
CITIZENSHIP, SECURITY AND A YOUNG PERSON'S PERSPECTIVE

Vaiva ZUZEVIČIŪTĖ

Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania

E-mail: vaiva.zuzeviciute@mruni.eu

ORCID ID: [0000-0001-5768-1626](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5768-1626)

DOI: 10.13165/PSPO-22-31-07

Abstract. *The discussion is focused on critical analysis of sources, with an emphasis on analysis of the contents of a concept of democracy, its perceptions, assessments and forms of contemporary experiences by young people, also, on conceptualisation of the concept of security and implications.. The aim of this paper is to present the theoretical considerations and results of the pilot empiric study on perspectives on security (the paper analyses the concepts of citizenship and democracy, its history and current state, also some findings of a pilot empiric study on security are presented). Methods of critical reference analysis and survey were used for the development of this paper.*

Keywords: *citizenship;, citizenship education, democracy, security, young adults.*

Introduction

After the collapse of Soviet Union several countries Lithuania regained and cherished the possibility for progress and democracy as independent states. In Lithuania, after the occupation of five decades, Independence was declared on 11 March, 1990; at the moment of developing this paper (2022) the Independence counts more than three decades. Together with 9 more countries, the Republic of Lithuania joined the European Union (EU) in 2004. It is a democratic country, more specifically, according to one perspective, which will be addressed later, it is an electoral democracy. The structure of governance is defined in the Constitution (adopted in 1992), which clearly identifies separation of legislative, executive, judiciary powers, which, as a consequence, serves as a tool for checks and balances to ensure the overall oversight over governing bodies and government's actions. The elections to municipal and state bodies are free with almost no breaches registered in the last elections, moreover, the level of participation in most recent elections of four years cycle to the main legislative body (Seimas (Parliament)) even under the pressure of pandemic reached 47,2% (LR Seimo Rinkimai, 2020). Thus the activities and impact of each individual, a citizen gain an increasing weight on the events and their direction.

It would seem that the country is on the path to prosperity, security, growth. However, the recent external, and thus-inevitably- internal tensions and threats force us to re-think the achieved level, its price and the ways forward.

Thus the **aim** of this paper is to present the theoretical considerations and results of the pilot empiric study on perspectives on security. **Methods** of critical reference analysis and survey were used for the development of this paper.

Short historical overview and the situation today

Though democracy and the role of citizens have been under the scrutiny of intellectual discussions for millennia, but the intensity of discussions varied.

At some instances of human history, the discussions were welcome, and there were other instances, even in very recent history, when the discussions warranted fierce opposition or even sanctions.

While most of us may refer to democracy as having the history of at least 2500 years, and give the example of Ancient Greece, however, the democracy in Athens, while a beacon of hope and pride for democratic thought, still was quite limited. Plato, the founder of much of what is considered the pillars of Western civilization, went as far as call it very bad form of governance (Plato, here from Platonas, 1981). On the one hand, we may agree with the reserved sentiment, because the democracy that was built 500 years BC certainly had its misgivings, e.g., it did not include women among citizens, also there were a number of other limitations, thus, it was rather limited (Sale, 1980). On the other hand, after the collapse of the Ancient Greek system, it took more than 2000 years to start discussing this particular form of governance again in order to formulate the productive, effective approaches, the role of citizens and the mechanisms that enable co-existence of ideas and ambitions, and – yes - individuals. Thus, democracy is a very recent human invention, which deserves to be cherished. While criticism is always welcome, but the fact that this innovation accounts for just the smallest fraction of human history may explain the need for a constant attention and reflection on it and the efforts to stabilize democracy and empower citizens' role.

While the works of thinkers of 17th and especially 18th century in re-birth of the idea of democracy, and consequently, the establishment of democracy as an experienced human reality is of utmost importance, but, due to the limitations for the scope for the paper, just a glimpse on more recent theoretical considerations is provided.

After almost a total dramatic collapse of democracies in 20th century, manifested by cruel world wide wars, then the entrenchment of the Soviet influence after the WWII in a large part of the world, the attention to democracy's founding pillars was acutely renewed. Among many theoreticians the ideas of the depth of democracy, characteristics and the relation between characteristics, the role of citizens were very important in shaping a contemporary, more inclusive idea of democracy (Schumpeter, 2003 (first edition: 1943); Dahl, 1971, Dalis, 1994).

For Schumpeter the democracy mainly was characterized by free elections and freedom to vote, that is, the mechanism of fair representation was more important, which is not surprising as these ideas were formulated in mid-20th century (the primary source was published in 1943 and was re-published decades later, which is referenced here). For Dahl, as his ideas were formulated three decades later, democracy was attributed more characteristics. Among them: the possibility for all the citizens to voice their expectations and needs, the opportunity for citizens to make those expectations publicly known and considered with equal attention and seriousness; therefore, citizens must have the rights to associations, rights to vote, to elect representatives, to be elected as a representative. It was also noted that it is imperative to have a number of impartial news outlets, elections must be free and the elections must have consequences (that is, the policies that were voted for must be followed through).

These ideas were expanded further; later it was added that each and any structure of governing apparatus must be accountable for citizens (including military), moreover, the accountability must be before citizens and among different branches of power, moreover, political and civil pluralism is essential in order to have the arena of competing ideas and policies (Diamond, 1999).

Due to the ideas of these thinkers (and others, including, e.g., Zakaria, 1997), the democracy is viewed today as something complex and multifaceted rather than a solid entity. Democracy may be liberal, or it may be electoral, moreover, there is dynamics, when one form

of democracy may change into another, or certain aspects of, let us say, liberal democracy, may change: sometimes the aspects may expand, sometimes – shrink, thus changing the overall quality and depth of democracy. Electoral democracy is based on fair and free representation in governing; but when it is strengthened by attention to civic rights and liberties, rule of law, independent media, then liberal democracy may emerge (Dahl, 1994).

Lithuania enjoys a functional democracy, thriving economy, even if economy suffered blows by pandemic of 2020 and again more recent blows due to fall-out with China in 2021, and then again another, most recent energy crises due to the war in the Ukraine in 2022. Still, Lithuania participates in international community with a clear voice and solid reputation as being on the side of democracy and respect for human rights, which became especially evident during 2022, when Lithuania offered its support for the Ukrainian refugees and other cases.

According to a recent V-Dem Annual Democracy Report (Lührmann et al, 2019), Lithuania is ranked at the 29th place; which accounts for ranking among the the top 10-20% countries globally in the Liberal Democracy Index ((LDI=0.730); a scale of 01 to 1, where 1 denotes the highest LDI score is used). Various arguments, counterarguments and opposing critical comments may be used regarding the undertaken research methodology, but the fact that just over a third (35%) of the global population lived in democratic countries in 2018 (13% in liberal democracies and 22% in electoral democracies in 56% of countries around the world) indicates that Lithuanian citizens enjoy a privileged status. Lithuania is an electoral rather than a liberal democracy due to the balanced relations between judiciary, executive and legislative powers and the fact that all citizens are equal before law. In the last decade, numerous attempts have been made to increase the transparency and accountability of the judiciary system and especially eradicate political corruption. The attempts resulted in several pre-trial investigations and trials, even legislative changes. However, these factors could have had an opposite effect on the citizens' subjective perceptions, because these incidents attracted media attention, and as a consequence the events could have disproportionately sensitized the citizens to the extent of judicial and political corruption. As a result, several measures were implemented to minimize political corruption, including amendments to the Act on Financing Political Parties and Campaigns (Act on Financing Political Parties, 2013), which strictly define the entities and amounts eligible for contributions.

Another instrument, used by Economist Intelligence Unit (Democracy Index, 2021), employs another methodology and the classification. The instrument identifies four types of governance globally: Full democracies (21 countries, which account for 12.6% of countries), Flawed democracies (53 countries, which account for 31.7% of countries globally), Hybride regimes (34 countries, that is, 20.4% of countries) and Authoritarian regimes (59 countries, which account for 35.3% of all countries globally). The highest index possible in this instrument is 10, and the first rank (the same as in the previously presented instrument) is given to Scandinavian country, Norway: 9.75 out of 10). Generally, the top countries in both instruments are allocated very similarly, thus we may safely conclude that the picture given by both instruments about situation in other countries is also adequate and is as precise as it is possible to achieve precision in such cases.

Lithuania is ranked lower in this instrument (in comparison to a previously presented instrument); it is enlisted among the Flawed democracies, at the 40th place (the index is: 7.18 out of 10). Interestingly, the previous year, the same instrument (Democracy index, 2020) classified 23 countries (13.8% of countries globally) as Full democracies and 52 (31.1%) as Flawed democracies. 35 countries (21% of countries globally) were classified as Hybride regimes. Among Authoritarian regime 57 countries (34.1% of countries) were enlisted; thus, it

seems, the number of both Full democracies and Authoritarian regimes decreased, even if by a small number just recently, in the last year. According to the instrument, the quality of democracy in Lithuania is developing, because in 2020 it was ranked 42nd (index was: 7.13), as opposed to the 40th rank in 2021, which adds to general sentiment about the right direction that the state has taken.

In Lithuania, positive perceptions of the state and the quality of democracy, are also evidenced in the nationally constructed instrument, that is, by Lithuania's rank in the Civic Empowerment Index (CEI). The Civic Empowerment Index (CEI) was developed by the Civil Society Institute. The Civil Society Institute (CSI) is a foundation representing the third sector, therefore its findings may be considered low-biased, if not completely bias-free, because, once it is not a government organization, the CSI does not have agendas to defend or promote its policies and strategies. In 2019, Lithuania scored 39.7 out of 100 points in the CEI, which was the highest value since the first survey had been first conducted in 2007 (Pilietinės galios indeksas, 2019). Voter turnout in national elections, the depth and coverage of national citizenship education policies, strategies and actions indicate that Lithuanians are willing to exercise their civic rights and participate in public life. According to the authors of the CEI Report, this result reflects on the growing potential of civic engagement as Lithuanian citizens are increasingly aware that community and civic organizations as well as individual citizens can significantly influence public decisions. The CEI score in this particular dimension increased from 55.2 points in 2016 to 61.2 in 2019. The mean score measuring Lithuanian citizens' readiness to solve societal problems increased from 34.3 points in 2016 to 36.8 in 2019. Interestingly, even during the pandemic, the CEI score further increased, and in 2020 it was 41.3 (out of 100); the authors of the survey explained the dynamics due to an increased citizens' interest in their lives, policies that were adopted due to pandemic (both in support, and, in many cases one may argue - against the policies for managing the global health crises) (Pilietinės galios indeksas, 2020).

It is important to note that the three referenced instruments – two international and one national - take into account a multitude of factors, while providing the ranking. The increasing ratings of the country illustrate that in Lithuanian society there are many aspects that we must be appreciative of and grateful for.

However, there are still tasks to be aware of. Among the latter young person's relations to democracy and security may be important dimensions, especially in the recent context of looming, almost palpable threats that citizens of this region experience at the time of developing this paper (Autumn, 2022).

Due to technological advancement, globalisation, young people have wider opportunities both to experience and to exercise their rights, responsibilities of a citizen, to experience security, to reflect on it or to share their concerns. Emergence of IT assisted social networks and the enhancement of a second generation human right to education may be useful in trying to frame a contemporary young adult's perception on state, on democracy, on the rights and the duties. The IT assisted social networks are not much older than a young adult, because the internet itself counts just 30 years (Butrime, Zuzeviciute, 2014). The gigantic platforms that constitute so much of contemporary person's life, such as Facebook, counts as many years as our students' age. Thus it may seem that the role of an educator is diminishing and fades away in many aspects of education, including citizenship education. Yet, I disagree.

Surely, the manifestations of citizenship entitlements and activities, where young people are involved are initiated, motivated, planned and implemented using IT assisted social networking platforms. For example, Lithuanian youth organised a series of events to support

BLM movement, thus joining international like-minded community (LRT, 2020, <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/pasaulyje/6/1185531/vilniuje-palaikymo-jav-protestams-eitynes-surenge-aktyvistai-musu-zinute-igirs-ir-amerikoje>). Nationally, a lot of attention and actions, to the extent that some of those even caused some friction with the national legal framework, were dedicated to animals' rights (LRT, 2020 <https://www.tv3.lt/naujiena/video/1058543/po-i-viesuma-kylanciu-nelegaliose-veisyklose-kankinamu-sunu-skandalo-vilniuje-protestas>).

Those and other actions were organised mainly horizontally, they were peer based, organised using IT assisted tools, without much centralised input (Zuzeviciute, Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz, 2022). Proliferation of IT assisted social networks and expansion of their role in young adults' life-fabric, including his/her involvement in democracy's functioning became increasingly evident. But at the same time, those citizenship and morality orientated activities also resulted in breaches of legal frameworks, for example, at times they led to trespassing or breaching private property, which is contrary to rule of law (Zuzeviciute, Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz, 2022).

Thus the role of citizenship education, discussing the limits and rules, reflection on good and evil, on the context and the balance in actions are still important. Exactly the task for an educator to perform. Also, citizenship education may (or must?!) incorporate discussion about supremacy of law, which provides the foundation for security within the country and internationally. These discussion, reflections on what constitutes security and how we may add to it, however, should not add too much stress for our students.

Students' perspectives on security

In the light of the contemporary context, a pilot study was implemented in Autumn 2022 on the perspective of students. 97 students shared their opinions in a questionnaire on security, the Likert scale was used (with '1' denoting the slightest agreement, and '5' denoting the strongest agreement with specific pre-formulated items). Participants study in study programmes related to law enforcement, they represent I study cycle.

Some of the results are surprising in the context of recent events; but not surprising if the age of participants is factored in.

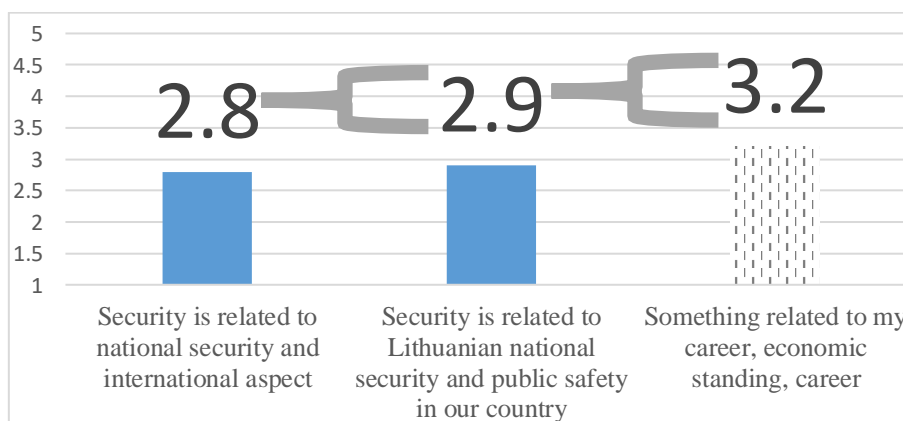


Figure 1. Some perspectives on security and safety: personal aspect

Interestingly, the notions that we – mature people, professionals – take for granted, such as the idea that national and international security are interrelated – were not strongly supported

by students, as it is illustrated in Fig.1. Respondents assessed their ‘career, economic standing’ higher (3.2) than they did ‘security related to national security and public safety’ (2.9).

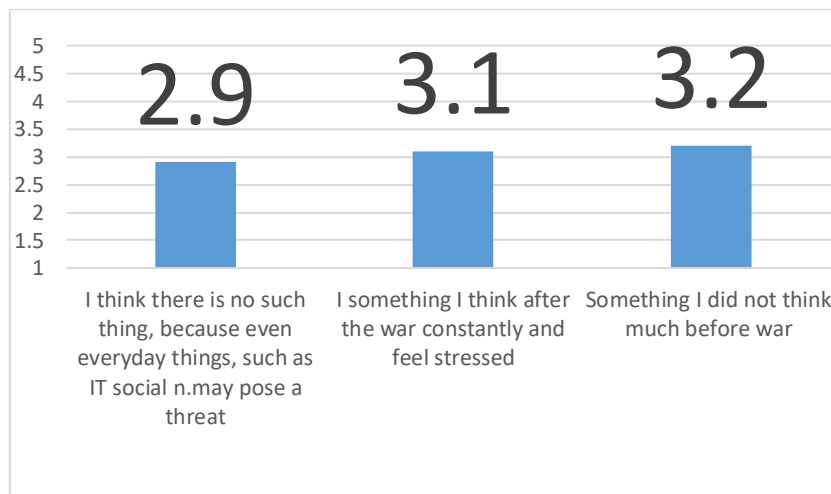


Figure 2. Perspectives on security: impact of war

On the one hand, it was interesting that participants themselves noted the security being related to many aspects in life, e.g., they noted (as it was indicated and discussed in depth in theoretical part of the paper), that even IT networks may (and serve) nefarious purposes. Students’ assessment (agreement with this statement): 2.9.

Not surprisingly, young people did not think too much about security before the war, as it illustrated in Fig.2 (3.2) Now they constantly feel stressed about that (3.1), which reflects well the current situation yet does not add to the quality of life of young people (or any person for that matter).

Conclusions

Contemporary young adult may enjoy the most privileged life in human history (in countries, where the technological advancements and the societal achievements are evident). The high level of education, access to public services, connectivity to the body of readily available body of knowledge and the people globally may be enumerated among many other.

Some of these aspects serve as building blocks for citizenship activity for a young person. The ecology, social justice, moral causes may be enumerated among the pursuits the young people engage easily and in an effective way due to IT social networking. However, the same actions for noble causes may lead – and do - to breaches of legal frameworks and harming other citizens’ rights, thus the role of educator even in this world of abundant information remains important.

The empiric findings quite strongly suggest that security and safety is not something a young person constantly frets about (the definitions and differences between concepts of security and safety are not analysed here in depth; the issue is addressed elsewhere: Šlapkauskas, Zuzevičiūtė, 2022).

The results of empiric pilot study show that only after war security came into forefront of focus, moreover, young people conceptualise ‘security’ being clearly related to career, salary, prospects.

Moreover, I would argue - and it is especially important for educational professionals - a young person should not fret about that (security) too much. On the contrary: a young person should think about friendship, about building social networks, starting a career, establishing oneself as his or her own person. However, we – educational professionals- should still find the way to start discussions about citizenship, security, because any contemporary person should be aware of the situation and his/her place in it. The discussions are necessary, yet there should be a balance between building awareness and stressing young people too much. The first one is necessary. The second will not add to final goal and even may be detrimental to overall security in society.

References

1. Butrimė E., Zuzevičiūtė V. (2014). E-learning as a socio-cultural system: towards a balanced development, Saarbrücken, Lambert Academic Publishing, ISBN 9783659588693.
2. Dahl, R.A. (1971). Polyarchy, participation and opposition. New Haven and London, Yale University Press.
3. Dalis, A., R. (1994). Demokratija ir jos kritikai. Vilnius. Amžius.
4. Democracy Index, 2020. In *Sickness and in Health?* (2020). Available: <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2020/>, Access: 1st August, 2022.
5. Democracy Index, 2021. THE CHINA CHALLENGE (2021). Available: https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2021/#mktoForm_anchor, Access: 1st August, 2022.
6. Diamond, L. (1999). *Developing democracy: Towards Consolidation*. Baltimore and London, the John Hopkins University Press.
7. EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2022). Decision taken today strengthens us all, Available: https://ec.europa.eu/search/?QueryText=candidate+status+ukraine&op=Search&swlang=en&form_build_id=form-U19QyLkKrd5NPXwk9aJIEG8rZ0v7PhBzCjHw3-9Vg44&form_id=nexteuropa_europa_search_search_form, Access: 28th July, 2022
8. Lietuvos Respublikos Politinių Partijų ir Politinių Kampanijų Finansavimo Bei Finansavimo Kontrolės Įstatymo Pakeitimo Įstatymas (Act on Financing Political Parties) 2013 m. lapkričio 26 d. Nr. XII-615, valid since 14 December, 2013; <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.ADD126F0FD6E>, AccessL 12th June, 2022.
9. Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo Rinkimai (2020). Available: <https://rinkimai.maps.lt/rinkimai2020/aktyvumas/>, Access: 27th October, 2020.
10. Lührmann, A., Gastaldi, L., Grahn, S., Lindberg, S. I., Maxwell, L., Mechkova, V., Morgan, R., Stepanova, N., & Pillai, S. (2019). *Democracy Facing Global Challenges [Annual Democracy Report 2019]*. Varieties of Democracy Institute, University of Gothenburg, Access: 16 October, 2021 from v-dem_annualreport2019_test.indd
11. Pilietinės Galios Indeksas (2019.) Available: <http://www.civitas.lt/time-line/pilietines-galios-indeksas-2019-m/>, Access: 1st August, 2022.

-
12. Pilietinės Galios Indeksas (2020). Available: <http://www.civitas.lt/time-line/pilietines-galios-indeksas-2020-m/>, Access: 1st August, 2022.
 13. Platonas (1981). Valstybė, Vilnius, Mintis
 14. Sale, K. (1980). Human Scale, New York, New society Publishers.
 15. Schumpeter, J. (2003). Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy, London, Routledge.
 16. Šlapkauskas, Vytautas; Zuzevičiūtė, Vaiva. Between Security and Safety - Outlines for the Contours of Research in Search of a Holistic Approach // Europe Alone : Small State Security without the United States / edited by David Schultz, Aurelija Pūraitė, Vidmantė Giedraitytė. Lanham : Rowman & Littlefield International, 2022, Chapter 18. ISBN 9781538167281. eISBN 9781538167298. p. 403-422.
 17. Zakaria, F. (1997). The Rise of Illiberal Democracy. Foreign Affairs, November-December, No 76, pp. 22-41.
 18. Zuzevičiūtė, V.; Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz, B. (2022) The workdays and weekends of democracy in Lithuanian young adults' calendar In Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz, B., Kennedy, K. (eds) Reconstructing Democracy and Citizenship Education : Lessons from Central and Eastern Europe, London; New York, Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781003140528.