

BALTIC STATES IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF RUSSIA'S SECURITY POLICY

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Introduction

Russia's unexpected offer at the end of 1997 of security guarantees to Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia was met with surprise not only in the Baltic states but also in the West. The Baltic states considered the Russian proposal as not relevant to the real needs of bilateral and regional cooperation and totally incompatible with the growing spirit of European cooperation and greater integration processes which should include them.

The Russian offer, however, seems sufficiently logical in the broader context of Moscow's policies toward the Baltic states and its opposition to NATO expansion. Moreover, it also illustrates well Russia's traditional geopolitical thinking. This article will describe the main directions of Russia's relations with Lithuania and the other Baltic states and present the broader context forming these views. The article will also attempt to show that the issues of military Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) in the Baltic region are much less relevant than the need for enhanced cooperation in the field of so-called civic security.

GEOPOLITICAL BALANCE - OF - POWER THINKING VERSUS INTEGRATION OF SECURITY COMMUNITY

Russian politicians in domestic as well as in international fora, at least since late 1993¹, have stressed that Russia is a great power and its foreign policy should play an appropriate role. The Russian ruling elite and much of the intelligentsia, as an expert on Russia's history observed,

“are less concerned with low living standards than the loss of power of influence, perhaps because inwardly they doubt whether Russia, can ever equal the West in anything else. Power and influence for them take the form of imperial splendor and military might second to none.”²

Although Russia no longer, at least officially, considers the Western democracies as antagonists, the answer to the question whether this great Eurasian country will associate itself with the Western community or retreat into traditional assertive expansionism is still unclear.

There are many indications suggesting that Russian foreign policy makers are returning to the postulates of the classic balance of powers and realpolitik thinking. The lowest common denominator in Russia uniting liberal, democratic, neo-communist, orthodox, and chauvinistic thinkers is the claim of the country's great power or superpower status.³ Therefore, the incompatibility between the vision of an integrated Euro-Atlantic security community of democratic states, shared by the majority of

¹ For the evolution of Russian security debate see, for example, Alexander Kononov, “International Institutions and European Security: the Russian Debate” [ed. by Marco Cornovale], *European Security and International institutions after the Cold War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995) or James Sherr, *Russian Great Power Ideology: Sources and Implications* (Sandhurst: Conflict Studies Research Center, July 1996).

² Richard Pipes, “Is Russia Still an Enemy?” *Foreign Affairs*, 76, 5 (September - October 1997), 68.

³ Of course, one should not make this an absolute claim because as some representatives of the Russian academic elite have noted there is not a single viewpoint on this question. In addition to the ruling anti-NATO rhetoric there are also voices promoting constructive cooperation with NATO in all directions. Pavel Ivanov, Boris Mikhailov, “NATO i interesi nacional'noi bezopasnosti Rosssiy” [NATO and Russian national security interests], *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnoshenya* [World Economics and International Relations], 8 (1997).

European post-communist societies, and Russia's policy based on a power play by "key European powers." The first vision is embodied in the process of NATO enlargement, the second in Russia's opposition to it.

Russia's anti-enlargement rhetoric is apparently based on the belief that NATO enlargement to the East would interfere with Russia's national interest and that Baltic, Polish, or even Balkan interests are a permanent part of Russia's historical interests, which do not change as political systems and ruling ideologies change inside Russia. Foreign policy analysts, supporting such a view, assert that Western democracies should accept Russia's claims and together with her engage in the "power play", which would be the cornerstone of European stability. "World War II proved that when there are substantial reciprocal interest, there is also the possibility of cooperation - even between Western democracies and the Stalinist dictatorship."⁴ In 1997 Minister of Defense General Igor Rodionov proposed that a European order should be restored around the classical balance of power, and not integration by suggesting that the 19th century "Concert of Europe" was the most relevant model for the modern European security system.⁵

Even in academic circles Gorbachev was criticized for failing to preserve a favorable balance of power by underestimating the Soviet military potential and the importance of military factors for international stability. According to this view, Russia fell into strategic and economic traps by signing the START-1, START-2 treaties, and the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE).⁶

One of Moscow's main goals, while pushing its plans for reconstructing the European security system, is to oppose NATO becoming the foundation of pan-European security. Russian diplomacy persistently emphasized the importance of OSCE as a key European security body. This Russian strategy for pushing the model of a collective security system was not greeted with enthusiasm by Western countries. A successful collective security system requires the community of states to use, or at least threaten to use force against the aggressor state. This poses a number of questions and problems. In the case of violent conflict, how can international intervention be functionally effective and legitimate? How can some general understanding about who is the aggressor be reached? Even if some effective and legitimate decision-making mechanism could be invented,⁷ the problem of implementation, the highly complicated question of using international military forces would still remain. And that means, that in all cases violations of international norms could not probably be met with effective action.⁸ The historical experience of the League of Nations serves here as the best illustrative example: the collective security system after World War I was unable to

⁴ Igor Maksimichev, "Russia and Western Europe" [ed. by Robert D. Blackwill, Sergei A. Karaganov], *Damage Limitation or Crisis?* (Washington. London: Brassey's, inc., 1995), p.181. To reinforce his realpolitik arguments the author notes only examples from 19th and early 20th century European history, but insists that they are relevant to post-cold war Europe (p. 173).

⁵ *The Times* (March 12, 1997).

⁶ Irina Zhinkina, "Stabil'nost' mezhdunarodnich otnoshenii i vneshnyaa politika Rossii" [The Stability of International Relations and Russia's Foreign Policy], *S.Sh.A.: ekonomika, politika, ideologiya [USA: Economy, Politics, Ideology]*, 4, 1997.

⁷ Russian experts and politicians proposed settling the extremely ineffective processes of the OSCE by creating a special Security Council as the key decision making body within the OSCE. Sergei Oznobistchev, "Russia and the International Security System, War report," *Bulletin of the Institute for War & Peace Reporting*, 34 (June 1995), 28.

⁸ *The Future of European Security* [ed. by Christoph Bluth, Emil Kirchner, James Sperling] (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing Company), 1995, p.10-13.

prevent World War II (because the European community failed to integrate Germany and include the U.S.), but allowed the USSR to play power games.

The argument of some Russian analysts that the failure to establish a Europe-wide collective security framework on the basis of the OSCE and NATO expansion to the East helped or even induced Moscow to consolidate the post Soviet republics into an area of Russian influence⁹ is not a convincing explanation. Russia views the “geopolitical space” of the former Soviet Union according to the rationale of the balance of power.

Proponents of the geopolitical school of thought insist that the Cold War with its bipolarity originated not from ideological confrontation, but had a purely geopolitical nature. Only reality is geopolitics, and international relations should be subordinated to it. Because one of the principle laws of geopolitics is the law of the block-confrontation, that is the inevitability of territorial expansion: “from territorial state, to state-continent.”¹⁰ That is why the Russian dominated Eurasian block is considered to be a geopolitically predetermined reality.

THE CONCEPT OF THE “NEAR ABROAD”

The picture would be incomplete without mentioning the established important distinction in Russian security discourse between the “near abroad” and the “distant abroad.” According to this view, the former USSR members are deprived of normal rights in international relations and their sovereignty can be legitimately restricted. There is considerable ambiguity concerning the Baltic states, which are not members of the CIS and have made much progress in reintegrating into the Western community, but, nevertheless, are treated as a special case not just by Russian politicians but also by the Western security community. This conception of the “near abroad” is a logical consequence of Great Power ideology and the realpolitik approach to international relations, for it implies that Russia has special responsibilities, interests, and rights there. The demand to preserve and exploit the USSR defense perimeter and even push it out as far as possible reflect mentalities left over from the Soviet period rather than a careful assessment of Russia’s security interest.

Democrats in Russia openly declare that they were thinking about the reintegration of the former Soviet republics from the very moment of the signing of the Agreement on Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and mention energy, capital, and financial resources as the main tools of influence and leverage to realize this “principal objection.”¹¹ In 1992 Yevgenii Ambartsumov, then the chairman of the Russian parliament’s Committee on International Affairs, stated that:

“Russia is something larger than the Russian Federation in its present borders. Therefore, one must see its geopolitical interest more broadly than what is currently defined in maps. That is our starting point as we develop our conception of mutual relations with ‘our foreign countries’”¹²

While acknowledging the formal independence of the former Soviet states, the “near abroad” advocates believe that Russia should compete with foreign influences in the “post-Soviet geopolitical space” and forbid the formation of alliances between CIS members and third countries. The emergence of “new power centers” in CIS space is

⁹ Andrei Zagorski, “Russia and the CIS,” *Redefining Europe. New Patterns of Conflict and Cooperation* [ed. by Hugh Miall] (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996), p. 78-79.

¹⁰ Aleksandr Dugin, “Pochemu nikak nezakonchitsya cholodnaya voina” [Why the “Cold War” Will Never End], *Krasnaya zvezda* (April 25, 1997).

¹¹ See for example the interview with Sergei Shakhrai. *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (December 12, 1996).

¹² Quoted in Rajan Menon, “In the Shadow of the Bear. Security in Post-Soviet Asia,” *International Security*, 20, 1 (Summer 1995), 158-159.

perceived as extremely dangerous.¹³ The most salient feature of this ideology of reintegration is the strict rejection of the principles and practices of European integration. Its adherents view the model of the EU as dangerous. They insist that military and political integration should proceed before economic integration. “The best and most suitable example for the CIS is not the experience of building and developing the European Communities, but, probably, the experience of German unification.”¹⁴ The consolidation of post-Soviet space is a top priority and condition sine qua non for the survival of Russian statehood, thus the internal destabilization of former republics is a legitimate means to this end.

Although Russia is not capable of full-scale imperial revanche and the forceful takeover of most former Soviet republics, it is also not prepared to respect the democratic sovereignty of newly independent states in the post-Soviet geopolitical realm. Thus, the Russian political elite must choose between the partial reintegration of part of the former Soviet Union into a confederation like structure or try to create a system of dependent and dominated states with only formal independence “very much along U.S. relations with Central American states.”¹⁵

No doubt, such fatalistic predicaments from a realpolitik perspective seem to be logical and natural. At the same time, the profound economic degradation, which caused a dramatic deterioration in Russia’s military power and armed forces, considerably constrains Russia’s great power ambitions.¹⁶

There is a growing awareness in the Russian security community about the dangers which Russia’s geopolitically driven strategy for the speedy integration of the CIS contains for Russia itself. As Dmitri Trenin, an analyst from the Carnegie Moscow Center, notes”:

“To avoid the rapid and destabilizing expansion of NATO even if only by the admission of a single country - Moscow would be ill-advised to attempt to patch together anything resembling a Warsaw Pact, this time within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This tactic has already shown itself to be counter-productive, provoking new divisions among the members of the post-Soviet Commonwealth, rather than consolidating the CIS around Moscow.”¹⁷

This is the most general context in which the security policy of Lithuania and the other Baltic states should be understood and the notion of the “Russian sensitivities” interpreted.

THE BALTIC STATES: STILL FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS?

Ever since the collapse of the USSR, Western officials, academics, and journalists have struggled to find a term to denote the twelve countries that emerged in its place. The three Baltic states, of course, were and continue to be treated separately.

The “Former Soviet Union” has become the accepted term for describing the ex-Soviet republics for several reasons, but, unfortunately, it is also frequently used in

¹³ “SNG: nachalo ili koniec istorii?” (CIS: The Beginning or the End of History?), *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (March 26, 1997).

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 5.

¹⁵ Blackwill, Karaganov, *Damage*, p. 19.

¹⁶ Sergei Rogov argues that the collapsing “de-industrialized” Russian economy can not provide sufficient financial support even to meet the minimal needs of the armed forces. “Bezopasnost’ strani i voenaya reforma” [Security of the Country and Military Reform], *Krasnaya zvezda* (November 23, 1996), 3.

¹⁷ Dimitri Trenin, “Avoiding a New Confrontation with NATO”, *NATO Review*, 44, 3 (May 1996), 17-20.

regard to the Baltic states. Some of the reasons are innocent and perhaps justified, but others have profound negative consequences.

At least since early 1993, the term East-Eastern Europe was used to define the area composed of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and with some reservations the Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. In this context some researchers suggested that it is possible to consider Latvia and Estonia as new members of the Northern region and even predicted a probable split of the three Baltic states.¹⁸ Lithuania was apt to emphasize the historical and cultural tradition of its Central European identity.

Compared with the rest of the former Soviet republics, the Baltic States are viewed as a special case in legal terms and in their relations with Russia. The very label “former soviet republic” should not be relevant for the Baltic States - Western governments never recognized their forcible incorporation into the Soviet empire and they are not successors states of the USSR and thus do not have any obligations toward the political or military arrangements of the former USSR or Warsaw Pact. In this respect their situation is like that of Sweden or Finland.¹⁹ However, Russia and Western policy-makers do not always treat the Baltic states as part of Central Europe in geopolitical terms.

In this context it is worth noting the remarks made by former British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind maintaining that Western leaders should stop referring to the group of countries that emerged from the collapse of the USSR as the “Former Soviet Union.”²⁰ Rifkind argued that such references are “unwise” because they carry with them “the unconscious legitimization” of the possible return of Russian rule there in the future. Instead Western governments should consider these countries in terms of strictly geographic categories.

Commenting on Rifkind’s statement, Paul Goble noticed that the term “Former Soviet Union,” like any other word chosen to designate a group of countries, can and does have profound policy consequences.²¹ Anyone who lumps these countries under the term “Former Soviet Union” will almost inevitably view them through a Moscow prism and thus evaluate them in Russian terms rather than in terms of their often very different interests.

The choice of terminology has been at the center of most public discussions on the enlargement of NATO. Far too often, Moscow has insisted and Western governments have at least implicitly acknowledged that the former Soviet border continues to have meaning, even as both sides insist that they are not interested in drawing lines in Europe.

But the dangers that arise from such terminological continuity are even greater when they shape the structure of Western government institutions. Goble points out that in many cases Western foreign ministries are divided in precisely the same way as they were structured when the Soviet Union still existed.

It is time to end the search for a single term to comprehend the group of countries whose greatest commonality was in the past rather than in the future. And that in turn means that “Former Soviet Union” should be retired as both a term and an idea.

¹⁸ Christoph Royen, “The Visegrad Triangle and the Western CIS: Potential Conflict Constellations,” *East European Security Reconsidered* [ed. by John R. Lampe and Daniel N. Nelson] (The Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Sudeuropa-Gesellschaft, 1993), p. 93.

¹⁹ Egidijus Vareikis, “Baltic States in the Concept of European Security,” *Branderburgishes Bildungswerk* (Berlin, May 6-9, 1996).

²⁰ Paul Goble, “It’s Time to Forget the FSU (CIS: Analysis From Washington)” (RFE/RL, March 11, 1997).

²¹ *Ibid.*

In the debate on NATO enlargement so far, unfortunately, the argument that the three Baltic countries are a “special case” not only among the former Soviet republics, but also in Central Europe remains the strongest argument against extending Alliance membership to the three states. The term “Baltic states” should not be just a code name for the territory where Russia has some legitimate (less than in other republics of former Soviet Union) interest.

Even though the Baltic states were mentioned, one would say rather too cautiously²² in the final communiqué of the Madrid summit on NATO enlargement, there is a strong feeling that the West seriously takes into consideration “Russian sensitivities” about the escape of the Baltics from its, at least, soft control.

On such occasions the earlier declarations on Baltic policy made by Russian politicians are apparently being revoked. For example, Andrei Kozyrev, then Russia’s Foreign minister, told Russian ambassadors in January 1994 that Russia “should not withdraw from areas which have long been spheres of interaction, spheres of Russian interest” such as the CIS and the Baltic states. It is symptomatic that Kozyrev, subsequently, denied that his statement also referred to the Baltic states. Ambiguity and contradicting statements seems to be the deliberate tactics of Russian diplomacy dealing with the Baltic states.

RUSSIA’S BALTIC POLICY: CAN IT BE ARTICULATED?

The only sure element in Russian policy toward the Baltic states is its fierce and often unarticulated opposition for their accession to NATO.

This seems to be a Russian foreign policy priority, a boundary that should not to be crossed. As a Russian scholar put it:

“admitting any former Soviet republic into NATO would be regarded by Russia as a provocative move, just as Washington regarded the 1962 deployment of Soviet missiles in Cuba. This idea has already taken root in Russian political circles”²³

In an article²⁴ in 1994 Alexei Arbatov admitted that the Baltic states were unlikely to reintegrate with Russia in any sense and were not any security threat to Russia if it did not push them into military alliances with other states by its position-of-strength policies. Arbatov did not explain how the participation of the Baltic states in “military alliances” could threaten Russia’s security.

It seems that Russia does not have a sufficiently elaborated or rationally articulated Baltic policy, but relies on Moscow’s general strategy toward the West and its involvement in the “near abroad.”

The justifiable question arises: Is the so-called “Monrovisky Doctrine”, whose meaning is vague and subject to interpretations from quite benign to very aggressive, toward the Baltic states just a policy by default and not a comprehensive long term strategy?

²² The text stated that “alliance expects to extend further invitations in the coming years” without exactly saying to whom and when. The communiqué stops short of a pledge to admit any specific country (except Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, of course) saying only that “we recognize with great interest and take account of a positive developments towards democracy and the rule of law in the southeastern European countries, especially Romania and Slovenia.” An even vaguer nod was made into direction of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia: NATO leaders saluted the “progress achieved towards greater stability and cooperation in the states of the Baltic region who are also aspiring members. See excerpts of remarks by Solana about invitation to three countries to join alliance, *International Herald Tribune* (July 9, 1997).

²³ Vladimir K. Volkov, “Expanding NATO Eastward. View from Moscow,” *Problems of Post Communism*, 44 (May-June 1997), 66

²⁴ Alexei G. Arbatov, “Russian National Interest,” Blackwill, Karaganov, *Damage*, p. 65.

In the spring of 1994, then Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev proposed a plan for the Central and Eastern European countries, including the Baltic states, by which Russia and the West would give so-called “cross security guarantees.”²⁵

This was, in effect, a proposal to manage jointly the security ‘stock’ of Central and Eastern Europe. Europe would be divided into three spheres: the Western sphere covered by NATO security guarantees; the CIS sphere with Russian security guarantees; and a NATO-Russian ‘security condominium’ covering much of Central and Eastern Europe.²⁶

After the agreements at the Helsinki summit by Presidents Boris Yeltsin and Bill Clinton and the signing in Paris on May 27²⁷ with NATO of the “Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security,” Moscow admitted the inevitability of NATO expansion. Russia was forced to accept its strategic withdrawal from Central Europe,²⁸ in which some Russian strategists wanted to preserve a ‘buffer zone’ - a group of states with weak defense capabilities. This ended for a while Russia’s attempts to push its project of “cross security guarantees” for Central Europe.

Many Russian policy makers admitted that NATO expansion would be less than catastrophic long before the Helsinki summit. In 1996 First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Ivanov suggested that Russia is going to “be in touch with reality” and will agree with the extension of NATO membership to the “Visegrad group.”²⁹ Ivanov mentioned completing the adaptation of the CFE treaty and greater CIS integration while preserving Russian military bases there as the key priorities of Russia’s foreign policy.

The Baltic states were surprised when during the meeting of the U.S. and Russian heads of state in Helsinki on March 23-24, 1997, Yeltsin announced that Russia would guarantee the security of the Baltic countries and find the good will to maintain positive relations with them.

This declaration was preceded by the release on February 11, 1997 of a document in which Moscow codified a new “long-term” policy for the Baltic states.³⁰ This policy called for greater Russian influence there and preventing these countries from joining Western institutions.

While the statement claimed that Moscow sought “to fully realize the potential of good neighborliness” between Russia and the Baltic countries, this was clearly not its most important message.

Appearing in the heat of Russia’s campaign against NATO expansion to the East, the document asserted Moscow’s total opposition to NATO membership for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Their entry into the Western alliance, the statement said “would have an extremely negative impact” on relations. The only basis for Baltic security is “the preservation of their status outside blocs.”

²⁵ Andrei Kozyrev, “Common European Partnership,” *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (February 2, 1996).

²⁶ Èeslovas V. Stankevièius, “NATO Enlargement and the Indivisibility of Security in Europe: A View from Lithuania,” *NATO Review*, 44, 5 (September 1996), 21-25.

²⁷ *The Economist* (May 17, 1997), 43.

²⁸ However, some Central European states still worry that their security interest could be jeopardized in the quest for compromise between Russia and NATO in the newly created NATO-Russian Permanent Joint Council. “Central Europeans Hold Their Breath,” *International Herald Tribune* (March 17, 1997).

²⁹ Igor Ivanov, “Faktor sili” [Power Factor], *Krasnaya zvezda* (November 19, 1996).

³⁰ *ITAR-TASS news agency (World Service)* (February 11, 1997).

According to Paul Goble, this statement was “the most authoritative indication yet that Moscow intends to take steps to include the Baltic states within a Russian sphere of influence.”³¹

The document outlined the main themes of Russia’s Baltic policy.

- First, the long-standing Russian claim that Estonia and Latvia are mistreating their ethnic Russian minorities.
- Second, steps should be taken to “strengthen” the position of Russian capital in the economies of the Baltic countries using Moscow’s ability to shift the flow of goods across Baltic territory.
- Third, Moscow should not sign any border agreements with the Baltic states until there are “specific measures” to improve the situation of Russian “compatriots” there.

Because NATO made the existence of border agreements a requirement for membership, Moscow could demonstrate its the ability to block the efforts of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to rejoin the West. Yeltsin’s spokesman Sergey Yastrzembzsky made this point very eloquently when he declared that the Baltic states “even from a formal point of view fail to meet very many criteria set by NATO countries themselves. (...) These requirements include clear-cut relations with neighbors. Taking into account the experience of Latvia and Estonia, it is evident that the issue is not topical now.”³²

It is interesting to note that Lithuania was not directly mentioned in these Russian policy guidelines. This was done in a roundabout way by stating that the Russian government will insist on “creating favorable transport conditions for the Kaliningrad region.” This particular demand is addressed to Lithuania through which the movement of goods, services, and military equipment between Russia proper and Kaliningrad takes place.

Formally, Russia does not have any formal complaints to Lithuania concerning its transit to Kaliningrad region. When Poland joined NATO, Lithuania became the only landbridge through non-NATO territory to the Kaliningrad region. And the full negative geopolitical weight of the region’s “question” fell on Lithuania.

In the policy guidelines Moscow did not make any direct hints in this direction. But nevertheless, any time Russia mentions Kaliningrad it sends a signal to Lithuania and the West about its ability to complicate the issue.

According to the official Russian position, the Helsinki summit “prevented a resurgence of the cold-war spirit.”³³ However, Moscow warned that this spirit could be recalled. Russian Foreign Minister Yevgenii Primakov persistently repeated that NATO “is perfectly aware” that the whole system of Russian-NATO relations will collapse in the foreseeable future if the former Soviet republics, including the Baltic states, are included in the process of NATO enlargement.³⁴

Nevertheless, Primakov stipulated that Russia could change its position concerning the bid of the Baltic states for NATO membership if the Alliance would transform itself into an organization free of any cold-war element.

Obviously wanting to change the general negative image of Russia’s Baltic policy, Primakov declared that if the Baltic states, despite Russia’s objections, joined NATO, Russia would not react as it did in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

³¹ Paul Goble, “Putting Pressure On The Baltics (Russia: Analysis From Washington)” (RFE/RL, February 14, 1997).

³² “Russia, U.S. in for no bargaining, Yeltsin’s spokesman says,” *BNS* (March 14, 1997).

³³ *bid.*

³⁴ “Interview with Primakov,” *Novoe Vremya* (November 15, 1997).

These overtures of Russian diplomacy could be perceived as an attempt to change its traditional Baltic policy of threats to a policy of persuasion.

Before leaving for the NATO-Russia summit in Paris, Yeltsin again warned that NATO would “fully undermine” its relations with Moscow if its expansion included former Soviet republics. He stated that he hoped to convince the Baltic states that joining NATO would not improve their security.³⁵

After signing the Founding Act between Russia and NATO in Paris, Moscow began to use it as an argument against Baltic states membership in NATO.

For example, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Nikolai Afanasievski stated that now that Russia and NATO had signed the accord in Paris they could no longer consider themselves as adversaries, and this situation “seriously weakens the arguments of countries that want to join the alliance”³⁶ After reminding that Baltics bid for NATO “would not serve the interest of their security, and on the contrary would create immense tensions” between Russia and West, Afanasievski asserted that “Russia is willing to take into consideration, in the most benevolent fashion, all the concerns of the Baltic countries concerning their security.”

These declarations could be understood as Moscow’s attempt to impose on the Baltic states its supported model of “cross security guarantees..”

BALTIC CHARTER AND RUSSIAN SECURITY GUARANTEES

This even became more clear in the context of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright’s visit to Vilnius on July 13, 1997. She asserted that the U.S.-Baltic charter will not provide security guarantees. “The Baltic Charter is not a security guarantee, it is an umbrella that allows U.S. to cooperate on the basis of shared values and shared goals.”³⁷

The very first draft of the U.S. sponsored Baltic security plan was presented to the Baltic Defense Ministers on September 24, 1996 and received rather cautious Baltic support.

The U.S. proposal, called the Baltic Action Plan and unveiled by Secretary of Defense William Perry, called for Washington to lobby European governments to include the Baltic states into the European Union, to help improve relations between the Baltic states and Russia, and to broaden bilateral ties between Washington and the three northern European countries. The plan was described in most general terms and its real content was not known.

In Vilnius Albright did not further explain the charter’s content, but noted that it would reflect common U.S. and Baltic views on an undivided Europe and mention the importance of cross-border cooperation.

It is worth noting that Albright came to Vilnius from St. Petersburg where she had two days of discussions with Russian Foreign Minister Primakov. As the Russian press reported, Primakov expressed Moscow’s traditional opposition toward Baltic membership in NATO, but noted that he has nothing against the creation of a security guarantee system for the Baltic states if Russia was also a part of it.³⁸

³⁵ Phil Reeves, “Russia Balks over Baltic States,” *The Independent* (May 28, 1997).

³⁶ “No need for Eastern Europe to join NATO, Kremlin says,” *Agencia EFE* (June 2, 1997).

³⁷ “U.S. Secretary of State Albright promises Baltic inclusion in NATO,” *DPA* (July 13, 1997).

³⁸ Marina Kalashnikova, “Madlen Olbrait razocharovala Pribaltiku” [Madeleine Albright disappoints Baltics], *Komersant-daily* (July 17, 1997), 4.

In May, however, Primakov said that Moscow was prepared to negotiate reliable security guarantees with the Baltic states, either with or without Russia's participation.³⁹

That was a more than obvious attempt by Russia to push its model of "cross security guarantees" for the Baltic states.

RUSSIA'S "SECURITY PACKAGE": THE DIFFERENTIATED APPROACH TOWARD THE BALTIC STATES?

The next, and rather far reaching, step in this direction was made by Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, who made new efforts to block possible future NATO membership of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia

On September 5, 1997 during a speech in Vilnius at the international conference "The Peaceful Coexistence of Peoples and Good-Neighborly Relations - a Guarantee of Security and Stability in Europe," Chernomyrdin announced that Russia would offer Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia "a comprehensive security package if they remained unaligned.⁴⁰ He also proposed establishing a "hotline" between the Russian military command in Kaliningrad and the Baltic states as well as mutual advance notification for all military exercises in the region. The Russian premier offered to hold only "defensive" military exercises in Kaliningrad, have an increased number of mutual visits by warships, and establish no-maneuver zones in the Baltic Sea.

These Moscow's gestures toward Lithuania were obviously aimed at strengthening the new image of a cooperative Russia. Moscow's benevolent approach is supposed to indicate a new trend, a new more positive view in Russia's politics.

On October 25, 1997 presidents Brazauskas and Yeltsin signed the long awaited border treaty which was the "first border agreements between Russia and a former Soviet republic."⁴¹

This gave Moscow the opportunity to give the highest profile to its new Baltic policy. Yeltsin also offered Brazauskas a new package: Russia would provide unilateral security guarantees for the Baltic States by signing with them a legally binding international agreement or a multilateral "Regional Security and Stability Pact."

He described his country's offer to the Lithuanian President in his characteristic style: "No unexpected strides would be made by Russia, and if someone threatens Lithuania they will have to deal with Russia."⁴²

Lithuania politely rejected the proposal noting that "A new agreement on good neighborly relations and assured mutual security, or a regional pact are not necessary."⁴³

By saying "a new agreement" Lithuania was clearly referring to the Lithuanian-Russian Treaty on the Basis for Relations Between States, signed on July 29, 1991. In the treaty both parties agreed on the fundamental principles of relations and on the right of each state to choose independently how to guarantee its security, pledged to refrain from the use of force and the threat of the use of force and to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inviolability of borders.

³⁹ *BNS* (May 24, 1997).

⁴⁰ *DPA* (September 5, 1997).

⁴¹ "Brazauskas' Moscow visit to spark Lithuanian-Russian relations," *DPA* (October 22, 1997).

⁴² "Lithuania uninterested in Russian security guarantees," *DPA* (October 25, 1997).

⁴³ Rokas M. Tracevskis, "Lithuania and Estonia Reject Russian Security Guarantees," *The Baltic Times* (November 6-12, 1997).

In the Baltic states and the West there was a general perception that Russia would prolong its border disputes with the Baltic countries in order to prevent them from joining NATO. It was Russia's "trump card" in its effort to subdue the desire of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia to join NATO.

On the eve of President Brazauskas' official visit to Moscow, Foreign Minister Algirdas Saudargas commented that the visit marks the beginning of a new Russian-Baltic relationship.⁴⁴

Saudargas predicted that Russia would choose Lithuania as its partner for intensive cooperation in the Baltic region. That was not so difficult to anticipate, because relations between Russia and Lithuania have been less rocky than with Latvia or Estonia.

Lithuania signed an agreement with Russia on September 8, 1992 that led to the departure of Russian forces by the end of August 1993 - one year before the Russian forces withdrew from Germany as well as Latvia and Estonia. Lithuania had granted the small Russian minority the right to its citizenship by the "extremely liberal provisions" of its citizenship law.⁴⁵ As many as 37 percent of the Russians living in Lithuania speak the local language, "the highest share for any post-Soviet republic."⁴⁶ Russia's relations with Lithuania have been less tense than with Latvia or Estonia. In view of these differences some Russian analysts predicted that once united Baltic front could split, with Lithuania on one side and Estonia and Latvia on the other.

Did Russia by signing the border delimitation treaty with Lithuania try to use the differences between the Baltic states for its own benefit? Or was it just the first concrete step of Moscow's new "positive" Baltic policy? If the second, then quite understandably Russia decided to start with the least problematic Baltic state.

Russia sees the movement of the EU, unlike NATO, to the East in a positive light. Moscow considers such an advance acceptable, if its economic ties with new members did not suffer. Moscow analyst Dmitry Trenin argued that if the Baltic countries were taken into EU, Russia "itself would have one foot in the union."⁴⁷ He suggested that Moscow occupies a solid position in Latvia and Estonia. The hundreds of thousands of ethnic Russians would become the first "Eurorussians."

One could say that Russian foreign policy experts realized that Russia "can not match its exalted aims with existing means,"⁴⁸ But there is also another explanation based on the theory of "cross-security guarantees."

Before the Helsinki summit Primakov mentioned Russia's concerns about the "red lines" that can not be crossed in NATO expansion, making clear that the success of the Helsinki agreement would depend on several points, one of which was "no" to Baltic NATO membership. Moscow described the Helsinki summit as a relative success. Does this mean that the American and Russian presidents accepted a code language in which "success" means that the Baltics will never get into NATO, as Jim Hoagland observed.⁴⁹

An analytical report in the fall of 1997 prepared by the influential Council on External and Defense Policy attempted to present the ideological grounds for proposing security guarantees. The authors of the study invited the formulation of a "New Agenda

⁴⁴ "Brazauskas' Moscow..." *DPA*.

⁴⁵ Fadeyev, Razuvayev in *Damage* [ed. by Blackwill, Karaganov], p.116.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

⁴⁷ Dmitry Trenin, "Baltics at the Crossroads," *The Moscow Times* (July 16, 1997).

⁴⁸ Sherman Garnet, "Help Russia Join the Real World," *International Herald Tribune* (March 17, 1997).

⁴⁹ Jim Hoagland, "The Very Tricky Consequences of a NATO Deal with Russia," *International Herald Tribune* (March 8-9, 1997).

for Moscow Relations with the Baltic States” and tried to create the impression that Russia was starting to search for an honorable dialogue with the Baltic states as it was possible “already today to change the vector of mutual relations in the positive plane” because “normal and good-neighbor relations of Russia and the Baltics are completely compatible with the interest of the two sides.”⁵⁰

However, the main leitmotif of the study - the search for a way by “civilized means” to keep Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in Russia’s sphere of interest as well as the categorical (and cautionary) assertion “only friendly Russia can give the Baltics real security guarantees. Western guarantees will not help for sure, if the relations with Moscow are bad.” The idea of formulating specific political-military CSBMs for the Baltic region, a kind of “regional security table” was also mentioned: “Russia should propose its own version of guarantees, in the region, which could include limitations of naval weapons, measures of confidence, including the bilateral, etc.”⁵¹

However, the Russian Government’s campaign of vilification and threats against Latvia, begun in the early spring of 1998 whose pretexts were the Latvian Waffen SS veterans march through the streets of Riga and the dispersion in Latvia’s capital of the Russian speaking pensioners making excessive social demands showed that Russia was not yet ready to seek an honorable dialogue with the Baltic states. It is worth noting that the second report of the Council on External and Defense Policy on Russia’s relations with the Baltic states valued Russia’s pressure on Latvia in an essentially positive manner and justified the Russian foreign policy line to make the intensity of Russia’s political and economic relations directly dependent on the determination of the Baltic states to establish relations based on good neighborliness.⁵²

FROM SECURITY GUARANTEES TO REGIONAL COOPERATION

Russia had to accept reluctantly the idea that the topic of security guarantees did not have a clear future; that the question of security and trust in the Baltic region has to gain a contemporary sound. That was once again affirmed by the presidents of the Baltic states, who on November 10, 1997 in Palanga issued a joint communiqué reiterating their shared position that unilateral security guarantees do not correspond to the spirit of the new Europe and that such guarantees, as well as regional security pacts, had never been on the agenda of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. They stated that security and stability in Europe would be strengthened by the integration of the Baltic states into the EU and NATO. However, the presidents welcomed the expressed wish of Yeltsin to further expand good neighborly relations and mutually beneficial practical cooperation.

Russia decided that the time had come to change accents. During his visit to Sweden on December 3-4, 1997, Yeltsin made a gesture of good will by announcing that from January 1, 1999, Russia would unilaterally reduce by more than 40percent its

⁵⁰ “Rosyia i Pribaltika [Russia and the Baltics],” *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (October 28, 1997).

⁵¹ On May 24, 1997 Primakov raised the issue that Soviet-built defense systems in the Baltic states, including the early warning systems and naval bases, could be brought into the NATO fold. *ITAR-TASS* (May 24, 1997). Some Russian analysts are very actively proposing on the basis of, or according to, the model of BALTBAT to establish joint Russian-NATO-Baltic units. Such projects as well as mixed Russo-Baltic exploitation of Baltic military ports are conceived to be a solution helping to dilute the “new dividing lines in the region.” This might probably be how Moscow imagines the draft of the practical implementation of the cross-security guarantees for the Baltic countries. Igor Maslov, “Baltiyskiy aspekt rasshireniya NATO [Baltic aspect of NATO Expansion],” *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (April 16, 1997).

⁵² I. J. Jurgens, S. A. Karaganov, “Russia and the Baltic - II,” *Council on External and Defense Policy* (July, 1999), 7, 24-25.

ground and naval units in northwest Russia. Lithuania and the other Baltic Sea states evaluated these developments positively as their implementation would contribute to the security and stability of the region and of Europe as a whole. Swedish Foreign Minister Lena Hjelm-Wallen noted that Yeltsin had changed his wording: “today we did not hear anything like [a pact and guarantees], today it was confidence and cooperation.”⁵³ However, on the same day December 3 in Stockholm Primakov, nevertheless mentioned that Russia “is ready for *cross-security guarantees*. The United States could guarantee together with us the security of the Baltic states.”

It became clear that the idea of security guarantees, at least in its first appearance became totally unacceptable. On December 12, 1997 the EU Presidency issued a Declaration on the Russian Federation’s proposals regarding security aspects, confidence-building measures, and regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. The Presidency on behalf of the European Union noted with interest the Russian proposals. The EU stressed “its commitment to the principles of the indivisibility of European security and the fundamental right of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and all other sovereign States to choose their security arrangements freely.”

On December 19, 1997 Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksander Avdeyev visited Lithuania and held talks with Foreign Ministry officials. Avdeyev clarified that the Russian President’s proposal did not mean that Russia intended to guarantee Baltic security against possible threats from other countries. Instead, it meant that Russia guaranteed not to jeopardize the Baltic states themselves.

On January 20, 1998 Foreign Minister Primakov described the Partnership Charter signed between the United States and Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia as a “normal development”, and said that the Russian proposals on regional Baltic security arrangements have been misinterpreted: “Our position is often distorted. No one ever spoke of unilateral guarantees.” He said that security guarantees to the Baltic States should be given not only by Russia, but also by other countries: the Nordic countries, U.S., and NATO. Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennadii Tarasov also said that Russia’s security proposals to the Baltics deserved more attention if the Balts really wanted to strengthen mutual trust. But he added that Russia understood the non-binding character of the charter and therefore would issue its final stance after it sees how the charter works in the context of Baltic and all-European security.

As if answering these comments of the Russian official, on January 21, 1998 Strobe Talbott said that the U.S. wanted to enhance confidence-building measures in the Baltic Sea region by supporting cooperation between Russia and Europe through all available channels. Russia was also being strongly urged to realize ever more strongly the importance of practical cooperation in the Baltic region and direct attention to its economic interests in the region. On January 23, 1998 Chernomyrdin called for measures to prevent the EU’s planned enlargement from severing future members’ economic contacts with Russia and other members of the CIS and suggested that Russia discuss the problem with the EU and candidate states. Chernomyrdin told the conference that Russia supports the idea of setting up a Baltic common energy market: “Time has arrived to use to the full the geographic advantages of the Baltic region and turn it into a true bridge between Europe and Asia.”

Notably he said the recent proposals by Yeltsin were “yet another proof of the importance we attach to the principle that security in the Baltic region and the north must be based not on the philosophy of the balances of military potential but on large-scale confidence-building measures and practical cooperation.”⁵⁴

⁵³ B. Goldsmith, “Yeltsin upbeat with success on Sweden trip,” *Reuters* (December 3, 1997).

⁵⁴ *Interfax News Agency* (January 23, 1998).

All these changes for the better showed that Russia was quietly forsaking the idea of security guarantees for the Baltic states or at least was trying to find a more positive interpretation for these proposals. In his February 17, 1998 annual report Yeltsin offered the Baltic states “to give up the search for illusionary threats and to concentrate attention on the creation of good neighborliness and mutually beneficial partnership.” However, while speaking about regional cooperation he expressed his preparedness “to work for the development of regional cooperation and for strengthening measures of confidence at a multilateral level with the fate of all interested states.”

Yeltsin stressed the priority of the OSCE, noting that Russia “consistently maintains the position that the OSCE plays a systematic role in creating the architecture of security of the European continent.”⁵⁵

Russia understood the goal of Western states to maintain as constructive as possible cooperation relations with Russia, above all in the context of NATO expansion. Russia presented the “Baltic pact” proposal at the time when it was already practically clear that the decision on the membership of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary had already been made. By initiating discussions about Russian “security guarantees” for the Baltic states, Russia attempted to take over the initiative into its own hands and force the West to listen more closely to its voice and demands.

After the Madrid meeting in which Germany achieved its strategic goal, the NATO invitation to Poland, the efforts of German politicians to demonstrate their understanding for Russia’s “concerns” became more active. Chancellor Helmut Kohl stressed that it is vitally important also to include Russia in European security agreements: on the one hand, opening the doors of NATO and the EU, and on the other hand, partnership with Russia are political concepts, an integral part of “security for all Europe,” and they are not in conflict, he asserted at the international conference on security problems in Munich on February 9, 1998, at which about 200 experts from the whole world participated.⁵⁶

MILITARY CSBMS AND REVISING THE VIENNA DOCUMENT

The head of the Russian general staff Anatolii Kvashnin at the OSCE conference stated Russia’s conditions for continuing the reduction of weapons and armies: 1) the balance of conventional weapons remains, 2) military equipment or armies can not be stationed at the Russian border.⁵⁷ The possibility of converting the Russian proposals of guarantees into the language of regional CSBMs was discussed in some Western states. One should notice that in political, diplomatic, academic discussions the CSBMs are understood in two ways: the military context and in a broader understanding of the CSBMs. The concept of the military nature of the CSBMs was begun to be used in the context of the OSCE and for a long time was understood to include the strictly military security aspects.

The Vienna document, later renewed in 1992 and 1994, established the results of the 1990 negotiations on CSBMs. This document determined state obligations, whose purpose was to increase trust and transparency in the OSCE sphere of states in respect to purely military might. The Forum for Security Cooperation with continuous negotiations in Vienna discusses CSBM questions in the OSCE forum.

⁵⁵ *Interfax* (February 17, 1998).

⁵⁶ *Reuters* (February 7, 1998).

⁵⁷ “Russian general outlines disarmament terms,” *DPA* (January 27, 1998).

One has to admit that talks in the OSCE about Baltic and Balkan regional “tables” were begun considerably earlier than Russia’s proposals appeared. The idea of regional “tables” was realized in the Stability (Balladur) Pact, but this was limited strictly to the questions of borders and national minorities, i.e. military aspects were not discussed.

The military aspects of the CSBM in Russia’s proposals of guarantees were stressed increasingly less when it began to raise the economic dimension, but this aspect received unexpected activation.

In 1998 an article in a German journal Political Director of the Federal Foreign Office Wolfgang Ischinger raised the idea of applying “regional tables” to the Baltic region.⁵⁸

Ischinger raised the question: Is it possible to reach three goals at the same time while expanding NATO: 1) not to have gray zones of security, a security vacuum in Eastern and Central Europe; 2) to strengthen and maintain the right to choose freely security structures/unions as a basic element of the security system enveloping Post-Cold War Europe; 3) to implant and nurture this new security order not against Russia, but with it.

It seems that Ischinger made the silent assumption that in fact this was impossible because the three goals contradict one another. He asserted that:

“the proposal for a “regional table” to discuss security -related issues in the Baltic deserve close attention.<...> Germany does not want to force anyone into regional arms control measures, but is convinced, that regional military confidence-building can contribute towards creating a cooperative environment in the Baltic.”

Ischinger also noted that any agreements which were to remain restricted to countries in the region would lack balance if the U.S. were not involved along with Russia.

This article by the German diplomat can serve as a basis for suspecting that there is a desire to view the Baltic states as an “unifying chain” between NATO/EU and “associated Russia,” using the instruments of the Vienna Document review.

However, the urgent German proposal to regionalize security and revitalize “the regional tables” did not receive broader support “in the interested region.”

In a Non-paper reflecting their general position Finland and Sweden underlined that there are no military threats in the Baltic region. They especially emphasized that political-military cooperation is an aspect of wider security and the Baltic region must not be separated from the common security of the entire Europe. This step of Sweden and Finland was understood to be a tactful way of rejecting the Russian proposals on regional security arrangements and the support for them by Germany and France.⁵⁹

The views of the two Scandinavian states essentially coincided with the position of Lithuanian diplomats. President Adamkus already on March 26, 1998 in the statement “On the Development of Relations with Russia and the Security and Confidence Building Measures” made it perfectly clear that the discussion on the security elements in the military area was at this time not relevant in the context of bilateral relations and regional cooperation.⁶⁰

Adamkus also drew attention to the fundamental priorities of the Lithuanian-Russian relations timetable stressing that Lithuania is prepared to cooperate with Russia in many fields: economic, social, environmental. The text of the statement also shows

⁵⁸ Wolfgang Ischinger, “Not against Russia: Security and Cooperation in the Baltic Region,” *Internationale Politik* (February 1998).

⁵⁹ *Helsingin Sanomat* (April 23, 1998).

⁶⁰ “Lithuanian President proposes Russia should promote security, develop cooperation,” *BNS* (March 26, 1998).

that Lithuania's view toward the CSBMs is not negative, but stresses that many factors, and not only military elements, promote indivisible security and trust. It is most important that the new proposals would not regionalize security and "tear away" the region of the Baltic states from the general European context.

Moreover, the questions of trust and openness are mentioned in the proposals of the Lithuanian president. Lithuania declared that it is taking the initiative with concrete actions on a bilateral basis to discuss the possibility of informing the OSCE states about considerably smaller changes in military units or their movements than was foreseen in the 1994 Vienna document, and also offered to swap additional evaluation visits and inspections according to the Vienna document provisions. Of course, Lithuania hoped that its neighbors and especially Russia would express their preparedness to use these suggestions. Adamkus's policy statement received a positive evaluation from Yeltsin,⁶¹ but did not receive further distribution.

The question of special military CSBMs in the Baltic regions died down, and the OSCE summit meeting in Istanbul on November 18-19, 1999 adopted the 1999 Vienna document, i.e. approved the conclusion of the revision of the 1994 Vienna document on measures to strengthen trust and security. The renewed document was supplemented with a separate section on regional measures which foresaw the possibility for states to accept voluntarily additional regional and bilateral means "according to concrete needs." Thus, the issue of regional measures was not separated from the sphere of Europe's general undivided security.

One should state that the discussion about regional Baltic CSBMs or "regional tables" died out naturally because the arguments and, at least temporarily, the motives were exhausted. The reminder of Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov to his colleagues from the Nordic and Baltic states at the meeting of foreign ministers in St. Petersburg that "the proposals of Russian President Yeltsin made a year and a half ago still apply"⁶² did not make an impression on anybody and did not receive greater attention. And that is understandable. Not finding any support among the states of the region the Baltic political-military CSBMs proposals could not be realized first of all because they were not compatible with the currently in Europe dominating and ever becoming stronger integration processes. The documents of the April 1999 NATO summit meeting affirmed the determination of 19 states, including into the Baltic states, to further expand the Alliance and the December summit meeting of the European Union states in Helsinki invited both Latvia and Lithuania to begin membership negotiations (Estonia had received such a proposal a year earlier).

On the other hand, the countries located around the Baltic Sea are relatively well equipped with the institutional tools necessary to cope with new threats and challenges. Therefore, it is hard to find convincing arguments substantiating the need to create new regional structures. One should make full use of the currently existing institutions. The CBSS and bilateral contacts are the principle structures providing the web of cooperation in the region.

Lithuania tried to use its term as chairman of the CBSS, which started on June 23, 1998, to demonstrate its complete compliance with the principles of regional

⁶¹ The Press-office of the President of the Russian Federation on April 14, 1998 issued a statement declaring that Russia is prepared to continue active dialogue and practical cooperation in various fields with Lithuania with the hope that by joint efforts "we will be able to convert our common home - *Baltiia* [the Baltic] - into a region of peace and stability." There was the unexpressed notion that for Russia a "peaceful *Baltiia*" is a "*Baltiia* without NATO."

⁶² Speech of Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs I. S. Ivanov at the Nordic and Baltic states foreign affairs meeting according to the formula 5+3+1 in St. Petersburg, May 15, 1999.

cooperation, but especially stressed the necessity to include Russia more deeply into Baltic cooperation.

Lithuania was striving to mark its presidency with the efforts aimed at concrete cooperation in the region. Lithuania had shown that practical involvement of the Kaliningrad and St. Petersburg regions in the wider network of the Baltic Sea region's cooperation was among the priorities of its chairmanship in the CBSS. Lithuania attached great importance to the inclusion of Kaliningrad region into the framework of the CBSS as well as through the development of the Euroregion "Nemunas" and "Baltic" projects.

Lithuania's relations with the Kaliningrad region hold a special place in its overall Russian policy and regional cooperation. Lithuania encourages the Kaliningrad region to pay more attention to economic cooperation with neighboring states and the EU in order to develop the production of goods in the district and thus promote the social and economic development of the area. It is believed that a higher level of social and economic development of the Kaliningrad region will enhance integration process in the Baltic Sea Area.⁶³ It is self evident that such a policy - directed to the expansion of economic, ecological, social, and cultural cooperation as well as to the new risks and challenges dominating regional security such as illegal migration, environmental problems, organized crime - best suits the real interests of the two states and the whole region and therefore has the best perspective. The future will show whether Russia will abandon its traditional thinking and utilize fully the possibilities offered by such cooperation.

CONCLUSIONS

It is difficult to predict today how Vladimir Putin's replacing Yeltsin as Russia's president will influence its relations with Lithuania and the other Baltic states. It is equally difficult to state whether Putin's exhibited determination and pragmatism not recognizing any ideological constraints will be transferred to foreign policy and particularly to its relations with the Baltic states. The new (corrected) defense doctrine, signed by Putin in January 2000, lowering the nuclear threshold by providing for its use when all other means of crisis settlement have been exhausted, might signal the start of a "harder" Russian foreign policy. However, that would be a hasty conclusion. In an official American reaction Washington did not think that the doctrine strayed in any major or significant way from the concept presented in 1997 by Moscow. One could even believe that growing internal problems, especially the war in Chechnia, will force Russia to cooperate more with the West and also utilize the opportunities for constructive cooperation with the Baltic states and the whole Baltic Sea region.

Russia's proposals to provide security guarantees for the Baltic states were not relevant to the real needs of the region, but with the broader tasks of Russia's policies toward the West, primarily its opposition to NATO expansion, which was understood as resulting in Moscow losing its traditional spheres of influence. Russia's traditional geopolitical thinking, looking suspiciously at the strengthening of integration processes in Europe, supports this perception.

On the other hand, one can explain the certain understanding in the West about the Russia's "security guarantees" proposal not only by its desire to strengthen dialogue and cooperation relations with Russia, but also by certain doubts about the "political"

⁶³ Vygaudas Uđackas, "Linking Russia with New Europe. Kaliningrad could become gate of opportunity," *The Washington Times* (January 12, 2000).

status of the Baltic states, which, moreover, has increased as their integration into European and trans-Atlantic structures became stronger.

The main priorities of the region are strengthening the cooperation of states, subregions in the economic and social spheres and developing common ecological projects. It is essential to solve as quickly as possible the new threats - illegal migration, environmental problems, organized crime. To solve these problems separate negotiations in an OSCE "regional table" or in some other form are really not needed. In answering these threats it is essential to use effectively bilateral, regional cooperation, also including the CBSS format.

It is worth noting that the mentioned 1999 report of Russia's Council on External and Defense Policy on Russia's relations with the Baltic states also devoted considerable attention to the regional dimension of these relations. The authors exhibited a much more positive attitude toward the activities of the CBSS in practically resolving important regional problems and contributing to defeating negative tendencies. The importance of economic cooperation is particularly stressed, noting that it should contribute to drawing together the wealthy Western states with the quickly developing countries of the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea.

In the military area the problematic question of the region is the insufficient development of the armed forces of the Baltic states. Their rapid strengthening could contribute to the stability of the region and whole Europe.

The up-dated Vienna Document on confidence and security building measures and the completed adaptation to the changed security situation of the post Cold War period of the CFE Treaty, the principle arms control agreement in Europe providing the basis for military balance and transparency in the continent,⁶⁴ can also open new possibilities for the Baltic states.

⁶⁴ Jeffrey D. McCausland, "Endgame: CFE Adaptation and the OSCE Summit," *Arms Control Today* (September - October 1999).