

# STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY AND INDEPENDENCE IN POST-SOVIET SPACE: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF UKRAINE AND LATVIA<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Latvia and Ukraine have very similar history. These countries both were in the framework of Russian Tsarist Empire and later in the Soviet Union due to tragic historical events such as occupation, military conquests and annexation. The goal of this article is to analyse the historical stages of the struggle for democracy and independence of these two countries in order to identify common features and peculiarities, the reasons of the temporary loss of independence and the behavioural features of the conquering country in order to avoid similar occurrences in the future. Consideration of the historical stages in this article starts from the XX century as a period of activation of the movements for democracy and independence. The conclusions of this article are based on the answers on the following questions: What lessons can we learn from historical experience? How small country to avoid occupation by a stronger neighbour? What is the role of the international community in protecting smaller countries and preserving peace?

**Keywords:** democracy, independence, occupation, post-soviet space, Latvia, Ukraine

## Introduction

This article intends to analyse the situation with democracy in two post-soviet countries – Latvia and Ukraine – the formation of democracy and democratic government, steps and fighting for receiving independence from conquering countries. This analysis starts from XX century. The beginning of this century was marked by the intensification of movements in these countries for independence and a democratic way of their development.

Latvia, like Ukraine, is a post-soviet country, but this country, in very short period of time after soviet regime, managed to create a really democratic society, transparent and effective system of government. It

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is the country with effective co-operation between citizens and elected officials, where the corruption in power practically is absent. Particularly for this reason, the experience of this country is very important for Ukraine and some other post-soviet countries, which are only in the process of the creation of effective, transparent, and responsible governments.

In this article, the main stages of struggle for democracy and independence of the mentioned countries were analysed.

The main questions of this research are the following:

- Why countries have so strong desire to be independent?
- What should be the state policy of small countries to maintain their independence?
- Which should be the international response to the annexation of small countries with larger countries and with greater military force?

This historical analysis is giving the answers on these questions.

## **Ukraine and Latvia before and just after October revolution in 1917**

As of the beginning of the 1917 revolution, Ukraine and Latvia were within the Russian Tsarist Empire. Latvia was in the framework of Russian Empire from XVIII until XIX centuries. XIX century in Latvia was finished by the Riga's revolt in 1899. Creation of a social-democratic organisation was a result of this revolt. It was a beginning of mass protests and workers' movement for their rights and freedoms.

Ukraine even now is continuing to struggle for its independence and democratic values.

As Ukraine, Latvia several times was occupied. As it was noted by Plakans (1995: p. 113), the most pessimistic assessment with respect to national survival was that, in the years just before World War I, only some 60 percent of the population of the Latvian territories was Latvian, with other nationalities being more prominent in such non-agricultural domains as politics (Germans and Russians), business (German and Jews), and the professions (German and Jews). Even in agriculture, only an estimated 39% of Latvian farmers owned 5 percent of all arable land in the Latvian territories; 90 percent or so of the rest was the property of some 1,300 private estates, owned or leased for the most part by Baltic Germans and, in Lettgallia, by Russians and Poles. Nevertheless, the Latvian political elite had an opportunity to rectify those injustices after 1914, when Russia's participation in World War I caused imperial power to wane. It was at this time that the idea of self-determination gained in appeal, though by no means among all Latvians.

At the beginning of the 20th century in Latvia, the idea of creation of Latvian state has originated. A little later, it was transformed into demand of political autonomy in the framework of Russian Empire. The revolution in Russia in 1917 was an important impulse for development of national and political independence of the country. In spring 1917, the issue of political autonomy was discussing in all newspapers in the country. The slogan was “Free Latvia in Free Russia”. Latvians wanted to be in Russia because they were sure this country will choose the democratic way of its development as the main motto of new Russian power was “All power to the councils” that meant all power belongs to citizens as representatives and members of these councils. In August 1917, a conference was held in Riga. The participants of it were the members of many civil organisations and political parties. In some literature, the decision of this conference called “Declaration of Latvian independence”. Riga’s conference was the first conference on which all Latvian people were represented. (Блейере, Д., Бутулис, И., Зунда, А., Странга, А., Фельдманис, И., 2005: р. 110).

After September 1917, when Riga was occupied by German troops, there was a strong conviction among Latvians that only self-determination and independence would save Latvia from disintegration and division between Russia and Germany. For implementation of this idea were created two organisations – Democratic bloc and Latvian Provisional National Council. These organisations advocated the political independence of Latvia and its separation from Russia.

The National Council of Latvia was created in November 17, 1918. On the position of a Prime Minister of Latvia was elected Kārlis Ulmanis. He was responsible to create new interim government.

‘His small team faced an enormous task. The government had no funds, no military force, and no police... The Latvian population at large had suffered three years of war action across the country...The Latvians remember this time as the “Struggle for Freedom” (Ābols, 2002: 157–158).

The recognition by the international community of the National Council as the authority of Latvia has contributed to this to a large extent. The Latvian state was proclaimed on November 18, 1918. It was a new stage of Latvian development. Understandable, the decision of Latvia to be independent from the Bolsheviks’ Russia was not pleasant for it. In December 1918, Bolsheviks’ troops invaded Latvia. The war for independence was started. It was very difficult time for Latvians, because they had to defend their independence with weapons and in heavy fighting. The process of fighting with the Bolsheviks was complicated by the fact that part of the citizens of Latvia, due to misunderstanding of what was happening, sympathised with the Bolsheviks.

Ābols (2002) describes this situation as follows:

‘The majority of Latvians were poor and underprivileged and a vision of a New World with more justice fitted them perfectly. Exposed daily to the arrogance of the ruling class, the promise of brotherhood, an important component of the theory (egalite, fraternite of the French Revolution) was particularly appealing. It is quite likely that the majority of adherents to the movement were emotionally motivated’ (Ābols, 2002: 111).

It was not possible to win in this war alone for small Latvia. Moreover, the Government of Latvia had to sign the agreement with Germany for receiving the help of this country in the fighting with communist Russia. By this agreement, Germany had to help with the weapons, and the German military volunteers were receiving the Latvian citizenship if they took part in the fight against the Bolsheviks no less than 4 weeks. The signing of such a treaty was a necessary measure to protect the country from the Bolsheviks. However, this event only complicated the situation inside the country and the split between the opinions of citizens. Somebody called it German occupation.

To quote Ābols (2002: 154):

‘In the fateful year of 1918, however, the whole of Latvia was under German occupation... The Latvians were facing terrible odds. The land was under harsh military occupation, a large part of its population was dispersed over endless Russia and its young men served with the Latvian Riflemen losing themselves in the vortex of Russian civil war’.

At the turn of 1918–1919, the Provisional Government of Ulmanis was in a hopeless situation. The Social Democrats refused to cooperate and withdrew from the National Council on December 30, and on January 3, the Bolsheviks entered Riga, and within a short time, they occupied almost the entire territory of Latvia. In December 1918, the Latvian Soviet Social Republic was proclaimed. (Блейере, Д. et al., 2005: 123–124).

*If all Latvian parties were together, if they together, in close cooperation worked on Latvian independence and development, it would not be possible for Bolsheviks or any other forced to seize this country. However, internal strife and quarrels did not allow political forces to unite for the main goal – the prosperity of their country.*

In December 1918, Soviet rule was established in Latgale and Vidzeme. On 17 December 1918, the Bolsheviks founded their own state in Latvia, “Soviet Latvia”. Peteris Stucka and Fricis Rozins headed this state. The government of Soviet Latvia was created by military force. The Councils quickly merged with the Bolshevik Party institutions, forming a “partocratic” dictatorial machine (Straume, 2007: 37).

*By a strange coincidence, the countries of Europe did not seek to substantially assist and support Latvia in its struggle for independence from Russia. This was especially evident during the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The allies, who considered the Soviet power in Russia as a temporary phenomenon, did not intend to ignore the fact that before Latvia was formerly a part of the Russian Empire. State leaders, politicians of European countries began to defend the idea of united Russia and offered to solve the issue of the independence of the Baltic states of Russia itself at the All-Russian Constituent Assembly. – (Блейере, Д. et al., 2005: 125).*

Even Germany started to co-operate with Russia, which was very dangerous for Latvia. On November 25, 1919, Latvia decided to break the diplomatic relations with Germany. *With support of Poland in 1920, Latvia received some victory on the communist's troops. The government of Soviet Latvia ceased to exist.* The period of the struggle of Latvia for international recognition has started. Only in January 16, 1921, Latvia was recognised as a state de jure. In September 1921, Latvia was accepted into the League of Nations.

The victorious Ulmanis government signed an armistice with Soviet Russia on February 1, 1920, and a peace treaty on August 11. At that time, Soviet Russia also recognised Latvia as an independent state (Plakans, 1995: 120).

*The main conclusion of Latvia's victory is that not very big countries can win in the fighting with more big country only with support of other countries. For Latvia, it was possible to receive independence only after Poland's military assistance and with support of other countries in Europe.*

*Quite different situation was in Ukraine. This country did not receive timely support from other countries and as a result – the loss of independence and the compelling entry into the Soviet Union.*

Still being part of totalitarian Russian Empire Ukrainians created several secret groups for fighting with the regime. The members of these groups were very famous Ukrainian writers, poets, active citizens, etc.

The ideas of this social activity were reflected in the "Book of the life of Ukrainian people", written by M. Kostomarov. He was a supporter of the ideas of equality, freedom and democracy of Ukraine. In his view, the ultimate goal and the main task for Ukrainians was to build of independent Ukraine on the basis of Orthodox religion and democracy. Kostomarov emphasised that the Ukrainian people have always sought to democratic forms of government (M. Kostomarov, 1921). Very active member of the group of Kosomarov was the famous Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko. Like Kostomarov, he also dreamed of Ukrainian independent state built on the democratic principles.

The end XIX – beginning of XX century was a period of appearance of citizens' associations, groups of active defenders of the interests of Ukrainian people on the basis of the general rise of Ukrainian national identity, increasing their social activity. Just before revolution in 1917, in Ukraine were about 20 political parties and organisations with political orientation.

The victory of the Revolution in 1917 allowed people to hope that they will receive their so desirable independence and build their own independent state on democratic principles. Unfortunately, the Provisional Russian Government did not support these ideas.

In 1917, in Kiev, a Ukrainian National Congress was conducted – 1st Universal. On this Congress was elected a new composition of the governing body of Ukrainian state – Central Council. On the post of a Head of this Council was elected M. Grushevskiy. He developed the Concept of government of Ukraine in which proposed to establish a democratic electoral system. It was expected that all social groups would be involved in the elections. At local level had to be several types of local self-governmental bodies: self-governed local communities; elected councils of districts and elected volost' councils; regional parliament. Like in Latvia just after revolution 1917, when there were still some hopes for a democratic way of development of new Russia, on the Congress in Ukraine was taken a decision about Ukrainian autonomy in the framework of Russia. The special delegation was sent to Petrograd. Understandable that Russia did not allow creation of this autonomy. However, the Head of above-mentioned Council M. Grushevskiy decided in any case to create independent Ukrainian state. Several Congresses were organised after it and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress (III Universal) was taken a decision to create Independent Ukrainian State without Russia. It was called the Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR). This country existed 3 years. In 1917, the leaders of soviet Russia decided to send military forces and destroy this country. This war lasted 3 years. It was very difficult period of fighting for democracy for Ukrainians. Many people were killed. A red army defeated in this battle.

On December 25, 1917, the Red Army launched an offensive on the territory of the UPR. Independent Ukraine decided to appeal to the international community for help. On December 28, 1917, peace talks between the delegations of Ukraine, Russia and Germany began. The German delegation was ready to support Ukraine's independence. Seeing this, while negotiations were still ongoing, the Bolsheviks formed three shock armies and began a military offensive on Kiev.

This political situation in Ukraine led to the adoption on January 22, 1918, of the Fourth Universal. "From this time, Ukrainian People's Republic," noted in it, "becomes an independent, free, sovereign state of

the Ukrainian people.” At the same time, in the adopted “Law on National and Personal Autonomy” were proclaimed the rights of all peoples of Ukraine to establish their national life, to unite in unions with the right of legislative initiative and the use of subsidies from the budget for national and cultural needs. However, the independent Ukrainian state failed to defend itself (Byt et al., 2016: 268).

The Bolsheviks established control over the Kharkiv, Ekaterinoslav and Poltava provinces and launched an offensive on Kiev. Two groups led the offensive of the Bolshevik forces: one along the Kharkiv-Poltava-Kiev railroad, the second – in the direction of Kursk-Bakhmach-Kiev. Several days of fierce fighting went to the station “Bakhmach”, in an unequal battle, the Ukrainian army was forced to retreat to the station “Kruty”.

On January 29, Ukraine commemorates the Day of the Heroes of Kruty – Kiev students, participants in the battle with the Bolshevik Army 100 years ago. About 200–300 young people entered an unequal battle with the many-thousand-strong Bolshevik army on the approaches to Kiev. The squads of M. Muraveev for 5 days were fired Kiev and after it they invaded the city. In Kiev, in pursuance of the order of M. Muravayov, “to mercilessly destroy all officers, cadets, monarchists and all enemies of the revolution”, thousands of people were shot without trial and investigation (Byt et al., 2016: 269).

Ukrainian People’s Republic, in accordance with the aggression of Soviet Russia, asked Central European countries for immediate armed assistance. The Allies did not hesitate for a long time and on January 27 (February 9) in 1918 a treaty was signed between the UPR and the states of the German bloc, according to which Ukraine would have to supply Germany and Austria-Hungary with 60 million pounds of grain, 3 million pounds of sugar, 2.8 million pounds of sugar, meat and so on. Germany and Austria-Hungary put forward an ultimatum to Soviet Russia and began to prepare troops for the offensive and on February 18, 1918, German-Austrian troops launched an offensive. Soviet Russia signed on March 3, a peace treaty and was compelled to recognise the independence of the UPR and its treaty with the Central European states. *With support of other countries, Ukraine managed to receive independence.*

*After this victory, instead of building a new independent state, representatives of various political forces in Ukraine began the struggle for power. Soviet power decided to use this fact.*

In October 1919, a fracture occurred at the front. On December 12, Soviet troops captured Kharkiv. In January 1920 – Donbas, in February – Odessa. The remains of the White Army fled to the Crimea. During 1919 in Ukraine, as a result of the fierce civil war, power finally collapsed, chaos and anarchy prevailed. In less than a year, Kiev moved five times from one

hand to another. Cities were empty. The peasantry sought to preserve its land plots and grown bread. Under such conditions, it was ready to support any government. However, as soon as this or that authority proved unable to meet the demands of the peasantry, it opposed it and turned to the opposite side. The Ukrainian peasant knew well that it was not necessary to return to the old order, but did not know what kind of system to fight. Often he cursed all the townspeople and all the governments. The support of the peasantry of the “green” atamans with their anarchism and banditry as a whole did not have positive consequences for Ukraine. Regular troops fought for cities and railroads, while peasant partisan groups dominated villages, and the only authority recognised there was the power of weapons. It was extremely needed to find a consensus. As a result of different negotiations between the leaders of Ukraine and some territories around Ukraine, it was make a decision to create one country – Ukraine with some additional territories like Kuban.

Some countries decided to help Ukraine, but they had some requirements. For example, Poland in exchange for military support asked for part of the territory of Ukraine, and the government agreed to this, since it understood that it was impossible to defeat the Soviet regime alone.

As Latvia, Ukraine decided to participate in the peace conference in Paris in 1919. But, if Latvia did not receive support and desirable decisions on this conference, the result of it for Ukraine, and, as further events shown, for other European countries was terrible.

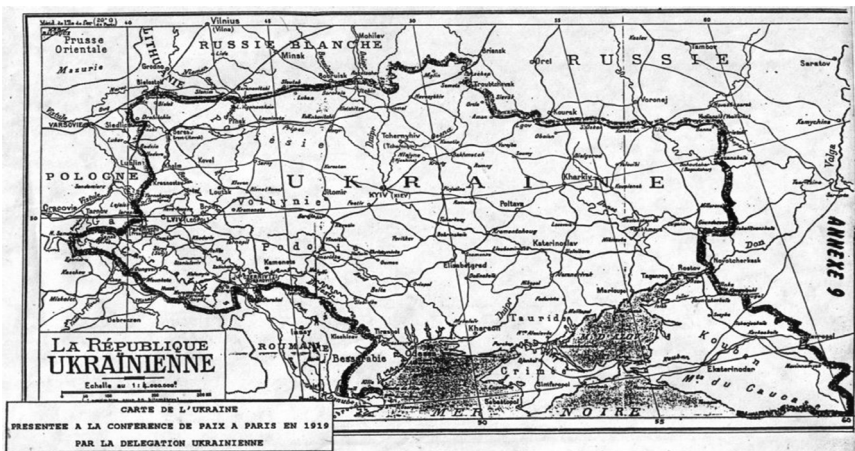


Figure 1. Map of future Ukraine. It was presented at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.



The Ukrainian delegation presented the map of future Ukraine, which was based on the agreements achieved as a result of above-mentioned negotiations.

At the Paris Peace Conference “Ukrainian Question” did not stand as a separate item for consideration. It arose in the process of determining the post-war borders of Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia. Representatives of the Ukrainian delegations were not recognised as real representatives of Ukrainian people. Ukrainians were one people, whose right to self-determination at the conference was ignored. As it was noted by Ukrainian historian O. Gisem, they ignored the speeches of Ukrainian representatives about the natural right of the Ukrainian people to self-determination. In June 25, 1919, to Poland was given the authority to join the whole of Galicia and to introduce the civil administration in this territory. The condition was to ensure the autonomy of Galicia, political, religious and personal freedom of the population. The tactically flexible diplomatic line to seize Transcarpathia was conducted by the President of Czechoslovakia T. Masaryk and Minister of Foreign Affairs E. Benes. They co-ordinated their actions with Western states and enlisted the support of Transcarpathian emigration to the United States. In January 1919, the Czech troops entered the city Uzhgorod. May 8 in Paris, it was decided to transfer the Transcarpathian Ukraine to Czechoslovakia. In September 1919, it entered into the Saint-Germain peace treaty. In the capital of France, questions about Ukrainian lands of Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia were also discussed. They were rejected in favour of Romania”. (Гісем О. Б. et al., 2012).

*Later, this decision led to tragic consequences – not only Ukraine was occupied by Soviet troops, but also countries such as Poland and Czechoslovakia became communist and for many years they were left behind in their development under the communist pressure.*

After the entry of parts of the Red Army to Poland and eastern Galicia, Polish and Galician Revolutionary Committees were immediately formed. They proclaimed the nationalisation of enterprises and banks, expropriation of landed estates and the organisation of labour committees to manage them. In Halychyna, the Galician socialist Soviet republic was proclaimed (Гісем О. Б. et al., 2012: 279).

Between the RSFRR, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, on the one hand, and Poland on the other hand, on October 12, 1920, an armistice agreement was signed and the conditions for the future of peace were outlined. The war was concluded on March 18, 1921 in Riga. Western Ukrainian lands, which were promised for help in the war with the Soviet army, remained under Poland.

## **Ukraine and Latvia before World War II**

The period of 1917–1920 gave to Ukraine many heroes, but did not give the main thing – independence.

From 1920, it was a territory of Soviet power. The motto of it: “All power to the Councils, to the citizens” was only on the paper and only words. It is not possible to say about real democracy or self-government in that period. They were absent. However, it was not the main problem then. The process of collectivization was started. The people were obliged to give their lands, all their property including horses and cows, their food including flour and wheat to soviet power. Understandable that people did not want to do it. The representatives of soviet power said that “we will collect all what you have and create the farms and factories, and you will receive from it according to your needs”.

For fighting with significant opposition of Ukrainians, the soviet power decided to use force, to take the property of Ukrainians forcibly. All people who did not want to give their property were shot or imprisoned. Despite of it, Ukrainians as before did not want to unite into soviet collective farms. In addition, soviet regime found a new mean of fighting with Ukrainians. For this territory were discontinued all food supplies. In 1930s, it was a very strong starvation. The people died from famine just on the streets.

Historians (Гісем О. В. et al., 2012: 340) noted that indeed, the famine affected various regions of the USSR. But only in Ukraine (and in the Kuban, where ethnic Ukrainians predominated), the Kremlin, through its natural fines, turned hunger on the Holodomor with ten times more victims in only two regions, of which two thirds of the population consisted of Ukrainians. According to S.V. Kulchytsky, and they coincide with the estimate of the American researcher John Mace and his English colleague Robert Conquest, the death rate from starvation in Ukraine was 3–3.5 million. Over 1900–1934 more than 5 million people suffered a complete demographic loss. This is the genocide of Ukrainian people, which was carried out by the Soviet authorities.

As a result, the soviet power received an agreement from Ukrainians for their uniting into collective farms and to give all their property to these farms. It was really a very difficult period for Ukraine and its people.

However, the troubles of the Ukrainians, as well as all other countries, which were the part of the Soviet Union, did not end there.

At the 17th Congress of the Party, Stalin emphasised: “Repressions in the field of socialist construction are a necessary element of the offensive”. Therefore, monopolisation of power generates violence. In this case, communist propaganda is of great help. It does not allow criticising the communist doctrine, the Soviet government and the Bolshevik Party. In

the pre-war period, beginning in 1929, in Ukraine there are three waves of mass repressions. The first wave, which took place in 1929–1931, was directly related to the processes of deportation and dispossession. They were aimed primarily at those who opposed violent collectivisation. The second wave of mass terror (1932–1934), which is closely connected with the first, led to the death of millions of people, had a continuation after the assassination of one of the Bolshevik leaders – S. M. Kirov. The most famous not only for scholars, but also for the general public, the third wave swept the territory of the USSR in 1936–1938. The last in the historical literature was called the “Great Terror”. (Masalskij (Масальський), et al., 2009: 269).

The national Ukrainian elite received a tangible blow from Stalin's terror. According to estimates of victims of repression, only for the period from 1933 to 1938 were 360 thousand Ukrainian citizens. It should be noted that many of those who had previously made considerable efforts to identify “enemies of the people”, in the years 1937–1938 they themselves became the victims of terror. The co-authors of the Stalinist “great terror”, the leaders who headed the NKVD of Ukraine, also became the victims of repression. Thus, a totalitarian regime was established in Ukraine, as well as in the USSR in the 20–30's. Having removed from the political arena representatives of other political forces, the Bolsheviks led by J. Stalin established total control over all aspects of social life. (Masalskij (Масальський), et al., 2009: 270).

Unlike Ukraine, which, after long and bloody battles, became part of the Soviet Union, Latvia received long-awaited independence, as it was noted above.

New independent Latvia has chosen the democratic way of its development. In first years of independence in the country, several democratic laws were created. The most democratic from it was the law on election, which has given possibility to participate in the political life in Latvia even very small political groups and parties. However, it had not only positive, but the negative outcomes as well. Because the way to politics was open for people who were very far from it and could not make anything useful for the country.

At the same time, as Latvian historians have noted (Блейере, Д. et al. (Bleiere D.), 2005: 152), the achievements of Latvian democracy were significant. The economy of the country was developing at a rapid pace. Many European countries suffered from rising inflation, but Latvia already in 1923 introduced its own currency, the lat, which was stable and soon became weighty not only within the country. Agrarian reform was successfully carried out. The culture and cultural traditions were developing. Moreover, the whole country was reborn.

The Communist Party in Latvia was forbidden, because their members tried to destabilise the situation and their main task was to restore Soviet Latvia and its accession to Soviet Russia. Without communists and Soviet power, Latvia flourished. In 1922, the main law, the Constitution, was adopted, in which Latvia proclaimed as independent democratic state. The power, by the Constitution, belongs to the people of Latvia. The citizens of Latvia elected the Latvian Parliament (Saeima).

However, there were people who were not satisfied. The opponents of Latvian democracy were not glad that there are so wide possibilities for wide range of public to participate in political life and political activity. In 1922, the Latvian National Club was created. The representatives of this club said that Latvian public policy should be “more Latvian” and not so democratic. In general, the beginning of XX century was not a time for democracy. At that time, democracy ceased to exist in many European democratic countries.

As it was noted by historians (Straume, 2007: 45), democracy in Europe had been under threat since the early twentieth century, when totalitarian philosophy began to spread. In 1922, totalitarianism flourished in Italy; in May 1926, authoritarianism was introduced to Poland and half a year later, to Lithuania.

In 1925, in Latvia was the election of the President. In addition, even democratic leader Kārlis Ulmanis made a criticism of democracy in his election speeches. It was the beginning, the first calls of Latvia's departure from democracy. However, Ulmanis did not receive the victory on this election.

The economic world crisis of 1930s has its impact on Latvia as well. The fall in living standards always leads to criticism of the power and power authorities. Therefore, the opponents of the Latvian democracy received more supporters.

Although the attacks on democracy were growing, in Latvia it was still much calmer than in the countries of the old democracy, even during the years of economic crisis. In Germany, democracy not only fell, its enemy came to power – Nazism. In Austria, democracy died as a result of a bloody civil war. France was also close to this, where some people were already killed in strikes and street battles. In the late 1930s, only 12 from 29 European countries managed to maintain a democratic system. Latvia embarked on the path of totalitarianism – the last of the Baltic countries – in the spring of 1934. On the night of 15 to 16 May, Prime Minister K. Ulmanis and his supporters carried out a coup d'état. This was a manifestation of the weakness of the parliamentary-democratic system. Democracy in Latvia was destroyed by a politician, whose role in the creation and formation of the state was decisive (Блейере, Д. et al. (Bleiere D.), 2005: 157, 161).

Negative outcomes of this coup d'état were not only elimination of democracy, but also creation of a dictatorship, which led to "policy of one person" without any possibility for citizens to take part in the process of decision-making in the country. Even the functions of the parliament passed to the government. In general, the system of state policy was imbalanced.

In 1939, when Germany decided to use military force in relation to Poland, Latvia advocated a neutrality policy, and in June 1939 signed a non-aggression treaty with Germany. One year before it, Latvia decided to abandon the signing of the principles of collective security proposed by the League of Nations. Understandable, it was a mistake for small country to avoid support of this organization.

On August 23, 1939, Germany and the USSR signed a nonaggression pact and a secret additional protocol, known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. According to this protocol, the fate of Latvia, as well as of other countries, was predetermined.

In the Article 1 of the Secret Additional Protocol was defined the following:

'In the event of a territorial and political rearrangement in the areas belonging to the Baltic States (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the northern boundary of Lithuania shall represent the boundary of the spheres of influence of Germany and U.S.S.R. In this connection the interest of Lithuania in the Vilna area is recognized by each party'.

*There is a very interesting fact that traditionally Soviet Russia was trying to receive desirable results by means of natural resources of the country, by manipulation of it. By official information, after signing the Soviet-German treaty, Germany received over a period of 17 months from the USSR 865 thousand tons of oil, 140 thousand tons of manganese ore, 14 thousand tons of copper, 3 thousand tons of nickel, almost 1.5 million tons grains and other strategic materials (But et al. (Byт), 2016: 406).*

The victory over Poland created the necessary prerequisites for invading other countries. The USSR proposed Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to sign mutual assistance agreements. These treaties provided for the deployment of Soviet military bases in these countries, which in itself already meant occupation. *It is clear that it was impossible to sign these treaties in any case, but the leaders of the mentioned countries apparently feared aggression from the USSR and decided that signing such an agreement would help avoid war. However, for example, the Finland-Soviet war shown that even small country can defend itself and its independence, if it is really ready to struggle for it, if the citizens of this country are ready as well.*

*Despite the obvious desire to seize these countries, expressed in the agreements proposed for signing, these countries signed them. They signed not only*

*agreements, but also a condemnation to themselves as independent countries. It was a demonstration that the desire to avoid small problems by neutrality leads to much greater problems. As a result of the signed agreements, the USSR introduced its military contingent into the territory of the Baltic countries.*

However, the agreement was signed by representatives of Baltic States, by this it was given possibility for USSR to seize these territories.

On June 17, 1940, Soviet troops violated the border of Latvia and entered its territory. On June 20, a new puppet government of Latvia was formed.

Just a month before July 21, 1940 – before the first meeting of the so-called National Saeima – more than 70 Latvian citizens were arrested and deported to Russia. It was nevertheless unprecedented – the arrest by the state security organs of another country of citizens of formally still independent Latvia (Блейере, Д. et al. (Bleiere D.), 2005: 234).

In Latvia a government loyal to the Soviet government was created, which asked the Soviet Union to accept Latvia. A delegation of the National Saeima in Moscow asked accept Latvia “in brother family of people” (Блейере, Д. et al. (Bleiere D.), 2005: 235). From this time, the period of soviet annexation was started.

## **Latvia and Ukraine in the period of World War II and later**

Latvia and Ukraine have very similar history. The situation after the country's annexation to the USSR in Latvia was the same as in Ukraine in 1920s, when country was joined to the USSR as well. The so-called “collectivisation” and “dispossession” began. All private property has been cancelled. The rouble gradually replaced the national currency of the lat, the stability of which the Latvians were so proud. Not only their private enterprises, if such were available, but also houses were taken from people.

As it was noted by A. Plakans (1995: 144), the Latvian Constitution was abolished and replaced by the constitution of USSR; strict control was established over the printed publications. With respect to agriculture, the new authorities repeatedly asserted that collectivisation would proceed only on a voluntary basis. Although a few state farms (kolkhozy) were created.

However, this situation was not as terrible as further events – repressions.

Political repressions against the inhabitants of Latvia began immediately after the occupation of June 17, 1940. The USSR authorities arrested 3353 people, including most of the officials of the Republic of Latvia, the president of the state and other members of the government. The charges were based on the 58th article of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR, which

provided for the punishment of the so-called “counter-revolutionary activities”, including “for treason against the Motherland”. The repressions reached their culmination on June 13–14, 1941, when during one night in the USSR 15443 inhabitants of Latvia were taken out of the USSR – women, men, and children. Among them was a significant number of former soldiers and officers of the Latvian Army, many of whom were shot after being arrested in a camp in Ligatne or deported to the USSR. Mass killings also took place in Riga Central Prison, Dreilini, Stopini, Baltezers, Katlnalns and other places. In 1940–1941, about 26,000 people in Latvia were arrested, killed and repressed (Uldis Neiburgs, 2018).

Understandably, that after so much terror, many Latvian people were glad when German troops come to the country. (The same was in Ukraine). The people met them with the flowers as liberators.

J. Straume (Straume, 2007: 61–62) described that situation as following: ‘The Soviet Terror of 1940–1941 had so traumatized the Latvian people that in the space of a single year, the 700-year long enmity towards the Germans had disappeared. News of German’s attack on the Soviet Union was met with relief. Units of partisans known as “Brothers of the Forest” began operations, clearing part of Latvia of the Soviet army. They hoped that Latvia would regain its freedom and independence. However, Germans had no such intention. On 1 July 1941, the Germans ordered all partisan units to be disbanded and for them to hand over weapons. The wearing of the army and defence uniforms of the Latvian Republic was forbidden. The Latvian flag could not be flown. Latvian words disappeared from institutions and place names throughout Latvia... As the German occupation began, one dictatorship was replaced by another’.

Thus, the situation was the same as in Ukraine. The Nazis started not only abolish Latvian main principles of being, but to kill Latvians. Therefore, the Nazis began to lose the people’s support. Latvians started to fight against the Nazis for their independence. After victory of Soviet Union Latvians hoped that they will manage to receive independence, but again it was not possible and country again was the member of USSR.

In the period of Soviet Union, Ukraine as Latvia was a republic in the framework of this state. Only in 1990, Ukraine received so desirable independence. However, it was very long and difficult way.

Ukrainians hated Soviet power due several real reasons (mentioned above). When the Second World War was started and the German army was on the territory of Ukraine some of Ukrainians were very glad. They hoped that they would receive so desirable independence of their country. Moreover, on the first stages they were trying to have some negotiations with the representatives of German army. Ukrainians decided to fight the

communist regime together with them. However, when they saw that the fascists can kill any person without any reason they started to fight with the fascists as well. Therefore, they were fighting both with communist's Russia and German army. Understandably, that so small country could not receive a victory in this battle. The leader of this struggle was Stepan Bandera. He was fighting both with the communist regime and with the Nazis. His struggle was not successful and as a result, he was put in a German concentration camp. From 1942 until 1944, he was in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

Particularly for the reason, that just after arrival of German army, Ukrainians and their leader Stepan Bandera were trying to combine their forces in fighting with the communist totalitarian regime, the representatives of Soviet Union said that Stepan Bandera was a fascist. It was in all textbooks in soviet schools throughout all the communist period. By opinion of soviet power, and current Russian power, if Ukrainians were fighting with the communist regime and now continuing to fight for democracy and independent state, they are the fascists.

On June 23, 1941, on behalf of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, led by Stepan Bandera, was sent on 14 pages of the Memorandum to Adolf Hitler, in which it was strongly emphasised that the main task of the organisation is the restoration of an independent Ukrainian State: "Even if German troops, when they arrive in Ukraine, will be greeted at first, apparently as liberators, this instruction can change quickly when Germany comes to Ukraine without appropriate promises regarding its intention to restore the Ukrainian State [...] Ukrainians are determined to create conditions that will guarantee national development in an independent state. Each government, which pursues its own interests in building a new order in the Eastern European space, must take into account this resolution" (Посівнич М., 2015).

Understandably, in the Nazis' plans of "New Europe" such a state, as an independent and free Ukraine could not exist. The government, headed by Yaroslav Stetsko, was arrested and sent by the Gestapo to concentration camps.

On July 3, 1941, bilateral talks were held between representatives of Ukraine and Germany. The threat of a reprisal by the representative of Germany, if the OUN does not cease its activities, said the leader of the OUN: "We entered into a battle that unfolds now to fight for an independent and free Ukraine. We are fighting for Ukrainian ideas and goals. [...] OUN – the only organisation that was fighting, and it has the right, on the basis of that struggle, to create a government." In order to induce Bandera to cooperate and withdraw the Act on June 30, July 5,



1941, the Gestapo arrested him near Belza and sent him to Lublin via Krakow. The next day he was summoned by the chief of the government of the General Province Bühler and demanded that he refuse the proclamation of the Act. After a negative response, Bandera was placed under house arrest and, along with his wife, they were sent to Berlin on July 9<sup>th</sup>, where they placed in a Gestapo prison Lichterfeld-Ost. On September 15, 1941, Bandera was sent to the Gestapo's central prison No. 29. At the same time, mass arrests of OUN members were carried out in all German occupied territories in Ukraine and in Europe. In the prison were about 1500 members of OUN. Bandera's brothers Vasily and Alexander were tortured at the end of July 1942 at the Auschwitz concentration camp. In Kherson, the Gestapo shot the third brother of Bogdan and in the Lvov's prison; the brother of his wife was killed. At the same time, by the NKVD in Kyiv on July 10, 1941, Bandera's father a priest Andrew was shot, and two sisters Volodymyr and Oksana were taken to the Siberian concentration camps (Посівнич М., 2015).

Without Bandera, Ukrainians were continuing to fight with Nazis, but not with the communists. Firstly, it was need to run through the main enemy – Nazis. The losses of Ukrainians and citizens of other nationalities of the former USSR during 1941–1945 amounted to 4.5 million people of the civilian population of the occupied territories (dead and missing persons); about 4.1 million military people (killed, dead in captivity, missing persons, dead in hospitals in the first post-war years); 2,4–2,8 million people exported to Germany for forced labour (most of them were killed); at least 100,000 OUN-UPA members; about 16 thousand Ukrainians who perished in the armed formations that fought on the German side. Totally, about 10 million people (Безсмертя. Книга Пам'яті України, 2000: 561).

The victory over fascism was possible by the unity of people who were ready to give their lives for the liberation of their countries. Who knows what the world would be like, if the German army, instead of mocking the people of the captured countries, would give them freedoms, as they had promised at the beginning: *...Although, historical experience shows, and it must always be remembered, that no country, capturing another, will give freedom and promote development – it will only use the territory and its people for realizing its own goals, needs and tasks.*

After the victory over fascism, Ukraine, like Latvia, continued to function within the framework of the Soviet Union. The situation in the Soviet Union with economy, Soviet propaganda, approaches to culture and society is well known. Therefore, this period of time will not be considered here.

## **Transition to Democracy in Ukraine and Latvia (the end of the XX – the beginning of the XXI centuries)**

In 1987, Latvian activists became trailblazers within the Soviet Union, feeling out and even stretching the boundaries of glasnost with their calendar demonstrations. Many in the West saw these demonstrations, which received extensive media coverage throughout the world, including the USSR, as the litmus test of Gorbachev's sincerity and seriousness in implementing liberalisation. The demonstrations were organised by a small human rights group, formed in the summer of 1986 by three workers from the city of Liepāja, calling itself Helsinki'86. The purpose of the demonstration was to commemorate publicly the events of June 14, 1941 (the mass deportation of Latvians to the Soviet Union), August 23, 1939 (the signing of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) and November 18, 1918 (the proclamation of Latvian independence) – three turning points in Latvian history that had been distorted or ignored in official publications (Dreifelds, 1996: 55–56).

In general, the restructuring called “perestroika” initiated by Gorbachev gave impetus to the active development of the democratic movement and the creation of new political parties. In Latvia, various anti-communist political parties began to emerge in 1988. Understandable, as soon as the slightest opportunity appeared, in Latvia they started talking about the independence of the country. On May 4, 1990, a vote was taken in the Supreme Soviet of the LSSR on the independence of Latvia, and more specifically on the Declaration of Independence. This Declaration received the majority of voters and from this moment, Latvia was a new state – Latvian Republic. Latvian society was very glad to receive this news, which, unfortunately, was short-lived.

10 days later, on May 14, 1990, Gorbachev signed the decree on the incompatibility of the declaration proclaiming the independence of Latvia, like other Baltic countries, to the USSR Constitution. Next day, on May 15, a special committee was created for defence of Constitution of USSR.

The period began, which was characterised by a sharp confrontation and the growth of extremism on the part of opponents of independence. As soon as the confrontation between the Kremlin and the leadership of the Republic of Latvia intensified, the growth of extremism also intensified (Блейере, Д. et al. (Bleiere D.), 2005: 405).

Latvia's true independence was impossible without the proper recognition of the USSR and the international community. In 1989, the 2nd Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR officially recognized the presence of a secret protocol to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and condemned it. However, the fact of the occupation of the Baltic countries was not recognised.

In the period from the adoption of the declaration on May 4, 1990 to August 1991, the opponents of independence directed all their efforts to obtain Gorbachev's consent to defeat the Republic of Latvia, especially after in September 1990 Gorbachev was authorised to introduce presidential rule (Блейере, Д. et al. (Bleiere D.), 2005: 407).

The Baltic countries, in one united front, confidently followed the path of independence. Naturally, the power of the Soviet Union could not accept this. The Soviet power decided to use the force. This decision was fatal for the Soviet Union, but it was the impetus for raising the people's desire for freedom and independence, which they were ready to defend in any case.

On January 12, 1991, Soviet troops began to use force against the Baltic countries, which were so eager for independence. In Vilnius, during the capture of the television by the Soviet troops, 13 people were killed.

Deksnis and Jundzis (2015: 126–127) described these events:

'When violent intervention came from Moscow, it did not take the form of introduction of presidential rule. Armed intervention in Lithuania preceded attempts at armed intervention in Latvia to restore Soviet power. On the night of 11/12 January 1991, a Soviet military detachment killed 13 persons whilst taking over the Lithuanian TV centre in Vilnius... For its part the LPF reacted to events in Vilnius in a way that evidently caught by surprise forces that might have sought to intervene violently in Latvia. A massive demonstration (estimated at half a million persons) was held on 13 January 1991 in Riga... During the brief daylight hours of 13 January 1991, a series of defensive barricades were erected to protect a number of strategic sites, important public and government building in Riga'.

These events in Vilnius and Riga did not stop the Soviet power, which further decided to use force. On January 20, Soviet military forces began an assault on the Ministry of the Interior of Republic of Latvia in Riga. In addition, very interesting fact: as in Kyiv in the period of Maidan in 2014, in 1991 in Riga people (in Latvia about 500 thousand residents) of Latvia were gathering in Riga on January 13th for the demonstration. When the citizens of Ukraine have known about the use of military force against peaceful demonstrators in Kiev, they began to converge on the Maidan from all over the country.

Edgars Engizers (Engizers, 2017: 35) claimed that the attack by OMON on January 20th on the building of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Latvia represents the culmination of the period of the Barricades, yet at the same time, these two historical events are very different. One was violent and had a definite aim, although there is still no clarity about the detail of the attack, the chain of command and its place in the pyramid of geopolitical processes; the other was a peaceful and all-encompassing process, one which has been exhaustively

examined, although there is still much unknown, this referring more to the Third Awakening in a global sense, the triumph of which is irreversibly related to the period of the Barricades. Despite of all this, the events of January 20<sup>th</sup> are most fundamental to the significance of the period of the Barricades. The most important outcome of the period of the Barricades in the context of the restoration of Latvian independence was that the people of Latvia realised that their only way forward was through renewing full independence...

Despite the resistance of the Latvian people and their willingness to go to the last in the struggle for their independence, the Soviet Union and its leadership did not abandon the idea of returning Latvia and other Baltic republics “to the friendly family of fraternal peoples”. Getting independence was not easy.

Joint armed actions of the OMON and regular Soviet army units from the Baltic Military District began in Latvia, starting late in the afternoon of 19 August 1991. From 19 to 20 August, many government and other public buildings in Riga were stormed and occupied, or had their interiors ransacked. Several state institutions ceased to function after being raided. Regular army units blocked access roads to Riga and the bridges across the Daugava within the city, stopping the movement of all large vehicles (Deksnis, Jundzis, 2015: 139). It is very interesting, but exactly the same situation was in Kyiv in 2014 in the period of the Maidan. Due to the fact that it was impossible to drive, people from other cities went to Kiev on foot, in whole columns of several tens of kilometres.

Whereas there is considerable evidence that the Soviet adopted a Constitutional law “On the Statehood of the Republic of Latvia” which decreed the transition period for de facto renewal of Latvia independence to be over. Soviet armed forces occupying building were ordered from Moscow to stand down and return to their bases. Undoubtedly, failure of the August putsch contributed substantially to de facto restoration of Latvian independence (Deksnis, Jundzis, 2015: 140). After it, independence of Latvia received international recognition.

In the period of Soviet Union Ukraine was a republic in the framework of this state. Only in 1990, Ukraine received the so desirable independence. However, it was independence only on the paper. As before, Ukraine was like a province of Soviet Union and the communists were the leaders of the country. As a result, the level of corruption was very high, and citizens’ rights and freedoms were not protected. The mass protests started from 2002. In addition, in 2004 they were finishing by Orange Revolution. The elections in 2002 become the beginning of the manifestation of public activity. Those elections have had many infringements and did not express, in full measure, the public will. From this period of time in the country

were started the mass actions of public protests. Many political forces have taken part in it. They were political parties with different ideas and political views. The events of “orange revolution” in Ukraine have proved that citizens are very active and they are ready to take active part in the life of their country, that civil society in Ukraine not only formed, but active functioning – it can assert own rights, interests and even form a power and its structures.

In that new political situation, the issues of co-operation and partnership between power and public were very important. New democratic power, which received a big trust and support from citizens, have had to more collaborate with them, to rush be as more as possible responsible and responsive to the citizen’s needs. Moreover, the most important task for new Ukrainian power was to not only support the public activity, but also create all conditions (technological, legislative etc.) for real development of democracy in the country, as well as effective system of administration, particularly the development and reinforcement the system of local self-government as the main manifestation and expression of local democracy.

All these points were in the pre-elective promises of candidates from democratic forces. Unfortunately, technological and legal aspects of democracy were not radically improved; citizens did not receive additional possibilities to take active part in the process of decision-making.

The election of the President of Ukraine in 2010 has shown the great disappointed of Ukrainians by the leaders of “orange revolution”. As a result, their opponent received political power.

Ukrainians though that maybe so strong totalitarian person as V. Yanukovych will be better than weak and inactive V. Yushchenko. In addition, another motivation to vote for this person was his promises to develop the country in democratic direction and achieve real and effective European integration of Ukraine as well. However, from the first days of his presidency the situation was quite different. Moreover, the events from November 2013 were a citizens’ reaction on it. However, it was very difficult for Ukrainians to go on the actions of mass protests. They were not sure that another leader who will receive power as a result of these protests would execute his or her promises and be really democratic leader that he or she will not deceive. Nevertheless, the country was in situation when citizens could not suffer more. The European integration for Ukrainians was not a question of an improvement of the economic situation, their economic well-being. It was a question of their personal security and life. The Ukrainians hoped on realisation of two important things: human rights and personal security, and strong system of control.

So, how the mass protest action was started? Why? What were its leading forces?

The last 2 years of the reign of Yanukovych, in Kiev and other Ukrainian cities took place the protests of different categories of citizens. They were teachers, representatives of medical sphere, people who have suffered from the actions of the police, etc. The members of the Party of the Regions have taken into account all components, all possibilities to keep power, but they did not take into account only one – the ordinary people, the citizens of this country. Moreover, it was clear that if these people combine their protests, their forces, it will be very powerful and strong action. For their unit it was need only one impetus. In addition, this impetus was very sudden and bloody crackdown of students protesting for not signing the agreement with EU. The students were sitting near with the monument of Independence of Ukraine on the main square in Kiev, which called a Maidan of Independence. They decided to be on this square not only during the day, but also at night. In addition, in 4 a.m. hundreds of police officers attacked several dozen of students. They not only dispersed students, but also were herding them into the yards and beaten by truncheons. They chased after them through the streets of several hundred meters and beat. It was terrible cry on the streets. This cry heard the monks of the monastery, which located near with the Maidan. Moreover, they decided to open the gate. Only it saved people. Many of them were with broken heads, arms and legs. For police officers it was not important is it boy or girl. When Ukrainians saw it in the morning news they began to gather and go to the monastery. Many students, their parents gathered near with the main Kiev University – Taras Shevchenko University. It was only first days of the protests. After it, 3 months Ukrainians were on the Square (Maidan) of Independence all days and nights, but without any positive solution, because, at the national legislation there is no any possibility for citizens to dismiss the government. If in developed democratic European countries, even for a small fault, the government or its members should resign, in Ukraine the governmental officials, civil servants can do whatever they want without any responsibility before citizens. Therefore, now Ukraine has a situation in which the governmental or elected officials, members of the Parliament if they want, they can work for this country, for its citizens, but if they do not want to do it, there are no any legal measures to force them realise their duties and responsibilities. In Ukrainian legislation, there are defined responsibilities for civil servants, elected officials, but the system of control does not work. There are no any possibilities to withdraw the elected officials from their posts if they do not want to work for the citizens, for the country. As noted before (Babinova, 2015) in future, this situation may lead to desire of some people to use power for their personal purposes and interests as previous Ukrainian power, and as before, citizens will not have any legal instruments to have any impact, to fight with this situation in legal way.

4 years after of the presidency of new leader of the country Petro Poroshenko, it is not possible to say that the forms and methods of public participation, particularly public consultations were improved, that he really consults with the citizens, as it was the main requirements of the Maidan. Now, 4 years later there is no real and effective public participation in the process of decision-making, real public control of the governmental activity, as before these is a significant gap between power and citizens, activity of all branches of power is not transparent and open for public. In Ukraine the mechanisms and methods of collaboration between power and public are not completely thorough yet and require its improvement and, in some cases, its creation. Many points of legislation now only are “on the paper”; they are not working, because the mechanisms, instruments of its realisation, as well as the mechanisms of control of their execution, in most cases, are absent. Creation of the effective mechanisms of public involvement, public participation and, as a result, strong system of public control of the activity of all governmental bodies will be important element of transparency of the power, improvement of the process of service delivery for public and reinforcement, development of democracy. Ukraine now is only on the way to implementation of above-mentioned tasks.

## Conclusions

In the comparative historical analysis of the struggle for the independence and democracy of two post-Soviet countries – Latvia and Ukraine, which was made above, the defined goal was achieved: the common features and peculiarities were identified, the reasons of the temporary loss of independence and the behavioural features of the conquering country were defined in order to avoid similar occurrences in the future.

This analysis has given possibility to make the following conclusions:

1. Latvia and Ukraine have very similar history. They were in the structure of Russian Empire and later in the Soviet Union. They fought for their independence for many centuries and lost it because of unequal confrontation with more big and powerful countries. In XX century, the main struggle of these countries was with totalitarian countries, seeking to conquer as many other countries as possible. They were fascist Germany, Russia and later the Soviet Union.
2. Historical experience shows that exactly and only totalitarian leaders are the initiators of the wars; particularly they have strong desire to seize or annex other countries. Historical experience shows, and it must always be remembered, that a country, capturing another, will not give freedom and promote development – it will only use the territory and its people for realising its own goals, needs and tasks.

3. Small or not very big countries can win in the fighting with more big and powerful countries only with support of other countries. It is possible to avoid a war only with their quick and effective response, and not only other countries, but all international society. Quick, relevant and effective reaction is a basis of peaceful existence in the world. When Latvia and Ukraine were receiving international support, they were receiving their independence as well. Without this support, they not only lost their independence. The aggressor country went further and decided to conquer or annex those countries that were waiting, chose neutrality or simply did not help very actively. For example, after Paris Peace Conference in 1919 on which Latvia and Ukraine didn't support in the struggle with Soviet Russia the main participants who didn't support them – Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia after it like Latvia and Ukraine were joined to the Soviet Union.
4. There was another important reason for the loss of independence of Latvia and Ukraine. It was inability to negotiate and work together on the prosperity and development of their countries by various national political forces. They were several examples of it in the above historical analysis. At the moment, Latvia has managed to overcome these problems, and Ukraine still bears the negative consequences of such political actions.
5. In order to avoid wars, the world community should make every effort so that no totalitarian leader appears in any country. It should be the special developed international mechanisms. Nevertheless, the main fighter against totalitarian leaders is the citizens of these countries, who should have the broadest possibilities to control power, and not only choose, but to dismiss political leaders from their posts in legal way.

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