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## **The Normative Construction of the Military in Lithuania**

Lithuanian Case

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Between the Organisation of Armed Forces and the Principles of  
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## Introduction

Any nation's historical memory contains some mythologies or fancy stories about the heroism of the defenders of Motherland. For Lithuanians, the key story is that of the defense of the Pilenai castle related in the crusader chronicles<sup>1</sup>. In 1336 the defenders of the castle, after a long and shifting battle, unwilling to surrender to the crusaders, set fire to the castle and burned themselves alive together with the people gathered in the castle. Later, the Great Duchy of Lithuania won a number of spectacular battles with the crusaders, and yet it was that lost battle, portrayed in numerous artistic works, that has become part of Lithuanians' identity. The story eminently features the spiritually unflinching, deeply patriotic figure of the soldier as the defender of the country. Despite the oldness of the story it became a source of inspiration for the defenders of Lithuania's independence in January 1991 when the very survival of the Lithuanian state was at stake.<sup>2</sup>

The vitality of the Pilenai story in Lithuania's political discourse shows that Lithuanians tend to conceive national defense as total defense, with every inhabitant of the country taking part in the defense. The armed forces are merely a tool in the country's defense whose effectiveness can be boosted in critical situation by the support of the whole population. On the other hand, there is another image of the 'defender of Motherland', alongside this one, that of the cosmopolitan professional warrior. This is related to the historical peculiarities of the Lithuanian state.

After its formation in the 13th century, the Lithuanian state for several centuries was among the most powerful European states. Being a pagan metropolis<sup>3</sup>, it was dominating the Christian territories of several times its size, which was unique for the historic period.<sup>4</sup> During the period of its flourishing Lithuania "maintained the dual policy of vigorous defense against the Teutonic Order in the West and territorial

- 1 See: Kiaupa, Zigmantas, Jurate Kiaupiene, and Albinas Kuncevicus, *The History of Lithuania Before 1795*, Vilnius, Lithuanian Institute of History, 2000.
- 2 In January 11-13, 1991 the Soviet Union made an attempt at a coup d'etat, with the aim of suppressing Lithuania's independence declared on March 11, 1990. There was little doubt that Soviet commandos would try to seize the parliament. Had the assault been attempted the parliamentary building, equipped with 'Molotov's cocktails' and other defensive weaponry, would have become another burning Pilenai. Despite the grave danger the parliamentarians remained within, with numerous volunteers. The building was surrounded by a live wall of people from all of Lithuania, determined to defend Lithuania's independence. Probably because of this determination of the people to enact another feat of Pilenai, no assault on the building was attempted.
- 3 Lithuania's conversion to Christianity began in 1385 after marriage of grand Duke Jogaila to Queen Jadwiga of Poland.
- 4 In the reign of Grand Duke Vytautas (1392-1430) Lithuania achieved its greatest power and widest territorial extent, from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Even at the first half of the 16 century, before the 1569 Union with Poland, the Great Dukedom of Lithuania, judging by the size of its territory and population, was the fourth in Europe (after Muscovy with approx. 2,800,000 square kilometers; European part of Turkey after 1541, 840,000 square kilometers; Sweden (with Finland), 800,000 square kilometers) while Poland was the eleventh. See Dembkowski, H. E. (1982), *The Union of Lublin Polish Federalism in the Golden Age*. Eastern European Monographs, New York: Boulder, p.333.

expansion into Russian lands in the East, the latest being affected by a series of victories against the Tatars and a policy of judicious intermarriages with Russian princely families”.<sup>5</sup> Such an expansionary policy required a well-armed professional army that was recruited from different ethnicities living on the territory of Lithuania at the time. In Lithuania’s contemporary political perceptions, the dual character of the policies of that time finds its reflection in being proud of the heroism of the defenders of ethnic land, but also in the admiration for the professional army for its victorious exploits in conquering new territories (expanding one’s security space, in current jargon). One can say that Lithuania’s medieval history legitimizes both the image of warrior-defender and that of the warrior-conqueror. However, the formation of the image of the contemporary military was most directly affected by the experience of security and defense policies of interwar Lithuania (1918-1940) and by the story of the formation and the collapse of its military.

## 1. Lithuania’s Armed Forces: Their Role and Status in the First Republic (1918-1940)

### 1.1. Historical and Geopolitical Background

Lithuania declared its independence in 1918, in the aftermath of the war and the revolutions that led to the collapse of the Russian empire.<sup>6</sup> The main goal of the new state at that time was to define, and to secure international recognition of its territorial borders. At the time Lithuania had borders with Latvia, Poland and Germany.

In a book published in 1938, commemorating 20 years’ anniversary of Lithuania’s independence, Lithuania was characterized as the country “struggling for Vilnius”<sup>7</sup>. The problems relating to Vilnius were raised at the Paris peace conference. The goal of Lithuanian political leaders was the restoration of independent Lithuania in its ethnic boundaries, with Vilnius as capital and with the area of the Smaller Lithuania (Konigsberg region) included within its boundaries. The goal clashed with Poland’s interests in its endeavor to re-establish Poland within the boundaries of 1793. Thus it claimed Vilnius and the Klaipeda (Memel) region, the same territories as did Lithuania. In an attempt to strengthen its position in the negotiations with Lithuania Poland seized Vilnius on October 9, 1920. In 1923 the League of Nations resolved to cede Vilnius to Poland, while recognizing Lithuania's claims to the Klaipeda region. Despite the

5 See David J. Smith, Artis Pabriks, Aldis Purs and Thomas Lane, *The Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. XX.

6 In 1565 the Lublin union between the Great Dukedom of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland was created, constituting the Commonwealth of Lithuania and Poland. In 1793-95 the Commonwealth was broken up and absorbed by Russia, Prussia and Austria. The entire Lithuanian ethnic area fell under Russian rule. It remained so until the end of the First World War.

7 See: Zaunius, D. (1938) ‘Du Lietuvos uzsienio politikos desimtmečiai’, in V. Kemežys (ed.), *Lietuva 1918-1938*, Spaudos fondas, Kaunas, p.30.

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resolution of the League of Nations Lithuania refused to establish any relations with Poland till Vilnius remained in Poland's hands.<sup>8</sup>

In an effort to regain Vilnius Lithuania's foreign policy turned towards establishing closer relations with Soviet Russia (Soviet Union since 1922) and Germany thus alienating the neighboring states. All attempts of Estonia, Latvia and Poland at creating a unified geopolitical space between Germany and Russia failed. Lithuania's foreign policy was in fact helpful for Russia and Germany, since both were intent on preventing Poland from gaining dominance in the region. As later events have shown, the threats posed by the Soviet Union and Germany were underestimated while Poland's power was overestimated.

After the Soviet Union and Germany signed the non-aggression pact of August 23, 1939, with its secret supplementary protocols apportioning them respective zones of influence, the backbone of Lithuania's security policy, based as it was on the clash of interests of the Soviet Union and Germany, was broken. Later events developed on a scenario common to all Baltic states: 'mutual assistance' treaties signed (with Lithuania on October 10, including the stationing of 25,000 Soviet troops), then occupation (June 1940) and, finally, incorporation into the Soviet Union (August 1940). For fifty years the Baltic states disappeared from the world map. Though no one doubts that Lithuania alone or even together with the other Baltic states was hardly able to withstand the military intervention of the Soviet Union, historians and politicians are still seeking an answer to the question why the Baltic states were occupied without any political and military resistance. A measure of clarity on the issue can be obtained by an analysis of Lithuania's political structure and the role of the military in its society at the time.

## **1.2. Lithuania's Armed Forces**

The formation of Lithuania's armed forces was affected by the fact that "the borders of the independent Lithuanian state were determined not by the League of Nations, but by the use of force, either on the part of Lithuania itself or by its more powerful neighbors".<sup>9</sup> From the early days of the declared independence the very existence of the Lithuanian state faced great threats. Ethnic Lithuanian lands were claimed by both Poland and Russia. A timely creation of the armed forces was the necessary condition for the survival of the state. The volunteer Lithuanian army was created in spring of 1918. Though little trained and poorly equipped the army managed to defend Lithuania's independence by successfully fighting the Bolshevik Russia, Bermont's troops and the Polish army in 1918-1920.

8 Internationally, the Polish occupation of Vilnius was qualified as such only in 1931, when the international court in the Hague drew the decision that in seizing Vilnius Poland violated international law. Diplomatic relations with Poland were established in 1938. See: Eidintas, Alfonsas and Žalys Vytautas (1998): *Lithuania in European Politics: the Years of the First Republic, 1918-1920*, Vilnius: Vaga Publishers.

9 Smith D., (note 4), p. 29.

Because of tense relations with Poland, Lithuania had to maintain a large military force. Early in 1922 Lithuania's military forces had 52 965 soldiers on the alert. The army comprised 13 infantry, 3 cavalry, 4 artillery regiments, an aviation squadron (12 aircrafts), a regiment of armored vehicles, an engineering battalion, and border control units.<sup>10</sup> The structure of the military, its place and role in the society were tightly linked to Lithuania's political regime whose particular characteristics found expression in the Constitutions of 1922 and 1938. The first Constitution was expressive of the "founding fathers'" orientation towards West European constitutions: "The result was a highly democratic form of government in which the legislature was dominant, the executive was weak, and the President was largely a figurehead".<sup>11</sup> However, it soon became obvious that the Western democratic model fitted badly Lithuania's realities. The inefficiency of the executive, the immaturity of the party system, the frailty of the civil society, as well as the discontent of such influential social groups as the Church and the military<sup>12</sup> created conditions for the coup d'état of 1926. The regime that was introduced by the coup was legitimized by the Constitution of 1938. In contrast to the first Constitution, this one legitimized the priority of the executive, controlled by President Antanas Smetona. The Smetona regime can be defined as authoritarian nationalism. It was characterized by the restraint of political and civil rights and by the cult of the leader, all of this based on such ideas as national will, national solidarity, loyalty to the common cause, and discipline.

The Smetona's regime effected a gradual militarization of the society, with the military gaining ever more prominence. This is evident from the share of the budget allotted to the military: it was 16-19% till 1935, 25% in 1938 and 24,23% in 1939.<sup>13</sup> The training of soldiers and officers was a high priority. In order to boost the authority of the military in the wider society the government used the radio, the press, organized various public events and "open door" days. Most popular were annual festivals promoting the solidarity of the military with the society. These measures proved to be quite successful, for despite the unpopularity of Smetona's regime, the military enjoyed public support, and the high ranking military was a significant part of the political-military elite. In 1940 Lithuanian Armed Forces numbered 30 thousand soldiers, and the number could be increased up to 150 thousand in case of mobilization. The army had 17 generals and 1800 officers. In early 1940 Lithuanian Armed Forces comprised 3 infantry divisions, 4 artillery regiments, 3 cavalry regiments, military aviation and armored military units with the total assets of more than 700 pieces of ordnance, 118 military aircrafts, 10 armored vehicles and other military equipment manufactured in Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Switzerland, and other states of West Europe<sup>14</sup>. In quantity and quality of armored vehicles Lithuania lagged behind other Baltic states, but its aircraft forces were most up to date.

10 See Gintautas Surgailis, *Lietuvos kariuomenė: 1918-1998*, Vilnius: LR Krašto apsaugos ministerija, 1998, p. 21.

11 Smith D., (note 4) p. 19.

12 The reduction of the military that began in 1922 and that was sped up after the 1926 elections provoked intense discontent on the part of army officers. The top military supported the coup of December 1926.

13 Surgailis, G. (note 10), p. 26.

14 *Ibid*, (note 8) p. 28.

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Alongside the armed forces there was the militarized nationalist organization, Lithuania's Riflemen's Union. Established in 1919, it reached its peak of influence during the Smetona regime. Since 1935 it was directly subordinate to Lithuania's chief military commander. In 1940 Lithuania's Riflemen's Union had 23 divisions (*rinktine*), about 1200 squads (*būrys*), totaling 42 000 riflemen, plus 15 000 riflewomen and about 5 000 supporting members.<sup>15</sup> There were also youth organizations for the support of the military. Lithuania's Catholic clergy was very influential in the armed forces. In Lithuania's religious hierarchy the military were provided with a special enclave, with the military chaplains having a distinct agency, the "military priesthood" headed by the chief military chaplain. He was subordinate to the Minister of defense, and since 1935, to the chief military commander.

The military under the Smetona regime were expected to perform two functions: first, to be a guarantor of the state's independence, of its security against the main external enemy, Poland, and, secondly, to be the force consolidating the state (the nation) conceived as an organism for its unity and flourishing. However, after 1920 the army has never been used in its direct function of defending the country's independence. There was no military resistance to the Polish ultimatum of 1938, to the German invasion of Klaipeda in 1939, or to the ultimatum of the Soviet Union in 1940. The army served not so much as a means of counteracting external threats as a means of guaranteeing internal stability of the country under conditions of Smetona's authoritarian rule.

Lithuanians are now painfully inquiring why the Lithuanian military were so passive in 1940. Historians, too, are divided as to how to judge the foreign policy of the Baltic states at the time. As the British historian David Kirby wrote, "the governments of Pats, Ulmanis and Smetona need not have collaborated to the extent which they did. By agreeing to mutual assistance pacts in the autumn of 1939, they clearly compromised their countries' future existence".<sup>16</sup> The defeatist stance of the Lithuanian government can be explained in part by the dictatorial character of the Smetona's regime. During nearly the whole inter-war period the country was under martial law. The formation of an independent civil society was greatly hindered thereby and this led to the political passivity of the population. At a critical juncture, having severed the vital ties with their societies, the governments found themselves lacking political will.

The Lithuanian Cabinet of Ministers, unconditionally accepting in 1940 the Soviet ultimatum demanding a reshuffle of the government and letting in unlimited corps of the Red army, argued as follows: "Our resistance would enrage Moscow and it would devastate our country", "resistance would not only require considerable loss of life of our people, but would also destroy our whole economic life without any countervailing advantage".<sup>17</sup> Now it is evident that non-resistance did not save Lithuania's people from loss of life and did not prevent the devastation of the country. At the critical juncture it

15 Ibid, p. 31.

16 Kirby, D. (1994), "Incorporation: The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact", in G. Smith, ed., *The Baltic States: The National Self-Determination of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*, London Macmillan. Kirby, p. 80-81.

17 Truska L. (1996), *Antanas Smetona ir jo laikas*, Vilnius: Valstybinis leidybos Centras, p. 372.

even contributed to internal division within the society and thus helped create an air of legitimacy for Soviet actions. The invasion of the Red army into Lithuania in June 1940 was the death toll to the Lithuanian armed forces. The liquidation and destruction of the Lithuanian military preceded by arresting and sending about 2000 officers and 4.5 thousand soldiers to Soviet concentration camps where most of them were killed or died because of unbearable conditions.<sup>18</sup> A part of the military was incorporated into the Soviet army.

The fact that Lithuania's military, so much extolled during the whole period of Lithuania's independence, at a critical joint for the state's destiny obeyed the order of the civil government not to resist foreign invasion is now considered in Lithuania as an historical blunder. The resolve not to repeat it finds its reflection in most strategic documents of the reemerged Lithuanian state. The lost dignity of Lithuania's military has been partly recuperated by acknowledging the valor of its soldiers and officers in the guerilla fight against the Soviets in 1944-1954.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. Conceptualization of Defense and the Military in the Second Republic: 1990-

Lithuania was the first republic of the former Soviet Union to declare its independence. On 11 March 1990 a mere 1.5 percent of the Soviet population inhabiting only 0.3 percent of Soviet territory posed a fundamental challenge to the vast empire and its powerful apparatus of repression. The world saw the challenge, though at first with little formal engagement yet with plenty of (if at times condescending) sympathy. Only after the bloody events of January 1991 in Lithuania and the failed Moscow putsch in August 1991 did Lithuania receive widespread international recognition<sup>20</sup>. On 17 September 1991 Lithuania was granted membership in the United Nations.

Though becoming an actor of international politics, Lithuania still had to do its state-building under very complicated circumstances. Like other post-communist states Lithuania had to implement "a triple transition in which it was attempting simultaneously to create a new state and nation, to establish new political institutions based on the rule of law, and to build the foundations for an effective and productive market economy"<sup>21</sup>. (Kanet, 1998: 293). From the very beginning this triple transition process was conceptualized in security terms. This is evidenced by the profusion of official documents related to security and defense policies. The shifting international environment and the changing status of Lithuania on the road to NATO and EU constantly demanded new revisions of the security situation and adjustments in state policies. The documents

18 Surgailis, (note 8), p. 72.

19 See: Gaškaitė N., Kuodytė D., Kašėta A., Ulevičius B. *Lietuvos partizanai 1944-1953 m.*, Kaunas, 1996.

20 See: Miniotaite G. 2002, *Nonviolent Resistance in Lithuania*, Boston: Albert Einstein institution.

21 Roger E. Kanet, 1998, "Towards the Future: The Emergence of a New Security Order in East-Central Europe and Eurasia," in William E. Ferry and Roger E. Kanet, eds., *Post-Communist States in the World Community*, New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc, p. 293.

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constitute a kind of condensed history of the state after the restoration of independence. They reflect not only the story of Lithuania's integration in NATO and EU but also the processes of the country's Westernization and Europeanization accompanied by shifts in security and defense conceptualizations.

Let us consider the dynamics of security and defense conceptualizations by attending to the contents of the major documents related to the subject of the report. The relevant documents are: *Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania*, 1992 (Constitution); *Law on Fundamentals of National Security 1996* (LFNSL 1997), *Law on organization of the National Defence and the Military Service*, 1998; *National Security Strategy* (NSSRL 2002, NSSRL 2005), *Military Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania* (MSRL, 2000, 2004), *White Paper of Lithuanian Defense Policy* (WP 1999, 2002, 2006). In analyzing these documents we will focus on the conceptualization of security, defense, military forces, and civil-military relations.

## **2.1. Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, 1992**

Lithuania's Constitution, in stressing that its legal roots are "the Lithuanian Statutes and the Constitutions of the Republic of Lithuania" (*Constitution*, Preamble), emphasizes the historical continuity of contemporary Lithuania to the Great Duchy of Lithuania and to the interwar Lithuania. In its main provisions the current Constitution resembles Lithuania's Constitution of 1922 that was based on the Westphalian model of state sovereignty. Security is conceived as national security, while defense is "the defense of the state of Lithuania from foreign armed attack" (Article 139). The Constitution employs a rather static concept of the external enemy, based on Lithuania's historical contingencies. Indirectly, this is confirmed by the amendment of the Constitution (adopted on 8 June 1992), the Constitutional Act "On the Non-Alignment of the Republic of Lithuania with post-Soviet Eastern Alliances" (Article 150). The intention behind it is to legally dissociate once and for all from Russia and the post-Soviet space.

The basic constitutional provisions on national defense (chapter 13) outline the character of the civil-military relations. According to Article 140, the State Defense Council, consisting of the President (Head of the Council), the Prime Minister, the Chairman of the Parliament, the Minister of National Defense, and the Commander of the Armed Forces co-ordinate the main issues of the national defense. The Constitution establishes direct accountability of the government, the minister of national defense and the commander of armed forces to the Parliament for the management of the armed forces of Lithuania. The Parliament is also granted the right to impose martial law, to declare mobilizations, and to decide on the employment of the armed forces for the defense of state or for the implementation of international commitments (Article 142). The Constitution forbids the appointment of active servicemen as ministers of national defense and names the President as the Supreme Commander of the armed forces. These constitutional provisions constitute the legal basis for the application of the principle of civilian control over the armed forces.

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The constitution calls for one year of compulsory military training or alternative service. The 139 article of the constitutions states: “The defence of the state of Lithuania from foreign armed attack shall be the right and duty of every Citizen of the republic of Lithuania”. Citizens “are obliged to serve in the national defence service or to perform alternative service in the manner established by law“.

## 2.2. The Basics of National Security of Lithuania 1996

Lithuania’s political life offers ample material for the analysis of different conceptualizations of security and defense. In the period between the declaration of Lithuania’s independence in 1990 and the enactment of the main document defining Lithuania’s security and defense policies at least four other drafts of the security conception were widely discussed. *The Basics of National Security of Lithuania* (BNSL) that was adopted by Seimas (Lithuania’s Parliament) in December 1996 was prepared by a task group created at the end of 1994. The group consisted of representatives from all the parties having seats in Seimas, so that the final document was fairly expressive of the common attitude of Lithuania’s political elite towards issues of national security.

The document is not entirely consistent. On the one hand, it manifests the tendency towards the securitization of the geopolitical environment. On the other hand, it also reflects the fact that in the period between the first draft of the law and the document’s adoption as law Lithuania’s foreign and security policy acquired a distinctly pro-Western orientation. The most prominent feature of the document is the partition of the security space into the zone of peace and the zone of potential conflict. Membership in EU, NATO and WEU is seen as the main means of ensuring Lithuania’s security and the country’s habitation in the zone of peace.

Security is conceived as the preservation of the permanent and unchanging entity (the nation-state) by discovering the threats it faces and neutralizing them by political and military means. The document shows that Lithuania’s security concept in early 1990s was based on the neo-realist assumption that the state’s priorities and threats can be easily and unambiguously defined and that they remain the same despite interactions with other states and other institutional dynamics. Security thus conceived incites enmity in foreign policy and lays the grounds for the practice of securitization in domestic policy. This conception of security, exploiting the image of unpredictable Russia, saw Lithuania’s integration with NATO and EU as grounded mainly on the needs of national security.

The document reveals the tension present in Lithuania’s political life, namely that between an orientation towards the nation-state in domestic policies but integration with the West in foreign policy. The former orientation is the dominant one, expressive of the political discourse prevailing in 1992-95. This is particularly evident in the conception of defense as based on the principle of total and unconditional defense:

“Total defense means that Lithuania shall be defended with arms by the armed forces, that all the resources of the state shall be employed in the defense effort and that *each citizen and the nation shall offer resistance by all means possible* (my emphasis, G.M.). Unconditional defense means that defense of Lithuania

shall not be tied to any preconditions and *no one may restrict the right of the Nation and each Citizen to resist the aggressor* (my emphasis, G. M.), invader or anyone who encroaches by coercion on the independence the territorial integrity or the constitutional order of Lithuania” (Chapter 7).

“In the event of aggression or other forms of coercion against the State of Lithuania, no State institution or official shall be allowed to make a decision or issue an order forbidding the defense of the sovereignty, the territorial integrity or the constitutional order of Lithuania. Such resolution or order shall be considered null and void, and defiance towards them shall incur no liability” (Chapter 7).

As the quotations show, the concept of defense is obviously influenced by the spirit of the Pilenai story and the polemics with the defeatist policies of 1940. One can also notice the contrast drawn between the Nation and the State, one that grants the nation the right to resist state institutions if they refuse to defend Lithuania’s sovereignty and its constitutional order. This means that defense comprises defense against both external and internal enemies. Such a conception of defense naturally leads to the division of defense into military defense, guerilla warfare and civil defense. The latter comprises “non-violent resistance, disobedience and non-collaboration with the unlawful administration, as well as armed resistance”. The role accorded to civilian resistance in the document representing Lithuania’s defense policy is quite unique in defense conceptualizations currently predominant in the world<sup>22</sup>.

The adoption of the strategy of total and unconditional defense by Lithuania’s political elite was the result of many different factors, the most important of which was probably a specific interpretation of Lithuania’s interwar history. The interpretation was a kind of polemics with the painful events of 1940, when Lithuania, though militarized, made no attempt at resisting the Soviet ultimatum. Presumably, the commitment to total and unconditional resistance had to prevent the repetition of such events. The choice of total defense was also influenced by the predominance in Lithuania’s political discourse of the neo-realist interpretation of the geopolitical environment and by the modernist conception of sovereignty. The experience of the neighboring countries, particularly that of Sweden, has also played a role.

Besides the definitions of security and defense the document also defines the armed forces and their functions. The Armed forces “shall be loyal to the Republic of Lithuania, its Constitution, serve the State and society, obey the state government democratically elected by the Lithuanian citizens” (chapter 18). The armed forces comprise regular armed forces, the Voluntary National Defense Service (SKAT) and active reserve forces. The structure of the armed forces indicates that they are oriented towards territorial defense. The backbone of the armed forces are the servicemen whose “civil consciousness and morale, professional skills and military ethics” have to be

22 See Miniotaite G. (2004) ‘Civilian resistance in the security and defence system of Lithuania’, Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review 2003.

fostered. The “mutual understanding and trust between servicemen and the civilian population” should also be encouraged.

A section of the document is devoted to issues of “democratic control over the armed forces” (chapter 8) and is based on the relevant provisions in the Constitution. It is stressed that all decisions on defense policy and armed forces are to be made by the democratically elected civilian government. The document underwrites the publicity of decisions on defense policy and defense expenditure; it also establishes the main principles and procedures of the civilian control of the armed forces. However, the document “failed to establish a clear definition of the parliamentary overview and provided only limited tools of accountability and control”<sup>23</sup>.

In general, one can say that *The Basics of National Security* universalized and legitimized the conception of political reality prevailing in 1992-1995. At the time Lithuania’s membership in EU and NATO seemed to be a distant and hardly attainable aspiration. No wonder, the document is mainly based on the assumption of self-reliant defense. Eventually, the assumption was suspended in the *National Security Strategy* and the *Military Strategy* that are more in tune with the spirit of the age.

### **2.3. Law on Organization of the National Defense and the Military Service, 1998**

The evolving attitudes towards the foundations of national security and strategies of national defense were made more explicit in the *Law on Organization of the National Defense and the Military Service* (1998) and in *The Military Defense Strategy* (adopted in 2000, amended in 2004). The law of 1998 sets forth the fundamentals of organization, command and control of the national defense system, and establishes the procedures for the implementation of military and civilian service within the national defense system. According to the law, the national defense system consists of 1) the Ministry of National Defense; 2) the Armed Forces and, in time of war, other armed forces: border police, special police units and citizens in organized resistance (guerilla) units subordinate to the Commander of the Armed Forces; 3) the Lithuanian Military Academy, the Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) School and other military schools; 4) other state institutions established by the Ministry of Defense or subordinate to the Minister of National Defense; 5) infrastructure assigned to National Defense and the enterprises established by the Ministry of National Defense.

The law prescribes that “the principle of democratic civilian control shall be applied to all institutions within the national defense system” (Art. 6). The law underwrites the requirement that Seimas determines the amount of funds to be allocated for the development of the Armed forces, the acquisition of weapons and other support equipment.

23 Gričius A. and Paulauskas K. (2003) „Democratic Control over the Armed Forces in Lithuania“, Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review 2002. p.241.

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The law states that “the national defense system shall be developed as part of the transatlantic collective defense system”. In this regard “the Armed forces and other institutions within the system of national defense shall be developed according to NATO standards, and shall be interoperable with NATO structures” (Art. 3).

The law defines the status of the serviceman: „A serviceman is a defender of the Lithuanian State“ (Art. 21). Military service “requires a high degree of loyalty to the state”. The servicemen enjoy the constitutionally guaranteed human rights and liberties. The “serviceman’s human dignity” should be respected, a serviceman may not be “forced to serve another person or group of persons”. Moreover, he need not blindly comply with orders; he should not comply if the order violates “universally recognized principles and norms of international law” (Art. 27).

On the whole, judging by its contents the law is transitory in nature. It blends together the elements of national and collective defense. The structure of the national defense system, still oriented to total territorial defense, and the serviceman conceived as the “defender of the state”: these constructions are expressive of the earlier stance on national defense. On the other hand, the envisaged preparation of the military for the “interoperability with NATO structures” shows that the law is also responsive to the needs of a collective defense.

#### **2.4. National Security Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania, 2002, 2005**

While Lithuania made strenuous efforts at meeting the requirements for membership of NATO and EU doubts came to be voiced, particularly after the Washington Summit of 1999, as to the compatibility of the concept of national security assumed in the document with the concept of cooperative security as developed in NATO strategic documents. In 2002 the Seimas approved a new document, more congruent with the evolving security situation, *The National Security Strategy*.<sup>24</sup> In the new document the referent object of security remains “state sovereignty and territorial integrity” while the main objective of security arrangements is threat prevention to be achieved by joining the “common European security and transatlantic defense systems”.

In delineating security threats, dangers and risks the document blends together the conceptions of cooperative security and national security. On the one hand, it is stressed that under conditions of globalization security is “indivisible”, that “the fight against terrorism, corruption, organized crime, trade in people, drug trafficking, illegal migration, smuggling” is a high priority for Lithuania. The document emphasizes that “the Republic of Lithuania does not observe any immediate military threat to its national security and as a result does not regard any state as its enemy”. On the other hand, the document is indirectly bent on Russia’s securitization because of the “overwhelming dependence of the Republic of Lithuania on the strategic resources and energy supplies of one country”

<sup>24</sup> The document notes that “the National Security Strategy is a flexible and open document and it will be amended on a regular basis when major changes occur in the internal or external security environment”. The most recent edition of the National Security Strategy was approved in 2005 (NSSRL 2006).

[Russia]. In order to reduce the threats latent in this economic dependence it is suggested that strategically vital sectors of the economy be identified and the state be given a “controlling decision power” over them. The prevalence of the national security conceptualization is most prominent in the way Lithuania’s defense policy is defined. Both in the *National Security Strategy* and in the *Basics of National Security* national defense is bound to total and unconditional territorial defense comprising military and civil resistance components.

On the whole, the comparison of security conceptualizations in the documents of 1996 and 2002 shows a certain turn towards the concept of cooperative security. Yet the remaining securitization of Russia and the continuing attachment to territorial defense show that national security and defense are conceived as a problem for the particular state rather than a common or regional concern.

The 2005 edition of the document seeks to avoid this ambiguity. First of all, the new edition is premised on a more extensive legal basis. *The Strategy* is based on the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, the Law on the Basics of National Security, *the North Atlantic Treaty and the Treaty on European Union* (my emphasis - G.M.). As a member of NATO and EU, Lithuania perceives its national security as a constituent part of the security policy of these organizations and refers to the analysis of threats set out in NATO Strategic Concept, the Strategy of the European Union, and other strategic documents of NATO and EU. The definition of Lithuania’s security interests now comprises not only “sovereignty, territorial integrity and democratic constitutional order of the Republic of Lithuania” but also wider concerns: “global and regional stability”, “security, democracy and welfare of NATO Allies and European Union Member States”, and “freedom and democracy in the neighboring regions of the European Union”.

In the new document, the concept of military defense is quite radically modified. First, the principle of total unconditional defense that pervaded all previous documents is dropped. More emphasis is laid on the principle of democratic control of the armed forces. The principles of defense are supplemented with the principles of “deterrence and collective defense” and “crisis prevention and stability development”. With the principle of total defense gone, the idea of civil resistance is also dropped. It is replaced by the requirement of “civil training” that would help “consolidate democratic and civic values and to strengthen civil society”. The law asserts: “Civic training enhances patriotism, resolution to defend the Homeland, national freedom. Awareness of the importance of national identity and civic training is a condition of ensuring national security”.

## **2.5. The Military Defense Strategy (2000, 2004)**

The surveyed *Law on Organization of the National Defense and the Military Service* is an expansion on the provisions of the *Basics of National Security* (1996), while *The Military Defense strategy* (2000, amended in 2004) is a specification of the provisions of the *National Security Strategy* (2002), expressive of Lithuania’s commitment to collective defense. Lithuania is committed „to participate in international operations led by NATO,

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European Union or UN as well as ad hoc coalitions implementing the aims of these organizations” (3.2.2.2.).

The law lays an even greater stress on the proposition, already set forth in previous documents, that “all the decisions on the defense policy of Lithuania and use of the Armed forces are taken by the democratically elected civilian authorities” (5.2). The President of the Republic is the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of the State. The chain of command of the military operations and other defense actions starts from the President of the Republic and, through the Minister of National Defense, passes to the Commander of the Armed Forces. The Commander of the Armed Forces is subordinated to the Minister of National Defense (5.3).

The document is based on the conception of NATO as a peaceful and accountable organization whose members in developing their individual and collective capabilities “settle disputes by peaceful means” (4.1.1.). The NATO states in their dealings on defense matters are guided by the principle of mutual assistance and international law: “An armed attack against one or more of NATO countries is an attack against them all and will receive defensive response according to Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations” (4.1.3.).

The commitment to full spectrum joint operations implies specific requirements for the Armed Forces. “Lithuania shall organize its national military units of high readiness on the basis of categories of operational readiness interoperable with NATO, European Union and United Nations The national military units will be able to react promptly to crisis, including those *outside the Lithuanian territory*” (4.3.2). (My emphasis – G.M.)

Lithuania will fulfill its commitments with capacities centered on the highly capable Reaction Brigade and its supporting units. Collective defense demands higher training standards for the servicemen. The Lithuanian Armed Forces, “strong, professionally trained and patriotic, are one of the most important pillars of the Lithuanian security” (7.3). The technical nature of the modern equipment and requirements of modern operations require that higher standards of skills be applied in training the persons suitable for military service. The document points out that the soldiers should be able “to participate in the military dialogue on various security issues and communicate in the official NATO language”. Lithuania is creating the forces, which will be able to react rapidly to the threats of today and tomorrow, will be well trained and armed, will be mobile and able, in co-operation with NATO forces, to ensure the defense of the Alliance and the state and contribute to the full spectrum of NATO operations outside Lithuania.

In order to ensure better professional qualities of the Armed Forces, “the number of soldiers in professional military service will be increased, while the number of conscripts will be reduced respectively”. The law guarantees the continuation of the earlier programs set on improving the quality of life and moral and patriotic education, cultivating civic duties, patriotism and ethics of an individual soldier. The Armed Forces

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will look for new ways of making the military service an attractive career prospect for the Lithuanian youth.

The texts reviewed belong to different stages in the build-up of the Lithuanian state. Their analysis shows that Lithuania's security and defense policies are undergoing a transition, as the nation-state model is being replaced by that of a liberal democratic alliance. In defense policies this finds its expression in the transition from total territorial defense to collective defense. The objective of defense is accordingly modified, as it is now not only the defense of one's own state but also participation in international missions abroad. These changes lead to the reformation of the defense system and the armed forces.

### 3. Transformation of the Military and the Lithuanian Society

The reestablished Lithuanian state has been in existence for only 17 years. In this period it has experienced great transformations in economic relations, political structure and value orientations of its people. These changes have affected Lithuania's security policies and its armed forces. The image of the soldier as the valiant and staunch defender of Motherland, carrying out his civic duty, is being gradually replaced with that of a professional soldier engaged in global peacekeeping missions and crisis-prevention operations. The armed forces, formerly as the conscript army defending the nation from external threats, are being transformed into professional motorized infantry brigades doing the job of social and political "fire-fighting" all over the globe (See Appendix 1). How is this change perceived and received by the society? Is the society convinced by the claim, employed in NATO strategic documents and widely used by local politicians, that in a global world it is the spreading and defending of Western values (i.e. human rights) which is the most effective way of preserving peace? According to the Undersecretary for Defense Policy and International Relations Renatas Norkus "the defense of Lithuania today starts in Afghanistan rather than within Lithuania's borders"<sup>25</sup>. Does not the transformation in fact erode national self-consciousness, an important component of which is the national army of a sovereign state? An exhaustive answer to these questions would require a wide-ranging investigation of the current political and social transformation. I will confine myself to a short survey of debates concerning two issues directly related to the reforms of the armed forces: 1) public attitudes towards compulsory military service and 2) attitudes towards Lithuania's military participation in international operations<sup>26</sup>.

25 See Norkus R., "Defense Transformation: A Lithuanian Perspective", 11 April 2006, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. <http://www.kam.lt/index.php/lt/96062/>

26 See: Paulauskas K., 'The Driving Logic Behind the Defence Reform in Lithuania: Building the Future Military', *Baltic Defence Review*, 2003, 9,1: 126-134.

### 3.1. Debates on Compulsory Military Service

The concept of total defense previously upheld by Lithuania required keeping large reserves to reinforce active units. Conscription system was essential to prepare each and every citizen to fight or to resist aggression by non-military means. Growing participation in international operations and NATO security guarantees provided Lithuania with a solid base to rethink its policy towards conscription and compulsory military service. New requirements and new missions of the armed forces are in need a soldier who must not only be a well-trained in military terms, but also well educated (be aware of the international relations), know foreign languages, and be an expert of civil-military relations – in other words, a true professional.

Before Lithuania's membership in NATO and the subsequent reforms of the military Lithuanian armed forces had some 50 000 servicemen. In 2006 the total number of servicemen in the national defense system dropped to 18 250, with mere 3210 of them being conscripts. It is planned that by 2009 the transition to a professional army will be complete. However, such a transition would contradict Lithuania's Constitution that envisions compulsory military or alternative public service. At present, young men of age 19-26 are conscripted to a 12 month long compulsory service.

The government, favoring the transition to a professional army, initiated a discussion on the issue in Seimas in 2006. It should be noticed that until now neither the substantial changes in the concept of defense nor the subsequent reforms in the military have been made the subject of political debates in Lithuania's parliament. The main political parties in Lithuania are of one opinion on the issue. Since 2000 every newly elected Seimas has followed the rule of signing the unanimous *Agreement between political parties of the Republic of Lithuania on the defense and security policy*. This is an agreement to the effect that all parties support Lithuania's membership in NATO and pledge to allot at least 2 percent of GDP for defense. The agreement has practically blocked all parliamentary deliberation on matters of defense. Membership in NATO implies that the criteria of being a NATO member – such as interoperability with NATO military forces – have been met. Since Lithuania became a member of NATO any reforms in the military have been considered an internal NATO issue. However, the issue of compulsory military service has been treated differently.

The program proposed by the Ministry of Defence involves a gradual reduction of the conscripts in the army. The proposal is that only those willing would be conscripted for compulsory service. According to the analysts of the Ministry of Defense, the compulsory military service in the time of peace would thus be legitimated not as a universal duty but just as a necessary condition for becoming a serviceman in active reserve or for applying for jobs in other defense structures (e.g. border control). The conservative party holds a similar view. On their view, completely abandoning compulsory service is inexpedient. A purely professional army would become self-absorbed and lose its ties to the society. The conservatives propose to introduce a compulsory 7 weeks long military training course for young men of age 18-24. Having done the training course young people could choose the service in the professional army

or be enlisted to the reserve. The youth section of the liberal and center party is vehemently in favor of a purely professional army and urge the Seimas to adopt the necessary laws without delay. In their view, “we should have a professional army based on the principle of voluntary service, get rid of the coercive character of army formation, and amend Lithuania’s Constitution accordingly”<sup>27</sup>.

These discussions have shown that Lithuanian politicians consider military matters not only from the functional but also from the normative point of view. “A contemporary army demands high levels of training. A professional soldier would serve as an example to ordinary Lithuanian citizens. The professional soldier would be highly motivated to serve in the army because of its high professional standards, high esteem and attractiveness”<sup>28</sup>, said Juozas Oleka, Minister of Defense.

The reforms taking place in the army have not changed the prevailing positive attitude of the population towards the Lithuanian army. Lithuanian society’s confidence in and support for the armed forces have been constantly growing in recent years. The dynamics of popular trust in the army in 1998-2006 shows that it grew from 30 percent in 1998 to 54 percent in 2006. Accordingly, distrust waned from 28 to 12 percent. (See Appendix 2.) According to a public opinion poll carried out in June 17-26, 2006 by the Lithuanian-British public opinion research company “Baltijos tyrimai” the majority of Lithuania’s population considers Lithuania’s army *youthful* (80%), *positively representing Lithuania to the world* (63%), *better than the Soviet army* (59%).<sup>29</sup>

### 3.2. Attitude to International Operations

During the last ten years more than two thousand Lithuanian soldiers have participated in ten international operations and two OSCE missions. Lithuania has been annually increasing its input to international operations. In 2005 the number of Lithuanian soldiers serving abroad reached 230. In 2005 Lithuania assumed the leadership of a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan as a part of NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Lithuanian soldiers assist the central government of Afghanistan in strengthening its control over the Ghor province, in reforming its security forces, and they help maintain the dialogue between central government, international organizations, and local leaders. Lithuania continues its participation in the coalition-led operations and in a NATO-led training mission, both in Iraq. According to the Ministry of Defense, in 2007 Lithuanian troops have been active in NATO operations in Afghanistan (137 soldiers), in Iraq (58 soldiers) and Kosovo (32 soldiers)<sup>30</sup>. One soldier takes part in EU operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The current Lithuanian government attempts to maintain or even increase the number of troops serving in the missions abroad. It has even proposed to expand the geography of

27 [www.omni.lt](http://www.omni.lt) 13-11,2006.

28 See: [http://www.politika.lt/?cid=9274&new\\_id=452153](http://www.politika.lt/?cid=9274&new_id=452153), claimed 07072007

29 [www.kam.lt](http://www.kam.lt), claimed 09062007

30 Ibid.

the missions by sending troops to Georgia and Central Africa. Seimas rejected the proposal, pointing out that it would be more sensible to focus on the central mission in Afghanistan by gradually reducing the number of troops in Iraq. The President, however, considers troops' withdrawal from Iraq premature under present conditions.

Lithuania's population is divided on the issue of missions abroad. According to the opinion poll carried out by *Splinter tyrimai* in April 2007, 40 percent of the respondents approve this policy, while half of the respondents do not. At the same time the majority of the respondents consider that Lithuania benefits from participation in military missions abroad because its troops get more experienced, because the country contributes to the strengthening of international security and thus improves its own international image.

Table 1.

<b>Does Lithuania benefit from participation in international military missions? (percent)</b>	
Yes, the army (soldiers) gain in professionalism	13,2
Yes, Lithuania contributes to international security	10,4
Yes, Lithuania improves its international image	9,4
Yes, Lithuania benefits from all above	19,2
No, Lithuania has no benefits	36,3
Other	1,2
Does not know/ Does not respond	10,3
Total:	100

Source: "*Splinter tyrimai*", [www.delfi.lt/0707/17](http://www.delfi.lt/0707/17)

When queried specifically about the mission in Iraq, more than half of the respondents (56 percent) favored the withdrawal of Lithuanian troops from that country. Withdrawal

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is more often favored by women, older, less educated, lower income people. Readers of the DELFI website have also been polled on the issue. From 12 thousand participants of the poll 74 percent were against the troops being sent to Iraq.<sup>31</sup>

The popularity of international missions is also on the decline among the troops themselves. Currently, there are pretty few soldiers volunteering for international missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. A lance-corporal in active service, unwilling to reveal his name, told the daily "Kauno diena": "We now have to order some soldiers to go there, though previously this was voluntary and we had no shortage of applicants. The situation has changed cardinally."<sup>32</sup> Indirectly, this is confirmed by the fact as Lithuania joined NATO the law on foreign missions was amended. The amendment says that starting with July 1, 2004 the soldiers are to be *appointed*, not chosen from among *volunteers*, to do their service in international operations. According to Valdas Tutkus, the Commander of Armed Forces, since Lithuania became part of a system of collective defense "participation in international missions became a duty".<sup>33</sup> Yet the principle of voluntary application is still applied, according to him, in mustering the troop contingent to be dispatched on the peacekeeping mission in Kosovo.

## Conclusion

This short analysis of how Lithuania's defense and the military are being constructed in official documents, as well as the survey of popular reception of these constructions show that the conceptions of defense and the soldier vacillate between the two images prevalent in Lithuania's culture – those of the soldier as a defender of Pilenai (Motherland) and the soldier as a professional fighting battles in foreign lands. This is indicative of the weight of historical stereotypes and normative pressures in any construction of the model of the ideal soldier.

The image of the soldier as the valiant fighter for the Motherland and the idea of total defense is a reflection of Lithuania's orientation towards the nation state. In official discourse the orientation was predominant till about 2000-2001. Lithuania's negotiations with EU for membership and previous participation in NATO Action plans were the main factors leading to changes in Lithuania's official normative documents. The civil democratic control over the military has been successfully established in Lithuania. However, recent documents are often characterized by attempts at reconciling the contradictory ideas of maintaining a sovereign nation state and seeking for a common space of security, which is indicative of a state in transition.

Our survey of public opinion concerning the transformation of the military confirms the conclusion obtained from the analysis of Lithuania's main strategic documents – that Lithuania is currently in the transitory stage of moving away from the

31 <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/article.php?id=12216401>

32 Stasys Gudavičius, "Kauno diena" 2007 vasario mėn. 19 d.

33 Ibid.

discursive meanings of the modern nation state to those of a postmodern society based on common liberal democratic values.

The generally positive attitude towards Lithuanian army, increasingly modern and professional, is still in line with its modernist image as the defender of the borders of the nation state. However, much less positive, if not to say negative, attitude towards the participation of Lithuanian troops in military operations abroad shows that the image of the soldier as the defender of any human being in the world is still quite alien for the Lithuanian society.

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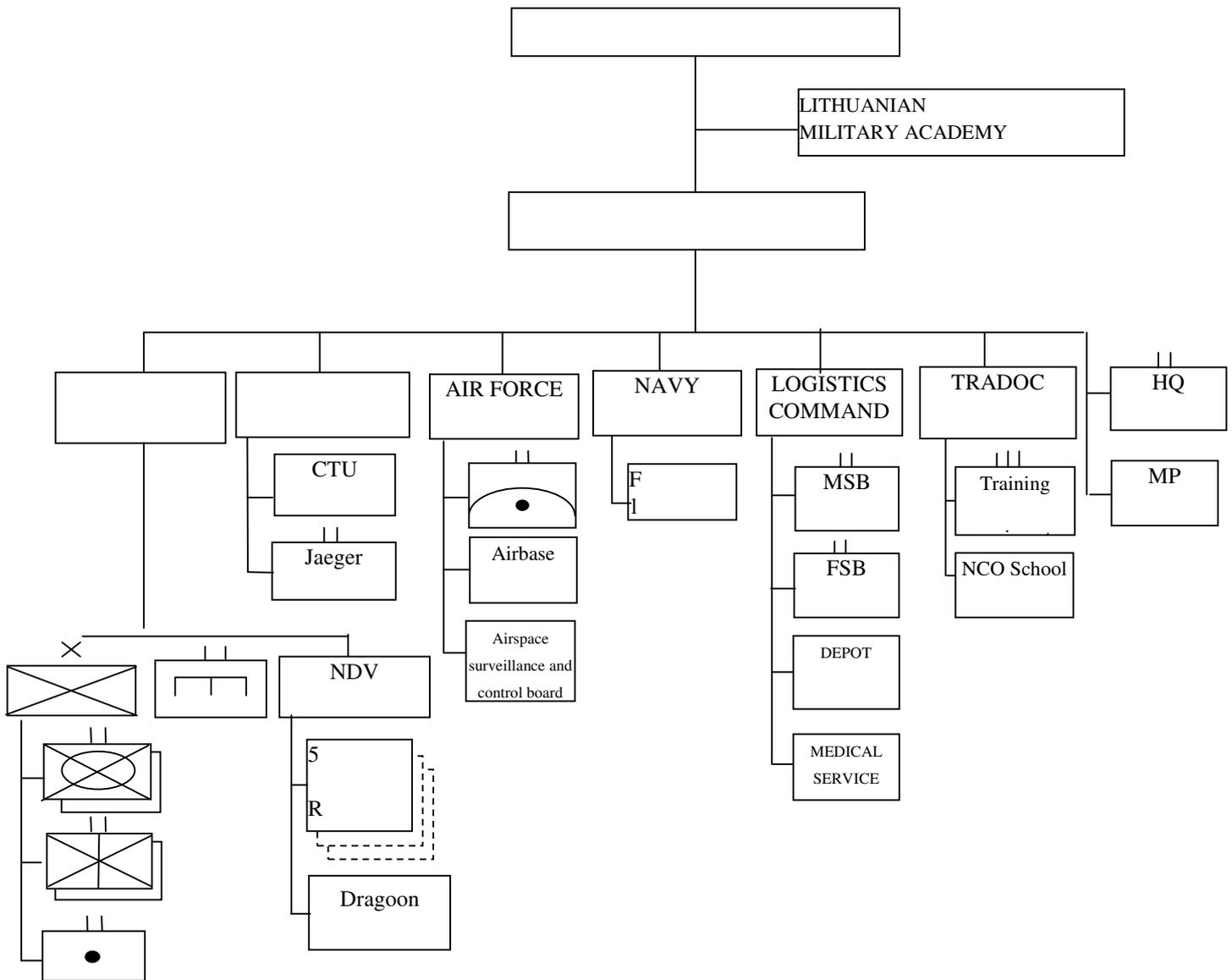
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Appendix 1

**Structure of the Armed Forces (2006)**



Source: Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence, [www.kam.lt](http://www.kam.lt)

Appendix 2



Sources: „Vilmorus”, „Lietuvos rytas”