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## Lithuanian Strategic Culture

The concept of strategic culture shows how traditions, stereotypes, or prevailing patterns of behaviour shape major strategic decisions. The research provides a fresh perspective on how Lithuanian strategic culture influences the internal dynamics of decision-making procedures. The article gives the particular attention to key three debates in Lithuania: defence budget, participation in international operations, and military reform. This article shows that certain characteristics of Lithuanian strategic culture, such as elitism, a huge reliance on the state, and the militarization of security, exercise a huge impact upon defence policy decisions. The article provides concrete recommendations how to overcome existing deficiencies and improve the decision-making procedures in Lithuania.

### Introduction

All countries of the world exist on a space confined by their history, culture, or geography. All of these parameters constantly fluctuate, thus determining foreign and domestic politics, relations with neighbours, or geopolitical orientation.

Security and defence policy is a product of outside influences or views and interests of leaders, organisations, and interest groups. From a neorealist perspective, security and defence policy reflect interstate relations, domestic political circumstances play only a minor role. From a neo-liberal or constructivist perspective, internal politics shapes the debates on security and defence. Constructivists in particular emphasize the importance of the political and security culture for the formation and implementation of most the important security and defence policy decisions.<sup>1</sup>

The term strategic culture is used to explain patterns of behaviour, security, and defence identity of states and non-state actors. The concept of strategic culture is a direct descendant of the concept of political culture - which has been debated, developed, variously employed, and even more variously defined by political scientists since the early 1950s.<sup>2</sup> Strategic culture is defined as the ideas, expectations, and patterns of behaviour that are shared across the actors involved in the processes surrounding security and defence politics of

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<sup>1</sup> Šešelgytė M. The Problem of Common Defence Identity in the European Union, Doctoral dissertation, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Gray C. *Comparative Strategic Culture, Parameters*, 1984, pp. 26-33.

particular countries.<sup>3</sup> In this study Lithuanian strategic culture is understood as ideas, expectations, norms, and behaviour patterns of Lithuanian decision makers that effect the formation and implementation of Lithuanian security and defence policy. This study focuses the biggest attention to defence aspects of Lithuanian strategic culture.

Strategic culture could be analysed as a national style, given that a particular culture should encourage a particular style in thoughts and actions. For example, the United Kingdom and France possess strong expeditionary mentality and a tradition of active participation in world affairs. The President of the United States has a very strong authority to use military force abroad, while in Germany even minor decisions on defence have to be approved by the Parliament, and a strictly legalistic approach is used to define lawfulness of military interventions. Germany still retains conscription, and such decision could be interpreted as German self restraint from more effective and more deadly Bundeswehr. Denmark, Norway, and Lithuania put self restraint on having nuclear weapons on their soil, while Iceland decided not to have armed forces at all.

History plays a hugely important role in the formation of a strategic culture. For most of Europe, WWII influenced the formation of norms allowing the use of military force only for self defence purposes. The policy of non-alignment emerged as an attempt to escape involvement from a power struggle between two superpowers. Deadly conflicts in the Balkans fostered a more active strategic culture based on the norms of humanitarian intervention. The war in Iraq boosted a new debate on the lawfulness of military interventions and the role of United Nations Security Council

A broad spectrum of views and historical traditions towards the use of force, self constraint, decision making procedures, and other issues, allows researchers to group nations into several categories. John Duffield suggests using two dimensions of strategic culture: unilateralism vs. multilateralism and militarism vs. antimilitarism.<sup>4</sup> Alistair I. Johnston proposed to divide strategic cultures into defensive or offensive categories.<sup>5</sup> Ulrich Krotz in his study of French and German national role conceptions, considers even more dimensions: military power vs. civilian power, unilateralism vs. multilateralism, military force as the evil vs. military force as a force for good, non-nuclear power vs. nuclear power, domestic consensus over major defence issue vs. highly fragmented politics, dependence on outside powers vs. independent power, and so on.<sup>6</sup>

This study discerns to show the different dimensions of the Lithuanian

<sup>3</sup> Meyer Ch. *Theorising European Strategic Culture*, Centre For European Policy Studies, Working Document n.204, June 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Duffield J. S. *Political Culture and State Behaviour: Why Germany Confounds Neorealism*, *International Organization*, 53 (4), 1999, p.779.

<sup>5</sup> Johnston A. I. *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in China History*, Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 112 – 113.

<sup>6</sup> Krotz U. *National Role Conceptions and Foreign Policies: Germany and France Compared*, Harvard University, Centre for European Studies, Working Paper 02.1, 2002.

strategic culture and its influence over decision making in the area of security and defence. This study is based on the notion that the Lithuanian security culture, as a system of symbols, consists of several parts. The first part is the fundamental assumptions about her strategic environment, i.e. the role of war in international relations, character of the enemy, and potential threats. The second part consists of attitudes towards and conditions for the use military force (when and how). The third part presents the concrete actions of decision makers and implementations of these decisions.<sup>7</sup> The study starts with a short overview of the Lithuanian threat perception and decision making procedures in the security and defence sector using three important debates - participation in international operations, the defence budget, and defence reform. These examples illustrate the importance of strategic culture in analysing defence policy decisions.

## 1. The Main Features of Lithuanian Strategic Culture

Lithuanian strategic culture is a result of its long history, and especially, of the last seventeen years of independence. After the reestablishment of independence in 1990, Lithuania was faced with a serious challenge – to redefine its identity and identify “them” and “us” in this world. During the first years of independence most Lithuanians shared very similar understanding of friends and enemies. They thought that Russia would remain hostile and would try to re-establish its control over the Baltic States. The Western countries would support Lithuania but not sacrifice their vital interest for the sake of small Baltic countries.

The Lithuanian perception of “we” clearly encompassed Western civilization and values, while Eastern neighbours were perceived as “they.” Integration into NATO and the EU was based on the formation of a ‘European’ or ‘Western’ identity which was associated with the European way of life, cultural achievement, social welfare, and prosperity. Both elements were closely interlinked and embraced positive attitudes towards Western Europe and a negative view towards their Eastern neighbours. Not surprisingly, Samuel Huntington’s idea about the clash of civilisations was very popular in the Baltic States. The Lithuanian identity was created by distancing itself from Russian traditions and emphasising common European values that were considered to be very different from those of Russia. The Lithuanian security and defence policy reflected a clear and unambiguous identification with the West.

As a result, a broad consensus on the Lithuanian security and defence policy agenda emerged among the elite. A consensus within the Baltic States along with very few discussions among politicians on security policy issues, allowed several observers to declare the existence of ‘tunnel vision thinking’

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<sup>7</sup> Šešelgytė, op.cit..

among the political elite. For instance, F. Moller in 2002 declared that what is materializing in the Baltic States is a type of 'tunnel-vision' meaning that decision-makers can only see limited ways of achieving security and refuse even to discuss alternatives. This is as much a result of their security concepts as it is a product of how they conceive the states should be. [...] A major result of the lack of alternatives is the absence of controversial public debate and the lack of interest or curiosity in this issue. All major political parties support the recent military policies, namely, the increase of military expenditure and integration in to NATO.<sup>8</sup>

F. Moller in his observation, failed to understand the complexity of the values, identities and interests driven approach towards integration in to NATO. In the Baltic States security conceptions are as much about identity and state-building as they are about security. Their aim is the construction of a collective self, meaning the identification of the individual with the nation, organized politically and socially as modern, sovereign nation-state.<sup>9</sup> As the West in the Baltic States is being associated with prosperity, security, and democracy whereas, the East is loaded with poverty, unpredictability, totalitarianism, and insecurity. From the point of view of national security, the West linked in particular with the EU and NATO. After regaining its independence, the Lithuanian elite and general public was unwavering in their choice of integration with the West.<sup>10</sup>

It should be noted that the concepts of the East and the West are highly value-loaded in the Baltic States. Security debates and the perception of threats have been especially influenced by the period of almost fifty years of being part of the Soviet Union. It has been noted that "the experience of Sovietization was to have a profound impact upon the security aspirations and perceptions of the emergent Baltic political elites in the late 1980s."<sup>11</sup> The Soviet Union, and later its successor, the Russian Federation, has been perceived by all three countries as the main threat to their sovereignty and territorial integrity. Although good neighbourly relations have been declared as another foreign policy priority, the perception of the potential threat related with uncertainty about Russia's internal political situation and its external policies have remained fairly stable.

Euro-Atlantic integration reflected mostly "value driven" policy of the Lithuanian elite. At the same time it coincided with hard-liners view of the security situation in the region that considered the quest for membership as a way to escape the Russian influence. The pursuit for NATO and the EU membership united different factions of Lithuanian political spectrum. The most visible expression of consensus among politicians was a letter signed by the Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazauskas to the NATO Secretary General Manfred Wornat. In this letter the President expressed the Lithuanian desire

<sup>8</sup> Moller F. *The Baltic States: Security, Identity, and the Identity of the State*. Bonn International Centre for Conversation, Brief 25. p.52 <http://www.bicc.de/publications/briefs/brief25/content.php>, 2002. p.48-51

<sup>9</sup> Moller *op.cit.* p.48

<sup>10</sup> Miniotaite G. *The Security Policy of Lithuania and the 'Integration Dilemma'*, COPRI Working Paper, Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, May 2000.

<sup>11</sup> Herd G. P. *The Baltic states and EU enlargement, in Henderson, K. (ed.) Back to Europe: Central and Eastern Europe and the European Union*, London: UCL Press, 1999, p. 259.

to become a member of the Alliance. The letter was supported by all major political parties. Political consensus remains, until now, the dominant feature of the Lithuanian security discourse. In 2001 all major Lithuanian political parties signed an agreement on the Lithuanian defence policy and renewed it in 2004. In 2004 the "Agreement between Political Parties of the Republic of Lithuania on the Main Foreign Policy Goals and Objectives for 2004-2008" was signed. In this agreement they reiterated their support for major security and defence policy objectives, namely active participation in NATO and the EU.

Agreement among all major political factions is a unique characteristic that rarely happens in other European capitals. The public opinion polls show that the general public agrees also with major security and defence policy objectives.<sup>12</sup> Such a broad consensus could be explained by the prevailing elitism of security and defence discourse. In Lithuania, security and defence remain 'high politics' that rarely draws the attention of the general public.

- According to public opinion polls from 23 categories of interest, defence occupies only 22 place;
- National security appears as the last item in programmes of the political parties;
- In 2006 newly appointed Government allocated to security issues only last paragraphs of its programme;
- The President in his yearly addresses to the Parliament devoted to security only several sentences at the very end of his speech.

The disappearance of major military threats or aggression by force allowed Lithuanian citizens to concentrate on other issues rather than defence. Not surprisingly, public support for Government actions is highly dependant upon an orchestrated and well organised public relations campaign. For example, during the Kosovo crisis, Lithuanian support for membership in NATO dropped to 27 percent. After the government launched a public relations campaign for support for membership, in several years time it increased to a staggering 70 percent. This proved that the Lithuanian elite can easily exploit public disinterest in security and defence and mobilise people to support already established security and defence policy objectives.

Another important reason for the absence of any sophisticated debate on security and defence policy issues is how small the security expert community in Lithuania is. Security experts could be calculated in tens and they are the major source of information for decision makers and the general public:

- Issues of security and defence policy are raised only from time to time in major newspapers. Only several journalists specialize in the defence sector. The Ministry of Defence publishes seven journals but their circulation is very limited. Two major defence related internet sites [www.army.lt](http://www.army.lt) and [www.ginklai.net](http://www.ginklai.net) rarely devote any attention to the Lithuanian defence policy.

<sup>12</sup> Participation in international operations and active foreign policy in distant countries like Afghanistan is the only exception.

- Lithuanian academic institutions publish an increased number of articles on international relation issues, but only few experts specialise in defence policy in even fewer in Lithuanian defence. Some of them also occupy official positions in ministries and other governmental position; this can limit their ability to make open or provocative statements.

- Lithuania has only one think tank that devotes most of this attention to defence (the Centre for Strategic Research established by the Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius University, and the Lithuanian Military Academy). In 2004 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, State Security Department, and three Universities established The Centre for Strategic Studies. The main task of the Centre is to “help formulate strategic foreign policy goals and tasks, prepare strategies and action plans, and also to propose recommendations to Lithuanian governmental institutions.”<sup>13</sup> The Centre fills the gap in security studies, but defence is not part of its studies yet.

- Lithuanian ex-military do not participate in the public discussions on defence issues. The only exception is the former Chief of Defence MG Jonas Kronkaitis.

- Political parties do not possess enough expertise to prepare a new defence policy agenda. Their election programmes barely mention defence issues - only defence budget and conscription deserves more attention. The Labour party that won the latest parliamentary elections did not express its opinion on any defence policy issue at all. A lack of expertise among politicians results in mistakes and misunderstandings in public speeches or even in the Programmes of the Government, for example the Programme of 2000 contained three serious mistakes and one mistake repeatedly appeared in the programme of 2004 and again in 2006.

A lack of expertise narrows the debate on defence issues mainly to the exploration of concrete incidents that happens in the Lithuanian military. A broad discussion on the participation in international operations, the defence concept, NATO transformation, or Russian-Belarusian military integration is not taking place and is discussed only within a small community of experts working in the governmental institutions. The Lithuanian defence bureaucracy, that includes high ranking military officials, clearly establishes rules of the game. Others either have no expertise (political parties), or interest (public), or money (academic community).

Domination of the defence bureaucracy results in a very state-centric security defence policy discourse. As a consequence, the state (or the Government), but not the non-governmental organisations and political parties, became subjects of security policy. Security is understood as solely a governmental activity, the voice of non-governmental agencies or organisations then disappears in the dark. Most importantly citizens also consider the state as the only security and defence actor. Lithuanian public distances itself from this arena; citizens do not consider individual efforts to be a part of security building efforts.

<sup>13</sup> Institute for Strategic Studies. <http://www.ssc-lietuva.lt/index.php?id=15,0,0,1,0,0>

Diana Janušauskienė and Jūratė Novagrockienė, in their empirical research, revealed that most Lithuanians emphasize with state's and Government's role in assuring security. Only experts (elite) more clearly emphasized individual dimension of security.<sup>14</sup>

Not surprisingly, most Lithuanian defence and security related documents such as the Law on the Fundamentals of the National Security, the Security Strategy, and the White Book of Defence policy, also slightly mention individual and group level of security. Speeches of the President or Prime Minister on defence matters are dominated by the phrases as "national interest," "balance of powers," "great powers," "domination," etc. The most influential academic articulated by leading researchers are written from a neo-realist understanding of security. Most importantly many neo-realists and geo-politicians later occupy important positions in the Government.

Lithuania started integration into Western security structures adhering to the narrow understanding of security. Such an understanding sharply contrasts with the post-modern concept of cooperative security that prevailed in major European capitals, especially in the Scandinavian countries. Frank Moller noticed, that in Lithuania the "cooperative approach to security may be applauded up front at the stage, but it is laughed at behind the curtain as being unrealistic, naïve, and utopian."<sup>15</sup> Empirical research conducted by Susanne Nyes, in 2002, confirmed that the Lithuanian elite adheres to the traditional understanding of security, i.e. national actors (states) and military capabilities dominate the security discourse.

Only in the last few years has a broad spectrum of security issues started to appear as an official threat analysis and action plans. The traditional understanding of security started to vanish only after perspectives of joining NATO and the EU became more explicit. NATO was no longer perceived by most Lithuanians as an anti-Russian organisation. Polls indicate that 73 percent of Lithuanians do not perceive any threat of military aggression. Only 20 percent thought that such threat could materialise in the nearest future.<sup>16</sup> This number corresponds to the 24 percent of Lithuanians who think that NATO membership is necessary because of the Russian threat. The majority of Lithuanians think that membership in NATO increases security and stability, and also encourages investment and economic development. In the public survey conducted in 2005, most Lithuanians emphasised individual levels of fear or even personal security, over the fear of foreign aggression.<sup>17</sup>

A militarised understanding of security dwindled even earlier. The

<sup>14</sup> Janušauskienė D. Novagrockienė J. Analysis of Attitudes of Lithuanian Citizens Towards Security [Lietuvos gyventojų požiūrio į saugumą analizė], Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review, 2002, Lithuanian Military Academy, 2003, p. 289-290.

<sup>15</sup> Moller F. *The Baltic States: Security, Identity, and the Identity of the State*. Bonn International Centre for Conversation. Brief 25. 2002. p.48-51. P.56

<sup>16</sup> Baltic News Service, Polls show majority of Lithuania citizens wants to join NATO [Dauguma Lietuvos gyventojų nori į NATO, rodo apklausa], 20 06 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Interior, Attitude of Lithuanian Citizens Towards Public Security [Lietuvos gyventojų požiūris į viešąjį saugumą], <http://www.vrm.lt>, 2005.

Russian economic crises in 1999 and its repercussion in Lithuania strengthened the understanding that the threat from the East may not necessarily come in military uniforms. Russian willingness to use energy as foreign policy tool even further increased the Lithuanian obsession with economical security. An increase of natural gas prices to Ukraine, the breakdown of the oil pipeline to Lithuania, and the economic blockage of Georgia strengthen the perception that the role of energy security will increase and supplement the military component of security. The defence policy will be intimately interlinked with other dimensions of security, including homeland defence. In such a society, the business elite, non-governmental organisations, and other actors will play a bigger role in establishing defence policy objectives and the allocation of resources to achieve them.

## 2. Impact of Strategic Culture upon Major Defence Policy Decisions

The main features of Lithuanian strategic culture such as elitism, militarization, political consensus, and domination of the state have a huge impact upon major defence policy decisions. The importance of these features in different societal groups may vary, but in general, they are more or less applicable to the elite and the general public. Some of these features are becoming less important but they still play an important role.

The decision making procedures are also taken into account in this study. Lithuanian strategic culture is characterised by legally, very well orchestrated, but in practice quite weak, democratic control over the armed forces. The main reasons behind this are:

- The Parliament has too little knowledge and expertise in defence matters. No single member of the Parliament has served in the Lithuanian armed forces. The Committee of National Security and Defence is supported only by the small number of staff which has no experience in defence issues. Former member of the Committee of National Security and Defence, Algirdas Gričius, recognizes that “there is indeed an urgent problem of experts and advisers to the parliamentarians,” but he continued “because the Parliament lacks expertise, the Lithuanian Armed Forces would be the one that would suffer at the expense of more of a transparent and allegedly “better” democratic oversight.”<sup>18</sup>

- Political parties have little expertise in defence and as a rule they continue the security and defence policy of former Governments. Civil service guarantees the continuation of approved guidelines and smooth succession. All Ministers of Defence make almost no political appointments and continued to work with staff members left by the previous Ministers. For example, when in 2000 the position of the Minister of Defence was given to Social democrats,

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<sup>18</sup> Gričius A., Paulauskas K. Democratic Control Over The Armed Force in Lithuania. Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review, 2002, Lithuanian Military Academy, 2003, p. 246-247.



several high ranking officials belonging to the Conservative or the Christian Democratic Party, continued to work in the Ministry. Ministers of Foreign Affairs usually became career diplomats.

- The National Security branch in the Chancellery of the Government has only four civil servants who have to oversee the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defence, and other security related state institutions. Such a broad spectrum of their work does not allow them to prepare an independent and comprehensive overview of the defence sector for the Prime Minister. In addition to that, in comparison with most Western states, the Lithuanian Prime Ministers' involvement in the defence policy has a surprisingly low profile. It may be indicative that the Prime Minister is hardly ever mentioned in legal acts. The legal constitutional provisions focuses on the shared authority between the President and the Minister of Defence, without singling out the Prime Minister.<sup>19</sup>

- The Lithuanian Constitution and laws established a very strong institution of the Commander of the Armed Forces. The Commander of the Armed Forces is mentioned in the Constitution; he is approved by the Parliament and is a member of State Defence Council. As a member of State Defence Council he participates in discussions over national security aspects of foreign and domestic policy and performs other function rarely enjoyed by the Chief's of Defence in other NATO countries. As a result the Commander of the Armed Forces participated in discussion on privatisation of Mazeikiu Nafta (the biggest oil refinery in the Baltic states) and even on the impeachment procedure to the former President Rolandas Paksas.

As a result, the Minister of Defence and Commander of the Armed Forces dominate the debate over major defence policy issues. Domination of the executive branch of government makes a difference in determining the outcomes of major defence policy decisions.

## 2.1. International Operations

The agreement between Political Parties of the Republic of Lithuania on the Main Foreign Policy Goals and Objectives for 2004-2008 emphasize that Lithuania is oriented towards active foreign policy: "My vision of Lithuania is that of a country which through the quality of its membership of the European Union and NATO and good neighbourhood policy has become a leader of the region. I have a vision of Lithuania as a centre of the region with Vilnius as a regional capital," spoke then the Acting President of Lithuania Artūras Paulauskas when introducing the Lithuanian Foreign Policy Concept and a new vision of Lithuania.<sup>20</sup> Such leadership means not only honour, but also available human, financial, and military resources dedicated towards the achievement of this vision.

<sup>19</sup> von Riekhoff H. Report on Specific Problems and Developments in Civil Military Relations in the Baltic Republics, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine, Carlton University, 2001.

<sup>20</sup> The Speech by the Acting President A. Paulauskas at Vilnius University on 24 May 2004. "On Lithuania's New Foreign Policy", [http://www.urm.lt/data/2/LF51152557\\_Paulauskokalba.htm](http://www.urm.lt/data/2/LF51152557_Paulauskokalba.htm), 08 08 2004.

Active participation in international operations is an important element of an active foreign policy. Lithuania has participated in international operations since 1994 and is constantly increasing her contribution. Lithuania started their participation with low intensity humanitarian operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but later switched to high intensity war fighting missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. In real numbers, the Lithuanian contribution is less than moderate but taking into account her size, Lithuania is an active player in the international arena.

The Lithuanian public is less supportive to international engagements than the elite. According to social polls 50 percent of Lithuanian population support participation in international operations but 44 percent are against it. This discourages many Lithuanian politicians from open support of international endeavours. From the other side, since the budget for military operations is a part of Ministry's of National Defence budget, the costs of the Lithuanian military contributions has not been an issue of the public debate. Only then in 2006, the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested financial resources for civilian projects for the Lithuanian led Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan, financing of international operations started to draw public attention. Quite interestingly, a request for additional resources received only moderate support from all political parties. Aleksandras Matonis commented that the "Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has no 'Hawks' that can [...] and forcefully get required resources." As a result, in sharp contrast to other nations, Lithuania in 2005 and 2006 assigned to civilian projects in the Provincial Reconstruction Team in total only 2 million euros.

This comes not as surprise if one takes into consideration the small role of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in making decisions on Lithuanian participation in international operations. The decision making chain for such participation is the Chief of Defence – Minister of Defence – President – and also the Parliament. Even in the Parliament, international operations come under the supervision of National Security and Defence Committee while the Committee of Foreign Affairs has only a secondary role. For example, the decision on leading the Provincial Reconstruction Team was made mainly on military advice that did not fully exploit all economic, social, or financial aspects. The operation was planned by military staff with no participation from other Governmental agencies. Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs later recognized that "then in 2005 first group of Lithuanians landed to Chencharan we new about this province only from report of World Food Organisation." Lack of coordination and information led to a sceptical view on the participation in Afghanistan from other institution, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Interestingly, enough participation of Lithuanian soldiers in high intensity operations in Iraq or Afghanistan is not considered as a problematic issue by the Lithuanian elite. These operations are financed directly from the defence budget, thus allowing politicians to avoid public discussions. Confronted with the open debate over the civilian contribution to operations, the Lithuanian elite shows fewer abilities to implement foreign policy objectives. In order to avoid such discrepancies this study recommends:

- To broaden the understanding of international operations. So far the Law on International Operations, Exercises, and other forms of Military co-operation treats international operation as purely military activity neglecting other possible aspects of possible contribution;
- To reorganise the State Defence Council into State Security Council and to include Minister of Foreign Affairs into this institution. The role of Ministry of Foreign Affairs must also increase;
- To involve political parties and non-governmental organisations into the discussion on the size and geography on Lithuanian participation;
- To link foreign policy objectives with available resources. The idea of “a centre of the region” must be backed by resources or new concept must be developed.

## 2.2. Defence Expenditure

Debates over the defence budget have shown an ambivalence of the Lithuanian security and defence policy. On one hand, the Lithuanian political parties want to be a reliable ally therefore in all international forums Lithuania declares her intentions to raise defence budget to 2 percent of GDP. On the other hand, political parties try to avoid public debates on this issue understanding that such policy would not find an adequate support among electorate. Consequently the 2 percent for defence were achieved not by raising the real defence spending, but by expanding the definition of defence expenditure to include additional defence related activities such as interior troops. Such a ‘covert’ action shows the gap that exists between foreign and domestic policy.

Surprisingly though, the defence expenditure has never become the subject of hot political debates although several political parties tried to score some additional points advocating for a smaller defence budget. Especially after the economic crises in 1999, the left wing politicians took an opportunity to criticize the right wing Conservative government for their attempts to raise the defence budget in a time of serious economic problems. During the parliamentary election campaign of 2000, the New Union party (social liberals) declared that “in Lithuania, the balance between different social sectors is violated – the armed forces get the particular attention and social sphere, health and education are neglected.” The Agricultural party used even more radical rhetoric: “education and healthcare are at the brink of bankruptcy while the armed forces receive huge amounts of money arguing that this is necessary for NATO membership.” The candidate of this party, in 2005 presidential elections, Kazimiera Prunskienė (Minister of Agriculture in the current government) declared that “National security is based not only on integration into NATO and forthrightly understood strengthening of the armed forces and the growing defence budget.”

Such propaganda drew attention even in foreign countries. Stratfor, in the analysis “Guns Versus Butter: A NATO Aspirant Reconsiders” noticed

the New Union Party's proposal for defence cuts.<sup>21</sup> Stratfor emphasized that New Unions plan suggested spending about one fifth of the military budget on education: "all imply outright indifference to NATO membership. Joining NATO is a popular idea for most Lithuanians, particularly after just breaking free of decades of Russian domination, but the price tag of membership in the Alliance is high". Stratfor concluded that "the Baltic states offer NATO no strategic advantage that is significant enough to make them a worthwhile investment.[...] The New Union seems to understand this dynamic and believes that the country should put its money into things that it can improve like education."

Such a forecast never became the reality. Vice versa, after the New Union party became part of the ruling coalition, it changed its attitudes and voted for an increased defence budget. Even more – the new centre left coalition that ruled Lithuania from 2000 promised to reach the 2 percent of GDP for defence in the coming years. Such changes clearly demonstrate how the political parties may become more hawkish after they become responsible for the security and defence of the country. In 2004 even Union of Centre and Liberals declared that they would seek "to equip the armed forces with modern equipment. We will assure necessary resources to implement this task."<sup>22</sup>

Discussions over defence the budget clearly show how foreign policy and the international environment can dictate domestic policy discourse. Foreign and domestic pressure forced the New Union party to abandon one of the key electoral promises. Most importantly NATO's pressure to increase defence spending was less important as then the will of Lithuanian citizens to become the member of the Alliance. From 2004, the defence budget started growing every year by almost 10 percent. Such growth was fixed in the National Defence System Development Programme, approved by the Parliament in 2006.<sup>23</sup> Even the Agricultural Party did not oppose the steep rise in defence spending. The growing defence expenditure did not raise particular attention among non-governmental organisations and the general public. Even more, political parties are no longer afraid to declare their support for defence.

In 2007 political parties will start the discussion on the new defence agreement. The defence expenditure will again become the topic of political debates. In order to avoid unnecessary manipulation this study recommends that:

- Decision makers must resist temptation to put under defence expenditure items that are not directly linked to defence;
- A group of independent advisors could be set up to assist political parties and the Parliament to control effective use of defence resources. The biggest procurement programmes could become separate projects approved directly by the Parliament.

<sup>21</sup> Stratfor Guns Versus Butter A NATO Aspirant Reconsiders, 03 06 2000,

<http://www.stratfor.com/CIS/commentary/0005031756.htm>

<sup>22</sup> All electoral programs could be found at <http://www.lrs.lt>

<sup>23</sup> The National Defence System Development Programme [Krašto apsaugos sistemos plėtros programa]. Approved by the Parliament on July 4, 2006, n. X-743

### 2.3. Defence Reform

The attitude towards defence reform allows us to evaluate stratification of political parties on major defence policy issues. In this context the abolishment of total defence concept and creation of expeditionary capabilities was the dominant issue on the political agenda.

The “total defence” concept previously applied by Lithuania required large mobilizable reserves to reinforce active units. A conscription system was essential to prepare each and every citizen to fight or to resist aggression by non-military means. In reality, the Baltic States never fully implemented this concept; the youth were unwilling to spend a year in the armed forces. The Ministries of Defence have never had enough human and material resources for the extensive training programs and preparation of infrastructure that would be required to deal with all the draftees who would serve under a system of truly universal service. On paper, the plans looked impressive, but in reality less than 10–25 percent of young males aged 18 served as conscripts in the Baltic States’ armed forces.

Expeditionary warfare requires completely different type of forces - armed forces must be able to deploy, sustain, and fight in hostile environment without support any from local population. Huge difference also lay in logistics - expeditionary armed forces must assure that in the area of operations they have assured access to communications, food, fuel, and other supplies. Such armed forces can project power to other regions of the world and contribute to active foreign policy. Conscription may be retained but use of conscripts in expeditionary operations has little military meaning.

Despite the consensus on major defence policy issue, most Lithuanian political parties have very strong views on the question of conscription. The Social democrats and the Conservatives are the most moderate parties in this respect. The Lithuanian Social Democratic Party in its programme declares support for “total civilian defence” although in prior to parliamentary election in 2004 they proposed to diminish number of conscripts by half. The Homeland Union (The Conservatives) in their programme state that they will support active reserve of the armed forces, the Rifleman Union, national defence volunteers and will continue with conscription. Another camp is represented by the Liberals and the Liberal democrats who advocate for fully professional armed forces. Interestingly enough, two political parties have difficulties in merging they views on conscription with they foreign policy concept. The Conservatives may find it difficult to combine their adherence to active foreign policy with the call to retain conscription. The Liberal democrats may struggle to find the mission for fully professional armed forces if they would stop Lithuanian armed forces participation in foreign military endeavours.

Actual voting in the parliament shows that behaviour of political parties

in the Parliament may be different from their electoral promises.<sup>24</sup> An analysis of voting practices has shown that the Social democrats, the Conservatives, The New Union and even Labour party supported legislation that allows sending Lithuanian troops to foreign missions. The Agrarian party and especially Liberal democrats in most cases voted against such participation.

The Lithuanian public does not take a very active participation in debates about conscription. Several non-governmental organisations support total defence concept and the system of conscription. They normally represent patriotic right wing population or former dissidents and fighters against Soviet occupation. Still public support for a professional military is increasing; more than half of the population (53 percent) declares their support for ending conscription.<sup>25</sup> Of those polled however, 68 percent declared their support for the proposition that “the armed forces are necessary because only there can young people be taught how to defend our country.”<sup>26</sup> This inconsistency reflects two distinct trends in the society: on the one hand, the general public wishes to preserve the armed forces as a state-building institution, while on the other, the absence of a visible military threat and the existence of NATO security guarantees strengthen arguments against conscription.

It is worth noting that defence reform of the Lithuanian armed forces outpaces the political debate. The highly sophisticated defence bureaucracy has mildly pushed reforms through various governmental bodies. The Armed Forces have already abolished military infrastructure and units designed for territorial defence. The Ministry of Defence has substantially increased allocations for international operations; in 2005 Lithuania spend almost 10 percent of defence budget for international deployments.<sup>27</sup> The number of conscripts has been decreased to a degree that the concept of universal conscription and total defence has already lost its meaning. The National Security Strategy<sup>28</sup> and the Development Plan of the National Defence System<sup>29</sup> prepared by the Ministry of Defence and approved by the Parliaments does not even mention total and unconditional defence. Interestingly enough these profound and conceptual changes did not raise public discussions and strong reactions from politicians or non-governmental organisations.

The abolishment of the total defence concept has clearly indicated how Lithuania strategic culture changed the pace and magnitude of defence reform. Insufficient funding forces the political-military elite to push hard with defence reform and create expeditionary capabilities to support foreign policy

<sup>24</sup> Mačiulskaitė L. Voting of Political Parties on Major Defence Policy Issues [Lietuvos politinių partijų balsavimo gynybos politikos klausimais tyrimas], Vilnius University, (not published).

<sup>25</sup> Baltijos tyrimai, Public opinion about the Lithuanian armed forces [Lietuvos gyventojų nuomonė apie Lietuvos kariuomenę], survey released in June 2003. In the same poll, 28 percent disagreed and 19 percent had no opinion on this subject.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. The poll found 24 percent against and 8 percent with no opinion.

<sup>27</sup> The Guidelines of the Minister of Defence for 2006-2012, Ministry of Defence,

<sup>28</sup> The National Security Strategy [Lietuvos nacionalinio saugumo strategija]. Approved by the Parliament on January 20, 2005, n. X-91.

<sup>29</sup> The National Defence System Development, op.cit

objectives. Non-governmental organisations and political parties were passive observers unable to challenge official position or propose viable alternatives. In order for in the future to even improve decisions making procedures this study recommends:

- Political parties must better link foreign policy objectives with defence priorities;
- An agreement between political parties on defence policy must be more detailed and comprehensive;
- The abolishment of total defence must be fully recognised by all defence actors and explained to the society.

## Conclusions

This research has shown that elitism, militarization, consensus, and domination of the state are the main features of Lithuanian strategic culture. Their inclusion into analysis of decision making brings a completely different view of major decisions of Lithuanian defence policy. Three major debates being, participation in international operations, the defence budget, and reform of the armed forces, has proved that political intentions and the results that follow from these intentions can be very different.

The research also demonstrated that the Lithuanian elite is able to adjust its thinking and political principles to the changing realities of the modern world. Lithuanian political parties that were arguing against a bigger defence spending have rapidly changed their positions after their realised that NATO membership is linked to the performance of applicant states. The drive for NATO membership also influenced the speed and magnitude of defence reform. All political parties still preserve their consensus on major defence policy objectives although the discussion of the future of conscription may change this pattern. The creation of expeditionary military capabilities will boost Lithuanians to strive to become more active players in the world or even regional centre, especially if more resources for development projects will be allocated.

This analysis also emphasized that certain features of Lithuanian strategic culture, such as a state centric understanding of security, the militarization of security may have a negative impact upon effectiveness of decision making procedures. Lithuania must strengthen the security and military expertise of political parties and non governmental organisations. They must play a bigger role in the debate over strategic choices in the area of defence. Lithuania also must create a security community that possesses the knowledge and expertise to confront or provide an active support to governmental institutions.

*Vilnius, January 5, 2007*