The treaties concluded between Soviet Russia and its western neighbours were inspired by the military and geopolitical circumstances, which developed in that region after the First World War. Three great empires – Austria-Hungary, Germany and Russia – lost the war. It was a rare event in the history of nations.

Soviet Russia grew up on the ruins of imperialist Russia, but its rise was complex, stormy and caused great concern for those who were to form new European political constellations. Soviet Russia intended to strengthen its power by inflaming Socialist revolutionary fire in Europe. However, under the pressure of the neighbouring states and the Allied Powers, it was forced to waive those intentions, at least temporarily.

The situation on all fronts in Europe encouraged the introduction of a new order on the continent taking into account the right of national self-determination. This factor was decisive.

After the First World War, smaller Eastern European states (including Poland, whose military, economic and political potential was relatively greater) were to play a significant role in the creation of the geopolitical situation in Central Europe.

In this paper an attempt is made to focus attention on the final stage of the process in obtaining sovereignty of those states from their eastern neighbour – Soviet Russia. That fact was of crucial importance in the further consolidation of their statehood.

Estonia was the first to sign a peace treaty with Soviet Russia (2 February 1920). Lithuania followed suit, finalizing its peace treaty

1Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR (henceforth DVP), vol. II, Moscow, 1958, 339-354)
on 12 July 1920. However, the situation changed slightly in favour of Soviet Russia when Latvia had to negotiate its independence on 11 August and Finland 14 October 1920. Poland, having defeated the Bolsheviks at Warsaw, could already enter into talks with Soviet Russia as an equal partner. Their peace treaty was signed on 18 March 1921.

The chronology of the conclusion of these treaties is indicative of the military and political situation on the borders of the Baltic states and Soviet Russia. The Russian offensive was stopped in the Baltic states in the summer of 1919. With a view to preventing the Bolshevik onslaught westwards, the Allied Powers increased their support for the Baltic states and required that Germany take corresponding military steps.

New impulses appeared in the creation of a Baltic collective security system. Several conferences took place, at which a military and political alliance of eastern Baltic states was discussed. The concepts of the Eight (Scandinavian countries, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland, of the Five (Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland) and of the Three (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) were debated. The concept of the Eight was unreal at the very beginning. Estonia and Poland were in favour of the Five. Lithuania preferred the variant of the Three. Polish aggression against Lithuania and the occupation of eastern Lithuania prevented the formation of the system of the Eastern Baltic collective security.

The military and political situation in the Baltics in the summer of 1919 also influenced the attitudes of the Allies. They still expected to preserve the Russian empire under White control; the Baltic states, however, did not reconcile themselves to such prospects. Requiring the right of self-determination, they were liable to start direct negotiations with Soviet Russia. In this respect, Estonia was most active, being the first to oust the troops of the Red Army from its territory with the support of the Finns and the Allied Powers.

Even Great Britain, endeavouring to maintain its influence in the Baltic states, and ultimately in Russia (whatever that country might be), was forced to accept the fact of the truce negotiations between the Baltic states and the Bolsheviks. The threats of Yudenich

\[\text{DVP, vol. III, Moscow, 1959, 28-41. In greater detail, see Č. Laurinavičius.}
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\[\text{Lietuvos – Sovietų Rusijos taikos sutartis. Vilnius, 1992.}
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\[\text{DVP, p. 101-116.}
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\[\text{Ibid., p. 265-280.}
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\[\text{Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich. Warszawa, t. III, 1964, 572-609.}
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\[\text{A. Skrzypek. Związek Bałtycki. Warszawa, 1982, 33.}
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and Kolchak did not change the determination of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to gain recognition from Soviet Russia.

Hard-pressed Soviet Russia, exploiting the differences of interests and disagreements among the eastern Baltic countries and the Lithuanian-Polish conflict, immediately prevented the formation of a military alliance by the signing of bilateral treaties and extending its sphere of influence. In planning its action against its main opponent, Poland, Soviet Russia was interested in securing the neutrality of the Baltic states and possibly a favourable attitude from Latvia and in particular from Lithuania, a part of whose territory had been occupied by Poland.

It was important for the Baltic states to ensure their recognition by Soviet Russia *de jure*, thus blocking any schemes of White Russia and inducing the Allied Powers to acknowledge them as newly born states.

Despite the agreement of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to begin negotiations with Soviet Russia jointly, Estonia was the first to start them, having received the Russian offer to discuss armistice terms. Soviet Russia was particularly interested in the truce, since according to Lenin’s assessment the contemporary situation was dramatic. If the Baltic states and the Allied Powers had formed a common front against the Bolsheviks, the latter would have been faced with a catastrophe. Therefore, on 31 August 1919 the Estonians were invited to start armistice negotiations, being promised independence in advance. Soon afterwards similar notes were sent to Latvia, Lithuania and Finland.  

By this peace treaty Soviet Russia recognized Estonia *de jure* and ceded it a small region, inhabited by a mixed Estonian and Russian population. Soviet Russia pledged to cover war damages by paying 12,000,000 gold roubles and granted a concession to exploit forest in an area of 100,000 desiatines (a desiatine equals 2.7 acres). In its turn Estonia allowed Soviet Russia to exploit the water resources of the Narva.

A peace treaty between Lithuania and Soviet Russia was signed when the latter was preparing to attack Poland. Taking the Lithuanian-Polish conflict into account, attempts were made to ensure Lithuania’s active participation in that offensive. In the negotiations Lithuania was faced with a difficult task: to win the independence recognition and to defend the right to its ethnographic territories without getting involved in military engagements on the side of Soviet Russia. The latter stratagem would have been extremely dangerous for Lithuania.

*Historia dyplomacji 1914-1939*. T. III. Warszawa, 1977, 204.
It could be stated that at that time Lithuania managed to make an optimal variant of the agreement, taking into consideration its potential at that time. In return for territorial ‘renunciation’ Soviet Russia gained favourable Lithuanian neutrality for its contemporary military actions in the eastern Lithuanian territory then occupied by Poland. By a secret protocol Lithuania violated the principle of neutrality in respect to the warring parties and was accused without delay.

Lithuania received de jure recognition from Russia and, more importantly, the acknowledgement of its eastern frontiers, which were disputed by Poland. The signing of the treaty with Soviet Russia was an important counterbalance to the dangers arising from Poland’s policy and getting rid of the atmosphere it created. Lithuania, nevertheless, avoided from getting directly involved in the sphere of Soviet Russia’s influence.

Soviet Russia also pledged itself to return Lithuania material and cultural possessions brought from the country during the war. To cover war damages Lithuania was given a concession of 100,000 desiatines of forests and 3,000,000 gold roubles.8

Latvia was destined to conclude its peace treaty with Soviet Russia on 11 August, when Red Army troops stood before Warsaw and the Bolsheviks were in high spirits. No doubt, they were interested in the security of their northern (Latvian) front. The general situation, nevertheless, was disadvantageous to the Latvians. Their main gain was the de jure recognition of their statehood, the solution of the Latgalian problem; to cover the war damages they succeeded in negotiating a concession for the exploitation of 100,000 desiatines of forests and 4,000,000 gold roubles.

The discussion of the Finnish-Soviet peace treaty proceeded even less normal circumstances. The final signing of the treaty took place on 14 October 1920, when Soviet Russia had preliminarily secured the terms of the peace agreement with Poland and had dislodged its troops there against the forces of Gen. Piotr Wrangel.

Russia ceded Petsamo to Finland. However, it safeguarded the right of free transit to Norway. The Finns failed to recover Eastern Karelia, but Soviet Russia allowed the Finnish merchant fleet to use the Neva between the Gulf of Finland and Lake Ladoga. Finland also had to promise to neutralize the strategic importance of some islands in the Gulf - military installations, etc., were not permitted there.

The basis of those treaties was the right of national self-determination as a prerequisite for the recognition of statehood. The bor-

8P. Ėpēnas. Naujųjų laikų Lietuvos istorija. T. II, Chicago, Ill., 1986, 361.
orders were defined taking into account the interests of the contracting parties, contemporary military and political realia and the principles of historical justice. In the preparation of the treaties the easiest were the issues related to repatriation, prisoners of war and convicts.

The peace treaties contained clauses forbidding the signatories to support mutually hostile actions. By such formulations Soviet Russia insured itself against possible Allied intervention through the territories of the Baltic states. On the other hand the treaties provided for a certain impediment for Soviet Russia to export the red revolution to the Baltic countries.

The treaties also contained significant mutual commitments to sign agreements of economic cooperation – a step, enabling the development of normal neighbourly relations and the elimination of Soviet Russia’s economic isolation.

Those aspects made up a kind of pattern of the treaties, and concrete solutions of border delimitation, financial transactions or damage coverage were indicative of Soviet Russia’s tactics in a particular military and political situation.

Estonia, being the first to start negotiations, received the largest share of financial and material compensation for war damages. Similar results were obtained by Lithuania. The Latvian talks proceeded in a much more intense atmosphere, because at that time Soviet Russia was filled with considerable elation as a result of its victories on the Polish front. The solution of the Latgalia issue was of utmost importance for Latvia. Finland had to sign the peace treaty under the most unfavourable conditions, because Soviet Russia was no longer tied up to Polish problems.

Poland and Soviet Russia signed their peace treaty after a military confrontation. At the start of the negotiations both states had their own problems - either internal (Soviet Russia) or external (Poland). Since both contracting parties regarded the right to national self-determination as instrumental, they settled the border problem comparatively easily. Soviet Russia was interested in solving the relations with Poland without delay due to its complicated internal situation. Therefore it did not react to Poland’s military operation (Żeligowskiada) against Lithuania, which was a violation of the armistice agreement (9-12 October). In that way the Poles tested how Soviet Russia would practically treat the formula, offered by Dąbski, enabling both sides to cover an apparent breach of the Lithuanian-Soviet Russian treaty of 12 July 1920. Česlovas Laurinavičius

9In greater detail, see Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1920 roku. Przebieg i tło międzynarodowe. IH PAN, Warszawa, 1991.
quite rightly characterized that formula about the recognition of the Polish border pushing further to the east as ‘Satanic’ rather than ‘Solomonic’. The formula was truly exemplary. In that way Poland pretended to have acquired sovereignty with respect to the Eastern Lithuanian territory, while Soviet Russia, using the same method, allegedly enunciated its position as a defender of Lithuania’s sovereignty. The Allied Powers were presented with a fait accompli.

The Żeligowskiada, which could be directly related to the process of Polish – Soviet Russian talks, and the final signing of the treaty between the two states in Riga facilitated the solution of the problem of Eastern Lithuania. Similarly to the eastern border issue of Poland the conference of the ambassadors of the Allied Powers could merely acknowledge the mutual agreement between two great powers. However, that step, which at first glance could be treated as a great victory in extending the eastern borders far from their own Polish ethnographic territory (in particular in Galicia), was fraught with further conflicts, caused by the abuse of the principles of national self-determination and historical rights, contained mainly in that treaty. There both sides covertly used the diktat as a formative instrument of geopolitics. That agreement, nevertheless, soon led the contracting parties to frequent quarrels.

Poland, creating its sphere of influence disguised as federalism, due to the reaction of the neighbour states limited its activities to the so-called ‘realistic’ conception, which according to the results was generally estimated as an annexationist policy. The Poles failed to reach an agreement with the Ukrainian leader Simon Petliura, and in obtaining the Vilnius corridor they lost Minsk, which possibly could affect the fate of the federalist idea.

In negotiations with Soviet Russia, Poland, in contrast to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, was more energetic in its requirements of financial compensation for its economic activity when it was a part of the former Russian empire. Though great Polish demands were unacceptable to the Soviets, they could not reject them outright, not only because of internal problems, but also due to the perspective of retaining the possibility of transport through Poland to the West. Soviet Russia lumped together all financial requests into a total sum of 85,000,000 gold roubles and agreed to pay the equivalent of 30,000,000 gold roubles. The situation changed, and Poland did not receive anything of that sum – that was a common diplomatic tactic of Soviet Russia.

10Č. Laurinavičius. Lietuvos-Sovietų Rusijos, p. 164.
The Poles succeeded in attaining material (means of transport, post and telegraph installations) and cultural values more successfully than the Baltic states.\textsuperscript{11}

Both Poland and Soviet Russia regarded the treaty as mutually beneficial. Poland got rid of the pressure exerted by the conference of the ambassadors in relation to its eastern borders, Soviet Russia obtained the recognition of its influential western neighbour, and Soviet Belorussia and Ukraine were recognized, too. After that, Russia could use the forces, previously engaged against Poland, for the settlement of home issues.

The aforementioned peace treaties of Soviet Russia, drawn in a particular and especially complicated situation and signed with its western neighbours when it was impossible to settle the situation by sheer military and political diktat, led to a completely new balance of power in the region. Small states made use of a new factor – the right of national self-determination and with the forces at their disposal strengthened that right, creating independent states, which became new subjects of international politics in that region. Their actions in the independence period prevented the formation of the union of mutual cooperation. That, in its turn, jeopardized the stability of the region. At that time an immediate impact of Lithuania and Poland on the formation of the northward alliance of the Eastern Baltic region became apparent. The military and political diktat, enforced by Poland on Lithuania, destroyed the geostrategic equilibrium between the East and the West.

Historic and ethnographic principles and those of historic rights clashed in many ways with the factors, conditioned by military and political diktat and law. Therefore the solutions achieved in the region could not be long-term ones because they were not tolerated by Germany – at that time a paralyzed agent, which was important for the formation of the European geostrategic constellation. Germany’s recovery started the erosion of a frail stabilization in Central Europe.

\textsuperscript{11}J. Kumaniecki. Dwa oblicza dyplomacji radzieckiej. Rokowania w Mińsku i Rydzie. \textit{Wojna polsko-sowiecka}, p. 168.