



LITHUANIAN FOREIGN POLICY REVIEW

2014
(32)

FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH CENTER

2014

From the Editor

Lithuanian Foreign Policy Since 2004: A Small State in International Organizations

2004 was a historical year for Lithuania¹. It was a year when the country within one month became a member of two of the most important regional international organizations – NATO and the EU. It was the end of a process that started in 1994 when memberships in these organizations were declared foreign policy priorities². It was also a year when foreign policy changes were needed, expected, and declared.

Foreign policy change is a tricky concept, as to analyse change first we have to ask how to conceptualize it. Very broadly, we can distinguish two approaches. The first, more traditional, is concerned with the identification of the change and then the explanation either of its sources or causes. Charles Hermann talks about four levels of change³: 1) adjustment changes (changes in the level of effort and scope of the policy, what is to be done does not change); 2) program changes (means the change in policy methods, means, and instruments); 3) problem or goal changes; 4) international orientation changes, which is the most extreme form of foreign policy change, involving the changes in roles and worldview of the actors. According to him, the first step is to understand what level of changes we are analysing. Only after that we should proceed with the analysis of its conditions or causes. Of course, this classification is nothing more than a useful heuristic device to clarify the discussion and it provides markers to distinguish among the variety of possibilities. Most importantly, it emphasizes the need to agree on the level at which foreign policy discussions are conducted.

Another way of looking at change is to understand the political function the discourse about change performs in foreign policy making, or to analyse the role change plays in the political process. “The Change” is an important part of

¹ This article was written as a part of research project “Lithuanian Foreign Policy since 2004: Between Stability and Change” conducted by Vilnius University. The research was funded by a grant (No. MIP-012/2013) from the Research Council of Lithuania.

² “Lietuvos Respublikos politinių partijų kreipimasis dėl Lietuvos Respublikos integravimosi į NATO”, 5 10 1993, http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter/w5_show?p_r=5042&p_d=62154&p_k=1, 27 09 2014.

³ Hermann C.H., “Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy”, *International Studies Quarterly* 1 (34), 1990, p 5.

the political rhetoric, which is often used to emphasize the difference – from the opponent, from the previous government or the period. In this sense we should ask what political actors, decision makers are portraying as change, and what does it say about them and the political environment they are acting in. Keeping in mind this distinction, we can take a quick look at the change in Lithuanian foreign policy making after 2004.

What changed?

Now, at the end of 2014, yet another ten years have passed and the time comes for new reflections on how and where Lithuanian foreign policy is developing. After 2002 when the final decision was made in the EU on Lithuania's and other nine states' accession the questions "what's next?", "what will be different?" started to emerge in the discussion on foreign policy. One position that Lithuania will soon have no independent foreign policy and should become a "golden province" was silenced pretty soon. Instead, ideas about an active and value-based foreign policy emerged. The first and most pronounced incarnation of such a position was the now famous manifesto of becoming a "regional centre" which promotes democracy, human rights and rule of law and helps bring Eastern European countries closer to Europe and enlarging the zone of stability and security⁴. Eventually, by 2006–2007, these ambitions diminished, mainly because of the change in Lithuanian foreign policy leadership, the lack of a clearer strategy for reaching the goal, the political developments in Ukraine and Georgia – the main targets of the new policy – also did not provide much support and optimism for achieving a successful foreign policy.

The subsequent years have not produced any new groundbreaking visions in foreign policy thinking or making. Thinking on the third level of Hermann's model, the goal of change did not happen. And this is the level at which usually questions about foreign policy strategy are asked in Lithuania. Even though the new President Dalia Grybauskaitė elected in 2009 urged to move foreign policy closer to Europe, to resist talking and caring only about the Eastern Neighbourhood, and to become more pragmatic, in content Lithuanian foreign policy did not change

⁴ Paulauskas A., "Speech 'Lithuania's New Foreign Policy' at Vilnius University," 24 05 2004; *Politinių partijų susitarimas Dėl pagrindinių valstybės užsienio politikos tikslų ir uždavinių 2004-2008 metais* [The Parliamentary Resolution on "Lithuanian Foreign Policy Priorities after Lithuania became EU and NATO member], 5 10 2004.

much throughout these ten years – though because of the changed institutional settings some shifts from the pre-accession period inevitably happened.

Making a very quick run through the last ten years⁵ several foreign policy choices or strategies can be highlighted. First, the efforts to Europeanize (or internationalize) foreign policy issues, that is to involve as much as possible the EU (or other international organizations) in solving the problems that are considered Lithuanian national interests⁶. Mainly, these issues have been energy security (e.g., efforts to decrease energy dependence on Russia through implementation of the EU III Energy package) and the politics of history (e.g. efforts to condemn the crimes of Stalinism on the European level). In most of these cases the reason behind such a policy was Russia. Balancing Russia with the help of international institutions has been the Lithuanian strategy since independence⁷, and since our memberships in NATO and the EU it has become much more pronounced and resolute.

The second strategy was Lithuania's active Eastern Neighbourhood policy promoting political reforms there and most importantly supporting, lobbying the "open door" policy in both the EU, and NATO for these states. In line with this policy, Lithuania during its EU Presidency in the second part of 2013 campaigned very passionately for the Association Treaty with Ukraine trying to make it the "crown jewel" among its presidency achievements. Not surprisingly, this second priority is also connected with Russia as the region is seen as the battleground of two value systems – the Western represented by the EU, and the Eastern represented by Russia. Lithuania sees this battle as zero-sum game – only one player can win here. The general EU approach is a more win-win policy, that is, a policy that seeks to look for solutions that are favourable for all involved. That is the reason why immediately after the start of its membership, Lithuania was labelled as a "one-issue" state – the state which is russophobic, a "cold state warrior"⁸, and not looking for constructive solutions in EU-Russian relations.

⁵ For a more exhaustive review on the last ten years of Lithuanian foreign policy see – *Lietuvos užsienio politika 2004-2014 m. [Lithuanian foreign policy 2004-2014]*, sud. Jakniūnaitė D., Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2014 (forthcoming).

⁶ See, e.g., Vilpišauskas, R., "Lithuanian Foreign Policy since EU Accession: Torn between History and Interdependence", *The New Member States and the European Union: Foreign Policy and Europeanization*, ed. Baun M., Marek D., London: Palgrave, 2013, p. 127-142.

⁷ See Vitkus G., *Diplomatinė aporija: tarptautinė Lietuvos ir Rusijos santykių normalizacijos perspektyva*, Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2006.

⁸ Leonard M., Popescu, N., *A Power Audit of EU-Russia Relations*, London: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2007.

The third strategy for Lithuania voiced by many diplomats and foreign policy makers is to become and to stay a visible and active player in various international organizations and settings. International organizations are seen as the ideal tool for small states to promote their interests on the regional or even global level, to make them more vocal and heard. It was and still is a very broad and superficially defined strategy that has manifested itself mainly through the efforts to chair a variety of international organizations (e.g., ECOSOC in 2007, Community of Democracies in 2009–2011, OSCE in 2011, Council of the EU in 2013) and is still waiting for its comprehensive evaluation.

About the current issue: Lithuania in International Institutions

How it is possible to talk about achievements when foreign policy goals become less clearly defined, and the aims become “visibility”, “activity”, being “adviser”, or “team-player”? The current issue of *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* is trying to answer this question from one angle – analysing Lithuania’s foreign policy in the changed international institutional context. Becoming part of international institutions was the main environmental change which created both new possibilities, and new constraints for Lithuanian foreign policy making. All the articles in this issue in their own ways analyse how successful and effective Lithuanian foreign policy has been in these changed circumstances.

Arūnas Molis and **Tomas Vaišnoras** in their article “Energy Security through Membership in NATO and the EU: Interests and Achievements of Lithuania” review the development of the EU external energy policy and NATO energy security initiatives since 2004. They demonstrate that the main Lithuanian interest is to strengthen both policies because this will allow diminishing the energetic isolation of Lithuania. They indicate several positive trends which coincide with its national interests and to which Lithuania has more or less contributed: the creation of common energy and natural gas markets in the EU, more common energy infrastructure projects that are being implemented, more and more questions of the external energy policy solved at the EU level. Although they also notice some areas for improvement (no strategy on how to develop relations with Russia or the states of Central Asia, or a lack of coordination between different EU policies) their evaluation of Lithuanian policy in this area is quite positive.

Raimonda Miglinaitė and **Dovilė Jakniūnaitė** in their article “Lithuania at the United Nations Security Council: Strategy or Accident?” investigate in what ways Lithuania’s becoming the member of the UN SC can be considered a tangible

achievement. They demonstrate that UN SC membership itself has an important symbolic meaning and the successful bid for the UN SC seat is a demonstration of a consistent LFP strategy. However, a notable lack of strategic ideas of how to capitalise on this success transforms the political achievement of a non-permanent UN SC seat into lofty declarations emphasizing mainly bureaucratic gains.

Linus Kojala and **Vilius Ivanauskas** try to understand and evaluate Lithuania's Eastern policy throughout the decade by analysing the rhetoric of two Presidents using the role theory approach. They demonstrate mainly that the concept of a national role by a leader does not depend solely or even very decisively on their personal beliefs or stance, but to a large scale on structural factors. In the Lithuanian case they are the engagement in Euro-Atlantic organizations, that is, partnership with the United States, the dynamics of the EU Eastern policy, and the changing geopolitical environment. Actually, they go as far as to state that the most important factor determining the direction, and in that sense the national role concept are structural factors. Thus, again the previous articles emphasize the institutional constraints and Lithuania's ability to play within them.

Galina Vaščenkaitė in her article "Lithuanian-Polish Relations after 2004: Good Old Cooperation in Regretfully Bad New Wrapping" pays attention to whether, how and why Lithuanian-Polish relations have changed. She demonstrates that the priority areas – military, economic and energy – of bilateral cooperation and the main tensions – namely, that although the unresolved issues of the Polish national minority and harsh political rhetoric worsen the general emotional setting of bilateral relations, nevertheless, this does not create obstacles for effective and substantial cooperation between the two states. Thus, this article proves once again how seemingly over-determined domestic constraints are counterbalanced by the necessity of cooperation in international institutional settings.

Finally, **Xavier Pierre** and **Rytis Paulauskas** write about the EU coordination process in Geneva and analyse the adaptive challenges the Member States are facing in this context. More importantly, it presents the experience of Lithuania's EU Presidency in participating in the EU coordination process. Their research shows that the biggest challenge for small and medium states in the EU context is to strengthen the diplomatic capabilities in order to be able to act and work on multilateral frameworks.

Dovilė Jakniūnaitė
November 2014, Vilnius