Dr Vidmantė Giedraitytė, General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania, Promoting Civil Participation in National Security: Lessons from Lithuania.

In today's fragmenting world order, marked by growing geopolitical tensions and weakening international stability, civil participation in national security is becoming increasingly important. Traditional security efforts are no longer enough to address complex hybrid threats like disinformation, cyberattacks, and societal division. As a result, the involvement of the wider society is essential. States must find new ways to engage citizens in shaping and supporting security and defence policies. Lithuania, located in a geopolitically sensitive region, offers a strong example of how public resilience can be strengthened through active civil involvement. The purpose of this report is to reveal how civil participation can be promoted to strengthen national security, using the experience of Lithuania as a case study. The objective is to identify the main factors and measures that contribute to the formation of a sustainable and inclusive civil society, which has a real impact on the implementation of security and defence policy. The research used document analysis, comparative analysis and case study methods. The study was based on strategic and normative Lithuanian documents and international scientific sources. The study included an analysis of theoretical concepts (e.g., "universal defence", "whole-of-society approach"), an assessment of Lithuanian public policy, and a study of the activities of existing civil initiatives and organisations (such as the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union, NGO networks). Key findings show that promoting civil participation is most effective when there is a clear and supportive legal framework that enables citizens to engage in defence preparedness activities; public education and practical preparation are actively developed through formal programmes and digital platforms; and local community and NGO networks are strengthened, ensuring financial and organisational support. The Lithuanian example reveals how an inclusive, multi-layered approach to civil participation can increase not only the resilience of the state, but also public trust in institutions. This model can become applicable in other countries seeking to create inclusive, whole-of-society security and defence systems.

Keywords: civil participation, national security, universal defence, societal resilience, Lithuanian model.