

LITHUANIAN EASTERN POLICY 2004–2014: THE ROLE THEORY APPROACH

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Abstract

The article seeks to analyse Lithuanian Eastern policy in the period of 2004–2014. As role theory is used as a theoretical approach, the decade is divided into two parts in accordance to presidential terms: 2004–2009, the second term of Valdas Adamkus and 2009–2014, the first term of Dalia Grybauskaitė. This article aims to identify both the main characteristics of Adamkus and Grybauskaitė by analysing their personal national role conceptions on Lithuanian Eastern policy and by seeking the dynamic of change that depends on other role theory dimensions – structural factors and actual role performance.

Introduction

Conceptual analysis of Lithuanian foreign policy after the collapse of the Soviet Union is often divided into four periods 1990–1994, 1994(5)–2004, 2004–2009 and 2009–ongoing¹. Different elements and priorities prevail in each of them.

The first period (1990–1994) and the second period (1994–2004) are mainly concerned with consolidation of the recently regained independence and the broadly agreed goal to get full membership in the European Union and NATO. After “anchoring itself firmly in the family of Western democracies” in 2004, Lithuania had to start “a new phase of statehood development”² or simply to fill a

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¹ For example, a similar periodization might be noted in various works of Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, Ieva Karpavičiūtė, Dovilė Jakniūnaitė and others.

² Gražina Miniotaitė, “Tapatybės paieškos Lietuvos užsienio politikoje: tarp Šiaurės ir Rytų dimensijų”, (In search of identity in contemporary Lithuanian foreign policy: between East and North

“strategic vacuum”³ in its foreign policy⁴. Due to its geopolitical situation, identity and economic interests, the new Lithuanian foreign policy agenda was shaped around Eastern policy and countries such as Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Belarus and others. Therefore, the third period (2004–2009) illustrates the euphoria of creation of the new identity⁵ and is based on the idea of regional leadership in the Eastern policy.

A significant amount of analysis by foreign policy scholars⁶ was devoted to the Eastern policy, especially when it was prioritized in the period of 2004–2008. For example, according to Laurynas Jonavičius, who applied theories of conventional constructivism and critical geopolitics, membership in the EU and NATO led to the change of the country’s “geopolitical identity”. The concept of “heading East” was driven by Lithuania’s aim to create a democratic barrier along the country’s eastern borders, material basis and changes at the structural level of the international system, which provided favourable conditions for a new Lithuanian identity. In other words, both material and ideational factors, such as construction of a new identity, were important in the process⁷.

G. Miniotaitė explained this Lithuanian foreign policy dimension via the narrative of “Europe as a normative power”. She concluded that the “regional leadership” approach was used as a narrative to develop and consolidate Lithuania’s new international identity and it was merely a nationalist replica of the EU’s narrative of “Normative Power Europe”. Yet the goals to promote the European normative model and common values to the East were not clearly defined geographically⁸. Furthermore, while the aims to “bridge” East and West and at the same time be closely involved in the North and South dimension are ambitious, they lacked sufficient grounds⁹. Galina Vaščenkaitė’s research, similarly to that of Miniotaitė,

dimensions), Kn. Lopata R., Novagrockienė J., Vitkus G. (ed), *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review*, 2004. Vilnius: Lietuvos karo akademija, p. 83

³ Laurynas Jonavičius, Geopolitical Projections of New Lithuanian Foreign Policy, *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2006/1 (17), p. 15

⁴ Inaugural address to the nation by H. E. MR. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania <<http://archyvas.lrp.lt/en/news.full/5116>>

⁵ Ieva Karpavičiūtė, “Kaita ir nacionalinė tapatybė užsienio politikos studijose: Lietuvos atvejis” (National Identity and Change in Foreign Policy Studies: The Case of Lithuania), *Political science almanac* (13), Vytautas Magnus University, p. 126

⁶ The analysis include works of Gražina Miniotaitė, Dovilė Jakniūnaitė, Tomas Janeliūnas, Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, Nortautas Stankus, Kęstutis Paulauskas, Laurynas Jonavičius and others.

⁷ Jonavičius, p. 33–36

⁸ Gražina Miniotaitė, “ES normatyvinė galia ir Lietuvos užsienio politika”, p. 13–16

⁹ Miniotaitė, “Tapatybės paieškos”, p. 95

is also aimed at re-evaluating Lithuanian foreign policy in the context of the EU's normative power and notes that Lithuanian foreign policy is stuck in the search of a niche in Europe and in its efforts to become more visible and influential in the EU¹⁰.

The fourth period, which started in 2009 and is (possibly) still ongoing, shows another shift of priorities and the search for greater pragmatism and specialization, together with the relatively new Nordic vector¹¹. It is widely agreed that Lithuanian foreign policy underwent a transformation at the end of that period. For instance, Ramūnas Vilpišauskas used interdependence and economic arguments to present the basic trends and explain the shift of priorities. According to him, Lithuania started to reflect more closely the country's actual economic interdependences in terms of investment and trade, especially in 2009, when the emphasis has been placed (as in the early 1990s) on closer cooperation with the Baltic–Nordic countries, as well as with Belarus and Russia¹².

While most of these analyses sought to explain Lithuania's foreign policy as a whole or its relation to the EU's goals, the aim of this article is to observe the trends of the country's Eastern policy in 2004–2014 and explain its place in the broader context of foreign policy goals. Eastern policy is described as Lithuania's relationship with Eastern Partnership countries (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Armenia), including other related countries, such as Poland and Russia. To observe dynamics and shifts, we apply the concept of role theory,¹³ which is rarely used in the analysis of Lithuanian foreign policy. By integrating foreign policy analysis and International Relations (IR) theory, role theory enables looking at foreign policy as an interactive process; the subject not only forms the policies, but adapts them to the expectations of other participants and is also conditioned by various structural factors.

As role theory emphasizes both individual perceptions of political elites and structural elements, we divide the period of 2004–2014 into two parts, 2004–2009

¹⁰ Galina Vaščenkaitė, "The Discrepancy of Lithuanian Foreign Policy: „Normative Deeds for the „Realpolitik“ Needs“?", *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2011, No. 25, p. 34–40

¹¹ Ieva Karpavičiūtė, "Kaita ir nacionalinė tapatybė užsienio politikos studijose: Lietuvos atvejis" (National Identity and Change in Foreign Policy Studies: The Case of Lithuania), *Political science almanac* (13), Vytautas Magnus University, p. 120–126

¹² Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, "Lithuanian Foreign Policy since EU Accession: Torn Between History and Interdependence" in Braun M., Marek D., eds., *The New Member States and the European Union. Foreign Policy and Europeanization*, London: Palgrave, 2013, p. 124

¹³ A notable exception is a work by N. Statkus and K. Paulauskas, who briefly mentioned Role theory and its applicability to Lithuania, in Nortautas Starkus, Kęstutis Paulauskas, "Foreign Policy of Lithuania: Linking Theory to Practice", *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2006, No. 17, p. 56–57.

and 2009–2014, which coincide with the terms of two different presidents, Valdas Adamkus and Dalia Grybauskaitė. To analyse the dynamics of Lithuanian Eastern policy, we seek to answer these questions: 1) What was the essence of Adamkus' and Grybauskaitė's foreign policies, by emphasizing the Eastern dimension?; and 2) what were the causes of change in their policies (analysis of factors, which contributed/determined policy change)?

1. Role theory

Even though it has been left out of mainstream discussions for long periods, role theory is now considered as an established conceptual tool of foreign policy analysis. The concept of “role”, which was initially developed in sociology and social psychology, started to gain ground in political science in the 1970s with Kalevi Holsti's seminal article *National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy*. Holsti criticised “unnecessarily crude” portrayals of national roles and “too strong preoccupation with national role types germane to the structural conditions, such as bloc, satellites, allies, and non-aligned”. Instead, the new concept followed the path of sociological and social-psychological theories about the role of the individual in society and argued that, “by providing the sense of purpose of the state in the international community, national role conceptions endow the state with a sense of selfhood and identity”¹⁴.

According to Lisbeth Aggestam, the theory adopted an inductive approach to explore what role conceptions policy-makers themselves perceived and defined¹⁵. It was indicated that the practitioners of foreign policy expressed different and more roles than the ones stipulated by academics; hence the roles may have multiple sources and may not be exclusively generated by the international distribution of power – an argument which is the backbone of the realist school of international relations.

Role theory has three core elements:

- The key is *national role conception*. In Holsti's words, “a national role conception includes the policymakers' own definitions of the general

¹⁴ Vit Benes, “Role Theory: A Conceptual Framework for the Constructivist Foreign Policy Analysis?” Third Global International Studies Conference, August 17–20, 2011. University of Porto, Portugal <http://www.wiscnetwork.org/porto2011/papers/WISC_2011-768.pdf>

¹⁵ Lisabeth Aggestam, “Role Conceptions and the Politics of Identity in Foreign Policy”. Arena Working Papers, WP 99/8, 1999 <http://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-publications/workingpapers/working-papers1999/wp99_8.htm>

kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems. It is their “image” of the appropriate orientations or functions of their state towards, or in, the external environment”¹⁶. Therefore, the key are actors, the policy-makers, who use simplified roles as “a core of a grand causal map through which [they] make sense of the world and their personal existence therein”¹⁷. As this paper will analyse a specific area of Lithuanian foreign policy, namely the Eastern policy, the single-role assumption will be used, which puts aside divisions in the political elite’s foreign policy priorities.

- Role theory also includes *role expectation*. It can be defined as “the roles that other actors of groups prescribe and expect the role-beholder to enact”. It is also important how foreign policy-makers themselves perceive role expectations arising from the others. For instance, Germany was encouraged by other countries to take a more active role in foreign and security policy after reunification¹⁸.
- The last term is *national role performance*, which encompasses the actual foreign policy behaviour in terms of decisions and actions undertaken, as well as the outcome¹⁹. Hence, it is attitudes, decisions and actions governments take vis-à-vis other actors in order to implement the role²⁰.

Holsti’s multiple case analysis provided evidence of seventeen role conceptions, “arranged along a continuum reflecting the degree of passivity or activity in foreign policy that the role conceptions seem to imply”²¹. They are the following: bastion of revolution–liberator, regional leader, regional protector, active independent, liberation supporter, defender of the faith, mediator–integrator, regional–subsystem collaborator, developer, bridge, faithful ally, independent, example, internal development, isolate, protectee, as well as other roles. While a state may have multiple national role conceptions²², the analysis of this paper is confined to Lithuania’s role in Eastern policy.

¹⁶ Holsti, “National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy”, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 3, September, 1970, p. 245–246

¹⁷ Chih–yu Shih, “National Role Conception as Foreign Policy Motivation: The Psycho-cultural Bases of Chinese Diplomacy”, *Political Psychology*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1988, p. 599

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Aggestam

²⁰ Benes

²¹ Holsti, p. 260

²² Ibid., p. 260–273

Furthermore, other factors, such as the size of a state may play a role in determining the type of national role, yet they are not exclusively determined. For example, “operationalization of state size may differ (geography, population, economy, etc.) and even a small state can play a significant role in international relations”²³. Therefore, in theory, any role type is applicable to Lithuania.

According to Benes, the strength of this theory lies in the fact that it “occupies a middle position on the ontological spectrum between individualism and structuralism (holism)” or between foreign policy analysis (FPA), which traditionally prefers an actor’s perspective and individual ontology, and theory of international relations (IR), which tends to adopt structuralism ontology²⁴. In other words, foreign policy analysis considers the individual to be the “ground” of IR theory, while international relations are more apt to proceed from systematic orientation²⁵. Role theory tries to build “an empirical bridge between agent and structure in international relations” as it has the wherewithal to reconcile different levels of analysis and provides a means of assessing the interplay between internal and external variables²⁶. As the efforts to integrate, and, possibly, synthesize conceptual, theoretic, methodological differences of FPA and IR under the umbrella of role theory are being pursued²⁷, it is important to move this debate to a field of Lithuanian foreign policy research.

The paper analyses Lithuanian foreign policy via three dimensions of role theory: First, it explores the national role conception of the political elite, namely two Presidents of Lithuania, and its influence on policies towards Eastern countries in the period 2004–2014. The President is a determining factor in foreign policy, as according to Article 84 in the Lithuanian Constitution, “The President of the Republic shall decide the basic issues of foreign policy and, together with the Government, conduct foreign policy”²⁸. While there are various inter–institutional frictions and competition because of the rather significant role of the Parliament and Government in foreign policy, it is agreed that President has a right and duty to project his influence and take his own foreign policy initiatives. It is done

²³ Marijke Breuning, “Role theory research in international relations: state of the art and blind spots” in Sebastian Harnisch (ed) et al, *Role Theory in International Relations. Approaches and analyses*, New York: Routledge, 2012, p. 18

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Cameron G. Thies, Marijke Breuning, “Integrating Foreign Policy Analysis and International Relations through Role Theory”, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Volume 8, Issue 1, 2012, p. 2

²⁶ Ebere Richard Adigbo, “National Role Conceptions: A New Trend in Foreign Policy Analysis” <http://www.wiscnetwork.org/porto2011/papers/WISC_2011-647.pdf>

²⁷ G. Thies, Breuning, p. 3

²⁸ Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania <<http://www3.lrs.lt/home/Konstitucija/Constitution.htm>>

mostly by focusing on macro-level initiatives with high-level meetings, visits and various international forums²⁹. In order to define the national role conception of two Presidents Valdas Adamkus and Dalia Grybauskaitė, interviews, as well as an analysis of the core foreign policy speeches and memoirs are used. Speeches and official statements are of essential importance, as “what statesmen and diplomats say is often as vital as what they do. It would not be far-fetched to go further and declare that speech is an incisive form of action”³⁰.

Second, the role of expectations are analysed via Lithuania’s relationship with key partners – the United States of America, the most influential member of NATO, and the European Union. Due to its “Lilliputian size”, Lithuania has a limited capacity to influence even the regional environment by itself; hence, membership in the Euro-Atlantic community provides opportunities for joint action³¹. Therefore, policies of the EU and United States towards the region are essential, as they, in the minds of the political elite, open up or restrict opportunities for Lithuania to take an active role in the region. Therefore, policies of the EU and United States will be analysed in light of the possibilities they open up for Lithuania. Third, key events and circumstances (crisis, conflicts, new policies), which shaped Lithuanian foreign policy in two different periods, are taken into consideration, as they are closely related to the second dimension.

2. Valdas Adamkus – 2004–2009: the idea of a Regional Centre

Artūras Paulauskas, acting President of Lithuania after Rolandas Paksas’ impeachment, announced his foreign policy doctrine in 2004: “I have a vision of Lithuania as a centre of the region, with Vilnius as a regional capital”³². President Valdas Adamkus, who was elected in 2004, followed the path of this foreign policy as it complied with his national role conception.

Lithuania fulfilled its ambition to become member of the EU and NATO, but had to continue strengthening its security by surrounding itself from all sides

²⁹ David J. Galbreath, Ainius Lašas, Jeremy W. Lamoreaux, *Continuity and Change in the Baltic Sea Region: Comparing Foreign Policies*, New York: Rodopi, 2008, p. 95

³⁰ Philippe G. Le Prestre (ed), *Role Quests in the Post-Cold War Era: Foreign Policies in Transition*, Montreal: McGill–Queens University Press, p. 14

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 97

³² Paulauskas, A. (2004) “Lithuania’s new foreign policy”, Speech by the acting president of the Republic of Lithuania, Vilnius University, 24 May 2004. < <http://paulauskas.president.lt/one.phtml?id=4996>>

with free and democratic states and transferring the function of the eastern “forepost” to other states, for instance, Ukraine³³. In his inaugural address, Adamkus expressed the idea to “bridge the West and the East”³⁴. It was elaborated during a meeting with the heads of foreign diplomatic missions in Lithuania: “Lithuania can and must be a centre of regional gravity. That should be our strategic orientation. It is ambitious, but we have historic, geographic and political preconditions to succeed. <...> I see Vilnius as a natural centre of the region, where political initiatives are being born and implemented”³⁵. This direction was closely related with the President’s personality and experience of five decades spent living and working in the United States, which shaped his liberal, value and freedom based ideology. Adamkus sought to spread democracy and freedom to the countries in the East as it was a “civilizational mission” with historic roots in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania³⁶. These ideas became a practically applicable foreign policy doctrine³⁷.

Moreover, Adamkus sought to break Lithuania’s international isolation after the impeachment and unprecedented in Europe removal of President R. Paksas³⁸. Partly because of recurring political crises in the region, it was soon understood that Lithuania will only be interesting to Western partners by taking an active stance towards what is now known as Eastern Partnership countries³⁹. In Adamkus’ words, “The task was to find ways to be more noticeable in European policy and strengthen our international standing. We could do it only by being active in regional policy and becoming advocates of post-Soviet countries<...>”⁴⁰.

The key event, which helped to shape Adamkus’ perception of the region, was the Ukrainian Orange Revolution in 2004. During the political crisis, the

³³ Jonavičiū, p. 21

³⁴ Inaugural address to the nation by H. E. MR. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, July 12, 2004 <<http://archyvas.lrp.lt/en/news.full/5116>>

³⁵ Respublikos Prezidento Valdo Adamkaus kalba Lietuvos diplomatinų misijų vadovams, July 13, 2004 <Address by H. E. Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, during the meeting the heads of foreign diplomatic missions in Lithuania><<http://archyvas.lrp.lt/lt/news.full/5121>>

³⁶ Alvydas Jokubaitis, Raimondas Lopata, Lietuva kaip problema <Lithuania as a problem>. Vilnius: Tyto Alba, 2014, p. 284

³⁷ Česlovas Laurinavičius, Raimondas Lopata, Vladas Sirutavičius, “Kritinis požiūris į Lietuvos užsienio politiką: kas pasikeitė nuo Augustino Voldemaro laikų?” (Critical Approach to Lithuanian Foreign Policy: What has Changed since Augustinas Voldemaras’s Times?). Vilnius: *Politologija* 2009/2 (54), p. 111

³⁸ A close aide to the Presidents Staff, interview with the author, Vilnius, 12 September, 2014

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Adamkus, p. 527

Lithuanian President was invited by his Ukrainian counterpart to Kiev to act as a mediator between political groups and protesters after the rigged presidential elections. Adamkus shared this role together with the Polish President Kwasniewski: “this mission was only the beginning of efforts to draw Ukraine and the Western world closer together. It was also the start of Lithuanian diplomatic activity in Eastern Europe. <...> Lithuania’s role in this region excelled its size; we erupted from provincial foreign policy. Lithuania never had such important tasks before”⁴¹.

Adamkus foreign policy vision could also be observed while analysing the destinations of his foreign visits. Ukraine, Georgia, Poland and other countries are among the most visited during his term.

Table 1. Foreign visits of the President Valdas Adamkus (2004–2009)⁴²

Belgium ⁴²	18
Poland	16
Ukraine	13
United States	7
Germany	6
Estonia	6
Georgia	6
Latvia	6
France	4
...	
Azerbaijan	3
Moldova	2
Armenia	1
	158

The structural conditions and role expectations to pursue active policies in the East were partly favourable in 2004–2009.

A key factor was the excellent relationship between Poland and Lithuania – symbolically, Adamkus chose Warsaw for his first foreign visit after his election⁴³. Both Polish Presidents Alexander Kwasniewski (1995–2005) and Lech Kaczynski (2005 – until his tragic death in 2010), who worked during Adamkus’ term,

⁴¹ Adamkus, p. 127

⁴² Belgium is the most popular destination due to regular meetings among EU leaders in the European Council.

⁴³ Prezidentas su darbu vizitu lankysis Lenkijoje [President will visit Poland] <<http://archyvas.lrp.lt/lt/news.full/5178>>

expressed the goal to become a centre of the region and spread democracy to the East⁴⁴. As they maintained excellent relationships with Adamkus, Lithuania became an essential partner with similar aims⁴⁵.

Adamkus' vision was also influenced by the Giedroyc–Mieroszewski political doctrine, which was developed in the Polish emigration literary–political journal “Kultura”. It proposed a concept of Polish Eastern policy based on the close cooperation of Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine (ULB region)⁴⁶. The President had a direct link to this approach: for example, the intellectual discourse of “Kultura” shaped the foreign policy of Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski⁴⁷, who in turn described the Polish – Lithuanian relationship in the times of Adamkus as “a strategic partnership” with a similar vision⁴⁸. It also created room for Poland and Lithuania to take care of other “problematic” neighbour countries (Belarus, Ukraine), ensuring their democratic development and advocating their integration into Europe⁴⁹. To this day Adamkus remains an unofficial patron of the intellectual platform, the Jerzy Giedroyc Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation⁵⁰.

Kaczyński's policies had rather similar implications for regional cooperation. He sought a strategy described as *Prometheism*, which has historic roots in the 1920s and 1930s; it aims at creating a fortress of common defence against Russia that would include independent states in the basins of the Baltic, Black and Caspian Seas. Therefore, Kaczynski sought to “develop the closest possible relations with the countries southeast to Poland” by pooling together Western–

⁴⁴ Jonavičius, p. 25

⁴⁵ Later V. Adamkus himself admitted that without closer cooperation with Lithuania Poland will not be able to strengthen its position as a leader of region (V. Adamkus: Lenkijai bus sunku būti regionine lydere be gerų santykių su Lietuva (V. Adamkus: Poland will struggle to be leader of region without good relationship with Lithuania <http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/16091/v._adamkus_lenkijai_bus_sunku_buti_regione_lydere_be_geru_santykiu_su_lietuva>)

⁴⁶ Marcin Celinski, The Giedroyc era ended in foreign policy. March 8, 2011 <<http://liberteworld.com/2011/03/08/the-giedroyc-era-ended-in-foreign-policy/>>

⁴⁷ Nathaniel Copey, *Public Opinion and the Making of Foreign Policy in the 'New Europe': A Comparative Study of Poland and Ukraine*, New York: Ashgate Publishing, 2013, p. 4

⁴⁸ Valdas Adamkus, *Paskutinė kadencija. Prezidento dienoraščiai*, <The Last Term. Diaries of the President>. Vilnius: Tyto Alba, 2011, p. 8

⁴⁹ Aleks Szczerbiak, *Poland within the European Union: New Awkward Partner or New Heart of Europe?* London: Routledge, 2012, p. 84

⁵⁰ I–asis Jerzy Giedroyc dialogo ir bendradarbiavimo forumo suvažiavimas Druskininkuose <The first meeting of Jerzy Giedroyc Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation in Druskininkai> <http://www.wilno.msz.gov.pl/lt/ivykiai/i_asis_jerzy_giedroyc_dialogo_ir_bendradarbiavimo_forumo_suvaziavimas_druskininkuose>

oriented Eastern European states⁵¹. Hence, Lithuania maintained a role of the closest partner of Poland to strengthen regional security and seek mutual goals. Close political cooperation between Lithuania and Poland also led to a favourable public opinion – in spite of the previous conflicts, in 2007 more than 53 percent of Lithuanians regarded Poland as a friendly country, while only 7 percent as non-friendly⁵². While the Lithuanian Polish minority issues remained complicated, in Adamkus' words, “it did not harm our cooperation, as we were still able to use strong personal relationship and understanding”⁵³.

Furthermore, his relationship with the United States supported this role. “The United States recognised Lithuania’s activity and was interested in his regional expertise: Adamkus was often asked to brief about the situation or to make recommendations. For example, during a meeting of Baltic leaders and the President of the United States of America George W. Bush (2001–2008), Adamkus was specifically asked about his meeting with the Belarus President, because no other participant had any direct contact with him”⁵⁴. The leader of the U.S. was not actively seeking a policy of democracy promotion when he was elected, but that perception changed because of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. After that, democracy promotion became his central objective⁵⁵. Bush even supported Ukrainian and Georgian aspirations to join NATO⁵⁶ and recognised Adamkus as a close partner in the region. Among Presidents of Lithuania after independence, Adamkus had the biggest number of direct contacts with the President of the United States⁵⁷. Furthermore, he described George W. Bush as “the best friend of Lithuania”⁵⁸. Lithuanian President consulted Bush before making important

⁵¹ Gela Merabishvili, “Why Ukraine Matters to Georgia” <<http://www.neweasterneurope.eu/interviews/1117-why-ukraine-matters-to-georgia>>

⁵² Ainė Ramonaitė, Nerijus Maliukevičius, Mindaugas Degutis, “Tarp Rytų ir Vakarų: Lietuvos visuomenės geokultūrinės nuostatos” <file://hnas-cifs.activeid.vu.lt/CIFS_User/Redirected_studentai/s1316548/Downloads/geokulturines_nuostatos_isplestine_santrauka.pdf>

⁵³ Adamkus, p. 162

⁵⁴ A close aide to the President’s Staff, interview with the author, Vilnius, 12 September, 2014

⁵⁵ Federiga Bindi, *The Foreign Policy of the European Union: Assessing Europe’s Role in the World*, New York: Brookings Institution Press, 2010, p. 305

⁵⁶ “The Seduction of George W. Bush” <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/11/05/the_seduction_of_george_w_bush_by_vladimir_putin>

⁵⁷ “Lietuvos ir JAV prezidentų bendravimas: nuo George’o W. Busho viešnagės Vilniuje iki nenoro vykti vakarieniės su Baracku Obama į Prahą” <<http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/lietuvas-ir-jav-prezidentu-bendravimas-nuo-george-o-w-busho-viesnages-vilniuje-iki-nenoro-vykti-vakarienes-su-baracku-obama-i-praha-56-364927>>

⁵⁸ A.Kwasniewskis: būdama didesnė, Lenkija galėtų būti ir supratingesnė <<http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/akwasniewskis-budama-didesne-lenkija-galetu-buti-ir-supratingesne.d?id=55952065>>

decisions, such as flying to Georgia during the conflict with Russia in 2008⁵⁹, there was regular telephone contact between the leaders⁶⁰ and high-level bilateral meetings to discuss the situation in the region⁶¹. In short, the United States ascribed to Lithuania the role of its “buffer or agent in Europe”⁶², because it needed: a) partners in Europe who would defend the United States’ interests during a difficult period of divisive war in Iraq, and b) allies, which could promote democratization to other regions⁶³. Adamkus’ personality and ambitions suited that role.

Yet the policies of the EU were rather different. Lithuania, which had recently joined the EU, lacked trust from the other Member States; furthermore, Lithuania did not have enough experience to construct an interest-mediation style according to Brussels’ rules⁶⁴. Furthermore, the EU itself seemed to be unsure about its policies towards the East⁶⁵. It led to misunderstandings: for instance, Lithuania expressed its support to the Orange Revolution in Ukraine before the EU announced its official position⁶⁶. Josep Borrell, then President of the European Parliament, criticized the role of Poland and Lithuania in Ukraine by noting that they acted under American influence and had a different stance from the majority of European countries⁶⁷. Moreover, Lithuania and Poland did not succeed in their role as “agenda setters” or “wake-up callers” during the 2008 Russian invasion in Georgia⁶⁸. From the EU’s perspective, Lithuania was rapidly becoming a “one issue state”, with its criticism of Russia and activities in the post-Soviet region⁶⁹. The Lithuanian President remarked that European leaders lacked an understanding of

⁵⁹ “Lietuvos prezidentas išvyksta į Gruziją, vizitą parėmė JAV prezidentas” <<http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/lietuvos-prezidentas-isyksta-i-gruzija-vizita-pareme-jav-prezidentas.d?id=18059923>>

⁶⁰ A close aide to the Presidents Staff, interview with the author, Vilnius, 12 September, 2014

⁶¹ “President Bush Meets with President Adamkus of Lithuania” <<http://georgewebush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/09/20080929-5.html>>

⁶² Stankus, Paulauskas, p. 57

⁶³ Č. Laurinavičius et al., p. 105

⁶⁴ Gunta Pastore, “Small New Member States in the EU Foreign Policy: Toward “Small State Smart Strategy”?”, *Baltic Journal of Political Science*, 2013 (2), p. 75

⁶⁵ Vilpišauskas, p. 136

⁶⁶ Dovilė Budrytė, “Back in the USSR, or New Initiatives in Lithuania’s Foreign Policy after the Dual Enlargement”. Presentation in international conference Europe’s Small States in a Changing Environment 2–3 June 2006, Copenhagen, Denmark <<http://www.norface.org/files/s1-budryte.pdf>>

⁶⁷ Zaki Laïdi, *EU Foreign Policy in a Globalized World: Normative Power and Social Preferences*, New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 113

⁶⁸ Pastore, p. 81

⁶⁹ Karpavičiūtė, p. 123

the region: for instance, during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, he described the European Union's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana as a "person, who has no understanding what so ever of what is happening in Ukraine"⁷⁰, while Solana saw Lithuania's policies as too "radical"⁷¹.

In practice, the national role performance of Lithuania's "regional leadership" was based on three dimensions. First, Lithuania was actively involved during the crises in both Ukraine and Georgia. Second, Lithuania initiated engagement with an informal group of states, the E-11 Caucus and organized international events, such as the "Vilnius 10" Summit in 2002 and *Vilnius Summit 2006: Common Vision for a Common Neighbourhood*, which brought together leaders from the Baltic States, the Black Sea region and the Vice-President of United States Dick Cheney⁷². Third, Lithuania politically supported Euro-Atlantic integration in Ukraine and other countries⁷³.

To sum up, the "regional leadership" concept had its roots in Adamkus' personality, as his personal experience, perception and values were compatible with activism in the region, especially after Paksas' isolation. Lithuania filled a "strategic vacuum" with "value based" foreign policy, led by the principles of democracy promotion and self-determination⁷⁴. This kind of policy was also possible due to role expectations that were given to Lithuania by Poland, which sought similar goals and saw Lithuania as a key partner, and the United States, which recognised Adamkus as a suitable leader to promote its interests.

Yet Lithuania's achievements in Eastern policy could be described only as mixed⁷⁵. One of the reasons is that the EU had a cautious approach towards Lithuania's initiatives. Furthermore, Eastern countries had "reform fatigue"⁷⁶ and often failed to meet expectations. Due to these and additional factors, such as an "overstretch" of broad and ambitious foreign policy targets⁷⁷, Lithuania's publicly announced ambitions to become a "regional centre" were not realized. In practice Lithuania was a partner to a significantly bigger and more influential country, Poland, which sought similar policies in the region. Without Poland Lithuania is

⁷⁰ Adamkus, p. 135

⁷¹ Vilpišauskas, p. 137

⁷² Budrytė

⁷³ Jonavičius, p. 29

⁷⁴ Laurinavičius et al, p. 107

⁷⁵ Vilpišauskas, p. 135

⁷⁶ Pastore, p. 70

⁷⁷ Statkus, Paulauskas, p. 73

less able to have any influence in the EU or NATO, while opportunities to draw the attention of the United States also deteriorate considerably⁷⁸.

Therefore, in 2004–2009 Lithuania fulfilled its role of what was described by Holsti as a Regional–subsystem collaborator, rather than a regional centre. A Regional–subsystem collaborator conception envisages not occasional interposition into areas or issues of conflict, but it rather indicates far-reaching commitments to cooperative efforts with other states to build wider communities⁷⁹. Lithuania sought this by seeking niches for itself in the foreign policy doctrines of the United States and Poland. As this is less ambitious, it could be argued that the main foreign policy goals were achieved: Lithuania regained its place among Western countries after Paksas’ isolation and played a part in the far-reaching goal of democracy promotion in the East.



Diagram 1. Adamkus’ conception

⁷⁸ Irina Batorshina, Vadim Volovoy, “Modern Lithuanian foreign policy: the adjustment of traditional policy”, *Journal of Baltic Region*, 2011 (4), p. 28

⁷⁹ Holsti, p. 265

3. Grybauskaitė 2009–2014: from pragmatism to the “New Cold Warrior”

Dalia Grybauskaitė was elected in the first round in 2009 as an independent candidate. She openly criticized Adamkus’ foreign policy and based her argument on the failure of “regional leadership” – for example, she openly spoke about Lithuania being laughed at as a “one-issue state”⁸⁰ at European institutions. In her inaugural speech Grybauskaitė said that, “the priority of foreign policy was and will continue to be good relations with its neighbours. But we need to adjust the foreign policy pendulum: let strong and consistent defence of the interests of Lithuania remain instead of only imaginary leadership in the Euro-Atlantic space”⁸¹. She later elaborated on the issue it by saying that “Lithuania had a single vector foreign policy – it was either the United States, or no one. My aim is to change it into a multi-vector foreign policy <...> by paying more attention to Europe, especially Northern Europe<...>. I aim to balance”⁸².

Therefore, her national role conception at the beginning of her presidency clearly differed from that of Adamkus. It consisted of two main aspects:

Pragmatism. She came to office as a strict technocrat, with vast experience in various state institutions and a five-year tenure as European Commissioner for Financial Programming and the Budget. Therefore, she sought to play according to European rules as she “learned a lesson on the need for compromise” and had experience in complicated negotiations with partners in European institutions⁸³. It led to a more cautious approach towards policy initiatives in the East and closer cooperation with European institutions in decision-making processes.

Focus towards Western Europe and more “beneficial” regions. The aim was to redirect Lithuanian foreign policy from the Eastern region and pronounced pro-Americanism towards “Old Europe and to shake off the label of a “one-issue state”. Hence, the new focus was on the Baltic Sea Region⁸⁴ and countries

⁸⁰ Vaščenkaitė, p. 37

⁸¹ Inaugural Address by President Dalia Grybauskaitė Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania <http://www.president.lt/en/activities/speeches/inaugural_address_by_president_dalia_grybauskaitė_seimas_of_the_republic_of_lithuania.html>

⁸² D.Grybauskaitė siekia ne pakeisti, bet subalansuoti užsienio politiką <<http://www.lrytas.lt/-/13100180671307815245-d-grybauskaitė%20-%20siekia-ne-pakeisti-bet-subalansuoti-u%C5%BEsienio-politik%C4%85.htm>>

⁸³ Pastore, p. 74

⁸⁴ Prezidentės D. Grybauskaitės kalba atidarant Baltijos jūros valstybių vyriausybių vadovų susitikimą. 2010-06-028 http://www.president.lt/lt/prezidento_veikla/kalbos/prezidentės_d._grybauskaitės_kalba_atidarant_baltijos_jūros_valstybių_vyriausybių_vadovų_susitikimą.html

with which Grybauskaitė had close contact during her years in the European Commission. For example, she chose Sweden as the destination for her first foreign visit⁸⁵. As Grybauskaitė noted during the State of Nation Address in 2011, “We are an integral part of the Baltic Sea Region and we have reliable partners here with whom we share the same regional development goals. It is natural therefore that cooperation with Nordic countries in all spheres continues to be a top priority”. It was apparent that Eastern countries were left somewhat aside – only Belarus was briefly mentioned in the address⁸⁶. Nordic formats (NB6 and NB8) were often emphasized together with the task of ensuring an independent supply of energy and fulfilling other strategic projects. Another key factor was Grybauskaitė’s relationship with German Chancellor Angela Merkel – during this term, as the incapability of bilateral interests diminished and relationship intensified⁸⁷. For instance, Grybauskaitė noted that, “Germany is a strategic partner of Lithuania and a staunch advocate of our membership in the EU and NATO”⁸⁸.

Several structural role expectation factors stimulated this shift. First, it was understood that Lithuania does not have sufficient resources to become an interlocutor or bridge between Russia and the EU with its activities in Eastern Europe⁸⁹. During the global economic crisis, the Lithuanian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) shrunk around 15 percent⁹⁰. As, according to Miniotaitė, Lithuania’s previous ambitions were based on recent achievements, especially in its fast-growing economy, rather than its “glorious past”⁹¹, it was difficult to continue promoting the image of a “success story” in the East. Therefore, it is no surprise that the speeches and annual reports of the first years in office show Grybauskaitė’s priorities in areas such as social conflicts within society, justice and legislation. In short, domestic issues dominated, while there was less attention to foreign policy⁹².

⁸⁵ 2009 metų išvažiujamųjų vizitų apžvalga [Review of international visits in 2009] <http://www.prezidentas.lt/lt/prezidento_veikla/vizitai/2009_metu_apzvalga.html>

⁸⁶ State of the Nation Address by H.E. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania <http://www.president.lt/en/activities/speeches/state_of_the_nation_address_by_h.e._dalia_grybauskaite_president_of_the_republic_of_lithuania_8497.html>

⁸⁷ Matthias Rantzsch, “The German Interests towards Lithuania: a Dilemma of the Zwischenraum”, *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2008 (20), p. 46

⁸⁸ Lithuania’s strategic partnership with Germany is for the benefit of Europe <<http://www.eurodialogue.eu/Lithuania-strategic-partnership-with-Germany-is-for-the-benefit-of-Europe>>

⁸⁹ Statkus, Paulauskas, p. 75

⁹⁰ Lithuania in second attempt to join euro <<http://euobserver.com/lithuania/120293>>

⁹¹ Miniotaitė, *In search of identity in contemporary Lithuanian foreign policy: between East and North dimensions*, p. 97

⁹² Batorshina, Volovoy, p. 27

Second, the foreign policy concepts of the principal strategic partners changed and “deprived Lithuania of an important foothold in tackling international issues”⁹³. It is related with Lithuania’s relationship with the United States and Poland, two countries that played an essential part in Adamkus’ leadership attempts.

The newly-elected President of the United States Barack Obama outlined the Asia – Pacific region as a foreign policy priority, while being less interested in Europe and post-Soviet countries⁹⁴. Furthermore, as Obama launched a “reset” policy expecting to turn Russia into a cooperative partner by showing greater humility and by accommodating President Vladimir Putin’s sensibilities on Iran, ballistic missile defence, nuclear arms treaties, Lithuania’s, which remained critical towards Russia, role declined. In April 2010, Obama and Russian president Dmitry Medvedev signed a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) in Prague, decreasing tension after previous plans by the United States to deploy the missile defence system Eastern European. Grybauskaitė openly disagreed with Obama’s reduction plan, claiming it could harm Lithuanian security. A symbolic gesture of this was refusal to take part in the dinner in Prague, where Obama invited the presidents of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Romania, as well as the prime ministers of Poland, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia. D. Grybauskaitė was the only president who did not accept the invitation⁹⁵. She also noted that Lithuania would not become a “hostage” of the United States’ foreign policy⁹⁶.

- In addition, the relationship with Poland came to a “deadlock”⁹⁷. Various factors, some of which may not be regarded as structural, contributed to this shift:
- Increased activity of Polish minority leaders, which formed a faction in the Parliament of Lithuania for the first time in 2012, as they are often regarded “neither loyal nor trustworthy to Lithuania and even Poland”;
- The unsolved and escalating problem of the spelling of family names in Lithuanian passports;

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Jarosław Cwiek-Karpowicz, “Polish Foreign Policy Toward its Eastern Neighbors: Is a Close Cooperation with Germany Possible?”, DGAPanalyse, 2011, p. 3 <<https://dgap.org/en/article/getFullPDF/20366>>

⁹⁵ How the Russian ‘Reset’ Explains Obama’s Foreign Policy <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/10/16/how_the_russian_reset_explains_obama_s_foreign_policy>

⁹⁶ Has Grybauskaitė helped Lithuania break free from hostage status? <<http://www.lithuaniantribune.com/3425/has-grybauskaitė-helped-lithuania-break-free-from-hostage-status-20103425>>

⁹⁷ The Economist, Bad blood <<http://www.economist.com/node/21549987>>

- Certain other tension-provoking issues (national education policy of minorities; land restitution in the Vilnius region, “Mažeikių nafta“ / PKN Orlen issues);
- Personal convictions and specific personalities⁹⁸. For example:
 - a) Polish foreign minister Radosław Sikorski openly refused to visit Lithuania until minority issues were not being dealt with⁹⁹;
 - b) Polish President Bronisław Komorowski, who was elected in 2010, and Grybauskaitė continued a good bilateral relationship on a presidential level, but did not avoid certain stand-offs – for instance, Grybauskaitė declined to visit Warsaw to discuss regional security with other Baltic leaders in reaction to Polish pressure and suggestions that it might review its position on the NATO air-policing mission if Lithuania did not address minority issues;
 - c) Komorowski, who was elected in 2010, sought a “more moderate” line on Russia than the Kaczyński brothers¹⁰⁰, causing concern for Grybauskaitė that the Baltic countries could become “scapegoats” of such a policy¹⁰¹;
 - d) In 2012, Grybauskaitė even called a “pause” on ceremonial meetings between state leaders¹⁰².

Bilateral tensions were reflected in society – a remarkable shift in Lithuania’s public opinion took place, as only 12 percent of respondents considered Poland to be a “friendly state” while 27 percent characterised it as “hostile” in 2014¹⁰³.

In practice, at the beginning of her term Grybauskaitė shaped her Eastern policy by continuously aligning it with the dominant EU approach and Eastern

⁹⁸ Živilė Dambrauskaitė et al., “Lithuanian–Polish Relations Reconsidered: a Constrained Bilateral Agenda or an Empty Strategic Partnership?”, Eastern Europe study centre, Analytical Review, 2011, p. 34–36

⁹⁹ Wayne C. Thompson, *Nordic, Central, and Southeastern Europe*, 2014. London: Rowman & Littlefield, p. 158

¹⁰⁰ Stratfor, Russia’s Role in Polish–Lithuanian Tensions <<http://www.stratfor.com/video/russias-role-polish-lithuanian-tensions-dispatch#axzz3J4s46Lb0>>

¹⁰¹ Relations with Poland continue to worsen <<http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1609128145&Country=Lithuania&topic=Politics&subtopic=Recent+developments&aid=1&oid=598071444>>

¹⁰² Lithuanian President wants pause in “ceremonial meetings” with Poland <<http://www.15min.lt/en/article/world/lithuanian-president-wants-pause-in-ceremonial-meetings-with-poland-529-262324>>

¹⁰³ Lithuanians’ trust for Poles plummets <<http://www.thenews.l/1/10/Artykul/172598,Lithuanians-trust-for-Poles-plummets>>

Partnership (EaP) policy goals. By seeking this direction, Lithuania avoided controversial unilateral policies and coordinated its goals on an EU level – for example, bilateral meetings with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko in Vilnius and Minsk were considered as an “European signal” for rapprochement, rather than a Lithuanian-only initiative¹⁰⁴. It played a significant role in shaping new Lithuanian orientation towards Eastern partnership countries through structural frameworks approved in the EU instead of bilateral or regional strategies of New Europe’s countries towards their Eastern neighbours. Hence calls for closer cooperation in the framework of EaP in technical areas such as modernization, granting of visas or the prospects of EU Association agreements became dominant, while a value-based approach played a rather marginal role.

Furthermore, cooperation in Nordic formats such as the NB8 intensified: it was developing in the areas of security and defence, with joint military training such as Amber Hope and Baltic Spirit conducted in the region, cooperation in international missions intensified. Furthermore, all the countries worked to enhance cyber- and energy security as well as civil safety in the region¹⁰⁵.

It was not only Grybauskaitė’s own national role conception, but also structural conditions which shaped unfavourable conditions for a continuation of an active Eastern policy. It was especially notable at the time of the economic crisis, as it also reflected the country’s actual economic interdependencies in terms of investment, trade and strategic economic goals¹⁰⁶ rather than value-based ambitions. Therefore, Grybauskaitė sought to refocus on the Nordic dimension. According to Holsti’s typology, Grybauskaitė embraced the role of Internal Development, which had little reference to any particular task or function within the international system. The emphasis, on the contrary, is that “most efforts of the government should be directed toward problems of internal development”. While international political matters are of second importance, it does not preclude various forms of international cooperation, particularly in economic and technical matters”. Grybauskaitė sought to deal with the economic crisis, strengthen ties with the Northern countries and fulfil Lithuania’s role as a modern European state.

The changes are visible while reviewing the foreign visits made by Grybauskaitė. While visits may not fully reflect political priorities and even be misleading, Grybauskaitė was clearly less willing to go to Eastern Neighbourhood countries.

¹⁰⁴ Election Stakes High for Lukashenko <<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/election-stakes-high-for-lukashenko/422824.html>>

¹⁰⁵ NB8 cooperation is unique <http://president.lt/en/press_center/press_releases/nb8_cooperation_is_unique.html>

¹⁰⁶ Vilpišauskas, p. 135

For example, close cooperation and friendship with Eastern countries were not among of her foreign policy priorities¹⁰⁷.

Table 2. Foreign visits of President Dalia Grybauskaitė (2009–September 2014)¹⁰⁸

Country	Visits
Belgium	34
Poland	10
Germany	9
United States	7
Latvia	6
Finland	4
Estonia	4
France	4
Norway	3
Eastern partnership countries	
Ukraine	6
Georgia	2
Moldova	1
Armenia	1
Azerbaijan	1
Belarus	1
	115

Yet Grybauskaitė’s policies shifted again in the latter phase of her first term. Her activities became increasingly similar to the previous policies of Adamkus as even some features of leadership in the region became evident. While the first four years could be described as Internal Development, characterized by pragmatic policies, 2013 notes a significant shift to the new phase of Lithuania’s activism in the region.

Several factors may have contributed to this shift:

– Stabilization of domestic politics due to a relatively successful handling of the economic crisis. Lithuania’s economy is currently among the fastest growing in the EU¹⁰⁹;

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Visits of President of the Republic of Lithuania <http://www.president.lt/en/activities/visits_414.html>

¹⁰⁹ European economy guide: Taking Europe’s pulse <<http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2014/11/european-economy-guide>>

– Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Lithuania declared Eastern Partnership as one of the key priorities during its Presidency and hosted EaP in Vilnius in the second part of 2013. Because of this, international attention to the issues of the EU's policies towards Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia and other EaP countries grew considerably. Lithuania's Presidency created more favourable structural conditions for activism, as the EU itself engaged in debates about the future of Eastern Partnership and did not discourage greater Lithuanian activism in the region;

– Russia's aggression in Ukraine and the changing security environment in the region after the Vilnius Summit caused a shift of political priorities. Annexation of Crimea and escalation in Eastern Ukraine was considered as a direct security threat to Lithuania. It caused a shift of priorities both for politicians and society. For example, Grybauskaitė started her State of the Nation Address in 2014 by emphasizing that, "War and occupation <...> have become a real threat on the continent of Europe" and continued that "the direct threat to regional security also highlighted the importance of neighbourhood cooperation. Fully aware that the strength of the region is built on unity, together we – Lithuanians, Poles, Latvians, and Estonians – assessed the threats and joined our efforts to ensure security"¹¹⁰. Economic problems, which dominated the media during the financial crisis, gave way to security issues. In March 2014, just before the Lithuanian Presidential elections, 87 percent of Lithuanians believed that there is a "real threat" of Russia's military attack on Lithuania¹¹¹, while in 2012 more than 60 percent said that Lithuania does not face "any direct threats"¹¹². The crisis also caused a shift of attention for the United States, which played a crucial role in the sanctions policy towards Russia; furthermore, both President B. Obama and vice-president Joe Biden visited the Baltic States and expressed support for NATO defence commitments¹¹³.

– A new phase in the relationship with Poland. While the Polish minority issues remained tense, the new geopolitical circumstances and similarities of security

¹¹⁰ State of the Nation Address by H.E. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania <http://president.lt/en/activities/state_of_the_nation_address/2014.html>

¹¹¹ 87% Lithuanians are certain that Russia could attack <http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/news_in_english/29/39562/87_lithuanians_are_certain_that_russia_could_attack>

¹¹² Visuomenės nuomonės tyrimas šalies saugumo ir gynybos klausimais (Public opinion research on country's security and defence) <<http://www.spinter.lt/site/lt/vidinis/menutop/9/home/publish/NjAyOzk7OzA=>>

¹¹³ Obama Transcript: NATO Will Defend Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania <<http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2014/09/03/obama-transcript-nato-will-defend-estonia-latvia-lithuania>>

threats led to similar positions on the international stage. For instance, Poland and Lithuania, together with other Baltic countries, were named in the group of the most “hawkish” EU Member States while discussing events in Ukraine and sanctions against Russia¹¹⁴. It also led to strategically important practical decisions: formation of a joint Polish–Lithuanian–Ukrainian military unit¹¹⁵ and Lithuanian support for Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk for the position of the new President of the European Council. In addition, strategic energy projects, such as the Polish–Lithuanian gas pipeline¹¹⁶, were given a new impetus¹¹⁷.

Hence during the first term Grybauskaitė demonstrated transformation from a pragmatic and cooperative approach to a proactive (“new Cold War warrior”¹¹⁸) positioning, even if a more cautious approach remained dominant in the EU. National role conception, as it was previously described, played only a marginal role, as it did not directly reflect the new priorities. It could be argued that her national role performance was flexible and not based on long-term foundations. Therefore, the shift was caused by structural factors: while being critical of Adamkus’ policies at the beginning of her term, Grybauskaitė soon sided with her predecessor’s policies mainly due to Russia’s aggression in Ukraine and successful economic stabilisation, while ensuing factors, such new impetus for cooperation with Poland, played an essential role. Hence, the foreign policy role moved from Internal Development closer to an Adamkus–like Regional–subsystem collaborator.

The key factor remains Poland: the effectiveness of new role depends on her ability to continue close cooperation with Poland, which may still be harmed by domestic policies, less favourable personal relationship and other circumstances. If the relationship returns to the earlier more complicated stage, Lithuania’s policy may seem as Regional leadership without a solid foundation for effective implementation.

¹¹⁴ Divided we stand: Where do EU states stand on further sanctions on Russia? <<http://www.openeurope.org.uk/Article/Page/en/LIVE?id=19876>>

¹¹⁵ BBC, Poland, Ukraine and Lithuania form joint military unit <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29284548>>

¹¹⁶ Lithuania Seeks Faster Baltic–EU Energy Links on Ukraine Concern <<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-03-04/lithuania-seeks-faster-baltic-eu-energy-links-on-ukraine-concern.html>>

¹¹⁷ Lithuanian president reveals her vote in EU appointments <<http://en.delfi.lt/eu/lithuanian-president-reveals-her-vote-in-eu-appointments.d?id=65710952>>

¹¹⁸ Mark Leonard, Nicu Popescu, “A Power Audit of EU–Russia Relations”, Policy Paper, ECFR, 2007, p. 2

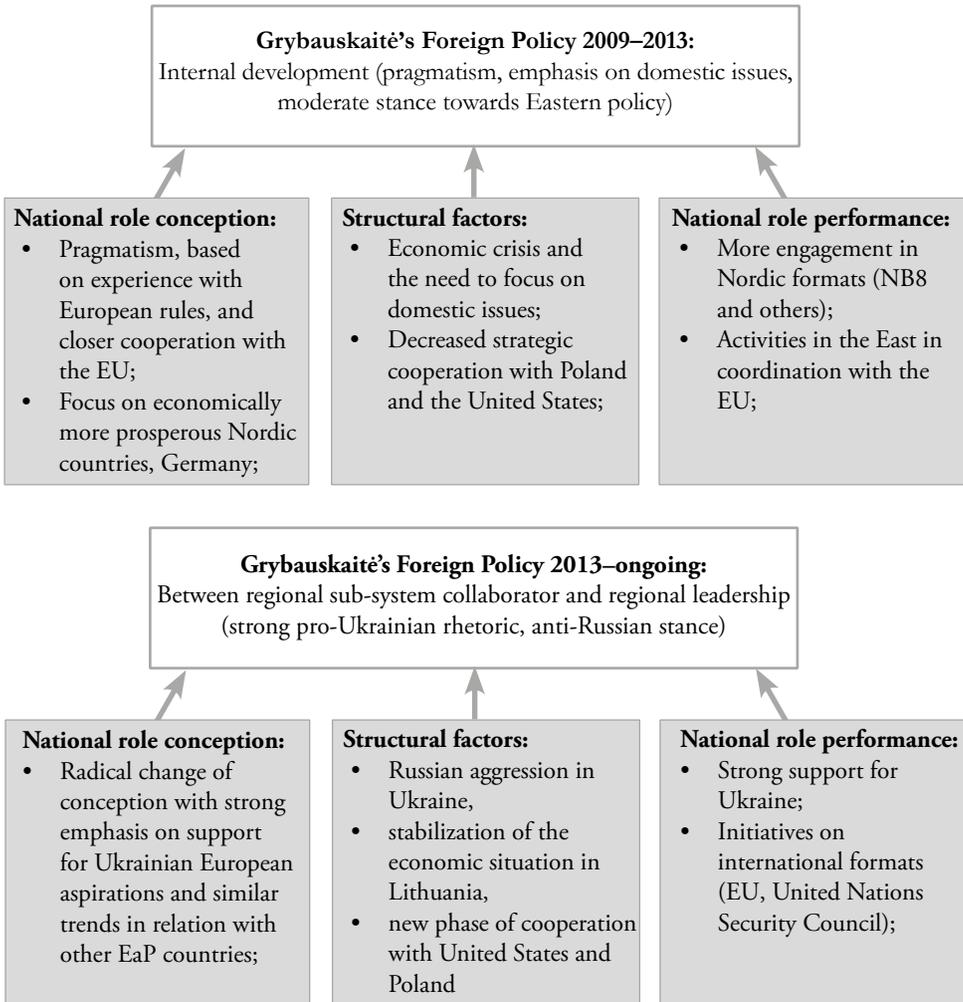


Diagram 2. D. Grybauskaitė's Eastern policy dynamism

Conclusions

Adamkus' Eastern policy was described by the President himself as “regional leadership”. It was influenced by several factors, such as the ideas of liberalism and democratisation, which shaped his perception in the United States; understanding of Lithuania's interest to form close regional cooperation with Poland, Ukraine; the

need to break Lithuania's isolation after the impeachment of R. Paksas. Structural factors and role prescriptions were mixed: while the United States encouraged Lithuania's activism in Eastern policy as it was compatible with its interests, the EU implemented a more cautious approach and criticised Vilnius for lack of coordination. But the main factor was an excellent relationship with Poland, which was due to personal contacts between Presidents, common foreign policy visions and strategic interests. Hence, while Adamkus expressed the idea of "regional leadership", according to Holsti, it was more in line with a Regional-subsystem collaborator, as Lithuania played the partner's role to Poland's initiatives and could not have pursued the same policies without its support.

After Adamkus activism, Grybauskaitė started-off as a leader who prioritised a pragmatic approach. Due to vast experience in various institutions and the European Commission, she emphasized European institutions and cooperation according to multilateral rules as the key element for success. Distancing herself from her predecessor's policy, Grybauskaitė at the beginning embodied a certain withdrawal from Eastern policy as she sought to change Lithuania's image as a "one issue state". Structural factors, such as the economic crisis, influenced her decision to focus on domestic challenges instead of idealism towards Eastern neighbours. In accordance to economic interests, closer ties with Nordic countries were also highlighted. Furthermore, neither Poland, with which the relationship became increasingly complicated, nor the United States, which prioritised other regions, encouraged Lithuania's activities in Eastern policy.

Yet in a latter phase Grybauskaitė changed her foreign policy to move closer to Adamkus' regional sub-system collaborator. The shift was noted just before Lithuania took over Presidency of European Council in 2013 and was caused by structural factors, mainly Russia's aggression in Ukraine and refocus on international issues after stabilisation of the domestic economy. These two shifts during Grybauskaitė's term reveal that the national role conception hardly depended on the President's proposed trajectories; structural factors and role expectations played a more important role. The key factor is the relationship with Poland, which is an essential partner in order to implement the regional sub-system collaborator role, which was dominant in Adamkus' term and recently became a practice of Grybauskaitė. In order to be effective, Lithuania should ensure close cooperation with Poland; if this relationship declines, Lithuania risks moving into a role of solitary and possible ineffective regional leadership.

Discussion of which factors were the most important (e.g., the geopolitical situation *versus* the consensus of the political elite *versus* the relationship with Poland, the United States, etc.) could be beneficial for future research.