



# FORUM



## Central Europe Forum at the Saxon State Parliament **'Germany, Central Europe and the Eastern Neighbours' conference**

on 13 May 2022 at the Seimas  
of the Republic of Lithuania in Vilnius



**Sächsischer Landtag**



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beim Sächsischen Landtag



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The Central Europe Forum at the Saxon State Parliament, established by the President of the Saxon State Parliament, Dr Matthias Röbner, aims to further advance the process of cooperation at the heart of our continent. Its goal is to develop ties based on intellectual exchange, mutual inspiration and civic understanding in Central Europe. The Central Europe Forum sees itself as an initiator that takes regular action to increase public awareness of the role that Central European priorities play in the shaping of the European Union.

In 2022, eleven years after its foundation, the Central Europe Forum met in Vilnius. We want to thank the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania for its great hospitality, and especially its President, Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen. International representatives from politics, science and society exchanged views on current developments in Germany, Central and Eastern Europe on 13 May 2022. They discussed the topics ‘The situation in the dictatorship and war zones – Russia, Belarus, Ukraine’ as well as ‘External security in the 21st century – what must Europe do and what can it do?’. This volume documents the conference in text and pictures.

Published by the Saxon State Parliament

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## Imprint:

Editor: Saxon State Parliament,  
constitutional body of the Free State  
of Saxony, Bernhard-von-Lindenau-Platz 1,  
01067 Dresden, Germany  
In matters relating to the Saxon State Parliament,  
the Free State of Saxony is represented by  
the President of the Saxon State Parliament  
Dr. Matthias Rößler.  
V. i. S. d. P.: Dr. Thomas Schubert,  
Saxon State Parliament  
Editorial staff: Cynthia Wrage, TU Chemnitz;  
Dr. Thomas Schubert, Kevin Britschka,  
Saxon State Parliament  
Photos: Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania;  
tsikhanouskaya.org; othmar-karas.at;  
Saxon State Parliament; gettyimages/  
Aleh Varanishcha, prosIgn  
Layout: machzwei, Dresden  
Printed by: Druckhaus Dresden –  
Neue Süddeutsche Verlagsdruckerei GmbH

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# Opening





Vilnius Old Town



## Fostering relations between Germany and Lithuania

Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė

» Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to our conference guests. I would like to extend our best wishes and greetings on behalf of the President of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen.

It is a great pleasure for me to address you today as friends of Lithuania. Marko Schiemann and I have just been

looking at the historical photos from when he and his colleagues were here in Lithuania 30 years ago, to get a picture of Lithuania's path towards democracy. At that time, we expressed our determination to be free and independent through the referendum. On the one hand, this history from 30 years ago seems far away, but on the other hand, it is very close to us today as we experience

the same or similar struggles for the values of Western civilisation.

Last year, Lithuania and Germany celebrated the 30th anniversary of their resumption of diplomatic relations. Germany occupies a very important place in the minds and hearts of the Lithuanian people. I still remember very well when I was in primary school, perhaps in 1994, and one of my classmates brought beautiful felt-tip pens to class. Everyone asked her where she had got them, and she said that the Germans had given them to her because she had relatives in Germany. Even then, in our childhood, we saw Germany as a symbol of high quality and of friendship.

**Germany's support and the presence of German and other NATO troops in Lithuania is of utmost importance to us. It makes us feel much safer and much stronger. This is a significant matter for us.**

We hope that this aid and support could perhaps become even greater, especially in the context of the war. As you know, we are in a very sensitive and fragile situation in geopolitical terms. We are only connected via the Suwałki corridor, and the defence capabilities and the support of our partners are therefore extremely important. We ourselves are also making efforts to strengthen the country's defence capabilities by increasing our defence budget and taking other measures.

It is the third month of war for Ukraine, and our feelings and emotions show no signs of subsiding. They are still very



much alive and fresh. Lithuanian society is donating money to Ukraine, and we are also sending weapons.

On a political level, Ukraine's prospects with regard to the European Union are of key importance. We have spoken about this many times before, but now, in light of the war, the Seimas has unanimously adopted a resolution which proposes not only that Ukraine be granted candidate status as soon as possible, but also that it be given the very clear prospect of EU membership. This country, which is today

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fighting and defending itself against Russian aggression, can be considered a true member of the EU that fights for the values we share in our European family.

These questions are the most important ones today. As this event's moderator already mentioned, a good six months ago we would not have believed that Russia could invade an independent state in such a brutal way and kill its innocent civilians. The images that we are continually seeing out of Ukraine are shocking and distressing, and one wonders if things can get any worse. The Russian war machine seems to be a thing of inconceivable brutality. But it can be stopped if we all stand together, if we all help Ukraine. We are in fact certain that the Baltic States are Russia's next target.

These are heavy issues that I have raised, but it is my sincere hope that we can win the war together and build a different life by helping Ukraine. It is clear that we are already rewriting history, that Europe will no longer be as it was before.

**I very much hope that energy independence will not only be part of these strategies but will become the essence of the future of the European Union.**

Giving up gas or oil from Russia is not the only important aspect; it is also important to place a greater focus on renewable energies and on things that make our world and our planet a cleaner place.

I want to thank you once again for your support and friendship and for fostering relations between Germany and



Lithuania, for taking an interest in Central European affairs and, of course, in Ukraine. I sincerely hope that those meeting here for the first time will become friends, and that those who are already acquainted will strengthen these ties.

Thank you, and I wish you a pleasant stay here in Lithuania. <<



## Plėtoti Vokietijos ir Lietuvos santykius

Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė

» Guten Morgen, meine Damen und Herren, Sveiki, gerbiamieji, Mieli renginio svečiai, Kuo geriausi linkėjimai ir sveikinimai jums nuo Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo Pirminkės Viktorijos Čmilytės-Nielsen.

Man labai malonu šiandieną kreiptis į jus kaip į Lietuvos bičiulius. Tik ką su gerbiamu p. Schieman apžiūrėjome

istorines nuotraukas kada jis ir jo kolegos prieš 30 metų lankėsi čia Lietuvoje ir stebėjo Lietuvos demokratinį kelią referendumo būdu, pasirinkimo būdu, ir kuomet išreiškėme apsisprendimą būti laisvais ir nepriklausomais. Viena vertus istorija prieš 30 metų atrodo tolima, bet kita vertus labai artima šiandien, kai matome labai panašias ar tas pačias kovas už Vakarų civilizacijos vertybes.

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Lietuva ir Vokietija pernai minėjo 30 metų diplomatinį santykių atkūrimo jubiliejų. Vokietija Lietuvoje, lietuvių žmonių galvose ir širdyse užima labai svarbią vietą. Aš puikiai atsimenu kai mokykloje, pradinėse klasėse, gal 1994 metais, klasiokė atsinešė į klasę labai gražius flomasterius. Visa klasė klausinėjo iš kur ji juos gavo, o ji atsakė, kad jai vokiečiai padovanojo, nes turėjo giminaičių Vokietijoje. Jau tada vaikystėje mums Vokietija atrodė kaip aukštos kokybės ir draugystės ženklas.

**Kalbant rimčiau, mums be galo svarbi Vokietijos parama ir tai kad Vokietijos kariai bei kitų NATO priešakinių pajėgų kariai yra čia Lietuvoje. Mes jaučiamės kur kas saugesni ir kur kas tvirtesni.**

Mums tai yra didžiulis dalykas. Mes viliamės, kad ta pagalba ir parama, galbūt, galėtų būti dar didesnė, ypatingai atsižvelgiant į karo kontekstą. Kaip žinia, esame labai jautrioje ir trapioje situacijoje geopolitinė prasme, turime Suvalkų koridorių, todėl gynybiniai pajėgumai ir mūsų partnerių pagalba yra ypatingai svarbi. Stiprinti šalies gynybinius pajėgumus dedame pastangas ir mes patys, didindami gynybos biudžetą ir imdamasi kitų veiksmų.

Ukraina. Trečias mėnuo karo ir mumyse jausmai ir emocijos tikrai neslūgsta. Jie vis dar labai gyvi ir švieži. Lietuvos pilietinė visuomenė aukoja lėšas Ukrainai, siunčiame ir ginkluotę.

Politiniu lygmeniu yra be galo svarbi Ukrainos Europos Sąjungos perspektyva. Esame jau ne sykį ir anksčiau pasisakę,



bet dabar karo akivaizdoje Seimas vienbalsiai priėmė rezoliuciją, kurioje mes kalbame ne vien tik apie kandidatės statuso suteikimą Ukrainai kaip įmanoma greičiau, bet ir apie labai aiškią perspektyvą dėl narystės Europos Sąjungoje. Ši šalis šiandieną kaudamasi ir gindamasi nuo Rusijos agresijos, jau galima sakyti yra tikroji ES narė, kovodama už tas vertybes, kurios yra išpažįstamos mūsų šeimoje.

Šie klausimai šiandien yra vieni svarbiausių. Kaip jau gerbiama reginio moderatorė paminėjo, dar prieš gerą

pusmetį nebūtume patikėję kad tokiu brutaliu būdu Rusija gali įsiveržti į nepriklausomą valstybę, žudyti jos civilius nekaltus žmones. Vaizdai kurie plūsta iš Ukrainos kiekvieną sykį yra šokiruojantys ir sukrečiantys, ir atrodo, ar dar gali būti baisiau. Panašu, kad Rusijos karo mašina yra nesuvokiamo brutalumo, bet ji gali būti sustabdyta visų mūsų susitelkimu, mūsų visų didžiule pagalba Ukrainai. Esame tikri, kad kitas Rusijos tikslas yra Baltijos valstybės.

Tokie liūdni pasidalinimai su jumis šiandieną, bet, nepaisant to, aš labai tikiuosi, kad kartu padėdami Ukrainai karą laimėsime ir galėsime galvoti apie kitokio gyvenimo kūrimą. Akivaizdu, kad jau dabar mes perrašome istoriją, kad Europa nebebus tokia, kokia buvo.

**Labai tikiuosi, kad energetinė nepriklausomybė bus ne vien tik strategijų dalimi, bet taps esmine Europos Sąjungos ateities šerdimi.**

Svarbu ne vien tik atsisakyti dujų ar naftos iš Rusijos, svarbu ir daugiau dėmesio skirti atsinaujinančiai energetikai ir tiems dalykams, kurie padarytų mūsų pasaulį ir planetą švaresne.

Dar sykį dėkodama jums už jūsų paramą ir už draugystę mūsų valstybei, už tai kad jums rūpi ir Vokietijos-Lietuvos santykiai ir Vidurio Europos reikalai ir neabejotinai Ukraina, aš labai tikiuosi, kad tie kas matomės pirmą kartą, atrasi-me čia draugų, o tie kas esate tarpusavyje pažįstami – tuos ryšius sustiprinsite.



Labai jums dėkoju ir malonaus buvimo čia, Lietuvoje. «



## Defending a free, democratic Europe

Dr Matthias Röbner

» Madam President, honourable members, ladies and gentlemen and guests, it is an honour for me to welcome you to Vilnius, to the historic building of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. Unfortunately, I cannot be there in person with you due to a coronavirus infection and have to speak to you from my home, where I am in quarantine. I am very sorry about this.

My heartfelt thanks go to Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen for the opportunity to meet with you at the Central Europe Forum. The location could hardly be more fitting, the topic could not be more relevant.

**We see this conference as a clear sign of our close ties with the Republic of Lithuania and a free Baltic region. It is intended to demonstrate our solidarity in a free Europe, which is a core concern of the Central Europe Forum.**

The time of the union between the Electorate of Saxony and the Kingdom of Poland-Lithuania under Kings August II and his son August III lies more than 300 years in the past. In the 21st century, our countries are united by the common goal of a flourishing coexistence in a European Union that stands steadfast on its foundations of freedom, democracy and the rule of law. We all have a duty to guard this most precious thing.

When we, the Board of Trustees of the Central Europe Forum, made the decision in 2020 to hold the conference in Lithuania, we were also motivated by the civil protests in Belarus and the massive repression against the Belarusian people. So working towards a partnership with the European Humanities University was a matter of course for us. Professor Ignatov, thank you for your commitment, and I am glad that you and your students are taking part in the conference today.

I am honoured today to welcome Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the leader of free, democratic Belarus. She will speak to us after lunch. I am particularly impressed by her global campaign for a free Belarus.

There are both historical and contemporary reasons why an initiative like the Central Europe Forum is based in

Saxony. Historically speaking, Saxony has always belonged to Central Europe and has helped shape the Eastern and Central European region for centuries. After the prolonged period of two totalitarian dictatorships, the Free State of Saxony returned to democracy in 1990. We and the other countries in Central and Eastern Europe are united by the successful revolutions for freedom of 1989.

In addition to the people of Poland, I was particularly impressed by the Baltic peoples' struggle for national sovereignty, for independence, for freedom and democracy. When I travelled by train through the Baltic States with my wife in the summer of 1989, stopping in Vilnius and Riga, we saw people gathering and singing – singing in response to the Soviet troops. The Balts' 'Singing Revolution' still touches me deeply today.

On 11 March 1990, the legendary Vytautas Landsbergis declared Lithuania's independence from the Soviet Union. It is a special honour that our conference can take place in the Hall of the Act of 11 March, where the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania was also adopted by its Parliament in 1992. How I wish I could be with you today!

Back in February 1991, at the invitation of the Seimas, a group of members of the Saxon Parliament was already in Lithuania to mark the occasion of the referendum on independence. Our visit at that time was also about protecting the referendum through the presence of members of international parliaments. Our members of the State Parliament were deeply moved as they stood at the still-fresh graves of those who died for independence and freedom on 13 January 1991. Among the members of Parliament was Marko Schiemann,

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who now chairs the European and Constitutional Affairs Committee in the Saxon State Parliament and whom I warmly welcome as head of the Saxon delegation.

**Ladies and gentlemen, the Free State of Saxony will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of its constitution in a few days. We know exactly what the fight for freedom and the re-establishment of a country mean. We also know what returning to Europe means. All these aspects connect us with the Lithuanians, the Latvians, the Estonians, and all this has been our mission for the Europe of the 21st century ever since.**



A united, peaceful and free Europe is in our peoples' most vital interest. Russia's war of aggression against free Ukraine fundamentally undermines all this. It puts an end to the order of peace in Europe and exposes not only the EU member states to an immense threat. Russia represents the greatest danger to peace and freedom in Europe today. We are experiencing a very dark hour.

Russia's war, which is contrary to international law, is simultaneously an attack on a world order based on rules that seemed a matter of certainty to us in Europe. As Robert Kagan wrote back in 2008, 'Russia and the EU might be geographical neighbours, but in geopolitical terms, they live in different centuries': one in the 19th century, driven by power politics and violence, the other in the 21st century, pursuing the cause of a peaceful world order.

The two are now colliding. But despite many sceptical views, we can see today that Europe is remarkably united in the action it is taking. There is life in the so-called West. It is more united – we are more united – than we have been for a long time. Because it is clear to everyone that Russia must not win this war!

In view of Russia's war, there can be no doubt that Germany is on the side of the Ukrainian people. Germany is doing a great deal in this regard. It is providing Ukraine with financial, humanitarian and, last but not least, military support. It is actively upholding the sanctions in concert with the European states.

Germany also has close ties with the Baltic states in the face of Russia's hegemonial threat. The German government

made the right decision to increase the Bundeswehr's presence in the Baltic states as part of NATO. The threat from Russia is all too real, especially here in Lithuania, for us to tolerate it in any way from this point onwards. We must all defend a free Europe together. Any return to Sovietisation in Europe would be a disaster for all of us who know and have experienced it.

Germany has learned from its history. The Munich Conference of 1938, the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939, large states deciding on the right of smaller states to exist – all this belongs in the past in free Europe. Instead, our clear solidarity is with all those threatened by aggressive autocracies. The territorial integrity of sovereign states is no longer negotiable in 21st century Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Eastern and Central European states in particular show us the behaviour that is required in a time of darkness like this. I find this admirable.

**In a world that is increasingly seeing major power politics and expansionism, a trend that is on the rise everywhere, Europe must fly the flag of democracy and freedom together.**

Today, it is Russia's nationalist authoritarianism that is ruthlessly attacking freedom in Europe. Let us oppose it with 'level-headed bravery' as European proponents of democracy. Violent rulers have no mercy for uncertainty and naivety. Shared strength is the only way to secure freedom!

Our conference aims to present different perspectives. In the morning session, we will be taking a look at Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. In the afternoon, the focus will be on security policy options for us in Europe and on behalf of Europe. Experts in these fields, including many from the Baltic countries, will take questions from the moderators and the audience. I am excited to hear their answers and look forward to an enlightening event with you.

And I am grateful that we can be here together. «



*In memory of those who died for independence and freedom on 13 January 1991 the Saxon delegation, represented by Marko Schiemann, laid down a wreath at Antakalnis Cemetery.*



## Laisvos ir demokratinės Europos gynimas

Dr Matthias Röbler

» Gerbiamoji Pirmininke, gerbiamieji Parlamento nariai, gerbiamos ponios ir gerbiami ponai, brangūs svečiai, man didelė garbė pasveikinti Jus Vilniuje, istoriniame Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo pastate. Deja, dėl koronaviruso infekcijos negaliu būti kartu su Jumis, nes karantinuojusi ir turiu kalbėti su Jumis iš namų nuotoliniu būdu. Labai dėl to apgailestauju.

Nuoširdžiai dėkoju Viktorijai Čmilytei-Nielsen už galimybę dalyvauti pas Jus vykstančiame Vidurio Eurpos forume. Vieta vargu ar galėtų būti tinkamesnė, o tema – aktualesnė.

**Ši konferencija yra aiškus mūsų glaudžių ryšių su Lietuvos Respublika ir laisvomis Baltijos valstybėmis ženklas. Ja siekiama parodyti mūsų solidarumą laisvoje Europoje. Laisva Europa yra pagrindinė Vidurio Europos forumo tema.**

Saksonijos kunigaikštystės ir Lenkijos-Lietuvos karalystės unijos laikai, kai valdė karaliai Augustas II ir jo sūnus Augustas III, baigėsi daugiau nei prieš 300 metų. 21 amžiuje mūsų šalis vienija bendras tikslas – ilgalaikė santarvė Europos Sąjungoje, kurią tvirtai sieja laisvė, demokratija ir teisinė valstybė. Mes visi privalome saugoti šį lobį.

Kai 2020 m. Vidurio Europos forumo patikėtinių taryboje nusprendėme konferenciją surengti Lietuvoje, Baltarusijoje tada vyko pilietiniai protestai ir masinės represijos prieš Baltarusijos žmones. Todėl mums nekilo abejonių, kad reikia bendradarbiauti ir su Europos Humanitariniu Universitetu. Gerbiamas pone profesoriau Ignatovai, dėkoju Jums už Jūsų indėlį ir džiaugiuosi, kad Jūs ir Jūsų studentai šiandien dalyvaujate konferencijoje.

Man didelė garbė šiandien pasveikinti laisvos, demokratinės Baltarusijos vadovę Sviatlaną Čichanouskąją. Ji kalbėsis su mumis po pietų. Jos visuotinės pastangos kovojant už laisvą Baltarusiją mane ypač sužavėjo.

Vidurio Europos forumo iniciatyva gimė Saksonijoje ir dėl istorinių, ir dėl su šių dienų aktualijomis susijusių priežasčių. Saksonija istoriškai visada priklausė Vidurio Europai ir šimtmečius padėjo formuoti Rytų ir Vidurio Europos

regioną. Po ilgo dviejų totalitarinių diktatūrų laikotarpio 1990 m. Saksonijos laisvoji žemė grįžo prie demokratijos. Kartu su kitomis Vidurio Rytų Europos šalimis mus vienija sėkminga 1989 m. laisvės revoliucija.

Be lenkų, man ypač didelį įspūdį padarė Baltijos tautų kova už nacionalinį suverenitetą, nepriklausomybę, laisvę ir demokratiją. Kai 1989 m. vasarą kartu su žmona traukiniu keliavome per Baltijos šalis, sustoję Vilniuje ir Rygoje matėme, kaip žmonės būrėsi draugėn ir dainavo – dainavo sustoję priešais sovietų kariuomenę. Baltų „dainuojančia revoliucija“ esu sujaudintas iki šiandien.

1990 m. kovo 11 d. legendinis Vytautas Landsbergis paskelbė Lietuvos nepriklausomybę nuo Sovietų Sąjungos. Tai, kad mūsų konferencija gali vykti Kovo 11-osios Akto salėje, kurioje 1992 m. Seimas priėmė ir Lietuvos Respublikos Konstituciją, yra ypatinga garbė. Kaip norėčiau šiandien būti su Jumis!

Jau 1991 m. vasarį Seimo kvietimu Lietuvoje referendumo dėl nepriklausomybės proga lankėsi Saksonijos parlamentarų grupė. Tuo metu buvo svarbus tarptautinių parlamentarų dalyvavimas, kad būtų apsaugotas referendumas. Mūsų parlamentarai stovėjo giliai susijaudinę prie kų tik palaidotų žmonių kapų, kurie 1991 m. sausio 13 d. žuvo už nepriklausomybę ir laisvę. Tarp parlamentarų buvo ir Marko Schiemann, kuris šiandien vadovauja Saksonijos Landtago Europos ir Konstitucijos komitetui ir kurį nuoširdžiai sveikinu kaip Saksonijos delegacijos vadovą.

**Ponios ir ponai, po kelių dienų Saksonijos laisvoji žemė švęs 30-ąsias konstitucijos metines. Mes puikiai žinome, ką reiškia kova už laisvę ir valstybės atkūrimas. Taip pat žinome, ką reiškia grįžimas į Europą. Visa tai mus sieja su lietuviais, latviais, estais, ir visa tai yra mūsų misija 21 a. Europoje.**

Vieninga, taiki ir laisva Europa yra mūsų tautų interesas. Rusijos karinė agresija prieš laisvą Ukrainą visa tai sudrebino iš pagrindų. Ji žlugdo Europos taikos tvarką ir kelia didžiulę grėsmę ne tik ES valstybėms narėms. Šiandien Rusija kelia didžiausią grėsmę taikai ir laisvei Europoje. Išgyvename labai tamsią valandą.



Tarptautinei teisei prieštaraujantis Rusijos karas kartu yra išpuolis prieš taisyklėmis grindžiamą pasaulio tvarką, kuri mums Europoje atrodė aiški. Robert Kagan dar 2008 m. rašė: „nors Rusija ir ES yra geografinės kaimynės, tačiau geopolitiniu požiūriu jos gyvena skirtinguose amžiuose“. Viena gyvena 19 amžiuje, vadovaudamasi galios politika ir smurtu, kita – 21 amžiuje, siekianti taikios pasaulio tvarkos.

Dabar įvyksta jų konfrontacija. Tačiau šiandien, nepaisant daug skeptiškų nuomonių, matome, kad Europa elgiasi nepaprastai vieningai. Vadinamuosiuose Vakaruose vyksta gyvenimas. Vakarai vieningi – mes esame vieningi – kaip niekada anksčiau. Nes visiems aišku: Rusija neturi laimėti šio karo!

Rusijos karo akivaizdoje nekyla abejonių, kad Vokietija yra Ukrainos žmonių pusėje. Vokietija daro daug. Ji suteikia Ukrainai finansinę, humanitarinę ir karinę paramą. Ji aktyviai remia sankcijas Europos kontekste.

Vokietija taip pat yra glaudžiai susijusi su Baltijos šalimis dėl Rusijos hegemoniškos grėsmės. Vokietijos vyriausybė priėmė teisingą sprendimą sustiprinti Vokietijos federalinių ginkluotojų pajėgų buvimą Baltijos šalyse NATO kontekste. Rusijos grėsmė yra pernelyg reali, ypač čia, Lietuvoje, kad galėtume ją toleruoti. Visi kartu turime ginti laisvą Europą. Bet kokia pakartotinės sovietizacijos forma Europoje būtų katastrofa mums visiems, kurie ją pažįstame ir patyrėme.

Vokietija pasimokė iš savo istorijos. 1938 m. Miuncheno konferencija, 1939 m. Hitlerio ir Stalino paktas, didžiųjų valstybių sprendimai dėl mažesnių valstybių teisės egzistuoti – visa tai laisvoje Europoje yra praeitis. Vietoj to mes

aiškiai solidarizuojamės su visais, kuriems grasina agresyvios autokratijos. 21 a. Europoje dėl suverenių valstybių teritorinio vientisumo nebegalima derėtis.

Ponios ir ponai, ypač Rytų ir Vidurio Europos valstybės mums rodo, kaip reikia elgtis tokią tamsią valandą. Manau, kad tai verta susižavėjimo.

**Pasaulyje, kuriame vis dažniau susiduriama su didžiosios galios politika ir mąstymu apie didelį teritorinį išsiplėtimą, kuris vis labiau įsitvirtina, Europa turi kartu kelti demokratijos ir laisvės vėliavą.**

Šiandien būtent Rusijos nacionalistinis autoritarizmas kėsinasi į Europos laisvę. Būdami Europos demokratais pasipriešinkime jam ypač drąsiai. Neužtikrintumo, naivumo diktatoriai neatleidžia. Tik bendra jėga užtikrina laisvę!

Mano gerbiami ponios ir ponai, mūsų konferencijos tikslas – pristatyti skirtingus požiūrius. Ryte daugiausia dėmesio skirsime Rusijai, Baltarusijai ir Ukrainai. Po pietų aptarsime mūsų saugumo politikos galimybes Europoje ir Europai. Šių sričių ekspertai, tarp kurių bus daug iš Baltijos šalių, atsakys į vedėjų ir klausytojų klausimus. Nekantrauju išgirsti atsakymus ir kartu su Jumis nekantriai laukiu informatyvaus renginio.

Dėkoju, kad galime būti kartu. «



A photograph of Dr. Othmar Karas, a man with glasses and a dark suit, speaking at a podium. He is gesturing with his right hand. The background is a blurred blue and white setting, likely a conference or parliament.

## Standing united and resolute in the face of history

Dr Othmar Karas

» Chairperson of the Seimas Čmilytė-Nielsen, President Rößler, Rector Ignatov, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for the invitation! I regret that I cannot be with you in Vilnius today in person or via a live video stream. I hold the Central Europe Forum at the Saxon State Parliament in very high regard, so it is of utmost importance to me to be able to make my contribution in this way.

Everything – including your conference, of course – is currently overshadowed by Russia's cruel war of aggression against Ukraine. All of us – the European Union, its citizens and its partners – must stand together against the aggressor and stand up for our values. We must support Ukraine with everything the country needs to defend itself and supply its needs. And we must sanction Russia via every means within our power.

**Being united and determined is the only way we can stand before history and overcome new challenges – both internally and externally. Now is not the time for party politics, blockades and blackmail. What matters now is political responsibility and keeping our eyes open to reality.**

Putin is breaking all the legal foundations that underpin the peaceful coexistence of people. He is waging a war against Ukraine – a sovereign country, innocent people and our values. The issue is nothing less than war or peace. It is about a confrontation on European soil: The system of freedom against the system of dictatorship. The system of discourse against the system that uses war as a way of doing politics.

Both the war in Ukraine and the ongoing pandemic have caught us in the middle of a transformation process. We all know there is a lot to do: We want to implement the Green



Deal and become the world leader in green technologies. We want to resolve the issues around digitalisation and make the coming decade Europe's 'digital decade' with cutting-edge technology that is made in Europe. We want to learn the lessons of the pandemic and become more independent in the areas of supply chains, research, energy and food security. And we want to create a common foreign, security and defence policy.

These priorities must not be played off against each other; we must take a holistic approach to putting them into effect. Europe must become faster and more capable of taking external action in every area. It must become more transparent and closer to the people within its borders.

This idea also runs right through the findings of the Conference on the Future of Europe. Its 325 concrete proposals for the further development of the European Union were drawn up with the direct participation of citizens and were determined to be undisputed as a matter of principle by the EU institutions and the national parliaments.

These proposals serve as a tailwind for all that we, the European Union, want to push ahead with. They say YES to ending the undemocratic principle of unanimity; YES to the European Parliament's right of initiative and sovereignty in budgetary matters; YES to a union for energy, health and social matters; YES to a union for security and defence matters; YES to transnational lists; YES to more cooperation among the citizens of Europe. The European Parliament will now become the counsel for these proposals and will also take the initiative for a convention on the necessary treaty reforms. Because the credibility of the

## Opening

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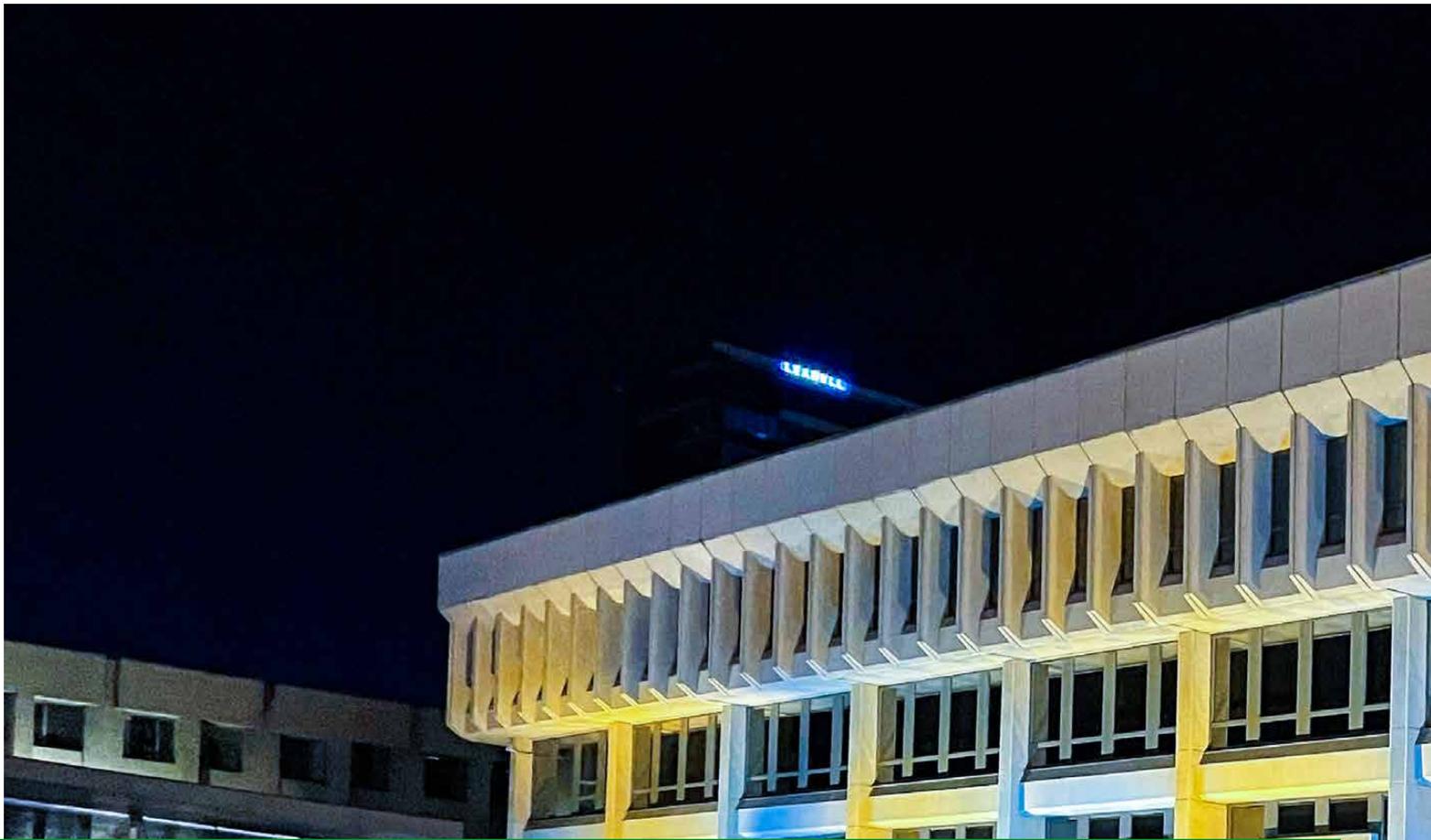
Conference on the Future of Europe depends on its implementation.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Central Europe Forum at the Saxon State Parliament has been forging bonds of intellectual exchange and civic understanding for more than ten years. With your regular conferences in the countries of Central Europe, you make an essential contribution to strengthening the economic, cultural and historical interconnections and relationships between them. The fact that you are holding your conference in Vilnius today sends an important signal. Here in particular, the fear that the war could expand is especially great. I was on working visits to Vilnius and Riga as recently as the beginning of April 2022, and was able to witness for myself how willing the people are to help.

**The answer to the war and the challenges of the future must be that Central Europe and the European Union become much more closely integrated in economic and cultural terms. We must not take democracy and freedom for granted, but fight for them and work to strengthen them every day.**

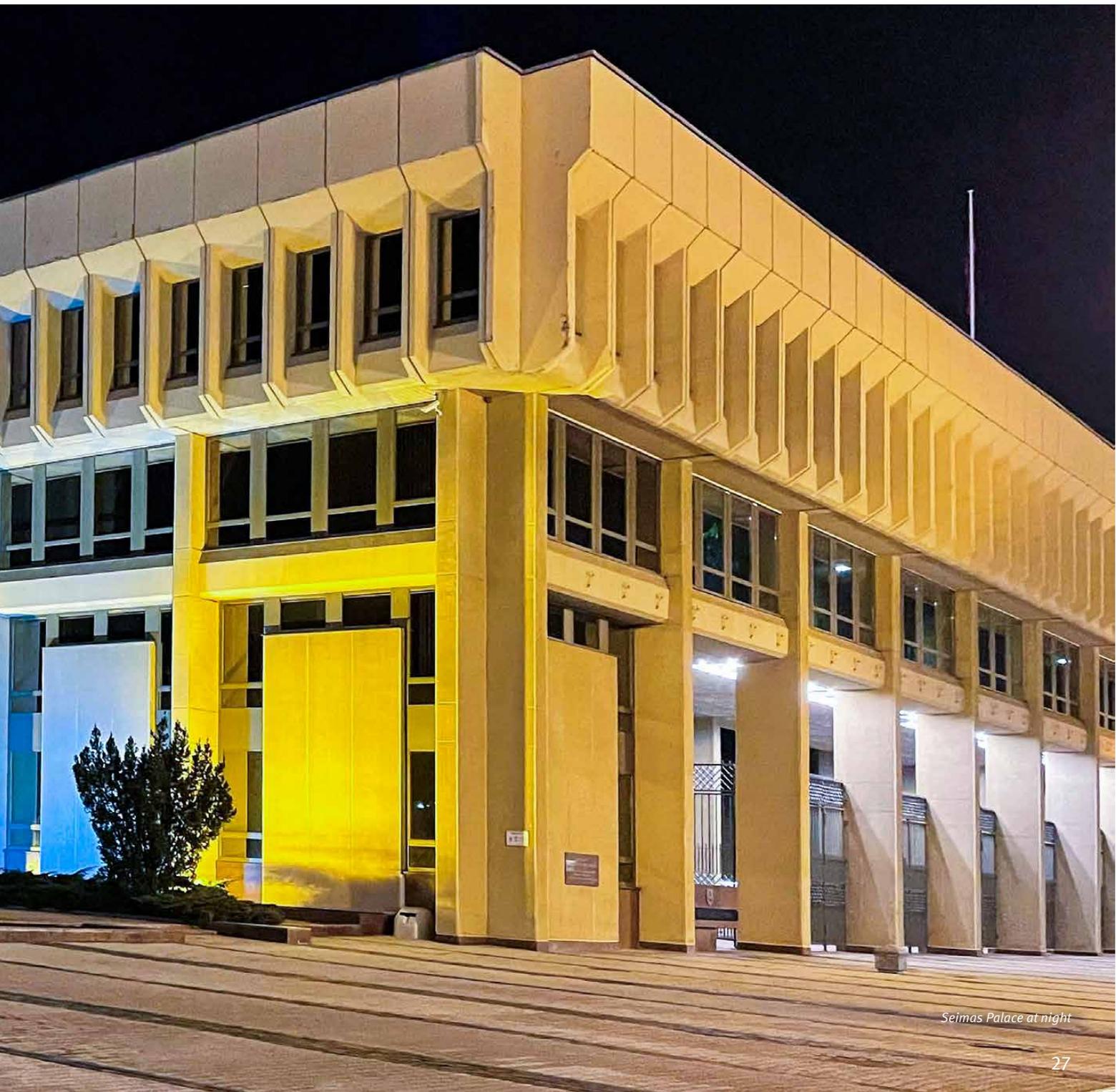
With this in mind, I encourage you to keep thinking and hope you find this event to be an interesting one that offers lively discussions and memorable encounters. «





Topic I

# **The situation in the dictatorship and war zones – Russia, Belarus, Ukraine**



*Seimas Palace at night*



Keynote

## Enhancing education in the humanities to counter the repression of totalitarian regimes

Prof. Dr Sergei Ignatov

» Your Excellences, distinguished guests, dear colleagues. It is my honor to meet all of you at the Central Europe Forum Conference devoted to the security challenges in Europe.

The topic of today's conference provides the great opportunity to talk on the special role and mission of the education, especially – role of the universities, in the world

where totalitarian regimes act in a very brutal way using the instrument of war for their predacious interests.

I believe the most of you know that the European Humanities University began its life in 1992 as a Symbol: Belarus belongs to Europe and shares its values for centuries. With 100 students studying for a variety of degrees in two rooms rented from the Academy of Sciences in Minsk, university

began attracting increasing numbers of students and staff. Why so? Because in early 1990's everybody was trying to become a banker or a businessman, but nobody paid attention to the basic roots of European civilization, but EHU has had a vision that society should be built on a huge, rich, powerful intellectual tradition and on the autonomy.

We all know a consequence of such attempts – the University was forced into exile in 2004 and in 2005 reestablished its activities in Lithuania with the generous support of the Lithuanian government. Lithuania has earned the admiration of defenders of academic freedom worldwide for rescuing EHU.

In the 1990s, universities appeared throughout Eastern Europe, carrying humanitarian knowledge – knowledge about people. First of all, they taught people how to communicate with each other. The main goal was to quickly create “new people – new elite” who would participate in the management of the country in a new way. The second goal is to remind Eastern Europeans that they are the bearers of European intellectual traditions. And this is still relevant in connection with the context that has developed in Belarus and Russia.

In February 2022, Russia invaded into the sovereign Ukraine and as academic community we should not only rethink the Russia as a neighbor, but also distinctly understand how to educate students with European and humanitarian values in the core – this is the EHU role also. EHU is a university that teaches in the tradition of Liberal Arts so that society can change and people live better than previous generations.

**Belarus is located in the very heart of Europe, between Russia and the Western value paradigm. That is why the education of young Belarusians directly affects the agenda in the region. EHU is exactly the university that provides education without ideology, and this commitment helps us to educate people with a huge social potential – they create jobs, businesses, do research, preserve and restore heritage, and work internationally.**

The migration collapse on the borders of Belarus with every single neighboring state except Russia in 2021, provoked by the Belarusian authorities, demonstrates that it is impossible to ignore Belarus and the Belarusian problems because this will become a problem for the whole of Europe and the Western world.

The Russian war in Ukraine and involvement of the Belarusian territories is a direct example of how the Belarus could impact on the wellbeing of the Europe negatively, but if the people receives good education-positively as those who resist this war.

**Young Belarusians, who received a quality education, who saw the world, traveled to other countries for exchange, implemented scientific and social projects that they dreamed of, and not which should have been done according to plan, will be able to gradually change the situation in their country and, as a result, surrounding. It is inevitable, an evolutionary process – a matter only of time and circumstances.**

That is why donors, on the one hand, support young Belarusians in their pursuit of education, and on the other, they contribute to the security of the entire region and the values of a democratic society. Some facts: 96 students and 18 scholars were provided an academic shelter at EHU. 69 civically active prospective students were supported during the admissions this summer. This is the only university that works for the needs of the Belarusian society, and not the Belarusian authorities.

It is important to recall (in addition to the good), the EHU community was directly affected by the repression by the Belarusian authorities – 3 graduates and 2 students were recognized as political prisoners for their freedom of speech and disagreement with the election campaign 2020 results. Among them Sofia Sapega, who was detained in May 2021 together with Roman Protasevich after the enforced landing of the RyanAir flight in Minsk.

In addition, at the beginning of 2020, EHU joined the international network Open Society University Network established by George Soros. It brings many opportunities for the EHU students and united universities from New York to Vilnius.

The Russian war in Ukrainian explicit that the region, where the Belarusian and Ukrainian people faced with an authoritarian regime, definitely need a humanitarian education. According to the latest poll conducted by EHU with the support of the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry in 2021, 67% of graduates return to Belarus and their level of well-being is significantly higher than the national average. This is our greatest achievement. And of course the

very existence of EHU is 30 years, more than 18 of which in exile is an achievement in itself.

We are speaking with you on the 3rd month of the war in Ukraine and it became clear that education is a chance for societies to escape the war. Recreating a university in exile is not so easy, and it is not a tool for quick transformations. We believe that EHU can be such a model place for all students, including by increasing the number of students from Russia who are looking for education in Europe and strive to get knowledge in the European intellectual tradition.

Our location in Lithuania, our experience and readiness to expand the scientific community, enriching it with specialists dealing with Russian problems (and this is a very important context for Belarus as well) even contribute to this.

Dear friends, I believe that the wisest response to the repression of totalitarian regimes is to continue to strengthen, support and maintain the university. A university whose foundations are based in a new, democratic and interdisciplinary education. A university that has academic autonomy – because if we don't have this academic autonomy, our country does not really have a civil society. Let's look back at the past. During communism we did have good universities, but without any form of social life – and you all know what civil society was like in our countries. When elites get their degrees at universities that are not autonomous, you could say that academia is essentially enslaved. In contrast to this, we are building security in the European region with our free university. Thank you very much! «



*Founded in 1992 and forced into exile years later, the EHU was granted the official status of a Lithuanian University in 2006.*



# Panel discussion





*Hall of the Act of 11 March: Central hall of the historic Parliament building where the statehood of Lithuania was restored on 11 March 1990.*



## Panel discussion

*Prof. Dr Georg Milbradt*



*Dr Andrius Kubilius*



*Dr Edit Inotai  
(moderator)*



*Dirk Schübel*



### → **Dr Edit Inotai (moderator):**

Thank you very much, Professor Ignatov, for your very interesting talk about the European Humanities University, and thank you also for speaking about how important education and academia are for our societies and for democracy.

Let's get started with our panel discussion now, which is entitled 'The situation in the dictatorship and war zones – what's next for Russia, Belarus and Ukraine'. I would like to start off by introducing our participants.

Dirk Schübel is ambassador and head of the EU Delegation to Belarus. He has almost 20 years of professional experience in European foreign policy and Eastern Europe. Ambassador Schübel also formerly served as head of the Russia department of the European External Action Service. So we can also have an in-depth discussion with him about Russia during this panel.

Dr Andrius Kubilius was Prime Minister of Lithuania between 1999 and 2000 and then again from 2008 to 2012. Dr Kubilius has been a member of the European



*Franak Viacorka*



Parliament since 2019. He is a member of the Christian Democratic parliamentary group. Thank you for also taking the time to be here with us today.

Prof. Dr Georg Milbradt was Minister-President of the Free State of Saxony between 2002 and 2008. Since 2017, he has been the German Federal Government's special envoy for administrative restructuring and decentralisation in Ukraine. In other words, he has a wealth of experience as regards Ukraine – we will also be talking about this during our discussion.

Later on, Franak Viačorka, a Belarusian politician, journalist and activist, will also join us. As a member of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's cabinet, where he works as a foreign policy advisor, he can shed light on the situation in Belarus and the activities of the opposition.

I would also like to note that we have planned to hold a moderated discussion for about 50 minutes to an hour, after which you, our guests here in the auditorium, will also have the opportunity to ask questions.

My first question is for Mr Kubilius: What is the mood in Lithuania and the Baltic countries right now? What has changed since Russia attacked Ukraine at the end of February 2022? What is your assessment of the situation now?

### → **Dr Andrius Kubilius:**

Hello to everyone. It is indeed a very important forum. I will answer to your question in a very simple way: what is happening now, is not something unexpected for us in Lithuania. We have observed the growing threat of an authoritarian Russia ever since the year 2000, since Putin came to power; and we have spoken about it loudly, and we have often been called Russophobes because of that. Unfortunately, I have to say, we have not succeeded over the decades in convincing our colleagues from the 'old Europe' that authoritarianism in Russia is the greatest threat to the European security. The situation has not changed for us; however, the perception of the whole situation in the western part of Europe has changed somewhat.

## Panel discussion

And, indeed, Europe is in a deep geopolitical crisis, but I have always looked at crises as more than a problem. Of course, what we are seeing today is a tragedy, it is a catastrophe, people are dying! But a crisis is also an opportunity for a change. In order to achieve changes, we need to understand what we have done so far, perhaps not quite rightly, and we need to understand what is needed, how the geopolitics of the European Union – because this is a geopolitical crisis – needs to be changed in order to really avoid such problems in the future.

And here I will conclude my answer in a very metaphorical way: It is very good that the Central European Forum has gathered in Vilnius, because, according to the geographical definition, the geographical centre of Europe is 20 kilometres from Vilnius. So you are really at the centre of Europe. Germany, Saxony, is, in a sense, a province of Europe compared to the geographical centre of Europe. But there is a real paradox that you are now at the real geographical centre of Europe and at the same time at the edge of democratic Europe. In 30 kilometres to East from Vilnius, the un-democratic begins. And I often ask myself: what is the solution to this geopolitical crisis? what do we have to do in order that peace and security on the continent of Europe are no longer threatened? My metaphorical answer is very simple: we need Vilnius to be not only the geographical centre of Europe, but also to be the centre of democratic Europe. In other words, our main task is to ensure that democracy spreads slowly, little by little, to the eastern part of the European continent.

We have Ukraine, which is fighting for the survival of its democracy; we have Belarus, where the people made it very clear two years ago that they no longer want to live with a dictator. Well, the dictator has stifled that democratic revolution for the time being, but that does not change the mood of the people. And what we have is, in fact, a Russia ruled by the current authoritarian regime, which has also become an international aggressor. But we must not lose faith that Russia, too, can eventually become democratic. And a democratic Russia would be the most important answer to ending the geopolitical threats and geopolitical dangers on the continent. Thus the path



that we need to pursue is very clear: the extension of democracy to the eastern part of the European continent. And we have to believe that we can actually achieve this.

Dr Edit Inotai: Thank you very much. One key question is, of course, whether there is a prospect of a democratic Russia in the immediate future. We will talk about this in greater detail, but for now I would first ask Mr Schübel, what has changed in Belarus since the end of February? How firmly is it attached to Vladimir Putin's side? And how informed is Belarusian society about what exactly is happening in Ukraine?



→ **Dirk Schübel:**

Thank you very much. Good morning! Let me start by thanking Dr Rößler, who unfortunately is unable to be here with us at this conference today, for inviting me. I am very happy to be here today – as a native of Saxony. And I am happy to have the opportunity to return to my roots a bit and speak here at the conference.

I am also, as always, very happy to be in Vilnius. It has effectively become my place of exile after Lukashenko and the Belarusian authorities did in fact ask me to leave the country in June last year. I have been working full-time from Brussels ever since. But I come here to Vilnius very often to meet many Belarusian friends, people in society and those working on behalf of democracy.

I believe that 24 February of this year also changed Belarus forever, because not only was much of the West surprised by Russia's full invasion and aggression against Ukraine; this was likewise unexpected in Belarus. I would even dare to say that Lukashenko did not expect this either. And if he did expect it, he thought – as the Russian leadership itself did – that it would be a matter of three or four days. They were clearly mistaken. And so I think that Lukashenko's calculation didn't work out either; that while he made his territory, the territory of Belarus, available for Russian aggression, he thought it would be a quick affair. It didn't turn out that way. As such, it has to be said, unfortunately, that Belarus and the Belarusian leadership have become fully complicit in the aggression by providing the territory and logistics and by allowing missiles and other projectiles to be launched from Belarusian territory.

Rail links, roads and airports have been used to allow Russian military aircraft to take off. This, of course, has made Belarus part of this conflict – and this is also the reason why, when we enact our packages of sanctions at EU level, we cannot leave Belarus out. Because Belarus has unfortunately been used, as much as the authorities deny it. But it is also true that in recent weeks, after being pushed back from the Kyiv and Chernihiv areas, Russia has not been making such active use of Belarusian territory. This could change again, however, because we do not know what Putin's objectives are.

But I also believe that the regime itself can't have any interest in deploying Belarusian troops in Ukraine. To our knowledge, this has not happened so far. One can only hope that it stays that way, because there is no or very little support for such a move among the public in Belarus. The polls we have seen indicate that over 90% are against Belarus being actively involved in Russia's war in Ukraine.

This means that a very strong majority is against it. I also believe that the overall mood would become worse still if Belarusian troops were deployed in Ukraine, and this would probably also further sink Lukashenko's approval ratings, which are already very low. In this respect, I believe that even the current leadership has no interest in deploying troops there, if it can avoid doing so.

The population, by contrast, has also tried to provide support for Ukraine. Information has been provided, rail links have been cut, and this has now unfortunately led the Belarusian leadership to adopt even more extreme

legislation which, in principle, seeks to impose the death penalty on so-called attempted acts of terrorism. In other words, contrary to our efforts all these years in trying to get the Belarusian leadership to abolish the death penalty, the grounds are now being extended so that so-called terrorist acts are punishable with death.

It must also be said that the fact that Russia's invasion made use of Belarusian territory meant that, of course, the whole world saw that Lukashenko was likely not permitted to decide for himself whether Russian troops would be stationed there or not. He has thus also become a threat to the independence of Belarus, which we as the EU absolutely support. We want to maintain an independent Belarus where people can decide for themselves by whom they want to be governed and of which 'club' they want to be a member. For this reason, 24 February also made a major difference for Belarus, and people are watching very closely and are also quite well informed, even though the state channels in Belarus have adopted the Kremlin's propaganda almost word for word.

But there are nuances, and given the length of time the war is now lasting, the understanding has also grown in Belarus that this is a real war and not a 'special operation', as Putin's media call it, and that this cannot actually end well. In addition, there are the sanctions that we have now imposed, which will also have a clear effect on Belarus.

And I also believe that both the leadership and the population are well aware that the sanctions will have an



impact and that this was certainly not what was intended. Given this, I believe that the situation in Belarus is set to become even more difficult over time.

→ **Dr Edit Inotai:**

Thank you very much. I think we will be talking about the sanctions in detail later on. But it is interesting to hear you say that this participation or use of the territory of Belarus casts doubt on Lukashenko's autonomy. Personally speaking, I have always thought Belarus was not really an autonomous state and was rather controlled by Moscow, but the situation has probably become even worse.

→ **Dirk Schübel:**

I think that we in the European Union and in the West as a whole have done everything to maintain this independence. Belarus was in fact economically and also militarily dependent on Russia in many ways. But the rigged elections of August 2020 and the deterioration in the country's relations with the West have of course meant that Lukashenko essentially had only Russia to turn to, which made this dependence even greater. We are very much aware of Russia's objective, and I believe that it has yet to achieve everything it wants to in this regard. Belarus is not completely dependent yet, but its dependence has increased over the last months and years – and I think Lukashenko himself is to blame for that.

→ **Dr Edit Inotai:**

Let us talk a bit about Ukraine now. Professor Milbradt, you have visited Ukraine regularly over the last five years

and have also been involved in the reforms. What were the most important advances in Ukraine in recent years, and how has its relationship with Russia changed – including prior to the war in particular? And can this war actually accelerate Ukraine's accession to the EU?

→ **Prof. Dr Georg Milbradt:**

Ukraine had a very difficult history in the 20th century. Unlike the Baltic countries, Ukraine did not succeed in becoming independent as early as after the First World War, although there were efforts to do so at the time. These efforts failed because of Poland's attempt to restore the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, with the inclusion of Ukraine, and because of the Red Army, which sought to take back Ukraine. As a result, the country did not get the opportunity to build a democratic state as early as the inter-war period.

In the new Soviet Union, Ukraine gained a degree of cultural autonomy – which was deliberately brought about by Lenin – and the Ukrainian language was granted a certain amount of freedom alongside Russian. The country finally gained independence due to the break-up of the Soviet Union. However – and this is another difference compared to the Baltic countries or Poland – its new freedom did not begin with a revolution; that is, there was no clear break with the communist past. The red flag of the Soviet Union was replaced by the blue and yellow flag of Ukraine. The previous elites remained in power for the time being. The only difference was that they were no longer subordinate to Moscow but were independent, and this changed only gradually. The first attempt at a major restructuring, the Orange Revolution,



failed. Even then, Russia interfered by supporting Viktor Yanukovych, who won the election due to fraud. The circumstances behind the poisoning of West-leaning candidate Viktor Yushchenko remained unexplained. Putin made it clear that he wanted to prevent Ukraine from aligning itself with the West.

The second attempt came with the Maidan Revolution in 2013/14, which had a clearly pro-European orientation. President Yanukovych had initially promised an association with the EU and conducted corresponding negotiations. Shortly before signing, he backed away from it under intense pressure from Putin, a move that triggered mass protests. Ukraine's view of its western neighbour Poland played a role at the time that should not be underestimated. Many Ukrainians compared their development up to that point with that of Poland. Poland's gross domestic product per capita in 1990, roughly estimated, was not much higher than that of Ukraine, because Poland's economy was weakened by the long struggle that *Solidarność* waged against the communist government. And now, over 20 years later, Poland's GDP per capita was around three times as high. Many wondered what this major difference could be attributed to. The obvious answer was Europe. Firstly, Poland had already received a lot of money from Brussels as a candidate for EU membership and even more as a member later on. And secondly, if Ukraine were to plan to join Europe, it would be forced to catch up with the necessary reforms. The alignment with the West had also put pressure on the new EU countries, prompting them to significantly accelerate their reform process. Left to its own devices, this would take far too long in Ukraine.

Yanukovych's backtracking destroyed this hope and turned large parts of the population against the government, because the alternative – becoming a member of a Eurasian Economic Community dominated by Russia – was not an attractive prospect. Ukraine had already had negative experiences with Russia prior to this due to its unsolicited interference, and its big neighbour had also used gas supplies as a means of exerting pressure. When Russia then occupied Crimea and started a covert war in the Donbas with its army and intelligence service, the vast majority of Ukrainians turned their backs on Russia and now considered their neighbour an enemy. Prior to this, Russia had tended to be seen as a good relative or even a brother.

The ongoing military and political confrontation with Russia also caused Ukraine to develop a strong national consciousness, just as many peoples have only become nations due to wars. For example, Germany's unification in the 19th century was ultimately also a result of the war of liberation against Napoleon. Ukrainians increasingly felt non-Russian, even those who used Russian as their mother tongue or as a common language. The alignment with the West not only represented a turning away from Russia but also a recollection of Ukraine's long affiliation with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the many Western influences during that time.

One good example is the city of Kyiv, which was granted Magdeburg law around 1500 – not because there were many German merchants there, but because it was a modern law that the king intentionally used as a way of

promoting the cities' economies in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In 1802, citizens of Kyiv even erected a monument to this Magdeburg law to clearly state, 'We are also part of Europe. We are aligning ourselves with the West.' This law was only definitely replaced by Russian law in 1830, and the monument was later rededicated as one commemorating the Christianisation of Kievan Rus'.

In the period between 2014 and the Russian attack in February 2022, the country succeeded in implementing important reforms and – which is often overlooked – in completely decoupling itself from Russia in economic terms. The overwhelming majority of Ukraine's exports had originally gone to Russia, and it was also largely dependent on gas from Russia. The economic turnaround was achieved in a few years, albeit with severe difficulties. The government was able to stabilise the country after it experienced a major economic collapse due to the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas. The National Bank of Ukraine served as a model in its decisive and consistent rehabilitation of the country's ailing banking sector.

My task, in addition to internal administrative reform, was to support Ukraine in introducing truly local self-government, a strategic reform to put an end to the pronounced excessive centralisation that was a legacy of the tsarist and communist systems, to place a greater focus on building the country from the ground up and thus also to strengthen democracy, civic co-government and co-responsibility.

This reform succeeded even though some politicians feared that local self-government and decentralisation would promote separatism and thus the Russian agenda. However, the reform had the opposite effect, because strong communities with elected political leaders strengthen the population's sense of identity with their own homeland, cohesion in the common state and also democracy. Strong mayors are currently serving as the core of civil resistance, especially in the war zone, which is predominantly Russian-speaking. Some are in prison; the fate of others is uncertain.

The majority of the population is not accepting the occupation. You will have seen the demonstrations in Kherson on TV after the Russian invasion. The successful decentralisation process has played a key role in strengthening Ukraine and has not weakened the country. But important elements are still missing, especially constitutional safeguards for local self-government. The current constitution from the 1990s still includes post-Soviet remnants that are not compatible with European ideas, such as of the rule of law or democratic administrative structures. Safeguarding municipal reform by means of the constitution was on the list of priorities before the Russian invasion, as was judicial reform and the ongoing fight against corruption and oligarchy. Progress had already been made in this area as well – including with the help of the European Union and other Western supporters.

I was in Kyiv for the last time in December 2021. People don't usually travel there in January because, after New Year's Day and the Orthodox Christmas, political

work doesn't start again until the end of January or beginning of February. I was preparing for my next trip at the time. Then came the Russian invasion. It wasn't a complete surprise, because the threat was there, given the massive Russian deployment on Ukraine's borders. At the moment, I am only in contact with our Ukrainian partners via video conferences, phone and email, and I am still connected to U-LEAD with Europe, an EU project that had already supported the communities in establishing self-government in the past. Since the outbreak of the war, U-LEAD is now helping to alleviate the country's immediate needs, for example, for electricity. A materials warehouse has been set up in Rzeszów on the Polish/Ukrainian border and is being used to supply communities with generators or coordinate medical aid, for example.

It's quite amazing: Despite the war, Ukraine is continuing to function, from its administrative bodies, to the banks and even the schools, because they went digital very early on. It's now possible to organise administrative departments and govern a state digitally, without necessarily being there in person. Many employees are internally displaced within Ukraine or have escaped to Poland or other countries. Ukraine's state and society are united by a motivated army, its civil resistance, its firm conviction and the will to drive the Russian army out of the country and to keep Ukraine as an independent country. However, many Ukrainians are disappointed with Germany because of its hesitant attitude. I hope this will change and that we won't only provide good advice but also support Ukraine in every way we possibly can.

Europeans need to think beyond today. The war will not end soon. We need to start thinking now about how we will supply Ukraine with more weapons and ammunition in the autumn and next year so that the Ukrainian army can fight a successful battle. At the same time, consideration must also be given to how Ukraine can be rebuilt and institutional structures further improved. But in order for reconstruction to be successful, Russia must withdraw its troops and there must be a secure and lasting peace.

→ **Dr Edit Inotai:**

Thank you very much, Professor Milbradt. We will now be talking a bit about the future in the second session as well. But first I would like to welcome Franak Viačorka, Senior Advisor to Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. Mr Viačorka is also an expert in media issues and digital media information – these are of course important current topics. My brief question for him would be: How has life changed for the opposition leader and for this opposition movement of Belarus in the last two or three months? Have you been travelling a lot?

→ **Franak Viačorka:**

Thank you chair, guests, excellencies, I am honoured to be here and speak about Belarus. Actually, we were surprised by the war, probably as much as you or most of you. It changed our activities in Belarus, definitely. Then we were fighting Lukashenko's drastic regime, now we are also fighting the aggression of Russia. Even if not as visible as in Ukraine, but we also still have Russian troops on our territory, they are present in at least six towns and cities. There are at least two so called mili-

tary training centres, which are de facto military bases and we don't know how they really work. And there are multiple military complexes, based or located on Belarussian territory, including air defence systems which are located there without any Belarussian or societal control over them.

Lukashenko basically decided to do collaboration with Putin's regime in this war, similar, perhaps, to Vichy's regime in France during the second world war. He pretends to be sovereign, independent, but the fact is that he does not serve the interests of the Belarussian nation anymore. This is connected to the events in 2020, when Lukashenko gave up – actually lost the election and then gave up the role of representative of the Belarussian people. He refused to conduct free elections, to step down and have a dialog with Belarussians. Instead, he organised mass terror with the support of Putin.

So, we have the right to say that for us the war started much earlier with the crackdown on civil society and media in 2020. Therefore, perhaps you cannot see many rallies and protests in Belarus right now against the war, but only because those voices, those people are either in prison or in exile. He destroyed more than 350 civic organisations, more than 50 big media outlets were closed, more than 300 Telegram or YouTube channels were deemed extremist and therefore, we have the right to say that the preparations for this attack on Ukraine started in Belarus two years ago.

We cannot organise public activities of resistance, instead we went underground and call our movement



right now Partisan movement. It is about the distribution of independent information, we organised the network of „Samysdat“. Thanks to technology much more is possible than before, we have a network of saboteurs who coordinate through social media and special messengers. According to Lukashenko’s own official information, they organised more than 80 acts of sabotage and diversions of railways, aimed at stopping Russian troops from going into Ukraine. At least two big cy-

berattacks were carried out, organised by Belarussian cyber-partisans, which disrupted the railway system for several days. And many, many other things which basically made Russian life, Russian military presence in Belarus very, very unstable.

At the same time, we are trying to mobilise the Belarussian society. It is still vulnerable and susceptible to both Russian misinformation and propaganda and

in Belarus that is not only about troops or the physical competition on the battle field, it is about the competition for the narrative in a very, very large sense. It is like TV against the internet – users of traditional TV, of Russian TV channels, of Lukashenko's TV channels against new media. So, they are very susceptible to narratives such as that Ukraine is ruled by Nazis and that we have to liberate first Ukraine and then the entire world. This rhetoric is getting more and more aggressive, it is very toxic, it is very intolerant.

Mostly, Belarussian rhetoric is very repetitive but in some cases it's even more brutal, more aggressive than the Russian one. Lukashenko tries to be like Putin but stronger. When Putin says something weird, stupid, Lukashenko repeats it after a few days but adds stronger wording, just because he wants to be like the alpha male, more masculine, more important – and we see some invisible competition between them in being rude.

Of course, neither Lukashenko nor Putin cares much about the opinion of society. And this is also their miscalculation and their problem, because they underestimated, as the previous speaker mentioned, the power of the nation, the power of the people, the power of Ukrainian identity – especially in Ukraine, because it is not Zelenskij who is fighting Russia – it is the Ukrainian people.

And the same thing is true about the Belarussian people. Neither Putin nor Lukashenko have understood that the Belarussian nation has already been formed – independent, sovereign, with its own language, culture and

identity. 2020 was surprising to both of them. And the resistance we see right now against the war is surprising to them again. We are still facing a big challenge, convincing the big majority of the population that this war was launched by Russia. We still have problems in reaching that big group of Belarussian citizens who were using independent websites before the war – now these websites are unreachable.

But I think we have started to work more closely with tech companies, thanks to our international partners – and this will open for us new opportunities. I mean social networks, I mean YouTube, I mean Microsoft, because technology in our case can be decisive, it can play the crucial, critical role in prevailing over Russia's imperialist, revanchist narrative.

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya is recognised by and still has very big support of the wider Belarussian population. She is the most popular leader and her percentage of recognition in Belarus is the same as Lukashenko's. It is like 98,5%. No one comes anywhere close. The name of the prime minister or any other of Lukashenko's ministers is from 5 to 10%, at maximum. So, there are no visible politicians for the majority of Belarussians – and this is our greatest asset.

Our goal as the team of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya is to help Belarussians to identify with the movement, with the movement for freedom and democracy. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya is on the one hand the symbol of the movement and on the other hand she is the leader putting important issues on the table. Before the war we

were very focused only on democratic elections as our only target, goal and aim. Now we also pay much more attention on geopolitics, because this is the very right moment to explain to Belarussians where they really belong.

It is not about creating something unnatural. Belarus is a natural part of Europe. It is also a territory of the Magdeburg Charter. All the big cities of Belarus were part of Magdeburg law, they had self-government. We do have this tradition, which many Russian cities do not have. I think what we have to do is to explain to and to educate Belarussian people more where they belong, what they deserve.

And in many cases Putin's Russia is actually helping us, because Putin's Russia is very much associated with war, with suffering, with torture, with missiles and Europe, in the minds of people, is associated with a safe haven, safety, prosperity - you simply don't see many people fleeing for Russia, actually you can't see anyone doing that. Instead all of them are trying to find a safe haven in neighbouring EU countries, Thank God.

In this situation, we have very strong allies. Lithuania, Poland and Latvia as well have done an incredible job in 2020 in accepting our refugees and still continue doing this. We also receive support on a political and diplomatic level from all the EU countries and I am happy to be here with Dirk Schöbel who is the leader of EU diplomacy for Belarus. And this support has symbolic value for Belarus, it gives energy to Belarussian people and it creates the feeling that they will not be abandoned.

When you are dealing with an authoritarian, totalitarian ruler, energy and hope are the most important things. Tools of course, matter too, if we want to prevail over Russian propaganda but energy and the certainty that we are expected, that we are supported is a huge deal, because Lukashenko's and Putin's message towards Belarus and Ukraine has always been: „No one is waiting for you in the West, no one is waiting for you in Europe.“ But now Belarussians see, thanks to Tikhonovskaya, thanks to international support, thanks to German support and the United States that we are waited for, that we are expected, that we are more than welcome there. This gives people the energy to not give up and to continue the resistance.

In order to finish my short remarks, I would like to thank first of all the parliamentarians of EU member states, I'd like to give big thanks to their governments but also to the Diplomatic Corps. We are still in the middle of the revolution, in mood of this revolution, in the revolutionary process. It has taken much longer than we expected in 2020 but this is the way we started it and it is irreversible now, clearly.

Right now, we just need another push, we need a bit more energy, we need more bravery in order to finalise what we started. On the one hand we continue what we started in 2020, but on the other hand we will be helping Ukraine by all possible means. Because we understand that Ukraine's victory will give us a chance for victory for ourselves. And this victory of Ukraine or even tactical victories of Ukraine can open windows of opportunities for democratic changes in Belarus.

## Panel discussion

And when some people say that in Belarus changes only happen when Putin collapses, I must say that Lukashenko is way weaker than him and I think we shouldn't wait until Putin collapses, which is just a matter of time, but we are sure that Lukashenko's collapse will make Putin's collapse much more plausible. Thank you.

### → **Dr Edit Inotai:**

Thank you very much, I think now we should talk a bit about the future. The biggest question, of course, is how can and how should Europe deal with Russia now? What are the possibilities, what measures can be effective? Sanctions, arms deliveries, financial support for Ukraine? What works, and are there other options? Mr. Kubilius, what is your assessment from Vilnius, from the Baltic countries?

### → **Dr Andrius Kubilius:**

Franak Viačorka has already touched upon a lot of my points. First, we need to learn the lessons, what kind of mistakes we have been making until now. Then, we need to have a much clearer strategy, but not only for your countries, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia, but for the entire region, which is very much interconnected.

Like Franek said: "If Lukashenko collapses, that will be a big blow to Putin. If Putin collapses, then democracy will definitely come to Belarus." A lot of things will depend very much on Ukraine. Now our focus is, of course, on Ukraine, both on helping Ukraine to defend its own territory, its own sovereignty but also on defeating Putin's military force. Our main goal, our holistic approach should be targeted on looking how we can help Rus-



sia to become a democracy, because that will resolve the issues of our own security. This formula: Europe – whole, free and at peace means very clear things: all Europe needs to be free. That means all of Europe needs to be based on democratic values, on values of freedom. Without that, we will always have the same problems. Some people are saying: "Look, you are a naive guy. Look at Russia – 80% of the Russian people support this war, they are supporting Putin and so on. So, what are you talking about – democracy in Russia?! This is a crazy idea."

I say it in a very simple way: we should look back in history, at some very painful chapters of history. I don't know if anybody conducted opinion polls in Nazi-Germany or Imperial Japan in the Second World War, but perhaps the German and Japanese people were supporting their authoritarian leaders, their dictators and their war. But now Germans and the Japanese enjoy their democracies.

The question is how they switched from being nazified towards democracy. We know some answers from history. First of all, such regimes were defeated in military way. That is why when we are looking to Ukraine we are saying: wait, we are faced with this Kremlin-regime, that is again a new fascist regime. I have recently been to Butcha, near Kiev where there are clear evidences that the Kremlin really became a new fascist regime. That is why, when we are talking about Ukraine, we first of all need to do everything to achieve a total defeat of Russian military forces in Ukraine. This also can open the doors for changes in Russia.

In addition to that, we need to see our big strategic mistakes – mistakes that were very much connected with our lack of belief that Russia could really become a democracy. And Putin was very good in trying to convince everybody around him in the capital cities of big major countries that Russia will never become a democracy, that Russia is a wild eastern nation with nuclear weapons at its hands.

That is why in the western capitals one allegedly needs to adapt to Putin because there is no way for another

Russia. That is also why, if you look at the language previously used by the European Union, a priority was never a democracy in Russia, but a priority was the dialogue with Putin. I think this really needs to be changed. A dialogue with Putin will not bring changes in Russia, it will not democratise Russia. On the contrary, Russia will stay as it is now, the biggest danger to the European Union, to the security in Europe.

Firstly, success in Ukraine in the military field can really open a lot of new opportunities for Russia to transform itself. Secondly, and this is very important, it is not only the defeat from a military point of view, it is to do everything to make Ukraine an example of success. That is why we are talking about a Marshall plan for Ukraine (or whatever we want to call it), about a huge amount of money – the numbers that are mentioned now in the European Parliament range from 500 billion up to a trillion Euros.

That again can be a major factor in making Ukraine a success, not only in becoming a democratic country but also a very prosperous country. The Ukrainians will need to remember that Ukraine is a very rich country, as far as their resources are concerned. It has a very well-developed industrial basis, it has very well-educated people. As European history has shown repeatedly, Ukraine can become a successful country only through the successful integration into Europe. There is not a single example of any country that came out of the Russian Empire, after its collapse, and became a successful country without the integration into Europe. We need to understand that our policy of integration is an instrument to make Ukraine an example of success.

Why is a successful Ukraine so important? Again, it is not just that we simply wish all the best for Ukraine. But Ukraine as an example for success can be a major inspiration in itself. An example of EU soft power to show to the Russian people that, if they were to follow that example – I am not talking about Russia becoming an EU-member by the way, that is a little too fanciful – that could be a huge inspiration to the Russian people to look for a transformation of their country. That in turn would be an inspiration for the Belarussian people to move forward.

That is why we need to see the whole, broader picture and to understand that everything is very much interconnected. I'd like to stress again that we were making a mistake in not believing in the possibility of democracy in Russia and Putin was very good in convincing us that democracy will not come to Russia any time soon. That is why the European Union was afraid of pushing forward with the integration of Ukraine: because everybody was afraid that this might provoke Putin.

If, for example, we compare our political language vis-a-vis the Western Balkans and Ukraine, we can see that it has always been very different. The Western Balkan countries were always promised the EU membership, but Ukraine was never promised the membership perspectives, and now we can see the outcome. In some way, from a geopolitical point of view, we left Ukraine in a grey zone and that created a kind of temptation for the Kremlin. The Kremlin noticed this Ukrainian grey zone and thought that in case Putin interfered, the West would not come to the defense of that Ukrainian grey

zone. I see this as one of the factors that led to the situation we are faced with now. Therefore, we need to change our policy, we need to have a very clear strategy for the whole region.

Through success in Ukraine we can influence the development in both Russia and Belarus, and this is how we can create a much more peaceful and stable European continent where Vilnius will not only be the geographical centre of Europe, but also the centre of a democratic Europe. This is our vision.

→ **Dr Edit Inotai:**

I would also like to give the floor to those present in the room. But to conclude this session, Mr. Schübel, what is your perspective from Europe or Brussels? How should Europe deal with Russia now? What would effective measures look like? Putin is also making threats with nuclear weapons. How should Europe respond in this regard?

→ **Dirk Schübel:**

Thank you very much. It is, of course, somewhat outside my current area of responsibility, but naturally you cannot look at Belarus without looking at Russia – nor can you look at Belarus without looking at Ukraine. First of all, I agree with Mr Kubilius that the future of the whole region will be determined in Ukraine. In other words, the outcome of the war will be of crucial significance for the future of the entire region.

I can tell you that we have already started to discuss what will become of our Eastern Partnership – includ-

ing in light of the fact that we have three Eastern Partnership countries that want to become members of the EU, namely Ukraine, but also Moldova and Georgia. The decision as to whether candidate status will be granted to one or more of these countries will be taken relatively soon in EU circles.

And then, of course, we also have to consider, if that is the case, what we should do with the Eastern Partnership? What do we do with Belarus in the Eastern Partnership? This is another issue that we are looking at. We have always said that Belarus remains part of the Eastern Partnership and that we are working closely with the democratic forces, with Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, with her team, with the many other activists in civil society who are still working for Belarus both outside the country and within it.

That is, Belarus will remain part of an entity, whatever it might be called, but of course we will always make the distinction between the regime and Belarus as a country. As regards Russia, I think, from a personal perspective, that it is almost impossible to make as many mistakes as Putin has in recent years. What he is getting now is everything he actually wanted to prevent: he is getting new NATO member states that, four months ago, were not even thinking about NATO membership, namely Finland and Sweden. Many more troops are being sent to their borders. Ukraine, which he wanted to de-Nazify and demilitarise, is now receiving many weapons from Western stocks. In principle, there is no question for him now: He must win the war – in whatever way we define this. And this is exactly what we must



## Panel discussion

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prevent; we have to stop him from winning this war. Ukraine has fought heroically so far. It is unbelievable what the people there have achieved, that has to be said quite honestly, and probably none of us believed that they would have been able to do it. Every day that passes is another success for Ukraine, even if it has to make unspeakable sacrifices for these successes.

We are getting very little news about the numbers of non-civilian deaths in Ukraine. I am sure that there are many, many, many, as well as vast number of Russian dead. If we were able to succeed in the Ukrainians pushing the Russians back to the territories they had before 24 February in at least the foreseeable future, I think that would be a great success. And then, from this position of relative strength, it would have to be explained to Mr Putin that we cannot move forward in this way. Personally, I find it difficult to imagine working with Putin as we did before 2014. It seems almost unthinkable.

As regards the 80% of the Russian population who support the war, I am not sure we are really at 80%. Telephone surveys are being conducted. But who responds to a question like this on the phone in Moscow or in Russia? Who will say without hesitation that they are against the war? You certainly have to take that into account as well – and I don't think there are that many respondents. What is true, however, is that Putin has a firmer hold on power than Lukashenko. I think that can be said. I would not venture to guess at how long this will last when many more thousands of soldiers are brought home dead. We are already in the process of adopting the sixth package of sanctions now. They will

bite again. And maybe they won't bite so much right now, but they will bite.

Many Western companies have already left the country. Frankly, I think that from a moral perspective it must be very difficult for companies to maintain a presence in Moscow at the moment. In other words, all this will play a role, so that hopefully we will reach a point where Putin and his entourage come to their senses. At least to some sense that Ukraine is not theirs, but that Ukraine is and will remain a democratic, independent state that we will continue to support.

We need patience, just as Franak Viačorka and his democratic forces in Belarus need patience. We all need patience, and time is not on the side of Putin and such a hostile regime. We are working together on this – it is also important that we have a common European front. And I am also very happy that my very distinguished colleague Julie Fischer, my American colleague who is responsible for Belarus, is with us. We are working more closely than almost ever before, and together we want to try to ensure that this region remains and becomes democratic. Thank you very much.

→ **Dr Edit Inotai:**

Thank you very much! Professor Milbradt, can Ukraine win this war in military terms, and should Europe still negotiate with Putin?

→ **Prof. Dr Georg Milbradt:**

I am not in the military and can only repeat what I hear from military circles, and especially from the British

side, which is very well informed. The British believe that Ukraine can successfully survive the war and that Russia will not achieve its objectives for the war. But the next question is, what comes afterwards?

The first thing I want to say is that we are very lucky to have Joe Biden in the White House. Imagine if the American presidential election had turned out differently and Trump was in office. In that case, Ukraine would have already fallen. Because the crucial support – particularly of a military nature – is coming from the US, Canada and the UK. The Baltic countries and Poland have also been very involved, but that wouldn't have been enough on its own.

What happens if in 2025 the government in America is led by Trump again? Is Europe ready for this? At the moment, we can only take successful action with American support and are not in a position to pursue a policy towards Putin that is independent of America.

First of all, this means that Europe has to set itself up differently in the future and develop its own position as a military power. It's true that we have many European armies, but they are not sufficient as a whole. And my second point is that Putin is openly threatening to use nuclear weapons. And anyone who threatens a non-nuclear state with nuclear weapons is already at a significant advantage. At the moment, we Europeans are protected by America's nuclear umbrella, but for how long? Europe will need to consider whether the French 'Force de frappe' should not in fact be developed into a European nuclear power over the medium term so we can independently ensure that there is a balance in Europe.

I do not think the sanctions will cause Putin to capitulate any time soon. He has full control of the Russian state through his KGB connections. The old oligarchs from the Yeltsin era aren't relevant any more. They have been stripped of their power and are only allowed to earn money. The new oligarchs are Putin's cronies. I think a revolution in Russia is unlikely at the moment. This is something we could see in the long run at best.

But if it proves possible to build a vibrant democracy in Ukraine, combined with economic progress, it would destabilise Putin's ideology of 'Russkiy mir' (Russian world), which is essentially a tsarist one as well: 'We are something different from the rest of Europe. Democracy and the rule of law are only instruments of the West designed to destroy Russia. Russia can only be ruled autocratically or perish.' If Ukraine, an eastern Slavic country, achieves social and economic success with the European model (perhaps Belarus as well), then the Russian middle class, especially in the big cities, will realise that there is a democratic alternative for their country. This represents an opportunity for change over the medium term.

In the long run, Russia is in the weakest position among the world powers; it doesn't have a sound, modern economy but only one that is based on the sale of raw materials from Siberia – in contrast to the Chinese, who have built a state-of-the-art economy over the last 30 years that competes with America on equal terms. Russia's position as a world power rests solely on its huge arsenal of nuclear weapons. For this reason, it is appropriate that we prevent the import of raw materials and the export of high technology.



Over the long term, the danger for Russia is that it could become a vassal of China. The Russian cities in Southern Siberia are already in Chinese hands – not politically, but economically. China’s economy is diffusing northwards, and at some point the Chinese will also reach Northern Siberia and control the sources of raw materials there, perhaps in 50 years. But Putin will be dead by then, and hopefully the generation living in Russia at that time will be much more realistic. This is why I am cautiously optimistic about the long term. However, this doesn’t mean the Europeans will be successful in the short term.

We need to have patience and continuity at the political level. Because there is no satisfactory short-term solution, we must work together to develop our strategy for the future in Europe, draw the necessary political conclusions, including military ones, and provide the necessary means, but not on credit. The new priorities will mean cuts in other types of government spending or higher taxes; that is, a certain decline in prosperity. The party is over, especially in Germany!

I have often wished the Ukrainians luck and success, saying that I would sleep better then. Because there are just 850 kilometres between Dresden and Lviv. That’s right next door by American standards. This is why we Germans, but also all Europeans, must not only help Ukraine but also understand that Russia’s war of conquest in Ukraine directly affects and threatens us, and that we must therefore act in our own interests.

### → **Dr Edit Inotai:**

Thank you very much! My final question is for Mr Viačorka, and we will then open the discussion to the audience. In your opinion, how should Europe deal with Russia now? Should we break off all contacts on a cultural, economic and political level or should we stay in contact?

### → **Franak Viačorka:**

I am sure there are smarter people than I to talk about how to deal with Russia. However, I can tell you something about the connections between Belarus and Russia. But I can tell you that we must make sure that our only ally, whose name is very well known, will be fully isolated and brought to justice.

Putin needs Lukashenko, his crony. They have a symbiotic relationship. In 2020, Putin saved Lukashenko, then Lukashenko came to Putin many times to ask for money. And now, Putin needs Lukashenko, it seems, for some diplomatic and political reasons but also in order to show his own citizens that it is not only Putin's fight but rather that it is a war of a coalition of nations. I think we must make sure that this coalition partner is a pariah, that he is isolated and that he is not a real leader but rather a self-proclaimed usurper.

How to deal with Belarus: We have always said that it is important to distinguish between sanctions on the regime and those on the people. Unfortunately, ordinary Belarussians are very often limited with regard to getting scholarships at European universities or visas. Many small private companies, which were supporting the

Belarussian democratic movement, were somehow also targeted by limitations and restrictions of the western societies. It is therefore very important to adjust sanction policies to make sure, that those who are in power and those who support the regime are really punished.

My first recommendation is therefore to continue the sanctions policy towards Lukashenko and to make sure that Putin is not able to use Lukashenko to circumvent those sanctions to help all those who fight authoritarianism but also those who help contain Russian imperialism, not only in Belarus but also in all other post-soviet countries. I think there are similar movements there, because for Putin it is not only about Russia, he has the network of media organisations which are cultivating this revanchism, even in the territory of EU countries, as you probably know. In the case of Belarus, we have the expertise how to deal with this, so we are happy to share our experience on how to contain these messages.

But right now, we also need help in Belarus to strengthen those voices, their need is increasing. When we, just to give you an example, create content on YouTube and each video we post on YouTube begins with a 30-second pro-Russian, pro-Putin video advertised by Russian propagandists. Every day they put millions of Euros in promoting their narrative on social media. So, this is another recommendation, to support alternative voices and to make sure that propagandists do not misuse western technologies. That would help in Belarus, it would help the Russian people and it would help other post-soviet countries but also countries susceptible to Russian propaganda.



And the last point is to be consistent, because we often see how there are different generations of politicians in EU countries and each new generation says that it had an easy solution for Russia and we in Belarus see that and this has helped people like Lukashenko to stay around for so long. They always hope for a new populist leader to come to power in some European

country and that they will then make a deal with this new leader. This consistency should be preserved after each election in an EU member state. Thank you.

→ **Dr Edit Inotai:**

I would like to invite the audience to share their questions now.



→ **Audience (Peter Patt):**

*Thank you very much. My name is Peter Patt from Saxony. I have two questions, perhaps for Mr Schübel: The end of the war – you said on the one hand that Putin must not win and on the other that Ukraine must win the war. There might well be distinctions here, but what is your definition of the end of the war in territorial terms? What about the territories of Donbas and Crimea? At what point would you say the war is over?*

*And another question that's on my mind: Has Germany entered the war or not? If you base it on the definition of Belarus, providing their land and space for attacks, we provide weapons as part of the defence. Does this mean we have entered it or not? The federal government says not. Putin will see things differently. And what are the consequences?*

→ **Dirk Schübel:**

Thank you for your questions. I think it is absolutely

clear that Ukraine must never give up its territories. It must not give up Crimea, it must not give up the Donbas. They are to always remain Ukrainian territory. The question of how long it will take them to get those territories back is a matter of looking into the crystal ball – we do not know. I did not say Ukraine must win, but I do say that Ukraine must not lose. There is a difference. And I believe that if, in the foreseeable future, they could manage to push the Russians back to the areas that they controlled until 24 February of this year, then that would be a great success from my point of view, and that would be the first milestone that needs to be achieved. I hope this can be achieved.

We are seeing the war turning into a stalemate to a certain extent right now. This is a huge success for Ukraine. Who would have believed that Ukraine could do that? Let us see how the next few weeks look; the Russians seem to be running out of materials. We will see how this develops. We also should not be too optimistic, it is still a huge country with enormous resources. But I think, as I said, that the interim goal should be to push the Russians back to the territory that they controlled until 24 February.

Is Germany in the war? Of course it isn't in the war because it is supplying weapons, that is quite clear. I think the situation in Belarus is a very different one. It has provided its territory. Russian troops have marched through the border and attacked Kyiv as well as, a little further east, Chernihiv and other areas – without success, as we have seen. But all the logistics were provided. Airfields were full of Russian planes. Even today –

Franak Viačorka will be able to describe it better – Belarusians are not allowed to go into the forests around Gomel or near the Ukrainian border. This is prohibited because they might meet Russian soldiers. So if that is not participating in the war, when people can no longer go where they want in their own country...

In this respect, I do not think there are any parallels. On the contrary, I think it is the European Union's duty, and therefore also Germany's, to support Ukraine as much as possible by providing the weapons they need to push back the aggressor. And this is also gaining more and more traction in the German government – personally, I am pleased about this, and I hope that these efforts will also be successful. Thank you very much!

→ **Dr Edit Inotai:**

Thank you very much. We will collect the questions now.

→ **Audience (Prof. Dr Beate Neuss):**

*My name is Beate Neuss, Professor of International Politics at Chemnitz University of Technology. I fully agree with the panel's analysis, especially with regard to the future and the European Union's stance towards Ukraine. Mr Milbradt, you spoke about the long-term strategic thinking that is needed. My question to all of you is: how you would assess the European Union's capacity for long-term strategic thinking, especially when looking inside the member states themselves: The far right in France has never been as strong as it is today, we have gone through Brexit, we have two EU members, Hungary and Poland, that would no longer qualify to join today. The question really is how reliable is the*



*European Union's position in the long term with regard to Central Eastern Europe and Eastern Europe?*

→ **Dr Edit Inotai:**

Thank you. Someone has also raised their hand in the last row.

→ **Audience (Olga Karach):**

*Hi, I am Olga Karach, I am the head of the human rights organisation "Our House". I am from Belarus. I have a question for Mr. Kubilius as a person of history and as strong fighter for the independence of Lithuania. In my opinion, everything that is going on in Belarus is connected to a historical trauma and everything that happened before and after the Second World War. For example, Belarussian political prisoners have to use CLO-labels in prisons, just as the Jewish people had to wear their signs. I now have the strong impression that Lithuania and Belarus very much resemble East and West Berlin because a wall is being built between us and Belarussians suffering*

## Panel discussion

*from repression are trying to escape by running through the forest or sometimes use paragliders or swim through rivers. This impression, that we turn the clock back 100 years, is so strong to me that I would like to ask Mr Kubilius whether you share that impression, considering that you also lived through the Soviet era and how we can deal with the consequences of this Soviet legacy?*



### → **Dr Edit Inotai:**

We have another question.

### → **Audience (Hanka Kliese):**

*My name is Hanka Kliese. I remember the summer of 2020, when those of us in Europe and Germany looked at Belarus with a great deal of interest and solidarity. In my opinion, this interest has disappeared. Over the winter and since February of this year, we have all been looking – for understandable reasons – only at Ukraine. But you told us that a strong relationship between these two situations in these two countries is very important.*

*My feeling is that both Belarus and Ukraine are suffering from the same ailments. And my question now is, how can we create a stronger awareness in Germany so these connections can be recognised?*



### → **Dr Edit Inotai:**

Let us try to answer these three questions. Since Franak Viačorka has to leave shortly – perhaps you can answer the question regarding Belarus and how awareness can be created in Germany.

### → **Franak Viačorka:**

It is true, media create and shape the agenda. If you have pictures of mass rallies with thousands in the streets this is all over the media and politicians and other stakeholders are discussing this. But when you are a partisan – many Belarussians do not even know about the partisan movement –, it is very secret and anonymous and you cannot show how much work is being done, you cannot imagine how many people get

arrested for spreading leaflets and newspapers every night and you cannot take pictures and show those in western media. So, in the western media there is only 5 to 10% of the things that are being done in Belarus. That is a pity, but we understand why.

What is important to explain is that there is still life, there is still resistance. It changed its form. In Belarus we call it “fire in the swamp”. There is a spark, there is a small fire, nothing is happening from outside but at some point, it will go out. Then there will be a huge fire. This fire is something we support and have to support. We have to explain to the international community and

the German civil society that there still is resistance, that, secondly these two situations are interconnected.

It is very difficult to explain to countries that are not experts that both Ukraine and Belarus, as you mentioned, are two sides of the same coin. Putin took Belarus without a single shot because he had someone in power who collaborated and he did not take Ukraine because its government has sided with the people. That is the difference. But Putin’s goal in both situations is the same: to take control of countries which he believes to be a part of Greater Russia. He does not recognise the statehood of neither Ukraine nor Belarus. We have already understood this.



## Panel discussion

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What to do? Pay attention to Belarus, always mention Belarus together with Ukraine because we fight together. Of course, we are smaller but we try to help Ukraine win, the same as hopefully everybody in this room, I hope. We understand that, right now, Lukashenko and Putin are sitting in one boat. What is important for us is that Lukashenko is not trying to avoid responsibility. So, Belarus and Ukraine are together, they are in one corner and Lukashenko and Putin are in another corner, as perpetrators, as aggressors. If that is understood, and I believe it will be, then it is much easier to build a long-term strategy – as was discussed before.

And again, Belarus is not Russia. This is something we are still fighting, even in naming. A few weeks ago I came from Norway and they are struggling with renaming our country from „white Russia“ like „Weißrussland“. We have said, after the war started that this has become a political issue not a linguistic one. It is not about Russia, we are not „White Russia“ and we don't want to be called that. It is just a symbolic step, but it will help you understand better what Belarus is now. It is a modern, independent, sovereign, European state that wants democracy and that needs support in that fight. Thank you, unfortunately I have to go now.

### → **Dr Edit Inotai:**

Thank you very much for being with us today and explaining the situation. I would now like to invite Mr Kubilius to speak.

### → **Dr Andrius Kubilius:**

Thank you Olga Karach for this question about history.

I am not a historian though, my background is in physics, like Angela Merkel. But I do like history because you can learn a lot of lessons from it and understand what is happening.

My understanding about our region and Russia is indeed based on my understanding of history. Russia is a European country, which throughout its history has shown one tendency: European developments come to Russia very late with very long delays and sometimes very tragic delays. If you look at the 19th century, you will see how Russia from the Decembrist revolution until 1917 was trying to repeat the French Revolution. They succeeded only in February of 1917 and then ended up with the Bolshevik revolution or Bolshevik uprising.

And now, Russia or the Soviet Empire – let's call it what it was – was in 1990 the last empire on the European continent which started to collapse. This process is still going on. If you look at other empires on the European continent, which collapsed after the Second World War, such as France or Great Britain, you can see a lot of evidence of how painful it was for those countries. In the 1950s, France was in a deep political confusion domestically, because of how difficult it was for them to say farewell to Algeria. In some ways, for the time being the situation in Russia is similar, also mentally.

People's feeling of nostalgia is quite natural but unfortunately, Putin he started to use it to build his power base, he moved towards autocracy. I am not surprised that Russia moved in that direction back in 2000. That, sadly, is once again a consequence of these historical

tendencies and the experiences in other countries. Once again, we can see some historical developments: first of all, what happened in Belarus in 2020 and what is happening in Russia right now – the loyalty of the people to the authoritarian regimes – is starting to fade away, because those regimes cannot provide for improvements of peoples' lives. I think that was the reason why people took to the streets in Belarus and same feelings can probably be seen in Russia now, though maybe deeply hidden.

Secondly, the Kremlin started to lose its authority over different regions, like Ukraine and Moldova, even Armenia back in 2018, and that is why the Kremlin became afraid of how things were developing. For Putin the biggest danger is to lose the basis for his authoritarian power, and therefore democracy is seen as the total enemy for his regime and his ability to stay in power. That is the reason why he became so nervous and started to look at possibilities to expand into Ukraine.

It is very difficult to predict how things can develop in the future. Somebody might say that it may take a very long time for Russia to turn itself into a democracy – I will not expound on that. But I have one simple example: back in 2020, in May, four months before August, I myself did not believe that anything could happen in Belarus. But in August we had elections in Belarus and that changed the whole picture.

I remember the 1980s very well. Who could have believed in 1985, when Gorbachev and Perestrojka came, that the Soviet Union would collapse a couple of years



later and totally disappear? Things in our region can happen suddenly, unexpectedly and to me historical tendencies are very clear: you cannot stop the spread of democracy. You might delay it, using guns or violence but you cannot stop that change. So, the tendency for development is positive. The question now is: Do we merely observe those tendencies or do we actively do things?

Here is what we are doing in both the European Parliament and in national parliaments: we recently created a network of global parliamentarians with the catchy

title „United for Ukraine“ (U4U). There are more than 250 members from 30 parliaments in the network – the last parliament to join, I was quite surprised to hear, is Micronesia. They also want to help as much as they can. But I don’t know if we have anybody from Saxony’s Parliament.

Secondly, we created in the European Parliament an informal „Friends of European Russia Forum“. We are discussing with the opposition – teams of Navalny, Kara-Murza and others – how we can help Russia to return back to democracy. Again, let’s have a joint discussion about that. I would invite all of you to join.

Thirdly, if we look at the future of that region, then education, as Rector Ignatov has said, must be one of the major priorities. When democracy arrives, who will be the people who care about a democratic Belarus and a democratic Russia? That will be a big question. We are trying to make European Humanities University much stronger, but we are looking at who can help.

The European Commission gives a lot of support but I do not know if we have support from Saxony. That is a question to which I would like to get a positive answer to.

→ **Dr Edit Inotai:**

We have one more answer. Unfortunately, we will have to clarify any other questions over lunch. So let us look at the question about Europe and how united we are.

→ **Dirk Schübel:**

Thank you very much. I wanted to add something about

the European Union’s ability to apply a long-term strategy. I think everyone in the European Union is aware that we have to think more strategically, that we have to be more strategic. You may also remember Ursula von der Leyen’s inaugural speech as President of the European Commission, when she referred to a ‘geopolitical European Union’.

And it was so quick, I don’t think we in Brussels could have imagined it, how quickly this geopolitical commission came upon us. I am an EU official and I naturally have to defend my institution, but I honestly have to say that I actually also see exactly what Ursula von der Leyen as well as Charles Michel, the President of the European Council, are doing: they are there on the spot, and they were among the first. I don’t want to talk about the German chancellor now; he could also turn up in Kyiv at some point, I think. But they were both already there. Michel was even in Odessa for Europe Day on 9 May, expressing solidarity in an area that is even more dangerous than Kyiv these days. In other words, it is already abundantly evident that we have to align ourselves strategically in the long term. And I think our policy is also more oriented towards the long term now.

It also has to be said that Russia has united the EU in many ways. We have pushed five packages of sanctions – and very far-reaching packages at that – against Russia through the member states with a speed that would have been unthinkable with previous packages. The sixth package has come to a bit of a stall now. You will be familiar with the discussions on the oil embargo; that is where it gets down to brass tacks, if you can put

it that way. But in this case, too, it looks as if an agreement can be found. Which is to say, it has also united us. We have also coordinated very closely with the partner states and continue to do so.

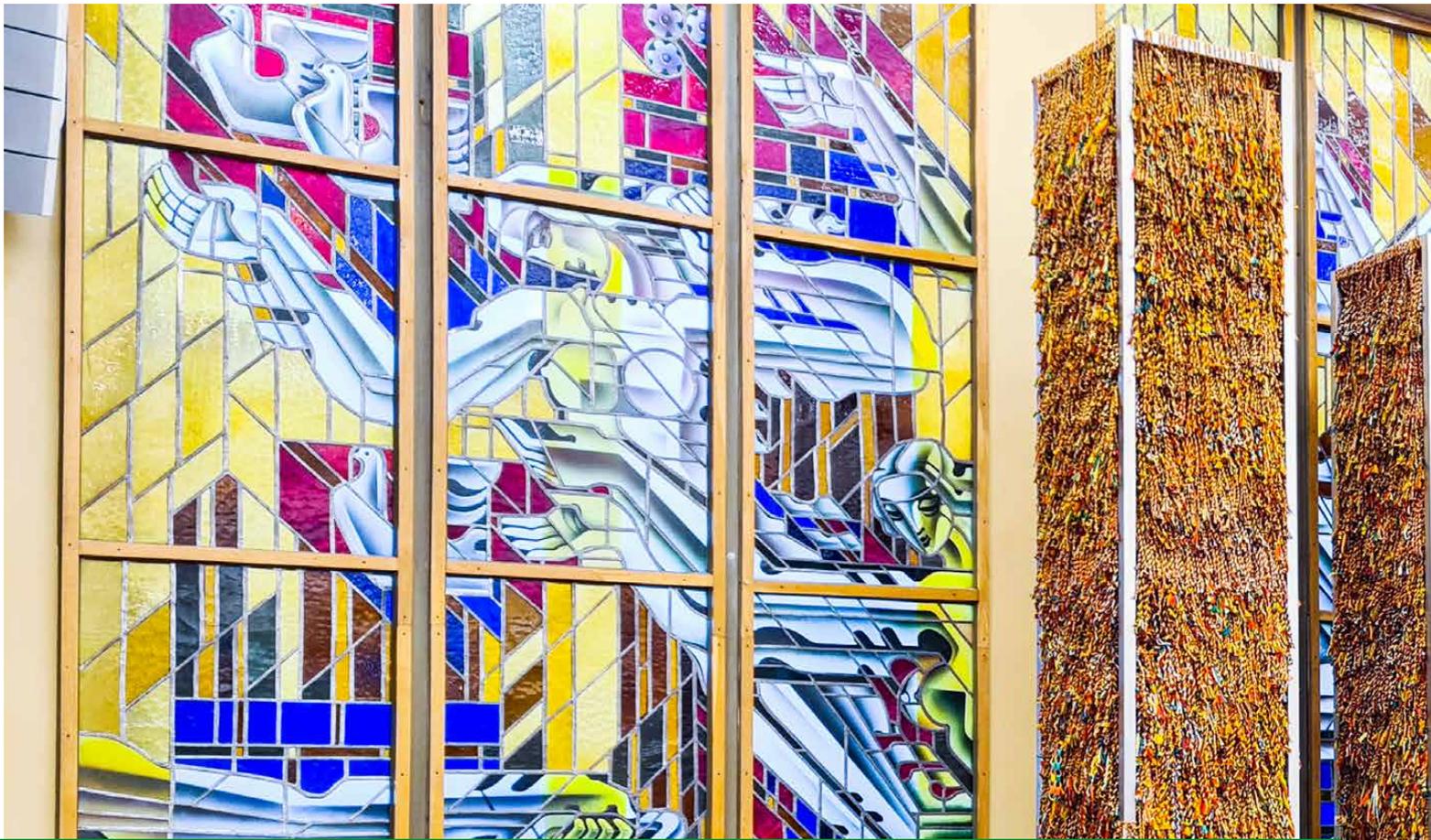
I have already mentioned the US, but Canada and the UK, and even Japan and Switzerland, have also adopted some of our sanctions. Previously, it would have been unthinkable that Switzerland would take over part of the EU sanctions. Putin has managed that too, another de facto defeat, in that he has united us, the ‘Western camp’ so to speak.

This is one aspect. Besides this, there is a new EU document called the Global Compass, which is intended to give us a rather more strategic focus. Ultimately, it will always depend on the respective commission and the respective commissioners. But it’s my impression that the current commission is well aware of this responsibility, that we have to take a more long-term, strategic approach.

We also know that not all of our member states are perfect. You have already mentioned the countries that can be discussed in this context. But in the end, they have provided great help in other areas. Poland has given huge assistance to the Ukrainians and also to the Belarusians, by the way. Hungary has also welcomed a great many Ukrainian refugees. There are also many positive things to report in all the other discussions we are having. But that will indeed be the most important element for the future if we want to remain together in this club called the European Union. Thank you very much.

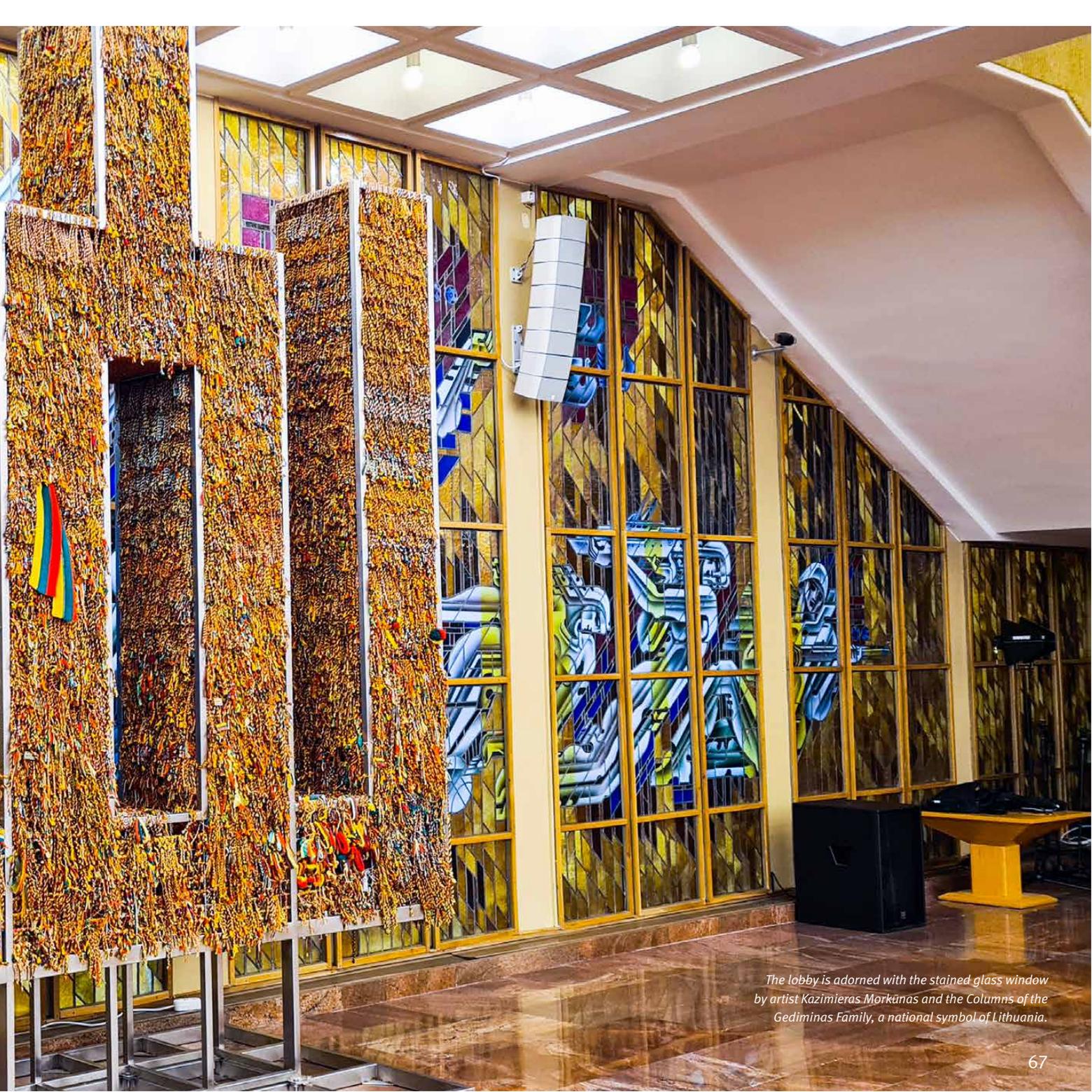
→ **Dr Edit Inotai:**

Thank you very much! As always, we had a very short time for this discussion, and I would like to follow this up during the break. But now I would like to sincerely thank those of you on the panel and the participants in the discussion for their insights, for their professionalism and their experience. Thank you very much!



Topic II

# External security in the 21st century – what must Europe do and what can it do?



*The lobby is adorned with the stained glass window by artist Kazimieras Morkūnas and the Columns of the Gediminas Family, a national symbol of Lithuania.*

A photograph of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya speaking at a podium. She is wearing a grey blazer over a white collared shirt. A microphone is positioned in front of her. The background is a light-colored wall with a wooden ledge and some greenery.

Keynote

## Belarus cannot be free unless Ukraine is free

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya

» Thank you for inviting me today to speak in this historic place, in this hall where the independence of Lithuania was restored in 1990. It reminds me of the importance of our own struggle for freedom and independence. It is appropriate to speak about the situation in the dictatorships and warzones as the topic of the first part of the Central Europe Forum. It gives me now a chance to talk about the situation in my country, Belarus, which is closely connected to the situation in Ukraine.

At every meeting to which I am invited I speak about why it is so important to support Ukraine and Belarus. The destinies of the Belarussian and Ukrainian people are interdependent. We all understand that there will be no free Belarus without a free Ukraine just as without a free Ukraine there will be no free Belarus.

Lukashenko allowed Russia's regime to commit this act of aggression against our peaceful neighbours from our territory. This illegal act has betrayed the Ukrainian state but also created a grave threat to our own statehood. Therefore, I am so proud to see Belarussians and Ukrainians united at solidarity rallies when I travel around the world. We stand together in our common fight. Many Belarussians who fled the repressions in 2020 found a safe place in Ukraine. After the war started many have stayed there. Belarussians volunteer in hospitals, they help refugees, internally displaced persons and simply people in need. Hundreds of Belarussians joined Ukrainians in fighting the Russian aggression. This common struggle has created a historical moment, for Ukraine, for Belarus and the entire region.

**The world order is in a state of meltdown and it is up to us which form it will take when it's over. Our actions must define the future of international relations and the security system in our region. And we are not talking about something impossible.**

When I hear that something is impossible, I think about Stanislav Shushkevich, the first leader of an independent Belarus who passed away last week. In 1991 he joined the leaders of then Soviet Belarus, Russia and Ukraine in Belovezhska Pushcha to sign the agreement on the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It turns out that dismantling a huge empire could be very swift, just with the stroke of a pen. Today we are overturning what was considered obvious before.

Lukashenko's regime, which seemed invincible, demonstrates its inability to control and rule, when the Belarussian people decided in 2020 that they needed freedom and started protests that have already lasted for three years. Putin's army which seemed so powerful just a few months ago, turned out to be unable to live up to its image after it was confronted by skilful and fearless Ukrainians.

For me it all started in 2020. In the election of August 2020, I ran against the dictator Lukashenko, after my husband had been jailed simply for declaring his candidacy. In the months of protests that followed the stolen election my people tried to break free from the dictatorial chains. Up to one and a half million took part in the peaceful protest. That is a lot for a country of 9.5 million.

Belarussians surprised themselves but also frightened both dictators. Putin and Lukashenko underestimated the strength of the people. 50,000 people were detained. Hundreds of thousands have been forced to leave Belarus. Thousands experienced torture and inhuman mistreatment. My husband Sergej, one of thousands of political prisoners, was sentenced to 18 years imprisonment, almost two of which he has already spent in a solitary cell.

Some experts believe that Putin's current, revanchist war began in 2020 with this mass terror in Belarus. Lukashenko would not have survived without Putin. Military units of Rosgvardia were actually amassed on the border with Belarus ready to rescue the drowning dictator. Lukashenko is still paying off his debt. He illegally allowed Belarus to be used as a staging ground for the attack on Ukraine. We now understand that the crackdown on Belarussian civil

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society, the destruction of free media, alternative voices, trade unions, human rights defenders were all a preparation for the occupation and the war against Ukraine.

But the dictators failed to suppress our movement. Despite the brutal repressions the protests movement continues underground and after two years is still there. Two months ago, Belarussians united in an unprecedented objection against the war. On February 27 for the first time since 2020 tens of thousands took to the streets across the country to protest against the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Our activists hacked government websites, volunteers handed out newspapers. The initiatives formed by the mothers of soldiers work with the military.

And we can also claim two achievements: first, our country has not become a place where the Russian feels safe. Since February, Belarussian partisans have conducted more than 80 acts of sabotage on the railway. Their bravery helped to slow down Russian supplies, their troops and weapon shipments through Belarus. Belarussian crowds in their thousands alerted Ukrainians of missile attacks and of Russian bombers flying their way and this helped to save lives. Secondly, the Belarussian army refused to enter Ukraine despite attempts to drag it into the war.

This is also the achievement of our people, of mothers and, of course, of the officers who refused to follow this criminal order. We have made our stance clear: we are against the war and the dictator supporting it. Lukashenko became an accomplice and dragged our country into this unjust war of aggression. He completely dismissed the national interest of Belarus and serves the interest of the Kremlin. Now he

tries to switch from arsonist to firefighter, claiming that he wishes Ukraine well and was actually a peacemaker. No way! The West should not buy this again. We must learn that dictators cannot be appeased or reeducated.

We also see attempts to start the exchange of political prisoners for the lifting of sanctions. We cannot allow the people of Belarus or political prisoners to be used as bargaining chips. We do not want the release of 10, 100 or 300 hostages, we want the release of all political prisoners immediately, without conditions. All of them must be rehabilitated and restored in their rights. All criminal cases must be closed so that everyone can get back home safely, those who are in prison and those who are in exile.

Every single day means more suffering – for the population of Ukraine living in fear of Russian shelling, for political prisoners in Belarus for ordinary citizens living in a state of terror. I know that sanctions are not a silver bullet but they do work. Under the pressure of sanctions, the regime is making mistakes. It will have to retreat, release political prisoners and start talking to people.

**Until that happens, I call on the international community to keep building up pressure and not recognise the regime. You may ask: how then to fight if you have no weapons. The fact is that back in 2020 we chose a peaceful path of struggle and we try to stick to it. We believe in the power of words, the power of persuasion, the power of diplomacy. Perhaps this path is longer but we hope it will bring more sustainable changes in the longer run.**



You do not see protests in the streets but big changes are already happening in our society. First of all, Belarussians realised that their fate lies in their hands and that no one else will make those changes for them. Hundreds of NGOs were forced to leave Belarus in 2020 and 2021 but they regrouped and are active again. Many media outlets resumed their work. Secondly, the energy in the society is accumulating and there is so much of this energy waiting to be unleashed. You can see it in the now exiled communities: there is an explosion of art, creativity and innovative technology to combat repression. Thirdly, an immunity to tyranny is being developed within society. Even those who served the system for years realised that this policy leads to a dead end. Belarussians will never accept the dictatorship. And fourthly, the Belarussian national identity is strengthening. Every day as more Belarussians learn their language they discover their true history. More and more Belarussians are making their choice in favour of democracy, human rights and the return to the European family.

Meanwhile, we have to fight any attempts to falsify our history and to use it as an excuse for the crimes of today. This week we marked the 9th of May. A German newspaper invited me to reflect on the importance of that day. As a child in the early 1990s, I was very excited about May 9th. Summer was right around the corner, holidays seemed unending. First comes May 1st, Labour Day, only to be followed by May 9th, Victory Day. In school, our local chief ideologue led a class to reenact heroic deeds of the Red Army. We performed all of the Soviet rituals. We wore red handkerchiefs, laid carnations at the local monument to the Red Army and watched the veterans' procession. It was a day to

commemorate the end of the Great Patriotic War and honour those who fought and died for our peace.

In Belarus, the regime has started to abuse this day for political purposes. In Russia, the Kremlin's propaganda went further. It made Victory Day the symbol of Russia's imperial might. A day to stoke nationalism, scare neighbours and show off new shiny tanks. Russia's regime has styled itself as the guardian of this sacred victory. And anybody opposing Russia became a Nazi only to be defeated.

They believe that they have the right to conquer and colonise. It provided the denazification-pretext for Putin to launch the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. You can often hear Belarussians say: anything but war. Belarussians know all too well that there is nothing glorious about war. We have never had ambitions for imperial glory but we have suffered from those of others. Almost every war in our region saw our land pillaged and people killed. Unless we all embrace the lessons of history we will be doomed to repeat it. We are seeing it right now.

**So, how should we deal with May 9? Instead of Victory Day I would call it Remembrance Day. This should be a day of honouring the victims of wars past and present. It has to have a simple message: never again! We should remember that there are no victors in wars, there is only loss and destruction, that one cannot win a war, one can only end it.**

It should be a day of reflection and not of parades and fireworks. It should be a day of conversation when older generations pass on to the youngest the values they learned the hard way. A procession of peace among them. Instead of parades and pompous celebrations it should be a day to light a candle for the victims of war and put it in your hand.

We are right now writing the crucial chapters in the book of history for many generations to come. The bravery of Ukrainians and Belarussians will serve as an inspiration for our children. And your voice is loud, confident and strong. I urge you to continue using it on behalf of those who refuse to be silenced in Belarus and those who fight so bravely in Ukraine and who are writing a new history for our region. Thank you. «



Keynote

## The European Union must take rapid, united and resolute action

Dr Laima Liucija Andrikienė

» Participants of the conference, please allow me to share some thoughts on the topic ‘External security in the 21st century – what Europe can do and what it must do’. The textbooks on warfare at the beginning of the 21st century say that we need to change the concept and tactics of war depending on the how society is developing from a social, economic, political and technological perspective. Terms such as hybrid warfare, malicious cyber activity, artificial

intelligence and others have come to the fore, suggesting that conflict is moving to an advanced level of technology and that we need to focus our resources on technological advances to prepare for this shift. A few relevant quotes include, ‘Whoever wants to win a war today has to win the information war first’ and ‘New wars will not be fought on battlefields, but on computers and via communication systems’, according to a book on the ‘new face of war’.

And now we see here, in the third decade of the 21st century, in the heart of Europe, a barbaric, unprovoked war in which primitive soldiers armed with antiquarian ammunition are killing, raping and pillaging civilians, including the elderly, children and women, deliberately bombing civilian targets and sending bloody ‘trophies’ to their families in Russia. Is this déjà vu? It is as if this war were taking place 80 or 100 years ago, because the inhabitants of our part of Europe underwent the same and similar experiences during the first and second Soviet occupations. Let us think about Germany in 1944/45 and what the Soviet soldiers did on German soil, how they treated German women and children. This is now being repeated in Ukraine, where the legal successor to the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation, a member of the United Nations Security Council, is committing war crimes with the help of self-proclaimed Belarusian President Lukashenko. It is obvious that in order to ensure its security, Europe must be prepared not only to fight modern threats but also those that many consider archaic. That is my first point.

My second point is that Russia had already clearly stated its aggressive intentions in 2008 and 2014 when it occupied and annexed the territories of Georgia and Ukraine. Yet even Lithuania, which was realistic about the threat posed by Putin’s regime, held out hope that Vladimir Putin’s ambitions to restore the empire would remain a vision and that democratic change would be possible in Russia and its ally Belarus. The military campaign in Ukraine has removed any illusions about the possibility of normalising relations with Russia and any doubts about the threat the Russian regime poses to democratic Europe.

According to Levada, Russia’s most reliable polling organisation, Putin’s popularity rating in Russian society has actually increased since the war began (82% of the population supported him in April this year, up from 71% in February). The latest data from the same source indicate that 67% of Russians have a negative opinion of the European Union. Given this public mood, which has been fed with poisonous propaganda for years, it is clear that the Putin regime, the Putinist ideology, will exist longer than Putin himself, and that Europe must do everything it can to put an end to this criminal ideology once and for all. Because Putinism in the 21st century is what National Socialism and Stalinism were in the 20th century – two criminal, bloody ideologies, one of which was condemned by the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg and the other of which went unpunished because the victors were not denounced. This is the mantra that Russia continues to repeat to this day.

My third point is this: what steps must Europe take in the current situation? First and foremost, we must continue the measures aimed at weakening the Russian regime, isolating it politically and economically and making it impossible to escape accountability for war crimes. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is now in its third month, but Russia has shown no willingness to end its aggression or to participate in targeted negotiations. This means that the pressure currently being placed on Russia is insufficient. We need to tighten the sanctions against Russia by disconnecting more banks, especially Sberbank and Gazprombank, from the SWIFT system, imposing a full embargo on imports of oil, coal, nuclear fuels and gas from the Russian Federation, and placing further sanctions on the

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oligarchs and their family members. We must stop financing the Russian war machine. Belarus, Russia's accomplice, must be treated in the same way.

**It is also our duty to help bring to justice all those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine.**

We must use the institutions of the European Union (Eurojust, Europol, the European Public Prosecutor's Office, the International Criminal Court) to investigate war crimes more effectively, to collect data on the crimes, their perpetrators and victims, and to prosecute the war criminals. In addition, we should consider an initiative to set up a special court to investigate the crime of aggression in Ukraine. A court of this type could be established via an international treaty between Ukraine and an international



organisation such as the Council of Europe, supported by states that are not members of the Council, such as the United States, Canada and others. I would like to remind you at this point that the Council of Europe, unlike some other international organisations, already expelled the Russian Federation from this European international organisation on 15 March.

In addition, we need to strengthen the European Union's weak points in order to deal with external security threats – or rather, we need to do much more in these areas. The Covid-19 crisis has demonstrated that the EU member states react in a chaotic manner when initially confronted with the crisis, with each country pulling in their own direction. The crisis triggered by the pandemic involved unilateral action by the member states of the European Union, consisting of the closure of internal borders, restriction of exports of medical goods, etc. After the war against Ukraine broke out, we have seen the uncoordinated and not always timely provision of military aid to Ukraine, which in some cases has been exploited for its own benefit, as well as splits between member states with regard to sanctions against Russia. Even if the member states of the community are able to mobilise and act in a coordinated manner in the long term, a slow decision-making process is not appropriate, especially when faced with authoritarian regimes where decisions are made by an autocratic leader.

My fourth point is that the European Union's unity as regards its values is even more important than speeding up the decision-making process.

**The European Union was born as a democratic peace project. Member states must be united by values first and foremost and not by economic considerations. The first pages of the Treaty of Lisbon list the fundamental values of the European Union, which you and I are very familiar with: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and ensuring human rights. But the European Union does not have an effective mechanism to protect these values.**

At the same time, we are observing a situation in which a country that belongs to the family of the European Union kowtows to the Putin regime, and another country that is defending European and common human values with its blood is being treated with scepticism when it comes to its aspirations to become a member of the European Union, or at least to initially obtain candidate status. We need to find ways of sending a clear political signal that countries that defend the common values of the European Union are welcome in the European Union and that those who violate these values will receive a tough response.

We need to dedicate a separate discussion to the actions of Serbia, a candidate country for accession to the European Union, in connection with Russia's war against Ukraine. The country's lack of participation in the European Union sanctions, the permission it has granted for Russia and its planes to use its airspace, the large-scale procurement of weapons from Russia and China – all this, in today's context, is reason to talk about the fact that Serbia's candidate status should be questioned and the

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ongoing negotiations with the European Union should be suspended and frozen.

And one more thought from me about China. Even though everyone's attention is rightly directed towards Russia's war against Ukraine right now, we must not be naïve about the threat posed by the Chinese regime. Despite Russia's brutality and destructiveness, China has still reaffirmed its strong partnership with Russia, with the presidents of the two countries adopting a joint declaration in February this year reiterating their common approach to European security and their opposition to NATO expansion. The Chinese ambassador in Moscow said that China would continue to step up its cooperation with Russia in the fields of military technology, energy and aerospace. The mutual support between these two autocracies poses an even greater challenge to the democratic world. The European Union must closely monitor China's approach as regards its sanctions. It must be ready to react if China were to help Russia circumvent the sanctions imposed on it.

The People's Republic of China is concerned about the unity and strength of the democratic world's response to Russia's actions in Ukraine. We can therefore assume that China, which has already demonstrated its aspiration for world domination through its actions so far, will use the tactics of 'divide and rule' (I'm referring to the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as the 16+1 format created for Central and Eastern Europe) and economic aggression (which Lithuania experienced after the Taiwanese Representative Office opened in Lithuania) to continue to drive a wedge between the European Union and the US and foment discord among the EU member states. Any member state of



the European Union and its companies can become the target of unlawful and politically motivated actions.

The European Union should not tolerate situations where trade is used as a weapon. It must therefore be prepared to defend the integrity of the internal market against such attacks and disruptions. Unjustified economic pressure on a country, which Lithuania, for example, had to suffer, endangers the common market of the European Union and the EU as a trading bloc. This means we must seek long-term and sustainable solutions to reduce the European Union's

dependence on and vulnerability to China, specifically by renewing and making effective use of the European Union's trade policy instruments, such as the new anti-coercion instrument, which will help to combat economic coercion in pursuit of political objectives.

And finally, as regards China and Russia: although the Chinese and Russian regimes use different tools, both have blatant ambitions to change the world order and, besides this – to dominate the world. The best response that a democratic Europe can have to such ambitions remains closer cooperation and coordinating its actions with its international allies, especially the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada, the countries of the Indo-Pacific region and other world democracies.

**I would like to conclude by saying that we are living in the time of a great, tremendous historical, tectonic turning point that will change the face of the world for decades to come. It is a responsibility we all bear to future generations, and our mission, to do the best we can with the current critical situation in order to make Europe and the whole world a better place in the future. So that the struggle between democracies and autocracies ends with victory on the part of the former. That is my wish for all of us.**

Thank you for listening. <<



Keynote

## Europos Sąjunga turi veikti sutelktai, greitai ir ryžtingai

Dr Laima Liucija Andrikienė

» Gerbiamieji konferencijos dalyviai, leiskite man pasidalyti kai kuriomis mintimis tema „Išorės saugumas dvidešimt pirmame amžiuje – ką gali ir turi padaryti Europa“. 21-ojo amžiaus pradžios karybos vadovėliai rašė, kad, atsižvelgiant į socialinį, ekonominį, politinį ir technologinį visuomenės vystymąsi turime keisti karo sampratą ir taktiką. Dėmesio centre atsirado tokios sąvokos kaip hibridinis karas, kibernetinis kenkimas, dirbtinis intelektas

ir kitos, suponuojančios, kad konfliktai persikelia į aukštą technologinį lygmenį ir, norėdami jiems pasirengti, išteklius turime sutelkti į technologinę pažangą. Keletas citatų: „Šiandien norint laimėti karą, pirmiausiai turite laimėti informacinį karą“, „Nauji karai bus kariaujami ne mūsų laukuose, o kompiuteriuose ir komunikacijos sistemose“, – rašoma vienoje iš knygų apie „naująjį karo veidą“.

Ir štai, trečiajame 21-ojo amžiaus dešimtmetyje Europos centre matome barbarišką neišprovokuotą karą, kur anti-kvarine amunicija ginkluoti primityvūs kareiviai žudo, prievartauja ir plėšia taikius žmones, įskaitant senelius, vaikus, moteris, sąmoningai bombarduoja ir apšaudo civilinius objektus, siunčia savo šeimoms į Rusiją kruvinus „trofėjus“... Deja vu? Taip, tarsi tas karas vyktų prieš 80 ar 100 metų, nes mūsų Europos dalies gyventojai tokius ir panašius patyrimus turėjo pirmosios ir antrosios sovietų okupacijos metais. Prisiminkime ir Vokietiją 1945-aisiais ir ką sovietų kareivos išdirbinėjo Vokietijos žemėje, kaip elgėsi su vokiečių moterimis ir vaikais. Dabar tai kartojama Ukrainoje, karo nusikaltimus vykdo sovietų sąjungos teisių ir pareigų perėmėja, Jungtinių Tautų Saugumo Tarybos narė Rusijos Federacija, talkinant Baltarusijos apsišaukėliui prezidentui Lukašenkai. Akivaizdu, kad Europai, siekiant užtikrinti savo saugumą, reikia būti pasirengusiai kovoti ne tik su grėsmėmis, kurias įvardijame kaip šiuolaikines, bet ir tomis, kurias daugelis laikė archajiškomis.

Antroji mano tezė: savo agresyvius ketinimus Rusija pademonstravo jau 2008 ir 2014 metais, kai okupavo ir aneksavo Sakartvelo ir Ukrainos teritorijas, tačiau net Lietuva, realistiškai vertinusi Putino režimo grėsmę, turėjo vilties, kad Vladimiro Putino imperijos atkūrimo užmačios liks tik vizija, ir kad demokratiniai pokyčiai Rusijoje bei jos sąjungininkėje Baltarusijoje yra įmanomi. Kariniai veiksmai Ukrainoje išskleidė iliuzijas dėl santykių su Rusija normalizavimo galimybės ir bet kokias abejones dėl Rusijos režimo grėsmės demokratinei Europai.

Patikimiausios Rusijos viešosios nuomonės apklausas vykdančios organizacijos „Levada“ duomenimis, V. Puti-

no reitingas Rusijos visuomenėje prasidėjus karui net išaugo (šių metų balandžio mėnesio duomenimis, jį palaikė net 82 proc. gyventojų, o šių metų vasarį palaikymas siekė 71 proc). Naujausiais to paties centro duomenimis, 67 proc. Rusijos gyventojų Europos Sąjungą vertina neigiamai. Turint omenyje šias ilgus metus toksiška propaganda maitintos visuomenės nuotaikas, akivaizdu, kad Putino režimas, putinizmo ideologija gyvuos ilgiau už patį Putiną, ir kad Europa turi dėti visas įmanomas pastangas, siekiant baigti su šia nusikalstama ideologija kartą ir visiems laikams. Nes putinizmas 21-ajame amžiuje yra tas pats, kas 20-ajame amžiuje buvo nacizmas ir stalinizmas – dvi nusikalstamos kruvinos ideologijos, viena jų sulaukusi įvertinimo Niurnbergo tribunole, o kita likusi neįvertinta, nes nugalėtojai neteisiami... Ir šią mantrą Rusija kartoja iki šių dienų.

Trečioji mano tezė: kokių veiksų dabartinėje situacijoje turi imtis Europa? Pirmiausia, turime tęsti priemones, nukreiptas į Rusijos režimo silpninimą, politinę ir ekonominę izoliaciją ir atsakomybės už karo nusikaltimus neišvengiamumą. Rusijos invazija į Ukrainą tęsiasi jau trečią mėnesį, bet Rusija nedemonstruoja jokie noro stabdyti savo agresiją ar tikslingai derėtis. Tai reiškia, kad dabartinis spaudimas Rusijai yra nepakankamas. Turime didinti sankcijas Rusijai: atjungti daugiau bankų, pirmiausia „Sberbank“ ir „Gazprombank“, nuo SWIFT sistemos, taikyti visišką naftos, anglių, branduolinio kuro ir dujų importo iš Rusijos Federacijos embargą, toliau sankcionuoti oligarchus ir jų šeimų narius. Turime nustoti finansuoti Rusijos karo mašiną. Baltarusija kaip Rusijos bendrininkė turėtų sulaukti to paties.

**Taip pat mūsų pareiga yra padėti patraukti atsakomybės visus, kurie atsakingi už karo nusikaltimų ir nusikaltimų žmoniškumui vykdymą Ukrainoje.**

Veiksmingesniam karo nusikaltimų tyrimui, duomenų apie nusikalstamas veikas, jų vykdytojus ir nukentėjusiuosius rinkimui, baudžiamajam karo nusikaltėlių persekiojimui vykdyti turime išnaudoti Europos Sąjungos institucijas – Eurojustą,

Europolą, Europos prokuratūrą, Tarptautinį Baudžiamąjį Teismą. Be to, svarstyтина iniciatyva dėl Specialaus tribunolo agresijos nusikaltimui Ukrainoje tirti įsteigimo. Toks tribunolas tarptautine sutartimi galėtų būti įsteigtas tarp Ukrainos ir tarptautinės organizacijos, pavyzdžiui, Europos Tarybos, kurią paremtų valstybės, kurios nėra Europos Tarybos narės, įskaitant Jungtines Amerikos Valstijas, Kanadą ir kitas. Čia norėčiau priminti, kad Europos Taryba, skirtingai nei kai kurios kitos tarptautinės organizacijos, pašalino Rusijos Federaciją iš savo narių jau kovo 15 dieną.



Antra, siekdami atremti išorės grėsmes saugumui, turime stiprinti Europos Sąjungos silpnąsias vietas, tiksliau – dirbti tose srityse turime gerokai daugiau. Jau COVID-19 krizė parodė, kad Europos Sąjungos valstybės narės pirmojoje akistatoje su krize reaguoja chaotiškai ir kiekviena valstybė siekia „tempti paklodę į savo pusę“. Pandemijos sukeltos krizės atveju, tai buvo vienašališki Europos Sąjungos valstybių narių veiksmai, uždarant vidaus sienas, apribojant medicininių prekių eksportą ir panašiai, o prasidėjus karui prieš Ukrainą stebėjome nekoordinuotą ir ne visada savalaikį karinės pagalbos Ukrainai teikimą, kai kuriais atvejais išnaudojamą savireklamai, taip pat valstybių narių susiskaldymą sankcijų Rusijai atžvilgiu. Nors ilgainiui Bendrijos valstybės narės geba susitelkti ir veikti koordinuotai, lėtas sprendimų priėmimo procesas nėra tinkamas, ypatingai susidūrus su autoritariniais režimais, kur sprendimus priima vienvaldis lyderis.

Ketvirtoji mano tezė: dar svarbiau nei sprendimų priėmimo proceso spartinimas yra Europos Sąjungos vienybės vertybiniu požiūriu.

**Europos Sąjunga gimė kaip demokratinis taikos projektas. Sąjungos valstybės narės pirmiausia turi vienyti vertybės, o ne ekonominiai išskaičiavimai. Lisabonos sutarties pirmuosiuose puslapiuose išvardytos pagrindinės Europos Sąjungos vertybės, kurias mes su jumis gerai žinome: žmogaus orumas, laisvė, demokratija, lygybė, teisinė valstybė, žmogaus teisių užtikrinimas, tačiau Europos Sąjunga neturi veiksmingo mechanizmo šioms vertybėms apsaugoti.**

Vienu metu stebime situaciją, kaip valstybė, priklausanti Europos Sąjungos šeimai, pataikauja Putino režimui, o kita valstybė, krauju ginanti europietiškas ir bendražmogiškas vertybes, sulaukia skeptiško požiūrio į jos siekį tapti Europos Sąjungos nare, iš pradžių bent gauti šalies kandidatės statusą. Turime rasti būdų pasiųsti aiškų politinį signalą, kad bendras Europos Sąjungos vertybes ginančios šalys yra laukiamos Europos Sąjungoje, o jas pažeidžiančios sulauks griežto atsako.

Atskirai reikėtų kalbėti apie Europos Sąjungos šalies kandidatės Serbijos veiksmus Rusijos karo prieš Ukrainą kontekste. Neprisijungimas prie Europos Sąjungos sankcijų, sudarymas sąlygų Rusijai, jos lėktuvams naudotis savo oro erdve, dideli ginklų pirkimai iš Rusijos ir Kinijos šandienos kontekste duoda pagrindo kalbėti, kad Serbijos šalies kandidatės statusas turėtų būti kvestionuojamas, o vykstančios jos derybos su Europos Sąjunga turi būti nutrauktos ir įšaldytos.

Ir dar viena mano tezė – apie Kiniją. Nors visas dėmesys šiuo metu pagrįstai sutelktas į Rusijos karą prieš Ukrainą, negalime būti naivūs ir dėl Kinijos režimo grėsmės. Net ir Rusijos žiaurumo ir destruktijos akivaizdoje Kinija iš naujo patvirtino tvirtą partnerystę su Rusija, šių metų vasarį priimančią bendrą abiejų valstybių prezidentų pareiškimą, kuriuo abi pusės patvirtino bendrą požiūrį į Europos saugumą ir opoziciją NATO plėtrai. Kinijos ambasadorius Maskevoje pareiškė, kad Kinija toliau stiprins bendradarbiavimą su Rusija karinių technologijų, energetikos ir kosmoso srityse. Šios dvi autokratijos, remdamos viena kitą, kelia dar didesnę iššūkį demokratiniam pasauliui. Europos Sąjunga turi atidžiai stebėti Kinijos veiksmus dėl Europos

## Keynote

Sąjungos sankcijų ir būti pasirengusi reaguoti, jei Kinija norėtų padėti Rusijai apeiti šiai taikomas sankcijas.

Kinijos Liaudies Respubliką neramina demokratinio pasaulio vienybė ir tvirtumas prieš Rusijos veiksmus Ukrainoje. Todėl galime tikėtis, kad, naudodama „skaldyk ir valdyk“ taktiką (turiu galvoje „Vieno kelio – vienos juostos strategiją“, kitaip dar vadinamą OBOR strategija, taip pat formatą „16+1“, sukurtą Vidurio ir Rytų Europai) ir ekonominę agresiją (Lietuvos patyrimas po to, kai Lietuvoje buvo atidaryta Taivaniečių atstovybė), Kinija jau ankstesniais veiksmais pademonstravusi siekį dominuoti pasaulyje, toliau sieks varyti pleištą tarp Europos Sąjungos ir JAV bei kurstys nesutarimus tarp Europos Sąjungos valstybių narių. Neteisėtų ir politiškai motyvuotų veiksmų taikiniu gali tapti bet kuri Europos Sąjungos valstybė narė ir jos įmonės. Europos Sąjunga neturėtų toleruoti situacijų, kai prekyba naudojama kaip ginklas.

Todėl Europos Sąjunga turi būti pasirengusi ginti vidaus rinkos vientisumą nuo tokių atakų ir trikdžių. Nepagrįstas ekonominis spaudimas vienai valstybei, kokį patyrė Lietuva, kelia grėsmę bendrai Europos Sąjungos rinkai ir Europos Sąjungai kaip prekybos blokui. Todėl mes turime ieškoti, reikia ieškoti ilgalaikių tvarių sprendimų dėl Europos Sąjungos priklausomybės nuo Kinijos ir pažeidžiamumo mažinimo, pasitelkiant Europos Sąjungos prekybos įrankių ir priemonių atnaujinimą ir efektyvų naudojimą, kaip, pavyzdžiui, naujoji priemonė, padėsianti kovoti su ekonomine prievarta siekiant politinių tikslų (angl. Anti-Coercion Instrument).

Ir baigiant – apie Kiniją ir Rusiją: nors Kinijos ir Rusijos režimai naudoja skirtingas priemones, juos abu vienija



neslepamos ambicijos pakeisti pasaulio tvarką, dar daugiau – dominuoti pasaulyje. Geriausias demokratinės Europos atsakas į tokias ambicijas išlieka glaudesnis bendradarbiavimas ir veiksmų koordinavimas su tarptautiniais sąjungininkais, pirmiausia – Jungtine Karalyste, Jungtinėmis Amerikos Valstijomis ir Kanada, Indijos ir Ramiojo vandenynų regiono valstybėmis, kitomis pasaulio demokratijomis.

**Ir visiškai baigdama, noriu pasakyti, kad gyvename vykstančio didelio, milžiniško istorinio, tektoninio lūžio, pakeisiančio pasaulio veidą dešimtmečiams, metu. Visų mūsų atsakomybė ateities kartoms, mūsų misija – išnaudoti dabartinę kritinę situaciją tam, kad ateities Europos ir viso pasaulio veidas būtų patrauklesnis. Kad kova tarp demokratijų ir autokratijų baigtųsi pirmųjų pergale. To mums visiems ir linkiu.**

Ačiū už dėmesį. «

A photograph of Marko Mihkelson, a man in a dark blue suit and tie, speaking at a wooden podium. He is looking directly at the camera. Behind him is a large bouquet of orange and green flowers. The background is a light-colored wall with a wooden ledge.

Keynote

## The existing world order is being challenged

Marko Mihkelson

» Dear Žygimantas, thank you very much for these provocative introductory remarks. Dear friends, I would like to thank the Sächsische Landtag for inviting me into this honourable hall, the Lithuanian Parliament. Dear Laima, it is very good to be back again in Vilnius.

I am actually not going to talk about the successes or mistakes of German foreign policy. I think we understand that

we all together are facing extremely difficult challenges and that all of us have to learn from our own mistakes and successes but also from our common mistakes and successes.

I would like to start from where Laima actually ended up. I totally agree with you and I guess that at the end of the day we all understand that we are living in the middle of

tectonic shifts in the world, not only what is happening in our region, which is just one part of this tectonic shift, if we think about Russian aggression against Ukraine. Tectonic changes – are we right in the middle of these tectonic shifts or maybe only at the beginning of these shifts which have already lasted for several decades?

I personally think that one of the most important moments in recent world history was the end of the 1970s. This is first and foremost related to the opening of China. I would argue that what has happened with all of us since then is very much connected with China's regaining of strength and power throughout the last 40 years. That has affected many other events around the globe and has a very direct impact on what happened in the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s.

I am not going into detail but it is very interesting to actually look into those connections and trends that were launched by this major change in world politics in the 1970s. And saying this I would like to say that if we, as Europeans, as westerners, look at the world today it, simplifyingly speaking, can be said that China's relative power is on the rise. It is growing, it is getting more important, it is going to be even more powerful in the coming years or even decades. Our relative power, the West's relative power, is being challenged. I am not going to say that it will necessarily diminish, but certainly our relative power in world politics today is smaller because of China.

And Russia's relative power is certainly diminishing. But Russia still poses an existential threat, first and foremost to the West and also to a liberal world order – what Laima

mentioned earlier in her speech. And the rest of the world, including India, the Arab nations, Brazil and some other countries, smaller and bigger, are watching very carefully how this big confrontation that is unfolding before our eyes is playing out. We are part of this confrontation, this conflict, this war – whatever we call it – between an autocratic Russia, a Russian dictatorship and democracies, first of all Ukraine but also all those who are supporting Ukraine.

**But if we add to that that we also face major challenges like climate change, energy security, food security and the emergence of disruptive technologies, then I do not think that we've ever had to tackle so many of them at the same time. The reason why we have so many conflicts and major conflicts is exactly that smaller relative power of the Western nations or the West in general.**

That has given China and Russia the idea to challenge our world order for many years now. For China this is more systemic and more strategic. I am not saying that this is a direct, existential threat to us but they will challenge our world order for many years to come. As you know, China would like to be the global leader by 2050 and they are trying very hard to keep themselves out of major conflicts.

Russia is triggered primarily by their imperial past and their autocratic system – in Putin's case that resembles the one we are familiar with from the 1930s, when the Russian leader was Stalin. This, of course, is very

dangerous because these two components – the desire to reestablish imperial might or power, including moving borders by using force and at the same time being an autocracy or dictatorship even, which would like to fight back democracies along their borders, like in Belarus or Ukraine.

But saying this I think we have to understand that the most serious and most immediate threat is coming from Russia. Please make no mistake in thinking that this is temporary. We have seen that Russia has posed a serious threat to the West and has challenged it for the last 100 years. Perhaps today we live in the most critical times of this threat.

So, what should be do? In the latter part of my speech I will focus on what we should do, first on this global scene. If western countries want to preserve their role – I do not want to say their domination of the world order but at least a rule-based world order –, we should do three things: First, we should start to heavily invest in our defence and in our resolve to defend our values, territories and principles, such as international law and a rules-based order. And that demands from all of us, all our nations, to look very seriously and collectively at what should be done when increasing our defence and resolve in defending our interests in the region and globally.

Secondly, we have to work closely together to build a technological firewall: artificial intelligence, quantum computing and many other still unknown fields, which are going to be part of our everyday life in future. It is very important to set the standards and the best way to do that

is to work together as Europeans but also with our very good allies and partner like the United States, Japan and other countries.

Thirdly, another major defence we have to work on is perhaps very difficult to understand for democracies. It is how to protect our public life, in particular the informational space. I am not only talking about disinformation or propaganda campaigns against our societies, I am also talking about how well-educated we are, how well we know about our own history but also about global history and how well we are able to make decisions knowing about that past and to establish the strategies for today.

When we focus on the Russian aggression against Ukraine and, as Laima mentioned, it is not only an aggression against Ukraine but rather a major attack on western interests and values, we need to understand that the end of this conflict, the end of this war, the end of this major confrontation will define our future. And if we want to live in a peaceful and stable Europe, we have to understand that there is no alternative other than that Russia must be defeated in this war. This is clear and simple – defeated. No Minsk 3, no new Normandys, no ceasefires, if they are not humanitarian ceasefires. Russia should be defeated. And it is first and foremost Ukraine which is telling us that, it is Wolodymyr Selenskyj who says that. They define a victory for Ukraine as one where all the territories, including Crimea and the illegally annexed territories are liberated. For that we, the western powers, should help Ukraine in their fight for freedom which will also have a major impact on Belarus. Svetlana Tikhanovskaya just talked about that.



## Keynote

**Furthermore, we have to anchor Ukraine very strongly in the Euro-Atlantic community. A major part of the Ukrainian society would like to see their country a part of the European Union and NATO.**

And we have to make sure that Ukraine, as an European nation, has the right not only to apply for membership but actually to become part of the European Union and NATO. This is why next month will be extremely important when the European Council will take a decision on offering Ukraine candidate status for the European Union.

**About this conflict and war: I hear here and there that one of the reasons why Russia attacked Ukraine was NATO enlargement, that NATO poses a threat to Russia. This is a prime example of Russian propaganda and does not even come close to reality. The best thing that has happened to Europe over the last 30 or 40 years has been both NATO enlargement and the enlargement of the European Union.**

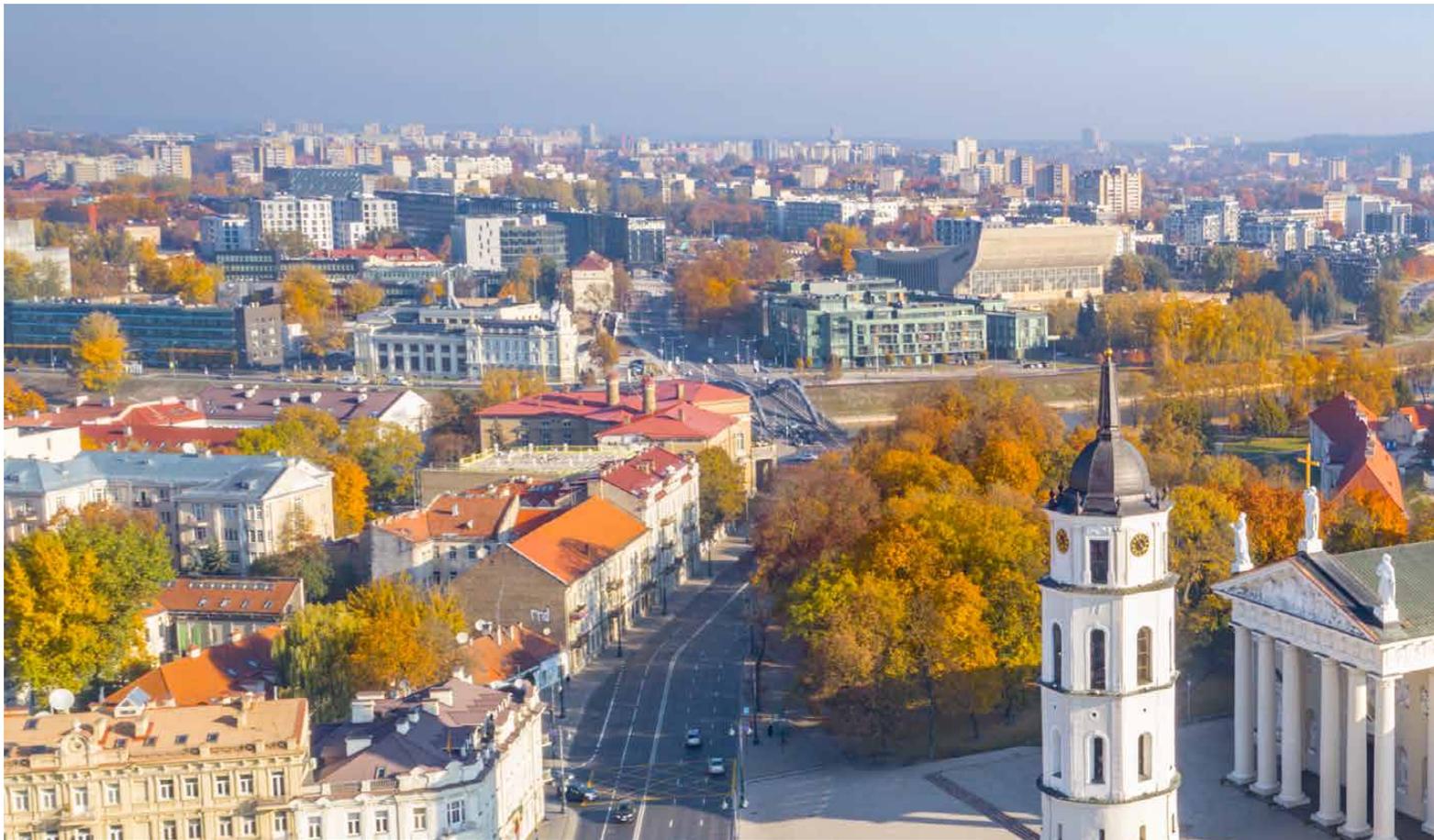
The best example for that is Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and other nations, which benefited from this, their people benefited from this. And this is why we argue today in these historic times for our very good neighbours, Finland and Sweden – yesterday the Finish prime minister took a decision and I know that Sweden will follow quickly – to start the ratification process for NATO membership in the coming weeks. This is a major shift towards the strategic defeat of Russia.



Russia in December still said that NATO must not be enlarged by one metre – and see what they got today. Finland and Sweden, particularly Sweden – how difficult that decision has been for them. But the people took that decision, 80% of Fins and around 60% of Swedes agreed with this.

I would like to make a couple of closing points and they resemble those which Laima made. We have to keep Russia isolated, for as long as Putin's regime remains in power. We are not going to change that regime, this is up to the Russian people. But I cannot imagine any decent European leader sitting at a table with Putin, who is a war criminal. A couple of days ago I was in The Hague, meeting with the chief prosecutor Karim Khan. He is very dedicated to doing his job and find out about all the atrocities in Ukraine and find the perpetrators who have committed massive war crimes.

Our parliaments, Lithuania's, Estonia's, Latvia's and others have recognised Russian actions in Ukraine as genocide against the Ukrainian nation. This is something we all have to understand: if we let those crimes go unpunished again, our continent will not be safe and in peace. Thank you. «



# Panel discussion





*The Cathedral of St. Stanislaus and the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania in the heart of the Lithuanian capital Vilnius.*



## Panel discussion

Marko Mihkelson



Dr Žygimantas Pavilionis  
(moderator)



Matthias Sonn



### → Dr Žygimantas Pavilionis (moderator):

I want to welcome you to this House of Freedom where we first rebelled against the Soviets – to this very place where you are sitting right now. We now want to hold a panel discussion and I would like to invite His Excellency, the German Ambassador Matthias Sonn, as well as Marko Mihkelson and Prof. Dr Liliana Tymchenko to take the stage.

Marko Mihkelson has already told us a great deal, but I still want to torment the ambassador a bit more with my awkward questions about Germany's leadership.

The ambassador has served in many different locations, including in the Balkans during the war; he was part of the team that prepared the Dayton Agreement. He served in Latin America, he served with me in Washington in 2010, but we did not meet there – which was actually a great pity. But now he is here – and we are so happy to have the Germans here in Lithuania! They have the largest number of troops here, they lead the NATO forces here. They have one of the largest economic communities, trade is growing – we like that a lot. And by the way, Germany was once our neighbour, from the 13th century onwards. The first Lithuanian book was



Prof Dr. Liliana Tymchenko



printed in the city then known as Königsberg. So we like the Germans, we miss them, and that is why we are all the more pleased to have the German ambassador here with us.

Ambassador, you know that I like to challenge people a bit, in a positive way of course. Which is why I would like to ask you: what kind of German leadership do you think will be needed in future if we want to create lasting peace in our region, if we want to stop the bloodshed that recurs again and again in our region, if we believe in our values and want to prevent these totalitarian crimes from

happening again? I would like to see Germany take the lead and expand its defence and security policy, but, Mr Ambassador, do you think this could happen?

→ **Matthias Sonn:**

Thank you, dear Žygis, it is a great honour to not just be in this room, this historic place. It always gives me goose bumps when I walk into this place because I have in my mind the images from 1990/1991, and in particular to sit up here on this podium – it intimidates me, a little bit. I am also very honoured to be here together with you, Mr chairman and with you, Professor and to be in front of parliamentarians from one of the oldest and traditional German federal states, Saxony. I think I do not even need to refer to the fact that kings of Saxony for, I think, 65 years were also grand dukes of Lithuania. Thank God, that is a long time ago and I am referencing that only for the sake of completeness.

Let me address your question about German leadership within a context which does not entirely omit history and the history of the 20th century and Germany's role, among other places, in the Baltic region. This is so because what I am going to say will describe the kind of leadership nobody wants from Germany ever again, including us Germans who do not want to offer that kind of leadership again, ever. So, you can count on the fact that any kind of German leadership will be firstly; demand-driven – it will not be pushed, it will have to be pulled. Secondly, it will be a quiet form of leadership which will favour substance over sound effects and colourful show. And thirdly, it will be extremely cooperative and close. That is the sort of framework

and is perhaps the presentational, performative aspect of this. I think that is very important.

On the current form of German leadership: one thing remains, Germans, the majority of our population, of our people still feels uncomfortable with the idea of German leadership as such. And that, of course, and that brings me right back to what I said, has to do with history. So, let it not be me who talks, let it be somebody else, and I am quoting the Ukrainian foreign minister Dmitro Kuleba, who was in Berlin yesterday. And Kuleba said, perhaps to the surprise of some in Europe and in our transatlantic community, that Germany had now taken over the lead in supporting Ukraine in its existential struggle against Russian military aggression. I will leave it at that. I believe, if Dmitro Kuleba says something like that I should just leave it at that and I should spare you the long list of things which I do have in my mind what Germany has been doing and is doing in support of Ukraine's struggle. Let me leave it at that



for the beginning, I will refer later to some of the things that Marko said. Thank you.

### → **Dr Žygimantas Pavilionis:**

Let me now provoke Marko a bit more. Marko, how do you see German leadership from the Baltic perspective, what would we need? I remember 1997 when foreign minister Klaus Kinkel said he was an advocate of the accession of the Baltic states to NATO. Can Germany, together with France, say now that they advocated candidate status for Ukraine? Can they also be the leader on democracy?

In this room we have Jacob Wollenstein, chairman of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung for Belarus and now also for Lithuania. Did you know that the German foundations were the first in the world to work on democracy? Reagan learned from them in 1982, when he made the Westminster speech. He modelled the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute and the National Endowment for Democracy on those German foundations.

So, explain to me why the later the Germans invested into relationships with autocracies, with Russia and China, thus establishing interdependencies that are now killing and dividing us. Maybe it's time for German leadership on democracy on a global scale and end those interdependencies with totalitarian countries and build the world united behind democracy?

My last little question and challenge: Maybe it is time to build a United Nations of Democracy, because I miss

Germany in the Security Council of the UN. It has been quite some time that German has not been given the seat that they deserve. Instead, we have two totalitarian regimes that bloc everything that we do for human dignity.

→ **Matthias Sonn:**

Well, we have Estonia there at the moment, that's good.

→ **Dr Žygimantas Pavilionis:**

So, how should German leadership look in our region, in Europe and globally, Marko?

→ **Marko Mihkelson:**

Thank you very much. It seems like a simple question and I will try to answer it. Last time I was in Berlin two weeks ago together with my colleagues from the foreign affairs committee of the Estonian Parliament. We visited both the Bundestag and the foreign ministry, with the chancellor around and we had some very interesting discussions with journalists and think tankers. And, please correct me if I am wrong, but I think in Germany this big "Zeitenwende" is going on in many ways, in terms of thinking about how to fulfill this position which many other nations want Germany to assume.

Members of the Bundestag asked delegates from Lithuania and Estonia what they expected from Germany and I gave a very simple answer – leadership. We are really looking forward to this leadership. The ambassador already explained what leadership means in German terms, but sometimes leadership must be a bit more visible and sometimes it must be ahead of others instead of leading from behind. I understand that we are

in the middle of a semi-academic, semi-political discussion here, a rather sensitive territory, but I would argue, and please correct me if I am wrong, that these policies which actually have served Germany well for many years, if not decades – Ostpolitik, starting in the 1970s under Willy Brandt or "Wandel durch Handel" comes to mind – and the hope associated with this is very logical.

Taking into account the past, arguing that never again will we build a world whose first and foremost desire is to sit behind the same table and get all the problems solved through diplomacy, negotiation, understanding each other's worries and so on and so forth – I am not going to argue that this was the wrong course, but, unfortunately we have seen that the other parties, Russia and, somewhat China, mostly Russia though, have not accepted this kind of world.

I heard in Berlin that the image of Russia some people have built in their minds has indeed collapsed.



Today it is extremely important that we, together and with German leadership and with other nations, build not only this strong first wall of defence but also make our democracy, our democratic Europe (I hope, I am allowed to use these words) great again.

Those nations, which really are in Europe, like Ukraine, like the western Balkans or Belarus, would like to experience the same success stories as we have. Why can't we be as open for them now as Europe was for us 30 years ago? This is crucial and this is something where we also have to understand that we are not going to do something against somebody. I know that it has always been the critical question – if we move towards Ukraine, offering them membership – and think about Bucharest in 2008 – maybe then we somehow provoke Russia into doing something. This war is unprovoked! Nothing was less of a provocation than our fatigue in defending our democratic values.

And this is something we look forward to Germany doing and we can see that huge changes are going on in this regard inside the Berlin establishment.

### → **Dr Žygimantas Pavilionis:**

Exactly that is why we like Marko. Let us now turn to International Law. I know, Dr Lilia Tymchenko, that you are well versed in International Law.

I mentioned Reagan's Westminster speech a moment ago. It was written by an interesting American diplomat, Marc Palmer. I remember him coming to my embassy in Washington, he sat down – that, by the way, was the

last time I saw him, sadly he passed away – and his last toast to me was: Žygis, let's drink to a world in which autocracies will be banned by International Law. I was shocked, I would love that world. But honestly, looking at the situation now, I am dreaming about that world.

Just one week ago exactly, we had a huge international conference in Lithuania of lawyers from all over the world who would like to bring Putin and Lukashenko to The Hague. Because what is happening is against our humanity, against all our universal values – which were written after the Second World War by you, because we were occupied back then. So, why don't we come up with some other international organisations, charters or laws so that we can jail those war criminals, because that's what they are, I couldn't call them anything less.

I have been to Butcha twice. I have seen it, in Butcha, in Irpin and in other places. I saw the same images in movies about the Second World War. I could never have believed that this could happen again. I was there with German, French and other delegations. If you want to join the "United for Ukraine" parliamentary platform, please do. We are currently planning our fifth visit to Kiev in June.

So, Dr Lilliana Tymchenko, what is the future of International Law? What is the future for human rights in the 21st century? How can we use International Law to protect Ukrainians from – I do not even know what to call it, but in the Lithuanian Parliament we call it what it is, genocide?

When Russians in occupied territories catch Ukrainian soldiers or citizens and ask them to join the occupier's army and they refuse, they are killing them on the spot. If they find anything in their clothes identifying them as Ukrainian they are killing them on the spot. They take thousands of kids from their mothers and russify them inside Russia. They take millions of Ukrainians and deport them like they deported my own grandfather to Kazakhstan, almost every Lithuanian has a similar story to tell. There is no difference to Russian behaviour 80 years ago. So, how can we stop those atrocities with International Law?



→ **Prof. Dr Liliانا Tymchenko:**

Thank you very much for this question. Before I start answering it, let me thank the Seimas, the government of the Republic of Lithuania and ordinary citizens who are supporting Ukraine and Ukrainians. My special thanks go to Poland, Germany, Norway, the UK, the United States, Canada and definitely the European Union as an organisation.

My heart is with a democratic Belarus and I am particularly grateful to the EHU, its leaders, staff and students who warm the souls of Ukrainians, students and teachers alike, who have become a second family for me and my children. I am from Bucha, I escaped from there by a miracle. I am a lawyer of International Law and I have always believed in it and still do. I do know that we have enough resources to punish murderers. When a maniac brings a knife to a victim's body, he doesn't destroy law and legal order but tries to defend his underground. And today our task is to stop the maniac and to punish him.

How? Everything is written down – let me open the Constitution of the United Nations' scientific and cultural organisation, which states: "since war begins in the minds of men it is in the minds of men where the defense of peace must be constructed". We, lawyers of international law and politicians, have been dreaming about this since 1648, the Peace of Westphalia. We were working on this during the First Hague Convention, we were working on and contributed to the norms of peace during the Second Hague Convention and also later on as well when the Kellogg-Briand Pact was signed and when the Charter of the United Nations was drafted.

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So, we have a structure. Yes, murderers and madmen should be excluded from the Security Council. And we have had good results as politicians, as lawyers of international law – that law is working. Russia was suspended from the Human rights Council, Russia was expelled from the Council of Europe. Very recently, the Human Rights Council of the United Nations voted in favour of opening investigations of potential war crimes. If we follow along those lines we understand the situation and level of consciousness and subconsciousness. You cannot simply execute a murderer, this is no way to punish a person. You need to change their mind, their way of thinking of a person. This is how you charter a new path into the future. This is how all of us, all human kind will be protected in the future.

You asked about human rights in the 21st century. Yes, through a culture of peace, through understanding, through cooperation and, sadly but definitely through war. Unfortunately, we have to find answers to this war. What we need more of, apart from political means and solidarity, is heavy weapons, including missiles of different types, aircraft, strong economic sanctions against Russia's economy and against Russian citizens living in EU-countries, in particular pro-Putin businessmen, propagandists, actors, musicians, scientists and students.

You mentioned before, that on May 6 we had a brilliant conference here in Vilnius, focusing on a Special tribunal for crimes committed against Ukraine. Let me thank you again, Lithuania, and all progressive forces in Europe for this great support and for your understanding,



because in the first days we were just struggling to get that understanding.

We, Ukrainians, wanted to show you that we are not just some human beings but that we also have our own culture, our history, our desire to live in a peaceful world. We are not madmen, we are no strange people, as we are sometimes portrayed. I heard a lot of strange stories about Russian propagandists who dismissively talk about us as if we were some oddities that have no identity of their own and that a thing like a Ukrainian nation does not exist – there is only Russia and nothing else.

So, we are fighting for our dignity, for our common future, for our very existence. I would therefore like to thank you for using the term “existential struggle”. We have no other way now but this struggle to stop these crimes, to stop Putin. I will stop it here in order to make room for other questions.

→ **Dr Žygimantas Pavilionis:**

Thank you Dr Tymchenko. I have a couple of more questions that I can put to the panellists, but honestly, I think I already know their answer to them. We still have an hour of our conference left, so, I will open the panel for questions from the audience.

→ **Audience (Student):**

*My name is Olga, I am an EHU-student. I have a question for Ms. Tymchenko: you talked about human rights violations at the hands of Russia and potential prosecution of war crimes. A big part of Putin's regime and the way it sustains itself is propaganda. Do you think those*

*propaganda people should be prosecuted as well and if so, what kind of prosecution should that be?*



→ **Prof. Dr Liliana Tymchenko:**

Thank you very much for that question. First of all, I want to remind everyone of May 4 and the joint statement issued by the UN human rights office and the high commissioner on the Russian invasion, and of freedom of expression and information. In this document, you can find all four aspects with regard to the media, the internet propaganda and disinformation. It was very important to recognize the existence of these things in the first place.

Again, I am from Bucha and I have met many people who still do not understand or even believe what happened. They always keep asking me many times: Are you really from Bucha? Did the atrocities really take place there? So, as I was trying to say, these events were officially recognized and will be fully investigated and will lead to a fair trial. Thank you very much for this question.



### → Audience (Alexander Dierks):

*Thank you. My name is Alexander Dierks, member of the Saxon State Parliament. First of all, thank you very much for the impressive impulses and also the discussions, which I largely share and can expressly support. A question, I would like to ask Mr Mihkelson: you said that Europe naturally needs German leadership, but that we also need to become stronger overall when it comes to security and defense policy.*

*If you assume that the European Union as a whole does not spend much less money on defense and armaments than the United States, but has far fewer capabilities, how do you see the prospects of greater military integration within Europe? Also the question of a European alliance? Because none of us know how the situation will develop towards the United States, who will be the next American President – God bless Joe Biden and his health. But we don't know how the next elections will turn out. So I think this question is quite interesting.*

*One more question for everyone. I fully understand and share the assessment that Russia can only be stopped militarily at this point. I believe, however, that this dispute will last for a very long time. Hence the question: How will this issue, including the sanctions against Russia, continue? I believe this can drag on for decades, because at least in my view it is essentially about ensuring that Russia never finds the strength to start such a war again. Otherwise, we will certainly experience that again in the near future. Perhaps a simple assessment on your part of how you see it.*

### → Marko Mihkelson:

If I may, I would like to also comment on the first question and then reflect on the second question as well. As European nations, we commonly are currently going through quite a big change in terms of understanding those real existential challenges that we face, posed by Putin's Russia and a big change in terms of understanding that we have to invest in defence. This new understanding can be seen in Germany, Sweden and many other countries whose defence spending over the last decade had not been at the level of 2% of GDP as all NATO members had agreed on. In Estonia our current level of defence spending is at 2.5% of GDP and we think that this is the new normal or the new floor.

But, as we have been discussing here today and throughout the Baltics, we could spend 10% of GDP on defence and would still lack some major capabilities in order to deter Russia. And this is why it is extremely important to have properly coordinate between nations when investing in defence and that there is a collective

interest behind it. This is what people are arguing about today, saying: do we really need to somehow think about changing the European security architecture?

I would argue, that this architecture, which was built after the Second World War, which has two pillars, the first one of which is the European Union and the second is NATO, is working perfectly well. The best proof for that is that Finland and Sweden will join, as Ukraine will in the coming years. We, as democrats, as free people do not need to listen to dictators who say that they do not like our free world, our democracies. For them we do not need to give up our freedoms or dismantle NATO or our defence alliance, no, of course not.

Lastly, do not worry about America. America is a very good friend and ally of us and do not worry about 2024. America is a democracy, there are elections, they elect the best possible candidate – and this best possible candidate, I am 100% sure, understands what defends America's interests as well. And the best way to defend America's interests is to have very strong transatlantic alliances through NATO and a good cooperation with the European Union.

→ **Dr Žygimantas Pavilionis:**

Thank you Marko. I want to add just one sentence, because I also represent Lithuania here. We also spend the same as you on defence, 2.5% of our budget and we are now in the last phase of negotiations with all parties to raise it to 3%.

So, I'd encourage our German brothers and sisters to do the same, because we need German soldiers. Mr am-

bassador, we have 1,000 troops now, we need 3,000, please, a whole brigade, the more the better. This has nothing to do with history, we like that history. We once shaped the world together in the Hanseatic League. We need you more.



→ **Audience (Tom Unger):**

*I have a question for Marko Mikhelson. Mr chairman, I completely agree with all your remarks and statements. You actually said that Russia needed to be defeated – you specifically said defeat. How is that supposed to happen There must be some kind of armistice agreement, better still a peace treaty. But then, Russia will still be a neighbour of the Baltics and of Ukraine and in addition to that. Putin might still be in office, there will probably be no regime change, at least not in the near future. So, how will it play out, will there be an armistice or a peace treaty?*

*The Baltic states are at the frontline, NATO's eastern flank will be reinforced. Thank God, Finland and Sweden*

*are about to join NATO very soon, within weeks or maybe six months – this is good for NATO, good for the EU, good for the Baltics. But I still would like to know how Russia is supposed to be defeated, the biggest country on earth with one of the strongest armed forces in the world, with nuclear weapons – they have 6,000 of them. Wouldn't it be better to come to a realistic agreement, maybe the contact line of before February 24, maybe the Donbas or even Crimea? What can be a realistic way out of this war?*

→ **Dr Žygimantas Pavilionis:**

Thank you for that question, that's actually my favourite one. Let the German ambassador answer first on how to defeat Russia.

→ **Matthias Sonn:**

Thank you Žygimantas for turfing the simple questions over to me. I need to start with a preliminary remark: I am the German ambassador to Lithuania. My mandate is not – let me repeat, is not – to speak about Germany's Russia policy in the larger sense. It is my mandate to speak about German policy including its Russian aspect with regard to the security of Lithuania and the Baltics.

On that one, I do have a few things to say. The first thing is an observation, an observation which holds true here in the Baltic states, including Lithuania, but also even in Washington and certainly, as far as I can tell from reading the media, in Berlin. The question you asked put slightly differently would be shorter: do we have war aims? What are they? This question is not, or not

yet, being thought about very much. It is, however, as you point out with your question, a very, very important issue that we will not forever be able to avoid.

I believe for us the most important response to this question, for the moment, is: nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine. We cannot agree to anything that Ukraine cannot also agree to. And with this sentence, I am paraphrasing my Federal Chancellor, Olaf Scholz. So, I can be pretty confident in saying it without risking going beyond my mandate.

This is an existential struggle that Ukraine is fighting, it concerns us very deeply, our security interests so, in that sense it is existential for us too but the most important thing is that we cannot and will not deal in any way with the aggressor over Ukraine's head. That is something I need to underline very strongly and I am confident about it, because my head of government has said it several times in various formulas.

The second thing is an answer, which has been several times, that Germany has been already here leading NATO military presence in Lithuania for a little more than 5 years – the five-year anniversary was in February of this year. What is the idea behind it? One could easily think, well, Germany is here because our troops have nothing else to do back home or because Lithuanians are such nice people, they have a friendly smile and blue eyes – all sorts of stuff. Nonsense. We are here because for Germany the security within the territory of our alliance, our defensive alliance, is indivisible. Either we all have security or none of us has.

You could turn this whole argument around and ask: what are our soldiers defending here? They are defending us, Germany. And it is more effective, it works better to do that here than thinking about it when an aggressor is approaching Dresden. I think, even though it is nothing new, it is worthwhile remembering that. That should be it for the moment. The question about the desired outcome of this conflict which we did not want, which Ukraine did not want was forced upon us but most of all on Ukraine. What do we need out of this? That is a debate, which has hardly begun, really. The second thing is that Germany's army is here because it makes sense. Thank you.

→ **Dr Žygimantas Pavilionis:**

Thank you for this very honest, clear and good answer. That is why we like our German ambassador to Lithuania. Lilliana, would you like to add how to defeat Putin? That's easy, isn't it?



→ **Prof. Dr Lilliana Tymchenko:**

Thank you for asking me that question as well. Unfortunately, this is not only about Putin, it is about the whole society. Although many artists have moved to Israel and there are a lot of funny and maybe not so funny stories in this regard. As you know, if you do not support the regime you can no longer live there. So, this is not just a question about how to defeat Putin, rather it is about defeating the attitude or mindset of the Russian population.

It will also take at least three to six months to simply stop active war actions. After that, we need to use peaceful and diplomatic means but, unfortunately we are talking about several generations of Russians that it will take to change that mindset. It takes at least 30 years to change people's minds, to make those minds peaceful.

Psychologists tell us that you cannot do anything with the minds of "zombi-people". I am very sorry about that, but that is psychology not a matter of the law. So, if you can't do anything about these "zombi-people", you simply have to wait until they disappear somehow. I am not talking about killing them, because they are fighting against us. I am not talking about troops or soldiers, rather Russian civilians. So, do we have to wait until they physically disappear?

→ **Dr Žygimantas Pavilionis:**

No, we don't want to wait. So, Marko, what should we do?

### → **Marko Mihkelson:**

Thank you very much and indeed, I have some ideas. It actually is not that difficult. But it is very good that you raised that question, because part of the problem is that we, as Europeans, have been so re-active and not pro-active in dealing with Russia.

First, Ukraine must win this war, this is ultimate, without that there won't be any defeat, logically. We therefore have to help Ukraine the way we do, with weaponry, with financial support because this is crucial at the moment, with humanitarian support and also, as I already argued earlier, by anchoring Ukraine as a free nation to the organisations of the free world such as the EU and NATO.

Secondly, NATO must invest seriously in deterrence measures on its eastern flank and we really hope that during the Madrid summit at the end of June we will change the strategy of deterrence. We have seen what happens when Russians occupy even small territories like Bucha or Radynka, near Kiev. We cannot have these disasters on our territories. So, we have to make sure that they do not even think about committing similar atrocities on NATO territory. That is of utmost importance.

Germany should take a leadership role at the Madrid summit. I recall the time, 25 years ago, when I was working as a journalist, as a Moscow correspondent also covering security issues and policy matters for our major news daily including the Madrid summit of 1997. At that time, the role of Mr Kohl was extremely important in order to get a few critical words into the final decla-

ration, which actually opened the doors for the Baltic nations to become NATO members in 2004.

Third, isolate Russia, impose economic sanctions, serious ones, including an oil and gas embargo, reduce our dependency on them. This might last much longer than we anticipate at the moment, but what alternative do we have? This is the best way to stop financing their war machinery, today and in the future.

Support the civil society of Russia as much as we can because, yes, right now they are under heavy pressure from Putin's regime. Our good friend Vladimir Kara-Murza is currently awaiting his trial to be punished for speaking the truth about the war in Ukraine. He might be jailed for ten years and he is only one example for the brutality of that regime.

I totally agree with you that these and other steps should lead us to a point where Russia won't threaten us anymore as free nations in the foreseeable future, neither with nuclear weapons nor any other form of aggression. This must be our ultimate goal but we also have to understand that this is not only about Putin who is carrying out these atrocities and war crimes. Very sadly, the majority of the Russian population has been brainwashed and does not understand the world we live in. And that might, perhaps, take generations to change so, we have to be patient.

### → **Dr Žygimantas Pavilionis:**

If I may add a few words because you mentioned Vladimir Kara-Murza. Before his departure to Russia

he was here in Vilnius and we had dinner with him. I was begging him not to go to Moscow but he said that he was a Russian politician and therefore had to fight in Moscow. So, now he is in jail, he created an ant-war commission to stop the war. I am certain that Vladimir Kara-Murza would agree with everything Marko just said because he said more or less the same.

He also added something that might fit your remarks as well, he said: imagine a democratic Germany after the Second World War to be governed by Nazi-Gauleiters. This is exactly what is happening in Russia. They still have the same KGB-killing machine, killing people in this territory for 100 years, one third of Lithuanians, two thirds of Belarussians. They just do it and there simply is no difference. And we invested money, we opened our markets, thereby empowering this machine and now we are surprise that it is killing again.

So, de-Putinise it and de-militarise it. And that brings me to my region, start with Kaliningrad and then continue with Belarus, because Belarus is occupied by Russian troops. Then you no longer have your little problem with the Suwałki-gap, because we know the threat – the Russian army, on both sides. So, that was my little addition to that from a Lithuanian perspective. Even though you raised a second question, I would like to give our Saxon guests the opportunity to ask questions.

→ **Audience (Ulrich Lupart):**

*Thank you very much. My name is Ulrich Lupart and I am a member of the Saxon State Parliament. I have two quick questions – two very quick questions. Namely,*

*and first of all, what do you think of the slogan ‘Make peace without weapons’? And secondly, if we look at the build-up of arms, as you put it, given the percentages in the Baltics, are we facing a Third World War?*



→ **Dr Žygimantas Pavilionis:**

If I understood that correctly, you want to make “peace without weapons”. I think that is simply impossible, but who wants to answer that? Maybe the ambassador?

→ **Matthias Sonn:**

Of course, peace without weapons would be highly preferable to any other form of peace. However – in a world where there is an aggressor, an armed aggressor, willing to deploy and employ his armed might against whomever might stand in their way, it is in my view, and not just my personal view, morally indefensible to claim “Frieden schaffen ohne Waffen” (make peace without weapons). It is morally deficient and politically obtuse to say this in the face of an armed aggression. As well as practically counterproductive. And, if I may add one more sentence

## Panel discussion

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to that if you permit me: in view of Germany's history in the 20th century this would seem particularly misplaced coming from a German voice. Thank you.

### → **Dr Žygimantas Pavilionis:**

Marko, you want to add something.

### → **Marko Mihkelson:**

Yes, very shortly on that. It is natural to invest in education, in health care, in keeping up our elderly people – this is what normal democratic societies do. But we have to understand that not the entire world is like us and never will be. So, we have to understand that we have to be prepared to defend our democracies and our people, this is one of the core tasks of any nation. And this is why you need to remember again what Theodore Roosevelt said: speak softly but carry a long stick with you. We have to understand that diplomacy only works well if the other party knows that you can enforce what you are trying to achieve.

### → **Audience (Student):**

*My name is Alex. Thank you for your interesting suggestions. Thank you for inviting students. I would like to apologize for my German. So many important things were said today, but these are just words. I have some direct questions: what steps will be taken next if the sanctions put in place do not have a positive impact? I mean, the war is still going on. People die every day. Lukashenko, who is directly involved in this war, is not yet in prison either. Do you think that the European Union still has unused tools to put pressure on Lukashenko? I believe these are the last hopes of the people of Ukraine and Belarus, including democratic Russians. Thanks.*

### → **Marko Mihkelson:**

Let me answer it this way: yes, we would all like to see things changing faster, especially for those who are under the immanent threat of being killed, tortured, raped, kidnapped or deported. Just think about what is still going on in the Asovstal steel works or in Mariupol. You cannot imagine that after 70 days plus the brave defenders, heroes of Ukraine are still defending that city. Last time I visited Mariupol in August of last year and today I cannot even recognise this place anymore. Together with the Ukrainians, we agreed that we will drink champagne one day on Mariupol's beach and I do not think that this will be in too distant a future. We must help Ukraine in their fight for freedom, that will help to bring to justice those who committed crimes, and this in turn is closely connected to Lukashenko and his future.

### → **Prof. Dr Liliana Tymchenko:**

Just one remark with regard to assistance. Maybe you do not feel it right now as citizens of Belarus, but one of my students in the class told me that in Minsk he was not even able to think freely, here in Europe, in Lithuania you can speak freely. This makes you a human being. So, that is very important because you have choices, you can make a living, you will survive, you will be happy and mankind will simply continue to exist – we were talking about existential things.

I would also like to return to the previous question about peace without weapons. If we could use the philosophy of Aikido where you exert force without touching a person or your enemy that would be great. But unfortunately, in our world we simply cannot use Aikido. We have

to be strong, we have to use hard weapons. That is the only way to stop murderers.

The other thing that is very important and that you must never forget is that you are still and always will be a human being. You still have the possibility to think. This is what makes you a human being. Thank you.

→ **Dr Žygimantas Pavilionis:**

If I can add one more thing to this peace without weapons-thing from my perspective: I was 20 years old, standing in front of the TV tower in Vilnius and I saw my friends being killed by tanks and special forces. I then came to this Parliament. I was standing outside. I saw those Russian tanks approaching. I was ready to die – and the only dream I had was to join the European Union and NATO because then I would never see tanks or see people killed.

I just wanted to be part of this family that would protect me. And I sacrificed half my life to achieve that. And honestly, when I was ambassador to Washington, I always kept saying that I would happily sacrifice the rest of my life for Ukrainians and Georgians to join NATO, because this way you can save the lives of millions of people with families whom your grandfathers started. It matters!

You can save the whole world by saving one person. What about a nation of once 40 million that is now only 30 million because it is at war. And honestly, even for those “Russlandversteher” (Russia lovers) – if they really want to save Russia, Ukraine must win that war and finally end this killer-regime in Russia and let Russians free.



Let me quote again Vladimir Kara-Murza, who one month ago said to me: “Žygis, remember, Putin first occupied us and only when he was finished killing every last remnant of democracy and closing the last free TV station he started to occupy Georgia and Ukraine and now he will be coming for you.”

So, save democracy. And if you think that this is not the time for it, look at Hungary. I am a politician now and not a diplomat anymore so, I can say: if you think internal and foreign policy are not connected, look at Hungary. If you do not fight for democracy within your country, if you do not fight against those Russian agents, you will be taken over by such totalitarian countries and you will have to do their bidding. You will lose your sovereignty first, then your foreign policy and finally your country. I am sorry for this little Lithuanian outbreak of emotions.



### → Audience (Magdaléna Vášáryová):

*My name is Magda Vášáryová, I come from Slovakia and I served for 18 years as Chechoslovak and later Slovak ambassador so, I am immune to the old dreams, although it is important to have dreams but you must not be naive.*

*You mentioned before that we have Russians here, it is Kaliningrad I am talking about. So, my question is, do we, here in Lithuania, have any plans for how to deal with former Königsberg? What will be done about it, because there are arms, arms directed against us? I was 20 years old when the Warsaw Pact armies invaded Chechoslovakia and it cost me another 20 years of not having any connections to the outside world. So, we are really not naive.*

*My second question touches upon something you also mentioned before. We have 700 kilometres of joint boarder with Hungary and in Slovakia we have a huge Hungarian minority. How do we handle that situation amongst ourselves because back then we desperately*

*had to be united within NATO and the EU. So, how do we deal with my former friend Viktor?*

### → Dr Žygimantas Pavilionis:

I will start by answering the second question first and will come back again to your great foundations who build democracy 30 years ago, such as Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the Foundation of the Liberal Party, the one of the Social Democratic Party which have been in Lithuania from the very beginning and helped us build our democracy. I still remember that I was educated 1992 in Berlin by the “Junge Union”. Am I a good product of their efforts? – I think so. Thank you for this. Those foundations should continue working; and I have to say that only Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung remains in Lithuania and is still working with us. The Americans left – they are now working in Belarus and Ukraine. Do we have foundations working for democracy from inside? Do we fight for democracy?

I remember Hillary Clinton, she visited the barricades of our Parliament in 2011 and she said: this is nice, you remember those fights of two or three days, but back then in America we fight for our freedom every day. You Europeans forget that freedom cannot be taken for granted, you have to fight for it. In America, the Lady of Freedom in the Capitol – the ambassador knows it well – is wearing a helmet and a sword. She is heavily armed, because the Americans know that you have to protect your freedom.

And if you have been reading the Freedom House report for the last 16 years, you realise that we are losing the war.

The autocracies are marching and are killing and dividing us. And we are stupid enough to do nothing about that, we do not defend our values, we have no vision how to do it – we just react and lose and keep losing.

I think Ukrainians will be victorious and a victory parade will be held in Kiev. The meeting in Ramstein represented the future for me. This is the type of organisation we have to create where the Ukrainian, German and Estonian defence ministers meet. By the way, Estonia spends the most money per capita on Ukraine's defence and we are always in a kind of competition with them in this regard. This is the future. This is the future of a world that needs to be defended.

And on Kaliningrad and Russians I would put it like this – and this is a very personal matter – it is not about Russians and I might make a bit of a nasty historical remark here: the borders along which the war is going on, Donetsk, are the old borders of our empire. We were “doing” Europe there together from the 13th century. Our empire was called the European Union of the Middle Ages. And it is a boarder of Europe. Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Belarussians, Jews, Saxon dynasties were making this empire according to their values, this was the border of the educated world in the 18th century, if you want.

We know a lot of Russians who fight against other Russians because this is about values. We protect values. And don't forget that Kaliningrad is the first Donetsk. We remember what happened to those German children. We accepted them into our families – we

know what happened. Nobody knows about that in the west, only now are you discovering the truth.

The first Donetsk took place in the Kaliningrad region. They created the zombies in the Kaliningrad region first. And we have to get rid of those zombies, including those from the Kaliningrad region, we have to demilitarise it. Because, when we started the whole process and if you had taken an opinion poll in Kaliningrad during the Jeltsin era, they would have loved to open their borders. They had hoped to become a Hong Kong of the region. They were opening their borders but then Putin came and closed them. He built the biggest military base with special forces there to attack us within 24 hours. I am sorry. I was talking for a bit too long. I know, I dominate too much, sorry.

I would like to finish off like this: friends, if we defeat Putin's regime, and I think we will and it will be much sooner than you expect, we will create the fourth wave of democratisation and make Europe whole and free within a very big territory of Europe. And finally, the dream of our grandfathers and fathers will become reality. I witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union and I think I will also be a witness to the collapse of Putin's regime. I thank you all for this wonderful discussion and leave the floor to Professor Ludger Kühnhardt, my good friend that supports EHU from Germany, in order to provide us with a more moderate conclusion.



# Final remarks







## Standing together for Europe's strength and diversity

Prof. Dr Ludger Kühnhardt

» My friends, Žygimantas, thank you very much for allowing me to speak to you as we bring our conference to a close. The hours we have spent together have been remarkable. The President of the State Parliament, Matthias Rößler, the chair of the Board of Trustees of the Central Europe Forum at the Saxon State Parliament, who is ill with coronavirus, has asked me as a member of the Board of Trustees

to extend his thanks on his behalf, and on behalf of all of us, to everyone who has hosted us over the past two days. Those of us who have gathered here under the leadership of Marko Schiemann want to convey our gratitude to all those who have made this conference possible, who have opened the doors of this prestigious building and who have shared such an exciting discussion with us.

After such a weighty last round of discussions, I would naturally be tempted to say something about the fact that ‘winning the war’ means above all breaking the will of those who use violence as a political means; something about the fact that no new disappointments must be allowed to arise in the question of Ukraine’s European prospects, and that France’s president is therefore on the right path when he has suggested thinking about a new kind of geopolitical European community within the EU, which can replace the Eastern Partnership while at the same time remaining honest about the preconditions for being able to be included in the very powerful but also demanding set of rules involved in the regulatory governance in the EU’s internal market, for which Ukraine will have to establish the preconditions over the course of many years even after a victory for freedom; finally, I would say something about the difference that exists between the individual ethical perspective of ‘making peace without weapons’ and the collective ethics of responsibility when a society is maliciously invaded and defends itself with weapons. I want to deny myself all that and spare you. I simply want to say ‘thank you’ from the bottom of my heart.

Madam President, Madam Vice-President, you have opened up this historic place, the Seimas, for our gathering and enabled us to share meetings and discussions that will stay with us for a long time to come. Thank you very much for your far-sighted and inspiring words, and thank you to all those who made this conference possible together with you. Rector Ignatov, Sergei, yesterday you welcomed us to the European Humanities University and gave us an in-depth look at the lasting power of the university’s love of freedom. I want to say a big thank you to you,

to your colleagues, to all your wonderful students and to the founder of the European Humanities University, Anatoli Mikhailov. Anatoli, when we met in Minsk in 1994, your enthusiasm for freedom and for the liberal arts was infectious right from the start. It has remained so in the EHU, your impressive life’s work. We stand in solidarity with your Russian alumna Sofia Sapega and the other students who have been interned completely arbitrarily in Belarus. But we also know that the vibrancy of the EHU will continue to inspire many young people, because it is stronger than any despotism can be. We wish the European Humanities University many more successes in the years to come!

When I was able to visit Vilnius for the first time in March 1992, the concrete blocks were still standing ready for use in front of the Seimas and sandbags were lying in front of the office of President Vytautas Landsbergis inside this parliament. Despite this oppressive apparatus, the spirit of freedom and the will for the future that emanated from this building, from its eleven political groupings at the time, and from the entire Baltic region immediately impressed themselves upon me. In 1992, Lithuania – like the Free State of Saxony – was struggling to adopt a new constitution. Two decades later, at the founding of the Central Europe Forum in Dresden in 2011, Matthias Rößler managed to put into words the new reality that had also become a matter of course here, in the centre, in the heart of Europe: ‘For the first time in many generations, we are once again in a position to concentrate our positive creative forces and contribute to the renewal of the EU in a culturally creative way.’ However, Rößler also said that the process of changing Europe’s course would continue and that new ideas will always be necessary. We have



heard a bit today about the aspects that will be crucial in the next decade or two for our freedom, our prosperity and for the peace in which we want to continue to live and which we will defend together for as long as we are challenged by an imperial and totalitarian dictatorship and its desire for war.

**The Dresden Declaration, which established the Central Europe Forum in 2011, spoke about the ‘spirit of freedom’. Today we know that freedom must be accompanied by the spirit of self-empowerment and defence in order to preserve freedom. Our conference has enriched us with lasting perspectives and reflections that we can all take with us into the everyday life that awaits us. We want to say a big thank you to all our speakers, moderators and panellists.**

Just a few weeks ago, on 18 March 2022, Erhard Busek passed away at the age of 80. The great Austrian statesman and intellectual helped shape the Central Europe Forum from the very beginning. He was a European visionary, and in 1992 he was one of the first to recognise the momentous and long-term significance of the European Humanities University. He gave the opening speech at the first Central Europe Forum in Dresden on 29 November 2011. Busek immediately looked beyond the immediate geographical area of Central Europe. He described the Baltic States as a perfect, inspiring example of the new regional sensors in Europe, of ‘working out commonalities that arise from the very preconditions.’ Europe’s richness, Busek reminded us in 2011, is ‘that everything is different.’

We honour Erhard Busek by remembering, especially now, his admonition to be ‘the one who accepts the other, because in reality they are at home in ourselves.’

In this spirit of diversity, even if it is occasionally hard work, lies Europe’s strength in the face of any form of pressure towards social uniformity and hegemonic politics of violence. In this spirit of pluralism, we will stand together against all threats to our freedom, our self-determination and our countries’ choice of alliances. In this spirit, we plan every one of our future moves together and act as Team Europe. We all know how many people in Belarus, Ukraine and Russia look to our example. There, too, the spirit of freedom will be stronger in the long run than the malevolent spirit of dictatorship, violence and war. The desire for war, violence and dictatorship will lose the argument with freedom, justice and peaceful ways of resolving conflicts.

Once again, we thank the organisers at the Seimas for their hospitality. Here in 2022, 100 years after the first election of the Seimas of independent Lithuania, you can be sure that for the next 100 years and for many centuries to come, you are and will remain part of free Europe and part of the Atlantic civilisation. Free Europe works together to defend itself against every threat and against every menace, because everyone everywhere in free Europe is part of the freedom of the self-confident, the so impressively proud and lovably strong Lithuania. «

A photograph of a modern, curved building with a grid of windows and a balcony with flags. The building is light-colored and has a curved facade. The balcony is lined with various flags, including the Ukrainian national flag. The building is set against a clear blue sky. A green rectangular overlay is positioned in the lower-left corner of the image, containing the word "Vitae" in white text.

# Vitae



*The historic Parliament building was completed in 1980 and served as seat of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania from 1990 to 2007.*



### Dr Laima Liucija Andrikienė

*(born in Druskininkai in 1958)*

studied economics and mathematics. She was a member of the Supreme Council of Lithuania and was one of the signatories of the 1990 Act of the Re-Establishment of the State of Lithuania. A Christian Democrat, Dr Andrikienė was a member of the Lithuanian Parliament from 1992 to 2000. During this time she served as Minister for Industry in 1996 and Minister for Europe from 1996 to 1998. Having served as a member of the European Parliament from 2004 to 2020, she has been a member of the Seimas again since 2020, where she chairs the Foreign Affairs Committee.

### Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen

*(born in Šiauliai in 1983)*

studied English philology at the University of Latvia. Čmilytė-Nielsen was a professional chess player from 2001 to 2015. She is a grandmaster and has won several international tournaments. Since 2011, she has been a member of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. She served as chair of the parliamentary party group of the Liberals' Movement of the Republic of Lithuania (LRLS) from 2018 to 2020, and since November 2020 she has been the Speaker of the Seimas.

### Prof. Dr Sergei Ignatov

*(born in Vidin in 1960)*

studied Egyptology at Saint Petersburg State University and later at Oxford. Dr Ignatov taught as a professor at Sofia University (1985–1996) and at the New Bulgarian

University (1994–2009). He is a member of the GERB party in Bulgaria (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria). From 2009 to 2013, he served as Minister of Education, Youth and Science in Bulgaria. Dr Ignatov has been Rector of the European Humanities University in Vilnius since 2018.

### Dr Edit Inotai

*(born in Budapest in 1970)*

studied English and Spanish philology in Budapest and earned a doctorate in international relations. Dr Inotai then reported from Berlin for daily newspaper Népszabadság from 2003 to 2007 and was head of the foreign desk from 2010 to 2014. Today, she works as a journalist and senior fellow at the Centre for Euro-Atlantic Integration and Democracy (CEID), where she focuses on international relations in the Eastern and Central European region.

### Dr Othmar Karas

*(born in Ybbs an der Donau in 1957)*

studied political science and business law. Initially an employee in the banking and insurance sector from 1981 to 1995, he became a member of the European Parliament in 1999. Dr Karas was head of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) delegation there from 2006 to 2009 and from 2011 to 2019. He was Vice President from 2012–2014 and 2019–2022, and since 2022 has served as First Vice-President of the European Parliament, where he is also active as a member of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs.

## Dr Andrius Kubilius

*(born in Vilnius in 1956)*

studied physics at Vilnius University. In 1988 he joined the Sąjūdis reform movement, of which he was secretary between 1990 and 1992. Formerly the leader of the Lithuanian Christian Democrats, he was a member of the Seimas from 1992 to 2019 (including chair of the parliamentary party group). He has been a member of the European Parliament since 2019. Dr Kubilius was Prime Minister of Lithuania from 1999 to 2000 and from 2008 to 2012. He also belonged to the official circle of advisers to Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko.

## Prof. Dr Ludger Kühnhardt

*(born in Münster, Westphalia, in 1958)*

studied history, political science and philosophy in Bonn, Geneva, Harvard and Tokyo. From 1991 to 1997, he was a full professor of political science at the University of Freiburg, and since 1997 he has been director of the ZEI Center for European Integration Studies at the University of Bonn and professor at the Institute for Political Science and Sociology there. Dr Kühnhardt is a member of several scientific advisory boards as well as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Central Europe Forum at the Saxon State Parliament.

## Marko Mihkelson

*(born in Valga in 1969)*

studied history in Tartu. He worked for Estonian daily newspaper Postimees as foreign editor in 1993/94. He was Postimees' Moscow correspondent from 1994

to 1997 and editor-in-chief of the paper from 1997 to 2000. From 2000 to 2003, he worked as director of the Baltic Centre for Russian Studies. A member of the Estonian parliament, since 2003, Mihkelson chairs the Foreign Affairs Committee there and has headed the Estonian delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly since 2011.

## Prof. Dr Georg Milbradt

*(born in Eslohe in 1945)*

studied economics, law and mathematics at the University of Münster. After working as a scientist, he was head of the finance department of the city of Münster from 1983 to 1990. A CDU member since 1973, Milbradt served as Saxony's Minister of Finance from 1990 to 2001 and was Minister President of the Free State of Saxony from 2002 to 2008. In 2017 he became the German Federal Government's special envoy for administrative restructuring and decentralisation in Ukraine.

## Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė

*(born in Kaunas in 1984)*

studied art and cultural management. She is a member of the Lithuanian Christian Democrats and has worked for her party in various roles and for various elected representatives. She was a member of the European Parliament from 2009 to 2014. Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė has been a member of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania since 2016, where she has served as Vice-President since 2020 and chairs the European Affairs Committee.

### Dr Žygimantas Pavilionis

*(born in Vilnius in 1971)*

studied political science at Vilnius University before entering the service of the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry. He headed the European Department there from 2002 to 2006. In 2010, he became Lithuanian Ambassador to the US and Mexico (until 2015), after which he was Ambassador-at-large for the Eastern neighbourhood, based in Lithuania. Considered a candidate for the presidency on a number of occasions, Pavilionis has been a member of the Christian Democrats since 1990 and a member of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania since 2016, where he has at times chaired the Foreign Affairs Committee.

### Dr Matthias Rößler

*(born in Dresden in 1955)*

has been the Speaker of the Saxon State Parliament since 2009. He studied mechanical engineering at Dresden University of Technology from 1975 to 1979 before working as a development engineer. A member of the coordinating committee for the re-establishment of the Free State of Saxony in 1990, he has also been a member of the Saxon State Parliament since 1990. The CDU politician was State Minister for Culture in Saxony from 1994 to 2002 and State Minister for Science and the Arts from 2002 to 2004. Rößler is chair of the Board of Trustees of the Central Europe Forum at the Saxon State Parliament.

### Dirk Schübel

*(born in Zwickau in 1965)*

is Head of the EU Delegation to Belarus. He studied economics and has held various official posts in Europe since 1993. In Brussels, he was initially involved in the EU accession negotiations with Hungary on behalf of the European Commission, among other tasks. From 2006–2009, Schübel was Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Ukraine and Belarus, from 2009–2013 he was EU Ambassador to Moldova and from 2013–2018 he headed the Eastern Partnership department of the European External Action Service (EEAS). Prior to his ambassadorship in Minsk, he headed the Russia department of the EEAS.

### Matthias Sonn

*(born in Hamburg in 1957)*

studied law and theology. He joined the Foreign Service in 1984. His first posts were to Trinidad and Tobago, Ghana, Turkey and Bosnia. He then became an embassy counsellor in Moscow before heading up a special counter-terrorism unit. After serving as head of the economic section at the embassy in Washington between 2008 and 2011, he became envoy at the embassy in Canberra in 2011. In 2013 Sonn became ambassador to Guatemala and Belize, and in 2016 ambassador to Bolivia. He transferred to the post in Lithuania in August 2019.

### Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya

*(born in Mikashevichy in 1982)*

studied education in Mazyr from 2000, specialising in German and English. She later worked as a translator.

In the 2020 presidential election in Belarus, she stood as a candidate in place of her husband, who had been barred from registering and had been imprisoned. Two days after the election, she fled to Lithuania with her two children and declared herself the rightful representative of the Belarusian people in 2022. She is the laureate of the 2022 International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen.

### Prof. Dr Liliana Tymchenko

studied law at Moldova State University, where she received her doctorate in international law. She initially worked at Kharkiv University of Humanities, then as a professor at the Kyiv University of Law and at the National University of State Tax Service of Ukraine, where she headed the Department of International Law. She currently teaches at the Center for Constitutionalism and Human Rights at the European Humanities University in Vilnius.

### Franak Viacorka

*(born in 1988)*

studied journalism and communication in Minsk, Warsaw and Washington. Since then, he has been a journalist (including at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty) and opposition political activist in his home country of Belarus. He serves in Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's cabinet as her Foreign Policy Advisor and Head of the International Relations Department. Having been imprisoned several times in Belarus for political reasons and subjected to political persecution, Viacorka now works abroad in Central and Western Europe.

In the inaugural meeting on 29 September 2011

**Dr. Matthias Röbler**, President of the Saxon State Parliament

**Dr. Erhard Busek †**, former Vice-Chancellor of the Republic of Austria

**Prof. Dr. Stefan Troebst**, Professor of Cultural Studies of East Central Europe at the University of Leipzig

**Prof. Dr. Beate Neuss**, Professor of International Politics at the Technical University of Chemnitz

**Prof. Dr. Gábor Erdödy**, former Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary

**Jiří Gruša †**, author and diplomat, Czech Republic

**Magdaléna Vášáryová**, Member of the National Council of the Slovak Republic

**Prof. Dr. Ludger Kühnhardt**, Director of the Center for European Integration Research (ZEI) at the University of Bonn

**Ryszard Król**, former Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Saxony

signed as board of trustees of the Central European Forum at the Saxon State Parliament the Declaration of Dresden.

The board of trustees of the Central European Forum (December 2022) are:

**Dr. Matthias Röbler**, President of the Saxon State Parliament

**Prof. Dr. Stefan Troebst**, emeritus Professor of Cultural Studies of East Central Europe at the University of Leipzig

**Prof. Dr. Beate Neuss**, emeritus Professor of International Politics at the Technical University of Chemnitz

**Prof. Dr. Gábor Erdödy**, former Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary

**Magdaléna Vášáryová**, former Ambassador of the Slovak Republic

**Prof. Dr. Ludger Kühnhardt**, Director of the Center for European Integration Research (ZEI) at the University of Bonn

**Dr. Christopher Metz**, former Director of the Saxon State Parliament

**Dr. Rafał Dutkiewicz**, former Mayor of Wrocław

**Dr. Jarmila Krejčíková**, former Consul General of the Czech Republic in Saxony

**Ing. Hans Penz**, former President of the State Parliament of Lower Austria