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Russia's Foreign Policy after September 11**

The article deals with the issue on Russian foreign policy in length of one year – from September 2001 till October 2002. It's evident, that the attacks of terrorists on the Twin Towers in New York signalled the turn in Russian foreign policy under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin from confrontation with USA and Euro Atlantic organizations to the cooperation with the said opponents. The turn was influenced by the objective bankrupt to confront with the West. Otherwise, the domestic high popularity rating of President Putin and his image of the State's consolidator, what has been originated on the brutal represses of Chechnya's separatism and the authoritarian concentration of power, served for the taken, non popular in Russia, course of ally with the West and particularly with USA.

It's shown within the article, how fluctuated the emphasises of Putin's policy in the analysed period, i.e. from the cooperation of USA and Russia in crushing the Afghanistan's Talibs, from the entering into the pact START – 3 and establishing NATO - Russian Council to the reactivated flirtation with Peking and Phenian, and the blackmail with the rockets "Satana". It is also established, how Putin's diplomacy relates the brewed Iraq crisis and the case of Chechnya militants in Georgia Pankisi pass and how for the pro western political course was obtained the transit through Lithuania to/ from Kaliningrad.

In sum, Putin just modifies the previous Russian (Eugenie Primakov) so called multipolar World strategy. The emphasises of Putin's political line point up not the forthright blocking of USA power, but the game of diplomatic in the concert of Great Powers, where Putin himself appears as a good player. The democracy itself doesn't take the priority in Russia and Putin's policy, meanwhile, doesn't lead to structural integration with the West, but far to the specific contiguous of Russian and the West structures. On the one part Euro Atlantic military structures enter into the post Soviet Union space – into Baltic countries, also Transcaucasia and Central Asia, on the other part the Russian energetics' capital penetrates to Central East Europe and Balkans, Russia preserves and even expands its influence upon Central Asia and the Far East.

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Introduction

Today it is common to regard the terrorist attack against the Trade Centre Towers on September 11, 2001, as the boundary date in the development of international relations. The idealists treat that event as a precondition for the entire civilised world to unite against a common threat that arose – terrorism. The realists are more sceptical and they are not inclined to believe that the customary competition for power between countries would disappear. In this context, following the events of September 11, 2001, the foreign policy of Russia is often regarded as a catalyst for this dilemma. It is thought that the nature of further international relations will greatly depend on what policy Russia is going to pursue – whether it will unite with the most developed countries of the world against barbaric manifestations or will make use of the situation to regain its former power. Such opinion is sufficiently wide-spread irrespective of the fact that Russia is no longer a superpower able to dictate its fashions to the world¹.

The fact that the President of Russia Vladimir Putin was the first to telephone the US President George W. Bush after the terrorist attacks to express his condolences and solidarity has been often mentioned of late. The idealists treat this fact as a guideline testifying to the fundamental strategic change in Russia's security and foreign policy, which marks the beginning of a new epoch in the relations between the East and the West, and Washington and Moscow, in particular. Even the concept that September 11 re-established the bipolar system has appeared. The difference is that now the USA and all other members of the anti-terrorist coalition, including Russia, form one pole, whereas barbaric states and international terrorist organisations belong to the other pole.²

Apart from all that, ringing declarations about the end of the Cold War started to be made, as if what was said a decade ago has been forgotten. Then followed the adjustments – it was not the Cold War that has apparently ended, but “the period following the Cold War”, that is, the post-post-Cold-War era³ has started. The truth is, it is strange that such optimistic sophistication can be presented in all seriousness in the post-modern era.

The sceptics do not leave it unanswered. Their doubts are based on the following arguments: what can one expect from the President, a regular KGB officer

¹ A vivid illustration: during his visit to Moscow in October 2002 Prime Minister of Israel A. Sharon characterised Russia as a superpower. Though it is common knowledge that currently by its economic capacity Russia can equal to such countries as Holland or even Portugal.

² Viewpoints// Security Dialogue, vol. 32, No. 4, December 2001, 499–509.

whose one of the first initiatives upon taking over presidency was bringing back the national anthem of the USSR, who during the period of his rule took draconian measures to annex Chechnya and transformed Russia's political system in the direction of authoritarianism? How seriously can we take the statements about Moscow's good will with respect to the West, when a year ago under Vladimir Putin's rule new strategies of security and foreign policy oriented towards the search for "a peculiar road" of Russia and by their nature hostile to the West were adopted?⁴ It was not by chance that within such context a joke that Vladimir Putin expressed his condolences to Bush ... before the September 11 events took place became widespread.

The realists, when reasoning about the course of Russia's foreign policy towards the rapprochement with the West declared by President Putin, were inclined to treat it as a temporary and situational course, which was based, all in all, only on *quid pro quo* calculations with respect to Chechnya, the Baltic States and financial issues urgent to Russia.

The year following September 11, 2001 is too short a time to either confirm or deny the above-presented approaches. Contradictory arguments can be found in the development of the events of the past year. On the other hand, the sum of these arguments provides a certain basis for making a judgement about the trends in Russia's foreign policy.

1. Experience

One of the basic problems that occurred in the foreign policy of the new Russia following the downfall of the USSR was the incompatibility of the real possibilities with the image of the former world power, which was still prevailing in the country⁵. That problem could be solved in many different ways. The first post-Soviet Foreign Minister of Russia Andrej Kozyrev tried to conceal the above-mentioned incompatibility in a peculiar way. It is known that during the initial period following the end of the Cold War idealistic visions about the disappearance of basic contradictions between the East and the West, about a universal distribution of liberal democracy, about institutionalism as the main paradigm of the future international system, etc., still prevailed in the world. Therefore, it is not surprising that Kozyrev tried to cover Russia's weakness by emphatically taking part in joint actions with the large Western states and by building new international institutions in which power and incapability of a separate state had "to melt". For some time the Western leaders, particularly the then US President W. Clinton, helped maintain the illusion that the new Russia was almost as powerful a state as the former USSR had been. There was even a certain "honeymoon" in the relations between Washington and Moscow⁶.

³ Graeme P.Herd, Ella Akerman, Russian Strategic Realignment and the Post-Post-Cold War Era?// Security Dialogue, Vol. 33, No. 3, September 2002, 358.

⁴ Česlovas Laurinavičius, Raimundas Lopata, Valdžios perdavimas įvyko, o kas toliau?// Tarptautinė politika: komentarai ir interpretacijos, Vilnius, Eugrimas, 2002, pp. 153–155; Vladas Sirutavičius, Iš Kremliaus vėl girdėti didžiavalstybinės melodijos// op.cit. 151–158.

⁵ Richardas Krickus, Rusijai būtina visam laikui atsisakyti didybės sindromo// Daily Lietuvos rytas, 2002 03 02, No. 50.

⁶ S. Neil MacFarlane, Russia, the West and European Security// Survival, Vol. 35, Autumn 1993, 3–25; Marek Menkiszak, Wybrane zagadnienia problematyki bezpieczeństwa Federacji Rosyjskiej// Polska I Rosja. Strategiczna sprzeczność i możliwości dialogu. Red. A. Magdziak–Miszewka, Warszawa, 1998, 128–130; Raimundas Lopata, Tarptautinių santykių istorija, Vilnius, ARLILA, 2001, 180.

However, realities still manifested themselves, and Russians began to feel ever stronger that they did not live in the country that everybody feared and respected. Difficulties in the interior transformation and failures in the economic policy were also added. It became fashionable to lay blame for the difficulties and offended ambitions on the West and on the United States of America, in particular. Kozyrev was accused of the course of co-operation with the West without the Court of Appeal. It was stated that such course only undermined Russia's authority and contributed to the establishment of absolute dominance of the USA in the world.

Jevgenij Primakov, who replaced Kozyrev, represented the *real politik* traditions. His conception of foreign policy was based on the following principle: the world should not be one-poled, it must have many poles. This meant that Russia did not only have to co-operate with the USA, but also to do its utmost to limit the power of the USA by all possible means. As a balance to America, Primakov started forming different unions and geopolitical blocks from the states, which were hostile to the West⁷. Thus, the so-called "the six of Shanghai" appeared, and strategic relations with Iraq, Iran, Libya, North Korea were renewed. Hence, Russia started pursuing the traditional policy of the balance of forces (or the policy of "the zero sum"). At the same time, the image of Russia as an Eurasian power was propagated. Briefly speaking, the foreign policy carried out by Primakov increased the gap between Russia's ambitions and real possibilities. Such line of policy complied with the visions of the nationalists and the so-called *derzavninks*, and Primakov's authority was rapidly strengthening in the country. However, the Kosovo crisis in the spring of 1999 (when Russia, having provocatively severed relations with the West, found itself in isolation) revealed the weakness of Russia's foreign policy more than anything had done that before. That crisis actually marked the downfall of Primakov's strategy.

Upon coming to power, Vladimir Putin, basing himself on the experience of his predecessors, could have drawn the following conclusions: it is senseless to carry out a conflicting policy with respect to the West, however, it is risky to co-operate with the West without having authority inside the country. In any case, Vladimir Putin started, first and foremost, to concentrate power in his hands. Having made use of the terrorist acts in Moscow and Volgograd, he resolutely waged a new war in Chechnya. The war fostered nationalism and chauvinism, and such atmosphere was convenient for Putin to restrict democratic freedoms and build the so-called "vertical line of power". A wave of criticism came from the West. However, due to the extent of the scoring ratings of Vladimir Putin in Russia, criticism from the outside weakened.

At the beginning of his presidency Putin avoided making profound changes in the foreign policy. His first visits to China, North Korea, Cuba perfectly matched his foreign policy. However, these visits, quite possible, only confirmed the conclusion that the prospect of modernisation of Russia was possible in co-operating with the West rather than with the backward and aggressive states.

It is known that after the failures of Primakov and President Boris Yeltsin, the relations with the West worsened. A number of interior and exterior circumstances interfered with their renewal. In this sense, the terrorist attacks in New York and

⁷ Leszek Buszynski, *Russia and the West: Towards Renewed Geopolitical Rivalry?* // *Survival*, Vol. 37, No. 3, Autumn 1995, 104–125; Irina Kobrinskaja, *Czy Zachod może zaakceptować Rosyjskie koncepcje bezpieczeństwa?* // *Polska i Rosja*, 124–125.

Washington presented a good chance for a change. From the point of view of foreign policy, at that time solidarity with America corresponded with the orientation of the entire civilised world, whereas from the point of view of home policy, condemnation of terrorist acts – no matter where they manifested themselves – was in line with the so-called anti-terrorist campaign against Chechnya.

By the way, it should be noted, that President Putin's solidarity with America was far from being approved in Russia, and some people did not even try to conceal their disapproval. Representatives of the generals (Leonid Ivashkov) and liberal democrats (Leonid Mitrofanov) referred to the assistance provided to America as "a geopolitical suicide". In their opinion, the terrorist acts committed by Islamists against the USA, apparently signified the agony of Western democracy, therefore, it was better for Russia to stay away and wait for a suitable moment when it could again become autocratic in the world.

On the whole, it is believed that President Putin had made up his mind to take the course towards the West before September 11 already⁸. However, it is not clear how far he planned to go. Hardly could he have planned such strategic orientation, towards which Konrad Adenauer turned Germany in his time. Most likely, the course planned by Vladimir Putin had to run somewhere between the traces left by Kozyrev and Primakov.

2. Steps Taken towards Co-operation with the West

2.1. The Rout of the Talibs

Concrete assistance to the Americans in crushing the Talibs of Afghanistan as the breeding ground of terrorism was the first steps that President Putin took in the co-operation with the West. True, these steps are interpreted differently.

When Russia posed no obstacles to taking military actions against Afghanistan (though it could do that through the Security Council of the UNO), such behaviour of Russia could be interpreted as a desire to involve Americans into a risky war. Then a great many Russian generals and politicians openly forecast that America would get involved and find itself in a similar crisis as it had been in during the Vietnam War. It is known that the case was different. The Talibs were crushed severely and in the shortest time possible. In this way, the USA once again proved its unequalled military power in Afghanistan, and the above-mentioned forecasters had to swallow a bitter pill.

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 antime, the Kremlin, with the strategic course of events in Afghanistan becoming more apparent, did not change its resolution to co-operate in the anti-terrorist coalition led by the USA. It is believed that, to a great extent, it was due to this fact that it became possible to make use of the forces that were opposed to the Talibs and acted in the North of Afghanistan, to create a new political system in Afghanistan⁹. True, this step could also be explained by the motive of traditional realism. The thing is that Russia did not feel safe in the neighbourhood of the Talibs, especially having in mind

⁸ Graeme P. Herd, Ella Akerman, op. cit.

⁹ Arminas Norkus, Maskvos žaidėjai – igudė// *Daily Lietuvos rytas*, 2002 09 07, No. 207.

the relations of the latter with the Chechen fighters. Therefore, the Kremlin's interest to weaken the pressure of Islamic radicalism from the South seemed quite understandable, irrespective of the fact that it was done at the expense of the demonstration of the USA power. According to the Director of Moscow Institute of Strategic Studies A. Konovalov, by means of its policy with respect to Afghanistan, Vladimir Putin "for the first time managed to buy security for the USA taxpayers' money rather than for the blood of the Russians". On the other hand, judging from the activity shown by Russia in contributing to the restoration of normal life in Afghanistan, one can forecast that in the future that activity and influence will increase. Thus, by means of elementary pragmatism, President Putin could achieve in Afghanistan what the Soviet leaders failed to achieve during the war that lasted for a decade.

However, another step – permitting (or making no objections to) Americans to build their bases in the former Soviet republics of Middle Asia and Georgia – clearly overstepped the limits of the traditional policy. True, this step was also related to both the Afghanistan campaign and a danger of the Islamic radicalism. Nevertheless, the permission for the American military forces to cross the boundaries of the so-called Commonwealth of Independent States, signified already practical and immediate military co-operation with the former strategic rival No. 1 on the arena of the "Moscow Monro" doctrine that had seemed autocratic until that time. This was not the case even during the so-called Great Patriotic War.

By the way, attention should be drawn to the fact that the penetration by the USA is going on along the parameter of the southern borders of Russia. This tendency particularly frightens Russian geopoliticians. They are afraid that NATO, which is enlarging from the West, will unite with the so-called GUUAM (the regional unit embracing Moldova, the Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan), and Russia will find itself within the surrounding ring – as if according to the scenario of "anaconda" of the USA geopolitician Alfred Mahan. It is clear that the context of this or similar scenarios only increases one's surprise at the originality of the Kremlin's position.

The decision-making technology with respect to the above-mentioned steps is not clear enough. This would require a special investigation. One thing is obvious: all these steps met with a strong opposition in Russia – especially with respect to the USA military bases on the territory of the former USSR. However, the process was going on because it was the President of Russia Vladimir Putin who provided impetus for the support. For example, after the information about the deployment of American officers in Georgia at the end of February 2002 was disseminated, the Foreign Ministry of Russia lodged an official protest to the US Government. However, shortly after that, in one of his speeches President Putin actually denied that protest, stating that he saw nothing wrong in the fact that Americans should take part in the anti-terrorist action in the Caucasus, like they did in Middle Asia¹⁰. Such course of events reminded of the famous revolutionary period of perestroika, when non-standard political moves initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev led to the incompatibility of actions of Soviet institutions. However, at the same time, such situation reminded of the so-called "Gorbachev's syndrome", which meant both an increase of the state leader's popularity abroad and the same leader's breaking away from the prin-

¹⁰ Česlovas Iškauskas, Rusija nenori dalytis su JAV Kaukazo// *Daily Lietuvos rytas*, 2002 03 04, No. 51; The Bush and Putin Encore// *Newsweek*, May 27, 2002, 20–23.

principles prevailing in his state.

Vladimir Putin, at least thus far, has escaped Gorbachev's fate. In this respect, a peculiar phenomenon could be observed. On the one hand, a general manifestation of the moods in Russia meant a universal disapproval of concessions made to America. Opposition to America was on the increase. For example, the assessment of the performance of the sportsmen at the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City brought on anti-American hysteria¹¹ in Moscow. However, on the other hand, disapproval of the foreign policy of Russia being pursued was not related to President Putin. At the same time, the rating witnessed that Putin's popularity was quite high. This case would require a special social psychological study, however, one thing is obvious – it testifies to the importance of authority in Russia.

2.2. The Issue of Anti-Missile System

It is known that the administration of the Republicans headed by G.W. Bush Jr. has taken the course towards the creation of anti-missile system since the very beginning of its rule. Practically, this entails new huge expenditures. The US economic and technical potential provides the Americans with some luxury, however, no other state, including Russia, can afford this. If the Americans succeeded in creating such system, it would mean for Russia that the nuclear missile potential that it possesses would no longer guarantee its strategic priority over the USA within the framework of the Mutual Assured Destruction, MAD, doctrine. In other words, Russia would lose its last attribute, which maintains its image as a superpower.

Russia could oppose to such perspective in two ways. Firstly, by making use of common propagandistic measures of the Soviet times and by means of diplomatic channels, it was possible to develop dissatisfaction of separate countries with the plans of anti-missile systems and to form such moral climate in the world that the USA would not dare to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, ABM, 1972. Secondly, having made its citizens tighten their belts, it was possible to try to maintain the remaining potential of the strategic missiles (about 6,000 warheads) or even to extend it. True, in both cases a doubtful effect was foreseen due to different reasons. However, somehow or other, one can maintain that President Putin has not exhausted the above-mentioned possibilities. At the end of 2001, after G.W. Bush announced his withdrawal from the 1972 Treaty, Vladimir Putin's reaction was moderate. He called it a mistake, however, at the same time, he expressed hope that the decision of the USA Government would not damage the relations between the two countries. It was obvious that President Putin put up with the reality that America was not to be overtaken from the strategic point of view. He even failed to make use of the available propagandistic reserve to appeal to Europeans, who were dissatisfied with the unilateral actions of Americans. According to the statement of the military expert Aleksandr Golc made in one of television programmes "Vremena", because of this position, President Putin had received a protest letter signed by nearly one hundred high

¹¹ During the Olympic Games the famous artist Zadornov tore the USA visa into pieces during the television programme, the anti-American Resolution was adopted at the Duma, Grigorij Jevlinski, one of those who tried to appease the rage, was publicly attacked, etc.

Russian officials.

In May 2002, President Putin and the US President Bush signed a new Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions called START –3, according to which both parties undertook to reduce the number of warheads from 6,000 to 2,200-1,700. At that time, Russian political commentators stated that the signing of the treaty meant some concession on the side of Americans. At first, they did not want that treaty at all. And the very fact of the signing of the treaty demonstrates that the USA and Russia were worth each other in the sphere of missile armament. However, another assessment of the treaty is possible, too. Actually, the treaty testifies that Russia refuses its plans to increase the number of warheads¹². Hence, it will not seek to keep the Americans in fear of their possible annihilation. Perhaps it was due to this fact, that after signing the above-mentioned treaty, discussions about the essential end of the Cold War epoch renewed. In other words, the treaty meant that the countries were stepping back from one of the main parameters of the Cold War – Mutually Assured Destruction, MAD.

2.3. Restoration of Relations with NATO

The September 11 events contributed to the restoration of the relations with NATO, which broke off following the Kosovo crisis in the spring of 1999. When Vladimir Putin visited NATO Headquarters in Brussels on October 2, 2001, he did refer to Russia's possibility to join that organisation. It actually happened half a year later: on May 27, 2002, the Joint Council of Russia and NATO was established in Rome. Within the framework of that Council, the Russian generals were able to sit down with the representatives of NATO states at the same table as equals according to the "20" format and consider various issues of international politics and security.

True, within the framework of the Council, Russia failed to acquire the veto right in solving the issues of the enlargement of the Alliance as well as security issues of its individual members. Moreover, Russians did not manage to get the desired rights in the sphere of the sale of weapons¹³. Therefore, many people in Russia expressed doubts about the necessity of the new institute. However, the ongoing discussion evidenced that the Kremlin was determined to firmly pursue the line of cooperation with NATO. By the way, with negotiations about the prerogatives of the Council going on, it was again possible to notice the incompatibility of the positions of separate Russian institutions – like on the issue of the USA bases in the Trans-Caucasus and Middle Asia¹⁴.

The problem of NATO enlargement is especially difficult for Russia. True, even during the visit of the President of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus to Moscow in the spring of 2001, it was evident that the Russian authorities were inclined to put up with the prospect of the membership of the Baltic States in the Alliance. Though strong dissatisfaction was expressed in Russia on this account too. A peculiar struggle between "the hawks" and "the doves" was going on. "The hawks", that is a number of the representatives of Russia's political establishment (Sergeij Rogov, Vechiaslav Niko-

¹² Josef Goldblat, *The 2002 Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions// Security Dialogue*, vol. 33, No. 3, September 2002, 391–392.

¹³ <http://www.ng.ru/politics/2002-05-28/2-friendship.html>.

¹⁴ Richardas Krickus, *NATO ateitis jau tapo ir Rusijos rūpesčiu// Lietuvos rytas*, 2002 04 27, No. 96

nov, the above-mentioned Ivashov and others) from time to time gave clear hints to their authorities that the latter should relate Russia's joining the anti-terrorist coalition to putting a stop to NATO enlargement. At a minimum, they required to relate the membership of the Baltic States in the Alliance to the extension of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces Reductions to the Eastern Baltic region. (By the way, Russians' request was approved by some allies in the southern flank. However, the opinion of Americans, that there was no relation between the membership of the Baltic States in the Alliance and the issues of Conventional Armed Forces reductions, took the upper hand.) Briefly speaking, many people in Russia understood the restoration of the relations with NATO as a usual concession to the West.

Meanwhile, "the doves" argued that in the changing international situation NATO was losing its importance and there was no sense to break lances over its enlargement¹⁵. There were sound grounds for such arguments. In the heat of the anti-terrorist campaign, sceptical remarks made by the US administration with respect to NATO and orientation towards "flexible coalitions" of the new type in the fight against terrorism declared by President Bush in fact strengthened doubts about the perspective of the Alliance itself. The question "What NATO are we joining?" was asked in the Baltic States¹⁶. When the global re-grouping of forces started in connection with the anti-terrorist coalition, the rapprochement of the USA and Russia faced a relevant question – what form and meaning should the trans-Atlantic axis acquire? No matter what the future of NATO actually is, the discussion in Russia amortised, in a sense, the issue of the enlargement of the Alliance, which in many cases is merely a psychological one¹⁷.

2.4. The Issue of Strategic Raw Materials

With the situation in the Middle East growing sharper due to Islamic radicalism, the USA was made to re-consider priorities of the regions from which it received the basic amount of raw energy materials. It was only Russia that could equal the Middle East in its resources of raw materials. Therefore, the so-called geoenergetic aspect began to play an ever more important role in the USA-Russia relations¹⁸. Recently, special preparations have been made to start direct transportation of oil by tankers from Russia to the USA through Murmansk and the Far East ports. The policy with respect to these subjects, which, one way or another, would participate in the geoenergetic co-operation between the USA and Russia, has begun to change accordingly.

In the person of its President Putin Russia stopped blocking the international treaty on the use of oil resources in the Caspian Sea and, following the negotiations that lasted for more than four years, the possibility to lay a pipeline through Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey to the Mediterranean Sea (Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan) was raised in the summer of 2002. Russia and the USA should become guarantors of this

¹⁵ "We think that NATO is already the past. This organisation did not participate in the war waged in Afghanistan because it operated in a very conservative way. The Russians would have been much more effective in the first stage of the war", said one of the Kremlin functionaries who did not want his name to be disclosed.

¹⁶ Ričardas Gavelis "What NATO is Lithuania Joining// Veidas, 2002 06 06, 54.

¹⁷ Arkady Moshes, The Double Enlargement, Russia and the Baltic States // Working Paper, 2002/4.

¹⁸ In one of his interviews the Russian politologist Sergej Karaganov stated: "The Americans understand that the process of the downfall of the Arab regimes has started. Therefore the role of Russia and its oil is sure to grow" // Financial Times, 2002 03 18.

pipeline. At that time, a number of bilateral agreements between Russia and Kazakhstan, between Russia and Azerbaijan, and between Russia and the Ukraine on transportation of oil and gas to the West were signed. This testifies to Russia's striving to become by itself, or by joining its neighbours, the former vassals, a strategic supplier of energy raw materials to the West.

Here it is worth mentioning President Putin's activity with respect to the Ukraine. In the first half of 2002, he met with the President of the Ukraine Leonid Kuchma as often as five times. The agreements reached testify that Russia no longer objected to transportation of gas from Russia to the West through the Ukraine. Earlier it was planned to lay the pipeline through Belarus. Does it mean that Russia will not take to the policy of cheap blocking and blackmailing the countries which cooperate with the West (the Ukraine, the Caucasus, etc.) and will no longer support Lukashenka's parasitic and anti-Western regime in Belarus? The question remains open. Anyway, it was in the summer of 2002, that disagreements between President Putin and Lukashenka came to light. The main reason of these disagreements seems to have been Lukashenka's refusal to privatise oil and gas enterprises in Belarus to which Russian companies laid claims. For example, the company "Jukos" wanted to purchase an oil refinery in Mozyr, the largest enterprise of that kind in the region (for more detail see the article by Raimundas Lopata).

Within the context of transportation of raw energy materials from Russia to the Western countries, it is worth remembering the fate of Mažeikiai Oil Refinery. It is known that in 1999 the refinery was sold to the USA company "Williams", which planned to refine oil brought from Russia and sell it to the Western market at a profit. By the way, in selling the company, Lithuania created exceptionally favourable conditions for the US company "Williams". Hence, through the geoeconomic interest, it was sought to provide Americans with additional impetus to establish themselves in the region geopolitically.

For nearly three years the business was slack because Russia blockaded transportation of oil to Mažeikiai. One may guess that impetus for the things to get moving from the dead point was given by a number of meetings of President Bush and President Putin during the period between the autumn of 2001 and the spring of 2002. Anyway, in June 2002, "Williams" finally managed to reach an agreement on supply of oil with the Russian company "Jukos". However, the matter did not rest at that. Hardly two months following the agreement had passed, and "Williams" withdrew altogether, letting "Jukos" have all the positions.

Such castling may be accounted for by specific circumstances related to the financial problems inside "Williams" in America itself. However, having looked at the region more broadly, it is not difficult to see that Russian oil and gas companies are trying to establish their positions in a similar way in other countries of Central-Eastern Europe – Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and even Slovenia¹⁹. Hence, Russia's impact is broadly extending towards the Baltic and the Mediterranean Sea basins. Having in mind history and Russia's geopolitical theories as well as the signal which is ever more often coming from the West – not to interfere with Russia's energy transit – the following interpretation of the latter processes offers itself: it seems that Russia, without using tanks and making a lot of noise, undertook to solve one of its most cherished geopolitical ambitions – to participate in the region of Central-Eastern Europe and to have influence on the European

continent on the whole, as well as to have access to the world waters.

3. Steps backwards

Major steps that Russia took from September 2001 to the summer of 2002 in the sphere of foreign policy were understood by many people in Russia as unilateral concessions to the West, and, first and foremost, to the United States of America. However, since the summer of 2002 a certain crisis in the course of the rapprochement with the West has been felt.

At the beginning of June 2002, the President of Russia Putin took part in the meeting of the heads of the so-called “the six of Shanghai”. This showed that Russia, though after a certain break, did not intend to forget the levers, which it formerly tried to apply against the West and especially against the USA. The reaction of President Bush is interesting indeed: when the meeting of “the six of Shanghai” started, he telephoned President Putin personally and announced good news that at last Russia had been granted the status of a market country²⁰. Hence, President Bush managed to pay back an old debt as if confirming, at the same time, that America needed Russia.

Meanwhile, Russia did not stop taking steps backwards. It was at the beginning of summer that the most famous cases of the recent period started to be escalated: the case of Georgia’s links with terrorism and that of “the corridor” to Kaliningrad Oblast. In July the tension eased, however, in August Moscow’s tone became sharper again. The Minister of Defence of Russia Sergej Ivanov became especially active as to the issue of Georgia. He appeared on television nearly every day making some statements in a military line. For example, on August 8, he spoke about Georgia expressly sharply calling its policy “double-faced”. Georgia was continued to be attacked during the following days, too. On August 16, Ivanov himself unexpectedly made a statement that Russia was not going to destroy its famous rockets SS-18 (“satana”)²¹. It was obvious that the scenario of demonstrating force was being developed, only the final results of that scenario were not clear.

On August 18-19, the news appeared in the mass media that Russia was supposedly preparing a huge 60-billion-dollar-worth co-operation agreement with Iraq. Since at that time the USA was already openly preparing for war against Iraq, the news might have been understood as a clear hint about the amount of money for which Russia would agree to sell Iraq. (By the way, forestalling the events, it should be noted that it was already in October that Washington, as though, responded to that hint of Russia and offered to write off all Soviet debts provided that Russia made no objections at the UN Security Council to taking military actions against Iraq.)²²

At the end of August, the Prime Minister of Russia Michail Kasjanov arrived in Peking. According to the statements made, he conducted successful negotiations over the issues of trading in weapons. The Head of North Korea Kim Jong Il arrived in Russia at that time. President Putin himself welcomed him warmly in Vladivostok. Official discussions were held about the railway connecting Siberia with ports of

¹⁹ Audrius Bačiulis, *Kol žvalgėmės į Vakarus, atėjo rusai // Veidas*, 2002 08 29, 24–26.

²⁰ Broadcast of Russian Television, *Flirting with the “Axis of Evil” // Daily Lietuvos rytas*, 2002 08 31, No. 201.

²¹ Programme of Russian television “Vremia”

²² Programme “Post Scriptum”.

South Korea and about its transit line through the territory of North Korea. However, the underlying implication of that visit was a signal to Washington that Russia had its opinion about the so-called states of “the axis of evil”.

In response to these steps taken by Russia in its foreign policy, the US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld openly spoke about the crisis in the relations between Moscow and Washington. According to Rumsfeld, when Moscow advertises its relations with such countries as Iraq, Syria, Cuba and North Korea, it wants to tell the whole world that it has nothing against co-operating with terrorist countries²³.

4. Dividends

Despite Rumsfeld’s sharp words, the situation was not favourable for dissociating Russia from the concert of the countries or simply ignoring it, as was the case during the Kosovo crisis. At that time, Washington’s strategy was related to Russia’s factor in the Middle East closely enough. On the other hand, the investments of Putin’s policy were already sufficient for the West to expect dividends. A further development of Georgia’s case vividly illustrates the situation that has formed.

4.1. Georgia’s Case

As has already been mentioned, in the summer of 2002, Moscow began to strain its relations with Tbilisi. The pretext for that was the Chechen fighters who concentrated in Pankisia mountaingorge that belonged to Georgia and from which they staged raids against the Russian Army in Chechnya. The President of Georgia Eduard Shevarnadze tolerated the Chechens in Pankisia as a certain counterbalance against the constant pressure that Russia exerted on Georgia (the pressure was built up by supporting separatists of Abhazia and South Osetia by regularly reminding Eduard Shevarnadze of his “crimes” against Russia when he was the Foreign Minister of the USSR, etc.). On the whole, the nature of the crisis being escalated showed that now Moscow took aim at Georgia as an independent state, and particularly at Shevarnadze himself, rather than at the Chechen fighters in Pankisia. For some time, Washington did its utmost to appease the passions, however despite that they only increased, naturally depending on the way the tension over Iraq increased.

At the beginning of September, actions of Washington itself started to get out of tune. The US Agency for National Security unexpectedly (on September 5) disseminated information about a recorded telephone conversation between one of al-Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan and an unidentified person in Georgia, which had been kept confidential for a year. The conversation took place several minutes following the terrorist attacks in New York, and these attacks were discussed in the course of the conversation. On September 9, President Bush telephoned President Putin; according to the US Ambassador to Moscow Aleksandr Vershbow, the Iraq issue, as well as other “common interests” were discussed. And on September 11, President Putin issued an ultimatum to Georgia threatening to start military actions in the mountaingorge in Pankisia. It should be noted that Russian television, having broadcast a

²³ Arminas Norkus, “Flirting with the “Axis of Evil” // *Daily Lietuvos rytas*, 2002 08 31, No. 201.

reportage about the ultimatum, shortly after that showed how President Putin was telephoning President Bush to express his condolences and solidarity in connection with the anniversary of the terrorist attack against the USA. The performance did not end with that. Soon the information was transmitted from the USA State Department, which assessed the threat issued by Moscow to Georgia as groundless both from the legal and political points of view. However, at the same time, the statement made by Vershbow in Moscow put the accents on al-Quaeda's links with Chechnya²⁴. The entire course of events in Georgia made one thing clear to Shevarnadze – the Chechen fighters in the mountaingorge in Pankisia will have to be sacrificed.

4.2. The Case of Kaliningrad Oblast

A drama of somewhat different nature developed around the issue of Kaliningrad Oblast. It seems that the adviser to President Putin Gleb Pavlovski initiated it, when in the spring of 2002 he declared on television that after Lithuania and Poland become members of the European Union, visa-free communication by railway and motorcars should be preserved between Russia and Kaliningrad Oblast, like that between the FRG and West Berlin during the years of the Cold War. At first, this statement was not taken seriously. All the more so that consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Lithuania and Russia about the future procedure for introducing visas had been held since the end of 2001. The reaction of the European Commission was straightforward: there can be no "corridors" of another regime in the Schengen zone, especially those that are open to such country as Russia which is unable to put its own borders in order and is unwilling to sign readmission agreements. Vilnius and Warsaw took corresponding positions on this matter: according to their statements, privileges of visa-free movement will have to be abolished in 2003 for the citizens of Russia who travel to and from Kaliningrad Oblast; should Russians want to reach Kaliningrad without obtaining visas, they have to go by plane or ship.

Pavlovski's statement, however, was not just empty words. Moscow cancelled the consultations about the introduction of visas and developed enviable diplomatic activity to prove that visas were unacceptable. The humanitarian and moral aspect played the central role in the argumentation of Russians. It seemed that with the European Union enlarging and the conditions of citizens of its countries improving, the situation of the Russian citizens would worsen. Moscow diplomats used President Putin's authority as a trump card. According to the special representative Dimitrij Rogozin, the solution of the issue of Kaliningrad Oblast would be a signal for the Russians to decide whether President Putin had made the right choice in taking the Western direction²⁵. Moscow's activity started to bear fruit in the middle of summer. At first, the heads of France and later the leaders of other EU states started expressing their opinion that the Russians should have visa-free communication with Kaliningrad Oblast. By the way, Washington, though keeping aside, also regarded the requirements of Russians with favour.

It should be noted that the attention of all countries, somehow naturally, was

²⁴ <http://www.stratford.com/standard/analysis.view.php?ID=206197>.

²⁵ Dimitrij Rogozin 's interview // Veidas, 2002 08 14, 12–13.

directed towards Lithuania, and it was through its territory that the communication had to be established. Meanwhile, from Russia's side Lithuania felt pressure exerted not only by the official Moscow, but also by the so-called people's democracy. Pickets were organised in front of Lithuanian Embassies in Russia, newspapers were flooded with articles of anti-Lithuanian nature, the Duma of Russia addressed the issues of lawfulness of Lithuanian territories and until now it has not been ready to ratify the agreement on the border with Lithuania signed in 1997.

It seems that the essence of the crisis created is as follows: Moscow is escalating the issue of visa-free transit to Kaliningrad Oblast, because it is afraid that due to EU enlargement, the Oblast may simply distance itself from Russia. The tendency has already been observed that the population of the Oblast travel more often to European countries than to their formal motherland. However, seeking to bind the Oblast to Russia, Moscow, at the same time, is renewing the fetters for Lithuania and other Baltic States, too. It is nothing new to maintain that in his time Stalin annexed the Oblast of the former Kaliningrad, seeking to attach the annexed Baltic States to the USSR. There is no guarantee that after the special corridor has been introduced for the civilians, within some time, Moscow will demand that such corridor should be introduced for military purposes, too. Hence, the case of communication with Kaliningrad may be treated as the gravitation dilemma of the two opposite directions.

Moscow diplomats, however, are trying to prove the opposite. They maintain that Russia wants "to go to the West" and adopt the European order. However, to do that money is necessary. First and foremost, money is needed to put in order Russia's southern borders, which are the main crossing point for illegal migrants. Having put its borders in order, Russia could sign the readmission agreement and *really* follow its provisions. Then the pressure exerted on the European countries by illegal migration would be *really* reduced. Thus, Europe should help Russia become Europeanised rather than push it away.

With the summit meeting of the European Union and Russia approaching (it is to take place in November 2002), the perspective of a compromise is in view. Moscow seems to agree to adopt the project of a simplified control of communication through the territory of Lithuania, which is financed of the European Union. However, it is still unclear, when Russia is going to ratify the agreement on its border with Lithuania, when it is going to sign the readmission agreement and, what is most important, it is unclear, how the mechanism of sanctions would function if Russia started violating the procedure of the transit regime. All this means doubtful prospects for Lithuania to join the Schengen zone.

5. The Balance of the Year or the Conclusions

The first thing to be stated is that during the past year, the gap between Russia's real possibilities and the picture that the Russians have about Russia's possibilities has decreased considerably. Russia is no longer afraid to admit that the USA is the most powerful country in the world and that Russia, all in all, is only a regional state of limited possibilities.

President Putin managed to establish friendly relations, quite conforming to the realities, with the governments of all Western states. Russia is gaining authority. Its voice is heard and its opinion is taken into consideration.

..... Currently, Russia is trying to act within the framework of a classical concert of the large powers. Such paradigm of action turned to be favourable for bringing out President Putin's diplomatic skills. President Putin proved to be a good player of political poker, who manages to win, having started the game with a bad playing card.

Putin's Russia has not, at least thus far, turned in the direction of strategic integration into the West. Russia's policy still contains elements of conflicting balancing. (These elements, most likely, are necessary for home rather than foreign policy considerations.) By the way, the policy of such nature is also determined by the recent US orientation towards "flexible coalitions".

Anyway, looking for analogies to the course pursued by President Putin, one may say that the strategy of de Gaulle's foreign policy would be much closer to him than that of Adenauer. The only difference is that the main ambition of the rebellious de Gaulle was the independence of the foreign policy of France within the framework of Euro-Atlantic integration, whereas Putin's strategy contains the ambition to restore the Eurasian empire.

On the basis of concert co-operation, there is a certain *overlapping* of Euro-Atlantic and Russia's structures. In one case, the impact of the European Union, NATO and simply that of the USA is spreading into the zone of Russia's traditional dominance. Such tendency has been observed in the so-called GUUAM space, that is, in the Ukraine, Georgia, Middle Asia. On the other hand, Russia's influence is spreading to the space of the development of Western structures, that is, to Central-Eastern Europe, the Baltic States and Afghanistan. Such *overlapping* of structures of the West and Russia contains the elements of stability and integration, conflict and destabilisation. What tendency will prevail, is an open question.