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## **LITHUANIA IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE PRESIDENCIES OF B. CLINTON AND B. OBAMA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The presidency of Barack Obama is often compared with the presidency of Bill Clinton, because many similarities exist between them such as warm relations with Russia, preference for soft-power instead of hard power, and so on. This article addresses the question of whether Lithuania's role in U.S. foreign policy is also similar in the two presidencies, since Lithuania (and the other Baltic states) was always in the U.S. field of interest because of its geopolitical position and U.S. competition with Russia. This article seeks to compare the role of Lithuania in U.S. foreign policy during the presidency of B. Clinton and B. Obama according to several criteria: the presentation of Lithuania in U.S. strategic documents and official rhetoric; the role of Lithuania in U.S. foreign policy practice; and the role of Lithuania in U.S.-Russian relations.

The article concludes that Lithuania's presentation in U.S. strategic documents and official rhetoric during the presidency of B. Clinton and B. Obama differs mostly in frequency of mention. In foreign policy practice U.S.-Lithuanian relations were transferred from the format "Work for you" to "Work with you." However, although in U.S.-Russian relations Lithuania was never the main factor that sharpened these relations— it only received its main security guarantees during the presidency of B. Obama.

**KEYWORDS**

Lithuania, United States, Bill Clinton, Barack Obama, Russia, foreign policy

## INTRODUCTION

After Barack Obama took office, U.S. foreign policy towards Russia started to change: the administration of B. Obama agreed to cut U.S. strategic nuclear forces under the New START treaty, toned down criticism of the violation of political freedom in Russia, and is trying to engage Russia in cooperation. Reacting to these changes Lithuania and other Baltic states expressed worries about their future role in U.S. foreign policy and about U.S.-Russian relations as they treat the U.S. as the main guarantor of their security and always look to Russia with caution.

However, experts admit that B. Obama's foreign policy course in the context of U.S.-Russian relations is not completely new and resembles that of Bill Clinton's administration (warm relations with Russia, domination of "Containment Light" strategy in these bilateral relations, preference to soft-power instead of hard power). It should be stressed that during the presidency of B. Clinton Lithuania and the Baltic states gained certain security guarantees and enjoyed active political communication with his administration. Therefore, the question arises, whether the role of Lithuania in U.S. foreign policy during the presidency of B. Obama differs from its role in U.S. foreign policy during the presidency of B. Clinton.

So the object of analysis in this article is Lithuania's role in U.S. foreign policy during the presidency of B. Clinton and B. Obama.

The choice of above mentioned object of analysis was determined by several motives. Firstly, Lithuania's role in U.S. foreign policy is rarely researched both in Lithuania and abroad. Secondly, certain differences in U.S. foreign policy towards the separate Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) determine that only one be analyzed at a time. Thirdly, B. Obama's presidency was chosen for analysis in order to reveal the latest trends in U.S.-Lithuanian relations; whereas B. Clinton's presidency was chosen because it was most similar to the presidency of B. Obama in terms of foreign policy towards Russia.

Lithuania's role in U.S. foreign policy (especially including the Russian factor) has not been widely analyzed at the level of scientific articles or monographs, neither in Lithuanian research organs nor abroad. Among Lithuanian research the work of Vaidotas Urbelis (he wrote about Lithuania in the U.S. grand strategy covering the period of G. Bush presidency), Evaldas Nekrašas, Raimundas Lopata, Česlovas Laurinavičius (who analyzed Lithuania's foreign policy from perspective of small states, also in the context of identity), Nortautas Statkus, and Egidijus Motieka (who focused on Lithuania's geopolitical position), are noteworthy. Among non-Lithuanian research, other names include: Aušra Park (she analyzed the

connection between leaders of Baltic States and foreign policy) and Edward Lucas. Considering the lack of analysis of Lithuania's role in U.S. foreign policy, in this article special attention is paid to primary sources: documents, speeches, treaties, press releases and information of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania.

The purpose of an article is to compare the role of Lithuania in U.S. foreign policy during the presidency of B. Clinton and B. Obama. The role of Lithuania in U.S. foreign policy will be compared according several criteria:

1. The presentation of Lithuania in U.S. strategic documents and official rhetoric paying special attention to frequency and the context of mentioning, declared political means in U.S.-Lithuanian relations;
2. The Role of Lithuania in U.S. foreign policy practice concentrating attention to military and political spheres, stressing the number of official visits, political support and cooperation in military sphere;
3. The role of Lithuania in U.S.-Russian relations.

Analysis of Lithuania's role in U.S. foreign policy during the presidency of B. Clinton and B. Obama in this article is based on the theory of classical realism that presumes that states are unitary actors, each of which expresses one vision of foreign policy. Therefore, the differences between the foreign policy vision of republicans and democrats during the presidencies of B. Clinton and B. Obama are not analyzed in this article.

The article consists of three parts. The first one is devoted to discussing the Lithuanian factor in U.S. foreign policy during the presidency of B. Clinton. In the second part of the article attention is focused on B. Obama's administration. In both parts Lithuania's role in U.S. foreign policy is analyzed using the same criteria: Lithuania's presentation in U.S. strategic documents and official rhetoric, the role of Lithuania in U.S. foreign policy practice, the role of Lithuania in U.S.-Russian relations. The international context is discussed as well. The third part is devoted to a comparison of the role of Lithuania in U.S. foreign policy during the presidency of B. Clinton and B. Obama.

## **1. LITHUANIA IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF B. CLINTON**

### **1.1. INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF B. CLINTON**

B. Clinton took office in difficult times: after the Cold War the distribution of power in the international arena and the situation in Europe had changed; new types of threats emerged. If during the Cold War there was a bipolar world system, where power was divided between the U.S. and the USSR, so after the dissolution of the Soviet Union the U.S. became the world's most powerful country. The U.S. was ahead of any other international player in its economic capacity, the quality of the armed forces, international influence. Experts of international relations acknowledge that the unrivaled power of the U.S. allowed B. Clinton's administration to assume a new foreign policy approach: U.S. leadership in world affairs.<sup>1</sup> In this context the administration of B. Clinton sought to build the world order compatible with U.S. values. Strategic U.S. documents indicate that the foreign policy of B. Clinton's administration was based on three elements: strong defense capability to promote cooperative security measures, promoting democracy worldwide and efforts to open foreign markets to promote global economic growth.<sup>2</sup> These three elements can be found in the U.S-Lithuanian relations as well.

Russia's status in the international arena during the presidency of B. Clinton, according experts of international relations, rested the same. Western powers did not recognize Russia as an equal partner. On the contrary, they often treated Russia as a potential threat.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, Russian foreign policy makers in the official rhetoric declared that Russia remained a great power. Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Yevgeny Primakov said that "Russia was and remains a great power, and its foreign policy has to comply with this status."<sup>4</sup> Experts of international relations admit that Russian reaction to its diminished status was painful. Because of dependence on the West (investment, the need for loans in order to modernize Russia), Russia experienced an alleged lack of respect from the Western powers, particularly the U.S., and felt confronting them. NATO enlargement only strengthened Russia's suspicion that Western states were playing power games, taking advantage of Russia's temporary weakness. Russian foreign policy makers

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Conry, "U.S. 'Global Leadership': A Euphemism for World Policeman," *Cato Policy Analysis* No. 267 (February 5, 1997) // <http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-267.html> (accessed May 20, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> *National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (February 1995): 2-3 // <http://www.fas.org/spp/military/docops/national/1996stra.htm> (accessed May 20, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), p. 92.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

proposed two measures to regain great power status in a multipolar world: balancing U.S. unipolar ambitions in coalition with other nations and taking control over the post-Soviet space.<sup>5</sup> This could be noticed in the Russian foreign policy as well.

Meanwhile, B. Clinton's administration treated Russia carefully because of its possession of nuclear arsenals, technology to produce weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and its geopolitical situation: Russia's neighboring regions (Europe, East Asia, the Persian Gulf) were important to the national interests of the United States. Therefore, B. Clinton's administration treated Russia as a great power in the official rhetoric.<sup>6</sup> However, B. Clinton's administration ignored the interests of Russia making decisions on NATO enlargement, the air attacks against Iraq (1998), Kosovo.<sup>7</sup>

It can be noticed that during the presidency of B. Clinton U.S. strategy towards Russia was changing. U.S. gradually abandoned the warm bilateral relations, which were started during presidency of George Bush senior. Head of the Moscow Institute Sergei Rogov observes that U.S. foreign policy course towards Russia gradually evolved from "a strategic partnership to a pragmatic partnership, from pragmatic partnership to realistic partnership, and ultimately – to realism."<sup>8</sup>

The Baltic region (and Lithuania within it) seemed like another potential source of instability in the then context (recently re-established independence, the question of minorities, the Russian neighborhood). The importance of Lithuania to the U.S. was increased by Lithuania's geopolitical situation: the presence in an area where U.S. and Russian interests collide.<sup>9</sup>

To sum up it can be said that the then international context was unstable but beneficial for the U.S.: lack of equivalent competitors let the U.S. take the role of the world's policeman and to create a new world order. Both Lithuania and Russia found themselves on the foreign policy agenda of B. Clinton's administration: Lithuania because of its geopolitical position and transitional period, Russia because of its power potential. Geopolitical background also determined the situation that both Lithuania and Russia were interested in U.S. foreign policy towards one another.

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>6</sup> *U.S.-Russian Relations at the Turn of the Century*, Report of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Working Group on U.S.-Russian Relations (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000), p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> John Feffer, "Containment Lite. U.S. Policy Toward Russia and its Neighbors," *Foreign Policy in Focus* (October/November 2001) // [http://www.fpif.org/articles/containment\\_lite\\_us\\_policy\\_toward\\_russia\\_and\\_its\\_neighbors](http://www.fpif.org/articles/containment_lite_us_policy_toward_russia_and_its_neighbors) (accessed May 20, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> John Feffer, "U.S.-Russian Relations: Avoiding a Cold Peace," *Foreign Policy in Focus* Vol. 1, No. 15 (November 1996) // [http://www.fpif.org/reports/us-russian\\_relations\\_avoiding\\_a\\_cold\\_peace](http://www.fpif.org/reports/us-russian_relations_avoiding_a_cold_peace) (accessed May 20, 2011)

<sup>9</sup> Česlovas Laurinavičius, Egidijus Motieka, and Nortautas Statkus, *Baltijos valstybių geopolitikos bruožai* (Vilnius, 2005), p. 186-187.

## 1.2. LITHUANIA IN STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS AND IN THE OFFICIAL RHETORIC OF THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION

Strategic documents and official rhetoric are great indicators of certain objects' importance in a state's foreign policy: the frequency of a certain state's mentioning, the context of that mention, the description of that state indicates how important the state is and what foreign policy course will be developed with regard to it. During the presidency of B. Clinton Lithuania (and the other Baltic countries) received some attention in U.S. strategic documents and official rhetoric, but far less than countries of the other regions (e.g. Latin America, Middle East, post-Soviet space). In strategic documents of B. Clinton's administration Lithuania is mentioned as a separate entity, but such references emerge only during the second term of B. Clinton's office (1997-2001).

In U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) of 1995 neither Lithuania nor the Baltic states are directly mentioned. Only provisions relating to the Eastern European countries can be detected, but the document does not generalize, what countries constitute the region according B. Clinton's administration. In NSS the Eastern European region is treated as one unit. B. Clinton's administration stresses the need to spread democracy in the world. Highlighting South Africa, the Eastern European region alongside Russia, it argues that it "launched a series of initiatives to bolster the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe."<sup>10</sup> The document refers to such guidelines of the U.S. actions in relations with Eastern European countries as technical, economic aid during the transitional period. The possibility to join NATO for the Eastern European countries is also indirectly mentioned: "Expanding the Alliance will promote our interests by reducing the risk of instability or conflict in Europe's eastern half — the region where two world wars and the Cold War began."<sup>11</sup>

Later U.S. NSS (1998) mentions not merely an abstract Eastern European region, but the Baltic countries in particular. In this strategy B. Clinton's administration (like other administrations) stresses that it always regarded the Baltic States as sovereign and independent states: "For over fifty years, the United States has recognized the sovereignty and independence of the republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania."<sup>12</sup> Thus, attention is drawn not only to the Baltic States, but to Lithuania as well (but, in fact, in the NSS of B. Clinton's administration Lithuania is always mentioned in the context of the other Baltic States). 1998 U.S. NSS kept emphasizing the necessity to spread democratic

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<sup>10</sup> *National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, *supra* note 2: 12.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*: 34.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*: 42.

values in the Baltic States and Lithuania. It noted that U.S.-Lithuanian relations have special nature. Referring to potential guidelines of U.S.-Lithuanian relations B. Clinton's administration stresses that it will seek "integration of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia into the transatlantic community and development of close, cooperative relationships among all the states in Northeastern Europe."<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, the situation in the official rhetoric of B. Clinton and officials of his administration is contradictory. The most important presidential speeches (e.g. those singled out by the Miller Center of Public Affairs) makes no mention of Lithuania (or the Baltic countries in general, as well). In the official rhetoric of B. Clinton Lithuania was only mentioned in specific situations (e.g. signing the Baltic Charter) and during official visits. In presidential speeches Lithuania's (and the Baltic countries) importance to the U.S. is mentioned and support for the further development of Lithuania is expressed: "I came here today because the Baltics are important to the United States. [...] We have always recognized these three nations as independent nations."<sup>14</sup>

In the rhetoric of U.S. Secretaries of State (Warren Christopher, Madeleine Albright) and lower-ranking officials Lithuania is mentioned more often. Lithuania was also often mentioned together with other Baltic states. Lithuania was treated as an independent actor in international relations, stressing that it deserves to be part of the Western community and the need to develop democracy in Lithuania. Officials of B. Clinton's administration praised Lithuania's efforts to integrate into the Western community, to participate in the North-East Europe Initiative, military missions: "We applaud Baltic contributions to European security, including through KFOR and SFOR in the Balkans."<sup>15</sup>

This may be explained by the international context then. At that time such threats as terrorism, the spread of WMD were not yet widely stressed. Therefore, the U.S. did not need allies as they are needed now. That is, Lithuania, perhaps, needed the U.S. more than the U.S. needed Lithuania. The foreign policy of B. Clinton's administration widely targeted the solving international conflicts (Israel-Palestinian conflict, conflicts in the Balkans, Somalia). Thus, Lithuania did not have an important role in U.S. foreign policy actions as it could not actively participate in military operations because of its transitional period.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Press Conference by President Clinton, President Ulmanis of Latvia, and President Meri of Estonia* (July 6, 1994) // <http://clinton6.nara.gov/1994/07/1994-07-06-president-in-press-conference-with-baltic-presidents.html> (accessed May 20, 2011).

<sup>15</sup> Thomas R. Pickering, "Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs," Keynote Address at the Conference on Baltic Sea Security and Cooperation, Stockholm, Sweden (October 19, 2000) // [http://1997-2001.state.gov/www/policy\\_remarks/2000/001019\\_pickering\\_bssc.html](http://1997-2001.state.gov/www/policy_remarks/2000/001019_pickering_bssc.html) (accessed May 20, 2011).



In the official rhetoric not only the situation in Lithuania is emphasized. The Baltic-Russian relations problem is analyzed as well ("We all recognize that the relationship of the Baltic states with Russia is one of the most acute challenges we face in our common effort to enhance peace, stability, and security throughout the region")<sup>16</sup>, proposing measure to improve the situation: to engage Russia in cooperation in the political, economic and environmental spheres. So, B. Clinton's administration was in favor of Russia's engagement strategy and expressed the attitude that such strategy would be useful for Lithuania as well.

So Lithuania received the greatest attention in the rhetoric of lower grade officials in B. Clinton's administration, although Lithuania's (the Baltic States) situation was discussed in NSS as well. Lithuania was treated as an independent actor of international relations important for the U.S., actively integrating into the Western community. From strategic documents and the official rhetoric of B. Clinton's administration the conclusion can be made that Lithuania was important for the U.S. because of common democratic values and an intention to ensure stability in Eastern Europe (that could be done improving relations with Russia). Documents and rhetoric of B. Clinton's administration indicate that US strategy towards Lithuania was focused on promoting democracy and integrating it into West European and Atlantic structures, emphasizing cooperation and engagement. This U.S. foreign policy course was a part of wider strategy in Europe – peace building on the continent and spreading the U.S. sphere of influence.

### **1.3. LITHUANIA IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY PRACTICE DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF B. CLINTON**

The foreign policy actions of B. Clinton's administration did not contradict the officially declared foreign policy course in relations with Lithuania. The foreign policy of B. Clinton's administration was focused on Lithuania's stabilization (democratization, political and economic reforms) and its integration into the Western community and international organizations. The U.S. demonstrated support for Lithuania on the official level by visits, supporting its position of international organizations, and signing the treaty of strategic partnership.

This foreign policy course of B. Clinton's administration was useful for U.S. interests in a number of ways. Firstly, stabilization of Lithuania and its consolidation as a sovereign unit in the international community and international organizations meant stabilization of the region (and security-building). Secondly, developing

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<sup>16</sup> Deputy Secretary Talbott Address to the Paasikivi Society (January 21, 1998) // [http://1997-2001.state.gov/www/policy\\_remarks/1998/980121\\_talbott\\_eursecurity.html](http://1997-2001.state.gov/www/policy_remarks/1998/980121_talbott_eursecurity.html) (accessed May 20, 2011).

relations with Lithuania B. Clinton's administration increased its influence in the region, and diminishing the Russian sphere of influence in this way.

Eastern European countries were experiencing a deepening industrial decline and economic recession that strained the already fragile democratic institutions in place. Therefore, economic assistance was one of the instruments of US foreign policy in relations with Lithuania in order to stabilize the situation in Lithuania. The principal goal of the assistance was facilitating democratization and free market, to develop constitutions that will enable their constituent nationalities to simultaneously achieve political autonomy and economic viability. For example, during the first three years of B. Clinton's term Lithuania got more than 12 million U.S. dollars (in comparison: Latvia got 7.5 million., Estonia received 2 million.).<sup>17</sup> In order to promote the development of civil society, the creation non-governmental organizations, and economic and political reforms in Lithuania and other Baltic states, the Baltic-American Partnership Fund was established in 1998. It provided advice, technical and financial assistance for various development programs.<sup>18</sup>

In the field of Lithuania's integration into the Western community, an intensive U.S.-Lithuanian dialogue can be seen (the highest level meetings and visits). The president of Lithuania repeatedly met with B. Clinton during his visits in U.S. (four times). On September 27 of 1993 Lithuania's president met with U.S. President B. Clinton in General Assembly of the United Nations, on in 25-27 June 1996 Lithuania's president visited U.S. on a working visit, in January 1998 Lithuania's president also met with U.S. president when the Baltic Charter was signed, meaning the start of the U.S.-Lithuanian strategic partnership, and in April of 1999, when the 50th anniversary of NATO was celebrated. Political communication between the U.S. and Lithuania was held during B. Clinton's visits as well: on October 26-27, 1993, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher met the Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs; in July 1994 B. Clinton met Lithuania's president in Riga; in July 1997 U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright met Lithuania's president in Vilnius.<sup>19</sup>

Lithuania's importance for United States was demonstrated not only by active bilateral dialogue. NATO played an important role in B. Clinton's administration foreign policy in relations with Lithuania and cooperation in the military sphere. B. Clinton's administration tried to influence the decision to expand the NATO alliance eastward. Therefore, during the presidency of B. Clinton several new initiatives

<sup>17</sup> Kimberly A. Zeuli and Vernon W. Ruttan, "U.S. Assistance to the Former Soviet Empire: Toward a Rationale for Foreign Aid," *The Journal of Developing Areas* Vol. 30, No. 4 (July 1996) // <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4192598> (accessed May 20, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> *Fact Sheet: Baltic American Partnership Fund*, Federation of American Scientists (January 16, 1998) // [http://www.fas.org/man/nato/national/98011607\\_wpo.html](http://www.fas.org/man/nato/national/98011607_wpo.html) (accessed May 20, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> *Presidents and Secretaries of State Foreign Travels*, Department of State (June 15, 2000) // [http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/prestravels.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/prestravels.html) (accessed May 20, 2011).

were started. In autumn of 1993 the U.S. suggested the Partnership for Peace (PfP) initiative in NATO, which covered military contact and cooperation activities between NATO members and non-members in Europe. The main goal of PfP was to give an opportunity for East European countries (Lithuania among them) to become involved in a multinational force-planning process and to bring the militaries of East European countries to NATO standards.<sup>20</sup> On January 27, 1994, Lithuania joined the Partnership for Peace program. Lithuania was engaged in many training, planning and operational activities such as weapons standardization and joint military exercises. Also joint peacekeeping battalion (BALTBALT), an airspace monitoring system (BALTNET) and joint naval squadron (BALTRON) were established. Lithuania's engagement in the PfP program not only strengthened Lithuania's military capabilities and increased security, but also opened the door to NATO.

Lithuania itself made active efforts to integrate into the Western community and its military structures. Lithuania contributed to IFOR, SFOR peacekeeping missions. Lithuania has taken part in these operations since 1996. Approximately 700 Lithuanian troops served in the missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (LITPLA, LITCOY, BALTCOY, BALTSQ, SFOR). Participation in IFOR and SFOR operations was the first time when Lithuanian troops participated in NATO-led international operations.<sup>21</sup> Lithuania's efforts were noticed. Since 1999 positive individualization of the Baltic States in the U.S. position can be noticed: Lithuania was singled out from the Baltic States as the most advanced state in its commitment to modernize the armed forces and to increase the defense budget by 2 percent of the GDP.

In order to make Lithuania a part of the Western community, other foreign policy actions were taken as well. B. Clinton's administration not only developed an active bilateral dialogue with Lithuania, and tried to open the door to NATO for Lithuania (and for the other Baltic States), but also provided support for Lithuania addressing other sensitive issues such as the withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of Lithuania (in Lithuania there was the largest number of Russian troops compared with the other Baltic States). According to experts of international relations, Russia perhaps would not have agreed to withdraw troops from the Baltic countries had it not been for strong and sustained international support, and particularly thanks to the silent diplomacy of B. Clinton's administration.

The Baltic Charter signed between the United States and the Baltic States on January 16, 1998, was another step forward in U.S.-Lithuanian relations. It confirmed that the U.S. supported Lithuania's aspirations to integrate into NATO

<sup>20</sup> Martin A. Smith, *Russia and NATO since 1991* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 57-59.

<sup>21</sup> *Tarptautinės operacijos*, Lietuvos Respublikos Krašto apsaugos ministerija (March 2011) // [http://kariuomene.kam.lt/lt/tarptautines\\_operacijos\\_786/dalyvavimo\\_istorija/operacijos\\_balkanuose/bo\\_snijs\\_ir\\_hercegovina\\_2838.html](http://kariuomene.kam.lt/lt/tarptautines_operacijos_786/dalyvavimo_istorija/operacijos_balkanuose/bo_snijs_ir_hercegovina_2838.html) (accessed May 20, 2011).

and the European Union because, according to the document, "Europe will not be fully secure unless Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania each are secure."<sup>22</sup> The document envisaged strengthening of consultations, establishment of Bilateral Working Group on Defense and Military Relations, further cooperation and expansion of defense initiatives (like above mentioned BALTNET). In the Baltic Charter B. Clinton's administration expressed U.S. interest in "the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, and security of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania."<sup>23</sup>

The foreign policy of B. Clinton's administration towards Lithuania can be characterized by the phrase "Work for you". During the presidency of B. Clinton Lithuania in U.S. foreign policy, however, was the factor that helped to achieve strategic interests – the security in the region, spread democratic values, the consolidation of U.S. influence. The administration used typical foreign policy instruments (e.g. support in international organizations, visits, military cooperation). The Clinton administration's foreign policy course towards Lithuania was exclusive by its financial support, as the specifics of the period required (transition period in Lithuania). Subsequent U.S. administrations changed the forms of assistance: from financial support it was changed into greater military cooperation (influenced by Russian power factor) and the solving of other issues important for Lithuania (for example, energy security during the presidency of B. Obama).

#### 1.4. THE ROLE OF LITHUANIA IN U.S.-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

In U.S.-Russian relations Lithuania, of course, was a dependent variable. The U.S. foreign policy course towards Lithuania was closely monitored in Russia and received a response. In the official Russian rhetoric, Russia's strategic documents and real actions indicate that B. Clinton's foreign policy towards the Baltic States and Lithuania during his presidency was perceived as a threat by Russia and created a certain security dilemma – Russia responded with similar measures, producing increased tensions.

Although Russia was worried about Lithuania's democratization conducted by the U.S., the start of a strategic partnership between Lithuania and the U.S. support for Lithuania at the diplomatic level, in the Lithuanian-American-Russian relations NATO factor was the one that caused the highest tensions (the administration of B. Clinton used NATO as an instrument of Russia's containment

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<sup>22</sup> *A Charter Of Partnership Among The United States Of America And The Republic Of Estonia, Republic Of Latvia, And Republic Of Lithuania* (January 16, 1998) // [http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/ch\\_9801\\_baltic\\_charter.html](http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/ch_9801_baltic_charter.html) (accessed May 20, 2011).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

strategy<sup>24</sup>). According to experts of international relations, Russia correctly interpreted Lithuania's engagement in NATO activities as an expansion of opposing spheres of influence.<sup>25</sup>

Dissatisfaction with Lithuania's engagement in NATO's activities was expressed both in the official rhetoric of Russian officials and Russian strategic documents. For Russia the Baltic States (including Lithuania) were a vital firewall that had to block Western intrusion into post-soviet space. In case of NATO enlargement, NATO's fighters would have been able to reach Moscow in 20 minutes. Talking in military terms, this situation stimulated Russia not to reject the possibility to use preemptive strikes, since hostile alliance would have been closer to Russian borders. In October 1993, Russian president Boris Yeltsin sent letters to Western leaders warning that NATO would not expand into former communist Central and Eastern European countries. Later the Russian foreign policy makers repeatedly stressed that a NATO expansion into Eastern European countries (Lithuania – among them) is not necessary because there was no conceivable external threat from Russia for them.<sup>26</sup>

During the entire presidency of B. Clinton Lithuania's engagement in NATO's activities was seen as a threat to Russia in Russia's strategic documents. Although in the 1993 "Basic Provisions of the Russian Federation's Military Doctrine" it is stated that Russia "regards no state as its enemy", the same document labeled any "introduction of foreign troops to the territory of states contiguous to the Russian Federation" as "an immediate military threat to the Russian Federation".<sup>27</sup> In Russia's military documents of 1995, even more harsh provisions can be noticed (Lithuania joined PfP - this fact explains the situation). It was stated that if NATO were to expand to the Baltic States, then "Russian Federation armed forces will immediately be sent into Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania."<sup>28</sup>

In foreign policy practice Russia threatened to withdraw from the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, which entered into force on 9 November 1992 and restricted the location of Russian military forces near the Baltic States and other strategically important regions of the U.S., and created the CIS defense community, which can be seen as a logical actions in order to limit U.S. influence in the of post-Soviet space. Aggressive Russian foreign policy rhetoric was transferred to foreign policy practice in other ways as well: in 1993 Russia became involved in the conflicts in Moldova, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Tajikistan. After Russia had used

<sup>24</sup> Containment strategy is a power balancing strategy aimed to limit the spread of influence of the adversary and to maintaining the balance of power in its favor.

<sup>25</sup> Birthe Hansen and Bertel Heurlin, *The Baltic States in World Politics* (Richmond: Curzon, 1998), p. 47.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>27</sup> *The Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation* (November 2, 1993), Art. 2.1 // <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/russia-mil-doc.html> (accessed May 20, 2011).

<sup>28</sup> Birthe Hansen and Bertel Heurlin, *supra* note 25, p. 59.

its overriding economic and military power, Azerbaijan agreed to renew the membership of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) organization. Georgia also agreed to become a member (joined CIS in 1993), Tajikistan became a Russian protectorate.<sup>29</sup>

Russia moved its response to U.S. foreign policy in the post-Soviet space (and Lithuania among them) into broader U.S.-Russian relations sphere. As Russia could not compete with Western countries by its power, in words of international relations expert Roger Kaneta, it tried to do anything to spoil the game.<sup>30</sup> Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs A. Kozyrev refused to sign Partnership for Peace agreement in 1994; meanwhile President B. Yeltsin threatened "cold peace" (protesting against the expansion of NATO). Russia started closer cooperation with China (in 1997 signed a "Joint Declaration for a multipolar world and the formation of a new international order") in protest against the U.S. and British air attacks in Iraq, recalled ambassadors from Washington and London (December 1998), refused to ratify START II, and boycotted the first NATO-Russia Permanent Council meeting (1999).<sup>31</sup>

It can be argued that in a sense Lithuania was the factor that stimulated B. Clinton's administration to use engagement strategy in relations with Russia in order to mitigate Russia's position. B. Clinton's administration sought to keep the Baltic States in its sphere of influence, but the security of Lithuania was directly linked to the constructive U.S.-Russian relations (as during the presidency of B. Obama) rather than to confrontation. So, some of the foreign policy instruments functioned not only as part of Russia's containment, but as part of Russia's engagement strategy as well. For example, the PfP program in the U.S. relations with Lithuania and Russia played a dual role: on the one hand, the active involvement of the Lithuanian in joint exercises with NATO was seen as a threat to Russia; on the other hand, the same mechanism had to encourage Russia to cooperate with NATO.

In summary, the Lithuanian factor in U.S. foreign policy itself did not aggravate U.S.-Russian relations. U.S.-Russian relations were impacted by the foreign policy course towards the Baltic region and the post-Soviet space chosen by B. Clinton's administration (it can be seen as containment strategy) – it created a security dilemma. B. Clinton's foreign policy conducted in the region (democratization, development of spheres of influence) by Russia was perceived as a threat to its interests. Russian's foreign policy became more aggressive. Russia

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<sup>29</sup> Roger E. Kanet and Alexander V. Kozhemiakin, *The Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation* (London: MacMillan, 1997), p. 87.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>31</sup> Andrei P. Tsygankov, *supra* note 6, p. xvi-xix.

took responsive actions not only in the Baltic region and the post-Soviet space, but also in the broader context of U.S.-Russian relations. However, B. Clinton's administration sought to mitigate Russia's aggressive position on Lithuania's admission to NATO because it was interested in stability in the post-Soviet space. Therefore, in its relations with Russia B. Clinton's administration used not only sticks, but carrots as well – i.e. an engagement strategy.

## **2. LITHUANIA IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF B. OBAMA**

### **2.1. INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF B. OBAMA**

A comparison of the presidencies of B. Clinton and B. Obama indicates that the international context of the twenty-first century has changed significantly in several aspects: in power distribution and the nature of threats. Both power distribution and the nature of threats affected U.S. foreign policy and U.S.-Russian relations.

During the presidency of B. Obama the U.S. is no longer a superpower – new power centers are emerging in the international arena that were not competitive to the U.S. before (China, India, Brazil). If in the past the U.S. dominated in military, economic and political influence spheres, then during the presidency of B. Obama the U.S. maintains a definite advantage in the military field, but in the economic sphere it is facing stiff competition. Taking into account the fact that now the U.S. is facing an economic crisis, it can be said that the latter factor determines the intensification of the new directions in U.S. foreign policy. In order to recover from the economic crisis B. Obama's administration is focusing attention on emerging economies – the new great powers (Asian countries). In such a way, for the U.S., Europe is becoming a partner of second importance. However, B. Obama's administration rejects arguments that the rise of great powers like China and India means the end for American influence in the world: "Perhaps, the argument goes, these nations represent the future, and the time for our leadership has passed. That argument is wrong. The time for our leadership is now."<sup>32</sup> Thus, B. Obama's administration, as well as B. Clinton's administration, declares an active U.S. engagement in world affairs.

The emergence of new threats (terrorism, WMD proliferation) also contributes to the change of U.S. foreign policy course: collective efforts are needed to combat

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<sup>32</sup> "President Obama: Now is time for US and West to lead," *BBC.co.uk* (May 25, 2011) // <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-13533306> (accessed May 26, 2011).



new types of threats. Such situation determines several aspects. Firstly, U.S. needs the support of its allies (to support its position in international organizations and during military operations – here the meaning of Lithuania increases). Secondly, joint actions and coordination of positions with great powers (that is with partners and not with allies) becomes even more relevant.

Russia's power in the international arena, compared with the one during B. Clinton's presidency, has also changed. If during the presidency of B. Clinton Russia had to be content with status of regional power and minor role in international relations, so after B. Obama became the president of U.S., Russia is identified as a great power in the rhetoric of Western States. In addition to already possessing a large nuclear arsenal, Russia is strengthening other military capabilities, exploiting the card of energy resources, expanding its influence on post-Soviet space, and it is not avoiding the use of its increased influence in the international arena.<sup>33</sup>

An assumption can be made that cooperation with Russia is useful for the U.S. It is therefore not surprising that when B. Obama became the president of U.S., a new foreign policy course towards Russia was announced. The administration of B. Obama stressed the necessity to reset U.S.-Russian relations. Both U.S. and Russia displayed pragmatism by lowering the importance of persisting conflicts in favor of benefits of cooperation: U.S. and Russia agreed to sign new START, Russia was engaged into cooperation with NATO. In this context the Baltic countries seem to be left on the sidelines. Their question is touched so that they would be tranquillized for security guarantees.

The situation of the Baltic States, compared with B. Clinton's presidency, has also changed. The transitional period in the Baltic States and Lithuania is already over: necessary political and economic reforms were accomplished. Lithuania became the subject of democratization and may help to spread American democratic values in other Eastern European countries like Belarus and Ukraine. Documents indicate that although Lithuania is already the member of EU and NATO, it does not feel safe enough (is demanding certain security guarantees within NATO).<sup>34</sup> So the U.S remains the main security guarantor for Lithuania. Meanwhile the U.S. had already implemented one of the most important tasks - Lithuania is the part of NATO. Thus, for the U.S. the assumption appears to work not for Lithuania, but with Lithuania in order to achieve benefits.

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<sup>33</sup> Robert Legvold, "Meeting the Russian Challenge in the Obama Era"; for: Vinod K. Aggarwal and Kristi Govella, eds., *Responding to a Resurgent Russia: Russian Policy and Responses from the European Union and the United States* (Springer, 2011) // <http://www.amacad.org/russia/meetingChallenge.pdf> (accessed May 20, 2011).

<sup>34</sup> *Penkioliktoji Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės veiklos programa*, No. XI-52 (December 9, 2008), Art. 173 // [http://www.lrv.lt/bylos/vyriausybes/15\\_vyr\\_programa.pdf](http://www.lrv.lt/bylos/vyriausybes/15_vyr_programa.pdf) (accessed May 20, 2011).



To sum up it can be said that even though the contemporary international context determines the reduction of U.S. power, B. Obama's administration does not want to refuse its leadership in the international arena. However, B. Obama's administration was forced to modify its foreign policy course towards Russia (cooperation with Russia for the U.S. is more beneficial than confrontation at the moment) in order to fight common threats. In this context Lithuania's role in U.S. foreign policy is also changing: B. Obama's administration stresses the need to work together.

## **2.2. LITHUANIA IN STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS AND IN THE OFFICIAL RHETORIC OF THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION**

The analysis of strategic documents and the official rhetoric of B. Obama's administration suggests that Lithuania does not hold a significant place in them: in the U.S. NSS Lithuania is not directly mentioned; meanwhile in the official rhetoric B. Obama's administration, attention is paid to it only on special occasions, such as anniversary celebrations, and during the visits.

In the U.S. NSS released by B. Obama's administration in 2010, differently from the NSS released by B. Clinton's administration, Lithuania is not mentioned. In the NSS of 2010 attention is paid to U.S. allies in Europe, but they are not specifically identified (though in the international context it is known that Lithuania is regarded as one of U.S. allies). Attention is drawn to the region close to Lithuania and the Baltic countries – Eastern Europe – emphasizing the need for democratic development in this area, but Lithuania is not mentioned among the states which could help to do that. So links with Lithuania, at best, can be found in the context of European allies.

Although Lithuania is not mentioned in the NSS of B. Obama's administration, there are a number of very important responsibilities to Lithuania expressed in this document. Firstly, B. Obama's administration confirmed its intention to make efforts to ensure the effectiveness of NATO's Article No. 5: "We will continue to anchor our commitment in Article V, which is fundamental to our collective security."<sup>35</sup> Secondly, it expressed an open commitment to support the sovereignty of Russia's neighbors (Lithuania falls into this category) and did not rule out the possibility to intervene into Russian sphere of influence: "While actively seeking Russia's cooperation to act as a responsible partner in Europe and Asia, we will

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<sup>35</sup> *National Security Strategy*, The White House (May 2010): 42 // [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf) (accessed May 20, 2011).

support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Russia's neighbors."<sup>36</sup> There were no such notions in the NSS of B. Clinton's administration – attention then was placed to strengthening the relations with Russia, rather than confronting with it. These provisions imply that the U.S. remains a key guarantor of the Lithuanian security – both by direct actions and within NATO.

Similar to case of B. Clinton's administration, which avoided bold statements, the rhetoric of B. Obama's administration concerning Lithuania is moderate and sparse. It can be also noted that during both the presidency of B. Clinton and B. Obama, Lithuania was instead mentioned in the rhetoric of U.S. Secretary of State and other officials. Meanwhile in the official rhetoric of B. Obama, Lithuania has received far less attention. In the rhetoric of B. Obama's administration Lithuania has occurred only on special occasions, such as during meetings with officials of the Baltic States, or anniversaries important for Lithuania.

In the official rhetoric of B. Obama's administration Lithuania is portrayed as a close ally and friend with the same values as the United States. B. Obama's administration stresses Lithuania's contribution to stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan, compliments the efforts to spread the values acceptable for the U.S. and to pursue an active diplomacy: "We also applaud Lithuania's leadership in international organizations like the Community of Democracies, the OSCE – which it will chair in the next year – its support for disaster relief in Haiti, and its very vigorous diplomacy far beyond its own borders."<sup>37</sup> Thus, Lithuania's assessment as a fully-fledged participant in international relations differs during the presidency B. Clinton and B. Obama. If B. Clinton's administration recognized Lithuania as a full-fledged participant in international relations, but at the same time stressed the need to implement economic and political reforms, the B. Obama's administration highlights Lithuanian contribution to strengthening international security and helping to develop democracy in neighboring countries. Thus, the official rhetoric reflected the progress made by Lithuania since B. Clinton's presidency.

B. Obama's administration, as well as B. Clinton's administration, favors close relations and strategic partnership with Lithuania: "Let me reaffirm the commitment of the United States to strengthen and deepen our partnerships with the people and governments of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania."<sup>38</sup> Comparing the rhetoric of the administrations of Obama and Clinton, the Obama administration's tendency to emphasize the need for mutual efforts can be observed. If Clinton's administration

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*: 44.

<sup>37</sup> *Hillary Clinton Remarks with Lithuanian Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius after their Meeting* (May 6, 2010) // <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/05/141586.htm> (accessed May 20, 2011).

<sup>38</sup> *Secretary Clinton on 20th Anniversary of the Baltic Way Reaffirms U.S. commitment to strengthen partnership with Baltic Republics* (August 21, 2009) // <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/August/20090821155130eafas0.9363062.html&distid=ucs> (accessed May 20, 2011).

emphasized U.S. commitment to ensure the security of Lithuania, to develop political and economic reforms, and to integrate it into the Western community, B. Obama's administration stresses that Lithuania itself also has to contribute to the desired outcome (safety). So the U.S.-Lithuanian relations moved from the format of "work for you" to "work with you".

Creating a vision for the future relations and foreign policy instruments, B. Obama's administration emphasizes the obligations of the U.S. to Lithuania concerning security needs: "The United States is dedicated to NATO's bedrock principle of collective security. Our commitment to Lithuania's security is ironclad and unwavering."<sup>39</sup> The rhetoric of B. Obama's administration gives the impression that this administration intends to develop U.S.-Lithuanian relations in the security sphere in the context of NATO, and not by unilateral actions. The Administration also draws attention to new spheres important for Lithuania such as energy dependence on Russia: "We look forward to increased cooperation between the Baltic states, between Lithuania and potential opportunities for U.S. companies to help develop solutions for reliable, sustainable energy."<sup>40</sup> An assumption can be made that in this way the U.S. admits that Lithuania's concerns about energy dependence on Russia are reasonable. Thus, in the context of possible foreign policy instruments B. Obama's administration emphasizes security issues in particular. Meanwhile, for B. Clinton's administration, Lithuanian security issues were only one aspect of U.S.-Lithuanian relations: U.S. political, economic support for Lithuania was also repeatedly stressed.

It can also be noted that in the official rhetoric B. Obama's administration, in contrast to B. Clinton's administration, avoids the issue of Lithuanian-Russian relations. If B. Clinton's administration openly raised this issue and had indicated possible foreign policy instruments to solve the Lithuania-Russian confrontation, then B. Obama's administration refrains from similar comments.

### **2.3. LITHUANIA IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY PRACTICE DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF B. OBAMA**

During the presidency of B. Obama U.S. policy in Eastern Europe is still based on the same principles: B. Obama's administration, as well as B. Clinton's administration, wishes to ensure the security of Lithuania and to keep Lithuania in U.S. sphere of influence. The U.S. and Lithuania, together with the other Baltic States, develop good relations, as the NATO treaty foresees. During the presidency

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<sup>39</sup> *Hillary Clinton Remarks with Lithuanian Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius after their Meeting*, *supra* note 37.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

of B. Obama, as well as during the presidency of B. Clinton, the military factor remains the most important field in US-Lithuanian relations. U.S. actions concerning Lithuania in the military sphere occurred as a response to military exercises carried out in Russia, joint military training exercises in the Baltic countries, and efforts to increase Lithuania's security within NATO.

When the Russian and Belarusian armies conducted "Zapad-2009" (West-2009) joint military maneuvers on Belarusian territory (near Lithuania and Poland) and in the Kaliningrad Oblast in September 2009, a formidable American warship toured the Baltic because these military exercises highlights the region's vulnerability. These Russian war games were part of the largest war games Russia has conducted at the eastern border of NATO territory since the end of the Cold War. *Ładoga-2009* indeed resembles the Red Army's preparation for the invasion of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, and an attack at Finland in 1939.<sup>41</sup>

If before 2009 in Lithuania and the Baltic countries there had been no major NATO exercises, B. Obama's administration strengthened U.S. military presence in the region with a lot of joint military exercises. In 2010 exercise "Baltic Host 2010" took place in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The exercise lasted five days, until June 4. Together with three Baltic countries, representatives of United States European Command (EUCOM) and NATO Naval Striking and Support Force (STRIKFORNATO-SFN) participated in "Baltic Host 2010". In autumn of 2010 joint exercises with the U.S. were held in Latvia. During the exercises in 2010, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were also taught to accept NATO forces entering the region. On September 13, 2010, over 4.000 troops and 60 ships along with planes and helicopters from the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland and Sweden participated in Northern Coast exercises in the Baltic Sea. On September 20 U.S. Special Operations Command Europe launched the Jackal Stone 10 multinational military exercise with 1,300 special forces from the U.S., Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Croatia, Romania and Ukraine. The exercises began at a Polish air base and continued at two bases in Lithuania. The U.S. dispatched USS Mount Whitney, the flagship of the U.S. Sixth Fleet (whose area of responsibility is the Mediterranean Sea) to participate in the drills.<sup>42</sup> On 18th of October 2010 the Latvian army military base in Adazi Training Center officially opened the international exercise called "Strike Sabre". Exercises involved troops from four countries - Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the U.S. The

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<sup>41</sup> "Disquiet on the Eastern Front. Can a Distracted America Remain a Bulwark for Eastern Europe?" *The Economist* (November 26, 2009) // [http://www.economist.com/node/14973206?story\\_id=14973206](http://www.economist.com/node/14973206?story_id=14973206) (accessed May 20, 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Rick Rozoff, "Baltic States: Pentagon's Training Grounds For Afghan and Future Wars" (September 30, 2010) // <http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2010/09/30/baltic-states-pentagons-training-grounds-for-afghan-and-future-wars/> (accessed May 20, 2011).

maneuvers of 2010 were the largest since the time when the three Baltic States joined NATO.

The administration of B. Obama took concrete steps to ensure the safety of Lithuania and other Baltic states (because after accession to NATO in 2002 there have not been any). During the meeting in Prague 2009, the U.S. president expressed the need to create NATO defense plans for each state (including Lithuania and the other Baltic States): "We must work together as NATO members so that we have contingency plans in place to deal with new threats, wherever they may come from."<sup>43</sup>

U.S. was working so that these plans would be created for Poland<sup>44</sup>, and after a long period of silence of Obama's administration in 2010 November media reported that NATO's Defense plans for Poland was completed, and similar plans will be developed within NATO for the Baltic countries.<sup>45</sup>

Contingency plans for Lithuania and the Baltic States mean that after six years of NATO membership the Baltic countries finally will have a tangible security guarantees. Previously Article 5 of NATO was more like a "paper" one (based on loud statements). Now it takes the base. In the context of relations with Russia the defense plans for the Baltic countries indicates that, NATO perceives Russia as a threat – this notion has not been expressed in the history of NATO since the Cold War, despite recent initiatives to develop active cooperation between NATO and Russia. In the military field, in contrast to the presidency of B. Clinton, Lithuania itself started being useful for the U.S. Lithuania's military unit in Afghanistan indicates that Lithuania supports U.S. position: according data of November 15, 2010, Lithuania has 219 soldiers in Afghanistan.<sup>46</sup>

However, comparing foreign policy practice during the presidency of B. Clinton and B. Obama, certain differences can be noticed. If the foreign policy of B. Clinton's administration was aimed at stabilizing the Lithuania and accelerating its membership in Euro-Atlantic organizations, B. Obama's administration is interested in improving the quality of Lithuania's membership in Euro-Atlantic organizations. Also this administration is trying to move the U.S.-Lithuanian relations in the format "Work for you" (which B. Clinton's administration used) to "Work with you"

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<sup>43</sup> *Remarks by President Barack Obama*, Hradcany Square, Prague, Czech Republic (April 5, 2009) // [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-By-President-Barack-Obama-In-Prague-As-Delivered/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-By-President-Barack-Obama-In-Prague-As-Delivered/) (accessed May 20, 2011).

<sup>44</sup> Edward Lucas, "Thanks to Poland, the Alliance Will Defend the Baltics," *The Economist* (January 14, 2010) // [http://www.economist.com/node/15268095?story\\_id=15268095&fsrc=nwl](http://www.economist.com/node/15268095?story_id=15268095&fsrc=nwl) (accessed May 20, 2011).

<sup>45</sup> Jorge Benitez, "NATO's Secret Defense Plans for Baltics Revealed by Wikileaks," *Atlantic Council* (December 07, 2010) // <http://www.acus.org/natosource/natos-secret-defense-plans-baltics-revealed-wikileaks> (accessed May 20, 2011).

<sup>46</sup> *International Security Assistance Force (ISAF): Key Facts and Figures*, ISAF (November 15, 2010) // <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/Placemats/15%20NOV.Placemat%20page1-3.pdf> (accessed May 20, 2011).

(Lithuania's support for the U.S. on certain issues is expected). Stabilization of Lithuania in B. Obama's agenda no longer exists. Both states stress that they are looking for new fields for cooperation. It seems that cooperation in the energy security sphere might become one of them. The U.S. strongly supports the Lithuanian government's efforts to pursue diversification of energy resources and energy security in the Baltic Sea region, states U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's letter to the Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Minister Audronis Azubalis.<sup>47</sup>

Another notable difference between the two administrations' foreign policy practice is the intensity of political communication. If during the two terms of B. Clinton the highest representatives of Lithuania and the U.S. government (presidents or foreign ministers/secretaries of state) have met at least seven times (five times during the targeted official visits)<sup>48</sup>, so during the presidency of B. Obama's the number of visits is much lower: the official state visits of the presidents did not exist.

#### 2.4. THE ROLE OF LITHUANIA IN U.S.-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

In the foreign policy of B. Obama's administration, as well as during the presidency of B. Clinton, Lithuania was the dependent variable and figured in U.S.-Russian relations. However, changes in the international context determined that Lithuania was no longer the factor that induced a security dilemma for Russia, as it was during the presidency of B. Clinton. Firstly, after NATO enlargement in 2004 Russia had to accept a *fait accompli*. Secondly, B. Obama's administration sought to reset the relationship with Russia and to engage it into greater cooperation not because of Russia's instability but because of Russia's growing power. Thirdly, even though Lithuania remained a strategically important country for the United States, B. Obama's administration devoted significantly less to it at the level official than B. Clinton's administration.

Lithuania's role in U.S.-Russian relations is twofold. During the presidency of B. Obama Lithuania continues to be a factor fueling U.S.-Russian relations. In response to the active Lithuanian-NATO (and U.S.) military co-operation Russia carried out a large-scale military exercises simulating an attack on the Baltics. Dmitri Rogozin, Russia's ambassador to NATO, has demanded that the Baltic defense alliance cancel plans.

Large differences between the U.S. and Russia were induced by the anti-missile plans and by Lithuania's position to limit Russia's participation in them. The

<sup>47</sup> JAV Valstybės sekretorės laiške – parama Lietuvos Vyriausybės pastangoms stiprinti energetinį saugumą ir regioninės AE statybai, LR Užsienio reikalų ministerija (April 29, 2011) // <http://www.urm.lt/index.php?-1060816140> (accessed May 20, 2011).

<sup>48</sup> Presidents and Secretaries of State Foreign Travels, *supra* note 19.

Lithuanian President said that "for the interests of Lithuania it is essential that security of all NATO members would be guaranteed by alliance rather than by Russia."<sup>49</sup> This position coincided with the position U.S. officials expressed in November 2010 that it would never leave any NATO state's missile protection in Moscow's hands.<sup>50</sup> While the United States has proposed setting up two independent but connected operations that would exchange missile alert warning information, Moscow has advocated a sectoral approach that would see the continent separated into two areas of missile defense responsibility. Washington has shown little interest in that proposal.

However, the U.S.-Russian 'reset' has helped in improving relations between Russia and the European countries, including countries of Eastern Europe such the Baltic states, which seems to be just fine with the U.S.. Obama's position on the question is that for the U.S., an improving relationship with Russia does not cross-out the importance of defending the national interests of Russia's post-Soviet neighbors. On the contrary, their security and the stability of the whole region depend strongly on the state of those countries' relationship with Russia. An altered foreign policy course towards Russia by B. Obama's administration allowed Lithuania to get security guarantees, which it never had before. It is the reset in the U.S.-Russian relations that led to the Baltics defense plans that were created during the presidency of George Bush senior but were not confirmed.

### **3. COMPARISON OF LITHUANIA'S ROLE IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF B. CLINTON AND B. OBAMA**

Comparing Lithuania's role in U.S. foreign policy during the presidencies of B. Clinton and B. Obama both similarities and differences can be noticed. The analysis of U.S. strategic documents and official rhetoric suggests that during the presidency of B. Clinton, in contrast to B. Obama's administration, which did not devoted any attention to Lithuania in its National security strategy of 2010, Lithuania was the object of both strategic documents and official rhetoric. In the National Security Strategy of 1998, B. Clinton's administration describes U.S.-Lithuanian relations as having a special nature, whereas in the NSS of B. Obama's administration, links with Lithuania, at best, can be found in the context of European allies.

In the field of official rhetoric Lithuania was mentioned in the rhetoric of U.S. Secretaries of State and other officials, whereas in the speeches of U.S. presidents

<sup>49</sup> *Baltijos šalys tariasi dėl bendrų veiksmų saugumo ir energetikos srityse*, Lietuvos Respublikos Prezidentūra (May 27, 2011) // [http://www.president.lt/lt/spaudos\\_centras\\_392/pranesimai\\_spaudai/baltijos\\_salys\\_tariasi\\_del\\_bendru\\_veiksmu\\_saugumo\\_ir\\_energetikos\\_srityse.html](http://www.president.lt/lt/spaudos_centras_392/pranesimai_spaudai/baltijos_salys_tariasi_del_bendru_veiksmu_saugumo_ir_energetikos_srityse.html) (accessed May 28, 2011).

<sup>50</sup> "Lavrov Says Russia-NATO Antimissile Cooperation is Critical 'Test'," NTI (May 23, 2011) // [http://gsn.nti.org/gsn/nw\\_20110523\\_7689.php](http://gsn.nti.org/gsn/nw_20110523_7689.php) (accessed May 28, 2011).



Lithuania received far less attention during both the presidencies of B. Clinton and B. Obama. In the official rhetoric of B. Clinton's and B. Obama's administrations the main provisions towards Lithuania were the same:

- In U.S. official rhetoric Lithuania is treated as an independent actor of international relations often emphasizing that the U.S. never recognized the occupation of Lithuania.
- In U.S. official rhetoric Lithuania is portrayed as a close ally and friend with the same values as the United States.
- Both administrations openly committed to defend Lithuania against potential enemies.

However, certain differences concerning Lithuania in the official rhetoric can be noticed as well:

- In contrast to B. Clinton's administration, the administration of B. Obama avoids the issue of Lithuania-Russian relations in the official rhetoric.
- In the sphere of instruments of foreign policy in U.S.-Lithuanian relations B. Obama's administration stresses security issues in particular, meanwhile B. Clinton's administration repeatedly stressed political and economic support for Lithuania as well.
- In contrast to B. Clinton's administration, which often expressed its commitment to help Lithuania to become secure and active member of Western community, B. Obama's administration stresses that Lithuania itself also has to contribute to the desired outcome.

In foreign policy practice during the presidencies of B. Clinton and B. Obama the biggest difference can be noticed in the field of bilateral meetings. During the presidency of B. Clinton the president and officials of his administration have repeatedly met with president and other high ranking officials of Lithuania (B. Clinton met with the president of Lithuania at least four times); however, during the presidency of B. Obama there have not been any top-level bilateral visits so far. Obama's administration only arranged dinner for ex-communist leaders in Prague 2010 April and a meeting of Eastern European leaders in Poland in May 2011, the meetings were held only at level of foreign affairs ministers, prime ministers. This indicates that B. Obama's administration gives priority to the partners rather than allies.

Another noticeable difference between the administrations of B. Clinton and B. Obama in the field of foreign policy practice is economic and political assistance. B. Clinton's administration actively used this foreign policy tool in its relations with Lithuania (for example, during the first three years of B. Clinton's term Lithuania got more than 12 mln. U.S. dollars support for political and economic reforms); in



relations with Lithuania B. Obama's administration concentrates on security issues rather than on economic and political support. The above mentioned foreign policy instruments' disappearance from the U.S. foreign policy agenda in relations with Lithuania might be explained by international context and Lithuania's role in it. During the presidency of B. Clinton Lithuania was in a transitional period and needed support in order to implement political and economic reforms; meanwhile, during the presidency of B. Obama, Lithuania itself could help spreading democratic values in neighboring countries.

During the presidencies of B. Clinton and B. Obama similarities in foreign policy practice can be noticed as well. Both administrations used the factor of NATO for the benefit of Lithuania. Administration of B. Clinton suggested the Partnership for Peace initiative in NATO and engaged Lithuania into it, and tried to make influence on the decision to expand the NATO alliance eastward. In contrast, B. Obama's administration expressed the need to create NATO defense plans for the Baltic States, Lithuania among them. In this way Lithuania got tangible security guarantees.

During both administrations joint military exercises were conducted. During the presidency of B. Clinton joint peacekeeping battalion (BALTBALT), an airspace monitoring system (BALTNET) and joint naval squadron (BALTRON) were established as well. However, in the Baltic countries there have not been such a large military exercises, as were conducted during the presidency of B. Obama in 2010 (Sabre Strike Baltic Host 2010, BALTOPS).

In U.S.-Russian relations Lithuania was and is the factor fueling U.S.-Russian relations. However, in U.S.-Russian relations during both the presidency of B. Clinton and B. Obama Lithuania was always a dependent variable: not that the Lithuanian factor itself aggravated U.S.-Russian relations, but the U.S. foreign policy course towards the Baltic region and the post-Soviet space did. Nevertheless, there is a difference worth paying attention to. During the presidency of B. Clinton U.S. foreign policy course towards Lithuania and the Baltic region created a certain security dilemma for Russia, whereas during the presidency of B. Obama Russia's response towards U.S. foreign policy concerning Lithuania and the Baltic countries has been more moderate. Russia is not trying to spoil its relations with U.S. as actively as it did during the presidency of B. Clinton. This might be explained by the decision of B. Obama's administration to reset relations with Russia.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Lithuania's presentation in U.S. strategic documents and official rhetoric during the presidency of B. Clinton and B. Obama differs by frequency of mention and at some points by the declared political means, and was similar in the context of mentions. In the field of strategic documents and official rhetoric Lithuania received more attention during the presidency of B. Clinton. In contrast to B. Obama's administration, during the presidency of B. Clinton Lithuania was mentioned more often and not only in the official rhetoric, but in the National Security Strategy as well. Presenting political means in relations with Lithuania, both administrations stressed security issues, but in the documents and rhetoric of B. Clinton's administration, intention to support Lithuania politically and economically was expressed as well. The context of Lithuania's mentioning in official rhetoric was the same during both administrations: Lithuania was mostly mentioned during specific occasions.

Analysis of the events during the presidency of B. Clinton and B. Obama suggests that Lithuania in U.S. foreign policy practice was more visible during the presidency of B. Clinton, but tangible security guarantees were obtained only during the presidency of B. Obama. In U.S.-Lithuanian relations during the presidency of B. Clinton, active political communication (official visits), military cooperation, economic and political support in international organizations can be noticed. Meanwhile, during the presidency of B. Obama, there are no top-level bilateral visits so far, and the U.S. foreign policy agenda in relations with Lithuania was transferred from the format "work for you" to "work with you"; however, U.S.-Lithuanian cooperation in the military sphere became even more intensive and NATO Contingency plans for the Baltic States were finally created. This suggests that the main U.S. position towards Lithuania has not changed.

In U.S.-Russian relations during both the presidency of B. Clinton and B. Obama, Lithuania was a dependent variable that sharpened U.S.-Russian relations. However, if during the presidency of B. Clinton the U.S. foreign policy course towards Lithuania and the Baltic States created a security dilemma for Russia, then during the presidency of B. Obama Russia's reaction to U.S.-Lithuanian relations can be considered more moderate.

To sum up it can be stated that Lithuania was the object of U.S. foreign policy during both the presidencies of B. Clinton and B. Obama. Despite certain changes in U.S. foreign policy during the presidency of B. Obama (intensity of political communication, diminished attention to Lithuania in public strategic documents, bilateral relations format "work for you"), the real security guarantees Lithuania has

obtained suggest that the changes are positive rather than negative. Therefore, it can be stated that B. Obama's administration continues the foreign policy course towards Lithuania started by earlier administrations.

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