

The Role of International Status Narratives

Why value-based foreign policy?
understanding Lithuanian choices 2021–2024

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Research
Council of
Lithuania

Puzzle

In 2021:

Lithuania launched a new, activist “value-based” foreign policy.

Diplomatic row with China

Dominant explanation: shelter seeking and alignment with patron

BUT: a) little evidence; b) why not other BS as well? c) why values not security?

+ 2022: Russia's aggression on Ukraine and LT moralising, assertive stance

Question

What was the role (function) of “value-based” policy 2021-2024?

Small state FP

Security orientation → shelter, bandwagoning, alliances (vs. neutrality, autarky)

Overcome weakness with non-material resources → get recognised as useful through status seeking

Strategies

Helping: mediator, supporter

Looking for unique strengths (social creativity)

Projecting moral authority

Bandwagoning for status

...

How to choose/decide?

Decision makers:

- domestic context

 - constraining/enabling structures

 - drive to differentiate

- leader perceptions on state identity and role

- leader personal motivations

Two cases

China and Taiwan

Support for Ukraine
against Russia

Relations with China since 2021

Exit from China's 17+1 format;

Parliamentary resolution on Uyghurs

Taiwanese Representative Office to open in Vilnius.

⇒ Severe economic and diplomatic pressure from PRC.

⇒ Domestic backlash

Domestic constraint: four elements of LT FP

Small state → weakness and vulnerability

Russia as persistent threat & Other

Western orientation (US vs Europe)

Foreign policy (should be) based on consensus

Political leadership

Moral consistency
(democracies vs
autocracies)

→ China = Russia



Mantas Adomėnas, Gabrielius Landsbergis / 15min montažas

AKTUALU / TRIBŪNA

2020 06 02

Mantas Adomėnas, Gabrielius
Landsbergis: Lietuvai ateina
metas rinktis

Political leadership

Moral consistency
(democracies vs autocracies)

Subjectivity (agency) of the
state

Through multilateralism,
networks, narrative
construction, recognisable
(remembered) → moral power

⇒ status seeking
behavior

Challenges and challengers

Foreign policy based on consensus

Fragile institutional balance in fp making

→ Domestic backlash

Russian aggression on Ukraine

One of the most forceful advocates for military and diplomatic support for Ukraine, sanctions advocacy

Promoters for European defense/security

Moral authority: “We told you so”

Back to “traditional” foreign policy thinking

Lithuania’s vulnerability against (potential)
Russia’s threat

Positioning as experts on Russia

Vulnerability as status position

Political leadership

Moral consistency

Subjectivity (agency) of
the state + survival

Through multilateralism,
networks, narrative
construction, ~~recognisable~~
~~(remembered)~~-vocal →
moral power

⇒ security (?) seeking
behavior

Domestic Context

Return to consensus (elite and public)

Institutional competition (on personal visibility)

Moral authority regarding “Europe”

(partially) acceptance: China \approx Russia

Preliminary conclusions

Value based FP: political entrepreneurship

FP change: through individual motivations and smallness as permissible condition

⇒ The role of political leadership and domestic constraints

Not if status seeking, but how:

⇒ untangling mechanisms and revealing justifications

Having agency as states and leaders

Limits of moral authority

+ Need for comparison with Lat, Est, Pol and Cz