
*Tomas Janeliūnas, Kristina Baubinaitė**
Public Establishment "Center for Strategic Studies"

In Search for the Optimal Regional Alliance: Strategic Partnership between Lithuania and Poland

It is essential for the state to have a strategic partner at the regional level. This is justified by the fact that Lithuania decided to turn into an active regional country while reducing the possible threat from Russia. The potential alliance of Lithuania and Poland should be the most rational direction of the strategic partnership. In attempting to justify this assumption the geopolitical interests of Lithuania and Poland, its coherence and compatibility, are examined. Conditions strengthening the development of the strategic partnership are reviewed. The most plausible scenarios of further co-operation between Lithuania and Poland are also presented.

Introduction

Additional foreign policy objectives were defined quite rapidly after Lithuania entered into the EU and NATO. These objectives were defined with the goal in seeking active participation in international politics and searching for possibilities of how to turn into an important player in the region, or even to become a certain geopolitical centre within the region. These aspirations were stipulated by the perception that even when the membership in the EU and NATO is assured the passivity of Lithuania would be unforgivable affluence. The geopolitical situation of Lithuania (it is precisely defined as a *geopolitical anomaly* by Česlovas Laurinavičius, Egidijus Motieka and Nortautas Statkus in the book *The Baltic States in the Twentieth Century: a Geopolitical Sketch*) would condition that passivity and eventually could reduce the geopolitical subjectivity of Lithuania and could enhance the threat to become an object of interchange or even informal periphery of non-transparent agreements between the powerful geopolitical subjects.

* Dr. Tomas Janeliūnas is the Deputy Director of the Public Establishment "Center for Strategic Studies", Lecturer of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science of Vilnius University, J. Tumo-Vaižganto g. 2, LT-01511 Vilnius, tel. +370 5 236 24 81, e-mail: tomas.janeliunas@ssc.urm.lt, Kristina Baubinaitė is an analyst of the Public Establishment "Center for Strategic Studies", the postgraduate student of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science of Vilnius University, J. Tumo-Vaižganto g. 2, LT-01511 Vilnius, ph. tel. +370 5 236 24 81.

Recently, it has almost been universally admitted that Lithuania as a member of the EU and NATO remains the object of the exclusive interest of Russia. Although Lithuania has strengthened its own structural power and receives military guarantees from NATO, Russia is the main source of threat for Lithuania. Arrogant speeches such as those made by the officials of Russia concerning the occupation recognition of Lithuania and assessment of the end of the World War II and the suspicions spreadings of the violation of Lithuania airspace when the Russian fighter SU-27 which crashed on 15 September 2005 in the territory of Lithuania – are apparent examples which illustrate Russia's hostility towards Lithuania.

In the presence of this historically developed and prevailing threat, the objective to strengthen the foreign policy activity of Lithuania is a natural choice. While being active, Lithuania could further strengthen its structural power and influence for the geopolitical processes in the region. At the same time activity in foreign policy allows Lithuania to avoid the destiny of the “exchangeable card” in the game of the powerful forces.

Nevertheless if Lithuania would operate alone the geopolitical features of Lithuania hinder expectations of higher influence even at the regional scale. Consequently the essential and rational task is to find relevant strategic allies. Lithuania could strengthen its influence while acting together with the allies.

Basically searching for the strategic allies at the global scale was completed in the first years of independence restoration – only the USA became an adequate geopolitical power which could help Lithuania to escape from the influence of Russia and to enter to the defense alliance – NATO. However demand for a strategic partner at a regional scale strengthened consequently due to the membership in NATO and respectively because of the declining interest of the USA towards Lithuania.

Lithuanian choice among potential directions of strategic partnership is limited. The alliance of the three Baltic countries is not attractive only due to the comparatively weak power of this alliance at the regional scale. Besides, as the historical experience shows, this alliance would not be enduring.¹ The Center for Strategic Studies presented a fairly comprehensive analysis concerning the possibilities of cooperation between Lithuania and Nordic countries.² Also, in the article *Relations between Lithuania and Germany in the context of global geopolitical challenges of 21st century* by Motieka and Daniliauskas the possibilities for further developing co-operation with Germany as one of the most important players in the region are discussed.

Nevertheless the main assumption of this article is that the potential alliance between Lithuania and Poland would be the most rational direction of the strategic partnership. In attempting to justify this assumption the geopoliti-

¹ Laurinavičius Č., Motieka E., Statkus N., *Baltijos valstybių geopolitikos bruožai. XX amžius*, [‘The Baltic States in the Twentieth Century: a Geopolitical Sketch’], Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2005, 83-196 (in Lithuanian).

² Strateginių studijų centras, *Šiaurės šalių geostrateginė svarba Lietuvai*, [‘The Geo-strategic significance of the Nordic countries to Lithuania’], Vilnius: Eugrimas, 2005 (in Lithuanian).

cal interests of Lithuania and Poland, their coherence and compatibility are examined. Conditions for strengthening the development of the strategic partnership are also reviewed. Finally, the most plausible scenarios for further cooperation between Lithuania and Poland are presented.

1. The Assumptions of the Strategic Partnership between Lithuania and Poland

1.1. The Geopolitical Interests of Poland at Global and Regional Level

At least a limited influence to the decisions adopted at the global level is a pivotal geopolitical interest of Poland. Several geostrategic vectors can be identified – and by the combination of these vectors Poland can implement its interests.

First of all, the possibilities for Poland to influence the global geopolitical processes are defined by its orientation to the USA as a strategic partner.³ The strategic partnership with the USA is a factor relatively protecting Poland from the potential geopolitical manipulations of the surrounding geopolitical actors that could reduce the geopolitical subjectivity of Poland. At the same time, this strategic partnership for Poland ensures a certain platform or to put it in a more simpler way – security guarantees – in seeking to implement its own regional geopolitical interests. On the one hand, in developing strategic partnership links with the USA, Poland is enhancing its structural power that gives additional levers in its relationship with comparatively stronger countries such as Russia and Germany. On the other hand, a strategic partnership with the USA creates a beneficial geopolitical environment for the development of its relative (mostly in economy sector) power. The attempt to strengthen the influence in decision making inside the EU with the support from the USA can be treated as the second geostrategic direction of Poland as for the country possessing global interests.

Eventually, the active policy of Poland inside NATO is the third direction or vector oriented towards the extension of the possibilities to influence the processes at the global geopolitical level. NATO membership for Poland provided the possibility to take a role of the geopolitical subject shaping the external environment. Poland supports the anti-terrorist campaign of the USA; Poland is also an active proponent of NATO transformation and strengthening its role. At the same time Poland encourages, for the priority of Alliance, the structure of the European security together supporting the preservation and consolidation of the positions of the USA in Europe.⁴ Thus a strategic partnership with the USA

³ Laurinavičius Č., Motieka E., Statkus N., *Baltijos valstybių geopolitikos bruožai. XX amžius*, [‘The Baltic States in the Twentieth Century: a Geopolitical Sketch’], Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2005, 300 (in Lithuanian).

⁴ Sejm of the Republic of Poland, *The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland*, Warsaw, 22 July 2003. <http://www.poland-embassy.si/eng/politics/strategy.htm>, 20 05 2005.

can maintain a balance of power in the structure of the European security beneficially for Poland. This could ensure levers to influence the dynamics of the global geopolitical processes.

It can be stated that Poland, holds a disposing powerful cultural-civilizational potential and balancing among three pivotal players of global geopolitics (Russia, the EU and USA). And while implementing an active and multilevel foreign policy, Poland has considerable potential in influencing the dynamics of the configurations of international politics at the global level.

The objective to make and influence, for the development of the global geopolitical process, creates a necessity to implement and shape active regional policy. This could enable one to avoid the potential manipulations of the powerful geopolitical players at the global level thereby reducing the geopolitical subjectivity of Poland. The objective to consolidate the region of Central and Eastern Europe with the assistance of the USA defines the geopolitical strategy of Poland at the regional level. The essential condition of this process is an effective Eastern policy of Poland whose aim is "... in the long-run to become important factor shaping common Eastern policy of the EU and NATO."⁵ Active dispersion of the geopolitical interests in the region of Central and Eastern Europe eventually helped to form an effective buffer against the direct influence of Russia and at the same time reduced the possibilities of the potential geopolitical manipulations between Russia and Germany towards Poland. Thus the particular chain of geo-strategic tactics of Poland at the regional level is forming; in the beginning of this chain the support of the USA for Poland is noticeable, which afterwards in the format of the EU and NATO is transformed into the dispersion of Poland's image as a regional leader. In turn this leads to a stronger decision-making process for Poland in the EU and NATO and afterwards in the processes of decision-making at global scale. The pivotal geopolitical interest of Poland is to guarantee the effective circulation of this chain.

1.2. The Geopolitical Interests of Lithuania at Global and Regional Scale

Lithuania belongs to the geopolitical conjuncture subregion, which emerged after the collision of the hostile geopolitical powers.⁶ Being a small country the ambitions of Lithuania to influence the processes occurring at the global scale are limited. However, in seeking to maintain its geopolitical subjectivity it has to turn its own geopolitical code towards the direction of one seeking to neutralise the negative consequences of the geopolitical manipulations. The background of this strategy lies within the process of strengthening the relative and

⁵ Sirutavičius V., „Lithuanian – Polish Strategic Partnership: Genesis and Prospects,“ *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2, 1998, 17-18.

⁶ Statkus N., Motieka E., Laurinavičius Č., *Geopolitiniai kodai: tyrimo metodologija*, [Geopolitical Codes: Research Methodology], Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2003, 118 (in Lithuanian).

structural power. This process can be stipulated by the involvement of Lithuania in the emerging alliances within Central and Eastern Europe and by the cooperation with countries having similar geopolitical interests.

Since neutrality or co-operation with the Nordic or with the Baltic countries cannot lead to security guarantees, the optimal geopolitical code version of Lithuania could be the orientation towards Poland and the strengthening of the strategic links with this country. This assumption is reflected and proven by the provisions of the conception of the "New Foreign Policy" which states that Lithuania is able to become the leader of the region through the quality of the membership in the EU and NATO and actively developing the relations of strategic partnership with Poland.⁷ The USA and Poland are linked by this strategic partnership. While co-ordinating foreign policy and strengthening the partnership with Poland, Lithuania could ensure more support from the USA and also support for the implementation of the geopolitical objectives. A common geostrategic direction of Lithuania and Poland towards Eastern neighbouring countries – Belarus, Ukraine and Russia – could become an essential instrument of the USA while seeking to develop democracy in the so-called discontinental geostrategic zone. While operating together with Poland in this area the potential possibility could emerge for Lithuania – to influence the interactions of the powerful geopolitical players (USA, the EU, Russia) in the regions of Eastern Europe and the East-Baltic and in this way to influence the development of the geopolitical situation. The latter geostrategic vector oriented towards the Eastern neighbouring countries of the EU potentially could emerge as a source of structural power expansion for Lithuania. Being a member of the EU and NATO Lithuania potentially could turn into the country performing the functions of geopolitical juncture. Lithuania could be a mediator in the relationship among the Euroatlantic structures and the countries of Eastern Europe – Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, South Caucasus countries – promoting democracy and turning the geopolitical orientation of these countries towards Euroatlantic space.⁸ Deepening the strategic partnership relations between Lithuania and Poland should be a goal for Lithuania. Lithuania should thereby have the possibility to strengthen relations with the USA, while actively advocating national interests inside the EU and performing the functions of a geopolitical juncture between Northern and Southern Europe. Eventually, the structural and relative power of Lithuania can be further strengthened and that would contribute to the reduction of the manifestations of the conjuncture environment.

⁷ Daniliauskas J., „Naujoji Lietuvos užsienio politika“ [The New Foreign Policy of Lithuania], Pranešimas konferencijoje „Lietuva po Seimo rinkimų 2004“, Vilnius, 19 November 2004 (in Lithuanian).

⁸ Statkus N., Motieka E., Daniliauskas J., „Globali geopolitinė raida ir Lietuvos užsienio politikos galimybės“, [Global Geopolitical Development and Opportunities for Lithuanian Foreign Policy], *Lietuvos metinė strateginė apžvalga 2004*. Vilnius: Lietuvos karo akademija, 2005 (in Lithuanian).

2. The Coherence of the Geopolitical Interests of Lithuania and Poland

Lithuania often emphasizes the importance of strategic partnership links with Poland. It can be stated that Poland is the most important partner for Lithuania in bilateral relations. Since 1997 the Advisory Committee of the Presidents of Lithuania and Poland, the Parliamentary Assembly, and the Co-operation Council of Governments are in action. Frequent meetings at high levels or between representatives of these Governments are the evidence of the active co-operation between the two countries.

One of the most important factors blocking active political co-operation between Lithuania and Poland is a great difference in relative (at the same time structural) power between Lithuania and Poland. Consequently, the strategic partnership between Lithuania and Poland can be named as partial or one-way co-operation. Strategic partnership is a necessity in safeguarding support for the security and foreign policy interests of Lithuania. Poland generally uses the term strategic partnership in relations with Lithuania and in general. But Lithuania occupies only the secondary role (however not of a small importance) in foreign policy of Poland.

The geoeconomic interests of Lithuania and Poland can be treated as a certain localisation of geopolitical interests or as another link in the process of the formation of strategic partnership. The localisation of geopolitical interests at the level of economy and cultural relations, mostly will determine the quality of the strategic relations. Accordingly, it is essential to analyse the directions of the economy relations between Lithuania and Poland extending in parallel with geopolitical interests of these countries. The intensity of economy relations is noticeably lower than the intensity of political cooperation.

In 2004 (see Table 1) the exports of Lithuania to Poland amounted to 1.243 billion Litas and constituted 4.8 percent of total exports from Lithuania – Poland was the fifth main export country. Imports from Poland amounted to 2.63 billion Litas and constituted 7.6 percent of total imports to Lithuania – Poland was the third largest import country.

Table 1. Main foreign trading partners of Lithuania⁹

Country	Exports (percent of total exports)	Imports (percent of total imports)
Russia	9.1	22.3
Germany	10.2	16.9
Latvia	10.1	3.8
Poland	4.8	7.6
France	6.3	3.2
Netherlands	4.8	4

⁹ Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Lithuania, Foreign Trade, http://www.ukmin.lt/files/Uzsienio_prekyba/apzvalg-04.doc, 25 04 2005.

Accordingly, Poland exports to Lithuania comprised 1.8 percent of the total of Poland's exports (15th position). Imports from Lithuania comprised 0.6 percent of the total of Poland's import (26th position).¹⁰ The economic importance of Lithuania for Poland is obviously modest. The investments from Poland into Lithuania are also small. In the beginning of 2005 the Polish investments totalled 290 million Litas (according to this indicator Poland was in the 19th position).

Table 2. Foreign direct investment of Poland in Lithuania (beginning of year)¹¹

Number of investors						Foreign direct investment, million Litas					
2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
113	111	107	126	126	126	162.9	204.9	229.1	283.3	278.5	290

Slow aggressiveness in the foreign markets and an underdeveloped infrastructure between Lithuania and Poland are the most important factors determining non-intensive economic co-operation between Lithuania and Poland. Both countries do not possess the common networks of energy sources (oil and gas pipelines, electric power networks) or modern highways (the projects *Via Baltica* and *Rail Baltica* still are unfinished).

It is also important to take into consideration the cultural relationship between Lithuania and Poland. The quality of the strategic relationship between the two countries will partly depend on the localisation of geopolitical interests and on the level of cultural relationship.

The importance of the cultural relationship may be defined by two key factors: common historic experience and significant national minority groups in Poland, as well as in Lithuania. Approximately 30,000 Lithuanians (mostly in small districts of Punksas, Seinai and Suvalkai in Suvalkai *voivode*) are residing in Poland. The Polish group is considered to be the largest national minority group in Lithuania. According to the data of the general census of the population 235,000 Poles were living in Lithuania in 2001 (it makes 6.74 percent of the whole population). The policy of national minorities is one of the most important (quite often as one of the most sensitive) aspects in Lithuanian-Polish bilateral relationship.

It is quite possible to assert that Poland bears much greater influence (especially political) on Lithuania than *vice versa*. Lithuania is important to Poland as a political (quite often also as a military partner) partner that supports Poland's initiatives among international structures. In the economic area, Lithuania could stand as an intensive transit corridor to Northern Europe. Polish cultural influence on Lithuania is quite significant because of a long common historic experience, as well as a big Polish community in Lithuania. Moreover, Poland has traditionally been the bridge carrying material and spiritual values from Western Europe to Lithuania.

¹⁰ Department of Statistics, Statistics, Foreign trade, <http://www.std.lt/web/main.php?parent=524>, 25 04 200

¹¹ Department of Statistics, Statistics, Economy and Finance, Foreign direct investment by investing country as of beginning of year, <http://www.std.lt/web/main.php?parent=365>, 25 04 2005.

Taking into consideration the Lithuanian-Polish geopolitical interests as well as geoeconomic vectors and cultural connections, it is possible to make presumptions that in most spheres the two countries share the concurrence of geopolitical interests while the aim to realise them provides a natural opportunity (in perspective – necessity) to extend the strategic partnership between Poland and Lithuania.

First, the similarity of geopolitical interests is partly determined by the fact that both countries have territorial contact and belong to the same geostrategic zone (*rimland*).

Common historic experience (common state during XVI-XVII centuries, a Soviet period) is of the utmost importance in influencing the geopolitical orientation and gravitation tendencies in the societies of both.

Second, the geopolitical situation of Poland and Lithuania determines the fact that the regulations of geopolitical codes in both countries are mostly determined by the development of the global geopolitical situation and the contact among the great geopolitical powers. The presumptions of a strategic partnership between Poland and Lithuania on the global level (after the regaining of the sovereignty of Poland and Lithuania when the USSR collapsed) are mostly connected with the identical geostrategic aim of two countries – to gain hard and soft security. Seeking for the goal has defined the community of geopolitical interests for both countries: they have connected their security with the integration into Euroatlantic structures. In perspective of the global geopolitical level, the guarantee for efficiency and continuity of these international structures in the very general meaning may be provided by the biggest EU countries and USA, which are able to ensure the continuity of geopolitical subjectivity within Central and Eastern European countries on the basis of ‘cross – guarantees’ (EU is the channel of soft and USA is the source of hard security import). While defining the potential necessity of the Lithuanian-Polish strategic partnership in the context of the relationship between the two countries and the USA, one has to make a great emphasis on the fact that Lithuania could gain a closer relationship with the USA via Poland (which is supported strategically by USA). Whereas Poland which is seeking for a leader’s status in the region of Central and Eastern Europe could be in the need of political support from Lithuania, which in its turn could enlarge the international prestige of Poland as well as its potential to have influence upon the global geopolitical processes.

The coherence of Lithuanian-Polish geopolitical interests on the global level form natural conditions for the expansion of strategic partnership between the two countries. Lithuanian – Polish interests come into contact in the regional policy so it would be rational to seek for strategic co-operation between the countries while realizing foreign policy in the terms of the region.

It is possible to identify the following spheres of perspective between Lithuanian-Polish co-operations within the region: co-operation within multilateral structures (NATO, the EU, etc.), common policy towards Belarus and Ukraine, co-ordinated policy towards Russia (especially Kaliningrad Oblast).

Lithuania and Poland are in different categories within the EU context and have quite opposite interests concerning EU integration in general, in parti-

cular EU institutional setup. However, there are many EU policy spheres where Poland and Lithuania have the same positions: foreign policy, security and defence, economic development, etc. One should pay attention to the fact, that if there is a possibility to form a certain economic 'core' within EU and get Poland involved into it, then Lithuania (after making a certain union with Poland) might form a different level of relationships with EU states and get the opportunity to pursue a more active foreign policy.

One also has to bear in mind that Eastern Europe is one of the most important vectors in Polish regional geopolitics. Namely this (European Neighbourhood Policy) vector in the regional geopolitics might be treated as sort of "geostategic axis" with the potential to provide nearly the strongest impulse to form a real Lithuanian – Polish strategic partnership.

Both countries speak in support of the democratisation of Ukraine and are ready to convey their Euro-integration experience. The two countries also support the formation of civic society and the process of democratisation in Belarus. Lithuania's participation in building stronger ties with Ukraine (and maybe with Belarus) is rather important for Poland. Due to historical reasons in Belarus, as well as in the Ukraine, there still exists some sort of Polonofobia. So, for Poland while implementing their policy towards these countries, in some cases it would be more preferable to act together with Lithuania (or via Lithuania as a mediator).

Lithuania is an important partner for Poland in discussing the question of Kaliningrad Oblast. With the view in the future to integrate Kaliningrad into Western sphere Poland (who does not want to strain their relationship with Russia) gains much more benefit if Russia considers Lithuania (but not Poland) the main obstacle for binding Kaliningrad to Russia.

If Lithuanian – Polish policy directed towards the consolidation of Central and Eastern Europe region could draw the USA and EUs biggest countries' attention, as well as manage to co-ordinate the policy of Western European countries towards Eastern European countries (Russia, Belarus, Ukraine), then the conditions for Lithuania and Poland could be created to implement their common regional geopolitical interests in order: to form the mechanism of drawing Kaliningrad into European space to seek for democratisation of Belarus making this country to serve as a barrier against the dissemination of Russian power, and to strengthen Ukrainian – USA – EU relationship.

It is obvious that Lithuanian – Polish geopolitical interests are mostly coherent, that is why it is more reasonable for the two countries to combine their efforts trying to attain their foreign policy goals on the global, as well as on regional, level thus forming preconditions to expand the Lithuanian – Polish strategic partnership.

3. Factors Influencing the Development of Strategic Partnership

3.1. External Factors

The relationship among the greatest geopolitical actors in the international system will make an inevitable influence on the Lithuanian – Polish relationship. It is possible to mark out several reciprocity scenarios among the most important geopolitical subjects:

- Transcontinental Alliance (USA – EU – Russian axis)
- EU countries vs. USA – Russian Alliance (Europe's isolation scenario)
- Eurocontinentalism (EU – Russian axis)
- Eurasism vs. Euroatlantism (USA – EU axis)

In case the Transcontinental Alliance it is realised that there could be formed an inter-balance alliance among the most important geopolitical actors – Russia, the USA, the EU. In such a situation Lithuania and Poland could become a conditionally stable geopolitical zone thus providing the possibility to expand their strategic partnership relations and to gain the status of “golden provinces” or to become a geopolitical link between the EU and Russia. On the other hand, a formal transcontinental alliance could potentially stand for a certain “cover” for the aim to mask long-term geostrategic interests of the greatest geopolitical subjects. If Russia gets involved in transcontinental alliance and becomes the most important geopolitical partner of USA in Europe, it could potentially seek for geopolitical influence in the European region thus getting an eventual possibility to gain freedom for its manoeuvre in the post-Soviet space. Such actions could provide conditions under which Lithuania could return to “grey security zone” thus obtaining the status of an exchange object. In this context Poland would become a power foremost for the USA and would be used to neutralise the geopolitical manipulations of Russia. One of the possibilities to avoid such a geopolitical perspective would be strengthening the strategic partnership between Poland and Lithuania. It would allow a consolidating of the region of Central and Eastern Europe and to form a geopolitical environment, which would be an effective block for Russia's attempts to spread geopolitical power in this region.

Another possible reciprocity combination among geopolitical actors is the USA – Russia alliance or Europe's isolation scenario. In this context both Russia and the USA may try to exploit Central and Eastern Europe countries forcing them to act as their influence agents in the EU. Such a situation wouldn't be favourable for Lithuania and Poland, which seek for their geopolitical and economical interest co-ordination on a strategic USA basis, and on the possibilities provided by the EU to expand their economy. If the possibility to keep the balance among the great geopolitical actors were lost then Lithuania's and Poland's geostrategical independence would eventually diminish.

On the other hand, Europe's isolation geopolitical scenario could naturally raise the interest of great European countries to break the isolation thus increasing their influence in Central and Eastern Europe. In such a context Lithuania and Poland could play a significant role acting as the moderators between the EU and the USA and search for possibilities to contribute to the reanimation of the transatlantic alliance, which could be more favourable in realising Lithuanian – Polish geopolitical interests.

An increasing Russian – European economic interdependence and Russia's (EU strive to limit the USA monopoly in the international policy could encourage an alternative) Eurocontinentalistic geopolitical scenario could also occur. If this scenario is successful then the optimal geostrategic direction for Lithuania could be its active mediation between the EU and Russia thus ensuring favourable conditions for their mutual economic transit. Co-operation with Poland could help Lithuania to amortise negative consequences of Russia's – EU political rapprochement could provide a good possibility for Lithuania to implement its geopolitical interests.

On the other hand, if Russia and the EU decide to share their influence in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, on the principle of geography but not on the principle of influence on certain sectors, then Lithuania and Poland might potentially become either Russian or EU provinces.

In this context the Lithuanian – Polish gravitation towards one of the above-mentioned control centres actually would depend on these countries integration levels into EU.

If Lithuania and Poland get involved in the EU economic core and pursue a regional policy (which mostly conforms with the interests of the great EU countries) then there would be a greater probability to avoid the perspective of becoming Russia's geopolitical province.

However, if the Eurocontinentalistic scenario is successful there is also the probability that the USA would try to break it and exploit the Central and Eastern European region as a geopolitical "wedge" between the EU and Russia. It would suit Lithuania as well as Poland because both countries intersect the EU and Russia's geopolitical interests and there might come the possibility to return to the traditional balance between the geopolitical codes of these countries.

Finally, it is necessary to mark out one more possible scenario of global geopolitics and its potential consequences on the development of Lithuanian – Polish strategic partnership. If Russia took back the neo-Eurasian dimension into its geopolitical code and tried to strengthen its positions in a post soviet space, then it is likely that the relationship between Russia and the West would get colder and lead to the Euroatlantic (USA – EU) conception's conflict with Russian neo-Eurasian geopolitical code. In such an international context Lithuania and Poland would act as a buffer against the dissemination of Russian power towards a western direction. Such scenarios would suit both countries because their intersection with geostrategic zones could let them expect the attention and support from great geopolitical actors while fulfilling strategically important functions to block and/or delimit Russia and naturally could strengthen their structural power.

In conclusion it must be noted that none of the above-discussed scenarios spontaneously implicate a radical discrepancy of Lithuanian and Polish interests that could hamper the development of their strategic partnership. At the moment, a creation of a Euroatlantic alliance is the most favourable case for a Lithuanian – Polish strategic partnership as it potentially guarantees the possibility for the two countries to co-ordinate their political and economical interests while constructing the conception of a new power centre in Central and Eastern Europe.

3.2. Domestic Policy Dynamics

Further development or stagnation of the Lithuanian – Polish relationship will depend on the international political environment as well as on internal social, economic and political factors. The analysis of Lithuanian and Polish domestic policies define the factors that could potentially influence the perspectives of the two countries' strategic partnership: change of political leadership, state policy towards national minorities, and development of economical relationships.

The dynamic factor of domestic policy is related to the potential change of Lithuanian – Polish geopolitical orientation. Poland's geopolitical orientation and gravitation towards the West causes no doubt. Whereas Lithuania's geopolitical situation as well as its historic experience give the background for the ambivalence of the country's geopolitical orientation (both towards the West and Russia) and during a long period for the possibility of a change in geopolitical orientation (towards Russia).

The basic changes in Lithuanian government (in case some pro-Russian parties and/or politicians came to power) could be expressed by their strives to change Lithuanian geopolitical orientation (from Western towards Russian) and that could mean the basic changes in Lithuanian geopolitical code thus potentially destabilise the development process of the Lithuanian – Polish strategic partnership.

However, Lithuania's integration into Western structures is getting more and more intensive that is why the possibilities for the above-mentioned basic changes in Lithuania's domestic policy are diminishing.

One of the most important factors that will certainly have influence on the future relations of Lithuania and Poland should be the situation with Polish ethnic minorities in Lithuania and the Lithuanian ethnic minority in Poland. The development of a strategic partnership between Lithuania and Poland will be influenced mainly by the means (democratic, based on respect for ethnic minorities or politically engaged and filled with aggressive nationalism) of solving the outstanding problems of the ethnic minorities in both countries.

Also, strategic partnership will be influenced by the development or stagnation of bilateral economic co-operation. Currently seeking for bilateral economic development it is important to concentrate on the infrastructural projects (transport, energy, communication), that would physically interconnect Lithuania (and, eventually, other Baltic States, Northern countries and North-West Russia) with Poland and Western Europe.

4. The Perspectives of the Strategic Partnership between Lithuania and Poland

4.1. Formal Strategic Partnership

Current relations between Lithuania and Poland can be described as formal strategic partnerships: the states coordinate interests of foreign policy only in those cases when it doesn't contradict geopolitical interests of both sides. This kind of partnership, that is seen only in coincidental interests, but not based on common geopolitical, economical and cultural aims, is very fragile. Potentially any of the political, economical or ethnical incidents can break the relations. Still, this scenario of partnership should be treated as positive to Lithuania's national interests because Lithuania's and Poland's importance and interest to each other does not change radically and in this situation cooperation between the countries can deepen.

The possibility to anchor this scenario is big. In the short run strengthening of Lithuania's and Poland's integration into the EU and NATO and the reclamation of "hard" and "soft" security supplied by those alliances can help Poland and Lithuania give more attention to foreign policy. This means more chances for both countries to extend geopolitical influence and implement foreign policy in the wider regional context and that can help to activate and to deepen strategic partnership between Lithuania and Poland to make it *de facto*.

4.2. Strategic Partnership *de facto*

The evolution to this scenario of strategic partnership can be identified with active deepening of relations and filling the "vacuum" made by formal strategic partnership with certain political, economical and cultural actions.

In the case of *de facto* strategic partnership Lithuania and Poland should constantly harmonize their foreign policy positions and mutually ensure politically equivalent status for each other. The basis for this scenario should be the growth of Lithuania's and Poland's geoeconomical importance in Europe. If Poland will treat Lithuania as a geoeconomically perspective partner that can consolidate regions of Southern and Northern Europe, then Poland should be prone to take bigger responsibility in order to safeguard Lithuania's interests. That would be eminently favourable from the stand point of Lithuania's national security. By widening the common infrastructural potential of Lithuania and Poland it is possible to create transit terminal between Central and Eastern Europe (in which Poland is seeking leadership), which will interlink Europe in East-West and South-North directions.

As well the *de facto* strategic partnership can be activated by the common regional actions of Lithuania and Poland while trying to implement the EU Neighbourhood policy. The interest of Poland as a possible regional leader is to

divide with Lithuania the political burden of representing EU interests in Kaliningrad, Belarus and Ukraine. And this can be the main motive to treat Lithuania as a geopolitical partner and to deepen relations between the two countries.

If politicians in both countries will understand that the most effective regional policy can be reached by joint actions, than *de facto* strategic partnership of Lithuania and Poland could be very possible.

4.3. The Possibility for Geopolitical Alliance of Lithuania and Poland

The geopolitical alliance of Lithuania and Poland can mean a qualitative change of the strategic partnership from common coinciding interests to mutual liability on the political level. In the case of this scenario, the interests of Poland should be understood as Lithuanian's interests and *vice versa*. If this scenario materialized it would have opened for Lithuania more possibilities to use joint structural power in forming relations with other geopolitical actors. Also, this would help to increase the level of Lithuania's national security, because it would lower the risk of becoming the object of geopolitical interchange. On the other hand, the alliance of Lithuania and Poland can be anchored only when Lithuania is a concurrent part of Lithuanian-Polish economical and political ties between East – West and South – North directions. The development of geopolitical alliance could be functional only in the long or middle term. The asymmetry of relative and structural power between Lithuania and Poland makes us question the possibility of creating the alliance in short or middle term.

4.4. Lithuania as the Geostrategic Periphery of Poland

The presumption for this scenario would be Poland's, as the leader of Central and Eastern Europe and the closest ally of the USA in Europe, ambitions to seek the implementation of its foreign policy aims when acting alone. In this case Lithuania will act as the periphery in Poland's foreign policy.

If Lithuania is a periphery of Poland this would mean that Lithuania is at risk of becoming an object of interchange between the geopolitical actors. As well, it would affect negatively the chances for Lithuania to make a profit from the widening of geopolitical networks in the Central and Eastern Europe and this would reduce Lithuania's structural power. On the other hand, if Poland will make Lithuania a geopolitical periphery it would distance itself from several viable regional policy directions: the expanding of a geopolitical network to Latvia, Estonia, Nordic countries and North-West Russia, European Neighbourhood Policy towards Eastern neighbours, and the Westernization of Kaliningrad. Those regional issues would be more effectively solved and would give more economical and political dividend by acting together. That's why the possibility for Lithuania of becoming the Poland's geostrategical periphery is small.

4.5. Lithuania – Object of Interchange between Poland, Germany and Russia

After becoming a member of the EU and NATO, Poland feels less danger of being transformed to interchange object between geopolitical actors. So, there is a possibility that Poland can join the informal agreement between Germany and Russia that would redraw political and economical spheres of influence in Europe. For some economical or political rewards Poland would agree to the possible transfer of Lithuania to Russia's sphere of influence. As well, there is also the possibility that Poland can make Lithuania a "sounding board" of radical positions. The rudiment for such a situation can be seen in Poland's unofficial position concerning Kaliningrad, when Lithuania was left to solve problems with Russia on its own.

A possible scenario would be when Lithuania is treated as an object of interchange between Poland, Russia and Germany. This would be the most negative, because eventually Lithuania can become Russia's bridgehead to Europe and/or the spreader of Russian interests into the EU. So, Lithuania would lose the possibilities of making independent geopolitical manoeuvres and this would be a threat for one's sovereignty. Still, the possibility for this kind of scenario is small. First of all, it would negatively influence Poland's security, for which Lithuania acts as one of the possible geopolitical buffer states from Russia, thus the domination of Russia could mean the growing threats for Poland. There is small chance that Poland would sacrifice the most perspective security scenario (the consolidation of Central and Eastern Europe with the support of USA) even though Poland has huge comparative and structural power. Because the USA is the only real superpower in the world, it is almost impossible that there can be any radical redistribution of geopolitical power in the Central, Eastern Europe and in the Baltic states without one's support. On the other hand, there is possibility that it would be Russia and the USA that will share spheres of influence in the Central European and in the Baltic states even though they are members in NATO. For example the USA would dominate the military sector and Russia would increase its influence in the economy and mostly in the energy sector¹².

The analysis of possible relations between Poland and Lithuania allows us to assume that there is only a small possibility of negative scenarios for Lithuania. Partly it is because of today's geopolitical reality, which determines big attention to Central and Eastern Europe from the main geopolitical subjects. This helps Poland and Lithuania to implement active regional foreign policy and expand structural power. That's why we can forecast that if there will be no change in the current geopolitical configuration there is a big possibility that a formal partnership between Poland and Lithuania can develop to a *de facto* strategic partnership.

¹² Janeliūnas T., „JAV ir Rusijos įtakos persiskirstymas Vidurio ir Rytų Europos regione,“ [The Re-division of USA and Russian Influence on the Region of Central and Eastern Europe], Pranešimas konferencijoje „Lietuva po Prahos“ Vilnius, 2002 m. lapkričio 29 d (in Lithuanian).

Conclusions

In the evaluation of the conjunction of interests between Lithuania and Poland, let us presume that the strengthening of this partnership would be the most rational choice for both countries. It is mostly Lithuania who seeks for a reliable and influential partner in the region if it doesn't want to stay passive country.

For Lithuania it is important to strengthen co-operation in these aspects:

- Seeking for Poland's support in strengthening the network between Northern and Southern Europe and between the West and East, while at the same time trying to suppress Russia's influence and looking for support from USA in European affairs;
- reducing the possible competition for Kaliningrad, Belarus or Ukraine;
- stimulating bilateral economic co-operation;
- co-ordinating security policy from Russia in economical sector;
- employing and expanding Lithuania's analytical potential.

Still, it is very important to mention the big difference in power between Lithuania and Poland, and the asymmetrical interests to each other. Lithuania's efforts in seeking strategic partnership shouldn't become an end in itself. So, it is necessary to describe some conditions for a strategic partnership.

1. Partnership with Poland should give evident benefits for Lithuania.

A principal provision of Lithuania concerning Poland should be formed in this way: Lithuania is trying to co-ordinate its policy with Poland, but doesn't identify itself with Poland and doesn't try to "melt" in Poland's sphere of influence. This means the one main principle in the strategic partnership with Poland is possible only when it helps Lithuania:

- to maintain ties with Northern and Southern Europe;
- to maintain the functions of a geopolitical "bridge" between West and East;
- to counterbalance the influence of Russia;
- to promote the presence of the USA in European affairs.

2. When speaking on the relations with Poland, the complementation of actions and not competition should be highlighted. Even though Poland is a much more powerful state, it can feel as if it is in a diplomatic competition (for example for Kaliningrad, Belarus or Ukraine) with Lithuania. Those provisions could block the basis for building a common understanding and building trust. That's why it is important as frankly as possible to explain to the Polish side, what Lithuania is seeking for and how the common exertion in the foreign policy can give the mutual benefits.

3. Improvement of economic co-operation. At the moment the economic interests of Poland are diverted towards the West (first of all, towards Germany) and building of infrastructure towards the West is the main aim for Poland. The intention of Lithuania should be to convince Poland, that only by tying Southern and Northern Europe together is it possible to embody one's geopolitical interests.

4. Co-ordination of the economic security policy. Lithuania and Poland feel insecure while depending upon Russia's energy resources. The intensiveness of those threats varies and depends upon the current entrenchment of Russia in Poland and the Baltic states. If Russia will dominate within this zone of the oil production and transit it would gain a powerful tool for the manipulation (for example by stimulating the artificial competition between countries) of the various countries. That's why it is important to look for a common understanding, that decisions about possession of strategic objects will influence ones neighbour and in the long run can negatively influence the economical security of both countries.

5. Lithuania should present its analytical potential. In this sphere Lithuania can present its peculiar view on Eastern Europe and give advice on how to solve the problems in the South Caucasus. Poland may be interested to take account of Lithuania's diplomatic and military experience in co-operation with Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and countries of the South Caucasus. Also, Poland can entrust to Lithuania the planning of some intellectual projects (for example in foreign policy, economic co-operation, building of civic society, etc.)

To summarise, it can be stated that strategic partnership or possible geopolitical alliance between Lithuania and Poland can be a rational aim of Lithuania's foreign policy. It can help to strengthen Lithuania's structural power and minimize the possibility to become Russia's object of influence. Yet, the low importance of Lithuania in European "geopolitical games" can create obstacles for Lithuania to become a strategic partner for Poland. That is why the only chance for Lithuania to enlarge its geopolitical potential is in an active foreign policy. Political indeterminacy in Belarus and Ukraine should give Lithuania chances to perform an important role in "geopolitical games". Eventually, this can help them to become seen by the bigger geopolitical actors.