

# *The small state's role in the Euro-Atlantic area: Potential changes in Lithuania's foreign policy*

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## **Summary**

Lithuania is a small state by objective features (population, territory, GDP) and subjective ones (geopolitical position, resilience from external security threats, national identity). The goal of this research is to define the main roles of Lithuania, which are relevant to the Lithuanian foreign policy decision-making process nowadays. Those roles are the structure for Lithuania's new President Gitanas Nausėda. While during his presidency he will have the possibility to modify them, for now for the roles formed and enacted over the last ten years serve as the limits of the change of the policy in the Euro-Atlantic area. The main assumption regarding the roles of Lithuania in the Euro-Atlantic area is that policymakers emphasize the smallness of the state. Accordingly, being a small state is translated to a set of expected and appropriate behavior. Therefore, the classical definition of smallness suggests that Lithuania's roles should include the strategies of hiding and appeal to democratic values. In order to deny or confirm the assumptions, the research includes the definition of small states, an analysis of small state foreign policy strategies, the main thesis of the Role theory, the theoretical basis of subjective smallness concept, and discussion of Lithuania's roles in the Euro-Atlantic area, using an interpretive methodology of Social constructivism.

*Keywords: small state, Lithuania, role, Social constructivism, foreign policy.*

## **Introduction**

Since 2004, Lithuania has been a member of the EU and NATO. Nowadays Lithuania expresses support for the Common European Defense policy and the leading role of Germany and France in this process. On the other hand, Lithuania is a NATO member and links national security with the Alliance and the USA. Simultaneously, both memberships

act as external sources of expectations for Lithuania's foreign policy. A pattern of expected behavior defines the state's role. Competition over its national role arises from an evident disagreement between domestic political parties, different branches of government and even between relevant political figures. In this context, the internal expectations are linked with what subjectively is considered to be appropriate behavior in a given situation. Domestic characteristics affect the definition and performance of the role of continuity or change of the subjective element. The core of the subjective element is the perception of 'appropriateness', i.e. the decision-makers' persuasion and ideas as to what as representatives of the state they should say or do while implementing foreign policy.<sup>1</sup>

According to Lithuania's constitution, the president of the republic settles basic foreign policy issues and, together with the government, implements foreign policy (Article 84). During the presidency of Dalia Grybauskaitė, for the past ten years, it was agreed that the main figure in implementing foreign policy was the president, while the prime minister and minister of foreign affairs followed the president's lead. For the past decade, Lithuania's foreign policy became personalized: "Grybauskaitė has become the most important foreign policymaker in Lithuania, and even a supervisor of the process itself."<sup>2</sup> Consequently, Lithuania's roles in the Euro-Atlantic area resulted from the conjunction of changes in the international environment and the stability of domestic features. Lithuania's agency in the EU and NATO represents the political actions of policymakers within the constraints of the given structure and particular situation.<sup>3</sup> Continuity or change of the evident foreign policy depends not just on the structural constraints. The change of the policymakers enacts a domestic state's role bargaining and changes in foreign policy.<sup>4</sup>

On 12 July 2019 Gitanas Nausėda was officially inaugurated as Lithuania's president. The new president was widely known as an economist but had no political experience. During his presidential campaign, Nausėda stressed the continuity of foreign policy. In his inaugural address, the President stated that his main strategic goals would be deeper Euro-Atlantic integration, maintaining close relations with the European Union and the United States, and developing relations with neighboring countries: Poland, Latvia, and Estonia.<sup>5</sup> The goals are mainly conditioned by external structural demands, i.e. Russia's threat to the eastern flank of NATO, US politics towards Europe, the European policies of Germany and France, Brexit and other actions of more powerful states. Equally the goals are predefined by Lithuania's already established policies, that were formed as subjective responses by the state's former political leaders. While the process of role changes takes place in a continuum, the 'appropriate' implementation of foreign policy by President Gi-

1 Gvalia, G., Siroky, D., Lebanidze, B., and Iashvili, Z. (2013) Thinking Outside the Bloc: Explaining the Foreign Policies of Small States, *Security Studies*, 22:1, pp. 98-131.

2 Janeliūnas, T. (2019) Prezidento įtaka Lietuvos užsienio politikos formavimui: galios centro pokytis D. Grybauskaitės prezidentavimo laikotarpiu. *Politologija* 2019/2, vol. 94, pp. 8-55. Retrieved from: <http://www.zurnalai.vu.lt/politologija/article/view/13332/12250>.

3 Gigleux, V. (2016) Explaining the diversity of small states' foreign policies through role theory, *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, 1:1, pp. 27-45.

4 Cantir, C., and Kaarbo, J. (2016) (Introduction) Unpacking Ego in Role Theory: Vertical and Horizontal Role Contestation and Foreign Policy. In C. Cantir, & J. Kaarbo (Eds.), *Domestic Role Contestation, Foreign Policy, and International Relations* [1] Routledge.

5 Inauguracija (2019, liepos 12) Lietuvos Respublikos prezidentas. Retrieved from: <https://www.lrp.lt/lt/prezidento-institucija/prezidentas-gitanas-nauseda/inauguracija/32824>.

tanas Nausėda evolves from the foreign policy of President Dalia Grybauskaitė. Moreover, appropriate politics are supported by demands from the electorate. Consequently, the beliefs of the population revealed in public opinion polls enable or diminish changes in foreign policy. In 2019 according to public opinion polls Latvia, Poland, Estonia, and Germany were named as priority partners by Lithuania's citizens, while 68 percent defined Russia as the main threat.<sup>6</sup> The results of the polls are linked to the perpetuated narrative that Lithuania is a small state in the neighborhood of big and threatening state.

The goal of this research is to define the main roles of Lithuania, which are relevant to the Lithuanian foreign policy decision-making process nowadays. Those roles are the structure for the new Lithuania's President Gitanas Nausėda. While during the presidency he will have the capacity to modify them, nowadays for the past ten years formed and enacted roles serve as the limits of the change of the policy in the Euro-Atlantic area. Consequently, the research includes six steps:

1. qualitative content analysis of the annual speeches to the parliament of Dalia Grybauskaitė (2009-2019);
2. qualitative content analysis of government programs (2012-2019);
3. qualitative content analysis of the annual government activity reports on foreign policy (2012-2019);
4. qualitative content analysis of the Agreement between the Political Parties Represented in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on the Strategic Guidelines of the Republic of Lithuania on Foreign, Security and Defense Policy 2014-2020; and discourse analysis of the presidential debates and interviews (March – May, 2019; national television, three most popular TV stations (LRT, LNK, TV3), three most popular news websites (delfi.lt, lrytas.lt, 15min.lt), and the most popular television on the [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) platform (Laisvės TV) to identify the existing narrative of Lithuania's roles.

The content and discourse analysis are based on the nine categories of the state's roles' analysis: identity, purpose, functions, level of commitment to the social group, the duties in the social group, the values of the group, expectations of others, the punishment for the inappropriate behavior, opportunities and constraints for actions presented in the political narrative. The main assumption on the roles of Lithuania in the Euro-Atlantic area is that policymakers emphasize the smallness of the state. Accordingly, being a small state is translated to a set of expected and appropriate behavior. Therefore, the classical definition of smallness suggests that Lithuania's roles should include the strategies of hiding and appeals to democratic values. In order to deny or confirm the assumptions, the research includes the definition of small states, analysis of small states foreign policy strategies, the main thesis of the Role theory, the theoretical basis of subjective smallness concept, and discussion on Lithuania's roles in the Euro-Atlantic area, using an interpretive methodology of Social constructivism.

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6 Lietuvos gyventojai draugiškiausia valstybe laiko Latvija, o keliančia didžiausią grėsmę – Rusiją, rodo visuomenės apklausa (2019, sausio 29) Lietuvos užsienio reikalų ministerija. Retrieved from: <https://www.urm.lt/default/lt/naujienos/lietuvos-gyventojai-draugiskiausia-valstybe-laiko-latvija-o-keliancia-didziausia-gresmerusija-rodo-visuomenes-apklausa>.

## Definition of Smallness

The concept of a small state is usually associated with the size of a country's territory and population. However, being small is not an absolute, but rather a relative concept. For example, a country with a small territory, but a developed economy will be more powerful than having a large territory, but a low GDP indicator.<sup>7</sup> Until the twentieth century, the small state category was known as a small power. 'Being small' emphasized a quantitative lack of power.<sup>8</sup> The origins of the term can be traced to the Vienna Congress held after the Napoleonic wars. The winners of the wars (Great Britain, Prussia, Russia, France, and Austria) were the most powerful states and had the power to decide the future of Europe. Hence, they were named as great powers. Other states that were invited to participate in the resolution of certain issues during the Congress were later named medium powers. States that were not included in the Vienna Congress, because they were considered insignificant, became known as small powers.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the term 'small state' in Classical theories of International relations is interpreted by the notion of power.

Classical IR theories define power in terms of military and economy capacity. However, power cannot be measured objectively.<sup>10</sup> For example, geographic location, human and natural resources can be measured and compared. While, technological development, good governance, and political institutions, national character or culture are qualitative data that is constantly changing.<sup>11</sup> For this reason, Studies of Small states developed during '60-'80s are based on assumption, that small states should be defined not in absolute power measures, but relative ones.<sup>12</sup> Thus, small states are the ones that are unable to guaranty their own national security and must seek alliances or coalitions. From this perspective, 'being small' state arises from circumstances in which the state recognizes that:

1. external assistance is necessary, because of the lack of resources;
2. security is limited and there is little time for error correction;
3. state leaders value state incapacity to ensure its own security as a constant state.<sup>13</sup>

The circumstances of acknowledging one self's smallness can occur from the international structure. For instance, Robert Keohane (1969) introduced the term of the role played by states systematically. Keohane has suggested that the states can be divided

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7 Manning, D. (2010) Small States and Traditional Concepts of Sovereignty: Anachronism or Hopeful Aspiration". Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Theory vs. Policy? Connecting Scholars and Practitioners, New Orleans Hilton Riverside Hotel, The Loews New Orleans Hotel, New Orleans, LA, Feb 17, 2010.

8 Ingebrietsen, C. (2006) Small states in international relations. University of Washington Press; Reykjavik : University of Iceland Press, Seattle.

9 Ibid.

10 Vandenbosch, A. (1964) The Small States in International Politics and Organization. The Journal of Politics, 26(2), pp. 293-312.

11 Ibid.

12 Rothstein, R. L. (1992) The Evolution of theory in international relations: Essays in honor of William T.R. Fox. Columbia, S.C: University of South Carolina Press.

13 Ibid.

into four categories.<sup>14</sup> Great power is that whose leaders believe that one can make a decisive impact on the international system; secondary power has influence on the system, but it is not decisive; middle power cannot act alone, but through unions or international institutions it can influence the system; and the one that believes that with or without allies affect the international system is a small power. Consequently, a small state's foreign policy is to adapt to the system and external conditions, not to change them.<sup>15</sup> This prescription for a small state's foreign policy is not dominant in IR.

Vital (1967) presents another approach to small states, using the concepts of inability and opportunity. He states that states should be treated as small if they have 10-15 million inhabitants and are economically developed or have 20-30 million inhabitants and are economically underdeveloped. In this context, the size of the territory, the economic and social development shows the country's ability to withstand unfavorable external pressure. According to Vital (1967), the strategy of a small state should be to change the external environment: reducing the unfavorable difference in forces, expanding the field of maneuvers and choices, and increasing all the resources needed in times of tension.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, a small state's foreign policy can be based on three strategies: a passive strategy of renunciation, an active strategy designed to alter the external environment, or a defensive strategy.<sup>17</sup> These strategies illustrate basic agreement in IR, that states differ in power, position in the international system and level of national security; they must form and implement their foreign policy accordingly.<sup>18</sup>

Analysis of scientific literature dedicated to small states shows that they have a limited impact on the external environment and/or low resistance to the changes in the external environment.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, dependence on other states and the international system limits the range of foreign policy actions, but does not deprive them of strategic thinking, and allows them to implement their national interests by intelligently maneuvering.<sup>20</sup> Summarizing the strategic behaviors of the small states mentioned in international relations studies, according to Toje six approaches may be distinguished:

1. Small states, in terms of their resources, geographic location, and system, must break down the risks into a hierarchical system and try to reduce the risk that is considered to be the highest (Hoffman, 1965).
2. As already mentioned above, Vital (1967) proposes that states adopt a passive, active or defensive foreign policy strategy, based on diplomatic means;

14 Keohane, R. (1969) Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics. *International Organization*, 23(2), pp. 291-310.

15 Ibid.

16 Vital, D. (1967) *The inequality of states: A study of the small power in international relations*. Oxford: Clarendon.

17 Milsten, D. (1969) Small Powers--A Struggle for Survival. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 13(3), pp. 388-393.

18 Haugevik, K. and Rieker, P. (2017) Autonomy or integration? Small-state responses to a changing European security landscape. *Global Affairs*.

19 Wiberg, H. (1987) The Security of Small Nations: Challenges and Defences. *Journal of Peace Research*, 24(4), pp. 339-363.

20 Toje, A. (2005) *The EU Strategic Culture: A Small State Approach*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Hilton Hawaiian Village, Honolulu, Hawaii Online.

3. East (1973) believes that in order to reduce the cost of foreign policy, small states tend to opt for joint action, increase their influence through multilateral agreements and extensive membership of international organizations;
4. According to Rothstein (1968), small states are defined by their dependence on others because, as discussed earlier, they cannot secure themselves only by their own efforts;
5. Russett (2001) states that small states tend to promote normative and moral international politics;
6. Small states are trying to respond to events as they are expected and avoid decisions or positions that might offend powerful states.<sup>21</sup>

Hey (2003) summarized the behavior of foreign states' foreign policy, which either appears in the international system or is most likely: limited participation in international politics; narrow foreign policy interests; limits the behavior of the near geographic dimension; use of diplomatic and economic foreign policy tools; emphasis on international norms, international law and moral ideals; the importance of security agreements and membership of international institutions; neutral position; trust in the great powers in defense, partnership and resource issues; tendency to cooperate and avoid conflicts; disproportionate use of foreign policy resources to secure security and survival.<sup>22</sup> The pattern of behavior suggests that small states do not act alone, i. e. their primary goal is to seek external support.

### Foreign policy of Small state

In essence, two small-country foreign policy strategies can be distinguished: hiding, which is described as an effort to remain invisible and not interfere with the disputes of the more powerful states, or an obligation that emerges through the prevention of threats and challenges by the creation and strengthening of international norms and institutions.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the states either isolate themselves in order to protect themselves, adapt to the international environment, or take an active foreign policy to influence the international environment in a way that is more favorable and more appropriate.<sup>24</sup> Basically, small states participate in alliances, coalitions, international intergovernmental institutions, multilateral forums, promote international law, global governance, and multilateralism.<sup>25</sup> To reduce the cost of conducting foreign policy, small states tend to choose joint actions, increase their influence through multilateral agreements and extensive membership of international organizations.<sup>26</sup> Vulnerability and lack of autonomy are the driving forces of the small states' foreign policy.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Hey, J. A. K. (2003) *Small states in world politics: Explaining foreign policy behavior*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

<sup>23</sup> Steinmetz, R. and Wivel, A. (2010) Introduction in Steinmetz, R. and Wivel, A. (Eds), *Small States in Europe: Challenges and Opportunities*. Routledge.

<sup>24</sup> Goetschel, L. (1998) *Small States Inside and Outside the European Union Interests and Policies*. Kluwer Academic Publishers.

<sup>25</sup> Hey (2003), op. cit.

<sup>26</sup> East, M. (1973) *Foreign Policy-Making in Small States: Some Theoretic Observations Based on a Study of the Uganda Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. *Policy Sciences*, 4(4), pp. 491-508.

Nowadays, political practice denies theoretical prescriptions for a foreign policy of small states. For instance, if small states are defined in relation to other states,<sup>27</sup> then every single state should be considered as small in relation to the USA or China. In contemporary international system small states project regional soft power and virtually become more powerful<sup>28</sup>; small states exert agenda-setting power in regional organizations<sup>29</sup>; small states create international norms in the security field<sup>30</sup>; small states occupy leading positions in global governance or mediate conflicts between more powerful states<sup>31</sup>; small states even shape balancing strategies of the great powers<sup>32</sup>, while middle-range powers engage in foreign policy strategies recommended for small states<sup>33</sup>.

Belonging to the category of small states does not mean that all small states behave identically in international politics. These tendencies illustrate subjective smallness, i.e. self-identification and interpretation of 'being small' impacts foreign policy accordingly. The key to the subjective evaluation of smallness is an interpretation of small as a weakness. Consequently, states can be divided into three categories: small and weak, small, but not weak, and not small.<sup>34</sup> Small states can promote an active foreign policy, be autonomous and even redefine their vulnerabilities, according to IR scientists promoting the 'subjective smallness' concept.<sup>35</sup>

The interpretation of 'being small' is a narrative that a state's political elite constructs based on a self-imagination of the state and the role of the state in the international system. The definition of appropriate behavior arises from the expectation linked to the particular role attached to the state.<sup>36</sup> A pattern of expected behavior defines the states' role, which is a result not just of self-definition and construction of national identity. A role is acquired during socialization when other international actors express their expectations. Social interaction between states enacts role performance.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, a state role has internal and external sources, which represent 'ego' and 'alter'.

27 Bjøl, E. (1971) *The Small State In International Politics* in A. Schou and A.O. Brundland (Eds) *Small States in International Relations*. New York: Wiley Interscience.

28 Chong, A., and Maass, M. (2010) Introduction: The foreign policy power of small states. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 23(3), pp. 381-382.

29 Nasra, S. (2011) Governance in EU Foreign Policy: Exploring Small State Influence. *Journal of European Public Policy*, No. 18.

30 Crandall, M. and Allan, C. (2015) Small States and Big Ideas: Estonia's Battle for Cybersecurity Norms. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 36:2, pp. 346-368.

31 Mohammadzadeh, B. (2017) Status and Foreign Policy Change in Small States: Qatar's Emergence in Perspective. *International Spectator*, 52 (2), pp. 19-36.

32 Kluth, M. F., and Lynggaard, K. (2017). Small State Strategies in emerging Regional Governance Structures: Explaining the Danish advocacy for China's inclusion in the Arctic Council. *European Politics and Society*, 19(1), pp. 103-119.

33 Brommesson, D. (2018) 'Nordicness' in Swedish foreign policy – from mid power internationalism to small state balancing? *Global Affairs*, 4:4-5, pp. 391-404.

34 Szalai, M. (2017) The identity of smallness and its implications for foreign policy – the case of Hungary and Slovakia. *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, 25:3, pp. 345-366.

35 Browning, C. S. (2006) Small, Smart and Salient? Rethinking Identity in the Small States Literature. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 19:4, pp. 669-684.

36 Breuning, M. (2017) Role Theory in Foreign Policy. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia*.

37 Walker, S. G. (2017) Role Theory as an Empirical Theory of International Relations: From Metaphor to Formal Model. In *Oxford Research Bibliographies on Politics*.

Domestic characteristics and external expectations affect the definition and performance of the role. On the one hand, national role conceptions collectively make the state's identity, which is expressed by the political narrative and the conduct of foreign policy.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, international structure and its members contribute to the enacted role, i.e. the role signals states position or status, which is recognized by others.<sup>39</sup> For instance, the status of regional or great power is not given or declared but acquired through self-identification and identification of others.<sup>40</sup> The role is an interplay between demands or expectations of other states and domestic expectations, between international structure and state's position, between self-identification and identification, between material factors and ideational factors.<sup>41</sup>

The role has normative power. The role is attached to the particular values and attribution to those values, influences foreign policy decision-making.<sup>42</sup> However, two practical problems could arise. First of all, states have a few roles and some of them can contradict themselves in a particular situation.<sup>43</sup> However, the selection of the role in a particular situation forms the state's agency.<sup>44</sup> For example, Lithuania has the role of 'independent', which is defined and performed as being self-governing and promoting self-determination right. The other role is as 'supporter', which defines Lithuania as a loyal partner and supporter of the US. Both roles can be enacted, then the US supports or seeks the independence of a territory and group of people. The Palestinian National authority's decision to become a member of UNESCO brought for Lithuania the inter-role conflict. At the same time, the Palestinian issue made Lithuania choose which role must be enacted. The second practical problem is how that role would be fulfilled. Lithuania after enactment of the 'supporter's' role had a choice to vote against Palestinian membership or to refrain from voting. 14 states voted against Palestinian membership. Lithuania was one of them. The 'appropriateness' of this decision arose from the constraints of the situation and the demands of the audience. The decision was made on the base of social identity, which is defined by the state's status in the structure, the value of role enactment for other states and the state's involvement with other states.<sup>45</sup> However, the decision was made by the policymakers based on their perception of what decision was appropriate and the main scientific problem is how role conflict was solved and how domestic actors with various conceptions interacted in the foreign policy-making process.<sup>46</sup> This example illustrates that the roles are not an instrument that allows the state's actions to be accurately predicted. Rather, they summarize the trends that can be expected.

38 Thies, C. G. (2013) *The United States, Israel and the Search for International Order: Socializing States*. Routledge.

39 Wehner, L. E. (2015) Role expectations as foreign policy: South American secondary powers' expectations of Brazil as a regional power. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 11(4), pp. 435-455.

40 Harnisch, S. (2011) Role theory: operationalization of key concepts. In Harnisch, S., Frank, C., and Maull, H. W. (Eds) *Role Theory in International Relations*. Routledge.

41 Lantis, J. and Beasley, R. (2017) *Comparative foreign policy analysis*. In Thompson, W. R. (Ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics (Oxford Research Encyclopedias)*. Oxford University Press.

42 Walker (2017), *op. cit.*

43 Thies (2013), *op. cit.*

44 Wehner, L. E., and Thies, C. (2014) Role theory, narratives, and interpretation: The domestic contestation of roles. *International Studies Review*, 16(3), pp. 411-436.

45 Gigueux (2016), *op. cit.*

46 Cantir and Kaarbo (2016), *op. cit.*



## Set of Lithuania's roles in the Euro-Atlantic area

For the past decade, Lithuania had expressed a set of goals, expectations, and measures to implement foreign policy. According to conducted content analysis and discourse analysis, being a productive member of the EU is one of its main goals. Lithuania's main interests are energy security and independence, security concerns at the Astravets nuclear power plant, and a secure and friendly neighborhood, including Belarus and Ukraine. The main area of cooperation is the Baltic sea region, emphasizing Scandinavia and the Baltic states. In the NATO structure, the main goal is 'real' membership, i.e. actually being secure from military threats. This goal was mainly linked to defense plans of the eastern flank, but nowadays the main interests are the anti-ballistic shield, air policing mission, and permanent military units. Consequently, the main areas of interest are territorial defense, energy security, cybersecurity, and informational security. The main partners in NATO are Germany, France, the US, Poland, and Sweden. Those features arise from the active persuasion that Lithuania is not secure. For example, even before the annexation of Crimea President Dalia Grybauskaitė stated, that:

Geopolitical processes are changing the world dramatically. Attempts to belittle us, to stop, to deceive, to bribe, to make us dependent, to decide for us - will not end. Because of the geographic location and size, we were and are in the East and West area of interest, so we must constantly fight for the opportunity to create our own state.<sup>47</sup>

After the annexation of Crimea Lithuania's security concerns were supplemented with values. First of all, Ukraine's security issues were connected to international law and justice. Afterward, Lithuania's President started to put emphasis on an active involvement in international politics:

The goal of foreign policy is not only to ensure national security, independence and the well-being of citizens, but also to contribute to the establishment of an international order based on law and justice.<sup>48</sup>

The change of narrative was based on the assumption that small states acting in international organizations according to international law can manacle powerful states. Consequently, Lithuania's foreign policy was based not on a hiding strategy, but actually taking greater responsibility for regional and national security:

We no longer can expect to be protected by others. It is necessary to strengthen bilateral relations with the strategic partners and the nearest neighbors and to expand the circle of friends. We need to search for new forms of collaboration, try to avoid transatlantic divisions and

47 Lietuvos Respublikos Prezidentės Dalios Grybauskaitės metinis pranešimas (2013 m. birželio 11). Retrieved from: <https://grybauskaite.lrp.lt/lt/metinis-pranesimas-2013>

48 Lietuvos Respublikos Prezidentės Dalios Grybauskaitės metinis pranešimas (2015 m. birželio 4). Retrieved from: <https://grybauskaite.lrp.lt/lt/metinis-pranesimas-2015>

seek a more efficient European Union and a rapidly responding NATO adapted to the new security environment.<sup>49</sup>

In summary, a qualitative analysis of the discourse suggests that for the past decade Lithuania enacted a set of roles in the Euro-Atlantic area, which are supported by Lithuania's political leaders and society:

1. Small, but effective, i.e. agenda-setting;
2. Driven by smart diplomacy, i.e. maneuvering in the EU and NATO;
3. Small, but rare, i.e. securing Lithuanian identity;
4. Small, but proud, i.e. relying on the achievements of the citizens;
5. Respected by others, i.e. an example for the other post-communist countries;
6. Not an object!, i.e. having a loud voice on matters;
7. Being ready, i.e. military and defense matters are as important as values;
8. Being right!, i.e. Russia's threat is real.

All those roles are developed through a subjective perception of smallness. At first, smallness was defined in terms of lack of influence. Unilateral Lithuanian foreign policy actions have a limited impact on the international environment.<sup>50</sup> This circumstance is largely influenced by objective factors, i.e. limited resources. For this reason, the ability of the state to achieve desired results is leveraged through the power of its partners through international organizations, particularly the EU and NATO. Thus, Lithuanian smallness is associated with the ability to utilize diplomatic relations, to make proposals, to support initiatives of powerful countries in exchange for their support of Lithuania. The second element of subjective smallness is based on uniqueness.

During the past ten years, the roles of Lithuania evolved. The self-image of smallness became less prominent. Moreover, being a small state was interpreted more in positive terms. The Lithuanian narrative on roles in foreign policy has a strong element of being small, but unique. This perception relies first of all on a need to keep national identity while facing a demographic crisis and not decreasing the flow of Lithuanian emigrants. Second, identity is built on a sense of sovereignty and survival.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, the success of native Lithuanians in science, sport, business or any other area is presented as evidence that objective and subjective smallness do not coincide. Subjective smallness is less and less defined as a lack of influence and more as an ability. In the listed roles, being a small state is increasingly interpreted by the political elite as being proud, special, expert, successful, making progress or being better than before. The small state concept has changed due to the international environment and the subjective perception of those changes by Lithuania's president Dalia Grybauskaitė and government members.

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49 Lietuvos Respublikos Prezidentės Dalios Grybauskaitės metinis pranešimas (2018 m. birželio12). Retrieved from: <https://grybauskaitė.lrp.lt/lt/kalbos/metiniai-pranesimai/2018-m./30193>.

50 Lamoreaux, J. W. and Galbreath, D. J. (2008) The Baltic States As 'Small States': Negotiating The 'East' By Engaging The 'West', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 39:1, pp. 1-14.

51 Lamoreaux, J. W. (2014) Acting small in a large state's world: Russia and the Baltic states, *European Security*, 23:4, pp. 565-582.

Since 2014, the EU and USA have imposed restrictive measures against Russia due to the annexation of Crimea and the destabilization of Ukraine. Moreover, NATO has introduced a Readiness Action Plan and increased its presence and activity in Eastern and Central Europe. The Western states' stance towards Russia's actions in Ukraine and towards Ukraine has created a positive environment for Lithuanian foreign policy based on the assumption that Russia poses a threat to the national security of the post-communist states. In this context, Lithuania aims to exclude the chance to legitimate Russia's actions. Lithuania's appeal to international law and organizations is a way of preventing Russia's possible military intentions towards the Baltic States while pursuing national security. Historical experience and examples of self-proclaimed states in the post-communist area induce Lithuania's political elite to search for EU and NATO member states' actions that would support Lithuania's declared values. Rationalization of foreign policy brings Lithuania to believe that military and defense matters are as important as values. Therefore, Lithuania is increasing military expenditure and emphasizing military cooperation in bilateral and multilateral relations, especially NATO and CSDP.

Foreign policy is conducted relying on the narrative that Lithuania is small. However, the more recent roles of Lithuania enable it to define smallness as not weakness. On the contrary, Lithuania's roles are built on the subjective persuasion of political leaders that objective features of smallness do not eliminate pro-active policy measures. Since 2008, when the Russian – Georgian war happened and Russia legally recognized the self-proclaimed republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Lithuania's political elite has been convinced that Russia's foreign policy will be imperialist. The first and foremost objects of aggressive imperialist policy will be Ukraine and Belarus, and then Central Asia and Baltic states, i.e. former members of the Soviet Union. This conviction is the main reason why Lithuania embraced the role as an example for the other post-communist countries and supports the Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine.

During the past ten years, the enacted roles of Lithuania have become more situated towards hard security measures. After integrating with NATO and the EU, the foreign policy of Lithuania was based on ceremonial diplomacy and had an approach of 'more talking than doing'. Since 2014, President Dalia Grybauskaitė rejected a set of Lithuania's roles based just on values and diplomacy. In order to be heard by the great powers in the Euro-Atlantic area and not to try to silence so-called partners to keep economically beneficial relations with Russia, the president relied on the concept of 'truth', i.e. not to meet with US President Barack Obama in 2010, because of his reset policies with Russia; not to visit Warsaw to celebrate Poland's independence day in 2012 due to offensive allegations of intentional violations of the rights of the Polish national minority; or just call Russia a terrorist state due to aggressive politics towards Ukraine in 2014. Living by subjective truth became the active role embraced by the president in order to redefine Lithuania's smallness and change a 'hiding' strategy to a 'being heard' strategy. Despite the fact that this pattern of behavior was considered one of the reasons why Dalia Grybauskaitė was not presented as a candidate for the presidency of the European Council in 2019<sup>52</sup>, now Lithuania is more militarily safe than ever.

52 Lithuania's president Grybauskaitė comes empty-handed from top Brussels jobs division (2019, July 5) Baltic News Network. Retrieved from: <https://bnn-news.com/lithuania-s-president-grybauskaitė-comes-empty-handed-from-top-brussels-jobs-division-202640>.

## Conclusions

During the presidency of Dalia Grybauskaitė, Lithuania's smallness was linked to the ability to be heard by its partners. Since 2012, the smallness concept has been changing. Nowadays Lithuania's political elite presents Lithuania as small, but not weak. The 'power' of the small state was linked to straightforwardness, telling the truth, support for victims (Georgia and Ukraine), and a responsible attitude towards its own future. Lithuania's main goal in the Euro-Atlantic area is to be secure. Consequently, Lithuania's roles are built on an active search for hard security and to maintain Lithuanian identity. There is not too much freedom of choice nor range of options in the foreign policy of Lithuania. Therefore, the roles should remain but the enactment of those roles could change. The main reason for this change is domestic expectations. Gitanas Nausėda is widely popular in Lithuania because he is softly spoken. Consequently, the tone of politics will change, but the main patterns will remain. As the old saying goes: "you can banish a wolf from the forest but not the forest from the wolf."

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