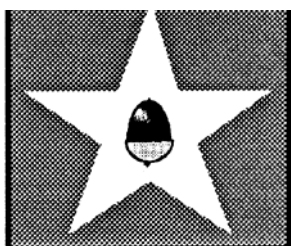


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**NATO Expansion and the
Baltic States**

February 1999



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NATO EXPANSION AND THE BALTIC STATES

Daniel F. C. Austin

It is said that Russia is the biggest obstacle to NATO expansion to the Baltic states.¹ The Baltic states certainly think so but have nevertheless firmly stated their intentions of joining NATO which they view as the only way of guaranteeing their security and independence.² For them nothing less will do. NATO has made it clear on many occasions that expansion is open to all states in Central and Eastern Europe on the condition that they meet the political and military criteria. Although the definition of these terms is unclear and open to interpretation, it is doubtful whether any of the Baltic states would qualify for NATO membership at the present time. Furthermore, few NATO states would want to include them in the next round of enlargement at the expense of alienating Russia and diluting the security of the Alliance.

However, there is much that the Baltic states can do to improve their own defence and security, and in the process increase their chances of NATO membership, without necessarily joining the Alliance. For a start, the Baltic states must realise that without the creation of their own armed forces they are unlikely to become serious candidates for NATO membership. With Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic this was possible because the political will existed in the West to oversee a five to ten year period of reform and reconstruction of their armed forces which NATO membership naturally requires. In the words of the then US Defence Secretary, William J. Perry, a key criterion for membership of NATO "is the capability of each member state to come to the defence" and aid of the other member states as laid out in Article V. "The Baltic states do not have the capability yet, but they are working very hard to get it".³ This does not mean that the Baltic states need to prove that they are serious candidates for membership on their own. Today, many Western nations are working with the Baltic states, helping them to construct their defence forces from scratch and making them compatible and interoperable with those of NATO. The credibility of the Baltic states as applicant states for NATO will be enhanced if, as sovereign, independent states, they are able to defend themselves, even if it is only for a limited period of time.

THE MILITARY IMPERATIVE

The Baltic states are not yet willing to assume the obligations of NATO membership. There are the bare outlines of military structures but the army command, such as it exists in all three Baltic states, has access to little material resources and financial support. The joint Nordic-Baltic battalion, BALTBAT is really a multinational effort designed for United Nations peacekeeping missions and to demonstrate good neighbourliness in the region.⁴ It is not a battalion for the purpose of defending the Baltic states and certainly not the embryonic stage of any army. It is a multinational effort of symbolic and political importance, otherwise BALTBAT is militarily useless. The Baltic states need armies that can defend their own sovereignty, if necessary on their own, not an army for taking part in multinational exercises and in out-of-area operations. The BALTBAT battalion has demonstrated usefulness in training individual soldiers about Western military techniques in peacekeeping and armed combat in defensive situations etc, but it is not an end in

itself.⁵ The creation of a whole army cannot be based upon this single cooperative venture alone which is politically symbolic but not very useful.

Each of the Baltic states needs to create their own modern army, and then cooperate very closely with one another. At this stage it is simply not possible to envisage integration of their armed forces under one single command. There is no common language and it would be difficult to work out who would be in overall charge. A unified command structure could only take place once the political and economic differences between each of the Baltic states was thought through. It would then be possible to concoct a common philosophy to cover such issues as whether an attack on one would mean an attack on all. At the moment, the Baltic states remain separate, sovereign entities with only minimal resources available to each state so that it may be almost impossible to work out defence priorities and matters such as funding.

Some Western countries have offered bilateral help to the armed forces including a mixture of training and equipment, but each gift of goodwill runs the risk of being uncoordinated and some bilateral programmes may duplicate those run by other countries. Partly as a response to this and to increase the effectiveness of Western assistance a political forum known as BALTSEA (Baltic Security Assistance) was established in late 1997. BALTSEA meetings are held three times a year and are attended by the representatives of Ministries of Defence (MODs) and General Staffs. Below them steering groups are responsible for the coordination of multilateral assistance and can identify areas where additional efforts are needed. Once a year, the presidency of BALTSEA will call for a joint meeting of Political Directors from the MODs and Foreign Ministries to evaluate previous cooperation and to discuss further initiatives.⁶

Efforts are also being made to repair the inadequate level of training of the officer class of the armed forces in all three Baltic countries by opening a Baltic Defence College in Tartu, Estonia, in 1999. At least for the first few years, the College will be funded by several Western nations and take as its objective the instruction of military officers in total defence concepts, logistics, political science and strategy, and a thorough induction in military technology. The graduates will be prepared for work with the staff of other nationalities, work in policy-making and long-term planning positions in their MODs. Eventually, the Baltic states will probably reorganise their armed forces along the classic military structure of three armed services and will be able to implement a territorial defence structure. In a classic military structure, the army, navy and airforce are usually subordinated to a Chief of Staff.⁷

Other projects and military exercises that have been set up in recent years, such as Baltic Challenge 98, are aimed at instilling normal Western military practices including the training in mine awareness, counter sniper, patrol and aviation, medical, quick reaction maritime mine, parachuting and humanitarian relief.⁸ BALTRON, the Baltic Naval Squadron, set up in 1998, is a programme that prepares the naval personnel of the three Baltic countries to work according to NATO standards and to coordinate efforts in the implementation of various tasks such as mine clearance and search-and-rescue operations at sea. In the air, BALTNET, the Baltic Air Surveillance Network, first set up in 1997, works towards the compatibility of the radar and data display system with NATO. The Regional Airspace Coordination Centre will be located in Lithuania and will be connected with the national centres in Latvia and Estonia, thus creating a joint air-surveillance system.⁹

In searching for a model for the construction of their armed forces, rather than take the British or American model of the armed forces, the Baltic states could look nearer home, to their immediate northern neighbour, Finland, which has a similar climate and terrain.¹⁰ The Finnish armed forces model would be most suitable as it emphasises independence and survival without reliance on outside help. The Baltic states are also in a similar situation to Finland; no country or alliance in their immediate vicinity is likely to come to their aid or commit themselves to their defence.

The Finnish model is also intended as a system of national mobilisation for general war. It depends upon very high levels of defence mindedness and civic pride. The Finnish model is based upon conscription, a universal reserve and rigorous reserve training. The military system is essentially a mobilisation system, capable of arming and deploying the entire able-bodied population within 24-72 hours. Once established it is relatively inexpensive to maintain (Finnish defence expenditure is 1.8 per cent of GDP).¹¹

As in Finland, the Baltic states need a territorial-based defence concept with training in self-reliance and survival techniques. Small arms, rocket launchers, light-infantry weaponry, anti-tank and anti-assault weaponry including field artillery and mines would be useful for small units trained in guerrilla-like warfare. They would be able to survive for months at a time in the forests and could be highly mobile. It would echo the kind of guerrilla warfare, such as the Lithuanian Forest Brotherhood, that the states kept up against the Soviet occupation until the early 1950s. Practice would be needed in tactical mobility (on foot or in small vehicles) with mortars and other ammunition designed for close engagement of the enemy. At sea, coastal artillery should be installed and fast attack seacraft with missiles will need to be purchased.

As the economies of the Baltic states develop so more sophisticated equipment can be acquired such as anti-aircraft missile systems and aircraft designed for interception and dogfights. The problem here is that they are very expensive to buy, maintain and staff. Furthermore, the distances involved are so small that by the time any interceptor was scrambled, the damage would be done; indeed Russian artillery could bomb the whole of the Baltic states without leaving Russian territory and thus air attack of the territory would be superfluous.

However, the Baltic states should also focus on defensive aspects of ground warfare as part of a defensive strategy to meet a full-scale land-assault. As part of this strategy arms-dumps and supply stores would have to be secretly located in strategic places. This would contravene the terms of the CFE treaty (Conventional Forces in Europe) but the verification system in this treaty is usually practical only for states that are part of military alliances. Full transparency would destroy the national defence capabilities of non-aligned states. For this reason, the Baltic states would have to follow the example of Finland and not become signatories to the CFE treaty.

Without large-scale financial resources attention could instead be placed on purchasing less expensive equipment: small arms, lightweight patrol boats and gliders for surveillance operations and frontier controls. This is partly taking place already as the Baltic states realise that if they wish to be part of the European Union's Schengen Treaty area, their eastern border with Russia and Belarus must be tightened and adequately guarded. Fortunately, the border guards of all three Baltic states are now under the control of the interior ministries which means that

they have access to European Union financial aid. Since the EU does not normally provide aid for military purposes or funding to those programmes that fall under the auspices of the Defence ministries this has led to a curious anomaly. The frontier guards in all three Baltic states are in a healthier condition (better financial resources and material assets) than their counterparts in the military.

Whether or not the Baltic states adopt the Finnish model, the political status of their large, restless Russian minorities and other disgruntled sections of the population will have to be solved. Certainly, a prerequisite of any credible national security policy is not to have vast sections of the population feeling alienated or disadvantaged. Finland, by contrast, has always been a very homogenous country with its defence forces enjoying a high status within society. In the absence of homogeneity, the Baltic states need to create the conditions of statehood, universal support of national armies and a credible, effective frontier control. Patriotism must be instilled in its citizens and access to jobs and social benefits should become conditional on whether one has done national service. National conscription and a reliance on mobilisation of reserve forces must become a source of civic pride. Low wages and poor morale in the armed forces do not contribute to any feeling of solidarity.

The construction of the armed forces of the Baltic states and their adaptability to Western military structures is largely hindered by the poor use of English amongst personnel both at army headquarters and in the field. Just as important is the training of bureaucrats at the MOD level and instilling them with a sense of what is normal practice in a Western-style democracy. Planning and strategy is normally subordinated to parliamentary control and scrutiny. It is also important to overturn the old way of thinking amongst middle and higher ranking officials in the Baltic defence ministries who may have been trained in Soviet military planning. This was largely based on weaponry and equipment usage over short periods of intense activity, but this Soviet concept should be replaced by Western military procedures that are more economically efficient. These make use of equipment and machinery over a longer life span before refuelling, refitting or replacement of existing machinery becomes necessary.

Neither was the Soviet military machine designed to support 'national' based armies, with national defence needs. The Warsaw Pact was really one army under one command in Moscow. Communism did not conceive of conflicting national interests within its own bloc. Therefore, the Baltic states must rebuild their armed forces from scratch along Western lines, with advice from military staff of NATO member countries, before any possible discussion of future membership of the Alliance. Closer collusion between NATO and the Baltic states will probably incur the wrath of Russian politicians. Yet the West is just as interested in not isolating Russia. Thus, regional cooperation, even though one aspect of it may involve the construction of the military and armed forces of the Baltic states, will defer the vexed issue of how to settle the security status of the Baltic states. For now, the priorities of the West should be to reinforce the existence of the Baltic states in the region and securing their sovereignty, not to grant NATO membership and thus antagonise Russia in the process.

US AND RUSSIAN PROPOSALS FOR GUARANTEEING THE SECURITY OF THE BALTIC STATES

At the end of June 1997, the European Commission decided to recommend membership negotiations with Estonia, but not with Latvia and Lithuania. This outcome was caused partly by Estonia's earlier decision to make an individual rather than a joint application for European Union membership. However, the singling out of Estonia at the expense of the other two merely aggravated political tensions between the Baltic states and put in doubt the creation of a Baltic customs union. Since then bitter accusations of betrayal have been heard between Baltic politicians.¹² The situation was somewhat rectified by the Luxembourg Summit of European Union heads in December 1997 when a second round of enlargement was promised to include those East European countries left out in the first round.

In public, the Russians have never opposed Baltic membership of the European Union, in contrast to their declared opposition to NATO expansion¹³. Russia has, however, appeared more ready to sign border demarcation treaties with the Baltic states and settle all outstanding issues of sovereignty and political relations. Thus, a border demarcation treaty was signed between Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, and his Lithuanian counterpart, Algirdas Brazauskas, on 24 October 1997 in Moscow.¹⁴ It was the first such agreement signed between Russia and one of the Baltic states. As of early 1999 the agreement awaits ratification by the Russian Duma.

At the same time, Russia hastily proposed unilateral security guarantees to the Baltic states, largely as a response to the US-Baltic Charter that was about to be signed, and partly to prevent them from drifting further towards NATO. In retrospect, the Russian plan was probably a desperate attempt to stop the inevitable from happening: at the core of the US-Baltic Charter was a part about reaffirming Baltic sovereignty by endorsing their right to choose how their security policies should be based. Regional cooperation would be encouraged through European and Euro-Atlantic institutions such as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) and under the auspices of Partnership for Peace (PfP). Russia would not be excluded or marginalised. Even so, Russia cannot have any right of veto over the direction taken by the Baltic states and must accept their neighbours as sovereign independent nations free to choose their own destiny.

The Baltic states, whilst quick to sign up to the spirit of the US sponsored Charter, were quick to dismiss the Russian offer of unilateral security guarantees. The Baltic states responded that "unilateral security guarantees do not correspond to the spirit of the new Europe and that these, as well as regional security pacts, have never been on the agenda of the Baltic states".¹⁵ Furthermore, they stated that European security was indivisible and that security and stability of the region would be strengthened by the integration of the Baltic states into the European Union and NATO.

The background to Russia's 1997's initiative to provide security guarantees to the Baltic states lay in a fifty page report by the influential Foreign and Defence Policy Council in October 1997. This called for closer cooperation between Russia and the Baltic states as an alternative to NATO membership. The report also argued that Baltic membership of the European Union would bring welcome economic benefits to nearby Russian regions.¹⁶ This was followed by proposals from the Russian Federation to provide security guarantees for the Baltic states. Specialists and commentators of Finland's security and geopolitics may not be surprised to note the

similarities with Russia's proposals to the Baltic states and the 1992 Agreement on the Foundations of Relations between the Republic of Finland and the Russian Federation.

Indeed Russia's security proposals to the Baltic states which would involve the latter staying outside the conflict of great powers appear to be a continuation of an old Soviet Cold War tactic. This is to demilitarise northern Europe, eventually neutralise Norway and make it and the surrounding waters of the North Atlantic a nuclear non-proliferation zone. In October 1997, President Yeltsin even stated that Russia does not "exclude the idea of creating an area of regional security and stability including the countries of northern Europe".

One only has to go back to 1978 when the then President of Finland, Urho Kekkonen, with the support of the Soviet Union, put forward a proposal for a Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone backed up by a superpower guarantee.¹⁷ Again, in October 1987, President Gorbachev launched what became known as the 'Murmansk Initiative', a set of proposals for regional security and arms control in the Arctic region and Scandinavia. The arms control component in the 'Murmansk Initiative' was a response to the introduction into the U.S navy of long-range, sea-launched cruise missiles that the Soviet Union considered a threat to its own nuclear and maritime bases in the Soviet north. The main military aspects of the Murmansk Initiative included a proposal for a Nordic Nuclear Weapons-free Zone and naval arms control measures in the North Atlantic, Barents and Baltic Seas.

It can be inferred that the 1997 Russian proposals to the Baltic states were similarly aimed at neutralising these countries by urging them to stay outside the conflict of great powers. Thus, compare Article 4 of the 1992 Finnish-Russian Treaty¹⁸, where it is mentioned that...

"The Parties [Finland and Russia] shall refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of the other Party and settle their mutual disputes by peaceful means in observance of the UN Charter, the CSCE Final Act and other CSCE documents.

The Parties shall not use, or permit the use of, their territories for armed aggression against the other Party.

*In the case of Finland or Russia becoming the object of an armed aggression, the other Party shall contribute to the settlement of the conflict in accordance with the principles and provisions of the UN Charter and CSCE documents and shall refrain from giving any military assistance to the aggressor".*¹⁹

...and the proposals by the Russian Federation for a "Regional security and stability pact" for the Baltic Sea region which state that "strict observance and implementation in political practice of the principle of no resort to force or the threat of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of the Baltic countries, no resort to weapons of any kind against these countries except in cases of self-defence or in other cases in conformity with the UN Charter".¹⁹

In Article 5 of the 1992 Foundation of Relations between the Republic of Finland and the Russian Federation it is mentioned that... "In situations where the international peace and security, or particularly where the security of either Party, is endangered, Finland and Russia shall communicate with each other, as necessary,

with the purpose of using the means afforded by the United Nations and the CSCE in the settlement of the conflict”.

Similarly, in the 1997 proposals by the Russian Federation for a “Regional Security and stability pact” for the Baltic Sea region it notes “*confirmation of the obligation arising from the principles of the OSCE Final Act to respect the independence, sovereignty and existing frontiers of the Baltic countries*”.

However, the Russian proposals to the Baltic states go further in a confusing subparagraph; “*the commitment arising from the principles of the OSCE Final Act to refrain from the use of constraints aimed at exploiting the exercise by the Baltic countries of rights derived from their sovereignty for selfish interests*”. In other words, no state or institution should use the status of the Baltic countries for selfish purposes of self-aggrandisement, a negative reference to possible NATO expansion.

The major stumbling blocks with these proposals is that should such a zone come into being Russia would have a strategic advantage because of the close geographical proximity of Russian territory and Russian military forces situated in northern Russia. In fact, part of Russia’s western territory is very much indistinguishable from the Scandinavian and North Atlantic theatre of operations. NATO is very dependent on the North Atlantic sea lane patrols for supply and reinforcement in a time of war. Norway, in particular, relies on a strong US naval presence in the Norwegian Sea as a deterrence to the Russian Northern Fleet operating out of Murmansk. For NATO sea lane patrols are as important a component of Western defence as land-bases are to Russia.²⁰

Thus, the Baltic states, with the support of the West, should note the historical comparisons of Yeltsin’s 1997 initiative and apply them to present day realities. The creation of another Finland, or Sweden, that is a zone of neutral or non-aligned states, would be of no security value to either the West or the Baltic states. Such a demilitarised zone would leave the Baltic states exposed and vulnerable and allow Russia the advantage to station forces in the geographical proximity without a counterbalance from the West. Norway and Poland are the nearest NATO member countries, neither of which allows the stationing of nuclear weapons on their soil. In the case of Poland, NATO expansion was agreed with the proviso that there would be no permanent stationing of additional NATO forces on Polish territory. Nor can anyone be sure the present regime in Russia will last and a reversion to nationalism and policies of aggrandisement in Russia is always possible.

A further problem with the Russian proposals is that a regional security and stability pact, as currently envisaged, will hold the Baltic states hostage and make intervention in their internal affairs a matter of course. The principles of the OSCE on minority rights will be used whenever the Russians feel like demanding more concessions. It was easy for Finland to sign an agreement with Russia based on the principles of the OSCE; Finland has no minority problems or border disputes with Russia. The Baltic states do.

Other aspects to Russia’s 1997 offer of security guarantees to the Baltic states include “*A special confidence-building routine in the border area*”. This sounds fine to the observer, but it could easily be interpreted as joint military exercises, or joint border patrols between the border guards of the Russian and Baltic states. If the stated priorities of each country is to counter illegal cross-border trafficking of drugs, people and money laundering, then such cooperation can surely be regarded as a good thing. However, cooperation would need to be tightly regulated and

limited in scope. In this instance, joint exercises would be fairly acceptable but certainly not joint border patrols. Border patrols are strictly territorial sovereign affairs. Borders mark the maximum limit of power by the central authorities of each state and designate where the sovereignty of one country ends and another begins. Not even Finland, a country with a good record of cross-border cooperation with Russia, has allowed its sovereignty to become blurred by conceding to Russia joint authority over border operations. Furthermore, the perfect functioning of a border guard in a time of war should be designed for easy integration into the defensive military structure of that country. No country with a land border and worried about external security threats would want to lose this capability and freedom of action.

“Setting up exchanges of annual plans for military activities in the area where the confidence-building measures apply, and notice of military manoeuvres in the Baltic countries and the adjacent regions of Russia”, has some merit, but a more subversive aim of the Russians would perhaps be to stop the Baltic states integrating their military procedures and defence plans, and carrying out military exercises with NATO countries.

The point about holding *“exclusively defensive military manoeuvres in the Kaliningrad region”* sounds tactless and merely reinforces Russian fears of NATO expansion and perhaps Russian superpower ambitions in the Baltic Sea. Apart from naval patrols operating out of Kaliningrad (mainly for search and rescue operations) is there any need for Russia to hold naval military manoeuvres in the southern Baltic Sea area?

“Visits to military sites on a reciprocal basis” sounds like a good idea and could be appended to the Vienna Document in order to guarantee the involvement of other powers. However, the designated Russian areas adjacent to the Baltic states must include both the Northern Flank Zone and the Central Military Zone, especially the Leningrad, Pskov and Novgorod *oblasti* and Belarus. Missile sites outside the CFE Treaty should also be included, since Russia has an advantage here too.

Russian analysts tend to argue that NATO expansion to the Baltic states would compel Russia to offset such a development by building up the nuclear and conventional forces of the Northern Flank at the expense of Norway. However, this has always been the case. The START II treaty, for example, barely affects the Kola Peninsula and certainly not the number of warheads on sea-launched ballistic missiles. In the case of the CFE treaty, the Baltic states are not signatories, but then neither are Finland and Sweden. For defence and security reasons it is not practical for neutral states to disclose their holdings of weaponry and location of arms dumps and ammunition supplies. Thus, if the Baltic states do join NATO in the future one possible way of assuaging Russia's security concerns would be to encourage the Baltic states to join the CFE treaty.

THE LIMITS OF THE FINNISH MODEL

It may be argued that Finland's post-war relationship with the ex-Soviet Union could provide the Baltic states with a foreign-policy line that is both realistic and practical. As a small state, Finland was able to manoeuvre skilfully between the security concerns of its larger neighbour, the ex-Soviet Union, while seeking to expand its trade and diplomatic links with the West. Whilst remaining outside the conflict of the great powers, Finland was recognised for decades as being part of a

grey zone between East and West. The country was never part of the Soviet military bloc, but the Kremlin was able to exert a large influence over the direction of Finnish foreign policy. In other countries of Eastern Europe the Soviet Union not just influenced but actually controlled the foreign policy of each state mainly through occupation. However, by the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union had come to realise that the foreign policy of a neighbouring state could be swayed more easily by persuasion than through the brute force of occupation. By then, however, events had spiralled out of Moscow's control and each state of Eastern Europe sought refuge in the West's canopy of economic and security institutions as a way of escaping the Russian military and economic sphere of influence.

However, the application of the Finnish example, where a country is not occupied but its foreign policy is heavily influenced, depends on a combination of military and trade diplomacy. Finland's success story was based on the willingness of Western nations to conduct free trade and economic relations whilst allowing Finland to continue its close economic and security relations with the Soviet Union.²¹ The West overlooked the special relationship between Finland and the Soviet Union with regard for Finland's welfare. Finland, for its part, was able to separate economics from politics by emphasising its willingness to conduct trade with both East and West. Ideological questions to do with national security were purely a matter between Finland and Russia. This combination of broad economic relations and a separate national security question allowed Finland the room to expand its diplomatic relations with both East and West.

It was as much the ability of Finland to combine growing economic prosperity with stable security relations with its restless neighbour which made its postwar security model such a success story. Yet, this opportunity will be denied to the Baltic states if the European Union intends to remain a 'union'. As a customs union with an external border tariff and strict anti-dumping quotas the European Union will not lend the Baltic states any favours in trading relations. If the Baltic states are not part of the single market, it will be difficult for them to break in. Thus the economic stability of the Baltic states could be hindered as much from the West as from the East.

By contrast, Finland had to contend with the two economic market areas, the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Free Trade Area (EFTA), both of which were much more benignly disposed towards Finland. Neither placed the kind of economic and political obstacles in the way of association and membership that the European Union is nowadays prone to do to non-member states.

What all this proves is that the Finnish model does have limits, which the Baltic states should be aware of. Neither can the Baltic states simply place all their bets on the hope of improved regional integration and economic growth. As former territory of the Soviet Union, the Baltic states are more strategically significant to Russia. The security dimension cannot be completely ignored even if it means that the Baltic states must continuously remind the patience of the West about taking their security concerns seriously.

ATTEMPTS TO INCREASE NATO'S PRESENCE

The Baltic states will always look to the West for protection. The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council that was set up by NATO will never meet the security needs of

the Baltic States, although the dialogue with Russia may be useful. Yet the Baltic states would probably like to see the presence of a NATO flag in some form. The symbolism of this would not be lost on the Russians. One suggestion is for NATO to open an information and coordinating office in at least one of the Baltic states. Vilnius seems an obvious location since Lithuania is a bridge between the Baltic region and Central Europe. One of the roles of a NATO office would be to provide an information and educational element along the lines of the Atlantic Committees in NATO member countries. However, an office in only one Baltic state would not meet the language, cultural and administrative requirements of the other two Baltic countries.

Once the office is established its activities would be fairly broad and meaningful. It would not only be a unit for the dissemination of information but its additional functions could include the coordination of bilateral projects between a member country of NATO and the Baltic states. Such projects may include the identification and implementation of tasks in cooperation programmes such as in civil and emergency planning and the provision of training and support for the Lithuanian military. Eventually, the office could have a secretariat and be permanently staffed by NATO representatives. Ultimately, the NATO office would coordinate the restructuring of the military in all three Baltic states.

In considering whether to open a NATO office it is important to strike the right balance. It is necessary to avoid the impression in Moscow that NATO is planning a hostile aggrandisement to Baltic territory whilst at the same time reassuring the Baltic states that the office is meaningful and not simply a duplication of functions and activities performed elsewhere. In reality, the Baltic states would have to overcome the heavy opposition of many NATO countries if one or more NATO offices are to be established somewhere in the Baltic states. At least one NATO country, Denmark, regards itself as uniquely placed to help the Baltic states and is jealous of outside involvement by non-regional states. Yet a NATO office would serve a useful function in this respect since it would seek to avoid the Baltic states becoming manipulated by any one country intent on pursuing its own selfish regional concerns. Any aid should be part of a concerted effort by all members of the Alliance and not the sole preserve of any one country.

KALININGRAD

At some stage it will be necessary to involve Kaliningrad in closer regional integration with other Baltic states. The problem with this half-forgotten exclave of Russia is that for historical reasons it is diplomatically highly sensitive. The break-up of the Soviet Union left Kaliningrad, home to 950,000 Russians, as an isolated outpost with its road and rail connections to Russia passing through Lithuanian territory. Russia is reluctant to allow Kaliningrad more autonomy in its economic and political relations with the West out of fear that this would set a precedent, which it has steadfastly denied, to other more go-ahead regions.

The Russian foreign ministry is very cautious. Its attitude is that if you want free trade with Kaliningrad you must have free trade with Russia. This creates a problem for the European Union, which does not wish to antagonise Russia by upgrading economic and cultural links with Kaliningrad. Russia's actions thus deny Kaliningrad the diplomatic representation that it needs in order to lobby for economic and cultural aid in West European capitals, especially in Brussels. As a consequence Kaliningrad is ignored in the policy making of vital Western security

and economic institutions and many countries in the West are reluctant to become involved with this region without excluding Russia.

The possibility of developing so-called 'soft security' policies, that is increasing trade, transport and energy links between Kaliningrad and the neighbouring Baltic and Nordic states would require greater diplomatic pressure in Brussels by the Baltic and Nordic states. But if Brussels could agree a policy, Moscow would find it very difficult to refuse. Indeed, it is in Russia's own economic interests to encourage regional stability since it is more dependent on foreign trade than the Soviet Union ever was. Russia is part of a new mutually beneficial relationship with the Baltic states. The ports of the Baltic states handle about 45 per cent of all Russia sea trade. "A degree of mutual dependency between Russia and the Baltic states arises from the interconnected nature of their [port, rail, energy and economic] infrastructure".²²

Finland has lobbied for greater coordination of economic aid programmes through the 'Northern Dimension' of the European Union, in order to increase stability and socio-economic development in the region within the framework of existing institutions, the European Union, Council of Baltic Sea States, the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, World Trade Organisation, etc.²³ This approach can be used as a positive way of committing Russia to the future stability of the region. However, a retrogressive, nationalist trend in Russia may also forestall all regional cooperation if Russia finds it convenient to express concerns about NATO expansion. Kaliningrad could be one area where this becomes apparent.

A strategy to incorporate Kaliningrad would thus see Russia commit itself to supporting Kaliningraders' right to represent themselves at the diplomatic level in Western international institutions and in neighbouring states such as Poland and the Baltic states. Kaliningraders would be allowed a free hand to develop regional and cultural links with their neighbours as they see fit. Russia would also commit itself to force reductions on land and at sea with a promise not to carry out belligerent exercises in the Baltic Sea region.

The Baltic states and Poland would increase cooperation with Kaliningrad in trade and economic policy and begin cross-border sporting and cultural links. An international university in Kaliningrad could be established with visiting professors from the West and Russia. Such a strategy would envisage Kaliningrad becoming incorporated in regional trade structures with eventual freedom of movement for peoples and goods. Kaliningrad could once again become the prosperous, economic enterprise zone that it was a century ago without necessarily changing its sovereign status. The alternative would be to leave this densely populated region isolated from the rest of the world. Without recourse to an improvement in the population's living standards or lifestyles Kaliningrad will continue to pose an environmental and external security threat to its neighbours.

SUMMARY

NATO membership need not be a be all and end all option for the Baltic states although all three countries would probably like to see the Alliance live up to Article 8 of the Madrid Declaration by firstly, confirming future [unspecified] rounds of NATO enlargement, and secondly, declaring the right of all states in Eastern Europe to decide their own future security arrangements.²⁴ This does not stop the Baltic

states from pursuing their own security programme regardless of whether they are members of NATO or not. Whilst the issue of NATO membership is deferred, the Baltic states must yet complete the construction of their own armies with military structures that attain Western standards, and also ones that will be interoperable and compatible with NATO forces. Peacekeeping along the lines of BALTBAT should only be pursued if new combat skills are acquired such as mine clearing, patrols, and being able to stage an emergency deployment in the event of a regional crisis. Nevertheless, each Baltic state needs to bear in mind that goodwill cooperation with the West is no substitute for 'hard' security. A sense of priorities must focus on increasing the external security of each Baltic state. Although this can be achieved just as much by countering internal instability and building cooperative, multi-level, 'softer' security guarantees than by meeting a hard military threat the leaders of the Baltic states may not view it that way. The leaderships in each of the Baltic states will be equally concerned about focusing on the capabilities of their armed forces to meet a massive ground and air assault, in their case mainly from the east. As an alternative to joining NATO the Baltic states could also increase the presence of the Alliance in their region to as great an extent as possible short of membership. A NATO presence in the form of an office could provide just such a solution.

The Baltic states can also turn to the European Union and Nordic-financed regional aid programmes, which encourage regional integration through numerous soft-security measures, and that serve the useful purpose of anchoring the Baltic states in European economic structures.²⁵ Kaliningrad could become part of these measures after some persuasion and diplomatic pressure on Russia. Overall, the Baltic states must still retain control over the degree of Russian political interest in their country and channel its expression into benign areas. This is because the Russian leadership may yet be tempted to link stable political and diplomatic relations with any attempt to improve the depth of their cooperation in regional economic development. For instance, the Baltic states could concentrate on improving their internal security, especially in the compatibility of residency policy, border control and movement of people with the neighbouring countries of the European Union and Poland. The Schengen Treaty and other areas of Justice and Home Affairs, more commonly known as Third Pillar, can provide a benchmark for the Baltic states to aim for. By improving their internal security, the Baltic states will also make it easier for themselves to advance their case for membership with the European Union and NATO. It is important for the economy and welfare of each of the the Baltic states that their Western borders are as transparent as possible while their Eastern border is as secure as possible. In this way, any risk of a potential disagreement with Russia, which may be used as an excuse of interference in the internal affairs of the Baltic states, could be reduced to a minimum.

ENDNOTES

¹. See, for instance, Henning-A Frantzen, "The Baltic Response to NATO's Enlargement", in **Jane's Intelligence Review**, Vol. 9, no. 10, October 1997, pp. 438-441.

². "NATO's Role In Baltic Security: Lithuania's view", speech by Vygaudas Usackas, Political Director at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Lithuania, for the conference, "The Baltic Region And The New European Security Structure", organised by the Embassy of the United States of America and the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Stockholm, 19 November 1996.

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3. "Perry Says Baltic Nations Not Yet Ready For NATO Membership", **American Forces Information Service: News Articles**, US Department of Defense, Washington, 3rd October 1996.
 4. Clive Archer, "Security Considerations Between The Nordic And Baltic Countries", in **Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 1997**, ed. Bertel Heurlin & Hans Mouritzen (Copenhagen; Danish Institute of International Affairs, 1997), 81-100 (pp. 88-89).
 5. See, for instance an information brochure, "Regional and International Cooperation in Action: The Baltic Battalion", issued by the **Department of International Cooperation**, Estonian Ministry of Defence, Tallinn, October 1998.
 6. "Baltic Defence Cooperation", **Fact Sheet No. 2: Joint Projects**, Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Riga, 1999.
 6. Ibid. Also, "Baltic Defence College Opens In Tartu", **RFE/RL**, 26th February 1999.
 8. "US And 11 European Armed Forces Train For Peace Support In Baltic Challenge 98", **News Release**, US Department of Defense, Washington, 2nd June 1998.
 9. "Baltic Defence Cooperation", **Fact Sheet No. 2: Joint Projects**, Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Riga, 1999.
 10. A national defence system on the lines of the Finnish model has been advocated by, Ronald D. Asmus & Robert C. Nurick, "NATO Enlargement And The Baltic States", **Survival**, Institute for International Strategic Studies, London, vol. 38, no.2, Summer 1996, pp.121-142.
 11. Speech by James Sherr, "NATO Enlargement: Military & Defence Implications For Hungary", Budapest, (**Budapest University of Economics and Sciences**) **BUES Conference**, 'The End Of A Millenium', 26 September 1997 (written notes).
 12. "Inside (and beyond) Russia and the FSU", **Monthly Intelligence Bulletin of the European Press Agency (EuroPA)**, Brussels, Vol. 5, No. 10, October 1997, p.7.
 13. A. M. Zaccor & V. Vaiksnoras, "The Lithuanian Army: A tool for rejoining Europe", in **European Security**, Vol. No.1, Spring 1997, [100-113], p.102.
 14. "Russia Guarantees Lithuania's Security and Promised Defence", in **Lithuania's Integration Into NATO**, Information and Press Department, Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius, no. 16, October 1997,
 15. **Current Latvia**, Information Bulletin, Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Riga, Wk 46, November 10-17.
 16. "Report Calls For Revamped Baltic Policy", **RFE/RL Newslines**, 30 October 1997
 17. Orjan Berner, "**Soviet Policy Towards The Nordic Countries**", (Harvard University Press, 1986) p.19. And, Roy Allison, "**Finland's Relations With The Soviet Union**", (London: Macmillan, 1985), pp.81-83.
 18. "Agreement On The Foundation Of Relations Between the Republic Of Finland And The Russian Federation, 1992", unofficial translation of this and all

subsequent excerpts from this treaty in, **Suomen säädöskokoelman sopimussarja: ulkovaltain kanssa tehdyt sopimukset, 1992**, Finnish Parliament, Helsinki.

19. All excerpts of Russian proposals on security guarantees to the Baltic states referred to here, are taken from papers submitted to the Baltic states and made available to other Western nations at, for example, the **Vilnius Summit of Central and East European Leaders**, 5 September 1997.

20. Ola Tunander, **“The Maritime Strategy And Geopolitics Of The Northern Front”**, (London: SAGE, 1989).

21. Association status with EFTA guaranteed that Finland would not remain aloof from closer trade links with Western Europe and the main historical developments of Western European towards closer integration. At the same time Most Favoured Nation status was granted by EFTA to the Soviet Union and other East European states as a guarantee that their trade with Finland would continue. See, **“Suomen poliittinen historia 1809-1995”** (Helsinki :WSOY, 1995) pp.260-261 & pp.282-283.

22. “A Study In Interdependency: Russian Transport Needs And Economic Development In The Baltic Sea Area”, a speech by Rene Nyberg, Deputy Director General for Political Affairs, Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at **Conference on Regional Integration: Towards a new Hanseatic League?**, Helsinki, 8 October 1997.

23. “The European Union Needs A Policy For The Northern Dimension”, speech by Finnish Prime Minister, Paavo Lipponen, at **Barents Region Today Conference**, Rovaniemi, 15 September 1997. Also, “Development Of The Northern Dimension In The European Union”, Unofficial Translation of a draft memorandum, Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Helsinki, 14 October 1997.

24. “Implications of EU and NATO Enlargement Policies for the Baltic States”, remarks by Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, at the **Conference of the Northern Dimension of the CFSP**, Helsinki, 8th November 1997.

25. See for instance, “The European Union Needs A Policy For The Northern Dimension”, a speech delivered by Paavo Lipponen, Prime Minister of Finland, at the conference, **Barents Region Today**, Rovaniemi, Finland, 15th September 1997.

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