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Multinational Force Ukraine Series

Lithuania: Balancing Ambition with Capacity

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Political Will

Lithuania approaches the discussion on a Coalition of the Willing (CoW) for Ukraine from a position of exceptional political commitment, shaped by strategic necessity, historical experience, and strong public support. Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion, Lithuania has emerged as one of Ukraine's staunchest European backers, politically and materially. It was among the first countries to signal readiness to join exploratory discussions on a Multinational Force Ukraine (MFU) after the Paris meeting. For Lithuania, Ukraine's security is directly tied to its own security: a successful Russian offensive or a frozen conflict on Russia's terms would dramatically increase threats to the Baltic region. The increasingly ambiguous US stance under a second Trump administration has sharpened Lithuania's strategic calculus, strengthening its conviction that Europe must show credible agency in supporting Ukraine's defence and future security.

Former defence Minister Dovilė Šakalienė has publicly committed the country to joining CoW, including the military capabilities, emphasizing the importance of demonstrating European resolve, particularly to ensure continued US involvement, which Lithuania views as essential for deterrence and sustainability. President Gitanas Nausėda has also described the reassurance force concept as "a necessity". Despite limited budget and ambitious own defence needs Lithuania continues to provide financial aid for the defence of Ukraine. Lithuania contributed approximately 1.43 percent of its 2024 GDP in assistance for Ukraine placing itself consistently in Europe's top tier of supporters alongside Estonia and Denmark. Vilnius has committed to maintaining this trajectory in the coming years through a pledge to allocate no less than 0.25 percent of its GDP annually for Ukraine's security and defence. Additionally, a ten-year bilateral security cooperation agreement was signed in Brussels by President Nausėda and President Zelensky. It further institutionalizes this long-term commitment, encompassing military support, resilience building, intelligence cooperation, cyber defence, and support for Ukraine's integration into NATO and the EU. At the beginning of 2025 military aid to Ukraine has already surpassed €769 million, and that Lithuania's overall, long-term support to Ukraine now exceeds €1.5 billion. Together with Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, and Sweden, it joined a USD 500 million procurement package under the Prioritized Ukraine Requirements List (PURL) aimed at acquiring key military equipment from the United States. This multilateral approach enables Lithuania to contribute more effectively despite limited national resources.

Military Capability

Lithuania has consistently demonstrated its readiness to contribute to the MFU. It seeks

to do so in a meaningful and targeted manner, using capabilities it can realistically sustain while preserving its own defence readiness. Yet Lithuanian engagement remains conditional on several factors. The President Gitanas Nausėda has noted, that "it must be credible, sufficiently numerous, with clear rules of engagement and a well-defined mandate... The United States' active involvement... is important." Lithuanian military planners argue that a 20,000-strong MF discussed by CoW tasked with securing the entire Ukrainian Russian border would be ineffective and unsustainable without participation from major powers, and larger European states such as Germany and Poland have already signalled reluctance to commit ground forces. Mission must ensure force protection, logistical sustainability, and operational clarity – elements that cannot be guaranteed without US involvement and major-power contributions. For Lithuania, participation in the MFU must be grounded in a broader strategic framework that strengthens, rather than substitutes, Ukrainian capabilities. Lithuania maintains that Ukrainians are best placed to secure their own borders, while external forces should focus on capacity building, regeneration, and specialized support. Its conditions for participation include U.S. backing, a clearly defined mission mandate, and the existence of a peace agreement or a stabilized ceasefire. Finally, domestic legal requirements mean that the Parliament must approve any deployment with a simple majority. Although support for Ukraine's victory and continued Western assistance is high among Lithuania's governing elites, occasional dissent emerges within the Seimas.

Societal backing for general aid for Ukraine remains remarkably strong, but support for the potential military deployment of Lithuanian forces to Ukraine is less pronounced. The 2025 Spring Eurobarometer demonstrates that 80 percent of Lithuanians agree with financing military equipment for Ukraine, it is one of the highest levels in the EU. Civil society mobilization is strong through donations, volunteer networks, and crowdfunded defence projects. But according to a recent public opinion survey, nearly 56 percent of Lithuanians oppose deploying national troops to Ukraine. Approximately 15 percent support deployment only if allied forces also participate, and a similar share back sending troops solely for the purpose of training Ukrainian forces.

At the outset of CoW discussions, Lithuania indicated that it could provide a company-sized unit, either from land or maritime forces. Currently, it signals potential contribution to support regenerating and training of Ukrainian forces. Lithuania is considering deploying roughly twenty instructors across different levels of command to assist the MFU. Forty Lithuanian instructors are already training Ukrainian armed forces in various formats (in and outside Ukraine). Therefore, the most realistic Lithuanian contribution consists of continued and expanded training missions, targeted deployment of small high-readiness units if conditions permit, substantial financial support, and active involvement in multinational procurement and capability development. These contributions align with Lithuania's defence model, its strategic priorities, and its long-term commitment to Ukraine's victory and post-war reconstruction.

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In the *Multinational Force Ukraine series* of policy briefs leading experts from allied countries assess key factors for participation in the Multinational Force Ukraine. This includes the political willingness of allies to deploy troops—on the ground, in the air, or at sea—to establish a military presence in or around Ukraine. They also examine the conditions for such deployments to occur (before, during, or after peace negotiations), the roles these forces would be expected to perform (defensive or offensive), the red lines imposed by national governments, and the specific capabilities each country could realistically contribute.

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