

## European Dimension in Latvia's Independence Movement (1988–1991)

### Latvijas neatkarības kustības Eiropas dimensija (1988–1991)<sup>1</sup>

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**Jānis Taurēns**, *Dr. hist.*

Associate Professor of the Faculty of History and Philosophy, University of Latvia

Aspazijas bulvāris 5, Rīga, LV-1050

E-mail: [janis.taurens@lu.lv](mailto:janis.taurens@lu.lv)

Accession of Latvia into the European Union and its successful functioning in this unique international organisation has created new themes for historical research. The concept and idea of Europe should be studied as a historical issue during different periods of Latvia's complicated and difficult history. The period of the movement for national independence (1988–1991) or the so called "Third Awakening" laid foundations for the modernization and westernization of Latvia. European integration is one of the most important aspects of westernization. The current article is devoted to foreign policy and value aspects of Latvia's Europeanization during the Third Awakening. Therefore, by analysing the existing sources of history new aspects can be identified.

**Keywords:** Europe, Latvia, independence movement, foreign policy, values.

Latvijas iestāšanās Eiropas Savienībā un tās sekmīgā darbība šajā organizācijā ir radījusi jaunas izpētes problēmas vēsturē. Eiropas idejas koncepts ir jāpēta kā vēstures problēma dažādos Latvijas sarežģītās un smagās vēstures periodos. Latvijas nacionālās neatkarības kustības atjaunošanas periods, kas pazīstams ar nosaukumu Trešā atmoda, lika pamatus Latvijas modernizācijai un vesternizācijai. Integrācija Eiropā ir viens no visnozīmīgākajiem vesternizācijas aspektiem. Raksts veltīts Latvijas eiropeizācijas ārpolitiskajiem un vērtību aspektiem Trešās atmodas laikā.

**Atslēgvārdi:** Eiropa, Latvija, neatkarības kustība, ārpolitika, vērtības.

There are several spheres where to look for the European idea in Latvia during the Third Awakening. Therefore, by analysing the existing sources of history, it is possible to identify new aspects. First of all, it is the field of foreign policy and international relations. Was Europe and the West a natural choice for the new Baltic foreign

policy direction? Or was it the only way to reject the historically enforced Eastern orientation? How serious was the support from European powers and the emerging European Union? Assuming that foreign policy was the most important sphere in Latvia's policies where Europe played the decisive role, it is necessary to ask, whether there were another fields. Did the concept of Europe play any significant role in economic ideas and domestic policy? Was it important for development of national culture and system of values?

### **The basic principles of foreign policy of Latvia during the national liberation movement**

The political objectives of the Popular Front of Latvia (PFL) and later those of the Supreme Council and the government evolved depending on the central political objective of these bodies. In 1988–1989, the political goal of the Popular Front was connected with the concept of sovereignty. Initially, it was expressed in demand for political, economic, cultural and linguistic autonomy of Latvia within the USSR. But already on May 31, 1989, the Board of the PFL declared full statehood of Latvia as its final objective. Its manifesto offered discussion in all chapters of the PFL about “*joining of the Popular Front of Latvia into “struggle for full political and economic independence”*”.<sup>2</sup> The Second Congress of the PFL in October 8, 1989, declared a full independent statehood as the objective of the Popular Front. Daina Bleiere wrote that “*The most heated discussions were not about the necessity of independence, but rather about the correct path towards it*”.<sup>3</sup> The majority of the delegates supported the path that allowed to conquer the system from within. The so-called parliamentary path made it “*necessary to win the local councils’*

*and Supreme Council elections*”.<sup>4</sup> Actually, only this path as alternative to more “*revolutionary*” ways discussed in the congress of the PFL was able to invoke Western support.

Independence of Latvia and the other Baltic states initially was understood (both by elites and international community) as close cooperation with a democratic and free-market-oriented Soviet Union (the so-called concept of “*Finlandization*”). Historian of international relations Edijs Bošs underlines that in the period from 1988 to 1991 this concept evolved from the idea about

*“Warsaw pact type military alliance relationship with Moscow, later envisioned “Finnish model”, later Baltic leaders talked about an Austrian style neutrality and finally came to the concept about participation in “European security system”. This evolution reflected “gradual Baltic departure from the logic of accommodation with Russia”*”.<sup>5</sup>

However, the reaction of international community was reticent. Again and again, the US and European governments warned the Baltic states that the achievement of their independence depended on the good will of the declining Soviet Union's leadership and negotiations with Moscow.

The plan for regaining of Latvia's statehood required the emerging national foreign policy to develop into different directions. Programme of reestablishment of statehood demanded to develop several directions of the emerging foreign policy. They included Baltic cooperation, taking into account very similar position and history of the Baltic nations. Baltic diplomacy attempted to exploit Russian democratic movement and its leader, the later Russian President Boris Yeltsin (1931–2007) as a counterbalance to the Gorbachev's Kremlin. Yeltsin's support was actually

very important in critical moments for independence movement,<sup>6</sup> but the Baltic states had to understand that Baltic question were also a card in Yeltsin's own game. Baltic nations also developed tactics of growing demands in their relations with the central authorities in Moscow. The West, which was considered a whole and united community, was of particular significance to the Baltic diplomacy. Working in this direction, it was important to overcome stereotypes: the Western trend to give priority to stability and the survival of Gorbachev's regime and to treat the Baltic problem as an issue of secondary importance. It was necessary to establish relations with Western governments, parliaments and mass media in order to revive the Baltic question, remind of and underline the legitimacy of the Baltic demands, and prove that the statehood of the Baltic nations was a realistic goal, overcoming the widespread scepticism in this regard.

Latvian journalist Pauls Raudseps wrote that American support was especially important for the restoration of the Baltic statehood. He drew the readers' attention to the way the Baltic question was treated in politicians' memoirs. The 41<sup>st</sup> President of the USA (1989–1993) George H. W. Bush (1924–2018) dedicated a significant part of his memoirs "The World Transformed" to the Baltic issue.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, the British Prime Minister (1979–1990) Margaret Thatcher (1925–2013) in her memoirs "The Downing Street Years" mentioned the Baltic states in three episodes only. Raudseps suggested that Bush was forced to support Baltic independence: "*support for the Baltic nations in the Congress and open discussion on foreign policy characteristic for the US political system, was the securest guarantee "for not forgetting Baltic independence movement"*".<sup>8</sup> However, the role of Europe should not be underestimated. It mainly manifested itself through the policy of individual European

powers rather than European institutions. Germany and the United Kingdom played a particularly significant role among the major European powers. The Nordic countries, especially Sweden and Denmark demonstrated a great interest in solving the Baltic issue.

### Attitude of different states

The attitude of different nations varied significantly. Already in 1989, the Swedish Foreign Ministry in a special analytical document drew the conclusion that the Baltic statehood was beyond the "realm of reality". "A special status within the USSR" was considered a maximum possible achievement for the Baltic states.<sup>9</sup> However, in 1989 Sweden established a consular office in Riga. It was close to a *de facto* embassy of Sweden. Lars Peters Freden was appointed as a representative of Sweden to Latvia.<sup>10</sup> His memoirs serve as a significant source of the Swedish diplomacy regarding the Baltic question, and also offer an interesting outsider's perspective on the process of the restoration of Baltic independence. The Baltic people highly valued the support of the Swedish public voiced in regular Monday pro-Baltic rallies. Latvian exile activist from Sweden Atis Lejiņš points out four projects that were important for the Latvian independence movement and supported by the Swedish government: the establishment of a diplomatic office in Riga and Information Offices of the Baltic States in Stockholm, radio broadcast in Latvian and election campaign training provided for the Popular Front staff.<sup>11</sup>

The Foreign Minister of Denmark at the time, Uffe Elleman Jensen, describes the attitude of his own country and Iceland as even more favourable toward Baltic independence. He mentioned the protocols of cooperation between the government of Denmark and the Baltic governments

in February of 1991.<sup>12</sup> Actually, they were close to the diplomatic recognition *de facto*.

Germany's approach towards the process of the restoration of the Baltic statehood has been estimated as cautious. It was dictated by the delicate situation regarding the German unification process and the necessity to avoid countermeasures taken by the Soviet Union.

Anxiety was widespread in the Baltic states due to concerns that the Western states would make secret concessions on the Baltic issue in return for a favourable attitude on behalf of the USSR regarding the solution of the German problem. German historian Kristina Readman indicated that the attitude of Chancellor (1982–1998) Helmut Kohl's (1930–2017) government should be described as following the principle of the "USSR first". This standpoint was maintained even after the bloodshed in Vilnius and Riga in January of 1991. The Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher (1927–2016), while condemning the tragic events, pledged to continue supporting the "Soviet people". In a conversation with Lithuanian Prime Minister Kazimira Prunskiene, Kohl emphasized that the Baltic nations should continue following the policy of a hundred little steps. In the talks held in mid-February with Latvian Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis, Kohl continued to use the old formula:

*"Germany is strongly committed to supporting the advancement of Baltic sovereignty, which would be achieved by means of political and economic negotiation in the framework of Baltic-USSR relations."*<sup>13</sup>

Baltic states felt that they deserved more progress and clear Western steps towards international recognition of their independence without a sanction of Moscow.

However, after the failed August 1991 coup in Moscow, Genscher supported

prompt recognition of the Baltic states.<sup>14</sup> The disappointment of the Baltic nations caused by the reticent attitude of Germany was also noticed by the first German ambassador to Latvia Count Hagen von Lambsdorf. He wrote that even bloodshed could do nothing to alter this attitude and justified it by referring to the presence of "hundreds of thousands" of Soviet soldiers on the German land.<sup>15</sup>

Following the Independence Declaration on May 4, 1990, the Chairman of the Supreme Council Anatolijs Gorbunovs sent the world leaders the manifesto adopted by the Parliament, informing them about this turn of events and seeking their support. Among other things, the document stressed that the independence restoration of the democratic Baltic states, Latvia included, was in line with the democratization trend in Eastern Europe, as well as the security interests of all the European states.<sup>16</sup> The answers received from European politicians encouraged Latvia to launch negotiations with Moscow. Margaret Thatcher recalled her declaration made in the House of Commons on March 27, in which she recognized the legitimacy of the will of the Latvian nation to determine its own destiny. However, she emphasized: *"actually there is no doubt, that actual and lasting independence of the Baltic nations will depend on a treaty with the USSR"*. She also expressed a hope that the Baltic negotiations with Moscow in the nearest future would lead to a result acceptable for all sides.<sup>17</sup> Later in her memoirs she was forced to recognize the mistakes made by the West at that particular time: we

*"in the West overestimated the degree to which a Soviet empire [...], an empire constructed and bound together by force – could survive the onset of political liberty. Perhaps we too much listened to the diplomats and Western experts and too little to the emigres"*.<sup>18</sup>

Thatcher, as well as other Western leaders were anxious about the risk of a coup and violence in the USSR. She maintained that she did not doubt the inevitability of the Baltic independence: the question was not if, but when it would be obtained. The political situation in Lithuania, especially in spring of 1990 and its dangerous relations with the Kremlin were of a particular concern to the British.<sup>19</sup>

Denmark's Prime Minister Poul Schlüter answered in a less cold and formal manner. While underlining the necessity to negotiate with Moscow, he also expressed understanding of the Baltic aspirations.<sup>20</sup> Latvian diplomat and politician Sandra Kalniete optimistically noted four important standpoints in his letter: a strong international support for Latvia, the equality between the USSR and the Baltic states as negotiation partners, the need to achieve results favourable for both sides and, last but not least, the belief that the Baltic independence should become a reality.<sup>21</sup> However, in fact all the above-mentioned aspects can also be traced in Thatcher's letter. On September 20, the Office of German Chancellor Kohl wrote to the Chairman of the World Association of Free Latvians Gunārs Meierovics (1920–2007) that Western Germany supported the rights of the Baltic nations to independence. The authors of the letter, however, admonished that it was impossible to achieve the independence of Latvia by means of unilateral declarations, but only as a result of a peaceful and negotiated process, resulting in solutions acceptable to all participants.<sup>22</sup>

### **Role of the European collective institutions**

The European institutions did not play any particular role in the process of the

restoration of the Baltic statehood. It is well known that the European Commission decided to recognize the independence of the Baltic states as early as on August 27, 1991. However, before that, the future EU did not play any significant role. Historian Eduards Bruno Deksnis states that, as a rule, 12 member states of the European Community limited their role to issuing appeals to the Baltic states to remain patient, which, in fact, was indeed the best possible advice to give to the political forces of the Baltic nations. He reminds that Maastricht Treaty on the formation of the European Union was signed after the international recognition of the Baltic states, and that until then the EEC mainly functioned as a framework for solving economic and trade problems.<sup>23</sup>

In the programmatic documents of the Popular Front of Latvia, the membership in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) was seen as a fundamental objective, or even more so, as the first step towards further international recognition. The process of the foundation of the CSCE had an immense importance for Baltic exile organizations from its very start. Later, in the first half of the 1970s they tried to prevent the recognition of Soviet post-war borders in the final document of the Helsinki process.<sup>24</sup> They also attempted to draw the attention of the international community to the status of the Baltic nations, as well as to the violations of human rights in the occupied Baltic states.<sup>25</sup>

The expulsion of the Baltic delegations from the plenary meeting of the CSCE in Paris on November 19, 1990, evoked a diplomatic scandal. The Baltic diplomacy had hoped to achieve some kind of a breaking point in this international conference. Gorbachev insisted that the Baltic delegations could participate in the conference only as a part of the Soviet delegation,

and threatened to leave the conference, if this demand was not met. In an attempt to solve the problem, France as a host of the conference offered a compromise by placing the Baltic delegations in a lodge for guests. Historian and diplomat Jānis Ritenis (1925–2007) in his monograph suggested that the incident in fact turned into a triumph for the Baltic delegations. Their press conference was attended by an unprecedented number of journalists, including the representatives of the world's leading media. The reception hosted by the Latvian delegation on the occasion of the national Independence Day on November 18 also became very popular among diplomats, even the Prime Ministers of Denmark and Iceland, as well as Foreign Ministers of Austria, Poland and Hungary attended the event.<sup>26</sup>

Another international institution, which was significant to Latvia at that time was the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. In this institution, Latvian diplomats and Latvian activists in exile had to explain the origins of the Baltic issue from its very roots, i.e. the German–Soviet secret agreements and the illegitimacy of the Soviet regime in the Baltics.

However, the European dimension was very seldom mentioned in the official documents of the Popular Front and the Supreme Council. One of such rare documents was the Independence Declaration of May 4, 1990, which addressed the issue of international rights, human rights included, and referred to Latvia's membership in the League of Nations during the pre-war period.<sup>27</sup>

The PFL leaders used to mention the concept of Europe in the context of the idea of a united and free Europe, which they insisted was impossible without the freedom of the Baltic nations. The Chairman of the PFL Dainis Īvāns wrote that *“the Baltic independence plus democracy in Russia, plus*

*the sovereinisation of the nations of the Russian empire “was the only possible way for a new Europe to emerge”*”.<sup>28</sup> S. Kalniete in her memoirs emphasized that the return of the Baltic nations to Europe was necessary also for Europe itself, for its stability and future.<sup>29</sup> The Baltic diplomacy insisted that the Baltic issue was the only problem created by the Second World War that had remained unsolved.

Describing the Western (Europe is not singled out) attitude, historian Daina Bleiere expressed disappointment with the fact that attitude of the West was not very positive; the Western countries supported Gorbachev and believed that the most important issues (the reduction of nuclear arms and the creation of a new international security order) had to be solved first. They also were afraid that the secession of the Baltic states could lead to a rapid disintegration of the USSR and trigger *“violence and civil war in many regions of the crumbling empire”*.<sup>30</sup> However, Western politicians were forced to offer as minimum moral, if not material and political support.<sup>31</sup> Ironically, American author Raimond Garthoff suggested that non-violent fight of the Baltic nations was much more dangerous for the integrity of the Soviet Union than the violent developments in the republics of Northern Caucasus.<sup>32</sup> S. Kalniete also indicated that if not for the public pressure, the Western politicians would have easily left the Baltic states under the Soviet regime, preferring first to solve the “more significant” German and disarmament issues. The Baltic states were forced to realize the policy of “creeping recognition” in order to expand the circle of those supporting their independence and improve the level of academic, political and diplomatic contacts: *“we were able to enforce Baltic issue”* to Western governments and achieve its inclusion in to agenda of international relations.<sup>33</sup>

## Europe and economic issues

The Popular Front of Latvia did not have a sophisticated economic program. The main task was to disconnect Latvia's economy from the declining Soviet economic system. It was necessary to "*demolish old system of planned economy and restore the social justice and to renew respect for private property*".<sup>34</sup>

Such metaphors as "a little life-boat to leave a sinking liner" were popular to describe the process. This process inevitably caused a decline in production and life standards. Historians Artis Pabriks and Aldis Purs used another metaphor, when they wrote that

*"Latvian economy was a cog within a larger Soviet machine – the cog could not work on its own. [...] The machine to continue the analogy, had not been oiled in decades"*.<sup>35</sup>

Regarding the foreign trade, the economists of the PFL hoped that Latvia would manage to sell its best products to the West and a little amount of Latvia's exports would be absorbed by the huge Eastern market.<sup>36</sup>

Europe was considered a paragon, the Scandinavian countries were especially admired in Latvia for their economic achievements. There was a strong feeling that Soviet occupation prevented Latvia from achieving the level of Scandinavian welfare. Exile Latvian economist Juris Viksniņš argued that if Marshall plan aid had been available "*at least Finnish income levels would have been reached*".<sup>37</sup> The Swedish socialism was seen as an alternative for the brutal and ineffective Soviet communism. The understanding of the huge gap between Latvia and Scandinavia came only later. However, in 1990, the correspondent of British newspaper "The Guardian" in

Latvia, Mr. Jonathan Steele remarked that all kinds of socialism including "Swedish model" had already become unpopular in this country.<sup>38</sup>

Deputy of the Supreme Council Edmunds Krastiņš writes that he was able to find just a single book about the market economy in the State Library in 1990. Initially, the economic thinking of the Popular Front was in the stage of "democratic socialism", however, the contacts with the West helped to improve the situation. Already in 1990, the PFL in its election programme accentuated market economy, private property, national currency. E. Krastiņš indicated that even the best economist of the world did not have a plan for transition from a centralized economy to a market economy.<sup>39</sup> However, full economic reforms became possible only after full restoration of independence with the assistance of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Western governments.<sup>40</sup>

Economist Uldis Osis wrote that Latvian government was practically forced to abandon ideas about economic "Finlandization" and cooperation with Moscow, and turn to contacts with the West, initially with the think tanks and research centres.<sup>41</sup>

We may assume that Europe and the West in general were seen as an ideal in terms of living standards, but there was no clarity about how to achieve them.

## European values

Lately there is a trend to underline the dominance of European values in Latvia at that time. Philosopher Maija Kūle wrote that the European values of freedom, human rights, rationalism, non-violence, welfare, solidarity and humanism in combination with the steps to achieve national liberation secured a balanced

and safe transition to independence and democracy.<sup>42</sup> Aforementioned values of European liberalism prevented formation of violent nationalist ideology or anarchist populism.<sup>43</sup> Philosopher Pēteris Laķis (1952–2003) also wrote that the political, not the economic reasons were the cause for the crisis of Soviet power and secured a success of new forces in politics. P. Laķis also underlined close connection between democratisation and liberalization and idea of national independence. Movement for national self-determination represented a democratic idea.<sup>44</sup>

Negative attitude towards Soviet was, of course, the reason for seeking sanctuary in European values. A. Pabriks and A. Pūrs argued that *“The attitude of Latvians and Balts at large can be described as a social and psychological rejection of everything Russian and consequently, everything Soviet”*.<sup>45</sup>

The former Prime Minister of Sweden Carl Bildt saw the legal and non-violent way of the Baltic nations towards their independence as a factor that evoked positive attitude from the part of international community and a criterion of their belonging to Europe and the Western world: *“in close contact with Russian democrats [...] they fought a legal, moral and political battle that was as effective as it was nonviolent”*.<sup>46</sup> Some authors, however, were sceptical. British journalist and historian Anathol von Lieven wrote that many aspects of the Baltic national revolutions in the modern Europe were seen as archaic. They were oriented towards traditionalism and romanticism, some of the revived traditions even risked to alienate the Baltic states from contemporary Europe.<sup>47</sup>

The President of Latvia Academy of Sciences Jānis Stradiņš laid a particular emphasis on the cultural identity that Latvia shared with Europe. He underlined that the sophisticated and decadent Europe needed Latvia because of its culture, not

because of its scarce natural resources or very limited domestic market. Our unique values could probably attract the interest of Europe and change its cosmopolitan uniformity, he wrote in 1990. Such approach was not very flattering for Europe. With frustration, J. Stradiņš also admitted that the ideas of nationalism were not dominant in Europe: *“representatives of culture treat them with caution”*.<sup>48</sup> J. Stradiņš very clearly declared the European trend as a dominating one in Latvia's national choice, not only in the field of its foreign policy. Europe was considered as the lost home, to which Latvians had to return, at the same time considering Latvia's possible contribution to Europe.<sup>49</sup> The discourse of returning home was influential throughout the entire period until admission of Latvia to the NATO and European Union. Sandra Kalniete even in 2016 wrote that return of Latvia to Europe was like *“return of a family under the auspices of the clan”*.<sup>50</sup> She continues to use classical metaphors: *“Our dreams and hopes were Europe that will welcome us as lost sons and daughters.”*<sup>51</sup> Of course, there were obstacles and disappointments in this path to the lost home. Baltic politicians also used to underline the differences from the Eastern values, present even during the previous centuries. Lennart Meri in 1993 indicated: Estonia for centuries had been the Eastern frontier of European legal system, and had accepted refugees – political and religious dissidents from Russia.<sup>52</sup>

Dr. Olga Procevska in her compelling doctoral dissertation analysed public discourses of Latvian intellectuals during the national awakening. She underlines key concepts used in public discourses, for example, the concepts of democracy and civilisation. The key ideas also include the concept of returning to Europe, to community of free democratic countries. The image of Europe, however, was somewhat mythical, the reflection of Europe was

one-sided and too idealistic. Latvian intellectuals could not accept the criticism of European media against the minority policy in the new situation in Latvia.<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusions

The movement for restoration of Latvia's independence, or the so-called "Third National Awakening" from 1988 to 1991 led also to restoration of democracy, free market economy and reintegration into modern Western culture.

The objective of the paper is to explore the European dimension as a factor both in international and domestic aspects during the National Awakening movement. The method of the research is traditional historical narrative. The research is based on comparative analysis of archival and published documents, memoirs of Latvian and foreign politicians, contemporary press and history literature.

From the international aspect, European powers like the USA were foreign policy partners of Latvia and the other Baltic states. They expected support from European states in reestablishment of national statehood. Latvia along with the other Baltic states tried to establish diplomatic contacts with governments and to influence public opinion of European countries. The role of the emerging united Europe – future EU – was not paramount, but neither was it inconsequential. The position of the European states differed from country to country, but generally they all were favourably disposed towards the Baltic nations. It is necessary to emphasize that the practical policy of European governments fell short of expectations of the Baltic states, evoking disappointment and bitterness.

Germany, Nordic countries, France, United Kingdom were among the most significant eventual partners. Sweden was the first country that established diplomatic mission in the Baltic states. Several episodes were also linked with the common European organizations, including CSCE, Council of Europe and, last but not least, EEC. Excluding of Baltic delegations from the CSCE summit in Paris (1990) led to major international publicity.

In domestic aspect, Europe in Latvia was considered as the example for future political and socio-economic development. The concept of "Europe" was closely linked with discourse about "the West", "democracy", "high living standards", definite system of values. Scandinavian countries were considered as positive model for socio-economic development. Methods of contemporary election fight were introduced during the election campaigns.

The leaders of the national awakening were not very knowledgeable regarding **economic issues**. Europe was perceived by them and the public at large as a paragon in terms of living standards. The initial attractiveness of the Scandinavian model faded together along with the popularity of all kinds of socialism.

In the field of **culture and values**, the European ideas dominated in the independence movement. Europe was considered the lost home, to which Latvians had to return. One of the most significant achievements of the independence movement was the ability to achieve a balance between the ideas of Latvian nationalism and European values. A successful solution of this controversy and establishment of a democratic regime in Latvia, opened a way towards successful European integration.

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## KOPSAVILKUMS

Latvijas neatkarības atjaunošanas kustība jeb Trešā atmoda (1988–1991) noveda pie demokrātijas, brīvā tirgus ekonomikas atjaunošanas un Latvijas reintegrācijas mūsdienu Rietumu kultūrā.

Raksta mērķis ir izpētīt Eiropas dimensiju kā nozīmīgu faktoru, kas iespaidoja gan ārpolitiskos, gan iekšpolitiskos aspektus. Izpētes metode ir tradicionālais vēstures naratīvs. Rakstā izmantoti arhīvu un publicētie dokumenti, Latvijas un ārvalstu politiķu memoāri, perioda prese un vēstures literatūra.

Starptautiski Eiropas valstis tāpat kā ASV bija Latvijas un pārējo Baltijas valstu ārpolitiskie partneri, tās sagaidīja Eiropas valstu atbalstu nacionālā valstiskuma atjaunošanā. Latvija un citas Baltijas valstis centās izveidot diplomātiskus kontaktus ar valdībām un ietekmēt sabiedrisko domu Eiropas valstīs. Tolaik topošās apvienotās Eiropas – vēlākās Eiropas Savienības – nozīme nebija liela, bet tā tomēr bija jūtama. Dažādu Eiropas valstu loma atšķīrās, bet kopumā tās bija labvēlīgi noskaņotas Baltijas valstīm. Būtiski uzsvērt, ka Eiropas valdību praktiskā politika neatbilda Baltijas valstu cerībām, izraisot vilšanos un rūgtumu.

Vācija, Ziemeļvalstis, Francija un Apvienotā Karaliste bija starp visnozīmīgākajām potenciālajām partnervalstīm. Zviedrija pirmā izveidoja diplomātisku misiju Baltijas valstīs. Vairākas nozīmīgas epizodes bija saistītas ar kopējām Eiropas organizācijām, ieskaitot EDSA, Eiropas Padomi un arī Eiropas Ekonomikas kopienu. Baltijas delegāciju izraidīšana no EDSA samita Parīzē 1990. gadā noveda pie plašas starptautiskas publicitātes.

Iekšpolitiski Latvijā Eiropa tika uzskatīta par paraugu nākotnes politiskajai un sociālekonomiskajai attīstībai. Eiropas koncepts bija cieši saistīts ar diskursu par “Rietumiem”, “demokrātiju”, “augstu dzīves līmeni”, noteiktu vērtību sistēmu. Skandināvijas valstis tika uzlūktas kā pozitīvs modelis sociālekonomiskajai attīstībai. Vēlēšanu kampaņās tika ieviesti moderni paņēmieni.

Nacionālās atmodas lideri nebija ekonomisko jautājumu speciālisti, Eiropa viņiem un sabiedrībai kopumā noderēja kā modelis dzīves līmeņa aspektā. Sākotnējā Skandināvijas modeļa pievilcība sāka zust kopā ar visu veidu sociālisma popularitāti.

Kultūras un vērtību sfērā neatkarības kustībā dominēja Eiropas idejas – Eiropa tika uzskatīta par zaudētajām mājām, kur latviešiem vajadzētu atgriezties. Viens no visnozīmīgākajiem neatkarības kustības sasniegumiem ir tās kapacitāte radīt līdzsvaru starp latviešu nacionālisma idejām un Eiropas vērtībām. Šis pretrunas veiksmīgs risinājums un sekmīga demokrātiskas iekārtas izveidošana Latvijā pavēra ceļu tālākai integrācijai Eiropā.