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Dear Reader,

Almost one thousand year ago the world became aware of Lithuania's existence for the first time. In the thirteenth century, a centralized Lithuanian state had been created, and the name of our country has remained on the world's political scene ever since.

During this millennium, the shape of Lithuania's statehood, its power and success in responding to historical challenges have varied. After having become a major European power in the Middle Ages, in the eighteenth century Lithuania lost its independent statehood, which was recovered, albeit with some dramatic interruptions, only in our century.

The centuries of Lithuania's statehood, the country's diplomatic experience and responses to the challenges of history constitute a rich object for academic research and analysis. Of course, this experience is being analyzed - a number of national as well as foreign academic volumes and scholarly papers appear annually, in which Lithuania's foreign policy and diplomacy are examined during different periods of history.

Still, important as they are, these publications are somewhat random and lacking a "common denominator." To put it differently, it would be beneficial to have a continuous publication about Lithuanian foreign policy, which would serve as a forum for exchanging academic and political insights as well as different views. Also, such a continuous publication would address not just the lessons of the past - even more importantly, on the basis of the current situation analysis, it would provide an opportunity to address policy planning as well as different scenarios, their relative strengths and weaknesses.

1998 is a jubilee year for Lithuanian diplomacy - eighty years the independent state of Lithuania was reconstituted, on 16 February 1918, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was founded on 7th November of the same year. It is somewhat symbolic that a publication, in which the history of Lithuanian foreign policy will be explored, present problems discussed and concepts for our future analyzed, appears this year.

Reflection and even the critical clash of different opinions, projects and points of view is a necessary attribute of policy as well as of every conscious action. I believe this publication will be a public forum, where foreign policy makers, politicians and those who implement policy will be able to change views with national and foreign academicians doing research in the areas of foreign policy and diplomacy.