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Lithuania's Search for Its Place in Central-Eastern Europe During the Conflict With Poland in 1919–1920

Abstract

Lithuanian historiography leads one to believe that the country's interwar conflict with neighbouring Poland was the darkest page in the history of the countries that once formed the Commonwealth of the Two Nations. Indeed, the wounds of mutual hostility healed during the bloody tragedies of World War II and the half-century-long occupation of Lithuania by the USSR and the imposition of its communist state model on Poland. After both countries succeeded in getting rid of the invasive communism that had hindered their national development, relations between them began to thaw, reaching the status of "strategic partners". Russia's war against Ukraine has become particularly important for the unity of Lithuania and Poland, as well as for other countries in Central-Eastern Europe, as Russia still harbours imperial and aggressive ambitions towards its western neighbours, significantly stepping up its aggression in 2022. This article examines the possibilities for cooperation between Lithuania and Poland at the height of the conflict between the two countries in 1919–1920, which even at the time reflected a common regional identity and could

have been the basis for a joint anti-Bolshevik front. Despite the fact that this was not achieved during this period, and the conflict over the ownership of Vilnius complicated relations between the neighbouring countries for a long time, there was still a certain mental perception of belonging to the same space, which helps to explain why in 1939 Lithuania, despite calls from Germany to occupy Poland, did not take advantage of the tragedy of its neighbouring country and did not try to reclaim Vilnius by military force. Lithuania did not let itself be dragged into the war, and half a century after the countries regained independence and the USSR collapsed, the former countries of the Commonwealth of the Two Nations have again strengthened their partnership and are ardent supporters of Ukraine, which is fighting Russian aggression and thereby strengthening the security of CEE.

Keywords

Central and Eastern Europe, the search for coexistence in the Lithuanian–Polish conflict, the possibilities of anti-Bolshevik cooperation in 1919–1920, Lithuania's geopolitical position in Europe

The year 1918 marked the end of World War I and was a period of profound changes in the entire European continent, including its central and eastern parts. For the states situated between the Baltic, Black and Adriatic Seas, this year presented an opportunity to create or finally consolidate their independent nation-states amidst the collapsing empires that had long oppressed the region. For centuries Romanov's Russia, the German Hohenzollern dynasty, the Austrian Habsburg Empire and the Turkish Ottoman Empire had been making attempts to dominate this part of Europe, but the decline of all of them opened up space for cooperation between countries sharing a similar fate. However, the winds of modern national revival sweeping through the 19th century not only encouraged opposition to the empires, but also gave rise to a host of new conflicts. Numerous national, religious

and linguistic conflicts emerged between countries with seemingly similar historical pasts. These conflicts prevented the emergence of a strong group of states between the three small, internal seas of Europe, making Central-Eastern Europe (CEE) a region that suffered tremendously from the brutality of World War II and the totalitarian ideologies that gave rise to it. One of the causes of this war, the totalitarian USSR, subsequently brutally occupied some of the countries of the region and turned the others into obedient satellites, restricting their freedoms. Russia, its legal successor, continues to encroach upon the CEE countries in modern times in its attempts to establish itself between the three seas, thus cutting its way into Europe. The eastern guardian of the CEE region is currently the courageous country of Ukraine, and many countries with a similar fate are staunch supporters of Ukraine. In particular, the group of northern countries in the region – Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Czechia and Slovakia – can be singled out. By their resolve, they compensate for the hesitancy of some Western European countries, often in the CEE region, which understandably originates from the painful historical past. Historically, the German and Russian states have often cooperated with each other in one way or another, often at the expense of the wellbeing of the CEE countries. A lack of decisive action towards Russia by the most powerful economy in Europe – Germany – and a tough, educational stance on domestic policy in its discussions with Poland – also a member of the European Union and NATO – are good examples of how the fears of the CEE region's people are not necessarily unfounded.

It is worth going back to the early origin of cooperation between the CEE states, which traces back to 1335. The time saw a growing population in mediaeval Germany and a mounting pressure to colonise the CEE region, which had recently been hit by attacks from the eastern Tatars. The 1335 meeting between the Polish, Czech and Hungarian kings in Visegrad, Hungary, and later, the 1385 Union of Krewo between Poland and Lithuania helped the two countries defeat the Teutonic Order at the Battle of Grunwald in 1410 and eventually defeat its existential threat. Later, in the face of another threat from the East – the growing power of Moscow – the countries strengthened their cooperation through the Union of Lublin in 1569.

In short, it can be noted that in the historical memory of the CEE states, a certain glorious age was a period of successful cooperation that reached its peak in the 15th century. In that century the Jagiellonian dynasty, the descendants of Jagiella, who concluded the Union of Krewo, ruled over the territory or at least a large part of the present-day territories of Lithuania, Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Czechia and Slovakia.

The year 1918 witnessed the emergence of new nation-states from this list. Lithuania and Poland managed to re-establish their separate statehood, but this brought them into conflict. The territories of Belarus and Ukraine, which were part of the Commonwealth of the Two Nations, were also the scene of struggles, with local national movements striving for independence for their countries. Czechia and Slovakia then formed the federal state of Czechoslovakia, and a similar experiment was attempted by the Slavic states along the Adriatic Sea, forming the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Romania gained strength after the war and went to declare its independence in 1877, while Hungary achieved a real independence, albeit with some of its borders severely curtailed by the Treaty of Trianon in 1920. However, it was now the Hungarians themselves, not the Habsburg dynasty, who oversaw their destiny. The period was thus seemingly favourable for the countries of the region. As we know, World War II would prove much more disastrous for them. Of course, this was due to objective reasons: above all, aggressiveness and the division of Europe between Moscow and Berlin. However, questions inevitably arise as to whether it was possible to avoid the violent conflicts between the CEE countries, which led to confrontation and prevented them forming a united regional bloc that could have fought against the ambitions of their aggressive neighbours.

This issue has been discussed repeatedly by various authors and in the historiography of many countries. I would like to revisit it once again by showcasing the example of Lithuania, by reflecting on how the population of the country that once again put itself on the global political map after many years and its political and military elite viewed the possibilities of regional cooperation and how they perceived, in general, the CEE region and their own country's place in it. It should be made clear from the outset that this

study, due to its small scale, does not focus on the then popular quest for Lithuania's possible identification as a northern European country. This was mainly due to the conflict with Poland, at the time the key power within the CEE region. It is not surprising that the Lithuanian political and cultural elite, unable to find a *modus vivendi* with Poland, was forced to look for such opportunities. At the same time, as all the unsuccessful federal ideas of the time showed, the country failed to forge a stronger link with even the closest neighbour to the north, Latvia – not to mention Estonia or the Scandinavian states further north, across the Baltic Sea. Even though Lithuania maintained and still maintains good relations with them, these relations have never translated into stronger prospects for regional cooperation. It has been much easier for Latvia, and even more so for Estonia, to find a link with the Scandinavian countries because of their long-standing cultural and psychological links with these countries.

The aim of this paper is therefore to investigate Lithuanian–Polish relations at what was likely the most difficult moment in the history between the two countries. A tentative hypothesis is made that even if there was a certain connection with Poland as a gateway to the CEE region, it is much easier nowadays, when Lithuanian–Polish relations have thawed, to nurture and strengthen the ties between the two countries and, through the centrality of Poland in the region, to involve Lithuania more closely in the various structures, such as the Three Seas Initiative, which could ensure both the independence and cultural development of the two countries. The following objectives were raised to achieve this aim:

1. Analyse which place, if any, the prominent political and military figures of the time who were shaping the country's policy and defending it with military means, saw for Lithuania in CEE.

2. Assess the reasons that prevented a joint anti-Bolshevik bloc developing among the easternmost CEE countries, which was supposed to prevent the spread of communist ideas from Russia into Europe and thus corresponded to the concept of *antemurale* that had been held by the countries of the region for centuries, and to highlight the exceptions which could have formed a common ground had they been promoted by the different parties to the conflict.

3. Explore the phenomena that might have mitigated the hostility between Lithuania and Poland during the interwar period, which is usually very prominent in the historiography, and might allow us to discover the possibilities for more positive cooperation, at least on individual issues, that have been obscured by this hostility.

Audronė Janužytė's PhD thesis, defended in 2005 at the Finnish University of Tampere, is worth noting. In it the author analyses the views of many prominent Lithuanian public figures on what modern-day Lithuania should look like and how its relationship to the region should be (Janužytė, 2005). Some important excerpts can be found in an easy-to-read book written by Alfonsas Eidintas and Raimundas Lopata (2020), which is intended to demonstrate the context of the restoration of the Lithuanian state in 1918. These researchers have extensive experience and have published several collections of documents, but in the aforementioned book their research findings are presented to the general public. Several works dedicated to the army can be mentioned separately – a book by Mindaugas Tamošiūnas (2021) on the Lithuanian cavalry of the interwar period analyses several difficulties faced by those whose identity did not make it an easy choice of even to which country – Lithuania or Poland – they belonged. The CEE region was under external pressure from its more powerful neighbours, whose plots have been extensively portrayed by Zenonas Butkus (2019) in his comprehensive monograph dedicated to the period in question. The Lithuanian historiography does not demonstrate very many attempts to define the boundaries of the region more broadly. In the historiography of neighbouring Poland, however, there have been many more such attempts: as early as 1952, Oskar Halecki's (1952) fundamental paper was published, which was intended to introduce the audience to the western world during the Cold War, to prove that the CEE countries were an integral part of western civilisation, which should not be left at the mercy of Communism and should be separated from the Russian space that was too strongly under the Asian influence and, thus, not a part of Europe. This tradition was continued by another Polish diaspora author, Piotr Wandycz, in his paper published in 1992, where he focussed on the history of the

countries of the so-called Visegrad Group: Poland, Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary. This tradition was also maintained by Jan Marek Chodakiewicz (2012) 20 years later, in his book further defining the intermarium tradition, but with more emphasis on the territory of the former Commonwealth of the Two Nations. In the same year, Zdzisław Krasnodębski's work (2012) on regional issues was published, representing a compilation of works by many authors. Chodakiewicz (2012, p. 4) focusses more on the eastern part of the CEE states – the countries between the Baltic and the Black Seas – as a kind of counterbalance to the more Asian civilisation of Russia. This is historically reminiscent of the concept of *antemurale*, which was so popular in the Commonwealth of the Two Nations and posited the protection of the European civilisation against the Asian empires. However, in the southern part of the CEE region – the Balkans – the term meant the fight against the advancement of the Ottoman Empire into Europe. For example, the Popes of Italy often gave the title to the Croats who fought against the Turkish invasion across the Adriatic (Velikonja, 2003, p. 78). A similar sentiment was shared by Hungarians and Romanians. It is no coincidence that George Friedman (2009, p. 73), an influential US geopolitical expert, sees CEE as a place that was set to flourish in the 21st century. There are other papers by foreign authors who note that the changing geopolitical background, Russia's attempted aggressive policies and the active ideological disputes in the West call on the CEE countries to defend their identity more strongly (Todoroiu, 2018, p. 116).

Likely the most authoritative historical study on Lithuania's self-perception in CEE belongs to historian Marius Sirutavičius (2015), who has written an 80-page paper published in a collective monograph by Vytautas Magnus University. This work provides a detailed analysis of the various works of the aforementioned Halecki, as well as the attempts of the historians who have followed his work to clarify and redefine the borders of the region. A review of political science studies reveals that in Lithuania, as well, more and more attempts are being made to define CEE. For example, one of the more recent articles on Lithuania's role in the European region concludes with the idea that "Central Europe is a territory of small countries whose histories have never seemed to be important to the rest of the world," but that

Lithuania belongs to this region and that its historical development should be more closely "linked to the Central European countries of Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland. Such a choice would allow Lithuania to develop its international policy more successfully and would resolve some of the existential identity issues that it currently lacks in its vision of the future" (Šimanskis, 2016, p. 149). However, different perceptions within the public at large must never be forgotten. If the academia, particularly historians, often sympathise with the perception of Lithuania leaning towards CEE, this does not in any way imply that society agrees. And if it does, it finds it difficult to define it consciously ("Europe, its borders...", 2015). To change this might require scientific promotion to ensure that the academic debate reaches the hearts of ordinary citizens and reinforces their sense of belonging to the region.

Collections of published sources are particularly useful for accessing and evaluating material already collected by other historians. The collection of documents on Lithuanian–Polish relations between 1918 and 1920 compiled by Edmundas Gimžauskas and Artūras Svarauskas is worth special mention, because it compiles many important letters exchanged among the highest leaders of the two countries, important messages to their friends in arms and correspondence with politicians of foreign countries, both large and small, gathered from key archives in both Lithuania and Poland (Gimžauskas & Svarauskas, 2012). The memoirs of important military officers – Konstantinas Žukas and Vincas Grigaliūnas- -Glovackis – were also used (Žukas, 1992; Grigaliūnas-Glovackis, 2017). The memoirs of the historian, diplomat and great thinker about the borders of Lithuania, Petras Klimas, and the published texts of the long-time Lithuanian President Antanas Smetona also deserve mention (Klimas, 1990; Smetona, 1990).

Although many important documents have already been published by the above-mentioned authors, the unpublished memoirs of Kazys Škirpa, the first volunteer of the Lithuanian Armed Forces, covering the period from the end of 1917 to the beginning of 1919, represent a valuable source kept in the manuscript section of Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania. It should be noted that these memoirs were written when the first volunteer was already

a colonel of the General Staff and the Lithuanian military attaché in Berlin in 1934 (Škirpa, n.d.). The rapidly changing geopolitical landscape called for reflections, and Škirpa, known at the time as an eager and detailed narrator, not only wrote his memoirs, but also sent detailed proposals to his command. His extensive and often controversial activities during World War II, which I have analysed in a recently published monograph (Jazavita, 2022), fall outside the scope of this article. The writing of this monograph and the doctoral thesis which inspired it required visits to numerous archives in Lithuania, Poland and Germany. Some of the documents from the archives of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central State Archive of Lithuania were used to demonstrate the culmination of the processes described in this article prior to the outbreak of World War II.

The beginning of the Lithuanian–Polish conflict – an opportunity lost for the region?

Back in 1915, with the German army's successful eastward expansion again driving the imperial Russian forces out of Lithuania after more than a century, the conference of Lithuanians in Stockholm did not yet dare to openly entertain the idea of independence, but nevertheless stressed that the Lithuanian nation suffered only because "history had determined its place between Germany and Russia" (Butkus, 2019, p. 11). It seems natural that a counterbalance to this would have to be found in the vicinity of the strongest state in the region, i.e. Poland, which has wider ties with other CEE states. However, both the manipulation of the major powers and the Lithuanian–Polish conflict itself made the search for a way out difficult.

At the beginning of 1919, Prime Minister Sleževičius noted that although the Germans were committed to helping Lithuania and the Berlin government was giving assurances that it was doing so, in practice they were giving away the country to the Bolsheviks without a fight in many areas, despite the treaty with the Entente: "they are clearly selling us out" (Butkus, 2019, pp. 125–26). However, as the Bolsheviks approached Kaunas and the Entente gave stricter instructions, on 11 January the Germans announced their resolve

to defend the territories 100 km off their eastern border, and Kaunas – which had become the provisional capital – happened to be within this radius. These ideas were shared by Škirpa, the first volunteer in the Lithuanian army, who even by the end of 1918 noticed an eagerness between post-war Germany and Soviet Russia to find an agreement and have a joint border; if this goal could not be achieved the Germans were willing to set Lithuania and Poland against each other (Škirpa, n.d., p. 87). Petras Gužas, then Škirpa's right-hand man as the military commander of Vilnius, in his memoirs referred to some other interesting facts: the hoisting of the Lithuanian national flag in the tower of Gediminas Castle in the early morning of 1 January 1919 was met with cheers from the crowd, and the Poles, who had larger forces in Vilnius, would stop the Lithuanian soldiers, check their documents and politely let them go (Gužas, 1923, p. 453). Stasys Butkus, another soldier who raised the flag at the tower and who later became editor of the Lithuanian army publication *Karys*, recalled a similar situation, saying that despite the name-calling, there was no conflict between the Lithuanians and Poles. On the contrary, he pointed to some funny curiosities:

> In the morning, a couple of young Polish legionnaires came to see us. I went to meet them far from the castle. The Poles praised the Lithuanian flag for being beautiful, noting immediately that the Polish flag should be hung next to the Lithuanian one. (Butkus, 1957, p. 102)

Thus, amidst brewing tensions over Vilnius' ownership, there was still some degree of communication, reminiscent of the spirit of the times of the Commonwealth of the Two Nations. The situation began to change very quickly, and when the Lithuanian government decided to retreat, the Minister of Education and a signatory of the Act of 16 February, Mykolas Biržiška, decided to stay in Vilnius and took a note of protest to the Polish General Władysław Wejtko. As Škirpa aptly put it, though, without an armed force to support such a protest, it was no longer relevant (Škirpa, n.d., p. 134). Soon the Bolsheviks captured Vilnius and both Lithuanian and Polish troops had to retreat. Once the situation on the front stabilised, both armies

pushed the Bolsheviks eastwards. Naturally, this required a joint anti-Bolshevik front of the CEE countries. The slight hints, or at least some goodwill towards the anti-Bolshevik front, can be seen in a note from Ignacy Paderewski, the then Polish Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, to Jurgis Šaulys, another signatory of the Act of 16 February, where he said

> As regards the question of Lithuania's independence raised by Your Excellency, I take the liberty of drawing your attention to the vote which took place on 5 April in the Constituent Seimas which acknowledged the right of the Lithuanian people to build their own state. The Government of the Republic of Poland considers that this right is indisputable. The Polish Government considers that it is impossible to negotiate on the border issue now, especially since the Lithuanian diplomatic mission has itself confirmed that the border issue cannot be resolved definitively. Meanwhile, the Polish Government stands ready to join in every step to agree on a joint defence against the Bolsheviks, as well as to establish the friendliest relations with the Lithuanian people. (Gimžauskas & Svarauskas, 2012, p. 176)

On 12 May Šaulys relayed a reply which showed that even then the main and fundamental source of disagreement between the two countries was a very pragmatic one: the Vilnius question:

> The Lithuanian government was convinced that all disagreements concerning the border between Poland and Lithuania would not be settled by force of arms, but by consensus and a final decision of the Peace Congress. However, this was not the case. The Polish Government, albeit speaking of peace and agreement, resorted to military force in Lithuania and, under the pretext of fighting the Russian Bolsheviks, invaded Lithuania, without warning the Lithuanian Government, and occupied by military force Bialystok, Volkovysk, Lida and other towns belonging to Lithuania. On the same pretext, it occupied Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. In addition, Polish forces, acting in agreement with the German leadership but without coordination with the Lithuanian Government, occupied Grodno, even though there was no danger to the city, and it had already been occupied by Lithuanian forces. All these

actions by the Polish government were carried out and have continued to this day, while the Lithuanian government has already proposed to the Polish government to join ranks in the fight against the Russian Bolsheviks, with the only condition being the mutual recognition of the independence of both countries: that Poland recognises an independent Lithuania, with Vilnius as its capital, and Lithuania recognises an independent Poland, with the capital city of Warsaw. (Gimžauskas & Svarauskas, 2012, p. 182)

The above-mentioned principle – the willingness to cooperate with Poland if it recognised Lithuania with its capital in Vilnius – was repeated many times by other influential contemporaries of the time, such as Klimas (1990, p. 174). Another city of interest was Grodno. Although it had almost no ethnic Lithuanians at all, dominated mainly by Jews and Belarusians, it was of particular importance to Lithuanian politicians as one of the centres of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Therefore, Lithuanian politicians at the time, such as Prime Minister Mykolas Sleževičius and Finance Minister Jonas Vileišis, vigorously decided that if the German army withdrew from Grodno and ceded it to Poland, Lithuania should also show its interest in the city and fight for the city by force (Gimžauskas & Svarauskas, 2012, p. 137).

Despite the first sparks, talks of a joint anti-Bolshevik front could still be heard. After the Lithuanian government withdrew to Kaunas, some prominent Lithuanian intellectuals stayed in Vilnius. They rallied around Mykolas Biržiška, the hot-tempered, diplomatic signatory of the Act of 16 February. It was this man who refused to retreat to the provisional capital and whose presence was intended to show that Lithuania still had an interest in Vilnius. After the Polish army had driven out the Red Army and established itself in Vilnius, Biržiška met Jerzy Osmołowski, the confidant of Poland's Commander-in-Chief Józef Piłsudski, and related the details of the meeting to the other members of the Committee of Lithuanians from Vilnius (lvlk). Osmołowski knew that Biržiška, like Lithuanian Prime Minister Mykolas Sleževičius, was a leftist, so he tried to convince them that his leader Piłsudski, who had come from the ranks of socialists, was also in favour of this, that there were no major

differences between Lithuania and Poland because they both were fighting against a common enemy, the Bolsheviks, but at the same time they sympathised with the workers and farmers rather than with the rich, the landlords, in order to deprive the Bolsheviks of their propaganda weapon. In Lithuania, this had an impact, because many of the intelligentsia originally coming from the peasantry did not trust Poland, not only because of its claim to Vilnius, but also because the richest landlords in Lithuania were usually Poles or Polish-speaking Lithuanians who favoured Polish culture. In order to secure a calm back-up for the fight against the Bolsheviks, Piłsudski tried to convey the message to Lithuanian intellectuals that he would not rely on the landlords in Lithuania, as they were the supporters of his political enemies, the "Endeks" (members of the National Democracy movement) (Gimžauskas & Svarauskas, 2012, p. 141). At that time the plan to form an anti-Bolshevik front still seemed realistic, because the Versailles Peace Conference was taking place then. However, the weights of the countries were not the same, with Poland being officially invited to the conference and Lithuania being left behind. Nevertheless, Lithuania's main negotiator in Paris, the capital of the war-winning France, was the first Lithuanian Prime Minister, Augustinas Voldemaras. In his speech to the French Prime Minister, who was chairing the entire Peace Conference and was discussing the coexistence of the post-war Europe, Voldemaras declared that Lithuania would be happy to cooperate with Poland, but only on the condition that Poland would recognise Lithuania not only with its capital city of Vilnius, but also as a part of the large ethnically mixed territories of the former Grodno and Suwałki Governorates, part of the East Prussian region and even Courland. This was, of course, a maximum territorial plan, and Poland, also showing interest in part of the same territories, was reluctant to recognise this. In that case, Voldemaras declared that the Polish army in Lithuania would not be treated as an ally against Bolshevism, but rather as an adversary (Gimžauskas & Svarauskas, 2012, pp. 166–67). These words of the historian and politician soon became a reality, and the conflict started to escalate.

It is not the purpose of this article to discuss in detail the conflict between the two former partners of the Union, which has already

been analysed many times. However, a few characteristic quotations are worth mentioning. For example, Colonel Konstantinas Žukas, serving as Commander-in-Chief of the Lithuanian Armed Forces, thus commented on the situation:

> After one of the captures of Sejny, Officer Asevičius, among other trophies, sent me a large wall map "Polska od morza do morza" (Poland from sea to sea), which he had taken from the Polish commander's office. This map clearly showed that not only the whole of Lithuania, but also the southern half of Latvia up to the Daugava River, was "real Poland". The map was later displayed in the War Museum in Kaunas. (Žukas, 1992, p. 139)

From this quotation it can be seen that the influential military officer did not see the conflict between Lithuania and Poland as a conflict over territories, but first of all as an obvious desire of Poland to gain a foothold in the former territory of the Commonwealth of the Two Nations. However, according to the interpretation of the Unions of Krewo and Lublin that prevailed in Lithuania during the time of the national revival, Lithuanian autonomy was not visible in Lithuanian historiography at all. For example, Petras Klimas, a signatory of the Act of 16 February, and Voldemaras, a member of the Council of Lithuania and the first prime minister of Lithuania, were both historians who shaped this image. On the other hand, as intellectuals, they understood the commonality of interests between Lithuania and Poland, at least until the 1863 uprising, just as they understood that as modern Polish nationalism was being formed, so too was Lithuanian nationalism, and that they naturally had more differences than similarities (Janužytė, 2005, pp. 90–94). However, it is interesting to note that Klimas must have understood the historical autonomy and statehood of Lithuania even in the Union period; Klimas was annoyed at the Versailles Peace Conference to realise that Poland was not seeing anything else in the eastern part of Europe, and imagined the 1772 borders not as a confederation of states, but as an ethnographic Poland (Klimas, 1990, p. 184). In fact, the influential politician Klimas was equally surprised as the influential military officer Žukas.

However, the Lithuanian army was not short of officers thinking otherwise. The most influential of these was General Silvestras Žukauskas, who served four times as Commander-in-Chief of the Lithuanian Armed Forces, and who had perhaps the greatest experience in the military forces of tsarist Russia. The circumstances of how Žukas became Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces in the summer of 1920 during the Polish–Soviet war are vividly described in his memoirs, emphasising Žukauskas' role:

> I told the President and the Prime Minister that a Commander-in-Chief must be appointed immediately. This was a very sensitive issue. The most important thing was that we did not have the right candidate... It is true that by that time Gen. Žukauskas, who had already been the commander of our army, had returned from Poland. He had gone to fetch his wife but stayed there too long. Quite rightly a campaign was waged against him among the officers, and he was appointed an inspector of the army. While in Poland, he met the provocateur Aukštuolaitis and unwittingly signed an article, with a weak sense of direction, on the necessity of a union between Lithuania and Poland. The article, signed by General S. Zukauskas, Commander-in-Chief of the Lithuanian Army, was widely commented on in the Polish press. The issue of the army commander remained unresolved. Temporarily, I was entrusted with that difficult and responsible position. (Žukas, 1992, p. 195)

Žukas was very correct about Žukauskas and his efforts to "revive the Union of Lublin", as he had been an officer himself since the beginning of 20th century, even spoke Polish at home (Eidintas & Lopata, 2020, p. 327) and could at least understand the sentiments nurtured by the older generation towards the common past that were still typical of Žukauskas, like the sentiments of Pilsudski himself. But when quoted, Žukauskas was much criticised by the military for such views. One of the most radical officers of the Lithuanian army, Vincas Grigaliūnas-Glovackis, did not mince his words in his condemnation of Žukauskas:

> Being of Polish culture himself, he always sided with the Poles, and regarded Lithuanians as yokels and farmhands, fit only to be slaves of

their masters. And this is our first Minister of National Defence! Greedy, a great lover of girls and cards, he hoped that through Smetona and Voldemaras he would get plenty of cakes in Lithuania. When he saw that Lithuania was not only short of cakes, but also short of bread, he rushed to Warsaw in search of cakes. (Grigaliūnas-Glovackis, 2017, p. 19).

According to Grigaliūnas-Glovackis, Žukauskas had many supporters in the army, whom he protected in various ways. One of his friends was Colonel Petras Jackevičius. Thirteen years his junior, he was born in 1877, but had already served for several decades, having started in the Russian army in 1899. He commanded the Lithuanian cavalry on several occasions. Perhaps it was age, or his friendship with Žukauskas – maybe it was his sympathy for the Hussars – but Jackevičius, an influential officer of the Lithuanian army, tried to prove the advantages of the Lublin Union to more than one person, even in the bathhouse, and lamented the fact that the Commonwealth of the Two Nations had not been restored (Grigaliūnas-Glovackis, 2017, p. 19).

If such a mood had affected the leadership, there were even stranger situations among the rank and file. Mindaugas Tamošiūnas, a specialist in Lithuanian cavalry during the interwar period, described the story of two brothers:

> Hussar Henrikas Vaitkevičius … considered himself a Lithuanian and always faithfully fulfilled his duties. His brother Feliksas, on the other hand, insisted that he was Polish. In their spare time, the Hussars' barracks were more and more often filled with arguments between brothers who were convinced of their own righteousness. (Tamošiūnas, 2021, p. 126)

This story ended as it must have ended when the nation-states were formed. Henrikas Vaitkevičius remained a patriot of Lithuania and fought for independence, while Feliksas Vaitkevičius was discovered to be in contact with Polska Organizacja Wojskowa (POW) agents and was allowed to flee Lithuania peacefully, apparently only on account of his merits in the previous fight against the Bolsheviks. Tamošiūnas describes several cases in which an officer who fought bravely against the Bolsheviks refused to fight the Poles, or was even

subjected to court-martial, especially after exposure of conspiracy with the POW. It is interesting to note that it was not uncommon among the rank and file to say that there was no need to fight the Poles because they believed in the same God (Eidintas & Lopata, 2020, p. 435). Thus, some hints of a regional connection can be seen, especially as the above-mentioned authors repeatedly point out that during the armistice Lithuanian and Polish soldiers did not avoid visiting each other or discussing something, and when they were captured on both sides of the frontline, they were often assisted by former classmates or other acquaintances. However, while some officers themselves were in favour of this, others reacted very negatively to the all-too-frequent chats between soldiers on different sides of the front. Škirpa, who has already been mentioned several times, was notoriously strict. As commander of the 5th Infantry Regiment, he was sent to Vilnius in May 1919 to negotiate with his Polish counterparts, but even almost a fortnight of negotiations were unsuccessful (Surgailis, 2017, p. 26). The officer in question tended to react personally to such things, so it is not surprising that on 23 July Škirpa demanded that his troops cease daily contact with the Poles, as they might deliberately send spies to extract valuable information. He threatened those who did not comply with court-martial and dramatically declared that henceforth there was only one way to greet the enemy – with fire (Surgailis, 2017, p. 36). This once again proves the author's point, already made elsewhere in this article, that in 1938 the Lithuanian political elite, having agreed to accept the Polish ultimatum and to establish diplomatic relations, sent a "gift" in return – the combative character of Škirpa, a retired colonel of the General Staff. On the other hand, even he was looking for a *modus vivendi* among the developments of 1938, and with some of the people with whom he had stood on opposite sides of the barricades in 1919 he had now established a close relationship, in particular with Marian Zyndram-Kościałkowski, at the time a patron of the POW (Škirpa, n.d., f. 648, ap. 1, b. 23, l. 110).

Although there was almost no support for reviving the union in the Lithuanian army, there was no support for the Soviets either. This was an important moment in the context of the Polish–Soviet war of 1920, when a seemingly small Lithuania could have tried

to tip the scales of war. Despite Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky's repeated calls for help and the creation of a joint anti-Polish front, Lithuania's military leadership maintained a pragmatic neutrality, which is reflected in Žukas' memoirs: "For the Bolsheviks, our manoeuvre to the Polish left wing would have been very useful, as it would have slowed down the Polish attack, but what good would it have done us?!" (Žukas, 1992, p. 210).

Even though Lithuania did not side with the Soviets, the idea was already gaining ground in the minds of some of the country's political and military elite that Lithuania could only keep its historical capital Vilnius in the event of a conflict between Poland and another country. In September 1939, Škirpa, then Lithuania's envoy in Berlin, would return to it. However, as in 1920, Lithuania chose a neutral position and did not hesitate to fight Poland or to help its former captors, Germany or the USSR, with arms. This was made clear on several occasions by the then President of Lithuania Antanas Smetona, Prime Minister Jonas Černius, Minister of Foreign Affairs Juozas Urbšys and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Stasys Raštikis. Material from the Berlin archives shows that the German envoy to Lithuania at the time, Erich Zechlin, was received by Prime Minister Černius, who echoed the arguments of Raštikis, though he stressed that even though Vilnius was still considered under Polish occupation, it was clearly Lithuanian from legal and national points of view. He also said that there could be no question of an armed takeover of Vilnius, but stressed that Vilnius would have to be handed over to Lithuania at the forthcoming peace conference. The neutral path was chosen, even though it infuriated the Germans (Zechlin, n.d., R-28870, p. 191). A hypothesis can be made that, despite the perceived wrongs at the hands of the Polish, Lithuania did not act against it, because it felt that Poland was still one of the states of the same CEE region, with which there were clear cultural and psychological links that were not overshadowed even by the conflict.

The Ukrainian factor – an opportunity lost?

Relations between Lithuania and Ukraine developed in a very different direction. It was a dream that the two countries could share a common

border. As early as 1909, future President Antanas Smetona published articles calling for closer ties with the Ukrainians, the closest people in the region in his opinion (Smetona, 1990, pp. 290–92). It should be noted that in another article from his youth, Smetona also used the phrase "from lagoon to lagoon", but interestingly enough, these peculiar inter-regional peoples were supposed to serve as a counterweight not only to Russia, but also to Poland itself (Smetona, 1990, p. 289). Even in the case of the Commonwealth of the Two Nations potentially being restored, this state was indeed to become at least a republic of three nations, as was still being considered in the 17th century. In 1918, active political figures Juozas Gabrys and Kazimieras Olšauskas had drafted a memorandum to the French proposing to support the idea of a Lithuanian–Ukrainian federation. Augustinas Voldemaras, a historian and future Lithuanian Prime Minister, went even further by taking part in the Ukrainian delegation at the Brest talks (Eidintas & Lopata, 2020, p. 167). It was for these reasons that the borders sought by the Lithuanian national movement were so far removed from ethnic lands – the hope was to have a joint border with Ukrainians. The conflict between Poland and Ukraine made the development of a strong bloc in CEE particularly difficult. According to Serhy Yekelchyk (2009, p. 124), a Ukrainian-born Canadian historian, the Poles at Versailles convinced the Entente that the spectre of Bolshevism was coming to Europe via Ukraine. Thus, in order to build a strong Poland as a bulwark, the Allies trampled on the principle of national self-determination by throwing General Józef Haller's army of 100,000 men, trained and equipped in France, into the fight against the Ukrainians, who posed no problem for European security. The losses on both sides could have been used to halt the Bolshevik advance.

It is interesting that the insights of the 21st-century historian were echoed almost word for word by Klimas (1990, p. 188) almost half a century ago. This army was supposed to be used to stop the Bolshevik expansion into Europe, but part of the force was consumed by the internal conflicts within the CEE powers. Without them, it would have been much easier for the Polish army to hold out along the Vistula River in 1920, and it is likely that the Bolshevik forces would never have advanced so far west. It is interesting to note that Ukraine was

still deeply divided at that time and, as Yekelchyk notes, Ukrainians in the east of the country looked favourably on the possibility of cooperating with Poland, while Westerners – who had never seen Russian occupation and who had not been under Habsburg rule until World War I – preferred to consider a possible anti-Bolshevik struggle alongside the Russian monarchists – the White Army. Symon Petliura, born in Poltava in eastern Ukraine, sought contact with the Poles, shook hands with Pilsudski and marched with his troops to Kyiv in May 1920. Meanwhile, Yevhen Konovalets, born in Zhashkiv, western Ukraine, had already organised an assassination attempt on Pilsudski in 1921. It is no coincidence that Konovalets would later become a close ally and even citizen of Lithuania. At the same time, it was a reminder of the missed opportunity that the emergence of the Ukrainian state would have strengthened the CEE region's ability to resist. In modern-day Ukraine, in the context of Russian aggression, this situation has fundamentally changed; there is no longer a clear west/east divide in the country, as the whole society understands that the country is essentially still on the edge of the *antemurale* and is defending Europe against further Russian invasion from the west. This breakthrough is of the same calibre as the already resolved Lithuanian–Polish conflict over the ownership of Vilnius and Suwałki. Poland recognises Vilnius as Lithuania's historical capital, while there is no debate in Lithuania that its southern border would rightly be located elsewhere, although in 1919 there were claims that the border in the south should at least include the entire area of the Suwałki province (Gimžauskas & Svarauskas, 2012, p. 121). Historical realities are now often obscured, but in the Polish and Ukrainian experience we also see the imprint of historical conflicts. A brief mention was made of the friendly historical ties between Lithuania and Ukraine, which could be used to promote understanding between the three countries and, at the same time, strengthen the eastern geopolitical wing of CEE.

Central-Eastern Europe between Moscow and Berlin

The CEE region has been at the epicentre of interests harboured by two competing centres of power: Moscow and Berlin. Moscow's rulers began to see themselves as the Third Rome as early as the end

of the 15th century, identifying themselves with the Roman heritage through Byzantium. Allegedly, after the collapse of the Roman Empire in 476, it was the Byzantine Empire, the eastern part of the Roman Empire, that protected the heritage of civilisation. After the collapse of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, the rulers of Moscow took over this heritage by marrying the niece of the last Emperor. After the fall of the two Romes, it was a persistent argument that the Third Rome would stand until the Last Judgement, thus giving this idea an eschatological, messianic image (Butkus, 2019, p. 9). This is why, during its expansion into CEE and other directions, Russia continuously emphasised its imperial heritage until Peter the Great succeeded in achieving diplomatic recognition of the Empire from the great European powers in 1721, after his victory over Sweden, the then regional power, during the Great Northern War. However, Mindaugas Šapoka, an expert on the period, points out that although Peter the Great managed to secure from the defeated Sweden and the weakened Commonwealth of the Two Nations the name of the new state of Russia rather than Moscow, this name was not recognised by the major Western powers, which only referred to the Russian tsars as emperors because they regarded Russia itself as an Orientalist, non-European state that did not abide by the rules of the European states (Šapoka, 2021, p. 237). After the Bolshevik Revolution, Russia seemed to have given up everything that defined its previous identity and adopted a negative view of the heritage of tsarism. At the same time, realising the impossibility of a global revolution at least for the time being, the Bolshevik ideologues eagerly embraced the idea of bringing back – and even strengthening – the Russian empire, and the communist ideas of equality and the overthrow of the old order became central to the powerful propaganda for achieving this goal (Butkus, 2019, p. 10).

As the agreements of 1772, 1793, 1795 and 1939 demonstrate, Moscow has always needed help from Berlin to intervene in Europe and to try to dominate CEE. When discussing the post-WWI context, one must not forget the harsh reparations imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. The Entente, which had imposed such a "cruel peace", was first and foremost looking for a foothold in another country that was not happy with the new order for its own reasons,

namely, Russia. A characteristic letter from Baron von Gayl, governor of Kaunas, to the government in Berlin said

> We need wide and direct access to Russia .... By all means increase the Lithuanian–Polish confrontation. If you succeed in handing over Lithuania to Russia without causing an international scandal, you will have fully accomplished your task and will have earned the gratitude of the Fatherland. (Butkus, 2019, p. 324)

The Germans were not alone in wanting a relationship with Russia, and for these reasons the action was reciprocal. If you are aware of the secret protocols signed in August 1939, it is worth noting that as early as November 1918 a special article was published by the Bolshevik in charge of nationalities, the future sole leader of the USSR, Joseph Stalin, who lamented the fact that in the countries located between Germany and Russia

> Petty kings and dwarf predators ... still rule, these dwarf "nation" governments, which by fate found themselves caught between the two grand bonfires of the eastern and western revolution, now dream of extinguishing the general revolutionary fire in Europe, while maintaining their curious existence. (Butkus, 2019, p. 325)

At all times, foreign leaders entertaining utopian ideas out of touch with reality have been threatening the path chosen by the CEE nations and their development towards independence. However, the inability of the smaller countries themselves to find a compromise is also a fatal problem, and unfortunately, this is typical of CEE countries. As regards the conflict over Vilnius, which is so topical in the context of this article, it can be noted that on the Lithuanian side the borders with Poland were designated in several ways. Even the leader of the Lithuanian Council and future President Smetona was inclined to see Lithuania mainly within ethnographic boundaries, but with important strategic additions. Without knowledge of the ultimate inclusion of Klaipėda into the state, the possibility of annexing the port of Liepaja in the north was under discussion. Lithuania should include the former Kaunas and Suwałki governorates, the Vilnius

governorate without the outermost Orthodox-dominated parts and part of the Grodno governorate, except for the very heavily Orthodox-dominated areas. While the northern boundary of the interests lay at the cities of Liepaja and Daugavpils in present-day Latvia, in the south, the industrial city of Bialystok was to be part of Lithuania, even though there were virtually no Lithuanians there. The border with Poland was to be drawn along the lines of the Lublin Union, but in the territory of present-day Belarus, especially in the western part, the hope was to go as far as a joint border with the Ukrainians. In this way, the future Lithuania would have a stable, friendly border with Ukraine and could cooperate against all its adversaries (Eidintas & Lopata, 2020, p. 117). Of course, such a Lithuania would have to be built on some kind of federal basis, because only then would some people of other nationalities be willing to stand up to defend it against invading enemies. This was understood by different interest groups. For example, Aleksandras Stulginskis, Smetona's rival, who was elected President of the Constituent Seimas in 1920, delegated by the Christian Democrats – who were winning the elections at that time – and soon elected President of Lithuania, described the territorial programme in a similar way: "From our point of view, the ethnological boundaries include the Vilnius region, the Suwałki triangle, the Klaipėda region and Lithuania Minor, but do not include the Slavic lands of the Grand Duchy" (Skrupskelis, 2010, p. 272).

In this way, claims to areas where Lithuanians were in a minority or non-existent were dropped, but the desire to claim disputed areas was maintained. There was a wish to win the favour of the large Jewish population in the disputed areas. The Lithuanian press, such as *Trimitas*, which belonged to the largest paramilitary Lithuanian Riflemen's Union, stressed that the Jews of Vilnius and Grodno, who would rather integrate into Lithuania, were suffering immensely in Poland ("Gardino žydai...", 1921, p. 6). Jonas Vileišis, a signatory of the Act of 16 February, spoke about this in one of the government's first conversations on 2 December 1918 during a debate on how Lithuania should preserve Vilnius:

> We need to strengthen the country from within. The army must be a state army; national regiments will not defend Vilnius. It is necessary

to have a lot of courage to call people of all nations to defend the country. (Škirpa, n.d., P-1241, p. 80)

Interestingly, many years later, when trying to stabilise relations with Poland and when considering a possible visit to Kaunas by Polish representatives, which was to take place at the beginning of 1939, Vileišis was seen as a real candidate to welcome this delegation, although he did not hold any influential positions at the time. Another councillor, Stasys Šilingas, replied that it was "not the Bolsheviks who pose a danger for us, but the Poles", and that all the attention of the state should be devoted to saving Vilnius and Grodno (Škirpa, n.d., f. 383, ap. 7, b. 2041, l. 10–11). The position of the President of the Lithuanian Council, Smetona, who was suspicious of Poland, was also similar.

Latvia's attempted and failed mediation

I do not wish to elaborate on the separate, complex topic of Lithuanian–Latvian relations. Lithuanian politicians believed that Lithuania had a long tradition of statehood, while its northern neighbours had just established statehood, and so were rather looked down on. This was especially the case with the previously mentioned Voldemaras, who met the British envoy to Sweden in Stockholm on 12 March 1918 and asked him to hand over the Act of 16 February to his command. In the context of this conversation, the eccentric politician and historian went so far as to say that Lithuania was not interested in any kind of federation, especially with the Latvians, who were pro-Russian; they and the Estonians could continue to be ruled by Russia (Eidintas & Lopata, 2020, p. 314). As mentioned above, Lithuania also claimed the Latgale region in south-eastern Latvia, and Poland also had set its eye on it. However, after the successful capture of Vilnius, the Polish leadership decided to be content with controlling the Vilnius region, which had a predominantly ethnically, linguistically and religiously mixed population. It was therefore in Poland's interest to have good relations with Latvia, with which it had a direct border. This made it possible to create a broader "sea-to--sea" group of states without the opposing Lithuania. However, this

posed problems for Latvia itself, which was struggling to navigate between its neighbours, Lithuania and Poland.

As the conflict escalated, the unstable geopolitical situation frightened Latvia, which felt it had only recently gained independence and feared another potential conflict. The Latvian national movement had many sympathies for the Lithuanian people, with whom it shared a common origin, but it also had a friendly attitude towards the Polish state. Poland, for its part, gave Daugavpils back to Latvia (Eidintas & Lopata, 2020, p. 374) after liberating it from the Bolsheviks and withdrew its claims to Latgale, where there was a Polish-speaking population. Hence, Poland was seen as something of a counterweight to Soviet Russia or even to a possibly soon-to-be re-emerging Germany. As closer relations with Lithuania could not be established, Latvian Foreign Minister Zigfrids Mejerovičs prepared to play the role of mediator, inviting representatives of Lithuania and Poland to Riga. However, this did not work. Although Latvia clearly supported Lithuania morally during the march of Lucjan Želigovski in October and November 1920, later in the interwar Lithuanian press or in diplomatic speeches there were several attempts to ridicule Latvia's stance, which in the eyes of the Lithuanians was not tough enough towards Poland. Mejerovičs' proposal to the Polish Foreign Minister Eustachy Sapieha was as follows:

> In order to resolve peacefully and amicably the disputed issues between Poland and Lithuania, which are not only an obstacle to a closer union of the Baltic States, but also hinder the establishment of friendly relations between the two countries, and are a regrettable cause of bloodshed for the two nations, the Government of Latvia is taking the initiative of submitting the following proposals to the Governments of the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania:
>
>   1) to send plenipotentiaries to Riga to participate in a joint Polish–Lithuanian conference with a view to declaring an armistice between the Polish and Lithuanian armies;
>
>   2) to fix a demarcation line between the two armies;
>
>   3) in the light of the desire expressed by the two Baltic States at the Conference to reach an amicable agreement on all issues without

resorting to arms, but by diplomatic means, to reach a solution to the fixing of the borders and to the other disputed issues involved.

The Latvian Government is confident that its proposal will be accepted by both countries and would be happy to welcome representatives of both Governments in its capital. (Gimžauskas & Svarauskas, 2012, pp. 500–01)

It is easy to understand that the region's *realpolitik* was not changed by such proposals, nor by the numerous conferences convened to organise an anti-Bolshevik front. The Latvians tried to mediate between Lithuania and Poland on several subsequent occasions,[1] but failed to create an effective union of the CEE countries. Despite their common Baltic origins, Latvia felt closer to Estonia than to Lithuania, which is why the two countries were able to form a union as early as 1923, but the union of the three Baltic States was never realised. Meanwhile, Estonia, through Finland, was more interested in seeing itself as a Nordic country. The conflict between Lithuania and Poland was one of the key factors preventing the creation of a bloc of states between the three seas, but it was far from the only one. After all, in theory, Poland had a border with Latvia and could have had contact with its northern neighbours through it. To the south, Poland had difficult relations with Czechoslovakia, but good relations with Romania and Hungary. The latter two were also at odds with each other. Conflicts in the CEE region were more numerous than usual. However, the interwar conflict over Vilnius, which left Lithuania and Poland without diplomatic relations for almost two decades, was the most prominent of them all. A representative quotation to illustrate this point is the visit of the Hungarian Regent to Warsaw, Admiral Miklós Horthy (2000), in February 1938, when he saw the strengthening of Germany and the USSR and wished Poland to seek an agreement with Lithuania. Apparently, even the leader of a country with no direct border saw clearly that a prolonged conflict was threatening and ultimately disastrous for

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1 For more, see Eriks Jekabsons, Latvian Foreign Minister V. Munter's attempt to mediate between Poland and Lithuania to resolve the conflict that erupted in March 1938, *Lithuanian Historical Yearbook*, 2011, No. 1.

both nations. The greatest lesson was therefore World War II, which was the most devastating for the CEE countries. Remembering all the victims in the area between the Baltic, Black and Adriatic Seas, and all the men who fought, it is important to learn the lessons of the past in the hope that the countries of the region will be able to reconcile their interests.

Conclusions

1.   The analysis of the speeches of the founders of the Lithuanian state – military officers, diplomats and politicians – from different perspectives makes it easy to see that a broader understanding of the region has been sorely lacking. The ungrateful fate of Lithuania situated between Russia and Germany was understandable, but a broader understanding of the CEE region was lacking. The routes to CEE were through one country, Poland, and relations with Poland were largely influenced by the question of who would control Vilnius and other territories.

2.   Due to the totally different views, no compromise could be found in this area, which prevented the formation of a joint anti--Bolshevik front. On the other hand, in 1920, even with proposals from the Soviet Russian military leadership, Lithuania did not want to break neutrality and fight against Poland, and a comparison of the war effort shows that there were some people in the army for whom the memory of the Soviet period did not have any negative connotations. Despite the hostility on the Vilnius issue, Lithuania was united by its anti-Bolshevik sentiment and a common Catholic faith. More than once, those fighting on the opposite side of the barricades had acquaintances or even relatives.

3.   Having analysed these lessons, it can be noted that even in the most difficult period of Lithuanian–Polish relations, the animosity was not as deep as it was later deliberately emphasised in the inter-war period because of idea to fight for Vilnius. It is worth noting that in September 1939, Lithuania, faced with offers to take back Vilnius, opted for neutrality and not to strike at the back of Poland, which was being attacked by the forces gripping the CEE region – the Berlin–Moscow tandem. The regional connection noted in this very

article has undoubtedly contributed to this even two decades later. It is no coincidence that when the USSR collapsed half a century later and the two countries became independent, their relationship was quickly re-established and even became known as a "strategic partnership". This shows that even at the most difficult moment of relations, the mental link between Lithuania and Poland – which was not completely broken in the current situation – has again significantly strengthened and has a great potential not only for greater security in CEE, but also to promote the perception in Lithuania of a regional identity and of belonging to a part of Europe between the Baltic, Black and Adriatic Seas, the maintenance of which is in the vital interests of all CEE countries, including Lithuania.

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