

A SMALL STATE IN THE ASYMMETRICAL BILATERAL RELATIONS: LITHUANIA IN LITHUANIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS SINCE 2004¹

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ABSTRACT

In this article, Lithuania's relations with Russia from 2004 to 2014 are examined. This analysis is not much of a challenge in itself: there have been no significant changes in the overall quality of the two countries' relations, no new issues of disagreement, and the countries' approaches to each other have also remained unchanged. This analysis is significant in a different way—relations with Russia motivate and induce Lithuania's entire foreign policy arena, from its strategies to the country's everyday debates. Understanding Lithuania's relations with Russia leads to insights regarding Lithuania's geopolitical thinking and how Lithuania represents itself. Therefore, in this article, the goal is to demonstrate that an analysis of Lithuanian-Russian relations since 2004 not only explains Lithuanian foreign policy, but also reveals an enduring and negative stability in bilateral relations notwithstanding constant turbulence and quarrels.

Keywords: Lithuania's foreign policy, Lithuanian-Russian relations, regional security, energy security, politics of history, Kaliningrad Oblast.

INTRODUCTION

Relations with Russia are among the most problematic of Lithuania's bilateral foreign relations. In this article, I examine Lithuania's relations with Russia since the spring of 2004, when Lithuania reached two foreign policy milestones: membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and in the European Union (EU). In the spring of 2004, Lithuania's foreign policy makers were openly optimistic about the country's geopolitical environment and the possibility of engaging with Russia in various European and transatlantic relationships (Valionis, 2004; Agreement of Political Parties, 2004). The implicit security assumptions of these foreign policy makers was that Lithuania would not have to worry as much about national security and that the country's membership in these two powerful institutions would

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make its international relations problems easier to solve. These wishful assumptions proved to be unfounded. Russia was, and remains, Lithuania's most hostile neighbour. As of 2015, Russia has proven alarming and difficult for Lithuania to trust.

An evaluation and analysis of Russia and Lithuania's relations over the last ten years, from 2004 to 2014, is not much of a challenge in itself: there have been no significant changes in the overall quality of the two countries' relations, no *new* issues of disagreement, and the countries' approaches to each other have also remained unchanged. But this analysis of bilateral relations is significant in a different way—relations with Russia motivate and induce Lithuania's entire foreign policy arena, from its strategies to the country's everyday debates. An understanding of Lithuanian-Russian relations leads to a better understanding of Lithuania's geopolitical thinking and how Lithuania represents itself.

Therefore, in this article, my goal is to demonstrate that an analysis of Lithuanian-Russian relations since 2004 not only explains Lithuanian foreign policy, but also reveals an enduring and negative stability in bilateral relations notwithstanding constant turbulence and quarrels. How have Lithuanian-Russian relations remained tense for a decade?

The article proceeds in five sections. First, I review the research and the topics defining bilateral foreign relations between Russia and Lithuania until 2004. Next, I identify the most significant events in the two countries' relations during the decade spanning from 2004 to 2014. These significant events reveal dominant relation stabilization practices. Further, I focus on the nexus between history and energy in the two country's relations. I also analyse images of Russia in Lithuania. Finally, I evaluate the impact of the decade's principal structural change—Lithuania's EU and NATO membership—on Lithuania-Russia relations, by showing how instability stabilizes Lithuanian-Russian relations. Specific political practices establish and enable a stable structure of Lithuanian-Russian relations. These stabilizing political practices and the unsuccessful attempts to change them constitute the focus of this article.

1. REVIEWING, ANALYSING, AND QUESTIONING RELATIONS BETWEEN LITHUANIA AND RUSSIA

The state of Lithuanian-Russian relations until 2004 has been extensively analysed by Gediminas Vitkus (2006a; 2006b). Vitkus analysed the first fifteen years of independence by identifying the era's main problems: negotiations regarding the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Lithuania, issues of Russian military transit across Lithuania to and from Kaliningrad, and disputes concerning NATO enlargement, among other issues. Vitkus emphasized the complicated nature of the bilateral foreign relations between Lithuania and Russia and was sceptical about the possibility of normalizing these relations. During Lithuania's early independence in the 1990s, it was difficult to imagine that Russia, which was perceived as Lithuania's major threat, could disappear from Lithuania's political consciousness and political practices. The only solution Vitkus proposed was that Lithuania, like all small countries in contemporary global politics, should pursue its goals by relying on international support. In

other words, he proposed that Lithuania constantly internationalize its bilateral relations (Jakniūnaitė, 2008). The historical analysis presented in the next section shows that only this internationalization practice produced successful results.

Researchers also devoted their attention to the so-called Kaliningrad studies (Lopata, 2002). Researchers considered the impact of the Kaliningrad oblast of the Russian Federation on Lithuania, analysed specific problems caused by the existence of this exclave, discussed the prospects of cooperation between Russia and Lithuania, and evaluated possibilities for the two countries to engage in economic integration (Lopata, and Sirutavičius, 1999). Lithuania's relations with Kaliningrad haven't been perceived as an immediate security challenge. Despite intense and difficult negotiations regarding military transits to Kalinin grad from 1993 to 1995, (Laurinavičius, Lopata, and Sirutavičius, 2002) Kaliningrad raised more considerations regarding Lithuanian-Russian economic cooperation and interests.

The region became a security concern when Lithuania began approaching EU membership: Kaliningrad began to be seen as a tool of Russian foreign policy for interfering with Lithuania's Western integration processes (Sirutavičius, and Stanytė–Toločkienė, 2003). In this view, the issue was analysed in the context of EU-Russian (rather than Lithuanian–Russian) relations, usually with analysts concluding that Russian domestic policy decisions determine the development prospects of countries in the region (Joenniemi, et al., 2000; Stanytė–Toločkienė, 2001). Analysts concluded that Russia held the region as a “geopolitical hostage” by emphasizing the region's uniqueness while depriving the region of any practical realization of its unique qualities and paying only selective attention to Kaliningrad's problems (Lopata, 2004).

The third major field of research in Lithuania regarding Lithuania's bilateral relations with Russia focused on the nexus between Lithuania's foreign policy and identity. These analyses revealed the significant role of Russia in Lithuania's political discourse and foreign policy decisions. These studies demonstrated that Lithuanian foreign policy is defined by a dilemma of sovereignty versus integration. That is, analysts showed that Lithuania is trying to transform its anti-Eastern Europe and anti-Russian stance into a pro-Western position without giving up its traditional nation state ideal or basing its policies on an obvious, real, and constant enemy: Russia (Minitaitė, 1998; Minitaitė, 2000; Minitaitė, and Jakniūnaitė, 2001; Minitaitė, 2003).

There have been a few attempts to analyse Russia's policies and actions towards Lithuania and other Baltic States. I endeavoured to understand Russia's attitude toward the Baltic States, including Lithuania, by analysing Russia's concept of neighbourhood (Jakniūnaitė, 2007) and concluded that Russia has no clear concept of its borders, and thus its territory, which leads to a rather aggressive expansionist policy, albeit not clearly articulated, in its western neighbourhood. My study relied on a constructivist foreign policy interpretation. Laurinavičius, Motieka, and Statkus, applying the theory of geopolitical codes, claimed that Russian expansionism is inscribed in the country's geopolitical position and history; therefore, Russia “will pose a potential threat for a long time,” requiring a constant need to “take steps to neutralize them [Russian threats]” (2005, p. 304).

Up until 2004, researchers tried to describe and analyse the two countries' economic relations, and even rejoiced when these relations improved in terms of trade or transit volumes (Miškinis, 2000; Prunskienė, 2000). Others evaluated the effect of the EU's enlargement on Lithuania's foreign relations, noting an increase in Lithuania's negotiating power, especially as Lithuania's economic relationships would be shifted to the EU (Vilpišauskas, 2000). Since 2000, researchers started to pay more attention to energy security issues by analysing Russia's attempts to sustain its role in the energy sectors of its neighbouring countries and by addressing the security challenges related to Russia's more assertive policies in the energy sector (see Šatūnienė, 2003; Smith, 2004).

Several Russian experts in a special issue of *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* (2000) focused on the issue of bilateral relations between Russia and Lithuania. When these experts tried to explain Russia's attitude, they emphasized the challenges of an enlarged EU and NATO; and in this context they discussed Lithuanian "politicking." These Russian experts seemed to resent a (then) new law on compensations for damages suffered during Lithuania's Soviet occupation. Uncompromising Lithuanian politics were often mentioned by the Russian guest authors, but they made few comments on the politics of Russia except to emphasize the goodwill of both parties. (Trenin, 2000; Moshes, 2000; Avdeev, 2000; Kretinin, 2000; also Karabeshkin, 2003). These Russian-authored *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* articles did not present a detailed analysis of Lithuanian-Russian relations, but instead expressed opinions on the current matters.

Since 2004, there has been very little general or comprehensive research of Lithuanian-Russian relations. Two articles provided a preliminary overview of Lithuania's independence period, but the authors of these articles paid little attention to more recent times (Jakniūnaite, and Vilpishauskas, 2012; Jakniūnaitė, Karabeshkin, Vilpišauskas, 2015). Despite the lack of general research on Lithuania-Russian relations since 2004, specific aspects of the two countries' bilateral relations have been examined, including topics such as: identity analysis, energy security, memory politics, and EU issues relevant to Russia. Insights from these studies are referenced in the discussions of specific topics of Lithuania-Russian relations in this article. The results of the studies analysing the bilateral relations of Lithuania and Russia from Lithuania's independence until 2004 are summarized below.

- 1) Lithuanian researchers seldom defined relations between Lithuania and Russia as *friendly* or *cooperative*—with the exception of some interpretations by Russian experts. Yet there is little discussion about or hopeful predictions that Lithuanian-Russian relations will improve.
- 2) The relationship between Russia and Lithuania is asymmetrical. Because of the disparity between Russia and Lithuania's sizes and influences, Lithuania cannot change its relations with Russia alone. But most analysts expected that the relationship between the two would change as a result of Lithuania's membership in international organizations. On the one hand, Russia will "reconcile" with Lithuania's NATO membership; on the other hand, the EU (or even NATO) will improve Lithuania's negotiating power, as illustrated during the negotiations over Kaliningrad's civil transit and visa regime.

- 3) The political elite of Lithuania, and most analysts, consider Russia a major security threat and support this claim with historical analogies and by referencing Russia's foreign policies, domestic policies, and public statements.
- 4) Russia is the significant and dangerous Other in Lithuania, and as such plays an important and sometimes decisive role in Lithuania's domestic political debates.

As I focus in this article on the period after 2004, the four previous conclusions raise the following questions:

- 1) In what sense is it possible to talk about the development of Lithuanian-Russian bilateral relations? For example, how are they changing or staying unstably stable?
- 2) How does Lithuania's EU and NATO membership influence the asymmetry of Lithuanian-Russian relations?
- 3) What role does Russia play in Lithuanian domestic politics? What do Lithuanian representations of Russia reveal about Lithuanian identity and how do these representations transform or influence Lithuania's domestic political practices?

2. DEFINING EVENTS IN LITHUANIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS FROM 2004 TO 2014

The first step in analysing the decade of bilateral relations is to identify the main events and phenomenon that define these relations. My review of the defining events in Lithuanian-Russian relations since 2004 is based on visible criteria; it includes the topics and events that Lithuanian media and foreign policy decision makers discussed most. The review is presented as a chronological narrative and covers the points necessary for understanding the later section, which focuses on energy and memory in Lithuanian-Russian relations.

In the beginning of the decade spanning from 2000 to 2010, analysts were quite optimistic about Lithuanian-Russian relations. After a tense 2002 to 2003 period, when Russia openly opposed NATO memberships for the Baltic States (EU integration seemed less alarming to Russian politicians) (Jakniūnaitė, 2007), a relative calm ensued. In the beginning of 2004, Lithuania was preparing for EU and NATO accession and Russia was readying for presidential elections. In addition, in Lithuania and in the other Baltic states, there was a common belief that after the Euro-Atlantic integration, relations with Russia would improve; that it would be possible for the Baltic states to constructively cooperate with Russia and the EU (Ehin, and Berg, 2009). This belief is illustrated by the May, 1 2004 *Seimas* [Lithuanian parliament] foreign policy resolution to "actively participate in the formation of a mutually beneficial EU-Russian partnership" (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2004). At the time, Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Antanas Valionis told diplomats residing in Lithuania, "Our goal . . . [is] Russian openness to Euro-Atlantic cooperation... it is necessary to promote and actively participate in the European Union and NATO's dialogue with Russia. This dialogue is beneficial to Lithuania, but it must be transparent and based on common values. On this matter, we must continue with a pragmatic and cautious neighbourhood policy" (Valionis, 2004). A similar idea about Russia's cooperation with the EU and NATO—based on common values—reappeared in the agreement among Lithuanian political parties on foreign policy (Agreement of Political Parties, 2004).

Ideas of promoting cooperation with Russia were quickly neutralized by the 2004 presidential elections in Ukraine. Disputes and disagreements over the transparency of the 2004 Ukrainian elections later led to the country's Orange Revolution. Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus, who had started his second term that summer, was actively involved in these events and, with Polish President Aleksandr Kwaśniewski, worked to resolve the Ukrainian electoral crisis (DELFI, 2004b). Some Lithuanian policy makers regarded the Orange Revolution as yet another sign of Russia's relentless meddling in the affairs of neighbouring countries and another reason for Lithuanian vigilance regarding Russia's actions and motives.

So, the very end of 2004 marks the beginning of a period of open confrontation between Lithuania and Russia, embodied mainly through Adamkus's categorically critical stance towards Russia. The critique was also closely related to Lithuania's involvement in EU neighbourhood politics and the country's support of integrationist policies in Eastern European countries.

Next, in the beginning of 2005, the Lithuanian public debated whether their president should attend Moscow's anniversary celebration of the victory over Nazi Germany. The president decided not to attend, but these debates indicate that it was almost impossible to talk of significantly improving relations with Russia. Lithuanians interpreted suggestions of reconciliation as a sign of allowing Russia to "become closer to us" or permitting Russia to "embrace us." For many, reconciliation signified a closeness with Russia that could only lead to Lithuania returning to Russia's sphere of influence (Jurgelevičiūtė, 2007; Janeliūnas, 2005). Such disputes also revealed the extent to which historical politics and incompatible national historical narratives have become an integral part of the bilateral relations between Lithuania and Russia.

Russia's aggressive foreign policy, domestic problems, and efforts to centralize its political regime dashed its neighbours' hopes for better relations with Russia. Lithuanian and the entire central eastern European region's politicians were impacted by Russian President Vladimir Putin's statement on May 2005; Putin announced that the Soviet Union's collapse was the greatest geopolitical disaster of the twentieth century (Putin, 2005). This statement established a direct relationship between Russia and the Soviet Union and provided a vocabulary for Russian discourse about the country's Soviet past. Putin's statement was a clear demonstration that Russia acknowledged its historical responsibility for the past (or at least its legacy). Putin was obviously not inclined to repeat that disaster he deemed the dissolution of the USSR to be; during his second term, Putin was asserting an image of Russia as a strong and great country, worthy of significant respect. Lithuania's policy makers registered these moves and stumbled through bilateral relations with Russia.

In 2006, Lithuanian-Russian relations revolved around the sale of the Mažeikių nafta² oil refinery. Russia pressured the Lithuanian government to sell shares of Mažeikių nafta to Russia's second largest oil company, Lukoil, arguing that this would ensure oil supplies to Lithuania. During the negotiations in July, Russian oil supplied to Lithuania through the Druzhba pipeline was suspended. According to an official statement, the supply suspension

² On September, 1 2009 Mažeikių nafta changed its name to ORLEN Lietuva, but is referred to as Mažeikių nafta throughout this article.

was due to a technical error. Despite the official statement of an error in the supply system, Lithuanians interpreted the suspension as Russian political pressure and a Russian attempt to prove that Mažeikių nafta would not last without Russia.³

Eventually, at the end of 2006, PKN Orlen, a Polish company, became Mažeikių nafta's major shareholder.⁴ The oil tensions of 2006 revealed another essential part of Lithuanian-Russian bilateral relations: Lithuania's almost absolute dependence on imported Russian oil and gas. Consequently, Lithuanians experienced persistent uncertainty and were keenly aware that Russia could manipulate their energy dependence for political reasons. Shortly after the 2006 oil supply suspension, Lithuanians' energy fears were heightened by gas supply crises in Ukraine in 2006, 2007, and 2009. Lithuania's situation of almost absolute dependence on Russia for oil and gas was soon termed the energy security issue and has become an integral part of Lithuania's foreign and security policies.⁵

Furthermore, 2006 was also the year when Lithuania could, for the first time, test the possibility of engaging with Russia as a part of the EU—in some sense Lithuanian-Russian relations had become a part of the Russian-EU relationship. On the one hand, this meant Lithuania needed to adopt general EU positions; on the other hand, it gave Lithuania the possibility to take part in the formation of those positions. Lithuania's role in forming EU-Russian relations became apparent in 2006 when Poland vetoed negotiations over a mandate to draft a new EU-Russia partnership and cooperation agreement. Lithuania supported Poland's veto by including the condition that cooperation between the EU and Russia would depend on Russia's compliance with democratic values. Thus, for the first time, Lithuania's bilateral concerns over Russia's unfriendliness were manifestly transferred to the EU. Later strategies to Europeanize Lithuania's relations with Russia have been increasingly applied and have been particularly successful in the energy sector.

Continuing with this strategy, in April 2008 Lithuania vetoed another revision of the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement of 1997. The start of the negotiations on the new agreement required Russia to renew the Druzhba pipeline oil supply, join the EU Energy Charter, resolve conflicts in Georgia and Moldova, and cooperate in the legal proceedings and extraditions relating to the killing of Lithuanian civilians by Soviet troops in Medininkai in 1991 and at the Vilnius television tower on January 13, 1991. After these conditions were included in the negotiation mandate, Lithuania withdrew its veto (Damulytė, 2008). As of 2015, no new partnership agreement exists (many no longer contemplate this possibility anymore). By demonstrating a lack of confidence in Russia, Lithuania certainly got Russia's attention at the EU level in 2008. Though Lithuania's stance was not startling news, (Lithuania's scepticism of Russia was not surprising) it revealed that Lithuania, called the "New Cold Warrior" in 2007 (Leonard, and Popescu, 2007), intended to live up to this moniker throughout the decade.

³ Oil supplies to Lithuania through the Druzhba pipeline were not renewed by October 2015.

⁴ It must be acknowledge that the deal was not just political: PKN Orlen's proposed price for Mažeikių nafta was twice that offered by Lukoil. Some speculated that the low price offered by Lukoil was influenced by their belief that their competitors would retreat because of uncertainty over the oil supply (Grigas, 2013).

⁵ The first time Lithuania's dependency on one energy importer (Russia) was called a threat was in the 2007 National Energy Strategy (Resolution on the Approval of the National Energy Strategy, 2007).

The year 2008 was a significant for yet another reason: the Georgian-Russian conflict took place in August 2008. Consequently, Georgia lost *de facto* two of its regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In October, Lithuania's political parties agreed on their foreign policy goals for the next four-year cycle. There was an evident change in the rhetoric of the new agreement, which was clearly affected by the events in Georgia. Their agreement stated, "After the conflict in the South Caucasus, there is a need for a new comprehensive analysis of the current geopolitical situation in the region and of the challenges to Lithuanian security and foreign policy" (Agreement of Political Parties, 2008). The agreement also mentioned the need for "more effective policies of NATO, the EU, and other international organizations with regard to the Russian Federation," and "... that challenges arising out of the Russian Federation government's policies should be properly considered in the EU and NATO" (Agreement of Political Parties, 2008). Thus, Lithuania's ideas about a partnership with Russia and about promoting or consolidating cooperation with Russia were replaced with concerns for efficiency—there was a shift in Lithuania from a benevolent, optimistic position to a more neutral rhetoric, based on benefits and caution.

However, the West softened its stance towards Russia soon after the Georgian crises; the US even initiated its famous Russian reset policy. In Lithuania, meanwhile, President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė, elected in mid-2009, criticized Lithuania's foreign policy turn towards its Eastern neighbours. During her election campaign and during her first term, Grybauskaitė talked of the need for a pragmatic and constructive approach towards Russia, based on national interests and balance, "The ultimate foreign policy goal of any country is to defend their country's interests, maintain its dignity, and treat all neighbours with respect. So far, Lithuania behaves like a state lacking self confidence by trying to befriend some and ignoring others . . . I have our Eastern policy in mind, a policy of a former Soviet territory giving very little attention to Western Europe and European Union countries" (Lrytas.lt, 2009).

For some time in 2009, there were no harsher utterances against Russia. Europe and the United State's relations with Russia were rather quickly normalized—although Lithuania was rather sceptical of the quick renewal of Russian-NATO relations in 2009. Grybauskaitė even surprised a number of foreign policy observers by calling Russian President Dmitry Medvedev at the end of the summer of 2009. Theirs was the first official conversation between the Lithuanian and Russian presidents in eight years, since 2001. However, their conversation focused on general and rather technical topics such as transport companies and exporters and the broader prospects of the economic and cultural cooperation (President of the Republic of Lithuania, 2009).

There were two more official meetings between leaders of both countries in 2010. In February, Grybauskaitė met with the Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in Helsinki "to develop a constructive dialogue" (President of the Republic of Lithuania, 2010). Lithuanian Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius met with Putin in March and the two engaged in talks about energy (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2010a) and historical research (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2010b), but did not reach any concrete agreements. These two meetings demonstrated, again, that two countries' leaders have little to constructively discuss:

problems between the two countries were not meaningfully discussed. The two parties only recognized their different positions.

Thus, from 2009 to 2010, meetings or conversations did not bring about any significant change in Lithuanian-Russian relations. It seems that 2009 was the calmest year between Russia and Lithuania, despite the periodic export hindrances on the Russian border that autumn (Dambrauskaitė, Kasčiūnas, and Sirijos Gira, 2009).⁶ The fact that the Lithuanian government was intent on solving the financial and economic crisis probably detracted Lithuania's attention from foreign policy matters, including events in and relations with Russia.

After 2010 it was clear that bilateral relations between Lithuania and Russia would not change and that Lithuania's position towards Russia—both at the presidential and foreign affairs ministerial levels—would not differ much from that of former Adamkus. Yet, in October 2012, the Social Democratic Party of Lithuania (LSDP), which had the right to form a government coalition, declared before the elections that it “would reset relations with Russia” and “look forward to the future” (LSDP, 2012). The LSDP's appointed Foreign Affairs Minister, Linas Linkevičius, stated, “We will not be advocates of Russia in Europe, but we cannot assume the prosecutor's role as well. I see this ‘reset’... by no means as a revolution or an intention to change everything, but more as a natural ‘test’ of the system” (Veidas, 2013). Neither a systemic review nor any positive test of Lithuania's relationship with Russia, however, occurred that year, or later.

In 2013, Lithuanian leaders intended to prepare for the presidency of the EU Council and to devote the second half of the year to the presidency itself. The most important event of 2013 in Lithuania should have been the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit and the signing of the Association Agreement with Ukraine. However, days before the scheduled November 2013 meeting, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich cancelled the signing. Ukrainians protested in response to Yanukovich's decision. The protests turned into what was later called Euromaidan, mass rallies of dissent against Yanukovich's decision, but also against the Ukrainian government.

Throughout 2013, Russia was an important player in the negotiations between Ukraine and the EU. Eventually, Russia pressured Ukraine not to sign the Association Agreement and persuaded Ukraine to join Russia's Eurasian Union. In the eyes of Russians, the events in Ukraine in 2014—including a government changeover and Yanukovich's flight from the country—gave Russia the right to interfere in Ukrainian affairs, first by occupying Crimea and later by supporting separatist rebels in south-eastern Ukraine.

In 2014 Lithuanian politicians openly and harshly criticised Russia's actions, particularly Russia's involvement in Ukraine. In the Lithuanian political parties' agreement regarding the strategic guidelines of Lithuanian foreign, security, and defence policies adopted in March 2014, the parties expressed concern “over the challenges presented by Russia's aggressive policy to the security of the world, Europe, and especially our region” (Agreement of Political Parties, 2014). In the agreement the parties also declared that “Russian revisionist policy in

⁶ Since then similar problems at the border have become periodic, and were prominent in 2013 and in the autumn of 2014 Russian officials have attributed the problems in all of these cases to technical difficulties.

central and Eastern Europe presents a major and prevailing foreign policy challenge and this Russian policy poses the main threat to Lithuanian national security” (Agreement of Political Parties, 2014). By the end of 2014, Grybauskaitė categorically called Russia a “terrorist state” (BNS, 2014). In 2014 there was more talk of military defence, with discussions focused on the probability of a Russian attack and the strength of NATO’s commitment to defend Baltic States.

This overview of events and processes demonstrates that bilateral relations between Lithuania and Russia deteriorated: recurring, and routinized problems were constantly restated and even seemingly new incidents were actually related to the same problematic categories that have defined Lithuanian-Russian relations for more than a decade. The overview also provides a sense of how the tensions between Russia and Lithuania came to be regarded as normal among Lithuanian foreign policy players.

Thus, this part of the article answered the first set of questions proposed previously: *In what sense is it possible to talk about the development of Lithuanian-Russian bilateral relations? How are they changing or staying unstably stable?* The events in Lithuanian-Russian bilateral relations are new manifestations of the same problem structures; in this sense, they stay stable—though stability is achieved through uncertainty surrounding where and how new annoyances will emerge. This condition is constituted by Lithuania’s approach towards Russia, but also by their asymmetrical relationship and Lithuania’s less advantageous position. In the next part of this article, I analyse how Lithuania’s foreign policy has attempted to change this structural condition.

3. INTERNATIONALIZING BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN LITHUANIA AND RUSSIA

The main structural or contextual change for Lithuanian foreign policy after 2004 was a structural and institutional change: Lithuania’s memberships in the EU and NATO created not only new constraints, but also provided new tools and possibilities. These memberships allowed Lithuania to develop its bilateral relations through multilateral frameworks by using its new institutional possibilities, procedures, and capabilities. Lithuania, in its relations with Russia, had been trying to maximize this internationalizing strategy. In this part of the article, I reveal how and when Lithuania’s internationalizing strategy works by analysing two main challenges for Lithuania’s bilateral relations with Russia: energy politics disagreements and differing politics of history.

3.1 Energy Security

During the entire decade spanning from 2004 to 2014, Lithuania’s dependency on Russian oil and gas was almost absolute. After the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant closed at the end of 2009, all of Lithuania’s gas came from Russia and Belarus.⁷ As early as 2000, Russia was beginning to use its economy for political purposes—a so-called economization of foreign

⁷ See National Energy Strategy 2007 (Resolution on the Approval of the National Energy Strategy, 2007) and the National Energy Independence Strategy 2012 (Resolution on the Approval of the National Independence Energy Strategy, 2012).

policy—by emphasizing the defence of its economic interests and using its big companies (particularly its energy companies) in foreign policy games (Bugajski, 2004).

Lithuania's worries about the stability of energy imports from Russia increased when Russia cited technical difficulties and suspended oil imported through its Druzhba pipeline in the summer of 2006. The periodic Russian gas crises in Ukraine and Europe in 2006, 2007, and 2009 also intensified Lithuania's energy security worries. Also, from 2006 to 2010, Lithuania lived through energy shocks when the price of gas rose from 85 USD/tcm in 2005 to 345 USD/tcm in 2008 (Balmaceda, 2013, p. 242). This price increase was not due to market tendencies alone; it was also due to political disagreements between Lithuania and Russia.

Until 2010, Lithuania was the country gas transited through on its way from Russia to Kaliningrad and this gave Lithuania some leverage in disagreements regarding energy imports. But this transit card lost its value when Nordstream, an offshore gas pipeline started functioning. Extending from Russia to Germany through the Baltic Sea, Nordstream now provides gas to Kaliningrad, making the exclave almost entirely independent from Lithuanian infrastructure for its energy imports.

Lithuania's increasing fears regarding energy dependency were reflected in its official documents. In 2007, Lithuania's National Energy Strategy stated that Lithuania's dependency on one gas and oil supplier—Russia—is a national security threat and the new 2012 version of the strategy was called the National Energy Independence Strategy (Resolution on the Approval of the National Energy Strategy, 2007; Resolution on the Approval of the National Independence Energy Strategy, 2012). In this way, from 2007 to 2008, Lithuania's energy dependency is more and more assertively regarded as a security concern and the most urgent and the state's most important problem. Around this time, *energy* became integral to Lithuania's foreign policies.

Several projects have been started or implemented to reduce Lithuania's energy insecurity, including: a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal in Klaipėda, plans to build electricity interconnectors with Sweden and Poland, and plans for a new nuclear power plant in Visaginas—though by the autumn of 2015, there was still no decision as to whether the plant would be started at all. Not all of Lithuania's energy projects are directly connected to Lithuanian-Russian relations, but all are about increasing energy security, which allows Lithuania to distance itself from Russia as much as possible.

The first time Lithuania tried to address its problems with Russia as an EU member state, with increased power to pressure Russia, was in 2006 when Lithuania was trying to sell Mažeikių nafta and solve the Druzhba oil pipeline problem. Prompted to act by Lithuania and Poland, President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso questioned the security of oil supplies to Mažeikių nafta during a meeting between the EU and Russia on May 2007. Lithuania's 2008 veto of the negotiation mandate between the EU and Russia was also related to the cessation of the Druzhba pipeline. Although the EU paid attention to this requirement and included the problem in its list of questions to be discussed, no decisions or agreement was reached and the negotiations were generally unsuccessful. But Lithuania's 2008 veto mattered—it became absolutely obvious that Lithuania had almost no independent leverage in its bilateral relations with Russia and could only influence Russia through the EU.

Lithuania was more successful in internalizing (or Europeanizing) its energy relations with Russia in its conflict with Russian gas supplier Gazprom, which, since 2010, is Lithuania's only gas supplier. In 2009 Lithuania decided to fully implement the third EU energy package to unbundle supply, transit, and distribution in the Lithuanian gas sector. Lithuania sought to restructure the gas market to reduce Gazprom's influence as much as possible and hoped to require Gazprom to refuse ownership of gas pipelines in Lithuania. The details of the implementation of the package are bureaucratic and technical and the dispute is actually about the commercial interests and resolutions between a large company and a state. However, because of Gazprom's close ties to Russia's ruling elite, this conflict played a significant role in Lithuanian-Russian bilateral relations.

In January 2011, Lithuania issued a formal complaint with the European Commission claiming that Gazprom was abusing its dominant position. In September 2012, the European Commission decided to investigate whether the company "might be hindering competition in Central and Eastern European gas markets, in breach of EU antitrust rules" (European Commission, 2012). The fight with Gazprom started in Lithuanian courts, which prompted Gazprom to go the Stockholm Court of Arbitration to "bar the Lithuanian courts to make [from making] a decision on a case that will investigate the operations of Lithuanian Gas" (Lithuania Tribune, 2011). By October 2012, Lithuania initiated its case against Gazprom in the same court in Stockholm. The disagreement was about an estimated 5 billion litas (approximately 1,450 billion euros) in overpayments made to Gazprom for gas supplied to Lithuania in accordance with bilateral agreements (BNS, 2012d).

Gazprom's response was indirect: Lithuania did not receive any discount for the gas and in 2013 was paying the highest gas price in the EU, 540 USD/tcm (Balmaceda, 2013, p. 253). This court saga continued until the end of 2015 when the object of the disagreements eventually disappeared. In 2014, the Lithuanian gas sector was divided and Gazprom was practically forced to leave the Lithuanian gas distribution system. Gazprom is still pressured, though, at the EU level.

Thus, we can see that by applying its internalization strategy—the proper use of the EU's acts and regulations, and knowledge of the institutional game—to its energy questions, Lithuania achieved relatively successful results. While Lithuania's internalization strategy did not improve or change its relations with Russia, Lithuania did manage to reach some of its goals, which most probably would have been unattainable otherwise.

3.2 Politics of History

A different strategy was applied to Lithuania's discussions over historical questions—instead of leveraging EU membership and institutional support, Lithuania formed partnerships and built or joined coalitions with like-minded EU member states.

Lithuania's disagreements with Russia over history focused mainly on two issues: 1) Russia's acknowledgement, or lack of acknowledgement, of the Soviet occupation of Lithuania and Lithuania's demand for Russian compensation for damages caused during the occupation; and 2) Lithuania's denouncement of the crimes of Stalinism and of Soviet symbols.

Lithuania's efforts to internationalize the first issue were unsuccessful; but Lithuania achieved a favourable, though still symbolic, result by joining a coalition to address the second issue.

Lithuania and Russia's positions regarding the issue of Lithuania's Soviet occupation and Lithuania's demand for compensation for damages suffered during the occupation are clear. Lithuania holds that as it was occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940, Russia—as the Soviet Union's successor state—should officially apologize to and financially compensate Lithuania. Lithuania put these two demands on its political agenda almost immediately after declaring independence from the USSR in 1990. Lithuania then legitimized its claims in a referendum in June 14, 1992, demanding “The immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the troops of the former USSR, which by the time of the referendum belongs to Russia, from the territory of Lithuania in 1992 and compensation for the damages to Lithuania.” Of Lithuania's registered voters, 69 per cent—and 92.6 per cent those who voted—agreed with the referendum proposition (Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania, 1992). Lithuanian negotiators unsuccessfully tried to raise this compensation issue with Russia while negotiating the removal of Russian (former Soviet) troops in 1993. After some pause, the issue became an active part of Lithuania's agenda in 2000. In June of that year, the *Seimas* followed Vytautas Landsbergis' initiative and adopted the Law on Compensation of Damage Resulting from the Occupation by the USSR (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2000), according to which the Lithuanian government was obliged to calculate its occupation-related damages and start compensation negotiations with Russia⁸.

On a bureaucratic level, the process of calculating damages and negotiating compensation stayed alive—calculations were provided and the issue was periodically raised in various intergovernmental meetings—but on a political level, it was not emphasized. The LSDP tried to avoid the issue entirely. The domestic debates about this issue intensified during discussions on whether President Adamkus should go to Moscow to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Victory day in 2005. The conservative the Homeland Union—Lithuanian Christian Democrats Party (TS-LKD) usually opposed raising the compensation issue, but since becoming a part of the ruling coalition in 2008, the Party changed its position and supported seeking compensation for occupation related damages at the end of its term (BNS, 2012c; Karaliūnaitė, 2012).

For Russia, all the talk of compensation and occupation appeared to be a Lithuanian effort to complicate its bilateral relations with Lithuania. According to Russia's historical interpretation, Lithuania was not occupied by the USSR; Lithuania was voluntarily incorporated into the Soviet Union. Thus, Russia immediately eliminated Lithuania's efforts to even start a

⁸ Article 2, paragraphs 3 and 4 of the law indicate that the Government of the Republic of Lithuania has to: “prior to November 1, 2000 appeal to the Russian Federation for the compensation of the damage caused during the period of the USSR occupation, submitting the calculations of damage, also inform the United Nations Organisation, the Council of Europe and the European Union about this, and constantly seek the support of these Organisations and the Member States thereof when solving the issues of the compensation of the USSR occupation damage to Lithuania,” and “initiate negotiations and constantly seek that the Russian Federation compensate to the Lithuanian people and the State of Lithuania for the damage caused by the USSR occupation.” (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2000)

discussion on the issue. For Russia, the case was closed: this issue should not exist neither on a political nor on an expert level, a position Putin reasserted in 2005.

Please take a look at the resolution passed by the Congress of People's Deputies in 1989, where it is written, black on white, that the Congress of People's Deputies denounces the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and considers it legally invalid. It did not reflect the opinion of the Soviet people but was the personal affair of Stalin and Hitler. How can we be more clear and precise on this point? Or would you rather that we repeated these words every year? What do you think, what more can we say? We think that this question is closed. I will not come back to it. We expressed our view once and that is enough (President of Russia, 2005).

Thus, not only are the positions of Lithuania and Russia in total opposition regarding the Soviet occupation of Lithuania and consequent issues, it is hard for Lithuania to get international support for its compensation demands. There were no similar legal precedents; besides, no other former Soviet republic or so-called Eastern bloc country has demanded compensation for damages suffered during the occupation (Jurgelevičiūtė, 2006; Jurgelevičiūtė, 2012). Understandably, it is unlikely that Russia will offer Lithuania concessions—developments in Lithuania's favour would open a Pandora's box for Russia. Thus, in recent times, the occupation issue has become more of a domestic issue—simply a matter of “politicking,” not a problem likely to be resolved constructively.

Central European countries' (CEE) efforts (especially those of Poland and the Czech Republic, Lithuanian representatives joined later) to start discussions about the crimes of Stalinism were more successful than Lithuania's attempts to receive compensation for damages incurred during the Soviet occupation. The goal of the CEE countries was to criminalize the period of Stalin's rule and condemn denials of Stalinist crimes, much as the denials of Nazi crimes are condemned. Lithuania cannot claim any exceptional merit for the results of these efforts, but its representatives joined a variety of initiatives. For example, Landsbergis joined the 2008 Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism, which proposed commemorating August 23 as a European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism (Roszkowski et al., 2008). The proposal was quickly supported by the European Parliament (European Parliament, 2008). However, a 2010 report written by the European Commission, *The Memory of the Crimes Committed by Totalitarian Regimes in Europe*, stated that the differing positions of the member states on the issue made it impossible to reach any agreement at the EU level (European Commission 2010).

These declarations and decisions are mostly symbolic. Discussions on history at the EU level are developing very discreetly and with a lot of consideration. Still, the aforementioned actions angered Russia and Russia tried to discredit and respond to them with its own initiatives in the international frameworks available, such as OSCE and the UN General Assembly. For example, Russia pushes yearly resolutions in the UN General Assembly regarding the “celebration of Nazism” in the Baltic States. Overall, the victory over Nazi Germany is one of the most important historical events of the twentieth century for Russia. This victory is now a sacral part of Russia's contemporary identity, just as the Soviet occupation of Lithuania is integral

to Lithuania's contemporary identity. So, any comparisons of the Soviet regime with Nazi regime are taboo in Russia and likely will continue to be for a long time. So, virtual successes in differing historical narratives are relative and without a clear winner for the time being, even if there are a few allies and friends on Lithuania's side.

4. MEASURING THE PRESENCE OF RUSSIA IN LITHUANIA

One of the defining features of Lithuanian foreign policy is acceptance of the fateful fact that Lithuania is close to Russia, a neighbour that poses a constant threat to Lithuania. The entire 2004 to 2014 decade was marked, directly and indirectly, by this constant reminder of Russia's proximity. Despite the countries' (not always constructive) efforts to communicate, Lithuania has to constantly remember that it cannot trust Russia and that Russia was, and will likely remain, the main threat to Lithuanian security. This condition necessitates an analysis of Lithuania's internal perceptions, representations, and debates about Russia in Lithuania. Thus, in this part of the article, I strive to answer two questions: 1) How present is Russia in Lithuania? And, 2) what kind of Russia does Russia's presence in Lithuania represent? To answer these questions, I analysed Lithuanian opinion polls, party and political divisions in Lithuania, and Lithuanian representations of Russia.

A review of opinion polls provides one way of revealing Lithuanian perceptions of a constant and contextual Russian threat in Lithuania. Unfortunately, periodic and comparable opinion polls about Lithuanians' attitudes regarding Lithuanian foreign policy and its bilateral relations with Russia do not exist and I cannot speculate about changes in Lithuanians' perceptions and beliefs regarding this matter. Publicly accessible polls are sporadic, cannot be compared, and do not allow statistically significant inferences to be made about Lithuanians' opinions about Russia. Hence, I analysed opinion polls from a different angle and directed my attention to the questions pollsters asked and the answers the public gave. From this angle, the polls reveal a lot about the political agenda in Lithuania and the steering of this agenda. A summary of the relevant opinion polls is provided in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Opinion polls about Russia or relations with Russia conducted in Lithuania from 2004 to 2014

Date	Pollster	Results
2004	Spinter (DELFI, 2004a)	Russian politics are not friendly towards Lithuania: 53% I agree with the politics of the government regarding relations with Russia: 57%
2006	Vilmorus and TSPMI (Ramonaitė, Maliukevičius, and Degutis, 2007)	Russia is a threat: 60%
2009	Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, 2009)	The influence of Russia is good: 22% The influence of Russia is bad: 39% (For comparison: the influence of the EU is good: 62%) Lithuania's dependence on Russian energy resources is concerning: 61%. Russia can become a trusted ally (of Lithuania): 18%

2011	Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, 2011)	Respondents that look at Russia favourably: 53% Respondents that look at Russia unfavourably: 42% (for comparison: participants with favourable view towards the US: 73% and participants with a favourable view towards the EU: 78%)
2011	Vilmorus (Elta, 2011)	Respondents that noticed positive changes in bilateral relations between Lithuania and Russia: 41% The most important issue in Lithuania and Russia's relations is energy security: 53% The most important issue in Lithuania and Russia's relations is respect and equality between two countries: 46%
2011 November	Spinter and DELFI (Černiauskas, 2012)	It is important to have cheap electricity and gas, even if it would mean depending on Russia for energy: 62.9% It is important, at any price, to be free from energy dependence on Russia: 25.3% Independence is more important than the welfare of the state: 20.1% The welfare of the state is more important than independence: 70.4% Lithuania should stay silent and should not hurt bilateral trade relations with Russia: 42% Lithuania must defend democratic values and criticise human rights violations: 27.5%
2012 January	Prime Consulting and Veidas (BNS, 2012a)	The most important for issue for Lithuania is to improve relations with Russia: 37% Lithuania has to improve its cooperation with Scandinavian countries: 17.8% Lithuania has to seek the greater unity among the Baltic States: 16.6%
2012 May	Spinter and DELFI (BNS, 2012b)	Now that Vladimir Putin is the president of Russia, relations between Lithuania and Russia will not change: 48%
2014 March	Prime consulting and Veidas (Veidas, 2014)	Russia will attempt to occupy all, or part, of Lithuania: 87% (The respondents were inhabitants of Lithuania's largest cities.)
2014 March	Spinter and DELFI (Černiauskas, 2014)	Relations with Russia are mostly harmed by: (It was possible to choose more than one answer.) – economic blackmail by Russia: 46.3% – unwarranted statements by Lithuanian politicians: 43.7% – aggressive rhetoric of Russia towards Lithuania: 38.3% – historical grievances: 32% – actions of Russia against other countries: 28.4% Relations would be improved by: (It was possible to choose more than one answer.) – proper gas prices: 39.4% – a moderate stance among Lithuanian politicians: 36.9% – another person as Russian president: 25% – another person as Lithuanian president: 15% – It is impossible to improve relations: 18.3% Should Lithuania have warmer relations with Russia: – Yes, because Lithuania is too small: 32.7% – Yes, because Lithuania would receive cheap gas: 12.2% – No, because of the Ukrainian events: 37.8%
2014 September	Spinter and DELFI (Samoškaitė, 2014)	If Russia decides to use military aggression against Lithuania, Lithuania could resist without NATO for 1 to 2 days: 44.6% If Russia decides to use military aggression against Lithuania, Lithuania could resist without NATO for a week: 16%

The data reveals several trends. First, the most of the respondents perceived poor relations between Lithuania and Russia and participants perceived Russia as a threat to Lithuania. This trend is relatively consistent from 2004 to 2014. Second, many know about or have heard of Lithuania's energy dependence issues. Third, the participants' opinions, both about concessions between the two states and about the possibility for Lithuania to change its situation with Russia, vary. Up until the beginning of 2014, public opinion on the traditional dichotomy between a state's security and welfare sided with welfare. Most respondents agreed that it was better for Lithuanian to pursue a moderate foreign policy with Russia for cheaper gas (from 2008 to 2010, economic issues were more acute because of the economic crisis). Fourth, even though respondents were critical of and sceptical towards Russia, many were also critical of Lithuanian politicians and their rhetoric. Even in March 2014, after Russia occupied Crimea, a substantial number of respondents believed that Lithuania's relations with Russia could change if Lithuania would change its discourse with Russia.

Thus, opinion polls demonstrate that Lithuanians perceive bad relations between Lithuania and Russia and usually no not doubt the possibility of a Russian threat or Russian blackmailing. But, it is possible to infer from these polls that with less tension and a better geopolitical situation, much of the population would prefer to desecuritize relations with Russia. Though, some Lithuanians would insist that any softening of the relations between their country and Russia would result in an even greater threat.

The positions of Lithuania's political parties also reflect the population's division between moderate and wary positions towards Russia. At one end of this spectrum, the TS-LKD talks constantly of Russian dangers, demands that Russia deal with its history and admit its mistakes, and critiques Russia's current political regime (Tėvynės Sąjunga, 2007). At the other end of the spectrum, the LSDP and the Labour Party (DP) have adopted a more moderate or pragmatic stance towards Russia.⁹ They tend to talk about Lithuanian-Russian relations by emphasizing Lithuania's business and economic interests, while also pointing to the futility of confrontational politics (LSDP, 2012). Of course, the spectrum of opinions is varied. For example, some agree that Russia poses a threat to Lithuania, but disagree with the rhetoric parties use to discuss Lithuanian-Russian relations. Others reason that because Lithuania is a small country, it should not annoy a bigger and more powerful country.

It should be noted that in practice, throughout Lithuanian-Russian relations, a particular position towards Russia has not mattered much: no Lithuanian political party has been any more successful than another in changing Lithuania's relations with Russia. Confrontational politicians have inevitably become more moderate after becoming a part of the Lithuanian government, and so-called moderates could not be too lenient on Russia either because of opposition pressure or because they could not get anything from accommodative political strategies.

The third aspect of this discussion about Russia in Lithuania is an analysis of Russia as a rhetorical device in public discussions. For example, in July 2011 Austria caught and

⁹ There is also an openly pro-Russian leader of the Polish minority party, the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania, which in 2012 and 2013 was part of the ruling coalition. The party's influences mainly the Polish-speaking and some of the Russian-speaking populations of Lithuania.

quickly released the former commander of the Soviet Alpha Group, retired KGB Colonel Mikhail Golovatov, who was wanted in Lithuania for alleged war crimes committed in Vilnius on January 13, 1991. Lithuanians' public and very emotional discussion of Golotov's 2011 release and their condemnations of Austria made it clear that the Lithuanian public sphere's assessment of Russia is enduring: Russia is still the main Other; though the country's role has changed and it now acts in more subtly, such as by creating divisions between EU member states (Lingevičius, 2015).

The official Lithuanian security and foreign policy documents reveal the same tendencies of Lithuania's public rhetoric regarding Russia. While there is a declaration to engage Russia in mutually beneficial cooperative efforts with the West, the more noticeable theme of these documents is that Russia's action worry Lithuania. Officials are concerned about Russian-initiated integrationist projects, their efforts to further strengthen the Russian armed forces, and Russia's use of energy exports for political gain in neighbouring countries (Jurgelevičiūtė, 2015).

Many domestic political scandals in Lithuania in the ten-years of EU and NATO memberships were connected in one way or another to Lithuanian politicians' direct or vicarious relationship with Russia. Such was the case that eventually resulted in the impeachment of President Rolandas Paksas. In a variety of media stories—ranging from those about Russian born Lithuanian entrepreneur and politician Viktor Uspaskich, to investigations of State Security Department activities, to media discussions about shale gas or the new nuclear power plant, and even coverage of teachers' strikes—Russia was not only mentioned, but was presented as an active, and at least partially involved, character.

In the context of this analysis it is not relevant to prove or disprove such statements, or their veracity. Yet it is worthwhile to repeat Vitkus, who in 2006 wrote, "Self-critical debates about what kind of tactic is better for Lithuania in its relations with Russia should be seen not as something that could somehow substantially change the quality of the relations, but more as a political show which is steered by the demands of the domestic politics" (Vitkus, 2006a, p. 172). Russia is not only the significant Other in Lithuanian foreign policy, but Russia is inseparable from Lithuania's political discourse and political processes.

CONCLUSION

2014 is the year when it became absolutely clear that Lithuania took notice of an obvious and openly demonstrated Russian aggression. Thus, Lithuania's post-integration decade, from 2004 to 2014, ended quite pessimistically if considered in the context of Lithuanian-Russian relations. Now, at the end of 2015, it is still unclear how long confrontations between the West and Russia will last. A lack of resolution also persists in Ukraine where analysts can only speculate about the future of Russia's involvement in Ukraine, when concessions will be made, or how the crisis will be resolved. Thus, Lithuanian-Russian relations are poor: there is no communication at the political level; and there are very few ideas for improving relations with the current regime in Russia.

Of course, this situation was not always so dire. Even though Lithuania's independence story and its concept of statehood is inseparable from both its history with Russia and from its perception of Russia as a constant danger, there were several periods when Lithuanian politicians publicly attempted to reach agreements with Russia. On the other hand, talk of Lithuanian-Russian agreements and cooperation was, very often, insubstantial, politically expedient rhetoric formulated to create a resolute, principled position, and to demonstrate caution towards Russia.

The analysis also demonstrates substantial reasons to doubt that Russia would help improve its bilateral relations with Lithuania. Aside from several mutual infrastructural projects developed in the Kaliningrad and Lithuanian region bordering Kaliningrad, Russia has constantly demonstrated indifference, irritation, and discontent in response to Lithuanian actions or remarks. Without Russia's contribution it is impossible to change Lithuanian-Russian relations. Besides, the relations are very much influenced by the dynamics of Russian-US and Russian-EU relations, but developments in Russia's relations with the US and the EU are not usually connected to Lithuania's goals and interests, and sometimes even undermine them.

The might and danger Russia poses presents a structural inequality: Russia's relations with Lithuania are not, nor can they be, symmetrical. Lithuania can bolster its small size and relative weakness only by internationalizing its foreign relations concerns through the EU and NATO.

The main tensions between Lithuania and Russia result from conflicting interpretations of shared historical experiences, asymmetrical access to energy resources, and in their differing interpretations of regional security and of Russia's appropriate role in regional security. Lithuania and Russia's mutual distrust prevents the two countries from discussing sensitive topics and from trusting each other's motives. Their shared distrust also creates a situation in which any analysis of their bilateral relations reveals recurring problems, these battles over the main tensions mentioned above also recur in the foreign and security policies of the two states.

Thus, in this analysis of Lithuania's relations with Russia from 2004 to 2014, I presented an undefined and inconvenient status quo, which has been, more or less, acceptable to Russia. If Lithuania would care to change its relations with Russia, it must cooperate with other states or try to influence the EU and NATO's policy decisions. Any direct changes to the relationship between Lithuania and Russia can only be initiated by Russia. The extent to which changes in the Lithuanian-Russian relationship are plausible must be assessed in light of the fact that Russia—in current and historical Lithuanian statehood narratives—is the primary, and a dangerous, Other. Thus, these relations do not allow Lithuania to develop trust in Russia, neither at a political level, nor in Lithuania's public discourse. Thus Lithuanian-Russian bilateral relations have been, and will remain, in a condition of cold stability.

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