

LITHUANIAN-POLISH RELATIONS RECONSIDERED: A CONSTRAINED BILATERAL AGENDA OR AN EMPTY STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP?

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Abstract

This article is based on the study carried out by experts of the Eastern Europe Study Centre in 2011 and presented to Lithuania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, diplomats residing in Lithuania and interested Poland's officials and diplomats during a public speaking event in Warsaw. The purpose of the study was to analyse the recent challenges in the relations between Lithuania and Poland. A long-standing strategic partnership (at least officially and repeatedly declared by Lithuanian politicians) is experiencing a wave of tension and complaints from both sides regarding issues of minority rights and intensified nationalist sentiments. The authors of the study seek to determine the main internal and external factors affecting Poland's position towards Lithuania in recent years and the most important challenges Lithuania still has to resolve if it wants to get back on track with the 'strategic partnership' with Poland.

"Gabriel Narutowicz, the first President of the Republic of Poland, had a brother, Stanislovas Narutavičius, a signatory of the Act of Independence of Lithuania. So where do the nowadays tensions between Poland and Lithuania come from?"¹

Introduction

The neighbourhood could serve a natural precondition for cooperation and peaceful coexistence on the one hand, or tensions and even enmity on the

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¹ Danilowiczus Robertas. Tautų maišatis. [Nations' mish-mash]. In: *Kultūros barai*. Nr. 2. Available at: <<http://www.lrytas.lt/-12994356941298725996-taut%C5%B3-mai%C5%A1atis.htm>>.

other. The illustration of the Narutowicz brothers is just one example of many where a combination of commonness and duality is an objective reality rather than a matter of interpretation. The sterile historiography is hardly achievable, therefore the mindset of the neighbours is filled with myths, legends, images and stereotypes. The Vilnius region has been a frozen conflict for over half a century, with both sides isolated and avoiding to converse. For this reason the aforementioned stereotypes have become even deeper and more prevalent in the historical memory of both nations. Yet the popular song line by the famous Lithuanian variety artist and ethnographer Pupų Dėdė (Petras Biržys) “Vilnius is given to us, and we are given to the Russians” in the 50s of the 20th century unambiguously indicates another party of the conflict, i.e., the role and interest of a third country.

Headlines, like “The Lithuanian-Polish brotherhood has vanished without a trace”², concerns by top leaders of the country that “Lithuanian-Polish relations collapsed overnight”³, are important signals for the Lithuanian foreign policy makers. Foreign experts, however, do not overestimate the fuzz in the bilateral relations, noting that the Polish-Lithuanian theatre of the absurd⁴ has more to do with narcissistic differences rather than geopolitical and cultural affinity⁵. Nonetheless, the question what provoked new tensions in bilateral relations still remains open.

In this article we are exploring Lithuanian-Polish relations. The intention of the authors, however, is not to reveal the historical truth or to provide the Lithuanian perspective. Rather, this analysis is an initiative for an open discussion regarding Lithuanian-Polish relations and the mistrust and tensions that have developed on both sides.

² Narbut Maja. Lietuvių ir lenkų brolybės nebeliko nė pėdsako. [Lithuanian and Polish Brotherhood Vanished without a Trace]. Available at: <<http://www.lrytas.lt/-12883459471288196450-lietuvi%C5%B3-ir-lenk%C5%B3-brolyb%C4%97s-nebeliko-n%C4%97-p%C4%97dsako.htm>>.

³ V. Adamkus: toks jausmas, kad Lietuvos ir Lenkijos santykiai sugriuvo per naktį. [V. Adamkus: It Seems as If Relations Between Poland and Lithuania Have Collapsed Overnight]. Available at: <<http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/vadamkus-toks-jausmas-kad-lietuvos-ir-lenkijos-santykiai-sugriuvo-per-nakti.d?id=42165857>>.

⁴ Poland, Lithuania, spiralling downwards. Available at: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2010/10/polish-lithuanian_theatre_absurd>.

⁵ Narcissistic Differences: A Row about Spelling Freezes Relations between Poland and Lithuania. Available at: <<http://www.economist.com/node/17316729>>.

On the one hand, Lithuanians are suspicious about the widespread concept of “kresy”⁶, manipulations with the Card of the Pole and eventual claims for Vilnius. On the other hand, self-criticism on the Lithuanian side is also needed as the unreasoned promises given in the early twenties regarding the Polish minority in the Vilnius region seem to be consciously delayed, which naturally annoys the politicians and society in Poland.

The agenda of the current Lithuanian-Polish relations is far from anything new as the critical marks have been known to both sides for over two decades. The assumption that, since 2004, neither Poland nor Lithuania has been interested in spiralling up the triggering issues because of the smooth Euro-Atlantic integration, however, does not explain why the discourse of anxiety in bilateral relations has started to develop only recently.

The analysis below elaborates on the following hypothesis:

1. The transformation of Lithuanian-Polish relations is influenced mostly by external factors, changes in the geopolitical environment and shifting priorities in the foreign policies of both countries.
2. The role of personalities is an important factor regulating the intensity of the problematic issues.
3. The icy Lithuanian-Polish relations are influenced by recent changes in the content of the bilateral agenda.

1. The Lithuanian-Polish Partnership: an Eternal Hostage of Geopolitical Shifts

*Busy people in Washington prefer America's allies to bring solutions, not problems. Exasperation seems to be equally divided. [...] But America wants Poland to carry more of the leadership burden in the region, and that means dealing with small countries as well as big ones.*⁷

The first part of the analysis takes a closer look at how external geopolitical choices affect the regional interstate relations in the post-Soviet area. The

⁶ “Kresy” (or “Eastern Kresy”) – refers to the territories which border the Eastern frontiers of Poland, i.e., today’s Eastern territories of Lithuania, and the Western parts of Belarus and the Ukraine. However, the Polish society views them as the eastern part of Poland, which was lost during the World War II. Geographically, “kresy” were the lands of the ex-Polish Voivodships between the towns of Vilnius and Stanislawsky (currently Ivan Frankovsky) in 1920-1939, which then constituted 30 percent of the Polish territory. In the collective consciousness of the Polish society, the term “kresy” is excessively idealized, usually perceived as the “lost small fatherland” or the vision of the “paradise lost”.

⁷ Lucas E. Available at: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2011/04/family_squabble>.

assumption is that the post-Soviet area constitutes a unique case of states and nations that shared the “feeling” of being directly involved in the geopolitical frameworks of the large countries, thus developing “special relationships” and partnerships, which, however, always stood in the way of developing functioning regional and neighbourly relations.

The logic of this analysis rests upon the idea that Lithuanian-Polish bilateral relations have been continuously dependent on the global geopolitical contexts and narratives of other actors, which resulted in the lack of constructive and positive bilateral agenda. Other outcomes include the absence of direct policies towards each other, short-lived strategic partnerships, competition rather than cooperation, and bilateral tensions.

In this light, the following iconic geopolitical breaking points of the three previous decades may be distinguished: the collapse of the Soviet Union, 9/11 and redefinition of the global security order, NATO’s and the EU’s eastward expansion, and the reset of the US-Russia relations. The questions to be answered are as follows: How did Poland and Lithuania react to these shifts? How did these shifts affect the bilateral relations of the two countries?

1.1. Strategic Partnership?

Lithuanian political scientist Professor V. Sirutavicius defines a strategic partnership in the following way⁸:

1. Excellent political relations at the highest level (having a trend towards institutionalisation);
2. Intense sectoral cooperation;
3. Bilateral relations perceived as “good” or “very good” at the public level.

V. Sirutavicius draws the above definition of a strategic partnership directly from the empirical reality of Lithuanian-Polish relations that had developed throughout the period of 1993-2003. The author also notes that a strategic partnership takes place and is sustained by certain resources, which both parties have at their disposal, as well as the overall international context. Nonetheless, one crucial element – common challenges or common goals – was missing. Absence of the latter might not be a coincidence, as the bilateral goals

⁸ Vldas Sirutavičius, “Lithuanian-Polish Strategic Partnership: Genesis and Prospects”. *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2001 (7), 4.

of the strategic partnership were hardly discussed outside the framework of multilateral cooperation. They are empirically missing.

It would take a lot of ignorance to deny that Poland and Lithuania have been facing similar or same security *problems* throughout the two decades. But have these *problems* ever turned into voluntarily defined common *challenges* that should naturally constitute the ground of a sustainable strategic partnership? The main difference between a shared security *problem/dilemma* and a shared security *challenge* is not only that the latter sounds better. A common security challenge is perceived as something that may be solved in joint effort and thus creates grounds for positive cooperation. Poland and Lithuania have always realised that they might be facing similar security challenges, but in retrospect, it seems that there was very little belief that the two countries had the capacity to tackle these dilemmas in joint effort successfully. Poland and Lithuania have always deemed bilateral cooperation insufficient and third power interference inevitable, even if that meant drifting away from initial definitions of security and perception of threats. Thus the cooperation has rarely had any significant positive content beyond coordination of positions in multilateral forums.

Collapse of the Soviet Union

Early years of independence left Poland and Lithuania in a geopolitical vacuum. The problem of not belonging to any security region was seen by both nations as a threat in itself⁹. Poland concentrated on the Visegrad countries, whereas Lithuania took attempts at institutionalisation and development of the Baltic Region cooperation. There were several reasons for not developing a Lithuanian-Polish strategic partnership from the outset:

1. The cooperation was hampered by the unsolved ethnic-territorial issues. In addition, the ethnic minorities in Lithuania had a different interpretation of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the statehood of Lithuania, which also made a considerable effect. The ethnic-territorial issues were only contained due to Polish and Lithuanian aspirations of Euro-integration and transatlantic integration that were seen as means of getting out of the European peripheries¹⁰.

⁹ Edyta Posel-Częścik, "Lithuania, Poland, Transatlantic Dimension". *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2001 (7), 2.

¹⁰ A. Valionis, E. Ignatavičius, I. Bričkovskienė, "From Solidarity to Partnership: Lithuanian-Polish Relations 1988-1998". *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 1998/2, 7-29.

2. The ambiguous situation of the Lithuanian Poles became apparent in 1989. Some were distancing themselves from the Lithuanian revival movement, although this process was usually considered to be the consequence of the activities of the “Jedinstvo” movement and of the Russian influence¹¹. In the end of the 20th century, however, Lithuanian-Polish political relations did not take a form of interstate relations, but rather developed as inter-societal contacts fostered by sentiments of *Solidarność* and *Sąjūdis*. The contacts were far from extensive; nevertheless, the visit of the *Sąjūdis* delegation to Warsaw in December 1989 evidenced bilateral goodwill and, most importantly, the decline of any Polish claims regarding Vilnius. Additionally, the meeting revealed the different perspectives towards the rights of ethnic minorities¹². In general, the Polish society has been an utmost supporter of the Lithuanian independence, especially during and since the events of January 1991. Meanwhile, a faster political recognition of the Lithuanian independence was unlikely due to a complex of reasons. Firstly, Lithuania was only an element in Poland’s foreign and Eastern policy – a multi-tier strategy had been adopted aimed at the normalisation of relations with the unified Germany, developing closer cooperation with the West, development of the Visegrad partnership, reconciliation with Poland’s former lands – Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania, - and balancing out the relations with Russia¹³. Moreover, at the time when the Lithuanian independence was declared, Poland and the Soviet Union were negotiating the withdrawal of the Russian military troops from Polish territory. Immediate recognition of the Lithuanian independence could have complicated the negotiations¹⁴, and thus had to be postponed until the previous had been settled.

NATO’s and EU’s Eastward Expansion

By 1990-1993, the Lithuanian political elite and the society in general had reached an overwhelming consensus on the EU and NATO membership as

¹¹ Laurinavičius Č., Sirutavičius V. *Lietuvos istorija. Sąjūdis: nuo persitvarkymo iki kovo 11-osios*. [A History of Lithuania. Sąjūdis: from Transformation to March 11]. XII tomas I dalis. Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2008, p. 254-259.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 447-449.

¹³ Sarah Meiklejohn Terry, “Poland’s Foreign Policy Since 1989: the Challenges of Independence”, *Communist and Post-Communism Studies*, vol. 33, no 1, 2000, 8-12.

¹⁴ Czesław Okinczyc, “10 years of Lithuanian-Polish Reconciliation”. *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2001 (7), 2.

the goals of strategic importance. The tactics how to get there was to be decided upon by the politicians. Several options were considered: asking for Poland's backing in the accession to NATO, asking the Nordic countries for backing on the road to the EU and NATO accession, or pulling all available support together¹⁵. Given little contradiction between the alternatives, the latter option was adopted. The prospects of the Polish and Lithuanian NATO and EU membership were closely linked to practices of good neighbourhood, but Polish-Lithuanian relations went well beyond that. In 1997, the bilateral cooperation and mutual assistance in meeting membership criteria was labelled as strategic partnership. By then, Poland had already acceded to NATO in the first round of NATO enlargement, but repeatedly stated that regional security is indivisible, i. e., one could not imagine ensuring full security of Poland without full security of Lithuania¹⁶.

After becoming a NATO member state, Poland continued to be an active supporter of the Lithuanian NATO membership. Throughout the process of the EU membership negotiations, Poland advocated an "open door" policy in both organisations.

The NATO and EU membership went hand in hand with the necessity of redefining Poland's and Lithuania's foreign policy priorities. It was less of a change for Poland. The rough guidelines of Poland's geopolitical role had been drafted long before the collapse of the Soviet Union with a prophetic 1966 essay in the émigré journal *Kultura* by historian Juliusz Mieroszewski. The essay did not only predict the collapse of the Soviet Union but also defined Poland's future as a regional power: relations with Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and other neighbouring states must be normalised and orientation towards Western Europe preserved. Poland should take up the role of a mediator for countries, which strove for European belonging, and serve as a bridge between cultures and countries that did not¹⁷. These principles gave Poland a well-defined regional role and clear goals beyond its own NATO and EU membership and were implemented with notable persistence regardless the internal shifts of political power.

Lithuania, however, did not have such a clearly defined role. The domestic discussion included options ranging from regional leadership to the prag-

¹⁵ Valionis, 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Meiklejohn Terry, 8.

matic “golden province”¹⁸. The choice of a regional leadership perspective paved the way to a certain competition mood with Poland, although aligning Lithuania’s position with that of Poland in order to achieve better outcomes within the EU was one of the main reasons for such a decision. Notably, the concept of the Lithuanian regional leadership was directed towards the EU neighbourhood, while Lithuanian ambition to become a regional leader within the EU was rather low. This allowed a certain period of co-action and congruity of interests with Poland and resulted in a series of joint actions within the EU: energy policy, EU-Russia relations, EU enlargement, and the Eastern Partnership initiative.

9/11 and Redefinition of the Global Security Order

The 9/11 events and the redefinition of the global security caught Poland and Lithuania in a moment of the Atlanticism euphoria. Both countries were developing a specific perception of the world order, in which Poland and Lithuania were apparently perceived as special and devoted partners of the US¹⁹. This mindset also implied that NATO was the primary security institution in the transatlantic area, whereas the EU defence capabilities and security policy were deemed as a matter of secondary concern as long as they did not interfere with the efficiency of NATO²⁰. Under these circumstances, the US constituted the backbone and the spirit of NATO. The 9/11 was an opportunity for Poland and Lithuania to prove their loyalty to the US. In retrospect, the uncompromising support for US military intervention in Iraq and allegations of hosting interrogation camps on Polish and Lithuanian soil would create a controversial image of both countries within the EU.

Moreover, their veto on the EU-Russia post-PCA negotiations mandate gave rise to the label of “Cold War Warriors” to refer to both countries²¹. But at that time, at least an illusion of joint action emerged and seemed mutu-

¹⁸ Raimundas Lopata, “Recent Debate on Lithuania’s Foreign Policy”. *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2009 (22), 161-162.

¹⁹ Nik Hynek, Vit Stritecky, Vladimir Handl ir Michal Koran, “The US-Russian security ‘reset’: implications for Central-Eastern Europe and Germany”. *European Security*, T. 18, Nr. 3, September 2009, 271.

²⁰ Renatas Norkus, “Lithuania’s Foreign and Security Policy Agenda Beyond 2004: Challenges and Opportunities”. *Baltic Defense Review*, 2003 (9-1), 114-122.

²¹ Mark Leonard, Nicu Popescu, “A Power Audit of EU 27-Russia relations”. ECFR, 2007. <http://www.ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_pr_russia_power_audit/>

ally encouraging. Both Poland and Lithuania had a specific perception of the Iraq issue:

1. It was clear that the political and material support for the military intervention was totally unrelated to direct security threats to either Poland or Lithuania (terrorism was not perceived as a tangible security threat by any of the two societies).
2. There was hardly any domestic debate on whether the US actions were to be supported or not. The political and societal consensus was overwhelming in both countries since this was what reliable partners were supposed to do.
3. Support to the global war on terrorism was perceived as an investment in both countries: it was supposed to strengthen the special status of Poland and Lithuania with respect to the US, and also to ensure that Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty remained relevant in its entirety. The concept of global and unconventional threats was quickly incorporated into the national security discourse and strategies²². The primary interest beyond these efforts was ensuring that NATO remained valid and vibrant. Whether or not such stance meant a truly well-coordinated position of Poland and Lithuania is a different question. For the most part, it was rather a coincidence of decisions, a race for the US and European attention and strife to establish oneself in a particular international role than a constructive joint action.

Reset of the US-Russia Relations

The reset of the US-Russia relations was arguably the most emblematic and pictorial geopolitical shift that Poland and Lithuania have witnessed since the end of the 20th century. The US turn towards nominal multilateralism in regard to both NATO and the EU came as a shock not only to Poland and Lithuania, but to all the CEE countries in general. As President Obama renounced the deployment of elements of antiballistic missile shield in Europe, it became a turning point that caused a seemingly unrelated, but very important divergence of security strategies of Poland and Lithuania. This divergence later revealed the lack of real bilateral cooperation between the two countries, which in turn triggered inflammation of the latent bilateral problems that have remained unresolved since the early 90s.

²² Norkus, 120.

After the initial panic of the CEE countries and joint addresses to the US administration requesting reassurance, it became obvious that Poland and Lithuania were about to choose different paths. In July 2009, Poland decided to include the European Security and Defence Policy into its 2011 EU presidency priority list. Poland also joined France in its initiative to assert the European security dimension (in order to push Medvedev's security treaty proposals out of the agenda while emphasising and establishing the EU as a major security provider in Europe alongside NATO). Poland also attempted to revitalise the EU Group of Six meetings and draw a security dimension to its agenda (G6 is an unofficial platform of the most populated EU states – Germany, France, the UK, Italy, Spain and Poland)²³. Moreover, Poland also launched a reset in its own relations towards Russia. By the end of 2010, the following goals had been achieved: Poland had succeeded in abandoning the “Cold War warrior” reputation and bringing back to normal its relations with Russia. The self-proclaimed shift from being a regional power to a European power proved to be successful. At least for the time being, Polish relations with Germany, Russia and the US have set into a successful equilibrium²⁴.

Lithuania chose a slightly different path. First, the Lithuanian security aspirations largely remained bound with NATO; therefore, NATO's New Strategic Concept and the necessity of a reassurance clause came into focus. Secondly, Lithuania launched a Russia relations reset, too, but, with less visibility and a reserved welcome on the Russian side. Thirdly, as Poland started to turn away from the regional to the EU perspective, Lithuania experienced the need to look for alternative options of alignment. The concept of being a regional leader was not fully abandoned, but it turned more complex as direct criticism towards the Russian Federation became undesirable. Thus, as Russia's threat perception moved out of the way, the idea of the Nordic-Baltic regional cooperation was revived²⁵. Lithuania began to position itself as a constructive partner and a contemporary European state and, just as Poland,

²³ Hynek et al., 271.

²⁴ “Polish Foreign Policy: Dancing with the big boys”. *Economist*, 2010 Nov 25. <<http://www.economist.com/node/17578876>>.

²⁵ “Lithuania looks towards Northern Europe”. *Alfa*, 2010 Feb 24, <http://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/10317330/?Lithuania.looks.towards.Northern.Europe=2010-02-24_08-18>.

entered into a period of pragmatic foreign policy. Nevertheless, the final outcome was not very promising in terms of the Lithuanian-Polish cooperation due to the following reasons:

1. Primacy of NATO became less of a unifying factor.
2. Previously, the Russian “threat” had indirectly synchronised the positions of both states in the discussions within the EU and NATO. Russian impotence was no longer relevant and expired as a ground for joint positions.
3. Poland turned “South and large” looking for partnerships, whereas Lithuania reoriented itself towards smaller Northern states.
4. Most importantly, implementing a pragmatic foreign policy, both states suddenly realised that there was an unfinished business between them since values and common geopolitical orientations were gone. Polish economic interests and concerns of the Polish ethnic minority that had been hibernating for three decades suddenly topped the agenda of the bilateral relations. Consequently, the fact that the Lithuanian-Polish partnership was of coincidental nature and had never had a real constructive content surfaced thereby resulting in diplomatic clashes.

2. Transformation of the Lithuanian-Polish Strategic Partnership in 2004-2010

2.1. External Factors. Foreign and Security Policies of Poland and Lithuania after Accession to the EU: Major Turning Point

Polish Influence and Increase of Power in the EU

After 2004, all the new EU member states had to undergo an adaptation period when Europeanisation was perceived as a passive process: following the EU policy and adopting it into the national policies in accordance with the prescribed regulations and procedures. Even now, in a number of the EU political spheres, some of the new EU member states have been passively implementing the decisions passed, as they have no clear standpoint on specific decisions made by the EU or political directions chosen, or are

not able to efficiently transfer them into the agenda of the EU institutions. According to research data assessing the rate of activity of policy formation by the new EU member states, the prevailing tendency has been that new member states are more active initiating or opposing certain issues only in a limited number of spheres, particularly those exclusively sensitive from the national perspective²⁶.

For a long time following its accession to the EU, the Polish standpoint on Europeanisation was also largely passive, at times even defensive. Nevertheless, Poland's potential opportunities and its weight in influencing the EU is significantly greater relative to any other new EU member.

According to famous researchers and EU experts (e.g., Andrew Moravcsik and his liberal intergovernmentalism theory, 1998), the influence on the EU policy generally depends on how intensively an individual EU member state expresses its interests. The ability to attain the desired result is governed by several essentially invariable parameters of power and specific variables which determine the impact of power and influence of the EU member states on EU decisions.

Table 1. Variables determining the impact of power and influence of the EU member states on EU decisions.

Independent variables	Number of inhabitants and economic capacity (GDP)
Dependent variables	Intensity of political preferences, capacities of alliance formation, administrative/bureaucratic capacities, persuasive advocacy, receptiveness of other member states, stability of domestic policy

Source: Copsey Nathaniel, Pomorska Karolina. "Poland's Power and Influence in the European Union: The Case of its Eastern Policy." *Comparative European Politics* 8, September 2010, p. 304–326.

Poland's independent variables of power are similar to those of the major EU Members. As regards formal powers in the EU institutions, Poland almost keeps pace with the major EU states – Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Spain.

²⁶ See: The European Policy Initiative (EuPI) "Not Your Grandfather's Eastern Bloc: The EU New Member States as Agenda Setters in the Enlarged European Union", 2009, Bulgaria, Sofia. Available at: <http://osi.bg/downloads/File/ComparativePolicyReport_OSI-Sofia_EuPI_28April2009.pdf>.

Table 2. **Poland's and Lithuania's characteristics in comparison with other major EU states**

	Number of inhabitants (mln)	GDP (bln, US dollars)	Number of votes at the Council of Europe	Number of Members in the European Parliament
Germany	83,25	3,414	29	99
United Kingdom	60,59	2,933	29	72
France	60,76	2,656	29	72
Italy	59,7	2,174	29	72
Spain	45	1,524	27	50
Poland	38,6	0,444	27	50
Lithuania	3,3	0,035	7	12

Yet, for a relatively long period of time Poland's "nominal" weight was not adequately represented in the processes of the EU initiatives and decision-making. In most cases, it was determined by the low, and in certain cases, even negative, impact of the "dependent variables" on the efficiency of power and implementation of influence (see table above).

According to the EU researchers of Poland's foreign policy Nathaniel Copsy and Karolina Pomorska, for a long time Polish vectors of political preferences did not coincide with the positions of the major EU states. This becomes particularly evident in the sphere of external interests: relations with the US (an explicit and perhaps even exaggerated support of the US in the context of the war in Iraq), Russia (emphasis on continuing threat, domination of rhetoric of material reproach), favouritism of EU Eastern neighbours and encouragement of the EU to "Europeanise" them as soon as possible thereby offering them the prospect of the EU membership, was at conflict with French, German (and oftentimes Italian) interests. This "dissonance" of Polish preferences prevented Poland from merging into the common mainstream of preferences of the larger EU states (with certain exceptions which are most frequently demonstrated by the UK). These different vectors constitute one of the main reasons which, on the one hand, has cut short the potential of influence, and on the other, has not made it possible for Poland to enhance other relevant "variables" - bureaucratic/administrative capacities in the sphere of

the formation of the EU policy, possibilities to be appointed to important posts in the EU institutions, - and complicated the alliance building processes within the EU.

The tandem of the Kaczynski brothers was yet another negative influence on Poland's position in the EU, as it interfered with its conservative views and frequently lack of tact. Later on, in 2007, when Donald Tusk was appointed Polish Prime Minister, the opposition between the Polish President and the Prime Minister became a serious problem that hindered the formation of a common, coherent foreign policy. On many occasions, the discord was viewed ironically in the EU. However, for Poland itself this was a severe blow, which suspended the transformation of the nominal power into the implementation of the efficient influence.

Still, Poland's increasing influence and weight could no longer be ignored. The first and most striking changes had to do with formal matters – negotiating the Treaty of Lisbon and calculating the votes that were to be given to Poland in the EU's Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. It may be maintained that it was the turning point which later provided Poland with the solid basis for enhancing its influence in the EU. Poland is one of the few countries that succeeded in introducing specific provisions into the Lisbon Treaty.

It was throughout 2007-2010 that changes in Poland's domestic affairs enabled the enhancement of the country's influence on EU decisions. Several "success" features may be highlighted as they prepared the grounds for the expansion of Polish influence and at the same time, they became the proof of efficiency of Poland's increasing influence on the EU policy areas:

- Negotiations on the Treaty of Lisbon, specific opt-outs for Poland, a symbolic "delay" in its ratification;
- "Taking over" the Eastern Partnership Initiative and announcing the final form of the official EU policy;
- Building alliances with Sweden and the Czech Republic;
- Jerzy Buzek's election President of the European Parliament.

Already throughout 2007-2010, it could be deduced that Poland was becoming more coherent, shrewd and prone to accept the "rules of the game" prevalent in the EU in pursuit of attaining more influence in the long term.

Changes in the vectors of Poland's foreign policy in its relations with Russia, USA, as well as the Eastern neighbours made a still greater stimulus for strengthening of Poland's position. These in turn were prompted by changes in the US top leadership, its reset with Russia, changes in the antimissile defence system alongside Russia's tactics towards Poland and the tragic death of President Lech Kaczynski, as well as a number of other influential actors of his milieu in 2010.

All this affected Poland's relations with Lithuania in two ways. On the one hand, Lithuania itself was late reacting to the changes in the international arena, especially the outcomes, which affected the increasing internal ambitions of Poland. The process was already observable at the time of launching the Eastern Partnership Program and became particularly obvious when Russia decided to review the historical issues (the Katyn massacre). Poland started to build alliances at another level, first with Sweden (and for a certain period of time, with the Czech Republic), and later with Germany and France.

The misunderstanding due to the spelling of Polish surnames in Lithuanian passports, as well as the death of Polish President Kaczynski shortly afterwards symbolically marked a move from a "strategic partnership" towards an "asymmetrical neighbourhood", in which the relations were transfused with inadequately excessive emphasis on existing issues or mere disappointment that had accumulated over time.

On the other hand, at the time Lithuania did not experience any changes, which would compensate the "loss of Poland": within such a short period of time it was impossible to locate any new partners to build alliances within the EU, Russia did not offer Lithuania any significant reset opportunities, while the relations with the US had fallen into the trap of emotional misunderstandings. In this light, Poland's disappointment with Lithuania was perceived in Lithuania as more painful and significant than it was in reality. Though deterioration of relations with Lithuania in Poland's public domain could be currently noticed, it has not become a prevailing theme. Nevertheless, Lithuanian attempts to ascertain the reasons why former strategic partners express discontent frequently result in a superfluity of arguments (oftentimes exaggerated, distorted and superficial), spreading from Poland's foreign minister and his allies or from Poles living in Lithuania.

Dynamics of Polish-US Relations

One of the more significant vectors of Poland's foreign policy which changed due to external factors has been the country's relations with the US since Barack Obama became the US President. Until 2009-2010 Poland was rather open in strengthening its role as a potential partner of the US in Central and Eastern Europe. The country sought to maintain "special ties" with the US, which would be comparable to the ties between the UK and the US, and, in certain cases, could even outshine them. Nevertheless, the policy of building "special ties" was largely encouraged by the focus of the George W. Bush administration on Eastern Europe (Ukraine and Georgia, in particular), and the peculiar new "encirclement strategy" towards Russia. The expansion of the antimissile defence system and Poland's position in the system projected by the Bush administration strengthened the impression that Poland may construct its defence system by fostering its bilateral partnership with the US. On August 20, 2008, Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice signed an agreement on the deployment of interceptors of the antimissile system on Polish territory²⁷ and the Declaration on the Strategic Cooperation between the US and Poland²⁸.

The Russia-Georgia war came as a great shock, which once again revealed the necessity for a more coherent position within the EU. For Poland, it also served as a warning (which came about somewhat later, after the situation had smoothed down), suggesting that unconditional support for Michail Saakashvili might undermine its prestige.

The start of Obama's presidency and the reset of US-Russia relations coincided with Polish Prime Minister Tusk's intention to appease Polish-Russian relations. In the late 2007, after the parliamentary elections, Tusk promised to ease the relations with Russia. In the end of 2009, one of the more topical issues was extension of the long-term gas supply deal with Russia. The agreement on gas deliveries was reached only in February 2010.

In 2010, the growing desire of the US and NATO to "reset" the relations with Russia coincided with the increasingly obvious dividing line between

²⁷ Available at: <<http://www.msz.gov.pl/Agreement,regarding,the,placement,in,Poland,of,antiballistic,defensive,missile,interceptors,20825.html>>.

²⁸ Available at: <<http://www.msz.gov.pl/Agreement,regarding,the,placement,in,Poland,of,antiballistic,defensive,missile,interceptors,20825.html>>.

Tusk and Kaczyński – Polish Prime Minister viewed it as an appropriate opportunity to distance himself from Kaczyński's pursued categorical “pro-Bush” foreign policy. Agreements with the US on the deployment of the antimissile system in Poland had already been signed; however, gossip spread that Obama could cancel everything. This produced certain tension, but assurances of the American side that, from the military perspective, “Poland will not lose” enabled a smooth transition from the “strong partnership” stage to that of the “more balanced partnership”, in which Poland does not necessarily seek to stand first among the US allies in Europe.

Similarly, these firm security guarantees (deployment of a battery of the Patriot launcher in May 2010; according to the agreement with Poland, six MIM-104 Patriot launching stations should be stationed in rotation, the first one having no military equipment; starting from 2012, the Patriot launchers should be deployed on the permanent basis) provided Poland with the opportunity to relatively quietly and reliably focus on other directions of the foreign policy, in particular, Germany, France and Russia.

At the present time, Polish-US relations may be characterised as fairly stable, with Poland feeling confident both in maintaining its role and making decisions, as well as choosing standpoints that are most beneficial to the country, even in dealing with the US.

Reset of Polish-Russian Relations

According to the Russia-published “Newsweek”, the “reset” of the relations with Poland had been planned even before the commemoration of the Katyn tragedy and the death of Polish President Kaczyński. As the sources of the Russian “Newsweek” suggest, the Kremlin's standpoint towards Poland was largely influenced by a certain “Long Telegram” by the Russia Ambassador to Poland, in which the latter argued that the poor relations with Poland might hinder building strategic partnership between Russia and the EU, and thus the tone should be changed. In the telegram it was made clear that Poland ruined the Russia-EU cooperation by blocking any significant initiatives. The author of the telegram stated that everything could be reversed if Moscow acknowledged the Katyn tragedy as this would remarkably sooth Poland's Russia-related regulations and would facilitate Russia's dialogue with the EU. Deputy Head of the Russian Government Yuri Ushakov passed this telegram

directly to Vladimir Putin. Coincidentally, Chairman and CEO of “Norilsk Nickel” Vladimir Strzalkowski (of a Polish origin) is reported to have asked Putin to soften the relations with Poland, too. It is unknown who influenced Putin more; however, the “Newsweek” suggests the latter personally ordered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to resolve the Katyn issue.

Even if these journalistic stories were not to be given serious consideration, it is a fact that in early 2010, Russia made some radical changes in its standpoint towards Poland. It was realised that Poland was becoming an increasingly significant EU actor and, in the long-term perspective, the endless conflicts could frustrate effective cooperation with the EU. Meanwhile the most important issue at the time was the renewal of the EU-Russia strategic partnership agreement.

The Smolensk air crash in the beginning of April 2010, thawed the Poland-Russia relations remarkably. The emotional shock and Russia’s publicly demonstrated efforts to provide assistance and expedite the investigations of the reasons of the catastrophe were to bring the political leaders of the two countries together. Shortly afterwards specific decisions were made: Poland’s assistance to Russia in extinguishing fires and an initiative to the EU institutions regarding a simplified travel regime for all residents of the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation.

The reset of the Polish-Russian relations in the public domain was welcomed by core opinion leaders and businessmen. Bilateral trade proliferated: only throughout the first half of 2010, Polish export to Russia grew by 28 per cent (in Euros) relative to the relevant period in 2009. As has already been mentioned, it was in February 2010 that the long-term agreement with Poland on gas deliveries was signed.

All these events testify to the fact that the reset of Polish-Russian relations was awaited in Poland itself (primarily by the Tusk government) and began after changes in Russia’s attitude towards Poland’s weight in the EU.

This change has been of essential significance to Lithuanian-Polish cooperation in foreign policy. For a long period of time Russia stood in clear opposition and posed a threat to both Lithuania and Poland, which allowed the two countries to construct a very similar identity and to look for ways to withstand the potential threat. Measures like the Eastern policy and backing the US intentions for NATO membership of Ukraine and Georgia were assessed in a similar way as preventing Russia’s possible expansion. The change

in the Polish foreign policy vector towards Russia alongside the essential change from the “Russian securitisation” rhetoric to “cooperation” declarations eliminated the unifying foreign policy line for Lithuania and Poland.

It was substituted by competing foreign policy initiatives: models of the visa regime simplification for the residents of the RF Kaliningrad Region, development of a Belarus-related policy, and aspects of partner cooperation in the framework of the EU Eastern Partnership initiative.

The decrease of the Russian securitisation in the Polish public discourse to a certain extent simplified Poland’s viewpoint on energy security. In this domain, the long-term “common opponent” of both Lithuania and Poland was no longer viewed so categorically. There have even been considerations that the Polish “PKN Orlen” investments into “Mažeikių nafta” were a mistake, thus options for a sale of the refinery (most likely, to a Russian company since only a Russian company may be interested in acquiring the oil refinery whose profitability largely depends on crude oil supply from Russia) should be considered.

Nevertheless, the Polish interest in diminishing dependence on Russian energy resources remains the same; therefore, at the practical level long-term strategies and political determination to integrate into the EU markets as much as possible, and to diversify ways of energy supply remain topical. This perspective should not hamper the foreseen energy infrastructure projects with Lithuania.

The reset of Polish-Russian relations left Lithuania aloof when a significant reshuffle in the foreign policy of the neighbouring country took place. Russia’s intentions to initiate the reset of its relations with Poland may be seen as a peculiar continuation of the tradition of the bilateral relations with the EU states (choosing bilateral relations rather than negotiations with the EU institutions), as well as an effective example of a divisive policy when different assessments of historical events are interpreted in light of the pragmatic approach.

Likely Threat of the External Factors to Poland’s Foreign and Security Policy

Weakening of Poland as Central and Eastern European leader. Although throughout 2007-2010 Poland succeeded in balancing bilateral relations with the big EU states and Russia, there was a certain downturn in its relations with the neighbouring EU states, traditional Poland’s allies, Lithuania and the Visegrad countries (Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic).

The chilled relations between Poland and the neighbouring states throughout this period may be explained in several ways. First of all, Poland's changing role in the region makes Poland consider abandoning its old image as the Central and Eastern European leader. Poland is gradually assuming the behaviour typical of a big state, which views relations with smaller neighbours as being of secondary importance. For example, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, which form the Visegrad Group, notice that Poland's focus on the expansion of various regional projects in Central Europe (in particular, those related to energy), has greatly decreased²⁹. Poland has recently been identifying itself not so much with the other states of the Central and Eastern Europe, but rather with the big EU players, such as France and Germany. According to experts, Polish foreign policy is phasing out the idealistic approach of the new divisions between the East and the West in Europe, while adopting a pragmatic rhetoric, i.e., dividing the frugal and responsible North and the free-spending and reckless South³⁰.

On the other hand, Polish shift in relations with the CEE countries may also be interpreted as the inability of the latter to "catch up" with Poland. Poland is the only EU state with the positive GDP throughout the entire global economic crisis, while its defence expenditure best conformed to the NATO recommended 2 per cent of the GDP³¹. The lag of the neighbours and Poland's growing perception of itself as a big EU player may consequently weaken the traditional regional ties with the neighbouring CEE states.

In order to maintain Poland's cooperation with its smaller neighbours, the "common denominator" is of vital importance. With respect to Lithuania, this would mean retaining of a "diplomatic" tandem with Poland on the following issues of Poland's Eastern policy: 1) interference into and settlement of "frozen" conflicts in the post-Soviet space; 2) retaining the support for the EaP countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) and their integration into the Euro-Atlantic space; 3) enhancement of energy independ-

²⁹ Available at: <<http://centreforeuropeanreform.blogspot.com/2010/11/new-poland-and-its-neighbours.html>>.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ According to the 2009 data, Poland's defence expenditure amounted to 1,7 % of the GDP, Lithuania's – 1,1%, Czech republic – 1,6 %, Slovakia – 1,5 %, Hungary – 1,1 %. Available at: <http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2010_06/20100610_PR_CP_2010_078.pdf>.

ence from Russia; 4) promotion of democratic processes in Eastern Europe³². On the other hand, the viability of the “diplomatic tandem” in the Eastern space will depend, among other factors, on Poland’s view regarding Lithuanian role in the Eastern policy.

Formally, the issue of the Polish national minority in Poland’s foreign policy has to do with the promotion of democracy; therefore, until problems related to the bilateral relations between Lithuania and Poland have been resolved, Poland will position itself as a peculiar “teacher” to Lithuania. Given this situation, it is apparently impossible to maintain the “diplomatic tandem” between Lithuania and Poland as long as such unequal partnership terms exist.

If in the short- and mid-term perspective Poland’s aspirations to join the big EU players remain to be related to the weakening of its bilateral relations with smaller neighbours, Poland risks to find itself in a certain “grey area” in the long run (i.e., despite Poland’s ambitions, Europe’s big states will not treat it as an equal partner, while, due to the weakened regional ties with the smaller Central and Eastern European states, Poland will not be seen as a natural leader in the region).

Poland’s growing ambitions may prompt integration of its smaller neighbours into other alliances (e.g., the integration of the Baltic States with the Northern countries), which could balance the increasingly growing bonds between Poland and the larger EU states. According to Russian experts, currently a strong tendency for “Europeanisation” is observable in Poland’s foreign policy, resulting in a temporary weakening of Poland’s relations with its Eastern neighbours³³. The implemented pragmatic foreign policy demonstrates its peculiar tactic, in which Poland seeks to enhance its influence in the foreign policy of the EU and wait until the right moment when it will “turn back” to its Eastern neighbours. Russian experts are nearly certain that Poland’s reversion to the East is inevitable: both the ruling *Citizen’s Platform party* and the opposition party *Law and Justice* are unified by the common ideology of the Giedroyc – Mieroszewski’s doctrine (for details see the review’s section

³² Available at: <http://www.atlanticcommunity.org/app/webroot/files/articlepdf/The_Polish_Lithuanian_Tandem20080915.pdf>.

³³ Неменский Олег. Опасное примирение: восточная политика Польши после победы Бронислава Коморовского. [A Dangerous Reconciliation: Poland’s Eastern Policy after Bronislaw Komorowski’s victory]. in: *Russian Journal*, 2010 07 09. Available at: <<http://russ.ru/mirovaya-povestka/opasnoe-primirenie>>.

“The Influence of Poland’s Internal Factors on the Agenda of Lithuanian-Polish bilateral Relations”), while Poland’s integration in the West is nothing but a “two-way” strategy, which presupposes that the initiatives of thawing the country’s relations with Russia have to be developed simultaneously with its enhancement in the EU and NATO³⁴.

For Moscow, it is particularly important that Poland not become an obstacle in Russia’s relations with the West. In this light, Russia always has to choose one of the two ways constructing its bilateral relations with Poland:

1. To isolate Poland as much as possible in the bilateral relations between Russia and other European states as well as in Russia-US bilateral relations. On the other hand, as a member of the EU and NATO, Poland nevertheless retains the possibility of hampering the implementation of Russia’s interests;
2. To neutralise Poland’s animosity towards Russia by strengthening bilateral relations between Russia and Poland. The latter perspective currently serves as the basis of Polish-Russian bilateral relations; nonetheless it should be pointed out that such policy largely depends on political changes in Poland and the US (changes in the Tusk and the Obama governments).

Taking into consideration the fact that in July-December 2011, Poland will head the EU Council, it is expected that, before the Polish Parliamentary elections are due in autumn 2011 or in the beginning of 2012 at the latest, Russia will hasten to institutionalise its bilateral relations with Poland. Resorting to miscellaneous formats of regular contacts, development of partnership and public relations, etc., Russia may attempt to “tie” Poland to the agenda of the present bilateral relations or at least to mitigate the negative consequences of the possible cooling in bilateral relations in the nearest future³⁵.

³⁴ It should be pointed out in this respect that Poland’s “two-way” strategy is an inalienable part of the so-called Sikorski doctrine, formulated in late 2008 as a reaction to Russia’s military assault on Georgia. According to the doctrine, any further attempts by Russia to review the borders of European states or their neighbours by means of military force or destructive activities should receive adequate response of the entire Euro-Atlantic community. See Wikileaks reveals the ‘Sikorski doctrine’. In: *thenews.pl*, 2010 12 08. Available at: <http://www.thenews.pl/international/artukul145030_wikileaks-reveals-the-sikorski-doctrine.html>.

³⁵ Неменский Олег. Еще одна перезагрузка. [One More Reset]. In: *Russian Journal*, 2010 12 09. Available at: <<http://russ.ru/pole/Esche-odna-perezagruzka>>.

The “two-speed” development of Europe. The rise of Poland as a regional power is primarily related to the core EU states (Germany and France). Meanwhile, Germany and France tend to ground their leadership in the EU by measures of fiscal policy, which helps consolidate the eurozone. By strengthening its role as a big EU state but not belonging to the eurozone, Poland risks being caught in no-man’s land: not yet taken fully seriously by Europe’s biggest states, but no longer seen by the rest of the new EU countries as a natural leader³⁶.

It should be pointed out that, by balancing between the larger European states (Germany, France and Russia), Poland tends to turn down the formation of any formal alliances with other big EU states if only they seek to create a counterbalance to the agreements of Germany, France and Russia. For example, in early November 2010, Poland rejected Italy’s proposal to establish an informal G6 group³⁷, which would comprise the UK, Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland, and France. The group was intended to put an end to the practice of Germany and France making decisions without consulting the other EU Member states³⁸.

On 19-20 January 2011, the first summit meeting of the Northern European countries (The Nordic countries, the Baltic States, and the United Kingdom) took place in London. Initiated by UK Prime Minister David Cameron, the summit focused on issues dealing with economic recovery in Europe. Although the summit was intended to promote informal exchanges in the spheres of technology, energy and social politics, for the UK itself the meeting played quite a different role.

As for the UK, the summit primarily provided the basis for fostering relations with the Northern European countries, which viewed negatively the domination of Germany and France in the EU. Recently, both Germany and France have been actively propagating fiscal reforms in the eurozone thereby

³⁶ Available at: <<http://centreforeuropeanreform.blogspot.com/2010/11/new-poland-and-its-neighbours.html>>.

³⁷ Currently the G6 group exists only as an informal cooperation format of Foreign Ministries of the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland, and France. The G5 group was established as early as 2003, seeking to promote intergovernmental cooperation among the largest EU states of the time within the framework of the third pillar (in the spheres of immigration, combating terrorism, law and justice). After Poland had joined the G5 in 2006, the group was renamed into G6 – *Authors’ note*.

³⁸ Available at: <<http://euobserver.com/9/31222>>.

gradually taking over all eurozone levers of political and economic coordination, which left the UK aside. Meanwhile, the Nordic countries and the Baltic States viewed the enhancement of cooperation bonds with the UK primarily as the development of regional security and a means to counterbalance Russia's political and economic influence³⁹.

On the other hand, the scope and depth of the cooperation of the Northern European countries will also depend on the position of the US. Therefore, it is likely that the aforementioned cooperation to counterbalance the influence of the core states of the continental Europe (Germany and France) will be limited. The US will not approve of such cooperation, should it produce alternative organisations that would compete with the already existing Western institutions. This is especially true of the security area. For instance, as early as in 2009, the Northern countries began to negotiate the formation of a regional military alliance (the so-called mini-NATO). The involvement of the Baltic States in this process could encourage integration of all aforementioned Northern European states within the security sectors. On 8-9 June 2009, during the meeting of foreign ministers of the Nordic states in Reykjavik (Iceland), the Nordic states announced their plans on more intense intercooperation. The development of military cooperation of the Nordic states was triggered by the report of former Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg (announced on 9 February 2009), which dealt with the cooperation of the Nordic countries in the spheres of foreign policy and security. The report provided an overview of the need for global and regional security. On its basis, Denmark, Iceland, Norway (NATO members) as well as Sweden and Finland (neutral countries) announced their intentions to form a military bloc. On 5 November 2009, a new cooperation agreement (NORDEFECO), which brought under one roof all the previously existing Nordic military cooperation projects, was signed at the meeting of the Nordic and the Baltic defence ministers in Helsinki (Finland)⁴⁰. The agreement emphasised the development of a security cooperation strategy of the Nordic countries in the spheres of hu-

³⁹ Rytų Europos studijų centras, *Rytų kaimynystės atspindžiai*. [Reflections on Eastern Neighbourhood]. 2011 m. Nr. 1 (23). Available at: <http://www.eesc.lt/public_files/file_1295769789.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Stoltenberg Thorvald. Nordic Cooperation on Foreign and Security Policy: Proposals Submitted to the Extraordinary Meeting of Nordic Foreign Ministers in Oslo on 9 February 2009. Available at: <http://www.mfa.is/media/Frettatilkyning/Nordic_report.pdf>.

man resources and joint military exercise, as well as the importance of the peaceful operations of NATO, the EU, and the UN. However, the US diplomats expressed their concern about the possible negative effect of the Nordic security cooperation on the activity of the Nordic states in NATO⁴¹.

It should be pointed out that, seeking a balance between Germany, France, and Russia, Poland has very limited opportunities for joining any alliances, which have the goal of counterpoising the three countries. Meanwhile, Poland's dependence on *ad hoc* bi- or trilateral lateral relations between Moscow, Paris, and Berlin will increase. This will inevitably augment tensions not only between Poland and the CEE countries, but also between Poland and the aforementioned bigger European states. This is testified by the agreement between Germany and France in February 2011 on the so-called "competitiveness pact" aimed at fiscal and economic harmonisation of the eurozone states. This pact was harshly criticized by Poland's Prime Minister Tusk, who claimed that it posed a danger of divisiveness and development of "two speeds" in the EU⁴².

Despite its pragmatism in foreign policy and its ambitions to act as a big EU state, Poland's influence on the main EU states is currently very limited. For example, Poland has not yet succeeded in convincing Russia and Germany to change the route of the Nord Stream gas pipeline, despite the fact that its present route will essentially block further development of navigation in the strategically important port complex of Szczecin- Swinoujscie. Yet, regardless of Poland's active attempts to take part in the debates on the future of the European security architecture, Poland was not invited to the trilateral summit meeting of France, Germany and Russia devoted to the European security issues, which took place in Deauville (France) in October 2010⁴³. It may be stated that, by "turning away" from the CEE states and seeking to foster its relations with the big European countries, Poland not only jeopardises its acceptance to the "club" of the larger EU states, but also imperils its leader's positions in the Central and Eastern Europe.

⁴¹ US upset by Nordic defence cooperation. In: *The Swedish Wire*, 20 December 2010. Available at: <<http://www.swedishwire.com/politics/7759-us-dislike-nordic-defence-cooperation->>.

⁴² Leaders warn pact could create two speed Europe. In: *EUbusiness*, 2011 February 20. Available at: <<http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/france-germany-debt.80>>.

⁴³ Krasuski Martin. A call for pragmatism of the Polish foreign policy. In: *Nouvelle-Europe*, 2011 02 18. Available at: <http://www.nouvelle-europe.eu/geographie/europe-centrale/a-call-for-pragmatism-of-the-polish-foreign-policy_2.html>.

2.2. Influence of Poland's Domestic Policy Factors on the Agenda of Lithuanian-Polish Bilateral Relations

As domestic policy experts note, there are several reasons why Poland's current President Bronislaw Komorowski does not have big ambitions to remarkably affect the foreign policy implemented by the Tusk government: 1) the country's government is the main policymaker in Poland's political system; 2) Head of the Polish government and Foreign Minister Sikorski share the same opinions on the essential foreign policy issues; 3) in his *Civic Platform party*, Komorowski is not supported with a strong back-up (i.e., his team), which would oppose the charismatic tandem of Tusk and Sikorski⁴⁴.

Komorowski's neutral position in the *Civic Platform party* is manifested by his own standpoint when in April-July 2010, rather than appointing politicians, he appointed specialists and technocrats, who had not been involved in the political strife, to the highest posts⁴⁵. His choice may be interpreted as the objective to sustain the unity of the *Civic Platform* without augmenting tensions from within caused by Poland's competing groups of supporters of Prime Minister Tusk and Speaker of the Seimas Grzegorz Schetyna in pursuit of influence. It may be argued that President Komorowski limits his role in Poland's foreign policy to the formation of a favourable medium that would facilitate the implementation of the country's foreign policy. Taking these circumstances into consideration, Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski is virtually unconstrained in determining Poland's foreign policy, while the latter becomes particularly personified and is closely welded to Sikorski's personality as well as his views.

In both Polish and Lithuanian mass media, the personality of Sikorski as Poland's Foreign Minister is posited as one of the main factors which have brought about the chill in the relations between Poland and Lithuania. In

⁴⁴ Parusinski Jakub. The End of an Era: Poland turns back to the EU. In: *ICPS, European Focus*, 2010, nr. 9. Available at: <http://www.icps.com.ua/files/articles/58/28/EF_9_2010_ENG.pdf>.

⁴⁵ On April 13, 2010, Stanislaw, Koziej, one of the best military experts who had contributed to the development of the process of Ukraine's integration into NATO, was appointed Head of Poland's National Security Bureau. On July 7, 2007, Jacek Michalowski, Director of the Polish-American Freedom Foundation, was appointed Chief of Polish President's Chancellery. Jaromir Sokolowski, Deputy Secretary of Polish President's Chancellery, may be referred to as the only true person of Komorowski's milieu and the loyal supporter in the milieu of the Polish President. – Parusinski Jakub. The End of an Era: Poland turns back to the EU. In: *ICPS, European Focus*, 2010, nr. 9. Available at: <http://www.icps.com.ua/files/articles/58/28/EF_9_2010_ENG.pdf>.

order to understand the dynamics of Lithuanian-Polish bilateral relations throughout 2007-2010, it is necessary to discuss Sikorski's personal views in greater detail. In Polish public sphere, Sikorski is most frequently perceived as an ally of the so-called Piast political concept which emphasises Poland's modernisation and integration into the West⁴⁶.

The Piast concept highlights the benefits of directional and pragmatic "Westernness" in the country's foreign policy with respect to other foreign policy directions (e.g., the Eastern policy), Poland's strong integration with Western European countries, as well as the development of Poland's ties with other Central European countries (Germany, in particular). On the other hand, it should be pointed out that, since 1989, the core of Poland's foreign policy (as well as of a significant part of its domestic policy) has been constituted by the aforementioned Giedroyc-Mieroszewski doctrine developed by the émigré intellectuals in the 1970s. The major elements of the Giedroyc-Mieroszewski doctrine are as follows⁴⁷:

- Poland has to abandon all its historical and territorial claims to Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus and has to recognise the utter independence of these countries (Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus are to be perceived as Poland's natural partners rather than vassals).
- Poland's support for the national identity of Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus will eliminate the continuous reasons for the Polish-Russian conflict. The independence of Poland's eastern neighbours is a prerequisite of good bilateral relations between Poland and Russia.
- Poland's support for the independence of Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus is a prerequisite in restraining Russia's imperialistic ambitions.
- The ongoing dialogue with Russian intellectuals and representatives of democratic political forces is of utmost importance to Poland.
- Poland may bring back to normal and to develop mutually beneficial relations with Russia if three essential conditions are implemented concurrently: 1) the improvement of Polish-Russian relations must not be pursued at the expense of the national identities and vital interests of Poland's and

⁴⁶ Czy Polityka Piastowska zniweczy Polityke Jagiellońską. In: *Salon 24*, 2010 02 09. Available at: <<http://mojsiewicz.salon24.pl/155900,czy-polityka-piastowska-zniweczy-polityke-jagiellonska>>.

⁴⁷ FOI-Swedish Defence Research Agency, "Polish-Russian Relations in an Eastern Dimension Context". 2006 June, 15–21. Available at: <<http://www2.foi.se/rapp/foir2008.pdf>>.

Russia's neighbours; 2) Russia has to be incorporated into the community of European countries and common economic or other structures that would ensure equal partnership while preventing any countries from taking a dominant position; 3) the development of Polish-Russian bilateral relations is impossible without Russia's consent and willingness to cooperate (stimuli for Russia's transformation have to be initiated by Russia itself).

It should be emphasised that all Polish political elite groups agree on the domination of the Giedroyc-Mieroszewski doctrine in Poland's foreign policy. For example, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sikorski has stated that the Giedroyc-Mieroszewski doctrine is not to be questioned while disagreements between the ruling liberal centre-right *Civic Platform* party and the oppositional conservative *Law and Justice* party on this issue are confined exclusively to the implementation methods of this doctrine⁴⁸.

Leader of the opposition *Law and Justice* party, former Polish Prime Minister Kaczynski, as well as many of his milieu, are adherents of the so-called Prometheus Theory. Developed by Jozef Pilsudski in the early 20th century, this theory was grounded on the weakening of the then tsarist Russia and its later successors in title (the Soviet Union, present-day Russia) by encouraging development of ethnic national movements in Russia's territory and establishment of independent states, Polish allies. The promethean ideas were modified and consolidated in the aforementioned Giedroyc-Mieroszewski doctrine, which emphasised the significance of the national identities of Poland's Eastern neighbours (Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus) in maintaining of Poland's independence.

Certain problematic aspects of Lithuanian-Polish relations (e.g., the issue of the Polish national minority rights in Lithuania) have always been a composite part of Lithuanian-Polish bilateral relations. However, throughout 1994-2007, the problematic issues between Lithuania and Poland were essentially "frozen" or left out on the periphery of the political agenda due to the pragmatic cooperation integrating into the West, and later due to the development of democratisation processes in the East. As has already been mentioned, the nature of Lithuanian-Polish cooperation largely depended on the climate of interna-

⁴⁸ O Giedroycia sporu nie ma. In: *Nowa Europa Wschodnia* 1/2010, p. 69-77. Available at: <<http://www.new.org.pl/files/docs/new110.pdf>>.

tional relations. Changes in the geopolitical arena have consequently caused the recent re-emergence of the problematic issues in Lithuanian-Polish relations. Lithuanian-Polish bilateral relations may be divided into the following stages:

In 1990-1992 Lithuanian-Polish relations were rather strained for several reasons. First, this period was overshadowed by the Vilnius issue, which had not been resolved in as early as 1920-1939. During the Soviet occupation it became a frozen conflict in the public discourse of both countries. Secondly, Lithuania and Poland had to construct the new basis for further development of bilateral relations. Strains in the relations between Lithuania and Poland were made even more severe due to representatives of Polish national minority in Lithuania who were part of the then Communist nomenclature, an unfavourable factor in the restoration of Lithuania's independence. During the voting on Lithuania's Independence Restoration Act at the Supreme Council of Lithuania on 11 March 1990, the majority of deputies of Polish nationality were in favour of abstention (six abstained from voting and three voted in favour of the Act).

The different standpoint of Polish representatives in Lithuania was based on the expectations of Polish national minority, which enjoyed rather broad cultural autonomous rights, in the Soviet Lithuania. The expectations were aimed at sustaining social and political guarantees related to the USSR. Moreover, there was no alternative program which would be appealing to the Poles in Lithuania and which could be offered by the political elite of the new Lithuania. This is testified by plans of Polish national minority in Lithuania to gain autonomy within the USSR in the Vilnius and the Šalčininkai regions in 1989-1991. Poland's government of the time officially condemned the autonomy plans; however, in September 1991 it criticized the dismissal of the Vilnius and the Šalčininkai Councils by the initiative of the government of Lithuania as encroaching on the political rights of Polish national minority.

On the other hand, in light of Lithuanian national identity, the ambiguous standpoint of Polish national minority in Lithuania was indirectly prompted by Poland itself. Up till the collapse of the Soviet Union it had implemented the so-called two-way policy with respect to their eastern neighbours: Poland maintained diplomatic relations with the central authorities of the Soviet Union in Moscow, while developing unofficial relations with its eastern neighbours (Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine). It may be maintained that throughout 1990-

1992, the intentions of Polish national minority in Lithuania to retain maximum possible political and cultural autonomy in Lithuania were seen as a certain threat to Lithuania's sovereignty. The Polish national minority factor essentially became a premise for the "securitisation" of Lithuanian-Polish bilateral relations (in Lithuania's public discourse at the time, Poland was frequently referred to as the main potential external threat to Lithuania's security).

In 1992-1994, when the bilateral relations between Poland and Lithuania got back to normal (after the "Declaration on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation" and the "Treaty on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation" had been signed in January 1992 and April 1994 respectively), Lithuanian-Polish bilateral relations started to be constructed on the basis of pragmatic consensus. The principle of "neighbourly cooperation" (and, in the course of time, the principle of "strategic partnership") became one of the core postulates of bilateral cooperation as both countries sought integration in NATO and the EU. It should be taken into consideration that the 1994 "Treaty on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation" took two years to sign largely due to the different assessment of historical events by Lithuania and Poland (the issue of the occupation of the Vilnius region in 1920-1939, etc). In order to normalise their bilateral relations, Lithuania and Poland eventually came to a consensus regarding an article of the treaty in which every party was reserved the right to have its own standpoint on historical events. This agreement left some space for both countries to separately interpret and consequently exploit the meaning of historical events in their bilateral relations.

In 1994-2004, Lithuanian-Polish bilateral relations were grounded on the so-called strategic partnership, which determined the development of the relevant relations during the period of integration in Euro-Atlantic structures, frequently postponing/pushing aside problematic issues (rights of national minorities in Lithuania, etc.). Polish relations with Lithuania were grounded on Poland's perspective that processes of Lithuania's integration into Western structures will facilitate the resolution of these problems⁴⁹. Poland viewed

⁴⁹ Sirutavičius Vladas. Lithuanian-Polish Strategic Partnership: Genesis and Prospects. In: *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2001 (7). Available at: <<http://www.lfpr.lt/uploads/File/2001-7/Sirutavicius.pdf>>.

Lithuania as a valuable connection with other states of strategic importance to Poland's Eastern policy (Belarus and Ukraine).

In 2005-2007, a certain EU “rejection” reaction broke out in Poland. The tandem of the Kaczyński brothers taking the posts of Poland's President and Prime Minister essentially implemented a populist, nationalist and confrontational policy towards the EU. Interestingly, the then confrontational policy of the *Law and Justice* party towards the EU was being implemented at the time of Poland's conflicts with Germany and Russia. This may be explained by the aspirations of Poland's ruling political elite of the time to consolidate the society by means of particularly strong national values, traditions and identity directed at “historical enemies” (Germany and Russia), or by means of emphasising the formalistic and rational EU, which was alien to the mentality of the Polish society⁵⁰. Poland's confrontational and contradictory relations with Germany and Russia sped up the search for allies among the new EU members.

Lithuania became Poland's closest ally in encouraging democratisation processes in the Eastern space (especially during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the Rose Revolution in Georgia). Nonetheless, the Kaczyński brothers' destabilising domestic and foreign policy did not allow Lithuania to implement the independent and consolidated Eastern policy. All Polish initiatives in the Eastern space bore a markedly reactionist approach to external events, which enabled Lithuania to project itself in the Eastern neighbourhood space as a distinctive leader of the region and as an equal partner to Poland.

One of the most significant issues of bilateral cooperation between Lithuania and Poland, which temporarily became an offset to the potential tension in the relations regarding the resolution of Polish national minority issues, was the intensification of Poland's energy policy at that time. In 2005-2007, Poland proposed the idea of the formation of an energy security pact among the EU and NATO states (Energy NATO), and was one of the most ardent opponents of the Nord Stream gas pipeline project implemented jointly by Russia and Germany. Besides, Poland launched the development of miscellaneous energy resources diversification projects, became the major investor in Lithuania's

⁵⁰ Gallina Nicole. Political Elites in Eastern Central Europe: Paving the Way for „Negative Europeanisation?“ In: *Contemporary European Studies*, 2007/2. Available at: <http://www.ces.upol.cz/images/pdf_gallina.PDF>.

energy sector (Polish energy company “PKN Orlen” acquired the Lithuanian “Mažeikių nafta”). It should be pointed out that in 2005-2007, the role of Lithuania as one of Poland’s closest allies in the Eastern space and energy policy sphere was essentially determined by Poland’s opposition with its neighbours (Germany and Russia). This is why, despite nationalist and populist rhetoric and the “rejection” of the EU, the Polish government of the time was inclined to mitigate the potential tension in its bilateral relations with Lithuania. The problems of bilateral relations were differentiated (i.e., divided into thematic “baskets”), keeping separate the resolution of strategically important issues from the general agenda of the Poland-Lithuania relations, thereby freezing the problematic bilateral issues (such as the issue of Poles in Lithuania), or attributing them to the issues of secondary importance.

The period 2007-2010 witnessed consolidation of Polish positions in the EU. Headed by Donald Tusk, the new government began to implement a more coherent and pragmatic foreign policy. Poland succeeded in resetting problematic relations both with Western states and Russia. The problematic bilateral relations between Poland and Lithuania were moved to the general agenda, while Poland’s Eastern policy came to be part of the EU institutional agenda (the Eastern Partnership Initiative), which enabled Poland to strengthen its role in the EU. The issues of Polish minority in Lithuania became Poland’s peculiar tension lever on Lithuania in an attempt to compensate its weakened positions in the East (Ukraine and Belarus).

It should be mentioned that throughout 2007-2010, the “problematism” of Lithuanian-Polish bilateral relations revealed not only changes in international relations, but also certain ideological provisions prevailing in Poland’s domestic policy. Although after winning the parliamentary elections in Poland in 2007, *the Civic Platform* headed by Tusk moved away from its former populist and nationalist rhetoric of *the Law and Justice party*, one may notice that, in the period from October 2007 (Polish parliamentary elections) to April, 2010 (death of the Polish President in the Smolensk air crash), Polish domestic policy faced a confrontational situation. The intensified competition between two right-wing political parties (*Law and Justice* and *Civic Platform*) was personified in Poland’s domestic and foreign policy (as Polish President Kaczynski supported by the *Law and Justice* party competed with the *Civic*

Platform representing Tusk's government). From a domestic policy matter the competition of the two parties grew into a foreign policy issue. For example, in the summer of 2008, Polish Foreign Affairs Minister Sikorski compared the situation of Polish national minority in Lithuania to that of Poles persecuted in Belarus. This is explained not so much by Sikorski's personal dislike of Lithuania, but rather by his rivalry with the then President Kaczynski, who emphasised the protection of the rights of Polish national minorities in the neighbouring states.

After the Smolensk air crash on 10 April 2010, which resulted in deaths of the Polish President as well as most members of Poland's political elite, the issue of the "deprived" Polish minority in Lithuania came to be openly employed in the rhetoric of both *the Law and Justice party* and *the Civic Platform*. It is likely that the issues of Poles in Lithuania will not only be a priority of the Polish Presidency in the EU in July-December, 2011, but also the trump card during the elections to the Seimas in Poland scheduled for autumn 2011.

Assessing the development trends in Poland's political system over the past few years, one may notice that in 2005-2010, the conservative *Law and Justice* and the liberal centre-right *Civic Platform* parties managed to attract a majority of the electorate (60-70 % of all voters) and stabilise the political scale (Polish left-wing parties, such as Poland's *Democratic Left Alliance*, which dominated up until 2005, have now lost the confidence of the electorate; as a result, only 5-15 % of voters currently support them)⁵¹. The stabilisation of Poland's political scale may have a significant influence on the "ideologisation" of Lithuanian-Polish bilateral relations, which would further complicate the resolution of these issues. Unlike the deideologised and propagating pragmatic policy of *the Democratic Left Alliance*, which dominated in the country's political arena until 2005, *the Law and Justice* and *the Civic Platform* parties are characterised by clearly expressed ideological provisions, which, as competition between the two right-wing parties escalates, may become rather radical. For example, in an attempt to capture the attention of the electorate, both the conservative *Law and Justice* and the liberal *Civic Platform* tend to resort to the radical rhetoric regarding the problematic issues in Lithuanian-Polish bilateral relations.

⁵¹ Parusinski Jakub. The End of an Era: Poland turns back to the EU. In: *ICPS, European Focus*, 2010, nr. 9. Available at: <http://www.icps.com.ua/files/articles/58/28/EF_9_2010_ENG.pdf>.

3. Content of Lithuanian-Polish Bilateral Relations – Reconstruction of the Agenda

„Although nationalities in Vilnius became more apparent than in the nineteenth century, many Vilnius dwellers easily changed them, belonged to several nationalities, or just did not care much.“⁵²

Lithuanian-Polish relations have two main dimensions. The first, bilateral, dimension, is the most problematic, while the second, Euro-Atlantic, dimension, as has already been mentioned, reveals positive examples of cooperation (coping with crises in Ukraine and Georgia, the EU Constitutional Treaty, etc.). Paradoxically, for a long time, the two dimensions were perceived as independent from each other, and tensions in one dimension did not affect the other dimension.

At the bilateral level, the problematic issues of Lithuanian-Polish relations had long been hibernating, and the tension started to reveal itself in 2008, when Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski crossed the rubicon of political correctness. Recent discourses of discontent have gained momentum, while the problems of Poles in Lithuania are emphasised both in Brussels and in the US Congress⁵³. Ongoing complaints, delegations visiting Lithuania and negative information on the situation of the Polish minority are shaping the general case discrediting Lithuania.

The Lithuania-Poland agenda contains issues of securitisation that need be reviewed and opportunities for their resolution/reconstruction assessed. The review confirms the assumption that the tension in Lithuanian-Polish relations has largely been determined by external geopolitical factors, in particular, by changes in the Polish foreign policy priorities. Poland criticizes Lithuania for ignoring international obligations to ensure the rights of the Polish national minority, poor investment climate conditions (logistics problems experienced due to the damages of Polish energy company “PKN Orlen”, delay in the Visaginas nuclear power plant construction) and other issues⁵⁴.

⁵² Venclova Tomas, *Vilnius. Asmeninė istorija*. [Vilnius. A Personal Story]. Vilnius: R.Paknio leidykla, 2011, p. 141.

⁵³ Available at: <<http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/del-lietuvos-lenku-teisiu-kreipimasis-hclinton.d?id=43788193>>.

⁵⁴ Available at: <http://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/10417150/?Lietuvos.URM.apkaltino.Lenkijos.pareigunus.skelbiant.klaidinga.informacija=2010-10-21_09-50>.

There are a number of issues which are more of the technical nature (such as personal names, topographic symbols), and others are of the economic nature (e.g., land restitution, “PKN Orlen”). These issues need to be depoliticised as much as possible. The new education law, however, will require the enhancement of both internal and external communication explaining the circumstances of the introduced changes and their reasoning. When discussing the situation of education in Lithuania, one needs to highlight the overall progress made in the Lithuanian education sector.

Education and amendments to the Law on Education. Amendments to the Law on Education approved by the Seimas in March 2011, are the most visible changes in the content of Lithuanian-Polish bilateral relations over the past few years. These changes have reaped criticism of both Poles of the Vilnius region and Poles of Warsaw. The Polish side expresses fears that the amendments will result in reduced opportunities to receive education in Polish, the ultimate outcome of which could be the assimilation of the Polish community in Lithuania⁵⁵.

On the other hand, opinions on these changes are not exclusively negative. For example, editor of the website “Głos z Litwy – Pogon.lt” Ryshard Maceikianec has no doubts that this step will improve the future for the Poles in Lithuania, as well as their competitiveness in the labour market⁵⁶. According to Edward Lucas, the regional expert and correspondent for “The Economist”, “It is good to be a Pole in Lithuania” because “Lithuania is probably the only place in the world where education from school to university level may be obtained in Polish”⁵⁷. There are number of statistical indicators to prove this statement:

- The Polish diaspora of 10 million people has 170 schools across the globe, of which nearly 100 are situated in Lithuania;
- Since 1990, the number of Polish schools in Lithuania has increased by app. 50 %;

⁵⁵ Available at: < <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/svietimo-ministras-del-tautiniu-mazumu-asi-miliacijos-klausimus-galima-kelti-lenkijai.d?id=43592565> >.

⁵⁶ Available at: <http://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/10955185/Akademikas..lenkai.niekur.neturi.tiek.teisiu..kiek.Lietuvoje=2011-04-04_13-40/> .

⁵⁷ Available at: <<http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/elucasas-lietuvoje-gera-buti-lenku.d?id=42248137>>.

- On average, one Lithuanian school has 344 pupils, while one Polish school has only 161 pupils.

Such statistics have to be accompanied by the following arguments:

- Referring to the inadequate criticism of the amendments to the Law on Education, one should remember an opinion expressed by Krzysztof Skubiszewski, Poland's Foreign Minister in 1989-1993: "Minority rights are not special rights, but rather, human rights and basic freedoms enjoyed by members of ethnic minorities. By relying on the advantages of these rights and freedoms, the state commits itself to ensuring total equality of ethnic minorities with other citizens. This is equality within the state – the same standard is applied no matter what group one belongs to"⁵⁸.
- A better social integration of the Poles in the Vilnius region, as well as better opportunities in the labour market, should be a mutual concern for both Lithuania and Poland.
- The most radical local politicians, such as Valdemar Tomaševski, may be reminded of words by Knut Vollebaek, OSCE Commissioner on the National Minorities, who said that "to learn the state language is the duty of national minorities, this is also their own interest".

Spelling of surnames. Spelling of surnames is one of the issues, to which Lithuania committed itself in the early years of Independence. Solving this issue would demonstrate Lithuania's good intentions and should serve as a positive turning point in the context of tensions. This is especially relevant since, at least formally, Lithuanians residing in Poland have this opportunity.

Unlike the need for outward communication in the first case, here it is deemed necessary to cooperate with representatives of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. It needs to be explained to the nationalistically-minded Lithuanian politicians that the Polish spelling of personal names does not pose any threat to Lithuanian identity; on the contrary, it should restrain arguments by the radically-disposed Poles. Additionally, the pragmatic aspect of this issue may be considered, since the example of Lithuanians residing in Poland testifies to the fact that this possibility will hardly be widely employed

⁵⁸ Timothy Snyder, *Tautų rekonstrukcija: Lietuva, Lenkija, Ukraina, Baltarusija 1569 – 1999* [Reconstructing Nations: Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, Belarus in 1569-1999], Vilnius: Mintis, 2009, 294.

for practical considerations (e.g., there would be difficulties in opening bank accounts, etc.).

According to the historian Česlovas Laurinavičius, the spelling of the letter “w” is but a detail, but also a “basic democratic duty”⁵⁹. As Lithuanian Justice Minister Remigijus Simašius puts it, “the government is in favour of the more liberal spelling of family names using the Latin script”, yet it seems that it will be the European Court of Justice that will “assist” in resolving this issue⁶⁰.

Topographic symbols in the most densely populated Lithuanian settlements. These changes are prohibited by the State Language Law although *de facto* one may find numerous instances of violations of this law in Lithuania. On the one hand, the fact that certain settlements contain Polish names causes discontent among Lithuanians and enables manipulations over the argument that the Poles deliberately violate Lithuanian laws or even mock them. On the other hand, such practices discredit the State Language Law, as well as raise doubts of the ability of the authorities to ensure its observance.

In this way, either the observance of the law should be enhanced, or amendments to the law should be introduced. The former option would only deepen the crisis in the bilateral relations, especially given the fact that the practice of writing place names additionally (though more formally) in the minority language in relevant settlements is legalised in Poland. Numerous regulations of the bilingual topographic signs in Poland make this option hardly possible in the real life.

Since Lithuania is relying on the principle of reciprocity, legalisation of the bilingual topographic signs could be another apparent sign of progress and goodwill in the relations. The technical side of this issue should be, however, emphasised by setting clear conditions, legal regulations, characteristics of specific regions/municipalities, thereby minimising the possibility of interpretations and ambiguities in the future. For example, in Poland, the part of the ethnic minority in a municipality should constitute at least 20% of the relevant

⁵⁹ *Šiuolaikiniai istorinės sąmonės formavimo būdai: prielaidos, galimybės, ribos*. [Contemporary Ways of the Formation of Historical Conscience: Premises, Opportunities and Limitations]. Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2010, p. 109.

⁶⁰ Available at: <<http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/rsimasius-panasu-ett-priims-sprendima-leistirasyti-pavardes-originalo-kalba.d?id=44622027>>.

population. This criterion should be applied when resolving the issue of Šalčininkai, Vilnius, Trakai and Švenčionys municipalities.

Land restitution. Land restitution is neither a merely technical, nor a merely economic issue. Nevertheless, the Šalčininkai example must be referred to in this respect, in which over 95 percent of land has been restituted. The same is true of Trakai and Vilnius districts, which clearly indicates the overall positive situation on this issue. However, one needs to be frank that the town of Vilnius is problematic due to miscellaneous business interests. It should also be pointed out that the representatives of the Polish national minority have always been part of the ruling coalition; therefore the Polish community did have levers to raise this issue and the latter should not be politicised in light of the Lithuanian-Polish relations.

Mažeikių nafta / PKN Orlen. Privatisation of this company is one of the most striking examples when business relations come to be politicised. The same may be said of the electric networks “RailBaltica” and “Klaipėdos nafta” (Klaipėda Oil). The speculations on this matter should be avoided and, in general, economic issues should be depoliticised as much as possible. This may be done by providing examples of successful cooperation in the economic sphere (e.g., an example of the large corporation “Ernst & Young”) or pointing out the state projects, e.g., energy bridge projects which, paradoxical as it may seem, were stuck during the “romantic” period in the Lithuanian-Polish relations at the time of the presidencies of Kwasniewski and Kaczynski.

This situation suggests several conclusions:

One sided communication. Though the Polish discourse of discontent was slightly seen before as well, it was most often interpreted as a merely “sikorskism” problem and was ignored for some time. Therefore, in recent years, the discourse has witnessed an increase in accusations of and reproaches to Lithuania, while articles or statements highlighting the progress made were missing.

Lithuania’s communication has to be fostered in two directions. Firstly, it has to be directed outwardly (at the diplomatic corps, Euro-Atlantic structures and international experts / analysts in particular), as well as at the Polish com-

munity in Lithuania. It should highlight positive changes and draw parallels with experiences of the Polish diaspora in other countries. The facts-based information and statistics could be passed to the research centres both in Europe and the US.

Unsuccessful integration of the Lithuanian Poles. Unfortunately, tensions in Lithuanian-Polish relations manifest that, over the twenty years of independence, the integration of the Poles residing in Lithuania was weak. Although identity formation is a long-term process, it must be acknowledged that the integration of the Polish-speaking Lithuanian citizens should become one of Lithuania's strategic objectives, that is, Poles have to become part of Lithuania, rather than an object of Poland. This may be achieved by increasing intercommunication. Understandably, interested parties and actors within the Polish diaspora in Lithuania who would be open to the dialogue and discussion, rather than stark confrontation, would also be an advantage.

Upon a firm resolution of the issues related to the teaching of the Lithuanian language in particular and educational reform in general, the spelling of family names must be liberalised. Positive signals to the Polish component of the Lithuanian culture will dispel doubts that the policy pursues but one issue – to lithuanianise, to “convert” the Polish diaspora of the Vilnius region into Lithuanians.

There is no owner of the Lithuanian-Polish issue in Lithuania. The majority of the aforementioned impending issues fall within the competence of the Seimas. However, a certain role is performed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Lithuania, as well as the President's Office, and the Government. Due to this, Member of the European Parliament Valdemar Tomaševski enjoys a much better position since he talks on behalf of the entire Polish diaspora in Lithuania. Though he has a substantial support of the electorate, he does not represent all Poles in Lithuania. Moreover, he manipulates the society by being selective in presenting the information and interpreting the development of Lithuanian-Polish relations.

Until 2009, the Department of the Ethnic Minorities and Emigration could be the formal coordinating body. After it had been abolished and coordination

of relevant issues passed over to the Ministry of Culture, issues of national minorities are within the competence of but one division. There is no doubt that, given the tension in Lithuanian-Polish relations, this structure is incapable of even absorbing the numerous critical situations. Meanwhile, such issues should be resolved in a coordinated way at a higher level.

The constrained agenda. It is necessary to have a long-term, or at least a mid-term perspective on Lithuanian-Polish relations, rather than solely engage in smothering burning conflicts. Although such reactions are understandable and necessary, escalation of the securitised issues is but a vicious circle/discourse. It provokes confrontation and apologies, sows discord, and increases the divide, but hardly resolves the issue of the Poles in Lithuania in essence.

The short-term agenda of imminent issues must be supplemented with issues targeting a more profound integration of the Polish diaspora, as well as reformulation of the content of the Lithuanian-Polish bilateral agenda.

It is no secret that the majority of Poles in Lithuania live in Šalčininkai, Vilnius, Trakai and Švenčionys Municipalities. People there are confronted with a high level of unemployment and miscellaneous problems of social infrastructure. For example, although transport infrastructure in Vilnius District Municipality is relatively well-developed, Šalčininkai District Municipality has the sparsest road network in Lithuania⁶¹.

According to the unemployment rate of the working-age population, the aforementioned municipalities (except for Trakai Municipality) take the top positions in Vilnius County (see table below) and significantly lag behind the national average of 13.6%⁶². Considering direct foreign investment per capita, the overall average of 10 122 Litas⁶³ in Lithuania is almost 200 times as much as that of Šalčininkai, or at least twice as much as the relevant figures for Trakai Municipality (see Table 3).

⁶¹ Available at: <http://regionai.stat.gov.lt/pdf/Aplinka_Vilnius_aps_LT.pdf>.

⁶² Available at: <<http://www.ldb.lt/TDB/Vilnius/DarboRinka/Situacijos%20apvalga/LastSituacija.aspx>>.

⁶³ Available at: <<http://db1.stat.gov.lt/statbank/selectvarval/saveselections.asp?MainTable=M2030204&PLanguage=0&TableStyle=&Buttons=&PXSId=3106&IQY=&TC=&ST=ST&rvar0=&rvar1=&rvar2=&rvar3=&rvar4=&rvar5=&rvar6=&rvar7=&rvar8=&rvar9=&rvar10=&rvar11=&rvar12=&rvar13=&rvar14=>>>.

Table 3. Unemployment rate and FDI per capita in selected regions of Lithuania

	Unemployment rate April 1, 2011	Direct Foreign Investment per Capita at the end of 2009 (in Litas)
Vilnius District	18,62 proc.	2 833
Šalčininkai	17,54 proc.	54
Švenčionys	16,14 proc.	2 673
Trakai	11,86 proc.	5 443
Vilnius County	12,89 proc.	25 316

Source: Data of the Department of Statistics and the National Job Centre under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.

The road, tourism and service provision infrastructures must be reviewed, which in the long-term should improve the socio-economic situation of residents of the Vilnius region. Investment and business development in the region would create a positive atmosphere for both bilateral cooperation with Poland and communication with the Poles in Lithuania. One of tourism promotion targets could be the development of the Dieveniškės infrastructure. The implementation of projects like this one should rely not only on pursuing state funding (investment programs), but also on the support of international projects, structural funds, funding of the Environmental Support Program, etc.

In the sphere of culture, not only cultural exchanges should be emphasised, but also more intensive activities in the Polish schools and Houses of Culture in the Vilnius region. Concerts and artistic performances there would not require so many resources as concerts in Krakow or Warsaw. In addition, the Polish community in Lithuania would also be targeted more directly. The cooperation and cultural dialogue as well as coexistence in the cultural domain, the examples of personalities like Adam Mickiewicz, Czeslaw Milozs or Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis must be fostered and become a positive impetus for people to people contacts. It is particularly beneficial bearing in mind that this year Milozs' 100th Birth Anniversary is commemorated, while the UNESCO has announced 2011 the Year of Čiurlionis.

Activities targeting the Lithuanian audience have to emphasize that Polish artists do take interest in Lithuanian culture⁶⁴ and inform the society about projects like the Music Week⁶⁵, which took place at the Vygriai (Wigry) House of Culture, thereby seeking to eliminate the stereotypes regarding Poles' intention to polonise Lithuanians.

The role of personalities. It is clear that the present Lithuanian-Polish relations are susceptible to any radical statements, which is why it is important to avoid confrontation. In addition, the positive rhetoric at the Presidential level need be encouraged (both by Adamkus and Grybauskaitė), ever more so after Polish Prime Minister Tusk's statement that "we must understand Lithuanians"⁶⁶.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In light of recent developments in the relations between Lithuania and Poland, several recommendations should be drawn up.

Poland's EU presidency and Lithuania's chairmanship of the OSCE should be presented as an opportunity for both states to strengthen their prestige. Therefore, cooperation and coordination of initiatives should be used to the full extent. Poland's EU presidency is to be a significant challenge, too, which may require the support of various countries, Lithuania amongst them. This would be a good opportunity to renew confidence and to demonstrate that Lithuania supports Poland's strategic interests and, in many cases, these coincide.

In the public domain, it is advisable to maintain the standpoint that relations with Poland are "good". The existing tension is to be neither emphasised, nor escalated. Nationalistic arguments resting upon historical grievances may be particularly sensitive. These aspects are to be consciously abandoned in the political rhetoric.

⁶⁴ Leidykla, kuri domisi lietuvių autoriais. [A Publishing House that Takes Interest in Lithuanian Authors]. Available at: <<http://www.boltrecords.pl>>. The Glissando magazine has even published an entire issue devoted to Lithuanian music. Available at: <<http://glissando.pl/wp/category/numery>>.

⁶⁵ Available at: <<http://www.wigry.org/cykle.php?cid=46>>.

⁶⁶ Available at: <<http://www.lrytas.lt/-13031977601301306551-lenkijos-premjeras-d-tuskas-privalome-suprasti-lietuvius.htm>>.

One of the greatest problems is the fact that Poles in Lithuania are represented by a political force which a) is neither loyal, nor trustworthy to Lithuania, and even Poland; b) is largely influenced by representatives of a third party; c) does not have political competition within the Polish community in Lithuania, but has internal democracy shortcomings within the party itself. For these reasons, an emergence of another competitive organisation among the Poles in Lithuania (not necessarily a party) would be beneficial, as it could gain more prestige in both Lithuania and Poland. Even if this political force was more loyal to Poland rather than Lithuania, it could change the present Tomaševski's inertia, whose logic is not susceptible to accepting any changes (even positive ones) that could lessen the closeness and detachment of the local Poles.

As regards improvements in the situation of the Poles in Lithuania, issues pertaining to topographic symbols and spelling of family names could serve as examples of Lithuania's goodwill and headway. Concurrently emphasis should be placed on the expansion of educational opportunities (while minimising the narrative of assimilation consequences), without reducing or restricting the rights of ethnic communities, or their opportunities to foster their identity. It should also be recognised clearly that the first results of this policy will become visible only in three to five years.

Certain other tension-provoking issues (land restitution in the Vilnius region, "Mažeikių nafta" / PKN Orlen issues) should be presented as merely technical matters in need of lower-level solutions, which Lithuania may consider in greater detail, yet without relating them to the foreign policy of the bilateral relations.

It should be acknowledged that interstate relations are largely influenced by personal convictions and specific personalities. The Sikorski factor cannot be ignored. However, confrontation, both direct and indirect, is to be avoided. The range of problems pertaining to Sikorski's personality could be absorbed by looking for Lithuania's allies among Polish politicians (e.g., Jerzy Buzek), as well as by making parallels to the examples of the Czech Republic or Germany. However, this should not constrain cooperation at lower levels aiming at the formation of a positive context. Higher-level coordination could be conducted at the level of prime-ministers (avoiding focus on certain problems or even distortion of the information at the level of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Poland's aspirations to consolidate itself as one of the big EU states by fostering relations solely with states like Germany, France, and Russia while ignoring the significance of the other EU members (the CEE states) may do harm to Poland itself. Central and Eastern European states share not only common historical experience, but also similarities of economic and national interests. In this light, EU members located in Central and Eastern Europe are natural Poland's allies. The multi-tier structure of EU institutions (European Commission, EU Councils, EU Parliament), EU decision-making, comitology, as well as other procedures would provide Poland with the basis to maintain good relations with the CEE states by forming *ad hoc* alliances of technical nature designed to deal with specific issues (e.g., energy security, development of transport and telecommunications infrastructure, negotiations regarding the EU Financial Perspective for the years 2014-2020, etc.). Such alliances between Poland and the CEE states (the number of votes of the Visegrad group alone (58) is the same as that of Germany and France combined) would create a certain political pressure on the old EU member states, which sometimes make decisions that are unfavourable for the new EU members. The main problems of the effective partnership of the CEE states arising at the EU institutions are as follows: insufficient representation of these states in EU structures and insufficient lobbying capacities of the new EU members for the decision-making process at the level of EU institutions. For example, according to its formal powers, Poland equals Spain, though has twice as less representatives at the EU institutions and only one Director-General out of 37 Directorates-General of the European Commission. In order to enhance the effect of Poland's cooperation with the other CEE states in the EU decision-making process, Poland should, first of all, make its performance in various lobbying institutions more active even at the early stage of the decision-making process (public consultations of the European Commission, comitology procedures). Secondly, it should avoid individualising submitted proposals. Seeking to ensure maximally broad support of the EU members, Poland's initiatives should distinguish themselves in their pan-Europism. In order to achieve this goal, Poland has to seek to develop various mechanisms and procedures capable of facilitating information exchange between Poland and the other EU members (the CEE countries). For example, Poland could initiate a review of the format of the Visegrad group turning it into a peculiar forum

for open sectoral initiatives, which could invite contributions from the other EU members seeking greater influence in the EU decision-making process.

Poland's weight in the EU is and potentially will be remarkably greater than that of Lithuania. Therefore it should be employed as much as possible. For example, rather than fear competition, Lithuania should ask Poland to support miscellaneous Lithuanian initiatives. In this sense, Poland could become a peculiar guardian for Lithuania at the EU level and might be no longer perceived as its competitor.

In its relations with the Scandinavian countries, Sweden in particular, Lithuania should avoid competition behind Poland's back, and seek trilateral (or multilateral) cooperation instead. Should forming a cooperation triangle including Poland, the Baltic States and Sweden prove successful, such a group or bloc may be of great significance at the EU level.

Mutual need to support one's representatives at the relevant EU positions should be emphasised in EU institutions and structures. Agreements to support each other's candidates (after they have been negotiated and approved while interests distributed) could be one practical solution.

Common interests, launching initiatives at the EU level may substitute the former Eastern policy as common interests should promote trust.

Extension of general agenda in pursuit of common bilateral initiatives would be an essential premise for the improvement of bilateral relations. This is particularly relevant for the promotion of the development and cooperation in the Vilnius region.