8 Invested in Ukraine

The struggle of Lithuania against Russia over the future of Europe[1]

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Introduction

Ukrainian events in 2014 attracted a lot of attention in Lithuania, among policymakers, media outlets and the attentive public. For some, it came as a shock just how fragile the security of the country might be; for others, the events demonstrated once and for all how untrustworthy and dangerous Russia is; and for yet others, it was a sign of the declining European order. Without a doubt, it was the central international issue for Lithuania's 2014–2015 foreign policy and the issue that was, and in 2015 continued to be, followed very closely and with great apprehension.

The position of Lithuania with regard to the events in Ukraine was clear, definite and assertive from the beginning: unconditional support for Ukraine and relentless criticism towards Russia. This article tries to understand the rationale and reasoning behind Lithuania's involvement in the Ukrainian crisis. It will not only elaborate the position that Lithuania took, but also explain the Lithuanian policymakers' world-view that emerges from these events and the role of Ukraine in these understandings.

Understanding a country's foreign policy involves more than just analyzing its decisions – how and why they have been reached. It also involves understanding the context (historical, ideational, experiential) and discovering the meaning behind decisions. These reveal a more concise picture of a country's worldview and its self-image. By understanding the representational process in foreign policymaking allows an explanation of certain state choices, which, in other perspectives might seem 'irrational' and 'unreasonable' or even 'radical.' Such analysis is also a good case study in order to reveal the intricacies and particularities of the nexus between the identity politics and foreign policy elaborated by such authors as Campbell, Weldes, Hopf and Hansen.[2]

Any state's foreign policy is an important image or representation – producing and reproducing practice, providing not only the world-view and self-representation, but also defining the risks and dangers that abound in the contemporary world and whether the decisions to be made are worth paying attention to and, specifically, what they are. Foreign policy is one of many state practices: these representations subsequently lead actions and justify them as well. Thus, the

foreign policy of a state is considered the continuation of state policy in general; it has inextricable connection with the internal, domestic processes and provides an understanding of them also.

Analysts note that Lithuanian foreign policy is grounded in three main self-concepts: it is a small country, next to Russia, and (trying to become) part of West, which is sometimes divided into Europe and the United States.[3] As will be demonstrated in this article, these concepts play a significant part in recent Lithuanian relations with Ukraine.

In the context of previous analyses, and in conducting a discourse analysis of the official Lithuanian foreign policy texts of 2014–2015, this article seeks to make sense of Lithuania's approach towards the Ukrainian events. The article begins by asking what the contemporary understanding of the events in Ukraine is; according to the Lithuanian perception, what was happening there and how was Lithuania involved? Next, the article discusses the Lithuanian understanding about its role in solving the conflict and reveals what ideas have developed about possible solutions and ways out of the crisis. Ultimately, the article demonstrates how the bordering and spatial practices by a small (and limited) state can contribute to the Europeanization discourses which surround the current conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

About Ukraine and the crisis

The year 2004 was important in many aspects for Lithuania. In the spring, the country became a member of NATO and the EU – as a result of a 10-year-long integration process focussing on domestic reforms and trying to prove to itself and to Western institutions that Lithuania not only needs but also belongs to the West, its political space and institutions, its ideas and value system. These achieved goals also made it obvious that Lithuania needed a new concept of looking at the world and acting within it, in other words, a new foreign policy.

In May 2004, the foreign policy decision makers started to talk and to develop the ideas behind the New Foreign Policy of Lithuania,[4] the main ideas of which became active policy in Eastern Europe (later on, South Caucasus was also added) with the promotion of democracy, support for pro-Western policies and possible integration into the EU and/or NATO. This policy was pursued almost continuously throughout the entire decade.[5] Ukraine became the focus of this policy. The biggest country in the region, and close to Russia, it just had to turn into a normal Western country for reasons to be explained later. In this section, Lithuania's relations with Ukraine, its understanding about Ukraine's place in the region and interpretations of the Ukrainian crisis will be analysed.

Lithuanian–Ukraine relations

Lithuania and Ukraine are two countries in the broader Central Eastern European region. They are not neighbouring countries, and they do not have any historical or other bilateral conflict or disagreement. They are united by their common

Soviet past from 1945 to 1990, and more or less belong to the same geographical and geopolitical region.

A general overview of their official bilateral relations is not extensive: there are a few bilateral treaties (e.g. on friendship and co-operation, or on investment promotion) and several intergovernmental agreements, mostly on economic co-operation; state and official visits by presidents and prime ministers also take place; symbolic institutions, like the Lithuanian–Ukrainian Presidential Council or Business Forums, have been created; and trade relations and some investments have been developed.[6] But such a review up to the end of 2013 would not take more than a couple pages. It has only been over the last 2 years that relations have intensified above the level of standard co-operation.

The 2004 Orange Revolution was the first opportunity for Lithuanian foreign policy to demonstrate its deep interest in the region and its support for the democratic process, and to develop closer relations with Ukraine. President Valdas Adamkus, at the time just recently elected for a second term, decided to participate actively in Ukraine's electoral debacle. He helped the Polish President, Aleksander Kwasniewski, to mediate the negotiations between the Viktor Yanukovych and Viktor Yushchenko camps and subsequently reached an agreement on the repeated elections, which Yushchenko won. The Lithuanian media openly praised the Lithuanian president, although Kwasniewski's role was much more important, with Adamkus serving more as his aide.[7]

In Lithuania, public and elite support for Yushchenko and for the protests in Kiev was strong. The Orange Revolution was seen as yet another victory (after the Georgian Rose Revolution) for democratic forces in the region, another country was becoming more independent and free. For the authors of the New Foreign Policy concept, the participation of the Lithuanian President in the Ukrainian events also helped to substantiate the claims about regional leadership, and indicated that Lithuania's foreign policy was moving in the right direction.

It was all about the efforts to (help) create a stable, more democratic and economically prosperous Ukraine and to support the EU's open door policy, especially on the rhetorical level, and above all promoting and supporting the EU Neighbourhood Policy (its Eastern dimension). However, disappointing developments in Ukraine, where internal quarrels demonstrated the country's immature political culture, also lessened Lithuania's initial euphoric support for Ukraine.

The years 2011–2013 in Lithuanian foreign policy were marked by preparations for assuming the presidency of the European Council in the second half of 2013. This was the time when true Lithuanian investment into what was happening in Ukraine began. Attention and involvement peaked in the second half of 2013 and remained at the high level through to the end of 2015.

At the beginning of 2013, the priorities for the presidency were declared, including the goal to sign an Association Agreement with Ukraine in the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius. However, the first signs started to appear at that time that it might not be politically prudent to over-promise or to raise expectations too high. The problems in Ukraine were serious, and the pressure from

Russia to join the Eurasian Union was increasing, as was the pressure from the EU not to delay the reforms.

When Yanukovych announced that he was not going to sign the agreement several days before the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, the disappointment and irritation with the Ukrainian President was huge. A similar level of anger was directed at Russia which, according to the dominant opinion at the time, had managed to achieve its goal in forcing Yanukovych to sell his country.

Lithuanian foreign policymakers and the media followed subsequent events very closely: the Euromaidan, protests and increasing violence, negotiations between opposing sides, the Crimea debacle, separatism and later war in Donetsk and Lukhansk, the MH17 catastrophe and the Minsk I and II agreements, etc. Lithuania manifestly supported the European aspirations, critiquing Yanukovych's behaviour harshly; it was infuriated by the Crimea referendum and subsequent occupation, and later by Russian-supported separatism in Ukraine's Eastern regions.[8]

Considering Lithuania's capabilities, a lot of help and support was given. In 2014, Lithuania provided 1.06 million litas (€307,000) of support to Ukraine. In 2014–2015, Lithuania was a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, and in 2014 alone it initiated eight meetings to discuss Ukraine's matters.[9] It was one of six co-sponsors of the UN General Assembly Resolution 68/262 on 'Territorial Integrity of Ukraine.'[10] In 2014, military co-operation with Ukraine also intensified when Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine agreed to establish the joint military unit, LITPOLUKRBRIG.[11]

Thus, reviewing Lithuanian's relations to Ukraine, it could be said that Ukraine was always an important partner, but most often in the background. Geographically a little distant (in the context of the region), friendly but not intense relations were developing. Lithuania always followed the most visible internal dynamics and scandals, was worried about Ukraine's energy relations with Russia, was suspicious of its pro-Russian politicians and, of course, was cheering the Orange Revolution. Nevertheless, since 2013 Lithuania had also become truly invested in Ukraine – financially, rhetorically, militarily and politically. This was no longer simply a matter of friendship or a feeling of affinity; it was how Ukraine was understood and what the crises there entailed.

Fighting with whom for what?

Even though relations with Ukraine have not always been very intense, apart from recent years, Ukraine has always remained a part of Lithuanian strategic and foreign policy thinking. In this section, I will explain the prevailing understanding about Ukraine and the reasons why its fate is of such significance for the whole of Europe (in the eyes of Lithuanian foreign policymakers). A very indicative example of this thinking can be found in the book *The Baltic States in the Twentieth Century: A Geopolitical Sketch*, where the position and role of Ukraine in the Central Eastern European region is also evaluated.[12] Three main characteristics around Ukraine stand out.

First, the biggest geopolitical challenge to Ukraine is its geography – being a transport, resource and energy hub, Ukraine's geographical position causes other (bigger) states to develop vested interests in controlling Ukraine. For Russia, Ukraine signifies true control of the entire post-Soviet (western) region and, ultimately, a means of achieving its goal of great state status. According to such a view, the United States is interested in preventing the creation of any competing alliance in the region, and an independent Ukraine is the biggest hurdle/buffer to preventing this from happening. The bigger EU member states are primarily interested in stability in Eastern Europe (where Ukraine is considered the main risk factor), as stability will allow the development of closer economic ties with Russia and stabilization of economic resource imports.[13] Consequently, when defined in terms such as these, the geopolitical situation of Ukraine makes the country a constant battle ground for great powers.

Second, Ukraine is an ethnically, culturally and religiously divided country, which has not managed any genuine measure of national and political consolidation. The concept that Ukraine is actually two countries – Western Ukraine and Eastern Ukraine – has been and remains dominant in popular Lithuanian perceptions about the country (as in the most of Europe as well). So, we have the second deterministic feature – the internal composition of the country that has not been able to be surpassed for the almost a quarter of a century, since gaining independence.

The fragmentation of the country has been strongly impacted by the competition between various economic and business groups which often controlled different political parties and blocs (this system is often called oligarchic).[14] Thus, it seemed that the political and, specifically, the economic elite (in many cases these are one and the same) are not interested in economic and social reforms as such reforms would undermine their dominant position in the country and most probably destroy their economic ties with Russian business.

Finally, the contested geopolitical position and internal divisions do not allow the country to have a consistent foreign policy nor the forces to constantly balance and have a multi-vector foreign policy.[15] Balancing simply signified being neither clearly pro-Russian, nor clearly pro-European, thereby trying to please both sides without obviously committing to either. Thus, Ukraine did not implement any substantial reforms for a long time in order to get closer to the EU (Lithuania's clear preference for Ukraine). And so the analysts concluded that Ukraine seeks to achieve a 'special' relationship with the EU with some advantages for trade and visa liberalization but not membership.[16] This was also the reason behind the dominant political forces in Ukraine being reluctant to clearly define their foreign policy stance for a very long time, even though opinion polls and analysis indicated that the majority of the bureaucracy and the attitudes of political leaders were clearly pro-European.

Indicatively, another group of Lithuanian authors debating Ukraine's situation after the Orange Revolution concluded that if the Ukrainian political elite does not pay attention to internal factors and geopolitical contradictions, then tensions within society may increase and threaten the territorial integrity of a country and even its independence.[17] Thus, Lithuanian researchers as well as its politicians, understood the fragility of the Ukrainian state and its internal contradictions, which

made the country vulnerable to outside pressure by Russia, usually considering the impact and demands from the EU to be benevolent and reasonable. Is this what happened in 2014 from the Lithuanian point of view?

The Lithuanian permanent representative to the UN, Ambassador Raimonda Murmokaitė, started her speech at the UN Security Council meeting with the following words:

> An undeclared war is being waged by Russia against Ukraine. By now, barely making the world's headlines because it is slow and creeping – a few more meters of captured land, a few more explosions, a few more Russian tanks, a few more dead at a time.[18]

This quote perfectly represents the Lithuanian position about what has happened: Russia started the war against Ukraine; it is not a Ukrainian conflict, but it is a fight between Ukraine and Russia. Russia could not accept that Ukraine had finally chosen a clear foreign policy path; Russia was not prepared to let it go, and therefore interfered in the most brutal, cunning way possible. Or in the words of the same ambassador:

> The conflict in Ukraine is not an internal affair. Not a civil war. Nor a rebellion of disgruntled citizens. It is Russia's war against Ukraine for daring to choose a different – European – path.[19]

The Minister of Foreign Affairs in Lithuania, Linas Linkevičius, explained:

> Despite an ongoing war and a sea of lies … nobody has changed the flow of history. This choice shows that Ukraine is ready to bid goodbye to its past and resolutely take the European path. No green men or white trucks can change what is destined to happen.[20]

All of these statements indicate the satisfaction – Ukraine has finally chosen only one direction, which was always its destiny. This combination of choice and destiny creates a double image of Ukraine: the country which gained its subjectivity by managing to choose, and the country which in reality did not have any genuine choice at all – just one, the right one.

Apart from Russia's interference in Ukraine, another fight is also taking place – a broader, bigger and crucial fight between Russia and Europe (or at times between East and West): '[w]hen we speak about Ukraine today, we speak about the entire pan-European security architecture.'[21] Now we have not a fight about a particular country, but also about a certain way of life and the possibility to choose. What is even more important – the fight is also for the future of all Europe. Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė elaborated:

> Twenty-five years ago we, Lithuanians, also had to defend our choice. Therefore, we support and understand you [Ukrainians] today. You all are

> heroes, because you are fighting for your own future and for peace in the whole of Europe.[22]

In another interview, Grybauskaitė emphasized that Russia is fighting the war 'against all EU' in Ukraine, and it must be taken seriously because 'post-Soviet imperialism' will soon come to our borders.[23] These quotes provide the reasons why Lithuania is so involved in Ukraine: it is not only Ukraine's fight; it is also Europe's fight, and therefore also Lithuania's fight. Taking part in this fight is a duty not only because of historical sentiment or empathy, but because this debacle is also a fight for the definition of Europe, as well as for the security of Lithuania. The next part of this article elaborates this reasoning and explains Lithuania's perception of its role in this conflict.

Lithuania's solution

As the conflict is not perceived to be a local one, but one with implications for the whole continent, Lithuania consequently takes an interest in not just solving Ukraine's problems directly. It takes two bigger tasks on itself: firstly, to remind Europe about the threat of Russia and its untrustworthiness, and, secondly, to remind Europe about its true values and responsibilities.

Russia's aggression

Russia is not only an important and decisive player in the crisis in Ukraine; it is also the significant reference point for the entire Lithuanian foreign policy. The previous paragraphs have demonstrated that, for Lithuania, unequivocal support for Ukraine also means a definite and unconditional fight with Russia.

Lithuania almost never had good relations with Russia throughout its 25 years of independence. Without going into too many details, it is reasonable to say that relations have been (almost) firmly cold, distant, even bad.[24] A variety of researchers of Lithuanian foreign policy have also noted Russia's role as the main threat, through which most of the other challenges are seen.[25] Because of Russia's close vicinity, there is a sense of fatalism about Lithuania's geographical position (very similar to the geographical determinism also projected towards Ukraine). Geography is one reason behind the perception of Russia's constant threat, playing with the existential anxiety in both foreign and domestic matters.

This does not mean that there were no discussions on Russia, nor suggestions on changing attitudes or proposals not to use the 'Russian card' in domestic politics.[26] Nevertheless, there was one dominant matrix in foreign policy discussions: everything had to be measured in the light of a possible threat from Russia, or in the possibility of irritating that country's politicians by reminding them about Lithuania's principled position (such as in matters of memory politics). Thus, it would be no exaggeration to state that most foreign and security policy decisions in Lithuania are made with reference to Russia. This representation of Lithuania

as a country living near, depending on and threatened by Russia is strengthened by the understanding that the whole region is in the same position.

In this context, Lithuania's decision after its integration into the EU to concentrate on the EU Eastern Partnership makes even more sense. This policy represents not only the desire to transfer its own integration experience, implementing reforms, but also as a strategy to neutralize Russia's influence, to distance itself from that country by creating a space where there is 'less Russia.'[27] In analyzing Lithuania's first steps in the EU and EU Neighbourhood policy, Miniotaitė concluded that Lithuania not only constructs the identity of threatening Russia through this policy, but also through its own identity – as a democratic, civilized and civilizing European state, as a subject of the normative power of Europe.[28] This is the reason why the Eastern partnership takes such a dominant place in Lithuania's EU politics – as though it is possible to counter-influence Russian actions by creating a Europeanized region between Russia and itself.[29] Thus, it comes as no surprise that Ukrainian events not only left the Lithuanian view towards Russia unchanged but, in point of fact, crystallized attitudes: official discourse stayed consistent about Russia's threat and aggression towards the whole of Europe, if not the international system.

The most radical expression on this theme was chosen by Dalia Grybauskaitė, who described Russia as 'a state with terrorist elements,'[30] in a September 2014 interview for the *The Washington Post*. Later, she was even more direct, and talked about Russia as a 'terrorist state.'[31] By describing Russia thus, using the most sensitive and powerful category of global security in the twenty-first century, Grybauskaitė equated Russia with terrorism, seeking to leave no doubts or even discussion on what kind of enemy 'we' are dealing with. It must be admitted that this move was not met with enthusiasm by other foreign policymakers and participants, and the President of Lithuania did not repeat these statements any further. However radical this example may be, it demonstrates perfectly the level of absolute badness Lithuania projects upon Russia.

Linkevičius' words are a more typical example of criticism and warning about Russia in Lithuanian foreign policy discourse:

> The current conflict is not a simple divergence of views, but a major breach of rules by Russia – grabbing pieces of land and keeping them …, exercising aggression against a sovereign country … with full use of military, economic, energy and political means, including brutal info-warfare. Add to this the fuelling of separatism and terrorism, including the supply of weapons.[32]

This representation of Russia as an aggressive, undemocratic, unpredictable state which thinks in spheres of influence and wants to control the region was repeated and reproduced in many speeches on many occasions. Another example:

> Russia is doing all it can to resuscitate the bygone era of division and brinkmanship, continuing its aggression against Ukraine, buttressed by bogus

> claims of defending Russian speakers … and outlandish accusations against Europe, and the West.[33]

At the end of 2015, the majority among the Lithuanian political elite did not believe that Russia, with its current regime, was able to change for the better. It can get only worse. Officials also frequently repeat that if it is not stopped in Ukraine, Russia might direct its aggression towards the Baltic States.[34] However, this statement is far more contested and debated in domestic discussions in Lithuania. Nevertheless, it allows for renewed emphasis of the level of insecurity that is generated when commenting upon the Ukrainian crisis because, in the end, it is always about the security of Lithuania with regard to Russia. The biggest difference between Lithuania and Ukraine is that the former is in the EU and NATO, meaning that Lithuania is not alone. The challenge is to remind the country's partners and allies about their commitments and their values.

True Europeans

To represent the conflict in Ukraine as a conflict between Europe and Russia is just one step; the next step is to persuade European partners (mostly Western and Southern) to accept this concept and to act on it: The Lithuanian Foreign Minister has said many times, 'Ukraine's success will considerably depend … also on Europe and the United States' united position and pressure against Russia,'[35] presenting no doubts as to who has to take responsibility and the final decision in solving the crisis. The biggest hurdle is considered to be an unwillingness to take that responsibility and failure to remember what the West or Europe is:

> The confidence with which Russia is acting now comes partly from our inability to stand by our values and principles. … It is high time to put values ahead of a strategic partnership … Returning to normal is impossible without renewing pledges of basic rules and commitments. … By being steadfast in our values we can impel Russia to rethink its ambitions; by being mild we can encourage their cruelest actions.[36]

This paragraph reveals a central explanation behind the perceived or genuine reluctance on the part of the partners: Europe has to remember what it is; it has to remember its values, its principles and its history. The concept of 'bringing values back to Europe' is also a frequent one, indicating that somebody (i.e. Lithuania) is helping to remember because:

> [We, Baltic States] knew that freedom is not a given, so we took responsibility for our nations and walked resolutely along the European road. Today, as Europe faces new challenges, it is especially important not to forget the values which encouraged [us] to come together forming the Baltic Way. The same values tore down the Berlin Wall a quarter of a century ago. Only together,

> looking for what unites us rather than divides, can we maintain peace in our continent.[37]

The values are usually not elaborated, assuming they are obvious and known to everybody, apart from one: Europe must stand against any aggressor. In this way, historical references towards World War II are evoked – a time when, according to this interpretation and implication, Europe demonstrated its weakness against two dictators who later destroyed the continent.

Secondly, Europe is not only reluctant to reflect on what it is, having spent many years in peace – it now lives in a dream, it does not understand the 'real' world: 'the EU should base its policy on the actual situation rather than its illusions.'[38] Grybauskaitė raised a similar objection. She talked about 'naivetė' and an 'unwillingness to take the threat seriously,' implying, of course, that the EU member states are guilty of just that.[39]

These charges reflect the constant frustration that sometimes surfaces in the Lithuanian media with the passionate assessment: they just don't understand the true reality. This kind of talking is inseparable from the divisive thinking about *us* and *them*. 'Us' (i.e. Lithuanians), who still remember their historical experience, who see much more clearly and objectively what Russia entails; and 'them' (i.e. Western Europeans), who live comfortably, with very little security worries and who are prepared to abandon anybody if their own well-being is affected.

Thus, by using value discourse and criticizing the comfortable life of Europeans, Lithuania tries to be the conscience of Europe, taking the difficult role on itself of reminding others of what Europe truly is. This, in turn, is indicative when observing Lithuanian relations towards Europe since regaining independence in 1990. Throughout the 15 years until it became a member of the EU, Lithuanian identity discourse was based on persuading itself and others that it is European, that it is returning back to Europe as a legitimate part of the entire entity.[40]

'Back to Europe' discourse was very much a part of the entire integration period, and had to be changed after finally symbolically becoming one. After membership, the 'new Europeans' started to become the 'perfect and genuine Europeans.' This tendency was to be noticed in one of the first analyses of Baltic States' foreign policy after 2004 EU enlargement: 'the Baltic States present themselves as more Western than the West, reproaching the West for its failure to understand the "true" nature of Russia.'[41] Not surprisingly, this happened most often when discussing Russia and when criticizing Russia about its violations of human rights, democratic procedures and disregard for Western values. Lithuania's attitude and comments about Ukraine in 2014–2015 is yet another example of a desire to be the perfect European and remind its partners that Europe sometimes forgets itself in its relations with Russia.

This urge to establish itself as an essential and natural part of the West and of Europe is again inseparable from the efforts to distance itself from the main danger – Russia. As explained in previous paragraphs, the fate of being geographically close to Russia is considered the reason behind many Lithuanian historical traumas and misfortunes. Together with this self-image goes another – that of

being situated at the margins of Europe, being on the periphery of Europe.[42] This sentiment can be explained with the concept of 'liminality,' the concept of being at the margins, those borderlands, and describing the experiences from there.[43] Liminality is inseparable from the centre, from the idea of not being at the centre, and also from the desire to get rid of this condition, to belong. Thus, liminality represents both fragility and vulnerability.

In this way we come to the situation where Lithuania fights both for the future and peace of Europe and for its own future. It also seeks recognition, once again, for being a legitimate part of Europe, of being listened to and of taking part in discussions and definitions of what Europe is.[44]

One of the ways to remove the 'liminal' condition is to broaden and enlarge Europe. Inclusion of Ukraine into this area (either as a member of the EU, or just by the country becoming unconditionally pro-Western) would be the biggest prize here: both physically and mentally, it would move Russia as far as possible from Lithuania. Therefore, there are few doubts about the Lithuanian obligation to help Ukraine (and Europe) because 'if we betray Ukraine, we will betray ourselves,'[45] and because 'Ukraine's struggle is our struggle.'[46]

It is Lithuania's struggle to ensure that Lithuanian foreign policymakers perfectly understand that any input would not necessarily need to be substantial or crucial. As mentioned in the introduction, a further, significant Lithuanian self-conceptualization is the concept of being a small country. It can never be forgotten, even if it was rarely mentioned in the Ukrainian context, just as Linkevičius expressed when visiting Australia:

> We, in Lithuania, being a small country, will never make a difference in this conflict and it will not be decisive what we are doing … it is more symbolic, more a gesture of solidarity.[47]

Conclusion

Analysis of the Lithuanian position towards the Ukrainian crisis entails more than simply describing the stance that was taken. It also provides the understanding about the 'thinking' of a small Central Eastern European state, about the power play in its region, about its own role in this scenario and the possibilities for getting out of the situation that Ukraine, Russia and all of Europe is in.

The analysis of Lithuanian foreign policy texts of 2014–2015 demonstrates that for Lithuania, the conflict zone is the zone of the competition, if not a war, over values and ways of life. It is not (only) about Ukrainian choices and their decisions. In Ukraine, Europe and its civilization are defended in Ukraine. There is no doubt that Ukraine must be 'with us,' with the Europeans. The altruistic feeling that other people also deserve to live better, might well be driving some of the sentiments. However, the fact remains that the biggest driving force for supporting Ukraine is not to make Russia angry (even though there might be something of that in the equation), but for Lithuania to distance itself as much as possible from Russia. Not to allow Russia to get closer to 'us,' to 'our space.' Lithuanian

security discourse is construed through the desire to create some kind of buffer that would remove it from its permanent marginal zone. In that sense, both Russian and Lithuanian thinking represent zero-sum games. Here, Ukraine becomes a tool that, in the eyes of Lithuania, makes Russia weaker and less influential and makes it further and further from Lithuania – the goal which is the principal driving force behind the entire contemporary Lithuanian foreign policy.

Therefore, Lithuania invests a lot into following and participating in finding the solution to the Ukrainian crisis because it means protecting Lithuanian space, it means saving European space and it means to being listened to, respected and (maybe) finally secured.

Notes

1 The research for this article was conducted during a Marie Curie International Research Staff Exchange Scheme Fellowship within the Seventh European Community Framework Programme.

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