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**THE POSITION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND  
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY ON THE BALTIC REPUBLICS'  
(LATVIA, LITHUANIA, ESTONIA) JOINING THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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Enlargement of the EU in 2004 was of great significance not only for the EU members, but for the Russian Federation as the candidates were former USSR republics and countries that had been under the influence of the USSR.

The purpose of this article is to uncover the attitude of Russian and German officials to Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia's joining the EU. The study uses the methods of historicism and objectivity as its basis. A regional approach that describes the development of the region into global political process is used.

The author proves that Russia has underestimated the consequence of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia's joining the EU. The Russian Federation made the hasty judgement that the Baltic countries' joining the EU would automatically solve the bilateral problems in relations between Russia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Russian politicians failed to detect negative economic consequences, which the Baltic states' joining the European Union brought about. The position of the German government was ambiguous. It was impacted by the obligations within its role as the 'motor' of European integration, but also had to consider the direct interests of the Federal Republic of Germany. The German ruling coalition by morally supporting the intention of the Baltic Republics to join the EU delegated the role of an 'advocate' of newly independent republics to the northern European countries while taking the right to defend primarily national interests of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The materials of the study can be used for further research of the history of the Baltic Region, in lectures and special courses.

**Keywords:** European Union, enlargement of the UE, Baltic Republics, European integration.

**ПОЗИЦИЯ РФ И ФРГ ПО ВОПРОСУ ВСТУПЛЕНИЯ  
БАЛТИЙСКИХ РЕСПУБЛИК (ЛАТВИИ, ЛИТВЫ, ЭСТОНИИ)  
В ЕВРОПЕЙСКИЙ СОЮЗ**

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Расширение ЕС 2004 г. имело огромное значение не только для членов Европейского Союза, но и для Российской Федерации, так как кандидатами на вступление были бывшие советские республики и страны, входившие в сферу влияния СССР.

Целью данной статьи является выявление отношения российских и немецких официальных лиц к вступлению Латвии, Литвы и Эстонии в ЕС. Методологической основой исследования являются принципы историзма и объективности. При написании работы использовался региональный подход, позволяющий вписать специфику развития региона в общую картину мировой политики.

В ходе исследования автор доказывает, что Россия недооценила последствия включения Латвии, Литвы и Эстонии в ЕС. Руководство РФ опрометчиво полагало, что вступление Балтийских стран в ЕС автоматически решит двусторонние проблемы в отношениях России, Латвии, Литвы и Эстонии. Кроме того, российские политики не смогли распознать негативных экономических последствий, которые несло в себе вступление Балтийских республик в ЕС. Позиция немецкого правительства отличалась двойственным характером. На неё оказывали воздействия, с одной стороны, обязанности, которые возлагала роль «мотора» европейской интеграции, а с другой стремление учитывать интересы одного из ключевых партнеров в регионе – РФ.

Таким образом, немецкая правящая коалиция, морально поддерживая стремление Балтийских республик вступить в ЕС, делегировала роль «адвоката» новых независимых республик Северным странам Европы, тем самым оставляя за собой право отстаивать в первую очередь национальные интересы ФРГ.

Материалы данного исследования могут быть использованы для дальнейшего изучения истории Балтийского региона, при подготовке лекционных и специальных курсов.

**Ключевые слова:** Европейский Союз, расширение ЕС, Балтийские республики, европейская интеграция.

The year 2004 became one of the most important stages of the history of the EU development. In 2004 the Union's enlargement was the largest in its history. No surprise that this step was preceded by a long preparation period and a heated discussion on the issue of the need to considerably increase the number of the EU members. The admission of the former Soviet republics – Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia has provoked the interest of the Russian public in the event. Despite the significant importance of the admission of new members, it was enlargement to the East that presented a number of risks for the EU in general and Germany as the main 'motor' of the European integration in particular. There was still an obvious difference between economic and political development of the Western and Eastern Europe, but the 'old members', including FRG would have to bear the economic burden of supporting 'new members'. Besides, admission of former Soviet republics and Soviet satellite states to the European structures would undoubtedly impact both, bilateral relations of Germany and Russia and the relations of Russia and the EU in general.

In Russian historiography the problem of EU enlargement has become a focus of attention and a subject for research. Of particular interest to Russian experts and researchers is the history of the European Union development [1], the importance of

integration processes, transformation of institutional structure of the EU [2;3;4] and economic and political consequences of its enlargement [5]. The FGR's European policy is one of the most acute issues discussed in papers, devoted to the problems of the EU. It is discussed both in connection with German international policy and in order to analyze Germany's place and role in creation of Europe-wide structures [6]. However, the position of Russian and German governments in respect of the Baltic countries - Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia – and their admission to the EU has still not been properly studied. It is particularly necessary to take a closer look at the issues connected with the circumstances, which influence the viewpoints and positions of officials of both states regarding the enlargement of the EU and the extent to which bilateral relations between Russia and Germany influenced the official position of their political leaders in particular situations. The present article will research these questions.

Russian political and public rhetoric has always put the notions of NATO and EU enlargement in opposition. The Russian political elite was well-disposed to the EU enlargement as they thought it to be 'another brick in the basement of European-wide process' [7, p.85]. In his analysis of Russia's position on the EU enlargement L.A.Karabeshkin, a PhD in Political Science, and the Dean of International Relations Faculty of Euroacademy in Tallin puts forth several factors, which in his opinion have preconditioned the mild reaction of the Russian politicians on the process. Firstly, there is an overall underestimation of the importance of the European Union. Secondly, Russian leaders did not expect any negative economic effects of the EU enlargement to the East. Turnover between Russia and the Baltic countries was still not large, fuel and energy resource was the main product, which Russia exported. The Russian side expected certain positive changes after Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia's admission to the EU, i.e. easing of customs regulations, access to European markets [8, p.75]. Russia also expected that the Baltic countries' admission to the EU would help to resolve the problems of the Russian-speaking minorities in these countries.

However, it was the trade and economic element of the relationship between

new and old EU members that presented the danger for Russia. European standards became an obstacle to Russian goods' penetration into Baltic markets, and Russian goods, which could not stand competition with European ones, disappeared from the Baltic market. E.M. Primakov was the first to notice negative effects of the Baltic states' admission to the EU for Russia. In 1998 he initiated the study of effects of the EU enlargement for the Russian Federation, which showed that the EU enlargement would create considerable obstacles for the restoration of near-border regional cooperation and the reestablishment of broken economic ties between Russia and its partners in the Baltic countries [7, p.86]. Yevgeny Primakov was also far sighted enough to see that the former Soviet republics would bring about anti-Russian sentiments in the European Union and would probably become a kind of pro-NATO influence agents in the European Union [9, p.179].

The problem of the Russian-speaking population in the Baltic countries after their admission to the EU has not been solved either. The Russian authorities assumed that the position of their nationals in the Baltic countries would be governed by European standards and second rate citizenship - 'non-citizen' category of persons – would be unacceptable for the EU. However, according to Russian researchers, 'Russia had rather emotional than legal attitude to the matter' [10, p.55]. The EU programme Agenda 2000, which the European Union has adopted with a view to enlargement, says: 'non-citizens make 28% of Latvian population and 25% of the population of Estonia. There is no evidence of their rights violation, apart from limiting access to certain professions in Latvia' [11]. The European states that have never recognized inclusion of the Baltic States into the USSR do not see any illegality in the fact that persons who came to Latvia and Estonia after 1945 are not considered their citizens.

Yevgeny Primakov's fears about pro-NATO and anti-Russian sentiment in the former USSR republics have been realized. Within the EU the policy of the Baltic States made a stand against Moscow. After joining the EU and NATO Lithuania made a bid for regional leadership in Eastern Europe and in 2004 Acting President of

Lithuania Arturas Paulauskas declared: ‘I see Lithuania as a regional leader thanks to its EU and NATO membership. I see Lithuania as a regional leader and Vilnius as a regional capital’ [12, p.18].

The President of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus took an active part in implementation of this aspect of the country’s international policy. He supported the ‘orange’ opposition in Ukraine by addressing its representatives with an appeal to continue the struggle and announced his full solidarity with them: ‘We should not give in. We should not give in. We need to protect our common democratic values’ [13]. The Baltic politicians saw their role in building a common European future to be the prevention of convergence between the EU and the Russian Federation. In 2007 Estonia and Latvia declared their intention to block negotiations between Russia and the EU regarding the signing of a new partnership and cooperation agreement. The minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia Urmas Paet in his interview to the Spanish newspaper El Pais two weeks before RF-EU summit in Samara urged to cancel it in order to ‘punish the Kremlin for laying siege to the Estonian Embassy and launching projects ... including cyber-attacks against Estonia’s state websites’ [14].

Thus, the Baltic States saw their EU membership not only as the means of integration into the European community, but as an instrument to press Russia when bilateral negotiations with the Russian party reached a blind alley. Following the events of 2008 the Baltic States adopted the view that a dialogue with Russia is only possible via Brussels. In our opinion, the EU has put them in an uncomfortable position by allowing bilateral relations of the Baltic States and Russia influence European-wide policy. As for Germany, it viewed the EU enlargement to the East as ‘an excellent opportunity to economically and later politically stabilize the states within ex-USSR zone of influence without provoking Russia’ [15]. The safety of the Baltic Sea region became a priority issue in the policy of the united Germany. In general, by supporting the Baltic States in their wish to join the EU Germany was dealing with its own national issues. At the same time Germany faced a dilemma – whether to deepen integration or widen the Community. We could describe the

position of the chancellor of Germany Gerhard Schroder regarding new members' joining the EC as ambivalent and contradictory. Firstly he revived the belief of the Baltic States in the fact that Germany protects their interests in Europe. In his public speeches the Chancellor of Germany repeatedly supported new candidates' admission to the EU: 'I am proud to say, that this enlargement (2004) would not have happened so soon without Germany's support' [16]. By speaking about where the enlargement of the European Union should lead G. Schroder pointed at the necessity to deepen the process by a wider integration that would embrace all the fields of the society's activity, both political and socio-economic. However, many researchers suspect there was more of a rhetoric in these statements rather politics and that in fact G. Schroder's European policy was rather targeted at strengthening the cooperation between Germany and France than at the European Union enlargement. The difficult position of the Social Democrat government within the country could become the main reason. Growing unemployment and unpopular social reforms made G. Schroder deal with national problems as a priority. According to Dr. Marianne Kneuer, professor of Hildesheim University, Germany had to sacrifice its traditional role of 'the motor of European civilization' for the sake of its national interests [17]. Another German researcher Helge Dauchert says that Germany has indeed delegated its role of an 'advocate' of the Baltic States to Denmark, Sweden and Finland, which allowed its government to concentrate on domestic problems [18, p.258].

Federal Chancellor G. Schroder's visit to Tallin in 2000 illustrates the controversial position of Germany regarding the Baltic States' admission to the EU. This first visit by the head of Federal Republic of Germany to Estonia allowed the Baltic States to hope for Germany's effective support. As the journalists shrewdly remarked, the Baltic leaders pinned such great hopes on this visit that even if G. Schroder 'had not opened his mouth during his visit, they would have felt content' [19]. It was during the visit that the Chancellor remarked that he had 'pinned big hopes on Putin's policy' [20]. Such statements of the Federal Chancellor made it clear to the Baltic government that Germany would not be put on the spot about its

strategic partnership with Russia. German paper Der Spiegel judged the Chancellor's visit to the Baltics in the following way: 'Shroder expressed his respect to the Baltic states, gave them hope, but did not promise anything. The Chancellor's visit is a certain attempt to balance between the interests of the Baltic citizens and the West while attempting to maintain good relations with Russia. Shroder supported the Baltic citizens' wish to enter the EU, but did not set any timeframe' [21].

Thus, we can pinpoint the careful wait-and-see position of G. Shroder's government on the EU enlargement to the East. Associate Professor of International Relations Department of Belarusian State University V.V. Froltsov, PhD in History called FRG's approach to Baltic policy 'situational'. In his opinion, this approach allows the German government to more promptly react to the situation in the Baltic region by considering the interests of the Baltic States and the position of Russia, Germany's key partner in the region. During the negotiations on the EU enlargement to the East the ruling coalition could not agree on mechanisms and degree of integration of new members. On the one hand the German government supported the wish of the Baltic states to join the EU, but on the other hand, they delegated the role of an 'advocate' of the newly independent states to Northern European countries thus reserving the right to advance Germany's national interests and provide opportunities to develop closer relations with Russia, its strategic partner in the East, especially in energy sphere.

Russia in its turn erroneously considered EU a minor evil as compared to the NATO as it has not distinguished the possible influence of the NATO member countries' leaders on European politics through the Baltic States. The Russian leaders incautiously believed that the Baltic States' admission to the EU would automatically solve bilateral problems in relations between Russia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

In conclusion of the abovementioned comparative analysis of the circumstances that influenced the position of the political leaders of Russia, Germany and the Baltic Republics concerning the latter joining the EU, it is notable that Russia, Latvia, Lithuania or Estonia did not consider the EU an institute whose aim is

the creation of a stable integrated European space. Each of the parties was trying to solve its national problems by making it responsible for resolving bilateral conflicts. Germany in its turn had to act as the third party in settling the ‘confrontation between Russia and the Baltic States by involving them in the system of regional cooperation’ [22]. As the result FRG had to play the unrewarding role of an arbiter whose actions were disapproved by both the ‘old’ EU members, who thought it ‘a Trojan horse’ and Russia’s proponent in the region, and ‘new’ members who condemned pro-Russian sentiment which were in their opinion caused by Germany’s dependence on the import of Russian energy products.

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