GEOPOLITICAL PROJECTIONS OF NEW LITHUANIAN FOREIGN POLICY

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Introduction

Lithuania's membership in NATO and the European Union is perceived today as a natural state, although only a few years ago this was the key subject of discussion in the political and academic layers and in the media. From 1995 to 2004 the ambition to integrate into those structures was the driving force of Lithuanian foreign policy. The implementation of this objective employed basically all national capacities starting with actions to ensure good neighbouring relations and ending with domestic policy reforms in the economic, social, and many other fields.

Today the major subject of discussion has been distribution and utilisation of EU funds or the living conditions of NATO soldiers in Điauliai. In other words, the former priorities of foreign policy became part of the domestic policy agenda. Attempts have been made to fill in the vacuum which emerged in the sphere of foreign policy by bringing out the idea of Lithuania as the regional leader. This idea has been consistently developed in public discourse by the country's top-ranking officials including the Chairman of the Seimas and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

This article examines the process of establishing Lithuania's identity of the regional leader in the country's public discourse. With emphasis on the geopolitical aspect of Lithuania's spatial status, a constructivist approach to the nature of international relations is invoked, and the importance of the identity factor for the formation of Lithuania's new foreign policy is presented. Based on the theory of conventional constructivism, statements of critical geopolitics, and the analysis of Lithuanian geopolitical discourse, the article conveys the principles of shaping the coun-

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try's geopolitical identity, the factors which condition its changes, and the resulting impact on the daily process of foreign policy implementation.

The article examines the space of international relations from the geopolitical angle because geopolitics, as the approach to the core of international relations, in the last few years has become particularly popular in the discourse of Lithuanian academicians and politicians-practitioners.

Theoretical model

Since the very paradigm of geopolitics today is not homogeneous, the article conceptualises the key assumptions of the geopolitical theory, whereas statements of traditional and critical geopolitics are linked into the integral theoretical model of geopolitical analysis. This model is based on the identification and integration *of material and ideationalfactors* which are characteristic of traditional and critical geopolitics respectively. The assumptions of *conventional constructivism* in the theory of international relations are used as the theoretical framework with integrated elements of traditional and critical geopolitics. Based on the assumptions of conventional constructivism, geopolitical identity in this model is treated as the central element, whose definition and empirical analysis allow for the explanation of geopolitical projections in foreign policy. Here geopolitical identity is perceived as "relatively stable role-specific self-perception and the expectations rising from that perception".[1] This perception is a social definition rising from those theories on which actors of the international system base their approach to *Self* and *Others* and whose assumptions constitute the geopolitical structure of the world. The examination of geopolitical discourse and of relevant material factors comprises the empirical part of the paper.

Lithuanian geopolitical identity and its effects on foreign policy

Proceeding to the analysis of Lithuanian geopolitical identity, there is a need to provide, from this angle, a general overview of the development of Lithuania's

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Alexander Wendt "Anarchy is What States Make of It". Kn. A.Linklater (sud.) *International Relations. Critical Concepts in Political Science,* Volume II, Routledge, 2001, 619-620.

identity after the end of the Cold War, which has influenced the country's foreign policy. The tradition of geopolitical thinking in Lithuania after the collapse of the Soviet Union in principle can be divided into two phases - the *"return to the West"* phase and the *"regionalleadership"phase.*

Return to the West geopolitics

As mentioned before, from 1995 to 2004 Lithuanian foreign policy was dominated by two key focus areas — membership in NATO and in the European Union. The declaration of "return to the West" in the programmes of political parties, mass media, and academic literature serves as evidence that the ambition to retreat from the "shatter belt zone" between East and West became the driving force of Lithuanian foreign policy. The discourse of formal, practical, and popular geopolitics created the idea of "return to the West" in one accord as the only and inevitable reality. This was accompanied by the construction of Russia's image of the greatest risk and threat to Lithuania.

Lithuania's geopolitical identity as the integral part of the Western world quite easily found its way to geopolitical discourse for several reasons:

— this geopolitical objective was based on a very strong historical imperative:
  during Soviet occupation it was developed, supported, and redesigned by
  Lithuanian emigrants and resistance actors, whose efforts were substantially
  reinforced by external factors, i.e. the US non-recognition policy of Lithua
  nian annexation.

- structural changes in the international system (the breakdown of the Soviet
  Union and the end of the Cold War) provided favourable conditions for this
  identity to transit from its hidden form to the official level and to anchor in
  foreign policy as a priority realm.

Upon breaking old and externally enforced "identity commitments", Lithuania started developing its new identity with great success. Since this development coincided with identity transformation processes of the big powers, it caused fewer objections on their part because the world in principle still operated under the conditions of transforming self-identification of the Cold War period. With those conditions in place, a need emerged for critical evaluation of the internatio-

nal identity structure of all actors within the global system (the visions of a multi-pole and single-pole world emerged) and for new constructivist practice. Deepening integration of European states and unilateral US actions in Iraq can be viewed as examples of this new practice aimed at constructing or enforcing new identities of actors within their own or others' international system and at developing a new structure of international institutions which support those identities. In Lithuania, the transformation of identity ran quite smoothly owing to the existence of geopolitical discourse which was created and supported throughout the Cold War and which clearly defined the guidelines for the new identity: independent Lithuania in the family of West European states linked through transatlantic relations with the USA. Following restoration of independence in 1990, those ideas, leaning upon the new "material foundation" — the transformation of relationships between the big powers - created a forecastle of practical geopolitics, which was easily implemented on the level of popular geopolitics as well. Since Western Europe and the USA in principle approved the creation of this kind of identity for Lithuania (negotiations commenced regarding NATO and EU membership), Lithuania quite easily achieved success in the implementation of the respective constructivist practice, whereas the formal confirmation of Lithuania's membership in the EU and NATO in 2004 basically finalised the process of constructing this new geopolitical identity: Lithuania established in the "shared understanding" of the greater part of the world as part of Western Europe, professing the values of democracy, free market, human rights, and the rule of law.

Geopolitics of regional leadership

Upon eventually becoming a full-fledged member of NATO and the EU, Lithuania faced somewhat of a vacuum in its foreign policy. To fill this gap, it was supposed to define new or reformulate old goals, mobilising the experience accumulated in the 15 years of independence.

In his speech at the conference "Lithuania's new foreign policy" held on the 24th of May at Vilnius University, the then acting president of Lithuania Artûras Paulauskas said:

Today I suggest a new broader doctrine. I view Lithuania as the regional leader through its quality of membership in the EU and NATO and through proactively

developed neighbouring relations. I view Lithuania as the regional centre and Vilnius as the regional capital.

The idea of Lithuania as the regional centre was afterwards contemplated in speeches of many other Lithuanian political leaders, and this role has also been attributed to Lithuania in different draft concepts of its foreign policy, the agreement regarding foreign policy between Lithuanian political parties, and other documents.[3]

The very first question inevitably arising after hearing this type of declaration relates to the region's definition: which region Lithuania wants and seeks to lead? In practical terms, not a single speech or document which stresses the ambition to become a "regional centre" defines the specific region.

Traditionally, Lithuania can be attributed to even several regions/sub-regions. We are part of the so-called East Baltic sub-region, which also includes Latvia and Estonia. No one would dispute that we fall into the Baltic Sea region together with the same Latvia, Estonia, and the Scandinavian states, Germany, Russia, and Poland. Without going deep into the definition, which would take several other articles to explain, Lithuania is often attributed to Central, East, or Central-East European regions, whose geographic boundaries have changed many times in the course of history depending on the positioning of geopolitical forces. Although one may find a broad assortment of region definitions, both the materialist and the ideational definition deserve consideration. Surely, geography cannot be totally ignored when speaking about any (sub)region. What is also apparent is that mere geography is not enough. Although it is possible to distinguish the geograp-hical-hydrographical region of the Danube basin, in the context of international politics it carries almost no analytical meaning. This allows for the inclusion of additional factors into the region's definition such as political, economic, and cultural belonging and common historical experience, which enables perception of the region as an integral formation in the lifecycle of more than one generation. In other words, the historic element supports the "shared understanding", which helps to distinguish one or another (sub) region irrespective of purely geographic

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[2] A. Paulauskas "Lithuania's new foreign policy" [2004 06 07].

[3] E.g. Resolution of the Lithuanian Seimas *regarding the foreign policy trends of the Republic of Lithuania following Lithuania's becoming a full-fledged member of NATO and the European Union,* 1 May 2004, Official Gazette, 2004, No. 75-2572.

factors. Hence the region's definition in today's international politics is becoming significant from the analytical point of view only when incorporating all the above-mentioned factors. This implies that a region can be characterised as certain material-geographic space united by common political, economic and cultural history. This history can be interpreted as a continuously (re) designed common "shared understanding" about the (sub)region, its belonging, and uniqueness compared to other material-ideational formations. At the same time it is important to support the region's definition with the factor of variability. Apart from the fact that a region is a material-geographical space united with political, economic, cultural, and other kinds of history, it is also a variable formation, whose variation depends on the structure of the international system and the policy pursued by individual states (within the region).

To conceptualise this definition of the region, one, again, must have recourse to geopolitical discourse. Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Antanas Valionis once expressed the idea that "For Lithuania to become a regional centre, it needs geographical space. To date, Lithuania without greater reservation has been attributed to only the tiny Baltic Region. Having distinguished North and Central Europe once, we still cannot boast a broader geographic identity. Therefore we must expand the interaction of the Baltic region with our northern, southern, and eastern neighbours to enable their proactive mutual relationships in improving Lithuania's strategic significance."[4] These words confirm the above-presented conception of the region: the geographical space and the opportunity to construct the region's boundaries. Valionis' words can be decrypted as a direct call to alter Lithuania's geopolitical identity by constructing a new geopolitical (sub)region, whose leader Lithuania could be. In other words, it is not the interests and activities which are adjusted to objective reality, but rather "objective reality" is constructed in consideration of the need to establish a new identity.

One may conclude that political discourse, which became particularly active after the end of the Cold War, regarding Lithuania's belonging to Europe, whose institutional expression was negotiations on NATO and EU membership, enabled the construction of a new geopolitical formation in the country's geopolitical discourse: the sub-region of the "newEU and NATO members", which is intro-

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[4] A. Valionis, speech to heads of Lithuanian diplomatic missions, [2004 08 08].

duced as the eastern fore-post of "real" Europe with the function of spreading Western civilisation further East, to the "not so civilised" Europe, including CIS countries and partly Russia. This "civilisation spreading" function, in turn, is the expression of the pursuit to progress even further west. It is apparent that the declared interests "to expand the boundaries of Europe and surround Lithuania from all sides with free, democratic, and European-type states"[5] and to implement the NATO and EU "open door" policy[6] in the context of identity formation is the obvious ambition to move forward on the geopolitical map of Western Europe and to transfer the function of the eastern "fore-post" to other states, for instance the Ukraine.

The problem of regional leadership

After defining the (sub) region, at least to some extent, to which Lithuania attributes itself declaring its "regional leadership" ambition, let us pass on to the feasibility analysis of being the leader of this (sub)region.

The features of materialist-rationalist states which claim regional leadership are quite clearly presented by Cohen[7], who argues that *the increased importance of second-order, or regional states has come at the moment in world history when major powers have begun to distance themselves from regions which they no longer consider vital to their own national interests. Second-order powerdom is (1) a reflection of the inherent military and economic strength of a state relative to its neighbours.* At the same time this power is (2) *the function of its centrality or nodality in regional trans-portation, communication, and trade.* As important as any of these factors, however, is (3) *the ambition andpreservance of the state, not only to impose its influence on others, but to persuade them of their stakes in regional goals and values.* One more criteria for measuring the strength of a regional power is (4) its *ability to gain*

A. Valionis, speech to heads of Lithuanian diplomatic missions, [2004 08 08].
"We find it important that the European Union and NATO continue development. In the
future we will support the states which strive to take the European path. Their success and
democratic change will also secure our success" - V. Adamkus, speech at the meeting with
heads of diplomatic missions accredited for Lithuania, [2005 03 21].
S. Cohen *Geopolitical realities and United States foreign policy. —* Political Geography, 22 (2003).
-p.1-33.

sustenance from one or more major powers without becoming a satellite <...> and through extra-regional political-military alliances, trade or ideological links.

Without going into much detail, it is obvious that according to these criteria Lithuania, in practically all fields, falls behind Poland, which, owing to its physical features and the attitude on the part of the big powers, is much more suitable for the post of "regional leader".

In other words, rational computations supposedly do not allow Lithuania to claim regional leadership. But maybe an alternative view exists as opposed to traditional rationalist-materialist thinking, which could help to explain today's changes in Lithuanian foreign policy and to support them in theory. One of these alternatives could be the already mentioned constructivist approach to international relations.

Identity transformation in Lithuania

It has already been mentioned that according to the constructivist theory actors of the international system (i.e. states) act according to the roles that they ascribe to themselves and others. That is to say, their behaviour and interests are conditioned by identity. Lithuania's "return to the West" policy was already discussed and it was mentioned that since 1 May 2004 the country has faced the process of the formation of the country's new foreign policy, which can be defined as the "regional leadership" policy. Based on the chosen theoretical model, it is apparent that this kind of transformation of foreign policy must be related to identity transformation.

In this context it is important to emphasise that the establishment of the identity of Lithuania as an integral part of the West was not the final point in the identity transformation process, which started after the collapse of the USSR. Upon gaining a firm position as a EU and NATO member, Lithuania, obtaining tangible support from this membership, has developed new ideas to create another - a substantially narrower - (sub) regional identity. This new identity is actually a declaration of the ambition to take the role of a (sub)regional leader.

Lithuania and Poland's strategic partnership as the ambition to establish the identity of the regional leader

Poland's geographic position and historic relationships with Lithuania could be defined as the crucial regional-scale factor which influences Lithuania's geopolitical projections. Everybody knows that since 1990 Poland has been Lithuania's strategic partner. What meaning, however, does it carry in the context of our country's new foreign policy and how do Poland's geopolitical discourse and practical geopolitics influence Lithuania's behaviour in the international arena?

In commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the agreement between Lithuania and Poland on friendly relations and good neighbourhood, Valionis said: "for those 10 years Lithuania has strivedtobe Poland's reliable partner (sic!). <...> Supported by Poland, Lithuania led off the Vilnius process, which was the outcome of good neighbourhood and solidarity all across Central and East Europe. <...> the dynamic space "from the Baltic to the Black Sea" may become one of the most promising regions in the European Union. <...> Lithuania and Poland are in the centre of this region. We can become its driving force, the crucial connecting link."[8] Broadly speaking, the general analysis of Lithuania's geopolitical discourse shows that Poland has a firm position as a strategic and principal foreign policy partner in Lithuania's "shared understanding". To tell the truth, in Lithuania this is old and common knowledge. It is interesting, however, to look at Poland's geopolitical discourse on the subject.

On the one hand, it can be claimed that to date Poland has not shaped its position with respect to Lithuania's initiative. Poland's academic and practical geopolitical discourse is full of similar ideas about the regional centre to those Lithuania has declared. According to the head of the International Security and Strategic Studies Department at the Political Studies Institute of the Polish Science Academy Kaminski, " *The conception of Poland's raison d'état <...> is predicated on strengthening its position in NATO and joining the European Union, maintaining the geopolitical status quo in the area of the former Soviet Union, preventing the*

Speech by Minister of Foreign Affairs Valionis at the Lithuanian Seimas in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the agreement between Lithuania and Poland on friendly relations and good neighbourhood. — Vilnius, 23 April 2004 — http://www.urm.lt/ view.php?cat_id=14&msg_id=3246.

emergence of new divisions in Europe (which implies assistance for Ukraine and Belarus and other neighbouring states) and stimulating European co-operation along the North-South axis. It is in Poland's strategic interest to see economic and political advance across the whole Central and Eastern European region and an eastward shift in the centre of gravity in Europe's relationships. "[9] Similar views are maintained by First Secretary of the Strategy and Foreign Policy Planning Department of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Olendzki, who claims that although Poland did not formally declare its ambition to be a regional leader, its policy in principle implies the existence of this kind of leadership.[10] In other words, Poland's ambition of a regional leader is not smaller than Lithuania's. As far as stronger material background and specific relations with the big powers, particularly the US, are concerned, Poland's position in creating its identity of the regional leader is far more favourable. Moreover that Lithuania is given a back seat in Polish geopolitical discourse. At least comparing the significance which is attributed to Poland in Lithuania's foreign policy with that which Poland ascribes to Lithuania, it is apparent that we are much more "in love" with our neighbours. Taking the speech of the Polish minister of foreign affairs introducing the Polish foreign policy as an example, one may observe that Lithuania is mentioned only once and only in reference to the position of the Polish national minority.[11]

In addition, with regard to regional leadership opportunities, Poles see Germany as their principal competitor in shaping the EU Eastern policy (i.e. of the regional leader). According to Kazanecki, *"Poland's main competitor to such a role is Germany. <...> Germany wants thereby to emphasise that the shaping of an [EU] Eastern policy should belong to it. This is an important challenge for Poland and one that requires an analysis of Poland's role in this area. We hold one more trump card for this competition. It is the support of the United States, which has an interest in Po-*

Kaminski A. *Quality of Structures, Sovereignty and Eastern Policy of Poland.,* http://www.spra-wymiedzynarodove.pl/yearbook/2000/druk/antoni_kaminski_quality...
Olendzki K. *Outlook for Regional Co-operation: Poland's role, http://www.sprawymiedzynarodo-we.pl/yearbook/2003/olendzki.html*
Government information on the Polish foreign policy presented by the Minister of Foreign
Affairs of the RP, Prof. Adam Daniel Rotfeld, at the session of the Sejm on 21 January 2005.
http://www.msz.gov.pl/start.php?page=1000000000&obj_display_cat=3&obj_dis-play_full= 1039&obj_to_display_type=29.

land's position in this region and in the conduct of a policy by Poland towards, first of all, Belarus and Ukraine."[12] Again, there is even no mention of Lithuania. This kind of Polish discourse leads to two assumptions: Lithuania is either totally unappreciated as a strategic partner on the Polish part or a certain role of a partner/ (sub)leader in the region is foreseen for Lithuania. The fact that the second alternative is nonetheless more realistic is supported *inter aliaby* the practical behaviour of Poland's political leaders. According to Polish President Alexander Kwas-niewski, "Poland like Lithuania has been at the intersection of different traditions, cultures, and mentalities from the very establishment of its statehood. This experience and knowledge can serve as a good background for creating the EU's rational and responsible Eastern policy."[13] This can be understood as a certain opportunity for Lithuania to have its niche in the space of regional action and to actually "share" the role of the regional leader. Judging from the discourse, this "sharing" should be based on the division of labour principle: Poland would lead the creation of the Eastern dimension in the context of EU and US interests with particular focus on Ukraine's "westernisation", whereas Lithuania would take a somewhat "specialist" role with particular emphasis on the regions where Lithuania's experience and opportunities are relatively higher than Poland's.[14] These specific regions should most probably include Belarus and Kaliningrad region.

The focus on the problems of Kaliningrad region has been associated exclusively with Lithuania for quite a while. On the one hand, this is due to Lithuania's tremendous attention to this region of the Russian Federation. On the other, when the issue of passenger or military transit from Russia to Kaliningrad is discussed, there are simply no references to the opportunities to perform it through the Polish territory (although physically this would be possible in principle). In other words, the Kaliningrad problem, in mutual relations with Russia and particularly with the EU, is raised mostly on Lithuania's initiative. This, in turn, as if reserves the right of initiative for Lithuania with respect to proposing solutions to this problem.

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P. Kazanecki Belarus, Poland and the EU's "Eastern Dimension". — In The EU's "Eastern
Dimension" — An opportunity for or Idee Fixe of Poland's Policy? — Centre for International
Relations. — Warsaw, 2002. -
www.csm.org.pl/en/files/easterndimension.pdf.
Poland, Lithuania could help with the EU's Eastern policy — the Polish president. — REUTERS
-Lithuania 2004.09.10.
Or in the areas which Poland views as not very promising — the Belarus case.

With reference to Belarus, it is worth recalling the informal NATO summit held on 20-22 April 2005 in Vilnius and the statements made during the event by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. *"Belarus is really the last dictatorship in the centre of Europe, and it's time for a change in Belarus."[15]* These words of one of the world's most powerful leaders were incidentally uttered in Vilnius. At the same time Rice emphasised the importance of Lithuania's role as a new EU and NATO member state in the development of democracy in the East - the Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova. That is to say, on the discourse level the US, and at the same time NATO, supposedly admit that Lithuania is the centre which should radiate the waves of democracy to Belarus. This is also supported with practice: it is the Lithuanian embassy in Minsk which became NATO's contact embassy in Belarus in 2005. In Vilnius the very same Rice met representatives of the Belarusian opposition. It is worth recalling that earlier Belarusian opposition numerous times found asylum in Vilnius.

In consideration of this situation and of the attitude in Poland, Lithuania's constantly emphasised strategic co-operation in the context of the identity of regional leadership could be quite easily explained. Realising that Poland's opportunities to be the regional leader are far greater, Lithuania constantly attempts to (re) construct its identity of Poland's most important partner, thus securing its opportunities to take the lead over one or another kind of initiative, i.e. Lithuania and Poland's strategic partnership is construed in Lithuanian geopolitical discourse as the tool for establishing geopolitical identity, which helps reconstruct and support this identity.

Influence of structural factors on Lithuanian foreign policy

According to O'Tuathail, the analysis of structural geopolitics is focused on the current geopolitical conditions of the contemporary world, which influence the way actors of the international system view the very same world. Among those principal conditions O'Tuathail names globalisation, informationalisation, and techno-scientific risks. These conditions are associated with the age of modernity, which no longer accepts the worldview of and denies traditional geopolitics, rai-

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C. Rice: Lithuania gives new energy and inspiration. — ELTA 2005.04.20.

sing the importance of newfactors. Disappearance of boundaries, "digitalisation" of international relations, inter-dependency, which grows at a spectacular pace, and similar changes irreversibly transform geopolitics (including the emergence of chronopolitics, etc.). In other words, representatives of critical geopolitics emphasise that the factors shaping the structure of the international system undergo change, which, in turn, implies alteration of the structure as such. Since this structure (which can also be characterised as a new whole of factors which structure international relations) denies the relevance of the factors underlined by traditional geopolitics, traditional geopolitics itself seems to be pushed down the stage.

If we look at the importance of structural factors for international relations from the constructivist perspective, we will see that here the concept of structure is as if "torn off" the object-materialist surface and lifted to the ideational level. According to Wendt, one has to agree with (neo)materialists, that *"there are strictly material elements in the structure of social systems. The actors who make up social systems are animals with biologically constituted capacities, needs, and dispositions not at all unlike their cousins lower down the food chain. These animals have various tools ("capabilities") at their disposal, material objects with intrinsic powers, which enable them to do certain things. In emphasizingthe ideational aspect of international structure, therefore, we should not forget that it supervenes on this material base, the analysis of which is a key contribution of Realism."*[16] In other words, it can be claimed that from the constructivist point of view structure is the common "shared understanding" which creates the rules of the game in the international system. These rules can be defined as "structure".

Let us try to have a look at how structural factors influence Lithuania's geopolitical identity (and automatically its geopolitical preferences). Here, again, one can make a few assumptions. It has been mentioned that following its accession to NATO and the EU Lithuania established its identity of an integral part of the Western world. This identity is also recognised in the geopolitical discourse of some of the big powers (USA, EU). Certain rather important actors of the international geopolitical system (i.e. Russia), however, do not admit it. This is to say, international geopolitical discourse influencing Lithuania's behaviours and preferences is not homogenous. Admittedly, the heterogeneity of the structure itself

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Wendt *Social Theory,* 189.

has an automatic effect, which can be identified as geopolitical formations of the "buffer"/"shatter belt"/"gate-way"/"the black hole" as they are named on the academic, practical, and popular levels. The idea of Lithuania as a "bridge" between East and West as well as North and South is very popular in Lithuanian contemporary geopolitical discourse. This, however, is only one side of the impact of structural geopolitics. The other one relates to Lithuania's identity-based belonging to the specific part of the global geopolitical structure of the world. As mentioned before, Lithuania identifies itself with the West, whereas the East (Russia) is considered one of the major "enemies" in geopolitical discourse. The implications of this identity-based belonging condition the relevance of the geopolitical worldview of the Western world (in the broad sense), i.e. identifying itself with the West, Lithuania as if declares its ambition to accept that "shared understanding" which dominates in the West. Taking into account the relation between material and at the same time ideational powers of this Western block, the greatest structural influence should be experienced from the US.

The US factor

The US agenda and interests in the Eastern Baltic region in the period from the reestablishment of Lithuania's independence in 1990 to its accession to NATO and the EU in 2004 were very precisely defined by Asmus. He argues that the key strategic objective in the nineties was the need to settle affairs with the countries which occupied the space between Germany and Russia. This priority emerged in the US European policy because namely the Central and Eastern European countries historically were the major source of conflict in Europe. Formulated the other way round, these words may be claimed to imply the expansion of the Western world to the East, integrating Central and East European countries, and thus eliminating the non-security or non-stability arising from the non-defined geopolitical/civilisational/value-based identity of these countries. According to Asmus, today, when the former Central and Eastern Europe has already been stabilised (i.e. accepted to NATO), the US needs a new agenda. The major challenge which the US will have to face in the coming decade relates to problems in the so-called southern flank of the Euro-Atlantic community. In principle, this is the region which begins in the Balkans, covers the Black Sea region, and stretches across the

Southern Caucasus to Central Asia. It is in this particular space where the US sees its strategic interests for the nearest future. The involvement of the US in helping this region to stabilise and engage into the Western orbit serves as a contribution in pursuit of the major strategic goal of the US: solving the problem of the Great Middle East. According to Asmus, it is the Great Middle East, being as it is today, that poses most risks to US and European societies.[17]

If we agree with the assumption that the particular issues of the Near East today are the greatest priorities on the US foreign policy agenda, one may ask what role is taken by the Eastern Baltic region, i.e. also Lithuania, in the US geopolitical schemes following the enlargement of NATO and of the EU. The issue is elaborated on by Larrabee, who admits that *"the old agenda, prior to the integration, was really to promote the internal reform and the democratization of the Baltic States, to obtain NATO and EU integration, to overcome the Russian opposition, to gain western support for NATO and EU integration, and to stabilize the Baltic region."[18]* He argues that a very important issue on the "US new agenda" is stabilisation of the region's direct neighbours, which include Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. One of the other important issues is the dissemination of stability to the Black Sea region. In other words, it is underlined that the major concern of the US in the 21st century is no longer the addressing of security issues in Europe, but rather relocation beyond the boundaries of Europe in pursuit of the same goals. Larrabee points out five key issues of the US "new" geopolitical agenda in the region where Lithuania, among others, acts:

- *Enhancing cooperation with Russia;*

- *Stabilizing Kaliningrad;*

- *Promoting Ukraine's European choice and integration into Euro-Atlantic insti
tutions;*

- *Promoting the democratization of Belarus and;*

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[17] Advancing cooperation between Northern Europe and the United States. — An "E-Pine" Think
Tank conference, Proceedings: E-Pine Think Tank Meeting, Washington DC, October 14,
2004, http://www.ui.se/texter/DC_report.pdf [Viewed on 2005 04 21].
[18] Ibid.

- *Integrating the Black Sea region into a wider Euro-Atlantic security framework.*[19]

According to Asmus, the integration of and enhancing co-operation with Russia has been the most relevant issue on the US agenda for quite a while. " *We have to keep in mind that how we [US, "West"] think about Russia is obviously going to have profound implications in terms of how we deal with Russia, how you all deal with Russia, how the collection of countries at this table deals with Russia.* "[20] Translating these words into constructivist language one may conclude that one of the crucial factors influencing US actions towards Russia is Russia's identification as a friend or an enemy, a benevolent or an evil-minded actor (i.e. the identity-based factor). Another important message of this statement is that Americans almost straightforwardly say that the behaviour of Eastern Baltic States in foreign policy is conditioned by the US approach to that behaviour. This means that on the structural level the identities and interests of the Baltic States are not considered independent and are rather conditioned (to a rather great extent) by the US position and "shared understanding". This "shared understanding" is forced on Lithuania, which, in turn, accepts it.

The EU factor

Although US influence on the formation of the vision of Lithuanian geopolitical foreign policy is the strongest, the structural impact of the EU on this vision cannot be ignored. A concise and quite comprehensive analysis of the EU political discourse is provided by Mamadouh.[21] She claims it is obvious that the mission of the European Union is envisaged as the securing of peace and prosperity in Europe and in the rest of the world. This kind of mission should be implemented through the dissemination of democracy and promotion of the "European method" — multilateralism. In other words, the geopolitical identity of the European

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[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Virginie Mamadouh "Framing the European Union as a geopolitical actor", Paper, presented
at the SGIR Conference "Constructing World Orders", The Hague, 9-11 September, 2004,
http://www.sgir.org/conference2004/papers/Mamadouh%20-%20Framing%20the%20Euro-pean%20Union%20as%20geopolitical%20actor.pdf [Viewed on 2005 03 10]

Union can be defined as the "peaceful disseminator of democratic values" in the international system. What is important in this context is the identity of a "peaceful" actor, which serves as a distinctive feature from US identity. The latter openly declare that for the sake of democracy and human rights (i.e. Western values) they are determined to strike preventive blows and to protect their beliefs using military force. Whereas EU identity is unambiguously associated with peaceful dissemination of Western values: "The EU <...> can offer its unique fifty-year institutional experience how goals should be sought and implemented through continuous compromise and negotiation."[22] This declaration of EU "peacefulness" allows for its definition as a "normative power",[23] which, although seeking the same goals as the US, uses different methods.

With reference to EU regional geopolitics, it should be noted that it to a large extent relates to EU ambition to create a "ring of friends"[24] along the EU's entire perimeter. Despite the fact that the geographical creation of this "ring of friends" is understood differently by specific EU Member States, one may nevertheless observe the generally declared EU commitment to develop a zone of security and stability not only inside the EU, but also beyond its boundaries. In this common ambition to create the "ring of friends" one may distinguish two narrower regional fields: the neighbourhood of the East and relations with the countries of the Mediterranean region. As a structural factor conditioning Lithuania's geopolitical preferences, EU policy has no significant impact on the Mediterranean states, therefore the most important element which can affect those preferences is namely EU policy with respect to eastern neighbours, or the so-called "Eastern dimension".

The Communication from the European Commission " *Wider Europe—Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neigh-*

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Prodi Romano, "A Wider Europe — A Proximity Policy as the key to stability "Speech at the sixth ECSA-World conference "Peace, Security and Stability International Dialogue and the Role of the EU", Brussels, 5-6 December, 2002. http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations?news?prodi?sp02_619.htm [Viewed on 2005 03 03].
Ian Manners "Normative Power Europe Reconsidered", CIDEL Workshop. Oslo 22-23 October, 2004, http://www.arena.uio.no/cidel/WorkshopOsloSecurity/Manners.pdf[Viewed on 2004 12 20]. Prodi "A Wider Europe", [2005 03 03].

bours"²5 states that with ongoing EU enlargement is it necessary to use the opportunity to reinforce co-operation with the new neighbours based on common values. At the same time it emphasises the objective *"to avoid drawing new dividing lines in Europe and to promote stability and prosperity within and beyond the new borders of the Union."²⁶* The Communication reiterates that EU enlargement should facilitate reinforcement of relations with Russia and intensification of actions with respect to the Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus. According to the Commission, these relations should be developed in consideration of the objective to create the zone of prosperity and friendly neighbours — the already mentioned "ring of friends" - where the EU could boast close, peaceful, and constructive relations.

Viewing EU-declared goals from the Lithuanian identity-based perspective, one may recall the following statements of the Lithuanian Seimas regarding new foreign policy goals: "The Republic of Lithuania, a full-fledged member of the European Union, will seek <...> to become one of the regional centres with tangible influence on EU's neighbourhood policy and to support the EU "open door" policy based on the Copenhagen criteria for countries which declare the intention to access the European Union".²⁷ This is to say, the goals declared by Lithuania and the EU practically coincide. In this context one can arrive at the conclusion that the changing EU identity at the same time constitutes changes to Lithuanian identity. In consideration of the fact that from the material-economic point of view Lithuania is very strongly dependent on its relations with EU Member States, again, one can view this as the "adjustment" of Lithuania's new identity to the changing structural environment. Although EU impact on the ideational level is not as strong as that of the US, it is impossible to ignore firstly because of the material basis. This means that changing EU geopolitical identity (i.e. the factor of structural geopolitics) also influences the geopolitical projections of Lithuanian foreign policy.

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament " *Wider Europe—Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours* " . - Brussels, 11.3.2003, COM(2003) 104 final, http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/ pdf/com03_1 04_en.pdf. Ibid.

Resolution of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania *on the foreign policies of the Republic of Lithuania following Lithuania's becoming a full-fledged member ofNA TO and of the European Union,* Vilnius, Official Gazette, 2004, No. 75-2572.

3 The Russian factor

Finally, Russia's "shared understanding" is the third very important structural factor in Lithuanian foreign policy. Traditionally, Russia was understood as the major obstacle which prevented Lithuania from "returning to Europe" and attempted to retain Lithuania within its sphere of influence. This identification of Russia with an "enemy" is closely related to the geopolitical discourse of Russia and to its interpretation in Lithuania. Russia's constant reiteration of its status as the great power and of its eternal interests in the near abroad, for historical reasons has been associated in Lithuania with the Russian occupation. This is to say, Lithuania's "shared understanding" about Russia treats the identity of this great power exceptionally as a threat to Lithuania's identity as an integral part of the Western world. This trend in geopolitical discourse can be observed throughout the entire period of Lithuania's independence (after 1990).

These trends lead to several conclusions. Firstly, the historical process of the formation of Lithuanian geopolitical identity has always related to the identification of Russia as the greatest threat. This is why today, owing to the "inertia effect", the relations between Lithuania and Russia remain strained even despite their generally recognised "kindness", especially compared to the situation in Latvia and Estonia. The second important issue — and this is where Russia's structural impact on Lithuanian geopolitical identity manifests itself— is that Russia seems to be eager to support its identity of the greatest threat to Lithuania.[28] On the one hand, this kind of behaviour by Russia implies Lithuania's negative approach to relations with Russia (proximity with the West, democratisation of Russia, etc.). On the other, recalling Lithuania's objective to establish its identity of the regional leader, this Russian discourse calls for constructivist practice which could "challenge" Russia and transform the "shared understanding" — the fear of Russia. In other words, actions which are contrary to Russian ambitions are taken to mitigate Russia's influence and to show that Lithuania can no longer exist within

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The influential Kremlin advisor Pavlovski once said that "The Baltic States are surely within the zone of our interests, particularly issues such as transit or the status of the Russian language or of the Russian community. We will by all means use their acceptance to these organisations *[NATO, EU] to* intensify the observation of issues within our interest and to influence these countries."

Russia's sphere, prepared to disseminate its own influence. Undoubtedly, this all relates to NATO and EU membership.

Conclusions

The analysis of Lithuanian foreign policy trends based on the method of "deconstructing" traditional geopolitical schemes offered by critical geopolitics reveals the relation of the emergence/creation of this policy to the geopolitical identity of actors of the international system and to the interests arising from the latter. Linking the assumptions of critical geopolitics with the theory of conventional constructivism gives rise to a new model of approach to international relations. This approach implies epistemological affinity of critical geopolitics with the const-ructivist theory of international relations, which manifests itself through recognition of the importance of social interaction and ideational factors in examining international relations. This affinity allows for the use of the critical geopolitics and constructivist approach as an integral model for the analysis of international relations, whose *criticalelement is the country's geopolitical identity.* The benefits of this model are also revealed in explaining the geopolitical projections of Lithuanian foreign policy.

The analysis of Lithuanian *geopoliticaldiscourse* developed in the country following accession to NATO and the EU leads to several significant conclusions about the directions and trends of the country's foreign policy.

— Membership in NATO and the EU can be characterised as somewhat of a
turning point in the history of Lithuanian foreign policy. This is because mem
bership in these organisations (a) created a certain vacuum in Lithuanian fo
reign policy because the strategic goals of the last decade were achieved, and at
the same time (b) provided a kind of backing for the implementation of new,
relatively more ambitious, projects in the sphere of foreign policy.

— Membership in NATO and the EU has contributed to the transformation of
the country's geopolitical identity — Lithuania was institutionalised as an *in
tegral part of the Western world,* this belonging explicitly expressed in practical
geopolitical discourse of the West. While the previous geopolitical identity of
the *country seeking to return to Europe* constituted the strategic goals such as

accession to NATO and the EU, the new identity is associated with the definition of new goals.

- In this context, the idea of *"heading East"*, which emerged in the country's
  geopolitical discourse and which directly relates to Lithuania's identity-based
  objective to "move West" on the geopolitical map of Europe and to create a
  somewhat democratic barrier along the country's eastern borders to protect
  from Russia's negative influence, can be easily explained. In practical geopo
  litics this idea took the shape of a *"regional leadership"* goal.

- The emergence of this goal/interest can be most adequately explained by ide-
  ational factors, which were linked with the existing material basis, their inte
  raction constituting the new geopolitical identity.

- At the same time it should be emphasised that the emergence of those idea-
  tional elements was directly related to *changes on the structural level* in the
  entire international system, which provided favourable conditions for the trans
  formation of the Lithuanian identity.

In a nutshell, the structural changes which appeared in the international system after the end of the Cold War and following the collapse of the USSR provided favourable conditions for identity-based transformation in Lithuania. This transformation could be viewed as the transposition of the existing identity, which is not feasible due to unfavourable structural factors, to practical geopolitics. Since the benefit of this transformation turned out to be greater than the likely costs and the altered structural environment enabled Lithuania to undertake the const-ructivist practice of establishing its new identity, Lithuania constructed its transitional identity of the country "returning to the family of Western states". Integration to Western formations, NATO and the EU, became the expression of this identity in the geopolitical projections of foreign policy. Successful progress of establishing this identity is due to common identity-based changes in the international system. Finally, upon achievement of Lithuania's geopolitical identity of an integral part of the Western world (the practical expression of this was membership in NATO and in the EU), new constructivist practice was undertaken by defining the goal of "regional leadership".

This approach does not deny the impact of material factors on geopolitical projections of Lithuania's new foreign policy, but at the same time reveals that the sole focus on material factors is not sufficient to substantiate them. The establishment of geopolitical projections in Lithuanian foreign policy, which are ideationally reasoned, but hardly feasible on sole material grounds, confirms the interfaces of their emergence with changes in the country's geopolitical identity and with the structural alteration of the "shared understanding" about regional geopolitics, substantially affecting those changes. It means that contextualisation of the geopolitical projections of Lithuanian foreign policy discloses the relevance of ideational factors. Although the turn-back of Lithuanian foreign policy to Belarus, Kaliningrad, and partly Ukraine could be explained by traditional material factors, the role of the regional leader becomes objectively definable and explainable through clarification of the ideas attributed to the material basis (i.e. "shared understanding").

In consideration of the fact that geopolitical reality is both a social construct and a material basis, the opportunity to shape geopolitical discourse becomes a crucial factor for its formation. In other words, apart from the analysis of material changes in the international system, there is a need to perform the job of analysing the ideational superstructure. Observation of economic power, military capacity, and scientific inventions (i.e. material factors) all by itself provides no explanation of how this will affect the international geopolitical structure, therefore the no less important element in the analysis and, at the same time, formation, of foreign policy should be the examination of ideas ("shared understanding") about geopolitical reality on the local, regional, and global level. It means that to impact the construction of geopolitical reality one needs to have substantial intellectual and analytical potential. This potential should be used for continuous monitoring and analysis of changes in structural geopolitics and for provision of adequate proposals to implementers of practical policy. To put it simply, creation of analytical centres, "think tanks", and similar institutions must be strongly supported on the national level.

On the one hand, this would enable continuous monitoring of changes in geopolitical discourse and adequate response to them. On the other hand, would also provide the opportunity to develop consistent national strategies for the implementation of foreign policy, which would then be updated and adjusted to changing structural environment.

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