

The Geopolitics of Support for Turkey's EU Accession: A View from Lithuania

AZUOLAS BAGDONAS*

ABSTRACT

Why does Lithuania support Turkey's accession to the European Union? The article analyzes some of the key domestic factors and the strategic thinking behind Lithuania's continuous support. Domestically, the political culture of the foreign policy elite and the permissiveness of public opinion allow treating Turkey's accession as a foreign policy issue, subject to cost-benefit calculations. Short-term calculations involve mutually advantageous deals between Turkey and Lithuania. Long-term assessments focus on how Turkey's membership would affect global, regional, and intra-European dynamics of power relations. The article suggests that, in the context of lasting foreign policy objectives and concerns, Turkey is attractive to Lithuania primarily due to its geopolitical roles: its traditional transatlantic alignment, its function as a transit hub for energy supplies to Europe, and its potential to become a great power, engaging in regional competition with Russia.

To join the European Union (EU), Turkey in time needs to overcome two obstacles. First, it needs to continue fulfilling the requirements of the Copenhagen criteria, i.e., the formal political, institutional, and economic conditions for membership. While sustaining the commitment to meet these requirements may be challenging, the second obstacle – obtaining the agreement of all and each of the member states to Turkey's accession – may prove to be even harder to overcome. In the calculations of the political elites of certain European countries, a number of perceived obstacles to Turkey's accession seem to outweigh the obvious benefits of Turkey's membership. There are worries about the political and economic impact of accepting such a large country, as well as concerns regarding changes in the formal and informal decision making procedures in the EU.

* International Relations Department, Fatih University, abagdonas@fatih.edu.tr

Scholars and, especially, the media tend to focus on the position of key EU states, such as Germany and France, and not without a good reason – their stance is likely to be of critical importance to the success of Turkey’s membership

Lithuania’s interest in having Turkey in the EU stems from the country’s commitment to Atlanticism, as well as from the perceived potential benefits in terms of reducing Russia’s influence in the EU

bid. However, the views of smaller states, which numerically constitute the majority in the EU, should not be altogether ignored for several reasons. First of all, in case of enlargement, each EU member state has a single vote, regardless of the size of their population and economy. Second, Turkey’s ability to convert its appeal into strategic leverage in the

accession negotiations also depends on the formation of a strong coalition inside the EU in favor of its membership.¹ Since in the absence of such a coalition, Turkey has less chance to successfully use its geostrategic location as a bargaining chip or to engage in effective rhetorical actions, the position of small countries becomes more important in the accession process.²

In this context, Lithuania’s continuous and unwavering support for Turkey’s EU membership provides an interesting case that gives a perspective on some of the factors at play in the most consequential instance of EU enlargement. This article analyses the background of this support, suggesting that the main determinants of Lithuanian-Turkish relations are conditioned by circumstances that have less to do with the European integration than with the EU’s external relations. Lithuania’s interest in having Turkey in the EU stems from the country’s commitment to Atlanticism, as well as from the perceived potential benefits in terms of reducing Russia’s influence in the EU. In support of this argument, the first part will discuss the factors that combine to make Turkey’s accession an issue of foreign policy, relatively isolated from swings in domestic public opinion and internal political competition. The second part will explain the dominant foreign policy concerns of Lithuania, forming the background within which this particular issue is viewed. Finally, the third part will provide an analysis of some of the key elements of strategic thinking behind Lithuania’s support for Turkey’s accession.

Support for Turkey – not an Issue of Domestic Politics

Since joining the EU in 2004, Lithuania has consistently supported Turkey’s EU bid. Official statements to that purpose have been made by various high level state officials during each of more than ten bilateral meetings that took

place since 2004. The official position adopted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and reiterated by different ministers of foreign affairs, diplomats, as well as chairmen of the parliament and presidents, is that Turkey is entitled to full membership so long as it meets the Copenhagen criteria. On several occasions, various ministers went beyond the passive rhetoric to actively promote Turkey's inclusion. For example, in January 2011, minister of foreign affairs A. Azubalis co-authored an open letter emphasizing Turkey's "vital strategic and economic importance," followed by another co-authored letter in June 2012 calling for a "new impulse" in the accession process.³

The position maintained by the foreign policy establishment does not have unambiguous domestic public support, and public opinion regarding Turkey's EU membership is highly polarized. Eurobarometer surveys indicate that, as in most other new EU member states, the public in Lithuania has been considerably more enthusiastic about further enlargement of the EU than the public in the EU-15 countries.⁴ Consequently, support for Turkey's membership has also been generally higher than the EU average: for example, in 2008, Turkey's membership was supported by 31 percent and opposed by 55 percent in the EU, while the respective percentages were 36 percent and 45 percent in Lithuania; in 2010, Turkey's membership was supported by 30 percent and opposed by 59 percent in the EU-27, whereas in Lithuania 41 percent were in favor and 40 percent were not in favor of Turkey becoming part of the EU.⁵ However, the public was more supportive of enlargement to countries other than Turkey: for example, in 2010, 85 percent were for the inclusion of Switzerland and 67 percent - for Ukraine, neither of which were even potential candidate countries, while 62 percent supported Croatia's EU membership. Although Turkey is one of the key holiday destinations for Lithuanians, the public opinion depends largely on information obtained indirectly through media channels which, given the remoteness of Turkey, often tend to focus on extraordinary and negative events (earthquakes, terrorist attacks, political scandals, etc.). Thus, while recent opinion polls placed Lithuania in the minority of only five EU member states where the public supported Turkey's membership, opinions regarding Turkey's candidacy were generally more reserved and more equally split than the views towards the potential membership of other countries.

The European integration has been and, to a large extent, remains a project driven by political elites. Decisions on whether to allow particular candidate member states to join the EU have rarely been validated by national parliaments

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or referendums.⁶ Moreover, since mass opinion is generally shaped by exposure to elite discourse, political elites retain the ability to produce sufficient levels of public support for European enlargement.⁷ In other words, to gauge the relevance of public opinion as a factor of European integration, we need to look at the behavior of political elites – why they choose to heed or ignore the lack of public support for further enlargement, as well as how they frame enlargement, thereby cueing and “constructing” public opinion.

One key aspect in this regard is the degree of elite polarization – the more divided are the political parties on European integration, the more likely are they to nurture and make use of the divisions in public opinion.⁸ Furthermore,

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a recent study showed that a country’s attitude towards Turkish accession depends critically on whether it sees it as a predominantly question of foreign policy (e.g., Poland and the UK), a matter concerning internal EU politics (e.g., France), or an issue of national politics (as in Germany and Austria).⁹ If Turkey’s membership is seen as a foreign policy issue, analy-

ses of the economic and geopolitical costs and benefits typically result in a fairly positive assessment. If it is viewed through the prism of internal EU politics, the costs in terms of its impact on the organization’s internal, institutional, political, social, cultural, and economic setup may outweigh the benefits, particularly for large member-states, such as France and Germany. Finally, when Turkey’s accession is seen as an issue of national politics, i.e., when its impact on the national economies, societies and security becomes a matter of domestic debates, the assessment generally tends to be negative. These two aspects – elite polarization and the categorization of Turkey’s accession – are interrelated because, in contrast to domestic political matters, foreign policy issues are ordinarily less likely to attract significant public attention and thus offer fewer incentives for elite polarization.

Several factors can explain why Turkey’s EU accession is generally regarded as a foreign policy issue and is relatively shielded from domestic political competition and swings in public opinion in Lithuania. Firstly, in contrast to Germany, France or Austria, Lithuania does not host a significant Turkish community and does not have much experience with immigration in general. Immigration remained very low even during the period of fast economic growth in 2005-2007, when there were labor shortages in many economic sectors, and further decreased since the economic crisis in 2008, when the share of foreign workers

in the labor force plummeted from the all-times high of 0.52 percent in 2008 to 0.16 percent in 2009.¹⁰ Thus, while surveys show that a large majority of people view immigration negatively due to fears of economic competition, the issue remains rather abstract and does not figure prominently on the domestic political agenda. Secondly, neither the EU's affairs nor EU's enlargement in particular attract much interest from the public or feature in domestic political debates. Public interest in the EU has steeply declined since 2004, such that, for example, the voter turnout in the 2009 European Parliament elections was only 21 percent, more than twice lower than the turnout in 2004 or the EU average.¹¹

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, there is a history of consensual decision-making on matters of European integration, which created certain informal standards and expectations among the political elites. The pattern was set from the very beginning when all major parties declared stalwart support for Lithuania's membership to the EU, thereby foregoing an opportunity to capitalize on the existing differences in the public opinion on the EU, preempting potential debates on any of the number of controversial issues of the accession (e.g., land property for foreigners, EU demands to close the nuclear power station, etc.), and replacing them with a government-funded propaganda campaign aimed at ensuring that enough people show up for the referendum on the EU and vote yes.¹² Since then, major decisions regarding the European integration have been rarely subject to widespread political debates. For example, joining the Euro zone is generally treated as a technical and not a political issue. The question of organizing a national referendum to approve the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe was never considered and the treaty was hastily ratified by the parliament with 84 to 4 votes in favor, before it was even officially translated into the Lithuanian language. In a typical manner, in October 2011, ten major political parties signed an agreement that Lithuania's Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2013 will not be subject to public political debates.

The combination of the above-mentioned factors provides for considerable insulation of the question of Turkey's EU accession from public opinion and the continuity of Lithuania's policy, and permits addressing the issue on the basis of cost-and-benefit calculations of national interest. Despite the fairly critical media coverage, the EU's enlargement to Turkey has never turned into a contentious issue of politics, either between different institutions or between different parties. Indeed, when some politicians and media figures expressed critical opinions

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regarding Turkey's EU membership in 2004, the then minister of foreign affairs A. Valionis took an unprecedented step to publicly condemn "ill-grounded assessments that can spark national and religious discord," and claimed that the parliament need not discuss issues that lie within the competence of the government.¹³ The minister's concerns about the parliament putting spokes in the foreign policy wheel were not entirely unwarranted because parliamentary debates often tend to fall back on emotions and established identity narratives that are easily comprehensible to the general public. For example, in December of 2005, the representatives of the small Armenian community in Lithuania managed to organize an exhibition of gruesome photographs from the Ottoman Empire in 1915 in the parliament's halls and then successfully lobbied for a parliamentary resolution on the recognition of the "Armenian genocide." In late December, at the end of the parliamentary session when almost two thirds of MPs were already missing, the parliament passed the resolution hastily, without consulting the Foreign Affairs Committee and without any debate.¹⁴ This event did not significantly affect relations between Lithuania and Turkey but it illustrates some of the potential difficulties that may arise if Turkey's EU membership becomes an issue of domestic politics.

Costs and Benefits of Support for Turkey

If public opinion does not play a significant role, what can explain Lithuania's support for Turkey's EU membership? The short-term rationale is to trade Lithuania's support in the EU for Turkey's support in NATO. The longer-term and consequently less-clearly expressed reason is the perceived advantages of the likely impact of Turkey's membership on the EU's external relations. In general, the security dimension outweighs political, economic, and cultural considerations and results in Lithuania's positive assessment of Turkey's EU bid. The following sections will expand on these two motives.

In the absence of significant economic ties, the character of bilateral relations between Lithuania and Turkey has to be viewed almost exclusively in the context of Lithuania's security interests. While the majority of the seventeen treaties signed between the two countries concern economic and trade relations, cooperation in the areas of transport, tourism, culture and education, the agendas and the timing of bilateral meetings have generally been dictated by matters related to cooperation in the area of security. In the decade between 1994 and 2004, Lithuania sought to obtain Turkey's support for its membership in the NATO, and Turkey's approval was later reciprocated by calls to begin accession negotiations with Turkey on schedule on October 3, 2005, despite the latter's refusal to recognize Cyprus. Since 2004, Lithuania seeks Turkey's support for



Photo: REUTERS, Fatih Saribas

Flags of Turkey and the European Union are seen from the roof of the *Covered Bazaar* in Istanbul.

the continuation NATO's Baltic air-policing mission, as well as several other projects. The air-policing issue has been the highest on the agenda in the past few years. In the absence of sufficient air-force capacity, Lithuania relies on assistance from NATO countries to secure its airspace and seeks to either make the temporary NATO air-policing mission in the Baltic states permanent or at least extend it to 2018.¹⁵ Cooperation on these and other security-related issues has been one of the core reasons behind Lithuania's support for Turkey's EU aspirations.

It may appear that Lithuania's support for Turkey is merely an exchange of a bird in the hand for two in the bush, when tangible benefits are extracted in exchange for support in an enterprise, which will only be realized in the future and may well come to nothing. However, beyond the particular issues, important as they are perceived to be, there is also the larger context of Lithuania's support for EU's enlargement to Turkey, which suggests that support would be forthcoming even in the absence of immediate and advantageous venues for cooperation. To examine this larger context and the strategic thinking on the part of the Lithuanian foreign policy makers, the significance of Turkey's accession to the EU has to be discussed.

Naturally, the accession of such a populous country would have a considerable impact on virtually all aspects of the life of the Union and the full extent of

this impact may not be thoroughly appraised prior to accession. For example, Lithuania has been one of the largest net recipients of EU funds, both in per capita terms and as a proportion of GDP, and it might seem that the prospect of Turkey draining the EU's budget would be an unwelcome one. However, uncertainties in the accession timetable and future prospects of national and re-

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gional development, possible changes in EU's main spending policies, and the likelihood of special arrangements, which may be agreed upon in the case of Turkey, reduce the value of forecasts on Turkey's impact on the EU budget as a basis for forming enlargement preferences, at least for small states like Lithuania. Certain

other predictions, while perhaps no less speculative in their nature, provide firmer guidelines for foreign policy. Specifically, three aspects are worth mentioning: Turkey's impact on EU's energy security, relations with the US and Russia, and the balance of power in the EU. The persistent and all-encompassing Lithuanian foreign policy theme uniting these diverse aspects is the country's assessment of its security environment – namely, the perception of Russia as the main source of political, economic, and military threat. A more extensive discussion of this theme is necessary to get a clearer picture of the Lithuanian foreign policy makers' strategic thinking.

Lithuanian Foreign Policy, Russia, and the EU

Much of Lithuania's foreign policy since the restoration of independence in 1990 can be explained by the incessant feeling of insecurity toward Russia. Virtually all major foreign policy decisions and initiatives have been shaped by the perception of Russia as a perpetual source of existential threat. During the early 1990s, all diplomatic efforts were directed at achieving international recognition of the independence and removing the Russian armed forces from Lithuania. During the decade since 1994, the chief foreign policy aim was to entrench the country's independence by joining NATO and the EU. Since 2004, in addition to policies within NATO and the EU, various initiatives have been undertaken, both independently and within international organizations, to obstruct and weaken Russia's resurgent imperialism by providing all types of direct and indirect support for the fledgling democracies of the former Soviet republics, especially, Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova, as well as by trying to limit Russia's influence on the international arena.

Lithuania's foreign policy is grounded in realist thinking and dominated by geopolitical imagery, prevalent among practitioners, media pundits, and scholars alike. From this perspective, the view that Russia presents a constant threat hardly needs arguing. The centuries-long competition between the Lithuanian Grand Duchy and Muscovy, which culminated in the disappearance of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from the map of Europe at the end of the 18th century and brought more than a century of Russian rule, the Soviet aggression and annexation of the Republic of Lithuania in June 1940 – indeed, the entire history of political and military relations between the two countries seems to indicate a historical pattern. Lithuania was able to defend its interests when Russia was weak, and, conversely, whenever Russia was strong it followed expansionist policies and Lithuania lost its sovereignty.¹⁶ The geopolitical formulations translated this gloomy view into one of the most important features of contemporary Lithuanian foreign policy – a firm and unquestionable transatlantic orientation, as well as a more or less clearly expressed strategy of Russia's containment.¹⁷

From this perspective, the chief foreign policy goal is to achieve military and economic security of the country against possible intervention from Russia. The military security strategy is based on NATO membership in the spirit of Lord Ismay's classic formulation: "keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down." Although the Cold War is over and NATO makes fairly regular attempts to engage Russia in security cooperation on a range of issues, certain elements of Cold War thinking and behavior remain alive and well in the Baltic region. For example, in 2009, on the seventieth anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Poland in September 1939, Russia held large-scale military exercises in Ladoga and Zapad, which involved preparations for invading the Baltic states and repelling an attack from Poland. In addition to the Russo-Georgian War of 2008, this was probably what led NATO to finally resolve internal disputes and draw up military plans for combat operations in the event of armed aggression against the three Baltic states. In 2012, the annual U.S.-sponsored maritime exercise, BALTOPS, involved an unprecedented landing operation on the Lithuanian seacoast, supported by two U.S. B-52 bombers flying over the operation area, supposedly to liberate an area captured by terrorists. These symbolic exchanges provide

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just one of many examples of tensions arising from Russia's resuscitated great power ambitions, and their general impact is to create an atmosphere of deep suspicion and fear, as well as to push Lithuania ever deeper into the fold of the United States.

While "keeping the Germans down" may appear to be an obsolete mission, the Lithuanian foreign policy makers are profoundly distrustful toward its European partners' ability and willingness to provide adequate collective security guarantees in the foreseeable future. Occasional lapses, such as France's decision to sell two amphibious assault ships to Russia or Germany's Rheinmetall's contract to equip a Russian combat training center in 2011, as well as constant differences between Lithuania and major EU players in the perception and assessment of threats that Russia poses, confirm the established view among the foreign policy decision-makers in Lithuania that only the United States can "keep the Russians out." The presence of the United States (and its nuclear weapons) in Europe and the strength of the transatlantic alliance are considered essential to the region's and the country's security. Lithuania's Defense Minister did not exaggerate much when she claimed that "partnership with the U.S. in

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the area of defense is the foundation of our statehood."¹⁸ Thus, when the alliance was put under strain by disagreements in the wake of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Lithuania decidedly supported the U.S. position over Germany and France, joined the so-called "coalition of the willing," and

during the decade since 2001 went out of its way to accommodate global and regional U.S. interests.¹⁹ Despite the period of more reserved relations with the U.S. following President Obama's attempt to "reset" relations with Russia, there can be little doubt over which side Lithuania would choose, should there be another rift in the transatlantic relations in the short- to medium-term future.

The possibility of the weakening of transatlantic community presents a threat to Lithuanian national security. Although the EU and its leading states are considered largely irrelevant to Lithuania's military security, they are essential to improving the economic security and, particularly, solving or mitigating the problem of energy dependency on Russia. Lithuania is fully dependent on Russian gas and partially dependent on its oil supply. In addition, since the closing of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant at the EU's behest in 2009, Lithuania is increasingly reliant on Russian electricity. Strategic projects designed to reduce the energy dependence, such as building a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal, establishing connections to the European power grid, and constructing a new

nuclear power plant, require financial and political support from the EU. For example, the planned LNG terminal would not by itself secure access to alternative sources of natural gas, since Russia controls the transmission and distribution pipelines of the gas network. In this regard, the manner and the success of the implementation of the EU's Third Energy Package provisions become critical.²⁰ More generally, since Lithuania lacks the power to achieve the desired outcome in negotiations with Russia on energy issues and has to rely on the EU, the internal EU divisions and power dynamics, and the positions taken by France and Germany in particular, acquire vital importance. Should the EU and the United States experience serious political disagreements as the former strengthens its common security and foreign policy dimension, Lithuania, which could be seen as the U.S.'s Trojan horse in the EU, may be forced to choose between military and economic security to the detriment of the latter.

Impact of Turkey's EU Membership

In the context of the overarching Lithuanian foreign policy goals sketched above, Turkey's accession entails a number of potentially beneficial consequences. First, from the geopolitical perspective, Turkey's geopolitical code has traditionally been congruent with Lithuania's interests. Even more important are Turkey's attempts to capitalize on its geopolitical position by investing heavily into energy projects. Turkey's inclusion would increase the EU's influence in the Middle East and, more importantly for Lithuania, the Caucasus. Second, Turkey's accession would reconfigure the balance of power within the EU and alter the character of the Union, which would be reflected in its external policies as well. All in all, from Lithuania's point of view, Turkey's membership could change the dynamics of the EU's external relations in advantageous ways.

Within the large and somewhat esoteric body of literature on geopolitics, it is generally accepted that Turkey belongs to an area of competition between the United States and Russia and forms an important element in that struggle. Assuming that one of the key goals of the United States' strategy is to prevent the emergence of hostile alliances and the consolidation of power in Eurasia, Turkey serves U.S. interests even during the low points of relations between the two countries.²¹ Historically, the Ottoman Empire fought no less than thirteen wars with Russia since the 16th century, and the relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union were characterized by adversity throughout the Cold War. The more deterministic strands of geopolitical thought, thus, project the same pattern of conflict into the future as well.²² For example, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who is unfathomably popular in Lithuania, sees Turkey as a geopolitical pivot (a state in a sensitive location) with a potential to become a geostrategic player (a state pos-

sessing the capacity to alter the existing geopolitical state of affairs), contending with Russia and Iran over influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus.²³ Alexander Dugin, one of the better-known Russian geopoliticians, claims that Turkey

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is the strategic outpost of Atlanticism encroaching upon Russian interests in Central Asia and the Caucasus, and should therefore become an object of relentless positional geopolitical war waged by Russia by means of building an alliance with Iran and Armenia, as well as inciting Kurdish separatism.²⁴ Thus, regardless of the

current state of political and economic relations between Turkey and Russia, which have never been better, the geopolitical perspective poises the two countries as competitors bound to collide sooner rather than later.

In this regard, Turkey's accession to the EU is expected to not only strengthen the U.S. position but also increase the Union's involvement and add some muscle behind its policies in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Lithuania is particularly interested in Georgia's situation. Diplomatic activities in Ukraine and Georgia have been the centerpiece of Lithuania's "eastern" policy since 2004, designed to curb Russia's influence in the post-Soviet area, earn points with the United States, and carve out a sphere of influence in the EU on the basis of superior knowledge and connections. While the efforts to facilitate Ukraine's movement away from Russia have predictably failed, Georgia, which remains a staunch ally of the U.S. and has expressed its intention to join NATO and the EU, is still high on the Lithuanian foreign policy agenda. The hopes are that Turkey's accession to the EU would bring the Union's relations with Georgia to the next level and make Georgia's EU aspirations more realistic, thereby frustrating if not ending Russia's designs for the region.

Perhaps the most important component of Turkey's geopolitical appeal to Lithuania is Turkey's position and active role as a potential transit hub for energy supplies to Europe. The sensitivity of some of the key EU members to Russia's interests partly derives from Russia's dominant position on the European fuel market. It has been argued that the EU is less dependent on Russian energy than it was two decades ago, that Russia cannot easily convert its position into political leverage because of interdependence, and that overdependence is therefore not such a pressing issue for the EU as a whole.²⁵ However, the differences in the levels of dependence between individual states and the resulting internal divisions in the Union retard the creation of the single energy market and in this regard, given the projected growth in European energy consumption,

the development of alternative supply routes and further dilution of Russia's role is extremely important. Turkey's role in facilitating and stabilizing European access to Central Asian and Middle Eastern oil and, especially, gas could thus not only further reduce reliance on Russia's supplies but also impede the effectiveness of its divisive energy diplomacy.

The second major impact of Turkey's accession to the EU would be an inevitable reconfiguration of the internal balance of power within the Union, as well as the potential change of the Union's character. France and Germany have played a key role in the process of European integration and, although this partnership is not monolithic and allows for substantial differences on a range of issues, the two countries continue to dominate European politics even after the Union expanded to 27 member states.²⁶ Due to its large population, the voting power of Turkey in various EU institutions would be second only to Germany and, consequently, in some cases Turkey would be able to control or determine some of the decisions taken in the EU. This allows for various interesting and novel scenarios. For example, under the Treaty of Lisbon voting arrangements, effective from 2014, the combined voting power of the UK and Turkey would equal that of Germany and France, and decisions in the Council of the EU could (at least theoretically) be taken without the consent of the latter.

The dominance of the German-French axis has frustrated Lithuania and crippled its ability to achieve its aims both in the EU and NATO. The German-French tandem typically takes moderate or even supportive positions with regard to issues concerning Russia. For example, NATO's contingency plans for the Baltic states were reportedly held up due to Germany's concerns about upsetting the Kremlin.²⁷ During the 2008 Bucharest Summit, France and Germany thwarted the U.S. plans to grant a Membership Action Plan to Ukraine and Georgia to the dismay of Lithuania. Within the EU, it was France and Germany who resisted the move towards integration of the European energy market and diluted the Third Energy Package by inserting provisions on independent transmission operators, which permits Russia's Gazprom to retain ownership of its transmission networks.²⁸ While Turkey's accession to the EU is unlikely to automatically translate into a bolder EU policy toward Russia, Turkey's geopolitical orientation and investment into energy projects would open new possibilities in the internal decision-making process and could lead to more vigorous positions toward Russia.

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Concluding Remarks

The answer to the puzzle of Lithuania's support for Turkey's EU membership can be summarized as follows. Permissive public opinion and low domestic relevance of the issue, as well as the practice of consensual decision-making

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on matters concerning the EU, turn Lithuania's support for Turkey's EU membership into an unusually "pure" foreign policy issue, subject only to rational cost-benefit calculations on the basis of perceived national interest. As such, the question is viewed primarily within the framework of national security, rather than economic or other "low-politics" issues.

Short-term calculations concern the tangible benefits of "trading" support for Turkey in the EU for Turkey's support within NATO. Longer-term strategic calculations of Turkey's EU membership include visions of Russia's containment in Central Asia and, particularly, the Caucasus both through the advancement of Turkey's interests and the consequent expansion of the EU's role in these regions. Anchoring Turkey in the European institutional framework is seen as a way to increase the stability and availability of alternative energy supplies and thus reducing Russia's influence within the EU. Furthermore, Turkey's membership is expected to moderate the dominance of the French-German tandem, as well as strengthening the transatlantic dimension of the EU.

Lithuania can be considered a clear success case of Turkish diplomacy in terms of identifying and pursuing mutually advantageous venues for cooperation in a timely manner. The case reveals the utility of the multipronged and flexible Turkish EU accession communication strategy. What works in the "Old Europe" may not necessarily work in the "New Europe." While talking about Turkey's importance in fostering multiculturalism in Europe would likely backfire in a vigorously Catholic country that is still recovering from the trauma of the fifty years of forced atheism and rediscovering the religious aspects of its identity, the emphasis on Turkey's contribution to the EU's energy security and global role found a fertile ground. The geopolitical perspective – the *modus operandi* of responsible strategic planning in Lithuania and Eastern Europe in general – focuses on the longer-term geographic and historical factors, rather than the fleeting events or tactical maneuvering. This strips the rich and often contradictory political reality to bare bones distinction, where Turkey is seen as a potential enemy of the enemy and hence a friend. Ultimately, Lithuania's sup-

port for Turkey's EU membership is primarily conditioned by Turkey's position with regard to the United State and Russia, and not the EU.

Endnotes

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3. "The EU and Turkey: Steering a Safer Path Through the Storms," *EU Observer* (January 1, 2011), retrieved July 1, 2012, from <<http://goo.gl/1NSyD>>, and "The EU and Turkey: Stronger Together," *EU Observer* (June 28, 2012), retrieved July 1, 2012, from <<http://goo.gl/4rtT8>>.

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5. See *Standard Eurobarometer 69* (Spring 2008) and *Standard Eurobarometer 74* (Autumn 2010), retrieved July 1, 2012, from <<http://goo.gl/TC8kc>>.

6. One notable exception was the referendum in France in 1972. In the past few years, however, steps have been taken in Germany and, especially, France to increase the stranglehold over the European Union's enlargement at a national level, some of which directly concern Turkey's accession process. See Paul Craig and Grainne de Burca, *The Evolution of EU Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 208-211.

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12. See Liudas Mazylyis and Ingrida Unikaite, "Euro-referenda: Lithuania's Case," in *Central Europe beyond Double Enlargement*, eds. Algimantas Jankauskas and Ramunas Vilpisauskas (Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2004), pp. 37-51.

13. Press release by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Minister of Foreign Affairs Calls to Make no Distinctions between Foreign Partners on the Bases of National or Religious Belonging," (January 4, 2005), retrieved July 1, 2012, from <<http://goo.gl/n0c8D>>. For a description of these debates, see Egdunas Raciuis, "Debate in Lithuania on EU Expansion to East: The Case of Turkey," in *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review 2005* (Vilnius: Military Academy of Lithuania, 2006), pp. 93-106.

14. One of the sponsors of the resolution argued that the resolution needs not be delayed by discussions because many EU countries had recognized the genocide and because "this support [for the Armenian state, the oldest Christian state in the world] coming from us, the Catholics, on the eve of the Holy Christmas would be a truly symbolic step."

15. This goal was achieved during the NATO Summit in Chicago in 2012, when the air policing mission was extended indefinitely, subject to periodic reviews.

16. Gediminas Vitkus, *Diplomatinė Aporija: Tarptautinė Lietuvos ir Rusijos Santykių Normalizacijos Perspektyva* (Vilniaus universiteto leidykla: Vilnius, 2006), pp.173-174.

17. The clearest expression is to be found in the programmatic statement published in 2007 by the then opposition leader and the current Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius – see “Russia Containment Strategy: Plan on Reduction of Russia’s Influence” (May 9, 2007), retrieved July 1, 2012, from <<http://goo.gl/aJgC2>>. Despite its controversial public reception, the document not only encapsulates the spirit of the current government’s policies toward Russia but captures the thinking behind the entire two decades of foreign policy.

18. “R. Juknevičienė: Partnerystė su JAV Gynybos Srityje - Mūsų Valstybingumo Pagrindas,” *DELFI* (January 4, 2012), retrieved July 1, 2012, from <<http://goo.gl/6iBjC>>.

19. For example, in 2005 and 2006, CIA chartered planes were given a *carte blanche* to land in Lithuania and a secret prison was established, although the subsequent parliamentary investigation found no evidence that any prisoners were held or tortured there.

20. The EU’s Third Energy Package offers a new regulatory framework aimed at creating an integrated and competitive internal energy market. In the case of Lithuania, particularly important are the rules which require the “unbundling” of energy production from energy distribution. According to these rules, Russia’s Gazprom, the sole supplier of natural gas to Lithuania, could be forced to sell its 37.1 percent stake in Lietuvos Dujos, the main natural gas company in Lithuania, which controls the domestic transmission and distribution pipeline network.

21. One such low point was in the aftermath of the U.S. decision to invade Iraq and it engendered a lively and ongoing debate in the academic literature regarding the current state and the future of the alliance between Turkey and the U.S. The change in the international security environment, as well as political, economic and military developments in Turkey call for a reassessment of bilateral relations, which is recognized by politicians on both sides. It remains to be seen whether this reassessment will entail a reorientation of Turkey’s foreign policy.

22. The boldest projections see Turkey as not only a power blocking Russia’s interests but predict direct confrontations in the Caucasus and the Black Sea in the not so distant future. See George Friedman, *The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), pp. 144-148.

23. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), pp. 134-136.

24. Aleksandr Dugin, *Osnovy Geopolitiki* (Moscow: Arktogetia, 2000), p. 138.

25. See, for example, Tom Casier, “Russia’s Energy Leverage over the EU: Myth or Reality?,” *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (2011), pp. 493-508.

26. For a good overview, see Douglas Webber (ed.), *The Franco-German Relationship in the European Union* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

27. See Ian Traynor, “WikiLeaks Cables Reveal Secret NATO Plans to Defend Baltics from Russia,” *Guardian* (December 6, 2010), retrieved July 1, 2012, from <<http://goo.gl/QEkli>>.

28. Pierre Noel, “Beyond Dependence: How to Deal with Russian Gas,” *ECFR Policy Brief* (November 2008), retrieved July 1, 2012, from <<http://goo.gl/Icb6k>>.