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The *Lithuanian Political Science Yearbook* aims to provide a wide picture of the main fields of Political Science in Lithuania – Political Theory, Institutional Design, Electoral Process, Public Policy and Public Administration, International Relations and related disciplines. However, it is by no means limited to publications on Lithuania or by Lithuanian authors. Contributions are welcome both from Lithuania and abroad.

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## FROM IRAQ TO UKRAINE: EU FOREIGN POLICY AND AMBITIONS OF THE SMALL(ER) STATES\*

*Gediminas Vitkus*

**Abstract.** The main objective of the paper was to evaluate already existing contribution of the smaller Central and Eastern European (CEE) states to EU's common foreign policy during the course of 2003-2004. These two years were chosen deliberately, because during that period of time we were able to observe two dramatic cases. The first case was – the so-called the Iraqi crisis of February 2003, when the smaller CEE states didn't align themselves with the Franco-German anti-American stance. The second case is the successful mission carried out by the Polish and Lithuanian Presidents and EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) on behalf of the European Union in Kyiv in December 2004.

Both cases showed very obviously that (non)involvement of the smaller states contributed to the (un)success of the each case. Also both of them made obvious that the European common foreign and security policy cannot be by definition equaled to the French and German opinion. The common policy will come up only when the smaller member states will be involved in the process.

The second point of the paper is a demonstration that one of the main obstacles for wider involvement of the smaller CEE states into common European foreign policy is widely-assumed prejudice, which considers the CEE states as russo-phobic, pro-American and not interested in the EU's CFSP at all. As the Ukrainian case displays the smaller states are much more eager to comply to the European Union's values than the great powers do. In difference from the great powers the smaller states are not burdened by the frame of mind about their own special mission and could more easily to transfer their attention to the common values, which the European Union is based on.

### *Introduction*

There are many books and studies written about small states and their foreign policy peculiarities. Occasionally we observe an increased interest to these actors in the world of politics. The 20<sup>th</sup> century experienced at least two instances of this kind. One became clearly apparent when the League of Na-

tions began operations and treated the small states as their legal equals, thus providing them with more space for independent foreign policy actions and influence on the world politics than ever before<sup>1</sup>. However, the League of Nations did not help to avoid the next World War. That gave cause for the rise of a notion that probably the small states, especially those that were located between Germany and Russia, were to a high degree responsible for that failure<sup>2</sup>.

The next wave of interest concerning the phenomena of small states arose when a new bipolar world order emerged. The issue under consideration was the experience of those small and neutral countries (Austria, Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland) which managed somehow to escape direct involvement into one of the two rival political and military blocs<sup>3</sup>.

Today we can observe a new academic interest in the problematic of small states. This interest was encouraged by the increased number of small states due to collapse of the communist bloc and the Soviet Union as well as the EU and NATO enlargements, which have brought many new smaller states into the already well settled decision-making structures and political culture. It is natural that the amount of literature on that subject is growing very rapidly.<sup>4</sup>

This paper aims to contribute to this mainstream research. Its main objective is to evaluate already existing contributions of the smaller Central and Eastern European (CEE) states to the EU common foreign policy within the 2003–2004 time frame. These two years were chosen deliberately, because during that period two dramatic cases were observed. The first case was the so-called Iraqi crisis of February 2003, when the smaller CEE states didn't align themselves with the Franco-German anti-American stance. The second case is the successful mission carried out by the Polish and Lithuanian Presidents and EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) on behalf of the European Union in Kyiv<sup>5</sup> in December 2004.

It might be controversial to place Poland in the category of small states. Poland is by no means a small state. However, it is important to take into account that the very concept of small state is not an absolute but a relative one. For instance, in the context of France, Germany and Russia, Poland certainly would be a smaller state. And this is exactly the meaning of the concept as used in the title and text of this paper.

### ***1. Demand for “shutting-up-states”***

It is quite apparent that the Western European perception of the new EU Member States for the Central and Eastern Europe is somewhat ambiguous, especially when the issue under consideration is the EU foreign and security policy. There the CEE countries are usually regarded as those most Russo-phobic and therefore most pro-American. Furthermore, sometimes the CEE countries are treated as an open pro-American lobby, as the American Trojan horse which is supposed to undermine any of EU initiatives in the field of foreign and security policy that America may not like. The most powerful argument in favor of this perception was the behavior of the CEE countries during the Iraqi crisis in the early months of 2003. At that time the EU was unable to formulate a common position towards the USA's openly expressed readiness to attack Iraq at any price. The smaller EU and the acceding CEE countries were openly supporting that decision and therefore became, at least partially, responsible for the dramatic split within the European Union itself.

However, the split within the EU started as a conflict between France and the UK but not as a conflict between smaller and bigger states. France and the UK were not able to find a common ground for their stance in the UN Security Council. Finally, the collision went into full swing, when Germany (at that time also a member of the Security Council) behaved in a very untypical way. Germany decided to unconditionally support French diplomacy despite that its role usually was only to mediate. This was a big surprise to many observers, who did expect a different development<sup>6</sup>.

It is worth mentioning that the conflict between the UK on one side and France and Germany on the other was initially assumed by the general public to be a conflict between the continental Europe and the traditionally opportunistic pro-American British counterpart. The French President and the German Chancellor also believed that they were expressing the European opinion<sup>7</sup>. However, very soon it became obvious that this was not true. It turned out that the French and German opinion did not equal the European opinion; hence their assumption that their policy expressed the opinion of the majority of European governments was wrong.

First of all, a letter from eight countries – the Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom –



was published in the *Wall Street Journal (Europe)* in January 2003. This was soon followed by another letter from the Vilnius-10 (V10) group of smaller states. Bruce Jackson, a tireless campaigner for the cause of NATO enlargement, drafted this letter and sent it to Lithuanian embassy. The Lithuanians sent it, in turn, to the other members of the V-10. The text was non-negotiable: “Take it or leave it, the e-mail said<sup>8</sup>. In view of that, some of the V10 governments could have become nervous about the EU’s reaction. However, they did not want to lose the chance to demonstrate their solidarity with the USA. At stake in just a few more weeks was the pending vote by the US Congress on whether to accept seven of V10 countries into NATO. And as we know today, this letter made certain that any hesitant senator had no doubts about the loyalty of the Eastern Europeans to the US. The outcome of the vote was unique – 96-0 “pro”.

In this atmosphere it was little wonder that these letters made French President Jacques Chirac furious. In a statement made in Brussels on 17 February after a special EU summit on Iraq, he launched a diatribe directed at the Central and Eastern European candidates for EU membership. Chirac branded the V10 group move “childish” and “dangerous”, saying the Central and Eastern European countries “missed a great opportunity to shut up”. “These countries had been all at once, let’s say, not too well behaved and a little unaware of the dangers of an excessively rapid alignment with the American position... When you are in the family, after all, you have more rights than when you are asking to join and knocking on the door,” he said<sup>9</sup>.

In that situation ancient Romans would say: *nil novo sub solo*<sup>10</sup>. We have got a classical situation – when the great powers are in a conflict they look for allies. The importance of the smaller states at that instant increased disproportionately. Of course, the bigger states did not want them to become political actors. They preferred the small states to remain pawns only. But at least one side made a proposal – “take it or leave it”. The other side came up with its reaction later just by indicating that the smaller ones had lost a chance to “shut up”. The first option was certainly more attractive to the small states. At least, it was demonstrated that it was possible to have a choice.

Nevertheless, let’s examine the consequences of this drama from the perspective of European Union’s common foreign policy development. The case under discussion has clearly shown that in order to have a common

European foreign policy it is not enough to have an accord between the two leading states, France and Germany. As the case shows, they didn't realize that. Both countries, though differing from Americans, did nothing to mobilize a wider European support, and attract to their side the smaller members and acceding states. European Union's Mr. CFSP Javier Solana was not involved in this from the very beginning. France and Germany accused the United States of unilateralism, but, in fact, they behaved in the same manner in the context of the European Union.

There was not a big surprise when the Franco-German unilateralism didn't bring any visible results. It was not possible to stop the Americans anyway. In addition, they have severely damaged inter-European relations and the future development of the common European foreign policy. But let's put aside the unilateralism of France and Germany. It might be the subject for separate consideration. Let's turn to the smaller CEE states, which in their response behaved in pro-American manner. The question at stake is the motivation and way of thinking of the smaller states. Were they really unconditionally pro-American or was there still some space for compromise, if someone had been willing to work at it?

## ***2. Forced bandwagon***

To my mind, the correct answer is the second one – there was still room for compromise. My argument is that smaller states in practice are much more interested in having an international order with the rule of law, which curbs hegemony and prevents eventual aggression. Various studies on the small states' security and foreign policy and especially on relations between bigger and smaller states show very clearly that the smaller states, in order to compensate for their limited resources, are always looking for some additional security guaranties. Internationally recognized neutrality or participation in alliances usually are options to consider. Another option is a jumping on hegemonic bandwagons. However, this option is generally taken only as the last resort<sup>11</sup>. In other words, sometimes the situation forces the smaller countries to choose between two evils – to be damaged or to jump on the bandwagon, the lesser evil. Therefore, it may frequently become a preferred option, or a lesser evil.

The Iraq war case has shown very clearly that bandwagoning was not the best option for the smaller states, neither even for the hegemon nor for the

smaller partners. The “new friends” of Washington may be more compliant but weren’t nearly as rich and powerful as the old ones, or as able to help shoulder burdens. Poland, the largest of the new democratic states in Eastern Europe, has limited resources, especially in tough economic times. America is supposed to pay the lion’s share of the costs in any case<sup>12</sup>. On the other side, American defiance of generally accepted international norms and accustomed international order caused real troubles for the smaller partners. For them, the stability of the international norms is a cornerstone of their very existence and security. The crux of the matter is that there is a possibility that somebody else, who is also powerful, may decide to follow the American example.

For instance, immediately after the Iraq war, the well-known Russian analyst Sergei Karaganov published an article in the Russian daily “Izvestia”, where he wrote that Russia made a mistake when it objected to the American action. Of course, first of all, with his article Karaganov was preparing the ground for Russian–American reconciliation after the conflict over Iraq. However, his argument was rather controversial. Karaganov argued that in order to understand what the US did in Iraq it is necessary to accept a “new concept of sovereignty”. Since the so-called Third World and partly the Second World consist mostly of failing or already failed states, the leading powers of the World should take a burden of responsibility to restore and to maintain the order. Although no one could present any proof of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the American action should have been legitimized for the removal of the bloody Saddam’s regime<sup>13</sup>.

Later Karaganov developed his argument in the article written together with Vladislav Inozemcev and published in the journal “Russia in Global Affairs”. They openly used the Iraq precedent as an argument on behalf of Russian involvement into the Georgian provinces of Abkhazia and South Osetia as well as Moldova’s Transdnistria<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, Russia has already declared several times that it reserves for herself the right of preemptive strikes against terrorists even beyond Russian borders. It can be surmised that the most likely target for such an action may be the Republic of Georgia.

This paradoxical coincidence between American and Russian behavior was noticed by the UPI analyst Peter Lavalle. In his commentary published in the website “Untimely Thoughts” on occasion of Putin’s meeting with Bush in September 2003, he stated: “...The United States has no problem

with violating international law; it has shown contempt for international public opinion. Russia refuses to take advantage of numerous international institutions to resolve the continuing human catastrophe in the troubled republic of Chechnya. Both the United States and Russia have become international outcasts, to a degree, for these reasons<sup>15</sup>.

Probably there is not enough ground for a 100 percent agreement with Laval, however, his statement illustrates what kind of negative consequences the unconditional bandwagoning with the USA may bring. It is a risky enterprise since such actions by the hegemon create a new international order which may not always be advantageous for smaller states. Also, this new order might be easily exploited by other countries whose increased influence may not be welcomed at all. Moreover, these “other countries” may feel a “responsibility” to ascertain occasionally whether or not the smaller neighbours can already be treated as failing states.

One may ask why these smaller CEE countries chose the bandwagon despite the above described costs. As stated before, they have chosen the lesser evil. The lesser evil was to support the hegemon with all possible negative consequences to the international order. It would have been even a greater evil to undercut the perspective of joining NATO by losing the unconditional US support at the end of the long effort. That might have even caused the collapse of some governments in CEE, while the European Union, as we know, did not become a forum for elaboration and development of any reasonable alternatives.

It would have been possible to interpret the desire of the CEE states to join NATO as soon as possible as an expression of their instinctive Russo-phobia, like Peter Schultze and others did in their study<sup>16</sup>. But I have selected Schultze’s study for a different reason. Schultze expressed a widely prevalent prejudice that the acceding EU member states “have no ambitions (*Anspruch*) to become actors within a new and, for them, hardly understandable EU foreign and military policy structure which is also disliked by the USA”<sup>17</sup>. That’s not true at all. The CEE states were probably lacking power, wealth or influence, but they have never lacked ambitions.

On the contrary, in the EU common foreign policy, the CEE countries are considered as one area where smaller new EU member states are ready to contribute and thus make the EU policy towards Eastern neighborhood more consistent

and coherent. There is another question – to what extent France or Germany are ready to welcome these ambitions. Since the European Union is a community of states not based on calculations of *realpolitik* but on precisely described sets of values, there is space for hopes of a more positive development. The Ukrainian case proves that these hopes are not baseless.

### ***3. Spillover of ambition, or “Europeanization” of small states’ policy in actu***

At the end of November, 2004 the EU had got a new headache – the Ukrainian election. For many in Europe, the Ukrainian crisis sprung from nowhere. However, already during the course of the election campaign it was already possible to predict that something was going to happen. Ukrainians in those elections were deciding to support either the pro-European or the pro-Russian candidate. At stake was geopolitics. There was no doubt that the Ukrainian choice was extremely important for Russia. Russian President Putin himself visited Ukraine twice during the campaign in order to support his favorite. Meanwhile, the attitude in many European countries was very different. Russia’s closest neighbors were worried as much as the EU bigger countries, Germany or France, were rather indifferent.

Nevertheless, a dilemma for western leaders arose when at the end of the voting day many observers from the OSCE reported massive violations and fraud, which brought a tiny majority to the Russian-backed candidate. The dilemma became even more acute when thousands of aggravated demonstrators occupied the central Kyiv and blocked the governmental buildings. They had sworn not to leave the Independence Square until their right to fair election became policy. Tension hit the highest point when the number of demonstrators was increasing to tens of thousands. It was a revolution since the government was not able to function any more. The solution had to be either the use of force or negotiations between the two candidates.

As Alexander Rahr, the well-know German expert on Russia, noticed in his interview for “Deutschlandfunk”, when the crises in Ukraine arose it suddenly became obvious that the main EU countries were never really interested in Ukraine. All their attention was always concentrated only on Russia<sup>18</sup>. And now they had again a dilemma: Either they recognize the results of the election expressing at the same time a concern about viola-

tions, or recognize the election as illegal and go into conflict with the Russian president Putin who had already managed to congratulate the “winner”. To make things worse, Russia was sending very clear signals to Western Europe that any sort of international European interference would not be welcomed.

This tough Russian position was easy to explain. President Putin at this time was very close to his “promised land”. His “Grand Design” of the second presidential term was to create a more coherent community of the post-soviet states around Russia. The success key of this project was Ukraine, and the chances to involve this country were very high. The potential competitors of Russia like the US or the EU during the last few years were very passive in Ukraine for different reasons. The US was busy with Iraq and was also disappointed by the corrupt rule of President Leonid Kuchma. The EU, again, was mostly concerned with its further enlargement, but it had no plans for that further enlargement. The EU wanted to pursue a special “New Neighborhood” policy towards Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. Therefore, finally, Ukraine turned to Russia. The results became apparent immediately. On September 19, 2003 Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine signed the Agreement on the Single Economic Space<sup>19</sup>. The Agreement provided that Ukraine would coordinate its economic policies and external economic relations with Russia. Therefore, it was very important for Putin to assure a continuity of the Ukrainian politics after change of government as well.

Probably Putin’s friends in Europe, Schröder and Chirac, would have been happy to close their eyes as they did with Chechnya or “Yukos” Oil Company problems. However, the pro-Russian stance of those leaders was a permanent target for severe critics in Western European mass media. It appeared that an open concession to Mr. Putin was not possible at this time. Use of force in Kyiv would certainly cause casualties or even civil war with unpredictable consequences for the whole of Europe.

However, the situation was not hopeless. An alternative solution came from Ukrainians themselves. Acting president Kuchma phoned to Mr. Alexander Kwańiewski, President of Poland, and Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of Lithuania, and invited them to come to Kyiv in order to undertake a “honest broker” mission between the two candidates and to help find a political solution. It was obvious that Russia was not in a position to take on this mission

since it had already congratulated “the winner”, despite the recorded violations and fraud. Later Polish President Kwaśniewski narrated to the Polish weekly “Polityka” that it was extremely important to ensure the European backing for this mission and even to present it not as a Polish–Lithuanian effort but as a complete European Union mission. Before flying to Kyiv, Kwaśniewski had made telephone calls to key European leaders. He also addressed German Chancellor Schröder. According to Kwaśniewski, the first conversation was rather cold (*pierwsza rozmowa była zimna*)<sup>20</sup>, nevertheless, Schröder promised to contact Putin and to explain to him that this mission was not anti-Russian but oriented only towards helping Ukrainians to reach a political compromise in order to exercise fair elections. And as we know today<sup>21</sup>, it was helpful, since Russia sent its representative to the negotiations as well.

Finally, the mission received the informal EU mandate. Mr. CFSP Solana also arrived in Kyiv. Thus, the loyalist Russian pro-Putin media were in difficulty, because it was not very persuasive to present the whole enterprise as a routine Polish anti-Russian intrigue.

However, the European mandate was not a guarantee for success of the mission. There are already numerous failures on record at the EU, if we take into account the unsuccessful efforts to mediate crises in former Yugoslavia or the Middle East. Therefore, this case needs to be studied in detail in order to determine the reasons for its success this time. This case pointed out that the decisive factor might have been not the size of the mediating actor, but its previously accumulated capital of political co-operation and even personal contacts. It can be argued that sometimes the smaller states may be in a much better position to do that than the bigger ones.

Note what President Kwaśniewski had observed in another interview, which took place after the “third” round of the Ukrainian elections: he stressed that the most helpful factor for him was his knowledge of Ukrainian politics and politicians. This was knowledge accumulated during the long years of communication and co-operation. Since he had personal knowledge of the people on both sides, he was able to persuade them to talk to each other and to de-escalate the situation. According to Kwaśniewski, “...you cannot get credit from nothing. You cannot just come and say – I am Kwaśniewski, Polish President, and now I will be helping you”<sup>22</sup>.

Of course, it is natural that Poland, being a neighbor to Ukraine, was able to achieve success more effectively than, for instance, a more remote

European country. At the same time it is important to recognize that the chance for success would be less if Poland had not been backed by the whole European Union. So, this case stands out as an interesting example of how the common European foreign policy could effectively bring visible results in combination with the policies of separate member states who contribute their unique experience and expertise.

### *Conclusion*

We have discussed two cases – the Iraqi and Ukrainian crises – and tried to identify what kind of importance the smaller states had for the EU's common foreign policy. We have had a chance to see how (non)involvement of the smaller states contributed to the (un)success of the case. The common European foreign and security policy cannot be equaled to the French and German opinion by definition. Common policy will arise only when the smaller member states become involved in the process.

The second point was to demonstrate that one of the main obstacles for a wider involvement of the smaller CEE states into common European foreign policy is a widely-assumed prejudice which considers the CEE states as Russo-phobic, pro-American and not interested in the EU's CFSP at all. As we see, the Ukrainian case allows us to reach a completely different conclusion. The smaller states are much more eager to comply with the European Union's values than the great powers are. Unlike the great powers, the smaller states are not burdened by mindsets about their own special missions and so can transfer their attention more easily to the common values the European Union is based on.

Conversely, if we look only outwardly we may easily get the impression that the smaller states are already playing an important role in the EU's foreign policy. The US President Bush, during his recent and important visit to Europe, spent more than a half of his working time communicating with representatives of the smaller states. He met Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, Luxembourg's Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker who also held the EU's Presidency, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hopp Scheffer who is Dutch, President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso who is Portuguese, and Ivan Gašparovič, President of Slovakia who was hosting the American–Russian summit in Bratislava.



However, this was only the official side of life, suggesting a different reality. Of course, the smaller states cannot change the world order and dictate the political agenda. Nevertheless, what they can do is enrich policy options, which may become based less on interests and more on values.

In conclusion, I would like to take a zestful liberty using some metaphors from the culinary arts. Every cook knows that for a good meal he needs not only main ingredients (the great powers) but also various spices (the smaller states). And in case of Iraq we had rather flavorless Franco-German food. Therefore, it was no big surprise that Chirac, being French and having good taste, noticed that the food was bad. However, he had forgotten that he was the main chef at that time. On the other hand, we need to keep in mind that spices do not always improve the taste. It may become too spicy as happened with the US effort in Iraq. When one uses spices he ought to know how to use them well. And, as we had a chance to try, the Ukrainian borsch<sup>23</sup> tasted good.

Therefore, for the sake of future of the common European foreign policy, it would be useful to suggest establishing a sort of gentlemen's agreement among the Member States. As far as the new Constitution for Europe foresees two new important positions, the President of the European Council and the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs, it would be useful to agree that the representatives of the Great Powers would not keep both positions at the same time. This system is already functioning in NATO. As far as the SACEUR is always American, the NATO Secretary General is European. In the future, if and when European armed forces equal the American, probably even a rotation of those positions would be possible.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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<sup>1</sup> Certain examples of those studies might be: Rappard W.E., 'Small States in the League of Nations', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 49, 1934, pp. 544-575.; Herre P., *Die kleinen Staaten Europas und die Entstehung des Weltkrieges*, München, 1937.

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  - 5 "Kyiv" is the Ukrainian version of the name of the Ukrainian capital, which is probably more widely known as "Kiev" (Russian version).
  - 6 See, for instance, the interview with Richard Holbrooke in Falke, J., "Nur ein Familienstreit", *Rheinischer Merkur*, 25 07 2003, [http://www.merkur.de/aktuell/php/printandsend.php3?action=print&file=../po/drw\\_033001.html](http://www.merkur.de/aktuell/php/printandsend.php3?action=print&file=../po/drw_033001.html), 19 12 2004.
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