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LITHUANIAN-GERMAN RELATIONS IN THE SPHERE OF SECURITY DURING THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR IN 2022-2024

STOSUNKI LITEWSKO-NIEMIECKIE W SFERZE BEZPIECZEŃSTWA PODCZAS WOJNY ROSYJSKO-UKRAIŃSKIEJ W LATACH 2022-2024

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Abstract. The concept of Lithuanian foreign policy is based on three basic priorities: membership in NATO, membership in the European Union and friendly relations with neighbors. The axiological basis for building international relations was based on values such as common attachment to democratic values, human rights and support for an international order based on rules, law and peace. Thirty-three years later, this Baltic country of about 2.8 million people is taking bold steps to counter Russia's imperialist aspirations at a time of international security crisis. The aim of the article is to analyze the changing geopolitical reality through the strengthening cooperation between Germany and Lithuania in the area of security policy. The research problem of the work was defined in the form of a question: what are the characteristics of the issues of Lithuanian-German relations during the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022-2024 In the context of potential threats generated by Russia? What will be the composition of the future German brigade in Lithuania and its preliminary schedule? The starting point of the discussion is the hypothesis that: small countries are able to start a process that can bring benefits to the entire region and thus contribute in their own way to building international peace and security. Moreover, Lithuania, by pursuing an active and effective foreign policy based not only on national but also regional interests, contributes in its own way to building international security; Moreover, tangible results are being achieved thanks to Lithuania's efforts to attract Berlin's attention and pressure it to take more decisive action against Ukraine and its eastern flank. The research method used in the work was content and content analysis and analysis of secondary data. The argument for taking up this issue is the lack of both Polish and English-language literature. For this reason, the presentation of preliminary research results provides a perspective for further, in-depth research on this topic.

Keywords: security, Lithuania, Germany, NATO, Russian-Ukrainian war

Abstrakt. Koncepcja litewskiej polityki zagranicznej opiera się na trzech podstawowych priorytetach: członkostwie w NATO, członkostwie w Unii Europejskiej oraz przyjaznych stosunkach z sąsiadami. Aksjologiczna podstawa budowania stosunków międzynarodowych opierała się na takich wartościach, jak wspólne przywiązanie do wartości demokratycznych, praw człowieka i wspieranie ładu międzynarodowego opartego na zasadach, prawie i pokoju. Trzydzieści trzy lata później ten bałtycki kraj liczący około 2,8 miliona mieszkańców podejmuje śmiało kroki, aby przeciwstawić się imperialistycznym aspiracjom Rosji w czasach międzynarodowego kryzysu bezpieczeństwa. Celem artykułu jest analiza zmieniającej się rzeczywistości geopolitycznej poprzez zacieśnianie się współpracy Niemiec i Litwy w obszarze polityki bezpieczeństwa. Problem badawczy pracy został zdefiniowany w formie pytania: czym charakteryzuje się problematyka stosunków litewsko-niemieckich w podczas wojny rosyjsko-ukraińskiej w latach 2022-2024 w kontekście potencjalnych zagrożeń generowanych przez Rosję? Jaki będzie skład przyszłej niemieckiej brygady na Litwie i jej wstępny harmonogram? Punktem wyjścia dyskusji jest hipoteza, która zakłada że: małe państwa są w stanie rozpocząć proces, który może przynieść korzyści całemu regionowi i tym samym przyczynić się na swój sposób do budowy międzynarodowego pokoju i bezpieczeństwa. Ponadto Litwa, prowadząc aktywną i skuteczną politykę zagraniczną, opartą nie tylko na interesach narodowych, ale także regionalnych, na swój sposób przyczynia się do budowy bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego; co więcej, dzięki wysiłkom Litwy na rzecz zwrócenia uwagi Berlina i wywarcia na niego presji, aby podjąć bardziej zdecydowane działania wobec Ukrainy i wschodniej flanki, osiągnane są wymierne rezultaty. Metodą badawczą zastosowaną w pracy była analiza treści i treści oraz analiza danych pobocznych. Argumentem za podjęciem tej problematyki jest brak literatury zarówno polskiej, jak i anglojęzycznej. Z tego powodu prezentacja wstępnych wyników badań stanowi perspektywę do dalszych, pogłębionych badań na ten temat.

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo, Litwa, Niemcy, NATO, wojna rosyjsko-ukraińska

Introduction

The role of small states in international relations is increasing as a result of changes in the international environment. These changes include globalization and the post-Cold War shift towards multipolarity. Global efforts to meet the challenges of countering the growing global power of states that threaten the stability and values of the contemporary international environment and related issues also increase the role of small states, especially post-Soviet ones.

One of the areas in which the role of states may change is the field related to presenting and promoting democratic values, including human rights and supporting the construction of an international order that guarantees the peaceful and harmonious coexistence of various states in the world, despite the fact that the use of such a concept may be negatively received by countries in various regions of the world. Unfortunately, the end of the Cold War did not bring the expected results in this respect. The result is mixed. Today, in the third decade of the post-Cold War era, the world is observing a gradual weakening of the regimes that would represent the above-mentioned values, imposing their own value systems and ultimately withdrawing from the rules-based international community. Today, such powers are neo-totalitarian states: China and Russia. Today, they pose a threat to the international order. Moreover, the Russians and the Chinese also stick to their own concepts of democracy and human rights, defining them as they see fit. In this

way, they want to avoid criticism for authoritarian rule and violations of the rights of their citizens (The diplomat 2023).

Hence, the question arises whether it is possible to undertake multilateral efforts, including multilateral talks by political actors, aimed at stopping and reversing the trend on the part of China or Russia? There is no clear answer to the question of which solution or measures will be more effective because it all depends on what individual state actors care about. Each state uses foreign policy to pursue its own goals and interests in the international arena. Currently, Lithuania is one of the few countries with an internationally recognized status that conducts its international policy based on human rights and democratic values. The small country is taking bold steps to counter Russia, the rising global power of the century, and is finding support from Germany as Olaf Scholz's administration seeks to leverage transatlantic partnerships amid Western concerns that China is considering supplying Russia with weapons in its war with Ukraine. The aim of this article is to analyze the changing geopolitical reality through the strengthening cooperation between Germany and Lithuania in the field of security policy. So far, research has shown that the annexation of Crimea by Russia has prompted the Lithuanian authorities to pay even more attention to security issues. From its security perspective, Lithuania decided to increase defense spending, including in order to accelerate the modernization of the armed forces and increase the potential of military-civilian and allied cooperation within NATO, especially with Germany. The conflict in eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea have led to a real change in the perception of Russia as a threat to its own security and that of other Baltic states militarily (Vilson 2015, Kojala and Ivanauskas 2015).

The theoretical basis for this research is post-structural theory. From this perspective, Lithuania accepts and actively shapes its identity as a small state, defined primarily in relation to large and dangerous powers. This is explained by this small country's consistent pursuit of integration and being an active player in the international arena, which was supposed to help it break away from the Russian sphere of influence and build transatlantic ties. Poststructuralism denies the objectivity and materiality of factors used by other theories. Focusses on the use of discourse analysis, within which the concept of „smallness” is created. In this approach, the category of small states is only one of the perspectives of perceiving reality, which may have different content that translates into different strategies of action. Post-structuralism gives subjectivity to small states and emphasizes their identity shaped in the changing circumstances of international relations (Milliken 1999). The starting point of the discussion is the hypothesis that:

- small countries are able to start a process that can bring benefits to the entire region and thus contribute in their own way to building international peace and security;

- Lithuania, by pursuing an active and effective foreign policy that is based not only on its national but also regional interests, contributes in its own way to building international security;
- thanks to Lithuania's efforts to attract Berlin's attention and put pressure on it to take more decisive actions regarding Ukraine and the eastern flank, tangible results are being achieved.

The research method used in the work was content and content analysis, as well as analysis of collateral data. The argument for taking up this issue is the lack of both Polish and English-language literature. For this reason, the presentation of preliminary research results constitutes a perspective for further, in-depth research on this topic.

Assessment of the state of literature

This issue has been discussed in a few scientific and research works, especially in monographs on specific research, trying to explain it from a geopolitical perspective and national interest (Janeliūnas 2019; 2021; Laurinavičius, Sirutavičius, Lopata 2009; Nekrašas 2004, 2009).

Issues related to the directions and strategic partnership of Lithuanian foreign policy have been discussed in a number of scientific and research works, in particular in the monographs by Lopata, Bielinis, Sirutavičius, Stanytė-Toločkienė (2006) and in scientific articles by Sirutavičius (2001); Czechowska (2011; 2013), Janeliūnas (2006; 2011) and Gajauskaitė (2012; 2014; 2015).

Moreover, several researchers such as Gricius, Paulauskas (2004), Motieka, Statkus, Daniliauskas (2005), Lopata and Statkus (2006), Urbelis (2015), Maliukevičius (2015), Panova (2015), Ališauskas (2015), Banaś (2016), Andžāns, Romanovs (2017), Kuczyńska-Zonik (2017), Kaukas (2017) Jakštaitė-Confortola (2016; 2019; 2020), Česnakas (2016) ; 2020), Scott (2018), Murauskaitė (2015; 2015; 2018), Janušauskienė (2017; 2019), Maluzinas (2023a,b) and Palavenis (2021; 2022; 2024) attempted to discuss Lithuanian foreign policy from the perspective of security and potential threats from Russia.

Research methodology

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The growing role of small states in international relations

International relations are developing dynamically. The collapse of the communist bloc and the bipolar world briefly transformed the world into a dominant unipolar one, which is now gradually turning into a multipolar one. The role of not only great powers is changing, but also medium-sized and even small countries. In the emerging globalizing, multipolar world, the role of regional powers and international organizations or forums is increasing. Although this has not attracted much attention, the potential role of small states is also increasing as a result of increasing interdependence. This is reflected in the growing body of literature devoted to international relations, politics and the role of medium and small states (Jargalsaikhan, 2018; Bajda, 2021; Alford, 1984).

As Jargalsaikhan (2018) notes, there were three waves of growth in the number of small states in the 20th century: after each of the two world wars and at the end of the Cold War. The causes and effects of such increases are the subject of separate research. However, Jargalsaikhan (2018) notes that with the end of the Cold War and the division in the hierarchical structure of international relations, small states are gaining an increasing degree of freedom of expression, choice, and independent action in their foreign policy. Small states have only recently become subjects rather than objects of international relations. The situation is currently changing. Researchers focus on specific states and their opportunities and limitations, dealing with both theoretical issues and the practical policies of some small states.

Although small states make up the majority of UN or NATO member states, not all of them pursue foreign policies that influence regional development or

international relations. Accordingly, many researchers believe that small states are not necessarily weak states despite quantitative limits on their power. Sometimes, their influence can be significant, in part because membership in international organizations can provide them with additional legal and political instruments to influence events or decisions. Bearing in mind the nature of small states, it is assumed that they constitute a force for the gradual development and strengthening of international law. Research provides many concrete examples of the successes and failures of small states while pointing out the internal and external factors that influenced their policies and decisions (Alford 1984; Henderson 2016; Mansbhaz 1998; Maniruzzaman 1982).

What is a small state?

Any discussion of small states begins with defining this concept. There is a lot of literature on this topic. The most accepted and natural way to define a „small state” is based on population, territory, economy, and armed forces. But even on these quantitative factors there is no unanimity. For example, some believe that a small country should have a population of no more than 1 million. Others believe that 1 million is an arbitrary number and propose other numbers, above or below this amount. The same can be said about the size of the economy. In the case of defense capabilities, some suggest that small states are those that are unable to defend themselves against external aggression. Such criteria are also arbitrary because they ignore the specific situation and the specific threat. For this reason, there is still no universally accepted definition of a small state.

According to Jargalsaikhan (2018), despite the lack of agreed criteria for a small state, there is a growing understanding that quantitative criteria are not sufficient to take into account the size or strength of a state, especially its efficiency, which is an important element in successfully meeting a country’s domestic and international challenges. There are still no agreed criteria for „state effectiveness”. Non-quantifiable elements such as political will, national resilience, internal cohesion, state structure, comparative advantage and soft power influence the ability of states to influence other countries. Like other social phenomena, such as globalization or integration, they affect small countries, in most cases strengthening at least their political freedom of speech and some actions. This, in turn, encourages some small countries to pursue a more bold and active foreign policy to meet these objective challenges.

Despite the proactive foreign policy of small states, it should be noted that small states are not able to fully influence international relations and are more exposed to the risk of being involved in conflicts than larger ones. Small states usually receive protection or assistance from powerful states (mainly through alliances) or

support a balance of power policy that maintains stability and trust among larger powers. Similarly, small states are more interested in developing and strengthening international law and international mechanisms. In this sense, the goals of their foreign policy and the means of achieving them differ from those of great powers and other large states.

This article presents a situation in which an active foreign policy of a small state, based on national and regional interests or broader common interests that threatens the interests of a great or regional power, can be effective. Because it is based in part on the absence of a selfish purpose and agenda, which great powers usually lack because of their political or strategic position or obligations. For the purposes of this work, the criteria of a small country were adopted - Piotr Bajd's classification, which proposes that the group of small European countries includes those whose population does not exceed 10 million citizens and whose territory does not exceed 80,000 km², and political leaders identify with this feature. Lithuania, with a population of 2.8 million (137th position in the world), a total area of 65,000 km² (121st position) and a GDP worth USD 68 billion (86th position), meets all the measurable conditions allowing it to be described as a small country (Bajda, 2021, 337-340).

Lithuanian-German relations in the context of the war in Ukraine

Although bilateral Lithuanian-German relations have developed slowly but significantly over the last decade, cooperation between Vilnius and Berlin is developing mainly in multilateral formats, the most important of which are NATO and the European Union.

Lithuania sees Germany as a partner with which it maintains close and friendly relations and as an important point of reference in the EU's NATO. This country has special historical ties with Germany due to the fact that the former Lithuania Minor, or Prussian Lithuania, which included the cities of Klaipėda (Memel) and Shilutė (Heydekrug), was part of the German Reich. Bilateral relations are based on partnership in the EU and NATO, as well as on a close network of contacts in business, science and academia, culture, and society. Defense cooperation within NATO was intensified after Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and even closer after Russia's attack on Ukraine. Germany remains one of Lithuania's main trading partners and the main investor in the country. Moreover, during the presidency of Dali Grybauskaitė and Gitanas Nausėdy maintained the Euro-Atlantic course in his foreign policy, and Lithuania's alliance with Germany and the USA remained a priority. Lithuania continues to support NATO's increased allied presence in the Baltic region and Poland, as well as Germany's position in most votes in the EU. Given the growing threat to the security of the Baltic region from Russia, the

discussed Lithuanian presidents pointed to the need to intensify bilateral relations with Germany regarding arms tenders. Announcing the continuation of army modernization and increasing defense spending to 2% of GDP in 2018 and 2.5 of GDP in 2022 (OSWc 2016; Hyndle-Hussein 2019; Janeliūnas 2021).

Meanwhile, Lithuania (like the other two Baltic states) remains a tool (object of exchange) in Germany's strategic policy in conducting foreign policy with Russia. From a geopolitical point of view, for Germany, the prevailing elements encourage domination in supranational structures, primarily the EU (geopolitical internationalism). Ensuring the implementation of German national interests through EU institutions. Germany's main interests include:

- maintaining common transatlantic institutions;
- ultimately integrating East Germany;
- deepening EU integration and promoting EU expansion into Eastern Europe (Laurinavicius, Motieka, Statkus 2005).

After Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2022, it should be noted that Germany's strategy also tends to change its geopolitical orientation towards the east. In Berlin's view, the Eastern Partnership has always been perceived as an initiative that, on the one hand, favors German interests, but on the other hand, may also have a negative impact on them. According to the German political elites, the Eastern Partnership was to serve as a tool to bring partner countries closer to the EU in the economic, but not political, aspect, which could lead partner countries onto the path of EU and NATO membership and, as a result, antagonize Russia. This was noticed by Berlin's previous political elites, who did not want to change the essence of the EU's political relations with its eastern neighbors - Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, or Georgia. The German political elites at that time believed in maintaining the status quo, in which the Eastern Partnership was part of the European Neighbourhood Policy and had neither a positive impact on the prospects of partner countries' accession to the EU nor a negative impact on the EU's relations with Russia (OSW a, 2008, 4-12).

This attitude explains the passive behavior of the German government towards the war in Ukraine in its first phases. However, over the last less than two years, the German authorities' narrative regarding Ukraine has changed significantly. The key role in the process of changing Berlin's attitude towards Ukraine is the effectiveness of Kiev's own efforts, as well as those of Poland and the Baltic countries, primarily the public pressure on Berlin to abandon caution in the field of arms supplies and break with the Russia first policy (OSW b, 2023).

Lithuania, which has been actively supporting Ukraine politically and militarily since the beginning of the war, played an important role in this. By convincing Berlin in the context of NATO that it should assume the obligation to secure Ukraine by

all available means (Dudziska 2022, 2). Perceiving Russian aggression as a threat to their own security and that of other EU countries (Maluzinas 2022; 2023).

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, Lithuania, compared to other NATO allied countries, has refrained from open criticism of the Berlin government for its passive attitude towards the Ukrainian-Russian war, focusing on the possibility of developing cooperation with Germany in the military sphere. After Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Lithuania increased the share of defense spending to 2.5% of GDP and thus significantly accelerated the process of modernization of the national defense system. When acquiring arms and military equipment, it cooperates mainly with Germany and the USA. Over the last few years, the Lithuanian army has made purchases from Germany, for almost EUR 1 billion (including Wilki armored vehicles, self-propelled howitzers, and trucks). Moreover, from 2022, German companies producing military equipment „Rheinmetall” and „Krauss- Maffei Wegmann” opened a military equipment service center in Janów, Lithuania. Furthermore, Germany remains a participant in the Baltic Air Policing, their contingents are often stationed at a base located in Iauliai, Lithuania. In 2022, Lithuania also joined the German-funded air defense initiative initiated by Germany (European Sky Shield Initiative), the aim of which is active cooperation of NATO countries in the field of a common air defense system and increased interoperability (Kuczyńska-Zonik 2023). All these relationships indicate that from Lithuania's perspective, Germany is an important partner of Lithuania in the sphere of security and defense and its strategic ally in NATO.

Deployments of the German brigade in Lithuania

The possibility of deepening relations with Germany and orienting them toward the East made it possible to change the priority of the NATO alliance. During the NATO summit in Madrid, the Alliance countries approved a new strategy that focuses the Alliance's attention on threats from Russia and the need to strengthen collective defense and deterrence, especially on the eastern flank (NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, 2022). The adoption of NATO's new defense strategy was a diplomatic achievement for great powers and a small state. It was welcomed not only by Lithuania, but also by the international community, which considered it an important step toward strengthening collective defense and deterrence in the region (NATO Strategic Concept 2022, 2022). The decision to create four international battle groups that will be deployed in Poland and the Baltic countries can be considered a tangible effect of these activities. Based on it, NATO forces in Lithuania were to be increased by approximately 5,000 additional soldiers. This was evidenced by President Gitanas, joint statement Nausėda and Chancellor Olaf Scholz, issued in

June 2022, in which the parties agreed that Germany - in addition to commanding the multinational NATO battle group - will deploy its brigade to defend Lithuania.

The following months brought a dispute between Vilnius and Berlin regarding the interpretation of this announcement - the German side stuck to the position that most of the brigade would be permanently stationed in Germany, and the Lithuanian side insisted on the permanent deployment of German forces in Lithuania. For this reason, Lithuanian political elites began to publicly put pressure on the Berlin government to take seriously the security interests of its partners in Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, the Lithuanian side suggested that if Germany fails to fulfill the agreement, Vilnius will be forced to look for „new strategic partners.” Moreover, in May 2023, in the face of Yevgeny Prigozhin’s coup, Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda called for further strengthening of NATO’s eastern flank (dv.com, 2023). During the first half of the year until 2023, Vilnius constantly appealed to Berlin to accelerate the promised deployment of 4,000. Bundeswehr soldiers on NATO’s eastern flank. For the Lithuanian side, this issue is currently the most important in Vilnius-Berlin relations. According to Lithuanian experts, Berlin is delaying in fulfilling its promise because it would result in:

- denunciation of the NATO-Russia declaration of 1997. This act stipulated that NATO would not deploy permanent NATO forces in the new member states of the Alliance. The main supporter of its validity so far is Germany;
- changing Berlin’s perception of Russia;
- the deterioration of already tense relations with Moscow;
- lack of stable and predictable relations with Moscow and the search for fields of cooperation;
- crisis on the German political scene (15min, 2023; Delfi.lt 2023a).

Only the presence of the Wagnerians near the Lithuanian border in June 2023 and the project proposal from Polish President Andrzej Duda regarding the rotational or permanent deployment of Polish soldiers in Lithuania forced the government in Berlin to declare that Germany was ready to permanently deploy a brigade in Lithuania under certain conditions (dv.com, 2023). Thus, the government in Berlin decided to regain the credibility of the alliance after sharp criticism related to slow deliveries of weapons to Ukraine in the first year of the war and insufficient defense spending. The reason for the decision taken by the government in Berlin could also have been dictated by fears that the Lithuanian government might have lost interest in deeper security cooperation with Germany. This could be particularly felt during the NATO summit in Vilnius in July 2023 - in the context of the adoption of new regional defense plans - the issue of brigade deployment, which is important for Lithuania, including a bilateral agreement between Germany and Lithuania on the deployment of a unit the size of a German brigade, although it was raised in the context of the decision of the NATO summit in Madrid in 2022, it was not „reflected” in the text of the declaration of the Vilnius NATO summit, which was expected by

the Lithuanian side (NATO.int, 2023). The German Defense Minister Pistorius stated that the agreement between Vilnius and Berlin regarding the brigade in Lithuania is a bilateral matter, not that of the entire Alliance. The agreement between Lithuania and Germany regarding the brigade was described in the Lithuanian political and public space as Lithuania's first diplomatic failure at the NATO summit, because from the Lithuanian perspective this issue is currently the most important in the relations between Vilnius and Berlin, which Berlin is not fulfilling. However, it leaves it to Germany to decide whether it wants to become involved in the countries of the eastern flank to a greater or lesser extent (Delfi.lt 2023b).

However, the turning point was the meeting on December 18, 2023 of the defense ministers of Lithuania and Germany - Arvydas Anušauskas and Boris Pistorius, who signed the so-called a road map for the deployment of a German brigade in Lithuania („Lithuania Brigade”), which provides for the gradual deployment of the German brigade depending on progress in the expansion of the necessary Lithuanian military infrastructure (LRT.lt 2023).

From the perspective of poststructural theory, Lithuania proves that, as an entity in the hierarchical structure of international relations, as a small state with a greater degree of freedom of expression, choice, and independent action in its foreign policy, it is able to achieve its designated geostrategic interest, bringing benefits to the entire eastern flank region. If the agreements with Berlin are implemented, Lithuania will most likely have the largest NATO military presence.

The brigade is to achieve full operational readiness by the end of 2027 and will ultimately number approximately 4.8 thousand. military employees and approximately 200 civilians who will be stationed on a permanent rather than rotating basis. The Lithuanian side is to guarantee infrastructure for military personnel and their families. The „Lithuania Brigade” is also to include the 122nd Mechanized Battalion from Bavaria (approx. 600 soldiers and 44 Puma infantry fighting vehicles) and the 203rd Armored Battalion from North Rhine-Westphalia (approx. 600 soldiers and 44 Leopard 2A7 tanks), which, according to according to the plan of the German Minister of Defense, they will be transferred from Germany (Gotkowska, Graca 2023). Moreover, it will have a tangible impact on the economic condition of arms contracts; Lithuanian political elites link the purchase of German Leopard 2 tanks (letter of intent was sent in July 2023) for the needs of the newly formed division within its armed forces, with Germany's readiness to expand brigade in Lithuania. Additionally, the German arms tycoon Rheinmetall is planning to build a production plant in Lithuania, which would reduce the country's dependence on international supply chains (Kuczyńska-Zonik 2023)

There is a perception in the Lithuanian political space that the German decision to deploy 5,000 soldiers in Lithuania is of geostrategic, geopolitical and geoeconomic significance for both countries. Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Gabrielus Landsbergis pointed out that after the start of the war in Ukraine, Germany

experienced an awakening, which made our threat assessment much more unified (JP.lt, 2023). Moreover, according to Lithuanian political elites, Germany must have reflected that its policy towards the Russian-Ukrainian war and the militarization of NATO's eastern flank translates into the allied credibility of this country.

Conclusions

The issue of Vilnius's efforts to deploy a German brigade in Lithuania is an important element in the context of the future of the relations between the two countries and Berlin's policy towards the Eastern Partnership. Scholz's government, which may run for reelection next year, is also not interested in escalating tensions in relations with Lithuania. His announcement from Berlin, informing about the achievement of consensus, can be treated on the one hand as an attempt to calm political emotions in bilateral relations and, on the other, as an attempt to improve Germany's image in the EU and NATO structures by improving the security of NATO's eastern flank, which constitutes a qualitative change in policy foreign and defense of Germany.

The pace of the brigade's deployment will largely depend on the development of infrastructure in Lithuania, the preparation of which is the responsibility of the Lithuanian government. However, the German decision to deploy the brigade in Lithuania is a strategic element in deterring NATO by preventing the possibility of an attack. And this is (probably) the only deterrent that the Russian regime understands. Thus, Germany shows that it wants to be a reliable partner in NATO and the EU. The pro-Russian policy of Germany, which has been cooperating with Putin for the last two decades, no longer believes that isolating the Kremlin would be a bad solution. Moreover, the belief that the integration of the Russian economy with the Western world is mutually beneficial is no longer established in Germany. This leads us to assume that after the war, both sides may not express any further desire to improve mutual relations between Berlin and Moscow.

In the course of the research procedure, several hypotheses were established, which turned out to be correct: H1. Lithuania was able to force Berlin (diplomatically and politically) to send the promised soldiers, which may bring benefits to the entire region and thus contribute in its own way to building regional peace and security - H2; H3. Thanks to Lithuania's active foreign policy and pressure on Germany, they are increasing funds for military support for Ukraine. For example, in 2024 - in accordance with the consensus reached on the 2024 budget - Germany plans to increase financial resources for military assistance to Ukraine under the government program of military support for partner countries (Ertüchtigungsinitiative der Bundesregierung, EIBReg) from the planned PLN 4 billion to PLN 8 billion euro (Gibadło 2023).

The project to establish a German brigade in Lithuania represents a qualitative shift in Berlin's foreign and defense policy. It will be the first time such a large Bundeswehr tactical unit will be permanently stationed outside the country, which could mean deeper strategic cooperation in both the military and political spheres on the Berlin-Vilnius line.

Lithuania's experience may be useful for small states or entities that cannot belong to traditional (regional) democracies due to their geographical or geopolitical location, but do not want to be a blind spot and be under pressure from superpowers. In a broader context, based on their specific needs, small states can also launch a process that can benefit the entire region and thus contribute in their own way to promoting and building international political values. This analysis proves that small states can pursue an active and effective foreign policy that is based not only on their national interests, but also on regional and broader common interests and values, while posing a threat to the legitimate interests of great or regional powers. An example of such a policy is Lithuania's policy of promoting the politics of values as an element of building a vision of international security.

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