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THE BALTIC STATES' FOREIGN POLICY GOALS AND STRATEGIES REGARDING RUSSIA IN 1990s

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Unlike many other publications on the topic of the relations between the Baltic states and Russia, where authors focus mostly on Russian interests and goals in the region, this article presents the analysis from the perspective of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian interests and goals. The author reveals the main aims that defined policies of the Baltic states towards Russia in 1990s, demonstrates the dynamics of the issues, which constituted the agenda of Baltic-Russian relations in the appropriate period, analyses the strategies used by the Baltic states to implement their goals and interests regarding Russia and assesses their efficiency.

Key words: foreign policy; Baltic states; Latvia; Lithuania; Estonia; Russia.

ЦЕЛИ И СТРАТЕГИИ ВНЕШНЕЙ ПОЛИТИКИ ГОСУДАРСТВ БАЛТИИ В ОТНОШЕНИИ РОССИИ В 1990-е гг.

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В отличие от многочисленных публикаций по теме отношений между государствами Балтии и Россией, авторы которых уделяют основное внимание российским интересам и целям в регионе, в настоящей статье в первую очередь рассматриваются интересы и цели Литвы, Латвии и Эстонии. Автор раскрывает основные принципы и цели внешней политики государств Балтии, которые определяли их политику в отношении России в 1990-е гг., показывает динамику вопросов, составлявших основу балтийско-российских отношений в указанный период, анализирует стратегии государств Балтии по реализации интересов и целей в отношении России и оценивает их эффективность.

Ключевые слова: внешняя политика; государства Балтии; Латвия; Литва; Эстония; Россия.

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Introduction

The theme of relations between the Baltic states and Russia and their implications for European and regional security has been very popular over the last two decades among international relations and foreign policy experts. But a vast majority of publications on this theme focus mostly on Russian, not Baltic, interests and strategies. They often create a simplified and misleading perception, that it was Russia only, who imposed the agenda of Baltic-Russian relations, while the Baltic states simply reacted to it and their policies in this direction were purely defensive. Such an approach consciously or unconsciously presents the Baltic states not as sovereign actors, but as passive objects of international politics. And this is definitely far from reality, as there have been numerous examples, when it was they, who initiated the raising of certain issues with Russia. The Baltic states have their clear goals regarding Russia, stemming from the overall goals and principles of their foreign policy, and have elaborated their strategies and tactics in achieving these goals.

Therefore in this article aims to consider the issue from completely different perspective: to reveal how Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia themselves perceived and shaped their relations with Russia and how their politics towards Russia were transformed over the first decade of their restored sovereignty? This is the main aim of this article. To achieve it the following three issues will be analyzed:

- the problems dominated in the agenda of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian relations with Russia in the 1990s;
- the goals the Baltic political elites pursued towards Russia and how these goals were changing during that period of time;
- the means and strategies the Baltic states applied to achieve these goals and how successful they were.

So the object of this research is the foreign policy of three Baltic states – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The subject is the role of Russia in the foreign policy of these countries and their development in the first decade of their restored independence.

As for the chronology of the article, it can be defined simply as “Yeltsin’s Era” in Russia, starting from the elections to the Supreme Councils of then still Soviet republics in March 1990, that paved the way for both the Baltic states declarations of independence restoration and for a quick rise of Boris Yeltsin to the political leadership in Russia, and ending with his resignation from the office of the President of the Russian Federation in late 1999. These events were chosen instead of linking the chronology to any political changes in the Baltic states because the first change of leadership in post-Soviet Russia had by far much greater impact on the development of Baltic-Russian (as well as Western-Russian) relations. To prove this let’s just mention, that the principal decisions on admitting the

Baltic states into the EU and NATO were made not before the new Russian President Vladimir Putin took the office and defined the foreign policy priorities of his first presidency.

The literature on the relations between the Baltic states and Russia is very vast and numerous. Yet not so many publications on the topic give clear visions of the Baltic states foreign policy towards Russia in the 1990s. This is particularly true for the Western authors, who are concentrated on explaining the reasons for Baltic “fears” of Russia and Russian “misperceptions” of the NATO enlargement process, but pay little attention (if any) to the formation and development of the Baltic states foreign policies regarding Russia. It could be said, they pay attention to the foreign policies that affect the Baltic states, but not to the foreign policies of the Baltic states themselves. A good example of such research is the paper of the former US ambassador to Estonia and Lithuania K. C. Smith [1].

Much more informative are the studies of Baltic (mostly Lithuanian) researchers of this issue, such as R. Lopata [2], D. Mereckis and R. Morkvėnas [3], G. Vitkus [4], L. Zile [5]. They give a more detailed picture of the Baltic foreign policy formation process. Especially interesting in this respect is the article of G. Vitkus, published in “Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review”, where he reveals and explains the evolution of Lithuanian foreign policy and its strategies towards Russia during the first 15 years of Lithuanian-Russian relations.

As for Russian publications to the research question, most of them can be characterized by a high level of emotional sentiments and endeavor to present the whole situation solely through the prism of Russian great-power interests, thus presenting Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian foreign policies as completely and unreasonably “anti-Russian” and “provocative” [6–11]. Among a few more moderate authors, who try to explain motivations and driving forces that stood behind the foreign policy decisions of both, the Baltic states and Russia, should be mentioned prominent Russian academic researcher of post-Soviet developments in three Baltic states R. Simonyan [12–16], and director of the Carnegie Moscow Center D. Trenin [17]. Yet disregarding of whether one considers assessments and arguments of Russian authors unbiased and reliable enough, Russian bibliographical sources has one particular advantage that makes them very useful for historical research – due to the overall predominance of old-school positivist approach in the analysis of Russian foreign policy, the authors ground their conclusions not on thorough methodology or abstract theories, but on the careful selection of facts. Therefore they often provide valuable details that make it much easier to construct the chronology of events and to reveal its trends.

Developments of Baltic-Russian Agenda and Baltic Foreign Policy Strategies towards Russia

It is interesting to point out that in 1990–1991 Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian movements for the national independence received an enormous support from democratic forces in Russia and personally from Boris Yeltsin, who maintained close cooperation with the newly elected Supreme Councils of the Baltic republics, dominated by the independence supporters, to strengthen the front of internal opposition against the central authorities of the Soviet Union chaired by Mikhail Gorbachev. When in the response to the declaration of independence in spring 1990 Mikhail Gorbachev imposed economic embargo on energy supplies to the Baltic republics and refused any possibility of negotiations with their Supreme Councils until these declarations would be denounced, Boris Yeltsin, who at the time mentioned chaired the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation, supported independence of the Baltic republics and concluded on 5 August 1990 agreements with their governmental delegations to make this embargo void [5, p. 491]. He also criticised violent actions of Soviet forces in Riga and Vilnius in January 1991 and urged Russian soldiers not to shoot at civilians.

Even more important was the signing of treaties on the basis of interstate relations of the Russian Federation with Estonia (12 January 1991), Latvia (13 January 1991) and Lithuania (29 July 1991). These treaties outlined the recognition of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian independence by the Russian Federation as well as their rights to voluntarily join any international organizations and alliances. Although Baltic researchers praise these treaties as truly democratic and equal [15; 19, p. 499], Russian researchers are more skeptical about them. For example, A. Vushkarnik blames Boris Yeltsin for political short-sightedness and points out that these treaties were the lack of substance for Russia, as many important problems, that later formed the core of Baltic-Russian contradictions, were left without attention “for future negotiations and agreements” [8, p. 13]. So the only aim of the treaties for Boris Yeltsin, according to him, was to undermine the power of Mikhail Gorbachev and nothing more.

Finally, the decrees of Boris Yeltsin from 24 August 1991 on the recognition of state independence of Estonia and Latvia and the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and these states marked the beginning of international recognition of the Baltic independence. If before the act their independence was officially recognized only by Iceland on 22 August 1991, than after 24 August a real march of international recognition started. On 27 August the European Communities declared their readiness to establish diplomatic relations with the Baltic states, the United States of America declared it on 2 September, – and, finally, the State Council of the USSR recognized it on 6 September [8, p. 15].

Such good relations between Boris Yeltsin and the Baltic national leaders seemed to form a solid base for friendly and trustful relations between the Baltic states and Russia in future. But the events of the following two years made it clear that this alliance was merely “tactical”. As soon as the Soviet Union split up and the Russian Federation was recognized as the USSR successor state, it also inherited all the claims and attitudes that Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia previously addressed to the Soviet government. As L. Karabeshkin points out, former friendship gave place to the climate of mutual mistrust and suspicions [9, p. 85].

Since then issues that constituted the agenda of Baltic-Russian relations can be divided into two major categories: those imposed by the Baltic states and imposed by Russia. Both these categories include issues that attributed to all of the Baltic states, as well as particular questions, that were acute only for one or two of them. The first issues raised by all three Baltic states regarding their relations with Russia were the withdrawal of Russian (former Soviet) troops from their territories and signing of border treaties with Russia. They were perceived in Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius as the most acute and necessary steps for full sovereignty and independence from Russia and as important prerequisites for the integration into the Western community.

Besides all three states tried to push Russia to the recognition of the Soviet occupation of the Baltic states in 1940 and to charge it as the USSR successor state with the responsibilities to compensate for the consequences of this occupation. As G. Vitkus argued on this issue, if the Russian Federation were ready to assume the rights of the former Soviet Union (such as the seat of the permanent member of the UN Security Council) it should be ready to take responsibilities for its policies as well [18]. And the first claims in this respect were urges for Russia to return the buildings of the former embassies of the Baltic states in Rome and Paris that were taken by Soviet Union after their incorporation.

As for particular issues, there should be mentioned territorial claims of Estonia and Latvia to Russia stemming from the fact that their borders as soviet republics on the edge of 1980s – 1990s not completely coincided with those of prewar period, as some years after the incorporation into the USSR Moscow returned territories, it ceded to Estonia (2300 square km) and Latvia (1600 square km) according to the 1920 peace treaties and included these areas to Leningrad and Pskov regions of the Russian SSR [8, p. 31–32]. Referring to the concept of “restored statehood” Tallinn and Riga attempted for a while to “restore” in addition to prewar statehood prewar borders as well. Lithuania, whose territory was enlarged after the incorporation of 1940, obviously didn’t support such vision.

As for issues raised by Russia, it should be underlined that Russian foreign policy towards the Baltic states in 1990s could be characterized as reactive more often than vice versa. The most acute issue for Moscow regarding all the three states was the concern about their possible membership in NATO, so it tried to prevent by all possible means admitting of its former possessions into the military alliance led by the US – its former main enemy of the Cold War era. Besides Russia had some particular issues with each of the Baltic states. In Russian-Lithuanian relations it was the question of Russian transit, especially military one, between mainland Russia and its Kaliningrad exclave through the Lithuanian territory. In relations with Latvia and Estonia probably the greatest concern for Russia became the advocating of civil and political rights of Russian-speaking minorities in these countries in order to use them as a means of its political leverage over Riga and Tallinn.

Now let's trace the dynamics of the issues mentioned above in the agenda of Baltic-Russian relations. First the Baltic republics raised the question of the Soviet troops status on their territory soon after declaring the restoration of their independence in 1990. In December of the same year they offered the USSR government to negotiate interstate agreements on this issue. But these proposals got no response until the split-up of the USSR. Second, as the Baltic states refused to use former Soviet military personnel and facilities, stationed on their territory, in building their national armed forces, these troops were taken under the command of the Russian Federation. At the end of January – beginning of February 1992 Russian delegation chaired by Deputy Prime Minister S. Shachray visited the Baltic capitals for the negotiations about the terms of these troops withdrawal. In May 1992 Russia proposed its timetable plan that envisaged the beginning of withdrawing of the main military units in 1995 (after troops withdrawal from Germany is finished and the appropriate infrastructure for the stationing of these troops in Russia will be built) and its finish by 1999. Besides Kremlin expressed a wish to retain some military facilities in Latvia.

The Baltic states were greatly displeased with such Russian plans as they implied prolongation of Russian military leverage over them for another decade. But Moscow was reluctant to any compromise, arguing that the building of technical infrastructure and accommodation for personnel allowing the relocation of these troops to Russia will require lots of time. As G. Vitkus describes it, understanding that their political weight is too small to change Russian position on bilateral negotiations, the Baltic states decided to "internationalize" the issue and first of all to seek Western support [4]. So they started "speaking with Russia through the West". And this strategy proved to be quite efficient. After some efforts on the side of the Baltic diplo-

macy to persuade the West that Russia deliberately delays troops withdrawal to preserve a certain degree of military control over them, the Western states finally supported Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia on this issue and used "a carrot and a stick" tactics to persuade Russia to hurry up with troops withdrawal. The issue was discussed in several UN and CSCE documents, as well as during bilateral contacts of Western states and Russia. On the one hand, in 1993 on G7 summit in Munich Western leaders expressed a commitment to allocate 160 million dollars to fund building accommodation for Russian military personnel being relocated to Russia from the Baltic states. Nordic states were ready to allocate about 50 million dollars for the same purpose. On the other hand, in 1992–1994 the US Congress made several decisions to condition American technical assistance to Russia by its progress with troops withdrawal from the Baltic states [8, p. 41].

On the contrary, Russia preferred to conduct bilateral negotiations with each of the Baltic states separately, trying to impose package decisions linking Russian concessions on troops withdrawal to this state concessions on other issues of Russian interest. And as Russian-Lithuanian relation in the first half of the 1990s seemed to Moscow less problematic, than those with two other Baltic states (unlike Latvia and Estonia, Lithuania didn't advance any territorial claims to Russia and granted full citizenship rights to its Russian-speaking minority), Kremlin decided to "reward" Lithuania with quicker troops withdrawal. Its schedule was agreed upon during Vytautas Landsbergis visit to Moscow in September 1992. But signing of the final agreement on Russian troops withdrawal and their status on Lithuanian territory until the end of this process was postponed for an uncertain future because Vytautas Landsbergis strongly conditioned this step with the requirements to compensate for damages caused by Russian troops since 1940 [7, p. 28–29]. So the troops withdrawal from Lithuania was finished in August 1993 and, as D. Mereckis and R. Morkvėnas point out, thus Lithuania became the only Baltic state, that managed to avoid defining status of Russian troops on its territory [3].

The second in this row was Latvia. Russian-Latvian agreement on troops withdrawal was signed on 30 April 1994 during the visit of Latvian President Guntis Ulmanis to Moscow. Due to the Western mediation Latvian government agreed to some concessions to Russia. Although Russia leaved its naval bases in Ventspils and Liepāja it was allowed to rent the radar station in Skrunda until 31 August 1998. Soviet military pensioners living in Latvia were granted a permanent resident status while the rest Russian military personnel had to be withdrawn by 31 August 1994.

The same date was defined for the ending of troops withdrawal from Estonia. Although due to numerous disagreements on the legal status of Russian-speak-

king population of Estonia, especially Soviet military pensioners, the treaty on terms of troops withdrawal was signed during the meeting of Estonian President Lennart Meri with Boris Yeltsin in Moscow just a day before this process was finished.

At the same time Latvia and Estonia faced constant criticism from Russia for the situation with political rights deprivation of their Russian-speaking minorities and for the introduction of mass “non-citizenship” for them. But these two states preferred to ignore it until Russia used the same strategy of “internationalizing” the issue. On submitting its application to the Council of Europe in May 1992, Russian foreign minister A. Kozyrev also presented Memorandum on human rights violations in the Baltic States [8, p. 22–23]. As a result Latvian application for membership in this organization was suspended for more than 3 years until the February 1995. Also Russia used CSCE mechanisms for protection of the national minorities rights. It initiated opening of CSCE missions for monitoring the situation with rights of the Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia and Latvia in 1993. These missions made several recommendations on liberalizing Latvian and Estonian citizenship legislation. And after this the recommendations were largely implemented by these two states in the end of 1990s, the missions were closed on their demands in 2001.

Yet Russia didn't succeed in persuading the West to condemn in principal Latvian and Estonian policies of not granting automatically citizenship to the Russian-speaking immigrants of Soviet era. Thus, although Estonia and Latvia had to make some concessions on this issue, they underlined, these concessions were made because of their wish to correspond to the Western standards and not because of Russian pressure. So Moscow felt highly offended with such developments and hasn't missed any occasion to blame the Baltic states for supposed violations of the Russian-speaking minorities rights till nowadays.

The question of signing treaties on the state border between Russia and the Baltic states also became very acute. When in 1991 Boris Yeltsin signed treaties on the basis of interstate relations with the three republics, only Russian-Lithuanian treaty provided that both sides agreed to consider the existing border between Lithuanian SSR and Russian SSR as their state border [3]. The treaties with Latvia and Estonia left this issue for further negotiations [3, p. 30]. The last two states in the beginning of 1990s, as it has been already mentioned, hoped to restore their borders of the pre-war period and therefore laid claims on small bordering territories of the Russian Federation.

The hardest border disputes occurred between Estonia and Russia. On 12 September 1991 the Supreme Council of Estonia applying to the concept of “restored statehood” declared unlawful decisions of the USSR Supreme Council on separation from Estonian SSR of

Ivangorod and Pechora. Then, according to A. Vushkarnik, Estonian government even started issuing Estonian passports to the dwellers of these territories, arguing that they or their parents were citizens of the prewar Estonia [8, p. 31–32]. Also Estonia tried to engage Finland and CSCE as mediators in its border disputes with Russia. Russian response was rigid as well: in June 1994 Boris Yeltsin decided to start unilateral demarcation of state border with Estonia and in November of the same year personally visited the border and declared that Russia will not cede any part of its territory to anyone.

After government change in Estonia in late 1994, it became more tended to give up its initial territorial claims in order to speed up signing of border treaty with Russia. Such developments were also encouraged by international situation – in 1994 on the NATO summit in Brussels the process of the Alliance's eastward expansion was initiated. And Estonian government, that declared its membership in NATO as the state's priority, was well aware of the Alliance's principle not to admit countries which have unsettled territorial disputes with their neighbours. So in May 1995 President of Estonia Lennart Meri announced his readiness to settle border disputes with Russia. In October of the same year both sides declared that they have no territorial claims to each other. And on November's negotiations in Tallinn they agreed to take the existing border line between them as a basis for their state border. In February 1996 the work on the border description and demarcation was started.

Yet the border treaty between Estonia and Russia was not signed until the end of the 20th century. According to A. Vushkarnik, it was caused by Estonian demands to include into the text of the treaty references to the Tartu peace treaty of the 1920 to make Russia recognize the “restored nature” of Estonian statehood and occupation of 1940 [8, p. 31–32]. But such argumentation seems rather problematic since it was Estonia, who was most interested in signing the treaty as soon as possible and therefore was more tended to compromise. More reliable here seems argumentation of K. C. Smith, who points out that it was Russia, who refused to sign the treaty even after Estonia withdrawn all its claims and was ready to sign it on the Russian conditions. Thus Moscow wanted to use the unsettled border issue to hinder Estonia's admission to NATO [1, p. 9].

Negotiations on settling the border issue between Latvia and Russia largely followed the same scenario. On 22 January 1992 Latvia also declared decisions of the USSR Supreme Council on separation from Latvian SSR and inclusion into the Pskov region of the RSFSR of Pytalovo/Abrene district to be unlawful. But Latvian-Russian disputes on this issue had never reached such a high tension as Estonian-Russian. Negotiations on delimitation and demarcation of the state border

between Latvia and Russia started in April 1996. And meeting Russian demands Latvia agreed to negotiate just the establishment of the state border – not its restoration, as Riga planned initially [8, p. 32]. Yet the same, as in the case of Estonia, Russia refused to finalize legal procedures for signing the treaty – especially since Russian-Latvian relations worsened significantly after a demonstration of Russian-speaking pensioners had been broken up in Riga in 1998. Moscow replied to this incident with economic sanctions against Latvia such as restriction of Latvian exports and stopping bank transfers [1, p. 9].

Lithuania seemed to be most likely candidate to become the first of the Baltic states to successfully finalize border negotiations with Russia. But even this country didn't succeed in it until 1997. Although there were no territorial disputes between the two states and Moscow had less objections to Lithuanian cooperation with NATO, as this state had no common border with the mainland Russia (only with its Kaliningrad exclave) it still took a long while to agree the terms of Russian military transit to and from Kaliningrad region through Lithuanian territory. While Lithuania wanted to regulate it by internal norms on military and dangerous cargo transit, equally applied to the all foreign military transit, Russia insisted on signing a bilateral agreement establishing special conditions for Russian transit.

As G. Vitkus argues, in contrast to the negotiations on Russian troops withdrawal, when Russia experienced constant pressure from the West and international institutions like the UN and CSCE, negotiations over Kaliningrad transit in 1994 “came to a dead end as soon as Lithuania and Russia found themselves tête-à-tête” [4]. D. Mereckis and R. Morkvėnas add that “in the course of negotiations Russia did not hesitate to use economic pressure by delaying ratification of the 1993 Lithuanian-Russian agreement on economic cooperation, threatening to cut gas and oil supplies, and doubling the duties on Lithuanian goods imported to Russia” [3].

Finally the solution was found and the rules agreed by Lithuania and Russia in November 1993 for Russian

troops withdrawal from Germany had to be re-applied to military transit from Kaliningrad. This paved the way to signing of the treaties “On the State Border between Lithuania and Russia” and “On the Delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf in the Baltic Sea” in Moscow in October 1997. Yet, according to K. C. Smith, even border treaty with Lithuania had been never submitted to the Russian parliament for ratification until the end of the Boris Yeltsin's presidency as a result of great Russian discontent over the country's determination to join NATO [1, p. 10].

Preventing by any means Baltic accession to NATO seemed to be the main goal of Russian foreign policy regarding the Baltic states. And to achieve this Russia used both economic and political pressure on the one hand and several proposals for security guarantees to the region and confidence-building measures on the other. In the beginning of 1990s Moscow tried to enforce Baltic neutrality, offering Russian security guarantees in exchange. But such proposals were unambiguously rejected in Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn. Then in the middle of 1990s Boris Yeltsin promoted the idea of building in the Baltic Sea Region a regional collective defense system including Baltic and Nordic states that will function independently both from NATO and Russia. This idea was even supported by the US President Bill Clinton. But the Baltic states, as well as Nordic, rejected this plan. Finally in October 1997 Boris Yeltsin proposed a plan of creating a system of multilateral security guarantees in the region instead of NATO membership. As D. Mereckis and R. Morkvėnas point out, the Baltic states “well received... the positive tone of the proposals” yet it was underlined, that they were “not ready to trade in the prospect of transatlantic links in return for Russian guarantees” [3].

So by the end of 1990s Baltic-Russian relations were charged with many unsolved problems, mutual claims and conflicting goals and interests. K. C. Smith and some other international relations experts, both Western and Russian, even called their relations since the second half of the 1990s “a small Cold War” [1; 9].

Conclusions

Despite the fact that in the last two years of the USSR existence the Baltic national leaders received a strong support from Boris Yeltsin and Russian democrats in their common struggle against the Soviet central authorities led by Mikhail Gorbachev, Baltic relations with Moscow worsened as soon as both Baltic states and Russia reached full sovereignty. Since then Baltic-Russian relations were marked by mutual distrust, suspicions, claims and offences.

As for the agenda of Baltic-Russian relations, it wouldn't be exaggeration to point out, that for both sides here security interests prevailed to anything else, including trade and economy. It may be characterized as rather stable and static, as, due to the “high stakes” of

their conflicting goals, Russia and the Baltic states either were reluctant to make any substantial concessions and compromises to each other, and therefore most problems remained unsolved throughout the whole decade. They included such questions as Russian troops withdrawal from the Baltic states (probably the only issue, that was resolved relatively quick and didn't cause much confrontation), signing of the state border treaties, Baltic claims for Russian compensation for damages of Soviet occupation, persistent Russian complaints of discriminating Russian-speaking minorities in Latvia and Estonia, regulating Russian transit to and from Kaliningrad via Lithuanian territory, and last but not least Russian efforts to prevent by any means the Baltic membership in NATO.

Complaining to Russian unwillingness to treat them as equal partners and clearly understanding their inability to influence Russian position by their own limited resources, Baltic states in the very beginning of the 1990s chose a strategy of bringing the major issues of dispute with Russia to the arbitration of international organizations and thus “speaking with Russia through the West”. Paradoxically, but as soon as Moscow realized all the futility of its attempts to influence positions of the Baltic states by economic pressure, it also turned to the same strategy. So the West, first of all the USA, found themselves in a very advantageous position of arbitrators to the Baltic-Russian relations. Although this position was not always comfortable, as Western leaders had to balance between their wish to support the Baltic states, as most loyal new allies of the West, and not

to alienate Russia that at the times mentioned was also considered as prospective democratic state and one of important Western partners. So on some issues Western states and institutions took the Russian side – for example, they pressed Estonia and Latvia to liberalize their citizenship laws and didn’t include any of the Baltic states into the first round of NATO enlargement to the East. Yet on more principal issues, such as Russian troops withdrawal, the right of the Baltic states not to grant automatically their citizenship to the immigrants of the Soviet era and their right to choose any option for granting their security, including possible membership in NATO, the West clearly supported Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. So such a strategy proved to be quite effective for the Baltic states – moreover in their circumstances it was probably the best way to achieve goals they set.

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