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# OSCE'S ACHIEVEMENTS *vs.* SHORTCOMINGS IN THE RESOLUTION OF ARMED CONFLICTS

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## *Abstract*

What are the main advantages of the OSCE in conflict resolution issues? On the other hand, why cannot the OSCE solve the “eternal” problems in Transnistria or Northern Karabakh region? The present article consists of three main parts. First the author identifies strengths and opportunities of the OSCE in conflict resolution. The main advantages of the OSCE are distinguished in relation to the resolution of “frozen conflicts” and protracted crisis situations in the post-Soviet space. The questions on weaknesses and shortcomings of the OSCE are raised in the second part of the article. Lack of legislative power, non-legally binding decisions, and other weaknesses are revealed through an analysis of views on the organization and its activities by representatives of major states. Attention has to be paid to the position of Russian Federation regarding the ability of the OSCE to address potential conflicts in the post-Soviet space as well as the organization’s goals to ensure the protection of human rights. The limitations of the OSCE are apparent in the cases concerned with territorial integrity issues. The last section of the article is devoted to an analysis of the situation in Kyrgyzstan, which reflects both positive and negative features of the OSCE in regulating conflict situations in 2010.

## **Introduction**

In 2008 Spencer Oliver, Secretary General of the Organisation of Security and Co-operation for Europe (hereinafter OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly, when asked what he considered the greatest achievement of the OSCE, responded that it was the end of the Cold War. According to the diplomat, “countries’ commitment to cooperate in various fields has been a historic victory. Organization was able to solve, how to terminate an ideological struggle. It was changed to a dialogue”<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Pučeta A., “U.S. and OSCE long-standing diplomat S.Oliver: Economic war is more complicated than the Cold one” [LT: „JAV ir ESBO diplomatijos senbuvis S.Oliveris: „Ekonominis karas – sudėtingesnis negu Šaltasis“], *Lietuvos Rytas*, 04/07/2008, <http://m.lrytas.lt/-12151444521214534966-p3-jav-ir-esbo-diplomatijos-senbuvis-s-oliveris-ekonominis-karas-sud%C4%97tingesnis-negu-%C5%A1altasis.htm> [2010-08-20].

Oliver exemplified the OSCE influence on the management of events in Poland in 1981: “I can clearly remember that, when as a member of the U.S. delegation during the negotiations in Madrid back in 1981, I heard about the introduction of the martial law in Poland, we stopped negotiating. I said that we would not negotiate until we knew what was happening in Poland. The situation lasted for several months; however, over that time the world’s attention to Poland increased significantly. The forum was started”<sup>2</sup>.

In 2010, the main advantages of the OSCE are considered to comprise the ability to resolve ongoing conflicts in the region, in particular in the post-Soviet area. The connections between the OSCE and the end of the Cold War, the principles specified in the Helsinki Final Act relevant to the international arena, especially the guarantees of sovereignty and human rights for Eastern Europe, are important these days as they provide a valuable source of information for better analysis of crisis situations, regulation and resolution of conflicts. The Romanian OSCE Chairmanship in 2001, the Netherlands Chairmanship in 2003, the Slovenian Chairmanship in 2005, as well as the Belgium Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2006 defined priorities for action including the resolution of “frozen” and protracted conflicts in the region. In 2008 Finland identified prevention and management of “frozen” conflicts in the region as the only general priority for the OSCE<sup>3</sup>. Analysts enumerate OSCE’s strengths and abilities in solve conflicts in the post-Soviet area; however, not only opportunities are distinguished in implementing this objective, but also challenges: the 2010 Kazakhstan Chairmanship is analysed with particular attention to the two aforementioned aspects.

What is the apple of discord in conflict resolution situations? Why cannot the OSCE solve the “eternal” problems in Transnistria or Nagorno-Karabakh? What has been done and what can be done in Kyrgyzstan to prevent such “frozen” situations? These questions are raised and analysed in the present article. The structure of the article is as follows. Firstly, OSCE’s strengths and opportunities in conflict resolution are identified. The main advantages of the OSCE are distinguished in relation to the resolution of “frozen conflicts” and protracted crisis situations in the post-Soviet space, i.e., the advantages of the OSCE related to the aforementioned role of this

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Speech by Chairman in Office Kanerva at OSCE Permanent Council, 10 Jan 2008, Vienna. By Thierry Vuylsteke, Head of OSCE Desk Belgium MFA. Astana, Group of Friends of Kazakh CiO 2010 (21/04/08-22/04/08).

organization by the end of the Cold War, which also create opportunities for the future. Nevertheless, the second section of this article is devoted to a discussion of weaknesses of the OSCE. Lack of legislative power, legally non-binding decisions of the member states as well as other weaknesses are revealed through the opinions of the major countries on the OSCE activities. Attention has to be paid to the position of Russian Federation regarding the OSCE ability to address potential conflicts in the post-Soviet space together with its goal to ensure human rights. A critique of the OSCE is also given in order to show its limitations in the cases concerned with territorial integrity and sovereignty. The last section of the article provides an analysis of the situation in Kyrgyzstan, which reflects both positive and negative features of the OSCE in regulating conflict situations in 2010.

## **1. OSCE's Strengths and Opportunities in Conflict Resolution**

The ability to deal with armed conflicts in the post-Soviet area is considered to be the first advantage of the OSCE. The OSCE plays a crucial role in conflict prevention and management, and has posited the objective to resolve conflicts by means of negotiation in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia<sup>4</sup>. The following strengths of the OSCE are identified: experience of OSCE member states, awareness of regional peculiarities and understanding of the situation due to the proximity of the states to one another because of their traditions, cultural and social processes (e.g., the 2010 Kazakhstan Chairmanship and its neighbour Kyrgyzstan). These advantages enable understanding of the details and interests of the conflicting parties and thus ensure a successful and coordinated action.

Secondly, the OSCE is a well-known major security organization, covering the entire an-European region and regulating conflict situations since 1989, i.e., from the end of the Cold War. It is claimed that the vital role of the OSCE in ensuring European security could not be performed by any other multilateral institution. Thus neither NATO nor the European Union, neither the Council of Europe nor the Commonwealth of Independent States could ensure security in Europe through as

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<sup>4</sup> Survey of OSCE Field Operations, SEC.GAL/165/09, 9 October 2009, The Secretariat of Conflict Prevention center, Vienna. <http://www.osce.org/about/13510.html>. [2010-08-30].

many dimensions as the OSCE does<sup>5</sup>. In addition, the OSCE is the only organization that includes both military and civilian security dimensions<sup>6</sup>. The relation of the OSCE to the end of the Cold War, the consolidation of main international principles in the Helsinki Final Act, provides the OSCE with the status of neutrality, which allows the organization to serve as an impartial forum for conflict resolution.

Illustrative examples of the advantages listed above are the following: the role of the OSCE role in the management and resolution of protracted conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria. Answers to the questions where the OSCE's role is important and proper, where and when it is accepted and welcomed - are reflected in the quotes of the heads of states. The main advantage and the clear potential of the OSCE is seen when the organization is recognized as the only or main actor in the resolution of the conflict. For example, the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, where the conflict between two countries of the South Caucasus broke out in 1988, confirms these assertions. It is continually stressed in the articles on the Nagorno-Karabakh war that the leaders of the conflicting parties support the role of the Minsk Group in the conflict (see Section 3.1 below).

In addition, the OSCE is most effective when it works together with other multilateral institutions in the region<sup>7</sup>. Mostly important is what priorities are distinguished by the state holding the Chairmanship, and how the priorities defined relate to the position in the international arena and global context in general. For instance, in 2006 Belgium focused priority areas on the resolution of frozen conflicts. Meanwhile in 2007 Spain was more focused on terrorism prevention. During its chairmanship in 2008, Finland established a broader range of priorities and provided optimistic guidance on conflict resolution and management. Thus the OSCE emphasized the resolution of protracted conflicts in the relevant region. At the same time the protection of human rights receives due attention as well: areas covered include combating trafficking in human beings, promoting tolerance, non-discrimination and gender equality.

An opportunity as well as a weakness of the OSCE is that the priorities of the state holding the chairmanship are not formulated by the member state itself; rather, they are stipulated by issues dictated by the international arena. For instance,

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<sup>5</sup> Hopmann T. P., "Managing Conflict in Post-Cold War Eurasia: The Role of the OSCE in Europe's Security 'Architecture'", *International Politics*, Volume 40, Number 1, March 2003, pp. 75-100(26).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Afghanistan is considered to be a painful problem for the OSCE although it does not belong to the region of the organization's direct sphere of activity. However, through the U.S. and Russia, the EU and NATO are actively involved in counter-terrorism operations in Afghanistan. The OSCE cannot opt out of these problems; therefore, Kazakhstan set the reconstruction of Afghanistan and concentrated efforts to combat the Taliban as an important priority in 2010<sup>8</sup>.

## **2. Shortcomings and Weaknesses of the OSCE in Conflict Resolution**

Major shortcomings of the OSCE include unused opportunities of good reputation, neutrality, and knowledge of the region (as demonstrated by the cases discussed in Sections 3.3 and 3.4). Other internal and external factors that are assessed as the OSCE's weaknesses are the following: lack of power because of the uncertainty of the legal status of the OSCE and Russia's influence in the region, especially in the issues concerning territorial integrity in the post-Soviet space.

Firstly, it should be mentioned that the OSCE does not have such power as NATO or the European Union. Decisions lack legal status and are not legally binding for the member states. Furthermore, they are made at the OSCE's Forum only by the member states and are concerned with their own political commitments<sup>9</sup>. These commitments could be identified as concerted priorities and guidelines for common political aspirations in the region: peace and security guarantees and conflict prevention. During the Parliamentary Assembly only the opinion of a number of the parliamentarians is expressed, which addresses all important issues and thus allows countries to focus on similar guidelines; however, there is no mechanism of the legal obligation established<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Iškauskas Č., "Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship: a difficult mission" [LT: "Kazachstano pirmininkavimas ESBO: misija sudėtinga"], *Geopolitika.lt*, 2010 01 13, <http://www.geopolitika.lt/?artc=3778> [2010-07-20].

<sup>9</sup> Manton E., "The OSCE Human Dimension Process and the Process of Customary International Law Formation", *OSCE Yearbook 2005*, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, 195-214 p. <http://www.core-hamburg.de/documents/yearbook/english/05/Manton-en.pdf> [2010-09-03].

<sup>10</sup> Austria Federal Act of 1993, as last amended on 5 October 2002. [http://www.ena.lu/federal\\_legal\\_status\\_osce\\_institutions\\_austria\\_july\\_1993\\_consolidated\\_version\\_2002-020006814.html](http://www.ena.lu/federal_legal_status_osce_institutions_austria_july_1993_consolidated_version_2002-020006814.html) [2010-09-03].

Another aspect of the weaknesses is the Russian factor in the OSCE's activities. Why is not Moscow satisfied with the OSCE's activities? Česlovas Iškauskas provides the following explanation: "The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights - has long been reproaching Moscow with violations of human rights in the Caucasus, persecution of the media, neglect of business enterprises, freedom of speech and civil liberties. One of the key missions of the OSCE is monitoring of democratic processes in Europe, particularly in post-Soviet bloc states, and, most importantly, making an analysis of elections, referenda, and other conduct of plebiscite, as well as recording violations. Neither Moscow, nor Minsk liked the observers' findings after a visit to Belarus. The OSCE representatives regularly <...> get onto the Caucasus, particularly Chechnya, regulate the situation of human rights in Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, etc."<sup>11</sup>.

### **3. Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria: the OSCE's Achievements and Shortcomings**

#### **3.1. Nagorno-Karabakh – positive aspects of the OSCE's involvement**

According to information releases of Armenian and Azerbaijani Defence Ministries on 22 June of 2010, after an armed incident which took place on the night of 18th to 19th of June to the north of the dividing line, both parties suffered casualties<sup>12</sup>. The incident happened shortly after the meeting of Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents in St. Petersburg on 17th June, which took place at the invitation by Russian President in order to continue talks on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict<sup>13</sup>. A possible assessment of the situation suggests that Russia's demonstration of influence creates tensions in the region, while the necessary and useful platform to address the conflict is involvement of a neutral

<sup>11</sup> Iškauskas Č., „OSCE – a new point to disagree for Russia and U.S.“ [LT: “ESBO – naujas Rusijos ir JAV nesutarimų taikynys”], *Geopolitika.lt*, 2010 11 29. <http://www.geopolitika.lt/?artc=1472> [2010-06-15].

<sup>12</sup> “OSCE Chairperson Voices Concern over Incident in Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Zone”, *TurkishWeekly.net*, Tuesday, 22 June 2010, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/103606/osce-chairperson-voices-concern-over-incident-in-nagorno-karabakh-conflict-zone.html> [2010-08-20].

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

international organization, i.e., an international organization which unites countries supporting the two conflicting parties, viz., the OSCE.

During the press conference on the 20th August 2010, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev stressed that only the OSCE Minsk group proved effective in solving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. "Other potential participants in these talks are not fully immersed in the details and this complicates their role as a possible mediator", Medvedev said. "Efficiency is possible only in the Minsk Group format, or with Russian mediation efforts. In addition, the mediator in such a conflict must be deemed appropriate by all parties",<sup>14</sup> the Russian president clearly emphasized.

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan also said that the Minsk group was acceptable for the management of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. According to Sargsyan, concrete results could be achieved only through the OSCE Minsk Group. "Today there is no peace or war in the region. It is too bad that there is no peace, but it is also good that there is no war. The Minsk Group has great merits in this", Sargsyan added<sup>15</sup>.

Azerbaijan clearly expressed its position that Baku supported the renewed Madrid principles under which the total Armenian withdrawal from occupied territories was estimated over the five-year period<sup>16</sup>.

The OSCE's Chairperson-in-Office, Kazakhstan's State Secretary and Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev emphasized he did provide unconditional support to the efforts of the Minsk Group to direct negotiations in a constructive dialogue: "I have entrusted my Personal Representative, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk, to work closely with the Minsk Group Co-Chairs to seek ways to peacefully resolve the protracted conflict"<sup>17</sup>.

The quotes presented demonstrate the attitude of the states toward the OSCE role in the conflict. The OSCE is deemed to be better than any individual state,

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<sup>14</sup> Gasimova A., "Russia: OSCE Only Effective Tool in Settling Karabakh Conflict", *TurkishWeekly.net*, 20 August 2010, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/106492/russia-osce-only-effective-tool-in-settling-karabakh-conflict.html> [2010-08-20].

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Goble P., "After Almaty: The Future of Karabakh Negotiations", An Electronic Publication of Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy, Vol. III, No. 15, August 1, 2010, <http://ada.edu.az/biweekly /issues/vol3no15/20100809073836213.html> [2010-08-20].

<sup>17</sup> Ostapenko E., "OSCE Chairperson Voices Concern Over Incident in Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Zone", *TurkishWeekly.net*, Tuesday, 22 June 2010, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/103606/osce-chairperson-voices-concern-over-incident-in-nagorno-karabakh-conflict-zone.html> [2010-08-20].

seeking to engage in conflict resolution. The OSCE is regarded as a neutral, impartial forum for negotiations. Therefore the main advantage of the OSCE - its impartiality, reputation and confidence - can be used.

### 3.2. Nagorno-Karabakh: negative aspects

As Kari Mottola points out in his article “*The OSCE: Institutional and Functional Developments in an Evolving European Security Order*”, the Chechen crisis showed the OSCE role in post-Soviet space – i.e., the OSCE forum in which Russia could cooperate in dealing with territorial integrity issues and crisis management situations. The OSCE performs similar functions in Nagorno-Karabakh on the grounds that it enables the former Soviet states to negotiate on a neutral platform – the place where different interests of conflicting parties can be represented<sup>18</sup>.

However, the benefits and opportunities of the OSCE cannot show positive experience in all of the conflicts. The possibilities are limited, as has been highlighted by a number of authors, analysing the role of the OSCE in armed conflicts. For example, in her article “*The OSCE and Regional Conflicts in the Former Soviet Union*”, published back in 2001, Natalie Mychajlyszyn argues that, although the impact of the OSCE, in order to ensure regional and ethnic conflict prevention, management and resolution<sup>19</sup>, has been positive on several occasions, most cases have not been successful. The OSCE’s weakness is prominent in those cases where the principles of territorial integrity and freedom of national self-determination compete. The OSCE’s role seems most effective when there are no issues raised concerning territorial integrity. By contrast, the OSCE’s decisions and role are negative and valued as unsuitable where issues of territorial integrity are raised. This is precisely the problem, based on which Mychajlyszyn predicts that the instability in the states of the former Soviet Union will continue, the conflict cases will remain, and the OSCE’s credibility as an institution capable of

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<sup>18</sup> Mottola K., “The OSCE: Institutional and Functional developments in an Evolving European Security Order”, In., M. Bothe, N. Ronzitti, A. Rosas, K. Law, *The OSCE in the maintenance of peace and security—Conflict prevention, crisis management and peaceful settlement of disputes*, The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1997, p.8.

<sup>19</sup> P.vz. Natalie Mychajlyszyn defines 3 OSCE roles in conflict resolution: prevention of conflict in Crimea (related to the cases of Latvia and Estonia), conflict management in South Osetia (in relation to the case of Transnistria in Moldova), conflict resolution in Northern-Karabakh (related to the cases of Chechnia and Tajikistan).



ensuring regional and ethnic conflict prevention, management and resolution, will be weak<sup>20</sup>.

An illustration of the negative example may be provided by the aforementioned Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: when looking for justification, the Azerbaijani side, where the issue of Russian support for Armenia is raised, presents a problem. According to Araz Azimov<sup>21</sup>, Armenia's rejection of the Minsk Group proposal has led to stagnation in the negotiating process. The diplomat strongly expressed the position by stating that the result can only be achieved if Armenia agreed to the proposal of the Minsk Group. This dilemma is expressed in the following quote by Azimov:

„What is the main problem? Does Armenia recognize the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan? Is Armenia ready to support a model in which the two communities can live in Nagorno Karabakh while recognizing the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan? If Armenia recognizes the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan recognizes the territorial integrity of Armenia. <...> However we have never heard such a position of Armenia”<sup>22</sup>.

### **3.3. Moldova: more positive than negative?**

The OSCE's role and different options of influence are evaluated through a study of different cases of conflict resolution. In his 2001 article “*Russia and the OSCE – the Influence of Interested Third and Disinterested Fourth Parties on the Conflicts in Estonia and Moldova*”<sup>23</sup>, Claus Neukirch, provides a different perspective on and analysis of the role of the OSCE.

<sup>20</sup> Mychajlyszyn N., “The OSCE and Regional Conflicts in the Former Soviet Union”, *Regional & Federal Studies*, Volume 11, Issue 3, Autumn 2001, pp. 194–219, <http://www.google.com/books?hl=lt&lr=&id=7vjb-0eZ-wcC&oi=fnd&pg=PA194&ots=q0B1YoEQOX&sig=r1euyDIT9p6S7YN-EYqIE3A3n0w#v=onepage&q&f=false> [2010-07-28].

<sup>21</sup> Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, Ambassador Araz Azimov is the Director of International Security and Conflict Resolution Specialization at ADA MADIA Program. Azimov also serves as President's special representative on Nagorno Karabakh conflict. [http://ada.edu.az/facultyresearch/faculty/araz\\_azimov/](http://ada.edu.az/facultyresearch/faculty/araz_azimov/) [2010-08-29].

<sup>22</sup> Hajiyev T., “Official Baku called political speculation the statements of Armenian Officials that Russia will defend Armenia”, 29.08.2010 00:41, Trend, Azerbaijan, Baku, August 29, <http://en.trend.az/news/karabakh/1742251.html> [2010-08-29].

<sup>23</sup> Neukirch C., “Russia and the OSCE – The Influence of Interested Third and Disinterested Fourth Parties on the Conflicts in Estonia and Moldova”, *JEMIE–Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority*, July 2001. <http://leader.viitorul.org/public/597/en/jemie07neukirch11-07-01.pdf> [2010-08-30].

When the Transnistrian conflict turned into open armed conflict, Moldova was already a member of both the OSCE and the UN. However, none of the international organizations reacted appropriately to the conflict. The origins and the context of the conflict were formed as early as in 1990–1991, when Moldova was still under the rule of the Soviet Union, and the conflict escalated immediately after independence<sup>24</sup>. Moldova was admitted to the OSCE (then CSCE) on 30 January 1992. Thus, when, during the OSCE summit in Helsinki, President Mircea Snegur called upon the support of the international community, the conflict is already past the prevention stage. Furthermore, at the time no measures for conflict resolution were being taken. Only the quadripartite mechanism of Commonwealth of Independent States (hereinafter – CIS), was in effect, but it took place without the involvement of Western countries. The OSCE's role was very limited.

The OSCE mission was sent to monitor the situation; however, the decision to engage in conflict regulation was issued only on 14 August 1992. On the same day, in order to examine the appeal to the OSCE to contribute to settlement of the conflict, Adam Rotfeld was designated as personal representative<sup>25</sup>. On 4 December 1993, on the basis of Rotfeld's report, the OSCE Committee decided to establish a long-term mission in Moldova. The mission stabilized the situation in the country. The author emphasizes that it is this mission that stipulated the transformation of the conflict into the negotiations process and conflict settlement<sup>26</sup>. To summarise, the OSCE played a major role, but the action was taken much later than it could and should have been.

In his assessment of the impact of the OSCE on the conflict in Moldova, Claus Neukirch identifies several reasons why the impact was inadequate and inefficient. Firstly, the new structure of the OSCE for conflict prevention and conflict management was not functioning effectively at the time. The mechanism was neither established, nor operational, due to which the involvement in the Moldova conflict occurred at a later stage. Secondly, little interest in Moldova's problems prevented the OSCE from taking the necessary measures at the proper time; thus the decision to engage with the conflict was made only after the situation had been analyzed, which took nearly a year<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> 15-CSO/Journal 2// Cit. Op. 24.

<sup>26</sup> 19-CSO/Journal 3-3 Annex A// Cit. Op. 24.

<sup>27</sup> Cit. Op. 24.

In Moldova's case, the potential OSCE role of a neutral actor in preventing the conflict was not used successfully. This was done only after the conflict had been resolved – no longer as prevention, but rather as reaction to a situation in which the impartial character – the OSCE – was acting<sup>28</sup>. The advantage of the OSCE as a neutral organization was not used. The other option – awareness of the region's range of issues – had not yet been developed.

### **3.4. Moldova and Nagorno-Karabakh: issues to be raised**

The aforementioned OSCE's advantage as a well-known organisation that understands the problems of the conflicting states through awareness of traditions and cultural and social contexts, which may result in better and faster reaction and response to conflict situations as well as in their more effective resolution, is illustrated by the current example of Kazakhstan's Chairmanship. In his analysis of the most important problem faced by the country's OSCE Chairmanship, I kauskas argues that Kazakhstan "knows what it means to be a mediator in order to solve critical issues between Russia and international community. Moscow was invited to speed up the withdrawal of its military contingent from Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia) and Moldova (Transnistria) at the Athens meeting. However, Russia not only has failed to fulfil the requirements, but also has increased the number of its troops in Georgia"<sup>29</sup>.

An example of Russian influence is conflicts taking place in the post-Soviet area. For instance, the presence of the 14th Army on the territory of Moldova shows the potential of Russia's influence in a conflict situation<sup>30</sup>. As regards Russia's impact on the conflict in Moldova, in Neukirch's opinion, it is a key external factor that has ensured sharpness of the conflict: more specifically, it was the factor of the presence of the former 14th Army in Transnistria. The author argues that in the Moldova case Russian influence was very negative, while the role of the West and intergovernmental organizations was totally lacking<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Cit. Op. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Cit. Op. 24.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

In his 2008 article “*Conflict resolution, border security is the most important priorities for the OSCE in 2008 – Chairmanship*” Jean-Christophe Peuch maintains that efforts to resolve protracted conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Transnistria were among Belgian priorities in the country’s 2006 Chairmanship in the OSCE. However, the Belgian Chairmanship made no progress on any of the three conflicts<sup>32</sup>. In 2008, Finnish Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva identified conflict prevention and management as a priority. Kanerva said Finland would urge “to create enabling conditions for the peaceful resolution of regional conflicts and encourage all the parties to resume negotiations in order to find feasible political resolutions of the conflicts”<sup>33</sup>. However, conflicts are still unresolved. The question is – why is the OSCE rejected as a mechanism to address conflicts?

The OSCE’s strengths and weaknesses in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict were already discussed in the previous section. The main disadvantage is that the OSCE cannot regulate relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the sphere pertaining to the territorial integrity issues. The external factor, viz., a disinterested international player – the OSCE’s proposed Madrid Principles, the role of the OSCE Minsk Group in the resolution of the situation and ensuring peace in the region – are all positive factors. However, they fail because of the parties interested in the outcome of conflict resolution: Azerbaijan’s interests differ from those of Armenia. In addition, the Russian-Armenian defence agreement was extended until 2044<sup>34</sup>. In August 2010, the President of Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, and Serzh Sarkisian, the President of Armenia, signed a protocol extending the 1995 bilateral defence agreement. According to the Protocol, Russia committed itself to ensuring the territorial integrity of Armenia; this concerned not only borders with Turkey and Iran, but the entire territorial integrity. This position has already been established in the current Russian military doctrine, according to which any aggression on the member state of the Collective Security Treaty Organization is considered as aggression to all Members of the Organisation<sup>35</sup>. Therefore, the Armenian position on the territorial integrity may remain stable, while Azerbaijan, with its intentions

<sup>32</sup> Peuch J.-Ch., *Conflict Resolution, Border Security Are Top OSCE Priorities for 2008 – Chairman*, January 14, 2008. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav011508a.shtml> [2010-08-29].

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Aspects of Russian-Armenian Defense Agreement (LT: “Rusijos ir Armėnijos gynybos sutarties niuansai”), *Geopolitika.lt*, 2010 08 27. <http://www.geopolitika.lt/?artc=4196> [2010-09-03].

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

to use all necessary measures to restore control over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, is clearly warned that the war against Armenia is not a good option or not an option at all<sup>36</sup>.

Russian influence in the region is seen as a disincentive factor to conflict management and resolution. As a neutral figure, the OSCE sets the objectives to manage and resolve conflict situations; however, other actors maintain *status quo*. Moreover, the situation is stipulated by both internal and external factors. In the case of Moldova, the presence of the 14th Army, the impact of Russia on the maintenance of Transnistria, in spite of Moldova's consolidation of neutrality in the Constitution, the aim of which is to prevent troops of other countries in the territory. The role of the OSCE Minsk Group is welcomed; however, management of the conflict began too late, so the conflict is ongoing and long-term adjustment is necessary.

Russian influence is, again, considered to be important in the Nagorno-Karabakh case as it gives much support to Armenian ambitions of territorial integrity. Intervention of a neutral international organisation may have a positive effect; however, it is not as effective and guaranteed as the Russian assurances to maintain the interests of one of the conflicting parties.

To summarise, the discussion above supports Mychajlyszyn's statement (presented early in the article) regarding the fact that the OSCE is incapable of managing and resolving conflicts in which the main interest is related to ensuring the territorial integrity. The impartial OSCE can only suggest possible solutions to the conflicting parties, which these may be inclined to follow only when the solution is temporarily useful.

#### **4. Kyrgyzstan in 2010: Opportunities vs. Weaknesses of the OSCE**

In his article „*Quagmire in Kyrgyzstan: can the OSCE stabilize the situation?*”<sup>37</sup> Rafi Abazov from Columbia University argues that the OSCE's role in regulating the conflict in Kyrgyzstan is effective and has potential benefits. According

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Abazov R., “Quagmire in Kyrgyzstan: Can the OSCE Stabilize the Situation?”, 07/08/2010, *CACI Analyst*. <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5361> [2010-08-29].

to Abazov, the OSCE is able to resolve the conflict and to ensure its peaceful solution. However, Kyrgyz experts assess the situation quite differently. Some experts emphasize that the OSCE's activities are important and useful and that the OSCE has played a positive role in stabilizing the situation in the country. Quick response and reaction organizing the departure of the former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev from the country are emphasized as an advantage. Some argue that this has helped avoid the impending civil war. However, the other group of analysts argues that the OSCE's activities are ineffective because the organization did not manage to prevent the conflict between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities<sup>38</sup>.

#### **4.1. Conflict context and situation in 2010: the role of the OSCE**

According to Abazov, in June 2010 the intensity of the conflict between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities escalated to unseen levels since the independence of the republics in 1991<sup>39</sup>. The data provided by international observers reveal that the number of people killed is estimated at 200 (the current President Roza Otunbayeva says that the number may reach 2000). In addition, approximately 100,000 to 220,000 people were forced to leave their homes<sup>40</sup>.

The OSCE analyzes and assesses the situation in Central Asia: it has offices and centres in Ashgabat, Astana, Bishkek, Dushanbe, a project coordinator in Tashkent; in addition, the OSCE has its Academy in Bishkek<sup>41</sup>. However, the OSCE's past experience in inter-ethnic conflicts is controversial. It was quite slow to respond to the escalation of conflicts in Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. However, a quite successful prevention and resolution was carried out in the conflict of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 1990<sup>42</sup>.

Many observers had hoped that the OSCE would be effective in Kyrgyzstan for several reasons. Firstly, the OSCE has a broad experience in the regulation of

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Source: Key Issues in the OSCE field operations in 2011, Prepared by the Conflict Prevention Centre. 25 June, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> Cit. Op. 39.

ethnic conflicts and negotiation in the former socialist states. Secondly, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are neighbouring countries with close cultural, social and political relations. After the change in the Chairmanship in January 2010, the so-called "Four T-Model" (development of trust, tradition, tolerance and transparency), proposed by the OSCE Chairman Kanat Saudabayev, was promoted. It was widely believed that Kazakhstan, which knows and understands the political development of Kyrgyzstan better than anyone else, could effectively deal with the conflict situation. This would result in a situation quite different than the case of Yugoslavia, where the OSCE has been criticized for its inability to understand the situation and resolve the conflict because of a variety of political, cultural and social peculiarities of the country.

However, similarly to Bosnia and Herzegovina or Kosovo, the OSCE intervention was lacking promptness and depth. Experts expressed their disappointment at the OSCE's role, as a clear progress was not seen<sup>43</sup>. For example, Freedom House experts publicly accused the OSCE (with the Chairmanship of Kazakhstan) of its inability to deal with the situation in Kyrgyzstan efficiently.

Other experts disagreed, referring to a number of important developments and efforts to stabilize the country. First of all, the OSCE was the actor who brokered concessions for the former president Kurmanbek Bakiyev and arranged his departure from the country, thereby preventing the escalation of conflict into a civil war. Secondly, the OSCE continued to educate NGO representatives across both northern and southern areas of Kyrgyzstan even during the period of political confrontation in April and May 2010<sup>44</sup>. Thirdly, the OSCE co-ordinated delivery of humanitarian aid to Kyrgyzstan communities; these activities were particularly actively carried out in spring 2010.

#### **4.2. Consequences of the Kyrgyz conflict: situation created by the weaknesses of OSCE**

Ethnic clashes and the conflict in Kyrgyzstan in June 2010 showed that the effectiveness of OSCE conflict monitoring, conflict prevention and mediation systems and mechanisms is not sustainable. Many experts and politicians in

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Volovoj V., "Political development perspectives in Kyrgyzstan", *Geopolitika.lt*, 2010 08 16. <http://www.geopolitika.lt/?artc=4168> [2010-08-26].

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are still trying to explain what exactly has happened: how could street riots and the dispute concerning business and property issues grow into a violent conflict between the communities which have lived next to each other for a long period of time? The possible version of provocation is investigated; however, there are certain doubts about the role of international organizations and international intervention, in particular, concerning the efficiency of OSCE conflict mediation and stabilization of the situation in Kyrgyzstan.

Furthermore, mention should be made of several negative consequences. Firstly, it is the long-term destabilization of the political situation and interethnic relations. The balance in the relationship between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities is upset, if not completely destroyed. Secondly, local communities have lost confidence in Kazakhstan both as a country, and as a representative of the international organization. Therefore, the OSCE is no longer trusted either and this international organization is no longer perceived as a neutral actor able to help solve the conflict and to stabilize the situation in the country. Thirdly, political unrest has undermined the stability of both political and civil institutions, and the institutions in the country are weakened. Finally, ongoing emigration of qualified business and professional representatives and consequently weakening of the public sector are creating further instability.

**Table 1.** OSCE advantages and failures in Kyrgyzstan 2010

	<b>OSCE advantages and positive actions</b>	<b>OSCE failures</b>
1.	OSCE brokered the concessions for the former president Kurmanbek Bakiyev and arranged his departure from the country, thereby preventing the escalation of the conflict into a civil war	Long-term political tension has mounted and the process of destabilization of interethnic relations is apparent. The balance in the relationship between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities is upset
2.	OSCE co-ordinated delivery of humanitarian aid to Kyrgyzstan communities	Both political and civil institutions in the country are weakened
3.	OSCE educated NGO representatives across both the northern and southern areas of Kyrgyzstan	No preventive action has been taken to avert the conflict. Stability has been weakened by the emigration of qualified specialists



4.	The awareness of the specific features of the region as well as understanding of the situation: neighbouring country, traditions, culture, social factors	Emigration of qualified business and professional representatives as well as weakening of the public sector is creating further instability. The lack of appropriate and operative response
5.	The neutrality of OSCE was used. However, this factor may be further enhanced in the future	Local communities have lost confidence in Kazakhstan, both as a country, and as a representative of international organization. Therefore, the OSCE is no longer trusted either. This international organization is no longer perceived as a neutral actor able to help solve the conflict and to stabilize the situation

### **4.3. OSCE opportunities in Kyrgyzstan**

The political stabilization of the country is a very complicated process requiring both time and consistency, particularly in a country divided by several lines of conflict – political, ethnic, regional, and even urban vs. rural. Under these circumstances, impartial role of the international community is very important.

In this context, the OSCE can be a significant actor by taking several relevant steps. The first step is to mobilize support and all possible resources to develop and organize fair and credible parliamentary elections. The second step is to mobilize and coordinate international humanitarian assistance to migrants and communities affected by the conflict. The third step is to create an effective and efficient monitoring of conflicts as well as conflict mediation and prevention mechanisms. It is most important not only to stabilize the situation for the moment and to achieve a certain level of reconciliation, but also to prevent the escalation of conflicts in the future (for example, during the parliamentary elections in October 2010<sup>45</sup>). The fourth possibility is concerned with both the OSCE as an international organization and Kazakhstan as the OSCE Chairmanship: it is to learn from the conflict, to create a new conflict prevention and conflict resolution model, and to update standard procedures

<sup>45</sup> Source: Key Issues in the OSCE field operations in 2011, Prepared by the Conflict Prevention Centre. 25 June, 2010.

for the OSCE operation in the region, to make sure that the OSCE is ready to respond quickly and effectively<sup>46</sup>.

In his statement to the Ministers of the 56 OSCE participating States, Saudabayev stated that the Organization's ability "to effectively react and resolve existing and new challenges, including the need to stabilize the situation in Kyrgyzstan, will be a test of the OSCE's vitality"<sup>47</sup>. "The OSCE is to play a key role in rendering assistance to Kyrgyzstan, including through the enhancement of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek and the proposed Police Advisory Group, an initiative which was supported by the participating states. In addition, assistance from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights should be given for the upcoming parliamentary elections"<sup>48</sup>.

### **Conclusions**

First, the main strength of the OSCE is the image of a flexible non-bureaucratic organization capable of adapting to emerging international issues. Its ability to adapt to the international security system is another advantage. For example, priorities are formulated not only by the member state holding the Chairmanship, but are also selected and highlighted according to the main challenges in international relations. In addition, the OSCE enjoys an extensive and broad membership. Therefore, the organization focuses its activities on conflict prevention, management and resolution in Eastern Europe, South-Eastern European and Central Asia. Furthermore, OSCE's activities include military, political, as well as civil security aspects. Moreover, the objectives of the organization are set to address human rights issues as well as economic and environmental problems, which enables the organization to act as an impartial actor in a wide variety of issues<sup>49</sup>.

Second, the main disadvantages restricting the role of the OSCE are related to its inability to use all the basic advantages and opportunities. The cognitive aspect

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<sup>46</sup> Cit. Op. 39.

<sup>47</sup> OSCE Chairperson announces agreement on summit, calls Kyrgyzstan crisis a 'vitality test' for Organization, <http://www.osce.org/item/45368.html> [2010-09-03].

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> "Portuguese Chairman-in-office reviews achievements", OSCE Chairman-in-Office Antonio Martins da Cruz took stock of Portugal's Chairmanship of the OSCE. Excerpts from his interview with Richard Murphy, Head of Press and Public Information. 28 November 2002, Porto. <http://www.osce.org/item/115.html> [2010-09-03].

of the region has not been used in a reasonable way since the response to emerging crises was insufficiently prompt. Thus the main disadvantage of the OSCE is lack of prompt response and timely action. Other disadvantages of the OSCE are the following: slow decision-making, the unused abilities of its neutral status and contextual understanding (understanding of the situation in which neighbouring states may be much more appropriate negotiators in the conflict), and the Russian factor in the region. The OSCE is able to carry out conflict prevention, to manage and resolve conflict situations in the region due to the fact that the OSCE is well-known and is regarded as a neutral figure; however, these opportunities are limited in instances where issues of territorial integrity are raised.

Another weakness of the OSCE is an undefined legal status and legally non-binding decisions of the organization. On the other hand, OSCE has done a lot in the spheres of human rights protection and implementation of principles of international law. Therefore, some experts consider the lack of legal status to be an advantage as, alongside forms of activities organised only on political priorities, it allows the OSCE to operate in a wider region through a wider spectrum of activities, viz., protection of human rights and implementation of principles of international law. OSCE opportunities and weaknesses are named on the basis of the analysis of the current Kazakhstan Chairmanship and its actions in Kyrgyzstan conflict situation in 2010.

Third, neither advantages and opportunities, nor shortcomings and weaknesses are absolute. They may vary depending on the situation, due to which this the OSCE retains an important role in addressing issues raised in the international arena. The case of Kazakhstan and pieces of advice given to the country on how to learn from the 2010 conflict in Kyrgyzstan demonstrate that weaknesses can be turned into opportunities and strong advantages of the organization.

## LITHUANIA ASSUMES OSCE CHAIRMANSHIP

**Audronius Ažubalis\***

Lithuania feels privileged to have the opportunity to lead the Organisation just after the first OSCE Summit since 1999, the outcomes of which have a great influence on the agenda for the Lithuanian chairmanship in 2011. During our chairmanship a particular attention will be paid to such important issues as energy security, protracted conflicts resolution, promotion of sub-regional cooperation, strengthening OSCE role in Afghanistan, tolerance education and freedom of the media. Among other important tasks of our chairmanship will be the process of appointing a new Secretary General and an ODIHR director. A big challenge for Lithuanian chairmanship is to maintain our overarching goal to rebuild trust and confidence in order to strengthen security in Europe.

When celebrating 20th anniversary of Lithuanian independence, our national slogan was “In freedom we believe”. This simple phrase contains an important message not only to Lithuania, but to other Central and Eastern European states as well. The main achievement for all of us is freedom. Freedom to create, to think, to move, to express ourselves, to take our own decisions on our lives and our security is what really matters.

Lithuania has re-emerged as an active member of the European and global community. In 1990, when the Heads of State of the CSCE gathered in Paris, Lithuanian representatives could not be present there. Just twenty years ago the Lithuanian Parliament called upon the World community for the recognition of independence, and today Lithuania is about to start chairing the biggest regional security organization. Isn't it a remarkable turn of events? Kazakhstan's Chairmanship is even more important example of recognition of the States that have had to walk a long way through history in order to become sovereign and independent. The faster all countries proceed towards economic prosperity, regional security, respect and support for human dimension issues, the stronger the OSCE, and each and every participating state, will be.

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One of the top priorities of Lithuanian Chairmanship is the Energy Security. This is a complex issue, directly related to climate change, environmental security and sustainable economic development. Lithuania has been active in the OSCE dialogue on energy security and has hosted the Energy Security Conference in Vilnius in September 2010. To cope with these challenges, consolidated efforts and solutions are needed as well as the broad involvement of all stakeholders, including business and civil society. The OSCE can offer effective tools to promote dialogue for better understanding and various forms of cooperation – regional and cross-dimensional. The Baltic States have long been structurally dependent on imported energy. Therefore we understand the necessity to jointly develop common principles in the field of energy. Use of energy resources must generate economic prosperity, while transparency and non-discrimination have to be rooted in any transaction. Infrastructure development projects must follow strict environmental requirements, while promotion of low carbon technologies is a key to mitigating effects of climate change. An important milestone in this way is the Secretary General's report on the outcome of OSCE Expert Meeting on Energy Security, held in Vilnius in September 2010.

Protracted conflicts and conflict resolution have been a priority of several chairmanships. Every Chairperson-in-Office wants advance a solution to one of them. The conflicts in Georgia in 2008 and the 2010 crisis in Kyrgyzstan put the OSCE under the international spotlight and shaped perceptions of the Finnish, Greek and Kazakh chairmanships. In the Corfu dialogue many states have built a solid case for giving the Chair and the Conflict Prevention Centre more flexibility and early warning tools to avert a crisis or a conflict in their initial stages. The Chairperson-in-Office is expected to act quickly, consult key actors and mobilize political, financial and other available tools to address a conflict situation. It is the job of the Chairperson-in-Office to turn words into deeds as fine rhetoric is not sufficient on its own. It is evident that the protracted conflict in Transnistria will not be solved tomorrow. A work with partners will be done to resume formal 5+2 meetings. The proposal by the Chancellor Merkel and the President Medvedev is a sensible basis to work on. Confidence building process and real economic reintegration of the country should continue anyway. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, there are a lot of red lights flashing and the situation is worrisome. The Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group remain the engine that is driving a negotiated political settlement. The OSCE's role is the promotion of understanding and tolerance between the societies which are

parties to the conflict. OSCE should play more active role in the South Caucasus and especially in Georgia.

OSCE is a forum of 56, and Lithuania as the OSCE chairmanship should not have special preferences. On the other hand, all the Chairmanships bring a degree of distinctive experience, thinking and practice. Lithuania is a part of the Baltic Sea region and, like its Baltic neighbours, it shares the same values, has similar development ambitions and understands that only joint regional activities, for example, can help us develop common principles in the energy field. Stronger engagement in sub-regional cooperation is one of the priority directions for the Lithuanian chairmanship as sub-regional organisations play a significant role in the security of the OSCE region. Since 1999 the Platform for Co-operative Security adopted at the Istanbul Summit has not been used to its full potential. Fundamental institutional and regional developments in Europe over the last decade may be part of the reason for this. Yet, in the promotion of comprehensive security within the OSCE area all players – big or small – matter. Our belief in the potential of sub-regional organisations stems from the Baltic experience. Building on co-operative approaches the Council of the Baltic Sea States linked people and ideas, EU and non-EU members and transcended political agendas. It has been a huge success contributing to mutually reinforcing confidence, openness and trust. On a pan-European scale, a web of sub-regional organisations complementing each other's activities and those of the OSCE, could and will be able to push above its weight and contribute more effectively to building a strong security community.

We will encourage further bilateral or regional initiatives aimed at developing good neighbourly relations and inter-regional cooperation. More effective regional cooperation in the South Caucasus is vital for building long term stability in this volatile region. Central Asia could also take further joint efforts in responding to common challenges at the regional level. We are considering next year, under the aegis of the OSCE, of bringing to one table various regional and sub-regional organisations to discuss together the added value that they can bring to European security.

The Kazakh Chairmanship went an extra mile to strengthen the engagement between the OSCE and Afghanistan. The instability in Afghanistan affects us all. Threats emanating from Afghanistan – drugs, extremist ideology, terrorism – all undermine both the security of bordering states and of the OSCE region. Indeed, we are extremely concerned by the corrupting influence of drug trafficking on the development of societies in Central Asia and beyond. There are areas where the

OSCE holds the edge and can bring much-needed expertise and ideas to the table. These are border management, customs training, improved election processes through ODIHR assistance, providing assistance for defenders of human rights, improving legislation, advising on CBMs, gender education. The OSCE secretariat and field missions in Central Asia have developed excellent projects and more are in the pipeline.

Consolidation of all OSCE Afghanistan-related activities into one set of hands within the OSCE Secretariat might be considered. There is a need for stronger commitments regarding regional cooperation between Central Asian countries and Afghanistan. The OSCE can promote this process by “building bridges” – facilitating visa regimes, organising joint training as well as other measures. Agreements could be reached to develop more substantial OSCE-run projects to tackle drug trafficking and trade across borders or small scale economic projects for border communities. All this rests on the willingness of participating states to enhance OSCE engagement in Afghanistan.

Among the highlighted topics during our chairmanship will be promotion of tolerance and education. Lithuania has good experience in developing Holocaust research and education projects. We will focus on further development of tolerance education curriculum, improvement of school environment, strengthening the role of the civic society in tolerance education as well as on the exchange of experience on implementing educational projects aimed at promoting mutual respect and understanding, combating racism, and other forms of intolerance. This is a tool to enhance the integration of diversity into multi-cultural societies, both in the East and in the West.

World still faces various problems of national minorities’ issues, as it is a matter of both national and international security. The reality of our days – the emergence of new minorities due to the migration processes. The quiet diplomacy and persistence of the High Commissioner on National Minorities Ambassador Knut Vollebaek bring good results in this sphere. Such important topics as hate crimes, racism, xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination require continuous attention. ODIHR has done a very constructive work - organized a few events and roundtables urging the OSCE participating states to increase their efforts in fighting intolerance and discrimination as well as preventing hate crimes.

Freedom of the media is one of the essential pillars of the democracy. For the citizens of a democratic society it is extremely important to have access to information, to voice opinions and to exercise choice. Responsible media

professionals exercise high pluralistic standards and play a key role in taking a critical approach towards the governments and politicians by reporting corruption, human rights violations, minorities' concerns and manifestations of intolerance. Media pluralism is particularly crucial during periods of elections. Unfortunately, often journalists feel unsafe while performing this watchdog function - they are threatened, imprisoned, their lives are under risk.

We all agree that human rights and fundamental freedoms are at the core of security, so if freedom of expression is undermined or challenged, there is a serious threat to security. Governments have to do more to protect their journalists. Another important thing is the extremely rapid technological change of the media landscape. We have to ensure that the new media as well the freedom of expression and other fundamental human freedoms are properly guaranteed, especially for those who are the voice and conscience of our societies. With the freedom comes also the responsibility.

The chairmanship will be an excellent opportunity to assess how far European security has evolved and how much more still needs to be done to develop indivisibility of security throughout the OSCE area. It will be a difficult, hectic and inspiring time for our country, and our small chairmanship team. We have high hopes for building a reputation of Lithuanian diplomacy as transparent, effective and fair. We look forward to a challenging year ahead.



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# UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES: IMPACT OF THE U.S. - RUSSIA DÉTENTE ON THE WIDER EUROPE

**Janusz Bugajski\***

## *Abstract*

Cooperative relations between Washington and Moscow do not necessarily generate security throughout Wider Europe. Much depends on Moscow's goals and vulnerabilities of Russia's neighbors. The Barack Obama administration has been criticized for neglecting the national interests of East European, South Caucasian, and Central Asian states in order to obtain Moscow's collaboration in arms control, Iranian sanctions, and maintaining a supply corridor to NATO troops in Afghanistan. Such an approach emboldens Russia's leaders to press their former Soviet subordinates into closer dependency relationships that limit their sovereignty. One major shortcoming of Obama's foreign policy is a failure to clearly articulate U.S. security interests and strategic goals in the Wider European and Central Asian regions. These include preventing regional insecurity, precluding the emergence of a regional hegemony that challenges broader American interests, and involving a diverse array of states to assist Washington in combating common threats stemming from the broader Middle East and South Asia.

## **Introduction**

We need to re-evaluate the conventional wisdom that improved U.S.-Russia relations are automatically advantageous for all European and post-Soviet states. Closer ties between Washington and Moscow may encourage some European and Eurasian capitals to seek less confrontational relations with Russia and to develop their bilateral agendas, but this largely depends on Moscow's approach. Indeed, two potential negatives may result from the current U.S.-Russia détente. First, it may generate profound anxieties that Washington has abandoned

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East European, South Caucasian, and Central Asian national interests in order to obtain Moscow's cooperation in combating security threats in the Greater Middle East. This could either worsen relations with Russia as fears of domination increase, or it could encourage greater official acquiescence to Moscow because of the absence of sufficient Western protection or leverage. The latter scenario can also polarize and radicalize domestic politics.

And secondly, Moscow itself will feel emboldened by a perception that Washington may be willing to disregard security interests of East European and Central Asian states in order to ensure cooperation with Russia. Indeed, the Kremlin has been testing Washington's response to a range of assertive moves toward neighbors, such as pressuring Belarus through sudden increases in oil and gas prices and intensive propaganda attacks against President Alyaksandr Lukashenka; extending the presence of the Russian fleet on Ukrainian territory and pushing to absorb Ukraine's gas industry under a Russian monopoly; threatening Georgia with further conflict and partition; and increasing pressure on Azerbaijan to supply Moscow's energy networks.

## **1. Impact of the New West-East D tente**

In general terms, when U.S.-Russian relations improve, pressure is eased within Europe as the EU becomes potentially less divided in its Russia policy, especially if Moscow is not engaged in some stark new military aggression in its neighborhood. This appeared to be the case after President Barack Obama took office in January 2009 and Washington stressed the importance of collaborating with Moscow in pursuing common security interests in Afghanistan and Iran, as well as in the control of nuclear weapons. The new U.S. approach was seen as generating stability in Russia at a time when the EU also seemed less focused on promoting democratic reforms. For Berlin, Paris, and other EU capitals, stability in Russia was more important than the country's systemic transformation.

Although some EU officials remained concerned about the fact that closer U.S.-Russia ties could lead to a downgrading of Moscow's relations with the EU, countries that had upheld cooperative relations with Russia throughout the George

W. Bush administration felt relieved and even vindicated by Obama's policies. Indeed, policy makers in Germany and France believed that the previous U.S. government was the main culprit in unsettling relations with Moscow through its actions in the Middle East and had provoked the war in Georgia by giving Tbilisi the prospect of NATO membership, which convinced the Saakashvili government to act with impunity against Russia's alleged national interests. They chose to ignore Moscow's intent to recreate a regional condominium under its supervision or considered it a benign hegemony that would unburden the EU of the necessity to support and integrate the former Soviet republics.

In the wake of the White House "reset" with the Kremlin, several EU governments who had been most outspoken about Russia's policies appeared to soften their stance and new avenues of cooperation were pursued. For example, since early 2009 London has focused on manageable questions with Moscow seeking gradual bilateral improvements. Several Central-East European (CEE) governments were willing to give the new U.S. President the opportunity to curtail Russia's aggressiveness and make it a more constructive international player. This was especially visible in the stance of Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk who sought to improve Polish-Russian relations even before Obama's election.

Russian authorities calculated that it would be more difficult to drive political wedges between the EU and the U.S. under the Obama administration as there were fewer obvious points of disagreement that they could exploit whether over Iraq, counterterrorism, human rights, or missile defense. On the other hand, a lessened U.S. focus on transatlantic relations could serve Russia's long-term goal of disconnecting the Alliance. Moscow also decided to settle some enduring disputes with selected European states in order to gain greater leverage within the Union or with particular European states outside the EU to further its strategic and economic ambitions.

Poland's Donald Tusk government sought to improve relations with Moscow after assuming office in November 2007. Indeed, several CEE capitals believe that the Obama administration may be taking credit for improving their relations with Moscow, whereas the Polish case demonstrates that such bilateral revivals were already underway before the U.S. "reset." The rapprochement is largely driven by strategic considerations since Moscow views Poland as a rising power within the EU, as evident in the revival of the Weimar Triangle, a French-German-Polish initiative to coordinate their European policy. It is therefore offering closer business

and energy connections between the two states to increase Russia's influence within the Union.<sup>1</sup>

However, any bilateral thaws in the former Soviet zone are not irreversible as a great deal depends on Russia's internal developments and external behavior. Currently, Moscow is engaged in a campaign of outreach led by President Dmitri Medvedev and intends to obtain foreign capital and investment to modernize the Russian economy. However the thaw could move into reverse if Russia stumbles into a neighborhood conflict or a prolonged domestic crisis.

## 2. Skepticism toward Obama's Policies

One fundamental shortcoming of President Obama's foreign policy has been its inability or unwillingness to clearly articulate U.S. security interests and strategic goals in the wider European, Caucasian, and Central Asian regions, even if these are not currently overarching national priorities. These interests can be encapsulated in at least four policy objectives: first, consolidating bilateral partnerships and regional alliances to prevent the emergence of weak, fractured, or conflicted states that undermine regional security; second, precluding the expansion of any dominant regional power or regional alliance that challenges broader American interests and even the American presence; third, involving a diverse array of states to assist Washington and NATO in combating common threats stemming from the broader Middle East and South Asia; and fourth, ensuring the development of energy resources and their secure transportation from the Caspian Basin to Europe via the Caucasus and Black Sea region to uphold the stability of America's European allies.

In general, Europe's new democracies were not as enthusiastic about the Obama presidency as many of their West European counterparts. The Bush years were viewed relatively favorably as they had become an integral part of the Alliance

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Newman, "Is Russian Energy Dependence Threatened by Poland?" *O&G, Next Generation*, Sunday May 2, 2010, [www.cisoilgas.com/news/polands-shale-gas-deposits](http://www.cisoilgas.com/news/polands-shale-gas-deposits). Moscow is concerned about the fact that exploitation of vast reserves of Polish shale gas could challenge the economic viability of Nord Stream. Hence, it is seeking new energy deals with Warsaw. With an estimated 1.36 trillion cubic metres of shale gas, Poland has the potential to increase the EU's reserves by almost a half and offer a long-term alternative to Gazprom as a major energy provider to the EU.

and were courted and praised for providing military assistance to the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some disenchantment became visible during the latter part of the Bush presidency when the CEE received neither economic and military benefits, nor inclusion in the U.S. visa waiver program that several capitals had expected in exchange for support of the American war effort.

Subsequently, Obama was an unknown quantity who appeared to view Russia as his number one priority in Eurasia. Rightly or wrongly a “Russia-first” policy is perceived in some capitals as a “Russia-only” policy and the new administration has been widely viewed as making cordial relations a strategic priority regardless of Moscow’s neo-imperial designs on its neighborhood.

President Obama’s meeting with eleven government leaders from CEE during his trip to Prague on April 8, 2010 was intended to project “strategic reassurance” and convince them that upgrading contacts with Russia did not entail downgrading ties with the new democracies or closing the door to NATO’s growth eastward. For their part, the Central Europeans have sought Washington’s commitment to five strategic “no’s:” no weakening of NATO’s security guarantees; no U.S. military withdrawal from Europe; no redivision of the continent into spheres of influence; no termination of NATO enlargement; and no grand bargains with Moscow over the heads of former Soviet satellites.

The fact that President Obama needs to periodically “reassure” the new NATO allies that they have not been abandoned indicates that several capitals remain troubled not just about Russia’s aspirations, but about U.S. and NATO policies. For this reason, they will be looking closely at several significant landmarks. First, the content of NATO’s new Strategic Concept is important in defining the role of the Alliance over the coming decade and its commitment to collective defense. In particular, how Russia is depicted in the document, as a partner or a potential adversary, or both, will be closely monitored in CEE capitals. Second, NATO’s Summit in Lisbon in November 2010 will be important with regard to any recommitments to mutual defense and enlargement. And third, the contours of the new Missile Defense system will need to be fleshed out and how Russia will be included in the planned system.

CEE states remain concerned about Russia’s ambitions in countries, such as Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Georgia, and the pressure this can exert on their own security at a time when Washington no longer views the wider European project as a strategic priority. Indeed, by the summer of 2010 there was a growing

sense that the White House was gradually withdrawing from the post-Soviet region and placing greater emphasis on such instruments as the OSCE in conflict prevention and crisis management.<sup>2</sup> However, the OSCE had no proven track record in resolving conflicts, as it possessed no hard power deterrents or military instruments and was dependent on multi-national consensus. Washington evidently calculated that such an approach could prevent new confrontations with Moscow. This may also indicate that the U.S. and NATO were not prepared to surrender the post-Soviet region to Russian hegemony under the CSTO umbrella even though the Alliance was not playing an assertive role.

In a longer perspective, Washington's détente with Moscow may prove to be a window of opportunity for Russia and the Medvedev-Putin authorities will seek to extract as many advantages as possible from the Obama "reset." If Russia cannot deliver on U.S. requests for substantive assistance vis-à-vis Iran, North Korea, and Afghanistan, or becomes embroiled in new conflicts around its borders, it will prove to be of negative strategic value to Washington. Moreover, at the close of 2012 the Obama presidency may be replaced by a less Russia-focused administration, and Putin may return to the Kremlin with a more expansionist agenda.

### 3. Wider Europe in Question

Despite its reassurances that it will not support the delineation of interest spheres, in practice the Obama administration concluded that it would not vigorously challenge Moscow in its immediate neighborhood and could share influence in some regions. It calculated that even if Ukraine and other countries slipped under Russia's security and economic umbrella, this would not damage U.S. interests which center on much more vital concerns over Afghanistan, Iran, and nuclear proliferation. Indeed, closer Russian supervision over the post-Soviet republics was considered beneficial by some Western officials as such arrangement would purportedly generate fewer conflicts with Moscow. In effect, this constituted an informal concordat with Russia over respective zones of interest. However, the effectiveness of such an agreement will be tested particularly in the cases where resistance to Moscow's pressures and encroachments results in violent conflict or has a more direct impact on one of the new NATO members.

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph R. Biden Jr. "Advancing Europe's Security," *The New York Times*, May 6, 2010.

According to Russian commentators supportive of the Kremlin, whether or not the détente in U.S-Russian relations flourishes remains dependent on how Washington behaves in the “post-Soviet space” and whether it poses no threat to Russia’s self-defined security interests.<sup>3</sup> In September 2008, before Obama was elected, the Russian military staged a major strategic exercise (Stability 2008) as a warning to Washington. It involved a local conflict in the CIS area escalating into an all-out air, sea and land war between Russia and the West. This in turn erupts into a global nuclear conflict as Russia’s military planners envisage the limited first use of nuclear cruise missiles against targets in Europe and the U.S. In order to maintain this sense of impending threat, Russian officials continue to claim that Georgia has been rearming since the August 2008 war and has been preparing to retake its separatist territories.<sup>4</sup> Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin has charged the U.S. with arming Georgia, thereby elevating Moscow’s confrontation with Tbilisi to a proxy standoff with the U.S. and NATO.<sup>5</sup>

To counter Moscow’s pressure, during his visit to Moscow in July 2009, President Obama signaled that any new attack against Georgia would precipitate American involvement with unspecified “grave consequences.”<sup>6</sup> American military support for Georgia has been limited to providing training and equipment primarily for counter-terrorism operations rather than for homeland defense against a conventional invasion.<sup>7</sup> Soon after the August 2008 war a Georgia-NATO Commission was created as it became clear that Tbilisi would not obtain a NATO MAP in the immediate future. The Commission established an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO to foster institutional reform.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Andranik Migranyan, “At Last We Can Sum Up the Results of the Moscow Summit,” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, Moscow, Russia, July 29, 2009. Migranyan is the director of the New York office of the Russian Institute of Democracy and Cooperation Foundation.

<sup>4</sup> Viktor Yadukha and Mikhail Chernov, “Premonitions of August,” *RBC Daily*, No.101, June 15, 2009, Moscow, Russia.

<sup>5</sup> Pavel Felgenhauer, “Nuclear Submarines Deployed to Deter U.S. Interference in Russia’s Confrontation with Georgia,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 6, Issue 151, August 6, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Brian Whitmore, “Reset 2.0,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, July 28, 2009, [http://rferl/content/Reset\\_20/1787366.html](http://rferl/content/Reset_20/1787366.html).

<sup>7</sup> Richard Giragosian, “Georgian Planning Flaws Led to Campaign Failure,” *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, August 20, 2008, [www.jdw.janes.com](http://www.jdw.janes.com).

<sup>8</sup> “NATO-Georgia Joint Press Statement,” September 15, 2008, [http://cps/en/natolive/news\\_46438.htm](http://cps/en/natolive/news_46438.htm) Ukraine also obtained Annual National Programs (ANP) from NATO which were largely equivalent to annual MAPs.

Nonetheless, such an initiative was widely seen as a substitute for membership, indicating that Moscow may have achieved one of its objectives by halting further NATO enlargement.

Some analysts have proposed a more visible Western role that could act as a deterrent to further conflict by deploying a NATO military mission in Georgia as a counterweight to Russian bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.<sup>9</sup> Russia's invasion exposed major gaps in Georgia's defenses as Tbilisi had focused on counterinsurgency operations in distant theaters and neglected deftness against conventional military threats. Meanwhile over the past two years Moscow has increased its troop strength, established military bases, and signed defense pacts with its political proxies in the two occupied territories.

The Obama administration affirmed its commitment to the long-term security of Georgia by gradually assisting in defense sector reform, training, education, and force structure development that would enable Tbilisi to acquire a "modern, Western-oriented, NATO-interoperable armed forces capable of territorial defense and coalition contributions."<sup>10</sup> To be effective, U.S. military assistance must include air defense, anti-tank capabilities, command, control, communications, equipment, intelligence systems, operational training for territorial defense, officer training, and reservist training and mobilization. This would enable Georgia to raise the cost of another Russian attack without necessitating the use of U.S. firepower.

Perceptions that President Obama had disengaged from the South Caucasus grew throughout 2010, as evident in several missteps, including the following: the failure to appoint a U.S. ambassador to Azerbaijan for almost a year; public indifference or lack of a coherent strategy regarding Moscow's purchase of a French Mistral ship that will help project Russian power in the Black Sea; a fixation on opening the Armenian-Turkish border without tackling the more important and inter-linked territorial disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan; and a growing perception that the U.S. favored Armenia in the conflict over Nagorno-

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<sup>9</sup> Pierre Razoux, "What Future for Georgia?" *Research Paper*, No.47, June 2009, Research Division, NATO Defense College, Rome, p.5.

<sup>10</sup> Testimony of Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, "Georgia: One Year After the August War," Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee for Europe, August 4, 2009.



Karabakh because of pressure on the White House from America's Armenian lobby.<sup>11</sup>

In the wake of the Georgia war, Washington did not use the opportunity to intensify its security cooperation with either Azerbaijan or Armenia, or provide more impetus in mediating the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. Baku in particular felt frustrated that it had been taken for granted by Washington despite its stellar record in providing transit for coalition forces to Central Asia and Afghanistan; in contributing troops to U.S.-led operations; and in spearheading Caspian energy development. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's visit to Baku, Yerevan, and Tbilisi in the first week of July 2010 was intended to dispel perceptions of U.S. disengagement, but the practical results remained unclear.

Additionally, in a joint statement released on June 27, 2010 by Presidents Medvedev, Obama, and Sarkozy, the three co-chairs of the OSCE's Minsk Group urged their Armenian and Azeri counterparts to pursue the peace process on the basis of OSCE's Helsinki Principles. However, these principles include two diametrically opposed positions: territorial integrity of states, which indicates that Nagorno-Karabakh should return to Azerbaijan, and peoples' right to self-determination, which would signify the region's independence or incorporation in Armenia.

In the case of Ukraine, during U.S. Vice President Joe Biden's visit to Kyiv in July 2009, the Charter on Strategic Partnership, signed by Presidents Bush and Yushchenko in December 2008, was renewed and a bilateral commission was announced to focus on economics, trade, energy, security and rule of law. It remained unclear how the partnership would function under the Yanukovych presidency, especially as the new president placed the EU and Russia at the forefront of Kyiv's foreign policy, and the U.S. and NATO on the back burner.

During the first half of 2010, U.S. reactions were barely audible to the closer integration of Russia and Ukraine, as evident in plans to absorb key sectors of the Ukrainian economy and extension of the presence of Russia's Black Sea fleet. While

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<sup>11</sup> Vladimir Socor, "Is the United States Losing Azerbaijan? (Part Four)," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 7, Issue 80, April 26, 2010. Socor points out that "The linkage between border opening and troop withdrawal had been a fundamental element in the negotiating process for almost a decade, and is Turkish policy since 1993 (when Armenian forces crossed from Karabakh into Azerbaijan's interior). Breaking that linkage—as per the October 2009 Turkey-Armenia protocols, strongly encouraged by the U.S.—would undermine Baku's patiently constructed diplomatic strategy for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Baku proposes opening all borders to trade and transit as part of the first stage in the conflict resolution process, linked with the Armenian troop withdrawal."

President Yanukovych endeavored to bring Kyiv closer to Moscow, calculating that a less disruptive relationship would enhance the country's economic performance, both Washington and Brussels evidently calculated that such moves did not threaten Western interests and could bring stability to Ukraine. Western disengagement in turn emboldened Russian authorities and weakened Kyiv's potential bargaining position vis-à-vis Moscow. Such a short-sighted approach by the U.S. and the EU ignored the potential radicalization of Ukrainian politics precipitated by Yanukovych's policies and the likelihood of serious domestic conflicts in the years ahead.

#### **4. Consequences of Rapprochement with Russia**

The George W. Bush administration did not consider Russia as a major international player, but as a relatively weak post-imperial state that could be ignored in many policy decisions. Although Russia regained some of its strength over the last decade, it has nevertheless contributed little to international problem-solving, exaggerated its capabilities, and resisted constructive engagement.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Russia could be viewed as a declining power benefiting from a brief resurgence driven by temporarily high energy prices and with a leadership that has sought to stifle the development of a more secure Europe tied to NATO and the U.S.

During the first half of the Obama administration, Russia has been publicly depicted as a key partner for the U.S. However, in looking more closely at Obama's approach, Russia is courted in a narrow range of security-related issues and is not viewed as strategically or economically ascendant. Washington's purpose in highlighting a Russian partnership appears aimed at placating its elite's sense of global importance while tapping Moscow's cooperation and preventing its leaders from sabotaging U.S. interests.<sup>13</sup> The absence of extensive economic connections, where trade with Russia amounts to less than 1% of the U.S. total, indicates that

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas Graham, "Resurgent Russia and U.S. Purposes," The Century Foundation, New York, 2009, <http://www.tcf.org/publications/internationalaffairs/Graham.pdf>, p.3.

<sup>13</sup> For a valuable analysis of Obama's foreign policy concepts, see Constanze Steltzenmuller, *End of a Honeymoon: Obama and Europe, One Year Later*, Brussels Forum Paper Series, March 2010, Washington, D.C., German Marshall Fund of the United States.

in the event of renewed political conflicts common material interests are unlikely to reduce tensions.<sup>14</sup>

The notion has been widely disseminated that improved U.S.-Russia relations enhance security throughout Europe and Eurasia. This is certainly true if it helps restrict Russia's aggressive moves to undermine the sovereignty of neighboring states and results in a less confrontational relationship with NATO. However, the practical long-term impact of the U.S.-Russia détente needs to be assessed more thoroughly and counter arguments may also be valid.

For instance, Moscow may calculate that bilateral cooperation over Afghanistan and Iran are such paramount U.S. interests that Washington would be willing to retreat in other arenas to make sure that it succeeds. The Obama "reset" button in itself raised Russia's global stature. It was initially viewed with some suspicion and distrust in Moscow, although several pro-Kremlin analysts claimed that Washington had finally acknowledged that Russia had recovered from its post-Cold War torpor and would again be treated as a great power.<sup>15</sup> A number of analysts believed that the "reset" actually indicated U.S. weakness in the midst of two wars and an economic recession.

Some analysts even asserted that Obama's policies signaled a "grand bargain" with Moscow in which the U.S. would permanently halt further NATO enlargement and accede to a Russian sphere of primary influence in the former Soviet Union in return for Russia's diplomatic and practical help with Iran, Afghanistan, North Korea, and other security concerns. To demonstrate closer consultations at high official levels, a U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission with thirteen working groups was established in the aftermath of President Obama's visit to Moscow in July 2009. When Washington announced in May 2010 that Russia's military occupation of Georgia presented "no obstacle" to U.S.-Russian civilian nuclear cooperation and other collaborative ventures, Moscow understood that the new détente was clearly working to its advantage.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Marcin Kaczmarek, "Rosja-USA: Ograniczone Zmiany," *Tydzien Na Wschodzie*, No.23(141), June 30, 2010, Center for Eastern Studies, Warsaw, Poland, p.3.

<sup>15</sup> Check the analysis of Russia's reactions to the Obama "reset" in Yuri E. Fedorov, "Brief Analysis No.104: Russia's View of the 'Reset,'" *Central European Digest*, July 1, 2009, Washington, D.C.: Center for European Policy Analysis, [http://www.cepa.org/ced/view.aspx?record\\_id=182](http://www.cepa.org/ced/view.aspx?record_id=182).

<sup>16</sup> Barack Obama, "Message from the President Regarding a Peaceful Nuclear Agreement with Russia." Office of the Press Secretary, May 10, 2010, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/message-president-regarding-a-peaceful-nuclear-agreement-with-russia>.

Warming U.S.-Russia ties raised suspicions in parts of Central Europe, especially in the Baltic States and Poland, over Washington's potential concessions to Moscow. As a result, U.S. officials made strenuous efforts to underscore that they did not support direct security trade-offs with Russia or the consolidation of Russian and American spheres at the expense of other states. Vice President Joe Biden's visit to Kyiv and Tbilisi in July 2009 was intended to reinforce such arguments. Biden's remarks that Russia was a country in economic crisis and needed an arms control agreement much more than the U.S. was interpreted in Moscow as "plan B" to the Obama "reset button." Russian analysts believed that if Moscow did not make the required compromises and the U.S. did not gain benefits from the Kremlin over Afghanistan and Iran, then Washington would aim to push Russia to the periphery of world politics.<sup>17</sup>

However, Biden's assumptions that Russia's economic difficulties ensured that the government would be more accommodating are debatable. Indeed, in the short-term Moscow could become more belligerent to disguise and deflect from its internal problems unless treated as an important international player. Furthermore, the White House left unclear what it considered to be the "red lines" of Russia's behavior in the Kremlin attempts to re-establish demarcated spheres of influence. Red lines become blurred and diluted where Russia's influence seeps in through unconventional instruments, such as energy blackmail, corrupt business connections, conflict manipulation, and peace-keeping deployments that assist its agenda of reimperialization.

Obama's announcement of a new *détente* with Russia in early 2009 had little immediate impact on concrete policy-making in Moscow. The Kremlin eventually approved the transit of logistical supplies across Russia to NATO forces in Afghanistan and backed a new set of UN sanctions against Iran in June 2010. However, Moscow reserved the right to close its territory to NATO passage and continued developing economic relations with Tehran. Moreover, Russia's leaders periodically tested American reactions by ratcheting up tensions with selected pro-Western neighbors, such as drafting legislation to make it easier to send troops abroad to avowedly defend Russian citizens.

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<sup>17</sup> Vladimir Milov, "The Latest American Insinuation," *gazeta.ru*, July 27, 2009, <http://www.gazeta.ru/column/milov/3227830.shtml>. For excerpts of Biden's remarks see Peter Spiegel, "Biden Says Weakened Russia Will Bend to U.S.," *The Wall Street Journal Online*, July 25, 2009, <http://www.online.wsj.com/article/SB124848246032580581.html>.

Michael McFaul, the U.S. National Security Council's senior director for Russian and Eurasian affairs and the chief architect of Obama's Russia policy, stated that Washington harbored no illusions about the worldview of Russian officials who consider the U.S. as the primary adversary.<sup>18</sup> Given this official assessment, U.S. policy was presumably intended either to pacify Moscow through strategic engagement, or to outmaneuver Moscow through diplomatic cunning. Leaders in Moscow may not fully grasp that Russia no longer occupies a central position in American strategic thinking or in its foreign and security policy.<sup>19</sup> However, an acknowledgement of Moscow's reduced status in the U.S. worldview may encourage Russia's belligerence to provoke Washington's reaction. And this may be a useful argument for the Obama team in purposively raising Russia's esteem through bilateral arms control agreements and other forms of cooperation and thereby deflating Moscow's anti-American and conflict promoting agendas.

Rather than elevating Russia to a global power, the war with Georgia in August 2008 may have demonstrated Russia's preoccupation with relatively minor territorial issues and its limited military capacities. Additionally, in the post-war setting the Obama White House was much more concerned about gaining Moscow's support in pressing international disputes and forging strategic arms agreements than in challenging Russia's neighborhood influence. For instance, in May 2010 Washington revived an accord with Moscow in which the two countries would cooperate on civilian nuclear energy; the initiative had been shelved after the August 2008 war.

An effective U.S. policy toward Russia needs to combine cooperation in arenas of common interest while tempering Moscow's assimilationist approach toward its neighbors. A failure to oppose Russia's assertive regional behavior could revive several dormant conflicts. Washington should not exaggerate what the Russians can offer in reducing regional threats and global crises.<sup>20</sup> For instance, it was doubtful whether the diplomatic energy expended in gaining Moscow's support of moderate sanctions against Iran through the UN Security Council in June 2010

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<sup>18</sup> "The Russia/America Summit," *The Economist*, July 11, 2009, [http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=E1\\_TPJJPDSN](http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=E1_TPJJPDSN).

<sup>19</sup> Andrei Zagorski, "Russia and the U.S.: The Kabuki Dancing Over?" *The EU-Russia Centre Review*, Issue 8: Russian Foreign Policy, October 2008, p.109, Brussels, Belgium, [www.eu-russiacentre.org](http://www.eu-russiacentre.org).

<sup>20</sup> Damon Wilson in "Russia Must Also Hit the Reset Button," April 1, 2009, Atlantic Council, Washington D.C., [http://www.acus.org/new\\_atlanticist/russia-must-also-hit-reset-button](http://www.acus.org/new_atlanticist/russia-must-also-hit-reset-button).

actually made any major difference to Tehran's intent to develop nuclear weapons. At some point the White House needs to take full stock of what the new détente has accomplished for international security and for U.S. and NATO strategic interests.<sup>21</sup>

The notion of a "strategic partnership" between the U.S. and Russia is clearly premature. It assumes that Moscow and Washington share strategic objectives in terms of their global role.<sup>22</sup> Strategic partners not only cooperate in particular endeavors, they are also bound by common interests, values, and goals. While Russia can be a tactical partner with the Alliance in dealing with specific threats, such as nuclear proliferation, or in negotiating arms control accords, the government in Moscow does not share the long-term strategic targets of either NATO or the EU. NATO allies respect the will of sovereign states to enter multinational institutions of their choice. They also favor and support the development of democratic systems and legitimate governments that combine national stability with respect for human and civil rights. The same principles do not apply to the Russian authorities.

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<sup>21</sup> Friedman contends that "START talks are from a world long passed. The issues now revolve around Russia's desire for a sphere of influence, and the willingness and ability of the West to block that ambition. In George Friedman, "The Western View of Russia," *Stratfor*, September 10, 2009, [http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=14443&Itemid=132](http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14443&Itemid=132).

<sup>22</sup> Robert Legvold, "The Russia File," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2009, Vol.88, Issue 4, pp.78-93. Legvold asserts that Russia needs to "invest in promoting progressive change in its neighborhood" but does not specify what that would entail and why Moscow would support democratization among adjacent states if this pulls them away from Russia's orbit.

## WHY A COMMON EUROPEAN CULTURE OF REMEMBRANCE SHALL NOT EMERGE

Jeroen Bult\*

It is an annual ritual in the Netherlands. In late April, the first documentaries on the Nazi occupation of the small country and movies inspired by it are broadcast on TV, while numerous articles concurrently appear in newspapers and magazines and dozens of new books are published. They all offer a reconstruction of the traumatising German attack of May 1940, the activities of the underground resistance, the bloody battle near the town of Arnhem (September 1944), the *Hongerwinter* (the ‘Winter of Hunger’ of 1944-45, when the Nazi’s cut off the food supplies to the western part of the Netherlands), and the *Endlösung* that hit the Jewish citizens so hard (eighty percent of the Dutch Jews were annihilated in the extermination camps). This massive stream of information reaches its peak on 4 and 5 May, when the War dead are commemorated and the liberation by the Allied forces, mainly Canadians, is celebrated. Over the past few years, more attention has been paid to the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia, as well. Thousands of Dutch lost their lives in Japanese concentration camps, or while working as slaves on the Burmese railway line.

This year marks the seventieth anniversary of the German invasion and the sixty-fifth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, i.e., Nazi occupation, and even more documentaries, books, etc. have seen the light, including many that reflect personal stories and tragedies. The commemoration cult has thus reached its absolute zenith. Thomas Läufer, German Ambassador to the Netherlands, was not invited to attend the ceremony at the National Monument on Dam Square in Amsterdam, the most important commemoration event on 4 May. This entailed some discussion in Dutch media, but the hardliners prevailed: *De Bezetting* (‘the occupation’) should remain a strictly *national* matter, a symbol of national victimhood, and a cornerstone of national identity. Diplomatic relations between the Netherlands and Germany are excellent, and anti-German sentiments and

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stereotypes have evaporated in the course of time, yet on 4 and 5 May it is 'Us and Them' again. The wise words that (West) German President Richard von Weizsäcker spoke in 1985 – many German people also experienced the Allied victory over Nazism in 1945 as a form of liberation – are still being ignored in the Netherlands.

However, if two post-modern nations in Western Europe, who were front-runners of European integration in the 1950s and 60s, are not able to reach a *modus vivendi* on a common commemoration – although the Dutch-Calvinistic stubbornness seems to be a major problem here – how should the European Union as a whole accomplish a common culture of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* ('dealing with past'), as the Germans put it so beautifully? On this European macro-level, the complicating, disturbing factor has been the 'rivalry' between Nazism and Communism. From the moment of their EU accession in 2004, the former Soviet satellites, especially Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, have emphasized the necessity of integrating the crimes of Communism, i.e., the Soviet Union, into the pan-European historical consciousness. In their view, the 'moral monopoly' of Auschwitz has to be broken; the Gulag deserves an *equal* status. The 'privileged' position of Nazism as the ultimate symbol of Evil has to be replaced by a *broader* notion of *Totalitarian* Evil. The Latvian film *The Soviet Story* (2008) – "These people were not killed by the Nazi's", the voice-over impresses on us – tries to convey this vision to a wider, Western audience.

Such a pro-active approach towards the 'naïve, Russia-friendly' Western Europeans is considered to be of the greatest importance by most so-called new EU member states. As Vytautas Landsbergis, Member of European Parliament and former Head of State of Lithuania, wrote in his column in Lithuanian weekly *Veidas* (19-26 May 2008): "So far, the Soviet propagandists are still cultivating their seeds in the West and go on putting facts upside down and wrong side up, hiring professional allies or at least enforcing a total relativism." It is indeed correct that the greater part of the German, Dutch, British, French, etc. journalists and intellectuals truly believe that Nazism was worse than Communism – and didn't the Soviet Union last a crucial contribution to the defeat of Hitler? The lasting presence of Fascist regimes within Western Europe after 1945 – Franco's Spain, Salazar's Portugal and later the Colonel's Greece – only entertained this sentiment. Many progressive minds in Western Europe simply sympathized with the Communist Utopia (including Mao Zedong's and Pol Pot's versions of it) and radicalised after the cultural revolution of 1968 – in the 1970s, the Dutch Communist Party



(CPN) could count on a lot of support at the Universities of Amsterdam and Nijmegen, not to mention the Sorbonne in Paris. These *Fellow-Travellers*, as Leon Trotsky labelled them in his book *Literature and Revolution* (1924), a description that British historian and novelist David Caute took over in his famous book with the same title (1973), have left their traces in the Western European mindset. This is one of the reasons why Russia continues to strike up lamentations about 'the revival of Fascism' in the Baltic States. Some editors/journalists in Berlin, Amsterdam, London, etc. took Russia's 'arguments' for granted during the Bronze Soldier (*Pronkssōdur*) crisis in Spring 2007. Landsbergis has a point, so it seems.

The '*Loony Left*' defending Russia's glorious anti-fascist Soviet heritage is only *one* piece of the puzzle. In his book *The New Cold War* (2008), Edward Lucas points out that the *Fellow-Traveller* has changed his shape; nowadays, it is mainly Western European businessmen and (ex-) politicians longing for lucrative energy contracts who are trying to appease Moscow and are taking its interpretation of history for granted. Lucas presents Jeroen van der Veer, then *CEO* of Dutch-British energy giant *Shell*, as a clear example of what, in his opinion, is a credulous Kremlin-obeying elite. The editor of *The Economist* and long-term friend of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania would not find it surprising that Van der Veer, a member of the Albright Group that is currently developing a new strategic concept for NATO, in a recent interview with Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*, declared that "it is also in the interest of the Baltic States that they will develop a good relationship with Russia – if one is living there, one surely has to focus on that awareness." Slamming Russia with the accusation that it has never looked into the mirror of history and provoking it with a juxtaposition of Nazism and Communism is probably the last thing Van der Veer, *Nord Stream* figurehead Gerhard Schröder and others will do.

However, there are more fundamental, psychological reasons why propagating the idea of Communism as the Equal Evil in Western Europe will be a most difficult enterprise. American historian Charles S. Maier wrote in an article that was published in the German and French magazines for Social Science *Transit* and *Le Débat* in 2002 that, although authors and dissidents like George Orwell, Arthur Koestler, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, and Yevgenia Ginsburg produced impressive masterpieces on the long and dark nightmare that Communism was, this ideology still does not arouse as many emotional sentiments in the western part of Europe as Nazism does. Maier offers several explanations for this lack of, what he calls, 'hot memory.' First of all, Western Europe never experienced any Communist

occupation and repression itself. Secondly, the persecution of the victims of Nazism occurred on a more structural and a better-organized scale, and was founded on well-defined, racial ‘principles.’ Communist terror was marked by arbitrariness; every Russian, Ukrainian, Estonian, etc. was at risk and nobody could predict who would fall prey to the Cheka/NKVD/KGB the following day. According to Maier, only the ‘clear’, ‘purposeful’ terror as practiced by the Nazi’s leaves traces in public consciousness and contributes to the genesis of a ‘hot memory.’ Thirdly, and most importantly, the Nazi terror (that came to life again in hundreds of films) stimulates self-reflection – “How would I have responded if I had seen the *Gestapo*, or an outraged crowd hunting for Jews?” Far more than Communism, Nazism (still) confronts us with our own lack of courage and with our own passive attitude.

An additional problem is that juxtaposing Nazism and Communism is a great taboo in academic and political circles in *Germany*. Back in June 1986, conservative German historian and philosopher Ernst Nolte, in the early 1940s a student of Martin Heidegger, kicked off the notorious *Historikerstreit* (‘Dispute of historians’), when he revealed his thesis on the correlation between Nazism and Communism and between Auschwitz and the Gulag. According to Nolte, the racial murders that took place in the Nazi camps were, above all, a *defensive* reaction to the class murders that were ordered by Lenin and Stalin. Hitler felt inspired by their terror, but at the same time felt threatened by it. Nolte worked out this *kausaler Nexus* (‘the causal linkage’) theory in his controversial book *Der europäische Bürgerkrieg* (‘The European Civil War’). His opponents, sociologist Jürgen Habermas being the most prominent one, argued that in this manner, Nolte encroached upon the unique character of the Holocaust and played down the barbaric character of the Nazi regime and its atrocities.

After German reunification in 1990, the neo-conservative and nationalist *Neue Rechte* (‘New Right’) movement and its magazine *Junge Freiheit* (‘young freedom’) were not the only ones who tried to elaborate on Nolte’s ideas. Writer Martin Walser shocked the country when he stated in October 1998, during a speech that he delivered in St. Paul’s Church in Frankfurt, that the numerous, endless references to Auschwitz were not as much aimed at guaranteeing a lasting memory of the Holocaust, but far more at the “exploitation of our shame for current goals.” In Walser’s view, Auschwitz had become a ‘moral cudgel’, with which the Germans should be beaten, in order to intimidate them forever. Ignaz Bubis, Chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, was infuriated and accused Walser

of 'intellectual arson.' Six years later, angered Salomon Korn, Vice-Chairman of the Council, would walk away from a conference room in Leipzig, where Latvian politician Sandra Kalniete declared in a speech that the Nazi and Communist dictatorships were equally criminal and that no distinction between them should be made, only because one of them was at the winner's side. Other Baltic politicians – Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, Indulis Emsis, Vytautas Landsbergis, Mart Laar, Tunne Kelam – had already preceded Kalniete, or would follow in her footsteps.

As Chancellor Schröder's crusade against the U.S.-led War on Iraq in 2003 indicated, Germany is indeed able to speak with an independent, critical voice in world politics. The greater part of German public opinion and of the opposition in Parliament even supported Schröder. Yet, a more self-conscious, revisionist assessment of modern history is still a bridge too far for most German politicians (including Schröder), academics, journalists and citizens. The sense of 'Eternal Guilt' i.e. self-masochism will not evaporate; *only* the suffering of the German people under the Nazi regime and during the Second World War (Allied bombardments) has gradually been stressed more. The memory of the Communist repression in East Germany has not been given an integral place in national German identity; the moral responsibility for and the (possibility of the) involvement of relatives in the Holocaust have brushed aside the memory of such phenomena as the *Stasi* (the secret service of the GDR) and its dirty practices and the forced removal of children from their 'anti-social' parents. One could summarize it in a metaphor of movies that Charles S. Maier would surely appreciate: the movie *The Pianist* will have a greater impact than *Das Leben der Anderen*. If since 1990 the greater part of the Germans have hardly displayed any real interest in the Communist past of the eastern half of their country – many *Ossies* even worship the 'social warmth' of the GDR – one can only draw the conclusion that it will be most difficult to reach any tangible results on higher, pan-European level.

It appears that Germany, the biggest EU member state, is the main obstacle for the creation of a common European culture of remembrance, with an equal standing of Nazism and Communism. Yet Germany's historically inspired restraints seamlessly coincide with the other factors that have been outlined in this article: commemoration traditions and peculiarities that are supposed to strengthen national identity (the Dutch ones served as an example here), the influential progressive 'anti-fascist' paradigm, the business, i.e., energy interests in Russia that have brought about a form of self-censorship, and Nazism and its sadistic practices as the ultimate 'tool' for self-reflection and self-chastisement.

This does not mean, of course, that politicians and scientists should give up their attempts to make the spoiled, post-modern Western Europeans more familiar with the crimes of Communism and to combat the endless propaganda stream of distorted facts from Moscow. They owe it to Stalin's victims – including the Russian ones. But a common perception of Europe's disastrous twentieth century history will not emerge in the years and decades to come.

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# THE LINK BETWEEN EU SANCTIONS AND REPRESSIONS IN BELARUS

Rasa Gaidelytė\*

## *Abstract*

This article examines the relation between EU sanctions against Belarus and repressions in the country. On the basis of Reed M. Wood's theory of economic sanctions the article aims to answer the question whether EU economic sanctions promote repression in Belarus and whether more severe sanctions contribute to greater state-sponsored repression. In this article repressions are defined as violations of human rights. The article focuses is on three groups of human rights, which are closely related to the political sphere, viz., political, civic, and physical integrity human rights. Qualitative methods are used to examine whether the relation between EU sanctions and repression in Belarus exists and, if yes, what its nature is. The article is concluded by a discussion of the reasons why Wood's theoretical model cannot fully explain the case of Belarus.

## **Introduction**

The last fifteen years may more or less be distinguished by isolation policy in the EU-Belarus relations; however, starting from 2008, small changes came to be observable in the relations of the two. Finally, after a long break senior EU officials visited Belarus; Alexander Lukashenko, in his turn, was welcomed in several EU countries; an adjustment was made in election laws; and the EU suspended sanctions and invited Belarus to participate in the Eastern Partnership program. Complicated relations with Russia, the market and cheap energy resources of which have long been the most basic support of Alexander Lukashenko's regime, force Belarus to seek a compromise. The predicament is also aggravated by the forthcoming presidential elections in Belarus. These will take place not only at the time of the global economic crisis, which inevitably has touched Belarus, but which can also coincide with Russia's annual energy blackmail. Under these circumstances, any economic support and improvement of the international

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atmosphere for the Belarusian authorities become topical issues, and the EU, at least in theory, gets a new chance to resume its relations with Belarus.

On the other hand, the experience accumulated over the past fifteen years has clearly shown that the Belarusian leader has not expressed interest in cooperation to deepen systematic democratic reforms and to improve human rights conditions for account of security, as the regime would likely collapse. Therefore, the EU needs to re-address the dilemma of eternal values and pragmatic interests, and there is a number of practical considerations in developing the relationship. Firstly, there are strategically important gas and oil pipelines crossing the territory of Belarus together with electricity lines. Belarus is also an important transit country transporting different goods. Belarus' neighbors, including Lithuania, are particularly interested in a more open relationship, because the countries actively interact within their trade, business and tourism sectors, while also facing cross-border security, visas, smuggling, international crime, environmental, ethnic minorities and a variety of other issues. As it has already been noted, pragmatic cooperation would also be useful for Belarus; however, fundamental differences in values have resulted in mutual isolation.

Over the last fifteen years this isolation has been primarily stipulated by EU sanctions against Belarus, which have been selected as the main object of this research. The sanctions issue is currently relevant since the EU should consider in the short term whether it is appropriate to renew Belarus sanctions, i.e. whether to keep on trying to develop a more positive and pragmatic promotion policy, or to re-isolate and punish the official Belarusian government for its failure in the sphere of democracy and human rights. In his recent study, Reed M. Wood, a U.S. researcher of the human rights and conflicts, reveals that the unaddressed sanctions paradox has led him to look at the issue unconventionally. His empirical research of 157 cases has shown that economic sanctions not only rarely achieve its aims, but in some ways promote the repression employed by the authority of the sanctioned country; in particular, this effect is applicable to undemocratic regimes. Thus, although in recent decades economic sanctions have increasingly been used as impact tools to promote democratic reforms and respect for human rights, recent research has shown that sanctions often contribute to the opposite effect - political and civil rights become even more restrained in the relevant state. This in turn may lead to further tightening of the sanctions and thus pose a risk of falling into a vicious circle.

Sometimes prolonged sanctions could be justified, as even unsuccessful sanctions may serve, for example, as a disciplinary or deterrent measure to avert

military actions; however, if the sanctions do not in principle hit the target – managing political elite – and cause suffering of citizens due to an increase in repression, then the legitimacy of sanctions in the light of human rights becomes a controversial issue. Generally, EU sanctions against Belarus have been recognized as ineffective, but it is unclear whether they contributed to the rate of repression in the country. Therefore the main question of this study is as follows: Have EU economic sanctions against Belarus, bearing in mind that they were used to encourage respect for human rights, not caused counter-results - greater restrictions of political, civil and physical integrity rights in this country? Since Wood's sanctions theory gives reason to suppose that the EU sanctions policy towards Belarus is likely to have contributed to the increase in repression, the main research hypothesis is formulated as follows: economic sanctions applied by the EU instigate repression by the Belarusian authorities - the more severe sanctions applied, the greater repression employed. The remaining sections of the research will attempt to ascertain whether this hypothesis is true in the case of Belarus, and if it is not, – why. Causal relationships between the variables are researched by conducting a qualitative analysis of the case of Belarus. Since it is not clear which variable is dependent and which is independent, the time factor is controlled in the present research model; i.e., an attempt is made to identify which of the variables was created first and which prompted the other variable. In her assessment of the level of sanctions and repression in Belarus, the author relies on Wood's scale of sanctions assessment as well as the data of independent human rights observer organizations.

## **1. The theory of the relation between economic sanctions and repressions**

In international relations economic sanctions as a non-military impact tool have been used for a long time, but it has been noted that, since the end of the Cold War the number of sanctions cases, has increased significantly. According to John and Karl Muellers, in individual cases, economic sanctions could be worse than weapons<sup>1</sup> of mass destruction; however, in other instances they effectively and without further harm achieve the objectives set out. What does determine that?

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<sup>1</sup> Mueller J., Mueller K., „Sanctions of Mass Destruction“, *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 1999, [http://web.nps.navy.mil/~relooney/EconIntel\\_68.pdf](http://web.nps.navy.mil/~relooney/EconIntel_68.pdf), 2010 03 14.

Constructing his theory, Wood pays particular attention to the importance of the regime. Researchers have previously noted that the regime type is an important factor in determining the likelihood that sanctions<sup>2</sup> will be applied in the relevant country, as well as what their duration<sup>3</sup> and efficiency<sup>4</sup> will be. Wood complements these studies by claiming that the type of the regime is also conducive to various side effects of sanctions. In particular, when applied to undemocratic and weak democracy regimes, these are more likely to try to maintain their stability by resorting to repression. According to Wood, this is so due to the differences in the mechanism of sanctions in undemocratic regimes. Under the operating model of sanctions, these work as follows. Economic sanctions bear the real loss, which brings about the exhaustion of the resources of the target of sanctions. When directed exclusively toward the ruling elite, sanctions weaken its power, while the opposition forces, to a certain extent, become more entrenched. If sanctions are broader, then the loss soon hurts the society. This is manifested by growing public dissatisfaction, and is expressed by protests and/or support of the opposition. In any event, incumbents perceive loss as a threat to the stability of the regime and take steps to counterbalance the situation. As public and opposition discontent rises owing to exhaustible resources, the rulers primarily have to reallocate the resources, which, according to Wood, democratic and undemocratic regimes do differently.

Leaders of a democratic regime, at least in theory, are keen on the allocation of resources more broadly, as in consolidated democracies citizens' support is at the core of regime stability, and therefore lower budget does not hurt the population too badly. However, if the mass feels the impact of sanctions, the rulers are forced to find a compromise to have them abolished, since otherwise they risk losing public support, which would then give the opposition a chance to arise.<sup>5</sup>

In the meantime, the main regime support of undemocratic or weak democracy regimes is constituted by loyal political elite and frequently some other specific groups

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<sup>2</sup> Cox D., Drury, A. C., "Connecting the Democratic Peace and Economic Sanctions", *Journal of Peace Research*, 43(6), 2006, <<http://web.missouri.edu/~drurya/articlesandpapers/JPR2006.pdf>>, 2010 05 04.

<sup>3</sup> Bolks S. M., Al-Sowayel D., "How Long Do Sanctions Last?: Examining Sanctioning Process Through Duration", *Political Studies Quarterly*, 53 (2), 2000, p. 261, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/449280?seq=21>>, 2010 05 04.

<sup>4</sup> Nooruddin, I., "Modeling Sanction Bias in Studies of Sanctions Efficacy", *International Interactions*, 28, 2002, p. 73, <<http://psweb.sbs.ohio-state.edu/faculty/nooruddi/research/sanctions.pdf>>, 2010 05 04.

<sup>5</sup> Wood, R. M., "A Hand upon the Throat of the Nation": Economic Sanctions and State Repression, 1976–2001", *International Studies Quarterly*, 52, 2008, p. 493, <[http://www.unc.edu/~rmwood/Wood\\_ISQ.pdf](http://www.unc.edu/~rmwood/Wood_ISQ.pdf)>, 2010 03 14.



(for example, large businesses interested in the policy of the regime leader). Thus, in such regimes preservation of the support of the loyal group is more important than the citizens.<sup>6</sup> If leaders of this regime are confronted with the lack of resources, they tend to allocate the remaining resources so that support groups would suffer as little as possible, which generally disproportionately falls on the shoulders of non-elite public. Discontented citizens express their dissatisfaction by supporting the opposition, or explicitly, for example, by organizing protests, riots and so on. Oftentimes these methods complement each other and threaten the rulers<sup>7</sup>, but given the fact that a broader resource redistribution for the rulers is unfavourable (since then they risk losing the support of the most important groups mentioned above), the easiest and cheapest way to suppress public movements is through repression.

An interesting alternative approach to the destabilizing effect of sanctions and reallocation of resources is given in the work by Dursun Peksen and A. Cooper Drury. According to them, economic sanctions often do not threaten the elite with a schism and even on the contrary – strengthen the loyalty of the major groups to the rulers: by restricting the flow of goods and services of the state, sanctions allow the rulers to control the flow of the remaining resources. Resource mobilization makes the support groups more dependent on the incumbents, as the only way to get a “bigger bite” is to demonstrate loyalty. Thus, state power structures become more dependent on political power and can be widely used in working with opponents and suppressing mass protests<sup>7</sup> (such as the case of United Nations sanctions on the Hussein regime in Iraq<sup>8</sup>). In this way, according to Peksen and Drury, rulers do not need to worry about the fact that they might lose the support of important groups because the specification of economic sanctions stipulates that the loyalty of these groups will grow naturally. This interpretation is broadly compatible with Wood’s final conclusion: one way or another the regime cannot stop supporting these groups, and, therefore, the portion of the resources designed to ensure the welfare of the masses keeps on decreasing and there is rising inequality, and also dissatisfaction neutralized by repressions.

In addition to the dissatisfaction of the citizens, there is another important threat of the opposition. According to Wood, regime repressiveness is promoted by the

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 493.

<sup>7</sup> Peksen D., Drury A. C., “Economic Sanctions and Political Repression: Assessing the Impact of Coercive Diplomacy on Political Freedoms”, *Human Rights Review*, No 12142, 2009, p. 400-401, <<http://www.springerlink.com/content/y6524r8574x66537/fulltext.pdf>>, 2010 04 16.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 401.

fact that sanctions are often perceived as direct foreign support for the opposition<sup>9</sup>, especially if sanctions requirements are concerned with political reforms. Foreign support for the opposition helps to earn confidence and backing of hesitant citizens<sup>10</sup>, thereby increasing the legitimacy of the opposition. A balanced approach to parity of position and opposition forces often leads to internal instability<sup>11</sup>, and it is very likely that the desire to prevent such situation from happening will encourage incumbents to resort to reprisal against the opposition even before sanctions are imposed.<sup>12</sup> Even a destabilized, undemocratic or weak democracy regime will not necessarily agree to comply with sanctions requirements. By acceding to the requirements of foreign forces, rulers would appear weak in the eyes of the citizens, major support groups and opposition. Meanwhile, finding a compromise and opportunity for negotiation in consolidated democracies is often seen as rational steps to avoid deepening the crisis with other countries.<sup>13</sup> Thus, sanctions in undemocratic or weak democracy regimes are likely to persist, and therefore the probability of greater repression in such countries is higher.

In their works Wood as well as Peksen and Drury use Daniel Drezner's insights. Applying game theory and statistical analysis Drezner has supplemented sanctions theories by providing a description of an interesting paradox. He claims that the success of sanctions is determined not only by cost allocation and its impact at the present time, but also by implied relations between the parties in the future.

According to the author, forcing to obey, economic sanctions redistribute political power between the authorizing and penalized parties. Such redistribution of reputation is significant, if the parties have presumed that conflicts will proceed, which is far more likely to occur between unfriendly countries than among allies (the author divides relations into friendly, neutral and hostile, assessing the nature of the relationship before the introduction of sanctions<sup>14</sup>). Most allies are generally not interested in applying sanctions to each other, but if it

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<sup>9</sup> Wood, (note 6), p. 495.

<sup>10</sup> Kaempfer W., Lowenberg A., "Unilateral Versus Multilateral Sanctions: A Public Choice Perspective", *International Studies Quarterly*, 43 (1), 1999, p. 50, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2600964?seq=14>>, 2010 05 06.

<sup>11</sup> Benson M., Kugler J., "Power Parity, Democracy, and the Severity of Internal Violence", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 42 (2), 1998, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/174569?seq=11>>, 2010 05 06.

<sup>12</sup> Peksen, Drury, (note 8), p. 405-406.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 399.

<sup>14</sup> Drezner D., *The Sanctions Paradox: Economic Statecraft and International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 110.

happens, sanctions are usually mild, while the sanctioned country quickly agrees to negotiate the conditions posited. This is because the sender of the sanctions is aware of the fact that serious conflicts between parties are unlikely in the long term, while a brief loss of reputation will not have significant implications for the future; therefore, it is worthwhile to surrender in order to avoid the cost of sanctions. When disagreements arise between two hostile countries, the parties do not want to yield a point even if the sanctions' costs are high for both of them, and it is foreseeable that more conflicts will arise in the future, so that each previously made surrender might weaken the bargaining position in future.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the paradox of sanctions may be formulated as follows: the most effective sanctions work when there is least interest in using them (the allies case), and the least effective, when there is an attempt to gain over the sanctioned state.<sup>16</sup> According to this theoretical base, it becomes clear that sanctions encourage repression in the country where chances for the conflict between the parties in the future are big. This is because the anticipation of conflicts, when neither of the parties is inclined to yield, and thus vain application of sanctions protracts. Prolonged application of sanctions, in turn, leads to a chain reaction: sanctions waste state resources, increase inequality, create dissatisfaction and opposition support and encourage the rulers to increase repressions in order to maintain stability of the regime.

To sum up all of the above, we find that there are many reasons explaining why economic sanctions may promote repression in the sanctioned state, especially if it is characterized by a dominating undemocratic or weak democracy regime. First, economic sanctions deepen inequality in the society, and thus increase protests and higher expectations of the opposition support. Both factors threaten the stability of the regime, which encourages leadership to resort to repression. Second, sanctions are often viewed as direct foreign support to the opposition, which is also treated as an undesirable phenomenon that must be suppressed. Third, economic sanctions may contribute to the creation of a situation in which the state power structure becomes more dependent on the incumbents, therefore, if need be, they are easier to manipulate in repressions. Fourth, repressions are more likely to happen if, prior to the imposition of sanctions, the regimes have not maintained friendly relations and envisage more conflicts in the future. In such

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4-5.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4-5.

a case application of sanctions protracts, while prolonged sanctions, once again, increase the disjuncture in society. In addition, after the imposition of sanctions in the undemocratic or weak democracy regimes severe repression is more likely due to the fact that in these countries resources are redistributed differently from their democratic counterparts, and therefore the level of inequality is expected to be higher.

## **2. The severity level of EU sanctions and repressions in Belarus**

Since the goal of the present research is to ascertain whether EU economic sanctions contribute to repression in Belarus, an assumption is made that economic sanctions by the EU is the independent variable, whereas repression carried out by the Belarusian authorities is the dependent variable. However, in order to establish whether the relation is assumed correctly and is not converse (or mutual), the converse relation is verified. In his study Wood employs the quantitative method and computes data by means of a computer program used for statistical analysis. It should be born in mind, however, that this research is a case-study analysis. The small amount of data allows us to choose the qualitative method, which is more suitable for the purpose in hand as it enables us to monitor the impact of third factors and account for atypical circumstances. Nevertheless, in the assessment of whether EU sanctions encourage repression by Belarusian authorities in general, and whether more stringent sanctions encourage greater repression, specific values for the variables should be assigned. To assess the severity of sanctions, we employ a sanctions strictness scale originally designed by Wood. The level of the dependent variable – repressions in Belarus – is assessed relying on the data collected by independent human rights observer organizations (viz., Freedom House, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch). Their reports and indexes are usually used by scientists carrying out research in the domain of human rights, and after the end of the Cold War these organizations are recognized as unbiased.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Wood, (note 6), p. 500.

## **2.1. EU sanctions against Belarus and assessment of their severity**

We should start by determining what tools in general are considered to be sanctions. There are two terms used in EU documents to refer to this instrument. These are “sanctions” and “restrictive measures”.<sup>18</sup> Sanctions or restrictive measures are defined as diplomatic or economic tools, aimed at preventing illegal activities or policies, for example, which infringe the international law or human rights, do not respect the principal of rule of law or depart from democratic principles.”<sup>19</sup> Economic and financial sanctions make a separate group of restrictive tools, which is probably the most widely used instrument for the EU to affect third parties. Economic sanctions are an especially effective tool in relations with developing countries, since the EU absorbs one fifth of the exports of developing countries, which accounts for nearly half of total EU imports.<sup>20</sup> Restrictions are not strictly defined in regulations. They may refer to import, export, restriction of services (such as technical assistance or mediation), investment, tariff preferences abolition, prohibition of capital movement and the like. There are also the so-called “smart” sanctions, which are applied to individual subjects (individuals or groups).<sup>21</sup> In general, the sanctions list is not exhaustive, and economic sanctions could include all economic and financial restriction forms, based on the motives mentioned in the definition of sanctions.

Assessment of the level of severity of sanctions may be tricky. In his research Wood uses a four-point scale to assess the strictness of economic sanctions. Although an accurate assessment of the impact of sanctions is complicated, the author argues that it is nevertheless quite possible to distinguish at least three severity stages. Wood divides sanctions according to the extent of economic loss, and to the extent of coverage of sanctions. The author provides the following distribution of these restrictive tools:

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<sup>18</sup> European Commission, *Sanctions or restrictive measures*, Brussels, 2009 09 15, <[http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/cfsp/sanctions/docs/index\\_en.pdf#1](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/cfsp/sanctions/docs/index_en.pdf#1)>, 2010 03 21.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> European Commission, *EU Trade Policy and Market Access for Developing Countries 2006-2007*, Brussels, 2008, <[http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2008/april/tradoc\\_138597.pdf](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2008/april/tradoc_138597.pdf)>, 2010 03 21.

<sup>21</sup> European Commission, “Sanctions or restrictive measures”, (note 19).

**0 - normal economic relations.**

**1 - mild sanctions** (withdrawal of foreign aid, grants, loans or credit exclusion, soft trade restrictions on non-essential goods and so on. In addition, these economic sanctions are generally accompanied by more targeted sanctions, such as travel restrictions on leaders of the sanctioned country and other diplomatic sanctions).

**2 - average sanctions** (import, export, investment, trade restrictions, freezing of public or private assets, etc.).

**3 – strict sanctions** (embargo of all or most of the vital economic activities).<sup>22</sup>

As can be seen by the specification provided in the parentheses of the first group, Wood tends to include withdrawal of foreign support and promotion of development rather than restrictions on natural economic relations. Nevertheless, even symbolic sanctions might lead to repression, as they make the elite feel threatened, especially in cases where sanctions requirements are related to democratic reforms and human rights protection.<sup>23</sup> The second group - average severity sanctions - includes tools which cause real economic damage while addressing the public, and therefore form a stronger impression of a threat to the elite, as discontented public might abandon the current government. The strictest sanctions differ from average sanctions by their broad coverage and the fact that they affect vital economic activities or sectors. In announcing most severe sanctions one side completely or almost completely interrupts economic relations with the other side (e.g., the U.S. and the Cuban case). Such sanctions are comparable to an ultimatum; they carry the heaviest economic losses, and create the greatest tension between the sides, as well as within the sanctioned country.

Naturally, the scale of sanctions severity can be criticized for its abstractness. It seems that the author clearly identifies two extremes of sanctions - symbolic and total sanctions, while he places all other options in the middle group. However, as has already been mentioned, an accurate assessment of sanctions severity is complicated in the context of dynamic and complex economy, and therefore it may be argued that a more accurate classification of sanctions is hardly possible at all. Nevertheless, even having a three-level distribution of sanctions strictness is useful, as it allows monitoring not only whether the imposition of sanctions,

<sup>22</sup> Wood, (note 6), p. 500.

<sup>23</sup> Peksen, Drury, (note 8), p. 408-409.

in general, prompts increase in repression, but also allows verifying if stricter sanctions contribute to greater repression.

We will now proceed to a brief overview of the history of relations between the EU and independent Belarus. We will then try to establish what sanctions the EU has imposed on Belarus and will attempt to assess the strictness of sanctions applying Wood's scale.

Shortly after the EU had recognized the independence of Belarus in 1991, close official relations became possible. Following Wood's scale, the period from 1991 to 1997 may be characterized as having normal economic relations, since at that time the EU did not apply any restrictive measures against Belarus, and even provided financial support through various projects. However, after the 1994 presidential elections, which ended in a victory for Aleksandr Lukashenko, relations began to deteriorate rapidly due to internal changes in the country. After the Treaty on the Formation of the Community of Russia and Belarus had been signed in 1996, massive protests broke out in Belarus. Internal instability in the country between the President and the Supreme Council matured the conflict, which Lukashenko resolved by exceeding his powers and organizing a referendum on constitutional changes that significantly adjusted the balance of powers in favor of presidential authority. The EU recognized the move illegal. Although throughout 1995 Belarus was still making attempts to negotiate the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with the EU, the agreement never came into force in Belarus because of the non-democracy of the incumbent regime, persistent infringements of human rights, and the legal state principle. In 1997 the EU finally declared that it would not offer any intermediate terms of the contract. The same year, the EU suspended cooperation and froze support to humanitarian sectors as well as those that directly or indirectly encouraged democratization. These events marked the beginning of the isolation of Belarus. Russia alongside other eight post-Soviet states signed the PCA in the nineties and enjoyed its economic benefits, since the objectives of the agreement were not only to strengthen democracy, but also to foster mutually beneficial cooperation in the economic sector by promoting trade and investments, and gradually helping countries move closer to the EU economic model.<sup>24</sup> Apart from being unable to use these advantages, Belarus could not engage fully in other EU policy initiatives intended for the eastern neighbours as long as the

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<sup>24</sup> Summaries of EU legislation, *Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs)*, 2007 09 07, <[http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/external\\_relations/reactions\\_with\\_third\\_countries/eastern\\_europe\\_and\\_central\\_asia/r17002\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_relations/reactions_with_third_countries/eastern_europe_and_central_asia/r17002_en.htm)>, 2010 03 22.

PCA was invalid (e.g., the Eastern Neighborhood Programme). However, we cannot maintain that these restrictive measures had a significant impact on the economic development of Belarus at the time. Economic losses in this case are more apparent than real, measurable ones, because, to a large extent, Belarus lost something that has not been regained ever since (e.g., projected investment and trade promotion tools of the PCA,<sup>25</sup> benefits of the Eastern Neighborhood Program, etc.). In this way, according to Wood's scale of economic sanctions strictness, the EU sanctions since 1997 are best described as mild.

The mild sanctions period lasted until 2006. Although throughout this period, the EU repeatedly changed the terms of sanctions and supplemented them with new ones, following Wood's classification, they did not exceed the limits of mild sanctions as they predominantly consisted of diplomatic sanctions combined with discontinuation of support. The period between 1998 and 2004 was marked by various diplomatic rows, disappearance of several opposition members, outrages of democratic principles (of which the most important was the fact that none of the opposition candidates got into the House of Representatives in 2004, and the two presidential terms limit was repealed<sup>26</sup>), persecution of independent media and opposing political forces as well as other human rights violations. The EU mainly reacted by punishing the responsible officials of Belarus adapting their movement restrictions, which are deemed to be target sanctions in the category of mild sanctions. Multilateral and bilateral contacts with President Lukashenko and members of his government were kept to a minimum in 2004, while communication was exclusively informal. It extended only to programs that directly or indirectly promoted the democratic development in the country, contacts with NGOs, public figures, opposition members, and support of independent media.<sup>27</sup> However, the EU faced certain difficulties and cooperation with the non-governmental sector was not effective. The main obstacle was a series of laws published by the Belarusian authorities, which complicated provision of international support to NGOs in the country. In order to get the support organizations had to overcome a lengthy and complex project registration process; in addition, the government was able to veto projects or abolish the official status of an organization. Besides, organizations lacked

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Beldulskis D., Tomilinas T., Vileita V., *Baltarusija: misija imanoma*, Vilnius: Vilniaus Universiteto leidykla, 2005, p. 61, 65-66.

<sup>27</sup> Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Belarus, *Chronology of bilateral relations*, <[http://ec.europa.eu/delegations/belarus/eu\\_belarus/chronology/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/delegations/belarus/eu_belarus/chronology/index_en.htm)>, 2010 03 23.



general project development and implementation skills.<sup>28</sup> EU tools turned out to be relatively effective, and sanctions became more tightened in 2006, which, according to the scale of sanctions strictness by Wood, marked the beginning of a new stage.

In 2006 the EU extended the list of Belarusian officials, targeted by diplomatic and economic sanctions (freezing assets in the EU countries). The same year, due to the permanent disruption of trade union activities in the country, Belarus was removed from the General System of Preferences (GSP). All these sanctions, both at the state and individual level, brought about real economic losses. Belarus was no longer able to export goods of its origin to the EU duty free or at reduced rates.<sup>29</sup> Belarus exported 30% of its production to the EU in 2006<sup>30</sup>, and, although the EU had not yet been the main trade partner of Belarus, due to deteriorating relations between Belarus and Russia, export to the EU was growing significantly, while the unfavorable tariff regime led to more and more losses. Presumably the cost for Belarus amounted to about 400 million Euros a year.<sup>31</sup> This is not a very large sum and a greater loss in this case is the decline of international repute, which had not only political outcomes, but also the economic impact, as it created an image of the state as being unreliable and unattractive for investments.<sup>32</sup> In this way, according to Wood's scale and because of the real economic losses throughout 1997-2006 EU sanctions may be ranked as moderately severe.

At the beginning of 2009 target sanctions for the officials were suspended with a possibility for extension, yet tariff restrictions remained in force. In the public

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<sup>28</sup> European Commission, *European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. Belarus. Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013 and National Indicative Programme 2007-2010*, Brussels, p. 14-15, <[http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/country/enpi\\_csp\\_nip\\_belarus\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/country/enpi_csp_nip_belarus_en.pdf)>, 2010 03 23.

<sup>29</sup> Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio reikalų ministerija, *Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio prekybos politikos metmenys [Guidelines of Foreign Trade Policy of Republic of Lithuania]*, <<http://www.eu2013.lt/index.php?808144961>>, 2010 03 24.

<sup>30</sup> European Commission, „EU-Belarus Relations“, Brussels, <[http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/belarus/pdf/belarus\\_trade\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/belarus/pdf/belarus_trade_en.pdf)>, 2010 03 24.

<sup>31</sup> Charter97, “EU decides to impose mini-trade sanctions on Belarus”, 2006 12 21 <<http://www.charter97.org/eng/news/2006/12/21/rada>>, 2010 03 24 in Janeliūnas T., „Between Russia and the EU: Transformational Opportunities for Belarus“, *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, Nr. 19, 2007, p. 146.

<sup>32</sup> For a detailed research about what factors influence foreign investment please look: Busse M., Hefeker C., *Political Risk, Institutions and Foreign Direct Investment*, Hamburg: Hamburg Institute of International Economics, 2005, <<http://213.241.152.197/externe/2005/k050708f12.pdf>>. According to the authors, foreign direct investment is significantly influenced by the stability of government, respect for principle of law rule, bureaucratic efficiency, external and internal conflicts in the country, ethnical tensions and democratic accountability.

discourse such changes are referred to as warming of the relations, and the situation in question is likely to fall between mild and moderate sanctions, as, on the one hand, economic losses remained similar, while on the other hand, the “new chance” given to Belarusian leaders and optimistic expectations expressed by the EU temporarily improved the international image of Belarus. Thus more countries began to speak out for the reduction of Belarus’ economic and political isolation. However, the remaining effective restrictions on the tariffs, following Wood’s scale, do not allow one to assess the relevant sanctions as softer. In this way, the period between 2009 and 2010 may be characterized as having moderately severe sanctions. Considering everything what has been said with regard to the independent variable of the study, i.e., the economic sanctions imposed by the EU on Belarus, we can assign the following values:

<b>Sanctions case</b>	<b>Strictness</b>
1991-1997 EU economic sanctions	0
1998-2005 EU economic sanctions	1
2006-2010 EU economic sanctions	2

These values will be used in the analysis of the link between the two variables in the subsequent chapters.

## **2.2. Repression in Belarus: relevance to the study, and measuring the repression level**

After the discussion of the independent variable - the EU sanctions – we should define the term *repression* for the purposes of this study and determine what forms of repression are to be investigated. According to theory, sanctions encourage repression by creating a sense of insecurity for the incumbents who seek to maintain the regime; therefore, this kind of repression may be most accurately referred to as political repression. In the broadest sense, political repression is defined as government regulatory actions, “discriminating against persons and organizations viewed as presenting a fundamental challenge to existing powers relationships or key government policies, because of their perceived political beliefs.”<sup>33</sup> Since all

<sup>33</sup> Davenport Ch., “The Weight of the Past: Exploring Lagged Determinants of Political Repression”, *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 1996, p. 377, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/448879.pdf>>, 2010 05 10.

forms of oppression and discrimination break certain human rights and liberties, authors exploring the link between sanctions and repression usually choose the human rights conditions in the relevant country as an indicator of repression. In other words, the level of repression is inversely proportional to the human rights situation in the country – as repressions increase, the human rights situation deteriorates, and vice versa. From the methodological perspective it is handy to use human rights as an indicator, since the assessment of the status of human rights across countries is carried out on an annual basis. The data collected by independent organizations and projects like Freedom House, Amnesty International, CIRI Human Rights Index or Political Terror Scale are internationally recognized and are widely used by researchers.

The classification of human rights covers a broad range of different rights and liberties; therefore, the next important step is to determine which of them are relevant to the current study and should be investigated. In his work Wood points out that there are many forms of repression; however, he confines his research to physical repression, measured by indexes of physical integrity of human rights. The status of these rights is a relevant issue in the case of Belarus, too, as violations of physical integrity rights have been one of the reasons why the EU has applied sanctions against Belarus (for example, for political prisoners, cases of disappeared persons, death penalty, and so on). However, it is obvious that not only physical integrity rights are limited in Belarus. It would be particularly important to examine the impact of sanctions on civil and political human rights in the case of Belarus, since the EU is interested in democratic changes as well as in promotion of civil and political rights in the country. This is a highly undesirable initiative for the Belarusian ruling elite, as it threatens the stability of the authoritarian regime. Therefore, it is possible that interference of the EU potentially contributes to creating the opposite effect, i.e. repression of political and civil rights. In their studies Peksen and Drury prove that the status of the political and civil rights is concerned with the application of sanctions. Using statistical analysis, the authors make a conclusion that the negative impact of sanctions for civil and political rights in most authorized countries does exist and is statistically significant<sup>34</sup>; therefore, the investigation of the situation of political and civil rights in Belarus is relevant and reasonable as well.

In this way, in the present study the independent variable consists of three human rights groups - physical integrity, civil and political rights situation in

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<sup>34</sup> Peksen, Drury, (note 8), p. 408-409.

Belarus.<sup>35</sup> These groups are often used by human rights investigators in order to assess the level of political repression in the state.<sup>36</sup> Besides, monitoring of several human rights groups enables us to construct a more comprehensive view of the side effects of sanctions in the cases of individual states.

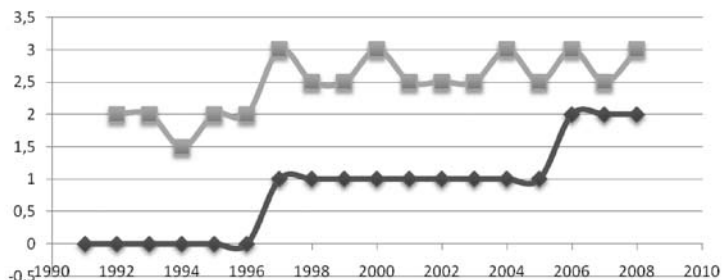
### **3. EU sanctions and repression in Belarus – the quest for the impact**

The evolution of physical integrity and the situation of political and civil rights in Belarus, while the sanctions were changing, are demonstrated in Graphs 1, 2 and 3, in accordance with Wood's assessment scale. Two significant changes in the severity of sanctions severity have been identified for the years 1997 and 2006, which divide the entire period of independent Belarus into three stages: before 1997, from 1997 to 2006, and since 2006 until now. A study of repression of the first period will help us to determine what impact the worsening relations between Belarus and the EU had on repression in Belarus, and how the imposition of EU sanctions on Belarus was associated with this repression. Analysis of the second period should reveal whether the side effects of sanctions, as described by Wood, manifested themselves, i.e. if the sanctions had contributed to even greater repression in the country in question. Investigation of the sanctions of the third period and their relation to repression will help determine whether the second part of Wood's hypothesis, i.e., stricter sanctions lead to the greater repressions, is applicable to the Belarusian case. Analysis of these three periods will form the structure of this section. The main method used is observation of the variation of variables and their interaction over time; the latter needed to determine whether variables are linked by causality. Bearing in mind the context and the potential impact of third factors we should answer the following question: the values of which variable underwent change the first and led to changes in another variable?

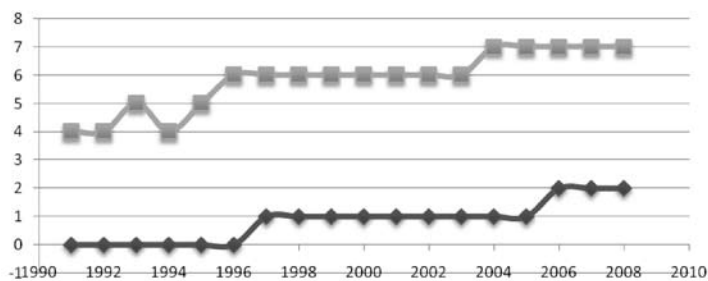
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<sup>35</sup> For detailed information about how indexes are constructed please check: Freedom House, „Methodology“, Washington, 2006 Edition, <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=35&year=2006>> and Gibney M., Cornett L., Wood R. M., “About the Political Terror Scale”, <<http://www.politicalterror scale.org/about.php>>, 2010 04 14

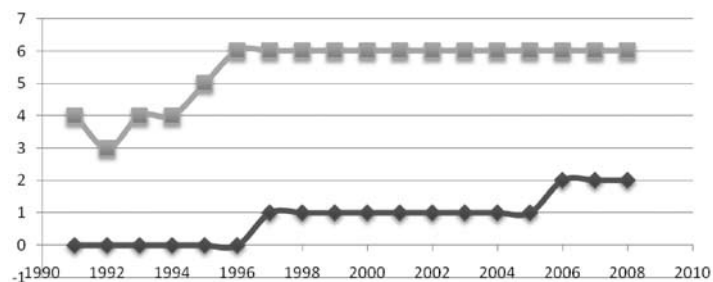
<sup>36</sup> Peksen, Drury, (note 8), p. 401-402.



**Graph 1.** The severity of EU sanctions (black) and the condition of physical integrity rights (grey) in Belarus throughout 1991-2008.<sup>37</sup>



**Graph 2.** The severity of EU sanctions (black) and the condition of political rights (grey) in Belarus throughout 1991-2008.<sup>38</sup>



**Graph 3.** The severity of EU sanctions (black) and the condition of civil rights (grey) in Belarus throughout 1991-2008.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Mark Gibney, Linda Cornett, Reed M. Wood, *Political Terror Scale 1976-2008*, 2010, <<http://www.politicalterror scale.org/download.php>>.

<sup>38</sup> Freedom House, "Country ratings and status, FIW 1973-2009", Washington, 2009, <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=439>>, 2010 04 14.

<sup>39</sup> Freedom House, "Country ratings and status, FIW 1973-2009", Washington, 2009, <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=439>>, 2010 04 15.

### 3.1. EU sanctions and repression in Belarus up to 1997

All three graphs show that the greatest and constant intensification of repression before the imposition of sanctions in Belarus took place in the field of political and civil rights. When Lukashenko became President, relative liberation of the political life of independent Belarus came to an end, and from 1995 onwards opposite trends were observed. In 1995, alongside the parliamentary elections, Lukashenko initiated a referendum, where the Belarusians were asked about the deepening integration with Russia, as well as about approval of Russian as the second official state language, the return of Soviet symbols, and the extension of presidential power to dissolve the Parliament. The referendum was the first significant step, while Lukashenko took the lead. At the same time Lukashenko urged citizens not to vote in the parliamentary election in order to weaken the legitimacy of the legislature. He partly succeeded in doing this as, due to citizens' passivity, it took three elections rounds to elect all the Members of Parliament<sup>40</sup>. However, the biggest change for Parliament came about in 1996. Another referendum was held that year in order to change the Constitution. This time the referendum radically changed the balance of power between the President and the legislature, making the separation of powers as well as the checks and balances system a formality rather than anything else. The Supreme Council was transformed into a bicameral parliament - the President elected members of Council of the Republic, while the House of Representatives was elected universally. The new law gave the President vast powers to engage in the legislative process: from now on his approval was needed in all relevant matters of state funding; in addition, "under the urgent and essential necessity" the President could issue legislative decrees which did not require parliamentary approval. Practice soon showed that such "urgent" matters began to appear increasingly often. In addition, the new parliamentary sessions were short-time and during long intervals between sessions the President had a possibility to issue decrees on matters which the parliament did not agree upon.<sup>41</sup> All these changes signified the destruction of the fragile foundations of democracy in Belarus and the consolidation of a new political system (or a return to a system

<sup>40</sup> Radio Free Europe, "Post-Soviet Belarus: A Timeline", 2006 02 24, <<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1066125.html>>, 2010 04 20.

<sup>41</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Republic of Belarus crushing Civil Society. Background*, New York, 1997, <[http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1997/belarus/Belarus-03.htm#P179\\_18533](http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1997/belarus/Belarus-03.htm#P179_18533)>, 2010 04 20.

similar to the old Soviet), which Lukashenko later called “vertical presidency”. The authoritarian nature of this system - concentration of power in the hands of one person and emergence of the cult of personality – led to a situation in which political rights of the citizens were severely restricted.

The opportunities for participation in the government of alternative political powers were severely constricted not only because of the new constitutional law, but also because of the breach of law. This was due to the fact that, after the constitutional revision, Belarus’ Constitutional court as well as the court of general jurisdiction in reality had no control over the executive and were largely under the presidential influence. In accordance with the new law, the President had the authority to appoint half of the judges of the Constitutional Court, with the Senate, the formation of which also took place with the participation of the President, appointing the other half. The power to initiate proceedings was denied from the Constitutional Court, and a number of institutions which could suggest issues for consideration, was also restricted. The weakness of the Constitutional Court is manifested by the fact that in 1996 Lukashenko was able to ignore the ruling of the Constitutional Court that Lukashenko’s referendum and constitutional revisions were illegal.<sup>42</sup> In addition, the new Constitution increased the President’s powers in appointing judges to the court of general jurisdiction and those to the Supreme Court, and the President could dismiss them on his own. Besides, court qualification commissions became an indirect tool to get rid of unfavorable judges.<sup>43</sup> Thus, although courts of general jurisdiction in Belarus had never been absolutely independent, after the 1996 constitutional revision, the fact that courts were subordinate to the executive power had become more apparent.

As far as civil rights are concerned, 1995 and 1996 were also marked by greater repression than previous years. Notably, freedom of belief, assembly, associations, free speech and protest were constricted the most during this period. Public media nearly monopolized all dissemination of information. During this period, independent radio and television stations were closed down; the independent press was also suppressed and persecuted. Accreditations were withdrawn from the reporters of broadcast Russian channels in Belarus. On the basis of allegedly nonobjective coverage, some reporters were ordered to leave the country. Due

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

to the audit conducted by the tax office, many NGOs were closed or received substantial penalties, including the Soros Fund Agency in Belarus. The rental price for organizations located in state-owned buildings was significantly raised<sup>44</sup>, and many of those who could not bear the burden of taxation, had to terminate their activities.

Finally, the freedom of ideas and free speech were constricted by physical reprisals against protesters, journalists and representatives of opposition. Restrictions on demonstrations, which could result in heavy fines or arrest, were validated by the presidential decree. During this period hundreds of peaceful protesters were arrested; many of them were penalized by unreasonably high fines, based on biased investigations and in the absence of advocates in court proceedings.<sup>45</sup> Human rights observers registered numerous instances of excessive use of police force during peaceful protests and demonstrations. Protesters and journalists were beaten, arrested, threatened with victimization, and removed from universities or schools. Representatives of the opposition, former members of the parliament, were persecuted, arrested, and even tortured, while their families were threatened.<sup>46</sup>

All these facts provide a general view on the human rights situation in Belarus over a period of several years prior to the introduction of EU sanctions. As can be seen, the overall trend is that of unreasonable severity of repression in all human rights groups under investigation. But what is the relation between this repression and EU sanctions applied in 1997? The EU Council adopted a formal decision to take restrictive measures in October 1997, on the ground that “violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms and non-observance of the constitutional principles associated with the rule of law had become commonplace”<sup>47</sup>. Therefore, it is clear that repression was one of the main factors which led to the imposition of restrictive measures on Belarus. The inverse relation prior to 1997, viz., that sanctions affected repressions during this period, – seems impossible for a simple reason – the sanctions had not yet been imposed. However, at this point it is worth

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

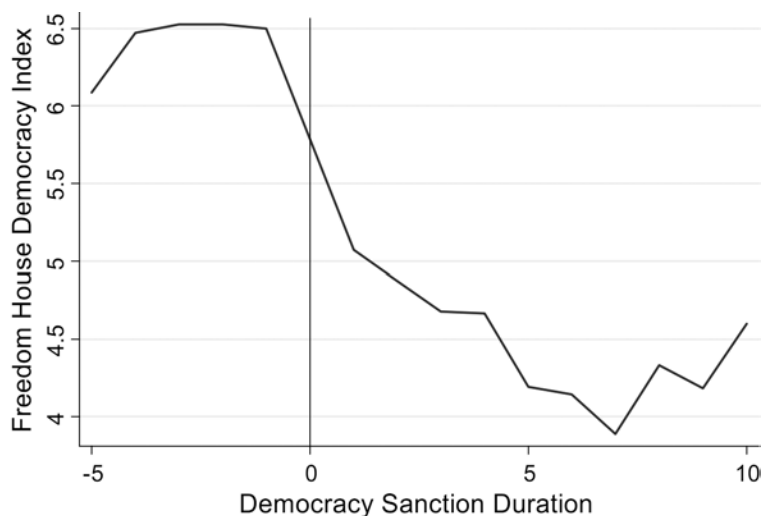
<sup>45</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Republic of Belarus crushing Civil Society. Summary*, New York, 1997, <[http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1997/belarus/Belarus.htm#P83\\_2082](http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1997/belarus/Belarus.htm#P83_2082)>, 2010 04 22.

<sup>46</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Police Violence and Arbitrary Arrest at Demonstrations*, New York, 1997, <[http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1997/belarus/Belarus-08.htm#P683\\_126175](http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1997/belarus/Belarus-08.htm#P683_126175)>, 2010 04 22.

<sup>47</sup> European Council, *Relations with the independent States of the former Soviet Union and with Mongolia*, Brussels, 1998 02, <<http://europa.eu/generalreport/en/1997/enx61097.htm#944>>, 2010 04 22.



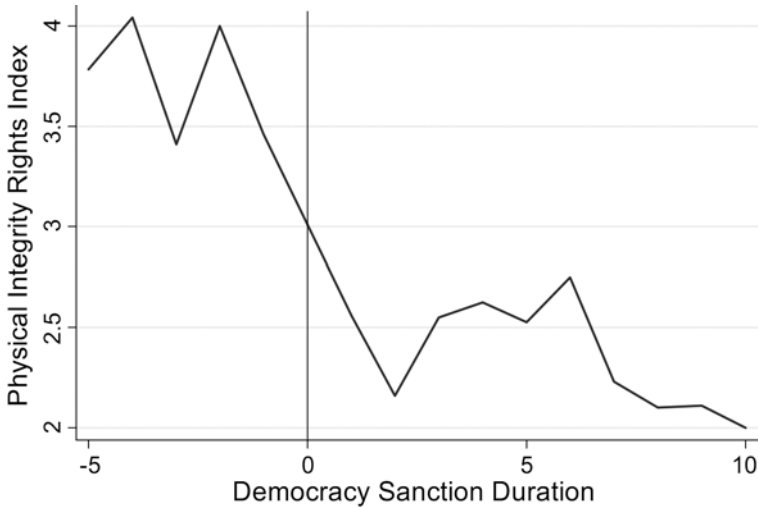
noting an interesting piece of research, carried out by Drury and Peksen. Their statistical analysis has revealed that, even before being applied, sanctions often have a negative effect on repression. This phenomenon is illustrated by Graphs 4 - 7<sup>48</sup>. In the cases when sanctions are applied as a punishment for repression in a country (democratic sanctions), the stimulating impact of sanctions on repression is virtually impossible to observe because it blends with the repressive nature of the regime (see Graphs 4 and 5). However, this impact is observable in the cases when sanctions are applied for reasons other than repression (non-democratic sanctions). Graphs 5 and 6 show that physical integrity and the situation of political and civil rights began to deteriorate just before the imposition of sanctions. According to the researchers, this is because sanctions are not usually imposed immediately after the deterioration of the relations, as it is hoped at first that only threatening sanctions may help to achieve the desired goals. However, if the leaders of the threatened regime believe that these threats can encourage opposition and lead to protests, it is likely that, to prevent this from happening, repression will be resorted to ahead of time.<sup>49</sup>



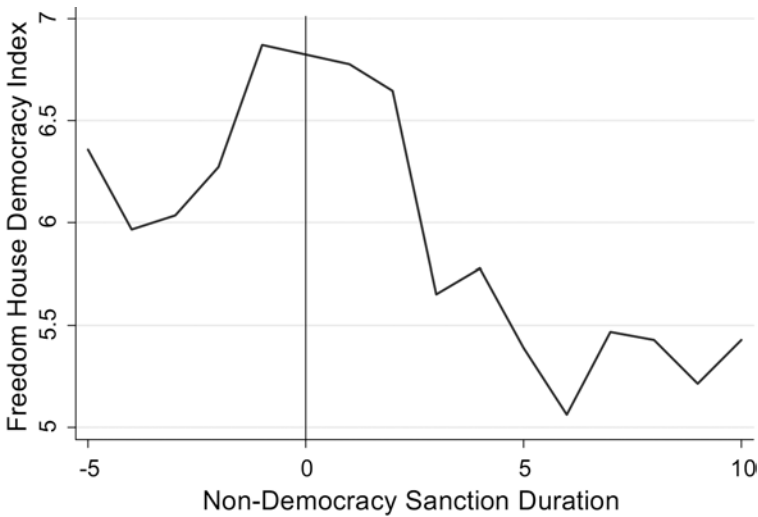
**Graph 4.** Dynamics of civil and political rights in the countries that were sanctioned in order to encourage democratization and respect for human rights.

<sup>48</sup> Drury, Peksen, (note 8) p.406-407.

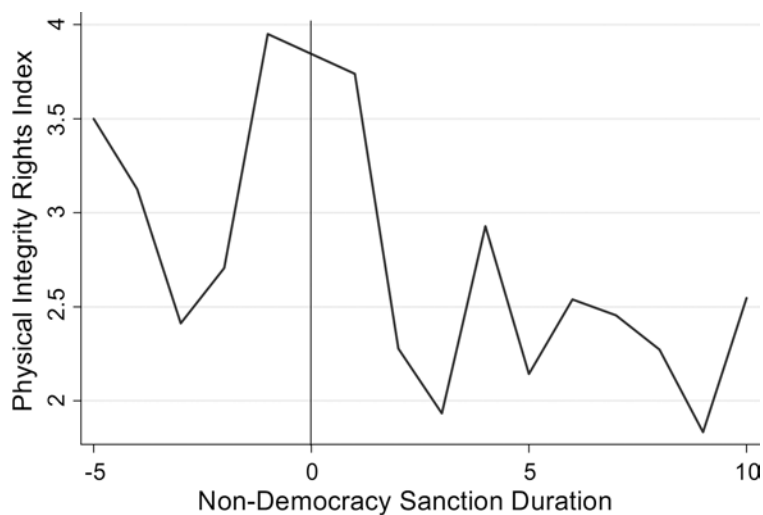
<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* p. 405.



**Graph 5.** Dynamics of physical integrity rights in the countries that were sanctioned in order to encourage democratization and respect for human rights.



**Graph 6.** Dynamics of civil and political rights in the countries that were sanctioned for reasons other than repressions.



**Graph 7.** Dynamics of physical integrity rights in the countries that were sanctioned for reasons other than repressions.

On a number of occasions prior to imposing sanctions the EU officially stated that it did not recognize revisions of the Constitution of Belarus as legitimate and did not intend to justify arrests of demonstrators, persecution of the opposition and other violations of human rights in the political, civic and physical integrity domains in the country.<sup>50</sup> Bearing in mind that some members of the political elite were pro-Western-minded (for example, members of the Belarusian People's Front), it is possible that EU support encouraged them to resist. Besides, before the imposition of sanctions in 1997, the public protested and the government responded by strengthening the repressive apparatus: tightening laws on demonstrations and using security forces to cope with protesters, journalists and the opposition. The outburst of this protest can be seen in the curve of the condition of physical integrity rights. On the other hand, it can hardly be denied that that it is primarily Lukashenko himself who is to blame for the repression as well as his radical domestic and foreign policy reforms, which put the political elite into opposite camps and divided the society. The desire to concentrate power in a single pair of hands programs political repression, as it runs counter to the basic democratic

<sup>50</sup> European Commission, "Belarus", Bulletin EU 4-1997, Brussels, 1997, <<http://europa.eu/bulletin/en/9704/p104006.htm>>, 2010 04 22.

principle – to enable the citizens to participate, whether actively or passively, in the government of the state. This restriction of freedom naturally fuels discontent among active citizens who have an alternative vision of the government, which is suppressed by the expansion of the repressive apparatus. Thus, it is necessary to recognize that, in the case of Belarus, it is impossible to determine objectively whether the EU with its critical statements could lead Lukashenko regime to resort to even greater repression.

Overall, considering the period up to 1997, one may maintain that assessments made by independent observers and human rights indexes suggest that the official motives of sanctions of the EU were justified, namely, repression had led to the imposition of sanctions. Meanwhile, the opposite causality, which was described by Drury and Peksen, in the case of Belarus, is elusive. As can be seen in Graphs 1-3, the situation of civil and political rights in Belarus had stabilized as early as 1996, although, on the other hand, physical repression did intensify before the imposition of sanctions by the EU. Since this intensification was related to more active protests, some of which were pro-European, there remains a possibility that, by criticizing Lukashenko's regime, the EU might have contributed indirectly to the provocation of turmoil in the country and, consequently, the promotion of repression, as the government's response to unrest.

### **3.2. EU sanctions and repressions in Belarus in 1997 – 2006**

Assessing the situation of human rights after the imposition of EU sanctions in 1997, we can see in Graphs 1-3 that, after 1998, civil and political repression remained at the same level. In that period physical repression in the country even slacked off a bit. This stabilization can be explained as follows: political repression stopped growing because Lukashenko's main political reforms had been implemented, the structures supporting the regime established, and the majority of the opponents of the regime neutralized. Thus protests were suppressed (the law on limiting demonstrations, issued in 1997, contributed significantly), the opposition was marginalized, and the diplomats, who supported it, were banished.<sup>51</sup> The already usual fight against the independent press and its remnants went on in

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<sup>51</sup> Lukashuk A., "Explaining Lukashenka's hold on power", *East European Constitutional Review*, Vol. 7 No. 3, 1998, <<http://www3.law.nyu.edu/eecr/vol7num3/special/belarus.html>>, 2010 05 05.

the field of civil rights in 1998. The deliberate actions of the government against the opposition press are testified by a secret government memorandum of 1998 leaked to the public, which laid down the guidelines concerning the specific steps to be taken against the opposition press.<sup>52</sup> In addition, at the end of 1997, an order regulating the press was issued, putting a ban on publishing articles, which “offend honor and dignity of the representatives of the government”. In 1998 the ruling was supplemented by a ban on the dissemination of slander against the President, treating it no longer as an administrative offense, but as a criminal offense. The same year a law was passed that limited export and import of information in the cases where the information content presented “a threat to national security, individual rights and freedoms and the public health and morals.”<sup>53</sup> Thus, the Belarusian government had not only destroyed all alternative opinion sources within the country, but also isolated the society from the influence of the outside world. The same year the EU countries withdrew their ambassadors from Belarus; however, the reasons for that were not related to the repression, and diplomats were driven out on the basis of Lukashenko’s initiative as an undesirable group of people. In response to the diplomatic war, the EU issued visa bans on Belarusian officials, thus reinforcing the mutual isolation.

In the next few years, the policy of EU sanctions towards Belarus did not change substantially: talks on signing a PCA with Belarus suspended in 1997 were not renewed by the EU Council, and official contacts with Belarus were kept to a minimum. The EU did not provide loans to Belarus and froze most of the technical service programs<sup>54</sup> and supported operation only of those programs that were directly related to the promotion of respect for human rights and democracy, and to the development of civil society. The EU Council also made the decision not to support the Belarusian ambition to become a member of the Council of Europe.<sup>55</sup> The withdrawal of all restrictive measures was linked to specific conditions, which Belarus was periodically reminded about throughout this period: political

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<sup>52</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 1999 - Republic of Belarus*, 1999 01 01, <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ac6a8b44.html>>, 2010 05 05.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, *Background Note: Belarus*, US Department of State, <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5371.htm>>, 2010 05 05.

<sup>55</sup> European Council, *Relations with the independent States of the former Soviet Union and with Mongolia* (note 45).

liberalization, respect for human rights and ensuring the rule of law.<sup>56</sup> However, it seems that the application of the principle of conditionality had virtually no effect on the situation of human rights in Belarus. Graphs 2 and 3 show that the situation of civil and political human rights had not changed in the period from 1996 to 2004; and only physical repression was temporarily tightened in 2000.

In their reports human rights observers relate this strictness to the parliamentary elections of 2000. Opposition activists and unreliable officials were compromised, judged and imprisoned for bribery, abuse of authority or organization of mass protests<sup>57</sup>; several representatives of the media and the opposition disappeared.<sup>58</sup> Before the elections, together with the support of Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), a council was established: it coordinated the opposition's activities in Belarus, and had the objective of uniting forces in the forthcoming elections. However, the council's decision to boycott the elections raised disagreements between the parties. Eventually this situation was taken advantage of in pursuit of preventing the opposition representatives to run for elections, as a boycott of the elections in Belarus is prohibited by Administrative Code. According to analysts, in this case international support resulted in creating more problems than benefits for the opposition, because the proposed methods of operation did not match the maturity of the party system and civil society.<sup>59</sup> However, this criticism is focused on the use of inappropriate positive policies rather than restrictive measures, which remained stable during this period; therefore, there is no evidence that any of the EU sanctions led to the violations of physical integrity rights in 2000.

Over a period of several years following the 2000 parliamentary elections, the level of repression in Belarus did not change fundamentally. Lukashenko won the presidential election in 2001, which Western countries announced being unfair and unfree. During this period, the EU renewed travel restrictions to Lukashenko and his closest fellows after the OSCE representatives had been expelled from Belarus in 2002. About that time the "step by step" program was employed in an

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<sup>56</sup> Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Belarus, *Chronology of bilateral relations*, (note 28).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 2001 - Republic of Belarus*, New York, <<http://www.hrw.org/wr2k1/europe/belarus.html>>, 2010 05 12.

<sup>59</sup> White S., Korosteleva E. A., Löwenhardt J., *Postcommunist Belarus*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005, p. 49, <<http://books.google.lt/books?id=HPjVRSvhFRAC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>>, 2010 05 12.

attempt to rescue the EU-Belarus relations. Its aim was to encourage Belarus to start reforms in exchange for the development of economic relations. However, reports by human rights observers and indexes showed that neither EU's critical tone accompanied by sanctions, nor suggestions to normalize relations significantly affected the political, civil, or physical integrity rights in Belarus until 2004: throughout all this time repression remained just as severe.

2004 was the year of greater changes both in Belarus and in Belarus' neighborhood. This year was special particularly because of the EU enlargement to the Central and Eastern Europe, Belarus becoming EU's geographical neighbor. Moreover, at the end of 2003, Georgia underwent the Rose Revolution, during which the opposition forces took the power, while at the end of 2004 Belarusian parliamentary elections and referendum were to be held in order to extend the presidential term of office for an unlimited period of time. Naturally, voting results were very important for Lukashenko, who was seeking to remain in office. As a result, again, 2004 witnessed a surge of repression, its purpose being to suppress the opposition and to isolate the public from "unfavorable information". As can be seen in Graphs 1 and 2, significant deteriorations were observed in the political and physical integrity rights.

Physical repression revealed itself by politically motivated arrests of the opposition and trade-unionists. A female journalist of an opposition newspaper killed in Minsk in October, as suspected, could have fallen victim to physical political repression.<sup>60</sup> Demonstrations were organized after the parliamentary elections. During these demonstrations many protesters were beaten up or arrested for libel or vandalism.<sup>61</sup> The media and NGOs, just as before every election, had to withstand increasing pressure: activities of several independent newspapers were suspended, the operation of informational websites was disturbed, and the presidential decree, issued in 2003, came into force strictly limiting NGOs and completely prohibiting political organizations to accept any financial support from abroad.<sup>62</sup> The deterioration of political rights in 2004 was associated with the parliamentary elections and referendum results. This time none of the opposition

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<sup>60</sup> Freedom House, *Map of Freedom in the World. Belarus (2005)*, Washington, <<http://www.freedom-house.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2005&country=6694>>, 2010 05 13.

<sup>61</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 2005 Events of 2004*, New York, 2005, p. 356-357, <<http://books.google.lt/books?id=dYXStZToKggC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false 354>>, 2010 05 13.

<sup>62</sup> Freedom House, *Map of Freedom in the World. Belarus (2005)*, (note 57).

representatives gained seats in the House of Representatives. Moreover, the official results of the referendum enabled Lukashenko to run for president for an unlimited number of times in the future. These changes meant that, starting from 2004, the index of Belarusian political rights was estimated at its highest value, which meant that the political rights and freedoms of the country actually did not exist anymore because of the very repressive nature of the regime.

In February, in response to the intensified repression in the country, the EU accused several high officials of being involved in the disappearance of representatives of former opposition and media. In September, the EU announced that it imposed travel restrictions on these officials in the EU countries. In addition to these specific sanctions, the EU repeatedly expressed its criticism regarding the referendum, the elections process, and the overall situation of human rights in Belarus.<sup>63</sup> However, as data showed, the following few years were not to see any significant positive change in the field of human rights - after the elections the level of physical repression somewhat diminished, while political and civil repression remained just as severe.

The steady high level of repression in 2005 can be explained by a number of important internal and external factors. First of all, in 2004, as the presidential elections in Belarus were approaching, Lukashenko, indeed, was to be alarmed by the consequences of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine: Ukrainian government was forced to adjust the electoral law and the presidential elections took place again, this time letting the opposition representative Victor Yushchenko win. In addition, Ukraine had implemented political reforms which weakened presidential powers. Considering these events in the neighborhood and the fact that an independent survey<sup>64</sup> in Belarus suggested that the 2004 constitutional revision was supported by less than half of the citizens, it is not surprising that the upcoming presidential elections encouraged Lukashenko to continue to rely on the repressive apparatus in order to prevent a scenario similar the Ukrainian one.

Since there were not many mass protests in Belarus in 2005, the level of direct physical repression was slightly lower. On the other hand, that year new amendments to the laws provided the repressive apparatus with even greater opportunities of legitimizing use of repression: the President now had a power

<sup>63</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 2005 Events of 2004*, (note 58), p. 357-358.

<sup>64</sup> Freedom House, "Map of Freedom in the World. Belarus (2006)", Washington, <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2006&country=6920>>, 2010 05 15.



to order the use of firearms against protesters. In addition, the country's security services underwent special training to learn a new tactics for the dispersal of protesters. Restrictions on the press, trade unions and NGOs, persecution and discrediting of the opposition before the elections were also included in the preparations for the elections. In addition, severe penalties were foreseen for working or acting on behalf of unregistered political parties. After the enlargement of the EU in 2004, when Belarus geographically became EU's neighbor, a higher level of repressions was observed, the aim of which was to prevent international influence. The main burden fell on NGOs which received foreign support: the rules of their operation were tightened even more; punishment by imprisonment was legalized for participating in unregistered organizations; foreign funding for NGOs, political parties and persons, „who promote “meddling into the internal affairs” of Belarus from abroad“,<sup>65</sup> was banned completely.

2006 was an important year in the sphere of human rights because of the increase of physical repression in Belarus. Both the government, seeking to intimidate opponents before the presidential elections, and the large wave of protests, which followed after the presidential election, provoked a higher level of physical repression. As the elections approached, many members of opposition groups and their campaign workers were arrested. A few weeks before the voting the KGB security service announced it suspected that the opposition was preparing to launch a revolt and warned that protesters in the streets could be accused of contributing to terrorism and could be sentenced to very severe punishments - imprisonment from eight years to death penalty, which still runs in Belarus. However, these threats did not stop the protesters. On the day of elections about 10,000 to 15,000 people walked out in the streets of Minsk, and 500-1000 protesters were arrested. These protests resulted in more intense persecution of opposition members and leaders, their arrests, and imprisonment, and the use of other repressive measures which, as it has already been stated, considerably weakened the opposition forces at the time.<sup>66</sup> Lukashenko won the elections; however, it remained unclear what the actual results of the elections were, because not a single survey company succeeded in conducting an independent investigation due to government restrictions.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, on the

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Freedom House, *Map of Freedom in the World. Belarus (2007)*, Washington, <<http://www.freedom-house.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2007&country=7134>>, 2010 05 15.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

basis of the findings of the OSCE, the EU declared the elections fraudulent and unfair, and imposed sanctions on travel visas for thirty top Belarusian officials. In May the EU extended those sanctions and froze the assets of Lukashenko and 35 officials.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, at the end of 2006, upon consideration of the findings of the International Labour Organization (ILO) concerning permanent and systematic interference with the activities of trade unions in the country, the EU temporarily removed Belarus from the GSP.<sup>69</sup> Thus, in 2006, the EU employed a wider arsenal of restrictive measures, which, according to Wood's Scale, was assessed as moderate economic sanctions.

After a discussion of the entire period from 1997 to 2006, we can now make several important conclusions in evaluating the link between EU sanctions and repression in Belarus. In particular, there has been no clear evidence found to prove that EU sanctions led to significant repression in Belarus during that period. For six years after the imposition of EU sanctions back in 1997, political and civil repression remained at the same level as in 1996, i.e., before the imposition of sanctions. The only human rights group that underwent some change during that period was the physical integrity human rights. It must be noted, however, that the year of presidential or parliamentary elections always witnesses intensification of political repression. The most important change of the period under consideration was intensification of political repression in 2004; however, it is difficult to envisage a direct causal relationship between EU restrictive measures and surge of repression. The main factor which determined this increase was Lukashenko's term of office, which was coming to an end and which he had to extend in such a manner as to avert the fate of Georgia and Ukraine. This was reflected in the special preparation process and security trainings taken by Lukashenko before the elections and the referendum. Of course, in the cases of the Georgian and Ukrainian revolutions, foreign intervention had important significance, but it was active support of the opposition and the non-governmental sector, promoted by positive supportive measures, that played the main role. In the case of Belarus, EU policy of isolation was to Lukashenko's benefit, as he himself sought to isolate the public from outside influences, and hence the withdrawal of diplomats and

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<sup>68</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 2006*, New York: Seven Stories Press, 2006, 363, <[www.hrw.org/wr2k7/wr2007master.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/wr2k7/wr2007master.pdf)>, 2010 05 15.

<sup>69</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No. 1933/2006 of 21 December 2006, *Temporary withdrawing access to the generalized tariff preferences from the Republic of Belarus*, 2004, 02 14, 4.

travel restrictions imposed on political elite, high visa fees for Belarusian citizens, restrictions on various co-operation initiatives and similar isolating measures only facilitated Lukashenko's objective. Meanwhile, Lukashenko was trying to prevent the influence of EU's positive measures by controlling the press, suppressing civil initiatives and reducing foreign funding opportunities for political parties and NGOs – i.e., by strengthening repression. In sum, if the EU indeed contributed to the increase in repression in Belarus in 1997-2006, then it was probably done so by positive, rather than restrictive, measures.

### **3.3. EU sanctions and repressions in Belarus after 2006**

The tightening of EU sanctions in 2006 is an important factor in the context of Wood's theory of sanctions, because, according to the author, stronger sanctions should contribute to stronger repressions. After an analysis of the repression in Belarus after 2006, we could verify if this has really happened.

According to the data of independent human rights observers, the level of repression in Belarus after 2006 has hardly changed. As can be seen in Graphs 2 and 3, the situation of political and civil rights in Belarus in 2007-2009 remained the same. The only field where changes did occur was the physical integrity human rights. The level of physical repression in 2007 was slightly lower, and in 2008 it increased slightly. The lower level of repression in 2007 may be associated with vulnerabilities in the opposition. Many of the members of the opposition movement "Young Front" were arrested during this period, while the opposition political parties failed to agree unanimously in the Congress of United Democratic Forces on the common position and the co-leader (Alexander Milinkevich was removed from his position of Chairman of the Board).<sup>70</sup> The split of the opposition during this period was very useful for Lukashenko, as it weakened the chances of the opposition to take advantage of the post-electoral public mood, and the beginning of disagreements on oil and gas prices between Russia and Belarus.

2008 was an ambivalent year in the approach to physical integrity rights – the first half of the year was characterized by relatively intense repression (increased arrests and imprisonments of opposition members and protesters), while just before

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<sup>70</sup> Freedom House, "Map of Freedom in the World. Belarus (2007)", Washington, <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2008&country=7351>>, 2010 05 16.

the parliamentary elections, all political prisoners were released and the Movement for Freedom chaired by Malinkevich was allowed to register.<sup>71</sup> However, as in previous elections, not a single representative of the opposition entered the House of Representatives, and the opposition, again, was left without any opportunities to influence the legislative process. The aforementioned warming before the election was related to the increase in Russia's pressure due to higher energy export prices and privatization of Belarus' strategic companies.<sup>72</sup> Besides, the relations between Russia and Belarus became more strained after the Russia - Georgia conflict, in which Russia clearly demonstrated what steps it could take in order to protect its area of influence. Meanwhile, Belarus did not recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, because in the slowly moving Russia-Belarus integration process it was important for Belarus to maintain a certain degree of independence and have its own leverage in negotiating terms of supply of energy resources.

The EU interpreted the release of political prisoners and non-recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia's independence as Belarus' desire to reduce its dependence on the East. In this way, it used the opportunity to improve its relations with Belarus. In 2009 the EU abolished its sanctions, except for the removal of the GSP, which, at least officially, was associated exclusively with the situation of trade unions and workers' rights in Belarus, which had not shown improvement over the period. The EU demonstrated its openness, and for the first time after the 13 years of the travel ban Lukashenko was welcomed to several EU countries, including Lithuania. Belarus was also invited to join the Eastern Partnership Program. It seems, however, that these steps did not bring about positive changes in the field of human rights. Imprisonments of opposition members, dispersal of demonstrations and arrests of their protesters continued; in addition, the media was banned from documenting the events, and online press was subject to the same restrictions as the paper press.<sup>73</sup> Among the positive changes one should mention amendments to the election law, which gave more freedom in election campaigning; yet, according to experts, it still did not guarantee a fair vote count.<sup>74</sup> The Eastern Partnership initiative was at a dead end, too, as Lukashenko vehemently opposed

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<sup>71</sup> Freedom House, "Map of Freedom in the World. Belarus (2009)", Washington, <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2009&country=7565>>, 2010 05 16.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Freedom House, *Map of Freedom in the World. Belarus (2010)*, <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2010&country=7780>>, 2010 05 16.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

the condition that the opposition be represented in the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly.<sup>75</sup> In 2010, the rules for internet users became more restricted, searches of the headquarters of the independent press were conducted, and the activities of the Union of Poles were suppressed. In general, it is unlikely that the regime would be willing to change the established methods of control, and it is also doubtful whether the year 2010 could be assessed by independent human rights observers differently from previous years. Significant changes could be expected only before the presidential elections, which are to take place in December. However, long experience has shown that the elections in Belarus are usually accompanied by increased repression, and probably it would be naive to expect that this time things could be dramatically different.

Upon consideration of the period 2006-2010, we have found that throughout this period restrictive measures of the EU did not affect the level of repression in Belarus. Neither the tightening of sanctions in 2006, nor the suspension of nearly all sanctions in 2009 improved human rights conditions in Belarus. Besides, these two different strategies did not contribute to the reverse effect either: repression in the country did not strengthen significantly. Thus, a conclusion may be made that Wood's assumption on the existence of a direct correlation between the severity of sanctions and repression, has not been proved in the case of Belarus. The last section of this article will be devoted to a discussion of the possible reasons why the Belarusian example presents an exception in Wood's sanctions theory.

#### **4. The exceptional case of Belarus**

First of all, in our analysis of why Wood's theoretical model does not provide an explanation for the case of Belarus, we should return to its major assumptions. Wood's theoretical model is based on the causal chain, which can be briefly summarized as follows: economic sanctions lead to the reduction of resources in the country; therefore, the government redistributes the remaining resources in such a way so as to ensure that major groups supporting the regime do not feel their lack. Since in undemocratic regimes or weak democracy regimes the government

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<sup>75</sup> International Press Centre, "Use EU 'carrots' carefully, says Belarus opposition leader", Brussels: Brussels Network Office, 2010 03 01, <<http://www.euractiv.com/en/east-mediterranean/use-eu-carrots-carefully-says-belarus-opposition-leader-news-290515>>, 2010 05 16.

is more centralized than in consolidated democracies, groups that do get a re-allocated share of resources are limited. Thus, in authoritarian regimes economic sanctions form greater inequality, resulting in growing discontent of citizens, which is expressed in direct protest or support for the opposition. These forms of discontent present a threat to the incumbents and are suppressed by repression. In view of this theoretical framework, the case of Belarus is special because repression increased significantly in the country, but as it has been found out, the sanctions did not considerably contribute to this intensification of repression, and therefore, the reasons should be looked for in this causal chain.

The first and most important assumption in the causal chain of the theory of economic sanctions is that sanctions determine resource reduction. If so, first it is necessary to find out whether or not EU's economic sanctions against Belarus brought about real losses. This can be done by analyzing the main economic indicators in Belarus, which are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Economic indicators of Belarus 1991 – 2008<sup>76</sup>

Year	Foreign direct investment, net inflows (BoP, current US\$, millions)	GDP growth (annual %)	GNI per capita (current US\$)	Income share held by lowest 20%	Trade (% of GDP)	Net official development assistance and official aid (current \$, millions)	Poverty gap at national poverty line (%)
1991	...	-1	4750	...	...	187,03	...
1992	7,0	-10	4380	...	...	272,54	...
1993	17,6	-8	4230	11	...	185,87	...
1994	10,5	-12	3720	...	37	118,82	...
1995	35,16	-10	3410	9	74	222,52	...
1996	104,5	3	3590	...	85	76,37	...
1997	351,6	11	4060	10	113	54,88	...
1998	203,2	8	4480	8	104	38,98	...
1999	444,0	3	4720	...	103	38,25	...

<sup>76</sup> The World Bank Group, Quick Inquiry, <<http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org/ext/DDPQQ/report.do?method=showReport>>, 2010 05 22.

2000	118,8	6	5120	8	125	34,49	42
2001	95,8	5	5510	8	127	39,45	...
2002	247,1	5	5930	8	117	39,28	30
2003	171,8	7	6540	...	121	48,41	...
2004	163,8	11	7530	...	131	48,07	17
2005	305,0	9	8540	9	108	57,81	...
2006	354,0	10	9710	...	114	76,52	...
2007	1785,2	9	10800	9	117	83,76	...
2008	2158,1	10	12120	...	120	110,18	...

According to the World Bank data, after Belarus had regained its independence, the country's GDP declined every year until 1995. However, when Lukashenko concentrated power in his hands the Belarusian GDP began to grow rapidly. According to the official data, GDP growth in Belarus slowed down only in 1998 - 1999, never reaching the negative, but later began to increase again and, starting from 2004, Belarus GDP grew annually by an average of 10% (the table above does not include the data of 2009). 1996 and subsequent years witnessed nearly uninterrupted growth of foreign direct investment and trade volume in Belarus. Of course, it should be noted that disagreements over the Belarusian economic data persist. There are opinions that Belarus' GDP has been artificially inflated due to inadequate methods of calculating GDP, barter trade with Russia (i.e., trade without money when goods are exchanged upon agreement on prices, which may not correspond to actual market prices<sup>77</sup>), printing money and high inflation, which complicates the calculation of real GDP.<sup>78</sup> Belarusian economic indicators can also raise questions upon comparison with relevant economic indicators of other post-Soviet states, which took more time to achieve similar economic results. However, experts argue that this uniqueness was stipulated by Belarus' rapprochement with Russia, which meant prices for gas and oil lower than market prices and trade privileges of the Russian market, where Belarus was able to sell its artificially driven industrial overcapacity. The resumed interference of the state in the economy and a slowdown in economic reforms were also important factors in

<sup>77</sup> Beldulskis, Tomilinas, Vileita, (note 27), p.

<sup>78</sup> Bandarenka., "Belarus's GDP in dollars dropped by 19%", Charter'97 Press Center, 2010 02 10, <<http://charter97.org/en/news/2010/2/10/26249/>>, 2010 05 17.

maintaining economic stability. Radical economic reforms were painful for many post-Soviet countries, however, considered useful over the long term.<sup>79</sup>

All in all, it is widely agreed that after 1996 overall economic trends in Belarus were comparatively positive, although they were not determined by structural reforms, but mostly by external factors and instantaneous circumstances. The only period when Belarus' economic indexes significantly deteriorated was from 1998 to 1999. Looking at the volume of foreign support, we can see that, starting from 1996, the support underwent a three-fold decrease, and in 1998-1999 it shrank even more. The slowdown of economic growth in Belarus came just after 1997, when EU sanctions were imposed. Nevertheless, experts attribute this decrease to the economic crisis in Russia, as it was no longer able to buy goods from Belarus.<sup>80</sup> The fact that EU sanctions had little influence is demonstrated by the rapid recovery of the Belarusian economy - immediately after the end of the Russian crisis. In addition, in 2006, when the EU had removed Belarus from the GSP, the country's economic indexes showed steady improvement, despite the fact that Belarus' share of trade with the EU has been increasing and by now has nearly reached that of Russia. Therefore, one of the most compelling explanations why economic sanctions by the EU did not encourage repression in Belarus is merely because the sanctions were not able to create a discernible lack of resources in Belarus. At this point, the main factors distorting the natural model of the operation of functions are the alternative Russian market and cheap energy resources, which ensured stability of economic growth in Belarus and minimized the impact of other economic factors.

On the other hand, even a minor reduction of resources may lead to the increase in repression if the loss is very unevenly distributed, which, according to Wood, often happens in authoritarian regimes. However, the table shows that the income share of the poorest segments of Belarus changed little over time: from 11% in 1994 up to 9% in 2007. It is often highlighted that in 2000 40% of Belarus' population lived below national poverty line. Pulled out of context, this figure may seem impressive, yet this statistic dates back to the year of Russian economic crisis, (to compare: in 2004 the

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<sup>79</sup> Bakanova M., de Souza L. V., Kolesnikova I., Abramov I., "Transition and Growth in Belarus", United Kingdom: 2004, 93, 105. <<http://www.eerc.ru/default.aspx?id=169>>, 2010 05 17.

<sup>80</sup> Schmidt R., "The 1998 Russian Financial Crisis. Part 3: Political Consequences and Recovery", 2009 05 24, <<http://stockbreakthroughs.com/2009/05/24/the-1998-russian-financial-crisis-part-3-political-consequences-and-recovery>>, 2010 05 17.



poverty rate was only 17%, bearing in mind that the EU average was 16%).<sup>81</sup> The same can be said about wage growth: from 1996 to 2008 real wages of workers in Belarus increased by 2.5 times and only in 2009 was a slight decline observed.<sup>82</sup> In terms of social inequality, Belarus is viewed as an exception in the general context of post-Soviet states, as it has managed to preserve the most egalitarian society.<sup>83</sup> Thus, EU economic sanctions against Belarus brought about neither a significant reduction of resources, nor an increase in inequality, which, according to Wood's theoretical model, was another important assumption for repression to take place. On the contrary, Lukashenko was able to preserve a wide range of social functions in the state and to ensure a relatively stable economic well-being, which coincided with the priorities of the passive and increasingly materialistic Belarusian society.

However, as has already been discussed in the theoretical part, the economic recession and the redistribution of resources are not the only factors responsible for the negative effects of sanctions on the situation of human rights. Another argument explaining this spillover effect of sanctions is that sanctions against undemocratic regimes are often interpreted as a signal of support to the opposition and therefore are seen as an encouragement to the opposition to compete more actively with the current government. The EU support for the Belarusian opposition is demonstrated not only by funding democratic initiatives, but can also be clearly observed in most disputes arising between the opposition and Lukashenko's team, for example, concerning election integrity or issues of political prisoners. However, an analysis of specific instances of repression implemented by Lukashenko makes the government's efforts to neutralize the positive measures of the EU much more apparent: e.g., a series of laws was issued which restricted foreign funding of political parties and NGOs. On the other hand, measures to counteract the effects of sanctions may simply be less visible, and, for example, reflect the constraints of the media, which is forced to present the motives and objectives of the sanctions in a way convenient for incumbents. Another argument discussed in the theoretical part regarding how sanctions could contribute to greater

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<sup>81</sup> European Commission, *Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2007*, Brussels, 2007 02 19, <<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/07/66>>, 2010 05 21.

<sup>82</sup> Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies, *Dynamics of annualized monthly employees wages (1991-2000)*, <<http://www.iiseps.org/ezarplata1.html>>, 2010 05 21.; Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies, *Dynamics of annualized monthly employees wages (2001-2009)*, <<http://www.iiseps.org/ezarplata2.html>>, 2010 05 21.

<sup>83</sup> Yemelyanau M., "Inequality in Belarus from 1995 to 2007", Kiev: Belarusian Economic Research and Outreach Center, 2009, <[http://beroc.eerc.kiev.ua/BEROC\\_WP01\\_Maksim\\_Yemelyanau-Inequality.pdf](http://beroc.eerc.kiev.ua/BEROC_WP01_Maksim_Yemelyanau-Inequality.pdf)>, 2010 05 21.

repression in the country, is that sanctions create conditions under which state power structures become more dependent on political power, while this dependency can be manipulated by means of repression. This happens, again, when sanctions disrupt the circulation of resources in the country with the reduced resources being concentrated in one person's hands. As it has already been discussed, EU economic sanctions against Belarus did not result in the disruption of economic development. Therefore, the argument that the restrictive measures of the EU had created the conditions which enabled Lukashenko to manipulate power structures more easily when dealing with the opponents is wrong. Although at the time when Lukashenko came into power, Belarusian security services indeed became more dependent on the President's control, this happened before the imposition of EU sanctions. One of the first steps taken by Lukashenko was transfer of control over the Committee for State Security (KGB) to the President's authority.<sup>84</sup> In this way, the President could widely use security services to enforce repression and, possibly, if these services had not been subordinate to the President, some types of repression would actually be milder.

The last assumption of the theory was that, if before the imposition of sanctions the relations between the sanctioning and sanctioned parties were "unfriendly", there is a high probability that sanctions would be fruitless and protracted. This interpretation is related to repression over the allocation of resources, because the longer the sanctions persist, the greater inequality forms in the society, discontent grows and ultimately repression increases. Regimes of different types often become the so-called "unfriendly" regimes, because they are based on different principles of management and contradicting values. And, indeed, shortly after Lukashenko had come into power and carried out authoritarian reforms, the EU and Belarus relations got worse. However, as has already been mentioned, EU sanctions have had little effect on the Belarusian economy; therefore this theoretical assumption can lead only to the conclusion that the economic sanctions of the EU are likely to continue to be fruitless. This is not to mean, however, that they will promote repression. On the other hand, it is likely that under the conditions of the global economic crisis and deteriorating relations between Belarus and Russia, the Belarusian economy could become more sensitive to the restrictive measures of the EU, and the impact of sanctions on repression may increase in the future.

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<sup>84</sup> Europa Publications Limited, *Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States 1999*, London: The Gresham Press, 1999, p. 184, <[http://books.google.lt/books?id=qmN95ffocsMC&prints\\_ec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.lt/books?id=qmN95ffocsMC&prints_ec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false)>., 2010 05 21.

## **Conclusions**

In this article we have analyzed the relationship between the EU economic sanctions and repression in Belarus. Using Wood's theoretical framework, the objective of the article was to find out whether this model, constructed on the basis of 157 cases of sanctions, explains the case of Belarus. According to Wood, economic sanctions have a negative impact on the human rights condition in the sanctioned countries, while more severe sanctions contribute to greater repressions. Paradoxically, in non-democratic or weak democracy countries this negative spillover effect of sanctions gets even stronger, although sanctions are most often imposed precisely in order to improve the situation of human rights, or to encourage democratization in the relevant countries.

In order to investigate the case of Belarus, we carried out an analysis of the situation in three human rights groups - political, civic and physical integrity - and attempted to establish their relationship with the severity of EU sanctions. It appears that, in general, the strictness of the sanctions and the level of repression in Belarus are related quantities, but mostly because the repression has encouraged the EU to impose and tighten sanctions, and not vice versa. The qualitative analysis showed that there was not a single case which would demonstrate intensification of repression immediately after the sanctions had been imposed. After the imposition of sanctions in 1997, political repression grew only in 2004, while physical repression tightened significantly every time before the presidential or parliamentary elections. Wood's assumption that stricter sanctions lead to greater repression was not valid in the case of Belarus, either. The most significant tightening of EU sanctions in 2006 was a response to the earlier increase in repression. Subsequently there were not any significant changes in the field of human rights in Belarus. However, due to the fact that during the entire period of the imposition of EU sanctions repression tightened in the country, the only possible explanation of the impact of EU sanctions on repression would be provided by the phenomenon described by Peksen and Drury: viz., an increase in repression, even before the imposition of sanctions, is stipulated by the incumbents' attempts to forestall the destabilizing effects of the sanctions. However, it is difficult to determine whether EU sanctions have had such an impact in Belarus, since the potential effect of the sanctions would have converged with the repressive nature of the regime.

In summary, it can be stated that, according to Wood's theory of economic sanctions, the hypothesis formulated at the beginning of the present research was

not confirmed, i.e. EU restrictive measures do not promote ongoing repression in Belarus (although there is not any positive effect either). The main reason why the Belarusian case is an exception is that the economic sanctions of the EU are too weak to overshadow Russia's economic influence on Belarus and to create a considerable lack of resources. In addition, after Belarus regained its independence, social inequality in the country has not increased significantly, while relatively stable economic welfare has remained the most important pillar of Lukashenko's popularity. The fact that the Belarusian society is egalitarian not only distinguishes Belarus from other post-Soviet states, but also contradicts one of Wood's theoretical assumptions that authoritarian regimes are likely to respond to sanctions by dividing roughly the cost of sanctions, thus increasing social exclusion in the society. Therefore, under these circumstances, the costs of EU sanctions are largely of symbolic value and function indirectly as a support signal for the opposition, whose revival could be suppressed by the incumbents' resort to repression. However, the impact of sanctions in this case is hardly visible and possibly merges with the impact of positive measures used by the EU.

Considering the ongoing significant changes - the global economic crisis, Russia's declining economic support to Belarus, and the upcoming presidential elections in the country - we can say that the most interesting exploration of the impact of EU sanctions lies ahead. If the EU does not abandon its sanctions policy and decides to renew the temporarily suspended sanctions, it is likely that, due to the aforementioned changes, the impact of EU sanctions against Belarus will become stronger; therefore, policy makers should act carefully in shaping the sanctions policy and assessments of the potential impact of sanctions on the condition of human rights in Belarus. In addition, it would be equally important and useful to examine the effect of EU positive tools of influence on repression in Belarus, as it is notable that some assumptions of Wood's sanctions theory would be perfectly suited for a description of the mechanism of these tools as well.

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## THE KALININGRAD DREAM: FROM IMITATION TO IMPLEMENTATION. INTERNATIONAL ASPECT

**Solomon Ginzburg\***

*“Dreams that are not subject to doubt are easiest to fulfill”*

Alexandre Dumas Sr.(1802 – 1870),  
*French author and dramatist*

Due to its peculiar geopolitical destiny, our Russian region is located at the heart of economic and diplomatic games, played by the EU and Russia as they slowly come out of the socio-economic crisis.

The mission of our unique region is apparent: to promote Russia's presence in the accumulating power unified Europe. However, neither Moscow, nor Brussels put any real effort to untie the Baltic geopolitical knot. The higher the degree of mutual concern, the more visible is the deterioration of the situation for the million of Russian citizens at Russia's western borders. For example, Kaliningrad residents are losing their right to receive free Lithuanian and Polish visas - now to get them one needs to have a humiliating invitation; they are the only ones of the entire population of Russia who are required to have transit Lithuanian visas to go to Ukraine and Belarus, and so on. Given the sanctimonious reproaches by the capital's officials, these discomforts hang out over the socio-economic life of the region like a sledgehammer. The recent summit “Russia-EU” in Rostov-on-Don does not contribute to the solution to the Kaliningrad dilemma.

We ought to use the freedom to cogitate, compare and think that has been bestowed upon us. Otherwise our life will be just as vain as the TV box which to many serves a successful substitute for the real world, making their heart miss a beat while rejoicing over virtual victories.

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## **General comments**

The post-crisis period creates the demand for both the implementation of the “no change” scenario, which has to do with the continuation of exploitation of the hydrocarbon udder by the Conservative Putinists, and reforms. The experienced shock may become a stimulus for the refinement of new models and approaches to the development of the Oblast. Meanwhile there is no intelligible reaction observable among Russia’s leadership to the model of the development of the region surrounded by the EU.

The most pernicious scenario is the intensification of domestic repression under the conditions of a confrontational foreign policy. This is the route of deadlock self-isolation, internal stagnation and outward enmity.

The best scenario for Russia’s exclave is the implementation of the Kaliningrad dream, which presupposes reorganization in three dimensions: restoration of federalism, including electivity of governors, democracy, and modernization. The Kaliningrad dream is a devout wish of the progressive part of the regional elite to ensure high standard of living, based on the freedom of the individual and culture in the western region of Russia.

## **Three approaches**

For two decades the unusual location of the oblast has been the subject of internal political struggle. Three fairly clear approaches to the solution to the Kaliningrad dilemma may be distinguished.

The first approach is associated with the aspiration to maximum autonomusness of the region. It rests upon the idea of acquiring the status of a republic, subjectivity of international law and associated membership in the European Union. For this purpose in 2005-2006 an attempt was made to establish the socio-political movement “Republic”, which presently is in a frozen state.

The second approach is overtly diametrically opposite to the first approach. It presupposes setting a course on standardization, simplification, unification of the Oblast, leveling to a single norm, oneness, single form, and the same approach to the Oblast as to other subjects of the Federation. The proponents of this approach are convinced that the best measure against separatism is treating the Oblast as

well as other parts of Russia according to the principle “one size fits all”. They believe that the most reliable way to resolve a problem is not to discuss it.

The third approach seems to be the most promising. It rests upon the idea of emphasizing the unique state of the Oblast by passing federal laws on state guarantees for Kaliningrad residents, reducing administrative barriers and making international agreements between the Russian Federation (hereinafter – RF) and the EU.

### **Imitation**

The Kaliningrad dilemma is still being solved in pretence. There is no breakthrough. Despite the victorious reports, the international situation of the region is in decline. Following the bureaucratic tradition, the issue is blabbed away. Adherents of the verticalization do not deem this issue topical. The real life is supplanted by dummies and unfeasible promises: an empty vessel makes the greatest sound.

The demagogic statements sound from both sides. For example, quite recently Franko Frattini, Italian minister of Foreign Affairs, has declared the possibility for Russian citizens to enjoy visa-free travel to Europe already this year. His compatriot Romano Prodi, previously the Chairman of the European Commission, dates the establishment of the visa-free regime between the EU and RF to as early as 2008. Vladimir Chizhov, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the EU, keeps pace: “As for Russia, we are ready to cancel the visa regime even tomorrow, without any pre-conditions. In this regard the ball is fully in the EU field”. (“Безвизовый режим с ЕС не должен стать недостижимым светлым будущим” [Visa-free regime with the EU must not become an unattainable bright future] –“НГ” [NG], December 22, 2009). All this reminds of a Brezhnev-time joke when, to imitate the movement forward, a train carriage is zealously shaken.

The document of the European Commission under the pretentious title “Toward a partnership for modernization between the European Union and Russia”, which is to be issued in February 2010, is but a compilation of vague generalities and another imitation. Bureaucrats in Brussels fill the document with vain rhetoric on “balanced development”, “investment building” and other vain wishes. The effect is similar to that in Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin’s (1826 – 1889) fable: “The new

bear-voivode sought to silence all enemies, but ate a siskin. At that he chilled out”. Since the end of last year, the EU has cancelled visas for three republics of the former Yugoslavia: citizens of Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia can now travel freely to the EU countries. In the nearest months this opportunity will extend to Albania, Bosnia and Kosovo.

For the RF the Schengen Visa enquiry has to do with an extreme degree of bureaucratization – an interview and filling in an application form which consists of 48 questions. For example, participants of a 5-day package holiday are to provide information regarding their father and mother, previous visits to Schengen states and means of subsistence.

One should not get hung up on the grievances of the West. Positive actions should be advanced. Pedalling on the issue of permanent humiliation from the EU and inflating the suspiciousness phenomenon are counterproductive.

In reality the visa-free regime between the RF and the EU is not possible until 2015. Moscow’s position on the issue becomes transparent in a comment by Maxim Travnikov, Deputy Minister for Regional Development of the Russian Federation: “You will agree that it will be unfair if residents of the Kaliningrad Oblast will enjoy visa-free travel to Lithuania and Poland, while other citizens of the Russian Federation staying in the Kaliningrad Oblast will not” (“Московская зависть? [Moscow’s envy?] – «Дворник» [The Street Sweeper], Nr 38, 2009).

### **Challenge for modernization**

Modernization is not a tribute to fashion, but rather a global competition among countries. As Russian political scientist Alexander Rubtsov notes, the “coffee break on oil” is becoming dangerously protracted. Meanwhile people are also raw material and a consumable item of the performance. The oil spirit is giddy. The country is becoming a semi-product, a fodder and is thus acquiring a state that will last a long time.

Meanwhile modernization is advancement to becoming up-to-date. This process is impossible without leaders and elites. What is at issue is not the question how to catch up with Lithuania and Poland in terms of quality of life; rather, it is how to change self, democratize politics, institutions, to enhance morale, values, and to create an effective civil society.



The objective has to be seen not in the traditional “catch up and outdo”, but in the creation of comfort life based on democratic institutions and innovative economy. The modernization process is non-intermittent and constant. Without democratization there can be no socio-political life.

The experience of South Korea, Singapore or China is not suitable for Russia. Tightening the screws, authoritarian leadership techniques, deep “freeze”, incredible growth rates under semi-slavery – this is a closed chapter dating back to the 30-50s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Given the extremely high corruption and administrative barriers, our output will prove non-competitive, even if the oil barrel costs \$500 US.

If one is eager to assume a leadership position, the transition to the development policy is an overriding imperative. Such policy needs subjects of action taking interest in real changes, not in blabbing away modernization, demagoguery, and in new verbose formulations of old policies.

A constant dialogue between representatives of various interest groups may become an alternative to the habitual politicking.

Modernization must not become a slogan justifying a yet another distribution of budget funds among the Putinists.

Not only Skolkovo is an indicator of Russia’s modernization, but the Kaliningrad Oblast as well. Dropping measures on Moscow’s side toward our region will be indicative of the profanation of modernization. A breakthrough in Kaliningrad’s direction will demonstrate seriousness of intentions to modernize Russia.

### **Seven steps for advancement**

Neither the RF, nor the EU can instantaneously, momentarily switch to a mutual visa-free regime. Our region can be the first to test this civilized practice. As Otto von Bismarck (1815 – 1898) noted, “Any politics is better than the politics of doubt”.

According to an ancient Roman saying, “Dropping water wears away the stone not due its strength, but due to the frequency of falling”. Regional authorities must influence rather than react, encouraging federal leaders and Euro-officials to take useful action in the interests of Kaliningrad residents.

*Step One* is the most important and difficult. The question on the presence in the currently developed framework agreement between the Russian Federation and the EU, which fundamentally defines the directions of the long-term strategic partnership, should be raised with all severity, possibly, as an appendix to the main text.

Three types of problems are relevant: economy, freedom and security, and education and science. Of great importance are issues related to consistent rules and norms ensuring cooperation, equality of competitive conditions, and free movement of goods, services and capitals. First investment and trade relations are to be identified. Then the necessary legal framework is to be created and extended. Integration is a process, not an aim. At the time of opening markets any economy finds additional resources for development. The issue of correlation between the European and domestic systems of standardization and technical regulation is crucial. One of the reasons for low competitiveness of our output at European markets is the discrepancy from the commonly accepted quality norms and technical standards.

In addition, a regulation has to be established on the provision of free Schengen multiple entry visas to RF citizens residing in the Kaliningrad Oblast.

Regulations are needed which would contribute to the formation of a common educational space, possibly on the basis of the Bologna process, which presupposes active exchange of lecturers, doctoral students, students, rapprochement of educational systems as well as mutual conversion of diplomas of higher education.

*Step Two* presupposes advocating the idea of entry liberalization up to a visa-free entry of the EU citizens to the Oblast. The Kaliningrad citizens ought not to be reminiscent of beggars exploiting geopolitical difficulties. Steps forwards need be taken, thus demonstrating openness and good will. Such disproportionate, asymmetrical (dissymmetrical) decision will stimulate the EU to provide concessions to Kaliningrad. The draft federal law has already been developed by regional opposition and presupposes introduction of changes and amendments made to the law on the entry/exit procedures to and from the RF. Approval of this initiative by the State Duma of the RF will lead to the investment flow and opening of new working places in the region.

Of course, every tub must stand on its own bottom. Moreover, the Oblast is not a subject of international law. However, application of successful practices will

enhance Russia's positions in the course of negotiations. Therefore, it is beneficial to study the experience of Switzerland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Iceland, which are not part of the EU, yet, along their basic criteria, meet membership requirements of the EU.

*Step Three* has to do with tactics. Firstly, signing of bilateral Russia-Lithuania and Russia-Poland agreements which will decrease the acuteness of the Kaliningrad visa problem has to be lobbied. The practice of provision of preferential national visas to the Oblast's residents will be resumed. Secondly, one has to seek abolition of the corrupted practice of invitations while insisting on multiple entry visas, which are valid for at least 2-3 years.

*Step Four* is to initiate a "round table" for Kaliningrad and European businessmen. It will turn into an influential and ongoing business-forum developing recommendations not only for regional as well as federal representative and executive agencies of State power, but also for the EU.

The forum is able to promote exchange of development strategies, economic information, conduct its thorough analysis, expand cooperation between economists and carry out joint research. This process could be initiated by the Representation of Chamber of Commerce of Hamburg in Kaliningrad as well as by a local division of the RF Chamber of Trade and Industry. Extended relations between domestic business and the EU are important: added value is not built on empty declarations. Not to agree with each other is better than not to talk at all.

*Step Five* is to propose Kaliningrad as a venue for regular meetings of non-governmental organizations of the RF and the EU. In practice this would be an establishment of the public forum "Russia-EU". Its objective would be to promote rapprochement of peoples and the formation of civil society. The implementation of this process would also require the involvement of the regional Public Chamber.

In addition, Kaliningrad has to be suggested as a platform for the Parliamentary Cooperation Committee. Deputies of the European Parliament, the Polish Sejm and the Lithuanian Seimas, the State Duma of the RF, the regional Duma and members of the Council of Federation of the RF could hold political dialogue. This will allow Russia to advocate its interests while interacting with European organizations, even if they are as "inconvenient" as the European Council on Foreign Relations. Parliamentary cooperation contributes to the approximation

of legal frameworks in the spheres of standardization, health care, pharmaceuticals, phytosanitary measures, environmental protection, technical regulation, fisheries, informatics, agriculture, competition, automotive industry, telecommunications, and customs.

*Step Six* is to initiate active cooperation with the European police agency on the basis of the agreement signed during the summit in Rome back in 2003. This will improve the efficiency of combating transnational crime, terrorism, economic crimes, financial fraud, illegal immigration and narcotrafficking.

There is clear evidence of breaches of Article 31 of the RF Constitution. The most odious officials are indignant about the fact that the “worthless society” is “impudently” protesting. Persecution of citizens on political grounds should be put to an end, regardless of the fact whether the persecuted individual is a demonstrator, a picketer, a deputy, a journalist, or a public figure.

*Step Seven* is to begin the development of a unified system of higher education with the European Union. Cooperation at the level of secondary education should be promoted, taking place directly between schools, lyceums and gymnasiums. The RF accession to the Bologna Process, which has been in force for as long as 11 years, contributes to this initiative. In addition, Kaliningrad needs a serious and authoritative linguistic school.

When advocating national interests, one should not only enjoy the beams of victories which frequently are merely phantoms, but also use the differing points of view among EU actors and engage in civilized bargaining. We should put an end to walking on the rake as only on the basis of reciprocal tracks and approximation of positions can one attain the desired effect.

We should keep insisting on the appointment of an authority figure, either vice-minister of the federal government, or deputy head of the presidential administration, who would be responsible for the coordination of activities dealing with integrated development of the Oblast. As an alternative, it may be reasonable to grant the Oblast the status of a separate federal district, investing the governor with the authority of the head (plenipotentiary envoy of the President of the RF) of the district and deputy head of the presidential administration. Our unique region has to become a national project of its own. Kaliningrad must win in the acute competitive struggle. Then the Kaliningrad dream will come true.

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## Is There a Chance for a Common European Culture of Remembrance?

Rokas Grajauskas\*

Over the past several years, there has been an intensification of the debate in Europe over its tragic past, in particular regarding the period of World War II (WWII), its aftermath, and the relation of contemporary Europe to the totalitarian regimes in power during that period. This debate was set in motion by politicians and historians of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, who feel that so far the perception of Europe's tragic past varies greatly depending on whether it is viewed upon from the "Eastern" or "Western" perspective.

The crimes of Nazi Germany were unequivocally condemned by the international community after WWII, while the Nuremberg Trials epitomized this condemnation. Few, if any, people have questioned the necessity to condemn Nazi crimes and to penalize the promotion of Nazi ideology or the denial of their crimes, of which Holocaust obviously stands out as the most horrific and mind-shattering case. By achieving widespread condemnation of Nazi ideology and Nazi crimes we have attempted to establish moral and legal principles in order to prevent the recurrence of similar horrors in the future.

For many in the CEE countries, especially in the Baltic States, Stalinism was a greater evil than Nazism. Arguably this was so merely because the Soviet occupation of these countries lasted much longer than the Nazi occupation. Recorded data show that during Stalin's regime up to 700 000 Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians were deported, from the population of six million. In Poland, some 1.5 million people were deported, of these 760 000 died, many of them children<sup>1</sup>. According to academic research, the Soviet occupation and Stalin terror totalled in the loss of every third resident of Lithuania<sup>2</sup>. It therefore seems reasonable that nations

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<sup>1</sup> Speech by Jerzy Buzek at the conference "Europe 70 Years After the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact", European Parliament, Brussels, 14 October 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Speech by Irena Degutiene at the conference "Europe 70 Years After the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact", European Parliament, Brussels, 14 October 2009.

which had suffered so bitterly would have the right to demand that these crimes be internationally condemned, similarly to how Nazi crimes were condemned after WWII.

In this context there can be no date more symbolic than 23 August, 1939, when the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (together with its secret protocols) was signed. This date is the symbol of the evil intentions of the two European totalitarian regimes that made a deal to divide Europe. This deal may also be considered as a starting point for the ensuing crimes that the two regimes later committed.

And yet the post-Communist European Union (EU) countries face substantial resistance against their efforts to achieve the condemnation of Stalin's crimes on an equal or similar footing as those of Nazi Germany. In his article "Why a Common European Culture of Remembrance Shall Not Emerge", Dutch historian Jeroen Bult puts forward a number of arguments as to why the post-Communist countries have found it so difficult to "integrate the crimes of Communism i.e. the Soviet Union into the pan-European historical consciousness"<sup>3</sup>.

According to Bult, Germany, the biggest EU member state, is the main obstacle for the creation of a common European culture of remembrance, with an equal standing of Nazism and Communism. Bult argues that juxtaposing Nazism and Communism is a great taboo in academic and political circles in Germany. Yet, Germany's historically inspired restraints seamlessly coincide with other factors as well, such as commemorative traditions and peculiarities in different EU countries that are supposed to strengthen national identity; the influential progressive "anti-fascist" paradigm; business, i.e. energy, interests in Russia that have brought about a form of self-censorship; and Nazism and its sadistic practices as the ultimate "tool" for self-reflection and self-chastisement.

Bult sets out his reasons in a consistent and reasonable manner. I can agree with most of them, but not the conclusion that a "common perception of Europe's disastrous twentieth century history will not emerge in the years and decades to come".

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<sup>3</sup> Jeroen Bult, "Why a Common European Culture of Remembrance Shall Not Emerge", *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2010 (24).

## Two Key Obstacles

In this opinion article I would like to discuss two main reasons for the resistance the CEE countries face. I believe that these two are the key obstacles in understanding the problem, whereas the other hindrances merely derive from them.

*The first reason* is the past and the current economic and political relationship between Russia and the biggest member states of the EU, primarily Germany, France, and Italy. In fact, many explanations of the differing interpretations of history go all the way back to the years of WWII. Back then Western European countries accepted the Soviet interpretation of certain events mainly due to the fact that the Soviet Union was a crucial ally in their war and eventual victory against Nazi Germany. According to the renowned British historian Norman Davis, such acquiescence was evident already during WWII, when the allied countries needed the support of the Soviet Union in containing Nazi expansion. For example, his research into classified documents of the UK of the time indicate that the guilt of the Soviet Union behind the Katyn massacre was a “near certainty”, but an alliance with the Soviets was deemed to be more important than moral issues; thus the official version supported the Soviet version, up to censoring the contradictory accounts<sup>4</sup>.

The same was true, for example, of the interpretation of the occupation of the Baltic States. During the Cold War most Western European countries accepted the Soviet version that the Baltic States joined the Soviet Union voluntarily. This interpretation remained after WWII as well. As years passed by, it got entrenched deep in the teachings of history in Western European countries.

After the collapse of the USSR there was hope that Russia itself would re-assess its history and unequivocally condemn Stalin's crimes. Indeed, there was quite a significant recognition of these crimes under Boris Yeltsin, the first democratically elected president of the Russian Federation, who condemned the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, admitted that the Baltic States were illegally annexed by Russia during WWII, and clearly recognized that the Katyn massacre was committed by Soviet soldiers. Ten years later, however, with Vladimir Putin's rise to power, these tendencies gradually started to be reversed. For already ten years now there has been substantial re-romanticization of the Soviet past and even some pro-Stalinist

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<sup>4</sup> Norman Davies, *Europe: A History*, HarperCollins, 1998

propaganda. This became noticeable in TV programmes broadcast by state-owned television channels, in films created, or in newly released history books for school-children that gloss over Stalin's terror and justify many of his mass crimes claiming that conditions of the time "demanded" it<sup>5</sup>.

Another part of the story is that with Putin's advent to power, Russia became adept at using certain European dependencies and vulnerabilities in a much more determined and consistent manner. In particular, this applies to Europe's dependence on Russian supplies of energy resources. Most of the Western European countries realized how vulnerable and risky their dependence on Russian energy is during the 2006 winter gas crisis, when millions of European energy consumers were faced with reduced quantities of gas delivered because of the conflict over supply provisions and transit prices between Russia and Ukraine. Whether deliberate or not, this was a signal that Europe has to take Russia's interests into account if it wants to remain warm during the winter.

Ever since part of Russia's strategy has been to maintain some level of uncertainty about the geography of its future supplies. Some of Russia's leaders, including Putin and Chairman of Gazprom Alexey Miller, have more than once indicated that Russia can redirect its oil and gas supplies away from Europe and either build LNG terminals or new pipelines to Asia<sup>6</sup>. Considering that Europe will have to import more energy resources (especially gas) in the future, this serves as a major "softener" of its policy vis-à-vis Russia.

What is more, European companies like E.ON-Ruhrgas, Shell, BP, Total and others are among the most active in Russia's energy market making multi-billion dollar profits every year. Meanwhile Russia has consistently demonstrated that if things do not go as it wishes, foreign energy companies will suffer first (recall Russia's unexpected decision to go it alone with the Shtokman oil field in 2005). That is why the biggest European energy companies, exerting significant influence over their governments, lobby for friendlier and more stable relations with Russia without irritants, such as the revision of certain historical inaccuracies or the condemnation of Stalin's crimes. In his article Bult advances a similar argument

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<sup>5</sup> Most of these trends are eloquently captured by Arkady Ostrovsky in his article in the *Prospect Magazine* called "Flirting with Stalin" - <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/2008/09/flirtingwithstalin/>

<sup>6</sup> Roman Kupchinsky, "LNG - Russia's New Energy Blackmail Tool", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume: 6 Issue: 77, 22 April 2009 - [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=34888](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=34888)  
Jeremy Page, "Putin threatens to divert oil to Far East", *The Times*, 27 April 2006 - <http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/article710012.ece>.



and states that “nowadays it is mainly Western European businessmen and (ex-) politicians longing for lucrative energy contracts who are trying to appease Moscow and are taking its interpretation of history for granted”.

On the other hand, it is also true that neither was there a significant desire among Western European leaders to re-assess WWII history after the end of the Cold War. Indeed, usually one cares more about one’s own sufferings rather than someone else’s. Besides, there was hope in the 1990’s that the Russian society would carry out this task on its own. When Putin came to power, energy and other interests quickly took the place of the more “moral” side of Europe’s foreign policy vis-à-vis Russia.

*The second reason* for the continuing difficulties in achieving Europe-wide condemnation of Stalin’s crimes has been the way these efforts have been carried out by CEE leaders themselves and the fear they have created that such a condemnation could endanger the preservation of the memory of the victims of Holocaust.

Many institutions or individuals around the world dedicated to the preservation of the memory of Holocaust, have expressed their outright concern, if not anger, about such efforts. For example, in response to the Prague Declaration, which grew out of the Conference on European Conscience and Communism, held in the Czech capital in June 2008, Dr Shimon Samuels, Simon Wiesenthal Centre’s Chief Delegate and Director for International Relations, sent an official statement to the OSCE, in which he warned about the “ulterior agenda” of the Prague Declaration, “the real purpose of which is to supplant Holocaust Memorial Day in Europe”<sup>7</sup>. He also accused some of the CEE intellectuals behind the Prague Declaration, such as Vaclav Havel, Vytautas Landsbergis and others, as having “anti-Semitic, racist and Holocaust distortionist motives”. Another vocal critic of the efforts of the post-Communist countries to revive the memory of Stalin’s crimes – Dovid Katz – has called such efforts “Holocaust obfuscation”. Some Jewish scholars see them as “the gravest threat to preserving the memory of the Holocaust”<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Shimon Samuels, “‘Prague Declaration’ is a Project to Delete the Holocaust from European History”, Simon Wiesenthal Centre, 5 October 2009 - <http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=lsKWLbPJJLnF&b=4441467&ct=7548759>.

<sup>8</sup> Cnaan Liphshiz, “Holocaust scholars slam EU for backing Nazi-Communist comparison”, *Haaretz*, 26 January 2010 - <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/holocaust-scholars-slam-eu-for-backing-nazi-communist-comparison-1.262074>.

On the one hand, these are exaggerated accounts, and they misrepresent the true motives of the post-Communist politicians and historians. Their efforts are not aimed at obfuscating Holocaust but rather at fully reviving the memory of Stalin's crimes. Essentially, all of them recognize the uniqueness of Holocaust. But in their view, such recognition should not preclude the condemnation of crimes committed by Stalinist USSR that resulted in millions of deaths.

On the other hand, CEE countries, especially the Baltic States, complicate the situation by seeding distrust in relation to their local as well as wider Jewish communities. One of the most acute problems is that most CEE countries have failed to prosecute the remaining Nazi collaborators. After the collapse of the Communist regimes, many of the post-Communist countries have managed to convict people of Communist-era crimes, particularly in relation to deportations after WWII, but have prosecuted in total only three Nazi-era war criminals<sup>9</sup>. Various Jewish institutions have also raised their concern about the re-appearance of anti-Semitic tendencies in CEE countries, especially in the shape of growing ranks and visibility of neo-Nazi organizations. In other words, the existing mistrust exacerbates the situation and leads to a lack of understanding of each other's motives. Those trying to achieve Europe-wide condemnation of Stalinist crimes should therefore spend more time and effort to engage Jewish historians and activists into a wide-ranging and frank discussion over the past events in question.

Moreover, many Holocaust scholars are uneasy with the fact that some politicians in the Baltic States, especially Lithuania, want to label the Soviet deportations and purges experienced by the Baltic people after WWII as *genocide*. A concept feared by them is one of "double genocide", which would effectively mean that the Nazi genocide (against Jews) equals the Stalinist one (against Lithuanians, for example, in Lithuania's case). For example, the museum to commemorate the victims of Stalinist terror in Vilnius is called The Museum of Genocide Victims. Such terminology only complicates matters and appears to be counter-productive.

According to the prominent Lithuanian philosopher, now Member of the European Parliament Prof. Leonidas Donskis, genocide is the annihilation *en bloc* of a people or of a race, irrespective of class divisions, dominant ideology and internal social and cultural differences. According to Donskis, no matter how

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<sup>9</sup> Efraim Zuroff, "Eastern Europe: Anti-Semitism in the Wake of Holocaust-Related Issues", *Jewish Political Studies Review*, 17:1-2 (Spring 2005) - <http://www.jcpa.org/phas/phas-zuroff-s05.htm>

cruel the Soviet terror that was visited upon the Baltic states, a large segment of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian society, by going over to the other side, by becoming collaborators, was not only able to save itself, but also secure for themselves successful careers in the administration of the occupying regime. Instead, Donskis proposes to use the term stratocide, coined by Soviet dissident Grigory Pomerantz, to describe the annihilation of certain strata and classes within a nation. Pomerantz argued that it was not an entire nation that had been wiped out as a racial or ethnic whole, but its most educated, most cultured and most conscious strata<sup>10</sup>. The labelling of Stalin's crimes against the people from the Baltic States as genocide, therefore, invites unnecessary opposition and fear among many that white-washing this important moral and legal term could indeed obfuscate the memory of genocide against the Jewish people during WWII.

The controversial context in which Lithuania and other CEE countries are trying to re-assess historical traumas in turn complicates the very effort to incorporate Stalin's crimes into a pan-European historical conscience. Inevitably, it has a significant impact on the way German society relates to these tragic past events as well. In Germany the existing taboo on juxtaposing Nazism and Communism will not be lifted until there is a broader support and appreciation of the sufferings of those who experienced Soviet terror. This also includes the wider Jewish community, which so far has been uneasy about the way Central and Eastern Europeans have fought for their cause. Therefore, until a more inclusive and subtle approach toward this issue is developed and a genuine dialogue is established with those who seek to preserve the memory of Holocaust, it will be difficult to expect a more favourable attitude of the German society towards the Europe-wide condemnation of Stalin's crimes, too.

### **Common Culture of Remembrance in Formation?**

European dependence on Russia and lack of mutual understanding with institutions seeking to preserve the memory of Holocaust are the two most important reasons behind the continuing difficulties with regard to achieving same

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<sup>10</sup> Leonidas Donskis, "The Inflation of Genocide", *European Voice*, 24 July 2009 - <http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/2009/07/the-inflation-of-genocide/65613.aspx>.

or at least similar condemnation of the Stalinist crimes to those of the Nazis. And yet I would argue that even despite these difficulties, there are signs that a common culture of remembrance in Europe is slowly, but surely taking shape.

One of the institutions that has moved forward in this regard the most is the European Parliament (EP). The EP has taken a consistent stance in favour of condemning Nazism and Communism (Stalinism) on an equal footing as Europe's two major 20<sup>th</sup> century totalitarian regimes. The EP resolution of 2 April 2010 "On European conscience and totalitarianism" condemned all types of totalitarian regimes but singled out Nazism as "the dominant historical experience of Western Europe" and both Communism and Nazism as totalitarian experiences of Central and Eastern European countries<sup>11</sup>. This resolution was passed by an almost unanimous vote of 533-44 with 33 abstentions. Among other things, it also clearly stated that "the uniqueness of the Holocaust must nevertheless be acknowledged".

The same declaration of 2 April 2009 also called for the 23 August, the day when the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed in 1939, to be proclaimed as a Europe-wide Day of Remembrance for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. In fact, the EP already called for 23 August to be remembered as such in a separate declaration on 23 September 2008 ("Declaration of the European Parliament on the proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism")<sup>12</sup>. In 2010, marking the occasion of 23 August, President of the EP Jerzy Buzek called the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact the "collusion of the two worst forms of totalitarianism in the history of humanity: Nazism and Stalinism", that caused "mass deportations and exterminations"<sup>13</sup>.

The European Commission, for its part, funds a remembrance project for young Europeans called "Active European Remembrance"<sup>14</sup>. According to the

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<sup>11</sup> European Parliament resolution of 2 April 2009 "On European conscience and totalitarianism", Strasbourg - <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2009-0213+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

<sup>12</sup> Declaration of the European Parliament "On the proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism", Strasbourg - <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P6-TA-2008-0439&language=EN>

<sup>13</sup> President Jerzy Buzek on the European Day of Remembrance for victims of Stalinism and Nazism, European Parliament, Brussels, 23 August 2010 [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/president/view/en/press/press\\_release/2010/2010-August/press\\_release-2010-August-10.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/president/view/en/press/press_release/2010/2010-August/press_release-2010-August-10.html)

<sup>14</sup> Website of the project "Active European Remembrance" - [http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/programme-actions/doc48\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/programme-actions/doc48_en.htm)

Commission, this project is aimed at keeping the memory of the WWII period alive and at ensuring that the mistakes of the past are not repeated and the present is appreciated. Within the framework of “Active European Remembrance” the Commission provides support to projects that “preserve sites of historical and social interest linked to Nazism and Stalinism”. The website of the project provides the following reasoning: “The legacy of Nazism and Stalinism underscore just how important and valuable our current democratic values are. By commemorating the victims, as well as preserving the sites and archives associated with deportations, and myriad other actions, Europeans, particularly younger generations, can draw lessons for the present and the future from these dark chapters in history”.

Another European institution, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), even before the EP expressed its position regarding the common legacy of Europe’s Communist and Nazi totalitarian regimes in its Resolution 1481 (2006) “On the need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes”<sup>15</sup>. The resolution states that the “fall of totalitarian communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe has not been followed in all cases by an international investigation of the crimes committed by them. Moreover, the authors of these crimes have not been brought to trial by the international community, as was the case with the horrible crimes committed by National Socialism (Nazism)”.

In a similar vein, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which took place in Vilnius, Lithuania in July 2009, in its final declaration (informally dubbed the “Vilnius Declaration”) of 3 July 2009 noted that “in the twentieth century European countries experienced two major totalitarian regimes, Nazi and Stalinist, which brought about genocide, violations of human rights and freedoms, war crimes and crimes against humanity”<sup>16</sup>. The Declaration included a paragraph reiterating the call of the EP to mark 23 August as a European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism

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<sup>15</sup> Resolution 1481 (2006) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe “Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes”, Strasbourg, 25 January 2006 - <http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta06/Eres1481.htm>

<sup>16</sup> Resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe “On Divided Europe Reunited: Promoting Human Rights and Civil Liberties in the OSCE Region in the 21st Century”, Vilnius, 3 July 2009 - [http://www.oscepa.org/images/stories/documents/activities/1.Annual%20Session/2009\\_Vilnius/Final\\_Vilnius\\_Declaration\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.oscepa.org/images/stories/documents/activities/1.Annual%20Session/2009_Vilnius/Final_Vilnius_Declaration_ENG.pdf)

and Nazism. The Vilnius Declaration was also adopted with a huge majority – out of 320 lawmakers just 8 voted against and 4 abstained<sup>17</sup>.

It is worth noting that the same resolution of the OSCE PA acknowledged “the uniqueness of the Holocaust” and expressed its strong call to fight anti-Semitism in all its forms. It is therefore interesting that in his commentary on the Vilnius Declaration Dovid Katz expressed an opinion that the equal condemnation of the two totalitarian regimes and the encouragement to mark the 23 August as a Europe-wide Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism was “slipped” into the Declaration by “the East European far right”<sup>18</sup>.

It is true that most of these monumental documents or projects of various European institutions were initiated by members from Central and Eastern Europe. This, however, demonstrates that the debate on Europe’s tragic past has been changing significantly exactly because Europe is not only “Western” Europe anymore; it is equally “Eastern” Europe as well. It is only natural that with the enlargement of the EU to include CEE countries, the position of the EU regarding issues of common past is changing. There are reasons to believe that this common position should only consolidate as Europe moves towards further integration and as CEE countries solidify their positions in the EU and learn to use to the full extent the opportunities membership in the EU provides. It is therefore likely that the EU will continue to move towards a more integrated appreciation of its common past and towards a common culture of remembrance.

### **The Importance of Common Conscience for European Integration**

To push the argument further, it could be said that a common culture of remembrance in the EU is *necessary* for further European integration. Initially the EU was created to overcome the conflicts and the mistrust that pertained between different European countries. However, if the EU wants to move in the direction

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<sup>17</sup> “OSCE Resolution Equating Stalinism with Nazism Enrages Russia”, *European Dialogue* - <http://eurodialogue.org/OSCE-Resolution-Equating-Stalinism-With-Nazism-Enrages-Russia>

<sup>18</sup> Dovid Katz, “Halting Holocaust Obfuscation”, *The Guardian*, 8 January 2010 - <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jan/08/holocaust-baltic-lithuania-latvia>

of a more pronounced political integration, the residual mistrust between some of the “old” member states and the “new” ones will have to be overcome.

In this case the differing historical interpretations serve as a source of residual mistrust. The “new” member states are frustrated that countries like Germany, France or Italy are still often reluctant to unequivocally condemn Stalinism, or to renounce the Russian interpretation of history in order not to upset Moscow. From the perspective of the newcomers, the Russian interpretation is nothing else but the Soviet one, which is full of falsifications and lies. It is only natural that, if any of the “old” member states still sympathize with this kind of interpretation, the post-Communist EU countries view them with significant suspicion.

According to the Danish academic of political science Ole Wæver, the essential element in the formation process of a political community based on a common identity is always defining “the Other”. According to Wæver, in the case of the EU, its Other is its tragic past<sup>19</sup>. With the 2004 enlargement of the EU, the debate became open again about what exactly European past is. From the perspective of the post-Communist EU countries, this past should not only be about the horrific wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century or the crimes committed by the Nazis, but also about the division of Europe produced by the totalitarian policies of the communist Soviet Union. To follow Wæver’s argument, until there is a consensus in the EU about its past, a common political identity will be extremely fragile.

Indeed, the EP resolution of 2 April 2009 clearly notes this point by stating that “Europe will not be united unless it is able to form a common view of its history, recognises Nazism, Stalinism and fascist and Communist regimes as a common legacy and brings about an honest and thorough debate on their crimes in the past century”. It also goes on to define the commonly recognized Other when it says that “from the outset European integration has been a response to the suffering inflicted by two world wars and the Nazi tyranny that led to the Holocaust and to the expansion of totalitarian and undemocratic Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe”. Such statements of a European institution, directly elected by nearly 500 million of its citizens, give hope that a common European culture of remembrance is in the making.

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<sup>19</sup> Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, 2003

## **Conclusions**

With this opinion I have sought to deny the conclusion reached by Jeroen Bult in his article that a common culture of remembrance will not emerge in Europe in the foreseeable future. I do agree that a common culture of remembrance has still not developed in Europe, and I think the two most fundamental reasons for this are economic and political dependence on Russia and fears about the possible obfuscation of Holocaust. On the other hand, I challenge Bult's conclusion by demonstrating the apparent signs of an emerging pan-European conscience with regard to its tragic past.

The two major obstacles for a common culture of remembrance outlined in this paper are not permanent. The discussion about what kind of measures the EU needs to take to withstand Russian political and economic pressure merits a separate paper. Nonetheless, it is widely agreed by experts that more substantial EU integration in the area of energy would make it less vulnerable to pressures from external energy suppliers. A genuine European energy policy would therefore have an indirect effect on the emergence of a common culture of remembrance.

Concerns about the memory of Holocaust should also be addressed with conscious effort. For those who know the motives behind the leaders of the post-Communist CEE countries, it is clear that their efforts are not aimed at obfuscating Holocaust, but merely at reviving and giving a clear assessment of Stalin's crimes. In other words, currently there is a lack of understanding between the CEE countries and the wider Jewish community. However, only constructive and intensive dialogue can change the misperceptions. The CEE governments, including the Lithuanian government, should engage with Holocaust scholars as well as Jewish (not least those in Israel) activists to alleviate their concerns. Dialogue is needed not only among politicians, but among historians as well. After all, to paraphrase Jean-Francois Revel, victims of Nazism will be insulted if they are used to bury the memory of victims of Communism<sup>20</sup>.

It is also inevitable that pressure for the convergence of views regarding Europe's past will come from within Europe, namely because of the need to abolish mistrust between the "old" and the "new" EU member states in order to be able to move ahead with deeper European integration. Europe will need to redefine its past as its Other to include the Communist crimes along the Nazi ones. Arguably,

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<sup>20</sup> Jean-Francois Revel, *La Grande Parade*, Pocket, 2001



such efforts are already taking place and results are seen within pan-European organizations, such as the OSCE, the CoE, and the EU itself.

At the end of the day the division of Europe and Stalin's crimes have to be seen by common European publics as tragic pages in European history, comparable to those of WWII itself, or the Nazi occupations of Western European countries during WWII. Ultimately, this common culture of remembrance has to manifest itself in documents, statements, books and other public documents of each and every EU member state. Most importantly, it has to become an integral part of history classes taught at Western European schools. Only when German school-children are taught about Nazi atrocities alongside the Stalinist ones as parts of a common European experience, will we be able to say that a common culture of remembrance has taken root in the EU.

***‘Right of Reply’...***

## Condemnation of Communism Does Not Require Submission to Double Genocide, Holocaust Obfuscation, or the Recent Deterioration in Civil Society and Free Speech in Lithuania

by [Dovid Katz](#)

Rokas Grajauskas cites me in his [recent article](#) on these pages as invoking the notion Holocaust Obfuscation (a term I [proposed formally in 2009](#)) to refer to “the efforts of the post-Communist countries to revive the memory of Stalin’s crimes”. Nothing could be further from the truth. My own website, [DefendingHistory.com](#), although dedicated primarily to the battle against trivialization of the Holocaust and the concomitant racism and antisemitism of the new Far Right in Eastern Europe, contains a [page on Soviet crimes](#), where I wholeheartedly embrace such Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly resolutions as [1096](#) (1996) and [1481](#) (2006), which wisely and rightly condemn Soviet crimes. It is vital that the full extent of these crimes be documented, the victims honored, the subject properly taught in international curricula, museums and memorializing institutions established, and justice pursued to the full extent of law. It is every bit as vital that Western commitment to Baltic security and independence remain unwavering, what with a huge unpredictable neighbor “with a certain past” (and unclear future) situated to the immediate east.

It is only after such attempts were demonstrably usurped by the far-right Double Genocide movement, insisting that all of Europe must accept the abject nonsense that Nazi and Soviet crimes were “equal” that one began to hear the voices of protest from [the tiny and vanishing Jewish communities](#) in Eastern Europe, as well as from [a wide array of voices in the democratic West](#), including, in late 2010, [seven European ambassadors](#) stationed in Vilnius — from Britain, Estonia, Finland, France, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden — whose letter to the president of Lithuania included the now classic line: “Spurious attempts are made to equate the uniquely evil genocide of the Jews with Soviet crimes against Lithuania, which, though great in magnitude, cannot be regarded as equivalent in either their intention or result.” So let us now discard the newest stereotype in town, that those who disagree with Double Genocide are necessarily supporters (or sycophants) of Moscow, or Jewish — a strange juxtaposition one does not expect to find uncritically recycled in highbrow academic parlance here on the pages of *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*. One of the European human rights champions who has spoken up with the most candor is British MP Denis MacShane, not least in his *Globalizing Hatred* (London 2008), where he lamented “the antisemitism coming back to life in some quarters of nationalist politics in the Baltic state [...]” (p. 33). Another is British MP John Mann who was the first

in Europe to document the antisemitic undertones of the red-equals-brown campaign. In response to a January 2008 conference in Tallinn, [he rose in the Commons to expose](#) what was underway.

In fact, current efforts to depict the Second Opinion on this issue as of necessity derivative from pro-Soviet (or Putinist) sentiments, or being only that of “Jews” is symptomatic of a (hopefully temporarily) declining environment of intellectual discourse and freedom in Lithuania, where parliament passed and the president signed, in June 2010, [a discreditable “red-brown law”](#) that threatens in some circumstances up to two years of prison for those who would deny or downplay either “genocide”, which is to say, in effect those who would deny Double Genocide. Even if nobody is ever imprisoned under the law, its effect has been, in the short time since passage, to stifle free debate and to encourage ever more liberal young Lithuanian intellectuals to emigrate. Its enactment, incidentally, followed upon that of a similar law in Hungary, passed shortly after the rise of the current right-wing government there, which has attempted to stifle the free media more widely.

The Double Genocide movement, which actually started in the Holocaust era itself in a blame-the-victims mentality (“the Jews were all communist criminals and got what they deserved”), has of late been intellectualized and disseminated by a variety of state-sponsored Orwellian institutions suffused with ultranationalism, antisemitism, and a desire to glorify Nazi collaborators of 1941. Mr Grajauskas himself notices something amiss with the “Museum of Genocide Victims” in central Vilnius. The museum ignores the one genocide that actually occurred in the country. Even worse, it [venerates the killers of 1941 as heroic rebels and features antisemitic exhibits](#) without curatorial comment. Similar attitudes are also evident at the [Genocide and Resistance Research Center](#), which is also responsible for the antisemitic “historic descriptions” at [Gruto parkas](#) near Druskininkai. When it comes to trying to “equalize” evils numerically, it is strange to see a paper in an academic journal quoting the figures of Soviet deportees beamed out by nationalist politicians in place of reliance upon the scholarly literature.

The “[Prague Declaration](#)” of June 2008 does not seek merely to win recognition for the truly appalling nature of many Soviet crimes. Among its extremist demands is that all Europe accept the idea that “Europe will not be united unless it is able to [...] recognize Communism and Nazism as a common legacy,” as if unity and friendship between peoples depend on mind-control-grade agreement, rather than the harmonious symphony of diverse and competing views in democratic societies. The Declaration insists that “crimes against humanity committed by the Communist regimes [...] must inform all European minds to the same extent as the Nazi regime’s crimes”; that Communist crimes must be assessed “in the same way Nazi crimes were assessed by the Nuremberg Tribunal”; demands establishment of a Europe-wide mixed red-brown remembrance day on 23 August, and, perhaps most sensationally, the “overhaul of European history textbooks so that children could learn

and be warned about Communism and its crimes in the same way as they have been taught to assess the Nazi crimes”. (A first draft of a proposed antidote to the Prague Declaration is posted [here](#)).

Returning to Lithuania, the campaign for the Prague Declaration [and related legislation and declarations](#) has not been pursued in a historical, political or social vacuum. It coincides with a period when the state [has sanctioned neo-Nazi marches on the capital's main boulevard](#) on independence day, failed to counter [1930s style antisemitic headlines](#) (even while [pouring money into PR “Jewish culture activities”](#)), and worst of all, when prosecutors have been pursuing not the Nazi war criminals they never showed serious interest in, but Holocaust Survivors who are alive because they escaped the ghetto to join the anti-Nazi partisans in the forests. A group of US congressmen still wait for a meaningful reply to their [December 2009 letter on this subject](#). And in Vilnius, back in 2008, the [Irish](#), [American](#) and [British](#) embassies publicly honored the anti-Nazi heroes who were being “investigated”, the first occasion since Soviet times, alas, when Western embassies were honoring persons being trashed by the state and prosecutors in this part of the world.

But these aged Holocaust Survivors were also honored for that very anti-Nazi resistance by the late President (later Prime Minister) [Algirdas Brazauskas](#), and the [free world at large](#). There is not one iota of evidence against any of them in connection with any alleged misdeed. [The frightful campaign of defamation](#) has included the canard that they cannot be found (leading to endless internet references to “the Jews hiding their war criminals”), and their “guilt” was most recently internationally trumpeted, quite unbelievably, by [the Lithuanian Human Rights \[!\] Association](#). In late January 2011 [the one-thousand day mark](#) was reached in the international vigil maintained internationally since the day police came looking for two elderly Jewish women in Vilnius; one of them, Dr Rachel Margolis, now 89, is afraid to return to Lithuania to see her native Vilnius one last time. Why did Lithuania inflict all this upon itself? That is the work wrought by the psychological, political, careerist and nationalist bandwagon increasingly known as: Double Genocide.

In 2010, a Klaipeda court [declared public swastika displays to be legal](#). Instead of condemning all (or indeed any) of [a frightening series of antisemitic, racist and homophobic developments](#), the foreign minister added to the lamentable atmosphere with his own [denunciations of imagined Jewish plots](#) on the topic of dual citizenship. The country's tiny but courageous Jewish community [responded rapidly](#).

The interrelationship between failure to deal straightforwardly with the Holocaust and contemporary antisemitism has been analyzed by a number of fine scholars, including [Efraim Zuroff \(2005\)](#), [Leonidas Donskis \(2006\)](#) and [Clemens Heni \(2009\)](#).

Lithuania's current foreign policy, entailing an expensive, self-destructive and misguided campaign to “rewrite history”, is doing grave damage both to the country's international standing and to [its own democratic potential](#). The fine, hard-working, long-suffering and forward-looking Lithuanian people

frankly deserve better leadership and a much more robust and fearless democratic spirit that would encourage diversity of opinion and open debate, even on the most painful episodes of the past. There is no country on this earth that does not have dark spots on its history.

And last but not least, to turn to the core issue:

I invite Mr. Grajauskas to join me in an expedition from (for example) the Belarusian border to the Baltic Sea, with detours north and south to visit as many towns and villages as possible. I predict we will find wherever we go Lithuanian (and Polish and Belarusian and Russian and other) people of all ages and sizes. But in town after town, all that is left of the erstwhile Jewish population is one of [the 250 or so mass graves that dot the country](#). Some 95% of Lithuanian Jewry, [over 200,000 citizens, were murdered](#) — men, women, children, only because they were Jews — in consequence of the massive and enthusiastic local participation, that started even before the establishment of German Nazi control (this “Baltic Proportion”, similar in all three states, was the highest in Europe). [Bold Lithuanian truth-tellers have spoken out fearlessly](#) over the years, and it is sad that so many of them have been marginalized in the face of the establishment’s Double Genocide campaign. At the same time, [the inspirational bravery of the many hundreds of Lithuanians](#) who risked everything to save a neighbor must never be forgotten.

Nothing could be worse for the Baltic states, their noble peoples, or the true need for education about Communist crimes internationally, than the present campaign, led by elites (politicians, academics, journalists etc.), to obfuscate the Holocaust via a bogus model of equality between Nazi and Soviet crimes that is empirically interlaced with numerous unsavory features that are being increasingly (if still informally) discussed in Western diplomatic and political circles as the East European New Far Right’s ability (so far) to project itself as center-right or center.

The very notion that the forces that liberated Auschwitz are ipso facto “equal” to those who perpetrated its genocide is so counterfactual that it behooves investigation of how the Double Genocide campaign could have come as far as it did. The answer to that may lie in the ability of even small states to (temporarily) obfuscate issues of history with expensive nationalistically motivated campaigns when others are busy with other matters and not paying much attention, and often unaware of the locally motivating factors.

To try to enshrine such “equivalence” in European Parliament legislation, or even worse, in laws that criminalize free debate, should be opposed by every genuine friend of Lithuania and the Baltic states.

The ultranationalist, racist, and antisemitic undertones of the current Double Genocide campaign are doing grave damage to Lithuania, and the sooner more local voices are raised in opposition, the better for the country on numerous counts, including political maturity; growth in democracy and open

society and tolerance; maintenance of high academic standards in the humanities and history (where diversity of opinion and approach is a prized asset); capacity for retaining talent in the country and attracting more of it from the far corners of the earth; and last but not least, genuine love for the scant remnants of peoples whose historic participation in seven hundred years of shared history is a proud legacy of the Grand Duchy, a legacy that continues to be cherished far and wide.

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# SECURITY CULTURE OF LITHUANIA

Margarita Šešelgytė\*

## *Abstract*

Employing the concept of security culture the article aims to define key features of Lithuanian security policy and to explain the rationale of its main security directions. In the first section of the article the model of analysis is described and four key variables are identified. Later on the narrative evolves around two allegories of Hobbesian and Kantian cultures which are juxtaposed and reflected in all subsequent sections of the article: fundamental premises of the nature of the international system, the nature of threats, a strategy and instruments to fight threats, and main partners (in the field of security) in the international affairs. The main argument of the article is that Lithuanian security policy, in particular its part directed towards Russia, is strongly influenced by the Hobbesian side of Lithuanian security culture, developed throughout the tumultuous history and triggered by the size and geographical position of the country.

## **Introduction**

For years size, geographical location and historical experience have been the major factors shaping security culture of Lithuania and defining main features of Lithuania's current security policy. Although at first sight neither the main goals of Lithuanian security policy, namely, preservation of the state sovereignty, peace and welfare, nor the means employed to attain these goals - cooperating with international community, especially NATO and the European Union<sup>1</sup>, - differ from those of many other European states. On the other hand, due to constant prioritization of Russia-related security issues in different international forums, Lithuania is often referred to as "one issue state", while because of its close, even subservient, relations with the USA it is received with a certain degree of suspicion by the pro-European members of the EU. The aim of this article is to reveal the main features of Lithuanian security culture and to explain the causes of certain aspects of Lithuanian security policy.

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<sup>1</sup> *Nacionalinio saugumo strategija*. [Strategy of National Security], Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, 2005.

## 1. Model of Analysis

The concept of security culture is novel in the academic debates. It is mostly related to the changing security agenda and alternative perspectives on national security,<sup>2</sup> when arguing that cultural elements of the global or domestic environment of the states are decisive in explaining the latter's national security interests, politics and behaviour.<sup>3</sup> Though it is complicated to define what these elements are, they may vary from one state to the other. Most commonly they are related to historical experiences in security field, especially the most dramatic ones, attitudes towards certain domestic or international practices, norms and values. Harald Müller defines security culture as a "set of values, norms, rules and practices with regard to security that gives thinking and acting in security field of a specific state a particular, sometimes singular pattern".<sup>4</sup> Following the lines of constructivism tradition it might be argued that security culture defines security identity and therefore shapes certain security preferences of a state, group or even individual. Though there could be more than one security culture in one state, for example, the first one directly influencing the official security discourse of the state and the second possessed by the society in general or by a specific group of the society, usually one security culture prevails and guides the official security discourse and behaviour of a state.

Can security culture change or be changed? Cultural factors are usually the most persistent through time; nevertheless, they still can change either in an incremental way, which takes years, or suddenly, as a response to an external shock. For example, conflicting security discourses of NATO members and some of the former Warsaw Pact countries transformed into common security discourse after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The concept of security culture presents the researchers with many challenging and novel opportunities for interesting research; however, most of the debates in the field so far have been carried on a rather conceptual and theoretical level. One of the reasons could be the fact that cultural variables are not easy to define and to

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<sup>2</sup> Katzenstein P., ed. *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Jepperson, R. L., Wendt, A., Katzenstein P. J., Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security, in Katzenstein P., ed. *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Müller H., Security cooperation, in Carlsnaes W., Risse T., Simmons B. A., eds. *Handbook of International Relations*, Sage Publications, 2002, p. 381.



measure. More applied research within the field is conducted using the concept of strategic culture. Strategic culture has been analysed as a civilisation phenomenon – the Western Way of Warfare<sup>5</sup>; as international institutions and norms<sup>6</sup>; as the strategic culture of certain states<sup>7</sup>; and, most recently, as the strategic culture of international organizations<sup>8</sup>. Though strategic culture is more related to the use of military force, the latest research on strategic culture does not limit itself to the analysis of military factors, and tends to investigate how cultural environment affects behaviour of the states in general.

One of the most popular definitions of strategic culture presented by Alistair Ian Johnston postulates that strategic culture is a system of symbols composed of two parts. The first part involves fundamental premises about the order of strategic environment (e.g., the role of war in inter-state relations), the nature of the enemy and the threats it poses, the effectiveness of the use of military force and the conditions under which military force is employed. The second part is of an operational character and is related to the most effective choices for fighting threats.<sup>9</sup> In this article Johnston's definition is employed as the basis for research strategy; therefore, it is argued that national security culture consists of: 1) a system of symbols related to and views on the nature of the international system; 2) perception of threats, their prioritization and attitudes towards the most effective ways to prevent and to fight threats. As through identity security culture shapes security policy and international behaviour of a state, it also has an impact on national foreign policy. Moreover, security culture, security cultures of the small states in particular, cannot be analysed without taking into consideration other players of international politics. Membership in alliances, international organizations, and partnership with other states in the field of security has an important effect on the development of the national security culture.

<sup>5</sup> Keegan, J., *A History of Warfare*. New York: Vintage, 1994.

<sup>6</sup> Finnemore, M., *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs About the Use of Force*. Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Kier, E., *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between Wars*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.; Gray, C., *War, Peace and Victory: Strategy and Statecraft for the next Century*. Touchstone Books, 1991.

<sup>8</sup> Cornish, P., Edwards, G., Beyond the EU/NATO Dichotomy: the Beginnings of European Strategic Culture. *International Affairs*, 77(3). London, Royal Institute of International Affairs: Blackwell, 2001; Rynning, S., The European Union: Towards a Strategic Culture? *Security Dialogue* 6 (4). Oslo: International Peace Research Institute: SAGE Publications, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Johnston, A. I., Thinking About Strategic Culture, *International Security*, Vol 19, No. 4, Spring 1995, p. 46.

## 2. Fundamental Premises on the Nature of the International System

Security culture involves a set of rather fundamental symbols and values related to the general understanding of the character of the international system (which has been shaped, re-shaped and preserved throughout history), the nature of states and their role in international relations. Alexander Wendt puts forward three dominant visions of world order and international relations grounded on different value systems and calls them “cultures of international relations”.<sup>10</sup> Although the Hobbesian culture was dominating the agenda of international relations throughout modern history, emergence of international institutions and other players of international relations reinforced the Kantian culture. It is worth arguing that mixture of values could be observed in the security policies of contemporary states, nevertheless domination of Kant vs. Hobbes and vice versa under certain circumstances may reveal particularities of security cultures in various states and help to explain their international behaviour patterns.

How Lithuania sees and estimates international system is very much interlinked with its historical experience. This experience is twofold: one part bears successful international experience of an independent statehood (its climax dating back to the 15th century, when the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania spread from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea) which was based on European values; while the other one is characterized by several periods of occupation and disillusionment in the peaceful and just international relations, suspiciousness towards European states and European politics. The last occupation of Lithuania alienated Lithuanian understanding on how international system is constructed and what values are guiding it from many Western European states.

By the end of the Second World War, Western European states understood that wars and power politics were evil, which should be eliminated as a rightful mode of international relations. Ever since the security cultures of those countries have developed in the spirit of cooperation, good will and the principle of respect towards each other's fundamental rights. Growing economies and security shield of NATO advanced further development of European security culture, which

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<sup>10</sup> Alexander Wendt argues that three dominant visions of international relations are grounded on three philosophical traditions: Hobbesian, Locke'an, and Kantian.

Wendt A., *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1999. p.313.

eventually started to resemble the famous „Perpetual Peace“ of Immanuel Kant, making European countries declare that „peace is the natural component of state policy“.<sup>11</sup> However at the end of the Second World War those left on the other side of the Iron Curtain learned a different lesson: the politics of reconciliation, pacification, and inability to have a strong say leads to disastrous consequences for the national survival and therefore should be avoided. For them international relations remained to be “ruled” by the Hobbesian logic and this understanding affected their security cultures for a long time.

Although during the Soviet occupation period Lithuania did not have its independent foreign or security policy, it might be assumed that it did not have its independent security culture either, since the latter was suppressed by the USSR. To understand current security culture of Lithuania at least two sets of factors should be taken into consideration. First of all, Soviet communism, although resented by Lithuanians, throughout the period of occupation managed to change a set of values and perceptions within Lithuanian society (attitudes towards human rights, the role of the state, fundamental freedoms etc.). On the other hand, narratives on glorious past of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, “historical injustice” and heroic post-war resistance were reinforcing antagonism towards the Soviet Union (Russia) creating positive alliance with those who opposed it.

These factors became vital for the formation of not only Lithuanian security culture; they also affected Lithuanian identity in general after Lithuania had regained its independence in 1990. For several years after declaring its independence, Lithuania was still considered by many European countries as „the grey zone“ of Europe. Lithuania was afraid to be left once again on the “wrong side of the curtain”. In 1991 Lithuanian political elite was considering several options of security policy: neutrality, security alliance of small states, and membership in military alliance.<sup>12</sup> However, considering the historical experience of Lithuania itself and having strong suspicion towards Russia, the last two options did not find sufficient support either within the political elite, or within the society of Lithuania. Therefore after Russian troops had left Lithuania in 1993, the President of the Republic of Lithuania Algirdas Brazauskas wrote a letter for the Secretary

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<sup>11</sup> *The European Security Strategy 2003 – 2008: Building on Common Interests*, Vasconcelos A., ed. EU ISS, Paris, February, No. 5, 2009. p.17 .

<sup>12</sup> Miniotaitė G., Lithuania's Evolving Security and Defence Policy: Problems and Prospects, *Lithuanian Annual Strategy Review 2006*, Lithuanian Military Academy, Vilnius, 2007. p.179.

General of NATO expressing Lithuania's intent to join the organization. It is worth mentioning that, although in the official discourse of Lithuania the strife for membership in NATO was defined as the aim to "come back to Europe", "gain a rightful place in the international community" etc., in reality it meant gaining security guarantees from the USA.

Throughout the Soviet regime, the USA never recognized the legitimacy of Soviet occupation of Lithuania and was the only state in the world not hesitating to officially bring up the issue of the occupation of the Baltic States. After Lithuania had regained its independence, not only was the USA a strong advocate of Lithuania's efforts to join NATO, but also had a rather harsh rhetoric against Russia's attempts, speaking in geopolitical terms, to push Lithuania back to the „grey zone of Europe“. Therefore, while Russia has become part of Lithuanian national identity as „they“, the major threat for the national survival, - the USA has definitely gained the status of „we“, the best ally and protector. The famous statement by George W. Bush made during his visit to Vilnius in 2002 for the citizens of Lithuania at the City Hall square that "anyone who would choose Lithuania as an enemy would also become the enemy of the USA" embodied exactly what Lithuanians had sought for years. The phrase was engraved in the table hung at the entrance to the City Hall of Vilnius. These factors gain a special importance when one is taking into consideration the fact that Lithuania tends to see the world politics as rather bellicose, driven by the "zero sum game" logic. On many occasions this logic has prompted a particular suspicion of closer cooperation between Russia and NATO or Russia and the EU.

Different argumentation was supporting Lithuania's membership in the EU. By joining the EU Lithuania sought to „come back to the European family“, "ensure economic welfare", "gain from the EU financial aid" and "strengthen democracy in Lithuania". Before Lithuania became a member of the EU, the Union had never been considered as a security organisation. Moreover, EU ambitions to create a common security and defence policy were received as a potential challenge for Lithuanian security threatening to undermine NATO. Those fears were reinforced by the support for the ESDP from Moscow as they were related to *Primakov's* doctrine aimed at balancing US hegemony by creating an alternative security system in Europe.<sup>13</sup>

Membership in the EU forced Lithuania to face strengthening of the ESDP and, now being part of the EU, to formulate its position on the issues related to

<sup>13</sup> Rontoyanni C., So Far, so Good? Russia and ESDP, *International Affairs* 78(4), 2002, p. 813 – 830.

the European security. Kantian values - democracy, respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms, and rule of law,<sup>14</sup> became inherent in the Lithuanian institutional framework. However, as cultural elements tend to be very change-resistant, certain discrepancies between the official security discourse and the real attitudes of the society and international behaviour of the state started to emerge.

First of all, the heritage of Soviet ideology, which definitely was in contradiction to the Kantian value system, has ingrained a certain impact on the Lithuanian value system in general. For example, a very significant feature of Lithuania, as well as of the other post-Soviet states is a rather indolent participation of the society in the affairs related to the security and foreign policy of the state.<sup>15</sup> By taking the security option of the country's membership in NATO, Lithuania has chosen the direction of the foreign and security policy corresponding to the expectations of the society<sup>16</sup>. The society has thereafter transferred the responsibility for the national security to the state. Unlike many other European states, the Lithuanian society does not see much of its own role in deciding national security issues, and considers the state to be the main guarantor of national security.<sup>17</sup> There is an observable separation between internal and external security issues, and although the society has moderate knowledge and opinion about the former, the latter is considered as the exclusive domain of 'high politics' rather than an "issue for society".

News on international politics and international security are only very briefly mentioned in the national media. Those that eventually do appear in national newspapers or internet portals are merely translations from international news agencies. There are no public discussions in Lithuania on key international security issues. Security decisions of the state are simply accepted as a constant. The reaction of the society towards one or another security issue thereby largely

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<sup>14</sup> Article 6, *Treaty on European Union*, Maastricht, 1992, <http://europa.eu.int/en/record/mt/top.html>

<sup>15</sup> It was demonstrated by the public opinion and security elite opinion survey on security related issues. *Lietuvos gyventojų, nevyriausybinų organizacijų ir politinių partijų požiūrio į saugumą ir gynybą analizė*, [Analysis of the Attitudes of Lithuanian Society, Non-governmental Organizations and Political Parties towards Security and Defence]. Generolo Jono Žemaičio Lietuvos karo akademijos Strateginių tyrimų centras ir Strateginių studijų centras, Vilnius, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Miniotaitė, (note 12) p.178.

<sup>17</sup> Janušauskienė, D., Novagrockienė, J., *Lietuvos gyventojų požiūrio į saugumą analizė*, [Analysis of the Attitudes of Lithuanian Society towards Security], *Lietuvos metinė strateginė apžvalga 2002*, Lietuvos Karo akademija, Vilnius, 2003. p.289-290.

depends on public relations campaigns.<sup>18</sup> This in part could explain relatively high interest of the society in everything related to Russia. This fact also became obvious during Lithuania's application for NATO and the EU process: professional and purposive public relations campaigns increased the number of those in favour of both organizations within a very short time. The expertise on security issues is also lacking within the political parties of Lithuania.<sup>19</sup> Therefore the security agenda of Lithuania is mostly affected by a small security community, consisting of political leaders, diplomats, certain bureaucrats, experts and the most influential academics and journalists. Yet even within this close security community circle there is an observable lack of self-reflection on international affairs, international security issues, as well as on the reasons why Lithuania makes one or another security policy decision. For a long time the main debates over security issues in Lithuania have stemmed directly from geopolitical considerations, which could also be attributed to the Soviet legacy and rationalization of international politics inside contemporary Russia.

The lack of self-reflection on foreign policy decisions could be demonstrated by Lithuania's determination to go to Afghanistan. Although Lithuania has contributed its troops to the military operations in Iraq and has led a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan since 2005, there has never been a major public or expert level discussion evaluating the status quo or lessons learned either before or after Lithuania's involvement in those countries. Although it could be argued that the lack of interest in international affairs or external security issues is characteristic of small states, which lack a global perception of the world, it is also related to the Soviet cultural heritage.

Secondly, though Kantian values are considered to be the guiding principles of the Lithuanian security policy (they are reflected in all the national security documents), Lithuania's external behaviour often reflects the features of the Hobbesian culture. One of the examples is the war in Iraq. Without questioning the legitimacy of the operation Lithuania supported it, later even contributing its armed forces, and was not sensitive to the use of military force without the UN mandate. First of all, the fact that Russia is a member in the UN Security Council and has a veto power, which it has used not once throughout the history of dealing with general

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<sup>18</sup> Urbelis, V., Lithuanian Strategic Culture. *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review 2006*, Lithuanian Military Academy, Vilnius, 2007. p.198.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

mistrust towards Russia in Lithuania, undermines the image of the UN as the most effective security organization in the eyes of Lithuanians. Secondly, historical experience of totalitarian rule influenced Lithuanian interpretation of the war in Iraq, which viewed it as liberation from oppression rather than aggression. The struggle between the Kantian and Hobbesian attitudes towards the international system, lack of self-reflection and interest of the society in international affairs makes Lithuanian foreign and security policy rather situational and inconsistent, where interpretation of certain principles of international relations is made and decisions pertaining to foreign policy and security are taken *ad hoc*, and are often based on “enemy” - “friend” conceptions.

### 3. Nature of Threats

The Hobbesian culture is naturally associated with the modern threats, which in most cases result from the struggle for power between the states, while the Kantian culture recognizes the importance of the post-modern threats and tends to explain the causes of modern threats as a result of bad education and wrong environment. Gražina Miniotaitė argues that the concept of security in Lithuania is very close to the one defined by Barry Buzan<sup>20</sup> and combines both realism and constructivism. Lithuanian official security discourse includes modern and post-modern, internal and external threats. The majority of the threats indicated in the official security documents of Lithuania reflect NATO’s strategic concept and are similar to the threats mentioned in the security documents of other European states. The Lithuanian National Security strategy, the Lithuanian Military Strategy, and the Lithuanian Defence Policy White Paper state that, in the contemporary security environment, there is an observable decrease of inter-state conflicts and increase of non-traditional threats (terrorism, WMD).<sup>21</sup> The National Security

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<sup>20</sup> Miniotaitė, (note 12) p.178.; Miniotaitė, G., The Baltic States: in Search of Security Identity in Krupnick Ch., ed. *Almost NATO: Partners and Players in Central and Eastern European Security*, Lanham Md, Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, p. 343.; Buzan, B., Waever, O., *Regions and Powers: the Structure of International Security*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, .2003. p.343.

<sup>21</sup> (note 1), *Lietuvos Respublikos karinė strategija*, [Military Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania] Valstybės žinios, 2005, Nr. 15-473;

*Lietuvos gynybos politikos Baltoji knyga* [White Book on Lithuanian Defence Policy], Krašto apsaugos ministerija, Vilnius, 2006.

strategy indicates that most of the risks and threats for Lithuanian security are of trans-national nature,<sup>22</sup> and points out that non-democratically ruled armed forces, failing states and “frozen” regional conflicts also pose a serious risk for Lithuania.<sup>23</sup> Despite the Kantian spirit of the main Lithuanian security documents, even there one could observe a display of concepts, such as national interest, balance of powers, domination and great powers<sup>24</sup>, which are more related to the traditional concept of security and the Hobbesian culture. The Lithuanian Defence Policy concludes that, in the long run, force demonstration and military conflicts remain a potential threat.<sup>25</sup> Noteworthy is the fact that the official security discourse in Lithuania is more Kantian than unofficial attitudes of the security elite or the society. The Lithuanian security elite tend to disagree with the broad concept of security prevailing in many European countries, deeming it unrealistic, and prefer the traditional concept of security. Meanwhile preference of the traditional security concept substantially influences certain security policy decisions in Lithuania.

A public and elite opinion survey on security issues<sup>26</sup> reveals an observable mismatch between threat perception as reflected in the official security documents and ingrained in the society. The tendency for the society to be generally more interested in internal security issues is widespread across Europe,<sup>27</sup> and Lithuania does not differ much in this respect. One third of the respondents mention low wages and pensions as one of the most potential risks for their security, 18% indicate emigration as a threat. Other threats mentioned by the respondents are corruption and delinquency. Nonetheless, the survey revealed a quite striking fact about the general awareness of the society on external security: only 2.7% of respondents have stated that insufficient ability of Lithuania to protect itself from external threats is important for them.

Respondents among the political elite tend to prioritize external threats over internal. Most of the respondents are worried about the energy policy of Russia and perceive it as a threat (75%); they also mention illegal human trafficking (63%)

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<sup>22</sup> (note 1), p.7.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Urbelis, (note 18) p.199.

<sup>25</sup> *Lietuvos gynybos politikos Baltoji knyga knyga* [White Book on Lithuanian Defence Policy], p.8., (note 1), p.7.

<sup>26</sup> (note 15).

<sup>27</sup> Eurobaromètre Standard 72, (2010) *L'opinion publique dans l'union européenne*, Automne 2009-TNS opinion & social, [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb72/eb72\\_vol1\\_fr.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb72/eb72_vol1_fr.pdf)



and international terrorism (43%). Immigration to Lithuania is also indicated as a possible threat. Belarus is considered as a potentially problematic state, too, but it is not particularly emphasized as a threat either in national security documents, or in the attitudes of the elite or society. It is worth mentioning that views of the society and the elite coincide in naming Russia as the most threatening state (49% of the society).<sup>28</sup>

A unanimous distrust of Russia might be explained through an analysis of Lithuanian national identity, where Russia is equal to the concepts of “they” and the “enemy”. It is also worth mentioning that after Lithuania regained independence Russia has been securitized by constant public relations campaigns. Lithuanian political elite felt the need to educate the society on the possible dangers coming from the neighbour that had caused very traumatic historical experience, anti-Russian rhetoric was also used in order to mobilise public support for Lithuania’s integration into NATO and the EU. On the one hand, because of the historical experience, the Lithuanian society was very perceptive of securitization of Russia. On the other hand, Russia was and is continuously stimulating antagonism by its statements and actions towards the Baltic States. For example, Russia’s New Security Strategy, written in response to the war with Georgia and adopted in May 2009, makes claims for a stronger integration of the post-Soviet area.<sup>29</sup> Organized very recently, joint Russian – Belarusian military exercise “West 2009” has been aimed at responding to the conventional attack of the “westerners” breaking into Kaliningrad Region. Imperialistic rhetoric supported by economical instruments, for example, growing Russian investment into strategic sectors of Central and Eastern European states (recently Russian capital has penetrated Lithuanian media sector) and rather unpredictable and aggressive international behaviour (cyber-attacks on Estonia, war in Georgia) keeps Lithuanian elite on alert and reinforces securitization.

Lithuanian is well-known in Europe for its harsh rhetoric towards Russia and its opposition to Russia’s rapprochement with Euro – Atlantic institutions. A certain change in Lithuanian stance towards Russia, however, could be observed quite

<sup>28</sup> There is an observable tendency that general antagonism of Lithuanian population towards Russia has dropped during last year, however it might be related to the changed rhetoric of the official Lithuanian foreign policy and therefore it might be only a short term phenomenon. Rusofobija įgriso [Tired of Rusophobia] // DELFI, 20100513, <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/rusofobija-igriso.d?id=32214465>

<sup>29</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation up to 2020*. 2009, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html>

recently. Already during her election campaign, Lithuania's new President Dalia Grybauskaitė emphasized that her foreign policy decisions will be pragmatic and constructive, especially towards Russia, and repeated it on numerous occasions when holding the position as President.<sup>30</sup> Reacting to the constraints for Lithuanian transporters on the Russian border in August 2009, President Grybauskaitė telephoned Russia's President Dmitrij Medvedev to discuss this issue also to address the problems of the export of Lithuanian dairy products as well as wider issues of economic and cultural cooperation. Over the last eight years that was the first official conversation between the leaders of Lithuania and Russia. The change in the position of Lithuania towards Russia is also supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Though it might be claimed as a "New era" of the relations between Russia and Lithuania, based on mutual respect and constructivism, in essence the change of the official rhetoric towards Russia does not necessarily change threat perception. Moreover, there is no evidence that the new ideas of the President are supported by the security community, or even the society. The President's decision to invite Medvedev and Lukashenko to the celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Lithuanian Independence was criticized by both local journalists and academics.<sup>31</sup> Even *The Economist* has criticized this decision as amateurish.<sup>32</sup> Some analysts even doubt if the declared pragmatism of the President does not in fact mean merely a cover for the actual personnel change in the key positions.<sup>33</sup> It should also be added that on the eve of the adoption of a new strategic concept of NATO, Lithuanian

<sup>30</sup> Inauguration Speech of the President of Lithuania D. Grybauskaitė, [http://www.president.lt/lt/pr-ezidento\\_veikla/kalbos/lietuvos\\_respublikos\\_prezidentes\\_dalios\\_grybauskaites\\_inauguracijos\\_kalba\\_pasakyta\\_iskilmingame\\_seimo\\_posedyje.html](http://www.president.lt/lt/pr-ezidento_veikla/kalbos/lietuvos_respublikos_prezidentes_dalios_grybauskaites_inauguracijos_kalba_pasakyta_iskilmingame_seimo_posedyje.html)

D. Grybauskaitė: Lietuva ir Rusija turi žiūrėti pirmyn, ne tiktai žvalgytis atgal [Lithuania and Russia has to look forward not only backwards// DELFI, 20090826 <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/dgrybauskaite-lietuva-ir-rusija-turi-ziureti-pirmyn-ne-tik-zvalgytis-atgal.d?id=23754964>.

<sup>31</sup> Pasytyčiojimas iš Sausio 13-osios ir Kovo 11-osios: D. Grybauskaitė kviečia D. Medvedevą atvykti į Lietuvą minėti Nepriklausomybės dvidešimtmečio [Mockery at the Memory of 13 th of January and 11 th of March: D. Grybauskaitė invites D. Medvedev to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Lithuanian independence] // Lietuvos rytas, 20100113 <http://www.lrytas.lt/-12633746841261958804-pasitytyciojimas-iskilmingame-seimo-posedyje.html>

<sup>32</sup> Back on the Map: how an invisible country rocked the world // The Economist, 20100316, [http://www.economist.com/node/15712913?story\\_id=15712913](http://www.economist.com/node/15712913?story_id=15712913)

<sup>33</sup> Česlovas Iškauskas Blog. <http://www.iskauskas.lt/2010/05/11/lietuvos-uzsienio-politika-%E2%80%93-tarp-agresijos-ir-nuolankumo>

officials, including the President, still firmly emphasized the importance of Article 5; moreover, Lithuania became even more persistent in making demands for contingency plans for the Baltic States. Reacting to cyber-attacks on Estonia and the Georgian-Russian war, Lithuania's Defence Ministry is also reviewing its strategic concept. In June 2009, new guidelines of Defence Ministry were approved. They envisaged a creation of a new high readiness battalion-size unit fit to react to the violations of Lithuanian sovereignty.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, it might be concluded that, in Lithuanian security culture, Russia remains perceived as a threat, both in modern and post-modern terms, expanding throughout the entire spectrum of security issues.

#### 4. A Strategy and Instruments to Fight Threats

Acknowledging that the majority of threats to national security are of the post-modern nature, at the official level Lithuania also chooses a post-modern complex strategy to fight those threats. This strategy involves two elements: the element of collective security<sup>35</sup> and the concept of the comprehensive security.<sup>36</sup> Lithuanian official documents claim that Lithuania is not only the consumer, but also contributor to the collective security.<sup>37</sup> This approach has induced Lithuania's participation in international military operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. It is worth mentioning, however, that in Lithuanian official discourse the comprehensive security strategy was rather of the declarative nature, whereas in practice Lithuania tends to prefer the military instrument to other instruments in fighting security threats. By all means this choice was influenced by the prevailing Hobbesian elements within the Lithuanian security culture. Moreover, it is supported by the lack of civilian instruments and capabilities in Lithuania. Finally, a comprehensive security strategy is impossible without well-coordinated

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<sup>34</sup> Lietuvos kariuomenėje – naujas aukštos parengties bataliono dydžio kovinis vienetas [New high readiness battalion size combat unit in the armed forces of Lithuania], *BNS*, 2009 06 14: 14 23.

<sup>35</sup> Government Performance Report. *Prime Minister's statement*, 2005, [http://www.lrvk.lt/main\\_en.php?cat=2&d=4001](http://www.lrvk.lt/main_en.php?cat=2&d=4001;); ), (note 1)., *Kodėl dalyvaujame tarptautinėse operacijose?* [Why do we participate in the international operations?] <http://www.kam.lt/index.php/lt/144608/>

<sup>36</sup> *Lietuvos gynybos politika*. [Lithuanian defence policy] <http://www.kam.lt/index.php/lt/122183/>

<sup>37</sup> Government Performance Report; (note 1).

foreign and security policies, oriented towards the same goals, whereas in Lithuania the two policies are generally viewed as separate. The failure of the comprehensive security strategy could be very visibly observed in Afghanistan. Lithuania has its own Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in the province of Ghowr. Although the very essence of PTR is reconstruction, in Lithuania this commitment is viewed rather as a military operation. There is a major lack of civilian projects and financing (in 2005, the civilian component of the mission was awarded 1 million LTL (approximately 290 000 EUR), in 2006 – 5 million LTL (~1 450 000 EUR), whereas e.g., to the civilian projects in Afghanistan the Netherlands contributes ~ 50 000 000 EUR yearly).<sup>38</sup> It is also likely that the deteriorating economic situation, despite the reassurances by Lithuanian officials of their commitments, might cause reductions in the international involvement. It is also worth mentioning that public awareness and support for participation of Lithuanian troops in international missions are lacking; thus only 28 % of respondents supported them in 2007<sup>39</sup>.

Although a comprehensive security strategy is hardly found in the security policy of Lithuania, the concept of the “promotion of democracy” plays a significant role in the Lithuania’s foreign policy. Noteworthy is the fact that the philosophy of the “promotion of peace” in Lithuania has a strong linkage to the strategy of “regional leaders”<sup>40</sup> proposed by the USA at the end of Cold War and aimed at strengthening the relations with the countries that had a similar attitude towards the strategic environment and the use of the military instrument. According to this strategy, those countries had a “special security mission” in the region. After joining the EU and NATO, Lithuania has set ahead new priorities of foreign policy<sup>41</sup>, the main

<sup>38</sup> Matonis, A., *Būti ar nebūti Afganistane* [To be or not to be in Afghanistan], Atgimimas, 2005 m. spalio 30 d.

<sup>39</sup> (note 15).

<sup>40</sup> Zaborowski, M., Longhurst, K. (2003). America’s protégé in the east? The emergence of Poland as a regional leader, *International Affairs*, 79 (5), p. 1009.

<sup>41</sup> Naujoji Lietuvos užsienio politika [New foreign policy of Lithuania], *Laikinojo prezidento A. Paulausko kalba Vilniaus universitete 2004 m. gegužės 24 d.*, 2004. [http://www.urm.lt/data/2/LF51152557\\_Paulauskokalba.htm](http://www.urm.lt/data/2/LF51152557_Paulauskokalba.htm)

*LR Seimo rezoliucija dėl Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio politikos kryptių Lietuvai tapus visateise NATO ir Europos Sąjungos nare* [Resolution of the Parliament of Lithuanian towards the directions of Lithuanian foreign policy after the full fledged membership in NATO and the EU], 2004. [http://www.urm.lt/popup2.php?item\\_id=156](http://www.urm.lt/popup2.php?item_id=156); Dėl pagrindinių valstybės užsienio politikos tikslų ir uždavinių 2004 – 2008 m. [On the key foreign policy goals and tasks of the state] *Lietuvos politinių partijų susitarimas*, [http://www.urm.lt/popup2.php?item\\_id=158](http://www.urm.lt/popup2.php?item_id=158)

idea of them being that the “opening window of opportunities” enables Lithuania to turn its disadvantages of being a “geopolitical crossroad” into the advantages of becoming a “bridge between the East and the West”, with the particular attention devoted to the neighbourhood policy. On the one hand, this policy has a lot in common with the Neighbourhood policy of the EU; however, Lithuania has a slightly different vision how it should be implemented. This vision has its roots in the historical heritage and the Hobbesian philosophy which, as it is believed in Lithuania, is especially applicable to the post-Soviet area. The strategy of “regional leaders” has received harsh criticism from the academia on many occasions<sup>42</sup> and has been addressed by President Grybauskaitė as not bringing expected revenues for the state<sup>43</sup>. The lack of a comprehensive security strategy was determining in the situation where foreign policy was limited to ad hoc initiatives and declarative statements, whereas security policy was of rather instrumental nature – fulfilling international commitments.

## **5. Main Partners (in the field of security) in the International Affairs**

Opportunities of small states to shape and implement independent security policies are limited. To a great extent, their security choices depend on their security partners, be it big states or international organizations. On the other hand, differences in threat perception or contradictions about how to react to threats may cause serious difficulties for cooperation with partners.

Upon becoming a member of the EU and NATO, Lithuania sees those organizations as the main partners in the field of security. In addition, addressing threats to national security, the White Book of Lithuanian Defence Policy lists other main partners: Northern Europe, the Baltic States, the United Nations, the OSCE, the Council of Euro-Atlantic Partnership, the USA, Poland, Denmark and Ukraine.<sup>44</sup> However, a more thorough analysis of the main security documents of

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<sup>42</sup> Nekrašas E., *Kritiniai pamastymai apie Lietuvos užsienio politiką* [Critical reflections on Lithuanian foreign policy] // *Politologija*, Vol. 2, 2009, Vilniaus universitetas.

<sup>43</sup> D. Grybauskaitė: šiandien Lietuvos lyderystė įsikalbėta [D. Grybauskaitė: Lithuanian leadership is se; f-suggested] // DELFI, 20090511, <http://www.delfi.lt/news/balsuok2009/president/article.php?id=22076134>.

<sup>44</sup> *Lietuvos gynybos politikos Baltoji knyga*, p.22 – 25.

Lithuania would reveal that NATO is accorded special priority in the Lithuanian official security concept. One also has to take into consideration that Lithuania belongs to the group of „new Atlanticists“<sup>45</sup> or the „new Europe“<sup>46</sup>, and is a very enthusiastic advocate of NATO and, primarily, of the special role of the USA in European security. Importance of the USA in Lithuanian security policy was already touched upon in the previous section where it was related to the Lithuanian history and strategic calculations. Moreover, cooperation with the USA and NATO has also provided Lithuania with the opportunities to obtain invaluable experience in international operations and to acquire a greater international influence. Noteworthy is the fact that, although in the official discourse NATO is often named as the main security partner of Lithuania, it is largely perceived as such because of the US participation in this alliance. The White Book of Lithuanian Defence Policy states that the preservation of the attention of the USA to the Baltic region, practical cooperation in the field of defence, and direct military presence of the USA in Europe is one of the main priorities of Lithuanian defence policy.<sup>47</sup> Support of the USA is also estimated as a very significant factor for the implementation of Lithuanian foreign policy. Close cooperation with the USA in the field of security has influenced Lithuanian foreign and security policy decisions on many occasions (position on the war in Iraq, Lithuanian presence in Afghanistan, position on the Russian–Georgian war). The official documents reveal the position of the security elite.

However, discrepancies do exist between the positions of the security elite and the society regarding the importance they attach to the EU and NATO in ensuring national security. Although the main reasons why Lithuanians sought to join the EU were of economic nature, the EU is increasingly perceived by the society as a security organization, too. Moreover, as the society is generally more aware and preoccupied with internal security issues linking the EU to the internal security solutions, it naturally attaches more importance to the EU in providing security. The attitudes of the elite towards the EU as a security organization are twofold. In a similar fashion, Lithuanian elite understand the importance of the EU in addressing many internal as well as external threats to national security

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<sup>45</sup> Strategic and Operational Implications of NATO Enlargement in the Baltic Region., *Institute for Foreign Policy (IFP) Analysis*, 2001. <http://www.ifpa.org/pdf/whitepaper.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Rumsfeld, D. in Toje, A. The 2003 European Union Security Strategy: A Critical Approach, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 10, 2005, p.119.

<sup>47</sup> (note 44) p.23.

(e.g., smuggling (drugs or weapons through the territory of Lithuania), spread of dangerous diseases, human trafficking, illegal migrations, breach of the fundamental human rights in the neighbouring countries). On the other hand, the elite tend to prioritise external security threats to internal ones, linking them to strategic issues and threats which eventually might require military response. For a long time after the initiation of the ESDP, Lithuania's security elite feared that the ESDP might undermine the importance of NATO and even cause the withdrawal of the USA from Europe; besides, Lithuania had concerns that Russia would play a strong role in the organization. Finally, Lithuania's scepticism towards the ESDP was encouraged by the traditional distrust of European states, their military impotence and prevailing pacifist sentiments in Europe.

Since 2004 (after Lithuania had joined the EU) the ESDP has been viewed in a more positive perspective<sup>48</sup> and is recognized as one of the key elements of Lithuanian security policy (though the involvement of Lithuania in the ESDP operations is rather symbolic). Lithuania supports the EU and its security instrument ESDP as long as it does not challenge or duplicate NATO and as long as it focuses primarily on the civilian aspects of security. Lithuanian security elite share the conviction that, unless the EU has a strong and coherent CFSP, the ESDP will not be efficient. The lack of EU's strong and consistent position was very obviously demonstrated during and after the Georgian–Russian war.

Although there is an obvious lack of discussions on European security in general, Lithuanian society and elite are increasingly aware of the growing significance of energy security and link it first of all to the European Union. Russia is considered as a threat for energy security in Lithuania as well as in other European states, and the EU is seen as the organisation that might respond to this threat. The inability of the EU members to agree on the strategic issues, especially in the field of foreign policy, is often perceived as the main challenge and the threat for the EU security.

It is worth noticing that, despite differences in opinions concerning the importance of the EU for national security, there is a general agreement among the society and elite on what the EU or NATO has to do. The EU is viewed as an organization addressing more internal, rather external, threats of national security (though they might have external background or consequences) - smuggling (drugs

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<sup>48</sup> Nekrašas, E., *Lithuanian Foreign Policy: Concepts, Achievements and Predicaments. Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review 2004*, Vilnius, 2005. p. 28 – 37.

or weapons through the territory of Lithuania), spread of dangerous diseases, human trafficking, illegal migrations, breach of the main human rights in neighbouring countries. NATO is associated with military tasks, military operations, collective security, defence against aggression of other states, fighting terrorism. Lithuanians tend to rely on NATO in circumstances where military involvement is necessary, meanwhile neither the society, nor the elite sees any role for the EU in military operations.

### **Conclusions**

Lithuanian security culture contains elements of two very different, even contradictory, philosophies on the nature of international relations: Hobbesian and Kantian. These elements interchangeably prevail in different situations. While in majority cases, when interacting with the EU members, Lithuania tends to rely on the Kantian element of its security culture, when dealing with Russia and other countries of the post-Soviet space the Hobbesian element prevails. The twofold security culture of Lithuania might serve as an explanation of the sometimes irrational international behaviour of the state. On the other hand, it should be noted that Lithuanian security culture is still undergoing transformation. For many years the international behaviour of independent Lithuania has been guided by Hobbesian philosophy and periods of occupation have strengthened the understanding that the real world resembles more the one defined by Hobbes rather than the "Perpetual Peace". Kant's world vision is rather new for Lithuania, but being part of the EU norms and institutions, it is gradually changing Lithuania's security culture.