

THE DISCOURSE ON THE FORMATION OF PERMANENT COMPULSORY INITIAL MILITARY SERVICE IN LITHUANIA

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ABSTRACT

In liberal democracies, the aim of the national armed forces is to protect the freedom and security of society as a whole by political and military means, which leads to the rejection of compulsory military service as an obligatory form of self-defence. However, in the context of shifting geopolitical stability, the subject of compulsory military service is growing in importance in the political discourse. The present paper analyses the political discourse on the formation of permanent compulsory initial military service in Lithuania, and places a particular focus on party programmes in elections held between 1992 and 2020. The content spectrum as regards permanent compulsory initial military service represented in the party programmes of Lithuanian political parties between 1992 and 2020 is scarce, and gives a sketchy image of the service. By communicating the risks associated with being limited to professional military service alone, the Conservatives make more frequent attempts than others at creating a political discourse on permanent compulsory initial military service. By contrast, other political parties focus on the circumstances associated with the geopolitical situation.

KEY WORDS: *Lithuania, critical discourse analysis (CDA), political discourse, permanent compulsory initial military service.*

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Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, a significant number of European countries have reduced their national military structures and defence spending, with 24 countries abolishing conscription altogether between 1990 and 2013 (Bieri, 2015), guided by the prevailing view that there would be no war. However, Ukraine and Lithuania reintroduced conscription after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. Conscription can realistically be viewed as a tool that can still be used to start, develop, or win or lose a war. It is worth pointing out that throughout Russia's ongoing military invasion of Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, the Russian army has consisted of conscripts as well as professional soldiers, whose purpose is to protect or preserve the state, and also to extend its borders. Under these circumstances, countries have strong incentives to reintroduce conscription as a tested and proven measure of self-defence. For example, in response to Russia's war against Ukraine, and given Latvia's geographical proximity to the conflict region, the Latvian parliament announced on 5 April 2023 the reintroduction of the mandatory military service for men aged 18 to 27, while women's decisions to serve would remain voluntary (Szymanowski, 2023). Since 2022, the public media in Poland, France, Germany and other European Union (EU) countries have also been discussing the reintroduction of conscription. It should be noted that while most countries have abandoned conscription, they can still legally introduce compulsory military service for their citizens, as the legal statute has not been modified in most European countries (Ronge et al., 2019).

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The traditional formation of compulsory military service is changing as a result of globalisation processes, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation methods and procedures, democratisation trends in public administration, technological transformations, societal solidarity, and transparency. Scholars have addressed a wide range of issues related to the formation of compulsory military service, including the challenges of compulsory military service (Cohen, 1985), assessing conscription in the European Union (Ronge et al., 2019), analysing democracy and citizenship in the context of compulsory military service (Jahnsen et al., 2019; Annaka et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2020; Micewski, 2021; Strand, 2021), discussing compulsory military service and the welfare state (Obinger, 2020), the role of compulsory military service (Nasar, 2021), and examining how such military service provides security (Lange, 2018), among other issues. The academic literature also highlights the fact that any country's approach to the formation of compulsory military service is usually addressed in the context of cultural and ideological issues, the historical background, threats, legal aspects of the work, and the economic situation (HORN, 2019). However, each country's defence and security considerations are specific to it, and a set of considerations can be identified as determining the formation of compulsory national military service.

Several Lithuanian themes on compulsory military service have been developed in the publications by Jermalavičius (2005), Miniotaitė (2009), Šlekis (2015), Laurėnas (2017), Kenstavičienė (2021), etc, where the research on the formation of military service has been integrated into the study of transformations of democracy.

The political discourse is another important aspect that stands out and has been widely analysed in scientific literature, although it is still a relatively new topic in the context of the military in general, with only a few authors having analysed the topic in scientific literature (Major, 2009; Korolova et al., 2019; Mishkurov, 2020; Opillard et al., 2020; Kabakhidze, 2021). This joint analysis of political discourse and the military is important, because the military has never been apolitical (Golby et al., 2020), but there has been very little research on the political discourse around compulsory military service. An example of such research is the work of Laitinen (2006), who analysed the controversial discourses on compulsory military service in Finland. Similarly, Tiargan (2016) points out that the Israeli public discourse on the subject of compulsory military service is active for cultural, social and historical reasons, but is under-analysed in research. Lynch (2012) observes that the rise of mass armies is partly a response to the rhetoric of the government and the possibilities for its application. All this leads to the fact that this article focuses on the political discourse on the formation of compulsory military service.

Although the topic of compulsory military service is not new, it is important to pay attention to the construction of the political discourse on compulsory military service in Lithuania. Traditional compulsory military service may diminish military benefits, as the current military organisation and technology not only does not imperatively call for universal military service, but also requires a large army in general. Similarly, obvious problems of democracy (e.g. growing social inequality, lack of equality, demographic change, etc) are also spilling over into the conscription mechanism, which distances the vision of smooth democratic development. Finally, it should be added that with the sudden reintroduction of compulsory military service in Lithuania (2015), there has been little research into statements by the state's politicians.

The object of the research is the political discourse on the formation of the permanent compulsory initial military service in Lithuania.

Aim of the research. To describe the changes in the political discourse on the formation of compulsory military service in Lithuania by studying the electoral programmes of political parties in the period 1992 to 2020.

The methodological basis of the research is critical discourse analysis.

1. Critical discourse analysis as a research strategy

In the most general sense, a discourse is defined as a speech act and/or social action that takes place in different discursive fields (science, politics, media, etc) and contributes to the construction of a social world that includes the production of knowledge, social relations and identities (Jørgensen et al., 2002). Fairclough (2013) notes that discourse is more important today than ever before.

The political discourse that is relevant to the study by this article has been around for as long as politics itself. Political discourse is defined as texts related to politics (Bayley, 2005). Amaglobeli (2017) points out that political discourse can be identified as a deliberate act pursuing certain goals on a case-by-case basis, and that these goals are usually of a material nature; in other words, it is a political discourse that shapes certain interests in order to protect/preserve, contest/deconstruct something. The article analyses political discourse using the critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach.

CDA is a research methodology that examines both spoken and written texts to find the meaning of the reality created by social stakeholders or hidden prejudices and inequalities. According to Fairclough, the founder of this methodology, 'the central interest in critical discourse analysis is the study of change, because meanings are grounded in the texts of others, and particular language changes individual discourses and the socio-cultural world' (Jørgensen, 2002; cited in Snieškienė, 2013, 38). Arribas-Alyllon and Walkerdine (2008) argue that critical discourse analysis is an excellent critical tool to get a clear picture of any political and socio-cultural phenomenon. It should be noted, however, that while CDA is based on criticality, criticism 'does not claim to be absolute truth' (Jäger et al., 2009). CDA focuses on specific social problems, and seeks to address them by analysing social and political action (Rogers, 2004).

The CDA strategy can be associated with a qualitative or quantitative approach, which incorporates a broader perspective to explain the problem in research. Wodak (2001) points out that different approaches to discourse can reduce bias. Bias is usually defined as any deviation from the real truth that subsequently leads to the formulation of false conclusions. Therefore, in planning, conducting and publicising the results of this research, it was essential to conduct a study that would avoid bias, as the choice of an appropriate research methodology can reduce this risk.

To sum up, an analysis of political discourse based on a critical approach is valuable for the following main reasons: 1) it dictates the framework of the research; 2) it demonstrates how controversial interpretations of compulsory military service are in the political discourse; and 3) it identifies the social problems that arise in the process of the formation of compulsory military service. Finally, the analysis of critical discourse allows us to paint a picture of the formation of compulsory military service over a certain period of time, which may encourage the formation of certain changes in society.

2. Methodology of the research

The research followed a mixed-method approach (Van Thiel, 2014), combining both quantitative and qualitative methods in one study. The data source is the electoral programmes of political parties, which are official and partly technical documents through which parties formulate and pursue political advances by presenting proposals that determine the performance of the party and its commitment to the electorate, and influence democratic society (National Democratic Institute, 2014). Popularity among voters is the main criterion for choosing political programmes. This research analyses the electoral programmes of political parties that won elections in multi-member constituencies and served in the following parliamentary terms: 1992–1996, 1996–2000, 2000–2004, 2004–2008, 2008–2012, 2012–2016, 2016–2020, and 2020–2024 (over 30 years). In total, the sample of party electoral programmes from 1992 to 2020 consisted of 43 texts.

The data analysis was conducted using MaxQda Analysis Pro 2022 (MAXQDA), a version of the data analysis software package that allows for the assignment of codes to text fragments, as well as for grouping and regrouping. The software can process information from different sources (political documents, articles, expert interviews, research reports, etc).

3. Research results

Looking at the distribution of the electoral programmes of the parties in terms of coded sentences, it can be seen that the focus on general aspects of national defence increased with each parliamentary election (Figure 1). The electoral programmes of the parties were exceptionally focused on it (188 sentences) in 2016.

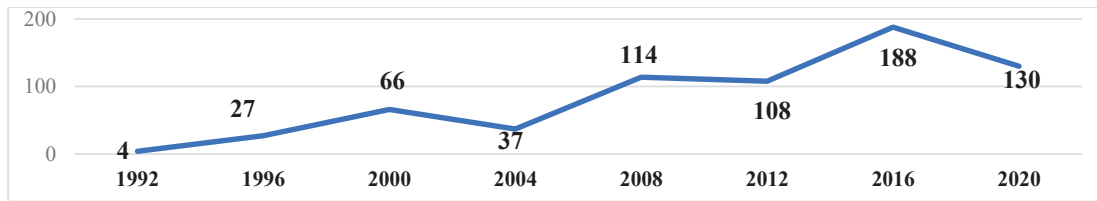


Figure 1. The occurrence of the theme of national defence in election political programmes in 1992–2020 (in sentences)

Two years after the restoration of Lithuania’s independence, the subject of national defence received scant attention, with a mere four sentences dedicated to the subject in party platforms in the run-up to the 1992 elections. Research traditionally underscores the integral nature of national defence as a fundamental part of the state. Certainly, it is important to bear in mind that Lithuania was undergoing a transformation during that period, with a fundamentally new democratic political system being established. However, the slight delay in including national defence in party platforms is likely to have been due to the slow development of security policy as such. This is in stark contrast to the 2016 elections, where the subject of national defence was notably dominant in the party platforms of various political parties. However, the catalyst for change stemmed from shifts in the international landscape, closely tied to the unsettling prospect of a military conflict.

A detailed breakdown of the distribution of the parties’ electoral programmes by coded sentences shows that in 2016 (18 sentences) and 2020 (17 sentences), compulsory military service is mentioned the most in the political programmes (Figure 2).

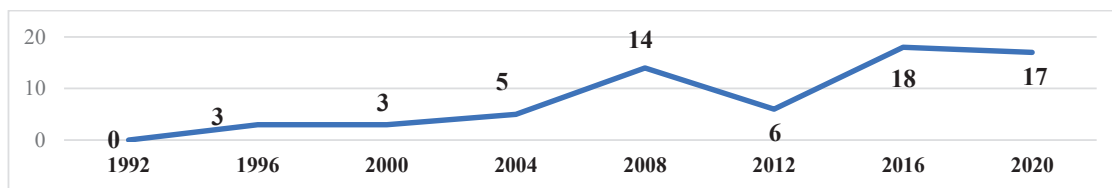


Figure 2. The occurrence of the theme of compulsory military service in election political programmes in 1992–2020 (in sentences)

Nevertheless, it should be noted that Lithuania had permanent compulsory initial military service in place already in 1992, yet there was no explicit reference to it in the party platforms. This may be attributed to the limited role, as previously discussed, of national defence on the agendas of the political parties during that period. Later, between 1996 and 2020, political parties engaged in the debate regarding permanent compulsory initial military service in varying degrees, even during periods of its suspension. The year 2016 was notable for the reintroduction of permanent compulsory initial military service. This led to the emergence of what could be termed a political response mechanism, whereby political parties responded to current developments, with debates on permanent compulsory initial military service topping the political agenda during the year.

All citizens are trained for national defence (Statute and Programme of the Lithuanian Christian Democrat Party, pos. 210).

Party politics influences how the army is formed. Conscription can become an aspect of party competition (Atkinson et al., 2022). Partisan electoral interests are important in politics because they can have a significant impact on voter support, and ultimately determine the outcome of elections. The programmes of political parties can be seen as representing the views that influence and shape the political discourse. It is

noteworthy that this research reveals that more than a third of the parties (39%) refer to compulsory military service in their electoral programmes to a greater or lesser extent, but more than half the parties (61%) make no mention of compulsory military service at all in their electoral programmes. Next, the statements of political parties on compulsory military service will be analysed, highlighting each election year.

1996. An important step towards ensuring the readiness and effectiveness of the country's armed forces was the statutory procedure proposed for conscripts by the Conservatives: 'To regulate the procedure for the preparation and testing of conscripts for military service, and to implement the system of training of the reserve', and by the Social Democrats: 'We will work towards the adoption of laws on conscription, an alternative national defence service, mobilisation and reserve, martial law, and non-collusion'.

2000. Political parties often take different positions on the issue of conscription. In this case, the Conservatives were in favour of conscription: 'We will strive for a balanced number of professional and conscripted troops to ensure the implementation of the principles of deterrence, universal and unconditional defence, and an effective and credible defence, with the minimum use of state resources'. In contrast, the Social Liberals stated in their political programme that military service should be limited to a professional army: 'In the context of the transition to new, effective forms of military training for young people, we should move away from compulsory conscription and limit it to the professional army'.

2004. A gradual reduction in the number of conscripts can lead to a better-trained and more professional military force. The electoral programme of the coalition of Brazauskas and Paulauskas envisaged a doubling of the number of conscripts, and an increase in the number of professionally serving soldiers: 'Over the next four years, it is planned to double the number of soldiers in compulsory initial military service to 2,000, gradually increasing the number of professionals to 8,200', and the Liberal-Centre Union expressed similar aspirations: 'The number of conscripts in the Lithuanian armed forces will be gradually and steadily reduced', and the latter set the goal of shortening the period of compulsory military service to nine months: 'We will shorten the period of compulsory military service to nine months'. However, the Conservative Party's position stood out, as it sought to preserve conscription: 'The armed forces are being effectively aligned to NATO mobility standards, while continuing to support public national defence organisations, the active reserve, riflemen, volunteers, and the preservation of the conscript army'.

2008. The Liberal and Centre Union, again in 2008, as in 2004, stated that its party wanted to move as soon as possible to professional military service: 'to move as soon as possible from compulsory service to a voluntary professional army'. The Conservatives paid particular attention to the issue of conscription in their electoral programme, which emphasised that the party was guided by Article 139 of the Constitution: 'We unreservedly abide by the current Article 139 of the Constitution, which stipulates that: "The defence of the State of Lithuania against a foreign armed attack shall be the right and duty of each citizen of the Republic of Lithuania. The citizens of the Republic of Lithuania must perform military or alternative national defence service according to the procedure established by law." A law in accordance with the Constitution may not narrow this norm in such a way that a decision of the Seimas could result in the indefinite exclusion from military service'. Training for conscripts would also enable the country to build up a reserve in case of mobilisation while also attracting new recruits to professional military service: 'Training organised in this way ensures that there is a sufficient reserve of people who have completed their initial military training for the event of mobilisation, and enables the selection of the most suitable people to join professional military service in the army or to combine civilian life with volunteer leisure service'. A distinction is made between the age of service and the duration of initial military training: 'As a general guideline, young people aged between 18 and 24 years of age who are fit for military service shall undergo seven weeks of initial military training, either on conscription or of their own free will'. The programme goes on to outline the options available to young people after completing their initial military training, i.e. they could choose to continue their service in professional military service: 'After completing initial military training, young people who wish to opt for professional military service will be able to be accepted into the active forces, while others will be able to return to civilian life and be included in the reserve list', and will be given additional points for further studies at higher education institutions: 'Young people who have completed their initial military

training shall be awarded additional selection points for socially important activities when applying to higher or special secondary schools'. Conscripts are to be paid a salary during conscription: "During their initial training, conscripts will receive a salary just like other soldiers".

2012. Conscripts are particularly important for the formation of the army reserve. The electoral programme of the *Drašos kelias* (Way of Courage) political party set the goal of maintaining the number of conscripts and professionals: 'We will ensure that the ratio of conscripts and professional soldiers in the army is in line with Lithuania's security requirements'. The Conservatives' electoral programme criticised the Social Democrat government for suspending conscription: 'The Social Democrat government suspended conscription completely unprepared for it, and after the onset of the economic crisis, when it was not possible to allocate more money to the recruitment of regular soldiers', which led to a certain stagnation of the creation of the reserve: 'Conscription was abolished, which was a major blow to the creation of the defence reserve'. The party highlighted what had been done, i.e. amendments to the Law on National Conscription were adopted: 'In order to prepare as many citizens as possible for the defence of the country, a new Law on National Conscription has been drafted and adopted by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, which has established a flexible and voluntary procedure for the performance of compulsory initial military service, and has also provided for incentive measures to motivate those who perform such service, such as subsidisation for employment or work, compensation of a part of the cost of studies, and priority in applying for admission to publicly funded places in higher education institutions. These measures are particularly important to promote the potential soldier's voluntariness to become a trained conscript' and the introduction of basic military training, which supplements the reserve, was also welcomed: 'In accordance with the new Law on National Conscription, basic military training (BMT) has been launched in Rukla, and 1,132 young people have already taken part in the training: 1095 boys and 37 girls. Most of them choose the military profession, while others join the reserve. The system has proven its worth, as young, motivated people are coming for training, and the numbers are only increasing'.

2016. When conscription returned, political parties detailed in their programmes how the service should be conducted and what specific policies should be implemented. The Liberals emphasised the need for compulsory military service for as long as there is a need for security in their electoral programme: 'We will maintain compulsory military service as long as it is necessary for the security of the country', with young people being conscripted after leaving school: 'Conscription would be extended to school and gymnasium graduates, preserving their access to employment', and would give young people a clear idea of when, how and under what conditions they would have to do their initial compulsory military service: 'Young people need to know when, how and under what conditions they will be able to do their initial compulsory military service while still at school, so that they can plan for the future'. Voluntary service would be encouraged: 'We will encourage voluntary service', and the service would be open to young people of both sexes: 'We stress that the service will be equally open and accessible to young people of both sexes'. The party stated in its electoral programme that it would not increase cash benefits for volunteers doing compulsory military service, as this military service is in line with broader national goals and values: 'We refuse to continue to increase the cash benefits for young people who volunteer for compulsory initial military service. An honourable compulsory civic duty cannot be bought with money', but it would increase the motivation of conscripts to opt for professional military service after their service: 'We will develop a motivational system to encourage conscripts to opt for professional military service after the end of their initial compulsory service'. The aim was expressed to make military service a choice and not an obligation: 'We will strive to make service in the army an opportunity rather than an obligation', and to make it possible for everyone to serve: 'Therefore, the Liberal Movement seeks to enable all citizens of the Republic of Lithuania, irrespective of their ethnicity, religion and gender, as well as public NGOs, to engage in the organisation of the country's defence and in the preparation of military and civil resistance, thus fulfilling their constitutional right and duty'.

The Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union highlighted in its electoral programme the need to ensure the infrastructure for the training of conscripts for the transition to universal military service: 'In preparation for the transition to the universal military service model in the long term, we will ensure the necessary inf-

rastructure for the training of the conscripts, as well as their welfare' and to continue to maintain a mixed composition of the armed forces: 'A strong, conscious civil society and Lithuanian armed forces consisting of professionals, volunteers, conscripts, and mobilisation reserve will continue to be the basis of Lithuania's national defence system', as the structure of the armed forces should be in line with the geopolitical situation: 'We are convinced that the structure of the armed forces must be in line with the geopolitical situation and threats, as well as with the country's demographic and financial capacities'.

In their electoral programme, as in 2012 and 2016, the Conservatives criticised the Social Democrats for abandoning conscription: 'In the autumn of 2008, just before the elections, the Social Democrats abandoned conscription, which dealt a major blow not only to the creation of the defence reserve, but also to the creation of the regular corps in the battalions', and they criticised the Social Democrat minister of defence: 'In a complex situation of obvious threats, the Social Democrat minister of national defence continued to behave inadequately, demonstrating unjustifiable hesitation, instead of coherent and rapid decision-making', and allegedly disregarded even the principle of territorial defence as declared by Nato: '...even after the Nato leadership recognised the importance of the principle of territorial defence, he consistently opposed the reintroduction of conscription, proposing the abolition of conscription after five years', and stressed that their party was the only one that was in favour of the continuity of conscription: 'It is unfortunate that the new composition of the Seimas after the autumn 2008 elections did not allow for correcting the mistake initiated by Olekas, as the TS-LKD was the only parliamentary party to advocate the continuation of the service of conscripts in the army'. The programme stated that the army should be made up of both professional soldiers and conscripts: 'The army should be made up of professional soldiers and soldiers of permanent compulsory initial military service (conscripts)', and that the conscripts would be young people who have completed secondary education, with a nine-month period of military service: 'We will introduce a universal nine-month period for those who have completed their secondary education'. The principle of the reserve, which would be formed by universal conscription, was updated: 'The reserve would be formed on the principle of universal conscription: all young people who have completed secondary education and who have no health problems would be called up to serve in the army', and citizens who have completed the conscription would become reservists: '*...enrolled in the army reserve*', with a five-yearly refresher: 'regular refresher training, usually every five years', although it is noted that such an ambition would require some preparation time: 'We are aware that the transition to such a system must be an aspiration, the practical implementation of which will require a preparatory period of (several years)'.

2020. The Social Democrats stated in their electoral programme that, for the time being, they would conduct conscription in accordance with the demographic situation, with a certain number of conscripts being called up: 'For the time being, taking into account the current demographic situation in Lithuania, the army's capacity and the concept of defence, we will conduct conscription for compulsory initial military service (maintaining the current number of conscripts called up per year (up to 4,000)'. Measures would be put in place to encourage young people to volunteer for service, and the 'conscription lottery' would be phased out over the next four years: 'At the same time, we will put in place a range of measures to encourage young people to volunteer for service, with a view to phasing out the conscription lottery over four years', as well as introducing additional incentive measures: 'We will increase the social guarantees for those who do volunteer for service, we will provide benefits, and we will introduce additional incentives'. It would also aim to encourage young people to take part in the training of junior commanders: '...we will aim to encourage young people to take part in permanent compulsory military service through the training of junior commanders'.

The electoral programme of the Liberal Movement emphasises that conscription is a duty and a necessity: 'Conscription remains an honourable duty and a necessity', and would therefore continue to reinforce the modernisation of all forms of military service and increase their prestige in society: '...the Lithuanian Armed Forces, professional, voluntary, and compulsory military service will be strengthened, its attractiveness and prestige in society will be increased, its combat capability will be expanded, modernisation will be pursued, and the citizens' integration in defence will be enhanced'. Compulsory military service would be organised by conscription taking place after school: 'School and gymnasium graduates would be conscripted, main-

taining their opportunities to enter the study and employment markets', and it would be open to both sexes: 'We emphasise that service will be equally open and accessible to young people of both sexes'. Volunteering would be encouraged: 'We will encourage volunteering for service', and professional military service would be encouraged after compulsory service: 'We will develop a motivational system to encourage the choice of professional military service after compulsory initial service'. However, it was pointed out that higher allowances would not motivate young people to join the service: 'Honourable compulsory civic duty cannot be bought with money'.

The Freedom Party, in its electoral programme, referred to age and fitness as the main criteria for selection for conscription: 'We will strive to make age and fitness the main criteria for conscription', and to initiating changes to women's military service: 'We will support the conscription of men between 18 and 23 years of age, and will initiate the necessary structural changes to the conscription of women between 18 and 23 years of age'. The focus was on the issue of discrimination: 'We will therefore strive to ensure that the Law on Military Obligation of the Republic of Lithuania, the Code of Conduct for Soldiers, and other legal acts related to military service, clearly establish the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, religion or belief, gender, language, sexual orientation, disability, age or other status, thus ensuring equal opportunities and the protection of human rights', as well as to highlight the restriction on the right of former conscripts to participate in politics: '...the freedom to participate in politics is restricted for thousands of people, as conscripts are placed in the reserve after their service, and the reserve is also considered to be real military service, which is subject to a restriction on political participation'. The implementation of alternative military service was also raised: 'The current Law on National Conscription of the Republic of Lithuania already foresees the possibility for alternative military service, but there is no budget and no appropriate institutional framework for the project to be properly implemented', as alternative service is currently only allowed on the basis of religious and pacifist convictions: '...alternative national defence service is only allowed on the basis of religious or pacifist convictions'. The aim was to provide opportunities for those who wished to perform alternative service: '...to give those who wish to perform alternative military service the opportunity to do so', and the means to do so were needed: 'We will seek to develop the necessary means to implement alternative military service, and to remove bureaucratic obstacles to comprehensive state security in different sectors', as it would be important to perform service not only in a military environment: '...there is a lack of capacity not only in military areas, but also in other spheres that are crucial in crisis situations, such as the fire service, hospitals, and the education system'.

It is evident that the political programmes under analysis tend to communicate a rather narrow spectrum of the content of compulsory military service, reflecting the emerging political agenda. More attention was devoted to the law on national conscription, the reduction or abandonment or maintenance of conscription, aspects of selection, the justification of the need for conscripts (the geopolitical situation), and youth volunteering. It is noteworthy that in the first decade of independence (up to 2000), permanent compulsory initial military service received particularly scant attention in the party platforms, and the positions of the parties were largely similar. In the second decade (up to 2012), several parties engaged in a controversial debate on the necessity of permanent compulsory initial military service. Throughout the third decade (up to 2020), a focus on the necessity of permanent compulsory initial military service dominated the political discourse, marking a shift from the trends observed in the preceding two decades, as the political parties increasingly aligned their positions on the matter.

According to the results of the research, the main stakeholders shaping the political discourse on compulsory military service are the parties of the following ideological orientations: conservatism, liberalism and social democracy. Each of these ideologies represents different political values, priorities and approaches. Conservative parties often stress the importance of traditional values, security and order, which may lead to support for compulsory military service as a means of strengthening national defence and security. Liberal parties are more likely to represent the principles of freedom, individualism and personal autonomy, and may be more critical or negative about compulsory military service, which is perceived as a restriction of personal freedom and self-expression. Social democratic parties tend to be based on social justice, equality

and solidarity, and their views can range from supporting compulsory military service as a way to ensure the general need for defence and involvement in public service, to a critical perception that compulsory military service may be socially unjustified or incompatible with the principles of equality. However, it should be stressed that the political discourse on compulsory military service has most often been developed by the Conservative Party during the entire research period.

In order to assess the ideology of a particular party, statements were categorised as positive or negative. A positive assessment was assigned if the political programme sought to adopt, increase, maintain, regulate or change, etc, something to make compulsory military service more productive, smoother, etc, while a negative assessment was assigned if it stated a desire to abolish conscription, reduce the number of conscripts, or move towards professional military service.

From the results of the research, it can be said that the political electoral programmes of the 1996 elections had positive attitudes (social democracy, conservatism), while in 2000 there were not only positive attitudes (conservatism), but also negative attitudes (social liberalism), and in 2004 two parties expressed negative attitudes (social democracy/social liberalism and liberalism), and one party expressed positive attitudes (conservatism) towards compulsory military service. In 2008, there were also negative (liberalism) but also positive (conservatism) attitudes towards compulsory military service. However, in 2012 (populism and conservatism), 2016 (liberalism, agrarianism, conservatism) and 2020 (populism, liberalism, social democracy), there were positive attitudes towards compulsory military service.

It is noteworthy that compulsory military service is viewed more positively than negatively in the political programmes during the research period. The outlier is the conservative party, which maintained only a positive approach to compulsory military service throughout the period. However, other parties are more likely to express a positive attitude towards compulsory military service by referring to the geopolitical context, which, especially since 2016, has encouraged parties to support conscription, but it is anyone's guess how compulsory military service would be perceived in another geopolitical context. There is a well-known view that right-wing parties tend to use the military to defend narrower national interests (Haesebrouck, Mello, 2020). It should also be noted that previous research has shown that conservatives actually have a more favourable view of the army and military service (Burbach, 2019).

Conclusions

The use of critical discourse analysis in the study provided an opportunity to show some inconsistencies and even contradictions in the political discourse in the formulation of the issues of PCIMS in Lithuania, which were made tangible by the changing political communication. It is important to mention that the volatility of political discourse is mostly related to the concrete changes taking place in Lithuanian society with regard to the (non-)formation of compulsory military service, which is mostly justified by the perception of the defence and security situation by political parties and politicians. The situational relevance of the formation of the PCIMS presented here implies that there may be a problem of instability or uncertainty in the formation of the compulsory military service in Lithuania: there is an inability to develop and implement a long-term strategy, both qualitatively and quantitatively, to ensure the stability, development, coherence and modernity of the national defence system. As a consequence, the tradition of effective security development may also be distorted, because such radical changes as the abolition of compulsory military service, or its sudden reintroduction (in less than a decade), demonstrate the rather unstable development of the security and defence system, and the public's acceptance of the changes becomes difficult.

When examining the topic of PCIMS in the electoral programmes of the Lithuanian political parties for the period 1992 to 2020, it became apparent that the electoral programmes of the Lithuanian political parties tended to treat the topic of PCIMS in a superficial manner, without providing a clear, comprehensive approach to the service. It is evident that the political programmes in the analysis tend to communicate a rather narrow spectrum of the content of compulsory military service, reflecting the emerging political agenda. More attention was devoted to the law on national conscription, the reduction/abandonment or maintenance of

conscription, aspects of selection, the justification of the need for conscripts (geopolitical situation), and youth volunteering. This may have an impact on the public perception of compulsory military service. The reasons for this low range of content can be various: 1) Changes in the geopolitical situation: the geopolitical situation of Lithuania has changed since its reconstruction and independence in the early 1990s. And since Lithuania became a member of Nato and the EU, it has created different conditions for defence and security. In such cases, it may be less important for political stakeholders to address the issue of compulsory military service in detail in their electoral programmes. 2) The importance of professional military service: most countries have moved from compulsory military service to professional military service due to changes in the global defence system and security challenges. This may also be reflected in the attitude of Lithuanian political parties, where it is more important to invest in a more professional military capability than expanding the compulsory service system. 3) Low public interest: compulsory military service is a topic that is perceived by the public to be less topical and less debated, which may influence the decision by political parties to pay less attention to it in their electoral programmes. However, it is noteworthy that the topic of PCIMS has moderately intensified over the last decade, as it seeks to respond to evolving national security risks. At the same time, this political discourse reveals the characteristics of a partly undemocratic society, and individual fragments of such a society suggest that non-compulsory military service is a reproduction of social inequality. Social inequality is, of course, a precondition for real political inequality. And political inequality is undemocratic. But it is not clear whether universal military service would (or in what way) reduce social inequality and thus be more favourable to democracy. However, when the number of conscripts in society becomes disproportionate (when instead of 70% to 80% of those who are conscripted, only 30% to 40% are enlisted), one might agree that this undermines the legitimacy of conscription and calls into question the duty and status of society. All of these factors suggest a fragmented formulation of compulsory military service, possibly ignoring some social processes, and thus exacerbating the acute problems associated with it, by giving priority to clearly articulated external threats. However, it should be noted that, according to the survey, the Conservative Party is the main stakeholder consistently speaking in favour of compulsory military service. The orientation of the Conservatives towards the dangers of only having professional military service is likely to be linked to their approach to national defence and security. Their political programmes emphasise that compulsory military service provides for broader public participation in defence processes, and thus builds an active reserve, which could maintain a broadly supported security culture. It also revealed that the orientation of other parties' electoral programmes towards the need for the formation of PCIMS depends on the international security and geopolitical context, which results in a shift in parties' attitudes towards the need for compulsory military service, in some cases making it important and necessary, and in other cases tending to reject it. In Lithuania, as in other countries, conservatives have a more favourable view of the army and military service.

Finally, it can be argued that the formation of PCIMS, as distinguished by the electoral programmes of political parties between 1992 and 2020, is conditioned by the geopolitical situation in the political discourse, and is socially constructed through the inclusion of both formal and informal political positions on PCIMS.

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LIETUVOS NUOLATINĖS PRIVALOMOSIOS PRADINĖS KARO TARNYBOS FORMAVIMO POLITINIS DISKURSAS

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Santrauka

Pastaraisiais dešimtmečiais plėtojant demokratijos principus, įtvirtinant liberalaus teisingumo idealus ir vertybes bei neutralizuojant grėsmes tiek valstybių politikams, tiek piliečiams bei pačioms ginkluotosioms pajėgoms iššūkių kelia privalomosios pradinės karo tarnybos formavimo klausimas. Jis aktualus ir mokslininkams, vis gausėjant naujų tiriamų sričių.

Pasibaigus šaltajam karui, nemaža dalis Europos valstybių sumažino nacionalines karines struktūras ir lėšas gynybai, nes vyravo požiūris, kad karo nebebus. Be to, liberaliose demokratijose ginkluotųjų pajėgų tikslas – politinėmis ir karinėmis priemonėmis užtikrinti visos visuomenės narių laisvę ir saugumą, o tai skatina privalomosios karo tarnybos, kaip „įpareigojančio pasiaukojimo“ formos, atmetimą. Po 2014 m. Rusijos įvykdytos Krymo aneksijos Ukraina ir Lietuva sugrąžino šaukimą į kariuomenę. Ir kitose Europos Sąjungos valstybėse viešojoje žiniasklaidoje atsinaujino politinės diskusijos dėl privalomosios karo tarnybos sugrąžinimo. Privalomosios karo tarnybos aktualumas skatina domėtis šiuolaikiniu jos formavimu, kuris gali būti apibūdinamas kaip daugialypis ir ginčytinas reiškinys, įtraukiantis įvairius veikėjus ir veiksnius, nes iš esmės privalomosios karinės tarnybos formavimas tampa politine užduotimi, kurią tenka spręsti politikams, per kuriuos gynybos ir saugumo politika įgyvendinama praktiškai.

Svarbus aspektas – politinis diskursas, kuris mokslinėje literatūroje plačiai analizuojamas, tačiau bendrame karinės tarnybos formavimo kontekste tai dar santykinai nauja tema. Nors politinis diskursas yra tik vienas iš bendrą politinį suvokimą apie privalomąją pradinę karo tarnybą formuojančių veiksnių, jis, be abejonės, daro poveikį šios tarnybos tvarumui bei gynybos politikai ir praktikai nacionaliniu lygmeniu.

Atlikto tyrimo radiniai leidžia teigti, kad per pastaruosius kelis dešimtmečius (1992–2020 m.) Lietuvos politinių partijų rinkiminėse programose privalomosios pradinės karo tarnybos tema dažniausiai buvo traktuojama paviršutiniškai, aiškaus, išsamaus požiūrio į šią tarnybą taip ir nepateikta. Pastebėtina, kad politinių partijų rinkimų programose apie privalomąją karo tarnybą 1992–2000 m. kalbama nedaug ir partijų pozicijos gana panašios, 2001–2010 m. vyksta prieštaringa kelių partijų diskusija dėl privalomosios karo tarnybos reikšmės, o nuo 2011–2020 m. apie tai kalbama daugiausia, tolygesnė tapo ir politinių partijų pozicija.

Remiantis tyrimo duomenimis matyti, kad komunikuojamas gana siauras privalomosios karo tarnybos turinio spektras, atskleidžiantis formuojamą politinę dienotvarkę. Didesnis dėmesys skirtas karo prievolės įstatymui, šauktinių skaičiaus mažinimui (ar jų atsisakymui) arba tokios tarnybos palaikymui, atrankos aspektams, šauktinių būtinumo pagrindimui (geopolitinė situacija), jaunuolių savanorystei. Politinių partijų rinkiminėse programose dominuoja pasisakymai, demonstruojantys vieningą konservatorių požiūrį į privalomąją pradinę karo tarnybą, jie skiriasi nuo kitų partijų, besiorientuojančių į kintančius geopolitinius veiksnius, kurie lemia jų poziciją dėl tokios karo tarnybos formavimo. Politinių partijų rinkimų politinėse programose privalomoji pradinė karo tarnyba tyrimo laikotarpiu vertinta labiau teigiamai nei neigiamai. Visgi privalomosios karo tarnybos formavimo tema tapo ypač aktuali, siekiant atliepti su Rusija susijusią kintančią nacionalinio saugumo riziką, tai galimai rodo visuomenės nesaugumo požymius Lietuvoje.

Galiausiai matyti tam tikra nestabilumo ar neapibrėžtumo dėl privalomosios pradinės karo tarnybos formavimo Lietuvoje problema: trūksta politinių partijų gebėjimo įgyvendinti ilgalaikę tokios tarnybos strategiją tiek kokybiniu, tiek kiekybiniu aspektais.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: *Lietuva, kritinė diskurso analizė, politinis diskursas, nuolatinė privalomoji pradinė karo tarnyba.*

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