

The End of the Lithuanian Political “Patriarch’s” Era

From Rise to Decline and Legacies Left Behind

AUSRA PARK

Abstract: Top political leadership can and often does play a crucial role in countries that transition from one political system to another. As a former Lithuanian Communist Party leader, the first president of independent Lithuania, and the longest-serving prime minister, Algirdas Brazauskas is one of a few Lithuanian policymakers who has left a profound impact on the country. This article reviews Brazauskas’ rise to the pinnacles of political power, evaluates his pursued policies, and assesses the legacies he left behind after withdrawing from politics in 2006. The author also examines the claim that Lithuania is facing a leadership crisis in the aftermath of Brazauskas’ departure.

Keywords: Brazauskas, presidency, prime ministership, legacy, leadership vacuum

A political earthquake shook Lithuania on June 1, 2006, when a long-term political survivor, Algirdas Brazauskas—who served as Lithuania’s prime minister from 2001-2006—decided to resign, together with all of his cabinet members. A prime minister’s departure, in and of itself a commonplace occurrence in European politics, marked a profound turning point in Lithuania’s political life. On the one hand, this event signified the end of what became referred to as the country’s political “patriarch’s” era of rule. On the other hand, analysts both in the country and abroad began pointing to the “leaderless” Lithuania phenomenon. Why was so much attention devoted to this single politician and his departure from a political scene in a small country on the Baltic coast?

Individual studies of political leaders always tackle challenging questions: “Why should one care about a particular individual?” and “Did he or she really matter as a leader?” Before these questions are addressed, a quick clarification of terminology is in

Ausra Park is an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at Simmons College in Boston, Massachusetts. Her research interests are comparative foreign policy, political psychology, and transitional processes in formerly communist states. She has published articles in *European Security*, *East European Quarterly*, *Journal of Baltic Studies* and *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*. Copyright © 2010 World Affairs Institute

order. The term leadership, as used in this study, should not be understood as a simple holding of a high office position, but rather as a complex phenomenon that encompasses an important quality—the power to sway others and make people do things that they would not have otherwise done. Individuals in power positions are not only able to exercise leadership, but also to achieve success and leave a profound impact on their surroundings through the skillful exploitation of various opportunities (i.e., unique once-in-a-lifetime situations, redefined institutional structures, stretching of assigned constitutional powers, the political culture, or support by constituents) as well as their own personal skills.

Studies of political leadership have shown that every individual leader certainly does not matter in all situations all of the time. For instance, Anthony Mughan’s and Samuel Patterson’s research suggests that leaders are likely to matter more under extreme political circumstances, such as crises and wars.¹ Furthermore, Timothy Colton and Robert Tucker, Martin Westlake, Daniel Byman and Kenneth Pollack, Archie Brown, and George Breslauer have established that leaders appear to be paramount in periods of transition or considerable change that a state undergoes.² Indeed, there is a general agreement among scholars of post-Communist states that leaders matter more when a genuine opportunity exists to change a state’s policies. During such times, a leader often has power concentrated in his or her hands; institutions, conversely, remain weak, stay in conflict, or undergo administrative restructuring and are not able to obstruct a leader’s policy choices and preferences. In such circumstances leaders have profound personal influence on their country’s political life and policy choices.

At the same time, these windows of opportunity rarely remain open for an extended period of time, and once they close, the influence of policymakers begins to diminish while that of bureaucratic structures gradually increases and solidifies. Naturally, this is only a general tendency, and the degree of leaders’ influence in the policy-formation process varies on a case-by-case basis, primarily because “[t]he capacity of actors to shape events is a variable not a constant.”³ Obviously, depending on the timing, situation, and context, some of the leader’s personal traits (i.e., background factors, belief system, leadership style, and sensitivity to domestic and external environments) may be of greater importance than others.⁴ It is simply the degree of an individual’s impact or the intensity of a person’s influence that differs. In other words, not all leaders are created equal and some of them matter more than the others.

Which type of leader matters and why is not a simple question to answer, either. Some leaders are considered “great” due to the profound changes that they introduce in their country. Usually, such leaders stay in power for several years⁵ and/or head the country during a critical juncture in time. Frequently, transformational, transitional or first-generation leaders are in a unique position to shape a state’s intentions and institutional structures to their liking (although a country’s geostrategic location, domestic politics, and political culture can all be equally influential factors). Furthermore, such leaders’ policy choices are less restricted or limited, particularly during the transitional years, and they are also most likely to affect state policies by leaving personal imprints that reflect individual preferences.

In Lithuania’s case, the question that is being posed is not about whether Brazauskas was important in the country’s political life, because the answer is an unequivocal “yes.” He kept the highest political posts during his lifetime, ranging from Lithuanian Communist Party chief; to first president of reestablished Lithuania; to Lithuanian

Democratic Labor Party and Lithuanian Social Democratic Party chairmanships;⁶ and, most recently, to the prime ministership. Unquestionably, Brazauskas, more than any political leader, had dominated Lithuania's political scene at least until 2006, when he withdrew from active politics.⁷ The questions that are of interest are: How did Brazauskas achieve such pinnacles of power, and in what ways was he able to exert his influence in domestic and foreign policies of Lithuania over the span of more than two decades? What kind of legacy has he left behind? And, finally, is there any validity to the claim that after Brazauskas' departure, Lithuania seems to be facing a political leadership vacuum? Through the examination and analysis of this policymaker's background, some of the key policies that he advocated and pursued, and the political successes and misfortunes that he encountered over the years, it is possible to draw some generalizations about the legacy that the former president and prime minister left behind, as well as suggest some observations on the state of political leadership in Lithuania today.

The Rise of Brazauskas as a Leader in Soviet Lithuania

In his official biography, Brazauskas describes himself in a typically traditional Lithuanian way—from an ordinary hard-working middle-class family that resided in a rural area and lived modestly.⁸ The beginnings of his climb up the Soviet Lithuanian political ladder can be traced to the period when Brazauskas moved to Kaunas to study at Snieckus Polytechnical Institute. While at the institute, he became a member of the Komsomol (a Communist youth organization), and in 1959 decided to join the Lithuanian Communist Party (LKP). Membership in the LKP allowed him to advance upward and to occupy relatively high political posts beginning in the early 1960s.

Brazauskas was appointed to the post of the Minister of Construction Materials in 1962, then became the first deputy chairman of the State Planning Committee⁹ and, later, the Secretary for the Economy of the Central Committee of the LKP from 1977 to 1988. All of these positions had significant and consequential influence on his personality. It was during these two decades that he learned the fundamentals of the Soviet administrative system and economic affairs, established long-lasting contacts with high-ranking officials both in Lithuania and within the Kremlin, and gained the knowledge of how to adapt and persevere in a tense, rigid political environment.

Brazauskas' rise through the ranks of the LKP began after he was elected as the first secretary of the LKP—the country's top political post at the time—on September 21, 1988.¹⁰ His election was claimed by some to be only a matter of coincidence, wherein he had simply been in the right place at the right time. It could certainly be so. At the same time, others argued that Brazauskas adopted a different “[...] approach to power consolidation that diverged from that of his predecessors and his counterparts at the national level. His power and authority came to rest upon his own popular standing and his image of being a new style politician equipped to help Lithuania make the transition toward greater sovereignty and pluralism.”¹¹

This new approach helped Brazauskas to redefine himself as a career politician who was willing to take calculated risks. Subscribing to, and advocating, a rather limited notion of Lithuanian sovereignty within the Soviet Union, he challenged Kremlin authorities by declaring the LKP's independence from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1989.¹² In hindsight, as bold—and, arguably, self-destructive—as such a move could have

been, it firmly solidified Brazauskas’ position at the top of political popularity charts in Lithuania, particularly among rural voters.

Brazauskas and his closest associates were creative as they introduced and sold the “native Communist” idea to the Lithuanian rural and impoverished population.¹³ This myth was perpetuated by spreading the word that the former head of the LKP had suffered the hardships and brutalities of the Soviet regime along with the Lithuanian people. What was not mentioned was the fact that members of the Communist party had special privileges: they shopped in special shops and grocery stores, they received treatment in special hospitals not accessible to ordinary people, and they had numerous other benefits (i.e., special holiday retreats or immediate access to housing and cars) that were not accessible nor available to the majority of the local population. This type of lifestyle hardly qualified as the “suffering” that the LKP head and members claimed they experienced together with ordinary Lithuanians. Nevertheless, the stories of shared repression worked, creating the foundation for another soon-to-emerge myth: Brazauskas as the “savior” of Lithuania.¹⁴

To Be the First: Rising to the Top of the Political Hierarchy in Independent Lithuania

In the light of his immense popularity, and following the 1990 first multiparty national elections in Lithuania—in which his party suffered a significant, albeit expected, defeat—Brazauskas was appointed deputy prime minister. Rising national consciousness among Lithuanians, and the continuous struggle to gain independence from the USSR, made him realize that his party, the LKP, stood no chance of political survival if it was to cling to the old Socialist-Communist ideologies, dogmas, and name. Using his political instincts, Brazauskas quickly determined which changes needed to be undertaken, and he adapted to the political environment accordingly. The first urgent step was to change the party’s name. As a result, the Lithuanian Democratic Labor party (LDDP) came into existence in December of 1990, and Brazauskas was chosen as its leader, remaining in this post until 1993.

As the 1992 parliamentary elections approached, Brazauskas and his party members launched an active campaign. The LDDP accused the then right-wing parties in power of inefficient economic policies and shortsighted foreign policy decisions, especially in regard to antagonistic relations they maintained with Russia. Brazauskas was particularly critical of governmental policies that, in his view, pushed Lithuania in the early 1990s into near total industrial collapse, uncontrollable inflation, huge unemployment, and rapidly plummeting living standards. He summed up the situation the following way: “[Over the past two years] new incompetent bureaucracies have been allowed to grow up, filled with people who are dilettantes and know only how to make patriotic speeches.”¹⁵ In light of this, Brazauskas presented himself and his party as knowledgeable experts who could save Lithuania and would help it to regain its economic prosperity, if given a chance.¹⁶ Knowing quite well the techniques of how to operate the levers of power—and by using his charisma, populist oratory skills, network of connections, and a captivating appeal of a “true commoner”—Brazauskas ultimately succeeded in making the LDDP victorious in the 1992 parliamentary elections.

Although there were strong indications based on public opinion polls that the LDDP would win, nobody expected such a sweeping victory by this party—it won more than half of the seats in the Seimas (the national parliament). “We did not expect such a good result,” was a comment from a visibly surprised, but jubilant Brazauskas as he learned of the

polling results.¹⁷ While the LDDP leader was quick to reaffirm his support for Lithuania's independence and speedy Russian troop withdrawal, he gave little indication as to the practical direction and political orientation of the LDDP leadership. For the right-wing parties, and their leader Landsbergis in particular, this was a major issue of concern; they viewed the LDDP's victory as a potential threat to Lithuania's sovereignty and independence. The fear was that a comeback by the former Communists could lead to the reintegration of Lithuania into the former USSR's economic and political structures.

While political reintegration of Lithuania into the former Soviet area did not occur, the revival and return of Soviet Lithuania *nomenklatura* to key bureaucratic and administrative positions did. For instance, Bronislovas

Lubys and Algirdas Slezevicius, both former Soviet system *apparatchiks*-turned-businessmen with close personal relationships to Brazauskas, were nominated and became Lithuania's prime ministers. Thus began the revival of Soviet network connections, under the watchful eye of the LDDP and its leader. At the very top of the hierarchy, both prime ministers brought their friends with them, who within a short period of time were appointed to a variety of government positions; lower

ranked LDDP members (i.e., those elected into parliament) hired their relatives and close associates to work as aides. This trend led to the emergence of a phenomenon known as crony capitalism,¹⁸ wherein private business interests were advocated as state official policies. Furthermore, such practices by LDDP leadership laid a solid foundation for secrecy, lack of transparency, absence of accountability, and soon-to-root widespread corruption in political and government circles.

The streak of political successes enjoyed by the LDDP in the parliamentary elections was further solidified as Brazauskas decided to run for the presidency, eventually winning the race with 60 percent of the electorate's vote. Campaigning on an alleged social-democratic platform of ideas, which included pledges to curb rampant inflation and restore a tolerable standard of living, the presidential front-runner was constantly reminded and asked about his Communist past. "Nobody in Lithuania would ever vote for Communists," Brazauskas rebuked the questions, which clearly annoyed and irritated him. "Zero percent would want a Communist president. You have to forget biographies."¹⁹

Obviously, Brazauskas was not only at pains to renounce his past as head of the LKP, but he also insisted on forgetting the past.²⁰ He came close to denying the suffering and damage that the policies pursued by the Communist regime had inflicted upon the local population.²¹ Such re-formulation of historical truths by LDDP leadership, combined with Brazauskas' personal eagerness to achieve political posts at any cost, seem to testify to his track record as a covert opportunist, willing to exploit any chance to achieve his ultimate goals and be the first in securing influential political posts.

Among such "to be the first" instances was Brazauskas' aspiration to become the first president of reestablished Lithuania.²² His victory in the 1993 presidential race was

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personally and politically pleasing to the LDDP head, although the position Brazauskas was to occupy placed him in an uneasy situation. If there was one area in which the incoming president had limited knowledge, inadequate expertise, and very narrow exposure, then that sphere was foreign affairs and foreign policymaking. With no trips being made to Western Europe during the Soviet period, non-existent personal contacts with Western politicians, no good command of any foreign languages (except for Russian), and no training or strong interest in foreign policy, the Brazauskas presidency was launched from a shaky foundation. It was clear that Lithuania’s chief diplomat would have to rely on his advisors in formulating the country’s foreign policy, particularly in the Western direction.

Brazauskas’ background and experiences, however, were not an impediment concerning Lithuania’s Eastward-looking policies. In fact, improvement of relations with the closest neighbors of Lithuania—Russia being the primary focus—was considered paramount by the newly-elected president. From his point of view, the previous administration’s resistance to maintain relations with any of the former Soviet republics, and its exclusive focus on the West, were perceived as a major shortcoming of the early 1990s foreign policy-making. In order to counterbalance the nationalistic and primarily Westward-oriented foreign policy espoused by the Landsbergis administration, Brazauskas sought to reverse this trend by making Lithuania’s foreign policy more balanced and internationalized.

During his single term in office, Brazauskas both succeeded in normalizing good relations with Russia and played a key role in achieving another vital foreign policy goal—the withdrawal of Russian troops from Lithuania. The president’s connections established during Soviet times proved to be beneficial, particularly his close working relationship with the late Russian president Boris Yeltsin, which dated back to the 1980s. Analysts seemed to agree that Brazauskas’ leadership abilities, especially in critical and tense situations, were commendable.²³

As for the intense advocacy of foreign policy goals in the Western direction—specifically Lithuania’s memberships in NATO and the EU—the president showed alternating personal preferences.²⁴ To some extent, this trend can be explained by the absence of major crises erupting on the Western front, and by the president’s unwillingness to push strongly for one particular membership (either in the EU or in NATO). Thus, in the first four years of his presidency until 1997, Brazauskas was flip-flopping, emphasizing the economic dimension of the country’s foreign policy one year and the military-security dimension the next.²⁵ For instance, the NATO membership request, which Brazauskas was forced to issue in 1996 amid pressure by the opposition leaders, revealed that the president was highly susceptible to internal pressures. Some analysts have argued that if a policy lacked urgency, Brazauskas preferred to take no initiatives of his own on an issue.²⁶

At the same time, although Brazauskas continuously claimed that his office’s “priority goals [were] to seek integration with the EU and other European political, economic, and security structures,” in reality the president followed those claims with few, if any, initiatives.²⁷ Since Brazauskas had very limited knowledge about the procedures and structures of the EU and favored “an evolutionary, not revolutionary” reform of Lithuania’s economy,²⁸ his preference for Lithuania’s membership in the EU wavered.²⁹ Overall, this vacillation in the president’s stances was a prominent feature of the administration’s foreign policy.³⁰ Thus, in periods when no domestic pressures were exerted on the president, Brazauskas favored the economic dimension of foreign policy (or EU membership); however, when he found himself under pressure from powerful domestic groups or individuals,

then the military dimension of foreign policy (that is, NATO membership) ranked at the top of his priority list.

Ultimately, at the end of his presidential term in 1998, Brazauskas could list only two major achievements: first, the normalization and establishment of good relationships with all neighboring states, and second, the withdrawal of Russian troops from Lithuania. However, two central foreign policy goals—membership in the EU and NATO—were not realized during his term.

As ironic as it may appear, the constitutionally defined role for the president to be in charge of foreign affairs was not to Brazauskas' liking. In many ways, he aspired to be president simply for the sake of being the first leader of reestablished Lithuania—and to satisfy his personal ambitions—rather than fully understanding what this position involved or how qualified he was for the job.³¹ Toward the end of his presidential term, Brazauskas, then 65, expressed his determination to retire, becoming, as Lithuanian journalists jokingly dubbed him, the country's "No. 1 pensioner."³² The outgoing president, exhausted from the continuous standoff between his office and the parliament (headed by Brazauskas' rival Landsbergis from 1996-2000) declined to run for the second term, claiming that time had come to let the new generation of politicians take the lead.³³ The president's supporters and admirers were upset by his decision not to run—and given his high ratings of popularity at the time he would have won without any difficulty (see Table 1 below)—but eventually accepted his choice.

Return of the "Savior"?

Brazauskas did not isolate himself from domestic politics after leaving the presidential post. Rather, while writing memoirs about his presidency, he continued to observe closely, albeit from a distance, the developments unfolding in the LDDP and the economic challenges that Lithuania faced at the dawn of the new millennium. Under the former president's watchful eye, and allegedly with his consent, the LDDP decided to merge with the Social Democratic party in 2001. The newly-created political unit, the Lithuanian Social Democratic party (LSDP), elected Brazauskas as its leader—a signal that the former president was willing to leave his retirement and return to active politics, though in a then-unknown capacity. Based on his personal remarks, and mentioned in his memoirs, it was becoming clear that he would not settle for anything less than a prime minister's post.³⁴

From the very beginning, Brazauskas' return to active politics seemed troublesome. Political controversies and scandals that engulfed his prime ministership early on stayed with him until the last days of his five-year term. In 2001, Brazauskas was caught up in the first mini-scandal involving a secret visit to Moscow. At first, the former president denied that such a visit occurred. However, when the media provided evidence that a trip did indeed take place, Brazauskas changed his position, acknowledging that he had traveled to Russia, but was unwilling to openly admit the real purpose of the trip.³⁵

To divert public attention from this, and from the possible complications that it may have caused in Brazauskas' securing of approval for the prime minister's position, a campaign to save the country was launched by the LSDP leadership. "The country is profoundly debt-laden and in deplorable economic condition," claimed Brazauskas.³⁶ "As a citizen I cannot continue standing on the sidelines and only observe what is taking place in the country. I cannot sit with my hands crossed, when absurd decisions are being passed, [...] when Lithuania is drowning," argued a prime ministerial hopeful.³⁷

In 2001, economic data did not support Brazauskas’ claims that the country was standing on the verge of an economic abyss.³⁸ One must note that critical decisions had already been made and implemented by previous administrations in the late 1990s when, as the result of the 1998 Russian ruble crisis, Lithuania’s economy had indeed been in shambles.³⁹ Therefore, “saving” the Lithuanian economy in 2001 was a political maneuver employed by the LSDP leadership, and the alleged “economic crisis” had no connections to the country’s economic realities.

Curiously, once Brazauskas was approved by the parliament as the new prime minister on July 3, 2001, the urgency of the “save the country” campaign was quickly forgotten.

“‘Saving’ the Lithuanian economy in 2001 was a political maneuver employed by the LSDP leadership, and the alleged ‘economic crisis’ had no connections to the country’s economic realities.”

The new prime minister began voicing the opinion that his government would follow the policies and guidelines that were established by the preceding two governments.⁴⁰ “The main task of the new Cabinet will be to continue vital reforms,” Brazauskas declared. “Joining NATO and the European Union will be the major tasks of this government.”⁴¹ Although one could get the impression that Brazauskas continued to pursue the same foreign policy goals that were established when he was president, this is inaccurate; actually,

largely external circumstances—that is, decisions taken by EU and NATO leadership—were at play at the time that Lithuania became a full-fledged member of these organizations in 2004. Essentially, Brazauskas’ government did not launch any special initiatives beyond the mere satisfaction of the already established membership criteria for the acceding countries. At the same time, however, he had no misgivings in crediting himself and his cabinet for the successful achievement of Lithuania’s two key foreign policy goals.⁴²

The short-lived “savior” campaign served one primary purpose—to satisfy Brazauskas’ personal aspirations. Not only was he successful in becoming a prime minister, but with the broad decision-making powers that this position held, he was also about to reintroduce old Soviet-style bureaucratic practices in government that would have profound implications on Lithuania’s politics in the coming years.

One of the first instances that signaled a revival of Communist-style practices in Brazauskas’ administration occurred in early 2002, when the prime minister presented the Government’s Performance Report to the parliament. This report, as well as the subsequent annual reports given by Brazauskas, established and followed a pattern typical of Soviet-style ministerial cabinet accounts: the text involved an overwhelming number of statistical data and self-glorifying achievements, and revealed only the positive accomplishments of the cabinet. Such government reports stunned the parliamentarians, while domestic political commentators were taken aback by the return of the old Soviet-school reporting style.⁴³ Predictably, for the next five years the government’s reports included the same undisputable “accomplishments”: continued growth of the GDP, increasing industrial output, declining unemployment, rising minimum wage, strong collection of taxes, and the like.⁴⁴

What was not addressed in government reports to the parliament were some of the key problems that Brazauskas had returned to “solve” in 2001: high state’s debt; indefinitely stalled tax, pension, health care, public finance, and higher education reforms; increasing lack of transparency; and growing secretiveness in regard to government actions and decisions. Moreover, government reports never included analyses of how Lithuania’s economic performance compared to that of other countries, nor did they touch on such important questions as high unemployment, low monthly pensions for the unemployed, growing emigration, low birth rates, spreading corruption, and decline in government trustworthiness.⁴⁵ Also not mentioned in the reports was the fact that every sixth person in Lithuania lived below poverty line.⁴⁶

Brazauskas enjoyed not only being a prime minister, but also took pride in heading Lithuania’s economy. In late 2002, as the country was in the midst of the presidential elections, it became evident that the prime minister’s office was gaining more and more political weight. After a surprising win by Rolandas Paksas over incumbent Valdas Adamkus in the 2003 presidential race, the political pendulum unquestionably pointed in the direction of Brazauskas. The inexperienced President Paksas was no match for the old political heavyweight; it did not take much time to observe that the true head-of-state, and the only person who held the true reins of power in his hands, was Brazauskas. As some observed, “Brazauskas was bathing in a sea of unrestricted power.”⁴⁷ Albeit short, the golden era of “King Algirdas”⁴⁸ peaked between early 2003 and late 2004.

Then, a perfect political storm struck. The impeachment of President Paksas, the first and thus far only head of state to be impeached on the European continent, nearly paralyzed Lithuania’s political circles. As the parliament and the Constitutional Court addressed the matter, Brazauskas came to be viewed by politicians, activists, and the public at large as the only guarantor of stability in the country. Announcing his views on the national radio, the prime minister suggested that “There [was] no government crisis in the country. There [was] only one problem and that [was] the president.” He urged Paksas to resign.⁴⁹

With the removal of President Paksas from office,⁵⁰ Brazauskas refused to yield to his supporters’ calls to run for the presidency. On a personal level, Brazauskas wanted to stay in the prime minister’s post. “I like concrete work in the post of prime minister. I don’t like going abroad, and as a president, one has to travel a lot,” he explained.⁵¹ In addition, since Brazauskas preferred real political power more than symbolic power, it was the post of a prime minister in which he wished to stay. Furthermore, on a political level, Brazauskas was unwilling to leave his beloved party leaderless—a situation that was acceptable neither for him personally⁵² nor for the LSDP, given that the party had no other identifiable leader of Brazauskas’ stature and visibility. The LSDP was Brazauskas, and Brazauskas was the LSDP.

2004 brought major changes into Lithuania’s political landscape—a new round of presidential elections and fall parliamentary elections were scheduled to take place. Although Brazauskas’ LSDP was successful in gaining a few dozen parliamentary seats, the biggest winner in these elections was a newly-formed Labor party, headed by Russian-born millionaire-turned-politician Viktor Uspaskich.⁵³

The surprising success of the populist Labor Party (DP) and the personal ambitions of Uspaskich signaled the end of the “King Algirdas” era. Unexpectedly, Uspaskich’s political maneuvering allowed him to hijack the role of Lithuania’s “savior” that Brazauskas used back in 2001. With two “saviors” in the country at the end of 2004, intra-institutional

tug-of-war, bickering, scandals, and power struggles were soon to become daily occurrences in Lithuania’s political realm.

Although Brazauskas was re-nominated for the prime minister’s position and was confirmed by the parliament, his so-called “second” return was quite different from the first one on several counts. First, his prime ministership acquired a derogatory label, AMB—Algirdas Mykolas Brazauskas—a combination representing the first letters of Brazauskas’ full name, which in informal colloquial Lithuanian came to imply a self-important, pretentious, and pompous individual who used political arm-twisting tactics to achieve both his personal goals and those of his closest friends and associates.⁵⁴ Second, the prime minister’s attitude and behavior had fundamentally changed.⁵⁵ Brazauskas became arrogant in his public discourses and sought closer ties with influential business lobbying groups, while at the same time distancing himself from the working class—a fundamental image-reversal from that of the “people’s person” and “voice of the poor in rural Lithuania” that he had established as his trademark in the early 1990s.⁵⁶ As could have been expected, the prime minister’s prestige and approval ratings fell (see Table 1 and refer to Table 2 for comparative purposes on previous governments’ approval ratings).

The Downfall of Lithuania’s Political “Patriarch”

Plummeting public approval ratings were not the only problem that Brazauskas faced at this time. As Lithuania joined the EU and NATO in 2004, a number of scandals arose—corruption allegations about allocating structural funds received from the EU for Lithuanian small and medium-sized business projects; the inappropriate use of taxpayers’ money for personal pleasures by the government officials; the prime minister’s protection of his cabinet members who worked or had links with the Soviet secret police, the KGB; a shady privatization in the early 1990s of a hotel that Brazauskas’ second wife owned; and the political favoritism charges, especially at the Ministry of Economics headed by Viktor Uspaskich. In all of these instances, the local media implicitly or explicitly blamed the prime minister for his inaction.⁵⁷ “Somebody does something and I’m the one who is constantly asked to give an explanation! I don’t like it. I’m not and will not be put in the role of a school teacher,” fired back the exasperated Brazauskas, refuting the growing criticism of his cabinet in local press.⁵⁸

The prime minister’s unwillingness and inability to address or solve the snowballing socio-political problems, and his indecisiveness amid an already tense political environment, were soon perceived as Brazauskas’ personal incompetence and lack of leadership. Apparently, “no changes, no actions, hence no turmoil” became the new defining characteristics of Brazaus-

TABLE 1. Trust in Brazauskas as president

Date of poll	Trust (%)	Do not trust (%)
April 1993	88	10
December 1996	54	33
October 1997	73	20
January 1998	76	19

Sources: Polling agencies “Baltijos tyrimai” and “Spinter”

TABLE 2. Trust in Lithuanian government

Date of poll	Prime minister	Trust (%)	Do not trust (%)
January 1996	A. Slezevicius	16	77
November 1996	L. M. Stankevicius	25	63
February 1997	G. Vagnorius	35	54
February 1998	G. Vagnorius	35	57
February 1999	G. Vagnorius	33	59
October 1999	R. Paksas	34	57
October 2000	A. Kubilius	32	54
November 2001	A. Brazauskas	30	61
December 2002	A. Brazauskas	30	63

Source: Polling agency “Baltijos tyrimai”

kas government.⁵⁹ As one observer put it, by mid-2006 the 73-year-old Brazauskas looked “knackered” as a result of continuous domestic infighting and mounting political criticism.⁶⁰

Brazauskas’ docility led to decision-making paralysis within the cabinet. Eventually, the decision by the DP to pull out of the coalition government led Brazauskas to resign as prime minister. By late May 2006, the political whirlwind that was surrounding his administration had forced him to realize that he could “not see any possibility of continuing his work.”⁶¹ After five years in office, Lithuania’s political “patriarch” left office—this time, apparently, with a firm determination not to return to politics again.

Brazauskas’ Legacy

Although Brazauskas’ prime ministership received and still receives mixed evaluations, those critical of his and his cabinet’s performance seem to predominate. Therefore, it is important to evaluate what kind of legacy the former LKP party leader, ex-president, and ex-prime minister left behind after withdrawing from political life.

Supporters of Brazauskas do credit him with a number of achievements. They point out, for instance, that the LKP was transformed and survived largely thanks to the political instincts and the leadership skills of Brazauskas. Without a doubt, the LKP (then the LDDP and later the LSDP) was and is the only political party that continues to be in power (either holding the majority of governmental posts or in coalition with other parties) during Lithuania’s entire post-independence period—clearly, not a negligible achievement by any means.⁶²

Beyond keeping his beloved political party at the top of the power hierarchy, however, Brazauskas’ legacy as a president receives mixed evaluations. On the one hand, he was successful in using his political power, non-confrontational governing style, and personal contacts to negotiate the Russian troop withdrawal from Lithuania—the first former Soviet republic to achieve such a goal—and was able to turn Lithuania’s relations with Russia from icy to lukewarm. Therefore, in the Eastward-looking foreign policy direction—especially Lithuania’s normalization of good neighborly relations with Russia, but also in regard to

immediate neighbors such as Belarus, Poland, and the other CIS states—Brazauskas’ personal input was invaluable and appreciated. Because of these efforts, the country’s foreign policy particularly toward its Eastern neighbors became more balanced, diversified, and lost its staunchly confrontational characteristics.⁶³

On the other hand, however, during his presidency Brazauskas was not successful in West-oriented foreign policy initiatives, and failed to attain Lithuania’s membership in NATO and the EU; he also did not aid the country in achieving diplomatic leadership positions on the European stage. As argued above, Brazauskas lacked the experience, expertise, and skills in the foreign affairs arena to express a strong commitment to these foreign policy objectives. He ultimately did not show personal dedication, passion, or interest in investing his political capital to strongly advocate and pursue either goal; it was largely due to internal pressure, primarily from opposing right-wing parties, that Brazauskas was forced to continue advocating Lithuania’s aspirations to become a member of the EU and NATO. In addition, Brazauskas viewed the country’s integration with the West as a long-term process rather than an immediate urgency. Apparently, when operating in daily situations unrelated to the above-mentioned issues, Brazauskas preferred to take on limited initiatives.⁶⁴

At the same time, even if Brazauskas did not succeed in achieving Lithuania’s key foreign policy objectives during his presidency, he did manage to build and establish an influential presidential office despite an initially weak performance.⁶⁵ Brazauskas’ successor, Valdas Adamkus, further strengthened the presidency, but the first president of Lithuania certainly deserves merit for giving this institution political weight, power, and influence on par with other much older domestic bureaucratic structures.

The legacies of Brazauskas’ prime ministership are much more controversial than those of his presidency. It would be difficult to deny that, upon his return from a brief retirement and the assumption of a prime minister’s post, Brazauskas took full charge of Lithuania’s economy. During his term in office, the country’s economy recovered, and even showed substantial growth.⁶⁶ Also important is the fact that Lithuania had become member of the EU and NATO in 2004—two key foreign policy goals to which the country aspired since the early 1990s. It has to be noted that the achievement of membership in these organizations was not the result of the groundwork that Brazauskas laid while being president (as argued above, he personally was not proactive in pursuit of these foreign policy goals). At the same time, Brazauskas had no reservations to credit himself and his government for these successes, despite the fact that previous administrations had launched tough economic reforms and made unpopular decisions in order to restructure the economic fundamentals after the country’s devastating economic performance during the 1990s.⁶⁷ Finally, Brazauskas’ admirers and supporters also recognize his contributions of guidance, reassurance, and political stability that he gave to the public during President Paksas’ impeachment process.

And yet, the amount of credit that should be given to Brazauskas’ personal leadership skills in all of his self-assigned achievements, especially in the economic sphere, is open to debate. Some argue that it was a natural progression that the country followed, and the prime minister played no significant role whatsoever in the process; Brazauskas was at the right place at the right time, harvested the fruits of others’ labor, and took full credit for it.⁶⁸ Others contend that without the guidance and leadership of the prime minister, Lithuania would not have achieved the economic growth and success that it did. The latter

group maintains that it was primarily Brazauskas who succeeded in keeping the Lithuanian economy relatively stable.

Despite the lack of consensus on Brazauskas role in Lithuania's strong economic performance during the first years of the new millennium, there seems to be a nearly uniform agreement as to the negative ramifications of his prime ministership. When Brazauskas decided to return to active politics in 2001, many political analysts forecasted that this would also herald the return of his larger "entourage" from the Communist era. Among the most worrisome trends to emerge would be the reintroduction and firm entrenchment of Soviet-style practices in government structures, political dealings, and decision-making—all of which would ultimately blur the line between national interests and those of big businesses, resulting in widespread corruption, entrenchment of crony capitalism, and Russian-style oligarchy.⁶⁹

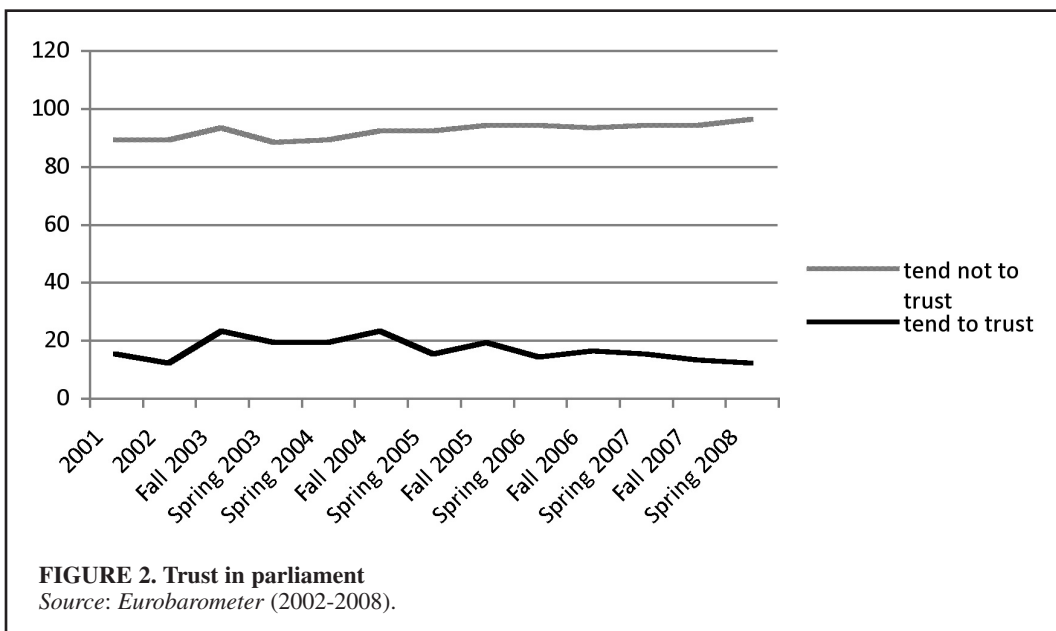
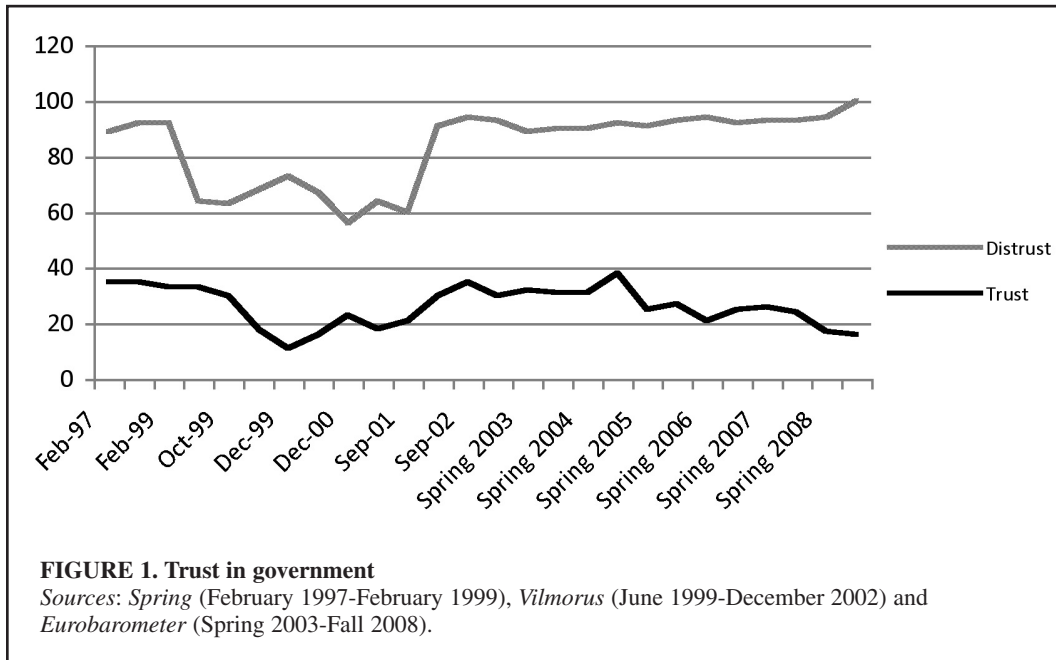
Predictions proved right. Indeed, whenever possible, the prime minister offered administrative posts within the government apparatus, state-controlled enterprise, and industry to his friends and close associates from Soviet times.⁷⁰ It was believed that by embedding the former Soviet Lithuania apparatchiks in key positions, the prime minister would not only be able to completely control the state's assets and wealth, but would also provide his network with crucial influence in the government's decision-making, especially concerning economic and energy matters.⁷¹

Brazauskas also promoted individuals from his inner circle of colleagues, the old *nomenklatura* members, to ambassadorial posts and high-ranking positions at different European and domestic institutions. For instance, Juozas Bernatoniš, a longtime friend of Brazauskas from the LKP days, succeeded in securing an ambassadorial nomination to Estonia after a prolonged fight with the parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee; Brazauskas allegedly made a few phone calls to some "troublesome" parliamentarians.⁷² Romualdas Visokavicius, chair of the Board of Directors of the Lithuanian Bank (who had received highly negative evaluations on his monetary politics), later became ambassador to Kazakhstan primarily due to his personal and political ties with Brazauskas.⁷³ Thus, the trend of selecting individuals based on "their political affiliation and even parents' background rather than on their individual skills, abilities, or knowledge of the EU structures and inner workings"⁷⁴ was also firmly established.

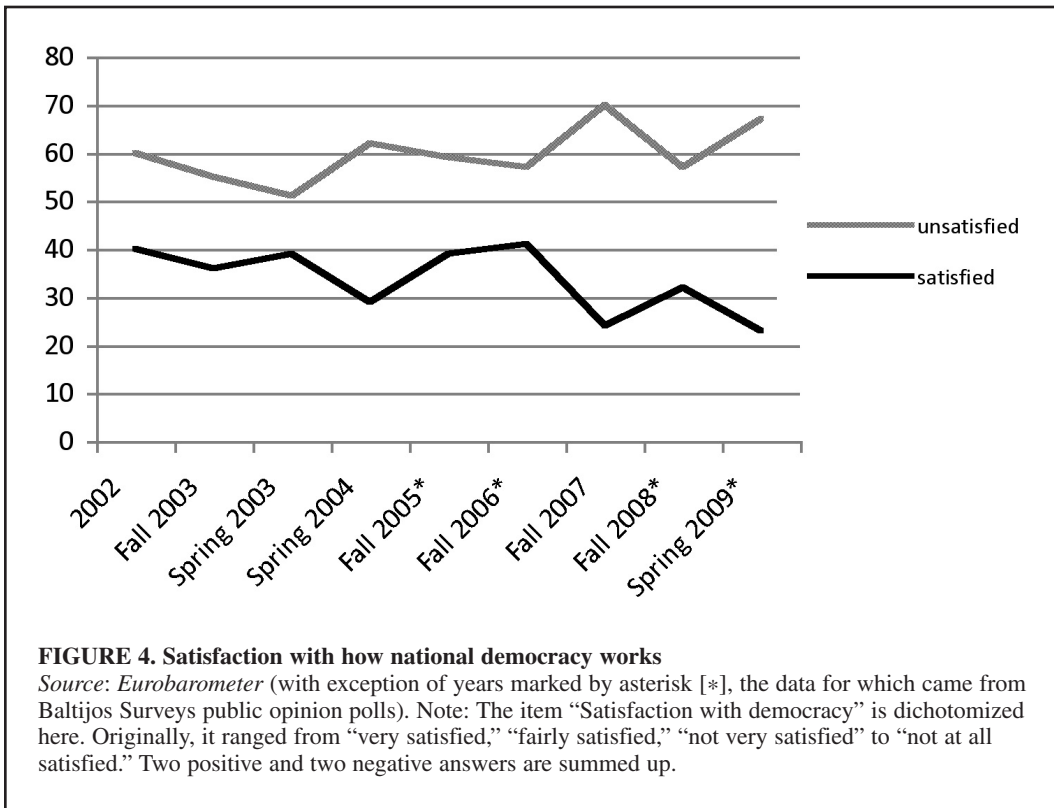
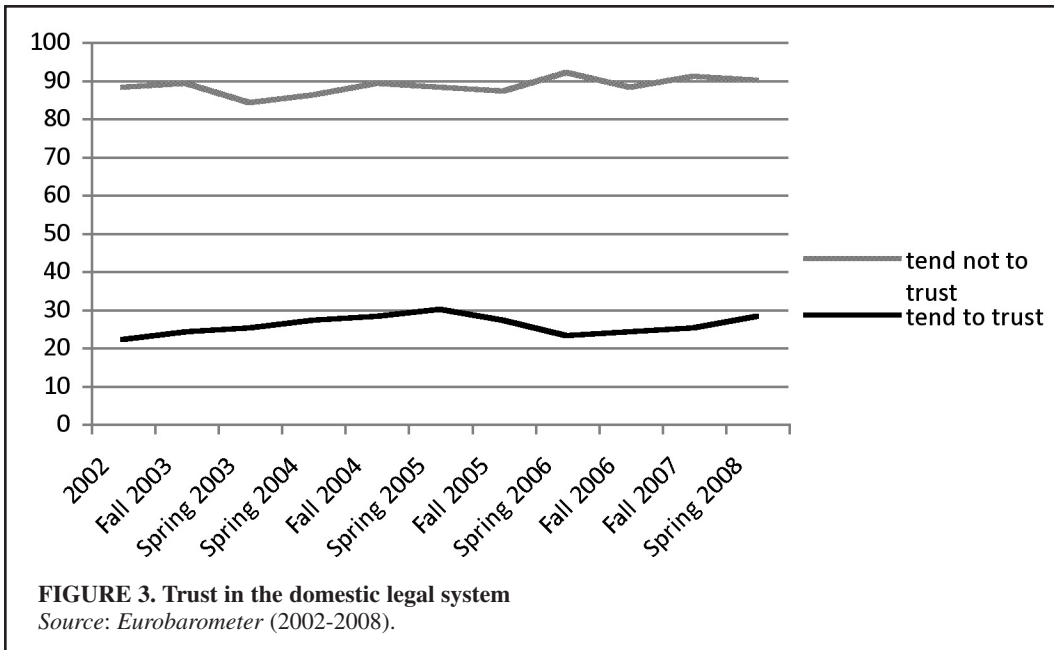
As a result of Brazauskas' five-year long prime ministership, a deeply flawed, corrupt governmental structure took hold as an inseparable and fully integral part the country's political life.⁷⁵ In other words, Brazauskas' years in power marked a firm entrenchment of the "golden age" of *nomenklatura*—a characteristic of governance that the former prime minister did not perceive as either problematic or troublesome. After all, rewarding friends and close associates with ambassadorial posts or well paying jobs was a widely accepted practice during Brazauskas' five-year long prime ministership—a practice that became so customary that it continues to this day.⁷⁶

Another legacy of the former prime minister is the failure to acknowledge and accept personal responsibilities, especially those of a moral or ethical nature, for official failures. Full conformism, public obedience and subordination to political institutions, and the expectation that those who work in government institutions should have no independent personal opinions of their own became integral parts of Lithuania's political culture during Brazauskas' years in office.⁷⁷

Blatant populist politics also became a daily occurrence in the country, frequently accompanied by political scandals, slander, intrigue, widespread corruption, increasing detachment between government structures and the rest of the population, ethical lows reached by local politicians and administrative employees, and a noticeable disregard for



the opinion of ordinary people. It was Brazauskas and his cabinet—fairly or not—who were held responsible on all these counts.⁷⁸ The general opinion held that it was during Brazauskas’ time in office that these unpleasant developments took root and flourished. As could have been expected, when Brazauskas decided to leave the prime minister’s post in 2006, public distrust in his cabinet and the government as an institution had reached an all-time high—an astounding 73 percent (see Table 3).⁷⁹



Furthermore, regardless of Brazauskas’ touting of Lithuania’s economic achievements to the EU and other international organizations, these numbers reflected only a part of the more complex developments unfolding in the country. Despite the economic boom that Lithuania had experienced during the time of Brazauskas’ prime ministership—mostly noticeable in the metropolitan areas, especially Vilnius—the rest of the country, particularly the rural areas, saw little change in poverty rates, real income, or European funding for social projects. It is not surprising then that another side effect of the post-Brazauskas’ prime ministership became the growing apathy in the Lithuanian electorate and increasing disillusionment with anything related to politics. Some political analysts suggested that during Brazauskas’ five years in office, the country entered into a “deep political freeze” phase.⁸⁰

Finally, although it cannot be directly linked to the prime minister’s withdrawal from active politics, local political analysts draw connections between Brazauskas’ ministership legacies (i.e., the strengthening influence of *nomenklatura*, widespread corruption, the increasing power of the local oligarchs, and the lack of impartial justice) and the intense apathy of Lithuanians toward politics and political matters in general.⁸¹ Public discontent is mostly expressed by withdrawing from participation in the political sphere; very high distrust in key political institutions,⁸² particularly government and parliament (see Figures 1 and 2) and the domestic legal system (Figure 3); massive emigration; and declining satisfaction with how national democracy works (see Figure 4).

One could only wonder if Brazauskas continues to believe that the price he paid by losing popular trust and support was indeed worth the variety of political posts that he had occupied during his long political career (refer to Table 3).⁸³

“Leaderless” Lithuania?

With the first generation of highly influential leaders leaving politics, a question lingers in the minds of policymakers and political analysts: Is Lithuania heading into a political leadership vacuum? Uneasiness that is felt about “leaderless” Lithuania is quite acute, especially as the first generation of highly influential leaders (i.e., former President Adamkus, current European parliament member Landsbergis, and now former prime minister Brazauskas) have or are about to leave the domestic political scene.

What can be said with some degree of certainty, however, is that Brazauskas, his life-long friends, and many other first generation leaders (including Landsbergis) did somewhat of a disfavor to Lithuania. On the one hand, their dominance and long stays in office prevented new and younger leaders to enter the spotlight; the impenetrable old-boys’ network proved to be too much of a challenge for young, upcoming individuals who might have otherwise considered a career in politics. Therefore, seeing the absence of opportunities or breakthroughs, new political aspirants often opted for other career paths, many of them choosing to work in the private or business spheres.

Brazauskas’ long-lasting dominance of the country’s political scene also contributed to the emergence of populist politicians such as Viktor Uspaskich and Rolandas Paksas, who presented themselves as viable alternatives to the old and “boring” leadership that the Lithuanian electorate loves to hate.⁸⁴ Unquestionably, these so-called “one-day leaders”⁸⁵ were largely products of PR companies and the local mass media. Predictably, their presence on the domestic political stage was not only short-lived, but was unsustainable in the long

TABLE 3. Trust in Brazauskas as president

Date of poll	Trust	Distrust
2001	24	65
Fall 2002	27	63
Fall 2003	31	59
Spring 2004	31	59
Fall 2004	38	54
Spring 2005	25	66
Fall 2005	27	66
Spring 2006	21	73

Source: Eurobarometer, 2001-2006

term. After all, it was slogans and campaigns created by local PR companies that succeeded in bringing these politicians temporary popularity and political power, not their own ideas, action plans, or visions. As soon as the novelty of these populist politicians waned, so did their political importance, influence, and power.

Additionally, and most shortsightedly of all, is that none of the first generation leaders, including Brazauskas himself, thought of training younger political heirs—a situation that has resulted in the relative absence of influential, innovative, and knowledgeable statesmen or stateswomen in Lithuania.⁸⁶ Given that Brazauskas would personally terminate any discussion about a potential successor for the LSDP while he held the prime ministership, it is not surprising that by 2006 his preference to surround himself with people who did not object to him or challenged his views eventually led to a situation wherein only his old friends remained around him.⁸⁷ Meanwhile, young and innovative political aspirants have found it nearly impossible to break through the established leadership wall with which Brazauskas and his close associates encircled themselves.

In contrast to other countries—for instance, Estonia, where young politicians have and continue to dominate domestic political arena⁸⁸—Lithuania finds itself with very few influential politicians in their 30s or 40s. The remaining powerful positions are occupied by the same 50-to-70-year-olds who have been dominating the country's politics for the last two decades. In other words, Lithuania is experiencing the absence of political generational change. It is not surprising, then, that articles with headlines such as “the country is at the crossroads in search of leaders” have been appearing in local newspapers since the late 1990s,⁸⁹ and the debate about “leaderless” Lithuania and the difficulties that the country's closed-up, clan-like political system presents for the emergence of new leaders became particularly acute in 2008.⁹⁰

Arguably, with the country's leadership arteries⁹¹ having been clogged by older politicians for much too long, it can be expected that Lithuania's political landscape and political life will not attract much attention except for populist slogans blaring occasional short-term politicians (such as above mentioned Viktor Uspaskich, Rolandas Paksas, and a recent addition, Arunas Valinskas, a wealthy TV-showman-turned-politician). Not surprisingly, political apathy and disengagement have been, and continue to

be, among some of the most prominent trends across the country, reaching new highs almost every year. The “leaderless” Lithuania that has taken shape in the wake of the Brazauskas era appears to be a reality, at least for some time to come.

NOTES

1. Anthony Mughan and Samuel C. Patterson, *Political Leadership in Democratic Societies* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1992).

2. Timothy J. Colton and Robert C. Tucker, *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995); Martin Westlake, *Leaders in Transition* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000); Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, “Let us Now Praise Great Men,” *International Security* 25, no. 4 (Spring 2001); Archie Brown, “Gorbachev, Lenin, and the Break with Leninism,” *Demokratizatsiya* 15, no. 2 (Spring 2007); and George W. Breslauer, *Gorbachev and Yeltsin as Leaders* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

3. Fred I. Greenstein, “Can Personality and Politics be Studied Systematically?” *Political Psychology* 13, no. 1, (1992): 117.

4. Jerrold M. Post, “Assessing Leaders at a Distance: The Political Personality Profile” in Jerrold M. Post, *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders: With Profiles of Saddam Hussein and Bill Clinton* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003); Margaret G. Hermann, “Effects of Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders on Foreign Policy” in Maurice A. East, Stephen A. Salmore, and Charles F. Hermann, *Why Nations Act: Theoretical Perspectives of Comparative Foreign Policy Studies*, (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1978); Margaret G. Hermann, “Ingredients of Leadership” in Margaret G. Hermann, *Political Psychology*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1986).

5. Although there is no consensus in the study of leadership as to how many years a leader should stay in office to make an impact, leadership studies imply that a minimum of three to four years or more appears to be a norm.

6. Took the name of the Lithuanian Socialist Democratic Party (LSDP) in 2001.

7. Even after withdrawing from politics, nearly a half a year later when a poll was taken in parliament, Brazauskas was still ranked as the most influential person in Lithuania. *Veidas*, November 3, 2006.

8. Algirdas Brazauskas, *Lietuviskos skyrybos* (Vilnius: Politika, 1992); Algirdas Brazauskas, *Penkeri Prezidento Metai: Ivykiai, Prisininimai, Mintys*. (Vilnius: Pradai, 2000)

9. For the evaluation of personal contributions to Lithuania’s economic life by Brazauskas himself see Algirdas Brazauskas, *Apsisprendimas, 1988-1991*. (Vilnius: Vaga, 2004).

10. For a more detailed assessment of Brazauskas and the role that the LKP and its successor, the LDDP, played in country’s politics in the early 1990s see Julius Smulkstys, “Brazauskas in Power: An Assessment,” *Demokratizatsiya* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1994).

11. John P. Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 186.

12. For a detailed personal account see Algirdas Brazauskas, *Lietuviskos skyrybos* (Vilnius: Politika, 1992).

13. *Lietuvos rytas*, June 5, 2006; Algirdas Brazauskas, *Ir tuomet dirbome Lietuvai* (Vilnius: Knygiai, 2007).

14. *Lietuvos rytas*, June 5, 2006

15. Olaf F. Knudsen, *Baltic Security: Domestic Factors* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Relations, 1993).

16. Andrew Cornwell, “Brazauskas’ Base For Cooperation,” *Central European* 26 (October 1993): 38; *The Guardian*, February 13, 1993; Algirdas Brazauskas, *Lietuviskos skyrybos*. (Vilnius: Politika, 1992).

17. *The Baltic Independent*, October 30-November 5, 1992.

18. Richard J. Krickus, “Democratization in Lithuania,” in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, eds., *The Consolidation of Democracy in East-Central Europe*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

1997); Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and the Path to Independence*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993)

19. *U.S. News and World Report*, May 23, 1994.

20. This was certainly the case in the 1990s. However, Brazauskas changed his position, opting to credit and even “glorify” his accomplishments and work carried out during the Soviet period in Lithuania. See Algirdas Brazauskas, *Apsisprendimas, 1988-1991* (Vilnius: Vaga, 2004).

21. Brazauskas pushed the idea that there were very few “real” communists in Soviet Lithuania. “Who [could be considered] a communist? In the [LKP] maybe 3 percent were communists and the rest were just members, regular people. Everybody in my generation grew under the Soviet system, and this was our destiny [to join the LKP],” argued Brazauskas. *Diena*, October 14, 1995. Also see *The Baltic Independent*, February 19-25, 1993 and Algirdas Brazauskas, *Apsisprendimas, 1988-1991* (Vilnius: Vaga, 2004).

22. Some observers find it strange to credit Brazauskas as the first president of re-established Lithuania. The reason for this is that—only in the West—Landsbergis is widely known as the “first president.” In Lithuania, in public references or legal documents, Landsbergis was never referred to as a president but rather as a Chairman of Supreme Council (later to be renamed parliament). Although in such a capacity, Landsbergis was officially the head of state, legally, he was not titled as president and this title was largely self-prescribed and adopted during his travels abroad.

23. Laimonas Talat-Kelpsa, “Pusiau prezidentalizmo link: Lietuvos institucines reformos analize,” *Politologija* 1, no. 7 (1996).

24. Ausra Park, *Giving Face to Baltic Foreign Policies: The Role of Leadership and Institutional Context in a Time of Transition (1991-1999)* (PhD dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2005).

25. Refer to content analysis results of Brazauskas speeches (Table 5.2) in Ausra Park, *Giving Face to Baltic Foreign Policies: The Role of Leadership and Institutional Context in a Time of Transition (1991-1999)* (PhD dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2005).

26. Laimonas Talat-Kelpsa, “Pusiau prezidentalizmo link: Lietuvos institucines reformos analize,” *Politologija* 1, no. 7 (1996).

27. *Tiesa*, October 7, 1993.

28. Brazauskas’ credo, to which he subscribed and continued to uphold even after he left the presidential office, was to do things in a “step by step” manner. See *Kauno diena*, December 18, 1999.

29. *The Baltic Observer*, 19-25 May 1994.

30. Ausra Park, *Giving Face to Baltic Foreign Policies: The Role of Leadership and Institutional Context in a Time of Transition (1991-1999)* (PhD dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2005).

31. Interview with Raimundas Valatka, deputy editor of *Lietuvos rytas* (the largest Lithuanian daily), April 30, 2003 and July 25, 2007. Also see Algirdas Brazauskas, *Penkeri Prezidento Metai: Ivykiai, Prisisiminimai, Mintys* (Vilnius: Pradai, 2000).

32. *Respublika*, March 14, 1998; *Vakaro žinios*, July 2, 2001; *Veidas*, November 2, 2006.

33. For more on the intra-institutional struggle between the Presidential office headed by Brazauskas and Parliament Chairmanship headed by Landsbergis, see Ausra Park, “Baltic Foreign Policy Making Establishments of the 1990s: Influential Institutional and Individual Actors,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 36, no. 2 (2005).

34. Algirdas Brazauskas, *Penkeri Prezidento Metai: Ivykiai, Prisisiminimai, Mintys* (Vilnius: Pradai, 2000).

35. The primary purpose of Brazauskas’ trip to Moscow was to meet with a head of the Russian natural gas provider “Itera”. Energy questions, particularly regarding the choice of oil and gas providers, were a high priority concern for Lithuanian policymakers for quite sometime by then, and the subject matter eventually became a true political hot potato that each government and prime minister had to address. It has been an established fact that Brazauskas’ preferences laid with the Russian oil and gas companies. See *The Economist*, August 25, 2001.

36. *Lietuvos rytas*, March 14, 2002.

37. *Lietuvos rytas*, July 12, 2001 and December 8, 2001.

38. For detailed accounts on Lithuania’s economic indicators see Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Reports: Lithuania 2001-2006* (issued annually since 1996).

39. For instance, Lithuania’s GDP plummeted 3.9 percent, exports declined (Eastern markets lost

attractiveness due to disruption in payments, local market consumption stalemated, and western European markets were still difficult to penetrate), hundreds of local businesses went bankrupt, and unemployment grew.

40. *Lietuvos rytas*, October 19, 2001.

41. *BBC News*, July 3, 2006.

42. Indeed, he was the head of the Lithuanian delegation in signing the alliance treaty in the US and then membership agreement in Greece—an excellent PR move on his part, largely targeting to impress a domestic audience.

43. *Veidas*, March 14, 2002; *Lietuvos rytas*, March 14, 2002; *Kauno diena*, March 13, 2002; *Verslo žinios*, March 13, 2002; *Vakaru ekspresas*, April 7, 2003; *Vakaro žinios*, January 29, 2002.

44. Refer to Government Performance Report 2005, Prime Minister’s statement. Available at http://www.lrv.lt/main_en.php?cat=2&d=4001 (accessed in October 2007).

45. Tony Austin, “Brazauskas taps into Lithuania’s protest vote,” *Reuters World Report*, October 9, 2000; *ELTA*, April 11, 2005; *BNS*, April 11, 2005.

46. *ELTA*, April 11, 2005.

47. *Veidas*, April 24, 2003.

48. *Veidas*, April 24, 2003; *Lietuvos rytas*, April 14, 2003; *XXI amžius*, June 6, 2003.

49. *ELTA*, December 12, 2003. President Paksas did not take prime minister’s advice and was impeached by the parliament in 2004.

50. Refer to the following sources for further information on the so-called Paksas-gate: *BNS* January 8, 2004; *The Economist*, November 15, 2003 and January 10, 2004; *Lietuvos rytas*, January 6, 8, 12, 15, February 6, 18, 23-27, March 1-6, 10, 24, 26, 29, 30, April 4-7, 2004; Terry D. Clark and Egle Verseckaite, “PaksasGate: Lithuania Impeaches Its President,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 52, pp. 16-24.

51. *Lietuvos rytas*, July 17, 2002; *BNS*, June 1, 2006.

52. Given the Constitutional requirement for a president to be politically unaffiliated with any party and to relinquish any political membership one has had up to that point, Brazauskas was unwilling to make such a trade-off once again.

53. For detailed account of parliamentary election results see www.vrk.lt and click on the tab “Election to the Seimas 2004.”

54. Author’s personal experience and knowledge of the Lithuanian language. Also, for indirect inferences in which AMB abbreviation was used in similar context, see *Klaipeda*, December 5, 2005 and July 5, 2006.

55. Reasons for Brazauskas’ apparently radical behavior change are widely debated. Some political observers contributed this change to Brazauskas age, others to his exhaustion in holding on to power, while others claim that the outgoing prime minister finally came to realize that he would not be able, despite his political clout, to carry out any required political-social reforms. Still others believe that by 2005, Brazauskas was able to secure the livelihood of his family businesses and lost interest in pursuing necessary economic reforms. Based on the interview with Raimundas Valatka, deputy editor of *Lietuvos rytas*, April 30, 2003 and July 25, 2007.

56. In-depth analysis of how Brazauskas created his public image over the decades is provided in *Lietuvos rytas*, June 05, 2006.

57. Mantas Martisius, “Kazkas negerai Lietuvos karalysteje,” available at www.delfi.lt (accessed on January 13, 2005); *Veidas*, October 27 and December 22, 2005; Saulius Stoma, “Naktis su oligarchija,” available at <http://www.delfi.lt/archive/article.php?id=6504094> (accessed on April 5, 2006); Arunas Spraunius, “V. Rubavicius apie lyderi ir lietuviska demokratija,” available at <http://www.delfi.lt/archive/article.php?id=8652988> (accessed on February 1, 2006).

58. *Lietuvos rytas*, October 12, 2005.

59. *Veidas*, January 16, 2003.

60. *The Economist*, August 25, 2001.

61. *BBC World News*, May 30, 2006.

62. For a detailed overview of this party’s political success since the 1990s, see Algis Krupavicius, “Lithuanian Social Democrats: A Prosperous Postcommunist Party,” in Kay Lawson and Peter H. Merkl, *When Parties Prosper: The Uses of Electoral Success* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007).

63. Nonconfrontational approach adopted by Brazauskas was not necessarily valued by authorities in Russia, as the latter exploited this opportunity to include new demands in the bilateral treaty negotiations. For more see Julius Smulkstys “Brazauskas in Power: An Assessment,” *Demokratizacija* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1994).

64. Laimonas Talat-Kelpsa, “Pusiau prezidentizmo link: Lietuvos institucines reformos analize,” *Politologija* 1, no. 7 (1996).

65. For a detailed analysis of Brazauskas’ legacy on the presidential office see Ausra Park, “Baltic Foreign Policy Making Establishments of the 1990s: Influential Institutional and Individual Actors,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 36, no. 2 (2005). *Veidas*, July 12, 2007.

66. This was the time when not only Lithuania but also other Eastern European states experienced an economic boom, resulting in impressive GDP growth.

67. Peter Mladineo “Lithuanian poll uncertainty unnerves markets,” *Reuters World Report*, October 9, 2000.

68. *Veidas*, December 28, 2007; *Lietuvos rytas*, December 27, 2007.

69. Analysts warned that it would be only a matter of time before Lithuania experiences a tight merger between politics and big businesses as “the country’s new tycoons” (majority of which have strong ties with oligarchs in Russia) would quickly and easily realize how to “buy political influence.” *The Economist*, August 25, 2001. Other articles forecasting this trend and providing evidence are: *Veidas*, August 22, 2002; November 14, 2002; September 9, 2004; October 27, 2005; March 23, 2006; December 14, 2006; and March 29, 2007; *Ziniu radijas*, July 21, 2006; and *Klaipeda*, June 5, 2006.

70. For instance, two of Brazauskas’ friends, Juozas Budrevicius and Petras Papovas, after failing to get elected to parliament in 2004 were appointed through prime minister’s mediation to influential positions—the former as a board chairman of the “Turtas” bank, and the latter as Director of Translation, Documentation, and Information Center, which is a subordinate agency to the government. See *BNS*, August 18, 2005; *The Economist*, August 25, 2001.

71. There were wide speculations in the local media that the ultimate goal of Brazauskas’ return was to determine who and/or which companies would be in charge of Lithuania’s energy sector (with the prime minister’s personal preference going to the big Russian conglomerates). Although it seemed at least initially that Russian gas and oil companies—“Gazprom” and “LUKoil”—may become owners of “Mazeikiu nafta”, the largest refinery in Lithuania, when refinery’s stocks went up the largest share was acquired by the Polish “PKN Orlen.” Thus, Brazauskas’ personal preferences and hopes were dashed by the unfolding events at the time. *Veidas*, December 28, 2006. Details about the prime minister’s efforts to secure contracts for his family businesses are discussed in *Lietuvos ziniuos*, September 10, 2007.

72. There were many speculations in the local media that Bernatoni’s aspiration to become an ambassador was motivated by his need to secure a government pension for life since there was no chance he would have been elected to parliament or any other government post due to his falling approval ratings after he resigned from the post of the Minister of Interior Affairs in 2003. One of the reasons why Estonia rather than some other country was chosen was Bernatoni’s lack of foreign language knowledge except for Russian.

73. Detailed account about Visokavicius nomination and the shortcomings that political appointments for ambassadorial positions present to Lithuania’s diplomatic corps is provided in *Veidas*, June 26, 2003 and September 28, 2006.

74. *Ekstra*, October 31, 2005; also see Egle Digryte, “J. Bernatoniui greiciausiai liks premjero patarejo arba Seimo nario kede,” available at <http://www.delfi.lt/archive/article.php?id=10165119> (accessed on July 20, 2006); *Ziniu radijas*, January 25, 2005; *ELTA*, January 24, 2005; *Lietuvos rytas*, September 4, 2001; *BNS*, August 18, 2005.

75. *Klaipeda*, June 5, 2006 and April 24, 2006; *Lietuvos rytas*, June 5, 2006; *Veidas*, June 2, 2005. Also refer to a 2007 Freedom House survey that ranked states around the world on democracy and corruption index.

76. *Lietuvos rytas*, June 5, 2006; *Klaipeda*, April 24, 2006 and June 5, 2006; *Veidas*, November 2, 2006 and October 11, 2007; and *Lietuvos ziniuos*, November 26, 2007 and May 8, 2008.

77. Virgis Valentinavicius “Apie valdzios netekimo skausma,” *Naujasis zidinys-Aidai*, November-December, 2005.

78. These and other shortcomings affecting Lithuania’s civil society and community were pointed out by President Valdas Adamkus in 2005. Refer to the President’s speech at the 5th National Prayer Breakfast, <http://www.president.lt/en/news.full/6083>. These issues were also discussed in *The Warsaw Voice*, June 28, 2006; *ELTA*, March 3 and August 4, 2005; *Lietuvos rytas*, August 12, 2004 and February 9, 2005; *Lithuanian Radio*, September 9, 2005; Arkadijus Vinokuras, “Epocha i praeiti, nomeklatura—lieka.” Available at <http://www.delfi.lt/archive/article.php?id=9774365> (Dated May 6, 2006).

79. The previous record holder was former prime minister Slezevicius, when 77 percent of the population expressed distrust in his cabinet in 1996. In 2008, distrust “record” was broken yet again, this time by Kirkilas government, when it reached 88 percent. Kirkilas government ultimately collapsed due to its inability to deal with the global economic and financial crises. For more details and analysis see Eurobarometer surveys conducted in 2008.

80. *Veidas*, October 11, 2007.

81. *Ibid.*; *Lietuvos rytas*, June 5, 2006; and *Veidas*, December 27, 2007;

82. Presidency is the only exception and receives strong trust evaluations among all political institutions.

83. Brazauskas’ holding of the two top political posts—the presidency and prime ministership—in addition to being a chair of his political party (first the LKP, then the LDDP and the LSDP) made him different from other former communist leaders who have come to power in the post-communist period. His “counterparts” usually would survive in high office for one or two terms, and would be pushed to the sidelines in their countries. In Lithuania’s case, Brazauskas succeeded in dominating the country’s politics and staying at its center for more than two decades—an impressive achievement for an individual in and of itself. Also see Kimitaka Matsuzato, “Differing Dynamics of Semi-presidentialism across Euro/Eurasian Borders: Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland, Moldova, and Armenia,” *Demokratizatsiya* 14, no. 3 (Summer 2006).

84. “Lietuvos ziniasklaida” available at <http://www.ausra.pl/0711/spauda.htm> (accessed on July 25, 2007).

85. *Veidas*, Jun 9, 2008.

86. The issue of leaderless LDSP was first raised in 2003 and it still continues to be debated. See *Veidas*, January 16, 2003 and December 22, 2005; *Lietuvos rytas*, June 1, 2006. Recently elected president Dalia Grybauskaitė, however, believes that she is representing a new generation of leaders in the country (Olexiy Solohubenko, “How Lithuania Grasped Freedom,” *BBC World News*, July 6, 2009). This is only her opinion, and no other domestic or foreign political analyst or observer has so far arrived to such a conclusion.

87. Virgis Valentinavicius, “Apie valdzios netekimo skausma,” *Naujasis zidiny-Aidai*, November-December, 2005.

88. Among them one could list Mart Laar (former prime minister during the 1990s), Juri Luik (former foreign and defense minister), Toomas H. Ilve (former foreign minister and current president), Kristina Ojuland (former foreign minister), Andres Ansip (current prime minister), and Urmas Paet (current foreign minister).

89. *Veidas*, January 29, 1998.

90. *Veidas*, June 6, 2008; *Savaite*, June 6, 2008.

91. A phrase coined by Leonidas Donskis. See his article in *Klaipeda*, April 24, 2006.