


# Unique Treaty



Relations between  
the Republic of Poland  
and the Republic of Lithuania  
(1994-2024)

Edited by Aleksandra Kuczyńska-Zonik and Andrzej Puksztó

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## Unique Treaty

This, the year 2024, is special for both Poland and Lithuania: the two countries are celebrating the 20th anniversary of their accession to the European Union as well as 20 years passing of Lithuanian membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and 25 years since Poland joined NATO. So, there are a lot of political, cultural, and scientific events in both countries during this year.

There was a chance that the 30th anniversary of the Treaty on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation of the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Poland (The Treaty was signed by Algirdas Mykolas Brazauskas, President of the Republic of Lithuania, and Lech Wałęsa, President of the Republic of Poland, in the buildings of the Seimas on 26 April 1994) would be forgotten or stay in the shadows<sup>3</sup>. However, this Treaty played a big role in strength-

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<sup>3</sup> *Lietuvos Respublikos ir Lenkijos Respublikos draugiškų santykių ir gero kaimyninio bendradarbiavimo sutartis*, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.11154> [27.03.2024]; *Traktat między Rzeczpospolitą Polską a Republiką Litewską o przyjaznych stosunkach i dobrosąsiedzkiej współpracy, sporządzony w Wilnie dnia 26 kwietnia 1994 r.*, <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU19950150071> [27.03.2024]; see also G. Kazėnas, *1994 treaty between the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania on friendly relations and neighbourly cooperation: successes and new challenges* [in:] *Good neighbourhood treaties of Poland: Political, security and social relations*, K.P. Marczuk (ed.), Palgrave Macmillan, Cham 2019, pp. 207-223.

ening the security and international position of both countries, and it is impossible to imagine the process of Euro-Atlantic integration without it. The path to the signing of the Treaty was neither easy nor comfortable given the battle for independence and sovereignty in both Poland and Lithuania from 1989 to 1990.

It is necessary to recall that there were several examples of friendship and strong relations between the members of *Solidarność* and *Sąjūdis*. Even earlier, Lithuanians were big supporters and followers of Polish anti-communist protests and the pro-democratic struggle at the beginning of the 80's: stronger winds of change came later in the republic of the Soviet Union. News of the Round Table in Warsaw and the first non-communist government were welcomed in Lithuania with huge enthusiasm. Also, we cannot forget the significant role of Polish and Lithuanian diasporas in the processes of political and economic transformation. Emigrants, especially in the US and Western Europe, worked hard for Polish-Lithuanian initiatives.

Nevertheless, there were also some "dark clouds" over Polish-Lithuanian relations; historical stereotypes and phobias, especially from the Interwar Period and World War II were reborn. A lot of conflicts and misunderstandings related to the rights of national minorities remained, mainly Lithuanian Poles. Therefore, we cannot forget that controversies around the Polish Lithuanian minority began in 1990, when only four parliamentarians from the Polish Fraction supported the Act of the Re-Establishment of the State of Lithuania (Act of March 11) in the Seimas of Lithuania, another six Polish politicians abstained from voting. This created a really cold climate for Polish-Lithuanian relations in Vilnius and cast a shadow over future cooperation<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, Poland was in no rush to

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<sup>4</sup> More about that: K. Buchowski, *Historia polityczna Litwy 1987-2004. Od sowieckiej republiki związkowej do integracji ze światem Zachodu*, Białystok 2023.

recognize the Republic of Lithuania in March of 1990, in contrast to other European countries. But later, Poland was very active in supporting Lithuanian efforts in the battle against the Soviet Union, especially during the tragic events of January 1991. Parliament and the Government of the Republic of Poland not only condemned the killing of Lithuanians near Vilnius TV Tower but also created the Lithuanian Informational Centre in Warsaw. Numerous Polish non-governmental organizations also started to help in the fight for the Republic of Lithuania.

It cannot be forgotten that the unsuccessful pro-Soviet coup in Moscow, in 1991 introduced the end of the USSR. The 5th of September 1991 was the date when the Republics of Poland and Lithuania reopened diplomatic relations. Even then, Polish-Lithuanian relations remained full of conflicts and misunderstandings, the majority of which focussed on the Polish minority in Lithuania. One such situation developed outside Vilnius, in the Vilnius and Šalčininkai districts: the Councils of these two municipalities were forbidden from working by the Government of Lithuania as they were against Lithuanian Independence and openly supported the Soviet Regime.

The mass media in Lithuania and Poland were full of historical polemics, even conflicts, especially regarding events in 1918-1922 and 1939-1940, and sometimes, paradoxically, also about the Act of Kredo (1385) and the Union of Lublin (1569). We cannot forget that Lithuanian and Polish intellectuals played a significant role in the process of reconciliation of the two nations, for example, Jerzy Giedroyc and his monthly journal "Kultura", where two famous writers – Czesław Miłosz and Tomas Venclova, wrote the "Dialog about Vilnius". Giedroyc was the author of ULB (Ukraine-Lithuania-Belarus), a concept of Polish foreign policy. He advertised a new vision of Polish thinking, started in 1950. According to Giedroyc, an independent and secure Poland was impossible without democratic and friendly neighbours, who were previously part of the Commonwealth. An independent and

secure Poland was possible only together with a democratic – Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. Some people suggested that the plans of Giedroyc were entirely unrealistic and romantic: Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine would never have independence<sup>5</sup>.

It is also necessary to mention the activities of “Santara – Šviesa”, the Lithuanian cultural movement in the US during the second part of the 20th century. Its activists created a new vision for Lithuanian identity and the foreign policy of a modern Lithuania. “Santara – Šviesa” had a big influence on Valdas Adamkus, who was the President of the Republic of Lithuania from 1998-2003 and 2004-2009.

As previously mentioned, some non-governmental organizations had worked hard for Polish-Lithuanian friendship and cooperation. Two of them in particular can be mentioned – Club of Lithuanian Friends in All Poland (*Ogólnopolski Klub Miłośników Litwy*), chaired by Leon Brodowski, and the monthly journal “Kultūros barai” with editor-in-chief Bronys Savukynas. These two organisations were the initiators of the famous Meetings of Polish-Lithuanian Intellectuals in Wigry, North Poland, close to the border with Lithuania. One should not overlook the Centre for Eastern Studies in Warsaw (*Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich*) and its first director Marek Karp, also journalists from the newspapers – “Kurier Wilenski” and “Znad Wilii” as well as the radio station “Znad Wilii” – all of whom played important, sometimes difficult roles in stabilising relations between Lithuania and Poland. The aforementioned difficulties, and the negative and positive emotions, were all presented in memoirs and scientific monographs of former diplomats – Antanas Valionis, Jan

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<sup>5</sup> A. Pukszo, *Jerzy Giedroyc i nacjonalizm: lekcje redaktora „Kultury”* [in:] *Stosunki polsko-litewskie wczoraj i dziś. Historia, kultura, polityka*, W.K. Roman, J. Marszałek-Kawa (eds.), Toruń 2009, pp. 230-235.

Widacki, and others, who had worked in Vilnius and Warsaw at the beginning of the 90's<sup>6</sup>.

The Treaty on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation of the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Poland became a unique document of international and diplomatic law, a good example for other countries. The Treaty not only described political, economic, and cultural cooperation between the countries but it also recognized the borders of two countries and two capitals – Vilnius and Warsaw. Some sections were connected with the rules of Polish and Lithuanian minorities in both countries.

The Treaty opened the door to intensive Polish-Lithuanian political and military cooperation and was an important background for ways to gain membership in NATO as well as for the process of eurointegration. The Treaty, an expression of historical compromises (it was recognised that each nation has the right to judge its own history) and the result of the foresight of its creators, proved to be a breakthrough in mutual relations. It was helpful in establishing cooperation between Poland and Lithuania and was particularly important in the first years of its operation, when both countries were not yet members of the EU. The development of bilateral contacts, the intensification of joint activities within both structures in the field of energy policy, and relations with Russia or the Eastern Partnership, were the foundation of the strategic partnership between Poland and Lithuania, based on common goals and interests.

The strategic objectives referred to the global policy (actions for international security, development of democracy, and protection of human rights), NATO and EU membership, regional and eastern policy, including maintenance of a high intensity of mutual contacts

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<sup>6</sup> A. Valionis, *Politikos sūpuoklės. Diplomatinės arena ir užkulisiai*, Vilnius 2018; J. Widacki, *Litwa, Ojczyzno nie moja*, Kraków 2008.



and political dialogue, and support for the integration of Eastern European countries into the EU and NATO. Poland and Lithuania did not declare any unequivocally contradictory or opposing views in the area of foreign and security policy, and possible conflicts of interest and differences of opinion did not concern issues of primary importance<sup>7</sup>. In the following years, however, a deterioration of relations was observed, mainly due to the strengthening of Polish-American cooperation and the “reset” in Polish-Russian relations at the expense of Lithuania, Lithuania’s integration with the Nordic countries, the entry of the so-called “Karta Polaka” (“the Pole’s Card”, 2007), the Law on Education in Lithuania (2011), and the exaggerated (in the eyes of Lithuanians) problems of the Polish minority in Lithuania, which resulted in a cooling of relations between the states<sup>8</sup>.

The current intensification of the Polish-Lithuanian dialogue is crucial for stabilising the situation in the Central and Eastern European region in the fields of energy, defence, and security, mainly visible at the European and transatlantic level. Poland and Lithuania have converging interests in the EU and NATO, especially in terms of the challenges and threats posed by the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine (maintaining or extending EU sanctions against Russia) and the Eastern Partnership countries (e.g., supporting Ukraine on its path to EU membership), the implementation of joint energy and infrastructure projects increasing the level of integration of the region, such as Rail Baltica and Via Carpatia. Regional security in its broadest sense remains the main area of cooperation between Poland and Lithuania. Poland is directly involved in strengthening the security

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<sup>7</sup> See: A. Pukšto, I. Karpavičiūtė, M. Norkevičius, *The Dynamics of Lithuanian-Polish Strategic Partnership*, “Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review” 2013-2014, vol. 12, pp. 115-149.

<sup>8</sup> A. Kuczyńska-Zonik, D. Wilczewski, „Polska i Litwa podają sobie dzisiaj dłonie”. *Polska perspektywa współpracy bilateralnej* [in:] *Stosunki Polski z Litwą, Białorusią i Ukrainą 450 lat po unii lubelskiej*, T. Stępniewski, B. Surmacz (eds.), Instytut Europy Środkowej, Lublin 2019, pp. 61-88.

of the Baltic region by actively participating in the NATO Baltic Air Policing mission and taking part in joint military exercises. Further activities envisage the development of Polish-Lithuanian cooperation in the defence industry, where they share not only the same perspective of military threats from Russia but also hybrid ones – disinformation or illegal migration supported by the Belarusian regime on the borders of Lithuania, Poland, and Latvia. In the future, strong Polish-Lithuanian cooperation may constitute an important northern direction of Poland's foreign policy and a pillar of the EU policy in the context of the reconstruction of Ukraine.

Undoubtedly, nowadays Poland and Lithuania share not only a historical and cultural heritage but also a common future in a united Europe. As members of, inter alia, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Three Seas Initiative, and the Lublin Triangle, they contribute to the expansion of cooperation in the Baltic region and Central Europe. Among others, Lithuania and Poland support regional infrastructure projects that will increase their transport, economic, military, and tourism potential. They are also interested in economic development and new technologies, while protecting their national security interests<sup>9</sup>. In addition, cooperation is developing at the parliamentary level through the Parliamentary Assembly of the Sejm and Senat of the Republic of Poland, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, and the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, which should be considered an effective mechanism to bring Ukraine closer to the European Union to a large extent. At the same time, as in the case of the Lublin Triangle, this form of dialogue serves to improve bilateral relations, as it not only involves a broader political representation but also focuses on issues of interest to three parties rather than just two<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> M. Antonovič, *Visions of Polish-Lithuanian regional cooperation – are they (in)compatible?*, 28 October 2021, "Policy Paper", Eastern Europe Studies Centre, Vilnius 2021.

<sup>10</sup> H. Bazhenova, R. Romantsov, J. Olchowski, *Zgromadzenie Parlamentarne Sejmu i Senatu RP, Sejmu Republiki Litewskiej i Rady Najwyższej Ukrainy* [in:] *Dyplomacja parlamentarna w Euro-*

Bilaterally, many contentious issues still remain. The rights of the Polish minority in Lithuania have remained a bone of contention between the two states. Among other things, the Treaty stipulates that persons belonging to the Polish minority are guaranteed the possibility to use their first and last names in the wording and spelling of the minority language (Article 14), but Lithuania has refused to adopt the relevant law citing Article 14 of the Constitution, which stipulates that the official language of Lithuania is Lithuanian. Recently, a significant change in the Lithuanian government's approach on this issue has been evidenced by the amendment to the Law on the Spelling of Names and Surnames, adopted in 2022, which recognises the use of the letters "w", "q" and "x" and "rz", "cz", "sz", "nn". This is a symbolic gesture, but not a complete solution to the problem, as only some of the Poles in Lithuania can realise their right to use their names and surnames in the sound and spelling of the minority language. There is still no possibility to use diacritic signs in first and last names, which do not appear in the Lithuanian alphabet but are an essential part of the Polish language ("ą", "ę", "ń", "ć", and "ó")<sup>11</sup>.

This publication presents the current state of Lithuanian-Polish relations. Polish and Lithuanian researchers have attempted to analyse various areas of cooperation, paying attention to its effectiveness, but also noting current and future challenges. Thus, they point out that security, economy, media, memory policy, and national minorities are important dimensions of bilateral cooperation. Firstly, Krzysztof Żęgota draws attention to the neighbourhood of both countries with the Kaliningrad region as an element of foreign and secu-

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*pie Środkowej i Wschodniej w latach 2015-2019*, B. Surmacz, A. Kuczyńska-Zonik (eds.), "Policy Papers" 2/2019, Instytut Europy Środkowej, Lublin 2019, pp. 71-82.

<sup>11</sup> EFHR, *Sąd Konstytucyjny Republiki Litewskiej orzekł, że Ustawa o pisowni imion i nazwisk, która zezwala na używanie liter „w”, „q” i „x” w dokumentach, nie jest sprzeczna z Konstytucją*, 6 July 2023, [https://www.efhr.eu/2023/07/06/sad-konstytucyjny-republiki-litewskiej-orzekl-ze-ustawa-o-pisowni-imion-i-nazwisk-ktora-zezwala-na-uzywanie-liter-w-q-i-x-w-dokumentach-nie-je/\[29.02.2024\]](https://www.efhr.eu/2023/07/06/sad-konstytucyjny-republiki-litewskiej-orzekl-ze-ustawa-o-pisowni-imion-i-nazwisk-ktora-zezwala-na-uzywanie-liter-w-q-i-x-w-dokumentach-nie-je/[29.02.2024]).

rity policy for both Poland and Lithuania. He discusses the various mechanisms of Polish-Russian and Lithuanian-Russian cross-border relations which have been developed since the 1990s, noting also that the current threats emanating from the Kaliningrad region are an important factor influencing Polish-Lithuanian cooperation within the EU and NATO. Next, Marlena Gołębiowska analyses the state of bilateral economic relations, showing both the dynamics of trade and investment ties as well as the adaptability and resilience of both economies given the not always favourable discourse at the political level. The third article, by Barbara Jundo-Kaliszewska, deals with the media coverage of Polish-Lithuanian relations, with a particular focus on historical aspects using the example of topics covered in the author's publicist programme *Conversations in Mackiewiczówka* (*Rozmowy w Mackiewiczówce*) on TVP Wilno. The aim of the text is to show the changes in Lithuanian historical discourse and to identify the key areas of media cooperation between Vilnius and Warsaw in the 21st century. In the two subsequent texts, Agata Tatarenko and Ramunė Šmigelskytė-Stukienė assess how exhibitions by Polish and Lithuanian museums and public history institutions contribute to the shaping of the narrative of the common past, and thereby to the dialogue between the neighbouring communities. In the next article, Karolis Dambrauskas focuses on the problem of restitution by members of national minorities in Lithuania, of land previously collectivised by the Soviets. He further indicates that the manner in which the land was restituted by the Lithuanian authorities indirectly influenced the ethno-demographic shape in the compact region inhabited by the Polish minority. Next, Krzysztof Snarski examines the activities of the District Museum in Suwałki concerning traditional Lithuanian culture in the Suwałki region and the contemporary identity of representatives of the Lithuanian community in Poland. Mariusz Antonowicz's article closes the monograph with a consideration of current Polish-Lithuanian relations. The researcher wonders whether the 1994 Treaty met the expecta-

tions of its authors and whether it needs to be updated in the era of new challenges and threats to bilateral cooperation.

We hope that this publication will contribute to further reflections on the state of contemporary Lithuanian-Polish relations and promote political and social dialogue between Poland and Lithuania.

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<https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU19950150071>.  
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Krzysztof Żęgota<sup>1</sup>

# **The Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation as a factor in Polish-Lithuanian relations**

## **Introduction**

Polish-Lithuanian relations are a good example of the pragmatic shaping of good-neighbourly relations after the changes that took place in Central and Eastern Europe at the turn of the 1980s and '90s. Although these relations were not free from significant historical factors related to current politics, both countries supported their mutual foreign policy priorities and pragmatically moved towards the European and Euro-Atlantic direction of integration. One of the important factors in these relations was the neighbourhood shared with the Russian Federation, the only subject of Russia which is a neighbour to both countries is the Kaliningrad Region.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Kaliningrad Region was territorially isolated from the rest of Russia, which significantly limited the possibilities of its socio-economic development. At the same time, in the 1990s, opportunities to stimulate the socio-economic development of the region were seen, among others, in developing

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cross-border relations with the bordering regions of Poland and Lithuania. An important factor in these relations was the accession of Poland and Lithuania to the European Union in 2004. On the one hand, it created new barriers to the development of cross-border relations, for example, related to the implementation of the visa regime on the Polish-Russian and Lithuanian-Russian borders. On the other hand, the enlargement of the European Union has provided new tools for developing cross-border relations such as programs co-financed by the European Union and Russia for cross-border cooperation. An important factor stimulating cross-border relations on the Polish-Russian border was the functioning of the local border traffic mechanism from 2012 to 2016. At the same time, this mechanism has not been introduced on the Lithuanian-Russian border.

The importance of the Kaliningrad Region in Polish and Lithuanian foreign policy changed after 2014, and especially since February 2022. As a result of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, the Kaliningrad Region began to be perceived as a potential source of military threats. The aim of this article is to analyze the significance and role of the Kaliningrad Region in Polish-Lithuanian relations as well as Polish and Lithuanian external policies. It addresses the following research questions: What factors shaped Polish-Lithuanian relations after 1991? What role did Polish-Russian and Lithuanian-Russian cross-border relations play in shaping relations with Russia? What was the military potential of the Kaliningrad Region? To what extent has the importance of the Kaliningrad Region changed for the security of Poland and Lithuania after February 2022?

### **Polish-Lithuanian relations after 1991**

An important element of Polish-Lithuanian relations was the dilemmas and challenges related to Russia and the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation. Polish-Lithuanian relations were officially established in September 1991, and in the following months, the

Lithuanian embassy in Poland and the Polish embassy in Lithuania were opened. It is worth mentioning that Lithuania proclaimed its independence in March 1990, at a time when the internal situation in the collapsing Soviet Union was still ambiguous. In January 1991, the Soviet military intervention took place in Vilnius, and the Polish-Lithuanian border was still guarded by Soviet troops<sup>2</sup>. In March 1991, the Polish government declared support for Vilnius's demands for independence, but the Polish side was still afraid of the reaction of the authorities in Moscow, which was conditioned by the unregulated status of the Kaliningrad Region<sup>3</sup>. Finally, the results of the August Coup in Moscow and the ongoing collapse of the Soviet Union led to the establishment of full relations<sup>4</sup>. In January 1992, the ministers of foreign affairs signed the Declaration on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation between the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania. The document regulated the following issues: respect for state sovereignty, territorial integrity, renunciation of territorial claims, and treatment of national minorities in accordance with international standards.

The Treaty between the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation was an important stage in the development of bilateral relations. The document was signed on 26 April 1994 in Vilnius by Presidents Lech Wałęsa and Algirdas Brazauskas. The parliaments of both countries ratified the document in October 1994, and it entered into force in November 1994<sup>5</sup>. Another important document was the Joint Declaration of the Presidents of Poland and Lithuania on Strategic Part-

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<sup>2</sup> W.T. Modzelewski, *Dwie dekady stosunków Polski z Litwą – wymiar polityczny*, "Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne" 2012, no. 3, p. 287.

<sup>3</sup> M. Bierowiec, *Analiza stosunków polsko-litewskich w latach 1991-2007*, "Dialogi Polityczne" 2008, no. 3, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> W.T. Modzelewski, P. Lotarski, *Stosunki Polski z sąsiadami po 1989 roku: płaszczyzna polityczno-wojskowa*, Olsztyn 2020, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> M. Bierowiec, *Analiza stosunków polsko-litewskich...*, p. 14.

nership, signed in 1997. The document included the need to support the accession of both countries to the European Union and NATO and to strengthen the regional partnership. The joint efforts of both countries culminated in 2004, when Lithuania and Poland joined the European Union, and Lithuania joined NATO (Poland had already joined the Alliance in 1999)<sup>6</sup>.

A common challenge for both countries was being the neighbor of the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation. The elites of both countries were aware that the territorial separation of the Kaliningrad Region from Russia would constitute a significant challenge for the border regions of Poland and Lithuania. There were also dilemmas regarding the legal and international status of the Kaliningrad Region after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The approach to this issue by individual Central and Eastern European countries, including Poland and Lithuania, was interesting. Some Lithuanian political and scientific groups supported the takeover of the Kaliningrad Region by Lithuania, mainly for historical and geographical reasons. It was also suggested that the Kaliningrad Region be handed over to Poland, Lithuania, or Germany<sup>7</sup>, however, some political groups in Germany showed an ambiguous attitude. Another option was that the Kaliningrad Region could become the fourth Baltic republic, operating under the aegis of Russia or international structures. The possibility of resettling people of German origin living in the former Soviet republics to the region was also mentioned. Importantly, from the very beginning, the Polish authorities presented a clear attitude, claiming that the Kaliningrad Region is an inseparable part of the Russian Federation and expressing the need to maintain Russia's

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<sup>6</sup> W.T. Modzelewski, P. Lotarski, *Stosunki Polski z sąsiadami po 1989 roku...*, p. 49.

<sup>7</sup> A. Sakson, *Obwód Kaliningradzki w opinii prasy polskiej 1990-1994*, "Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie" 1995, no. 3, p. 304; M. Chełmniak, *Obwód Kaliningradzki FR w Europie. Rosyjska enklawa w międzynarodowym ładzie politycznym*, Toruń 2009, p. 136.

territorial integrity<sup>8</sup>. A significant challenge for Poland and Lithuania in the context of being neighbours with the Kaliningrad Region was joining the European Union and implementing legal regulations affecting cross-border relations.

The proximity to the Kaliningrad Region was an important basis for Polish-Lithuanian relations and marked the axis of common interests. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, both Poland and Lithuania were in a specific geopolitical situation. On the one hand, both countries already in the mid-1990s clearly articulated their European and Euro-Atlantic direction of political, economic, and defense integration, declaring their willingness to join the European Union and NATO. On the other hand, they were neighbours with an entity of the Russian Federation, whose authorities did not hide their skepticism towards the expansion of NATO and the EU further east<sup>9</sup>. These trends were further deepened in the years 1999-2004 when Poland and Lithuania joined NATO and the EU. It was then that both countries left the zone of “dilutive security” and became members of the strongest military and political integration organizations in the region. This dramatically changed the geopolitical position of both countries – they also became countries whose borders with Russia and Belarus became the external borders of NATO and the EU<sup>10</sup>.

At the same time, with regard to the Kaliningrad Region, the neighbouring countries began to apply a policy of engaging the region in the European cooperation network. The Polish-Russian cooperation

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<sup>8</sup> A. Sakson, *Od Kłajpedy do Olsztyna. Współcześni mieszkańcy Byłych Prus Wschodnich: Kraj Kłajpedzki, Obwód Kaliningradzki, Warmia i Mazury*, Poznań 2011, pp. 414-415.

<sup>9</sup> A.J.K. Shepherd, *The European Security Continuum and the EU as an International Security Provider*, “Global Society” 2015, vol. 29, no. 2, p. 156; Y. Nikitina, *Russia and the Baltic states: problematizing the Soviet legacy discourse*, “Nationalities Papers” 2014, vol. 42, no. 1, pp. 5-6.

<sup>10</sup> K. Łastawski, *Sytuacja geopolityczna Polski po przemianach ustrojowych i wstąpieniu do Unii Europejskiej*, “Studia Europejskie” 2011, no. 1, pp. 20-21; D. Jakniūnaitė, *A small state in the asymmetrical bilateral relations: Lithuania in Lithuanian-Russian relations since 2004*, “Baltic Journal of Political Science” 2015, no. 4, pp. 71-73.

agreements at the state and cross-border level were signed in the years 1992-1994, and the Kaliningrad Region was one of the important directions for Polish foreign policy and cooperation among the regions of north-eastern Poland<sup>11</sup>. Up to 2004, several dozen social, economic, and political projects and initiatives related to the development of cross-border cooperation were implemented and numerous consulting and coordinating bodies were established at the government and local government levels<sup>12</sup>. These activities were further intensified after Poland and Lithuania joined the European Union. The factors of Polish-Russian and Lithuanian-Russian cross-border cooperation at that time were the following: implementation of cross-border cooperation programs financed from the European Union funds and the Russian budget, development of border infrastructure, deepening cooperation between local communities, non-governmental organizations, and educational and cultural institutions, as well as attempts to implement the liberalization of the visa regime<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> See: *Wykaz porozumień o współpracy na poziomie regionalnym i lokalnym strony polskiej z partnerami z Obwodu Kaliningradzkiego FR (stan na październik 2007 roku)* [in:] *Polska a Obwód Kaliningradzki Federacji Rosyjskiej. Teraźniejszość i wyzwania przyszłości*, A. Żukowski (ed.), Toruń 2008, pp. 311-313.

<sup>12</sup> A. Paradowski, *Obwód Kaliningradzki jako element stosunków Unia Europejska – Federacja Rosyjska z perspektywy Polski* [in:] *Federacja Rosyjska w procesie demokratyzacji*, J. Tymanowski (ed.), Warszawa 2011, pp. 304-310; T. Palmowski, *Problems of cross-border cooperation between Poland and the Kaliningrad oblast of the Russian Federation*, "Quaestiones Geographicae" 2010, vol. 29(4), pp. 75-76; S. Gänzle, G. Müntel, *Europeanization 'Beyond' Europe? EU Impact on Domestic Policies in the Russian Enclave of Kaliningrad*, "Journal of Baltic Studies" 2011, vol. 42, no. 1, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> See: W.T. Modzelewski, *Polska – Obwód Kaliningradzki FR. Polityczne uwarunkowania współpracy transgranicznej*, Olsztyn 2006; Д.А. Миронюк, К. Женгота, *К вопросу истории и развития интеграционных связей Калининградской области РФ с северо-восточными воеводствами Польши: программный подход*, "Балтийский Регион" 2017, т. 9, № 2, с. 156-179; *Mały ruch graniczny w warunkach kryzysu w relacjach polsko-rosyjskich*, A. Żukowski, M. Chetminiak, W. Kotowicz, K. Żęgota (eds.), Olsztyn 2018; Y. Zverev, *Kaliningrad: Problems and Paths of Development*, "Problems of Post-Communism" 2007, vol. 54, no. 2, pp. 9-25; A. Sakson, *Obwód kaliningradzki w otoczeniu NATO i Unii Europejskiej*, "Rocznik Bezpieczeństwa Międzynarodowego" 2015, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 49.

The geopolitical situation of the Kaliningrad Region also changed. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the independent Baltic republics began to be a kind of coastal barrier against Russia, limiting the Russian presence in the Baltic Sea basin<sup>14</sup>. The peripheral nature of the Kaliningrad Region was further deepened by the enlargement of the European Union and NATO in 1999-2004. In the period preceding the Polish and Lithuanian accession to the EU, the Russian side emphasized the importance and significance of the Kaliningrad Region as an undisputed part of the territory of the Russian Federation<sup>15</sup>. The issue of the transit of people and goods by land to the region was one of the significant problems in the enlargement process. Similar arguments were also used in the context of NATO enlargement. It is worth emphasizing that – in the opinion of researchers – the Kaliningrad Region was used instrumentally by the Russian federal authorities at that time<sup>16</sup>.

## Cross-border relations with the Kaliningrad Region

Polish-Russian cross-border relations began in the early 1990s, a time characterized by the development of good experiences on the Polish-Russian border, which can be divided into two distinctive periods. The first covers the years 1991-2014 when the Kaliningrad Region was open to external contacts and created new opportunities

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<sup>14</sup> See: M. Chełmniak, *Obwód Kaliningradzki Federacji Rosyjskiej w rosyjskich koncepcjach geopolitycznych*, "Przegląd Geopolityczny" 2010, vol. 2, p. 74; T. Palmowski, *Rola regionów transgranicznych w procesie integracji Europy Bałtyckiej*, Gdańsk 2000, p. 43.

<sup>15</sup> T. Diez, *The Paradoxes of Europe's Borders*, "Comparative European Politics" 2006, no. 4, p. 242.

<sup>16</sup> A. Żukowski, M. Chełmniak, W. Kotowicz, W.M. Modzelewski, *Polityka Rosji wobec Obwodu Kaliningradzkiego FR w okresie prezydentury Władimira Putina* [in:] *Rosja w okresie prezydentury Władimira Putina*, A. Stępień-Kuczyńska, S. Bieleń (eds.), Łódź – Warszawa – Toruń 2008, p. 117; R. Lisiakiewicz, *Polityka Rosji wobec Polski za prezydentury Władimira Putina (2000-2008)*, Toruń 2011, p. 177.

and tools for the development of Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC). An important factor was also the enlargement of the European Union in 2004, which – apart from negative factors related to the emergence of procedural barriers at the external borders of the EU – brought new financing opportunities for the implementation of joint cross-border initiatives with foreign partners. Polish entities became its principal partners, especially after Poland acceded to the EU, which created new institutional and program conditions for transboundary cooperation with the Kaliningrad Region. After 2014, the program format of Russian-Polish border cooperation evolved into a major tool for analyzing and assessing the region's relations with Poland's northeastern voivodeships, despite the fact that political relations between the Russian Federation and the EU had deteriorated.

The intensification of Polish-Russian cross-border contacts in the 1990s laid the groundwork for program-based cooperation. Sometimes, this process was included in the higher-level interactions between the regions of the Baltic Sea. One of the first interregional mechanisms was the institution of Euroregions<sup>17</sup>, a term that dates back to the oldest European initiative – the Euroregion transboundary cooperation program, which was launched in 1958 to bring together German and Dutch borderlands<sup>18</sup>. Much later, in February 1998, Euroregion Baltic was created, comprising the border areas of Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, and the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation<sup>19</sup>.

In the 1990s, the key EU tool for supporting cross-border and interregional cooperation financed from European structural funds was

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<sup>17</sup> K.-L. Lepik, *Euroregions as mechanisms for strengthening crossborder cooperation in the Baltic Sea region*, "Trames" 2009, no. 13.

<sup>18</sup> J. Szymański, *Podstawowe instrumenty prawne współpracy transgranicznej w ramach Rady Europy*, "Białostockie Studia Prawnicze" 2011, no. 9, p. 96.

<sup>19</sup> W.T. Modzelewski, *Polskie euroregiony formą integracji europejskiej* [in:] *Szkice europejskie: Unia Europejska wobec wyzwań współczesności*, B. Gaziński (ed.), Olsztyn 2015, pp. 175-178.

the INTERREG initiative. It was followed by INTERREG I (1990-1993), INTERREG II (1994-1999), and INTERREG III (2000-2006)<sup>20</sup>. The Kaliningrad Region did not share a land border with the European Union before Poland's accession, which is why the region was covered by intergovernmental programs<sup>21</sup>. This decision was based on the belief that intergovernmental cooperation was more comprehensive than cross-border contacts and, therefore, better suited to meet the needs of the maritime Baltic region<sup>22</sup>.

An important factor shaping the situation in the Polish-Russian borderland was the introduction of a local border traffic mechanism. This mechanism assumed the liberation of the visa regime on the Polish-Russian border by making it possible for inhabitants of the border area to cross the border without a visa. The mechanism was valid from 2012 till 2016, having a significant impact on the number of border crossings and the intensification of commercial and social relations. In particular, the former increased by leaps and bounds: in 2010, the total number of persons crossing the Polish-Russian border was around 1.45 million, rising to 6.56 million by 2014. This led to a better mutual perception of Poles and Russians and mitigated the importance of threats coming from the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation<sup>23</sup>.

The deteriorating relationship between the Russian Federation and the West after 2014 was certainly the main factor influencing the

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<sup>20</sup> K. Olejniczak, *Mechanizmy wykorzystania ewaluacji. Studium ewaluacji średniookresowych Interreg III*, Warszawa 2008, pp. 105-122.

<sup>21</sup> *Results of the Cross-Border Cooperation Program (ENPI) Lithuania – Poland – Russia 2007-2013*, Warsaw 2016.

<sup>22</sup> "A guide to bringing INTERREG and Tacis funding together", 2001, European Commission, [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/archive/interreg3/documents/tacis\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/interreg3/documents/tacis_en.pdf) [7.12.2023].

<sup>23</sup> K. Żęgota, *Bilans polskiego przewodnictwa w Radzie Unii Europejskiej w kontekście Obwodu Kaliningradzkiego Federacji Rosyjskiej* [in:] *Prezydencja Polski w Radzie Unii Europejskiej*, J. Fiszer (ed.), Warszawa 2012; idem, *Mały ruch graniczny w kontekście zmieniających się uwarunkowań relacji polsko-rosyjskich* [in:] *Mały ruch graniczny w warunkach kryzysu w relacjach polsko-rosyjskich...*, pp. 48-50.



legal and institutional foundations of Polish-Russian cross-border relations. At the level of the European Union-Russia relations, this meant a real freezing of institutional cooperation. On the other hand, with regard to bilateral Polish-Russian relations, the most important factors were bilateral political and economic sanctions as well as the suspension, in July 2016, of the local border traffic mechanism at the Polish-Russian border. The suspension and then non-restoration of local border traffic on the border with Russia provoked critical comments, especially from local government officials and representatives of local communities in the areas covered by the mechanism on both sides of the Polish-Russian border<sup>24</sup>. After February 2022, the authorities of the European Union decided to suspend all cross-border cooperation programs in which regions of the Russian Federation were engaged. The implementation of the Cross-Border Cooperation Program Poland–Russia 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 was, therefore, suspended<sup>25</sup>.

The beginnings of cross-border relations between the Kaliningrad Region and the border areas of the independent Republic of Lithuania date back to the first half of the 1990s. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the independent Baltic republics resulted in a significant change in the geopolitical location of the Kaliningrad Region. The process of withdrawing Russian army units from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe was also an important issue – some of these units were sent to the Kaliningrad Region, which significantly increased the level of militarization of the region<sup>26</sup>. This gave rise, especially in the first half of the 1990s, to significant

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<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, pp. 51-52.

<sup>25</sup> “Commission suspends cross-border cooperation and transnational cooperation with Russia and Belarus”, European Commission, 4.03.2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_1526](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_1526) [17.12.2023].

<sup>26</sup> D. Jakniūnaitė, *A small state in the asymmetrical bilateral relations...*, p. 71.

concerns among Lithuanian politicians and society and reduced the potential of Lithuanian-Russian cross-border cooperation<sup>27</sup>.

In the first half of the 1990s, the most important factors shaping Lithuanian-Russian cross-border relations included the following issues: 1) the presence of Russian troops in the Kaliningrad Region and the military potential of the region; 2) confirmation of the border between Lithuania and the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation as well as determining the issue of capacity, density of border crossings, and procedures for crossing and transferring goods; and 3) development of economic relations. The second issue was particularly important because it was related to both the possibility of importing goods to the Kaliningrad Region and the transfer of troops and military technology to the region. The freedom of traffic of residents of the Kaliningrad Region to Russia was also important<sup>28</sup>.

One of the basic documents regulating bilateral relations was the Lithuanian-Russian Treaty on Relations signed on 29 July 1991 (i.e., before the collapse of the Soviet Union)<sup>29</sup>. Another basic document for bilateral relations, including those of a cross-border nature, was the Lithuanian-Russian border treaty regulating the issue of mutual recognition of the borders and its status in the legislation of both countries. The treaty was signed in October 1997, but its ratification by the parliaments of both countries was a long-term process<sup>30</sup>.

Another important issue in the bilateral relations was the introduction of facilitations in the visa regime on the Lithuanian-Russian bor-

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<sup>27</sup> K. Żęgota, *Obwód kaliningradzki Federacji Rosyjskiej a bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej. Między geopolityką a konstruktywizmem*, Poznań 2021, pp. 138-140.

<sup>28</sup> E. Wojnowski, *Obwód Kaliningradzki Federacji Rosyjskiej – od obszaru zamkniętego ku rejonowi współpracy (1946-2006)*, Olsztyn 2006, p. 113.

<sup>29</sup> D. Žalimas, *Significance of the 1991 Treaty on Fundamentals of Interstate Relations Between Lithuania and Russia*, "Parliamentary Studies" 2018, no. 24, pp. 25-26.

<sup>30</sup> G. Vitkus, *High time for reflection: 15 years of Lithuanian-Russian relations*, "Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review" 2006, no. 18, pp. 145-148; E. Wojnowski, *Obwód Kaliningradzki Federacji Rosyjskiej...*, pp. 113-114.

der. It is worth emphasizing that Lithuania, like Poland, was obliged during the accession process to the European Union to introduce visa requirements for Russians travelling to Lithuania<sup>31</sup>. After Lithuanian accession, talks began on the introduction of a local border traffic mechanism similar to the Polish-Russian border. While the Polish and Russian sides agreed to expand the border area and cover the entire Kaliningrad Region, the Lithuanians did not agree to the proposed solution<sup>32</sup>. Lithuanian authorities feared that expanding the border area on both the Lithuanian and Russian sides would reduce border security, especially in the context of smuggling and other cross-border threats. It was also feared that after the introduction of local border traffic in the entire Kaliningrad Region, it would be increasingly difficult to monitor Russian citizens staying in the Schengen area<sup>33</sup>.

Lithuania's opposition to the introduction of local border traffic was also dictated by the general state of relations with Russia. It was emphasized that Lithuania was too dependent on energy sources from Russia, which would be deepened as a result of the implementation of the then-planned construction of a nuclear power plant in the Kaliningrad Region. Moreover, a controversial issue in bilateral Lithuanian-Russian relations was the rates of transit of Russian goods through the territory of Lithuania proposed to the Russian side by Lithuanian railways. Competition between the ports in Kaliningrad and Klaipėda in the context of the transfer of goods from Belarus was also a significant challenge. Moreover, Lithuania had been trying for years to open the Curonian Lagoon to inland navigation, but Russia, despite the agreement on free navigation in the Lagoon concluded

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<sup>31</sup> D. Jakniūnaitė, *A small state in the asymmetrical bilateral relations...*, p. 73.

<sup>32</sup> V. Ivanauskas, V. Keršanskas, L. Kasčiūnas, *Kaliningrad Factor in Lithuanian-Russian Relations: Implications to the Security Issues of Lithuania*, "Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review" 2017, no. 15, pp. 136-137.

<sup>33</sup> K. Dudzińska, *Small Border Traffic with the Kaliningrad District*, "Biuletyn PISM" 2010, no. 122(198), pp. 1-3.

with Lithuania in 2007, did not establish ship control procedures, which resulted in the freezing of the project<sup>34</sup>. As a result, the talks on local border traffic did not lead to the signing of an agreement and the introduction of a mechanism on the Lithuanian-Russian border.

## **Changes of relations with the Kaliningrad Region after February 2022**

The Russian military aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 constitutes a significant challenge related to the neighbourhood of Poland, Lithuania, and the Kaliningrad Region. What is important is that the upheaval in Ukraine observed from the beginning of 2014, and then the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia did not significantly affect Polish-Russian cross-border relations. It is also worth noting that the considerable militarization of the region and the resulting threats to the security of the Polish and Lithuanian borderlands had been a permanent factor affecting the neighbourhood with the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation even before 24 February 2022. The Kaliningrad Region is a significant component of the Baltic maritime zone of operation of the Russian armed forces, whose mission is to protect the Russian military presence in the Baltic Sea basin. The region is characterized by a highly developed military infrastructure, the backbone of which is a system of land, air, and maritime military bases. An essential component of this infrastructure is the Russian Baltic Fleet, with maritime bases in Baltiysk and Kaliningrad<sup>35</sup>. Observed since the middle of the second decade of the 21st century, changes in Russian foreign and security policy also resulted in transformations in the structure of armament and equipment of

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<sup>34</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>35</sup> K. Żęgota, *Obwód kaliningradzki Federacji Rosyjskiej a bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej...*, pp. 272-273.

units stationed in the Kaliningrad Region<sup>36</sup>. This was a permanent, yet not very influential factor contributing to the perception of the Polish-Russian and Lithuanian-Russian borderlands.

Concerns about military threats coming from the Kaliningrad Region intensified after the commencement of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Potential Russian threats coming from the Kaliningrad Region naturally concerned the border regions of Poland and Lithuania, which largely determined the conditions of the Polish-Russian and Lithuanian-Russian neighbourhood. This neighbourhood began to be perceived not in terms of development opportunities but mainly in the context of threats and dangers.

Entities engaged in cross-border relations until then started to withdraw from various forms of cooperation with the Russian side. The cooperation was broken, among others, by the municipal authorities of Olsztyn, Elbląg, Gdańsk, and Gdynia as well as by the management of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship<sup>37</sup>. Lithuanian local governments also terminated cross-border cooperation. At the beginning of March 2022, declarations on the termination of cooperation with local governments from the Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation were published by representatives of local governments including those from Klaipėda, Šiauliai, Vilkaviškis, Kėdainiai, and Pagėgiai<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> M. Zielonka, *Iskandery ćwiczą w Obwodzie Kaliningradzkim*, Defence24, 15.07.2019, <https://www.defence24.pl/iskandery-cwicza-w-obwodzie-kaliningradzkim> [2.01.2024].

<sup>37</sup> *Termination of co-operation as a protest against Russia's policy*, Regionalny Portal Informacyjny Wrota Warmii i Mazur, <https://warmia.mazury.pl/rozwoj-regionu/aktualnosci/7376-zerwanie-wspolpracy-w-sprzeciwie-wobec-rosji> [4.01.2024].

<sup>38</sup> *Lietuvos savivaldybės imasi nutraukti sutartis su Rusijos ir Baltarusijos miestais*, Vakarų Ekspresas, 28.02.2022, <https://ve.lt/aktualijos/lietuvos-savivaldybes-imasi-nutraukti-sutartis-su-rusijos-ir-baltarusijos-miestais> [10.01.2024]; *Nutrauktas bendradarbiavimas su Rusijos ir Baltarusijos miestais*, 1.03.2022, <https://www.klaipeda.lt/lt/naujienos/naujienos/7655/nutrauktas-bendradarbiavimas-su-rusijos-ir-baltarusijos-miestais:2577> [10.01.2024]; R. Jakubauskas, *Lietuvos savivaldybės atsisako bičiulystės su Rusijos, Baltarusijos miestais*, Delfi, 1.03.2022,

Actions were also undertaken on the national and international level to restrict cross-border relations in the Polish-Russian and Lithuanian-Russian borderlands. The Polish authorities chose not to reopen two of the four existing road crossing points on the border with the Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation after removing pandemic restrictions introduced at the beginning of 2020. In turn, the Lithuanian authorities decided in April 2022 to close the Sovetsk-Panemunė border crossing on the border with the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation, leaving only the Chernyshevskoye-Kybartai crossing open. The authorities of the European Union decided to suspend all cross-border cooperation programs in which regions of the Russian Federation were engaged<sup>39</sup>.

A further stage of events concerning the Polish-Russian borderland was information that appeared in the Russian and Polish media space in 2022, referring to the possibility of a migration crisis being generated on the Polish-Russian border by the Russian side, which would be similar to the one that started on the Polish-Belarusian border as well as the Lithuanian-Belarusian border in 2021. At that time, the issue of increasing the number of flights from Middle Eastern airports to the Khrabrovo airport was raised. The Russian information campaign concerning the possibility of generating another migration crisis, this time on the border between Poland and the Kaliningrad Region, became more intense in the autumn of 2022<sup>40</sup>.

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<https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/lietuvos-savivaldybes-atsisako-biciulystes-su-rusijos-baltarusijos-miestais.d?id=89591039> [10.01.2024]; J. Rauduvienė, *Šiauliai nutraukė ryšius su Rusijos ir Baltarusijos miestais*, *Skrastas*, 5.03.2022, <https://www.skrastas.lt/aktualijos/siauliai-nutrauke-rysius-su-rusijos-ir-baltarusijos-miestais> [10.01.2024].

<sup>39</sup> "Commission suspends cross-border cooperation and transnational cooperation with Russia...", *op.cit.*

<sup>40</sup> K. Wójcicka, T. Żółciak, *Rosjanie próbują utworzyć nowy korytarz z Kaliningradu. Kryzys migracyjny na granicy wciąż się tli*, <https://forsal.pl/swiat/bezpieczenstwo/artykuly/8578911,korytarz-migracyjny-z-kaliningradu-kryzys-na-granicy.html> [4.01.2024].

## Conclusion

Issues concerning the relations with the Russian Federation and the neighbourhood of the Kaliningrad Region constituted an important component of the foreign and security policy of both Poland and Lithuania. Challenges related to military threats emanating from the Kaliningrad Region were also an important component of bilateral Polish-Lithuanian relations. Already in the 1990s, it was emphasized that despite full respect for Russia's territorial integrity, particular attention should be paid to threats coming from the Kaliningrad Region. At the same time, various mechanisms of cross-border relations were developed on the Polish-Russian and Lithuanian-Russian borders.

The accession of Poland and Lithuania to the European Union in 2004 changed the conditions of cross-border relations with the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation. On the one hand, this increased the importance of border barriers and made relations at the social level more difficult. On the other hand, accession to the European Union enabled the implementation of various cross-border cooperation programs financed by both the European Union and Russia. Such programs were implemented both on the Polish-Russian and Lithuanian-Russian borders. Local border traffic, which operated on the Polish-Russian border from 2012 to 2016, was also an important mechanism. At the same time, the Lithuanian side decided not to implement the local border traffic mechanism.

The conditions of relations with the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation have changed dramatically since the beginning of Russia's full-scale military aggression against Ukraine in February 2022. Political relations with Russia were then severed as well as all forms of cross-border cooperation on the Polish-Russian and Lithuanian-Russian borders. In addition to the military threat emanating from the Kaliningrad Region, the migration crisis generated on the borders of both countries with Belarus has also become a permanent security factor for Poland and Lithuania. Potentially, such a crisis may also be generated on the border of Poland and Lithuania with

the Kaliningrad Region. Threats coming from the Kaliningrad Region will certainly be an ongoing factor in the cooperation between Poland and Lithuania on the forum of the European Union and NATO.

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Marlena Gołębiowska<sup>1</sup>

# Polish-Lithuanian economic relations: the resilience of trade and investment ties

## Introduction

The relationship between Poland and Lithuania is deeply etched with complexities and shared legacies. United within a common state until the late 18th century, the emergence of national consciousness in the 19th century began to test their bond, with subsequent geopolitical tensions during the interwar period and the post-Soviet Union era adding further strain. However, as Zajączkowski<sup>2</sup> notes, the post-Cold War era, particularly the 1990s, marked a definitive shift as both nations moved from historical disputes to concerted cooperation in various fields. The signing by Presidents Lech Wałęsa and Algirdas Brazauskas of the Polish-Lithuanian Treaty on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation<sup>3</sup> (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Treaty’)

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<sup>2</sup> W. Zajączkowski, *Polish-Lithuanian relations: the complexities on geopoliticsm* [in:] *The Effects of Enlargement on Bilateral Relations in Central and Eastern Europe*, P. Dunay, O. Pavliuk, W. Zajączkowski (eds.), European Union Institute for Security Studies, 1997, pp. 29-41.

<sup>3</sup> In Polish: Traktat między Rzeczpospolitą Polską a Republiką Litewską o przyjaznych stosunkach i dobrosąsiedzkiej współpracy, in Lithuanian: Lietuvos Respublikos ir Lenkijos Respublikos draugiškų santykių ir gero kaimyninio bendradarbiavimo sutartis.

on 26 April 1994 crystallized this new era of mutual understanding and partnership. T. Snyder notes the complex negotiations for this Treaty by stating that “Lithuania was the last of Poland’s seven neighbours to sign such a treaty, and the negotiations were by far the most difficult”<sup>4</sup>. Although disputes over historical narratives, particularly those involving national minority issues, have resurfaced repeatedly in subsequent decades of Polish-Lithuanian relations, G. Kazėnas underscores the Treaty’s instrumental role as a catalyst for comprehensive cooperation between the two countries across a wide spectrum of areas such as military and security, cross-border issues, transport and energy infrastructure, science, education, and justice. Economic cooperation, naturally, also emerged as a key facet of this partnership and the Treaty dedicates Article 9 to this field<sup>5</sup>. This article indicates that:

*Article 9*

*The Contracting Parties will promote the development of mutually advantageous economic cooperation, including trade ties based on market principles and will ensure favourable conditions for such cooperation, taking into account protection of investments, technologies, patent and copyrights and will introduce appropriate legal regulations related to the movement of capital, labour, goods and services.*

*The Parties will facilitate the development of the cooperation between state and private enterprises and other economic entities. In particular, they will promote development of investment and capital cooperation between Polish and Lithuanian enterprises, utilizing in full all available means of pro-*

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<sup>4</sup> T. Snyder, *National myths and international relations: Poland and Lithuania, 1989-1994*, “East European Politics and Societies” 1995, no. 9(02), pp. 317-343.

<sup>5</sup> G. Kazėnas, *1994 Treaty Between the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania on Friendly Relations and Neighbourly Cooperation: Successes and New Challenges* [in:] *Good Neighbourhood Treaties of Poland: Political, Security and Social Relations*, K.P. Marczuk (ed.), Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, Switzerland 2019, pp. 207-223.

*motion. Special attention will be paid to cooperation between small and medium-size enterprises.*

*The Parties will exchange experiences and offer each other assistance in the training and other such fields during the process of construction and improvement of a market economy.*

*The Parties will develop and facilitate scientific and technical cooperation between both States for peaceful purposes on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, taking into account the possibilities of modern science and engineering<sup>6</sup>.*

Notably, two years prior to the Treaty's ratification, the nations had laid the groundwork for economic cooperation through key agreements. On 28 September 1992, they signed an Agreement on the Mutual Support and Protection of Investments<sup>7</sup>. Concurrently, in 1992, the Polish-Lithuanian Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Markets<sup>8</sup> was inaugurated, with its headquarters in Suwałki, to promote and integrate companies engaged in economic pursuits in the border area, thereby intensifying commercial connections and enabling cross-border collaboration<sup>9</sup>. On 20 January 1994, they signed an Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with

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<sup>6</sup> *Zbiór Dokumentów 1994/L, X-XII 1994*, Warszawa, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> *Umowa między Rzeczypospolitą Polską a Republiką Litewską w sprawie wzajemnego popierania i ochrony inwestycji, sporządzona w Warszawie dnia 28 września 1992 r.*, Dz.U. z 1993 r., nr 122, poz. 543 (Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania on the mutual support and protection of investments).

<sup>8</sup> In 2009, the Polish-Lithuanian Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Markets declared bankruptcy. Six years later, in 2015, the Polish-Lithuanian Chamber of Commerce was established. Its website states that it is 'an exclusive association of companies and individuals involved, or intending to get involved, in Polish-Lithuanian business relations. The Chamber gathers and analyzes information about business opportunities in Poland and Lithuania, manages relationships with decision-makers and stakeholders, as well as organizes conferences and networking events'; Polish-Lithuanian Chamber of Commerce, <http://www.plcc.lt/> [24.01.2024].

<sup>9</sup> R. Jakimowicz, *Gospodarcze aspekty stosunków polsko-litewskich w latach 1992-2007*, "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Krakowie" 2010, no. 824, pp. 25-38.

Respect to Taxes on Income and on Capital<sup>10</sup>. Following the Treaty, by two years, the economic bond between Poland and Lithuania was further consolidated with the inception of a Free Trade Agreement (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Agreement’). A. Banaszkievicz remarks that this step was taken against a backdrop of growing trade exchanges between the two countries<sup>11</sup>. The Agreement itself stated that its objectives include:

*promoting, through the expansion of trade, the harmonious development of economic relations between the Parties and thus fostering the advance of their economic activity, the improvement of living and employment conditions, and the increase of productivity and financial stability;*  
*providing fair conditions of competition in trade between the Parties;*  
*contributing in this way, by the removal of barriers to trade, to the harmonious development and expansion of world trade<sup>12</sup>.*

The realization of these objectives, as outlined in both the Treaty and the Agreement, was facilitated by the common path of Lithuania and Poland toward integration with European and Euro-Atlantic structures. This journey culminated in a significant milestone when both nations joined the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), marking a pivotal chapter not only in their political alignment but also in their economic cooperation.

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<sup>10</sup> *Umowa między Rządem Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej a Rządem Republiki Litewskiej w sprawie unikania podwójnego opodatkowania i zapobiegania uchylaniu się od opodatkowania w zakresie podatków od dochodu i majątku, sporządzona w Warszawie dnia 20 stycznia 1994 r.*, Dz.U. z 1995 r., nr 51, poz. 277 (Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and on Capital).

<sup>11</sup> A. Banaszkievicz, *Traktaty i najważniejsze umowy międzynarodowe zawarte przez Polskę z Republiką Litewską w latach 1991-2011*, “Wschodnioznawstwo” 2014, no. 7, pp. 77-99.

<sup>12</sup> *Umowa o wolnym handlu między Rzeczypospolitą Polską a Republiką Litewską*, sporządzona w Warszawie dnia 27 czerwca 1996 r., Dz.U. z 1996 r., nr 158, poz. 807 (Free Trade Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania).

L. Žitkus and R. Žitkienė underscore that the integration with the EU in particular stands out as a key driving force behind the cooperation between Lithuania and Poland. The EU's stipulations for the free movement of goods, services, labour, and capital, along with other unified standards and regulations for all its member states, have significantly spurred the trade exchange between these two countries<sup>13</sup>. EU integration has also provided opportunities for their involvement in various EU-coordinated initiatives, further bolstered by their active participation in strategies and institutions within the Baltic macro-region and leveraging the EU's regional policy instruments. Nevertheless, this cooperation faces challenges. The authors point out several obstacles such as the peripheral nature of the Lithuanian economy, the economic size disparity between the two countries, and notably, the 'emotional load' still present in their relations: "the societies of both countries maintain certain thinking stereotypes formed by historic events and enhanced by the absence of political solutions for the present problems"<sup>14</sup>. However, as assessed by G. Vaščenkaitė, these issues in Lithuanian-Polish relations, while they may exacerbate the climate of bilateral political relations, do not prevent constructive cooperation in the economic realm. Furthermore, the robust economic ties are underscored "as proof of the constructiveness of Lithuanian-Polish bilateral cooperation or at least as a clear contrast to the harsh political rhetoric"<sup>15</sup>. In this context, discussions on the

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<sup>13</sup> Since then, Polish-Lithuanian economic relations have been governed primarily by the *acquis communautaire*, alongside the still-effective 1994 agreement.

<sup>14</sup> L. Žitkus, R. Žitkienė, *The system of factors affecting the intensity of Lithuanian-Polish cooperation*, "International Business and Global Economy" 2014, no. 33, pp. 723-742.

<sup>15</sup> G. Vaščenkaitė, *Lithuanian-Polish relations after 2004: good old cooperation in regretfully bad new wrapping*, "Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review" 2014, no. 32, pp. 73-105.



dynamics of these relations have also been contributed by M. Barwiński<sup>16</sup>, G. Arlotti<sup>17</sup>, V. Tymul<sup>18</sup>, M. Mróz<sup>19</sup>, and D. Budrytė<sup>20</sup>.

Building upon the established context and addressing the insights regarding the resilience of economic cooperation amidst political tensions, this article aims to evaluate the progress of Polish-Lithuanian economic relations since their joint accession to the EU. By extending the analysis from 2004 to 2022, the goal is to ascertain whether these relations have indeed improved over this nearly two-decade span, in contrast to the intermittent ‘harsh political rhetoric’. The analysis covers both trade exchange and mutual investments.

## Methods

The analysis within this article was constructed using a diverse range of data sources to ensure a comprehensive view of the economic relations between Poland and Lithuania.

Data concerning trade were obtained from the Central Statistical Office of Poland (*Główny Urząd Statystyczny*, GUS) and the Official Statistic Portal of Lithuania (*Oficialiosios statistikos portalas*, OSP). Trade in goods data encompass the years 2004 to 2022, while data for trade in services because of availability, cover the period 2010 to 2022.

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<sup>16</sup> M. Barwiński, *Polish interstate relations with Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania after 1990 in the context of the situation of national minorities*, “European Spatial Research and Policy” 2013, no. 20(1), pp. 5-26.

<sup>17</sup> G. Arlotti, *Stosunki polsko-litewskie między przeszłością a przyszłością*, “Studia Europejskie” 2014, no. 4, pp. 107-122.

<sup>18</sup> V. Tymul, *Mniejszość polska na Litwie a współczesne konflikty polsko-litewskie*, “Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej” 2015, no. 13, pp. 119-135.

<sup>19</sup> M. Mróz, *Wybrane aspekty relacji polsko-litewskich w latach 1991-2019 i ich wpływ na kondycję mniejszości polskiej w Republice Litewskiej. Raport*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2020.

<sup>20</sup> D. Budrytė, *Memory politics and the study of crises in International Relations: Insights from Ukraine and Lithuania*, “Journal of International Relations and Development” 2021, no. 24, pp. 980-1000.

Data on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows and positions were sourced from the National Bank of Poland (*Narodowy Bank Polski*, NBP) and the Bank of Lithuania (*Lietuvos bankas*, LB). FDI data encompass the years 2004 to 2022.

Following the identification and preparation of the data sources, the study embarked on a detailed comparative analysis, focusing on the evolving roles and positions of Poland and Lithuania within each other's trade and investment landscapes from 2004 to 2022. This comprehensive approach was anchored in quantitative analysis, employing methodologies to dissect and interpret the dynamics of bilateral economic relations.

To address the impact of annual fluctuations and offer a clear perspective on overarching trends, linear regression models were applied for trend analysis. This approach facilitated the examination of long-term trajectories in the economic interactions between the two countries, effectively isolating the underlying trends from yearly variations.

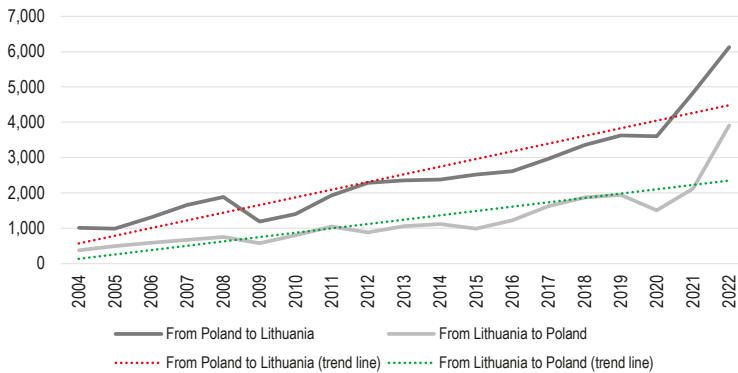
## Results

### *Trade in goods*

In 2004, the combined value of trade in goods between Poland and Lithuania amounted to nearly 1.4 billion euros, which increased more than sevenfold to over 10 billion euros by 2022 (Figure 1). During this period, Polish exports to Lithuania grew more than sixfold to over 6 billion euros, while Lithuanian exports to Poland expanded more than tenfold to nearly 4 billion euros. Within this timeframe, two significant downturns in trade volumes occurred, in 2009 and 2020. Furthermore, a substantial uptick in trade was observed in 2022. Generally, despite these fluctuations, the direction indicated by the trend line for trade in goods between Poland and Lithuania shows a clear increase. The trend line for exports from Poland to Lithuania reveals

a steeper growth trajectory, suggesting that Polish exports to Lithuania increased at a faster pace than Lithuanian exports to Poland.

Figure 1. Trade volume in goods between Poland and Lithuania from 2004 to 2022 (million euros)

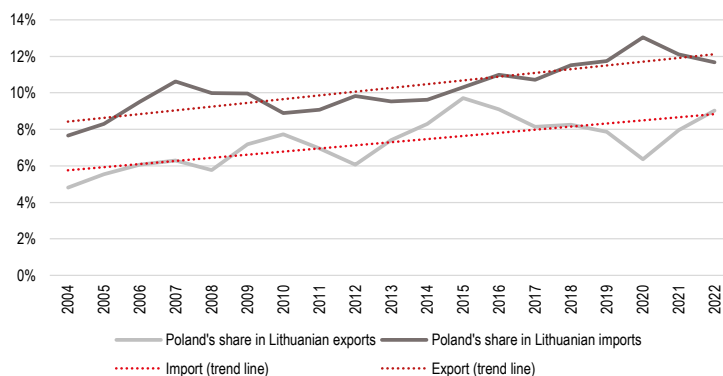


Source: Own elaboration based on data from the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS), <http://stat.gov.pl/> (accessed on 24 January 2024).

As a result, Poland's role as a trading partner in Lithuania's goods trade in the period under analysis grew significantly in importance. In 2004, Poland accounted for 4.8% of Lithuania's goods exports and 7.7% of its imports. By 2022, these figures had risen to 9.0% and 11.7%, respectively (Figure 2). Comparatively, in 2004, Poland ranked 8th among Lithuania's largest export goods partners (after Germany, Latvia, the Russian Federation, France, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Estonia) and 3rd among the largest import goods partners (after the Russian Federation and Germany). By 2022, Poland had advanced to become Lithuania's 2nd largest export goods partner (after Latvia) and the 1st largest import goods partner (before Germany and Latvia).

Lithuania's role in the context of Poland's international trade also evolved from 2004 to 2022. Lithuania's share in Polish trade saw a steady increase throughout the analysed period, especially in imports. In 2004, Lithuania accounted for 1.7% of Polish exports and 0.5% of imports. By 2022, these figures had grown to 1.8% and 1.1% for exports and imports, respectively (Figure 3). Notably, in 2004,

Figure 2. Poland's share in Lithuania's trade in goods: exports and imports from 2004 to 2022 (per cent)



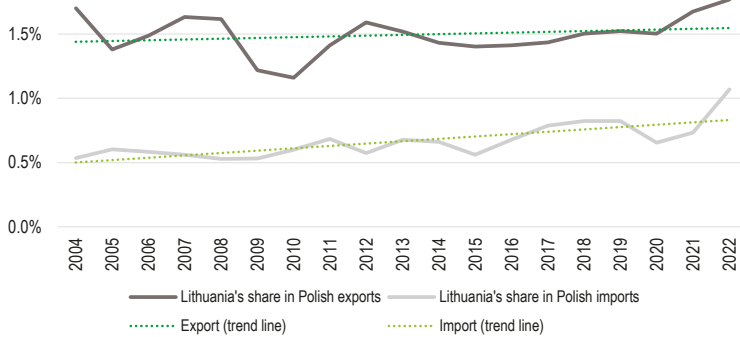
Source: Own elaboration based on data from the Official Statistic Portal of Lithuania (OSP), <https://osp.stat.gov.lt> (accessed on 24 January 2024).

Lithuania was ranked 18th among Poland's largest export partners and 27th among its largest import partners. By 2022, Lithuania had advanced to become Poland's 16th-largest export partner and 25th-largest import partner<sup>21</sup>.

The observations thus far affirm the trend lines, underscoring a notable ascension in Poland's role within Lithuania's trade framework from 2004 to 2022, as a key destination for both exports and imports. Conversely, the trajectory for Lithuania's contribution to Poland's trade, although also ascending, suggests a more moderate increase.

<sup>21</sup> Reflecting on the composition of trade at the end of the study period in 2022, the commodity structure of Polish exports to Lithuania was marked by several key categories: mineral products (notably electrical energy, which saw a significant increase in exports during 2021-2022), plastics and articles thereof, machinery and mechanical appliances, and iron and steel. Similarly, the structure of Lithuanian exports to Poland was dominated by mineral products and plastics and articles thereof, along with vehicles and their accessories, and agricultural and food products.

Figure 3. Lithuania's share in Poland's trade in goods: exports and imports from 2004 to 2022 (per cent)



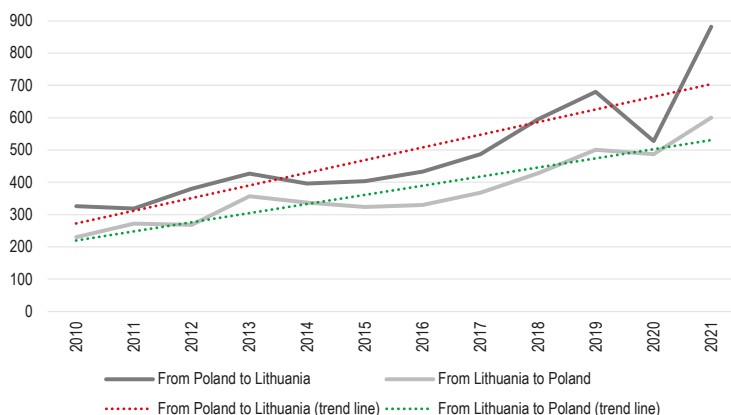
Source: Own elaboration based on data from the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS), <http://stat.gov.pl/> (accessed on 24 January 2024).

### *Trade in services*

In the context of trade analysis, it is essential to consider the services. Due to the limited data set, the scope of this analysis is confined to the years 2010 through 2021. During this timeframe, the trade in services between Poland and Lithuania significantly increased in value, starting from a baseline of just under 0.6 billion euros in 2010 and rising to nearly 1.5 billion euros by 2021. The value of Polish service exports to Lithuania more than doubled, rising from 326 million euros to 881 million euros. Meanwhile, service imports from Lithuania to Poland saw a similar upward trend, increasing almost 2.6 times from 231 million euros to 600 million euros (Figure 4).

This period is generally characterized by a persistent and dynamic growth in the value of services trade, except for 2020. However, the subsequent year, 2021, demonstrated a quick recovery, signalling a return to the previous growth trend. The trend lines for the trade in services between Poland and Lithuania further underscore the robust expansion from 2010 to 2021. Both Polish exports to Lithuania and Lithuanian exports to Poland demonstrate a consistent and marked increase.

Figure 4. Trade volume in services between Poland and Lithuania from 2010 to 2022 (million euros)



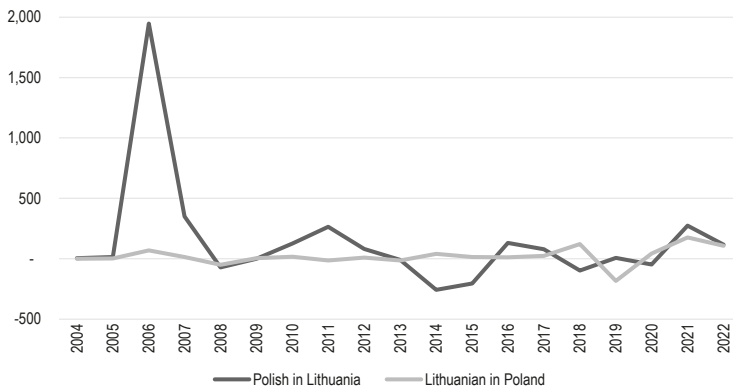
Source: Own elaboration based on data from the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS), <http://stat.gov.pl/> (accessed on 24 January 2024).

By the end of the analysed period, Poland was Lithuania's 7th-largest export services partner, accounting for 4.4% of Lithuania's service exports, and its largest importer of services, representing 11.4% of Lithuania's service imports. Conversely, within Poland's service trade, Lithuania held the 17th position as the largest export and import services partner, with shares of 1.3% and 1.4% respectively in Poland's service export and import markets.

### *Investment*

The period under review witnessed notable fluctuations in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows among the analysed countries (Figure 5). The year 2006 was particularly pivotal for Polish investments in Lithuania, with total FDI approaching 1.9 billion euros. The subsequent years were marked by variability in FDI from Poland to Lithuania, with periods of very high investment inflows such as 2007, 2011, and 2021 as well as years with significant outflows, especially in 2014 and 2015. Lithuanian investments in Poland also showed variability, with notable increases in 2018 and 2021, when investments reached 121 million euros and 178 million euros, respectively.

Figure 5. FDI flows between Poland and Lithuania from 2004 to 2022 (million euros)



Source: Own elaboration based on data from the National Bank of Poland (NBP), <https://nbp.pl/> (accessed on 24 January 2024).

To present a wider perspective on the investment landscape between Poland and Lithuania beyond FDI flows, it is important to discuss the positions of these investments at the end of the year. Comparing the extreme data points of the period under examination, the position of Polish FDI in Lithuania stood at 34 million euros in 2004, while by 2022, it had escalated to 1.236 billion euros. In the case of Lithuanian FDI in Poland, there was an increase from a minor negative position at the start of the analysed period to 556 million euros at the end.

When analysing the development of FDI between Poland and Lithuania, it is notable to observe a significant evolution in the positions of these countries as investors in each other's economies. In 2022, Poland solidified its role as a major investor in Lithuania, ranking 6th in terms of the value of investment positions by the year-end (after the United States, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Estonia)<sup>22</sup>. This represents a substantial increase from previous years,

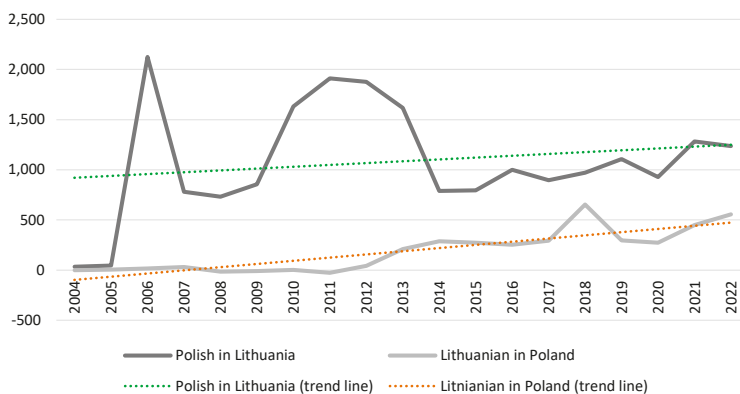
<sup>22</sup> Official Statistic Portal of Lithuania (OSP), <https://osp.stat.gov.lt> [24.01.2024].

underscoring Poland's heightened involvement in the Lithuanian economy. Data pertaining to Lithuania as a destination for Polish investments supports this observation. In 2022, Lithuania was ranked 8th as a target for Polish investments abroad (after Luxembourg, the Czech Republic, Germany, the United Kingdom, Cyprus, the Netherlands, and Hungary<sup>23</sup>), whereas in 2004, it was 18th.

Meanwhile, when considering Lithuania as an investor in Poland, it is notable that in 2022, the country occupied the 26th position as a source of direct investments. This also points to an enhanced presence of Lithuanian capital in Poland, especially when observing that in 2004, Lithuania ranked beyond the top fifty investment origins.

The trend line also provides a clearer view of the overall direction and momentum of investment positions over time. It shows that despite the annual fluctuations, there is a general increase in investment positions, suggesting an expanding engagement and deepening economic ties between Poland and Lithuania.

Figure 6. FDI positions between Poland and Lithuania from 2004 to 2022 (million euros)



Source: Own elaboration based on data from the National Bank of Poland (NBP), <https://nbp.pl/> (accessed on 24 January 2024).

<sup>23</sup> It is important to recognize that investments in Luxembourg, Cyprus, and the Netherlands may be influenced by tax optimization considerations.



## Conclusion

The aim of the article was to evaluate the progress of Polish-Lithuanian economic relations since their joint accession to the EU, assessing if these relations have indeed improved during the period from 2004 to 2022, contrasting with intermittent 'harsh political rhetoric'. The analysis confirmed a significant enhancement in economic ties, highlighted by growth in both trade exchanges and mutual investments.

The value of mutual trade in goods between Poland and Lithuania in the period of analyses increased from 1.4 billion euros to over 10 billion euros, and in services from 0.6 billion euros to nearly 1.5 billion euros. The trend lines for both goods and services trade between Poland and Lithuania indicate a consistent rise. Notably, exports from Poland to Lithuania have shown a steeper growth trajectory than exports from Lithuania to Poland. Consequently, Poland's position among Lithuania's largest trading partners for goods improved from 8th to 2nd for exports and from 3rd to 1st for imports. Similarly, Lithuania's ranking among Poland's largest trading partners for goods improved from 18th to 16th for exports and from 27th to 25th for imports. By the end of the period, Poland ranked 7th among Lithuania's largest service export partners and 1st among import partners, while Lithuania stood as the 17th largest service export partner for Poland.

It is also crucial to note that during this timeframe, two significant downturns in trade volumes occurred, attributable to global crises. The first contraction in the trade of goods was noticeable in 2009, during the global financial crisis, which profoundly impacted international trade. The second contraction happened in 2020, coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to unprecedented disruptions in global trade due to extensive lockdowns and restrictions. Furthermore, a substantial uptick in trade was observed in 2022, occurring against the backdrop of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This increase in trade between Poland and Lithuania may have been partly due to a strategic shift in trade patterns, as both countries sought to mini-

mize their dependence on Russian goods in response to the sanctions against Russia and the disruptions in trade routes caused by the war.

Turning to investments, notable fluctuations in FDI flows between Poland and Lithuania reflect the dynamic nature of international capital movements. Polish investment in Lithuania peaked in 2006, notably with PKN Orlen's acquisition of the Mažeikiai oil refinery. Significant Polish investors in Lithuania also include the insurance company PZU, the automotive firm Inter Cars, the cable manufacturer Tele-Fonika Kable, the glassware producer Warta Glass, and the IT company Sygnity. Among the key Lithuanian investors in Poland are Maxima Grupė, which in 2018 acquired Emperia Holding, owner of the Stokrotka supermarket chain, and Ignitis Group, a company specializing in green energy.

It is equally important to note that the end-of-year investment positions significantly increased. The trend line indicates that, despite yearly fluctuations, there was a general uptrend in investment positions. Consequently, by the end of the period under review, Poland had established itself as a significant investor in Lithuania, securing 6th place in terms of inward FDI value by year's end in Lithuania, whereas Lithuania ranked 26th in Poland. Additionally, it is noteworthy that Lithuania was ranked 8th in terms of outward FDI value from Poland.

In summary, this analysis has illuminated the substantial growth and deepening of economic relations between Poland and Lithuania from 2004 to 2022, underscoring the resilience and dynamism of their trade and investment ties. Despite the challenges posed by political tensions, both nations have demonstrated a strategic adaptability that has not only sustained but significantly enhanced their economic cooperation. This evolving economic landscape, marked by increased trade volumes and investment positions, affirms the positive trajectory of Polish-Lithuanian relations, showcasing a successful collaboration that transcends political discourse.

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Barbara Jundo-Kaliszewska<sup>1</sup>

## New dimensions of Polish-Lithuanian dialogue in media communication

### Introduction

The article presents selected aspects of Polish-Lithuanian relations in the context of information policy during the times of threat<sup>2</sup>, with an emphasis on history-related aspects exemplified by the topics covered in the author's current affairs programme titled *Conversations in Mackiewiczówka (Rozmowy w Mackiewiczówce)* (TVP Wilno) from 24 February 2022 to 31 December 2023. Information policy is defined as public policy and the tools it uses<sup>3</sup>.

The paper is based on the definitions found in the Act on Access to Public Information of the Republic of Lithuania<sup>4</sup> of 1996, which regulates “the modes of collection, preparation, publication, and dissemination of public information, the rights, obligations, and responsibilities of public information creators, disseminators, their participants, journalists, and the institutions regulating their ac-

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<sup>2</sup> More information: K. Kamińska-Korolczuk, *Polityka i media a kryzys zaufania. Polityka informacyjna mocarstw w czasie zagrożenia*, Gdańsk 2021.

<sup>3</sup> A. Zybala, *Polityki publiczne wobec wzorców zarządzania publicznego*, “Zarządzanie Publiczne” 2013, no. 4(26), p. 35, DOI: 10.7366/1898352942603 [27.08.2020]. Cf. K. Kamińska-Korolczuk, *Polityka i media a kryzys zaufania...*, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Lietuvos Respublikos visuomenės informavimo įstatymas*, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.29884/asr> [23.01.2024].

tivities”<sup>5</sup> (Art. 1 para. 1). This document defines, for instance, the concept of ‘audiovisual policy’ as a process of creating and implementing audiovisual sector strategies, principles, and directions of state management, goals and objectives as well as other legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania regulating the sector, created and adapted based on international requirements (Art. 2 para. 9). ‘Disinformation’ is defined as false information deliberately disseminated to the public (Art. 2 para. 15). In turn, ‘national radio and/or television programme’ is understood as a programme broadcast by a terrestrial radio ‘and/or’ television network and received in a territory inhabited by more than 60% of the population of the Republic of Lithuania (Art. 2 para. 28). Under the Act (Art. 2 para. 40), a ‘programme’ is a collection of sounds and/or moving images, independent in terms of content and structure, constituting a separate unit in a programme network or catalogue established by the service provider, irrespective of its length (feature film, music video, sports or other event, comedy series, documentary, children’s programme, original drama, trailer, talk show, educational programme, etc.).

The study explicitly refers to the Treaty on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation of the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Poland of 26 April 1994, according to which “awareness of the good and bad chapters of the history of the two countries should serve to consolidate mutual understanding between Polish and Lithuanian peoples in a united democratic Europe”<sup>6</sup>. Following the Treaty, the term ‘Polish minority’ in Lithuania is understood as “persons with Lithuanian citizenship who are of Polish origin or who

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<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise specified, all translations from Polish and Lithuanian are provided by the author.

<sup>6</sup> Treaty on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation of the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Poland, <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19950150071/O/D19950071.pdf>.

acknowledge Polish nationality, culture, or tradition and consider Polish as their mother tongue” (Art. 13, para. 2).

The author is a researcher affiliated with the University of Lodz and, at the same time, the scriptwriter and host of the analysed programme. Her research interests involve ethno-nationalisms, historical politics, political narratives, Polish-Lithuanian relations, war losses in World War II, and minority policies. Based on these interests, she compiles analyses and expert reports as well as conducts archive searches on behalf of external institutions<sup>7</sup>. Alongside her academic work, she pursues dissemination activities, believing that in this way she can influence the shaping of minority policies and public sentiment.

Transfer of information is of strategic importance both internally and externally for Poland and Lithuania alike<sup>8</sup>, therefore, the starting point for consideration will be the research hypothesis that the outbreak of a full-scale war in Ukraine in 2022 had an impact on not only the strengthening of Lithuanian-Polish relations at the political level but also the redefinition of the Lithuanian historical narrative in the media discourse, giving rise to new platforms for dialogue. The aim of the text is to show the changes in the Lithuanian historical discourse and to define the key areas of cooperation between Vilnius and Warsaw in the 21st century. To this end, the research sought answers to the following questions: How was the Polish-Lithuanian heritage of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth perceived in the historical discourse of Lithuania? How has the historical narrative of Lithuania changed in relation to its common past with Poland? How have these changes affected relations with other states in the region? How did they affect the perception of the Polish minority in Lithuania?

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<sup>7</sup> Institute of Central Europe, Jan Karski Institute of War Losses, The Jan Olszewski “Aid to Poles in the East” Foundation.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. K. Kamińska-Korolczuk, *Polityka i media a kryzys zaufania...*, p. 10.



Research methods used to help prepare the paper include the historical method, institutional method, content analysis, expert interviews, and case studies.

## Social and historical background

In the history of Polish-Lithuanian relations, the 20th century is marked as a period of dispute over Vilnius. Although these events took place in the first two decades of the 20th century, they determined – for almost 100 years – both the bilateral relations between the two countries<sup>9</sup> and the local relations between the Lithuanian authorities and the Polish national minority. The Soviet period froze Polish-Lithuanian national antagonisms and historical animosities for over half a century. They returned to the public agenda of Soviet Lithuania together with reforms and the idea of ‘reconstruction’ in the late 1980s and were subsequently exploited to stifle Lithuanian aspirations of independence<sup>10</sup>. After the collapse of the USSR and the subsequent restitution of Lithuanian independence, disputes over history tended to condition local legislation and determine relations with minorities<sup>11</sup>, directly affecting relations with its neighbours, particularly Russia and Poland. Both Polish and Russian minorities were overwhelmingly treated by the Lithuanian authorities as an uncomfortable legacy of former ‘hegemons’ from the point of view of the legislation being adopted<sup>12</sup>. After regaining independence, the Polish community lost access to Polish-language television channels available during the Soviet period (TVP1 and TVP2). As stressed by

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<sup>9</sup> More information: P. Łossowski, *Polska – Litwa: ostatnie sto lat*, Warszawa 1991.

<sup>10</sup> This issue is examined in the monograph: B. Jundo-Kaliszewska, *Zakładnicy historii. Mniejszość polska w postradzieckiej Litwie*, Łódź 2019.

<sup>11</sup> More information: A. Bobryk, *Odrodzenie narodowe Polaków w Republice Litewskiej 1987-1997*, Toruń 2005; A. Srebrakowski, *Polacy w Litewskiej SRR 1944-1989*, Toruń 2001.

<sup>12</sup> State Language Act; expiration of the Law on National Minorities in 2010; amendments to the Education Act of 2011 and others.



Barbara Jundo-Kaliszewska, Vytautas Landsbergis and Piotr Kuciński in front of Mackiewiczówka. Photo from the set of the "Conversations in Mackiewiczówka" program for TVP Wilno

the European Foundation of Human Rights: “Polish channels (except TVP Polonia, TVP Historia and TVP Kultura) were subject to payment (in Lithuania) after 1994 and ceased to be broadcast at all after 2000. Instead, from 1988 onwards, Lithuanian Radio and Television (LRT) broadcast programmes in Polish, such as Panorama of the Week (*Panorama Tygodnia*) (1988-1992), Panorama of the Week and Daily News (*Panorama Tygodnia i codzienne wiadomości*) (1991-1992), Vilnius Conversations (*Rozmowy Wileńskie*) (1992-2002), and Vilnius Album (*Album Wileński*) (2002)”<sup>13</sup>. In this situation, part of the Polish community in Lithuania remained in the Russian information sphere for almost 30 years. This resulted from poor knowledge of Lithuanian among the least educated members of society as well as the deliberate suppression of the Lithuanian narrative as a form of social resistance against the state’s language policy. This was one of the effects of exacerbating local national antagonisms and conflicts between the Lithuanian government and the Polish minority, at the heart of which have been, since 1991, the return of land, changes in electoral districts, the ousting of the Polish language from education, the issue of spelling surnames, bilingual toponyms, and the termination of the Law on National Minorities to name just a few. As Volodymyr Kulyk puts it, “By using a certain language, usually one for the whole state (or a part of it that is perceived as a separate nation), modern media reinforce the identification of readers or viewers with their community and, at the same time, the community’s association with that very language. However, the use of only one language can interfere with the interpellation of minority members who are not sufficiently familiar with it or do not recognise it as their own, and thus undermine identification with a state where other languages are not used. (...) The groups that do not feel invited into the community

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<sup>13</sup> *Lenkų televizija Lietuvoje – kur kryptame?*, <https://lt.efhr.eu/2017/05/09/lenku-televizija-lietuvoje-kur-krypstame/> [10.01.2024].

portrayed by the media require this language to be changed for the sake of greater inclusiveness or simply ignore it, seeking other mass media (...)"<sup>14</sup>. Russian-language media widely available in Lithuania proved to be these media. As recently as 2017, C-Gates, an Internet and TV provider, offered at least nine such channels, Balticum provided 12 channels, and Fastlink – more than 40. As the European Foundation of Human Rights warned, “The internet is full of instructions for free IPTV (Internet Protocol television) viewing. Such ‘packages’ can offer up to 130 channels in Russian. This is not so simple with Polish-language channels as Polish broadcasters successfully encrypt them, which makes ‘piracy’ almost impossible”<sup>15</sup>. On the one hand, the measures taken under the state’s language policy have had the effect of weakening the coverage of the Lithuanian mainstream media and reducing the trust of national minorities in state institutions. On the other hand, the limited availability of content in the mother tongue determined the need for an alternative solution.

The Russian annexation of Crimea was followed by a radical change in the Lithuanian establishment’s attitude towards the idea of allowing a Polish broadcaster onto the Lithuanian territory. In addition, in April 2017, an experiment was conducted in the Šalčininkai region<sup>16</sup> located on the border with Belarus, proving the accuracy of the author’s thesis. These were tactical exercises staged by the Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior, whose aim was to test the readiness of officers to counter a hybrid threat situation when confronted with

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<sup>14</sup> W. Kułyk, *Media i tożsamość*, <https://publica.pl/teksty/media-i-tozsamosc-3294.html> [24.01.2024].

<sup>15</sup> *Lenkų televizija Lietuvoje...*, op.cit.

<sup>16</sup> In the 2021 Population and Housing Census of the Republic of Lithuania, in the local government of Šalčininkai district, Polish as a mother tongue was declared by 18,361 out of 30,052 people, Russian – 5,308, Lithuanian – 4,968, Belarusian – 216, Ukrainian – 47, Romani – 52, other languages – 268 persons. After: *Gyventojų ir būstų surašymai*, <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/gyventoju-ir-bustu-surasymai1> [10.01.2024].



Barbara Jundo-Kaliszewska and Sławomir Koper in Mackiewiczówka. Photo from the set of the "Conversations in Mackiewiczówka" program for TVP Wilno



the so-called ‘green men’<sup>17</sup>. It took the ‘saboteurs’ 1.5 hours to seize the police station, cut off radio communications, and announce the creation of the ‘Šalčininkai People’s Republic’.

These and other considerations of geopolitical importance decided that a local branch of the Polish Public Television, TVP Wilno, was launched on the territory of the Republic of Lithuania on 17 September 2019, the 80th anniversary of the Soviet invasion against the Second Polish Republic and the occupation of the Vilnius region by the Red Army<sup>18</sup>. Miroslav Ciunovich from the town of Shumsk near Vilnius was appointed director. The programme is aimed at the Polish minority in Lithuania and covers current local events as well as affairs from home and abroad<sup>19</sup>. As Agata Chutnik rightly points out, “current affairs and leisure subject matter (of the programmes) strongly intertwines with national-patriotic themes.” On the one hand, this is a result of the pursuit of a mission related to historical education, which is distinctive of state-subsidised or state-funded media<sup>20</sup>, in this case, Poland. On the other hand, this is due to the specificity of the viewer, who, given the long-standing politicisation of language-related aspects in the country’s public space, remains firmly rooted in historical themes at the beginning of the 21st century.

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<sup>17</sup> *Szef MSW tłumaczył się z „zielonych ludzików” w Solecznikach*, <http://wilnoteka.lt/artyku/szef-msw-tlumaczyl-sie-z-quotzielonych-ludzikowquot-w-solecznikach> [19.04.2017]; „*Zielone ludziki” lądują w Solecznikach. Dlaczego Litwini ćwiczą odpowiedź na wypadek inwazji na terenach zamieszkałych głównie przez Polaków?*, <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75399,22083588,zielone-ludziki-laduja-w-solecznikach-dlaczego-litwini-cwicza.html> [12.07.2017]; *Eimutis Misiūnas paaiškino, kodėl pratyboms buvo pasirinkti Šalčininkai*, <https://www.lrytas.lt/lietuvosdiena/aktualijos/2017/04/14/news/eimutis-misiunas-paaiskino-kodel-pratyboms-buvo-pasirinkti-salcininkai-868418> [12.07.2023].

<sup>18</sup> *Uroczysta inauguracja kanału TVP Wilno*, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/44431056/uroczysta-inauguracja-kanal-tvp-wilno> [10.01.2024].

<sup>19</sup> Cf. A. Chutnik, *Dlaczego przekazy polskojęzyczne nie są ciekawe dla młodych przedstawicieli mniejszości polskiej w Litwie?*, <https://www.ejournals.eu/Studia-Migracyjne/Online-First/art/25155/> [10.01.2024].

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

## ***Rozmowy w Mackiewiczówce: a concept of communication***

The objectives of the programme are threefold. The main idea of the project consisted of an attempt to initiate a public intellectual Polish-Lithuanian dialogue. Based on the principle that “the essential aim of the media is to reach a wide spectrum of people and speak to them in a simple and evocative language of images and sound that will be able to attract them to certain attitudes”<sup>21</sup>, an attempt was made to prevent Russian disinformation, above all in the Polish circles in Lithuania. The third objective was to popularise the creative and political thought of Barbara Toporska and Józef Mackiewicz<sup>22</sup>. The house in Juodšiliai near Vilnius, where subsequent episodes of the programme were filmed, belonged in the late 1930s and early 1940s to a couple of prominent writers and intellectuals little known in Lithuania<sup>23</sup>. They left Lithuania in 1944, after which the building gradually fell into disrepair. It was not until 2021 that the house was restored and put back into use thanks to the efforts of Fundacja Wileńszczyzna (Vilnius Foundation). The following year, 2022, was declared the Year of Józef Mackiewicz in Poland. A number of projects were then inaugurated<sup>24</sup>, enabling the figure of the ‘cursed’<sup>25</sup> writer in a way to ‘return’ to Polish collective memory. Given Józef and Barbara’s commitment to Polish-Lithuanian dialogue, a similar task

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<sup>21</sup> W. Kawecki, *Komunikacja czy „Złudzenie komunikacji”?*, “Społeczeństwo. Studia, prace badawcze i dokumenty z zakresu nauki społecznej Kościoła”, XXXII (2022), no. 4(160), p. 26.

<sup>22</sup> *Dom Józefa Mackiewicza*, <https://wilenszczyzna.org.pl/projekty/dom-jozefa-mackiewicza/> [12.12.2023].

<sup>23</sup> Whilst the figure of Józef Mackiewicz is slowly returning to Lithuania’s public space (there are 2 plaques dedicated to the writer in Vilnius and a monument in Juodšiliai), Barbara Toporska is yet to be discovered.

<sup>24</sup> „Mackiewiczówka” otwarta dla szkół – inauguracja nowego projektu edukacyjnego, <https://kurierwilenski.lt/2022/04/01/mackiewiczowka-otwarta-dla-szkol-inauguracja-nowego-projektu-edukacyjnego/> [4.01.2024].

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Mackiewicz – pisarz wyklęty!*, <https://jozefmackiewicz.com/mackiewicz-pisarz-wyklety/> [4.01.2024].

should also have been accomplished in the Lithuanian media space. The idea of *Rozmowy w Mackiewiczówce*, a current affairs programme for TVP Wilno, became part of the above-mentioned celebrations. Conceptually, the project by the author and the director Piotr Kuciński<sup>26</sup> was to “mediate the understanding of contemporary issues”<sup>27</sup>. In its final form, it was an accumulation of historical, political, literary, and social themes, alluding to the validity of the thoughts of Józef and Barbara, a pair of eminent intellectuals. As stated in the description of the TVP Wilno service, *Rozmowy w Mackiewiczówce* is “a current affairs programme exploring historical themes. Together with the guests of the programme, Barbara Jundo-Kaliszewska discusses events that form the common Lithuanian-Polish heritage, looking at the Polish minority in the Vilnius region from a contemporary perspective and talking about Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and Belarus. The venue for these historical debates is *Mackiewiczówka*, the home of Józef Mackiewicz”<sup>28</sup>.

The main audience (at the time) consisted of primarily Lithuanian Poles, regular TVP Wilno viewers. Due to the development of mobile technologies and a general shift in the media policy towards greater accessibility and openness, the recordings were featured on the programme’s website and YouTube channel of TVP Wilno. Individual episodes were widely promoted in social media by the editorial team and directly by the author, including through the channels of the University of Lodz (the website of the Department of Theory of Politics and Political Thought or the Faculty of International and Political Studies). This made it possible to reach a wider audience, including younger people<sup>29</sup>. Due to these activities, media coverage

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<sup>26</sup> Piotr Kuciński – a film director and producer.

<sup>27</sup> W. Kawecki, *Komunikacja czy „Złudzenie komunikacji”...*

<sup>28</sup> *Rozmowy w Mackiewiczówce*, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/58994117/rozmowy-w-mackiewiczowce?page=2> [24.01.2024].

<sup>29</sup> Cf. A. Chutnik, *Dlaczego...*, p. 7.



was extended not only to Lithuanian or Polish citizens but also to inhabitants of other countries.

A total of 22 guests – representatives of the scientific, cultural, and political worlds of Lithuania and Poland – took part in the 2022-2023 programme: seven historians (Prof. Alfredas Bumblauskas, Prof. Alvydas Nikžentaitis, Prof. Jarosław Wołkonowski, Prof. Marta Sikorska, Dr Waldemar Wołkanowski, Prof. Krzysztof Buchowski, and Dr Tomasz Błaszczak), six penmen (Tomas Venclova, Romuald Mieczkowski, Birutė Jonuškaitė, Herkus Kunčius, Elżbieta Sieradzińska, and Sławomir Koper), three politicians (Vytautas Landsbergis, Ewelina Dobrowolska, and Halina Kobeckaitė<sup>30</sup>), three representatives of the world of culture (Zbigniew Lewicki and Ewelina Saszenko, Robert Bluj), one sociologist (Bogusław Grużewski), one journalist (Agnieszka Filipiak), and one educator (Adam Błaszczewicz).

A criterion vital in selecting the speakers was the attempt to balance the triad of representatives of the respective groups: Poles from Lithuania, Poles from Poland, and Lithuanians, based on the assumption that “they are supposed to mediate the understanding of contemporary issues. Media are supposed to be an intermediary (mediator), i.e., someone who communicates the reasoning of the two parties, who is able to step into both roles so as to understand the meaning of their words. Media interpret, so they are neither a mere megaphone nor a simple converter of each word from one code to another”<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, additional voices were present from the Karaites minority (Halina Kobeckaitė) in Lithuania and the Lithuanian minority in Poland (Birutė Jonuškaitė). Each episode was supplemented

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<sup>30</sup> Halina Kobeckaitė – the first female ambassador of Lithuania after 1990, representative of the Karaites minority.

<sup>31</sup> W. Kawecki, *Komunikacja czy „Złudzenie komunikacji”...*, p. 26.



Barbara Jundo-Kaliszewska and Tomas Venclova in Mackiewiczówka. Photo from the set of the “Conversations in Mackiewiczówka” program for TVP Wilno

by a thematic feature and expert commentary by researchers from Poland and Lithuania<sup>32</sup>.

### **‘Patriotism of landscape’<sup>33</sup>: in the circle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania**

The reflection of Czesław Miłosz, a Polish Nobel laureate, on Józef Mackiewicz may serve as a starting point for a discussion on new spaces for Polish-Lithuanian dialogue in the second decade of the 21st century, which in a way overlaps with the heritage of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania<sup>34</sup>: “He lived in the city, which for him remained the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and he was a patriot of that country. I think that already today it is difficult for the younger generations to picture what kind of a web of loyalties was at stake here, and why people like him treated Polish patriots with as much – reluctance as Lithuanian or Belorussian patriots. I have recently been reading again Mackiewicz’s articles and essays published in London, where he talks about the ‘internal partition’ of the Grand Duchy by Poles, Lithuanians, and Belorussians. “There was no successor to the whole thing. There simply wasn’t one. Everyone just wanted to carve off a piece for themselves (...) This led to a dispute escalating into an open fight over languages, culture, tradition, interpretation of history, and religion. The battle was also fought with fists, with clubs in Catholic and Orthodox churches, with knives, thills, pistols, and

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<sup>32</sup> In season 1 (March to December 2022), Dr Kamil Pecela, a translator, was a regular commentator on the programme. Season 2 saw the creation of a database of experts – researchers from Poland and Lithuania – whose statements were used in the programme. They included, for instance, Prof. Tomasz Majewski, Dr Aleksandra Kuczyńska-Zonik, Dr Tomasz Lachowski, Prof. Andrzej Puksztó, Dr Justyna Olędzka.

<sup>33</sup> J. Mackiewicz, *Lewa wolna*, Londyn 2012, p. 416.

<sup>34</sup> More information: T. Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus (1569-1999)*, Yale 2004; T. Snyder, *National Myths and International Relations: Poland and Lithuania (1989-1994)*, “East European Politics and Societies” 1995, no. 2, pp. 317-343.

finally, during the last war, with denunciations in Gestapo or NKVD offices. Hatred, by all the laws of nature, gave birth to hatred”<sup>35</sup>.

The nationalist narratives of the early and late 20th century ruled out the possibility of agreement in the area of history. Nationalisms, ‘thawed’ at the end of the 20th century, once again performed ‘internal partitions’ of the Vilnius region at the level of collective memory, which was accompanied by the emergence of ‘post-colonial extremes’ typical of liberated nations<sup>36</sup>: undermined identity, theories on ‘Polonised Lithuanians’ or concepts of ‘protecting the nation’<sup>37</sup>. A reckoning with the past began, including an attack on Home Army veterans<sup>38</sup>.

However, in order to understand what the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is for Lithuanians, it is necessary to quote Prof. Alfredas Bumblauskas: “The early days of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: that is Atlantis. And what happened then? Poles came and together with Jagiello made Poland out of Lithuania. How to love Poles? This is a highly simplified version, but the grand Lithuanian narrative ‘leans’ on such points (...) In Lithuania, it was believed that the Union of Krewo, i.e., the period after the death of Vytautas, was followed by a ‘century of night without dawn’, as Maironis once said. And what is this night? It is the Polonization of Lithuania. And then all the realities, including the Union of Lublin and the Constitution of 3 May 1791, were looked at through these glasses”<sup>39</sup>.

The lack of a ‘successor’ and the need to annex a separate piece of history led to dramatic situations already in the interwar period,

<sup>35</sup> Cz. Miłosz, *Koniec Wielkiego Xięstwa (o Józefie Mackiewiczzu)*, “Kultura” 1989, no. 5/500, pp. 103-104.

<sup>36</sup> More information: F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, London 2001.

<sup>37</sup> More information: B. Jundo-Kaliszewska, *Zakładnicy historii...*

<sup>38</sup> Jarosław Wołkonowski: *ostatnie wakacje w II RP #6*, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/61919079/jaroslaw-wolkonowski-ostatnie-wakacje-w-ii-rp-6> [24.01.2024].

<sup>39</sup> Prof. Alfredas Bumblauskas: *o kontrowersji wokół pierwszej w Europie konstytucji #3*, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/60032324/prof-alfredas-bumblauskas-o-kontrowersji-wokol-pierwszej-w-europie-konstytucji-3>; <https://wilno.tvp.pl/66498378/prof-alvydas-nikentaitis-o-powstaniu-stycznym-11> [24.01.2024].

as in the case of the Narutowicz brothers, one of whom became the first president of Poland and the other a signatory of the Act of Independence of Lithuania on 16 February 1918. This issue emerged in an interview with Sławomir Koper: “Gabriel Narutowicz came from a Lithuanian family. This is a complex example of a borderland family: Gabriel Narutowicz chose Polish nationality, while his brother Stanisław – Lithuanian. Two brothers. Two different choices. They were both tragic figures: one brother, Gabriel, was assassinated, shot dead by a right-wing fanatic. Stanisław Narutowicz, in turn, committed suicide ten years later, possibly because he was distraught over the fact that Poland and Lithuania could not agree. They both, like Józef Mackiewicz and Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz, felt they were citizens of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The last epigone of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was Czesław Miłosz, who also felt that he was a citizen of the Duchy; and it did not matter that this Duchy did not exist”<sup>40</sup>.

Originally, the programme discussions were to focus on the Polish minority in Lithuania and Polish-Lithuanian relations, however, external factors, namely the outbreak of a full-scale war in Ukraine, meant that it became – besides historical aspects – the leitmotif of the programme.

The war proved to be not only a constantly recurring theme but it also determined a comprehensive approach to the region and an analysis of Polish-Lithuanian relations through the prism of the former societies of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In this context, a conversation with Tomas Venclova, coincidentally scheduled and recorded on the day of Russian aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, acquires particular importance. This is the milestone that definitively changed the perception of Lithuanian-Polish relations in the 21st century. Russia’s neo-imperial intentions became a reality, although

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<sup>40</sup> Sławomir Koper: *o II Rzeczypospolitej* #10, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/65304643/slawomir-koper-o-ii-rzeczypospolitej-10> [24.01.2024].

the rationale for them had been evident much earlier (2008 – war in Georgia, 2014 – annexation of Crimea, 2020 – interference in the presidential elections in Belarus). “I feel today as Poles must have felt on 1 September 1939. This is a very important turning point in history, and on top of that, an ‘unpalatable’ one as it entails the violation of all international laws. This is an introduction of total lawlessness to a world and it is a great danger for the whole world. Including for Poland and Lithuania”<sup>41</sup>, Tomas Venclova said in the programme.

In this light, new significance was given to Polish-Lithuanian cooperation based on the idea of cooperation between the societies of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth or the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – which at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries not only succeeded in gaining independence from Moscow but also in joining the Euro-Atlantic structures<sup>42</sup>. The poet Romuald Mieczkowski argues that “We are out of options, as is Ukraine. This is not only Ukraine’s war. We are its base. It is about democratic and strategic values, about pushing the occupier, the invader, as far away as possible from the zone of freedom”<sup>43</sup>.

Likewise, the historian Alvydas Nikžentaitis alludes to the ‘freedom narrative’: “We see that the Polish-Lithuanian society is now united by common values. The most beautiful action of Poland and

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<sup>41</sup> *Tomas Venclova: W jakim stopniu oczekiwania i wizje o idealnym państwie litewskim się ziściły?*, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/58994589/tomas-venclova-w-jakim-stopniu-oczekiwania-i-wizje-o-idealnym-panstwie-litewskim-sie-ziscily> [24.01.2024].

<sup>42</sup> *Сф. Польща та Литва підтримують членство України в НАТО – саміт «Люблінського трикутника»*, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-politics/3650595-polsa-ta-litva-pidtrimut-clenstvo-ukraini-v-nato-samit-lublinskogo-trikutnika.html> [24.01.2024]; *Польща і Литва – головні сили в Європі, які підтримують Україну і білоруську опозицію – експерт*, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/hibrydna-viyna-kiberbezpeka-ukrayina-nato-rosiya/31320762.html> [24.01.2024]; *Близькі друзі: чому Польща і країни Балтії допомагають Україні у війні*, <https://ti-ukraine.org/news/blyzki-druzi-chomu-polshha-i-krayiny-baltiyyi-dopomagayut-ukrayini-u-vijni/> [24.01.2024].

<sup>43</sup> *Romuald Mieczkowski: o rosyjskiej prawdzie i kłamstwie #2*, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/60005990/romuald-mieczkowski-o-rosyjskiej-prawdzie-i-klamstwie-2> [24.01.2024].

Lithuania in the 21st century is the support for Belarus and Ukraine”<sup>44</sup>. A specialist in remembrance culture<sup>45</sup>, he stresses that “Changing the narrative is part of the modernisation of society. This results in the emergence of internal conflicts, the exploitation of minorities, which leads to a crisis of the whole system. We have seen this before in the region, with the collapse of this so-called post-Soviet bloc”<sup>46</sup>.

Vytautas Landsbergis, the “father of the nation”<sup>47</sup> and the leader of Sąjūdis, also returns to the period of the collapse of the USSR: «The Empire tried to marginalise us. Even at the time when I was in politics and dealt with high government officials, including Gorbachev, he would tell me: “Reject this nonsense, you will never enjoy independence! We won’t let it happen. And who will liberate you?”. We knew that we couldn’t wait to be liberated. We needed to be our own masters and fight for our right for our will and conscience to be recognised on an equal footing with other nations which have the right to their own statehood. All the more so because Lithuania has had a long history of statehood»<sup>48</sup>.

In turn, the historian Krzysztof Buchowski points out that: “Algirdas Brazauskas and Vytautas Landsbergis were the two leaders who determined Lithuanian politics and set its course<sup>49</sup> (...) Lithuania was undergoing the transition from communism to full membership of Western structures in the European Union and NATO. It seemed as if

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<sup>44</sup> Prof. Alvydas Nikžentaitis: o powstaniu styczniowym #11, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/66498378/prof-alvydas-nikzentaitis-o-powstaniu-styczniowym-11> [24.01.2024].

<sup>45</sup> More information: A. Nikžentaitis, *Valstybė ir atmintis: atminties kultūros ir jų reguliavimo būdai Lietuvoje, Vidurio ir Rytų Europoje*, Vilnius 2021.

<sup>46</sup> Prof. Alvydas Nikžentaitis: o powstaniu...

<sup>47</sup> *Rozmowy w Mackiewiczówce: dr hab. Krzysztof Buchowski #16*, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/70819141/rozmowy-w-mackiewiczowce-dr-hab-krzysztof-buchowski-16> [10.01.2024].

<sup>48</sup> Vytautas Landsbergis: o wydarzeniach, które wpłynęły na stworzenie wolnej Polski i Litwy #8, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kOUeLfZ20jUudDHDVvEFcwdtuyOpwxevVA7IGquP4EO/edit> [24.01.2024].

<sup>49</sup> More information: K. Buchowski, *Historia polityczna Litwy 1987-2004. Od sowieckiej republiki związkowej do integracji ze światem Zachodu*, Białystok 2023.

Moses was needed to lead Lithuania through that period. Lithuania had at least two such Moseses, namely Brazauskas and Landsbergis. It was quite a formidable task! Everything had to be rebuilt, including the economy and politics. Someone once used the term giants of politics. (...) It worked, it is something extraordinary and it is a great merit of the entire Lithuanian political class”<sup>50</sup>.

The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine revised the themes of World War II such as Moscow’s attack on a neighbouring state without a declaration of war (analogous to 17 September 1939), which was thoroughly discussed with the historian Jarosław Wołkonowski on the 80th anniversary of the Home Army<sup>51</sup>. The issue of the ‘Russian truth’ in the context of disinformation was examined in an interview with Romuald Mieczkowski<sup>52</sup>, who drew attention to the danger of manipulating nationalism in propaganda narratives: “Jozef Mackiewicz regarded nationalism as a form of enslavement of the mind, upon which the whole Bolshevik policy was based and which led to the distrust of another nation; after all, in Soviet times, individual nations had some nicknames, they had some pejorative labels, and this distanced people from each other so much”<sup>53</sup>.

The subject of war refugees, in turn, is presented in a conversation with Elżbieta Sieradzińska on the example of the biography of the Himalayan mountain climber Wanda Rutkiewicz, who was born in Plungė<sup>54</sup>.

Vilnius war losses, including human losses, and the issue of reparations were raised both in a conversation with the historian Walde-

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<sup>50</sup> *Rozmowy w Mackiewiczówce: dr hab. Krzysztof Buchowski...*

<sup>51</sup> *Jarosław Wołkonowski: ostatnie wakacje...*

<sup>52</sup> *Romuald Mieczkowski: o rosyjskiej prawdzie...*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>54</sup> *Elżbieta Sieradzińska: o życiu i przejściach Wandy Rutkiewicz #4*, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/60860196/elzbieta-sieradzinska-o-zyciu-i-przejsciach-wandy-rutkiewicz-4> [24.01.2024].



mar Wołkanowski<sup>55</sup> and in a discussion with the sociologist Bogusław Grużewski<sup>56</sup>. They discussed issues related to social economy from the perspective of modernity and the history of the region. “From the economic perspective, anything can be estimated. It is a simple task for an economist. What do we estimate and what value do we estimate it at? How much, for instance, is one human life worth: one million or three million? An appropriate methodology is employed here. In other words, the most important challenge is the methodology and, beside it, political decisions. Indeed, these cause the greatest problems. Everything can be estimated. The most difficult thing is to find a consensus among politicians”<sup>57</sup>, argues Grużewski. Furthermore, social economy issues were discussed from the point of view of both the present day and the history of the region. Answers were sought to the following question: how to function in a country where war cataclysms inevitably determine economic cataclysms?

Russia’s attack on Ukraine prompted deeper reflection on the integration of Georgia, Belarus, and Ukraine into the Western world and the role of Poland and Lithuania in these processes. These issues were explored in an interview with Ewelina Dobrowolska, the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania and initiator of the first application to the International Court of Justice in The Hague for the prosecution of Russian war crimes in Ukraine<sup>58</sup>. She stresses the importance of good relations with Poland and prioritises aid to Ukraine and the criminal responsibility of Russia<sup>59</sup>. “I am glad that

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<sup>55</sup> *Rozmowy w Mackiewiczówce: Waldemar Wołkanowski #14*, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/69709932/rozmowy-w-mackiewiczowce-waldemar-wolkanowski-14> [24.01.2024].

<sup>56</sup> *Rozmowy w Mackiewiczówce: Bogusław Grużewski #19*, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/72953316/rozmowy-w-mackiewiczowce-boguslaw-gruzewski-19> [24.01.2024].

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>58</sup> *Lietuva oficialiai stoja į Tarptautinio Teisingumo Teismo bylą*, <https://tm.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/lietuva-oficialiai-stoja-i-tarptautinio-teisingumo-teismo-byla/> [24.01.2024].

<sup>59</sup> *Rozmowy w Mackiewiczówce: Ewelina Dobrowolska #13*, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/68792086/rozmowy-w-mackiewiczowce-ewelina-dobrowolska-13> [24.01.2024].

our generation feels the responsibility and the need to help Ukraine”, the minister points out. Regardless of the outcome of the war, Belarus and Russia will remain on the world map, which is why Lithuania and Poland should not only support political refugees but also monitor the situation in these countries.

The subject of Belarus is present in conversations with Prof. Jarosław Wołkonowski or Tomasz Błaszczyk: first, in the context of the events of the Second World War and then in the light of contemporary politics. Similarly, the Polish-Lithuanian mediation regarding Georgia was shown in the programme featuring Agnieszka Filipiak, who stressed the importance of the presence of Presidents Lech Kaczyński and Valdas Adamkus in Tbilisi in 2008, as well as the support of Poland and Lithuania, in Georgian collective memory. She also points out that without the annexation of Georgian territories by Russia in 2008, the attack on Kiev might not have happened: “The war in Georgia reinforced Russia’s policy. From the very outset, Moscow wanted to maintain its spheres of influence, and the South Caucasus was such a region. This was critical not because of Russia’s attack on Georgia itself but because of how the world and Western countries reacted to it. Importantly, Russia was never actually punished for this aggression. (...) Let us recall that all this war happened because a few months earlier, in 2008, Ukraine and Georgia were promised ‘a road map’ to NATO at the NATO summit in Bucharest”<sup>60</sup>.

Artists formed a separate group of interviewees. The musical cultural code of the Polish minority in Lithuania was discussed with the composer and conductor Zbigniew Lewicki<sup>61</sup> and the famous Vilnius

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<sup>60</sup> *Rozmowy w Mackiewiczówce: Agnieszka Filipiak #17*, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/71667219/rozmowy-w-mackiewiczowce-agnieszka-filipiak-17> [24.01.2024].

<sup>61</sup> *Zbigniew Lewicki: o historii Mazurka Dąbrowskiego #5*, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/61262812/zbigniew-lewicki-o-historii-mazurka-dabrowskiego-5> [23.01.2024].

singer Ewelina Saszenko<sup>62</sup>. These conversations were part of the general trend of ‘freedom narratives’, for instance, it was pointed out that the Polish anthem, Dąbrowski’s Mazurka, was written when Poland was no longer on the map of the world. Aspects of artistic activity in times of captivity, art in war, or the struggle for identity also came up in conversation with the painter Robert Bluj, who argues that “images have no nationality. We identify with the place we come from, but a work of art itself has a wider reach. Our regionality does not limit it in any way”<sup>63</sup>. The aspect of identity became the subject of discussion with the writer Herkus Kunčius, author of, among others, the novel *A Lithuanian in Vilnius (Lietuvis Vilniuje)*: “I was interested in identity, as a Lithuanian in a free Lithuania – what identity does he have? No longer Soviet, but Lithuanian. How can a person brought up in a nationalist narrative look at Vilnius?”<sup>64</sup>.

The programme’s themes included the issue of desovietisation or the game of ‘agent files’ – the region’s Soviet legacy, which to this day has not been overcome in the region<sup>65</sup>. As Krzysztof Buchowski puts it: “We should not allow anyone or anything to divide or conflict us. Our hope as Poles and Lithuanians is that we will live together in a common Europe. We have our chance. We must keep our fingers crossed that our dangerous eastern neighbour will never take that chance away from us and question our security”<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> *Rozmowy w Mackiewiczówce: Ewelina Saszenko #22*, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/75136612/rozmowy-w-mackiewiczowce-ewelina-saszenko-22> [23.01.2024].

<sup>63</sup> *Rozmowy w Mackiewiczówce: Robert Bluj #18*, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/72309075/rozmowy-w-mackiewiczowce-robert-bluj-18> [23.01.2024].

<sup>64</sup> *Rozmowy w Mackiewiczówce: Herkus Kunčius #21*, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/74367742/rozmowy-w-mackiewiczowce-herkus-kuncius-21> [23.01.2024].

<sup>65</sup> B. Jundo-Kaliszewska, T. Lachowski, *Odzyskanie niepodległości przez państwa bałtyckie w świetle procesu rozpadu ZSRS oraz następcze rozliczenie okresu sowieckiej okupacji. Wybrane aspekty natury prawnej i politycznej*, “Władza Sądzenia” 2021, no. 20, pp. 109-127.

<sup>66</sup> *Rozmowy w Mackiewiczówce: dr hab. Krzysztof Buchowski...*

## Conclusion

The series of programmes titled *Rozmowy w Mackiewiczówce* produced by TVP Vilnius between 2022 and 2023 shows the validity of old issues, the need to redefine 20th-century disputes and, at the same time, highlights new levels of Polish-Lithuanian cooperation in the area of defending the democracy of other countries in the region. In this context, ‘freedom narratives’, underpinned by both the legacy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the declarations of both states included in the Polish-Lithuanian Treaty of 1994, acquire significance. They include a readiness to “contribute to the process of European integration” and an awareness of “the community of interests and of their co-responsibility for peace, security, understanding, and cooperation in a democratic and free Europe that respects human rights”<sup>67</sup>.

The outbreak of full-scale war in Ukraine in 2022 and the widespread militarisation of information, or the historicization of news coverage, prompts deeper reflection on the role of media discourse not only in the bilateral relations of states but also in their relations with minorities. In line with the Polish-Lithuanian Treaty, which states that “the Poles and Lithuanians living on the territories of both countries for centuries have brought lasting values to the culture of both peoples and countries as well as making a significant contribution to the development of European culture”<sup>68</sup>, both the Lithuanian minority in Poland and the Polish minority in Lithuania should be involved in the processes taking place in both countries. This is fostered by both in-depth historical reflection and a series of tangible actions in support of the freedom-fighting states of the region: Ukraine, Belarus, or Georgia. In the current geopolitical conditions, there is a return to old ideas, articulated both in the works

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<sup>67</sup> Treaty on Friendly Relations...

<sup>68</sup> Ibidem.

of Jozef Mackiewicz or Barbara Toporska, and their great friend, the editor of the Parisian “Kultura”: “We have a historic opportunity to fulfil Jerzy Giedroyc’s dream and build a Polish-Lithuanian-Ukrainian community. Let us hope that Belarus will soon join this group. And perhaps even Hungary...”<sup>69</sup>, argues Arvydas Nikžentaitis. These are countries whose national composition has changed over the centuries, and national minorities (including indigenous minorities) are now an integral part of the social landscape. This is why, among other things, the Polish minority in Lithuania should become involved not only in the processes of creating historical discourses but also in local legislation or regional integration activities.

If we consider that “media have ceased to be merely a technique for transmitting information and have become structures of social relations and set the ways of social thinking”<sup>70</sup>, it is necessary to appreciate their role in the process of developing new ideas and cultural discourses. As Alvydas Nikžentaitis argues, “Authoritarian countries are incapable of developing new currents in the culture of memory, hence they exploit old familiar narratives. In our region, these are the propaganda narratives of the Soviet Union. The ability to change narratives and the ability to create one’s own historical narrative is an integral part of modernization of the society”<sup>71</sup>. Both Poland and Lithuania have done colossal work in the area of collective memory and historical narratives since the collapse of the USSR. This has translated into their empowerment in the international arena. And although the process of developing a common discourse for the most pivotal moments of shared history remains unfinished, dialogue in this field is still ongoing.

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<sup>69</sup> Prof. Alvydas Nikžentaitis: *o powstaniu...*

<sup>70</sup> K. Kamińska-Korolczuk, *Polityka i media a kryzys zaufania...*, p. 9. Cf. M. McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, London 1964 (Polish edition: *Zrozumieć media. Przedłużenia człowieka*, Warszawa 2004)

<sup>71</sup> Prof. Alvydas Nikžentaitis: *o powstaniu...*

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Agata Tatarenko<sup>1</sup>

# Common narratives and individual dimensions: the historical heritage of Poland and Lithuania from the perspective of temporal historical exhibitions

## Introduction

Poland and Lithuania share a common historical heritage, which is reflected not only in the realm of relations between these countries but also in the culture and social ties among the two nations. Since 1989, in response to the richness of mutual connections, many museums and public history institutions in Poland and Lithuania have organized historical exhibitions focusing on the exploration and promotion of this unique phenomenon. The vast majority of exhibitions referring to the historical heritage of Poland and Lithuania encompass the era remembered collectively as the Commonwealth or Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth<sup>2</sup>. This state was established un-

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<sup>2</sup> In this context, it is worth adding that the name “Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth” (Polish: Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów) appeared for the first time in an official document only in 1791, long after the signing of the Act of the Union of Lublin in 1569 and when the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was at the end of its existence.

der the Union of Lublin concluded in 1569, which united the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, i.e., the areas corresponding to modern Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. However, increasingly there are exhibitions that also depict the parallel fates of these two countries in later periods. Through such initiatives, museums and public history institutions contribute not only to building knowledge about the past of Poland and Lithuania in these two countries but also to fostering social dialogue and promoting understanding and respect for cultural diversity. In this aspect, Polish-Lithuanian cooperation between museums and public history institutions is particularly valuable.

Since 1989, such actions have constituted a significant element in building relations between these countries and promoting their shared history. They are governed by the “Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education, and Science”<sup>3</sup>, signed in Vilnius on 17 December 1998. According to the document, the parties committed to cultural exchange, mutual promotion of national culture, scientific and research cooperation, and support for contacts between the cultural, educational, and scientific institutions of both countries. The agreement specified concrete forms of cooperation, such as organising joint exhibitions, as well as concerts, festivals, and exchanges of artists, scientists, and students. It also envisaged joint research projects, educational programs, and sharing experiences and knowledge in cultural, educational, and scientific fields. The aim of signing the document was also to promote mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation between

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<sup>3</sup> Internetowy System Aktów Prawnych, *Umowa między Rządem Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej a Rządem Republiki Litewskiej o współpracy w dziedzinach kultury, oświaty i nauki, sporządzona w Wilnie dnia 17 grudnia 1998 r.*, 19 July 2002, <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WMP20020310491> [17.01.2024].

Poland and Lithuania through joint activities in the fields of culture, education, and science<sup>4</sup>.

Over the past 25 years, cultural and scientific institutions, including museums, have extensively utilized the forms of cooperation outlined in the document. Collaboration has taken place in the field of research projects concerning the history, culture, and art of both countries. Often, exhibitions and publications have been the result. This is particularly evident in the case of joint temporary exhibitions, presented both in Poland and Lithuania, and in other countries. They addressed various aspects of the heritage of both nations and contributed to the promotion of their shared history and culture. Exhibitions were often accompanied by educational programs, including lecture series, workshops, and other events aimed at a wide audience.

This article will introduce several selected temporary historical exhibitions that addressed the shared history of Poland and Lithuania. The vast majority of these are exhibitions realized in collaboration between Polish and Lithuanian museums and public history institutions. The purpose of the article is to attempt to answer the question of how the common historical heritage has been interpreted through the prism of temporary museum exhibitions over the past few decades. In the article, the following questions will be addressed: what are the main themes, events, and phenomena from the history of Poland and Lithuania that are represented in exhibitions referring to their past? What are the main similarities and differences in the interpretations of the historical heritage of Poland and Lithuania? What are the main historical narratives presented in exhibitions in Poland and Lithuania? The answers provided will be utilized to draw more general conclusions regarding the individual dimensions of the

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<sup>4</sup> Ibidem.

historical heritage of the Commonwealth for Poles and Lithuanians, and the influence of shared history on their national identities.

## Shared experiences and values

The main issue addressed by temporary historical exhibitions in Poland and Lithuania, referring to their shared past, is obviously mutual relations. Focusing on key events, institutions, and figures, these exhibitions shed light on how relations between these two nations have evolved over the years. An example of an exhibition addressing this theme was the exhibition “For the Good of the Homeland: Lithuania and Poland in the Era of the 3rd May Constitution”<sup>5</sup> at the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania in Vilnius (in the Lower Castle), which ran from 20 October 2021 to 16 January 2022. It was organized on the occasion of the 230th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of 3 May 1791 and the act of The Reciprocal Guarantee of Two Nations (*Zaręczenie Wzajemne Obojga Narodów*) in 1791. The co-organizers of the exhibition were the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, which was its initiator, and the Royal Castle in Warsaw. The display was under the patronage of the Presidents of Poland and Lithuania.

The exhibition consisted of over forty objects from public and private collections – museums, libraries, archives, churches, monasteries, and private collections from Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, and Belarus. Among the most important objects in the exhibition were the original documents of the Constitution of 3 May 1791 and the act of The Reciprocal Guarantee of Two Nations, brought for the first time

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<sup>5</sup> Międzynarodowa wystawa „O dobro ojczyzny. Litwa i Polska w epoce Konstytucji 3 maja”, Gov.pl, 13 October 2021, <https://www.gov.pl/web/litwa/miedzynarodowa-wystawa-o-dobro-ojczyzny-litwa-i-polska-w-epoce-konstytucji-3-maja> [17.01.2024].

from Warsaw to Vilnius<sup>6</sup>. It was also possible to see a unique copy of the translation of the Constitution of 3 May 1791 into Lithuanian, made at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. The exhibition showcased the initiators of the reforms introduced during the reign of King Stanisław August Poniatowski (1764-1795), portraits of the most important statesmen, and various artefacts (documents, books, monuments, works of art) reflecting on the transformations in the political, social, and economic development of the state as well as cultural life.

The display, located on two floors of the palace, consisted of seven parts, which were connected both chronologically and thematically. It began with the section “Monarch and People” presenting the early years of the reign of Stanisław August Poniatowski. It depicted the main leaders of the political factions of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and displayed documents related to the election and coronation of the king. The exhibition also included Stanisław August’s ceremonial sword. The subsequent parts of the exhibition were: “For the Love of the Homeland”, “The Period of the Great Sejm”, “The Quiet Revolution”, “The Era of the Constitution and Lithuania”, “Between Loyalty and Betrayal”, and “The Struggle for Independence”. Each of these sections presented portraits of the key figures of the era, with Stanisław August Poniatowski’s figure present in every part of the exhibition. The exhibition also presented the fates of three exceptional women: Princess Teofila Jabłonowska Sapieha, a participant in the Bar Confederation, author of memoirs, and book collector; Princess Zofia Czartoryska née Sieniawska, the mother of Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski; and Teofila Brzostowska née Radziwiłł, the wife of the voivode of Inflanty, a member of the Masonic lodge, and the mistress of the female lodge “Perfect Fidelity”.

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<sup>6</sup> The original documents are kept in the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (Polish: Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie, AGAD).

The aim of the exhibition was to present, from the perspective of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the genesis of the adoption of the Constitution of 3 May 1791, its content and significance, as well as to present the modernization processes taking place in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 18th century. Concurrently, the exhibition allowed one to infer the attitude of the citizens of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania towards the reforms of the Great Sejm and the Commonwealth. According to the curator of the exhibition, Dr Ramunė Šmigelskytė-Stukienė, the Constitution of 3 May 1791 was not well known to Lithuanians, hence there was a need to tell its history<sup>7</sup>.

This statement accurately captures the differences between the approach of Poles and Lithuanians to the heritage of the Commonwealth. In the cultural memory of Lithuanians, the years between the Union of Lublin and the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth have been preserved as a period of the association of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania with Poland, but also as an association that worked to the detriment of Lithuania. It was a time when the state had to give up part of its sovereignty and was subjected to processes of Polonization. The years of association with the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland are perceived as a time when Lithuania could not develop in the same way as other modern states. For this reason, the Commonwealth is not associated in the cultural memory of Lithuanians with “Lithuanian-ness” and does not in any way legitimize later Lithuanian forms of statehood. Therefore, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is seen by Lithuanians differently than by Poles. It is perceived as a state with an ineffective state apparatus, disorganized, and lacking stable power. For the same reason, special events associated with the history of the Commonwealth such as the adoption

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<sup>7</sup> M. Piwowar, *Wystawa „O dobro Ojczyzny” w Wilnie. Wspólnota oraz niezależność*, 24 October 2021, <https://www.rp.pl/kultura/art19043561-wystawa-o-dobro-ojczyzny-w-wilnie-wspolnota-oraz-niezaleznosc> [18.01.2024].

of the Constitution of 3 May 1791, did not particularly register in the cultural memory of Lithuanians, hence the need to present them to a wider audience.

The shared fates of Poland and Lithuania are not only the history of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and the period of the 19th-century uprisings. These countries also share experiences of the fall of communism and the construction of democratic systems after 1989, although, of course, each country has its own way. These events are depicted in the open-air exhibition “Poland and Lithuania – Together in the Name of Freedom”, covering the years 1989–1991, thus presenting the period of rapprochement between the two nations through the activities of dissident organisations, emphasising the support from Poland for the Lithuanian aspirations of independence<sup>8</sup>. The exhibition, consisting of 22 panels, was displayed between 6 and 26 September 2021, at Konstantinas Sirvydas Square in Vilnius. Subsequently, it was presented in the Lithuanian town of Šiauliai. The organisers of the exhibition were the Museum of Polish History in Warsaw and the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Vilnius, with the participation of the Lithuanian Central State Archives, the Lithuanian Archives of Special Services, and the Polish Institute in Vilnius. The opening of the exhibition was attended by the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Lithuanian Foreign Minister. The exhibition was prepared in two languages: Polish and Lithuanian.

The exhibition presented the cooperation between the Solidarity and Sąjūdis movements and the process of building bilateral relations after 1991. The joint front of Solidarity and Sąjūdis against the Soviet rulers in the 1980s and 1990s, and the personal involvement of Pope John Paul II in the matters of Lithuania’s independence,

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<sup>8</sup> Wystawa „Polska i Litwa – razem w imię wolności” w Szawlach, Gov.pl, 25 March 2022. <https://www.gov.pl/web/litwa/wystawa-polska-i-litwa---razem-w-imie-wolnosci-w-szawlach> [17.01.2024].



were highlighted as key moments that reflected the convergence of the socio-political processes of both nations and their struggle for emancipation from the Kremlin. The aim of the exhibition was to show that the relations and common experience of the societies of Poland and Lithuania did not end with the fall of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but essentially continue to this day. Poland and Lithuania were also connected by communism, the fight against this system, and the subsequent political transformation.

The aforementioned exhibitions demonstrate that the historical relations between Poland and Lithuania are presented in a comprehensive and multi-dimensional manner and that they are not limited solely to the period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The narratives of the displays underscore not only shared historical experiences but also common values for both nations such as freedom, independence, and democracy. Emphasising shared values and highlighting key moments of cooperation between Poland and Lithuania, such as Solidarity and Sąjūdis, clearly suggests a desire to build a positive and constructive image of relations between the two countries. It is also worth noting that the presence of high-ranking government officials including the Presidents of Poland and Lithuania and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs at the opening of the exhibitions as well as the involvement of cultural and educational institutions on both sides of the border, speaks to the political and social significance of these activities. It is a signal that both Poland and Lithuania are interested in building positive and constructive relations based on dialogue and cooperation.

### **Multiculturalism – a shared phenomenon or Polish perspective?**

A phenomenon that prominently features in the historical narratives conveyed by temporary exhibitions organized in Poland and Lithuania, referring to their shared historical heritage, is multiculturalism.

A good example of this was the exhibition “Under the Common Sky: The Republic of Many Nations, Faiths, Cultures (16th-18th century)” organized by the Museum of Polish History in 2012 at the Royal Castle in Warsaw. The goal set by the creators of the exhibition was to “remind contemporary viewers that for almost two and a half centuries, in the lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which now encompass various states and nations, there existed a state formally constituting a federation of two entities: the Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, where power was wielded by the nobility, inhabited by many national, ethnic, and religious groups”<sup>9</sup>. This rather lengthy quotation, like the title of the exhibition itself, aptly captures its content and the meanings it aimed to convey. The creators sought to illustrate a common space inhabited by various religious groups, presenting a shared heritage without appropriating the past.

The exhibition was divided into six thematic modules. The first two modules presented multiculturalism in the broad context of the state, focusing on issues such as the phenomenon of federalism and the ethnic and religious composition of the society of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The next two modules gradually narrowed the perspective, focusing on the issues of regional and local identities and the ways in which individuals functioned in a multicultural society. The fifth module focused on the influence of multi-ethnicity on contemporary culture, while the final module showed what aspects of this heritage have survived to the present day.

The exhibition showcased artefacts, works of art, historical documents, and multimedia presentations depicting the ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity that shaped the identity of Polish society over the centuries. One of the most important exhibits on display was the

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<sup>9</sup> „Pod wspólnym niebem...” – przygotowania do wystawy Muzeum Historii Polski, Dzieje.pl, 12 April 2012, <https://dzieje.pl/wystawa/pod-wspolnym-niebem-przygotowania-do-wystawy-muzeum-historii-polski> [17.01.2024].

original Act of the Union of Lublin. From the Middle Ages, through the periods associated with the Golden Age of the Commonwealth, to the present day, the exhibition brought to light the history of mutual interactions between different social groups. Interactive stations allowed visitors to participate more actively, for example, in reproducing sounds of traditional musical instruments from various cultures or in virtual travel along historical migration routes. Additionally, lectures, presentations, and thematic workshops accompanying the exhibition enabled a deeper understanding of the history of multiculturalism in the Commonwealth.

The “Under the Common Sky” exhibition and its accompanying program not only showcased the richness of cultural diversity but also raised questions about how this diversity influenced the shaping of Polish national identity and what challenges and benefits the coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups entails. It was not just a journey through the past but also a reflection on the present and future of society.

Another exhibition that addressed the theme of multiculturalism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in Poland, was the “#Heritage”, presented at the National Museum in Krakow from 23 June 2017 to 7 January 2018. Due to its significant attendance success, it provided an important voice in the debate on the titular issue. The exhibition presented only objects from the collection of the National Museum in Krakow, which, according to the curators, particularly defined Polish culture<sup>10</sup>. The exhibition aimed not to represent the full spectrum of works from the museum’s collection but to provide an interpretation of those collections. Its main thesis was to emphasise cultural continuity and to find constant elements of national identity in known and unknown works from different epochs, even in periods

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<sup>10</sup> #DZIEDZICTWO, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, <https://mnk.pl/wystawy/dziedzictwo> [17.01.2024].

of a lack of political sovereignty. The structure of the exhibition was based on four categories drawn from anthropological and historical research on national cultures: geography, language, citizens, and customs. The first referred to the territories with which a given culture is associated and treats as its own; the second emphasised the role of language in defining national distinctiveness; the third described those who identify with a given culture, and the fourth made it clear that from a historical perspective, nations can be defined by reference to their cultural roots, not ethnic categories. The exhibition was inspired by Marek Rostworowski's famous 1979 exhibition titled "Polish Portrait: Self-Portrait", raising the question of how Poles define their history, culture, and civilizational achievements<sup>11</sup>.

The exhibition presented a completely different approach to multiculturalism in the Commonwealth of Both Nations than the one realized by the Museum of Polish History in 2012. As mentioned above, the 2017 exhibition was based solely on the collections of the National Museum in Krakow, which was clearly emphasised and made this institution the repository of Polish heritage. Above all, the narrative structure of the exhibition – elements specific to the cultures of other ethnic and religious groups coexisting in the space of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – was encompassed and defined as Polish. Elements such as Kontush sash ("kontusz belt", Polish: *pasy słuckie*, Lithuanian: *kontušo juosta*, Belarusian: *кунтушовы пояс*) were intertwined with the Polish semantic network. The #Heritage exhibition, although using the concept of multiculturalism, in fact, focused on finding constant elements in Polish history and the cultural continuity of Polish national identity. In relation to the years between the Union of Lublin and the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, this was at the expense of the cultures of other nations.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

Another exhibition that was supposed to address the issue of multiculturalism was the exhibition “Lithuania, My Homeland... Adam Mickiewicz and his poem *Pan Tadeusz*”, organised on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of Poland and Lithuania’s independence and displayed at the National Museum in the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania in Vilnius from 27 November 2018 to 24 February 2019<sup>12</sup>. Its organisers were the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, the Polish Institute in Vilnius, the National Museum Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania, the Ossolineum National Institute, the Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Pan Tadeusz of the Ossolineum National Institute, and the Royal Castle on Wawel. As part of the exhibition, the manuscript of “Pan Tadeusz” by Adam Mickiewicz was presented for the first time in Lithuania. The exhibit was accompanied by a broad historical commentary relating to both the author’s life and the creation of his work. The exhibits presented came from both Polish and Lithuanian collections, primarily from the institutions mentioned above.

An additional task of the exhibition, under the patronage of the Prime Ministers of Poland and Lithuania and the Ministers of Culture of both countries, was to illustrate and present to the public the cultural context including the multiculturalism of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The display, according to the organizers, was intended to present Adam Mickiewicz and his work in the context of his belonging to both Polish and Lithuanian culture, and as a writer who belonged to the cultural heritage uniting both nations. At the same time, the masterpiece “Pan Tadeusz” itself was exhibited as a timeless exposition of Polishness. Finally, the Lithuanian public perceived the display as an exhibition about a Polish writer and his Polish work, addressed mainly to students, due to the detailed bio-

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<sup>12</sup> „Litwo, ojczyzno moja... Adam Mickiewicz i jego poemat *Pan Tadeusz*” wystawa poświęcona stuleciu odrodzenia państwowości Litwy i Polski (1918-2018), Muzeum Pana Tadeusza, <https://muzeumpanatadeusza.ossolineum.pl/litwo-ojczyzno-moja-adam-mickiewicz-i-jego-poeemat-pan-tadeusz/> [17.01.2024].

graphical information. It is worth adding that while the exhibition included certain threads related to the history of Lithuania, such as the uprising in Lithuania in 1831 or Mickiewicz's connections with Lithuanian literature, the history of Belarus was completely omitted.

In the Lithuanian discourse on the heritage of the Commonwealth, popular in Poland and depicted in the exhibition "Lithuania, My Homeland...", the myth of multiculturalism fundamentally fails to function as well. This is shown by language issues, strongly related to the exhibition's theme; over the centuries, Lithuanians have shown a strong attachment to the Lithuanian language. The community of language appears in the Lithuanian discourse as one of the elements defining the nation, alongside territorial and cultural communities, as early as the time of Mikalojus Daukša (1527/1538-1613), the ordinary of the Samogitian diocese, and above all, the great Lithuanian humanist, who emphasised the importance of the development of the Lithuanian language as a literary one. In the Commonwealth, the Lithuanian language could not develop in the public sphere because the Grand Duchy of Lithuania used Ruthenian in official documents until the late 17th century, Latin in religious and scientific literature, and Polish in elite communication. Language issues translated into a more general approach to Lithuanian culture. The emerging Lithuanian national movement also excluded from its thinking the past of the Polonised Lithuanian nobility. It valorised the times of Gediminas and Vytautas, hence, the Middle Ages.

Furthermore, in the Lithuanian discourse on the historical heritage of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the claim of the Polonisation of the Lithuanian people during the period 1569-1795 dominated for years. This view developed already in the times of Vytautas. Lithuanian nobility attempted in various ways to fight not only against Polonisation but also against the sense of inferiority felt towards the Polish nobility. Hence the legendary visions of the ethnogenesis of Lithuanians, the most widespread of which was the legend according to which the ancestor of Lithuanian dukes was Palemon – Publius

Libon of the Colonna coat of arms (the Palemonian myth). It is worth emphasising that the idea of linking Lithuanians with the Roman Empire existed even before the Union of Lublin and was part of a broader trend observed in Europe, which aimed to indicate the connections of political elites of different countries with figures from ancient history. From this perspective, it is not surprising that the period between the Union of Lublin and the partitions of the Commonwealth of Both Nations is also viewed critically in Lithuania today, not in terms of multiculturalism<sup>13</sup>.

A kind of exception in the context of Lithuanian narratives about multiculturalism is the historical discourse on Vilnius. This is demonstrated by the exhibition “Vilnius, Vilnius, Vilne 1918-1948: One City – Many Stories”. The exhibition was presented at the National Museum in Krakow from 24 May to 3 September 2023, then at the National Art Gallery in Vilnius from 9 November 2023 to 4 February 2024, and between 15 February 2024 and 30 April 2024 at the Historical Museum in Vilnius. The curators of the exhibition were the Polish-Lithuanian team – Giedrė Jankevičiūtė and Andrzej Szczerski<sup>14</sup>. The exhibition, as the title suggests, presents the history of Vilnius from 1918 to 1948, a particularly turbulent period for its culture, community, and political fortunes, extending beyond the duration of the Commonwealth. It consists of seven parts: City Image – myth and reality, Struggle for Vilnius, Artists – portraits and self-portraits, Symbolic Places, Avant-garde Flashes, Everyday Life, and Farewell and Nostalgia. The exhibition focuses on the significance of the city as a centre of socio-cultural life for various ethnic and national

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<sup>13</sup> A. Tatarenko, *Unia lubelska w pamięci kulturowej: spór i dialog [in:] Stosunki Polski z Litwą, Białorusią i Ukrainą 450 lat po unii lubelskiej*, T. Stępniewski, B. Surmacz (eds.), Lublin 2019, pp. 51-52. Cf. H. Łaszkiwicz, *Pamięć i zapomnienie. Węzły pamięci w stosunkach polsko-litewskich*, [www.iesw.lublin.pl/projekty/pliki/IESW-121-02-09.pdf](http://www.iesw.lublin.pl/projekty/pliki/IESW-121-02-09.pdf) [11.02.2024].

<sup>14</sup> *Vilnius, Vilnius, Vilne 1918-1948: One City – Many Stories*, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, <https://mnk.pl/exhibitions/wilno-vilnius-vilne> [17.01.2024].

groups such as Poles, Lithuanians, Jews, and others. It also presents key historical events, urban transformations, and the impact of political events on the daily lives of Vilnius residents. The exhibition contains unique photographs, documents, everyday objects, maps, and multimedia presentations illustrating life in the city during that period. It also emphasises the role of Vilnius as a centre of science, culture, and politics in the former Eastern Europe. The exhibition also touches on sensitive elements of Polish-Lithuanian historical heritage. In the section “Struggle for Vilnius”, Ludomir Sledzinski’s painting “Piłsudski under Vilnius” and a poster with the inscription in Lithuanian “Let’s liberate Vilnius! Let’s destroy the exploiter – the Warsaw parasite” were presented. Thanks to this approach, the exhibition portrays Vilnius as a multicultural city where different ethnic and national groups such as Poles, Lithuanians, Jews, and others coexisted and co-created its socio-cultural life, but also reflects tensions and conflicts between these groups.

The mentioned exhibition echoes narratives of multiculturalism also found in literature, for example, in the works of Czesław Miłosz and Barbara Skarga. These writers describe Vilnius as a Polish, Lithuanian, and Jewish city. Miłosz himself became a kind of symbol of Polish-Lithuanian cultural ties. When a commemorative plaque dedicated to Czesław Miłosz was solemnly unveiled in Vilnius in June 2011, the then Mayor of Vilnius, Artūras Zuokas, said that Poland and Lithuania would have to share Miłosz, just like Mickiewicz, which speaks to the common culture of Poland and Lithuania and obliges the creation of a common future<sup>15</sup>. Multicultural Vilnius was also written about by Barbara Toruńczyk and Tomas Venclova, who expressed this in the famous book “Describing Vilnius”. Venclova de-

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<sup>15</sup> S. Tarasiewicz, *Wilno upamiętniło swego wybitnego obywatela Czesława Miłosza*, “Kurier Wileński”, 8 June 2011, <https://kurierwilenski.lt/2011/06/08/wilno-upamietnilo-swego-wybitnego-obywatela-czeslaw-milosza/> [18.01.2024].



scribes Vilnius in terms that go beyond Polish-Lithuanian relations and memory. He writes about it as a border city, a kind of enclave, a city of spirituality and art, and a city of many cultures and religions, whose heritage connects Poland, Lithuania, and, often forgotten in this context, Belarus<sup>16</sup>.

## Conclusion

The analysis of temporal historical exhibitions organised in Poland and Lithuania allows for several conclusions to be drawn. The Polish perspective often emphasises common values and moments of co-operation, such as Solidarity and Sąjūdis, aiming to build a positive image of relations between the two countries. However, it enables the observation of one of the dominant issues in the approach to heritage in these two countries – the tendency to define certain phenomena, experiences, and figures common to the entire space as “own for one country”. With this approach, the main heir to the heritage of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is Poland. This is starkly evident in the case of multiculturalism and the exhibitions carried out by Polish museums and public history institutions.

There are clear differences in the interpretation of the history and heritage between Poland and Lithuania. The Lithuanian perspective has a rather critical view of the period of union with Poland, seeing it as a time of failure of the state apparatus and processes of Polonization. On the contrary, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth has a decidedly positive place in the cultural memory of Poles. For Poles, it is a mythical golden age and timeless legitimisation of the Polish state and a basic point of reference for its activities. This image of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was maintained by literature

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<sup>16</sup> A. Tatarenko, *Unia lubelska w pamięci kulturowej...*, pp. 54-55.

and art, and today also by historical museum exhibitions, as shown by the examples in the text. In turn, Lithuanians in their historical narratives referring to various forms of statehood rely on the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, not the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Additionally, the analysed exhibitions demonstrate the involvement of high-ranking state officials such as presidents and ministers of foreign affairs as well as the participation of cultural institutions from both countries in the organization of historical exhibitions, testifying to the political and social significance of these actions. These exhibitions serve as a platform for building positive and constructive relations between Poland and Lithuania through dialogue and cooperation.

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# **The past opened up to the future: the activities of the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania in the field of cultural cooperation between Lithuania and Poland**

## **Intruduction**

The National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania is one of the youngest memory institutions in Lithuania, established on 9 July 2008, by a resolution decreed by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, and commencing its activities from 1 January 2009. The mission of the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania is to collect, protect, research, and popularise national and European cultural, artistic, historic, and archaeological museum objects of value that present to the public the history and cultural heritage of the palace of the Lithuanian grand dukes in Vilnius. During its fifteen years of activities, the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania has not only occupied the leading positions

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among Lithuania's other museums, it has also successfully integrated into international cultural heritage institution networks. The National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania became a member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 2009, and of the Association of Castles and Museums around the Baltic Sea in 2010, while from 2019, it joined the European Early Music Network (REMA). Today, official and partnership relations connect the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania with more than 200 European and world monarch and magnate historical residences, museums fostering history and cultural heritage, and other institutions. Presentation of the historical heritage of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in Lithuania and beyond its borders involves constant cooperation with Lithuania's diplomatic embassies abroad and the representative offices of other states in Lithuania. Despite such a broad geography of connections, from the very beginning of the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania's activities, one of the main trajectories of collaboration in the culture and historical memory field has been and remains our neighbour, Poland. The purpose of this article is to present an overview of the cooperation between the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania and Poland's culture and research institutions, highlighting the main trajectories of collaboration, the significance of the realised projects in giving sense to historical anniversaries of importance to both countries and the cultural contribution made in forming a collective memory.

### **The experience of Poland's royal residences in the reconstruction of the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania**

The reconstruction of the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania, part of the Vilnius Lower Castle, which had been swept off the face of the earth in the early 19th century by decree of the occupier, the Russian imperial government, was one of the most important projects under-

taken by the Lithuanian State that had reinstated its independence in 1990. The realisation of this project involved a great deal of careful preparation. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania Rulers' Palace Interiors and Expositions Department, formally established in 2002 within the structure of the Lithuanian Art Museum and, with the allocation of specific funding, already functioning two years later, embarked on further preparatory work for the fitting out of the future rulers' residence. By 2007, this department had been reorganised into a branch of the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania; the structural department of the Lithuanian Art Museum, together with the Castle Research Centre *Lietuvos pilys*, which had from 1993 conducted consecutive complex excavation and research of the Lithuanian grand ducal palace territory and other Vilnius Lower Castle sites, became the basis for the organisation of the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania.

Ahead of reconstructing the historic residence of Lithuania's rulers, the experience of foreign countries was used as a guiding principle. Special attention concentrated on Poland, which not only shared a common history with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania but also had previous experience in the protection and reconstruction of cultural heritage. In the words of the director of the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania, Dr Vydas Dolinskas, "The course taken in establishing a new national culture institution was similar to that taken by Poland's specialists, who participated in the reconstruction of the Warsaw Royal Castle. The museum operating in the reconstructed castle today (the Royal Castle in Warsaw – Monument of National History and Culture) traces its origins to a department of the National Museum in Warsaw, which later went on to become the foundation of the new institution's establishment"<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> V. Dolinskas, *Nacionalinio muziejaus Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės valdovų rūmų 2009-2010 m. veiklos apžvalga* [in:] *Lietuvos didžiųjų kunigaikščių rūmų kronika. Chronicon Palatii Magnorum Ducum Lithuaniae*, vol. 1, 2009-2010, pp. 78-85.

In seeking to amass as much information as possible, the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania Reconstruction Research Expeditions programme, visiting historic residences in neighbouring countries, was initiated and implemented, paying particular attention to typologically similar historic residences-museums, namely – the Warsaw Royal Castle and Krakow's Wawel Royal Castle – National Art Collection (henceforth – the Krakow Wawel Royal Castle). The Lithuanian Art Museum's Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania branch staff, in cooperation with their partners, organised an international educational exhibition in Poland in 2005 titled "The Lublin Castle Holy Trinity Chapel. Where East meets West<sup>3</sup>", while in 2006-2007, the exhibition "The Past Opened Up to the Future. The Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania in Vilnius<sup>4</sup>" was presented at five museums in Poland.

A programme presenting the palaces of European rulers started in 2003, which helped Lithuania's museum personnel not only acquire international experience but also withstand the unfounded criticism coming from opponents to the Palace of the Grand Dukes reconstruction project<sup>5</sup>. As part of this programme, Poland's historical residences were presented by the directors of the Krakow Wawel and Warsaw royal castles, Prof. Jan K. Ostrowski and Prof. Andrzej Rottermund, the deputy director of the Warsaw Royal Castle, Dr Przemysław Mrozowski, the head of the Malbork (Marienburg) Castle, Dr Mariusz Mierzwiński, and other museum professionals from Poland.

With the establishment of an independent museum institution in the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania in 2009, close cooper-

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<sup>3</sup> R. Černius, *Ten, kur Rytai susitinka su Vakaraais*, "Lietuvos Muziejai" 2005, vol. 1-2, pp. 37-38.

<sup>4</sup> "The Warsaw State Archeological Museum, the Wrocław City Archaeological Museum, the Schecin National Museum, the Biskup Archeological Museum, the Krakow Wawel Royal Palace Museum opened their exhibition halls to this traveling educational exhibition with great hospitality", see: V. Dolinskas, *The Educational exhibition "The Past Open to the Future. The Great Lithuanian Duke Palace in Vilnius" traveled to Polish cities*, "Lietuvos Muziejai" 2007, vol. 4, p. 27, [https://www.museums.lt/old/Zurnalas/2007\\_4/LM\\_Nr4\\_26\\_27c.pdf](https://www.museums.lt/old/Zurnalas/2007_4/LM_Nr4_26_27c.pdf) [4.01.2021].

<sup>5</sup> See: V. Dolinskas, *Nacionalinio muziejaus Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės...*, p. 80.



Symbolic opening of the reconstructed, though not yet fully furnished, Palace held on 6 July 2009. The heads of state or governments from 15 states participated in the symbolic opening of the Palace. Photo: Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania (Vilnius)



ation links continued to be developed with the Warsaw Royal Castle and the Krakow Wawel Royal Castle. The exchange programme for specialists from these museums and the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania that commenced 14 years ago continues to be successfully realised to this day. Specialists from Poland’s museums who come to Lithuania on official trips are familiarised with the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania reconstruction project, the museum’s collections, its permanent expositions and temporary exhibitions, share their experiences with scientists and researchers, collection curators, educators and exhibition curators, taking a deeper interest in their work. With the mediation of museum personnel from the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania, our colleagues from Poland also visit other museums in Vilnius and Lithuania, broadening their official and institutional contact lists and becoming acquainted with our country’s most famous historical and cultural objects. In turn, when participating in exchange programmes in Poland, specialists from the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania receive a thorough introduction to the Warsaw and Krakow Wawel royal castles and other historic residence-museums. They also visit institutions fostering the history and cultural heritage of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, cooperate with the specialists working there, and thus gain new knowledge and valuable experience<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> See: *Specialistų mainų programa – muziejinės ir kultūrinės patirties šaltinis*, 19.04.2013, <https://www.valdovurumai.lt/lt/naujienos/item/1635/specialistu-mainu-programa-muziejines-ir-kulturines-patirties-saltinis/> [24.01.2024].

## Exhibitions presenting Lithuania and Poland's shared heritage

One of the most prominent fields of activity of the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania is the international exhibitions that present the shared heritage of Lithuania and Poland and deepen visitors' knowledge of the historical connections between the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. These kinds of activities commenced from the very inception of the Museum itself, even before any fitted-out premises existed. In 2009, so as to commemorate the symbolic date of the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania's opening to the public, an inaugural exhibition was organised – “Wawel in Vilnius. From the Jagiellonians to the End of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth” – which was displayed in the Old Arsenal, at the Museum of Applied Arts<sup>7</sup>. The exhibition was dedicated to marking Lithuania's millennium, while its organisation carried not only deep symbolic meaning but also highlighted the drive to develop cultural and research cooperation between Lithuania and Poland. Impressive historic art treasures were brought from the Wawel Royal Castle in Krakow to Vilnius for this occasion, among them – some of the world-famous textiles from Sigismund Augustus' tapestry collection, which adorned the residential palace of the Vilnius Lower Castle in the 16th-17th centuries. As the director of the Lithuanian Art Museum, Romualdas Budrys, one of the organisers of this exhibition, remarked – it was the “largest and most meaningful cultural exchange project between Lithuania and Poland, which was realised in Vilnius, the 2009 European Capital of Culture”<sup>8</sup>. The presentation in Lithuania's capital of historical art treasures amassed and kept at the Krakow Wawel Royal Castle not

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<sup>7</sup> *Vavelis Vilniuje. Nuo Jogailaičių iki Abiejų Tautų Respublikos pabaigos, Lietuvos tūkstantmečio programos parodos katalogas, Taikomosios dailės muziejus, Vilnius, 2009 m. liepos 5 – spalio 4 d.*, J.T. Petrus et al. (eds.), Vilnius 2009.

<sup>8</sup> R. Budrys, *Vavelis Vilniuje* [in:] *Vavelis Vilniuje...*, p. 9.

only testified to the close historic relations between both nations but also to the contemporary cultural dialogues being developed today, in which it was possible to discern a modern revival of old traditions wherein the ruler's accumulated art collections would travel from Krakow to Vilnius and back again, along with their owner.

Four years later, on 6 July 2013, when the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania opened the international exhibition “Historical Tapestries from Polish Royal Residences” to visitors, exhibits were also borrowed from the Warsaw Royal Castle and the Krakow Wawel Royal Castle. Two 16th-century tapestries arrived in Vilnius that had once adorned the residences of the King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, Sigismund Augustus, and the Radziwiłł princes. On 13 October 2015, a unique treasure from the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania travelled under special supervision to Poland – a mid-16th century tapestry acquired at a Paris auction in 2009 that used to decorate the Vilnius residence of the King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, Sigismund Augustus (1544/1548-1572). This particular textile was displayed at the Krakow Wawel Royal Castle as part of its permanent Residential Apartments exposition. Sigismund Augustus' Vilnius tapestry was presented under the banner of “Lithuania in Krakow: the 2015 Cultural Season” programme, in the exhibition “Sigismund Augustus' Armorial Tapestry from Vilnius”, which was open in Wawel from 16 October 2015, until mid-January 2016.

In 2023, as part of the commemoration of the 700th anniversary of Vilnius, the symbolic journey of the Polish and Lithuanian rulers' amassed art collection from Krakow to Vilnius was echoed by the uniquely splendid exhibition “The Tapestries of Sigismund Augustus in Vilnius”. The exhibition of as many as 23 of Sigismund Augustus' tapestries held at the Palace of the Grand Dukes drew enormous interest from visitors; more than 60,000 visitors saw it over the course of three months.



Concert dedicated to Renaissance music and poetry of Jan Kochanowski, organised in the Context of Exhibition "The Tapestries of Sigismund Augustus in Vilnius", 31 May 2023. Photo: Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania (Vilnius)

The opening of the exhibition, which was under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Lithuania, Gitanas Nausėda, and the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, took place on a symbolic day for both states – May 3. During his welcome speech, the director of the Krakow Wawel Royal Castle, Prof. Andrzej Betlej, noted that “the exhibition of the tapestries of King Sigismund II Augustus at the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania in Vilnius is an unprecedented event”, because “as a part of the Wawel Crown Treasury and a splendid backdrop for momentous state ceremonies, the tapestries of Sigismund Augustus have acquired a status akin to crown jewels”<sup>9</sup>. The museum’s director expressed the hope that “this unique presentation will bring everyone closer to the vision of the times of the flourishing and powerful Polish-Lithuanian State, strengthened by the far-sighted political and culture-building policies of the last Jagiellon”<sup>10</sup>. Prof. Andrzej Betlej also drew attention to the fact that the tapestry collection bears testimony to our common history, but in the very difficult times we face today, it is also a visible sign of unity and common aspirations”<sup>11</sup>.

The exhibition of Sigismund Augustus’ tapestries was enriched by a substantial cultural programme during which visitors could listen to a lecture by the most well-known Polish textile specialist and researcher of Sigismund Augustus’ tapestries, Magdalena Piwocka, as well as hear Jan Kochanowski’s poetry recited by actors Birutė Mar and Vladas Bagdonas. The verses of this Renaissance-era Polish poet were accompanied by a concert of Poland’s early music performers.

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<sup>9</sup> A. Betlej, *The Symbol of our Unity, Common Aspirations and Common Purposes* [in:] *Žygimanto Augusto gobelenai Vilniuje* [The Tapestries of Sigismund Augustus in Vilnius] *Tarptautinės parodos katalogas* [International exhibition catalogue], M. Piwocka, M. Uzorka, V. Dolinskas, Ž. Mikailienė (eds.), Vilnius 2023, pp. 26-27.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

The 2009 international exhibition “The Union of Lublin and its Epoch in the Works of Jan Matejko” helped the Lithuanian public gain a clearer understanding of the union bonds linking Lithuania and Poland, dedicated to marking the 440th anniversary of the Union of Lublin. The exhibition displayed Matejko’s painting “The Union of Lublin”, kept at the National Museum in Warsaw, along with other museum objects of value.

At the end of 2010, amid the echoes of the 600th anniversary of the victory in the Battle of Grunwald, museum specialists from Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine held an international exhibition at the Radziwiłł Palace in Vilnius, “How this happened in the Great Battle... Exposé of Grunwald”. This exhibition was an extension of the exhibition held at the Krakow Wawel Royal Castle between 15 July and 30 September 2010, “The Token of a Magnificent Victory. To Mark the Six-hundredth Anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald”. The Vilnius exhibition sought to reveal historical memory phenomena related to the joint victory of the armies of Poland and Lithuania, symbols of this triumph, and ways that they were recorded from the 15th century to our current days, showing the historic image of Grunwald’s heroes in the historiographical tradition, literature, and art<sup>12</sup>.

The history of magnate families of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was revealed to visitors by the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania’s museologists and their partners in impressive international exhibitions: “The Crosses stand for virtue, the Arrow for victory... The Sapiehas – statesmen, art patrons and collectors” (2012) and “The Radziwiłłs. History and Legacy of the Princes” (2019). In this, the first fundamental exhibition focusing on the Radziwiłł princes to have ever been held in Lithuania’s history of museum events, more than 350 exhibits from around 40 museums, libraries,

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<sup>12</sup> M. Uzorka, B. Verbiejūtė, *Valdovų rūmų muziejaus parodinė veikla 2009-2010 m.* [in:] *Lietuvos didžiųjų kunigaikščių...*, pp. 118-120.

archives, churches, monasteries, and private collections located in seven countries around the world were on display. The exhibitions dedicated to the Sapiehas and the Radziwiłłs were both accompanied by a comprehensive cultural events programme and the release of catalogues presenting the latest scholarly research on these topics<sup>13</sup>.

In 2015, with the collaboration of three institutions – the Warsaw Royal Castle, Wawel Royal Castle, and the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania – an exhibition was held uniting all three historical capitals (Krakow, Warsaw, and Vilnius) “*Praemiando incitat. The Order of St. Stanislaus*”, which was dedicated to mark the 250th anniversary of the establishment of the Order of St. Stanislaus. The exhibition and the publication of the accompanying catalogue not only contributed to reviving historical memory, but also shed new light on the most complicated period in the existence of the joint Polish-Lithuanian State – the second half of the 18th century, while also encouraging a new assessment of the reign of the last monarch and the epoch of the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth<sup>14</sup>. This issue was continued and supplemented with new insights in the exhibition held under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Lithuania, Gitanas Nausėda, and the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, marking the 230th anniversary of the Constitution of 3 May 1791 and the Mutual Assurance of the Two Nations

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<sup>13</sup> *Kryžiai yra dorybės ženklas, o Strėlė – pergalės... Sapiegos – valstybininkai, meno mecenatai ir kolekcininkai: tarptautinės parodos katalogas, 2012 m. vasario 16 – gegužės 20 d., Vilniaus paveikslų galerija* [The Crosses stand for virtue, the Arrow for victory... The Sapiehas – statesmen, art patrons and collectors / Krzyże znaczą cnotę, a Strzała zwycięstwo... Sapiehowie – mężowie stanu, mecenasi sztuki i kolekcjonerzy], V. Dolinskas, B. Verbiejūtė (eds.), Vilnius 2012; *Radvilos. Kunigaikščių istorija ir paveldas: tarptautinės parodos katalogas, 2019 m. spalio 10 d. – 2020 m. sausio 12 d.* [The Radziwiłłs. History and Legacy of the Princes], V. Dolinskas, G. Džiaugytė, R. Lelekauskaitė (eds.), vol. 1-2, Vilnius 2020.

<sup>14</sup> *Praemiando incitat. Šv. Stanislovo ordinas: skirta 250-osioms Šventojo Stanislovo ordino įsteigimo metinėms (1765-2015): tarptautinės parodos katalogas, 2016 m. vasario 15 – gegužės 8 d.* [Praemiando incitat. The Order of St Stanislaus], V. Dolinskas, E. Gudas, G. Skujutė (eds.), Vilnius 2016.

– “To Keep the Homeland Alive. Lithuania and Poland in the Epoch of the 1791 Constitution” – which opened at the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania in the autumn of 2021. The exhibition catalogue, giving a thorough presentation of the epoch of the reign of the King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, Stanislaus August, the significance of the Constitution of 3 May, and the struggle for statehood, was released in 2022<sup>15</sup>.

This exhibition, accompanied by scientific, cultural, and educational event programmes, revealed to visitors of the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania the latest scholarly examinations of the efforts of the last monarch of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Stanislaus August Poniatowski, to summon the nobility towards a common goal – the revitalisation of the state, while also becoming a stimulus to rethink the history and legacy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of the 18th century.

Another international exhibition held at the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania in 2018, “Lithuania, my Homeland... Adam Mickiewicz and his poem Pan Tadeusz”, invited the public to foster historical memory and remember the heritage of the modern nations continuing the shared traditions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – the Lithuanians, Poles, and Belarusians. The exhibition in Vilnius (from 27 November 2018, until 24 February 2019) started the month of celebrations for the restoration of Poland’s statehood and continued until the month-long celebration of Lithuania’s restored statehood. The exhibition’s exclusive status in the context of modern relations between Lithuania and Poland,

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<sup>15</sup> *Kad Tėvynė gyvuotų. Lietuva ir Lenkija 1791 m. konstitucijos epochoje: paroda, skirta Abiejų Tautų Respublikos 1791 m. gegužės 3 d. konstitucijos ir Tarpusavio įžado 230-osioms metinėms: tarptautinės parodos katalogas, 2021 m. spalio 19 d. – 2022 m. sausio 16 d.* [O dobro Ojczyzny. Litwa i Polska w epoce Konstytucji 3 maja / To keep the Homeland alive. Lithuania and Poland in the epoch of the 1791 constitution], R. Šmigelskytė-Stukienė, G. Džiaugytė-Burbulienė (eds.), Vilnius 2022.



their cultural exchange, and the relevance of their shared heritage was also proven by the fact that it was under the patronage of both countries' prime ministers, and the ministers of culture<sup>16</sup>.

The starting points for holding the exhibition "Lithuania, my Homeland... Adam Mickiewicz and his poem Pan Tadeusz" were the excellent exhibition held at the Wawel Royal Castle in Krakow in 1998, and the impressive expositions at the Pan Tadeusz Museum opened in Wrocław as recently as in 2016<sup>17</sup>. The organisers of the Vilnius exhibition ended up being our partners from Poland – the Krakow Wawel Royal Castle, the National Ossolinski Institute and its branch, the Pan Tadeusz Museum, along with the Adam Mickiewicz Institute and the Polish Institute in Vilnius. The international exhibition "Lithuania, my Homeland... Adam Mickiewicz and his poem Pan Tadeusz" and its catalogue presented more than 250 exhibits from over 30 memory institutions in Poland and Lithuania (museums, libraries, archive institutes) and private individuals<sup>18</sup>.

Another phenomenon worth mentioning in the field of cultural cooperation between Poland and Lithuania would be the one-masterpiece exhibitions, which allow for a new reading and understanding of the historical narratives binding the two nations. Of such projects, I would mention the 2017 exhibition dedicated to marking the 630th anniversary of Lithuania's baptism and the 600th anniversary of Samogitia's baptism, titled "Baptism of Lithuania. The Painting of Wojciech Gerson". The painting by the eminent Polish academic realist painter Wojciech Gerson (1831-1901), created to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Lithuania's baptism, stands out not only for its

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<sup>16</sup> V. Dolinskas, *Adam Mickiewicz and his Pan Tadeusz came to Vilnius [in:] Lietuva, Tėvyne mano... Adomas Mickevičius ir jo poema Ponas Tadas: tarptautinės parodos katalogas: 2018 m. lapkričio 27 d. – 2019 m. vasario 24 d.* [Litwa, Ojczyzna moja... Adam Mickiewicz i jego poemat Pan Tadeusz / Lithuania, my Homeland... Adam Mickiewicz and his Poem Pan Tadeusz], M. Uzorka (ed.), Vilnius 2018, pp. 17-18.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem.

monumental dimensions and rare monochromatic palette but also for the historic subject matter and its interpretations. Gerson's painting "Baptism of Lithuania", created during the Russian occupation, had to serve as a reminder and signify the historical bonds between the nations of the partitioned Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Poland and Lithuania, the ties shared by the occupied Polish and Lithuanian nations, and their early statehood traditions. This was especially relevant after the mass repressions that followed the 1863 Uprising. As the director of the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania, Dr Vydas Dolinskas noted, "the vitality of the memory of the historical bonds between Lithuania and Poland plus the relevance of these links in our modern days was testified by the organisation of the display of Gerson's "Baptism of Lithuania" in Vilnius, not to mention the story of its patronage and the attention shown by the leaders and Catholic hierarchy in both states to this project. The exhibition was initiated by the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Lithuania to the Republic of Poland, Dr Šarūnas Adomavičius. The idea was convivially supported by the Director of the Museum of the John Paul II Collection, Joanna M. Grzybowska, and the Director of the Museum of the Warsaw Archdiocese Fr Dr Mirosław Nowak. The Metropolitan Archbishop of Vilnius, Dr Gintaras Grušas, and the Metropolitan Archbishop of Warsaw, Cardinal Dr Kazimierz Nycz, also approved of the initiative and intentions behind the exhibition. Aside from the honourable pastors who agreed to show their patronage, the Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, Prof. Viktoras Pranckietis, the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, Marek Kuchciński, and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania, Saulius Skvernelis, were also the exhibition's patrons"<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> V. Dolinskas, *An exhibition in commemoration of Lithuania's baptism at the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania* [in:] *Lietuvos krikštai. Voiccho Gersono paveikslas: tarptautinės parodos ka-*

Close cultural cooperation was also testified by the 2022 exhibition presented jointly by the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania, the Krakow Wawel Royal Castle, and the Adam Mickiewicz Institute (Warsaw, Poland), “Filius vero unicus... Children’s armor of Sigismundus Augustus”. On display at this exhibition was a unique historic relic of Polish and Lithuanian heritage – the exquisitely-made suit of child armour of the Crown Prince of Poland and Lithuania, Sigismund Augustus (1520-1572). This exceptional historical treasure, which was brought into Lithuania for the occasion, reminded visitors not only of the role of the Gediminid-Jagiellon dynasty in 15th-16th-century Europe but also of the history of Vilnius, which had become an important centre of politics, diplomacy, economy, culture, and art for the entire European region during the reign of Sigismund Augustus<sup>20</sup>.

In 2023, Vilnius’ 700th-anniversary programme at the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania also ended with an exhibition of a single masterpiece – Kazimierz Alchimowicz’s painting “The Funeral of Gediminas, which opened on 14 October 2023. The monumental canvas, created in 1888, is considered one of the most mature of Alchimowicz’s works. The artist himself gifted the painting to the National Museum in Krakow as soon as the museum was established. Interestingly, the idea of holding an exhibition of this painting came to the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Zbigniew Rau, while he was in Vilnius for the NATO Summit. The idea was supported by the head of the Polish Institute in Lithuania, Dorota Mamaj. The National Museum in Krakow and a regular supporter of joint historical heritage projects at the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lith-

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*talogas: 2017 m. rugėjo 26 – gruodžio 10 d.* [Chrzest Litwy. Obraz Wojciecha Gersona / Baptism of Lithuania. The Painting by Wojciech Gerson], V. Dolinskas, Ž. Mikailienė (eds.), Vilnius 2017, pp. 38-39.

<sup>20</sup> See: *Filius vero unicus... Vaikiški Žygimanto Augusto šarvai: tarptautinės vieno šedevro parodos katalogas, 2022 04 08-06 05*, K.J. Czyżewski, V. Dolinskas, Ž. Mikailienė (eds.), Vilnius 2022.



Opening Ceremony of the Exhibition “Lublin – the city of the Union between Lithuania and Poland”, 6 July 2019. Photo: Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania (Vilnius)

uania, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, helped arrange the difficult transportation of the painting and its exposition. The exhibition was held under the patronage of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Republics of Poland and Lithuania, and the Ministers of Culture of both countries. The exhibition of Kazimierz Alchimowicz's painting "The Funeral of Gediminas" attracted a lot of interest from Vilnius residents and guests of the Lithuanian capital. More than 24,000 of them visited it in two and a half months.

International exhibitions presenting the shared historical heritage of Lithuania and Poland and the scientific, cultural, and educational event programmes accompanying them have always drawn great interest among visitors. Figures representing these educational activities and events, and the volume of visitors they attracted, appear in the table on the next page.

### **International academic conferences**

International academic conferences play an important role in fostering historical memory and searching for common assessments and points of view. The meetings of scholars from both states make it possible to discuss important issues in Lithuania and Poland's historic and cultural development together, while also encouraging us to alter historiographical assessments, for which there are often no grounds in historical source data. One of the first conferences arranged by the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania and its foreign partners was the conference "The Union of Lublin: Its Idea and Continuity" held in 2009, dedicated to marking the 440th anniversary of the state treaty between Lithuania and Poland. The conference attracted more than 20 of the most famous historians, culture researchers and lawyers from Lithuania, Poland, and neighbouring countries, while the collection of scholarly articles prepared and published based on the papers presented at the confer-



Opening Ceremony of the Exhibition "Filius vero unicus. Children's armor of Sigismundus Augustus", 28 April 2022.  
Photo: Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania (Vilnius)

Exhibition duration	Exhibition title	Educational activities (number)	Educational activity participants	Events (number)	Event participants	Guided visits and individual visitors	Total exhibition visitors
1. 10 October 2023-14 January 2024	Alchimowicz's painting <i>The Funeral of Gediminas</i>	15	291	5	966	23,046	24,303 (2023 data only)
2. 4 May 2023-30 July 2023	The Tapestries of Sigismund Augustus in Vilnius	31	411	6	1,521	59,098	61,030
3. 8 April 2022-5 June 2022	<i>Filius vero unicus...</i> Children's armour of Sigismundus Augustus	106	2,238	5	636	18,420	21,294
4. 19 October 2021-16 January 2022	<i>To Keep the Homeland Alive</i> . Lithuania and Poland in 1791	35	591	8	3,000	15,182	18,773
5. 10 October 2019-12 January 2020	The Radziwills. History and Legacy of the Princes	127	2,603	10	3,131	49,377	55,111
6. 6 July 2019-1 December 2019	Lublin – City of the Poland-Lithuania Union	4	774	14	294	61,516	62,584
7. 27 November 2018-24 February 2019	Adam Mickiewicz and his poem <i>Pan Tadeusz</i>	12	2,335	60	1,106	20,577	24,018
8. 26 September 2017-10 December 2017	<i>Baptism of Lithuania</i> . The Painting by Wojciech Gerson	No data recorded	-	6	1,560	26,447	28,007

ence became the latest word in historiography, inspiring a change of established historiographical assessments<sup>21</sup>.

The union theme was continued in 2010 with the international academic conference “Saint Hedwig and Lithuania”. The conference searched for connections between the dynastic unions of Hungary, Poland, and Lithuania, looking at relations between King Louis I and Lithuania, the expression of female authority in the times of the Anjou dynasty, the role of Queen Hedwig, her relations with Lithuania, political status, and historical memory, among other themes. A new aspect was taken to look at the history of the two nations, namely – through the role of the Church in the state – in the international academic conference held in 2016, “Cathedrals in the capital cities of the Two Nations. The Episcopal churches of Krakow and Vilnius”. Approximately 50 academic papers were presented at this conference, arranged by the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania and the Wawel Royal Castle. The papers presented at this conference helped the audience understand relations between the Church and the governing elite, the role of bishops, chapters, and the cathedral’s clergy, and the position and role of cathedrals in society as sacred heritage objects and necropolises from the Middle Ages to the modern period.

Conferences dealing with the history of magnate families of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania drew strong attention not only within the academic community but from the broader public as well. Of such conferences, worthy of mention are the international academic events held in 2015 – “The Radziwiłł Princes. The most eminent magnate family in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania” and “Michał Kleofas Ogiński. The person and the epoch”.

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<sup>21</sup> *Liublino unija: idėja ir jos tęstinumas* [Unia Lubelska: idea i jej kontynuacja]: *tarptautinės mokslinės konferencijos, vykusios 2009 m. lapkričio 19-20 d. Vilniuje, Taikomosios dailės muziejuje, pranešimų pagrindu parengtas mokslinių straipsnių rinkinys*, L. Glemža, R. Šmigelskytė-Stukienė (eds.), Vilnius 2011.



When organising the conferences, special attention is also paid to unveiling the history of Lithuania's capital Vilnius, its status and significance. This particular theme was developed in conferences held in 2022 "Vilnius – capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania" and in 2023 "Vilnius and its communities in the 13th-21st centuries: seven centuries of the history of coexistence in the city". This conference was organised by the Lithuanian Institute of History, Vilnius University, and the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania in cooperation with Poland's research centres (the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, the Royal Łazienki Museum, the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and the University of Białystok).

Relevant issues in the history of Lithuania and Poland are also analysed at annual 18th-century researchers' conferences held at the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania. In 2023, to mark the 250th anniversary of the National Commission of Education, the 22nd Conference of 18th-century Researchers "The Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 18th Century: citizen, family, education" was organised. The conference invited participants to deepen their knowledge of 18th-century educational reform projects and the activities of these projects' initiators, means of civil education, the activities of the National Commission of Education and its importance, and the activities of Vilnius University and other educational institutions in the late 18th – early 19th centuries. At this conference, presentations were made by academics from various research centres in Lithuania and Poland. The discussion between Lithuania and Poland's academics summarising the event highlighted the significance of the National Commission of Education on society in both Poland and Lithuania.

## **The spread of scholarly knowledge in society: Warsaw-Vilnius Colloquiums**

In 2022, the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania’s links to Polish academic institutions broached new horizons. A cooperation agreement was signed with the Centre for East European Studies of the University of Warsaw regarding the organisation of the Warsaw-Vilnius Colloquiums cycle at the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania. The aim of this project is to provide society with high-quality cultural services, foster historical self-awareness, and acquaint the public with the history, politics, and culture of the Central East European region. At the initiative of the head of the Centre for East European Studies, Professor Jan Malicki, and the head of this centre’s Vilnius branch, Professor Andžej Pukšto, in 2022-2023 there were 10 Warsaw-Vilnius Colloquiums events (lectures, discussions, meetings with scholars and politicians), attended by close to 700 people. Among the most popular were the lecture by American political scientist John Stanley Micgiel (Columbia University of the City of New York) “Joe Biden’s and Vladimir Putin’s diplomatic face-off” and Prof. Kazuhiko Sawada’s (Japan) lecture about Bronisław Piłsudski as well as other meetings for the presentation of foreign scholars’ research results.

The lecture titled “Poland and Russia. In the neighbourhood of freedom and despotism” by Professor Andrzej Nowak of the University of Warsaw urged listeners to take a new look at the Russia factor in the history of Lithuania and Poland. This speaker searched for answers to the following questions: Was the Kingdom of Poland and later, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, capable of containing the emergence and development of the Russian Empire? Did the Polish nation understand the essence of Russian imperialism in time? Why did the Polish-Lithuanian State decline and what lessons have been learned (or not) in the 21st century? Why did Józef Piłsudski successfully restore Poland, yet fail to convene a union of Central East

European states that, looking into the future, could have effectively resisted aggressors? Is Vladimir Putin realising old imperialistic ideas?

All the Warsaw-Vilnius Colloquiums events were digitalised and are available online on the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania YouTube channel<sup>22</sup>. This undoubtedly serves to further broaden the spread of scholarly knowledge among society.

## Conclusion

To summarise the cooperation of the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania with Poland’s culture and research institutions, it may be said that the historic rulers’ residence reconstructed in the heart of Vilnius has, during its 15 years of activity, become not only a symbol of Lithuania’s statehood and a centre for the actualisation of historical memory and cultural heritage but is also a place for the entrenchment of dialogue between neighbouring states sharing a common past – Lithuania and Poland.

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<sup>22</sup> Prof. Kazuhiko Sawada’s lecture about Bronisław Piłsudski, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jg459DH0j80> [9.01.2024]; Dr Adam Eberhardt’s lecture about Moldova between Russia and the West, between peace and war, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2XBU85he4FA&t=8s> [9.01.2024] and others [9.01.2024].

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Karolis Dambrauskas<sup>1</sup>

# **An international perspective on post-socialist land reform in (South-Eastern) Lithuania\***

## **Introduction**

The Treaty on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation of the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Poland, signed by Lithuania and Poland in 1994, set out how the rights of Lithuanian Poles and Polish Lithuanians would be guaranteed in both countries. Throughout the thirty years of the treaty, the cultural rights of both minorities have received considerable attention, much of which has been paid to ensuring the minorities' rights to education in their mother tongue as well as to the original spelling of personal names – issues of importance for the Polish minority in Lithuania. In this chapter, I focus on one more issue that has been of no less relevance to the Poles in Lithuania for the past thirty years, until today. In Article 15 of the Treaty, both parties pledged that in the future they would “refrain from any action that could lead to the assimilation

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\* This chapter is a revised version of a part of the dissertation “Mapping ethnicity-property nexus: framing and negotiating ethnicity in the process of land restitution in South-Eastern Lithuania”, defended in 2022 at the Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences.

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of persons belonging to national minorities against their will, and, in accordance with international standards, refrain from any action that would lead to changes in the ethnic composition of territories inhabited by national minorities<sup>23</sup>". One of the actions that could have triggered these changes was the desovietization reforms introduced soon after the restoration of independence, including the restitution of land collectivised by the Soviets to its former owners. In what follows, I discuss how the post-socialist land restitution influenced the adherence to the principle enshrined in the treaty between the two countries. Avoiding possible biases, I look at the enforcement of the principle from the perspective of the main international body – the Council of Europe – set up to enshrine human rights on a continent devastated after World War II. I also discuss the issue of land restitution for Poles in Lithuania as well as Lithuania's official responses to the Council's comments and assessment in the Council's reports on the human rights situation in Lithuania. In doing so, I aim to understand what kind of governmentality had been shaping the attitude toward the issues that national minorities faced in Lithuania at that time.

Land restitution in Lithuania started in 1991 when, on 18 June, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania passed a restitution law called "On the Procedure and Conditions of the Restoration of the Rights of Ownership to the Existing Real Property". The aim of the reform was to restore justice to those who had suffered from the nationalisation of their property, in this case land, by the Soviet occupying regime. In independent Lithuania, only the citizens were entitled to the right to recover their land. By opting for a rather lib-

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<sup>2</sup> *Treaty on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation of the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Poland* [Lietuvos Respublikos ir Lenkijos Respublikos draugiškų santykių ir gero kaimyninio bendradarbiavimo sutartis], 26 November 1994, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.11154> [12.01.2024].

<sup>3</sup> Here and below are the author's English translations.

eral model of citizenship, the government of independent Lithuania made it possible for all persons living on the territory of the country at the time to obtain Lithuanian citizenship. However, the possibility of getting back one's land was not available to Poles who had emigrated to Poland after World War II and were Polish citizens (Lithuanian law does not allow dual citizenship, with only a few exceptions).

The most complicated and lengthy land restitution process was in south-eastern Lithuania, in and around the capital city. The region, which was part of the Polish Republic between the wars, is home to a sizeable Polish minority and, therefore, land restitution has affected them, with an inevitable impact on the relations between ethnic groups. What also gave it a distinctive character compared to land restitution in the rest of the country was the existence of the so-called street-plot settlements (Lith. *rėžiniai kaimai*) in the region between the two world wars, which were characterised by an archaic form of land tenure. The legacy of the street-plot settlements often added to the complexity of land restitution for the local population of south-eastern Lithuania.

Land restitution is, therefore, an important issue for the Polish community in Lithuania. During the period between 2004-2013, the return of land to its rightful owners in Vilnius and the Vilnius region was one of the main issues discussed in the Polish minority media<sup>4</sup>. Some Polish minority intellectuals maintained an opinion that the compromised restitution was one of the factors causing mistrust between the Lithuanian political elite and local Poles. The 1996 Law on Restitution, which provided for the return of property expropriated during the Soviet and Nazi occupation, included the possibility of returning land in places where it was once held but was no longer

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<sup>4</sup> G. Kazėnas, A. Jakubauskas, I. Gaižauskaitė, R. Kacevičius, A. Visockaitė, *Lietuvos Lenkų Tautinės Mažumos Identiteto Tyrimas / Badania dot. tożsamości polskiej mniejszości narodowej na Litwie*, Mykolo Romerio universitetas, 2014, p. 57.



available, by relocating the land (or rather the rights to it), and recovering it in another part of Lithuania. According to Mariusz Antonowicz, although a number of ethnic Lithuanians were also influenced by this provision, the Poles of south-eastern Lithuania were the most affected, as nationally, the Vilnius region's "most attractive and expensive land became the main target of various corruption schemes"<sup>5</sup>. Such concerns are not without reason as, over the years of independence, the number of Lithuanians has increased in Vilnius and the surrounding municipalities (see Table 1). Land resettlement from other parts of the country may have contributed to this.

Although land restitution is almost complete both in Lithuania as a whole and in the southeastern part of the country, it remains a topical issue due to the fact that it is still pending, mainly in the capital, Vilnius. As of 1 January 2023, 2,865 citizens were left to restore their property rights. The largest number of people who have not regained their land is in Vilnius and Grigiškės. In Trakai, 33 citizens remain to restore their property rights<sup>6</sup>. In 2024, Vilnius City Municipality completed the design of the land plots for land restitution and handed them over to the National Land Office, which is responsible for land restitution for individuals. Under the current procedure, residents whose land is included in the land to be bought back by the state and cannot be returned in kind can apply to the National Land Office for compensation in the form of forest. If this is not done, monetary compensation will be paid<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> M. Antonowicz, *Quo Vadis Wileńszczyzna?*, "Naujasis Židinys-Aidai" 2015, no. 5, pp. 21-22.

<sup>6</sup> *Residents who have not regained their urban land can claim a forest plot until 1 November* [Žemės miestuose neatgavę gyventojai iki lapkričio 1 d. galės pretenduoti į miško sklypą], lrt.lt, 23 March 2023, <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/verslas/4/1945201/zemes-miestuose-neatgave-gyventoja-i-iki-lapkricio-1-d-gales-pretenduoti-i-misko-sklypa> [12.01.2024].

<sup>7</sup> *Vilnius government has finalised the design of land plots for land restitution* [Vilniaus valdžia baigė projektuoti sklypus žemės gražinimui], lrt.lt, 10 January 2024, <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/verslas/4/2167763/vilniaus-valdzia-baige-projektuoti-sklypus-zemes-grazinimui> [12.01.2024].

**Table 1. Ethno-demographic changes in the municipalities of Vilnius County**

Municipality	2001 census			2011 census			2021 census					
	Poles	%	Lithuanians	%	Poles	%	Lithuanians	%	Poles	%	Lithuanians	%
Vilnius	104,446	19	318,510	58	88,408	17	338,758	63	85,436	15	373,513	67
Vilnius dist.	56,197	64	19,855	22	49,648	52	30,967	32	45,018	47	37,090	39
Šalčininkai dist.	31,223	80	4,086	10	26,858	78	3,746	11	22,933	76	3,789	13
Trakai dist.	12,403	33	19,798	53	103,62	30	19,383	56	8,822	28	19,003	59
Švenčionys dist.	9,100	28	16,899	51	7,239	26	14,723	53	5,583	24	12,709	55
Elektrėnai dist.	2,175	8	23,740	82	1,769	7	20,834	83	1,572	7	19,651	84
Širvintos dist.	2,019	10	17,507	87	1,628	9	15,290	87	1,291	9	13,150	88
Ukmergė dist.	335	1	45,901	94	280	1	37,752	94	257	1	32,517	94

Source: Statistics Lithuania<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Population and Housing Census. Population of the largest nationalities in Vilnius county [2021 m. gyventojų ir būstų surašymas. Gausiausių tautybių gyventojai Vilniaus apskrityje], "Statistics Lithuania" 2021, [https://osp.stat.gov.lt/lt/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize?has=3882e6af-69e6-4d86-bfee-473dfeab2dbe#/\[12.01.2024\]](https://osp.stat.gov.lt/lt/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize?has=3882e6af-69e6-4d86-bfee-473dfeab2dbe#/[12.01.2024]).

## **International assessments of restitution and government responses to them**

International reports issued between 1997 and 2008 by the Council of Europe's Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights continuously emphasised problems that members of minorities living in south-eastern Lithuania experienced while seeking to have their rights to formerly owned land restored. In its responses to these kinds of observations, the government argued that the restitution process was carried out according to the principle of treating every citizen equally. The government emphasised that the roots of the problems regarding the restitution process lay not only in failures of the country's institutions but also in individual responsibility for the process of those citizens seeking restitution of their land. In the eyes of the government, the reform's design was without any deficiencies, and problems were due to external reasons, defined by corruption or lack of involvement among people interested in having their land returned. I discuss this in more detail below.

In 1997, the Council of Europe's Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights issued a report "Obligations and commitments of Lithuania as a member state". The report described how the government of Lithuania was following the obligations to ensure the rights of national minorities that the country had committed itself to by joining the Council of Europe. The document contained an "Introductory Memorandum of the Committee on Legal Affairs & Human Rights" prepared by rapporteur György Frunda. The memorandum included a section on "Administrative reform and restitution of property issues", where several issues related to minority rights and land restitution were mentioned.

First, the report noted that in 1995 the government had expanded the boundaries of Vilnius city, as requested by the city council. During the period of independence, the city council embarked on the development of the city, previously limited by the Soviets, which in turn meant the beginning of the suburbanisation of Vilnius. The report mentions

that the step was taken despite the protests of adjacent municipalities, densely inhabited by minorities. Minority members argued against the city's expansion until the restitution of land was completed on the territory. The report, nevertheless, acknowledged that

*[d]ifficulties in the restitution of property to people residing in the adjacent regions – including ethnic Poles in respect of the regions surrounding Vilnius – and raised from the change of boundaries of the major cities were (at least partly) addressed when in May 1995 amendments were adopted to the 1991 Law on the Conditions and Procedure for the Restoration of the Citizens' Ownership Right to the Remaining Immovable Property according to which the procedure established by this law was also applied in respect of property rights to land which was included in the administrative boundaries of larger cities and towns after the entry into force of this law. Following these amendments, the entire previously owned land could be returned, and not only a part as before the amendments<sup>8</sup>.*

Despite its positive effect, the amendments had some flaws. Land restitution in the areas allocated to Vilnius after 1995 was carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Restitution Law on the methodology of land restitution in rural areas. According to this procedure, if the land to be recovered was originally located in a rural area and was subsequently assigned to the city, and if this land was occupied, it was now only available in kind, in another location in a rural area, without compensation, from the vacant land fund. The value of land in rural and urban areas varied considerably. Therefore, such an order benefited the development of the capital, but not the interests of residents of the capital's formerly rural parts.

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<sup>8</sup> Council of Europe, Rapporteurs: Mr Andreas Gross and Mr João Mota Amaral, *Obligations and commitments of Lithuania as a member state* (Doc. 7896), <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewHTML.asp?FileID=7826&lang=en> [12.01.2024].

Finally, the report mentioned additional problems faced by members of the minority in the “Vilnius region”. These problems were described as rooted in “the specific pre-war history of the region”. According to the report, when the Restitution Law was adopted in 1991 institutions responsible for implementing the policy rejected land ownership documents issued by inter-war Polish institutions arguing “that such an administration was, in the Lithuanian view, unlawful in Vilnius and its region”<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, in his book “Lithuanians and Lithuania’s Poles, and Lithuania and Poland in 1988-1994” Lithuanian historian, Vladas Sirutavičius, mentions vice-minister of justice, Zenonas Juknevičius, who, in his correspondence to the government in 1992, argued that the “documents issued by the Polish state institutions in the interwar years regarding the granting or purchase of land in the Vilnius region *from the state fund* (emphasis in the original) may not be used as documents proving property rights”<sup>10</sup>. Sirutavičius concludes that

*the Lithuanian government declared that documents, by which the so-called colonists, i.e., persons who moved to the Vilnius region after 1920, acquired land from the government of the time, were invalid. This was probably an attempt to emphasize the occupying nature of the Polish government in the Vilnius region and its illegality*<sup>11</sup>.

The decision of the Lithuanian authorities not to recognise the documents issued by the interwar Polish government had significant consequences for the return of land to minority citizens. As the Poles waited for the state to accept their documents, land restitution continued. When they ‘returned’ to the process, the total amount of land

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<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>10</sup> V. Sirutavičius, *Lietuviai ir Lietuvos lenkai: Lietuva ir Lenkija 1988-1994 metais*, Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2017, p. 258.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

for restitution was reduced because it had already been distributed to other Lithuanian citizens.

However, the report mentions that “[i]n May 1993, the government broadened the range of documents certifying property rights to the remaining immovable property in this region and allowed people who no longer retained such documents to prove their ownership in court”<sup>12</sup>. The change was brought by the newly elected post-communists left-wing government. Discriminatory practices ceased and persons were provided with an instrument (the court appeal) to resolve their restitution issues. However, while the problem affected a group of people (the report mentions the impact of the restitution process on the region’s minorities), the measures provided have only allowed land restitution problems to be addressed on an individual level.

In its opinion on Lithuania, published six years later, on 25 September 2003, the Council of Europe’s Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities attended to “the problems indicated in regard to the implementation of the law on the restitution of land (dating from 25 July 1991), which particularly affect persons belonging to national minorities living in the Vilnius area”<sup>13</sup>. The Committee noted that although the Restitution Law accords priority to returning land to its original owners, in the view of representatives of the Polish minority, a significant number of plots of land were given to persons from other parts of Lithuania. The original owners, most of whom were Poles, meanwhile, were still waiting to have their cases resolved. The Committee stated that

*[t]he Advisory Committee is aware that these difficulties, which are often encountered in countries in transition, do not generally affect only persons*

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<sup>12</sup> Council of Europe, Rapporteurs...

<sup>13</sup> Council of Europe, *Opinion of Lithuania*, 2003, <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168008bed4> [12.01.2024].

*belonging to national minorities. The Advisory Committee nonetheless urges the authorities to ensure that these persons do not suffer discrimination in the implementation of the legislation concerned and that solutions are found to those problems*<sup>14</sup>.

Therefore, the report documented problems caused by the provision to allow the transfer of land to those who resided in territories other than those where land was owned previously. However, we can assume that such provisions may have been less important to minority members. Except in a negative sense, when local minority landowners felt the effects of land transfers as people from other parts of the country began to move their rights to a region that was compactly populated by minorities.

In its official response, the Lithuanian side explained that restitution of real property at the time was underway and emphasised “that neither a person whose rights of ownership may be restored, nor the property or the procedure of restitution of the rights are in any way related to persons belonging to national minorities; i.e., the restoration of the rights to ownership is not related to a person’s ethnicity”<sup>15</sup>. Further, the response stated that “[t]he procedure and conditions of restoration of rights to ownership are being applied in the same manner everywhere in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania, regardless of whether a particular area is or used to be densely populated by a national minority”<sup>16</sup>. The government thereby assured that the same rules guiding the implementation of the restitution policy were applied countrywide, treating no regions and no citizens with

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<sup>14</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>15</sup> Council of Europe, *Comments of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the Report on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Framework Convention) in the Republic of Lithuania*, 2003, <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168008c951> [12.01.2024].

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

any exceptions. The response also noted that “[t]aking into account the fact that some citizens due to various circumstances failed to submit the necessary documents proving that they are descendants of the owner before the deadline expired, the deadline was extended till 31 December 2003”<sup>17</sup>. Put another way, the government argued that the restitution was a colour-blind process, treating every person irrespective of their ethnic background, equally. The government stressed its goodwill shown to persons who ‘failed’ the requirements of the process. In this way, it was implicitly suggesting that the land restitution problems were due to the failures of individuals. This is in line with the earlier assessment that during the period of independence, it was mainly individual problems of national minorities that were recognised. Accordingly, individual remedies such as access to the courts were provided for problems, even if they were collective in nature. It could perhaps be said that the privatisation of responsibility for one’s own success in the restitution process marked a new post-socialist governmentality. Any collectivism (other than national collectivism) may have been viewed with suspicion since the primacy of the collective over the individual was promoted by the Soviet authorities. The new governmentality (or way of governing), which was shaped as a counter to the old one, was based on the responsible and liberated individual, which the government tried to construct on a discursive level.

In their following opinion on Lithuania adopted on 28 February 2008, the advisory committee noted the positive developments concerning the restitution process in relation to minority rights: “[t]he Advisory Committee was informed of the efforts made to accelerate the process of land restitution. In this respect, the Advisory Committee welcomes the adoption (...) of a Governmental programme aimed at

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<sup>17</sup> Ibidem.



the completion of the land reform and land restitution by the end of 2007 (...)”<sup>18</sup>. However, the report also drew attention to the fact that the problems noted in the first monitoring cycle persisted. Quoting the Seimas Ombudsperson, the report stated that on average 55% of lands had been returned to their former owners, and only 23% were restituted in the minority-populated Vilnius area. The representatives of Polish and Tatar minorities complained that plots of land in the region were further assigned “to persons from other regions of Lithuania who allegedly are not the former owners of the land in question”<sup>19</sup>. The report noted that “[t]he representatives of the Polish minority informed the Advisory Committee on some shortcomings that they considered likely, in the long-term, to give rise to changes in the ethnic composition of the population, and to have a negative effect on the preservation of minorities’ identities”, and that it “could have a significant long-term impact on the composition of the population of the region” as well as “the participation of minorities in the decision-making”<sup>20</sup> process. The report, therefore, shows that certain minority-related restitution problems had been stalled and remained unsolved over the years.

Addressing these concerns, the Lithuanian government reiterated that the land reform, which began after the country’s independence, was still underway:

*[a]fter reestablishment of Lithuania’s independence, a land reform was started in Lithuania that continues up till now. The implementation of the land reform carried out on the basis of property restitution was started upon adoption by the Supreme Council of several laws defining the framework of the land reform in July 1991. These laws provided for the relocation*

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<sup>18</sup> Council of Europe, *Second Opinion on Lithuania*, 2008, <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168008c1a6> [12.01.2024].

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

*of land, or the restitution of land in equivalent kind, which also remained in subsequent laws.*

*The relocation of land or the restitution of land in equivalent kind means that it is possible to relocate a land plot of equal value from the pool of free land, therefore, the land plots owned by devisees of the land held in their patrimony may be occupied by migrants only in the case that the responsible institutions which implemented the reform applied the requirements of laws in the wrong way<sup>21</sup>.*

In other words, the government took the view that the design of the reform was without any deficiencies, and in case of problems, they were the result of the mistakes made by particular institutions. This adds to the previously mentioned individual responsibility in submitting documents at the right time, which authorities viewed as a source of the limited progress of the restitution process in south-eastern Lithuania.

What about changes in the ethnic composition of the region's population? The government explained them in the following way:

*[a] major part of the land of local residents has been sold, since with the improvement of the economic situation, a need to build private homes emerged. This need especially grew in the capital of Vilnius and its vicinities. Therefore, an increasing number of different nationalities settled in the Vilnius district. Thus, the national situation of residents is gradually changing. The reasons for these changes are economic<sup>22</sup>.*

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<sup>21</sup> Council of Europe, *Comments of the government of Lithuania on the Second opinion of the Advisory committee on the implementation of the Framework convention for the protection of national minorities by Lithuania*, 2008, <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168008f52b> [12.01.2024].

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

The government added that “the total plenitude of national minorities in Vilnius and its vicinities has not reduced during the last year”<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, the government suggested the changes in the ethnic composition of the region’s population were due to residents’ economic activities.

Of course, the reports and official responses should be taken with a grain of salt. First, from the cited document we can see that the report represents minority political leaders’ opinions. Although there is no reason to doubt the estimation of land restitution provided by representatives of the minority’s political leadership, there is no reason to take their opinion for granted either. The position presented by official bodies may also not necessarily be objective. The suburbanization process which started with the arrival of independence had an ethnic character; when better-educated and wealthier persons of Lithuanian background started moving to the adjacent territories of Vilnius city. Therefore, the argument that members of the minority sold their land upon a free contract does not take into consideration the possibility that contracting parties might have been unequal (status and class) and that this inequality might have impacted the contract. However, as I have argued elsewhere, ethnicity played a rather limited role in conducting and perceiving land restitution in south-eastern Lithuania and it should not be treated as a master category to explain the hardships members of the minority encountered throughout the process<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>24</sup> K. Dambrauskas, *Mapping ethnicity-property nexus: framing and negotiating ethnicity in the process of land restitution in South-Eastern Lithuania (dissertation)*, Vilnius: Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, 2022.

## Conclusion

The overview of the above-quoted documents allows drawing the conclusion that even though during the restitution process members of ethnic minorities were treated equally, such treatment hindered the independence-brought-opportunity to get back their or their family's land previously collectivized by the Soviets. The fact that minorities with worse starting positions had to participate in the restitution process on an equal footing with others is reminiscent of what political theorists call the "inclusion without solidarity" – guaranteeing equal rights to participate in the activities of a market society (trading and consuming), while at the same time staying indifferent to issues of disadvantage<sup>25</sup>. Indeed, as argued by Lithuanian anthropologists Neringa Klumbytė and Kristina Šliavaitė – "exclusive inclusion" of national (ethnic) minorities "played an important role in defining political belonging to a post-Soviet sovereign state"<sup>26</sup>. By "exclusive inclusion", they meant public discourses, policies, or laws which had an "exclusive" effect on national minorities as persons belonging to them were "categorized in terms of ethnic and social or political difference and attributed or declined specific rights"<sup>27</sup>. A possible example could be the national language policy, which had an exclusionary effect on "national minorities because they prioritize the majority language competence as a major linguistic principle for coexistence in society. Linguistic integration served as an exclusive inclusion of national minorities"<sup>28</sup>. The laws that provided legal grounds for policies aimed at restoring Soviet-brought injustice were indeed colour-blind. In this respect, all the citizens were treated equally and inclusively. However,

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<sup>25</sup> W. Kymlicka, *Solidarity in Diverse Societies: Beyond Neoliberal Multiculturalism and Welfare Chauvinism*, "Comparative Migration Studies" 2015, vol. 3, no. 1, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> N. Klumbytė, K. Šliavaitė, *Sovereignty and Political Belonging in Post-Soviet Lithuania: Ethnicity, Migration, and Historical Justice*, "Journal of Baltic Studies" 2021, vol. 52, no. 3, pp. 437-454.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem.

such treatment provided no room for attending to problems specific to the region and its different social and/or ethnic groups. Instead, collective problems, documented by international organisations, have been individualised, leaving the possibility for an individual to take private legal action against the land not returned. This character of post-socialist governmentality complicated the efforts to give and get back the land to its former owners in south-eastern Lithuania. Consequently, it had an indirect and unintended negative effect on the principle of avoiding ethnodemographic changes in south-eastern Lithuania, as agreed in Article 15 of the Treaty.

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Krzysztof Snarski<sup>1</sup>

# **Traditional Lithuanian culture in Suwalki District Museum ethnographical research**

## **Introduction**

The Suwalki region is located in the northeastern part of Poland. The conventional borders of this region are: from the south, the Biebrza River, from the west, the former border with East Prussia, from the east, the Polish part of the Suwalki region, marked by the border with Lithuania, and from the north, by the Kaliningrad Oblast. Determining permanent and impenetrable borders is impossible in cultural sciences, therefore, in the discussed area, there are many transitional zones, spaces isolated by dense forest complexes, and a complicated system of rivers and lakes, which further diversify the culture of discussion over the border area, modelling the road system and thus influencing the social communication and information exchange. Lithuanian and Belarusian cultural elements mix with Polish along the entire length of the border, thereby proving the uniqueness of the transition area. As a result, the Lithuanian and Belarusian communities living in the borderland on the Polish side acquired Polish

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cultural characteristics derived from permanent and impenetrable contact with the majority community for many years. At the same time – especially now – the transmission of external – Lithuanian and Belarusian – cultural threads is observed. This is particularly visible in local varieties of national languages, the development of dialect systems, and a specific cultural dialogue addressed to the Polish community living on the other side of the border. This phenomenon is very interesting for researchers of border culture. It allows for the determination of dominant and optional features in culture. It creates the opportunity to build comparisons and analyse the cultural dynamics of the borderland.

### **Traditional borderland culture in ethnographical interest**

Ethnographic interest in the Suwalki region as a unique part of the world was, in many ways, aroused by the publication of Aleksander Połujański describing Wanderings around the Augustów Governorate<sup>2</sup>. The story about a space filled with ghosts, about a landscape combining the most beautiful views from various corners of Europe, and finally about the people who, as if against all odds, inhabit this space, their culture, beliefs, and customs, has become a magnet for travellers, a research field for ethnographers, and a source of inspiration for artists. It has been discovered in many areas. As it turns out, the Lithuanian component appears to be an important element in building the overall folk culture of the Suwalki region, very clearly present in the discussed borderland.

Lithuanian folk culture has been a subject of research interest for a very long time. Briefly, it should be said that the events that began

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<sup>2</sup> A. Połujański, *Wędrówki po Guberni Augustowskiej w celu naukowym odbyte*, Warszawa 1859.

in the mid-19th century – the establishment of the Suwalki Governorate in 1867 – were a breakthrough moment. In the Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland, under the entry “Suwalki Governorate”, you can read that the largest population group separated “in terms of tribalism”<sup>3</sup> and inhabiting the discussed area are Lithuanians settled in the northern counties of the governorate. Being aware of the geographical scope of the Suwalki Governorate, together with its northern counties currently located on the Lithuanian side, i.e., Mariampol, Władysławow, Kalwaria, and Wyłkowysk, such argumentation is understandable. According to the editors of the dictionary, the regional diversity of settlement groups in the Suwalki Governorate resulted primarily from noticeable linguistic differences, therefore, in terms of the language used, Poles came second, followed by Ruthenians, including Greater Russians, then Germans, Jews, and Tatars. According to the authors of the Biographical Dictionary of Governors and Vice-Governors<sup>4</sup>, the Suwalki Governorate was the only one in the Kingdom of Poland where Poles were a minority group. Therefore, it is natural that elements of Lithuanian culture were very visible in the cultural landscape historically, and still are today.

Analysing the available sources, including historical, literary, and ethnographic studies as well as press articles published since the mid-19th century about the discussed borderland, a gradual increase in interest in the traditional folk culture of the Suwalki region can be observed. In the “Tygodnik Ilustrowany” during the years 1866-1867, cultural studies by Aleksander Osipowicz appeared entitled: “Trips to the vicinity of Suwalki. Stories, pictures and legends” (the aforementioned Trips by Aleksander Osipowicz were collected, newly edited by Tadeusz Budrewicz, and published by the Suwalki

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<sup>3</sup> *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, vol. XI, p. 618, <https://pbc.biaman.pl/dlibra/publication/67795/edition/65871/content> [24.01.2024].

<sup>4</sup> A. Górak, J. Kozłowski, K. Łatawiec, *Słownik biograficzny gubernatorów i wicegubernatorów w Królestwie Polskim (1867-1918)*, Lublin 2015.

Cultural Society in 1994) and “An outline of the characteristics of the Lithuanian people from the banks of the Czarna Hańcza”. Both texts were well-received by readers, and shortly thereafter they resulted in A. Osipowicz’s familiarity with the ethnographer Oskar Kolberg. Volume No. 53 of Oskar Kolberg’s complete works is titled “Lithuania” and contains a synthesis of threads of Lithuanian culture read by the author personally during visits to villages near Suwałki as well as from correspondence and studies made by his contemporary correspondents, journalists, and travellers, which Oskar Kolberg used. Typically, in Oskar Kolberg’s Complete Works, the titular Lithuania is presented through the characteristics of the country, people, customs, ceremonies, common songs, nobility and bourgeois songs, dances, beliefs, tales and legends, riddles and proverbs, curses, and language.

At the beginning of the 20th century, and especially in the interwar period, the Suwałki region found itself aside from scientific interests, being placed further in the sphere of interest of the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius or the Warsaw academic centre. Based on the system of similarities, the discussed area was treated either as part of Masovia and Podlasie or as an element of Lithuania, historically and culturally identified with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which was part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth<sup>5</sup>. The Suwałki region has become a context and point of reference for ethnographic studies. This decline in scientific interest did not negatively affect the state of folk culture.

## **Suwałki museum traditions**

Collecting and other museum traditions in the Suwałki region and Suwałki itself date back to the mid-19th century and are related to

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<sup>5</sup> M. Pokropek, *Ludowe tradycje Suwalszczyzny*, Suwałki 2010, p. 16.



Lithuanian cross in the village of Sejwy. Photo by K. Snarski (2009). Author's private archive

the need to manage natural and archaeological finds by private collectors. In 1872, an exhibition of the most interesting objects from the non-professional collection was organised<sup>6</sup>. The exhibition was situated on the premises of the girls' high school in Suwalki. These were mainly stones, minerals, and fragments of animal bones found in the Suwalki region, distinguished primarily by their shape, colour and surface structure. Scientific and educational values were not the primary motivation for the collector, however, with the increase in knowledge about the past, the discovered objects gradually began to acquire geological, archaeological, historical, and natural value.

The social mood at the beginning of the 20th century had a positive impact on the development of museology organised at the Private Seven-Class School of Commerce in Suwalki. The impulse for expanding the natural, historical, archaeological, and literary collections came from observations of amateur and professional collecting associations in other European countries. Jan Bujak<sup>7</sup> noticed an increase in interest in ethnographic collecting, among others, in the first church collections, magnate and royal collections, and finally in periodically organised agricultural and industrial exhibitions. The author states that "both general world and national exhibitions were intended to demonstrate economic achievements in the fields of industry, agriculture, and crafts, which, of course, aimed to increase the development of trade exchange and obtain capital. Great importance was also attached to scientific congresses and ethnographic exhibitions, where

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<sup>6</sup> A. Wędzki, *Kultura i nauka na Suwalszczyźnie w XIX wieku* [in:] *Studia i materiały do dziejów Suwalszczyzny*, J. Antoniewicz (ed.), Białystok 1965, pp. 267-278.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Bujak (1931-1991) – Polish ethnographer, employee and manager of the Museum Władysław Orkan in Rabka, conducted scientific research in Podhale, Spisz, and Orawa. He was the author of many scientific and popular science works, a large part of which is devoted to highland culture. He published in "Polish Ethnography", "Wierchów", "Quarterly of the History of Material Culture", "Rocznik Podhalański".

views and information about achievements in the field of technical, natural, and humanistic research were exchanged”<sup>8</sup>.

Visits to regional museums in Belgium and Switzerland made by a teacher from Suwalki, Jan Bijełko, probably became some of the circumstances supporting the development of collecting in Suwalki. In 1907, Bijełko published a text in “Tygodnik Suwalski” that could easily be called a meritorical program for the construction of the Regional Museum in Suwalki. The author wrote the following words: “Even when looking through a guidebook to foreign countries, we are pleasantly surprised that even small cities have their own museums containing various curiosities. (...) Such museums are an urgent need for our education, self-education, agriculture, industry, and trade. (...) Folk costumes from all over the province will also find a place in the museum. Finally, amateurs and photographers should provide photos of the picturesque views that the Suwalki region abounds in. Over time, we will find a detailed ethnographic map of the Suwalki region in this museum”<sup>9</sup>. Shortly thereafter, in 1908, the first organisational steps were taken to establish the Museum of the Suwalki Land, located on the premises of the Trade School and administered by the Suwalki branch of the Polish Tourist Society<sup>10</sup>. Similar museums began to be established at the same time in other branches of the Polish Tourist Society, of which the following should be mentioned: Kielce, Siedlce, Kujawy, and Miechów<sup>11</sup>.

During World War I, a combination of accidents, evacuation, and the removal of chests with museum exhibits from Suwalki into Russia, began a very difficult time of disintegration of the collection, ending

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<sup>8</sup> J. Bujak, *Muzealnictwo Etnograficzne w Polsce (do roku 1939)*, “Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego” CCCCXIII “Prace Etnograficzne”, no. 8, Warszawa – Kraków 1975, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> <https://pbc.biaman.pl/dlibra/publication/67795/edition/65871/content> [1.12.2023].

<sup>10</sup> A. Matusiewicz, *Polskie Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze (1907-1950) Polskie Towarzystwo Turystyczno-Krajoznawcze (1950-2007) w Suwałkach*, Suwałki 2010, p. 24.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.





Folk tapestry Pogoń. Photo by M. Pokropek (approx. 1964). From the collection of the District Museum in Suwalki

with a great loss. Zygmunt Filipowicz<sup>12</sup> began building a collection of works by Alfred Wierusz-Kowalski, an organizer of the Museum. Maria Konopnicka (opened in 1973) – a branch of the District Museum in Suwalki reports, following Edward Chwalewik, that in 1927 the “Suwalki” exhibits returned to Poland and were deposited in the basement of the Royal Castle in Warsaw<sup>13</sup>. Unfortunately, they were irretrievably lost as a result of the destruction of the Royal Castle in the first days of September 1939.

The next version of Suwalki’s museology, which continues to this day, has its origins in the tourist movement associated with the structures of the Polish Tourist Society, popularized after World War II and started many years earlier. The need to travel and explore one’s own country, encouraged by the founders of the society, was accompanied – inevitably – by souvenirs. The need or perhaps rather the fashion for collecting curiosities, created since the first years of the 20th century, and the socially-supported increase in interest in home collections have become noticeable sources for building private collections.

The museum in Suwalki, which operates to this day, was established in 1956 on the initiative of Antoni Patla (Antoni Patla (1898-1977) – Polish journalist, museologist, educator, and from 1912, a member of the Polish Tourist Society) as the Social Regional Museum. In the years 1947-1950, as the director of the Horticultural Secondary School in Suwalki, he initiated the establishment of the reserve on Lake Hańcza as well as being the creator of the Suwalki Landscape Park. In 1958, by decision of the Municipal National Council, it was renamed the Regional Museum and operated as such

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<sup>12</sup> Zygmunt Filipowicz (1931-2013) – Polish journalist, social and cultural activist, museologist, and an expert on the culture and history of Suwalki region, director of the District Museum in Suwalki in the years 1962-1998.

<sup>13</sup> Z. Filipowicz, *Muzeum Ziemi Suwalskiej [in:] Dziewięćdziesięciolecie suwalskiego oddziału Suwalskiego Polskiego Towarzystwa Krajoznawczego*, Z. Fattynowicz, M. Pawłowska (eds.), Suwałki 1997, pp. 33-40.



until 1975, when, as a result of administrative transformations and the establishment of the Suwalki Voivodeship, the institution's rank was raised and its name was changed to the District Museum. The planning and organisation of field research conducted by the Suwalki Museum began from the first moments of its establishment; however, from the time perspective, it should be stated that the intensity of field penetration, the acquired exhibits, and the field documentation were very different. It depended on the competencies, interests, and cognitive abilities of the people involved in this work. Over time, the Suwalki Museum, as a cultural institution, took part in many research programs, expeditions, field studies, and culture-building initiatives, guaranteeing the highest level of field and substantive cooperation, and continuing good practices with universities, research institutes, and specialised museums.

The area of the Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian border is a natural area of ethnographic exploration for the employees of the District Museum in Suwalki, but not only for them. The concept of the ethnographic distinctiveness of the Suwalki region, called the Eastern Ethnographic Borderland or the Masurian-Volhynia Borderland, proposed by Kazimierz Moszyński<sup>14</sup>, indicated that the Suwalki region was a heterogeneous area that spontaneously combines elements of various ethnographic orders. This state of affairs, combined with the still unsatisfactory level of knowledge of the history and culture of the region, encouraged scientific research in this borderland. As a result, since the end of the 1950s, the Suwalki region has become the site of many field studies conducted by students and researchers from the main academic centres in Poland. A special place among

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<sup>14</sup> Kazimierz Teofil Franciszek Moszyński (1887-1959) – Polish ethnographer, ethnologist, Slavist. An outstanding Polish researcher of folk culture. Author of the monumental work, *Folk Culture of the Slavs* (1929).

these student groups is held by the Department of Ethnology at the University of Warsaw.

From the very beginning of its existence (1964), the Ethnography Department of the Suwalki Museum focused on documenting the cultural heritage of the Suwalki region. By conducting regular field penetrations, it managed to collect nearly two and a half thousand exhibits, supplemented with field interview cards, photographs, and notes. In the first years of the Department of Ethnography's activity, this was supported by well-preserved and still-living folk culture. This was partly because the village near Suwalki was insufficiently supplied with modern agricultural equipment, so residents still used traditional farm equipment for work. They were largely self-sufficient and able to make all the objects and tools they needed for life. Some farms specialised in the processing of raw material, with any excess production distributed outside the farm. Such an extensive research topic as the traditional folk culture of the Suwalki region was divided into smaller ones, which were based on detailed documentation and ethnographic inventories of the encountered elements of material culture. Throughout all these years, it was run by the following people: Marianna Halicka, Teresa Gutzeit, Teresa Romanowska, Adam Żulpa, Janusz Przyczyna, and Krzysztof Snarski. Until the launch of an independent substantive department, ethnographic research was led by Zygmunt Filipowicz, the museum manager. Antoni Patla, a historian and regionalist, had a very close relationship with the Suwalki institution, but his activity was limited to acquiring a few ethnographic exhibits for the museum. The first number in the Inventory Book of Ethnographic Museums comes from 1959 and concerns the sculpture of the Sorrowful Christ described by Antoni Patla. Since the late 1950s, Marian Pokropek<sup>15</sup> and Joanna Maciejewska, among others,

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<sup>15</sup> Marian Pokropek (1932-2023) – Polish ethnographer, professor, PhD, long-time employee of the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Warsaw, founder of

have been conducting research in the Suwalki region. The contribution of these two scientists to the museum's activities is enormous, and the exhibits they acquired will form the basis of many ethnographic exhibitions in the coming years. The first records of regular field research in the area of traditional Lithuanian culture date back to July 1964, led by Marianna Halicka. This was the beginning of the project undertaken to recreate the Lithuanian folk costume and coincided with the creation of the ethnographic section of a large scientific undertaking conducted by the Białystok Scientific Society, the Comprehensive Yotvingian Expedition. The increased interest in the multiculturalism of the region, combined with the activities of the Yotvingian expedition, resulted in intensified research activities by the Suwalki Museum. Under thirty inventory numbers, Marianna Halicka included in-depth ethnographic interviews on Lithuanian folk costumes with the inhabitants of the villages of Ogórki, Kompcie, Wołyńce, Klejwy, Wiłkopedzie, Rejsztokiemie, Krejwiany, Trakiszki, Krasnowo, Wojtokiemie, Żwikiele, Szlinokiemie, Oszkinie, and Widugiery. The choice of the village was not accidental. The expected result of the research was an attempt to recreate the entire Lithuanian costume, both men's and women's. It was the beginning of many years of systematic research into the documentation of the folk culture of Lithuanians living in the Suwalki region. In the summary, Marianna Halicka wrote that she scientifically tested 16 villages inhabited by Lithuanians near Puńsk, and the goal was to collect all the possible elements of this costume for the needs of the museum and to obtain as comprehensive information as possible about individual elements, their use, characteristics, and symbolism. Unfortunately, as she wrote

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the Museum of Polish Folk Art in Otrębusy. He was a long-time head of the Department of Polish and Slavic Ethnography at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Warsaw. His rich collections of photographs documenting traditional, contemporary culture and folk art from, among others, Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia, were placed in the archives of the museum in Otrębusy.



The Feast of Our Lady of the Fields in Puńsk. Photo by K. Snarski (2009). Author's private archive

later, it was impossible to complete the women's and men's costumes due to their rapid disappearance. Despite all the efforts, it was difficult to overcome the barrier of 1880. In conclusion, the researcher stated that the activities of World War II became a factor that had a destructive impact on the preservation of the costume. Exposing one's ethnic and cultural distinctiveness through different Lithuanian clothing was very dangerous during the war. The distinctive elements of the folk costume were hidden, which contributed to their disappearance, and population migrations had a negative impact on the number of informants and people who could help recreate the elements of the traditional costume<sup>16</sup>.

The folk culture of the Suwalki region was within the research interests of representatives of academic centres on both sides of the border. It is difficult to talk about conducting competitive field explorations, but since the mid-1980s, there has been an increased interest in Lithuanian folk culture among researchers from Vilnius and Kaunas, with the active support of local teachers, regionalists, and the clergy. A special role in this process was played by the long-time parish priest in Puńsk, Father Ignacy Dziermejko<sup>17</sup>. He began his pastoral work in Puńsk in 1967 and immediately began organizing a collection of Lithuanian folk culture, encouraging residents to donate elements of traditional costumes and folk products. He was guided by the idea of identifying Lithuanians living in the parish in Puńsk and securing distinctive cultural elements for future generations. He wanted to recreate folk costumes, preserve traditional pat-

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<sup>16</sup> M. Halicka, *Badania etnograficzne Suwalszczyzny w latach 1964-1966* [in:] *Podsumowanie badań terenowych w latach 1965-1979* (typescript submitted to the Ethnography Department of the Suwalki District Museum).

<sup>17</sup> Fr. Ignacy Dziermejko (1927-2000), was born in Krejwiany to a Polish-Lithuanian family. He was ordained as a priest in 1953 and, in 1967, he became a parish priest in Puńsk. He received the title of General Canon of the Sejno Chapter and served as a diocesan vicar for the Lithuanian-speaking faithful. In 1993, he retired and moved to Suwalki, near the parish of St. Alexander. He died on 27 February 2000, in Suwalki.

terns in weaving, and preserve original ritual art, songs, legends, and stories. Father Ignacy Dziermejko introduced and expanded the celebration of the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 15 August (commonly called the Feast of Our Lady of the Herbs) with a new custom in the Puńsk parish that involved weaving wreaths of grain that resembled altars and processional feretrons<sup>18</sup>. Over time, preparing pilgrimage wreaths became a specific form of presenting villages belonging to the Puńsk parish and inhabited by the Lithuanian community. The custom of preparing wreaths on the occasion of the Feast of Our Lady of the Herbs is still cultivated in Puńsk. Specific projects stylistically refer to important events of Lithuanians living in Poland and Lithuania.

The involvement of the employees of the Ethnography Department of the University of Warsaw in the study of the folk culture of the Suwalki region was particularly manifested in the field activity of Prof. Marian Pokropek. During his stays in the Suwalki region, Marian Pokropek often encouraged young people to continue their education at the academic level. One of the people inspired by Prof. M. Pokropek was Anastazja Sidor (then Anastazja Aleksa). In the rural areas of the Suwalki Voivodeship, she collected 40 extensive interviews regarding wedding rituals among Lithuanians, especially changes taking place since the end of the 19th century<sup>19</sup>. Based on the collected field material and as a result of museum research, she prepared, under the supervision of Prof. Marian Pokropek, a master's thesis entitled: "Changes in the wedding rituals of Lithuanians living in Poland".

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<sup>18</sup> K. Tarka, *Działania służby bezpieczeństwa wobec księdza Ignacego Dziermejki – duszpasterza Litwinów w Polsce*, "Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie" 2012, no. 1(275), pp. 79-93.

<sup>19</sup> A. Sidor, *Badania etnograficzne na północno-wschodnim pograniczu polsko-litewskim od połowy XX wieku [in:] W krainie wielu tradycji. Badania etnograficzne na pograniczu polsko-litewsko-białoruskim w XX i początkach XXI wieku*, K. Snarski, A. Żulpa (eds.), Warszawa – Suwałki 2014, pp. 141-145.

Extensive fragments of the work were published in the magazine "Polska Sztuka Ludowa"<sup>20</sup>.

Amateur ethnographic researcher and local mathematics teacher Juozas Vaina<sup>21</sup> was responsible for the construction of an impressive para-museum collection as well as describing the traditions of the local Lithuanian population. In the 1960s, he wandered through the surrounding villages in search of items that had gone out of use or were becoming unnecessary in the Lithuanian countryside. He photographed houses scheduled for demolition and recorded songs and stories<sup>22</sup>. This rather tedious collecting work brought the expected results and his commitment to collecting ethnographic artifacts also yielded some surprises. He managed to collect over two thousand exhibits, which he initially stored in his home<sup>23</sup>. Currently, the collection can be admired on the premises of the Lithuanian Cultural Centre. The materials he collected constitute a comparative collection for research on the culture of Lithuanians in the Suwalki region<sup>24</sup>. In the 1980s, in cooperation with the District Museum in Suwalki, the Provincial Cultural Centre (then the Regional Centre for Culture and Art, currently the Suwalki Cultural Centre), ethnomusical research was conducted in areas inhabited by the Lithuanian population. Additionally, the Suwalki museum cooperated in research conducted by specialists in the field of traditional folk costumes of the Suwalki

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<sup>20</sup> A. Sidor (Aleksa), *Wesele litewskie*, "Polska Sztuka Ludowa" 1983, vol. 38, no. 1/2, pp. 69-80.

<sup>21</sup> Józef Wiktor Vaina (1916-2011) – Polish and Lithuanian educator, social activist and collector. He studied at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences of the University of Stefan Batory in Vilnius. After the war, he settled with his family in Puńsk and took a job as a teacher at a school there. He was active in the Lithuanian Social and Cultural Society. He founded and developed a private ethnographic collection until his death. In 2000, he was awarded the Oskar Kolberg Prize.

<sup>22</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20131002192127/http://www.punsk.com.pl/wordpress/strona-glowna/muzea/muzeum-etnograficzne/> [24.01.2024].

<sup>23</sup> A. Szwykowska, *Stolica polskich Litwinów*, "Spotkania z Zabytkami" 1988, vol. 12, no. 6(40), pp. 31-33.

<sup>24</sup> A. Sidor, *Badania etnograficzne na północno-wschodnim...*, pp. 141-145.

region's subregions, aimed at reconstructing the entire costume and preparing stage costumes for local folk groups<sup>25</sup>.

The resumption of multi-aspect field research and archival research was possible thanks to the implementation of tasks co-financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the Marshal's Office of the Podlaskie Voivodeship in Białystok in the years 2007-2010. Research on the folk culture of the Suwalki region was also possible thanks to the renewed involvement of Prof. Marian Pokropek, who undertook the task of conducting repeated ethnographic research and updating the state of knowledge about the changes in folk culture. At that time, as part of the cooperation between the District Museum in Suwalki and the then Regional Centre of Culture and Art in Suwalki (currently the Suwalki Cultural Centre), a number of field trips were carried out to document the phenomena of folk culture in the Suwalki region, along with elements of traditional culture among the Lithuanian community. Prof. Marian Pokropek was the leader of the field penetration and committed to preparing a popular science publication on folk traditions of the Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian border area. The author of this paper had the opportunity to participate in all elements of the project, starting from joint field explorations, through obtaining and analysing archival documentation from friendly museums and art institutes, to supplementing the created field documentation with content from the research archive of the Ethnography Department of the Suwalki museum. Mirosław Nalaskowski, Piotr Kuczek, and Krzysztof Snarski, who wrote these words, were the scientific editors of the above-mentioned publication entitled "Folk Traditions of the Suwalki Region" (Suwalki 2010).

The book was very well received, and the collected field material additionally served as field illustrations for contributing articles

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<sup>25</sup> These activities and the description of their results require a separate archival research.



on folk culture. Exploration in the field of research on traditional Lithuanian culture, which began again in 2009, brought much new information. In the field of Lithuanian folk culture, the research covered over thirty villages inhabited wholly or partially by the Lithuanian community. Locations and people were selected in advance, the route was determined, residents were contacted, and meetings were arranged. As a result, it was possible to reach local social leaders, teachers active in the field of culture, and representatives of regional Lithuanian folk groups. The challenge, which was completed successfully, was to reach farms where elements of traditional Lithuanian architecture remained. This was important in order to determine the direction and speed of changes in the transformation of villages in the border area. As a result, several dozen photographs were taken documenting the current state of Lithuanian architecture as well as field documentation arranged according to ethnographic categories such as food, clothing, weaving, blacksmithing, and ceremonial art.

Among the qualitative results that began to appear in 2009 was the re-opening of cooperation with regionalists, Lithuanian artists, leaders of the Lithuanian community, including, above all, Aldona Wojciechowska – co-owner of the Stara Plebania gallery in Puńsk, Józef Vaina, a collector and amateur ethnographer, and Anastazja Sidor from Puńsk, who has specialised in weaving Lithuanian belts and selvedges since the early 1990s. The skill of making selvedges was passed down in her family through generations, supported by appropriate ethnographic preparation, and resulted in the implementation of numerous workshops, shows, and training in the technique, design, symbolism of the colours used, and graphic motifs. The collection of selvedges dating back to the mid-19th century settled in the ethnographic collections of the District Museum in Suwalki constituted a substantive contribution to the development of weaving decorative strips by Anastazja Sidor. The oldest Lithuanian selvedge, which is in the collection of the District Museum in Suwalki, was made in 1860 by Aniela Lutyńska from the village of Oszkinie near Puńsk.

On the exhibit card, Marianna Halicka, who bought this selvedge for the museum in 1964, wrote the following information: “Women most often made selvedges while grazing cows. The threads intended for the selvedge tied the big toe. The threads of the weft were interwoven with the fingers [of the hand]. In this way, selvedges with complex geometric patterns were created. Often, warp threads tied women to the buttons on their blouses”<sup>26</sup>.

Woven selvedges, as an element found in the traditional folk costume of the inhabitants of the Suwalki region, have found interest among postgraduate students of museology studies. In 2013, Anna Krzaczek prepared – based on the Suwalki collection – a diploma thesis titled: “Krajka as an element of Polish folk costume”. One of the goals set by the author of the work was to prove that the art of weaving selvedges does not belong to the sphere of archival production; elements which can be found in archives and museum warehouses. She demonstrates that awareness of belonging to a specific social and community of property, once manifested by traditional folk costume, is now becoming an identifying element of specific folk groups. Echoing Jadwiga Koszutska, the author draws attention to one of the functions of the distinguishing elements of clothing, which is to influence the sense of identity with a social group.

## Conclusion

The contemporary scientific and research activity of the Ethnography Department of the District Museum in Suwalki allows us to conclude that topics related to traditional Lithuanian culture are not dominant. Among the research topics, a special place is occupied by the Old Believers community living in the Suwalki region. The Old Believers’

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<sup>26</sup> Ethnographic exhibit card no. MS/E 56, made on 9 February 1965, author Marianna Halicka.

history and culture as well as the contemporary cultural identity of representatives of this community, have become the main direction of research. As a result, numerous scientific articles and larger studies are written in which the author of these words creates a cultural picture of the Suwałki region with particular emphasis on Old Believers traditions. This does not mean that other spheres of regional culture are ignored; Lithuanian, German, Tatar, and Jewish topics find their place in substantive work, just like all areas of traditional culture. Whenever possible, the author attempts to participate in important events related to Lithuanian culture. He makes photographic and sound documentation, conducts thematic interviews with representatives of the Lithuanian community, and is trying to expand ethnographic collections with new exhibits. In cooperation with Lithuanian associations, local activists, regionalists, and teachers, he provides museum collections for scientific studies and prepares information about archival and documentary resources as well as helping to edit publications about local issues. As a result of all these activities, the District Museum in Suwałki is becoming a reliable partner for various social activities, including those related to traditional Lithuanian culture in the Suwałki region.

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## Is it time to renegotiate the Polish-Lithuanian Treaty?

### Introduction: the irrelevance of the treaty

“Contemporary Polish-Lithuanian relations from a scientific point of view are probably one of the least interesting topics. Despite the highs and lows, it all boils down to the same question – the demands of the Polish minority in Lithuania and its (non)implementation”. This is how the author of this article described research on Polish-Lithuanian relations in a book review in 2019<sup>2</sup>. National minorities issues – original name spellings, teaching in the language of national minorities, the use of national minorities language in public spaces – have all been a bone of contention between Lithuania and Poland since 1989, beginning during Lithuania’s movement for independence and complicating the restoration of normal relations between Poland and Lithuania. In fact, Lithuania was the last neighbour with which Poland signed a Treaty on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation in 1994 due to disagreements on historical and national minorities issues<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> M. Antonowicz, *Vladas Sirutavičius: Lietuviai Ir Lietuvos Lenkai, Lietuva Ir Lenkija. 1988-1994 Metais*, “Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny” 2019, no. 3, pp. 163-164.

<sup>3</sup> Vladas Sirutavičius provided a detailed account of the beginning of this dynamic. See: V. Sirutavičius, *Lietuviai ir Lietuvos lenkai, Lietuva ir Lenkija 1988-1994 metai*, Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2017.

At that time, there were hopes that this treaty would establish a framework for both countries to normalize their relations. And it did serve this purpose, especially in the process of entering the European Union (EU) and NATO. But after 2004, when Polish-Lithuanian bilateral relations started to develop in the context of Euro-Atlantic integration, the treaty from 1994 gradually lost its relevance. At most, it served as a point of reference during the lows in the relationship, especially during 2008-2017, when it was used as a basis on which Polish and Lithuanian politicians argued over national minority rights<sup>4</sup>.

However, once relations improved, politicians and diplomats quickly forgot about the treaty. For instance, neither Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis, nor Minister Radosław Sikorski mentioned it in their first bilateral meeting in January 2024<sup>5</sup>, although, Presidents Gitanas Nausėda and Andrzej Duda did mention it in the context of national minority rights<sup>6</sup>. This irrelevance is reinforced by that fact that Article 8.2 of the treaty states that “Meetings between head of state and government will usually be held once a year, also in each other case on agreement between the states”<sup>7</sup>. However, during the

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<sup>4</sup> R. Sikorskis: *Jei Vilnius Tesės Pažadus, Pirmas Investuosiu į Draugystę Su Lietuva*, Delfi.lt, 2013, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/r-sikorskis-jei-vilnius-teses-pazadus-pirmas-investuosiu-i-draugyste-su-lietuva-61431357> [24.01.2024].

<sup>5</sup> ELTA, *Landsbergis Pirmąkart Susitiko Su Lenkijos Kolega Sikorskiu – Aptarė Dvišalius Santykius Ir Paramą Ukrainai*, lrt.lt, 2024, <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2169190/landsbergis-pirmakart-susitiko-su-lenkijos-kolega-sikorskiu-aptare-dvisalius-santykius-ir-parama-ukrainai> [24.01.2024]; E. Mokrzecka, *Sikorski w Wilnie: sprawa paru literek mogla zajac krócej niż ćwierć wieku*, lrt.lt, 2024, <https://www.lrt.lt/pl/wiadomosci/1261/2169456/sikorski-w-wilnie-sprawa-paru-literek-mogla-zajac-krocej-niz-cwierc-wieku> [24.01.2024].

<sup>6</sup> *Joint Declaration of the Presidents of the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania*, president.pl, 2023, <https://www.president.pl/rotator-artykul/joint-declaration-of-the-presidents-of-the-republic-of-lithuania-and-71233> [24.01.2024].

<sup>7</sup> Lietuvos Respublikos Ir Lenkijos Respublikos Draugiškų Santykių Ir Gero Kaimyninio Bendradarbiavimo Sutartis, e-seimas.lrs.lt, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.11154> [30.01.2024]. The author did his best to find an English translation of the treaty but to no avail. Hence, this and further quotations from the treaty are translations from Lithuanian to English made by the author.

low period in bilateral relations, there were several years where no such meetings between Poland and Lithuania's prime ministers or presidents took place at all.

This political ambivalence towards the treaty is reflected in the academic literature as well. Ieva Gajauskaitė and Mindaugas Norkevičius mention it being of little relevance in conducting cultural diplomacy<sup>8</sup>. Galina Vaščenkaitė refers to it again in the context of the rights of the Polish minority in Lithuania<sup>9</sup>, as does Violeta Tymul<sup>10</sup>, Andžej Pukšto, Ieva Karpavičiūtė, and Mindaugas Norkevičius<sup>11</sup>. In other works I. Gajauskaitė fails to mention the treaty while discussing the Polish-Lithuanian strategic partnership<sup>12</sup>, M. Norkevičius stays silent about it analysing Polish-Lithuania regional cooperation<sup>13</sup>, as does Tomas Janeliūnas in the context of president Dalia Grybauskaitė's policy towards Poland<sup>14</sup>. In the latest research on Poland and Lithuania's responses to the artificially created migration crisis by Aliaksander Lukashenko's Belarus, the treaty does not appear as

<sup>8</sup> I. Gajauskaitė, M. Norkevičius, *Litewsko-polska współpraca kulturalna w latach 1990-2015*, "Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej" 2015, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 137-154.

<sup>9</sup> G. Vaščenkaitė, *Lithuanian-Polish Relations after 2004: Good Old Cooperation in Regretfully Bad New Wrapping*, "Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review" 2014, vol. 32, pp. 73-105.

<sup>10</sup> V. Tymul, *Mniejszość polska na Litwie a współczesne konflikty polsko-litewskie*, "Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej" 2015, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 119-137.

<sup>11</sup> A. Pukšto, I. Karpavičiūtė, M. Norkevičius, *The Dynamics of Lithuanian-Polish Strategic Partnership*, "Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review", November 2014, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 115-149, <https://doi.org/10.2478/lasr-2014-0006>.

<sup>12</sup> I. Gajauskaitė, *Strateginės Partnerystės Lenkijos Užsienio Politikoje: Lietuvos Atvejo Analizė* [in:] *Lietuvos Ir Lenkijos Santykių Dinamika: Nuo Istorinės Praeities Iki Šiuolaikinės Situacijos*, M. Norkevičius, G. Lukoševičiūtė, I. Masiliūnaitė (eds.), Kaunas, Vilnius: Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas, Versus aureus, 2015, pp. 91-111.

<sup>13</sup> M. Norkevičius, *Współpraca Litwy i Polski w kontekście regionalnym w latach 2004-2014*, "Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej" 2015, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 155-173.

<sup>14</sup> T. Janeliūnas, *D. Grybauskaitės doktrina: Lietuvos užsienio politikos kaita 2009-2019 m.*, Eugrimas, Vilnius 2019.



a potential framework for Poland and Lithuania to coordinate their actions<sup>15</sup>. This is confirmed by the author's own research<sup>16</sup>.

As a result, the academic literature on the Treaty on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation between Poland and Lithuania from 1994 is also sparse. The few positions that exist predictably focus on national minority issues. Andrzej Wierzbicki compares the Polish-Lithuanian and Polish-Russian treaties and the respective rights they guarantee for the Polish minorities in Lithuania and Russia<sup>17</sup>. Justyna Walkowiak focuses on the part dedicated to the rights of national minorities and observes that the controversies may have arisen due to different interpretations of certain phrases in Polish and Lithuanian versions of the text<sup>18</sup>. Gediminas Kazėnas rightly notes that the treaty managed to systematize the relationship between Lithuania and Poland in the 1990s, but later bilateral cooperation moved beyond the provisions of the treaty<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> M. Perkowska, A. Gutauskas, *Were the Lithuanian and Polish Responses to the Refugee Influx Legal or Illegal?*, "Białostockie Studia Prawnicze", 1 March 2023, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 117-136, <https://doi.org/10.15290/bsp.2023.28.01.07>; J. Ciechanowska, K. Szwed, *Odpowiedź Polski i Litwy na kryzys migracyjny przy granicy z Białorusią – próba porównania*, "Polityka i Społeczeństwo", March 2023, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 77-91, <https://doi.org/10.15584/polispol.2023.1.6>.

<sup>16</sup> M. Antonowicz, *Small state and middle power cooperation? The comparative analysis of Latvia's, Lithuania's and Poland's policies towards Belarus after 2020* [in:] *Middle Powers in Relation to Small States: Multilateralism, Minilateralism and the Quest for Niche Diplomacy*. Forthcoming.

<sup>17</sup> A. Wierzbicki, *The Polish-Lithuanian Treaty on Neighbourly Relations of 1994 and the Polish-Russian Treaty on Neighbourly Relations of 1992 in the Context of International Protection of the Rights of National Minorities* [in:] *Good Neighbourhood Treaties of Poland*, K.P. Marczuk (ed.), Springer International Publishing, Cham 2019, pp. 179-192, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12615-5\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12615-5_12).

<sup>18</sup> J. Walkowiak, *Jedno słowo, dwa języki, dwie interpretacje: polsko-litewski traktat z roku 1994 i jego (nie)zrozumienie*, "Comparative Legilinguistics", 19 January 2014, vol. 18, p. 88, <https://doi.org/10.14746/cl.2014.18.6>.

<sup>19</sup> G. Kazėnas, *1994 Treaty Between the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania on Friendly Relations and Neighbourly Cooperation: Successes and New Challenges* [in:] *Good Neighbourhood Treaties of Poland*, K.P. Marczuk (ed.), Springer International Publishing, Cham 2019, pp. 207-223, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12615-5\\_14](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12615-5_14).

## The outdatedness of the treaty

The treaty has gradually become marginal in Polish-Lithuanian relations as is reflected in both political and academic practices. What might be the reasons behind this? So far, there are two possibilities.

First, many of the treaty's declared objectives have been realised. For instance, Article 9.3 states that "countries will exchange experience and provide each other with learning and other assistance in creating and developing the market economy"<sup>20</sup>. Both countries have now established market economies and are members of the OECD. Article 10.4 declares that "countries will increase the number of cross-border points, modernize existing cross-border points and roads leading to them, and also put effort into accelerating customs and cross-border checking procedures and further develop cooperation among relevant administrative bodies"<sup>21</sup>. Lithuania and Poland now belong to the Schengen zone, which makes the aforementioned article redundant. Article 11.1 says that "the Contracting Parties shall cooperate in improving interconnections, transit, and related infrastructure in all areas of transport, including pipelines and energy lines"<sup>22</sup>. This is relevant only in the context of the Rail Baltica project, whereas the electricity interconnection and Via Baltica are in their closing phases, and the gas pipeline is fully functional. Article 14 of the treaty talks about, among other issues related to national minorities, the name spelling of people belonging to national minorities. Even this issue, which was one of the most contentious in Polish-Lithuanian relations, is partially solved<sup>23</sup>. Finally, Article 19 of the treaty describes that Poland and Lithuania will cooperate in the fields of education

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<sup>20</sup> Lietuvos Respublikos Ir Lenkijos Respublikos Draugiškų Santykių Ir Gero Kaimyninio Bendradarbiavimo Sutartis.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>23</sup> E. Mokrzecka et al., *Sprawa Wołkonowskiego. Co oznacza orzeczenie Sądu Konstytucyjnego?*, lrt.lt, 1 January 2024, <https://www.lrt.lt/pl/wiadomosci/1261/2161090/sprawa-wolkonowskiego-co-oznacza-orzeczenie-sadu-konstytucyjnego> [24.01.2024].

and science. This goal has also been achieved – Poland and Lithuania have joint research programmes, their universities collaborate, and much of this cooperation takes place in the context of the EU.

This last point is crucial as it directs towards an even bigger problem with the treaty: in most respects, it is completely outdated. The most glaring discrepancy between the text of the document and the empirical reality is its numerous references to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and implicitly the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, whereas Poland and Lithuania have been EU and NATO members for 20 years. There are other examples showing how far the treaty is out of touch. What purpose does Article 11.2 serve, for example, which reads that “the Parties will take measures to modernise and improve telecommunications communications, in particular telephone, telex and electronic data communications”<sup>24</sup>. It sounds ludicrous when Poland and Lithuania have to grapple with the challenges created by social media and artificial intelligence. Issues mentioned in Articles 17 and 24 of the treaty, namely the preservation of internationally accepted human rights or cooperation in legal and crime issues, are currently covered and transferred to the EU level.

### **Time to renegotiate?**

So, it is no wonder that the treaty plays only a marginal role in contemporary Polish-Lithuanian relations: its text does not match the current realities of the relationship. The 1994 Treaty on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation between Lithuania and Poland was about normalising Polish-Lithuanian relations, putting the foundations for future cooperation in place, and paving the way

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<sup>24</sup> Lietuvos Respublikos Ir Lenkijos Respublikos Draugiškų Santykių Ir Gero Kaimyninio Bendradarbiavimo Sutartis.

for both countries to enter Europe<sup>25</sup>. In the same year, Henry Kissinger described the newly independent countries of Eastern Europe in such a manner: “[there] are the ethnic splinters from disintegrating empires such as the successor states of Yugoslavia or of the Soviet Union. Obsessed by historical grievances and age-old conquests for identity, they strive primarily to prevail in ancient ethnic rivalries. The goal of international order is beyond their fields of interest and frequently beyond their imaginations”<sup>26</sup>. And this kind of thinking was prevalent at the time among the political elites in the USA and Western Europe. The Polish-Lithuanian treaty was meant to show both countries and the world that Lithuania and Poland can overcome their historical difficulties and cooperate, and that considerations about international order are not beyond their imagination. Consequently, it implied that these countries deserved to be accepted into the EU.

However, since 1994, the relationship between Poland and Lithuania has evolved into a strategic partnership. Both countries cooperate in numerous areas and take up joint initiatives on a regional and multilateral level. Thus, the realities of current Polish-Lithuanian relations have gone beyond those envisioned in the treaty and made it practically redundant. Speaking in more theoretical terms, one may say that Poland and Lithuania established a zone of peace in 1994. The treaty fixed the stability of democratic political regimes, provided mutual satisfaction with the then-existing status quo, attempted to create predictability of behaviour, created problem-solving mechanisms, and opened up communication channels<sup>27</sup>. But later on, the relationship had evolved into something, to use the terms of Andrea Oelsner and Simon Koschut, between a strategic international

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<sup>25</sup> V. Sirutavičius, *Lietuviai ir Lietuvos...*, pp. 410-412.

<sup>26</sup> H. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, Simon & Schuster, New York 1994, p. 807.

<sup>27</sup> A. Oelsner, S. Koschut, *A Framework for the Study of International Friendship* [in:] *Friendship and International Relations*, A. Oelsner, S. Koschut (eds.), Palgrave Macmillan, London 2014, pp. 3-31.

friendship based on shared interests and perception of threat, and a normative international friendship grounded on common identities, culture, and values<sup>28</sup>.

The question that stands before the decision-makers of Poland and Lithuania is whether the treaty should be renegotiated and upgraded to the current status of the relationship between those countries. The answer depends on the ambitions of these decision-makers and their vision for the relationship.

One answer could be to do nothing. And that would be reasonable. The Polish-Lithuanian relationship has gone through its ups and downs despite the provisions of the treaty, and at the lowest moments in the relationship, it still performed the function of a benchmark around which bilateral discussions took place. Why should one need to add a new document that could potentially limit one's room for manoeuvre?

However, a renegotiation of the treaty could actually serve as an instrument to develop the relationship further. These negotiations could serve as an opportunity not only for Polish and Lithuanian diplomats but also for politicians, experts, scientists, and civil society leaders to discuss present and future challenges and how Poland, with Lithuania, should approach them in order to work a certain vision for the relationship into the future.

What issues could be touched upon during such negotiations, and appear later in the newer version of the treaty? Some examples come to mind. The first is the challenge of the Eastern Neighbourhood. What can Lithuania and Poland do to ensure the survival and eventual victory of Ukraine in its war against Russia, even in the worst-case scenario of US disengagement from Europe? How will Lithuania and Poland prepare for the eventual accession of Ukraine

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 13-14.

into the EU? Do Lithuania and Poland have a common vision of EU reform to accommodate the approaching enlargement? In what ways will Poland and Lithuania support Belarus's independence and fight for democracy? Is there a chance to achieve a synergy between Lithuanian and Polish actions?

Second – energy cooperation. Both countries have embarked on a gigantic mission of transforming their energy sectors and becoming climate-neutral by the mid-21st century. This is a completely new task since the previous one – energy independence from Russia – has been largely achieved by both countries. But can Lithuania and Poland assist each other in their green agendas? Is there any potential for new energy projects with stronger involvement of business? How can Lithuania and Poland help each other in ensuring their energy security in these transforming energy sectors?

The third potential topic of discussion is military cooperation. Both Lithuanian and Polish politicians are talking openly about creating a regional cooperation framework<sup>29</sup> to ensure that a military response comes from the first moment Belarus and/or Russia potentially attack NATO. But how will the Lithuanian and Polish militaries cooperate to ensure the constant security of the Suwalki gap? Is there a chance for cooperation among both countries' defence industries and in the development of new military technologies? In what ways can Poland and Lithuania fortify their borders with Belarus and Russia? What can Lithuania and Poland do to make the Kaliningrad Region a liability for Russia, but not for NATO? How does the solution to the latter conundrum change with the entrance of Sweden and Finland into NATO?

Last but not least, the potential renegotiation of the Polish-Lithuanian treaty can touch upon national minority issues as well. Sceptics of this idea might argue that the provisions of the old treaty have not been

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<sup>29</sup> ELTA, *Landsbergis Pirmąkart Susitiko...*

realised, so why discuss new ones? But just as with the Polish-Lithuanian relationship in general, national minorities have come up with new challenges and opportunities for their development. For instance, can Lithuania and Poland cooperate in the digital sphere to ensure access to Polish cultural and media outlets and products in Lithuania and vice versa? How can both countries assist each other in preparing teachers for national minority schools? What can both countries do to promote the knowledge of Polish in Lithuania and Lithuanian in Poland?

At the moment these issues are either not discussed at all or in a scattered manner on an ad hoc basis. Crucially, these potential Polish-Lithuanian negotiations on a new treaty may focus not only on new challenges but also on opportunities to deepen integration between the two countries and their bilateral relationship. And actually, the process of reaching an agreement on a new text for the treaty might be more valuable than the treaty itself; while not all the discussion can later be transferred onto paper, it may remain in the institutional memory of Lithuania and Poland.

## Conclusion

30 years after the Treaty on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation between Lithuania and Poland was signed, one may conclude that the reality of 2024 is completely different from that of 1994. Current Polish-Lithuanian relations function in a different logic, only very loosely connected to that presented in the treaty. Therefore, the treaty has become obsolete, although it did secure a floor below which relations between Poland and Lithuania did not drop.

The question that stands before Lithuanian and Polish politicians is whether the treaty should be upgraded. A new ceiling to which both Lithuania and Poland may aspire in their relations might stem from this process. Obviously, this will take time and patience. But another reward may be a higher floor below which the state of relations may not fall.

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There was a chance that the 30th anniversary of the Treaty on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation of the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Poland would be forgotten or stay in the shadows. However, this Treaty played a big role in strengthening the security and international position of both countries, and it is impossible to imagine the process of Euro-Atlantic integration without it. This publication presents the current state of Lithuanian-Polish relations. Polish and Lithuanian researchers have attempted to analyse various areas of cooperation, paying attention to its effectiveness, but also noting current and future challenges. Thus, they point out that security, economy, media, memory policy, and national minorities are important dimensions of bilateral cooperation.