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Legal Framework of State Formation in Lithuania: A Historical Comparison Pre- and Post-EU Integration

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Abstract The accession of new countries to the European Union (EU) in May 2004 marked a qualitatively new stage in the integration processes both in Europe and worldwide. Analysing the positive and negative phenomena accompanying the enlargement of the EU is significant for countries considering or potentially joining the EU in the future. This analysis is crucial when forming long-term economic policies and deciding their integration directions. The experience of the Republic of Lithuania in studying the impact of external political situations on the processes of integration into the European community is seen as illustrative for Ukraine due to shared initial characteristics and historical proximity between the states. The article analyses the features of Lithuania's integration into the European community. A significant normative and systemic gap between the periods studied in the context of the legislative field is demonstrated. The study aims to analyse the dynamics of the normative-legal framework in developing European integration and state-building processes in Lithuania from 1990 to 2021. The research identifies which countries had the most significant influence on the state-building process in Lithuania after 1990 during the establishment and development of democratisation. Fundamental concepts of state-building in Lithuania during the studied period and the corresponding normative-legal framework of the process are highlighted. It is established that Lithuania's accession, despite a solid societal push for integration into the Western political and economic culture, had several distinctive features related to constitutional institutions, significantly impacting the resolution of issues between the government and EU institutions.

Index Terms state-building processes, European integration, regulatory and legal support, decentralisation reform, foreign policy, the Republic of Lithuania

I. Introduction

An essential condition for state-building is forming a practical normative-legal framework that allows the state to move forward quickly and efficiently. Examining these aspects in countries that actively began emerging from the USSR in the early 1990s, it is essential to consider Lithuania's experience. From today's perspective, it is evident that this country is one of the most successful in the post-Soviet space. The normative-legal acts it adopted on the eve of regaining independence, in the early years of its existence as a young state, on the path to EU integration, and after joining the European Union, played a significant role in this process.

The pro-Western orientation of the Baltic countries after gaining independence motivated them to identify strategic priorities in internal and external policies swiftly. Taking the Western European socio-economic development model as a basis, Lithuania positioned integration into European structures as one of the essential ways to strengthen national independence, sovereignty, and national security, which would help solve complex socio-economic problems. Joining the EU was a political priority formed in the Baltic countries long

before integration into pan-European economic interaction mechanisms. This direction was given special political and even symbolic significance. The "Return to the West" project was implemented by governing groups seeking to escape Russian influence. Consequently, state-building processes were based on a European integration vector.

The relevance of studying the normative-legal basis of Lithuania's state-building processes against European integration is due to several factors. The accession of the Baltic states to the EU had several features that were familiar to Ukraine. In particular, these countries have common borders with the Russian Federation; a significant number of Russian-speaking populations reside in their territories; since the economies of the three Baltic states were primarily oriented towards Russia, energy and raw material dependence on Russia forced the governments of these countries to find ways out of this situation. Therefore, studying the experience of solving these problems and the overall movement of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia towards a united Europe is very important for Ukraine. It seems appropriate to determine the influence of neighbouring countries as catalysts or obstacles to implementing the studied

development processes in Lithuania and Ukraine and to assess the extent and measure of their direct or background impact.

II. Literature Review

A significant amount of research on state-building processes in the legal and scientific fields and the search for practical ways to improve them focuses on studying and adapting the experiences of post-Soviet states. Several scholars analyse the historical prerequisites for democratic state-building in Lithuania, while others focus on the potential of the historical conceptualisation of European integration processes.

The empirical basis of the study includes literary sources, monographs, and scientific articles authored by European, Lithuanian, and domestic scholars, including Trabucco [1], Petryshyn [2], Astrauskas [3], Virgilijus [4], Mindaugas [5], Vytautas [6], and Žalimas [7]–[10]. It is worth noting that the work of these scholars possesses a specific theoretical and methodological potential; however, comparing the historical experience of forming the normative-legal foundation of state-building in Lithuania with the concept of the European integration process has been studied fragmentarily. This underscores the relevance of the topic of this study.

The study aims to analyse the dynamics of the regulatory framework from 1990 to 2021 as Lithuania developed European integration and state-building processes.

III. Materials and Methods

A range of general scientific and unique scientific methods, philosophical approaches, and principles of scientific knowledge were used in the research, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the subject. Among the general scientific methods employed, the system method allowed for characterising the specifics of the impact of foreign policy factors on the processes of state-building and European integration in Lithuania as a functional dynamic system. The functional method was used to identify the goals and objectives of the studied processes and their functional purpose. The sociological method was applied to generalise empirical information on the specifics of the practical implementation of state-building and European integration processes. In contrast, the historical method enabled the exploration of their evolutionary progress. The comparative-legal method allowed for distinguishing the features of the evolution of the influence of foreign policy factors on the European integration and state-building processes in Lithuania from 1990 to 2021.

IV. Results

Implementing a comparative analysis of the influence of foreign policy factors on the European integration and state-building processes in Lithuania from 1990 to 2021 requires a broader understanding of the context and initial conditions Lithuania was in when it regained independence. After proclaiming independence, the country formed a new government and adopted a new constitution. The process of state-building and European integration in Lithuania can be conditionally divided into four stages (Table 1).

Period	Features
1990-1997	Implementation of administrative-territorial reform, formation of a decentralised system and its gradual simplification, redistribution of powers
1997-2005	Initiate a discussion on regional policy development and address the issue of administrative oversight of decentralisation and democratisation
2005-2010	Ensuring the preparatory process for the implementation of several legislative decisions to support European integration and state-building processes
Started in 2010	Elimination of district administrations and creation of regional development councils, economically oriented social development, active European integration policy

Table 1: The process of state building and European integration in Lithuania. Source: compiled by the author

Initially, at the end of the 1980s, reformist movements were formed in Lithuania, aimed at establishing national law, democratic principles, a free market, and the implementation of European requirements and norms of state-building. Additionally, it should be noted that closer cultural and religious ties with Western European countries have historically characterised Lithuania. A significant portion of the Lithuanian population is Catholic, which is, to some extent, the result of the prolonged influence of the Polish Catholic Church. Another essential precondition for Lithuania's intensive integration into the European community was that the Lithuanian language is a model of the Indo-European languages of the Baltic group, allowing Lithuania to distance itself from the Soviet Union in this regard. These factors significantly influenced the state-building processes and the formation of Lithuania's foreign policy development course, as the reform of state institutions is only possible with the involvement of civil society and its active transformation processes.

After the international community recognised Lithuania's independence, the country set a course for closer ties with the EU and NATO. It is important to note that at that time, there was virtually no opposition to the Western development course within the country, and the internal political discourse was focused on developing an integration algorithm with the European community. Immediately, in 1991, Lithuania began an active policy of rapprochement with the EU and NATO. Within this defined course, the country joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, becoming a beneficiary of EU support programs. In cooperation with neighbouring countries, Lithuania founded the Baltic Assembly, an inter-parliamentary cooperation body on the path to membership in the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance.

In 1994, Lithuania officially declared the priority of joining NATO, and in 1995, signed the European Agreement on Association, analogous to Ukraine's Association Agreement with the EU. However, a significant role was played not by the external aspect of integration into the European community but by implementing several critically necessary political and economic reforms. For Lithuania in the 1990s, the consequential post-Soviet influence was characteristic, expressed in the prioritisation of the state sector in the economy, high

centralisation, and a critical mismatch of national legislation with European norms and requirements.

The outlined preconditions made it impossible for Lithuania to quickly integrate with the EU and NATO, requiring significant internal political efforts to reform and transform socio-political processes through the Association Agreement. By 1999, Lithuania had fully met the political criteria for EU membership and had made significant progress in forming a functional market economy. The decisiveness and radical nature of the reform implementation activities were prerequisites for Lithuania's accession to the EU and NATO in 2004, which was actively supported by the population.

Having distanced itself from the Soviet Union, Lithuania declared the restoration of the independent Lithuanian state established in 1918. The 1992 Constitution of Lithuania proclaims three main principles: a democratic form of government, independence from external control, and national sovereignty. The modern Constitution of Lithuania places significant emphasis on local self-government and its internal and external administration.

Lithuania began the active phase of the struggle to restore its independence in the second half of the 1980s. The organisational centre of these transformations was the democratic movement *Sąjūdis*, established on June 3 1988 [11]. It is important to note that even then, it began drafting normative-legal documents to be adopted immediately after the restoration of state independence. This is confirmed by an analysis of the work of the newly elected Restorative Seimas on February 24 1990, where the majority were democratic forces of *Sąjūdis*. The first noteworthy point is the beginning of the Seimas' work. Notably, it began its activities on March 10 1990, at the end of the second round of parliamentary elections. On the same day, the first draft laws were considered, including the draft law of the LSSR, "On Amending the Regulations on the LSSR Joint-Stock Company," prepared by members of *Sąjūdis*. This law defined the procedure for electing the President of the Supreme Council, a position of importance for the subsequent legislative work of the body [12].

Already on March 11 1990, when 133 deputies gathered in the meeting hall, they adopted several pre-prepared important state-building documents: the law "On the Name and Coat of Arms of the State," the Act of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania on the Restoration of the Independent State of Lithuania, the law "On the Restoration of the Validity of the Constitution of Lithuania of May 12 1938," the Provisional Basic Law, the law on the Provisional Basic Law of the Republic of Lithuania, the law "On the Change of Status of the State Administration Bodies of the Former Lithuanian SSR," the Resolution "On the Extension of Powers of Certain State Bodies of the Republic of Lithuania" [13], [14].

A similar situation was observed in the following days and even months, as the Lithuanian parliament held meetings almost daily to consider issues such as changing the status of state enterprises [15], including broadcasting companies [15], invalidating the Law on General Military Service of the USSR

on the territory of the Republic of Lithuania [16], adopting the Law on the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on March 22 1990, which had been developed back in December 1989, appointing government officials, forming temporary working groups of deputies, adopting resolutions "On the State Coat of Arms of the Republic of Lithuania" [17] and on marking the state border [18], etc. However, in this context, it is also worth paying attention to Moscow's reaction to the events in Lithuania. M. Gorbachev could not react sharply to Lithuania's declaration of independence on March 11 1990, as he was conducting his election campaign for the first president of the USSR at that time and was opposed by the republican and interregional group of deputies, so he urgently needed the support of deputies from Lithuania [19].

However, just a few days after the declaration of independence, the Kremlin activated the activities of some communists who opposed independence (supporters of the CPSU) in Lithuania. They aimed to destabilise the political situation in the country by inciting separatist sentiments, such as in the border town of *Sniečkus* (now *Visaginas*) near Belarus, organising rallies to collect signatures against the newly adopted legal acts and institutions (in line with the Kremlin's official stance); initiating strikes in Vilnius bakeries to disrupt bread supply to the population; inciting Lithuanian military personnel to resist; exerting propaganda pressure through Central Soviet television channels on the population and demonstrating military force at the border for psychological pressure; attempting to create parallel state structures by seizing the property of the Lithuanian Communist Party with military force; trying to isolate Lithuania on the international stage, etc. [20]–[23]. As a result, within two weeks, negative societal trends were observed in the country, with anti-independence opponents and the military seizing government institutions and organisations. In response, on March 26 1990, the Seimas adopted a resolution, "On Measures to Ensure the Normal Operation of State and Public Enterprises, Institutions and Organizations," aimed at normalising the situation in the country [24].

Despite the intense pressure from Moscow, on April 5 1990, the Law "On the Certificate of a Citizen of the Republic of Lithuania" was adopted to regulate citizenship issues until new passports were issued. The government formation process was completed, making it ready to implement new economic reforms [25]. However, the economic blockade imposed by the Kremlin in the second half of April 1990 somewhat slowed down the process of adopting necessary legal acts [26]. The Lithuanian parliament's focus shifted to legal acts aimed at establishing a state commission for preparing and implementing anti-blockade measures and some amendments to laws on enterprises and media operations [27]. In May 1990, despite the blockade, the Lithuanian parliament initiated the preparation of documents for agrarian reform and, at the end of the month, adopted a vital resolution, "On the Procedure for Enacting the Law on the Department of State Control of the Republic of Lithuania" [28].

A similar situation continued in the following months. The

Lithuanian parliament made maximum efforts to overcome the USSR's "nervous war, psychological war, and political blockade" and achieve progress in negotiations on Lithuania's withdrawal from the USSR [29].

However, in early January 1991, the situation between Lithuania and the USSR escalated, and the USSR threatened a forceful takeover of Lithuania. On January 12, 1991, the Seimas adopted a resolution, "On Measures for the Defense of the Republic of Lithuania," and the parliament began preparing for defence (Stenograma № 91, 1990). After the USSR used military force against Lithuania on the night of January 12-13, 1991, resulting in the deaths of over 14 people, mostly young (Stenograma № 93, 1990), the resolve of the Lithuanian parliament only strengthened, expressing the intention to fight for their statehood even in exile. This is evidenced by the Law "On the Emigration of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania," hastily adopted at the morning session of the Seimas on January 13, 1991. However, the situation with the government was not straightforward, as the absence of Prime Minister Albert Šimėnas required the urgent appointment of temporary Prime Minister Gediminas Vagnorius, though the former soon returned [30].

Despite the escalation of relations with the USSR, the Lithuanian parliament and society managed to withstand the pressure of this political totalitarian machine. Moreover, the Lithuanian Seimas decided to prove the natural state of Lithuanian independence to the world and further consolidate Lithuanian society around an independent democratic Lithuanian state. For this purpose, on January 16, 1991, at the session of the Supreme Council, Chairman Landsbergis, presenting the draft resolution, proposed organising a plebiscite of the residents of the Republic of Lithuania on February 9, 1991, with the intent to determine whether they approved of the new formulation of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, which was being developed and aimed at building a democratic state. On February 9, 1991, voter turnout at polling stations was 84.73%, with 90.47% supporting the plebiscite with the word "yes." The results of this plebiscite also contributed to the deputies adopting the constitutional law "On the Lithuanian State" with 116 votes on February 11, 1991. This law proclaimed that "The State of Lithuania is an independent democratic republic," and its status could only be changed through a general plebiscite of the Lithuanian people if at least three-quarters voted in favour [31].

In the context of state-building, 1992 was also significant regarding the constitutional process, institutional development, and establishing control over state security. To strengthen the system of checks and balances in the central government, it was decided in 1992 to reinstate the presidency, an initiative that had emerged in late 1991. Due to intense debates surrounding this issue and the parliament's ambiguous position, on March 12, 1992, the Supreme Council adopted a resolution, "On the Referendum Regarding the Restoration of the Presidency of the Republic of Lithuania." Several draft laws were submitted for citizens' consideration to regulate the presidency. However, only 59.18% of all voters participated in

the referendum, with 69.27% of those participants supporting the draft laws. According to the procedure established by the Referendum Law, this amounted to only 40.99% of the total number of voters in the republic, meaning the draft laws did not receive the necessary voter approval, and the process was somewhat postponed [31].

On June 14, 1992, the Supreme Council decided to hold a referendum on the unconditional and immediate withdrawal of former Soviet troops from the territory of the Republic of Lithuania. These steps were necessary because negotiations on this issue with the Kremlin, which had been ongoing for several years, had reached an impasse. It is also important to note that on June 8, 1992, shortly before the referendum, the Supreme Council adopted the Constitutional Act "On Strengthening the Republic of Lithuania" at an extraordinary session, which affirmed "non-affiliation with post-Soviet eastern alliances" [32]. On June 14, 1992, 70.05% of all voters participated in the referendum. 68.95% of the total number of voters, or 90.67% of those who participated in the voting, supported the withdrawal of the USSR army from the territory of the Republic of Lithuania. The decision adopted at the referendum came into force on June 18, 1992 [33].

Another significant step in the Lithuanian state-building process occurred on July 9, 1992, when the Restorative Seimas voted to hold elections for the Supreme Council on October 25. On the same day, a new law on Seimas elections was passed with 98 votes, coming into effect on August 10. The most important innovation of the Seimas elections was the establishment of a mixed electoral system [34].

The culmination of the state-building activities of the Restorative Seimas of Lithuania was marked by the new Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, adopted in a referendum on October 25, 1992, replacing the Temporary Fundamental Law. The preparation process for the document was quite complex and ambiguous. However, on May 6, 1992, all political forces within the Lithuanian parliament signed the "Declaration on the Constitution of Lithuania," which aimed to create a coalition for the swift adoption of the document [35]. This accelerated the drafting process, and by October 13, 1992, the Supreme Council, with a constitutional majority (98 votes), passed the resolution "On the Draft Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania" [36], which was approved by the citizens of Lithuania on October 25. This is the only Lithuanian Constitution adopted by referendum, supported by almost 81% of Lithuanian citizens who participated in the referendum. Overall, almost 1.5 million voters said "yes" [37]. According to Lithuanian legal scholars Vytautas Sinkevičius and Juozas Žilyš, "The adoption of the Constitution was associated with: the immediate withdrawal of the USSR's occupation army; significant economic reform; implementation of the Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania; administrative-territorial division and self-government reform, and the legal system." The Constitution restored democratic statehood, established the institutional system of the state, and took political and legal actions based on established political and legal principles to ensure human

rights and freedoms [38].

It is notable that after the adoption of the Constitution, the traditional state parliament, the Seimas, replaced the Restorative Seimas, significantly impacting the functioning of the entire legislative body [39]. Additionally, the presidency was reinstated in 1993, resulting in Lithuania becoming a semi-presidential republic [40]. In practice, the president and the majority in the new parliament were predominantly left-leaning, causing considerable societal concern. Former Soviet nomenklatura representatives, taking advantage of loopholes in privatisation legislation, became managers of significant nomenklatura capital. Furthermore, according to Lithuanian researcher Danutė Blažytė-Baužienė, the presence of former party functionaries in the Lithuanian parliament did not significantly aid Lithuania in breaking free from the USSR's embrace. However, it hindered Lithuania from eliminating the pervasive communist party influence and passing a deradicalisation law that would restrict the rights of the communist nomenklatura in government and municipalities. The absence of deradicalisation also slowed some reforms [41]. However, it is difficult to disagree with the Lithuanian historian Andrius Vaišnys's assertion that the classical "left-right" theory is inapplicable in Lithuania, as the value orientations of voters and political parties show an apparent disparity between implicit ideology and actual decisions [42].

This thesis is confirmed by the fact that the newly elected parliament at the end of 1992, despite its leftist leanings (76 out of 141 seats belonged to former communists), continued the course initiated by the Restorative Seimas to strengthen independence, mainly through a foreign policy aimed at economic and political integration of Lithuania into the EU and NATO [43]. For example, on January 4, 1994, Lithuania submitted its application for NATO membership, and on April 26, 1994, it signed an agreement with Poland. On June 25, 1993, the country introduced its currency (the litas) [44]. Even more indicative is the year 1995, when severe legislative initiatives were launched aimed at harmonising internal acts with EU normative-legal acts and strengthening the national structure of the state.

Firstly, it refers to the "Law on the State Language of the Republic of Lithuania," adopted on January 31, 1995, against language controversies. This law established the use of the state language (Lithuanian) in Lithuania's public life, protected and controlled the state language, and established responsibility for violations of the Law on the State Language [45], [46]. Another essential document adopted that day was the resolution "On the Reorganisation of the Energy System" [47]. In February and the following months, laws regulating the activities of public organisations and political parties were adopted [48] concerning the status of a local council deputy, the status of enterprises not subject to privatisation [49], and others.

Overall, most of the bills were aimed at adapting to the European legal system, allowing Lithuania to sign the Agreement on Associate Membership with the EU on June 12, 1995, and on December 7, 1995, approve the statement "Regarding

the Application of the Republic of Lithuania to Become a Member of the European Union" and submit it the next day [50]. Studies show that during the Seimas's term, from 1992 to 1996, 1440 government and 1058 parliamentary legal acts were registered in parliament, with 72.3% of government documents and 61.6% of parliamentary documents approved [51].

The Lithuanian parliament's work intensified even more after submitting the application and electing a new parliament. From 1996 to 2000, 3000 document projects were registered in the Seimas, with 2223 approved. Of the 80 legal acts registered on the President's initiative, 68 projects (15 bills and 53 resolution projects) were adopted. Of the 2225 ratification law projects registered by the President and the Government, 204 ratification letters were approved. Of the 1156 projects registered by the Government, 981 documents (908 bills and 73 projects of resolutions and other acts) were adopted. Of the 1539 projects registered by Seimas deputies, 970 projects (558 bills and 412 other act projects) were adopted.

On November 6, 1997, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania adopted the resolution "On Government Priorities for Lithuania's Integration into the European Union," which formed the basis of the National Program for the Adoption of Acquis (NAPP) approved by the Seimas on March 17, 1998 [52]. The adoption of these documents had severe consequences for Lithuania, as the country embarked on several reforms, including local self-government decentralisation, gradually increasing municipal powers but not political ones; changing land sale policies to foreigners, strengthening the protection of Lithuania's eastern borders; completing the planned privatisation program; and implementing the energy sector restructuring strategy [53].

After Lithuania completed the roadmap, it was admitted to the EU on May 1, 2004. This event marked a new phase in Lithuania's state-building processes, primarily involving transferring some of its sovereign powers to European institutions, and the Seimas became involved in the supranational decision-making process. The country aimed to integrate into EU structures as quickly as possible, as more than 1,700 legislative and executive legal acts needed harmonisation. At the initial stage, Lithuania adopted the Constitutional Act "On the Membership of the Republic of Lithuania in the European Union," and a new section was added to the Statute of the Seimas [54].

In the ESTEP report (European Social, Legal and Economic Projects) on the implementation of EU norms in Lithuania from January 10, 2012 ("Strengthening the Effectiveness of the System of Development and Implementation of European Union Law in the Republic of Lithuania"), the extent of Lithuania's achievements during this period was documented. The report categorised the legal acts regulating the implementation of EU norms in Lithuania into three stages:

- 1) before EU accession, which facilitated the completion of the roadmap;
- 2) 2004-2009 – establishing coordination of the system for transposing and implementing EU legislation, with the

creation of a particular information system for document flow between Lithuania and the EU;

- 3) from 2009 onwards – integrating EU norms into the system of state authorities of the Republic of Lithuania. The report also indicated that by 2010, Lithuania had exemplary transposition of EU legislation into its system, but after 2010, it began prioritising national legal acts. Problems emerged in implementing areas such as transport, the internal market, services, justice, and energy [55].

The Lithuanian parliament was active in legislative activities, as evidenced by registering over 5,000 legal acts in the Seimas from 2008 to 2012, though only about 50% were adopted. The highest number of legal acts was adopted between 1996 and 2008, with a decline observed up to around 2016 [51]. Evaluating the state-building activities of the Lithuanian parliament before and after EU integration, Lithuanian researcher Alvidas Lukošaitis noted, "In both cases, the decisions adopted by the parliament concerned the institutionalisation of the new political system (or democracy), the redistribution of governmental powers, the regulation of property relations, the introduction of new political, cultural values, and standards of sociocultural behaviour. The only difference is that in the second period of Europeanization, the entire political system underwent significant legal acculturation thanks to the parliament's decisions" [51].

However, it should be noted that after the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine in 2014, Lithuania began paying more attention to legislative acts aimed at strengthening national interests and national security. In this regard, the conceptual changes in the Constitutional Doctrine of the Republic of Lithuania in 2017 and 2019 emphasised strengthening human-centrism and combating disinformation and propaganda. Additionally, the Constitutional Court's resolution of December 18, 2019, declared the adoption of laws in urgent and especially urgent procedures, particularly those ensuring the functioning of the state [56].

European integration became the main factor for Lithuania, significantly influencing the country's development and acting as the primary catalyst for social-political reforms and economic growth. Following this path, Lithuania transformed its legislative framework according to the Copenhagen criteria, bringing the country closer to the level of a consolidated democracy.

The activities of the Lithuanian parliament in the early days of its work in 1990 were not ideal, partly because the parliament included about 40 communists (LKP). While they did not aggressively oppose Lithuania's restoration of independence, they tried to prolong the process, particularly concerning the voting for the Act of Independence Restoration. The communists proposed adopting it a few months later under the pretext of further development. More dangerous were the activities of the CPSU wing loyal to Moscow, which operated primarily at the local level, destabilising the situation and actively informing the Kremlin about the current sentiments of Lithuanians.

A remarkable aspect of the Lithuanian Seimas' activities was the intensity of its work. Analysing the transcripts of the Lithuanian Supreme Council sessions in the first year of independence and comparing them with the Ukrainian Supreme Council sessions, we notice significant differences. In Lithuania, the Seimas worked almost daily, discussing and adopting crucial state-building acts prepared in advance, covering almost all spheres of life. Another significant difference was that the Lithuanian parliament operated while the USSR still functioned fully, exerting severe political, economic, and moral-psychological pressure on Lithuania's political leadership and population.

Despite the situation's complexity, the Lithuanian parliament had a severe advantage over the Ukrainian Supreme Council – most members were from national democratic forces, enabling quicker decision-making. Furthermore, there was no obstacle like the presidential institution in Ukraine. Another crucial difference in the Seimas' work during the first year of independence was its close attention to public-political sentiments in the country. The leadership of the young state understood well that the Kremlin would make maximum efforts to create protest potential and hotspots of dissatisfaction in society, exhausted by economic blockade. Therefore, to prevent such manifestations, the head of the parliament constantly informed colleagues about the socio-political situation and urged them to counter these threats [57].

One of the most critical conditions for EU accession is transferring control over the country's judicial sphere [58]. The primary goal of this process is to increase the efficiency of Lithuania's system in EU matters at both interdepartmental and institutional levels. The project aims to ensure the seamless functioning of the EU affairs management system, enhance the effectiveness of Lithuania's representation in the EU, and improve the transposition and quality of implementation. Strengthening the effectiveness of EU policy implementation in the Republic of Lithuania is explained by the fact that the optimal level of legislation for implementing EU policies is a necessary precondition for effective functioning. This project allowed the identification of problems in the current system of EU law development and implementation in Lithuania, determining its effectiveness and proposing modern solutions based on advanced European experience to improve this system.

Attention should be focused on the legislative activities of Lithuanian deputies in the European Parliament and the specifics of elections to this structure. Political polarisation intensifies in Lithuania, and parties with significant coalition potential disappear. This could negatively impact the formation of governing coalitions of similar political orientations. Additionally, there is a leadership crisis, especially in smaller parties, where leaders are either "borrowed" (e.g., L. Donskis) or intend to withdraw from national politics. The importance of party institutionalisation is also highlighted. This conclusion is drawn because voters were inclined to come out and support TS-LKD despite its strict austerity measures. The importance of party institutionalisation is particularly evident

in the case of LLRA.

After 2009, the composition of Lithuanian representatives in the European Parliament changed. Notably, the 2009 European Parliament elections, unlike those in 2004, featured a significant number of political party leaders running for seats. This was due to political and legal challenges faced by these leaders in Lithuania, which they aimed to address through the European Parliament elections. Leaders elected to the European Parliament included Viktoras Uspaskich (DP), Rolandas Paksas (TtT), and Valdemaras Tomaševskis (LLRA). In 2009, three MEPs were re-elected (25%): Vytautas Landsbergis, Laima Andrikienė, and Justas Vincas Paleckis. Notably, none of them changed their party affiliation during the previous term. Other former MEPs either chose parties that did not make it to the European Parliament (Eugenijus Maldeikis and Margarita Starkevičiūtė - PDP, D. Budreikaitė - KKSS, O. Juknevičienė - LCP) or were overshadowed by political party leaders participating in the elections.

Even though 50% of Lithuanian MEPs changed their party affiliation during the term (mainly representatives of DP and LiCS), a third participated in the 2009 European Parliament elections as candidates from other parties. These data show that political parties cannot be sure that MEPs elected from their lists will continue to represent the party. This indicates a weak connection between MEPs and national authorities, as cooperation with the party tends to end long after joining the European Parliament. Such a situation does not encourage participation in the European Parliament elections [59].

Some issues in legislation are related to unconstructive interaction between the authorities involved in the process and the attitude of Seimas deputies towards legislative decisions. The complex and constantly changing circumstances between 1990 and 2020 led to an excessive legislative agenda in the Seimas and a highly active legislative role, causing instability in the legal system. The quality of legislative decisions made by Parliament was negatively impacted by the neglect of comprehensive expertise on bills, an unjustified and, in the long term, unhealthy habit of exceptional legislative rules (urgency and special urgency procedures), vast legislative discretion of Seimas deputies, and insufficient attention to planning the legislative agenda.

During the transformation period (1990-2000) in Lithuania, the processes of state restoration, democracy consolidation, and creating a free market economy co-occurred. The Supreme Council-Seimas (SC-S) immediately and permanently became the epicentre of systemic, structural, and public policy reforms. Other segments of the political system were either absent or weak, making the parliament a characteristic element of democratisation, parliamentarisation, and a subject of legitimisation. These processes unfolded simultaneously with incredible intensity, often under challenging conditions such as sharp economic downturns or overt aggression from hostile foreign states. It can be argued that the Lithuanian state was restored within a few months, democracy was formally consolidated after the so-called second change of power in 1996, and the principles of a free market economy were formally

established within ten years by 2000.

2000-2008 was the most active period of European integration. For the second time since gaining independence, the legislative process gained new momentum, marked not by individual agenda items but by a consistent and continuous legislative process. Endless global reforms, constant major overhauls of public policy, and the continuous advancement of the Seimas' legislative agenda, conditionally termed impulses of "transformation" (1990-2000) and "Europeanization" (2000-2010), led to a very intense parliamentary agenda (overload).

From the perspective of "Europeanisation," it can be said that it was ultimately established that the functions of the parliament are unbalanced, and the legislative power is destabilised. The legislative power has become improperly exclusive. Experts often point out that such a situation results from unjustified, interchangeable, and unclear decisions made by the parliament, particularly in the legislative sphere.

The practical application of Lithuanian experience in addressing systemic issues in Ukraine involves considering global and local factors that currently negatively impact the effectiveness of reforms. The constitutionally enshrined irreversible European and Euro-Atlantic course must be supported by adopting a series of normative legal acts in synergy with implementing practical measures to uphold the core values of a democratic society. At the same time, state authorities and local self-government must equally interact and bear responsibility within the scope of achieving these goals.

V. Discussion

As scholars [1], [2] assert, socio-political transformations, despite the spectrum of destructive factors, simultaneously served as a driving force in Lithuania for radically changing the format of relations in foreign policy practice, as well as in the aspect of cooperation with global institutions to ensure sustainable development towards European integration. According to Astrauskas [53] and Virgilijus [4], the analysis of the historical prerequisites for democratic state-building in Lithuania, in comparison with other countries, allows focusing on the potential of the historical conceptuality of European integration processes.

In turn, as researchers [5], [6] believe, Lithuania positions itself as a striking example of a country that, despite its size, is an active player in the region. It is a state that has defined its strategic goals and values, managed to carry out necessary structural reforms, and found its place within the architecture of NATO and the EU. It advocates democratic transformations in the region and acts as a partner capable of assisting even in difficult times.

Considering Lithuania's experience [7]–[10], the prospective development vector for Ukraine should include the optimal improvement of public administration models and further maximum integration into the European environment.

VI. Conclusion

The research resulted in several conclusions regarding the reformist potential of European integration processes in Lithuania. Strong international support for democratic state-building processes successfully mitigates threats posed by adherence to the European integration course in the context of crisis socio-political conditions. The analysis of Lithuania's integration into the European community highlighted certain stages characterised by specific principles and mechanisms of European integration policy. The issue of adapting the normative-legal framework for Lithuania's state-building processes to the requirements of the European Union demonstrates a significant normative and systemic gap between the studied periods in the legislative context.

The analysis of the dynamics of the normative-legal basis in the process of the development of European integration and state-building processes in Lithuania from 1990 to 2021 convincingly shows that Lithuania's accession, despite a solid public push towards integration into the Western political, economic, and legal culture, had several specific features related to constitutional origins and institutions, which significantly influenced the resolution of issues between the government and EU institutions. The study identified the countries that had the most significant impact on the state-building process in Lithuania after 1990 in the context of the establishment and development of democratisation, determined the essence of their interests, and ways of influence that either motivated or hindered the state-building and European integration processes. Fundamental state-building concepts in Lithuania during the studied period, in the context of the conformity of the normative-legal basis to the process, indicate that Lithuania positioned integration into European structures as one of the essential ways to strengthen national independence, sovereignty, and national security, which was potentially expected to help solve complex socio-economic problems.

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