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The Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship: Lessons and Dilemmas

The goal of this article is to discuss and evaluate the importance of Lithuania's OSCE Chairmanship in 2011, the achieving of political objectives and the results of the Chairmanship for Lithuanian national interests, foreign and security policy. The article raises questions about what motivates national states to seek a chairmanship of the OSCE, how agendas of the Chairmanship are formulated, and what obligations have to be assumed in chairing the OSCE. The article argues that Lithuania's motivation for the OSCE Chairmanship has evolved from early efforts to enhance national interests (based on political objectives) to the obligation to be efficient in fulfilling the formal functions of the OSCE (the functional/technocratic goals). The research found that despite the high activity and diplomatic efforts, the final result of Lithuania's Chairmanship was disappointing to some extent - only part of Lithuania's proposals with a priority mark were eventually adopted by the OSCE Ministerial Council in Vilnius.

Introduction

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Ažubalis in almost all of his official speeches has emphasized that Lithuania's Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2011 was one of the biggest challenges for Lithuanian foreign policy.¹ The word "challenge" probably in the best way summarizes the approach of Lithuanian diplomats and political leaders to the responsibilities of the chair of the OSCE, assumed by Lithuania in 2011. However, by itself this description is very abstract and empty. Even before the start of the Chairmanship, the Lithuanian foreign policy leaders emphasized that having the right to chair the OSCE granted to Lithuania is a success for the foreign policy of the small state and a kind of recognition. Also this achievement could be assessed as the award for Lithuania's diplomacy efforts to integrate itself into the international community

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¹ For example: Audronius Ažubalis, „Išmokime puoseleti vizijas“ [Lets learn to foster visions] . *IQ.lt*, 2011 02 23, <<http://iq.lt/komentarai/a-azubalis-ismokime-puoseleti-vizijas/>> [2011 08 07]; Audronius Ažubalis, „Lithuania assumes OSCE Chairmanship“, *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2010-24, p.127-131. <<http://www.lfpr.lt/uploads/File/2010-24/Azubalis.pdf>> [2011 08 07]

and to engage in international problem solving processes with responsibility.

However, in targeting the chair of the OSCE Lithuania has had to rely on more specific motives for why it seeks this position. One of the subjective motives was related to Lithuania's reputation and strengthening of its international assessments. Lithuania is a small country, so the politicians and diplomats regularly incur public as well as inner tacit pressure to be visible and significant on the scene of global politics. Often this goal is maintained unconsciously or by inertia. Political scientists can present a rational explanation as well: for a small country, survival and security issues are of critical significance; therefore it is important to ensure that they would not be forgotten by the actors of international politics. To repeat constantly the same points about us, our values and significance, means to increase the likelihood that the world community will pay proper attention to the threats our country faces and will provide the necessary support. It is therefore not surprising why for the first time holding a chairmanship of an international organization which brings together 56 countries and is considered an important political forum not only in Europe but also in some Asian countries. In addition, Lithuania has sought to emphasize that this task opens up new possibilities. More specifically, the potential produced by the arrangement has been discussed – namely, “to strengthen the country's international and regional role, to prepare for the Presidency of the European Union in 2013 and for the possible membership in the UN Security Council in 2014-2015,”² as stated by official representatives of Lithuanian before the start of the OSCE Chairmanship.

Until now Lithuanian academics, experts and journalists have had minimal interest in the OSCE as an international organization and its impact on international politics and security issues. Focusing mainly on NATO and the EU's impact and importance to the various security, international relations or administrative issue, the OSCE has been at best only briefly mentioned among “other” international organization, and those are not worthy to be an object of a special investigation. Perhaps the only recent academic article by Lithuanian authors aiming to review and assess the importance of the OSCE in the field of the conflict management, and in particular of the frozen conflicts in post-Soviet space, was written by Justina Alsyte, titled: „OSCE's Achievements vs. Shortcomings in the Resolution of Armed Conflicts“³.

Researchers from abroad, especially writing on security studies, are focusing

² Permanent Representation of the Republic of Lithuania to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. „Lithuania gets OSCE Chairmanship advice from Finland and Greece“, 23/04/2010. <<http://mission-vienna-io.mfa.lt/index.php?-1362301962>>

³ Justina Alsyte. „OSCE's Achievements vs. Shortcomings in the Resolution of Armed Conflicts“, *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2010-24, p. 81 – 99.

more on the OSCE's efforts to contribute to conflict management issues and promotion of human rights. However the majority of academic research on conflict analysis or the development of human rights and humanitarian problems mentions the OSCE only as a secondary player. Only in quite rare cases is the organization targeted as the primary object of study.

One of the most important sources to provide a lot of reviews of decisions by the OSCE and the institutional and political assessments of the activity of the organisation is the quarterly *Journal of Security and Human Rights* (formerly *Helsinki Monitor*). This quarterly not only reviews the most important academic assessments of the OSCE's policy, but also discusses in detail the procedural and political framework of the OSCE decision-making. The role of the OSCE Chairmanship, the selection procedure of the chairing country and the evaluation of a process of the Chairmanship are quite narrow topics, but they are also discussed in the *Journal of Security and Human Rights*. Vandewoud Cécile has written about the specifics of the selection to the chairmanship of the OSCE⁴; Walter Kemp - on the role of a chairing country to the general activities of the organization and on sometimes unjustified expectations for the chairmanship⁵; some evaluation of the particular OSCE Chairmanships can be found in experts' reviews⁶ as well as in analytical reports prepared by non-governmental organizations⁷.

However, this only partly makes the task of this article easier. And that task is to discuss and evaluate the importance of Lithuania's OSCE Chairmanship, to assess its formulated political objectives and the results achieved by the Chairmanship and its impact for the Lithuanian national interests, foreign and security policy.

This article is still the first academic attempt to assess what motivation was behind the Lithuania's goal to secure the Chairmanship of the OSCE, how the initial goals and objectives for the Chairmanship have shifted, and what results have been achieved in the implementation of the Lithuania's OSCE Chairmanship agenda. The chairmanship of the international organization, as a research object, is just an instrumental aspect of foreign policy and this article is not intended to explain or justify any theories of foreign policy making. This particular case study can provide some new or additional arguments and facts for more specific analysis on what Lithuania's

⁴ Cécile Vandewoude, „The OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office's election procedure: is there a need for formalized criteria?“ *Security and Human Rights*, 2011, No 1, p.49-62.

⁵ Walter Kemp, „The OSCE Chairmanship: Captain or Figurehead?“ *Security and Human Rights*, 2009, No 1, p. 9-12.

⁶ Neil J. Melvin, „The European Union, Kazakhstan and the 2010 OSCE Chairmanship“, *Security and Human Rights*, 2009, No 1, p. 375 – 380.

⁷ Janusz Bugajski, Margarita Assenova, Richard Weitz, „Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship 2010. Final Report“, Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS, 2011 January, 38 p.

(or any other small state) abilities to engage in international policy-making agendas are, and how it may increase its significance in the international arena.

Some political assessments have been provided by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania directly responsible for the OSCE's Chairmanship. These interviews with Lithuanian diplomats were of the greatest importance in trying to find what reasons and motives stimulated Lithuania to take responsibility of chairing the OSCE and to what extent Lithuania could contribute to the general activity of the OSCE. A lot of information was provided by Ambassador Rytis Paulauskas, the Director of the Department on OSCE's Chairmanship, who was the main person responsible for the coordination of the implementation of the Chairmanship's tasks and decision making in Vilnius.

1. Rules and Motives for the Chairmanship of the OSCE

The beginning of the Chairmanship of the OSCE (until 1994 – The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, CSCE) is related with a grand transformation of the organization after the end of the Cold War. There was a need to create more efficient instruments promoting the processes of security, human rights and economic development across Europe, where the collapse of the Soviet Union prompted a new wave of democratization. At the CSCE Summit in Paris on November 21, 1990, the Charter of Paris 'For A New Europe' was signed⁸. It was established in this Charter that the most important decisions of the organization will be adopted by Council of Ministers (CM) for Foreign Affairs of the CSCE and the Council will hold meetings regularly, at least annually. Berlin was chosen as the place for the first CM meeting. In this way Germany became the first member state responsible for the preparation of the CM meeting, the first chairing state and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany Hans Dietrich Genscher became the first 'Chairman' of the CSCE. At the Helsinki Summit of the CSCE in 1992 the Helsinki Document 'The Challenges of Change' was adopted and a status of a chairing member state was officially described⁹. It was pointed out that the Chairman in Office (a Minister of Foreign Affairs of a chairing member state), representing the CSCE and the Committee of Senior Officials, is responsible for the communications and consultations between the members of the CSCE.

⁸ Charter of Paris For A New Europe, November 19-21, 1990. <http://www.osce.org/mc/39516>

⁹ CSCE Helsinki Dokument 1992 The Challenges of Change, July 9-10, 1992. <http://www.osce.org/mc/39530>

The roles of some of the first chairing states of the CSCE were mostly related with the proper functioning of the Council and preparation for meetings of the Council of Ministers. While institutionalization of the CSCE became deeper and functions became wider, the tasks for a chairing member state also expanded. In the Helsinki Document of 1992 it was indicated that a Chairman of the CSCE will be requested to communicate Council and CSO decisions to the CSCE institutions and “to give them such advice regarding those decisions as may be required”¹⁰. However some obscurity remained regarding how far a chairing state may seek in its efforts to form agendas of Council and Council of Ministers of the CSCE/ OSCE and the priorities of the entire organization. This practice began to evolve by unwritten traditions and each country to some extent has its own interpretation of the importance, tasks and priorities of a chairmanship of the OSCE.

In 2002 The Ministerial Council at its Porto (Portugal) meeting agreed on the “Decision on the role of the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office”¹¹, which specified the functions and responsibilities of the OSCE Chairman in Office. This decision clarified the rotation on an annual basis principle and a chairing member state is designated as such by a decision of the Summit Meeting or the Ministerial Council, “as a rule two years before the Chairmanship’s term of office starts”¹².

It was stressed that a chairing country has to take “the whole spectrum of opinions of participating States” into account and to avoid a protection of some specific, national interests. As Walter Kemp, the Editor of the ‘Security and Human Rights’ emphasizes, this decision points out that the OSCE Chairman is “merely the first among equals for a year” and must ensure that its actions are not inconsistent with positions agreed on by all the participating States.¹³

The above mentioned decision for a chairing country prescribed not only bureaucratic-organizational tasks (to preside over, co-ordinate and report on its activities to the Summit Meetings, the Ministerial Council, the Permanent Council and their subsidiary bodies, to ensure communication among OSCE institutions etc.) but some possibilities to take initiative: to organize formal and informal consultations and dialogue with the participating states, to initiate open-ended groups, to provide the Permanent Council with recommendations on specific issues requiring particular attention or decisions, to appoint the heads of the OSCE to

¹⁰ CSCE Helsinki Dokument 1992 The Challenges of Change, July 9-10, 1992. p. 7. <http://www.osce.org/mc/39530>

¹¹ Tenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, 6 and 7 December 2002, Porto. <http://www.osce.org/mc/40521>

¹² Tenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, 6 and 7 December 2002, Porto. <http://www.osce.org/mc/40521>

¹³ Kemp, Walter. „The OSCE Chairmanship: Captain or Figurehead?“ *Security and Human Rights*, 2009 no. 1, P. 9-12.

external missions and others representatives of the OSCE. However even such functions which at first glance might provide some institutional power, are limited by obligations to consult with the participating states (more precisely – with the Permanent Council), the OSCE Secretariat and Assembly on the candidate's selection process and "shall act in accordance with the outcome of these consultations." In this sense, according to Kemp, the Chairmanship's powers of appointment are limited. Senior appointments in the Secretariat and Institutions are up to the heads of the respective institutions, in consultation with the Chairmanship, and not the other way around; the Chairmanship appoints a Special Coordinator for short-term election observation missions on the suggestion of the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly; The Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) appoints the head of the long-term observation mission, and so on.¹⁴

The most important appointments for the main OSCE institutions, for example, Secretary General or Director of the ODIHR, are made by the consensus of all participating States. During Lithuania's Chairmanship both the Secretary General and the Director of the ODIHR have to be appointed. During the selection and consultation process a Chairman in the Office has to ensure that proper candidacies, suited for all Participating States, should be proposed. Negotiations and consultations on the most important vacancies in the administrative structure of the OSCE may become a tough challenge for the Chairmanship, bearing in mind the very distinctive interest and positions of 56 countries.

Lithuania had to correctly confront this kind of situation. In 2011 a new Secretary General of the OSCE has to be appointed for a three year term. Quite unexpectedly a serious friction for some initial candidates arose among Participating States. After some assertive objections from representatives of Turkey, Albania and Cyprus, the initially proposed four candidates contracted with two personalities and finally a compromise was reached for Italian Lamberto Zannieri, who has been appointed as a new Secretary General as of July 1, 2011. Far less dispute was raised regarding the candidacy for the Director of ODIHR – Slovenian Ambassador Janez Lenarčič was reappointed for the second term.

Hence, formally, the role of the OSCE Chairmanship may look more like a set of various obligations and retentions, which are described by the principle of consensus, rather than by the abilities to increase political influence. As Kemp has written, the Chairmanship does not have the ability to bring "a whole new crew on board," nor does it need "to plot a new course" which is usually set in advance¹⁵.

And still the political role of the Chairmanship is almost the main motive for Participating States to apply for the OSCE Chairmanship. Perhaps the greatest

¹⁴ Kemp, Walter. „The OSCE Chairmanship: Captain or Figurehead?“ *Security and Human Rights*, 2009 no. 1, P. 9.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 11.

benefit of having the Chairmanship, as may be seen, is associated with the public and diplomatic attention to the chairing country which for a year is speaking on behalf of the organization and is in the foreground of the OSCE activities. However even the most visible position on the scene of the OSCE does not allow the OSCE Chairman (a Minister of Foreign Affairs) to publicly express his or her views as the voice of the OSCE. As it is set in the Decision of Permanent Council of the OSCE¹⁶, formal OSCE positions are adopted by the decision-making bodies on the basis of consensus and statements of the Chairman-in-Office made in their national or personal capacity, or explaining their national or personal positions, should be clearly identified as such. In other cases, as Kemp emphasizes, if the Chairman abuses this practice, powerful participating States are usually quick to react and bring back the Chairmanship to the restricted area of formalities.

Given these formal restrictions and responsibilities which the Chairmanship must to take on, some may wonder - why are Participating States striving for a role which can just as quickly cause a headache as guarantee international influence and prestige?

Lithuania's efforts and motives to secure the OSCE Chairmanship can be considered typical for a small or medium-sized country which seeks to enhance its international status and highlight the proper skills to act on the highest level of international policy. This motive from the first sign may perhaps sound like an abstract one, but actually it could be the first reason encouraging the country to apply for the Chairmanship.

The initial political decision in Lithuania's diplomatic institutions to pursue the OSCE Chairmanship was reached as early as in April, 2003, and a year later, on the 7 July, 2004, the intention of Lithuania to seek the OSCE Chairmanship was formally declared¹⁷.

In the period of 2003-2004 Lithuania faced a major turning point in formulating new diplomatic tasks. The achieved memberships in the EU and NATO encouraged politicians and diplomats to think about new possible Lithuanian foreign policy goals and more specific tasks, in short, new kinds of "check-points". On May 24, 2004, the Acting President of Lithuania, Artūras Paulauskas, in his speech "Lithuania's New Foreign Policy", mentioned one of the later often repeated mottos of Lithuanian diplomatic activities: "Lithuania should be a prominent, active and influential member of the European Union and NATO"¹⁸. Paulauskas intended

¹⁶ Decision No. 485, OSCE Statements and Public Information, PC.DEC/485, 28 June 2002.

¹⁷ An interview with Ambassador Rytis Paulauskas, August 24, 2011, Vilnius.

¹⁸ Acting President of Lithuania Artūras Paulauskas, "Lithuania's New Foreign Policy", *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2004, No. 13-14. P.8. <<http://www.lfpr.lt/uploads/File/2004-13%2014/Paulauskas.pdf>>

to highlight the active stance of Lithuania's diplomacy in order to become a kind of "a centre of the region" by continuing to promote democracy, human rights and European values in the region where Lithuania's interests persist. Paulauskas also indicated in his speech that "it is our moral duty to develop and promote together with partner nations such forms of international engagement, which we ourselves could take pride in and use. We should strengthen international institutions and take an active part in their work."¹⁹ Among the specific directions for Lithuania's foreign policy, the OSCE was mentioned as well - a determination for „setting and pursuing ambitious goals in the United Nations, the OSCE and other multilateral forums“²⁰ was formulated among the most important future tasks for Lithuanian foreign policy.

One of the first realizations of these ambitions involved a task to take "visible" positions in international organizations: to apply for the OSCE Chairmanship and for a non-permanent UN Security Council member status. Lithuania's foreign policy "check-points" should become a clear confirmation that Lithuania is indeed "an active, visible, and influential state" able to not only actively participate at the highest level of international politics, especially in Eastern Europe, but also to take solid responsibility inside some of the most important international organizations. In the Agreement between political parties of the Republic of Lithuania on the main foreign goals and objectives of Lithuania for 2004-2008, signed on October 5, 2004, set a clear goal to seek the OSCE Chairmanship in order to enhance efforts to develop the image of Vilnius as a regional centre:

To contribute to further development of Lithuania's relations within the multilateral formats; to take active part in the work of international organisations in order to strengthen the international standing of Lithuania; to seek for Lithuania's presidency over the OSCE in 2010, and membership of the UN Security Council for 2014-2015; to promote and establish Vilnius as a centre of international conferences and initiatives and a residence place of various international organisations and their divisions.²¹

The vision of being a "center of the region," as later formulated by Paulauskas, became an important guideline of the foreign policy of the President Valdas Adamkus, elected for the second term in 2004 (such a vision was actively supported and even promoted by Antanas Valionis, the foreign minister at that time, and his successor Petras Vaitiekūnas). Eventually this ambition started to be interpreted as unreasonable, and some political analysts even called it "useless in terms of Lithuania's

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Agreement between political parties of the Republic of Lithuania on the main foreign goals and objectives of Lithuania for 2004-2008, October 5, 2004. *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2004, No. 13-14. P.111.

national interests”²². However a large part of the work carried out by Lithuanian diplomacy from 2004 to 2008 was and still continued to follow this goal, recorded in 2004, to be “active, visible, and influential”. Even if the reasons for this motivation may seem an end in themselves and poorly justified on specific national interests, their consequences produced substantial results. As Rytis Paulauskas, Director of the Department for the OSCE Chairmanship, stated, on the way towards the OSCE Chairmanship the reasoning, motives and goals were shifting: in 2004 they looked quite different than approaching the Chairmanship.

In approaching the Chairmanship, more attention was given not only to the potential benefits for Lithuania’s foreign policy, but also to potential threats: some preliminary SWOT analysis and an evaluation of potential challenges were drafted. In meetings with non-governmental organizations and experts, not only were drafts of Lithuania’s priorities for the OSCE Chairmanship presented, but also the potential use of propaganda or provocative activities from outside during the Lithuania’s Chairmanship were discussed.

In 2007, the Ministerial Council declared Lithuania to have won the right to chair the OSCE. This decision became an examination of Lithuania’s significance in the international structures. In 2007 a number of possible candidates for the OSCE Chairmanship were negotiated at once. At that time, the biggest question raised was Kazakhstan’s application for the OSCE Chairmanship. The representatives from Western Europe and especially from the United States had some concerns about the risks associated with a possible Kazakh Chairmanship. Various NGO organizations working in the field of human rights and having close co-operation with the OSCE, opposed the candidature of Kazakhstan because of the poor progress of democracy in this country. It was also feared that Kazakhstan would try to constrain the autonomy and mandate of the ODIHR, one of the most important OSCE institutions, bearing in mind Kazakhstan’s support for the initiatives by Russia and some other CIS countries to change the status of the ODIHR.²³ Russia and other CIS countries have actively supported the candidacy of Kazakhstan. After informal talks among the major OSCE Participating States a compromise on the three eventual OSCE Chairmanships “in one package” eventually was reached: to give the right for Greece (in 2009), Kazakhstan (in 2010) and Lithuania (in 2011). In this sense, Lithuania was seen as sort of “balancing” the Kazakhstan’s Chairmanship

²² More about critics to the idea of „centre of region“ see: Nekra as, Evaldas, „Kritiniai pamąstymai apie Lietuvos užsienio politiką“ (Some Critical Thoughts about Lithuanian Foreign Policy), *Politologija*, 2009/2 (54), p. 123-142.

²³ Bugajski Janusz, Assenova Margarita, Weitz Richard. *Kazakhstan’s OSCE Chairmanship 2010, Final Report*. A Report of the U.S. – Kazakhstan OSCE Task Force, 2011 January. P. v. <http://csis.org/files/publication/110125_Bugajski_KazakhstanOSCE_Web.pdf >

as a country at that time quite clearly seen as a close ally of the U.S. in Central and Eastern Europe. According to Paulauskas, Russia did not loudly voice its opposition to the candidacy of Lithuania²⁴. However, it is likely that the Russian representatives wished to see Kazakhstan in the Chairman's position of the OSCE, having a categorical position more often than not, to seek for the compromise.

In 2008, after the parliamentary elections of *Seimas*, preparations for the OSCE Chairmanship were declared to be one of the most urgent priorities of Lithuanian foreign policy. It was declared as such in the agreement among Lithuanian political parties, signed on October 28, 2008 and named "Agreement on the foreign policy principles, strategic guidelines, and goals of Lithuania for 2008-2012"²⁵ and in the Programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania for 2008-2012²⁶. In this document, officially the most important goal of the Lithuania's OSCE Chairmanship was already proclaimed: "During the presidency we shall seek for as much progress as possible in the field of democracy development and human rights in the OSCE area as well as issues related to the regulation of conflicts and their outcomes in the Southern Caucasus and Moldova that have not been settle for many years."²⁷ More details on Lithuanian motives and tasks for the OSCE Chairmanship can be found in the Resolution on Lithuania's Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe in 2011, as of June 10, 2010, adopted by Lithuanian Parliament. It emphasizes that it "considers the future Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship a national priority and a tool in attaining the goals and objectives of Lithuania's foreign policy shared by other Participating States of the OSCE and aimed at reinforcing security, confidence and democracy within the entire OSCE, and in implementing and developing the commonly recognized values"²⁸. The Lithuanian Parliament, *Seimas*, has proposed that the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania identify the political priorities of the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship and has recommended the inclusion of the following political guidelines²⁹:

- continuation of a dialogue on the future of European security (the Corfu Process);

²⁴ Interview with Amb. Rytis Paulauskas, August 24, 2011, Vilnius.

²⁵ "Agreement of the political parties of Lithuania on the foreign policy principles, strategic guidelines, and goals of Lithuania for 2008-2012", October 28, 2008, Vilnius, http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter/w5_show?p_r=6654&p_d=85275&p_k=2

²⁶ Action Programme of the Fifteenth Government of the Republic of Lithuania, approved by *Seimas* on December 9, 2008, http://www.lrv.lt/bylos/vyriausybes/en_15_programa.pdf

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 45.

²⁸ Resolution on Lithuania's Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe in 2011, June 10, 2010. http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=375059

²⁹ *Ibid*

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- response to new security challenges, including combating all forms of terrorism and ensuring cyber security;
 - reaction to the threats emanating from Afghanistan;
 - participation in the process of resolution of long-standing conflicts and prevention of new conflicts, while respecting the territorial integrity of the Participating States of the OSCE;
 - promotion of regional co-operation within the OSCE;
 - enhancement of co-operation in the fields of energy security and transportation;
 - consolidation of the OSCE human dimension and implementation of its commitments with particular regard to freedom of the media;
 - support for the activities of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

A part of these recommendations was later transferred to Lithuania's OSCE Chairmanship priorities. Summarizing the stage of preparation for the Chairmanship, a specific evolution of Lithuania's aspirations and motives can be identified.

- *The international visibility and demonstration of regional leadership. 2004-2007.* The first motives to assume responsibility for the OSCE Chairmanship have largely been related to the onset of “a syndrome of emptiness” in the priorities of Lithuanian foreign policy starting 2004. After memberships of the NATO and the EU were achieved, the Lithuanian political leaders wanted to set some new strategic objectives, but it was clear that they will not match the grand achievements of 2004. Chairmanship of the OSCE and the possible rotating position in the UN Security Council were very specific ambitious aspirations, but rather important *per se*. The main motive of these goals was simply to become more visible on the “podium” of the main international organizations. In what way these positions will serve for long-term national interests and priorities of Lithuania's foreign policy was perceived, at best, only in abstract and intuitive thoughts.
- *Chairmanship of the OSCE – as an active instrument of “Eastern Policy” of Lithuania. 2007-2009.* Since 2007, when the right of the OSCE Chairmanship was already secured, there was still an inert thinking that persisted that the OSCE Chairmanship will strengthen Lithuania's efforts to actively participate in the processes of democratization and integration to Euro-Atlantic structures of post-Soviet states. It was also conceived that Lithu-

ania could facilitate a resolution of frozen conflicts in Moldova and South Caucasus (this is what the Government suggested in the Actions Program as of 2008). Attention and involvement of Lithuania's political leaders in the politics of Eastern Europe and South Caucasus during 2004-2009 naturally stimulated many to view the OSCE as an important instrument, strengthening further Lithuania's "competence" and significance in the field of Eastern policy.

- *Inclusion of some specific Lithuanian accents, rather than ambitious political goals. 2009-2011.* Approaching the OSCE Chairmanship (2009-2011). Lithuanian foreign policy-makers took a more rational and less ambitious assessment of Lithuania's capacity to chair the OSCE. Not only diplomats directly working with the OSCE, but politicians as well began to understand that the functions and increased the visibility of the OSCE Chairman do not provide only benefits to defend national interests. In addition, a more sober assessment of ambitions finally to "solve" frozen conflicts in the OSCE area was taken. It was understood to be a highly complicated process and that excessive interference by the OSCE Chairman may even worsen the situation. Some possible negative affects of the Chairmanship also started to be assessed: a greater vulnerability to external criticism resulting from the increased visibility, the possible retention of the national interests in the name of OSCE solidarity, etc. Therefore, a larger share of Lithuania's Chairmanship guidelines were concentrated to ensure the smooth functioning of the OSCE, the continuation of the on-going processes and to strengthen the image of Lithuania as a state with a reliable professional diplomacy. It was chosen to transfer some "softer" interests of Lithuania to the agenda of the OSCE - for example, to include energy security dimension. Also the "freedom and security for media" was formulated as a priority and a specific focus of Lithuania's chairmanship. These provisions ultimately became important specific points in the Lithuania's OSCE Chairmanship Programme.

2. The Agenda of the OSCE Chairmanship and Lithuania's Priorities

When assessing motives and agendas of the OSCE Chairmanship, not only of Lithuania but other countries as well, and implementation processes, it is possible to discern two main dimensions: the “upload” of political (national) interests to the OSCE and keeping on with the OSCE long-term obligations and duties. Both the political as well as the functionalistic dimension usually are reflected in the priorities of the OSCE Chairmanship programs; however, the balance between the two dimensions varies. Some countries see the OSCE as a tool to benefit their political ambitions and national interests, while others concentrate more on ensuring the smooth performance of the OSCE functions. As in the first case, an excessive ambition to use the Chairmanship for propagating the national interests or ambitions may even be harmful to the OSCE; therefore the major OSCE Participating states (the U.S., Russia, some biggest EU countries) would in advance preventively to stop such an effort and would not ever let overly “egocentric” states take over the Chairmanship. In fact, that was the reason why the application for the Chairmanship by Kazakhstan was seen with suspicion. It was believed that Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship was sought first of all to enhance its international prestige.³⁰ Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship agenda partly confirmed some fears about the dominance of the political dimension: the aim to organize a Summit meeting of the OSCE and up to this event to achieve significant changes with regards to the frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space, were included into the Kazakhstan's Chairmanship agenda.

When assessing Lithuania's ambitions, one can quite clearly see the evolution of Lithuania's approach towards OSCE Chairmanship – from the focus on political dimensions towards a more and more functionalistic agenda. Lithuania's OSCE Chairmanship agenda set by the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed a functionalistic approach: the concentration on current OSCE activities and ensuring the proper performance of functions of the Chairman was emphasized. The objectives of Lithuania's Chairmanship could be defined as moderate or even minimalist. While stressing that Lithuania's priorities will be to make progress in resolving the frozen conflicts, keeping the obligations for ensuring freedom of press, promoting tolerance, increasing the OSCE role in transnational conflicts resolution and solving energy security problems, Lithuania still argued that du-

³⁰ More about the importance of the OSCE Chairmanship for Kazakhstan see: Neil Melvin: Melvin N., „The European Union, Kazakhstan and the 2010 OSCE Chairmanship“ *Security and Human Rights*, 2009 No. 1, p. 375-380.

ring its Chairmanship nobody should expect any major breakthrough or a final resolution of the frozen conflicts. As Ambassador Giedrius Čekuolis, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for Protracted Conflicts said at the presentation of Lithuania's OSCE Chairmanship agenda in Vienna on 12 January, 2011, "the OSCE is an organization where progress is measured in millimetres, but they are worth of gold".³¹ Lithuanian Foreign Minister Ažubalis publicly reiterated the same position on several occasions, arguing that it would be a success for Lithuania, if it could succeed in pushing the confronting parties "by a millimeter" towards a peaceful agreement.

In some informal comments by Lithuanian diplomats even more pessimism has been exposed. At the end of 2010 there were pretty clear signs of growing tensions in Nagorno-Karabakh: both the conflicting sides had exchanged periodic sniper fire and least 25 soldiers were killed during the year of 2010, up from 19 in 2009³². Both the Azerbaijan and the Armenian side were not inclined to withdraw their snipers and reduce sources of tension. There were concerns that the conflict could move to even "hotter" phase. The remembrance of Russia-Georgia war in 2008 had increased the fear that military conflict might not be so unlikely. Therefore, some Lithuanian politicians and diplomats at the beginning of the OSCE Chairmanship were tending towards "not making any sharp moves" in order not to provoke more severe reactions and thus damage the very fragile situation. This attitude was encouraged by some extent because of the Kazakh Chairmanship example. It was keeping in mind that Kazakhstan's efforts to "push through" on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue only annoyed the involved parties, so otherwise sensitive to any pressure. At the Astana Summit in Kazakhstan an agreement on general principles was reached, but the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan refused to meet each other and made only a vague commitment to seek a solution based "on international legal principles and the Muskoka/L'Aquila statements of the Minsk Group co-chair countries"³³, which have been formulated in 2005 and now known as "the Madrid principles".

It was stated in the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship Work Programme, which was officially presented by the Foreign Minister of Lithuania Ažubalis on January 13, 2011, at the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna, that:

³¹ Gabrielė Pečkaitytė, „Vilnius sėkmę matuos milimetrais“, (Vilnius will measure a success by millimeters) *Lietuvos rytas*, p. 7., 2011-01-14.

³² The International Crisis Group Europe, „Armenia and Azerbaijan: Preventing War“ Briefing N°60, 8 February 2011. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/-/media/Files/europe/caucasus/B60%20Armenia%20and%20Azerbaijan%20---%20Preventing%20War.pdf>

³³ Ibid, p.8.

The strengthening and full implementation of the participating States' commitments across all dimensions of security in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area will be a strategic objective of the Lithuanian Chairmanship. Particular attention will be given to the promotion and protection of human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law, which are at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security. Protracted conflicts as well as existing and emerging transnational threats to security and stability will be among key priorities in 2011.³⁴

These formulations reflected a desire to implement functions of continuing the OSCE commitments recorded in Astana Summit on 3 December, 2010, and the earlier decisions of the OSCE. Among the priorities of the Work Programme, some cautious attempts to "move forward" by reducing tension and searching for abilities to potentially enhance better understanding between the parties of frozen conflicts can be found. The Lithuanian Chairmanship Programme provided separate tasks for enhancing mutual confidence and security between parties of frozen conflicts in Transnistria, Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia), and the Nagorno-Karabakh. Some of the Lithuania's efforts, recorded on the Chairmanship Programme, and criteria of possible "achievements", are identified in the Table 1.

Table 1. Possible Criteria for Progress in Frozen Conflicts during the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship

Conflict	Statements in the Lithuanian Working Programme	Possible criteria of „success“	Result
Transnistria	The Lithuanian Chairmanship will continue to pursue active OSCE participation in the political process aimed at settling the Transnistrian conflict on the basis of full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. The Chairmanship will seek, as a matter of priority, the unconditional resumption of formal 5+2 negotiations and development of concrete confidence and security-building measures, as well as facilitation of people-to-people contacts.	The unconditional resumption of formal 5+2 negotiations; Agreements, facilitating people-to-people contacts; Agreements, increasing confidence and security-building measures	The resumption of formal 5+2 negotiations

³⁴ The Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Lithuania, „2011 Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship Work Programme“, http://www.delegfrance-osce.org/IMG/pdf/ciogal0004r1_cio_work_programme_2011.pdf

Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia)	Facilitation of initiatives aiming at extending OSCE activities in Georgia, including through a meaningful OSCE presence, will also be of key importance to the Lithuanian Chairmanship. The Chairmanship stresses in this regard the importance of full implementation of the 12 August and 8 September 2008 agreements. Engagement of the OSCE in implementing concrete projects of confidence-building character with the aim of rebuilding trust and confidence will be one of the main tasks for the Chairmanship	Engagement of representatives of the OSCE in projects of confidence-building character The expansion of the OSCE activities in Georgia e The improvement of the Dvani/ Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism	During the Chairmanship regular meetings on the format of the Dvani/Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism were organised
Nagorno Karabakh	The OSCE role in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement process through the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs will be maintained. The Chairmanship will invite the parties to the conflict, as well as other OSCE participating States, to consider options of confidence-building measures and strengthening the OSCE monitoring activities on the ground.	Strengthening the role of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs Strengthening the abilities of the OSCE Mission in Nagorno Karabakh Agreements and measures strengthening mutual confidence-building and security	A common statement by the Minsk Group and Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers was issued on December 6, 2011.

On the *Politico-Military Dimension and Non-Military Security*, the first of three main OSCE dimensions, one of the most important tasks completed by Lithuania was a substantial update of the Vienna Document 1999 and the adoption of a programme for action. This objective, although seeming quite ambitious, was discussed for several years and Lithuanian diplomats hoped that it would be possible for the Council of Ministers to generalize all the results at Vilnius meeting 2011.

In addition to strengthening traditional security goals, a number of specific tasks have been identified³⁵:

³⁵ The Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Lithuania, „2011 Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship Work Programme“, http://www.delegfrance-osce.org/IMG/pdf/ciagal0004r1_cio_work_programme_2011.pdf

- It will endeavor to establish a strategic framework for police-related activities, effectively covering aspects of organized crime and illicit drug trafficking.
- The Chairmanship will work to improve the OSCE's profile in the field of cyber security and to define the value added by OSCE contributions in this area. It proposes to hold an OSCE conference to that effect.
- The Chairmanship will work to improve the OSCE's profile in the field of cyber security and to define the value added by OSCE contributions in this area. It proposes to hold an OSCE conference to that effect.

As for the *Economic and Environmental Dimension*, Lithuania made it clear that it will focus on the transport and energy sectors. The program included a statement that “enhancement of the energy security dialogue will be high on the Chairmanship’s agenda”. However, the Programme was not very specific on the tasks or decisions which should be agreed upon during the Chairmanship. At a later time, an official Lithuanian proposal was made for the OSCE Ministerial Council session to establish a permanent Task Force on Energy Security. This proposal was based on the idea that after the end of the Lithuanian Chairmanship discussions on closer cooperation between the OSCE countries on energy security would continue. Lithuania, as the OSCE Chairman, has focused on energy security, transport and economic activity during the second preparatory Economic and Environmental Forum meeting on April 4-5, 2011, in Druskininkai and the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum (for Sustainable Energy Development) on 14 September, 2011, in Prague.³⁶

On the *Human Security Dimension* Lithuania attempted to “call for a new look at our media freedom commitments. Hence, the Chairmanship’s intention to focus on the theme of pluralism in new media.”³⁷ To discuss this issue a Chairmanship conference devoted to the safety of journalists was held in June in Vilnius. So, media freedom and journalists’ security problems have become the “specific” distinctive accent of the Lithuanian Chairmanship in 2011.

³⁶ Arūnas Molis. „ESBO vaidmens stiprinimo energetinio saugumo srityje perspektyvos“ („OSCE role in strengthening energy security perspective“), Energetinio saugumo akcentai, Nr. 8, 2011, Energy Security Centre, Vilnius. P. 8

³⁷ The Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Lithuania, „2011 Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship Work Programme“, http://www.delegfrance-osce.org/IMG/pdf/ciogal0004r1_cio_work_programme_2011.pdf

3. Achievements, Disappointments and Surprises of the Chairmanship

The main results of the OSCE activities over the past year, along with some outcomes of efforts made by the Chairmanship, can be captured best at the Ministerial Council meetings. The annual MC meeting is the most important reference point for the OSCE and the place for major decision-making. Therefore, to prepare it for the MC and to achieve promoted decisions for a variety of initiatives is a key challenge for the Chairmanship. All the work of the year seeking compromises between the OSCE Participating States is summarized and the overall progress since the last MC is evaluated.

The Vilnius' intentions to face the MC meeting with a pretty ambitious agenda were reflected on the document drafted in the middle of the year named "Chairmanship's Discussion Paper for the OSCE Ambassadorial Retreat in Baden", as for 23–24 June, 2011.³⁸ This document mentioned the intentions to prepare for the MC meeting a number of decisions and declarations strengthening cooperation when addressing transnational threats, to adopt strategic guidelines on policing principles, to adopt the concept of counter-terrorism, cyber-security strategy, to promote the OSCE energy and transport profile and some other documents. One of the key proposals on the first dimension was the proposal to review the Vienna document "On confidence-and security-building" agreed in 1999³⁹. In total, Lithuania proposed thirty draft decisions to adopt at the OSCE Ministerial Council in December 2011.

However, the 18th session of the Ministerial Council which took place on December 6-7, 2011 in Vilnius and its outcomes were somewhat disappointing. Of the thirty proposed projects only eleven⁴⁰ were adopted, and a declaration (Ministerial Declaration on Combating All Forms of Human Trafficking) was approved. Bearing in mind that some of the decisions were dealing with relatively minor, technical issues (for example, Decision No. 13/11, Time and Place of the Next Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, or Decision No. 12/11, Application of Mongolia to Become a Participating State that stated a need for

³⁸ Permanent Mission of the Republic of Lithuania to the OSCE, Possible Deliverables for OSCE MC in Vilnius, December 2011. Chairmanship's Discussion Paper for the OSCE Ambassadorial Retreat in Baden, 23–24 June 2011, CIO.GAL/115/11, 14 June 2011.

³⁹ Frank Evers. „The OSCE Summit in Astana. Expectations and Results“. *CORE Working Paper 23*, October 2011, P. 26.

⁴⁰ Two more decisions of the MC *de facto* have been accepted earlier – Decision No. 1/11, Reappointment of Amb. Janez Lenarcic as Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, on 30 May, and Decision No. 2/11, Appointment of the OSCE Secretary General, on 30 June.

further consideration), it can be said that adoption of only one third of the of the projected decisions was not a very good result. For comparison, five declarations or statements and 16 decisions were adopted at the seventeenth session of the 2009 Ministerial Council in Athens. In 2008, at the sixteenth Session of the Ministerial Council in Helsinki a general statement, the two declarations and 10 decisions were adopted (four more decisions on the appointments were taken by “non-objection procedure” before the Ministerial Council meeting).

However, the “poor balance” between proposed and accepted decisions was the result of a highly ambitious effort by Lithuania to provide an extremely wide package of draft decisions. As the U.S. diplomats who informally participated in the Vilnius MC commented, so many proposals were not usual thing at the OSCE. In addition, as some Lithuanian diplomats mentioned, parts of the proposed decisions were submitted “for tactical reasons”, perhaps, knowing quite well they cannot all be accepted by consensus.

A sensitivity of some OSCE Participating States regarding the issues relating to human rights and freedoms and media security increased difficulties for compromise on the proposed OSCE MC decisions.

The eighteenth Ministerial Council in Vilnius was held right after the 4th of December when Parliamentary elections in Russia took place, where a number of violations were recorded. Internet space spread a lot of various video and photo evidence of election falsification in Russia. This led to enormous protests in Russia for a whole week, at the same time of the OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting. Hillary Clinton, the head of the U.S. State Department who attended the Ministerial Council in Vilnius, mentioned in her public statement that “Russia’s elections were neither free nor fair.”⁴¹ Clinton also quoted the report by the OSCE election observers in Russia, stressing the human rights and fundamental freedoms were still not fully secured. This has raised complaints from the Russian delegation and probably further strengthened their opposition to the OSCE decisions in support of media freedom in cyberspace, the safety of journalists and other documents related with the development of human rights.

The Russian delegation after the session of Ministerial Council provided a statement of concern that the OSCE did not reach significant decisions. It was said in a statement that “the drawing up of a unifying agenda for the Organization has been impeded by the unsound practice of promoting within that agenda group interests, a practice that is becoming ever more prevalent and that runs counter to

⁴¹ OSCE 18 th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6 – 7 December 2011. Statement by H.E. Ms. Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State. MC.DEL/31/11, 6 December 2011, <http://www.osce.org/mc/85930>

the original sense and purpose of the CSCE/OSCE⁴². It also implicitly criticized the efforts to include so many draft decisions in the OSCE agenda: “The approach involving a significant increase in the number of commitments and the adoption of decisions on minor issues that bring no real added value has completely outlived its usefulness⁴³. According to the Russian Delegation, the OSCE would require fundamental reform, otherwise the organization would lose its meaning as a multilateral forum for cooperation and security.

Nevertheless, in the report on progress made during Lithuania’s Chairmanship of the OSCE, presented at closing session of the Ministerial Council, it was stated that “significant efforts” have been made on five main priorities⁴⁴:

- register tangible progress in addressing protracted conflicts;
- significantly improve our record of implementation of media freedom commitments;
- enhance the OSCE profile with regard to transnational threats, including those emanating from the territory of Afghanistan;
- define the OSCE’s role in our energy security dialogue,
- promote tolerance education throughout the OSCE area in order to combat hate crimes and discrimination.

Lithuania also drew attention to the point that it had to respond to unforeseen events: “the aftermath of the December 2010 presidential elections in Belarus; a political crisis in Albania; outbreaks of violence in northern Kosovo; and the dramatic events of the Arab Spring⁴⁵. However, it should be noted that the year of 2011 was not anything particularly outstanding – there were no serious armed conflicts in the OSCE area, as in 2008, or significant political upheavals, accompanied the threat of civil war, as in 2010. Perhaps one of the biggest challenges for the OSCE was the previously mentioned Russian Duma elections, which were monitored by the OSCE representatives.

The OSCE has faced a big dilemma in regards to the evaluation of the election and the treatment of the Russian reaction to the civil protests against electoral fraud: how are they to react to events where one of the most influential members of

⁴² OSCE 18th Ministerial Council Vilnius, 6 – 7 December 2011. Closing Session. Statement by of the Delegation of the On the Outcome of the Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Vilnius. MC.DEL/65/11, 7 December 2011. <http://www.osce.org/mc/86173>

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ OSCE 18 th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6 – 7 December 2011. Report on progress made during Lithuania’s Chairmanship of the OSCE, 2011, Vilnius, 7 December 2011. <http://www.osce.org/mc/86008>

⁴⁵ Ibid

the OSCE does not promote the principle of free and fair elections, does not allow independent media to function freely, and independent online media sites on election day were blocked? But regarding the precisely these questions the OSCE and the Chairman rather avoided any “sharp corners”, which could lead to Russia’s nervous reaction. It was confined in the OSCE election observation report, which looked pretty low-key. The Lithuanian Foreign Minister, even in response to reporters’ questions, only quoted some laconic claims by the OSCE election observers report. Accordingly, the following point was even kept from public mention, namely, that the opposition of one of the Participant States prevented the OSCE Ministerial Council from the adoption of the decision appealing to media freedoms.

3.1. Protracted Conflicts

Searching for solutions in protracted conflicts, Lithuania emphasized the progress in the Transnistrian settlement process. Shortly before the OSCE MC the formal negotiations in the 5+2 framework was held in Vilnius, which has been suspended since 2006. It has been striving for the resumption of the negotiation throughout the year. On February 8-10, 2011, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Azubalis visited Moldova where he met with representatives of Moldova and Transnistria. Ambassador Čekuolis, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for Protracted Conflicts, constantly maintained contacts with representatives of Russia, the U.S. Ukraine and the EU - this has helped to held several informal 5+2 format meetings in 2011, and on September 22 in Moscow has been agreed to resume formal negotiations on Transnistria in the format 5 +2. However despite the progress made throughout 2011 in the negotiation process, a separate Ministerial Statement on the resumption of the official 5+2 negotiations on the Transnistrian settlement could not be adopted in the Ministerial Council, which would have been a sign of a more solid advance in a settlement of the conflict.

Also, the OSCE Ministerial Council has failed to adopt any statement on the conflict in Georgia. This conflict actually does not move from the point of death since the autumn 2008. Despite the efforts made by Lithuania, the inclusion of OSCE representatives to the settlement of the conflict and the potential establishment of the OSCE mission has remained without a brighter outlook. In the final report on progress made during Lithuania’s Chairmanship it was only stated that the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms within the Geneva Framework were used very actively in maintaining the dialog.

In the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict there was some formal agreement reached, showing that the conflicting parties want to maintain a dialogue.

The efforts by the representatives of the Minsk Group led to a Joint Statement by the Heads of Delegation of the Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries and the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan on the margins of the Vilnius Ministerial Council on 6 December. It was stated that there is “a need to continue the negotiating process in the format of the OSCE Minsk Group and to improve the climate for making progress towards a peaceful settlement”⁴⁶. Lithuania has also stressed that Armenia and Azerbaijan have confirmed that their Presidents are ready to meet again jointly in the near future under the auspices of the Co-Chair countries to continue their direct dialogue.

The document which summarizes how to improve the effectiveness of the OSCE in resolving protracted conflicts was titled *Elements of the Conflict Cycle, Related to Enhancing the OSCE’s Capabilities in Early Warning, Early Action, Dialogue Facilitation and Mediation Support, and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation*⁴⁷. This document highlights the importance of early warning of the imminent escalation of conflict and the information exchange between members of the OSCE. It was declared that the OSCE Secretary-General should report by 16 July, 2012, about the progress of enforcement of these recommendations.

3.2. The Politico-Military Dimension

As was planned, the updating of the Vienna Document 1999 “Of the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures”, that has been sought in recent years through Security and Cooperation Forum format, was completed in Vilnius. This document included nine so-called Vienna Document Plus’ recommendations. Also it was decided that this agreement should be renewed every five years. It was also a decision on “Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition”, that has already become a traditional, has been adopted as well as the OSCE commitment to strengthen its activities addressing non-proliferation and the proper role of the OSCE in facilitation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540⁴⁸.

Summing up the OSCE’s efforts to encourage cooperation by addressing

⁴⁶ OSCE 18 th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6 – 7 December 2011. Report on progress made during Lithuania’s Chairmanship of the OSCE, 2011, Vilnius, 7 December 2011. <http://www.osce.org/mc/86008>

⁴⁷ OSCE 18 th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6 – 7 December 2011. Decision No. 3/11. *Elements of the Conflict Cycle, Related to Enhancing the OSCE’s Capabilities in Early Warning, Early Action, Dialogue Facilitation and Mediation Support, and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation*. <http://www.osce.org/mc/86079>

⁴⁸ OSCE 18 th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6 – 7 December 2011. Decision No. 8/11, The Proper Role of the OSCE in Facilitation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540.

transnational threats, the Ministerial Council has adopted a document⁴⁹ that welcomes the intention to establish a separate department of the OSCE to address transnational threats and the OSCE Secretary General was called to report regularly on progress and performance in this area. As planned by Lithuanian diplomats, the OSCE decision addressing the problems of Afghanistan has been adopted. The Decision on “Strengthening OSCE Engagement with Afghanistan”⁵⁰ (very welcomed by the U.S. delegation) recommended the continuation and strengthening of the OSCE projects that could contribute to the development of stability and prosperity in Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, neither the updating of the Vienna document, nor other decisions made by the Ministerial Council were “revolutionary” - the abstract tone of decisions have little impact on existing performance and the importance of the OSCE by addressing security challenges in Europe and around the world. Russia would seek to strengthen the OSCE most in this area because Russians is still intent on imposing a vision of a Common European Security Space, which could reduce the significance of NATO. The Russian delegation expressed regret that the OSCE did not support Russia’s efforts to increase the importance of the OSCE in this field and to become a leading collective organization providing “hard security” for Europe.

However, Russia, as was suggested by some OSCE delegations, impeded the update of Vienna document more seriously. As the German delegation (representing other 38 OSCE Participating states) has expressed in an interpretative statement, the “technical and procedural nature” of the Vienna document updates were clearly less ambitious than expected. As was stated in this interpretative statement, the Forum for Security Co-operation “should aim for concrete results in areas such as lowering the thresholds at which we are obliged to inform other participating States of our military exercises, increasing opportunities for verification activity, expanding the range of military activities on which we notify our partners, modernising and updating our exchange of military information, informing our partners of at least one below threshold military exercise every year, strengthening our risk reduction mechanisms as well as exploring ways in which we can enlarge the scope of CSBMs”⁵¹.

⁴⁹ OSCE 18 th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6 – 7 December 2011. Decision No. 9/11, Strengthening Co-ordination and Coherence in the OSCE’s Efforts to Address Transnational Threats. <http://www.osce.org/mc/86089>

⁵⁰ OSCE 18 th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6 – 7 December 2011. Decision No. 4/11, Strengthening OSCE Engagement with Afghanistan, <http://www.osce.org/mc/86080>

⁵¹ OSCE 18 th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6 – 7 December 2011. Decision No. 7/11, Issues Relevant to the Forum for Security Co-operation, MC.DEC/7/11, Interpretative statement under Paragraph IV.1(A)b of the OSCE Rules of Procedure, 7 December 2011 <http://www.osce.org/mc/88839?download=true>

3.3. The Economic Dimension

As previously mentioned, one of the top priorities of the Lithuanian Chairmanship was to strengthen the activities of the OSCE on transport and energy dimensions. Lithuania in all international forums and institutions emphasizes the importance of energy policy and the need for coordination. It was expected that the OSCE Ministerial Council should adopt a decision to set up a working group dealing on the energy dimension and the OSCE would declare an intention to strengthen cooperation in this field.

Unfortunately, the economic dimension the OSCE Ministerial Council only managed to make a decision addressing the importance of the transport sector⁵². The Ministerial Council in Vilnius failed to adopt any specific decision on cooperation in energy security, although this topic has been circulating for a long time on the agendas of the OSCE institutions and events.

3.4. The Human Dimension

Lithuania and Western countries had some major disappointments over some of the proposals rejected by some OSCE members, in particular to strengthen the third pillar of the OSCE, the human dimension. Lithuania has made considerable efforts to adopt decisions at the Ministerial Council on the promotion of pluralism in the digital media and address the need for greater security for journalists. The U.S. Ambassador to Lithuania Anne E. Derse stated that these efforts of Lithuania were actively supported by the U.S. and the EU countries. However, consensus on them was not found - again, mainly because Russia and some other non-democratic countries opposed them.

Although the Lithuanian Foreign Minister and other diplomats directly responsible for the Chairmanship as well as the U.S. diplomats said that the Lithuanian Chairmanship priorities will be transferred into the agenda of the Irish Chairmanship for 2012, it can be stated that the OSCE did not achieve significant progress on human rights in 2011.

One of the clearest points of evidence to confirm this judgment is that Belarusian government crackdown on opposition members after the 2010 presidential elections in Belarus and closure of the OSCE mission in Minsk. It was an obvious gesture showing that one of the OSCE Participating States does not

⁵² OSCE 18 th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6 – 7 December 2011. Decision No. 11/11, Strengthening Transport Dialogue in the OSCE. <http://www.osce.org/mc/86084>

want to take into account any recommendations by the OSCE or to show any efforts to strengthen human rights. Russia's Duma elections, where many abuses and attempts to block independent media have been registered, have also confirmed that Russia would continue to look to the third pillar of the OSCE as an unwelcome advance.

Beyond the OSCE Ministerial Council there are troubling indications that even Kazakhstan, the Chairman of the OSCE in 2010, is not inclined to tolerate an opposition to its governing regime. Protests which had broken out in mid-December 2011 in the city of Zhanaozen (Western Kazakhstan) were subdued by a force, and at least 10 people were killed and many injured. In order to stabilize the situation, the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev introduced a state of emergency in the city.

These events and the outcomes of the OSCE Ministerial Council confirmed that a very different approach to human rights and freedoms persists between the West and Russia (and other non-democratic Eastern European and Central Asian countries) and that the organization did not actually succeed in reducing the gap. Lithuania's active efforts to include these topics into the co-operation agenda did not help in any way to find a compromise. To some extent that only further highlighted the existing differences between the OSCE Participating States and limited ability of the OSCE to contribute to this area of development in non-democratic countries.

Conclusions

Those Lithuanian politicians and diplomats aiming for the Chairmanship of the OSCE from the beginning imagined a little naively that they would produce only a positive result: a positive evaluation of Lithuania and better international recognition. It was believed that the chairing of such a large organization would strengthen Lithuania's Eastern Policy vector and Lithuania in the international arena would further consolidate its status as an expert of the post-Soviet space. However, the preparations for the OSCE Chairmanship and the very Chairmanship process modified by far all these expectations. It was realized quite soon that a substantial change in the OSCE activities and performance will not be possible. Furthermore, over-active behavior in order to impose upon the OSCE Chairmanship work program a reflection of national interests could cause a risk of objections by the major OSCE Participating States or even lead to the deterioration of bilateral relations with individual countries that look at the formal decision of the OSCE with a high sensitivity (especially if they are involved in

frozen conflicts). Ultimately, therefore, the Lithuanian Chairmanship Programme became not so much political as more functionalistic, i.e., it was aimed to fulfill functions of the Chairmanship properly and manage the various interests of the members of the OSCE correctly.

This choice reduced the risk Lithuania could damage its international reputation by striving for a number of ambitious goals or defending national interests. As the Chairmanship showed, Lithuania avoided the over-use of the OSCE Chairman's status to address their national foreign policy objectives. Perhaps the best example is Michael Golovatov's story, when the suspect of the massacre of January 13, 1991, was arrested in Austria under an EU arrest warrant, but was very quickly released and returned to Russia. In this not very pleasant situation for Lithuania and Austria, Vilnius resisted the temptation to include issues relating to the detention and release of suspects onto the OSCE agenda, or take advantage of additional opportunities to emphasize the evaluation of communist crimes, etc. As Lithuanian diplomats mentioned, it was cautiously suggested for Lithuanian politicians not to link this story with the Lithuanian Chairmanship of the OSCE.

However, the attempts to abstain from too actively sharing an opinion using the OSCE as a platform even restricted to some extent Lithuania's positions on foreign policy issues. This was especially seen when commenting on events in Russia and Belarus. For a long time Lithuania was quite critical of Russia and Belarus, but during the Chairmanship Lithuania tried to refrain from any sharp comments about Russia's Duma elections or the persecution of Belarusian opposition. A kind of ambiguous position towards the Belarusian regime was highlighted by the scandal of the Alesi Beliacki case, when despite the condemnation of the Lukashenka's regime there was an attempt to maintain the proper relationship on the official level. The Lithuanian authorities have sent the details of the Lithuanian banks accounts held by the one of the Belarusian opposition leaders and this became a pretext for law enforcement authorities in Minsk to bring charges against Mr Beliacki and assign him a custodial sentence. Later Lithuanian officers and diplomats made excuses and protested against such actions by law enforcement in Belarus; however, that had no substantial impact on the Lithuanian official attitude towards Belarus or the stance of the Belarusian regime towards the opposition.

Lithuania tried to show itself to be an active Chairman of the OSCE and very carefully prepared for the Ministerial Council. It prepared an unusually large number of draft decisions that were in line with Lithuania's Chairmanship priorities. However, final decisions only partially met the expectations of Lithuania – only a part of the proposed projects were adopted. Most of the proposals related to human rights and freedoms, and ensuring the security of journalists

and media, were objected to by some of the Participating States and the OSCE did not reach a consensus. This confirmed a long-existing assumption that inside the OSCE there remains a significant gap between the Western democracies and some non-democratic post-Soviet states, and Russia plays a crucial role among them. When offering the OSCE draft decisions on the human dimension, Lithuanian activity did not reduce the existing different approaches to democratic values. On the contrary - the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting was a platform for the exchange of critical voices from the U.S. and Russian delegations about the Russian parliamentary elections, and existing differences in approach. In this sense, the Lithuanian Chairmanship did not contribute in any way to reducing the differences of opinion among the members of the OSCE. Various formal and informal statements and evaluations by the Participating States appeared after the Ministerial Council suggested that the OSCE remains a highly fragmented organization, which is unable to reach common solutions that would significantly enhance the effectiveness of the OSCE on the security issues and cooperation for economic and human rights.

The agenda of the Lithuanian Chairmanship and its implementation was quite clearly directed to representation of one side of the positions in the OSCE – i.e. the aim of the Western democracies, and especially the U.S., to emphasize the development of human rights and democratic values. This choice was almost pre-programmed for the Lithuanian Chairmanship - not only because Lithuania belongs to the group of the democratic countries and is a member of the EU and NATO, but also because Lithuania took a kind of a “transferred cup” of the OSCE Chairmanship by representing the interest of the U.S. Still deciding on the OSCE Chairmanship, the right was granted for Lithuania as a kind of compromise, taking into account the 2010 Chairmanship by Kazakhstan, whose positions have been closer to Russia’s interests. Lithuania, as a small state, is naturally constrained in any attempt to offer a completely unique and original agenda of Chairmanship. The OSCE, as well as many other international organizations, first of all is a diplomatic playground for the big powers. In this sense Lithuania shall play on one of the “teams”, to support larger players and take advantage of their political support when implementing its proposed agenda.

Lithuania acted properly as a “team player” and fulfilled its functions to a maximum degree. U.S. diplomats highly praised the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship and the ambitions reflected in the Work Programme. This could be useful for enhancing the U.S. diplomatic support for Lithuania, but had no effect on changing the whole nature of the OSCE. So in that sense the Lithuanian Chairmanship ensured a smooth institutional functioning of the organization, but

in the political sense did not solve the challenges of the OSCE. However, a small state cannot change an inert trend that is shaped by the relationships among the major powers.

Finally, the Lithuanian Chairmanship of the OSCE had to be useful for Lithuanian diplomacy in the functional meaning. It has been mentioned often that it's a good workout for Lithuania before the EU Presidency in the second half of 2013. Organizational and logistical challenges encountered during the OSCE Ministerial Council session provided good practice that will be useful in preparation for Lithuania's EU Presidency. However, this did not change the political awareness among Lithuanian politicians and diplomats about how the essential interests of Lithuania could be strengthened when chairing such large organizations. Most of the energy was allocated to fulfilling the technical and bureaucratic functions, rather than formulating some political visions and solutions, let alone their implementation. This may be a common "curse" for small countries when the essential interests of the chairmanships are to "please" the biggest states and maintain its own reputation rather than try to include some original proposals or decisions at the top-level international arena. However, in this case, the risks and costs brought forth by the chairmanships may be even greater than the potential and abstract benefits. The fear of being criticized or even facing some provocations, as a side-effect of a greater visibility of the Chairmanship, may restrict some moves addressing foreign policy challenges of their own. Therefore, eventually, Lithuania, like many other small countries, can realize that even an "increased visibility and activity" by some special occasions does not change the existing abilities for diplomatic influence and does not guarantee better protection of national interests. It is simply a function which can be treated without any major expectations and which does not need to be pursued at every opportunity. Such a rational approach to chairing or representation of any large organization can be useful in order to waive some meaningless moves or ambitions in the international arena and to focus more on some of the real challenges faced by a small country.

Vilnius, August – December 2011