



The Baltic Forum -2005: Reflecting on the Past, Thinking into the Future

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President of the Baltic Forum

Part and parcel of a democratic society is the ability to resolve issues through discussion in a spirit of tolerance and dialogue, both within the society and in its relationship with its neighbors. Unfortunately, current political and social processes in the post-Soviet area fall seriously short of this ideal. To counter these democratic deficits, in 2000 the Baltic Forum was established in Latvia as an independent, nongovernmental and internationally oriented think tank.

One of the central areas of concern for the Forum has been Baltic-Russian relations. The idea was to create a space for contact among leading experts and public figures from many countries where argument could evolve into dialogue and where the inertia of mutual accusations could give way to a search for mutually acceptable solutions. Five years later, and in the wake of its 10th conference, I am pleased to conclude that the Baltic Forum has succeeded in creating such a space. The Forum has retained its objective and encouraged dialogue between states and people at a time when most members of the political elites have failed to do so.

Although the activities of the Forum take place mostly in Latvia, the Baltic Forum has a truly international-global, European and regional-perspective on the issues it addresses. Such an approach facilitates Latvia's adaptation to its new role as a member of an increasingly integrated European Union and also as part of a larger Europe. The Baltic Forum has succeeded in gathering internationally renowned experts every year, thus proving Latvia's potential as an intellectual hub for the region.

The choice of topic for the recent Baltic Forum conference was ambitious. No conference could possibly remove the question marks from the topic: *The Large Europe of the 21st Century: Common Challenges? Common Values?* Still, I believe that the ambition to pose these questions is fully justified. The awareness of a shared destiny and common values is still forming among Europeans. Even in the "old" Europe, this awareness met a powerful opponent in traditional national mindsets. The recent stalemate regarding the European constitution is just one glaring example of the seriousness of the European identity crisis.

This crisis makes it all the more urgent to address the issues raised in the various sections of the conference: the present and future of the new democracies in the post-Soviet area, the search for a common EU model of sustainable social and economic development, and the fate of the common political, economic, social and humanitarian spaces that might lead to the emergence of a broader concept Europe stretching "from Lisbon to ..."

One invaluable contribution of the Baltic Forum conferences is that they allow experts to transcend the boundaries of their academic disciplines by bringing political scientists and economists into productive dialogue with each other. This is especially important for the post-Soviet states, which face multiple transformations at the same time-economic transition, political reform, social change and an identity shift toward Europe. In this respect, the Forum gives experts, public figures and journalists from the old and new EU countries and their neighbor states, especially Russia, a unique opportunity to engage in a respectful and fruitful dialogue with each other.

The recent conference signifies both consistency and change in the activities of the Baltic Forum. There will be a stronger European "accent" in the Forum's activities-more efforts to promote the European agenda in Latvia, more partnership and networking with the European expert community. Yet one thing will not change: The Baltic Forum will stay true to its mission and remain an open and friendly meeting place for experts and decision makers who share our concern with promoting democratic values, tolerance and dialogue. I believe that with its consistently high level of participants in the conferences and other projects of the Baltic Forum, this meeting place will be becoming more and more crowded.

THE BALTIC FORUM CONFERENCE – 2005

THE LARGE EUROPE OF THE 21ST CENTURY: COMMON CHALLENGES? COMMON VALUES?

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An executive summary



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The first session of the conference was dedicated to an analysis of the 15 years of democratic transformation in Latvia and Russia, as well as the relations between the two countries in that period in the context of the democratic reforms. **Juris Rozenvalds**, professor of political science at the University of Latvia, announced the conclusions of a study on democracy in Latvia. This study sought to evaluate the democratic credentials of the country's institutions; identify what must be done to improve the quality of democracy in different aspects of public life; and inform policy proposals aimed at improving Latvia's democratic institutions. The study highlighted positive and negative aspects of democracy in Latvia.

On the positive side, Latvia has joined the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which creates favorable external conditions for democracy. Voter turnout is higher than the EU average, indicating that Latvians are politically active. In addition, people in Latvia are reasonably satisfied with their lives and want no drastic changes.

The negative aspects of Latvian democracy include the large number of resident non-citizens, a wide income gap between the rich and the poor, and the poor quality of its health care system. Latvian political parties are structurally weak and tend to function as small and undemocratic elite clubs, financed by a few tycoons whose interests they promote. Another problem is high level of political corruption.

Brigita Zepa, professor at the University of Latvia and director of the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences, analyzed Latvian democracy in a broader European context. According to Professor Zepa, “Democracy is perceived as a better political system



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Aleksey Salmin:
“Democracy as an idea has nowadays ceased to be a value and has been transformed into a banality.”

than any alternative by large majorities in both Europe and Latvia”. Eighty-nine percent of Latvians hold this opinion, as do 85% to 96% of Europeans from 32 countries. So a high regard for democracy unites all Europeans. But, as Professor Zepa observed, the real difference is that in Europe, 50% to 75% are satisfied with their existing system, whereas in Latvia only 30% of people approve of the country’s existing model of democracy.

According to the studies Professor Zepa cited, 58% of Latvians believe that strong leaders may be more useful for governing a country than laws and negotiation. In the rest of Europe, only 30% to 35% share this opinion. Why are Latvians so prone to believe in the powers of a strong leader? Professor Zepa pointed to the weakness of civil society in Latvia and the low level of citizen engagement in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In countries where civil society is strong, people are less likely to prefer strong, authoritarian leaders over democratic institutions. This inclination toward strong leaders is dangerous, because “the society surrenders its destiny to the leader and increases possibilities for manipulation by the political elite”. This view is also common in other Baltic nations and in countries formerly part of the Soviet Union.

Ilze Brands-Kehris, director of the Human Rights and Ethnic Studies Center in Riga, Latvia, discussed the citizenship aspect of democracy. For a democratic state to be legitimate, civil society must be engaged actively and effectively in governance. The question is, to what extent must the political sphere and citizenship include all people living in a territory? Analyzing the case of Latvia, Brands-Kehris pointed out that the large number of non-citizens – approximately 20% of the total population – poses a problem. The process of naturalization speeded up moderately in the last year. But the government issued a “very negative signal” by refusing to grant citizenship to a political campaigner who satisfied all the

requirements, allegedly for being “disloyal” to the state. This kind of action creates a negative image of the state and diminishes incentives for naturalization.

Abram Kleckin, professor at the University of Latvia and member of the board of the Baltic Forum, was very critical of the state of democracy in post-Soviet nations, pointing to the “growing tide of pessimism and disaffection in the society, as well as nostalgia for the past and a pervasive feeling of unfulfilled expectations.” Professor Kleckin observed that people feel alienated from the state and totally incapable of influencing it in any way; for this reason a reciprocal alienation is taking hold between government, the state, and power on the one hand and individual citizens on the other.

“In order to change all that, we need genuine democracy,” observed Professor Kleckin. And therefore, “We need to explain to ourselves that we cannot exist without democracy. If we do not succeed at this, we run the risk of repeating the recidives of the past century, meaning the authoritarian experience of the 30s, and that could happen in the future”.

According to Professor Kleckin, the Latvian democracy is not yet authentic, but rather imitative. Mechanisms to promote the development of democracy are badly needed. Society must be made feel that it is a policy maker, not just a policy taker, that it actively participates in democracy and has a stake in its survival and prosperity.



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Alexei Salmin, president of the Russian Societal-Political Centre foundation, expressed the view that democracy as an idea “has nowadays ceased to be a value and has been transformed into a banality.” According to Salmin, however, “there are no powerful antidemocratic movements and ideologies sufficiently attractive to pose a challenge to the complex of democratic values, principles and ideas”. No such ideologies would be able to galvanize the support of the people against the established democratic order. Even in Islamic countries, according to Salmin, democracy is slowly taking root, wrapping itself in Islamic clothes. There is no totalitarian ideology in the world that is currently capable of seducing large numbers of people.

Abram Kleckin:
“there is a growing tide of pessimism and disaffection in the society.”

But **Victor Makarov**, research fellow at the Baltic Forum, disagreed with the idea that democracy is no longer under serious threat, pointing out that, in fact, there are many opponents of democracy: “About everybody

seems to agree that democracy is the best way of government, but the way we act is contradictory to its values and thus undermines it.” According to Makarov, there are many kinds of democracy: efficient and inefficient, stable and unstable. In Latvia no other system of government but democracy is affordable, since Latvia acts in the framework of EU and NATO. But “we may construct a Frankenstein-like democracy – one that wouldn’t make anyone happy, a moribund democracy.” The main of problem of democracy is quality: Therefore, the “democratization” of democracy is in the main challenge of the day. Citing U.S. political scientist Adam Przeworski, Makarov pointed out that “the matter of the quality of democracy is the matter of its very survival.”

Sergey Karaganov, deputy director of the European Institute of the Academy of Science of



PHOTO UPAZE © THE BALTIC FORUM 2005
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Russia and president of the Council of Foreign and Security Policy of Russia, analyzed the interaction of Latvian and Russian societies during the process of democratic transformation and modernization in both countries. According to Karaganov, the EU and NATO membership has improved the Baltic states’ security and will help them overcome the historical problems and complexities in their relations with Russia by providing opportunities to build a more a constructive relationship. Karaganov suggested that the current crisis in Latvian–

Russian relations is just the latest of many such episodes, which soon will belong to the past. Because the Baltic states are now members of the EU, their problems with Russia are no longer bilateral, and the EU will be involved in resolving those problems, especially the territorial disputes Latvia and Estonia have with Russia. “The problems and complexes of the past must be left in the past”, Karaganov said.

Nadezhda Arbatova, head of department at the Institute for World Economy and International Relations in Russia, was less sanguine about the Baltic states’ first year in the EU. According to her, “the fears of the Russian government about the Balts playing an anti-Russian card in the EU have generally come true.” She analyzed the approach of each Baltic state toward

Russia, noting that Lithuania, in spite of the many thorny practical issues between the two countries, is the most pragmatic partner for Russia among the three. Estonia has become more so lately Latvia remains the most “problematic” country for Russia.

Recognizing the growing “democratic deficit” in Russia in the past few years, both Karaganov and Arbatova believed that continuing European integration is necessary to oblige Russia to promote and consolidate democratic reforms and modernization. Karaganov pointed out that Russia’s situation is more difficult than that of the Baltic states, because Russia is not a candidate for membership in the elite democratic clubs like EU and NATO and therefore lacks a clear external framework and incentives for democratization. To complicate matters more, it seems that the EU and the United States are once again adopting a policy of “peaceful coexistence” with Russia; that is, they are eager to cooperate in a pragmatic way on issues like energy and other raw materials and trade, as well as to make use of Russian political resources in fighting terrorism and weapons of mass destruction and managing instability in the Middle East, which are common concerns to all. At the same time, the EU and the United States do not seem very willing to integrate Russia into international democratic institutions.



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“The fears of the Russian government about the Balts playing an anti-Russian card in the EU have generally come true.”

To make matters worse, Arbatova believes, the position of new EU members, especially the Baltic states and Poland, is essentially anti-Russian, which makes cooperation between the EU and Russia more difficult. Previously Arbatova believed that the Baltic states lacked any clear strategy toward Russia, only tactics, but now she feels that “their strategy is akin to that which provided the rationale for creation of NATO – keep the Russians out, among other things.” Arbatova has found this attitude surprising, from countries that only recently made the post-Communist transition themselves and that have benefited generously from international support. She also observed that as the Baltic republics began their respective post-Soviet journeys, the new, democratic Russia was very generous with them and supported their bid for independence. Therefore, no historical cloud should shadow future relations between the Baltic states and Russia. The policy of excluding Russia is short-sighted, since it ignores the essential role played by European integration in nudging Russia toward democracy.

Amazingly, Arbatova concludes, the logic of promotion of democratic transformation through European integration works in case of Turkey, but not Russia.

Pilar Bonet, the Moscow correspondent of the *El Pais* daily (Spain) elaborated on the words of Arbatova and suggested Russia to use more effectively its own resources for democratization, created during the perestroika and the initial years of democratic Russia. Bonet also finds necessary for the EU to harmonize the different views about Russia existing among its members and put forward a comprehensive and coherent strategy for relations with this country.

Sergei Oznobishev, director of the Institute of Strategic Evaluations and vice president of the Russian–American Association, analyzed the interaction between a democratic world order and security. Oznobishev observed that “the decision-making process on the global, and also regional, level rightly provokes concerns due to its insufficiently democratic nature.” As an example, he cited the actions



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of the government of the United States in Iraq as an example of blatant disrespect for the norms and practices of the United Nations and international law. “Doubtless, the regime of Saddam Hussein was detestable, but there need to be universally agreed upon objective criteria and norms that would provide legal basis for such an action,” said Oznobishev. Adopting crucial foreign policy decisions outside the “democratic space” is a priori perilous. Oznobishev concluded that “merely declaring democracy in international

affairs is not enough. It must be backed by real action, starting with respect for international democratic norms when taking the most important foreign policy decisions. Otherwise, international security will suffer.”

Vladimir Averchev, research director at British Petroleum in Russia, pointed out the paradox of discussing the democracy almost exclusively in terms of division of power, political pluralism, and representative or direct democracy while almost completely ignoring the role played by business.

Averchev observed that the business community is different from all other actors in society in the sense that it involves material resources that can be used to influence the political processes that no other actor could match. This is true in countries with a long history of democracy, but even more so in countries like modern-day Russia or Latvia.

Recalling the experience of the economic reforms of the 1990s, Averchev pointed out that one of the most outstanding results was the eclipse of what he called the “Soviet middle class” – the technical and humanitarian intelligentsia, the very part of society that most eagerly supported democratic reforms. With that, the social-political base for democracy has evaporated. As a result, political parties and media have fallen prey to the oligarchic interests.

Is there any way out of this deadlock? – Averchev asked. Is Russia condemned now to become a blend of state capitalism and authoritarian power? In his view, probably the best solution would be to follow the example of Western countries, that is, to simultaneously develop capitalism and form a new managing class. Russia should rely on the model of Europe and the United States, where the impact of big business on policy was severely restricted or altogether prohibited.

Returning to the Latvian–Russian relations, **Nil Ushakov**, board member of the Baltic Forum, pointed out that “all politicians in Latvia, regardless of political affiliation, are quite aware that in long run good relations with Russia will be beneficial for Latvia. But whether good relations are beneficial for a specific political party in Latvia is a different question. In the short run, the costs of promoting good relations with Russia could be higher than benefits. In the long term, however, good relations with Russia could bring economic advantages that people will notice, and they will vote for a party that made efforts to improve relations with Russia.”

Victor Makarov suggested that perhaps it would be more appropriate to talk not about democracy building, but about parallel processes of forging of a national identity in the new nation-states of Latvia and Russia. These processes are the source of problems in bilateral relations: both sides are busy building their national identities by fighting each other within certain limits, lifting “national spirit” against the external enemy. So, Makarov asked sarcastically, maybe there is no reason to worry? Reacting to this remark, **Vladimir Ovchinskiy**, advisor to the Head of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation replied that democracy has so far failed in the post-Soviet space, where “there is indeed no democracy, but rather, as Abram Kleckin said, an

imitation of democracy.” In this context of imitation, alienation is growing between the state and the society, which could lead to turmoil in the post-Soviet space. In this situation, Ovchinskiy said, “Russian society, as well as other societies in the ex-USSR, is overheated with social hatred”. What will come after democracy? – wondered Ovchinskiy. His answer: the ideology of hatred, which is “already coming, as demonstrated recently in Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.”

One of the most vigorous discussion threads during the conference concerned the possibility of common European values and a common identity. Attempts have been made to create a common European identity that would allow us to define ourselves not merely as Latvian, Russian or English, but as European. But so far this process has not been particularly successful. Despite the many mistakes that have been made, however, the process continues, and it permits us to define our identity not only in terms of frontiers, but also in terms of positive values. In addition to defining our values and goals, we must also cope with grave challenges. One of the most defining and indispensable of European values is economic sustainability. In order to increase competitiveness in this era of economic globalization while preserving fundamental European values of solidarity and cohesion is a challenge common both to Europe as a whole and to Latvia.

Dr. **Edvins Karnitis**, member of the Board of Public Service Regulation, spoke about the model of growth that is based, in accordance with the Lisbon strategy, on investment in human capital and sustainable development. This model of growth takes place in the world community of nations. Latvia, being a small country, has a limited capacity to influence global processes. To operate in a global context, Latvia must rapidly and flexibly seize new opportunities and coordinate its actions with other partners.

Karnitis envisaged the following priorities for Latvia:

- define common priorities for economy, research, innovation and education, enhancing them through adequate financial, institutional, normative and other means;

- improve the education system by guaranteeing secondary and quality higher education to everyone, improving the preparation of specialists with the highest qualifications, and increasing the share of technical and engineering programs on all levels;

- take urgent action to improve and increase Latvia’s human capital by promoting more births, improving the health care system, adopting a more flexible migration policy, and lessening tensions in society; and

- place more emphasis on the economic, educational, research and cultural aspects of foreign policy, alongside traditional political and security aspects.

The **Baltic Forum** has launched an initiative to promote much-needed debate on models of socioeconomic development based on European values. The first results of the project were presented at the conference. The discussion paper titled “Knowledge-Based Welfare Society: An Alternative Social-Economic Development Strategy for Latvia” (by Tatyana Bogushevitch, Viktor Makarov and Marita Timofeeva) offers values, principles and ideas for the future development of Latvia. According to the authors, “the economy and information are the main vehicles for growth and development.” The knowledge- and information-based economy is the key to success in the economic framework of globalization. As a small country Latvia is dependent on external processes, and its government will play an important role by increasing its own efficiency and promoting a dynamic society.

At the center of Latvia’s future is a free individual who defines his or her own needs, values and priorities. Society requires cooperation and bonds of trust among individuals to prosper. Without this trust, these authors warned, there is no possibility to build an efficient economy, foment solidarity and refine the social-economic model to achieve more than just GDP growth.

The authors believe that “any social-economic choice for Latvia would include the welfare state. The debate is not whether we need a welfare state; it’s about the most appropriate system of welfare for Latvia. The most appealing examples are the Nordic countries, which are the most successful welfare states”. The most important elements of the welfare state model are universal guarantees for all based on the principles of freedom, solidarity, social citizenship and social justice.

But **Morten Hansen**, lecturer at the Eurofaculty of the University of Latvia and the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, does not believe that the welfare society is necessarily the best model to follow. He thinks that the new members of EU must concentrate their efforts on ensuring continued high levels of economic growth. This can be done by both reducing and leveling tax rates, preserving labor mobility and increasing immigration, even though this might be politically controversial.

Hansen agreed that it is necessary to increase investment in human capital, especially for education, but he expressed doubts about the reasons given. Hansen noted that the Latvian economy is growing very fast – its GDP growth rate in 2004 was 7.5%, among the highest in the EU. Such levels of economic growth result in increased tax inflow, making it possible to finance social programs. “Look at what France and Germany are doing, and do the opposite”, Hansen advised.

Carlos Closa Montero, research director at the Center for Political and Constitutional Studies in Madrid, Spain, answered in the positive to the question of whether Europeans have common values. It’s a



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Haris Xiruhakis:
“A large majority of Europeans believe that social justice is a key value.”

question of self-identification, he believes, since “we are talking about universal values, not just European. What makes values European or American is the way we interpret them in our culture”. Closa pointed out that the European constitution provides a framework for promoting European values. Article 2 mentions the key European values – freedom, dignity, rule of law, respect for human rights, and so forth. These values are common to all members of the EU, as well as others like tolerance and non-discrimination.

Closa emphasized the importance of economic values embedded in the European constitution. One of the core elements of the constitution is the concept of the “social state” or the “welfare state”. Despite the recognition of the social nature of the economy, however, it is obvious that the main driving force is the market. But Closa noted some challenges in promoting these values in the EU on the level of both individual member states and the Union as a whole. He singled out insufficient budget resources and the limited nature of the EU’s social policy as particularly important challenges.

Haris Xiruhakis, representative of the Council of the European Union, Brussels, pointed out the importance of defining values that would allow one to speak about the Europeans as a single, coherent entity. Foremost among these values are traditional individual values like family and work. Religion, however, does not rank among the values most appreciated by Europeans. Then there are political and economic values. The market economy generally enjoys

support in Europe. But this support is balanced by the widely held belief that the state must provide for social security. A large majority of Europeans believe that social justice is one of the key values; equality and welfare also rank high. There is a common understanding of freedom, peace and respect for cultural diversity in Europe. Xiruhakis stressed the importance of the latter, pointing out that the more culturally diverse European society is, the more respect is accorded to other cultures and their right to exist and prosper.

Speaking about the European Constitution, Xiruhakis noted that new principles are embedded in it that reflect growing concerns, including, for example, the ecology and tolerance toward the private life of individuals.

Eldar Mamedov, research fellow at the Baltic Forum, Latvia/Spain, analyzed the similarities and differences between European and American values. Mamedov pointed out the solid empirical evidence that in some questions Europe is moving fast toward liberal, postmodern values – for example, in issues related to the use of violence (such as the death penalty, arms control) and religion (abortion, homosexuality) – while America is more postmodern and Europe is more traditional in questions like immigration and multiculturalism.

Generally, as Mamedov pointed out, research on world values shows that the real value gap is not between America and Europe, but between rich and poor countries. Rich countries tend to a greater or lesser extent to embrace postmodern values of self-expression, while poor countries adhere to traditional values. America is the most traditionally minded country among the rich, but almost exclusively due to the role religion plays in American society. But in fact, even regarding such issues as the death penalty and homosexual rights, America is slowly becoming more liberal.



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Mamedov concluded that in questions like democracy, human rights, market economy, gender equality, abortion, divorce and homosexuality there is no real value gap between America and Europe. America and Europe are moving in the same direction – toward postmodern values – but Europe is moving faster, while America is slowing down.

In questions relevant to foreign policy, both sides view threats quite similarly, and terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism and global economic crises rank among

the most important of them. Due to their different historical experience, Americans are more inclined toward use of force to solve international crises, whereas Europeans prefer diplomacy and negotiation.

Herbert Schui, Professor of Business and Politics at the University of Hamburg, analyzed differing concepts of the welfare state and the social market economy. The European constitution enshrines the social market economy in Article 3, defining it as a goal to be achieved. This system promotes free markets and competition and ensures the most optimal use of resources. It's different from the welfare state, and many social-democratic parties in Europe have now embraced the concept as their own.

Whereas the welfare state ensures positive outcomes for its citizens, the social market economy achieves those outcomes by unleashing the forces of free markets. The welfare state is paternalistic, and the social market economy emphasizes the role and responsibility of the individual.

Leonid Grigoryev, President of the Institute of Energy and Finance foundation and president of the Association of Independent Centers of Economic Analysis in Russia, focused on economic growth in the eastern Baltics. After comparing macroeconomic data on the countries of the region, Grigoryev concluded that Russia has finally completed its transition from state-run economy to free market. There are grounds for optimism about Russian economic performance. However, in Grigoryev's words, "there is growth, but no happiness in Russia." This paradox can be explained by Russia's low rate of savings: Russia continues to export extraordinary amounts of money and makes no use of its own financial resources. "Russia is a rich country with very bad management at the level of the company, and it does not use its own resources to modernize", observed Grigoryev. The biggest problem of all, he said, is the lack of a clearly articulated strategy for long-term development.

Alf Vanags, director of the Baltic International Center of Economic Policy (BICEPS) in Latvia, analyzed the most relevant factors influencing Latvian economic development. He pointed to the growth in the non-trade sector based on the use of information technologies. As for sustainable development, he believes, Latvia will have to seriously consider promoting immigration, which may be controversial from a political point of view.

Helmut Sonnenfeldt, Research Fellow at the Brookings Institution and former deputy national security advisor to President Nixon, Washington, DC,

recognized the successful integration of Latvia into a number of important international organizations, chief among them the EU and NATO. As a NATO member, Latvia must be ready to contribute to international security. Sonnenfeldt believes that the role of NATO is still very relevant but that the nature of security risks and threats has changed. Nowadays those threats originate mainly from outside the area of NATO, but some come from within, as in the case of Balkans.

The threat of international terrorism, in Sonnenfeldt's words, "is a far more complicated and controversial problem than a conventional, traditional war." He commended Latvia and other countries of the region for actively participating in NATO operations and in the war on terrorism.

Kari Hiepko-Oderman, Research Fellow at the German Council on Foreign Relations, noted that Latvia's foreign policy is driven by internal political considerations, motivated in large part by distrust of Russia. She pointed out a lack of confidence in Latvian foreign policy that prompts it to turn its back on Russia and orient exclusively toward the West.

In the 1990s Latvia placed priority on its integration to the EU and NATO. Now that these goals are fulfilled and Latvian independence is firmly secured, it is time to heal wounds and close gaps in the Latvian society, Hiepko-Oderman said.

Marina Lebedeva, Director of World Political Processes at the Institute of International Relations, Russia, described a number of cooperation initiatives between Russia and Latvia in the field of higher education. The framework for this cooperation was reinforced after the EU and Russia signed a "road map" for the creation of joint efforts in science and education, including those with a cultural emphasis. This cooperation is smoothed by the many similarities between the systems of higher education in Russia and Latvia and by the high level of Russian language knowledge among Latvians.

Nevertheless, despite these favorable conditions, cooperation between Latvia and Russia in higher education is very limited. Countries like Sweden and Finland cooperate actively with Russia in the creation of



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Helmut Sonnenfeldt:
"NATO is still very relevant but that the nature of security risks and threats has changed."

joint postgraduate programs and exchange programs for students and professors, among other projects. These countries also implement on a bilateral level the

Bologne declaration on the integration of higher education systems in Europe, which both Russia and Latvia have signed. As Lebedeva pointed out, this cooperation has prospered despite the far bigger cultural and linguistic differences between these countries and Russia.



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In Search of Europe: Dialogues, a book written by Zalman Katz and published by the Baltic Forum, was presented at the conference. Thirty experts from the Baltic states, Russia, the United States, Germany, Poland and Finland contributed to this publication, engaging in a fruitful dialogue with each other and with readers across countries, cultures and languages.

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