

An Interview: Zbigniew Brzezinski Interviewed by the Journal “Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review”

This year Lithuania and Poland celebrate the 10th anniversary of the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between them. Today relations between the two states are labeled as “strategic partnership”. Majority of politicians from the Western democratic countries say this relationship is an example other countries should follow. Do you endorse this kind of position?

I agree that the Polish-Lithuanian strategic partnership provides a very constructive example of genuinely positive and significant regional cooperation. It is a factor of stability in Central Europe, and it is facilitating the entrance not only of Lithuania but also the other Baltic states into NATO.

In the Bratislava speech (May 11th, 2001), you mentioned three alternative NATO enlargement scenarios. In Your opinion, which scenario is to be pursued during the enlargement process?

I believe that a likely prospect is that the NATO alliance will, in the end, endorse some formula similar to the one that I proposed in my Bratislava speech: An invitation to the seven candidate states to join NATO, with admission dependent on a staggered and sequential ratification process. In other words, a pledge that the seven will become members of NATO will be followed by the commencement of the ratification process immediately for those states that have fulfilled all of the necessary requirements; followed by annual reviews of the degree to which others of the seven have completed their preparations and justified the commencement at that point also of the ratification process.

4. What are the latest developments in Washington on the subject of NATO enlargement?

The predominant point of view within the Bush administration is in favor of enlargement in keeping with President Bush's speech in Warsaw, which envisaged NATO membership for the countries between the Baltic and the Black Seas.

What is your assessment of the latest statements by the US Administration, and first of all the speech of President Bush delivered in Warsaw, concerning the membership of the Baltic states in NATO? Does it mean that the US Administration will stand for the invitation of the Baltic states in Prague, 2002?

President Bush's speech was a genuinely important historic commitment, containing an important strategic vision. I believe that it clearly indicates that the enlargement of NATO in the year 2002 has to be genuinely significant, not limited to only one or two newly invited members.

Speaking about the evolution of thinking in other NATO states, namely, Germany, France and the United Kingdom, have you noticed any symptoms of change, which could be important for the prospective membership of the Baltic states in NATO?

In my view, France has already moved very significantly forward with its commitment to include the Baltic states in NATO. President Chirac in effect declared France's determination to support that objective in the year 2002. Germany is still not quite as clear in its posture, but I believe that important Germans increasingly realize that it is in Germany's strategic interest to do so and that Germany bears a moral responsibility for what transpired in the Baltic countries in 1940. The United Kingdom right now seems to be very skeptical and perhaps even quietly opposed. Certainly the British diplomats are whispering in a fashion which seems to imply a negative attitude, but it may change over time.

Given that the Baltic states are invited to become members of NATO when the second wave of NATO enlargement is launched, could you try outlining the reaction of Russia to such a development?

The Russian leadership will proclaim its opposition and the Russian public will remain indifferent.

In Your opinion, has Russia reconciled itself to the idea of NATO enlargement?

The Russian political elite, despite its resentments, realizes that NATO enlargement is inevitable.

Is there any possibility Russia could embark on drastic measures after the NATO enlargement takes places?

No.

What is the future, the perspectives of Kaliningrad region development?

If Russia develops into a normal, democratic, post-imperial, European state that truly respects the desires and independence of its neighbors, then the Kaliningrad Region will become Russia's gateway to Europe and perhaps even an experimental stage in that process of Russia becoming a genuinely European country. If Russia chooses to isolate itself in nostalgic and futile hostility toward the West, then at some point in the future the Kaliningrad Region will become an independent Russian Baltic republic.

What is the role of Lithuania and Poland in this process?

The role of Lithuania and Poland is to help Russia become a constructive European state by maintaining normal and friendly relations with it and helping, whenever appropriate,

on the humanitarian level – especially in the case of the suffering people of Kaliningrad – but without any nationalistic or territorial ambitions regarding that region.

Ukraine occupies an important position in the East European region. In Your opinion, what role does Ukraine play in the process of building the democratic Europe?

Ukraine eventually will be a member of the European community, both in its political as well as security dimensions. If Russia becomes increasingly European, Ukraine will probably do so together with Russia; if Russia does not, Ukraine probably will become associated with Europe ahead of Russia.

Orientation of Ukraine has been described as pro-Western. What are the perspectives for the maintaining of this orientation?

The basic culture of Ukraine is Western in that it partakes of the shared traditions of Christendom, and much of Ukraine was subject to feudal and social arrangements more typical of Central Europe than of Muscovy.

The Baltic region is an authentic phenomenon. Countries, which endorse different security strategies, “gather” here. Sweden endorses the policy of “hard” neutrality, Finland is bound to the Treaty neutrality, Baltic states aspire to join NATO, Russia opposes the enlargement of NATO, Poland, Germany and Denmark are the members of NATO. What influence does the region exert on the dynamic processes taking place in the Euro-Atlantic security environment, and to what extent?

The Baltic region is a good example of constructive diversity. It should be a source of reassurance to the Russians that inclusion of some states in NATO does not mean the inclusion of all states in NATO – and that individual states have the right to make their own decisions in that regard – without such decisions automatically being viewed as threatening to Russia.

Thank you!