

## **THE BALTIC STATES: PICKING REGIONS, SHEDDING MYTHS, DECODING ACRONYMS\***

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### **Introduction**

Although the Baltic authorities saw membership in the EU and NATO as the only possible long-term solution to all their security concerns, they also pursued an active regional cooperation agenda as an “interim” remedy. The “interim” solution consisted of two essential components: 1) close tri-lateral cooperation among Baltic states; 2) embedding the Baltic states into the wide network of regional organisations and cooperation frameworks. The Baltic governments saw this cooperation primarily as a tool to achieve their ultimate goals. For their partners, it was a means to keep the Baltics happy without extending clear EU or NATO membership guarantees.

The double enlargement created an entirely new strategic situation in the region (or regions) inhabited by the Baltic states. The relevance of different sub-regional and regional organisations and cooperation frameworks has changed accordingly. The need for a major reassessment of necessity, value and importance of these various formats is long overdue. The Baltic governments face the challenge of reassessing their position in the “Europe of regions” and reordering priorities for participation in different regional cooperation settings.

With a new status within the region, the Baltic states will now be able to reallocate more of their energy outside the region. The EU could definitely benefit from their joint or individual efforts to promote cooperation and dialogue with the Eastern neighbours of the EU. The Baltic states have a keen interest in the success of the European neighbourhood policy (ENP) and are well placed to make a positive impact on Europe’s new neighbours.

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However, first and foremost, the Baltic states must shed some of the myths about their tri-lateral relations that haunted them throughout the past fifteen years. The Baltic governments simply need to start afresh.

### **The myth of the Baltic unity**

The Baltic states can claim several different regional dependencies. On various occasions and in different contexts, they are considered as belonging to the Central and/or Eastern Europe, Northern Europe, and the Baltic Sea region. The “Baltic” identity of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania is arguably the best known and the most politically significant, but also the least appreciated among the Baltic states themselves. The term “Baltic states” is a modern political invention of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which has little to do with the historical or cultural identity of the three countries. In the 1990s, the West has comfortably lumped Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia into one geopolitical entity, imposing the “Baltic unity” on the three historically and culturally diverse nations (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Historical and cultural diversity of the Baltic states**

	Statehood first established	Language	Dominant religion	Geographical (self-) identification	Major cultural influences
Estonia	1918	Finno-ugric (Uralic family)	Lutheran	Northern Europe	German, Danish, Swedish, Finnish
Latvia	1918	Baltic (Indo-European family)	Lutheran	Northern Europe	German, Swedish
Lithuania	13 <sup>th</sup> century	Baltic (Indo-European family)	Roman catholic	Central Europe	Polish

Source: compiled by author.

Out of the three Baltic states, only Lithuania has a long-standing tradition of statehood dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The lands now known as Latvia and Estonia were under German rule throughout the Middle Ages, before the Swedes captured them in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. German and Nordic

influences are still evident in the culture, literature and architecture of both countries. Both Latvians and Estonians are also predominantly Lutheran. For Lithuania, a dynastic union with Poland established by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century became the gateway to Europe. Lithuania was the last European nation to convert to Christianity. Only at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century did the destiny of the Baltic countries converge when Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia all became part of the Russian empire.

The historic record of Baltic cooperation during the interwar period was dismal at best. The “Baltic Entente” that was established in 1934 remained nothing more than a declaration, making it easier for the Soviet Union to swallow the three countries one by one. The term “Baltic” itself for Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians is associated with the Soviet rule.<sup>1</sup> The years under the Russian empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Soviet empire between 1945-1991 are the only truly common experiences of the Baltic states.<sup>2</sup>

Despite their dislike of imposed unity, the three countries had to demonstrate a certain degree of close cooperation during the nineties. The Baltic states had at least two reasons to put some effort into the “Baltic dream”: first, to show their socio-economic maturity and readiness to integrate with a larger entity – the EU; and second, to rebuff doubts about their “defensibility” and become eligible for NATO membership. With foreign assistance, the Baltic states launched a number of defence cooperation projects that played an important role in achieving NATO membership (e.g. BALTBAT - Baltic peacekeeping battalion, the Baltic Defence College etc.). Some of those projects were successfully integrated into relevant NATO military structures (e.g. BALTRON – Baltic mine countermeasures squadron, BALTNET – Baltic air surveillance network).

The downside of this cooperation was heated diplomatic battles among the three countries over the right to host a particular project. There also was

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<sup>1</sup> Miniotaitė, Gražina, *Convergent Geography and Divergent Identities: A decade of transformation in the Baltic states* // *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol 16, No 2, 2003, p.212-213

<sup>2</sup> Symbolically, probably the famous manifestation of the Baltic unity was the “Baltic Way” – a massive demonstration against the Soviet oppression that took place in August 1989 when the people of the three countries formed a human chain that ran from Vilnius through Riga to Tallinn.

a “beauty contest” over which country was best prepared for EU and NATO membership (Estonia was seen as the leader in the quest for EU accession, while Lithuania was considered as more advanced towards NATO membership). Although there has always been more competition than cooperation among the Baltic states, it was not necessarily a bad thing as they did eventually achieve their goals.

Today, the foreign and security policy agendas of the Baltic states still overlap considerably. The Baltic governments share similar concerns over Russia, coordinate their assistance efforts to the South Caucasus countries, have a common interest in preserving a strong transatlantic link, and ally on certain security and defence issues within the EU. However, Lithuania has a broader regional agenda and plays a more active role in the Eastern neighborhood than Latvia and Estonia. Relations with Kaliningrad, support for the European integration efforts of Ukraine and support for the democratisation of Belarus rank high on Lithuania’s agenda. Latvia shares Lithuania’s concern over the future of Belarus and seeks to assist Ukraine and the South Caucasus countries. Estonia seems to be less concerned about Kaliningrad and Belarus but does show interest in Ukraine and the South Caucasus.

The three countries should not put too much energy into preserving the myth of Baltic unity as something sacrosanct. The leaders of the Baltic states sometimes seem to be uneasy about voicing their differences in national interests and policies, including those towards Russia. This anxiety is reinforced by the stereotypes that still inform Western attitudes towards the Balts. For example, an article in the *Economist* dramatised Baltic disunity over the question of the Victory Day celebration in Moscow by maintaining that “inability to agree on a common line over going to Moscow highlighted lack of trust – and the success of Russia’s policy of divide, and perhaps, rule again.”<sup>3</sup>

In fact, such an externally imposed unity only constrains national decision makers and limits room for manoeuvre. At the same time, there are cases when the Baltic states would be better off standing firmly together – a common Baltic initiative would have better chances to succeed than an indi-

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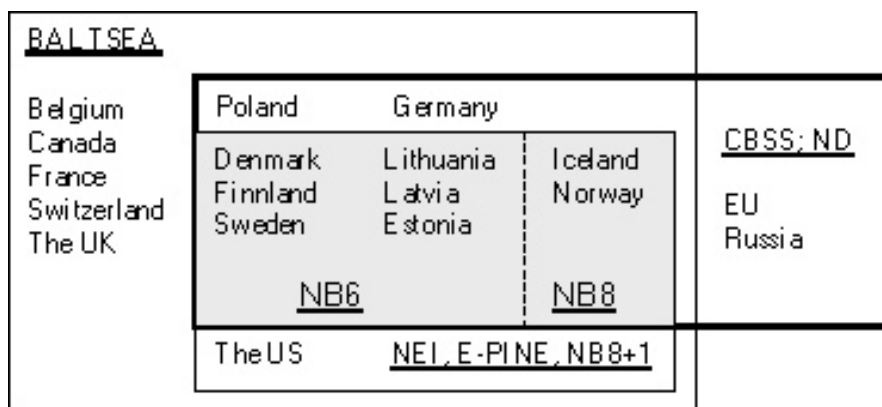
<sup>3</sup> ‘The Baltic Borders and the War: Frontier Justice’, *The Economist*, May 7-13 2005, p. 26

vidual initiative of Tallinn, Riga or Vilnius. But the criterion for evaluating the utility of trilateral cooperation projects should be the value added to the activities of the EU and NATO, not political symbolism. In order to reinvigorate Baltic cooperation, the political elites of the three countries have to acknowledge openly their existing differences, while pursuing together the interests they do have in common.

### **The regional cooperation: churning substance out of acronyms**

Most of the international institutions that now operate in the Baltic Sea area stemmed from the need to anchor the three Baltic states and Russia to Europe at large via a web of transnational economic, social and cultural ties. This effort produced a broad albeit loose network of regional cooperation with quite a few overlapping intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations (see Scheme 1).

Scheme 1. Frameworks of cooperation in the Baltic Sea region.



Different frameworks served different purposes for the Baltic states, as well as their partners. On the one hand, the importance of regional cooperation for the Baltic states has faded with membership of the EU and NATO. On the other hand, some of these formats became important venues for coordinating activities within both the EU and NATO. The challenge that the countries in the region as well as actors outside of it (primarily the EU and

the U.S.) now face is churning substance out of this soup of undecipherable acronyms (see table 2).

With the Baltic membership in the EU and NATO, the importance and relevance of some of the regional formats is changing. The Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and the Northern Dimension (ND)<sup>4</sup> both encompass the same group of participants: eight EU members, the Commission, Iceland, Norway and Russia. Both aim at strengthening dialogue and cooperation on a variety of regional issues, such as economic and social development, environmental and nuclear safety and cross-border cooperation. However, given the comprehensive if general agreements on the four common spaces signed between the EU and Russia in 2005, the importance of the CBSS and ND for all parties concerned may wane. Northern European Initiative (NEI)<sup>5</sup> – an American initiative designed to showcase the U.S. interest in the stability of the Northeastern Europe – was already replaced by a new Enhanced partnership in Northern Europe (E-PINE) initiative, which has yet to show any value beyond a catchy acronym. Although the CBSS, ND and E-PINE could all be instrumental in fostering development of the Northwestern regions of Russia, including Kaliningrad, the centralising trends within Russia could severely undermine such prospects. The Baltic Security Assistance Forum (BALTSEA) was a Western creation of the 1990s to provide support for defence reforms in the Baltic states and the upgrading of their armed forces. Having acceded to NATO, today the Baltic military leadership sees little need for such assistance outside the framework provided by the Alliance itself. NB+1 format was a short-lived one and never transpired into anything substantial.

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<sup>4</sup> More on the ND see: Aalto, Errki, Olavi, 'The Northern Dimension of the EU and the Trends in Security Policy in the Baltic Sea Region: A Finnish Point of View', available on-line: [http://www.bmlv.gv.at/pdf\\_pool/publikationen/02\\_intinf24\\_aalto.pdf](http://www.bmlv.gv.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/02_intinf24_aalto.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Rhodes E. Rethinking the Nature of Security: the U.S. Northern Europe Initiative. – Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, June 2002

Table 2. Regional cooperation formats in the Baltic Sea area

<b>FORMAT (year launched)</b>	<b>ORGANISATION</b>	<b>AGENDA</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>
<b>CBSS</b> - Council of Baltic Sea States (1992)	Intergovernmental organisation	All areas of regional cooperation excluding defence	Baltic States, Nordic States, Germany, Poland, Russia, EU Commission
<b>ND</b> - Northern Dimension (1997)	Non-governmental cooperation	Most areas of regional cooperation excluding defence	Baltic States, Nordic States, Germany, Poland, Russia, EU Commission
<b>NEI</b> - Northern European Initiative (1997)	Non-governmental cooperation	Replaced by E-PINE	Baltic States, Nordic States, the U.S. and Russia
<b>E-PINE</b> - Enhanced partnership in Northern Europe (2003)	Non-governmental cooperation	Cooperative security, vibrant economies, healthy societies	Baltic States, Nordic States, the U.S.
<b>NB + 1</b> – Nordic-Baltic and the U.S.	Intergovernmental cooperation (defence ministers)	Dormant since 2002	Baltic States, Nordic States, the U.S.
<b>BALTSEA</b> – Baltic Security Assistance Forum (1997)	Meetings of the defence officials	Coordination of assistance to the Baltic states	17 nations (incl. all Nordic and Baltic States)
<b>NB8</b> – Nordic – Baltic Eight (1992)	Intergovernmental cooperation	Cooperation in most sectors	Baltic States, Nordic States
<b>NB6</b> – Nordic-Baltic Six	Intergovernmental cooperation	Coordination of policies within the EU	Baltic States, Sweden, Finland, Denmark

At the centre of all these frameworks has stood the Nordic – Baltic cooperation, which was initially based on a loose and non-binding formula of 5N + 3B but later developed into a more cohesive NB8 framework. For Baltic elites, association with wealthy and peaceful Northern Europe had clear merits. Nordic countries were instrumental in bringing the Baltic states back to European structures. NB8 and NB6 are the acronyms that will likely have a lasting impact on foreign and security policies of the Baltic states. Today,

the NB8 is a microcosm of Europe itself: there are members of both the EU and NATO (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Denmark), there are non-aligned countries (Finland and Sweden) and there are non-EU countries (Iceland and Norway). In addition, they are all relatively small and share geographic proximity to Russia. It is obvious that all parties concerned can benefit in one way or another if the NB8 group becomes more cohesive and coordinates their foreign and security policies more closely. The NB6 format, encompassing the EU members, already seems to be working – it has become a routine for Prime Ministers of the six to meet before the European Council meetings.

The Nordic Council (inter-parliamentary body) and the Nordic Council of Ministers (inter-ministerial body) have been reluctant thus far to open their doors to full-blown participation of the Baltic states in their activities. Although the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers hold joint sessions with the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers respectively, the Baltic states still fall under “the Adjacent Areas Programme” together with Russia and the Arctic area. If the NB8 cooperation is to deliver, the Nordic countries will have to accept the Baltic states as equal partners, not apprentices. By the same token, the Baltic states will have to prove some proficiency in areas of utmost importance to their Northern neighbours, such as environmental protection and gender equality.

Beside the Northern European identity, the Baltic states are often mentioned among the Central and/or Eastern European countries. Out of the three, Lithuania presumably has the strongest affiliation with Central Europe. The majority of the Lithuanian public would more likely identify with Central rather than Northern Europe due to historical and cultural reasons. In 2000, with the creation of the Vilnius group to coordinate NATO integration efforts, Lithuania did earn some visibility as a Central European state. The Central European identity is especially reinforced by the country’s strategic partnership with Poland. In early nineties, the two countries managed peacefully to bury their interwar hostilities. Currently, Lithuania and Poland share the same interests in fostering democratic trends in Belarus and turning Kaliningrad region from a grey zone into “a window of opportunity”. In the defence realm, Lithuania and Poland have a common battalion (LITPOL-BAT); Lithuanian troops serve with Polish contingents in Kosovo and Iraq; Vilnius has also decided to join the Polish Battle Group.



Apart from the challenges posed by the Kaliningrad Oblast and Belarus, the Baltic Sea area seems to be an island of peace and stability amidst an ocean of trouble brewing around. The major hotspots of the world are relatively far away, and major military conflicts in the closest vicinity are also highly unlikely. The region is not immediately exposed to potentially large inflows of illegal migration in contrast to some southern European countries. In comparison to Western Europe, there have been no major terrorist attacks in any of the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea. In other words, the efforts to desecuritize the agenda of regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea area and in particular the Baltic-Russian relations were to a large extent successful. However, the countries of the region (especially the small ones) should mind the trap of the “golden corner” mentality - no region or country should feel completely safe in the era of unpredictable, uncertain, unidentifiable and increasingly transnational threats.

### **Making a difference in the European neighbourhood**

With the accession of the new member states, the neighbourhood agenda of the EU became more complicated than before. The new neighbours – Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the South Caucasus countries - are still in the process of transition towards democracy (with a varying degree of success), they are poorer and less stable, and ultimately, they are far from fulfilling EU membership criteria. All of this means the EU will be unable to offer them a membership promise anytime soon. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was to a great extent designed as a response to this challenge.

Arguably, the EU's relations with the Eastern neighbours are the area of the CFSP in which the accession of the new member states has had the greatest impact. The keen interest of the new members in the stability, economic and social development of the Eastern neighbours prompted the EU as a whole to pay more attention to and put more energy into this area. The new members brought a critical mass of knowledge and expertise about the new EU's neighbours. It still remains to be seen if this increased attention will transpire into substantial financial support for the new neighbours when the decisions on the 2007-2013 financial perspectives are made. It is clear that the EU member states will have to find a balanced approach

towards allocating financial aid among the Mediterranean countries, the Balkan countries and the Eastern neighbours.

Despite the active participation of the Baltic states in deliberations over the ENP, the actual success of their initiatives is constrained by their lack of experience in procedural matters. Even good initiatives are doomed to fail if presented in the wrong, amateurish way. It is a malaise common to most new member states. Their initial stance of “we know better” how to deal with Russia, Ukraine or Belarus did not fare well with the old members, but it taught the new members “a lesson in humility”. Yet, the Baltic states have a natural interest in trying to “make a difference” in the closest neighbourhood and in some cases they have already delivered. First of all, these countries are now responsible for the safety of the Eastern borders of the EU.<sup>6</sup> Curiously, Lithuania is the only European country bordering Russia to the West (Kaliningrad region). Latvia and Lithuania both border Belarus to the East. Safeguarding these borders is no easy task given the smuggling, human trafficking, trafficking of drugs and guns, organised crime, illegal migration and other challenges that could hit the EU ever more heavily if the development gap between the wealthy club of the West and the rest widened further. Stability, peace and economic prosperity in the Eastern neighbourhood should therefore be the top priority of the foreign and security policy of the Baltic states.

Lithuania, together with Poland, claims to have put Belarus, Ukraine, and the Kaliningrad region on the EU agenda long before they themselves became members. Even more remarkably, the three Baltic states already for a few years have been supporting and promoting democratic transformation and defence reforms in the South Caucasus countries, whereas the EU only in 2004 extended the ENP to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Such activities help to diversify the foreign policy of the Baltic states away from focusing

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that the border issues between Russia and Latvia and Estonia remain unsettled. The Russian government signed the border treaty with Estonia in May 2005, only to renounce it in June 2005 objecting to the way the Estonian parliament carried out domestic ratification procedure. Russia also cancelled the signing of the treaty with Latvia objecting to the unilateral declaration that Latvia wanted to add to the treaty, which mentioned the Latvian-Russian peace treaty of 1920. The Russian side interpreted the declaration as a “territorial claim” on the part of Latvia.

solely on Russia, while, at the same time, helping their major interest to see Russia becoming a normal democracy.

What make the Baltic states well placed to pursue an active policy is first and foremost the experience, expertise and credibility gained during their own transformation period. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania share the same past as former Soviet Socialist republics with Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and the countries of the South Caucasus. However, thus far, only the Baltic states managed to become established democracies and members of the EU and NATO. Their experience is particularly valuable to their Eastern neighbours in two regards: first, they know how to shake off the Soviet legacies and transform centrally planned economies into free market economies; second, they know how to adapt their legal and political systems and meet other EU and NATO demands in order to become eligible for membership. Another somewhat subjective factor is knowledge of the Russian language. The Baltic states could well play the role of interlocutors for day-to-day and people-to-people contacts between the EU and the Eastern neighbours. The challenge now for Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn is to “sell” these advantages to the rest of the EU, and the EU has to find a way to exploit the strengths of individual members to the benefit of all.

The Baltic states individually and together are too small to assist, for example, Ukraine in its complex agenda of cooperation with the EU. Given the constraints of diplomatic weight, human and financial resources, they inevitably must coordinate their endeavours not only among themselves but also with other interested parties. The Nordic-Baltic cooperation provides one such opportunity, which has not yet been exploited in any significant way. Cooperation with other new EU members in the Central Europe and in particular Poland provides another opportunity. The key role of the Polish president Alexander Kwasniewski and the Lithuanian president Valdas Adamkus in the crisis resolution during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine provided an especially convincing example of the possible benefits of such cooperation. The presence of the High Representative of the EU Javier Solana in Kiev with the two presidents provided the EU clout and guaranteed the success of the whole affair.

Although the activism of the Baltic states towards such difficult cases as Belarus or the South Caucasus may seem venturesome, the rationale behind

it is sound. Some politicians in the Baltic states tend to argue in favour of the “golden corner” mentality, which would entail a policy of self-restraint and general passivity towards any sensitive security issue that could draw their countries into unnecessary meddling with other nations, especially Russia. In their view, respective Baltic governments should focus exclusively on domestic problems. However, mainstream political thought seems to favour international activism, on the assumption that only an active foreign policy, even if risky, can ensure security for small states.

New EU members and the Baltic states have two alternative ways to proceed with their efforts towards European neighbourhood. On the one hand, there could be a certain informal specialisation among the Central European countries. For example, Poland would focus on Ukraine, Lithuania – on Belarus, while Latvia and Estonia – on South Caucasus providing a contact point for the rest of the members. Obviously, these individual efforts should only be complementary to those of the relevant EU institutions, especially if the post of the EU foreign minister is eventually established.

Another way is to focus on certain functional aspects of the ENP: conflict resolution, border control, or institutional reforms. In any case, the Baltic states will have to be as pragmatic as possible in order to avoid spreading their resources too thinly. Lithuanian decision makers in particular face such a danger, as they picture Lithuania as a regional leader pursuing a very ambitious agenda of foreign affairs.<sup>7</sup> Lithuanian ambitions to be among the leading EU members in all crucial areas related to CFSP – relations with Russia, the transatlantic link and the ENP – outstrip the capabilities of the country, creating a potentially dangerous overstretch, which could diminish rather than strengthen the influence of Lithuania within the EU. After all, being a “regional centre” cannot be a goal in itself – the strengthening of democracy and the rule of law in Lithuania’s Eastern neighbourhood should be the key strategic aim for Lithuania.

Summarising the current position of the Baltic states in the Europe of regions, several important conclusions can be drawn. First, with membership

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<sup>7</sup> For example, see: ‘Lithuania’s New Foreign Policy’, Speech by Artūras Paulauskas, Acting President of the Republic of Lithuania, at Vilnius University, 24 May 2004, available online: [http://www.urm.lt/data/2/EF51153536\\_Paulauskasspeech.htm](http://www.urm.lt/data/2/EF51153536_Paulauskasspeech.htm)

goals attained, they should reinvent their tri-lateral cooperation by focusing on pragmatic interests, rather than political symbolism. Second, the Baltic authorities must reassess the utility of participation in different regional frameworks – they cannot devote equal attention to all possible forums and must be choosier towards the “alphabet soup”. Third, they have a natural interest in devoting more of their resources to the Eastern neighbourhood, which could well become their greatest value added to the EU’s CFSP. All in all, the importance of regional cooperation to the Baltic states has not diminished since their accession to the EU and NATO. Despite the new international status gained by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the foreign and security interests they pursue, the challenges and problems they face, and the tools they have to tackle those problems will continue to be regional in nature.

### **Conclusion: sorting out priorities of regional cooperation**

Whatever merits the various regional cooperation formats that were set up during the 1990s had for the success of the Euroatlantic integration efforts of the Baltic states, their utility after double enlargement has to be reassessed.

- ❑ **Prioritising Nordic-Baltic cooperation.** It is crucial for Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn to sort out their priorities of regional cooperation. The membership in the EU and NATO is requiring a growing amount of time, people and energy from the three capitals. Due to objective constraints of resources, the Baltics will be unable to give the same level of attention to all the regional frameworks they were actively engaged in during the past decade or so. They will inevitably have to concentrate on priorities. Their cooperation with the Nordic countries in NB8 and NB6 formats should top the list as best-suited frameworks to coordinate policies and pursue interests they have in common within the EU and NATO.
- ❑ **Making a difference in the Eastern neighbourhood.** After having ensured their long-term security and prosperity, the Baltic states are now well placed to make a difference in regions further East. They need to shake off the image of “security consumers” and become contributors. The

Baltic states should further strengthen their efforts in the immediate Eastern neighbourhood and beyond: Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and the South Caucasus. They have the expertise that new Eastern neighbours of Europe could use to pursue democratic transformation. In order to compensate for the lack of resources, the Baltic states should seek for ways to combine their efforts among themselves but also more actively involve the Nordic countries. The Baltic states should also continue to work with Poland which shares the same interest of reaching out to the Eastern neighbours.

- ❑ Exploiting the weight of the EU. The Baltic states should exploit the tools available within the EU. While the EU does not yet consider it an important priority amidst the heated debates over the constitutional treaty, the question of the future EU relations with the Eastern neighbours will not go away. Sooner or later, the EU will have to decide whether they want to see Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and the South Caucasus as part of the European project. Nobody would dare to forecast when these countries could become eligible for EU or NATO candidacy, but without these countries being anchored to the key European institutions, Europe's security architecture would remain incomplete. With the democratisation and integration of these countries, the Western community would help Russia to shed its imperial past once and for all.
- ❑ Keeping the U.S. involved. The Eastern European neighbourhood is not on top of the agenda for the U.S. At the same time, having no direct stakes in the region makes it easier for Washington to take a relatively tough stance vis-a-vis Russia. It is important for the Baltic states and Poland, as well as the whole EU, to keep the U.S. interested and involved in regional developments. In the case of Belarus, it is of particular importance to develop a common transatlantic strategy that would encompass sticks to the authoritarian leadership of the country and carrots to its fledgling civil society.