
STANDPOINT OF THE BALTIC STATES TOWARDS NATO AND ESDP: THE RUSSIAN FACTOR

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Abstract

After reestablishment of independence, the range of problems associated with the withdrawal of the Soviet army dominated the security agenda of the Baltic States until 1994. Subsequently, an undisputed priority of their foreign and security policy became integration into euro-Atlantic structures. Presently, the Baltic States are formally full-fledged members of NATO and the EU which consider the guarantees of the fifth article of the The North Atlantic Treaty as the most efficient mean for ensuring “hard” security. On the other hand, due to transformation of the nature of threats to security of the world and each state, also for a number of other reasons, the Baltic States may not stay away from the common European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). This article examines a new dilemma of security and defence policy that has been recently faced by the Baltic States: commitments to which organization (NATO or EU) concluded and assumed by the Baltic States should be given priority. The article analyses the factor of a still imminent threat from Russia as one of the most important factors having an effect on this choice.

Introduction

After the withdrawal of the Soviet army from the Baltic States, the scope of threats to the security of the Baltic States didn't diminish, but on the contrary, increased. Nevertheless a willingness to ensure that Russian imperialism is not restored remains one of the most important priorities of security policy. To this end, bilateral and multi-lateral cooperation in the security field was started: military cooperation projects between the Baltic and Nordic countries were initiated, and cooperation with NATO was established within the framework of the PfP program. In truth, besides integration into transatlantic Western structures, other alternatives were considered, e.g. choosing a “neutrality” model

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promoted by Finland or Sweden, or simply maintaining close possible pragmatic relationships with Russia. However with the unceasing words of Russian politicians on integration of the Baltic States into the sphere of Russia's impact, the choice became clear: integration into transatlantic structures that can provide guarantees of collective defence.

Although the EU speedily develops "European" crisis management instruments, within the present day context the Baltic States primarily treat ESDP as activity to the benefit of European and US security. Different assessment of the transatlantic projects associated with Europe and the US is not accidental. First of all, the period of the Cold War is associated by the Baltic States with US assistance and distrust in Western Europe, which did not take any actions in restoring democracy in Eastern Europe after the Second World War (the so-called "Munich Syndrome"). In other words, the US, not Europe, is associated by the Baltic States with the power that helped defeat the Soviet Union. Secondly, the process of integration into NATO was actually much simpler, i.e. requiring less effort and compliance with different criteria than integration into the EU. Criteria for EU membership and closer cooperation, conditions, and requirements have until now determined some distrust in the whole EU structure. Finally, quite considerable emigration of the Baltic States elite to the US created a particular sense of commonality between both sides of the Atlantic and even ensured some lobbyist impact of the Baltic States in US political life.

On the other hand, taking into consideration the present day trends of the global security situation, the Baltic States may not stay away from ESDP development. Although the "old" sources of threat really didn't disappear, the nature of threats caused by them changed considerably. In other words, the instruments held at the disposal of the US and NATO are not sufficient to tackle the new challenges. Challenges of rogue or failed states may not be neutralized with military force only (no matter how efficient it is in the battle field), whereas NATO has virtually no civil crisis management capacities. Meanwhile the EU, guided by the principle that the best conflict resolution mechanism is the establishment of an efficiently operating democratic state,¹ develops the civil crisis management instruments quite successfully.

¹ "Conflict resolution in South Caucasus: The EU's role" Europe Report N°173 – 20 March 2006. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/europe/caucasus/173_conflict_resolution_south_caucasus.pdf>, 12 09 2007

Openly admit that if not within a short-term perspective, then in medium or long term the Baltic States will not be able to delegate sufficient and equal attention for fulfilling obligations within the NATO and ESDP framework risk only very few policy shapers in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonian. Neither officials, nor academics openly discuss what would Baltic States choose if they had to delegate limited capacities to both NATO and ESDP operations at the same time. Authors investigating the interests of the Baltic States with respect to NATO and ESDP (e.g. Ž. Ozolina or E. Mannik) mostly limit themselves to abstract statements that the goal of the Baltic States is to coordinate their commitments to NATO and the EU, to contribute to strengthening the strategic cooperation of both organizations etc.² Maybe this will be achieved by the time the need to make a choice emerges, yet what will happen in the event of failure remains unclear.

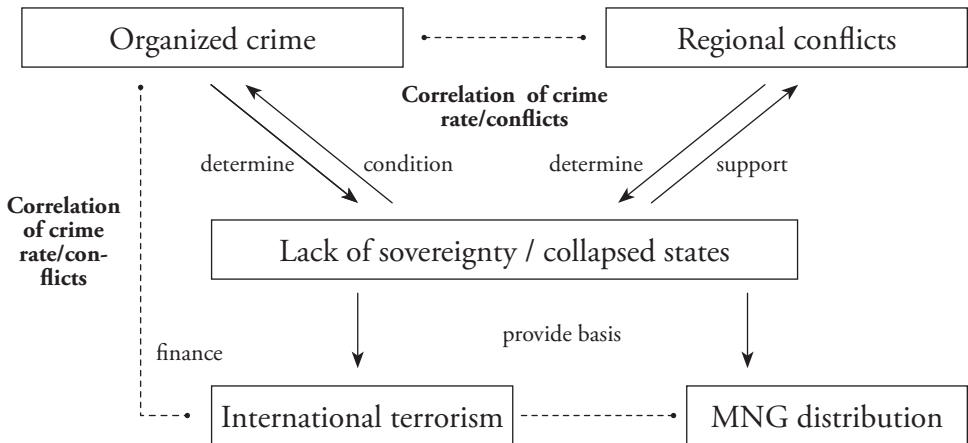
The present article is not intended to provide fast answers to the issues of how to solve the potential, and, probably, presently relevant dilemma of making a choice between NATO and the EU. The goal of this analysis is to start a discussion by identifying which factors could determine the choice of the Baltic States. Several essential assumptions have been made in the article: 1) an essential goal of the security and defence policy of the Baltic States is to ensure that short-term and long-term threats they face are neutralized in time; 2) the military capacities of the Baltic States, as well as financial and human resources, are too scarce to be able to independently neutralize the threats: this “forces” the state to integrate into the global organizations ensuring security and stability; 3) threats from the East are still very relevant to the safety of the Baltic States. The first part of the article analyzes the transformation tendencies of common threats to the national interests of the Baltic States. The second part contains an overview of ESDP and NATO instruments to respond to threats to the security of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia (by making yet another assumption that selection of the “alliance” is determined by its capacity to reduce state vulnerability). The third part investigates the importance of a specific source of threat - Russia - with a view to selecting the most efficient organization for ensurance of security.

² Archer C., eds, *New Security Issues in Northern Europe: The Nordic and Baltic States and the ESDP*, Routledge/UACES Contemporary European Studies, 2007, p.115-173.

1. Transformation of threats to the Baltic States

The nature of threats to the security of Europe radically changed at the end of the 20th century with the emergence of regional conflicts in the Balkans, activation of international terrorism, and organized crime. The “old” threats associated with military aggression did not disappear: high energy prices enable Russia to threaten with the deployment of strategic weapons in the Kaliningrad region and maintain their army in the Eastern European, Southern Caucasus, Central Asian countries. Terrorism, proliferation of WMD, regional conflicts, failed states, and organized crime have not emerged suddenly either - they were topical for several decades. Yet, after the terrorist attacks in New York, Bali, Madrid, and London it became clear that the threat of a military conflict between modern states was replaced by not less challenging globalization and complexity of the nature of threats. A schematic representation of the global type of threats is provided below:

Scheme 1. Complexity and mutual correlation of threats to security in Europe



Source: http://www.amo.cz/publikacefiles/new_threats2_ditrych_amo.pdf

Until the end of last century, residents of the Baltic States primarily associated membership in NATO if not with pure military support in case of intervention, then at least with a striving to prevent any attempts to repeat occupation and annexation. Therefore, the greatest effect on their security concept is still made not by national egoism promoted by realists, but by ambitions of the neighbouring state, specifically Russia, to restore its impact in the international environment. Open ambitions of Moscow to compete with the West, usage of leadership in the energy market for political goals, increasing closure of Russia's political system, and similar trends make one resist the attempts of Russia to prevent countries in the CEE region and South Caucasus from independently selecting their security partners and integrating into the world economy. The fact that a threat from the East still remains relevant is also demonstrated by recently conducted surveys, although the national security strategies and concepts as well as the military strategies of all three Baltic States state that no direct threat is imminent to them.³ According to the findings of a survey conducted in 2007, 44 per cent of Lithuanian residents chose Russia as the state which presently poses the greatest threat to Lithuania.⁴

On the other hand, both the mentioned strategic documents and surveys illustrate an undisputed transformation of both the threats themselves and their perception in the Baltic States over the last couple of decades. For example, according to data of the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, only 7 per cent of the country's residents seriously assessed external threats to the country's security in 2004 (fighting these threats was primarily associated with NATO functions). Meanwhile over 40 per cent of the respondents did not question the relevance of internal threats (their neutralization instruments traditionally belong to the EU). Moreover, according to findings of a survey conducted in 2005, Latvian residents assessed the threat of an armed conflict or state occupation as absolutely the least probable – their probability in the general list of threats took 31st and 32nd place. Russia was no longer assessed as a real threat in Latvia: only one-fifth of the respondents were hostile to Russia, and as many as 65 per cent of them did not support the opinion that Russia poses a threat to Latvia's

³ Only Estonia identifies the sources of military threats in the National Security Concept wherein it states that due to lack of trust and transparency in the military field, or due to violations of the state border, military crises may emerge in the vicinity of the country.

⁴ Delfi, *Survey: 44 per cent of major city residents believe that Russia poses the greatest threat to Lithuania*, <<http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/article.php?id=14740935>>, 18 10 2007.

independence. Latvians are much more concerned with internal threats, such as the crime rate, drugs, and the possibility of an economic crisis. Findings of the surveys in Estonia are similar: approximately 70 per cent of ethnic Estonians and 30 per cent of Estonia's foreign-born persons assessed direct aggression against the state as probable in 1992, but since 2002 (when Estonia was invited to join NATO) this threat was considered as quite probable only by 14-17 per cent of Estonian residents. According to data of the survey conducted in Lithuania in 2007, one-third of Lithuanian residents did not consider a single state as a threat to Lithuania.

It's obvious that it's not possible to neutralize "future" threats with "yesterday's" instruments. Therefore the need emerged to develop a new means of response, first of all to review the strategy for reducing the vulnerability of Europe. The main strategic elements of response to the threats became the expansion of the security and stability zone into the most unsafe (and neighbouring Europe) regions: Eastern Europe, the Balkans, South Caucasus, the Great Lakes Region in Africa, the Middle East. The EU declared their objective to have new measures of impact including both civil and military components. This decision may be motivated by the interests of the great EU states aimed at strengthening their power and developing a counter-balance to the US, yet, it should be admitted that until now no single international organization has crisis management instruments covering both the civilian and military component. In European Security Strategy (ESS) enshrined concept of creation of "ring of friends" became an ideological basis for the development and usage of these instruments. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), Wider Europe Initiative, Barcelona Process, military and civilian crisis management operations became the main measures for implementing the strategy of threats prevention or neutralization.

It should be noted that ways how to respond to the changed nature of threats are searched not only by the EU, but also by NATO. After the great EU states determined to develop "autonomous" mechanisms for the neutralization of threats to Europe and commenced implementation of independent foreign policy in the field of security and defence, the process of Alliance transformation gained momentum. The ministers of NATO foreign affairs decided in Reykjavik in 2002 that the current understanding of "out-of-area" operations is outdated: the Alliance should be ready to participate in the place where a threat

emerges.⁵ Correspondingly, NATO became involved in the ISAF operation in Afghanistan in October 2002, and subsequently also undertook the command over it. This activation of NATO operations meant that the Alliance acknowledged the necessity for a new type of preventative involvement. In other words, the Alliance, similar to the EU or UN, started to raise goals in the field of crisis prevention such as the promotion of economic, political, and social development seeking to prevent the emergence of new challenges.

2. Baltic States: between NATO and the EU

2.1. Background of the “choice dilemma”

Assumptions of the alliance theory constitute the core of foreign and security policy of the Baltic States. In other words, by implementing the goals of foreign policy, Baltic states are inclined to rely on the regional and global international structures. One can be sure of this after examining the implementation of one the priorities of the Baltic States’ foreign policy – the “Eastern Policy”. The Eastern Policy of the Baltic States is associated with the inhibition of threats spurred by instability in the Eastern European states in the place where they emerge – Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, South Caucasian countries, Russia. These countries not, let’s say, the Great Lakes Region of Africa and even the Balkans are considered to be the sources of imminent threats to the Baltic States. In addition, namely by operating in Eastern Europe Baltic states may make use of a minor, nevertheless significant advantage over the Western European states – the mentality of Moldavians, Ukrainians or Georgians is closer to us than to Germans, Brits or Spaniards. Nevertheless, acting independently or cooperating only among themselves, the Baltic States would only have few efficient measures of impact. Therefore they are interested in promoting more intensive ties of Eastern countries with the EU and NATO: firstly, political, economic, social, military, and other assistance of these organizations to the states located in the

⁵ Robertson G., “Video interview NATO HQ, 16 December 2003”. <<http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2003/so31216a.htm>>, 12 10 2007.

Eastern neighbourhood. This goal is associated with Baltic's specific interests of political "visibility" and energy security as well as blocking Russia's imperial ambitions, crime expansion or prevention of the collapse of less powerful states.

Ideally, the Baltic States should distribute their resources so that their obligations to NATO and the EU successfully contribute to the implementation of national interests. Resources are limited, however, whereas national, regional, NATO and EU initiatives are frequently not supplementary, but competing among themselves. Therefore while selecting a "priority" organization, a natural question arises: Which organization may assist with the implementation of goals of the Baltic States' foreign policy to the greatest extent and most efficiently? According to R.E. Osgood, the efficiency of a defence alliance and trust of its members will primarily depend on the level and nature of the threats: with an increase, the level of a threat will increase, and will diminish with the reduction of the latter.⁶ Therefore it is natural that when military threats were considered to pose the greatest threat to security during the years of the Cold War, the NATO security "shield" had special significance. The response to political, economic, and social challenges at that time was the secondary interest of the European states in the best case. Therefore, the strategic significance of the UN, EU, ESCO, and other international organizations established to neutralize them was of far less importance. Presently, the situation has changed – with the diminishing possibility for a military conflict between the states, the probability of "asymmetric" threats has emerged. This also changes the attitude of states towards the most efficient instruments for threat neutralization.

The probability of military aggression from Russia considerably diminished over the last decade, yet the intensity of associated political, social, energetic and other type of threats even increased. Meanwhile seeking to become an "expert" in neutralizing "soft" security threats, the EU still has no clear vision, and regularly faces the shortage of human, military or other resources in the field of ensurance of security. Besides that, EU hardly manages to combine priorities of the member states and the national interest, as well as different EU "policies", formats and specific initiatives.⁷ The EU "keeps silent" even at the time when the US and Russia discuss actions that may have a direct effect on the security

⁶Osgood R.E., *Alliances and American Foreign Policy*, The John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1968, p. 17-21.

⁷Fiorenza N., "EU Force Seeks New Mission After Congo", *Defense News* 18 (33), 2003. p. 42.

of Europe⁸. Meanwhile USA is traditionally treated within the context of security and relationships with Russia as a supporter of the Baltic States. In fact, the image of Washington somewhat altered in the Baltic States after the latter approved the CFE Flang treaty according to which Russia acquired a possibility to deploy three times more weapons at the Latvian and Estonian border than they had it until now. A suspicion emerged in the Baltic States that should the interests of America required so, the US might “sacrifice” them.⁹

Thus, presently, the Baltic States may not be one hundred per cent sure that in case of external threat NATO or ESDP will meet their collective defence obligations. Nevertheless, if USA (which instrument in Europe is NATO) and the great EU states (i.e. the main supporters of ESDP) set uniform goals for themselves in the field of security and acted together, the Baltic States did not have to tackle any dilemmas of the “choice between the alliances”. Yet, this is not reality: NATO and ESDP develop separate crisis management instruments, and cooperation in the place of crisis is frequently so inefficient that officers of both organizations participating in an operation are become endangered. The legal ESDP and NATO cooperation basis has some drawbacks: the *Berlin plus* agreements signed in 2003 are not officially binding treaties between the two institutions and are based on a non-binding EU-NATO declaration which also is not an international treaty. In order for the EU to use NATO resources accordingly with the *Berlin plus*, other more specific agreements have to be concluded. Due to peculiarities of the national policy, some NATO, but not EU members (e.g. Turkey) may block them. Besides, NATO, as an organization, does not practically have its own capacities, whereas the *Berlin plus* does not provide EU with the possibilities to use the USA resources. Limitation of the agreements was highlighted by the Cyprus and Malta membership in EU: it

⁸ For example, during the meeting of G8, V. Putin offered to USA to develop RPG together and to deploy some elements of the system in the Russian military bases in Azerbaijan. It is obvious that any decision in this context will have an effect in the European security system. Having involved into negotiations of the USA and Russia, EU could impact the final decision and become an important player in the development of the global RPG system. Practically no debates on this issue are going on in Europe.

⁹ Rumours about secret agreements between the USA and Russia were spread in March 2001, according to which Washington promised to Moscow that the Baltic States will never become members of NATO, whereas Russia will not question the necessity of the USA RPG system. Washington officially denied these rumours, yet premises to newly assess by the Baltic States the security ensurance mechanisms being developed in Europe have already been created.

turned out that these countries may neither participate in the NATO EU PSC meetings nor obtain protocols of NATO decisions. Sooner or later the Baltic States will have to choose which of the Western structures is able to provide the most efficient security guarantees and is able to achieve other, actually even more important goals of foreign policy. Hereinafter arguments associated with this choice will be examined.

2.2. Factors determining the choice of a safety organization

In the security sector all three Baltic States traditionally give priority to NATO and practically do not participate in the debates of Europe regarding the future of ESDP. ESDP is frequently not even attributed to the factors determining the national security policy¹⁰. For example, in the Latvian National Security Concept of 2005 no even mention is made about EU participation while solving the regional and global security issues and EU impact on the national security and defence policy. ESDP is mentioned in the aforementioned Latvian document one single time in the statement that Latvia should participate in the EU defence policy, without detailing how this participation should manifest itself. Factors determining that the so called “NATO first” principle is one of essential features of the state and defence policy of the Baltic States may be classified into several groups:

- Traditional euroatlantism. The Baltic States traditionally identify themselves as a “marginal” territory: this identification hasn’t changed significantly since the end of the cold war. This is determined by the fact that issues of the “hard” security, despite the transformation of threats and attitude towards them, has still inertly been among the most important ones to the Baltic States until now. According to A. Wendt, identity of the states is a relatively stable variable. Its transformation within a short-term and even medium-term perspective is little probable. Therefore the Baltic

¹⁰In other words, they treat EU as an economic and political union of states which membership is useful seeking to change the security environment, but not for the establishment of a long-term and favourable environment of operation in the security field.

States give priority to the transatlantic security projects and mechanism “out of inertia”;

- Reliability of security guarantees provided by the alliance. Collective security guarantees of the 5-th article of the North Atlantic Treaty for the Baltic States seem to be more reliable than the current or intended commitments of mutual assistance within the framework of ESDP. Such a conclusion is correct even taking into consideration the fact that NATO presently interprets security entirely differently than at the time when the Baltic States decided to seek membership in the Alliance. This is determined by a number of reasons (efficient military planning, operative capacities were checked in the place of crisis), yet nearly one of the most important of them is the existence of a clear axis capable of consolidating the efforts of majority of countries;
- Capacity of the alliance to adapt the organizational structure and crisis neutralization instruments to the constantly changing global security situation. Presently, the alliance operates as one of constituent parts of the international security ensuring mechanism. Activities of the Alliance combine with other instruments, such as international law and other international institutions. Besides, the diversity of instruments at the disposal of the alliance has also expanded: apart from mechanism for the prevention of military threats, the impact of NATO on international security is presently associated with the preserving and spreading of political stability.

An attention should be drawn to M. Ruhle’s¹¹ observation that being a democratic, multinational, defensive organization, NATO is essentially unable to plan and implement actions of offensive nature.¹² In his opinion, practical training in crisis management held by NATO in January-February 2002 demonstrated that only the US and Turkey were ready to take preventative actions. The role of representatives of the member states working in NATO institutions is to convey to the allies the standpoint of their country and to notify their governments on the position of other allies, but not to adopt decisions

¹¹ NATO manager of the planning and speech preparation unit of the Division for Political Affairs and Security Policy.

¹² Ruhle M., “NATO and the coming proliferation threat”. *Comparative Strategy* 13 (3), 2004, p. 317.

automatically. In other words, although separate military and civil structures operate inside NATO, there are no any voting procedures in the Alliance. Contrary to the EU, NATO does not have an efficient legal system; there is no any mechanism that would oblige the member states to comply with the “common” position which was reached during the internal consultations. It is hard to reach an agreement on sharing the intelligence information, necessity of the concrete initiative, usage of forces, type and length of operation, etc. In other words, it is difficult to NATO to adopt decisions of tactical and operative type at the time of crisis due to intergovernmental nature of the Alliance’s structure. This raises a question regarding trust in NATO as a military alliance, and at the same time makes one turn to the ESDP capacities in this field.

Sixteen operations have been carried out until now within the framework of ESDP: 4 of them were of military type, 3 – military/civil, and the remaining ones – civil. In 2006, 7,500 EU soldiers and officers participated in EU crisis management operations, and 900 more carried out civil missions. The EU helped the local authorities to prepare police officers (EUPOL-COPPS mission in the territory of Palestine, EUPM operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUPAT mission in Macedonia, EUPOL Kinshasa and EUSEC Congo missions in Congo), monitored the implementation of international peace treaties signed and activities of the border crossing points (AMM mission in Indonesia’ Aceh province, the EU BAM mission at the borderline between Moldova and Ukraine, and EU BAM Rafah mission in the territory of Palestine), helped reform the legal systems of some countries (EUJUST LEX in Iraq and *EUJUST Themis* in Georgia).¹³ Successful operation *ARTEMIS* (during which neither the EU nor UN used any NATO logistic support) became a basis for creating a concept of the EU Battle Groups. By supporting *Amis II* mission (carried out by the African Union), the EU created a new crisis management precedent when assistance is rendered not to the crisis-ridden government, but to the regional organization operating “on its territory”. In parallel, the planning of new operations was carried out (EUPT KOSOVO, EUPOL Afghanistan and EU missions in Chad),¹⁴ command over the civil crisis management operations was strengthened (a posi-

¹³ “EU Missions and operations”. *IMPETUS. Bulletin of the EU Military Staff*. Spring/Summer 2006, p. 8-11.

¹⁴ The expansion of several more operations in Africa has not been discussed, but it was prepared too.

tion of the civil operations commander was introduced, and plans were made to establish a command post for civil operations) in 2007. This demonstrates that the EU transforms its reputation of an international actor being unable to reach an agreement or implement complicated crisis management operations.

It is obvious, that involvement of the Baltic States into the ESDP activities in the field of crisis management operations is more symbolic. It would be even right to state that security of none of the Baltic States is directly associated with ESDP development and initiatives. In other words, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are essentially only passive participants of ESDP.¹⁵ Several groups of factors should be differentiated as a result whereof ESDP does not become an efficient instrument of foreign or security policy of the Baltic States:

- The Baltic States do not have any more significant effect on ESDP nor opportunities to take a more active role. Therefore to them ESDP is rather an “imposed” than natural choice – at one time the government of Estonia even directly expressed its dissatisfaction that Germany allegedly attempted to “impose” ESDP rather than “suggesting” to join NATO¹⁶;
- So far the EU has not been fully prepared to act independently in all high intensity operations. This is determined not only by the drawbacks in the implementation of operations, but also in control over their planning, command, and supervision;
- As a part of the so called “new” Europe Baltic states pursue different from the “old” Europe’s view towards the ESDP geographical framework and

¹⁵ In 2004, Tallinn decided to join the EU Combat group formed by Sweden, Finland and Norway. Estonia will delegate 45 soldiers to the EU Combat group to be on duty during 1st Quarter 2008. Lithuania assumed an obligation to appoint a military unit of the squadron size and minor logistics elements (in total 200 soldiers) to the EU Combat group of Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Latvia and Lithuania that will start to serve duty in 2010. This is nearly the most significant, but so far “paper” contribution of the Baltic States into ESDP crisis management operations: each of them appointed only one or several officials or military officers to specific ES ALTHEA, CONCORDIA, EUPOL Afghanistan and other civil and military crisis management operations.

¹⁶ This suspicion was even more enhanced by the statement of the then EU president R. Prodi in Riga that allegedly any aggression against an EU state shall be treated as an aggression against the entire EU and that the security guarantees provided by EU membership are even “better” than those of NATO. Mannik E., “The role of the ESDP in Estonia’s security policy” in Archer C., ed., *New Security Issues in Northern Europe: The Nordic and Baltic States and the ESDP*, Routledge/Uaces Contemporary European Studies, 2007, p.140.

application of its concrete instruments.¹⁷ Only the coordination of initiatives within the framework of ESDP and European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) would enable to harmonize different foreign policy goals of the member states. This is probably the only way to enhance the interest of the Baltic States in EU foreign policy. Yet, even in this case the Baltic States will be supporting ENP development in the Eastern dimension and the EU Southern states in the Southern dimension;

- EU external policy is too heavily dependent on Russia's interests.¹⁸ In other words, each time big Western states take into consideration Russia's regional or even global interests despite clearly undemocratic actions of the latter one regarding Ukraine, South Caucasus and the Baltic States (presidential elections in Ukraine, position with respect to the "frozen" conflicts, issues associated with the supply of energy resources are good examples). In this context, scepticism of the Baltic States is determined by the fact that the granting of priority to the ESDP would nearly coincide with an "ideal" variant suggested by Russia some time ago, according to which the Baltic States "could" join the EU with a similar status as Sweden and Finland, i.e. by remaining neutral in the military respect.¹⁹

The Baltic States declare that they are seeking to turn the development of ESDP in the direction of strengthening transatlantic ties with Northern America and the EU. The achievement of this task in any other way but by getting involved in ESDP activities is not possible. Participation in ESDP is useful to them also because NATO instruments for developing an active Eastern policy (which is the priority of the Baltic states) are undoubtedly less efficient than the corresponding EU instruments. In other words, only the EU, which has a sufficient arsenal of the "soft" power measures at its disposal, is capable of

¹⁷ CFSP priorities (in principal determined by the great EU states) are cooperation with international organizations, vigorous actions in the Near East and Africa, meanwhile priorities of foreign policy of the Baltic States concentrate on Eastern Europe.

¹⁸ For example, after the Baltic States and Poland suggested that border monitoring mission in Georgia should be taken over from ESCO; other countries rejected the suggestion due to possibly negative attitude of Russia to this initiative. Similar reaction was received to Latvia's suggestion regarding EU involvement in the Transnistrian conflict.

¹⁹ Asmus R. D., Nurick R., "NATO enlargement and the Baltic States". *Survival* 2 (38), 1996, p. 121-142.

neutralizing the levers of Russia's impact in the CIS region. Should the EU succeed in consolidating CFSP instruments and creating an efficient EU crisis management system, this could be used not only for solving the "frozen" regional conflicts in the post-soviet space. This could also change the NATO instruments – if, after its transformation, the Alliance became a political forum with a weak fifth article dimension. Finally, ESDP is undoubtedly an additional engine for reforming the national military forces: the development of the EU crisis management system induces the transformation of the national forces into the mobile deployable forces. In other words, ESDP creates possibilities to enhance the interaction of military units of all Baltic States as well as to learn, gain useful military experience, etc.

3. The efficiency of NATO and ESDP instruments in neutralizing threats emanating from Russia

Nearly the most important goals of the Kremlin with respect to transformation of the European security system is to create preconditions for the development of a new system and, after eliminating the US from this process, to replace Washington in Europe. Therefore Moscow's standpoint with respect to NATO is clear- Russia resists any NATO initiatives, including the geographical as well as the functional expansion. All cooperation initiatives of Russia and NATO are more an imitation of cooperation, and not a solution of specific security issues. This is clearly demonstrated by inefficient activity of the NATO-Russia's Council. Russia's position with respect to ESDP is not so unambiguous. On the one hand, the Kremlin is interested in ESDP as instrument that weakens the role of NATO in the European security system, fosters multi-polarity of the international system and facilitates the misbalancing of transatlantic ties. True transatlantic partnership on security issues (the so called "Western alliance") at the same time would practically leave Moscow without any possibilities to create a mechanism for counterbalancing its impact in Europe and in the world. Therefore such a scenario of ESDP development is not acceptable to Russia. The development of the new efficient EU defence union is also not handy to Russia, since such a formation may enhance EU external subjectivity too much

and mean the emergence of the new “competitor” in the “zone of Russia’s interests.”²⁰ Therefore, by supporting ESDP development, Russia seeks the ESDP to become a project of “a part of states”.²¹ This ESDP development model means that also the entire EU internal integration would be developing according to the “core” and “periphery” model, i.e. states hostile to Russia would not gain any major impact on political processes in EU. Thus, in summary, it could be stated that Moscow’s “support” of ESDP development is primarily associated with the implementation of “Primakov’s doctrine”, i.e. with an attempt to create a global security system opposing US hegemony, to enhance the Kremlin’s role and to restore the status of Russia as of a super-state.²²

Russia’s strategic objective to have impact on the European security system is an undoubted challenge to specific interests of the Baltic States. Threat to the security of the Baltic States is determined by the following specific goals of Russia’s security policy:

- Enhancement of military and economic power. Moscow enhances demonstrates its military power by reforming its armed forces, decreasing the number of conscripts in the Russian army, reviewing the tasks undertaken by specific types of armed forces, increasing funding to defence, modernizing and renewing the strategic weaponry, suspending the participation in CFE treaty, etc. An economic impact of Russia increases by enhancing the dependency of Europe on Russia’s energy resources:²³ growing revenues from oil and gas exports establish conditions to the Kremlin to invest into the currencies and securities of foreign states.²⁴ The Kremlin’s

²⁰ More information about ESDP development scenarios is provided at: Molis A., “*Future Scenarios of European Security and Defence Policy and Interests of the Small States*”, *Political Science* 4 (44), 2006, p. 54-83.

²¹ “Guidelines of Lithuania’s European Policy Strategies in Short Term and Medium Term perspective. *Summary*”. Centre for Strategic Studies, 2006. <[http://www.ssc-lietuva.lt/picture/upload/ssc_leps_sant-rauka_20061119\(1\).pdf](http://www.ssc-lietuva.lt/picture/upload/ssc_leps_sant-rauka_20061119(1).pdf)> 10 10 2007.

²² Rontoyanni C., “So Far, so Good? Russia and ESDP”, *International Affairs* 78(4). 2002, p. 813-830.

²³ Recently Europe has been importing from Russia approximately one third of natural gas and oil resources necessary to it. In 2030 Europe may import from Russia as much as up to 70 per cent of energy resources necessary to it.

²⁴ Approximately 40 per cent of the budget funds and the greatest portion of revenues in foreign currency are received by Russia from trade in energy resources which prices have been constantly increasing. Only a minor fraction of these funds is used for investments inside the country - the greatest portion thereof

administration uses economic levers quite efficiently: deprived of attention in the international arena since the very end of the cold war, Russia again was in the focus of attention due to its position on Iraq, Kosovo and other issues.²⁵ The more Europe is dependent on Russia in the economic field, the more it will be made to yield to Russia in another field, e.g. while regulating “frozen” conflicts in the Eastern neighbourhood. Such a scenario is quite probable, all the more so, that contrary to the things several decades ago, when in the relationships with Moscow the West sought to reduce a potential threat posed by it, presently the great EU states approach Russia as a “reliable supplier of energy resources” whose security interests may also coincide;

- An attempt to “make” the EU to start negotiating with Russia issues associated with the development of security architecture in Europe and to acknowledge the post-soviet space as “a special zone of Russia’s strategic interests”. Moscow still treats the attempts of other states to pursue more vigorous political or economic activity in Eastern Europe as a challenge to the national interests of Russia.²⁶ In other words, in the Eastern ENP dimension the decisions that may not be impacted by the Kremlin are not acceptable to Russia. Therefore Moscow demands to associate the usage of ESDP instruments with a corresponding UN Security Council resolution which could be vetoed by Moscow. Meanwhile Russia by using arguments of political and military integration as well as manipulating the energy resources seeks to reinforce its impact on CIS: it enhances the “collective” security obligations of CIS (i.e. expands impact of the Collective Security Treaty Organization), seeks a “mediator’s” role while “solving” “frozen” conflicts in the South Caucasus and Moldova, etc.
- An attempt to misbalance the transatlantic ties by fostering multipolarity of the international system²⁷. Due to Russia’s objections, EU external pol-

is used for the enhancement of impact on the world economy: annual expenses of the Investment Fund only amount to 3-4 billion USA dollars, whilst expenses of all target federal investment programs amount to 18 billion USA dollars.

²⁵ The Royal Institute of International Affairs, “Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign policy” *Chatham House Papers*, London: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. p.65

²⁶ Haukkala H., Moshes A., “Beyond “Big Band”: the challenges of the EU’s Neighbourhood Policy in the East” *Report of Finish Institute of International Affairs* 9, 2004, p. 19.

²⁷ Rontoyanni C., “So Far, so Good? Russia and ESDP”, *International Affairs* 78(4). 2002, p. 813-830

icy in Eastern Europe is inactive and non-efficient. A clear USA attitude towards the region could foster a more active EU involvement, yet different viewpoints towards the role of international organizations, the right to use the military force, integration of Turkey into EU, etc. remain serious obstacles to the USA and Europe partnership. By using concessions in the energy and other fields, Russia seeks to “fuel up” these differences between the attitudes of USA and EU even more: instead of promoting “collective” solutions EU members are urged to establish bilateral cooperation, implement bilateral initiatives with the Kremlin.

Within this context, the ways, instruments, measures and formats with the help whereof it would be possible to neutralize the threats arising due to Russia’s aggressive foreign policy, should be examined. Paradoxically, the US which is most interested in blocking the power of Russia and its impact in Eastern European countries and South Caucasus, has few opportunities to contribute to the implementation of analogous goals of foreign policy of the Eastern European and Southern Caucasian states. Firstly, the “hard” security instruments (military operations) of NATO are neither the most efficient, nor the most easily used. The “soft” security measures of the Alliance (provision of humanitarian aid, establishment of political dialogue, etc.) have not been developed so far and may not bring great practical benefit (e.g. while solving issues associated with economic progress, “frozen” conflicts, energetic safety, etc.) to the countries located in the Eastern neighbourhood. The US may not offer these countries any integration alternatives in the field of “soft” security. US assistance rendered on bilateral basis would bring positive consequences to Eastern Europe within a medium and long-term perspective only if Eastern Europe remains similarly important to Washington in the global priority scale as it was in the second half of the 20th century. Therefore, conditions for the receipt of assistance from Washington should not oppose these states with the EU – organization integration into which could essentially transform the geopolitical code of the present ENP Eastern dimension countries.

Having sceptically assessed the structural possibilities of NATO to counterbalance Russia’s impact in the region, it should be noted that having set the very same goal, the EU could make use of a number of cooperation formats

and instruments – starting with the provision of assistance and crisis management activities, and finishing with the neighbourhood expansion and development policy. Fear of Russia, however, makes EU not to get directly involved in conflict resolution and to concentrate activities “around the conflict”.²⁸ For example, instead of forming substantial crisis management mission, the EU provides financial support within the framework of the first “pillar” to South Caucasus and Moldova, organizes small civil crisis management operations, sends EU special representatives, tries to assume a “mediation” role (e.g. in Transnistria, according to 5+2 format), etc. In other words, in the region traditionally attributable to Russia’s zone of impact, EU acts more as an economic donor rather than a political actor.²⁹ It is no surprise that EU efforts do not satisfy the beneficiary states: e.g. Georgia has submitted petitions to the EU to form two missions for assessing possible demilitarization of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and monitoring the border between Georgia and Russia.³⁰

Nevertheless, the quite passive EU position does not mean that the EU shall not assume any major crisis management activity in the region in the near future. Having solved political (internal and external) problems on the usage of ESDP instruments in the ENP Eastern dimension, the EU may form, for example, border protection missions that would help Georgia’s and Russia’ border guards to delimitate the state border, foster cooperation on frontier issues.³¹ After reviewing their powers, the special EU representatives already active in the region could take a more vigorous political role in multilateral or bilateral negotiations, submit specific offers regarding conflict resolution on behalf of the EU. The EU essentially has sufficient capacities to support the plans for resolving the existing “frozen” conflict, e.g. to launch a demilitarization or police mission based on the Georgian plan for resolving the South Osetian conflict. EU military forces could supervise the withdrawal of Russia’s military forces and

²⁸ Department of International Development, “Conducting Conflict Assessments: Guidance Notes”, 2002, <<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/conflict-assess-guidance.pdf>>, 28 08 2007.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ “Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU’s Role”. Euro Report 173, 2006. <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4037&cl=1>>, 01 06 2007.

³¹ Vashakmadze M., “The EU and Russian Hegemony in Georgia” in Lejins A, ed., *An Enlarged Europe and its Neighbourhood Policy: The Eastern Dimension*. Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2004, p. 106.

help disarm militarized groups operating therein.³² The EU could contribute by creating a necessary international negotiations format and becoming one of the parties in these negotiations. The EU could also launch a military mission in the Nagorno-Karabakh to ensure security, and then it could send a civil mission which one of the task would be the organization of referendum on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh and implementation of the rule of law principle. In other words, EU has at its disposal a wide array of legal, financial, social and other mechanisms the potential impact whereof on the “frozen” conflicts would be huge³³ and which would undoubtedly have a positive effect in the attainment of goals of the Baltic States’ foreign and security policy. This is possible, however, only if the EU does not get scared of the “clash” of interests with Russia in the ENP Eastern dimension countries.

Conclusions

During the first decade after the reestablishment of independence, the Baltic States primarily sought specific short-term interests, i.e. assistance in neutralizing threats from the East. They had no other choice but to rely on the transatlantic Alliance and its security guarantees. Presently, seeking to counterbalance the impact of Russia in South Caucasus, Moldova, Ukraine or Belarus at least partially, the EU sets up institutes of “democracy” and supports the establishment of democratic political parties. Nevertheless, despite more vigorous activity within the EU framework, the Baltic States still trust the US the most in the security field. Although practically nobody believes in the opportunity to employ article five of the North Atlantic Treaty against Russia, trust in Washington’s commitments remains both important and strong among the new NATO members. In other words, threats posed by Moscow to the “hard” security of the Baltic States (not the threats of trans-national nature or even the “soft” security threats posed by Russia) remain nearly the most important imperative of security and defence policy of the Baltic States. There is no doubt that if some

³² Munteanu I., “Moldova and the EU Neighbourhood Policy” in Lejins A, ed., *An Enlarged Europe and its Neighbourhood Policy: The Eastern Dimension*. Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2004, p. 92.

³³ Popescu N., “The EU and Transnistria”. *UNISCI discussion papers* 10, <<http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00002858/01/popescu.pdf>>, 14 10 2007,

of the great EU states unite with Russia against the US, the Baltic States would give priority to partnership with Washington. As long as the leaders of Germany, France, and the Southern EU countries insistently reiterate the necessity to take into account both the global and regional interests of Russia, NATO will remain to the Baltic States a priority organization for ensuring security. The situation could only change if:

- Nature of the threats remaining the same the EU starts to coordinate its initiatives in the first (ENP) and second pillars (ESDP). So far, ENP and ESDP initiatives regarding crisis prevention and management have been controlled by different EU institutions. Therefore, initiatives implemented within the ESDP framework, lack resources/possibilities and political will. This shortcoming may be eliminated by uniting the instruments of economic cooperation and technical assistance with EU initiatives in the crisis management field;
- Mechanisms for the solution of conflicts in the Eastern ENP neighbourhood are dissociated from the general cooperation of the EU and Russia. The ultimate solution of the “frozen” conflict would be possible only with the participation of all conflicting parties (including Russia). However, for example, EU energy dependency on Russia should not become transformed into concessions to Russia in the Eastern neighbourhood. It is even more important that this dependency should become crucial factor during the negotiations regarding new EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement;
- The biggest countries EU review a list of EU priority regions and start to get ready for the real crisis management operations not only in Africa, but also in Eastern Europe. The new EU member states located in Central Europe have virtually no experience acting in the same region, or opportunities (influence) to initiate the planning of operation and preparation to it. Therefore, so far, ESDP instruments are either unsuitable in principle, or simply too weak to solve the “frozen” conflicts in the ENP Eastern dimension countries. This diminishes the interest of the Baltic States in the ESDP in general.