

## Identity Discourse within a Geopolitical Crisis: The Case of Lithuania<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*The annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 dramatically changed routine practices and perceptions about Lithuania's foreign policy agenda. The threat to this small state's security marked a new era of active searching for self-definition and policy direction. The article aims to analyse the dominant tendencies of Lithuania's identity in foreign and security policy after 2014. Lithuania is selected precisely because of its vocal reaction and concerns after the annexation of Crimea. This article analyses speeches, comments and statements made within contemporary political discourse by key political leaders in Lithuania's foreign and security policy. It argues that – in light of potential military threat – political leaders advocate for increased self-responsibility and readiness to act as the relations with their respective partners remain both crucial and complicated.*

### Keywords

Discourse Analysis; Identity; Lithuania; NATO; Russia; Security

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<sup>1</sup> The article is based on a presentation made at the 2018 AABS Conference at Stanford University dedicated to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Baltic independence.

“The fire is opened close to Lithuania’s borders, the territory of a sovereign country is being occupied, and the European map is brutally being redrawn.”

Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania (*Baltic News Service* 2014a)

## Introduction

Since regaining independence in 1990, Lithuania’s identity in terms of foreign and security policy has been focused on two dominant pillars. First, its close proximity to Russia is seen as a concern. Second, orientation to and integration with the West are understood as the return to civilisation and political family (Lingevičius 2015, 88). Although the dominant ideas of foreign and security policy varied throughout the ages (scholars distinguish three to four period<sup>2</sup>), integration into the Western political fabric has been a driving goal motivated by the desire to guarantee the sovereignty and have strategic economic, political and societal shelters. Through this lens, successful integration into the European Union and NATO has become a positive achievement of foreign and security policy because it distances ties to its unstable relations with its Eastern neighbours, particularly Russia. However, in 2014, routine policy practices were shaken by the unexpected annexation of Crimea and military conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Due to this crisis in the region, the issue of Lithuania’s security rose to the top of the country’s political agenda. Moreover, the intense public reflection on preparedness and necessary policy actions<sup>3</sup> has raised the question of a new stage of self-definition and foreign and security policy in Lithuania. Has annexation of Crimea affected or changed Lithuania’s self-definition in the context of foreign and security policy? What are the identity tendencies within this political discourse?

This article analyses what the dominant tendencies of Lithuania’s identity in foreign and security policy became after the events of 2014. This analysis of Lithuanian political discourse focuses on the role of a small state’s identity in foreign and security policy. I argue that traditional ‘one-size-fits-all’ explanations – all small states defined by same objective criteria as territory or population have similar *a priori* foreign policy – are not sufficient to explain Lithuania’s shifting reaction relative to other small states in foreign affairs (Gigleux 2016, 27). Rather, allocating greater attention to the nature of small states unique identity helps analysts observe what the key meanings of self-representation are and how they relate to foreign and security policy.

The article focuses on the political discourse of the main foreign and security policy actors in Lithuanian (such as former President Dalia Grybauskaitė and Minister of Foreign Affairs Linas Linkevičius). The analysis of such a discourse allows us to notice the dominant meanings and the

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<sup>2</sup> First – from 1990 to 2004 (independence and membership at NATO and EU), second – from 2004 to 2009 (period of ambitious visions), starting 2009 (pragmatism) (Brunalas 2016, 195).

<sup>3</sup> For example, re-introduction of conscripts, rapid increase of defense spending, cross-party agreement on security measures.

ways they are reflected in this particular context. It reveals emerging tendencies of a potentially new stage of Lithuania's foreign and security policy.

The first part of the article presents theoretical debates on the identity of small states and existing research in the Lithuanian case. In the next section the article discusses the dominant identity tendencies found in contemporary Lithuanian political discourse., The final section provides insights for future analysis and discussions.

### **The Tendencies of Pre-2014 Lithuanian Identity Development**

Lithuania's identity in foreign and security policy has been analysed as it has developed through various theoretical perspectives in response to specific events or periods. Many studies concentrate on the earliest stage, Lithuania's independence, and how the identity in foreign and security policy was first formed. For example, Miniotaitė (2007) mentions that in the early 1990s, different ideas were taken from interwar (neutrality, regional alliance or alliance with powers) and considered as equal options. The continuous discussion on regional dependence over the years has paralleled this tendency. Different leaders stressed the importance of different regions for Lithuania, imposing broader debates on which regional identity – Baltic, Nordic or Central European – is the most suitable for the country (Nekrašas 1998).

Newly gained membership in NATO, and the EU also became important triggers to discuss what Lithuania's identity is in the context of its foreign and security policy. As Paulauskas (2010, 161-162) suggests, the US was perceived as the most significant friend in Lithuanian discourse and practice, whereas the EU was mostly associated with the idea of 'returning to the West' and belonging to the European family. The analysis of the incident with former Soviet military officer M. Golovatov in 2011 revealed that the EU had been considered as a partial Self due to different approaches, including a softer EU position towards historical issues and tensions with Russia (Lingevičius 2015, 105).

In a comprehensive study on Lithuania's foreign and security policy between 2004 and 2014, Jakniūnaitė (2013, 21, 41) suggests that the identification as a 'small state' is a critical determinant of the country's foreign policy, while Russia is one of the most securitized objects. According to Vitkus (2006, 173), self-definition is usually constructed through the distance and antagonistic relation with the Other – Russia. Thus, the existing research of different periods illustrates the key pillars of Lithuania's identity in foreign and security policy as well as the dynamic and tension-ridden environment in which they are operating. As Šešelgytė (2013, 35) concludes, geopolitical position and historical memory have been two factors shaping and influencing Lithuania's self-identification and foreign and security policy. Nevertheless, there is no detailed research of recent

years' tendencies that raises the question of how political developments have regionally and globally affected Lithuania's identity.

### **Theoretical Framework and Methodology: Defining Identity within a Small State**

Compared to traditional approaches in International Relations, postmodernism stresses the importance of identity and its role in foreign and security policy. It allows understanding both concepts of identity and policy as changeable and multi-layered rather than once-established stable factors. Objective criteria are refused because identity is discursive, intersubjective, and formed in a continuous process (Campbell 1992, 12). Therefore, this conception of identity is formed through the adage: *I know who I am, when I know who the Other is* (Lebow 2008, 474). By this logic, identity tendencies may fluctuate according to internal and external processes. For example, in the wake of the regional security uncertainty that followed 2014, Baltic States intensified their cooperation in the search for joint solutions on how to bolster defence capabilities (Szymański 2015). Browning (2006 681-682) also presents that Finland's identity as a small state has changed over time. Its conception of smallness shifted from a limitation to an opportunity throughout the years.

Therefore, in the case of small states, their identity does not necessarily comprise a category based on similarities (i.e. physical size or some criteria to define the size) that conclude their self-definition. Instead, it can be formed by their relationship to the Other – something that countries find different or do not want to be related to (Andreou 2006, 4).

The postmodern approach also suggests that the relationship between identity and foreign and security policy is constitutive. On the one hand this means that identity does not form before foreign and security policy, but is revealed through the practice of such policies. On the other hand, identity is also necessary for the political process, which continually reproduces it (Hansen, 2006: XIV). Therefore, meanings of identity and foreign and security policy are understood as mutually related and interactive phenomena which might be affected by a diverse spectrum of conditions and experiences (Gigleux 2016, 27).

One of the challenges is how to analyse identity and policy tendencies, which method to apply, and how to collect relevant sources. Again, the postmodern approach suggests considering identity as a discourse – linguistic and non-linguistic practices – that reveal how the world (in this case, Lithuania and its foreign and security policy) is understood and perceived, how meanings transform to facts (Edkins 2007, 88). To define the research design Hansen (2006 2) refers to discourse as written and spoken texts – speech acts which can be chosen as sources for analysis.

Therefore, the research focuses on a case study – Lithuania and its political (foreign and security policy) discourse after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Being a border country in an asymmetric relationship with a big and threatening neighbour, Lithuania has become one of the principal advocates of Ukraine in the international arena while speaking as a harsh critic of Russia. Moreover, these incidents have unearthed sensitive issues regarding the country's security concerns. Bearing in mind existing tensions illustrated in previous research (Table 1) the analysis shows that small state's identity in foreign and security policy varies proving its self-subjectivity.

Table 1. Dominant identity tendencies before and after annexation of Crimea

	Relation/attitude towards Russia	Relation/attitude towards the EU	Relation/attitude towards NATO	Relation/attitude towards itself
Before the annexation of Crimea	Concern of asymmetric neighbourhood;	“Partial Self” where uncertainty and tensions due to the common ground exist;	Reliance on routine practices and burden sharing;	Concentration on integration to the West, changing ideas of pragmatism and regional leadership;
After the annexation of Crimea	Openly stated as a threat described in terms of unpredictability and military aggression; high level of securitization;	“Partial Self” because of the uncertainty of the EU's position and readiness to be united in case of emergency;	A significant part of Lithuania's Self-based on mutual recognition of threats and endeavours to ensure security;	Concentration on hard security, promotion of self-readiness and subjectivity, and active engagement into regional politics.

Source: author.

As mentioned, the primary analytical method chosen in this paper is *discourse analysis*. Although there is no agreed-upon way to exact steps of applying discourse analysis, subjective interpretation of many primary source inputs is usually named as the main instrument for applying this method (Vinogradnaitė 2006, 44-45). In this application, speeches and comments from 2014 to 2018 made by two crucial political leaders in foreign and security policy are chosen as key sources for the discourse analysis. Texts were selected according to these criteria: 1) unique texts made by the political leaders; 2) discussion of international events, processes or foreign and security policy. These texts (232 in total) were taken from official websites and the most popular news outlet determined by the number of unique visitors). After selection, texts were aggregated

by topics and compared by distinguishing and interpreting dominant meanings. These different categories of topics and found meanings show that identity is not necessarily integral, but rather a multidimensional and changing phenomenon.

### **Dominant Tendencies Emerging after 2014**

The analysed discourse has revealed a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, based on a variety of interpretations and speeches delivered. Following the methodological guidelines and interpretation process, four key themes have been distinguished within Lithuanian foreign policy: 1) Russia as the main threat; 2) the need to be an ‘eye-opener’ for Europe; 3) mutual collaboration with NATO to ensure deterrence, and; 4) initiating autonomous endeavours to ensure self-security. All these themes are presented and described below showing what arguments have been used and what identity tendencies are revealed through them. It is important to note that only the dominant tendencies are presented and discussed, meaning that different sources or angles may provide different results.

#### ***Russia as a threat***

After the annexation of Crimea, political leaders openly recognized Russia as the principal military threat to Lithuania. As the President claims, “we expect that Russia will remain unexpectedly aggressive and unexpectedly destabilizing” (Jakučionis 2018a). Although it is stated that direct confrontation is unlikely, according to the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lithuania suffers from Russia’s blackmailing, provocations and hybrid warfare techniques, such as propaganda or cyber-attacks (“Russia pursues aggressive military, informational and cyber policies against its neighbours” (Delfi 2018)). Despite the harsh rhetoric, politicians argue that Lithuania is willing to have normal relations between the two countries and has nothing against Russia *per se* (“we are open for a dialogue” (Černiauskas 2015)). According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, “we want good relations, especially with the neighbours <...> but they should be improved by those who behave inappropriately” (Plikūnė 2018).

However, following the comments towards Russia’s actions, such as aggression against a sovereign country, supporting of so-called terrorist groups (separatists) (the President argues, “it is an open territorial aggression not from terrorists or separatists, but directly from Russia” (*Baltic News Service* 2015a), the violation of human rights and militarisation of the Kaliningrad oblast (“today Iskander rockets are being deployed in Kaliningrad” (Jakučionis 2018b)) leave a negative perception of Russia. This deep understanding of instability and unpredictability in the neighbourhood intensifies the distinction between *Self* and *Other*. Here, asymmetric relations (small vs. great) become complicated because of the concern for military attacks: according to the President, “as long as Russia treats its neighbours and small states this way, then good, equal and

friendly relations with such a country will be impossible” (Garbačiauskaitė-Budrienė 2018). Thus, this perception leads to the inevitable need to take extraordinary measures and dominates on the political agenda.

Moreover, the concern of Russia’s threat transcends the national level. The President pays attention to Ukraine showing that Russia is not only a threat to a small bordering country, but it also becomes an issue for all of Europe: “Ukraine fights for the peace of the whole [of] Europe and for all of us. If the terrorist state <...> is not stopped, the aggression will spread throughout Europe and beyond” (Černiauskas, Parisas, Golubovas 2015). Russia is presented as violating the rules and laws of the international system, so it should be securitized not only on national but also international – or at least European – levels: “Russia does not act in accordance with the international standards and violates any international commitments. It means Russia becomes a threat to the whole [of] Europe” (*Delfi.lt*, 2015).

For the most part, the President describes Russia as an unpredictable actor that seeks to destroy the European peace project and even represents a different civilisation, referring to the Stalinist regime (“I see not only the Soviet but also the return of Stalinist style” (*Baltic News Service* 2014b)). The argument of a different civilisation further promotes the division between the *Self* and the *Other*. In contrast, the *Self* is defined by honesty, openness, international rules, democratic principles and values rather than size or material capabilities (“there are certain norms, principles that have to be respected in all countries” (Skėrytė 2017)). Otherwise, the *Other*, in this case, Russia is described as denying and destroying these civilizational features. This civilizational division relies on the premise that the post-imperial ambitions to reconstruct the impact in post-Soviet countries remain (“the sick post-imperial ambitions are being demonstrated to the European countries and the world” (Miliūtė 2014)). Therefore, the perception of danger is based on the issue of physical existence (a fear of a military attack) and on the fear that Western political civilization followed by Lithuania for decades can be damaged or even destroyed by continuous post-imperial reminiscences from the East. As the President claims, “we see post-soviet imperialism close to our borders. It is still a fight” (*Delfi.lt* 2015). Therefore, the leaders try to bring the message and influence Western allies to see, as they think, the real political situation and concerning risks.

### ***An ‘eye-opener’ for Europe***

Stating the potential danger for the country and Europe, Lithuania’s role of an eye-opener promoted due to the perception that the “security environment has essentially changed before half a year and still changes every day in Europe” (*Baltic News Service* 2014c). Lithuanian politicians constantly seek to convince Western countries to maintain unity and keep pressing Russia to change its course by imposing strict sanctions or sending Russian diplomats out of the country

(the Minister of Foreign Affairs argues that there are sanctions and we need to make them effective that all countries would follow the same policy towards Russia (*Baltic News Service* 2015b).

The idea of being “an expert” of the Eastern European political landscape in Europe is not new. In the case of a regional political crisis, Lithuanian leaders find themselves convincing other EU countries to have a common position and response to provocations or, in their opinion, inappropriate actions. Although Lithuania’s activity in internal EU politics varies, the issues of security or outside political provocations become one of the few national concerns to be received by the highest EU level. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs stresses, “it is important that the big democracies would have the last word because their role might determine not only the situation in Ukraine but the unacceptable precedent that is happening in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (*Baltic News Service* 2014d). Thus, the EU and Western countries are understood as those who can counterbalance Russia. In this respect, Lithuania becomes a norm entrepreneur as well as an advocate of Western political principles that have to be defended by the entire EU (“we cannot allow being surprised again, because the price will be even higher than before” (*Baltic News Service* 2014c).

Although on the one hand Lithuania is presented as an equal EU member, which seeks to cooperate and solve security issues together (“as long as Minsk agreement is not implemented, we have agreed that sanctions and critical attitude will dominate in our [the EU – J. L.] positions” (*ELTA* 2017a), on the other hand mistrust and disappointment of the EU reaction is also noticed. As the President claims, “European leaders’ patience has limits. Endeavours to talk with Russia diplomatically have led to negative result” (*Baltic News Service* 2014e). It is clear that Lithuania struggles to influence others to follow a similarly critical position towards Russia; this process becomes a never-ending plea to convince Western countries to evaluate Russia’s actions realistically and protect itself from false impressions. According to the President, “Europe has to understand that Russia seeks to rewrite [the] post-war map and its borders” (*Baltic News Service* 2014f).

Thus, the position and self-definition towards the EU remain controversial. Although the EU is not criticized as, for example, in the case of M. Golovatov’s release<sup>4</sup>, the uncertainty in terms of the EU position towards Russia becomes a litmus test (“today heads of NATO and the EU pass the test of leadership” (*Baltic News Service* 2014g). Therefore, the EU is a ‘Partial Self’ (not accepted entirely as an integral part of identity due to disagreements or disappointment) in the

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<sup>4</sup> In 2011, Austria decided to release Michail Golovatov after detention in Vienna. He was the head of the ‘Alfa’ group that stormed the TV tower and national buildings on 13 January 1991. According to the European arrest warrant, he is wanted for crimes and crimes against humanity. He was however released after less than a day of detention. This incident became one of the dominant topics in Lithuania’s discourse, blaming the EU for failing to follow European values and principles, exchanging political ideals to economic pragmatism.

spectrum of Lithuania's identity where constant tension of being recognized and heard within the EU exists (Lingevičius 2015, 104). Although the EU is associated with specific rules, norms and possibilities to counterbalance Russia, Lithuanian leaders do not see such unity and response to Russia's actions that would be appreciated. Notably, this lack of unified approach to Russia creates a distinction between Lithuania and the EU. In this case, the role of an advocate or a promoter of European values remains limited and based on national insecurity rather than well-established and widely admitted place within the EU. In this context, NATO becomes an even more salient provider of concrete military measures in deterring the threat.

### ***NATO as a Guarantor of Deterrence***

In this light, NATO is considered as the key actor to ensure deterrence and the possibility to exist ("we are members of NATO. We have no doubts in terms of security guarantees from the Alliance" (*Baltic News Service* 2014h). In comparison to mentioned uncertainty towards the EU, NATO is reflected as ready to stand for border countries and implement the article V in case of emergency: "we have received a commitment from all 28 states to defend our region if a threat emerges" (*Baltic News Service* 2014j).

While NATO has been significant for Lithuania's security since the beginning of the membership, before 2014, Lithuania relied on consolidated routine NATO practices. Although the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 was a wake-up call for the Alliance, during the Lisbon Summit in 2010 NATO and Russia established their partnership for the first time after the Cold War. At the same time, the defence plan of the Baltic States was also prepared and presented only in 2010. In this context of re-engagement, Lithuania used NATO burden sharing while reducing its own defence spending from 1.11% of GDP in 2008 to 0.77% of GDP in 2013 (*Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Lithuania* 2020). The military was also transformed from conscription to a professional army ready to participate in diverse missions worldwide (i.e. Afghanistan). Thus, concentrating on concrete gains and routine practices, NATO and its role has not been widely reflected and described in terms of Lithuania's identity.

Since 2014 the situation has dramatically changed, reflecting strong confidence in NATO. Baltic security issues are presented as common ("NATO partners have shown that we are not alone in the face of a threat" (*Alfa.lt* 2014)). All doubts have been pushed aside, arguing that NATO understands the new security environment in the region and shows solidarity with the Baltic States ("we strongly trust, and I would suggest others to trust in security guarantees that the Alliance provides" (Liauksminas 2014)). The sharing of security concerns, regardless of the size or location of the country provides a sense of commonality between Lithuania and NATO. Therefore, NATO

and its position become an internal and dominating part of this post-Crimean identity construction.

Since 2014, the interaction between NATO and Lithuania has been increasingly intense materialized by constant high-level political visits and meetings (the Secretary-General of NATO Jens Stoltenberg, former U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden, U.S. Secretary of Defence James Mattis, etc.). NATO has deployed multinational battalions in the Baltic States and Poland and inaugurated a NATO Force Integration Unit. It has also held exercises in the region, simulating defence of the Baltic States (i.e. in summer 2018, the “Saber Strike” were the biggest ever NATO exercise in the region which included soldiers from 19 NATO members). According to the President, attention towards Lithuania and the other Baltic States remains vigilant, as evidenced by the decision to establish a NATO Force Integration Unit, deploy U.S. military machinery, and hold vast military exercises in the region (*Baltic News Service* 2015).

In comparison to reliance on burden-sharing and some free-riding, in this context, Lithuania is presented as actively engaged in strengthening NATO, rather than just being a recipient of all security gains (“during the NATO Warsaw Summit the important decisions for the regional security have been made that we must implement consistently” (*Delfi.lt* 2016)). At the same time, various solutions and even requirements on what should be done have been proposed. Lithuania calls to ensure air defence and avoid military isolation of the region (“the proposals how to avoid any potential military isolation of the region should also be found”) (*ELTA*, 2017b)) and to redeploy troops from the Western countries to the East respond to the real security situation. Lithuania also asks NATO to be ready to transition from a peace regime to a war regime with a collective defence operation (“NATO must prepare constantly updated defence plans, provide military scenarios and reform decision-making process in order to make it faster” (*Baltic News Service* 2017)).

In this context, leaders present and reflect Lithuania as an expert of today’s security challenges in the region whose requirements reflect a necessary adaptation of NATO to the new security issues. “NATO has started to see threats in our region differently and understand what we say” (*Baltic News Service*, 2016). However, in contrast to the reflection of the EU, in NATO, the stress is on practical decisions and activities that have to be implemented rather than on a search for a common understanding (“for the first time during our membership, we will have such a significant package of measures for deterrence in this region” (*Baltic News Service* 2016)). Therefore, NATO is shown as an integral part of Lithuania’s identity because securitization of Russia and mobilization of political resources are presented as mutual interests. As D. Grybauskaitė claims continuously,

“Lithuania, together with the other NATO member states, is ready for challenges <...> that is why we are all together and ready to defend our states together” (*Baltic News Service* 2014k).

In this light, two post-Crimean NATO Summits in Wales and Warsaw are understood as the new stage and direction of both NATO and the collective defence. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs claims, “Lithuania greatly appreciates NATO decisions during the Welsh Summit to strengthen [the] capabilities of the Alliance in order to react to Russia’s aggression”. (*ELTA* 2015). Thus, this new stage is marked by the threat of Russia and intensified cooperation between member states (“NATO must become real defence organisation because it is the time to end the vacation” (*Baltic News Service* 2016)). Despite agitation and requirements to improve some processes and adjust to this new stage, NATO has become a key pillar of Lithuania’s identity in terms of foreign and security policy. The importance of NATO and its role provokes to consider Lithuania’s role and responsibility to take necessary measures and make a more significant contribution.

### ***Lithuanian Autonomy via Defence Resources***

In this respect, the willingness to ensure sovereignty and security in itself is the biggest shift in the discourse and policy formation after the annexation of Crimea. Before that, the defence has not been widely reflected in political discourse, especially during the economic crisis when all discussions and policy actions were concentrated on financial issues. After the annexation of Crimea, security became a mobilizing national issue that must be responded to appropriately (“today Lithuania is in the stage of information warfare. Therefore, we must defend ourselves, because democracy cannot be weak” (*ELTA* 2014)).

Due to the increased tension wrought by external threats, security concerns rose to the top of the political agenda. On this issue, the President stresses that Lithuania has taken security into its own hands and will not respond to any provocations: “we have to respond to the changing geopolitical situation in a fast and appropriate way by ourselves independently and together with NATO partners” (*Miliūtė* 2014). In this sense, the smallness of the state and the lack of capabilities become irrelevant because all endeavours are focused on guaranteeing its existence. Asymmetric relation between a small country and powerful antagonistic one are taken as a condition that has to be recognised and solved rather than [be] admitted as an inevitable destiny. As the President says, “I am proud that we do not accept any aggression towards our country <...> this is very important because we face the historic challenges of being on the border between the West and not friendly East” (*Pukenė* 2017).

This shift in the discourse goes along with several very important changes in foreign and security policy. After the annexation of Crimea, Lithuania has begun to significantly increase its defence spending and reached NATO’s requirement in just a few years. As it was mentioned, in

2013, Lithuania spent 0.77% of its GDP on defence, while in 2018, the budget allocated was 2.01% of GDP (from 267.3 to 873 million euros). As the President claims, Lithuania is one of the leaders exceeding the NATO standard to spend 20% of defence expenditures for modernization, because Lithuania already spends 30% (*Lrt.lt* 2017). In 2016, military conscription was reintroduced after more than a decade of building a professional army. In 2017, the updated national security strategy was approved, and tasks for citizens and potential scenarios in case of an emergency were later published. Thus, according to the President, Lithuania and the other Baltic States must do everything to guarantee security by themselves (*Baltic News Service* 2016).

Moreover, these perceptions complement the idea of cooperation and mutual endeavours between NATO and Lithuania. The country is treated as a sovereign state able to concentrate on its national interests, mobilize resources and increase self-confidence. Despite that the necessity of (or at least demand for) deterrence and a significant NATO input, more important perspective to emphasize is self-determination and readiness to act: “any kind of war against us has to be responded with the decisions that can secure Lithuania” (*ELTA* 2014).

### **The Symbiotic Relationship between Identity and Policy**

What do policy tendencies say about Lithuanian’s sense of self, and how does this, in turn, affect foreign and security policy? Lithuania considers itself as a small border state concerned about its sovereignty. Indeed, this aspect of its identity further strengthens Lithuanian resolves to remain an independent state. As it is noticed within the political discourse, Lithuanian politicians strongly reflect the idea that countries still need to be prepared to fight for their statehood and sovereignty, and this right to exist must be proved through self-defence and the ability to mobilise allies. However, *smallness* mentioned directly and indirectly is seen as a condition that should be accepted and realised in political actions rather than limitation.

Therefore, the size is just one of the possible factors strengthening the concern of the asymmetric relation to Russia. Historical memory and experience of being enslaved (for instance references to imperialism or the Stalinist regime) makes instability in the region even more *personal* or *familiar*. Smallness may also explain why so much attention is paid to the discussion of NATO’s commitment to defend while simultaneously mobilizing all internal resources on war readiness.

Compared to earlier years, the annexation of Crimea sparked the realisation that foreign and security policy has to be readjusted and Lithuania must take independent actions, namely by focusing on national defence capabilities, higher defence spending, better and more rapid military modernisation, civil resilience and better cooperation with the regional and international partners. Therefore, as B. Brunalas suggests, post-Crimean policy formation could be described as the new

period of Lithuania's foreign and security policy which is based on the existential threat of Russia (Brunalas 2016 208).

## Conclusion

Following the argument that identity in foreign and security policy is not a stable once-described phenomenon but rather a changing and complex process, new identity tendencies can be observed after the annexation of Crimea in Lithuania's case. Discourse analysis shows that the relations with other actors and policy formation are predominantly based on the perception of high insecurity. In the post-Crimean situation, Lithuania's self-definition has been mobilised on the basis of self-preservation as a small state, referring to its territory (the threat of military conflict and territorial occupation) and to the state as a sovereign political subject as well as a member of the Western political family. Therefore, such security concerns are at the highest level of the national agenda. Where all political, financial and societal resources are mobilized in order to defend sovereignty, modern security dominates Lithuanian policy.

Although a broader and more detailed analysis should be conducted in order to identify the more specific aspects of these identity shifts in foreign and security policy over time, new important tendencies and shifts in argumentation can already be observed. As Russia is openly named as a direct military threat to Lithuania, self-determination and self-readiness has become the most significant changes within the discourse. Although attitudes towards the EU and NATO also differ relative to what they were in the recent past, these differences also emphasize the role of Lithuania's subjectivity within the organisations. Therefore, the external shock becomes a litmus test to redefine or reflect routine policy practices and relations with partners and neighbours. It is important to note that all these arguments and actions have emerged as a reaction to an unexpected situation, but not as a consistent long-term plan; therefore, the question of sustainability and resilience remains – considering growing instability of international politics, how unpredictable actions of any major actors would affect those tendencies and political course.

This research also supports the idea that country's identity in foreign and security policy is not a stable nor constant phenomenon but one which varies over time and may be affected by any internal or external processes, such as the annexation of Crimea. In other words, identity and policy can change according to both incremental and sudden changes. Therefore, greater attention to identity issues brings value to foreign policy analysis because it presents a more dynamic and comprehensive picture of contemporary arguments and policies as well as the decision-making process.

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