

THE NATO FACTOR IN FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICIES AND RELATIONS AMONG BELARUS, RUSSIA, AND UKRAINE

Paper prepared under the NATO Research Fellowship Programme 2001/2003

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Introduction

The parallel enlargement of NATO and the European Union obviously plays a major role in the dramatic transformations that have swept Europe in the new millennium. It is aimed at meeting new challenges, but it is also a challenge in and of itself. Not in the least for the countries, which remain “outsiders” to this process, but which are becoming new direct neighbors of the enlarging entities.

Belarus takes a special place amidst these kaleidoscopic events. It is the only country in Central-Eastern Europe with the lowest-level relations and the highest-level

tensions as regards both of the EU and NATO as well as some other European organizations for that matter. It may, therefore, find itself “out in the cold” and suffer rather than benefit from the ongoing expansion. By the same token, because of its important geopolitical position and a transit role for the European Union and Eurasia, it is bound to exert a considerable influence over the climate of cooperation, and more specifically over the shaping of new border, trade and security regimes in the region and beyond. Therefore, from the perspective of a dual enlargement Belarus presents a dual issue: its particular problems are increasingly connected with and magnified by the expansion of the two most powerful European political, economic, and security institutions.

Russia has been playing a most influential role for Belarus and Ukraine in their relations with NATO. While Belarus has been Russia’s only military ally in Europe and has followed its political and military strategy even bringing them to extremes in opposing NATO enlargement, Ukraine at the same time had to refrain from coming too close to the Alliance so as not to aggravate its tensions with Russia. In a sense, until recently Ukraine has been going as far as Russia did in advancing its relations with NATO by emulating the newly created forms of cooperation. The dramatic rapprochement between Russia and the West, NATO included, in 2001-2002 has radically altered the previous disposition. Largely sticking to the outdated perceptions and strategies Belarus seems to be more and more out of touch with the dynamically changing situation. Ukraine, for its part, has eventually taken a decision to prepare for membership in NATO and the EU, but at the same time has become more dependent on Russia mainly due to domestic political and economic reasons.

While the developments at the new EU and NATO eastern borders are at a relatively early stage, it may be just the right time to evaluate the current situation and the emerging trends so as to facilitate tomorrow’s solutions. By a large margin the choice for the parties involved is between an adjustment and a radical change of policies. Is there a “third way” for Belarus, Russia, Ukraine or the European Union and NATO?

This paper is looking into the NATO factor in foreign and security policy of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, with the focus on Belarus. For obvious reasons the

enlarging European Union will be having a greater impact than NATO on these countries' domestic situation and foreign and security policies. In this light the recent saga of sparing no efforts to prevent or hamper the expansion of the Atlantic Alliance where Belarus has played so prominent role looks most ironic. Whether that was the right strategic focus or not, it does not apply any more. But is there anything different *à la carte*?

Because of Belarus' *de-facto* alliance with Russia the latter's role will always factor in any analysis involving Belarus. The paper briefly discusses the intrigue behind the diverging relations of the two closest allies *vis-à-vis* NATO.

The sources utilized here include official documents of the governments of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Union, Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian printed and electronic media, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty newslines, Transitions Online reviews, as well as academic articles and books put together in the Bibliography section.

1. Belarus and Its Neighbors: Regional Issues and Regional Cooperation

Belarus is a transit country. In 2001 alone its border authorities registered 22 million border crossings by people (two per one Belarusian citizen) and 5 million – by vehicles. In the same year Belarusian border guards detained 60 groups of illegal migrants totaling 1,500 persons, disrupted about 30 illegal channels for migration, confiscated contraband worth 800 million Belarusian rubles (about \$500,000), and 65 kilograms of narcotics.¹

1.1 Border issues

Starting from 1 January 2003 Lithuania, Latvia and Poland are going to introduce a full-fledged visa regime with Belarus. It is estimated that about 300, 000 Belarusian citizens will apply for Lithuanian and Latvian visas annually. The Polish authorities have reported that on the average there are about five and a half million border crossings by Belarusian citizens every year.²

¹ *Komsomol'skaya Pravda v Belorussii*. 10 January 2002.

² *7 Dnei*, 29 June 2002.

Last summer Poland concluded the Administration of Justice and Internal Affairs Chapter in its European Union accession talks in Brussels. Under this chapter it pledged after joining the EU to strengthen control of its 1,200-kilometer border with Russia's Kaliningrad Oblast, Belarus, and Ukraine in order to prevent illegal migration, as well as the smuggling of goods and the trafficking of drugs and arms. Interior Minister Krzysztof Janik said Poland needs to spend €250 million to beef up control of its 1,200-kilometer eastern border - which will become the EU's external border upon Polish accession to the union - in order to qualify for joining the Schengen agreements. Janik said that some 75 percent of the costs related to the tightening of the border will be covered by various EU programs.³

Warsaw committed itself to increasing its current border-guard force of some 12,000 servicemen and civilians to 18,000. By 2006, the country will increase the force by 3,200, hiring 5,300 professional frontier guards and 1,000 more civil servants while phasing out 3,100 army conscripts who are currently deployed. The government plans to buy and equip seven helicopters and two light aircraft for the border guards, as well as night-vision surveillance devices and other necessary equipment. The number of border watch-towers will be increased in order to space them at a distance not exceeding 20 kilometers.⁴

Poland's accession to the EU will mean tougher restrictions on travelers from Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. Warsaw will introduce visa requirements for them as of 1 July 2003. As an analyst with Radio Liberty-Radio Free Europe Jan Maksimiuk points out, today nobody is able to imagine the scale of technical difficulties or the political and socioeconomic consequences of border tightening. There may occur "local economic disasters" in the borderland regions of the four countries. In 2000, Poland was visited by 5.9 million Belarusians, 2.8 million Russians, and 6.1 million Ukrainians. (The same year Polish consulates all over the world issued only 185,000 visas.) The absolute majority of these visits were made by people engaged in petty cross-border trade, which is the main

³ See "Poland Needs \$245 Million to Strengthen Control of Eastern Border." *RFE/RL Newswire*. 2 August 2002.

⁴ Maksymiuk, Jan. "Warsaw Obliges Itself to Build EU's 'Berlin Wall'." *RFE/RL Newswire*. 9 August 2002.

source of their livelihood. Besides, Poland hosts about 500, 000 migrant workers, many of whom come from the FSU.⁵ If Brussels focuses on tightening Poland's frontiers and fails to draw up comprehensive assistance programs for Belarusian and Ukrainian border areas, Maksimiuk warns, not only Poland but the entire EU will be unable to influence the transformation processes in the "forgotten Europe" - Belarus and Ukraine.⁶

Lithuania has contemplated closing 23 out of 29 border posts with Belarus and modernizing border posts at Lavoryshki, Medniki, Raiharadz and Salechniki, as well as railroad border control posts at Hadutsishki and Kyane.⁷ Following its obligations before the EU on the introduction of a full-scale visa regime beginning on 1 January 2003, Lithuania denounced the 1994 Belarusian-Lithuanian agreement on mutual travel of their citizens.

On 27 November 2002 Lithuania and Belarus signed a new interim agreement on mutual travel of citizens, setting regulations for entering, exiting, transit and border crossing, as well as procedures for obtaining visas and traveling across the territories of the two states which came into force on 1 January 2003. The document defined the groups of citizens who do not need invitations to get a visa, citizens enjoying privileges and those who enjoy visas free of charge, in particular, aircraft and sea vessel crews. Citizens of border areas (numbering 75-80, 000 people) will be granted visas with 70% discounts. Free visas will be granted to cultural figures, athletes, persons of 16 years of age and younger and 70 years old or older and those making culture trips.⁸ As Belarus' deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Gerasimenko stated, the two sides have done their best to take into account the interests of all categories of citizens and find good solutions to facilitate the conditions for border crossing.

In nine months of 2002 Belarusian citizens were issued 66,000 Lithuanian visas – about the same figure as for Lithuanians going to Belarus. Beginning 16 November 2002 Lithuania raised the cost of entry visas for Belarusian citizens. A one-entry visa to

⁵ "Back to the Wall." *The Adams Report*. Available: <http://www.globalassignment.com/1-21-2002/backtothewall.html>

⁶ Maksymiuk, Jan. "Warsaw Obliges Itself..."

⁷ *Nasha Svaboda*. 15 October 2001.

⁸ Lithuania and Belarus Sign Interim Agreement on Border Crossing. Press release by Belarus' Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Service. Available: <http://www.mfa.gov.by/eng/index.htm>

Lithuania now costs €20 (formerly 15 USD), a special visa - €60 (formerly 50 USD), a transit visa - €10 (formerly 8 USD), and a group visa - €15 per person (formerly 10 USD). According to a Belarusian Foreign Ministry spokesman Belarusian is going to apply "adequate" measures and raise the cost of visas for Lithuanian citizens.⁹

Of special importance are the new economic projects between Belarus and the neighboring countries within the framework of the transborder cooperation program, e.g. the project on the renovation of the checkpoint at the Belarus-Lithuania border "Kamenny Log-Myadininkai". Equipped in the latest fashion, it can now process up to 3,000 vehicles a day. The traffic here is expected to increase twofold in the near future. Additionally, another vital project is under way at the moment - on the demarcation of the entire Belarus-Lithuanian border. The project budget is €1,298 million. It was planned to be completed by April of 2003 and will be followed by another one - on the demarcation of the 143 kilometers-long Belarusian-Latvian border. The TACIS office in Minsk evaluated this project as one of the most important TACIS projects in Belarus, contributing to regional cooperation and to combating illegal migration.

Belarus-Poland cooperation has been successful on water evaluation and improvement measures in the Western Bug basin, on ensuring the safety of water supply to the population in the Neman basin area, on assisting the development of the areas that suffered from the Chernobyl disaster in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, on building a system of international data exchange on the current contamination situation. Plans are being developed for the construction of the "Kozlovichy-2" border customs terminal. This is one of the busiest at the Belarus-Poland border. The new terminal will include a restricted zone for implementing state control of the goods and vehicles entering the country and a servicing zone with warehouses. Its value is estimated at €6 million.

1.2 Migration issues

Belarusian authorities are fully aware of the need to deepen transboundary cooperation on migration and refugees, especially in the light of the forthcoming EU enlargement. According to Mr. Bohdan Nahaylo, Head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Liaison Office in Belarus, this country is taking

⁹ See <http://www.br.minsk.by/archive/2002-48/vad3203.stm>

part in the international system of the refugee protection and is actively involved in the regional process initiated by the UNHCR office in order to develop transboundary cooperation between Belarus, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine. Recently, Latvia and Moldova expressed their interest in joining this process.

As of 1 June 2002, 623 persons were officially recognized as refugees, including 479 from Afghanistan, 64 from Georgia, 27 from Tajikistan, 17 from Azerbaijan. Other refugees came from Iran, Iraq, India, Cameroon, Liberia, Rwanda, Pakistan and Palestine.

Belarusian border troops have been actively confronting the activities of transnational organized criminal groups. In 2001 more than 40 channels of illegal migration were revealed. The combined efforts of the Belarusian, Ukrainian, Polish, Lithuanian border guards resulted in the detention of more than 700 persons. 400 more persons were detained when they were attempting to illegally cross the state border. About 30 organizers and accomplices in illegal migration, who were nationals of Belarus, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine, were arrested.

Political asylum in Belarus was asked for by only 34 persons out of nearly two thousand illegal migrants detained in 2001 by the Belarusian border guards. Among other reasons, these migrants were attracted by the fact that Belarus, though not being a rich country, offers them a calm environment for living, studying and working.¹⁰

Nationals of Afghanistan present the utmost potential danger in terms of illegal migration. 300 of them were detained last year alone. Illegal migration is combined with drug and human beings trafficking, organized crime and terrorism and is itself one of the "attractions" for criminal groups.

The tactics followed by illegal migrants usually implies state border crossing on foot and not at official border checkpoints but elsewhere. Trying to cross the border, illegal migrants make use of somebody else's or forged documents. In 2001 they attempted the following ways of crossing the border: travel in a freight railway van (16 Vietnamese nationals were detained), overcoming the electrical alert installations by a

¹⁰ "Belarus' attitude to refugees merits high appreciation, asserts Mr. Bohdan Naha jlo, Head of the UNHCR Liaison Office in Belarus." Available: <http://www.president.gov.by/eng/president/comment/esc.shtml>

rope-way (25 individuals), overcoming the electric alert installations by using ladders (20 individuals).¹¹

To cope with migration issues Belarus has introduced a number of legal, institutional and organizational instruments. The laws "On Refugees" and "On Immigration" were adopted, and the Department on Migration was set up under the Ministry of Labor, which has been cooperating with the UNHCR Office, and with the International Organization for Migration.¹² On 26 October through 1 November 2002 the Belarus Ministry for the Interior conducted a special operation code-named "Nelegal" (a serial operation). As a result, administrative sanctions for the violation of the rules of residence on the Belarusian territory were applied to 816 foreigners, 3, 009 citizens of the CIS states and 489 Belarusian citizens, including 36 officials. 11 groups of illegal migrants were detained. Overall, in 2002 alone sanctions for the violation of residence and transit have been applied to 35, 000 foreign citizens and individuals with no citizenship.¹³

Belarus is, so to speak, a secondary (or even a tertiary) transit country for illegal migrants. Many of them are coming via Russia. Vladimir Zorin, the Russian minister responsible for nationalities, told reporters in Moscow on 16 December 2002 that there are about 3 million illegal foreign workers in Russia and that the number of legal foreign workers increased by 19 per cent during the first half of that year, compared with the same period of 2001.¹⁴ According to an analysis of the Belarusian security services the flow of refugees from the territory of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to the territory of Russia, caused by the operation "Unlimited Freedom," may amount to one to two million people, out of which up to 10,000 may attempt to penetrate Belarusian territory aiming further to illegally enter the countries of Western and Eastern Europe. The number of illegal migrants detained in Belarus in 2001 was 50 per cent higher than it was in 2000. Already in September-December of 2001 - following the beginning of the

¹¹ "Illegal migration in the Republic of Belarus remains a factor that influences seriously the situation in the country." National Press Center of the Republic of Belarus. Available:

<http://www.president.gov.by/eng/president/comment/migr.shtml>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See <http://www.bdg.by/news/news.htm?34487,1>

¹⁴ *RFE/RL Newslines*. 17 December 2002.

anti-terrorist operation - the number of detainees sharply increased. Currently, like in previous years, the main flow of illegal migrants is made up of the citizens of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Vietnam.¹⁵

Although Belarus' border with Russia is the easiest to cross because of the absence of regular passport control, the Belarus-Ukrainian border is also porous enough. Over the five years since the establishment of the Homel border unit, it detained about 1, 500 illegal migrants from 30 countries of Asia and Africa on the Belarus-Ukraine border.¹⁶ According to officials, Belarus holds up 150-200 thousand illegal immigrants on its territory, who "strive to penetrate Europe and who flooded the country after the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan."¹⁷

On the whole, population growth through migration in 2001 compared to 2000 went down by 3, 000 people (by 24.8 %) amounting to 9,100 people. The migration saldo in 2001 remained positive with all CIS and Baltic states. Meanwhile, Belarus has its main migration exchange with Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, making up 87 per cent of the total

(see Table 1 in the Appendix). Citizens from 36 countries of the world settled in Belarus in 2001. The majority of them were Ukrainians (1,075 people or 66.2 %).¹⁸

Aside from Belarus' porous borders – first of all with Russia and Ukraine – another key issue in coping with illegal migration is the absence of bilateral readmission agreements with the neighboring countries. Moreover, as a Lithuanian expert observes, readmission agreements with expanding EU's eastern neighbors require a broader approach, including foreign policy tools and technical-financial assistance. They are unlikely to be adopted on a bilateral basis, initiated by a single future or present EU

¹⁵ Poddubny P., Verlup S. "Aktualnye voprosy protivodeistviya terrorizmu na gosudarstvennoi granitse i prigranichnoi territorii Respubliki Belarus [Topical issues of countering terrorism on the state border and border area of the Republic of Belarus]. In: *Terrorism kak ugroza natsional'noi bezopasnosti Respubliki Belarus [Terrorism as a threat to the national security of the Republic of Belarus]: Proceedings of an interagency scientific and practical conference*. Minsk: Institute of National Security of the Republic of Belarus, 2002, p.97.

¹⁶ *Narodnaya Gazeta*. 13 June 2002.

¹⁷ Statement by Ambassador Sergei Martynov, Head of the Delegation of the Republic of Belarus at the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Plenary Meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government. Prague, 22 November 2002. Available: <http://www.mfa.gov.by/eng/index.htm>

¹⁸ See <http://www.br.minsk.by/archive/2002-09/sc1444.stm>

member-state, and had better be addressed on the Community level. Negotiations on readmission agreements can lead to a realistic result by linking migration management, foreign policy and technical aid and by engaging simultaneously both Belarus and Russia.¹⁹

President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenka in 2002 expressed confidence that the Europeans themselves would plea for Belarusian support and cooperation in combating drug and illegal migration problems, given the strategic situation of Belarus in the center of Europe.²⁰ He emphasized that although illegal migration is a threat to Europe, Belarus has to deal with it alone and spends considerable assets. "The West wants to utilize our material and human resources without offering any compensation," Lukashenka claimed. Therefore, he tasked the Belarusian foreign minister to inform the "relevant states" that beginning with the next year Belarus will detain illegal migrants only on the condition that Belarus' expenditures are compensated for. Similarly, Belarusian interests will guide the solution of the issues pertaining to the need for border delimitation and demarcation. Lukashenka assigned the government with the task of improving the border infrastructure.²¹ However "from now on Belarus is not going to shoulder the full burden of ensuring European security", he stated.²² Meanwhile, Russia pledged to sign a readmission agreement with Lithuania and negotiate such agreements with EU states in 2003.

The European Commission, for its part, has proposed the establishment of a basic common legal framework and the gradual convergence of legislation, policy and practice which will result in a common EU migration policy. Substantial direct and indirect Community assistance (totalling some € 935 million for the period 2000-2006) has been programmed to provide support to third countries in their efforts to address legal and

¹⁹ See Slavenas, Erikas. "The Issue of Illegal Migration through Lithuania's Eastern Boreders: Current State of Affairs." In: *Lithuania's Eastern Neighbors: Politics and Security. International Conference Materials*. Vilnius: General Jonas Zemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania, 2002.

²⁰ Press Service of the President of the Republic of Belarus. 13 November 2002. Available: <http://www.president.gov.by/rus/president/press/13.shtml>

²¹ Press Service of the President of the Republic of Belarus. 2 October 2002. Available: http://www.president.gov.by/rus/president/press/p10_2.shtml

²² Press Service of the President of the Republic of Belarus. 24 October 2002. Available: http://www.president.gov.by/rus/president/press/p10_2.shtml

illegal migration issues. These programs have recently been put into effect and their results are expected to become visible in the medium and long term.²³

On 3 December 2002 the European Commission adopted a Communication on Integrating Migration Issues in the EU's Relations with Third Countries, which pioneers the approach that concerns related to legal and illegal migration need to be integrated into the external policy and assistance programmes of the EU. The long-term priority of the Community is to address the root causes of migration flows with its development programmes aiming at poverty eradication, institution and capacity building and conflict prevention. Regional co-operation on migration issues is given particular importance, notably in the Balkans, the Mediterranean and the former Soviet Union. The Commission is in the process of negotiating several readmission agreements between the European Community and third countries in which both parties reciprocally agree to accept the return of illegal migrants into their territory. The European Council has adopted decisions to negotiate readmission agreements between the EC and Russia, Pakistan, Morocco and Ukraine. The Commission proposes to give greater weight to migration aspects within the Regional and Country Strategy Papers. These papers form the basis of the EU's assistance programmes to third countries and their mid-term review is scheduled for 2003.

1.3 Regional Cooperation on Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism

Belarusian officials state that each and every day an "unprecedented flow of drugs riding to the West at the crest of the migration avalanche is stopped on the Belarusian border, and the flow of arms and nuclear materials coming the opposite way and destined to wind up in the hands of terrorists is suppressed." They reported that only over a period

²³ See European Commission: integrating migration issues into the EU's external relations
DN: IP/02/1793. 3 December 2002. Available:
http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/02/1793|0|RAPID&lg=EN&display=

In 2000 Russia's Chief Directorate for Combating Economic Crime registered 1, 600 criminal groups with 80,000 Chechens controlling over 40, 000 economic actors, including 1,500 state enterprises, 4,000 share-holding companies, over 500 joint ventures, about 500 banks and 500 wholesale and retail markets.²⁹ About 2,000 tons of cargo is transported via Belarus territory to Russia, only 5 per cent of which are of the Belarusian origin.

Belarus has signed intergovernmental and interdepartmental agreements on cooperation in combating crime with Lithuania, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Britain, Turkey, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, China, and some other countries. In June of 2002 a wider intergovernmental Agreement between Belarus and Lithuania was prepared on cooperation in combating crime, illegal drug trafficking and terrorism.³⁰ On 11 July 2002 a Protocol on cooperation was signed between the Investigation Departments of the Belarusian and Lithuanian Ministries for the Interior, providing for regular operative information exchange, inter-state assistance in the investigation of crimes against individuals and property, in the spheres of economy, computer information, combatting organized crime, illegal drug and arms trafficking.³¹

Belarus has also cooperated with the Polish police and other security agencies on matters of organized crime and terrorism. Illegal migration problems are dealt with by the two countries' border troops in consultation on a daily basis.

In June 2002 the Chief of the German Federal Border Guard General Klaus Severin visited Belarus and held talks to elaborate a joint strategy of dealing with illegal migrants from the East.³²

Additionally, multilateral information exchange among the police structures of the countries of the region is being maintained through Interpol.

Further, Belarus is party to the International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages, the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation, the

²⁹ *Belorusskii Rynok*. 17-23 June 2002.

³⁰ *7 Dnej*. 15 June 2002.

³¹ *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*. 12 July 2002.

³² *Sovetskaja Belorussiya*. 13 June 2002.

Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf, the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombing, the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime as well as other relevant international legal instruments.

However, there is a gap between membership in international legal frameworks and the domestic legislation. Only in January 2002 the Law of Belarus "On Fighting Terrorism" came into force to define the legal foundations, principles and organization of combating terrorist challenges. Additionally, Belarus' banking system has been empowered to check, in appropriate cases, the accounts and financing so as to establish whether funds belong to a terrorist network. Some efforts have been taken to enhance information security.

Belarus-Russia cooperation on regional challenges is the most advanced. The ministries of the interior, customs agencies and border troops, as well as special services and national security councils exchange information, hold regular meetings at various levels and conduct joint operations. At the initiative of the Belarusian KGB and the Russian FSB, a Committee on the issues of the Union State security was created in 1997 for the purpose of establishing interaction and strengthening cooperation in all areas of joint activities. A treaty on joint efforts in the protection of the state border of Belarus was signed as far back as in February 1995. Special joint border protection programs have been launched, including the construction of border infrastructure at the Belarusian-Lithuanian and Belarusian-Latvian borders. The Russia-Belarus Union's Customs Committee is working on the unification of the two countries' customs legislation.

Belarus has also been engaged in anti-terrorist measures within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States. A treaty on cooperation among the CIS member-states in combating terrorism was signed in June 1999. Its provisions stipulated concrete areas of cooperation: exchange of information, elaboration and adoption of concerted anti-terrorist measures, dispatching (upon agreement with the states concerned) special anti-terrorist groups, staff training, delivery of special means (e.g. gas agents) and equipment, etc.

However, as a result of the existing political tensions a regular and especially an institutionalized cooperation between Belarus and the EU on the “soft security” matters has so far been lacking. While EU-Russia cooperation has been steadily advancing, especially on combating terrorism, Belarus turns out to remain important but still a weak link in the shaping system of cooperation on trans-European security threats.³³

2. Belarus and NATO

2.1 An archaeology of history

On 10 March 1992 Belarus as one of the ten new members joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) at a special session. In May 1994 a delegation of the Supreme Council of Belarus took part in a session of the North Atlantic Assembly (NAA), where Belarus was granted the status of an Associate member.

In 1993-1994 a discussion on the merits and demerits of Belarusian membership in the Partnership for Peace Program (PfP) was underway.³⁴ Eventually, in November 1994 the Belarus Security Council took a decision to join the PfP program and on 11 January 1995 Belarusian Foreign Minister Uladzimir Syanko signed in Brussels the Partnership for Peace framework document. Belarus became the 24th country – one of the last – to join the program.

On 6 June 1995 Lukashenka entrusted Belarusian Ambassador to Belgium Uladzimir Labunou to sign on behalf of Belarus the Agreement between NATO and NACC and the PfP partners, and the same month Belarus took part in a NACC session in Oslo as an independent state.

Until an official Belarusian representative was sent to NATO, communication between the two parties was maintained through the Belarus embassy in Brussels. In mid-1996 the former Defense Minister Anatoli Kastenka was appointed Belarus’ representative on political-military affairs in Brussels, and a Belarusian liaison officer

³³ The areas and objectives of EU-Russia cooperation on combating terrorism were set forth in bilateral declarations adopted in 2001 and 2002. See, in particular:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/russia/summit_11_02/js_terr.htm

³⁴ See, for example “Po karmanu li Belarusi partnyorstvo?” *Vo Slavu Rodiny*. 5 August 1994.

was accredited with the NATO headquarters in Mons. A permanent representative office of Belarus at NATO was opened on 22 April 1998.

However, the Belarus-NATO relations deteriorated parallel to their development, most noticeably after Alexander Lukashenka was elected president of Belarus in the summer of 1994 and started drafting his foreign and security policy. The main preoccupation of the Belarusian authorities has since been the enlargement of NATO.

On 23 February 1995 Lukashenka declared that Belarus temporarily suspended the implementation of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE) due to be completed by 15 November 1995. At first this decision was explained by the danger of NATO expansion. Later, however, the lack of funds for arms reductions was cited as the main reason. NATO responded with a statement, which was reciprocated with a corresponding note from the Belarusian Foreign Ministry.

On 6 July 1995 Lukashenka suspended the withdrawal of the Russian strategic missiles from Belarus. He criticized the decision of the former Belarusian leadership on the withdrawal claiming it to be a serious political mistake in view of the future integration between Belarus and Russia.

On 11 September 1995 the Belarus Foreign Ministry issued a statement which condemned NATO bombing and called for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During his visit to the 50th session of the United Nations General Assembly in October 1995 the Belarusian president confirmed his negative attitude toward NATO enlargement and expressed an interest in the elaboration of a treaty on European security.

On 19 October 1995, when NATO Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs von Moltke visited Minsk to discuss the opportunities for cooperation between NATO and Belarus, it was reiterated that Belarus was not interested in NATO eastward expansion. Cooperation within the PfP was possible on condition that the two parties discussed their positions with the participation of Russia.

1996-99 were marked by a continuous and often overtly hostile anti-NATO campaign undertaken by the Belarusian authorities in a vain attempt to prevent the expansion of NATO. At the same time, after the decision by the EU to freeze relations

with Belarus because of the flawed November 1996 referendum and as a result of the international conflict that developed over the residences of foreign diplomatic missions near Minsk, NATO suspended the implementation of the agreement on information security.

Following President Lukashenka's warnings about finding "adequate responses" in case nuclear weapons were stationed on the territory of new NATO members, similar comments were made by Defense Minister Leanid Maltsov.³⁵ It was to be understood that "adequate measures" included another halting of the withdrawal and the return of Russian strategic SS-25 missiles and/or the redeployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus territory.

In an attempt to counter NATO enlargement on 3 July 1996 Lukashenka revitalized an earlier initiative on the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central-Eastern Europe and proposed to spend the money designated for the enlargement process on the solution of ecological, social and humanitarian problems.³⁶

On 29 January 1997 the Belarusian president received a letter from NATO Secretary General Javier Solana, which indicated, in particular, that NATO member-countries welcomed the withdrawal, completed at the end of November 1996, of the formerly Soviet nuclear weapons from the territory of Belarus to Russia. Thus the country fulfilled the commitments entered into under the Lisbon Protocol of 1992. On the other hand, the letter said that NATO could not support the Belarus proposition on the establishment of a nuclear weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe. Solana said that the Alliance would like to see Belarus as a full-fledged participant of the European security network which is based on the principles of true cooperation and stressed that the development of relations between NATO and Belarus would largely depend on the progress of democratic reform in the country. In conclusion, the NATO Secretary General expressed the hope that NATO-Belarus relations would continue to develop in the context of the Partnership for Peace program.³⁷

³⁵ *Vo Slavu Rodiny*. 19 April 1996.

³⁶ *Zvyazda*. 7 July 1996. For an analysis of some of the implications of this initiative see: Paznyak, Vyachaslau. "Vstupit li NATO v bez'yadernuyu zonu?" *Belorusskaya Gazeta*. 20 August 1996.

³⁷ *Vestnik ministerstva inostrannykh del Respubliki Belarus*. 1997. No.1, p. 101.

Even after the withdrawal of Russian nuclear weapons Lukashenka repeatedly mentioned the possibility of returning them to Belarus.³⁸ He also proposed to create an anti-NATO pact to include Belarus, Russia, China, India and Iran.³⁹

Following Russia's decision taken in protest to NATO's military action in Yugoslavia at the end of March 1999 Belarus halted all its cooperation with NATO including the PfP program and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). Lukashenka decided not to send an official delegation to participate in the Washington EAPC summit.

In the summer of 1999 the alleged "Yugoslav scenario" against Belarus was first evoked in a statement made by the Chairman of the Committee on Security of the Russian Duma Viktor Ilyukhin, who claimed that NATO was preparing plans for instigating an ethnic conflict in the Hrodno oblast of Belarus so as to justify a subsequent military intervention. This served to foment anti-NATO sentiments in both countries for some time, but also to increase the political influence of hard-liners.⁴⁰ However, following Russia's lead, in August 1999 Belarus decided to restore full-fledged relations with NATO

Yet another area of tensions between Belarus and the Alliance since Lukashenka's presidency has been the violation of democratic standards in the country. Already at the 41st annual North Atlantic Assembly (NAA) session in Turin (Italy) on 5-9 October 1995 the question was raised of withdrawing Belarus' status of NAA's Associate member due to insufficient democracy and failure to elect a new Parliament. Belarus's Associate status was suspended in 1997, following a constitutional referendum in November 1996 that enabled the recently elected President Lukashenka to "change the rules of the game", putting an end to the term of the existing Parliament and hand-picking an acquiescent National Assembly.

The NAA (renamed NATO Parliamentary Assembly) has discussed the Belarusian issue on a number of occasions. In 1999 it issued a declaration on the situation

³⁸ See, for example, "Rakety dlya presidenta." *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*. 17 January 1999.

³⁹ "Lukashenko izobrel novy protivoves NATO." *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*. 24 February 1999.

⁴⁰ *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*. 18 June 1999.

in Belarus urging the Lukashenka government to restore democracy and to ensure human rights and freedom of mass media.⁴¹

At its Berlin session in 2000 NATO's Parliamentary Assembly (PA) adopted a resolution on Belarus, in which it condemned the intimidation, harassing, arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of members of the political opposition and the failure of the Government to account for the disappearance of several opposition leaders. It expressed concern over the continued restrictions on the freedom of the press, the constant threats to non-state newspapers as well as the denial of access by the opposition to the state mass media. It noted that the 15 and 29 October 2000 parliamentary elections failed to meet international standards for a free, fair, accountable and transparent poll, declared its support for the Belarus democratic opposition and urged the Belarusian government to restore democracy and the rule of law.⁴²

A delegation of the NATO PA, co-chaired by its Vice-President Markus Meckel and Alice Mahon, Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Democratic Governance, visited Minsk on a fact-finding mission on 25-27 March 2001 to evaluate the prerequisites for the democratic presidential elections due later that year. In its concluding communiqué the delegation voiced concern that some political developments in the country, such as Decree No. 8 submitting international aid to NGOs and civic organizations to exacting government control, were not conducive to the goal of democratization. The Assembly failed to recognize the National Assembly of Belarus as its legitimate interlocutor, given the conditions in which it had been elected and how it operated, therefore, the suspension of Belarus' Associate status had to be further upheld.⁴³

At its annual session in Ottawa on 9 October 2001, the NATO PA adopted a special resolution on Belarus, in which it severely criticized Lukashenka's policies. It took note that the presidential election failed to meet international standards defining a

⁴¹ Declaration on the Situation in the Republic of Belarus, adopted by the Standing Committee. North Atlantic Assembly (NATO Parliamentary Assembly). AS 179 SC (99) 38 rev.1 Original: English.

⁴² NATO Parliamentary Assembly. 2000 Annual Session. Resolution on Belarus presented by the Committee on the Civilian Dimension of Security Berlin, 21 November 2000. Committee Resolution 297. Available: <http://www.nato-pa.int/archivedpub/resolutions/00-berlin-297.asp>

⁴³ Standing Committee Fact-Finding Mission to Minsk, Belarus 25-27 March 2001. Secretariat Report. International Secretariat 2 April 2001. Annex 3-e. Press Release. NATO Parliamentarians conclude visit to Belarus. Brussels, 27 March 2001. Available: <http://www.nato-pa.int/publications/press/p020530a.html>

free, fair, verifiable and transparent ballot, condemned the tactics of intimidation, harassment and repression employed against opposition candidates, the non-governmental press, representatives of Belarusian civil society and independent national observers. It denounced in particular the difficulties experienced by the opposition in obtaining access to state-controlled media and the presidential decrees promulgated in order to curtail the basic freedoms of expression and association. The resolution expressed deep concern over the disappearance of regime's political opponents and called upon the re-elected President Lukashenka and his government:

- to restore democracy and the rule of law in Belarus and to guarantee the protection of human rights, the independence of the judiciary, the freedom of the press and private enterprise; to initiate a real political dialog with the opposition without delay; to free all political prisoners immediately and to promptly set up impartial in-depth enquiries into the fate of persons who had disappeared and into the existence of "death squads";
 - to return to a legal constitution;
 - to extend the powers of parliament to give it the nature and character of a democratic institution capable of exercising legislative authority and political control over the government in accordance with the principle of separation of powers;
 - to end the systematic smear campaign to which the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Minsk was subjected and to co-operate fully with it.⁴⁴

Until the tragic events of 11 September 2001 the stalling relations between Belarus and NATO went along with strengthening the politico-military alliance between Belarus and Russia. On the one hand, the two countries were practically unanimous in their opposition to NATO enlargement. On the other, the official Minsk often even outstripped Moscow in its unrestrained rhetoric – if not the argumentation. Speaking from a position of a defender of the Slavic nations and of consistent integration with Russia, President Lukashenka on one occasion stated that sometimes Belarus had to run ahead of Russia on the military issues, especially with regard to NATO eastward expansion. "If Russia, as it

seems, takes some vacillating stand, I for one thing declared on behalf of my people once and forever: ‘We are categorically against NATO eastward movement’.’⁴⁵

The years of 1997-2001 saw an intensified cooperation between Belarus and Russia in the military sphere. It was repeatedly stated by both Belarusian and Russian political and military figures that the two states were creating a joint anti-aircraft defense system to counter the expanding NATO.⁴⁶ After the signing of the Belarusian-Russian treaty on the creation of the Community a more vigorous military cooperation between the two states involved the coordination of measures in response to NATO eastern enlargement. Lukashenka put on the table ideas about creating a powerful joint Belarusian-Russian military grouping to offset the enlarged NATO and expressed his readiness to realize them. Building on several successive bilateral treaties a number of military agreements were signed, including the Treaty on Military Cooperation and the Agreement on the Joint Safeguarding of Regional Security in the Military Sphere, both signed in December 1997. The latter was almost explicitly directed against NATO enlargement, and the fact that it has since been only a “paper tiger” is yet another proof of its political purpose.

In 2000-2001 Minsk enjoyed customary low-key relations with NATO and it was clear that they would not blossom very soon. True, the departure of Yeltsin and the ascension in the Russian politics of the Putin generation, which has a broader world outlook, have contributed, to some extent, to the abandonment of the most orthodox anti-NATO clichés in the Belarusian political establishment. During 2001 the Belarusian Foreign and Defense Ministries attempted to begin the reevaluation of relations with NATO proceeding from the premise that both the previous and the coming enlargements were *faits accomplis*. However, the tense relations with the West over the election campaign and the presidential elections in 2001 prevented any definitive decisions from being taken.

⁴⁴ Resolution on Belarus presented by the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security Ottawa, 9 October 2001. NATO Parliamentary Assembly 2001 Annual Session. Available: <http://www.nato-pa.int/archivedpub/resolutions/01-ottawa-307.asp>

⁴⁵ President Lukashenko’s speech at the Russian Academy of Social Sciences in Moscow. *Narodnaya Gazeta*. 13 February 1996.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Russian Air Force Commander-in-Chief Anatoli Kornukov’s statement in April 2001. Cited in: “Belarus would like to sign a Treaty on Security with NATO.” *Belarusian Telegraph Agency BelTA*. 1 July 2001. Available: <http://www.belarustoday.info/news/news.php?id=3682&lang=eng>

In response to the NATO exercise “Amber Hope 2001” in Lithuania in August-September 2001 Belarus armed forces conducted a large-scale military exercise “Neman-2001” (the largest since the breakup of the USSR) near the Lithuanian border. Lukashenka deemed that because NATO exercise was scheduled close to the time of presidential elections it posed a major security threat. “On the eve of presidential elections our country is on the brink of war according to the Yugoslav scenario”. he said. He further referred to an “outrageous funding” of both “unprecedented pressure from the outside” and a “fifth column” inside the country.”⁴⁷ The “Neman-2001” was followed by the “Berezina-2002” exercise. Reportedly, such large-scale exercises will become “traditional.”

Despite all this the formally institutionalized dialog within the EAPC has been maintained. Several cooperation programs have been in operation, and Belarusians have been taking part in various partnership activities including the NATO Science Program. Since 1993 over 75 Science Fellowships have been awarded to Belarusian scientists to study in NATO countries. Over 30 research teams from Belarus received support under the NATO Science Program in 1999-2001.⁴⁸

The “incredible rapprochement” between Russia and NATO in 2001-2002 and Ukraine’s decision in May 2002 to seek membership in NATO left Belarus “out in the cold”. At the Security Council meeting on 10 July 2002 Lukashenka admitted that Belarus cannot disregard the new realities: the irreversibility of NATO enlargement, the positions taken by Russia, Ukraine and other neighbors, as well as the threat of international terrorism as a factor encouraging military and political cooperation. He underscored the importance of assessing the country’s place and role in the context of the current European integration and of elaborating new approaches to relations with NATO.⁴⁹ He pointed out, however, that a fundamental change of policy is out of the question. Only certain adjustments are possible. “Russia and Ukraine seem to have rushed into

⁴⁷ “V ozhidanii voyny.” *Belorusskii Rynok*. No. 19, 2001.

⁴⁸ “Belarus and NATO.” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus. Available on-line: <http://www.mfa.gov.by/eng/policy/10.htm>

⁴⁹ “Policy Adjustments on NATO Possible.” *BelaPAN*. 11 July 2002. Available: <http://www.belaustuday.info/news/news.php?id=10808&lang=eng> Also: “NATO bolshe ne strashny monstr.” *Belorusskii Rynok*. No. 27, 2002.

NATO, but we are not obligated to follow them”, Lukashenka said.⁵⁰ The Belarusian president tried to downplay the importance of the new relations between Russia and NATO by calling them a “myth” and claimed that Belarus-Russia integration remains a priority for both states.⁵¹

Apparently, the intention to work out a new policy that replacing confrontation with real partnership has come as a result of the realization that the continuation of the former would be disadvantageous. It is doubtful, though, that minor adjustments will be enough.

Ironically, against the backdrop of the crisis in Belarusian relations with the OSCE and the EU by the end of 2002, the relations with the long-time enemy bloc turned out to be almost normal. But for a couple of things – visa denial for Lukashenka for the Prague NATO summit and NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson’s later remark that the Alliance believes “several aspects” of Lukashenka’s activities “in the human rights sphere are unacceptable for a democracy in the present-day conditions. NATO, the European Union and the USA share this opinion”, he said.⁵²

Still, this is nothing new and has not caused a serious crisis. After pathetic official speeches⁵³ and yet another passionate anti-NATO campaign in the media Belarus has not frozen its relations with the Alliance and has not called back its ambassador “for consultations”. Notwithstanding NATO’s decision Belarus will “continue and intensify its contribution to the common cause of the coalition [against terrorism].”⁵⁴ Planned activities proceed according to schedule. Judging by the reports posted on the “news” rubric of the website of the Belarusian Ministry of Defense, for a year or so MOD officials have been participating in the PfP activities much more frequently than before.

⁵⁰ *Izvestia*. 12 July 2002. Available: <http://izvestia.ru/politic/article20966>

⁵¹ “Priority prezhiye.” *Belorusskii Rynok*. No. 22, 2002.

⁵² NATO Secretary General George Robertson’s remarks at a press conference in Moscow on 10 December 2002. *RIA-Novosti* 10 December 2002. Cited at:

<http://www.belarustoday.info/news/news.php?id=13840&lang=eng>

⁵³ See “Belarusian Envoy Slams NATO for not Inviting President.” *RFE/RL Newsline*. 25 November 2002 and Statement by Ambassador Sergei Martynov, Head of the Delegation of the Republic of Belarus at the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Plenary Meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government, Prague, 22 November 2002. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus. Information Bulletin No. 177, 22 November 2002. Also: Leschenya, Igor. “NATO’s Leadership not Enough Democratic.” *Charter97*. Online. 11 November 2002. Available: <http://www.charter97.org/eng/news/2002/11/11/23>

On 31 December 2002 the then Foreign Minister of Belarus Mikhail Khvastou promised that Minsk's relations with NATO will be more constructive in 2003. "We are going to take into consideration the changing situation both in Europe and the whole world, and the need for firm and clear relations," Khvastou said. "We can see how the NATO expansion affects the interests of neighboring states, and we can see the expanding presence of this military and political organization, so we would like [to] - and we will - ensure our country's safe existence."⁵⁵

Still, it is so far difficult to imagine how relations can become constructive between political actors with their present often diametrically opposite political agendas.

2.2 Cooperation under the Partnership for Peace Program

According to its Foreign Ministry, Belarus attaches special significance to the implementation of the PfP program, which is considered to be "one of the most important mechanisms for practical cooperation both with the North Atlantic Alliance and individual countries of Europe and North America."⁵⁶

Initially, Belarus intended to address only minor, not financially burdensome issues within the PfP program. In November 1995 Belarus decided to activate its participation. The presentation program of cooperation under the PfP was elaborated by the Security Council and the Foreign Ministry.

Belarus officially submitted its Presentation Document for participation in the PfP program on 29 April 1996. At the initial stage all Belarus' activities were entrusted to be coordinated by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Eight years later it is clearly seen that some major areas of cooperation indicated in the document have remained unfulfilled. Among them are:

- the creation of an efficient national security system adequately meeting defense requirements;

⁵⁴ Statement by Ambassador Sergei Martynov...

⁵⁵ "Belarusian Foreign Minister Vows More Constructive Relations with NATO." *RFE/RL Newslines*. 6 January 2003.

⁵⁶ See "Belarus and NATO."

- using the experience of NATO members and partner countries in the drafting of defense legislation, as well as in the optimization of the national security and national defense structures;
- defense planning and budget management;
- command, control and communications systems;
- armaments, military equipment and hardware development and production;
- adjustment of special terminology;
- intelligence information exchange.

The document also stressed that Belarus would establish and develop contacts with the West European Union. This, however, was not accomplished either.

By submitting its PfP Presentation Document Belarus undertook some important obligations to meet the PfP political objectives. It pledged to:

- promote political cooperation, coordination and information exchange;
- engage in consultations on European, regional and global security;
- strengthen democratic control of the armed forces;
- facilitate transparency in national defense planning and budgeting processes;
- harmonize its defense policy and strategies;
- expand scientific and technical cooperation with appropriate NATO structures, NATO member-states and partner countries.

Also these obligations remain to be fulfilled. As regards democratic control of the armed forces, today there is even a regression compared to what was planned according to the legislation drafted in 1997.⁵⁷

Belarus has implemented its Individual Partnership Program (IPP) with NATO on a biennial basis since 1997. In July 1997 the NATO Council approved the Belarus IPP for

⁵⁷ See Paznyak, Vyachaslau. "Problemy demokraticeskogo kontrolya na voennoi sferoi v Respublike Belarus" [Problems of Democratic Control over the Military Sphere in the Republic of Belarus]. In: *Demokraticeskii kontrol nad voennoi sferoi v Rossii I SNG* [Democratic Control over the Military Sphere in Russia and the CIS]. Ed. by A. Nikitin. Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces and Centre for Political and International Studies (Moscow). Moscow: Eslan Publishers, 2002.

1997-1999. In 2001 Belarusian representatives took part in 59 events organized by NATO within the framework of the partnership program.⁵⁸

Belarus' IPP for 2002-2003 – the third such program - was adopted by the Security Council State Secretary in December 2001. On 20 February 2002 it was approved by the North Atlantic Council and came into force. Five principal participants in the IPP implementation are involved on the Belarusian side: the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry for Emergency Situations, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the State Committee of Border Guards and the National Academy of Sciences.

Compared with the previous IPPs the current one has 19 (five more) areas of cooperation with NATO members and partner-states. The new areas of cooperation are planning, organization and management of national defense research and technology, military geography, global humanitarian mine clearing, political and defense efforts against NBC proliferation, small arms and light weapons.

The 2002-2003 IPP gives first priority to the following fields: civil emergency planning, crisis management, language training, military education, training and doctrine, democratic control over the armed forces and defense structures, conceptual planning and operational aspects of peacekeeping, and small arms and light weapons.

Concerning the fourth IPP Minsk proposed to conduct in Belarus an exercise on combating a radiological threat and some other joint activities.⁵⁹ Perhaps democratic control over the defense structures remains the litmus test of good faith. However, a *de facto* intensified cooperation short of the political level has already been noticeable.

2.3 Misperceptions and ambivalent strategies vs. the expansion of the “new division lines”

⁵⁸ “NATO Council Adopted Individual Partnership Program with Belarus.” Available: <http://www.belarusembassy.org/us/news/digests/110302.htm>

⁵⁹ See Statement by Ambassador Sergei Martynov, Head of the Delegation of the Republic of Belarus at the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Plenary Meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government, Prague, 22 November 2002. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus. Information Bulletin No. 177, 22 November 2002.

The Belarus approach with regard to NATO has always been marked by some schism. While the PfP program has been viewed more or less positively, at first even as a “humanistic program,” NATO enlargement has been perceived as an unwelcome development, due to its “enemy image” in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.⁶⁰

One of the first versions of the official foreign policy concept of Belarus, adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers in 1996, contained no direct repudiation of NATO, but declared an intention to develop partnership relations with the biggest military powers and their military alliances, including NATO, NACC, WEU and the CIS.⁶¹ At the same time, the document said that “there still exists a possibility of geopolitical changes unfavorable for Belarus, first of all, with regard to the possibility of a rapid advancement of NATO military infrastructure to the East. As a state which declared in its Constitution an intention to achieve a non-nuclear and neutral status, the Republic of Belarus holds that a new system of European security is incompatible with a massive growth of any military bloc on the continent.”⁶²

Instead of an “accelerated” enlargement process Belarusian officials have favored an alternative “evolutionary” way, one of the reasons being that “in case Belarus would enter a close military union with Russia a potentially possible confrontation with the West would involve the republic as well.”⁶³ However, the inertia of the “cold war” thinking has been driving “certain forces” into pushing forward NATO enlargement toward the Western borders of Belarus and Russia. Since NATO is allegedly an embodiment of “an old atavism of the bi-polar confrontation,” Belarus is bound to oppose its eastward expansion.⁶⁴

Belarusian authorities have repeatedly referred to greater insecurity for Belarus in case of a new confrontation between the military alliances in Europe.⁶⁵ President Lukashenka, in particular, has on many occasions expressed concern over the Alliance’s nearing Belarusian borders, the danger of finding Belarus in between the two opposing blocs

⁶⁰ See Tsepkala, Valeri. “Stremeniye Belarusi k neutralitetu ne zapreschayet yei ukreplyat’ mir vo vsyom mire.” *Narodnaya Gazeta*, 10-12 September 1994.

⁶¹ *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*. 20 May 1996.

⁶² *Belorusskaya Gazeta* 10 June 1996.

⁶³ *Zvyazda*. 20 April 1996.

⁶⁴ Hryb, Mecheslau. “Respublika Belarus u Intahratsyinyum Pratsese Suchasnast.” Statement by the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Belarus at the 93th Conference of the Interparliamentary Union in Madrid. *Zvyazda*. 7 April 1995.

⁶⁵ See, for example, *Zvyazda*. 21 February 1995 and *Zvyazda*. 11 May 1995.

etc.⁶⁶ He also cautioned against a military misbalance in Europe because of "attempts to expand NATO by bringing in the former Warsaw Pact countries and warned that for Belarus this would lead to the militarization of the economy and slash social programs.⁶⁷ Presidential adviser Sergei Posokhov anticipated that NATO advancement to Belarusian borders would trigger off an espionage campaign and a preparation of the military theater which, in its turn, would make economic reforms impossible.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, Belarus has always been an active participant of the CIS Collective Security Treaty, and it supported its transformation into the Organization of the Collective Security Treaty in May 2002.

NATO enlargement has been perceived by Belarusian authorities as a revival of geopolitics in western policies. Moreover, it has been viewed as an attempt to take advantage of weaknesses and tensions among the CIS states and to "defeat them completely" by putting them out of active European politics and by redistributing forces in favor of the West.⁶⁹

Chief of the President's Secretariat Ural Latypau held that NATO enlargement might lead to a new confrontation, and the "line of fire" would be drawn across Belarus. The main merit of the PfP agreement for Belarus, in his opinion, was an access to full information on NATO development.⁷⁰

NATO enlargement has also been associated with an increased nuclear threat. At the Non Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference in April-May 1995 the Belarus concern "about possible risks of more and more places in Europe being used for nuclear weapons deployment in case of NATO's geographical expansion" drove it into reinitiating the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Europe – first advanced in the late 1950s.⁷¹ The idea, however, met with a lukewarm response from the potential participating states in the region.

⁶⁶ See Ibid.

⁶⁷ *Zvyazda*. 12 March 1995.

⁶⁸ *Svaboda*. May 17, 1996.

⁶⁹ See an interview with the First Deputy Foreign Minister Valery Tsepkala: "Dekoratsii na mirovoi stsene mogut izmenyatsa, no chelovecheskaya priroda ne izmenitsya nikogda..." *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, 13 June 1996.

⁷⁰ *Narodnaya Gazeta*. 18 October 1995.

⁷¹ Syan'ko, Uladzimir. Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus. Statement at the NPT Review and Extension Conference Plenary Meeting. New York, 18 April 1995, p. 3.

On 12 May 1997 Belarus handed in to NATO Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs Gebhardt von Moltke a draft of a bilateral Belarus-NATO Charter. The idea of the charter was further elaborated upon at the EAPC meeting in Madrid on 9 July 1997. According to the official statement made there (in fact, one of the few attempts at conceptualizing the country's foreign and security policy) Belarus, soon to border on NATO, had the right to raise the issue of an "institutional codification" of its relationship with the Alliance. Hope was expressed that the signing of an agreement regulating relations with the Alliance would objectively be in the interests of both Belarus and NATO.⁷²

In July 2001 Belarus' Defense Minister Leonid Maltsev confirmed that Belarus would like to sign a treaty on security with NATO that would allow Belarus to have transparent relations with the neighboring countries and to obtain "perfect security."⁷³ To date, however, there has been no positive response to this proposal.

Belarusian authorities believe that "from an historical perspective the decision to expand NATO eastward has no solid grounds and is a faulty one," because a "mechanical enlargement of military unions" will not ensure security, but will instead create new dividing lines in Europe, and thus will be counter-productive. In their view a European security model should be based "not on mutual containment, but on the concept of cooperation and mutual security guarantees."⁷⁴ Meanwhile, NATO has no way or record of concluding a treaty on security guarantees other than granting membership. Belarus is not after that. At the same time, there are no prerequisites at present for signing an agreement between Belarus and the Alliance along the similar lines as between NATO and Russia or Ukraine, because the political ground for any strategic partnership has been lacking.

The political leadership of Belarus has held that it is not NATO, but the OSCE that has a priority in building a security model for Europe in the XXIst century. This logic

⁷² Statement by Mr. Victor Sheiman, Official Representative of President A. Lukashenko, State Secretary of the Security Council of the Republic of Belarus. Meeting of the EAPC. Madrid, 9 July 1997. Available: <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1997/s970709j.htm>

⁷³ "Belarus would like to sign a Treaty on Security with NATO." *BelTA*. 1 July 2001. Available: <http://www.belarustoday.info/news/news.php?id=3682&lang=eng>

⁷⁴ Statement by Mr. Victor Sheiman...

rests on the fact that all Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) members function within the OSCE region. Therefore, the emerging OSCE model of European security must take into account, and rely upon, the EAPC and NATO while general rules or principles should be forged by the OSCE as a unique and universal transatlantic organization. Meanwhile, a division of functions among the two organizations is deemed possible. For example, the OSCE may limit itself in some cases to preventive diplomacy and post-conflict building, while the management of violent crises may be taken care of by the EAPC strictly within the OSCE and the UN Security Council mandate.⁷⁵

It is extremely ironic, that despite Belarus frequent declarations to the effect that it is the OSCE, but not NATO, that should serve as the basis for the post-cold war European security, of late Belarus has been in conflict not only with both of them, especially bitterly – from 1998 until the end of 2002 with the OSCE.

The new National Security Concept (NSC) that was adopted in July 2001 and replaced the 1995 version is explicit about the dangers for Belarus allegedly associated with NATO. It states, that “due to its independent foreign and domestic policy Belarus has been the target of unfounded political and other pressure on the part of the U.S. and other NATO members. Owing to their support the activities of destructive forces inside the country is growing, aimed at destabilizing the social and political situation and forcefully changing the constitutional order.”⁷⁶

The NSC further identifies as the main causes that complicate the military and political positions of Belarus: NATO eastern enlargement, adoption by NATO of a new strategic concept, “providing for the use of the military force without UN or OSCE mandate,” the creation of European Rapid Reaction Forces, the building by the neighboring states of military formations in the vicinity of the Belarusian border, as well as their increased military expenditures.⁷⁷

“The creation or expansion of the military-political alliances, the activities of which may be detrimental to Belarus’ interests” is listed among the major factors threatening the security of Belarus.” At the same time, among the priority ways of

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Kontsepsiya natsional’noi bezopasnosti Respubliki Belarus. *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*. 18 July 2001.

ensuring Belarus' security in the political sphere are "cooperation with the European Union" and "participation in the EAPC with a view to constructing a new European architecture that would take into account Belarus' interests."⁷⁸

The new Military Doctrine, adopted in January 2002 is concerned, in its turn, that there are "no efficient mechanisms to prevent military threats and to safeguard the interests of all international actors on the European continent," and that some unidentified "regional centers" are seeking to "gain political leadership in the shaping of security-providing mechanisms, disregarding the interests of all international actors. "The enlargement of military blocs and alliances to the detriment of the military security of Belarus and counteracting the creation of collective security systems including Belarus" are defined as "major external military threats." The Doctrine specifies as destabilizing for the military-political situation the practice of "political and economic blocking of interests" of particular states and attempts to open interference in their internal affairs on the part of unidentified international actors.⁷⁹

The cited documents clearly demonstrate the distance that has to be covered from the cold-war mentality to the thinking corresponding to the present-day reality.

2.4 Whence the new "division lines"?

The world is undergoing a fundamental change marked with both inherited and new divisions and fault-lines. The inherited ones include the vestiges of the previous history and international systems, such as civilizational, cultural, religious, political and military divisions.

Other divisions are contemporary constructions. The integration processes, which are underway only partially – by inclusion - erase divisions and produce (or reproduce) other ones. In this sense EU and NATO enlargements are shifting the line separating their members from non-members to the East. This is the first obvious consequence of the dual

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ See: Zakon ob utverzhdenii voennoi doktriny Respubliki Belarus [The Law "On the Adoption of the Military Doctrine of the Republic of Belarus. Adopted by the houses of the Belarusian National Assembly (parliament) in December 2001 and approved by president Lukashenko on 3 January 2002]. Available: <http://www.mod.mil.by/zakon/zrb20020103.html>

enlargement. With a broader vision of what has been going on in Eurasia one cannot but conclude, that new divisions are also taking place among the new independent states. Thus, the CIS is further fragmenting along the political, economic and military lines. The most recent facts proving this is the decision to transform the Collective security treaty into a six-member Organization of the Collective security treaty and the consolidation of the Eurasian Economic Community. At the same time, new divisions are taking shape even among such seemingly close allies as Belarus and Russia. These are divisions between the types of economies, political regimes, foreign policy orientations – for example with regard to NATO. In other words, there is no need to artificially dramatize every formalization of a particular type of relations agreed upon by the interested parties – states or other international actors. It may be more appropriate to discuss not that much formal differentiations but, rather, possible negative implications, like hostility, mistrust, decrease in human exchanges, economic cooperation, estrangement, etc.

There are divisions into democratic market-economy prosperous states and the ones at various levels of transition. These are so to speak organic divisions or, more exactly, differences. Transparent borders in the EU and porous borders in the FSU have different meaning.

The specificity or, should we say, sensitivity of the situation in Europe lies in the fact that the zone of Central – Eastern Europe where new formal divisions are taking shape has been a zone of military confrontation and an "iron curtain" that separated nations and individuals for decades. Therefore, memories of this recent past feed concerns about the possibility of its unwelcome repetition.

There may be temporary and natural periods of reduced interest in cooperation, due to a state's concentration of efforts on joining an alliance or integration grouping, while some of its neighbors may not be pursuing the same goals.

It would be also true to admit, that real division lines do not emerge out of their own will and require that there is at least one side who is to blame for the deterioration of relations.

3. Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and the NATO Factor

The alleged NATO threat has been exploited by the Belarusian leadership for pragmatic political and economic purposes: to obtain all possible support from Russia as a reward to the single most reliable ally. As one analyst notes, “Lukashenka survived by playing Russia and NATO off against each other. He needed Russia-NATO competition for influence in Belarus: that way he could sell himself to Russia as the guarantee against NATO influence, and could sell himself to his people as the guarantor of ties with Russia. Now, with the adversarial Russia-West competition fading away, he has less space to play with.”⁸⁰

Minsk relations with Moscow have visibly worsened since Vladimir Putin replaced Boris Yeltsin as Russia’s president in 2000. The most obvious dip came in August 2002, when Putin suggested that Belarus and Russia hold a referendum in May 2003 on “ultimate unification.” Belarus’ six regions would have the same rights as the 89 subjects of the Russian Federation, and the new state’s constitution should be based on Russia’s, Putin said. Lukashenka later called Putin’s unification plan unacceptable. According to many commentators, the Lukashenka-Yeltsin idea of building the Russia-Belarus Union as a supracountry with supranational governing bodies is dead forever. Putin’s Kremlin has apparently set a course toward full economic control over Belarus.⁸¹

When *Gazprom* announced that it would halve its gas supplies to Belarus starting on 1 November 2002, the government-controlled Belarusian Television went so far as to call the step “economic terrorism.” Lukashenka said at a government meeting on 6 November that the Kremlin was blackmailing him because *Gazprom* wanted to take over the Belarusian state-owned gas pipeline and storage company *Beltransgaz*. The *Gazprom* decision was motivated by Russian President Vladimir Putin, who no longer wants to subsidize Belarus and the Belarusian president has shown himself to be an unpredictable partner in recent months.⁸²

For several years the motto “With Russia into Europe!” has been circulated in Belarus, partly to support integration between the two countries, but also as a recognition

⁸⁰ Strauss, Ira. “Belarus: Russia as Liberator?” *RussianObserver.com* 27 June 2002. Available: <http://www.russianobserver.com/stories/02/06/25/1179/15684.html>

⁸¹ Maksymiuk, Jan. “Lukashenko Subdued.” *RFE/RL Newswire*. 17 December 2002.

of the reality that the Lukashenka regime is incapable of normalizing relations with the rest of Europe on its own. Some observers, however, point out that this may be a wrong reading. The fact of the matter is that there are only two ways to follow: “Belarus into Europe!” or “Belarus into Russia!” Indeed, the motto “With Russia into Europe!” is misleading and disguises the loss of sovereignty, bringing it into Russia and not necessarily into “Europe.” The meaning of the speculation about Russia as “Belarus liberator” is the hope that Putin will play the good imperialist in Belarus with behind-the-scenes actions to deliver the society from its dictator and restore the government to the people, or at least to a more moderate elite.⁸³

It should be noted, though, that despite Russian President Putin’s popularity in Belarus, his idea of its accession to the Russian Federation is not supported by the majority of Belarusians. Although about an equal number of Belarusians want to join the EU and Russia, there is a remarkable rise in pro-western sentiments, while the number of supporters of unification with Russia has decreased over the past two years.

According to an opinion poll conducted by the Minsk-based Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) 53.8 per cent of Belarusians are supportive of the unification of Belarus and Russia and 53.4 per cent would vote for Belarus’ accession to the European Union. The number of people who deem that NATO extension eastwards bears no threat to Belarus has increased since 1999 by more than twice. At the same time, only 32.2 per cent of Belarusians support Putin’s idea of Belarus’ incorporation by Russia.⁸⁴

There is an obvious association by the Belarusian government of the state’s security interests and concerns with those of Russia.⁸⁵ This is a clear manifestation of a de facto security and military alliance between the two states and of the attempts at coordinating their security policies. Internationally, Moscow has supported Lukashenka on many occasions, as in the case of his demand for a stronger OSCE mandate. Moscow has also blocked any

⁸² Znatkevich, Alex. “Belarus Accuses Russia of ‘Economic Terrorism.’” *Transitions Online*. Week in Review. 5 - 11 November 2002.

⁸³ Strauss, Ira. “Belarus: Russia as Liberator?”

⁸⁴ See Appendix 3 to this paper: “Belarusians Don’t Fear NATO and Want to Join Europe.” *Charter 97*. On-line. 10 October 2002. Available: <http://www.charter97.org/eng/news/2002/10/10/18>

OSCE move to condemn Belarus for its undemocratic practices. But this support is gradually eroding.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 have marked a watershed in world politics. Before 9/11 there was an inertia of Russian negativism regarding the enlargement of the Alliance and skepticism on the possibility of a productive cooperation with it. Those attitudes were enthusiastically supported by the Belarusian ally. Russia was also voicing its concerns about Ukraine's possible furtherance of relations with NATO to the point of seeking a formal membership. The political and economic situation in Ukraine, on the other hand, prompted President Kuchma to make a sharp turn in his foreign policy and radically improve relations with the Russian neighbor.⁸⁶

While, to an extent, these tendencies remained after 9/11, they acquired principally new meanings. To paraphrase a well-pointed remark that the NATO the new members are joining "will not be the NATO that they thought they were joining... precisely because they are joining,"⁸⁷ it would be correct to admit that the NATO that Russia and Belarus had been trying to prevent from enlarging is no more, and the previous concerns and phobias do not apply.

On the other hand, Russia's critical stance to enlargement remains.⁸⁸ Russia is not going to join the Alliance.⁸⁹ What has brought Russia and NATO closer together is the realization that neither of them alone can cope with the threats of terrorism, proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction and other global challenges.⁹⁰ Unlike Russia, Belarus has nothing to sell to NATO or the West in exchange for their tolerance of an undemocratic regime with inscrupulous international connections and unpredictable

⁸⁵ For a structured representation of external security threat perceptions of Belarus government and the opposition see Appendix 5 to this paper.

⁸⁶ See, for example, Peterson, Scott. "Diplomatic Tug-of-War has Ukraine Playing Both Sides." *Christian Science Monitor*. 11 July 2001.

⁸⁷ Lindley-French, Julian. *Terms of Engagement. The Paradox of American Power and the Transatlantic Dilemma post-11 September*. Chaillot Paper No.52. Paris: The European Union Institute for Security Studies (May 2002), p.76.

⁸⁸ See Borisov, Sergei. "Russia: My Neighbor, My Friend?" *Transitions Online*. Weekly Newsletter. 19-25 November 2002.

⁸⁹ See "Russia won't join NATO." *Belarus Today*. News. 18 July 2002. Available: <http://www.belarustoday.info/news.php?id=10928&lang=eng>

⁹⁰ See Borisov, Sergei. "Russia, NATO Continue 'Incredible Rapprochement'." *Transitions Online*. Weekly Newsletter. 10-16 December.

foreign policy. Whereas Russia's strategic partnership with NATO and the EU rests on calculated pragmatism, Belarus' current situation may be best described as a reluctant inevitability of adjustment to the unwanted new environment.

Conclusions

As a result of the dual enlargement Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and Moldova will have common borders with both the EU and NATO. Belarus will have to deal with new EU/NATO members, which will have unified basic legislation and which will pursue unified policies in the domains of economy, finance, trade, security, defense, etc. The possible negative effects of the new situation for Belarus may be summarized as follows:

a) the current tensions continue:

- ◆ toughening of visa procedures by new EU members
- ◆ ensuing difficulties for travel, contacts, exchanges and, generally for transborder/subregional cooperation
- ◆ lack of efficient transport/customs corridors on the border – hindrance for trade/transit
- ◆ "new division lines" are in effect

b) the current tensions will be exacerbated if:

- ◆ the new direct eastern neighbors of the EU have no will and funds to meet the new challenges, (hence demands by Belarus that EU finance the protection of Belarusian-Polish border against illegal migrants)
- ◆ EU countries are reluctant to provide larger assistance

c) if scenario **(b)** evolves, it may contribute to a situation (with regard to one or more non-EU members) where due to minimal economic cooperation and foreign investment, etc., the economic modernization in a "direct neighbor" state slows down to a halt; the economic and technological gap between the EU and such a state

widens, thus making them almost incompatible – i.e. the relationship collapses into a vicious circle.

d) Complicating the regional setting, the interaction of the enlarged EU and its direct neighbors would produce complex configurations of outcomes, e.g.:

- ◆ pressure on Belarus, both unintended/indirect and direct to liberalize and reform its political and economic systems
- ◆ provided Russia and the EU manage to agree on a special status of Kaliningrad exclave to become a pilot project for finding new cooperation models between them, that, in turn, may provide a strong incentive for Belarus and other non-members to follow suit
- ◆ the current Belarusian leaders may be non-responsive to the opening prospects and that would protract the negative status-quo (for a period of time) until some compelling internal and/or external variables factor in.

The EU continues to recognize the importance of Belarus. Political stability in the region is one of its priorities, since the new enlargement of the EU is creating a shared border with Belarus. Serious concerns remain over the political conditions in the country with incidents of repression of opposition forces. The endorsement of the TACIS civil society programme has been a positive step, fulfilling a benchmark set by the EU. The EU is closely monitoring political developments in Belarus. The EU continues to encourage dialog between the Belarusian government and the opposition in order to advance towards democratization. The EU is ready to resume normal relations with (and full assistance to) Belarus providing the EU/OSCE criteria for free and fair elections are met.⁹¹

On behalf of the European Union the Danish EU Presidency on 16 October 2002 issued a Declaration regarding Belarus, which was supported by the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated countries Cyprus and Malta, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, all members of

⁹¹ See http://Europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/belarus/intro/index.htm

the European Economic Area. The Declaration expressed the EU's alarm at the deterioration of the situation regarding freedom of media and freedom of expression in Belarus, the censorship and harassment of independent media by the Belarus state, the repression of journalists, trade unions and others critical of President Lukashenka. The EU urged Belarus to adhere to its international commitments concerning the freedom of media and freedom of expression, and called upon the authorities to revise the provisions in the Criminal Code that affect these freedoms. The need was underlined for improvements in the situation regarding human rights and democracy before relations between the EU and Belarus could move forward.⁹²

Since 2001 another point of controversy has existed in EU-Belarusian relations – the status, mandate and the very possibility of a normal functioning of the Advisory and Monitoring Group (AMG) of the OSCE in Belarus that was formed in Minsk in February 1998. During 2002 Belarusian authorities gradually pressed the AMG to the point of closure formally by refusing to prolong visas for its foreign staff. The grounds for such actions, however, were overtly political and they caused a new crisis in EU-Belarus relations.

Following their trip to Minsk in November 2002, a European Parliament delegation composed of Jan Marinus Wiersma of the Netherlands, Elisabeth Schroedter of Germany, and Robert Goodwill of the United Kingdom noted the lack of progress Belarus had made toward democracy since the 2000 parliamentary and 2001 presidential elections.⁹³

One of the consequences of the low level of relations between the EU and Belarus and between Belarus and the leadership of the neighboring countries entering the EU is the fact that there have been no bilateral or multilateral summits in the region involving the Belarusian president with his Polish, Lithuanian or Latvian counterparts since 1997 (not to mention the decision by the EU countries in 2002 not to issue entry visas to the

⁹² Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union regarding Belarus. 16 October 2002. Available: http://www.eu2002.dk/news/news_read.asp?iInformationID=23675

⁹³ "European Parliamentarians Note Lack of Democratic Progress in Belarus." *RFE/RL Newslines*. 2 December 2002.

top Belarusian officials). Needless to say, this is both an illustration of the situation, but also a hindrance to solving common problems in the region.

Serious problems in the way of developing regional cooperation and providing assistance and thus mitigating the negative consequences of EU enlargement for Belarus are posed by the Belarusian political system and legislation. Regional cooperation cannot develop without granting greater authority to regional bodies of power. Meanwhile, according to the 1996 Constitution even the powers of the Belarusian parliament are very limited, and the executive branch, first of all the president, firmly stands for the preservation of the existing distribution of authority, which puts it in an overwhelmingly privileged position. This said, the prospects for the elaboration of a code of local governance and self-governance based on the European Charter in the Belarusian parliament look dim.⁹⁴

Belarusian authorities are trying to decouple the common position of the EU and the OSCE on Belarus. They believe that the nature of relations between the OSCE and Belarus should not be defined by the European Union. They consider what they call "the attempt of the EU countries to substitute the OSCE by themselves" as absolutely unacceptable.⁹⁵

The official Minsk does not want to reconcile itself with the simple fact that it cannot easily improve relations with individual European organizations while staying "in quarrel" with others. The Prague NATO summit in November 2002 clearly demonstrated that advances to NATO produced no reward in the situation of an unresolved conflict around the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus. Likewise, any normalization of Belarus relations with the European Union must happen as part of wider process of improving relations with Western European and transatlantic institutions. This in turn, depends in the first place on meeting the European political standards by the Belarusian government.

⁹⁴ See, for example an interview by Pavel Shipuk, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Regional Policy of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of Belarus in *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*. 17 January 2002.

⁹⁵ Comments by the Press-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus in Relation to the Consideration by the Council of the European Union of the Issue on Belarus on 19 November 2002. 764-20-11-2002. Available: <http://www.mfa.gov.by/eng/index.htm>

EU and NATO eastern enlargement raises a host of complex and difficult issues for Belarus, ranging from political, military, security, economic, legal, socio-cultural to what used to be termed before as “secondary” humanitarian aspects. Moreover, it complicates a lot of outstanding strategic domestic and foreign policy options for the Belarusian state. The solution of many of these problems requires enhanced cooperation and interaction of the states in the region and the EU, including the provision of financial and technical assistance in many areas. This concerns first of all a coordinated dealing with the new security challenges, modernization of the border infrastructure and the preparation of a multilateral package of readmission agreements.

The keystone for all cooperative efforts is obviously a positive change in relations between Belarus and the EU and NATO, which, in turn, depends on Belarus’ turn to democratic reforms in the country’s political and economic systems. The other part of the story is that relations between Belarus and an individual European institution - the EU, the OSCE and NATO - cannot be pursued any more in isolation from the rest of them. In a sense, the dual enlargement has embraced also the OSCE and other European organizations, promoting an institutional change by spreading common values, norms and practices.

It is a paradox that the relations of Belarus with NATO for some time have looked better than with the EU. Although there has been a shared view among the EU, the OSCE, and NATO on the “Belarusian question,” the Alliance has been seemingly more “liberal” to Minsk than others. This “liberalism,” however, does not go beyond cooperation on “second-order” programs however important. NATO does not and cannot acquiesce with political and strategic prescriptions for European security that have been issued in Minsk for the simple reason that they promise no future for the Alliance.

Belarus has yet to accept the realities of the post-Cold War settlement in Europe. It is a historical misfit that Belarus under the Lukashenka regime has remained the last European state “in a state of war” with the West. While the “peace treaty” between Russia and NATO was concluded by the signing of the 1997 Founding Act and the former adversaries through the Rome accords of May 2002 instituting the NATO-Russia Council, moved further to embark upon building a strategic partnership, Belarus has left

itself far behind in the past, fighting with the old ghosts, struggling with the old, but still unresolved problems, and puzzled with the new ones fast piling up. Belarusian authorities should acknowledge the fact that any military response to the “customized” NATO “threat” is missing the point, which is a more comprehensive challenge posed by EU enlargement. The latter may “squeeze” harder.

The NATO factor remains extremely important for Russia, Ukraine and Belarus both politically and militarily. One can say that because of the Alliance’s new wave of enlargement its importance for them today is even higher than in the previous decade. However the aspects of this importance are different. As NATO is being transformed into a new political-military organization with new strategic tasks to cope with the new security challenges and with a global outreach, cooperation with the Alliance becomes a *sine qua non* for the European states that remain outside. Without a full-fledged cooperation with NATO and the EU (increasingly uniting the same states of Europe) non-NATO members cannot count on having viable roles in Europe and beyond.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. MIGRATION TO AND OUT OF BELARUS: MAIN EXTERNAL FLOWS

	2000			2001		
	No. of persons arrived	No. of persons left	Migration increment or decrease (-)	No. of persons arrived	No. of persons left	Migration increment or decrease (-)
Migration with foreign countries	25.943	13.812	12.131	23.355	14.270	9.085
Including: CIS and Baltic states	24.229	7.418	16.811	21.824	8.296	13.528
Russia	14.424	5.854	8.570	13.041	6.808	6.233
Kazakhstan	3.590	110	3.480	2.671	143	2.528
Moldova	391	37	354	428	26	402
Ukraine	3.546	1.137	2.409	3.361	966	2.395
Transcaucasia	531	43	488	408	48	360
Azerbaijan	197	23	174	153	11	142
Armenia	126	15	111	127	11	116
Georgia	208	5	203	128	26	102
States of Central Asia	1.010	68	942	1.062	158	904
Kyrgyzstan	132	6	126	143	3	140
Tajikistan	136	4	132	144	9	135
Turkmenistan	295	36	259	322	126	196
Uzbekistan	447	22	425	453	20	433
Baltic states	737	169	568	853	147	706
Latvia	291	50	241	299	49	250
Lithuania	384	109	275	503	82	421
Estonia	62	10	52	51	16	35
Migration with other countries	1.714	6.394	-4.680	1.531	5.974	-4.443
Including: USA	62	1.560	-1.498	70	1.318	-1.248
Germany	57	918	-861	47	1.306	-1.259
Israel	198	2.500	-2.302	207	1.701	-1.494
Poland	42	81	-39	51	83	-32

Source: <http://www.br.minsk.by/archive/2002-09/sc1444.stm>

Appendix 2.

BELARUS PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Table 1. Popular perceptions of relations with other countries⁹⁶

Mutually friendly relations exist between Belarus and	%	A neutral stance is taken by	%	A hostile attitude toward Belarus is adopted by	%
Russia	70				
Ukraine	53				
Moldova	44				
Kazakhstan	43				
Poland	41				
China	40	France	36		
Armenia	32	Czech Republic	35	USA	32
Kyrgyzstan	31	Greece	33	Latvia	18
Germany	30	Italy	33	Lithuania	15
Turkmenistan	28	Turkey	33	Great Britain	14

Appendix 3.

Public attitudes in Belarus with regard to the EU, NATO and unification with Russia⁹⁷

Table 1. Distribution of answers to the question:

"Given today there was a referendum on Belarus' accession into the European Union, how would you vote?" (September 2002)

Answer	Per cent
For	53,4
Against	8,1
Would not vote at all	13,0

⁹⁶ Based on the the results of a sociological poll conducted in Minsk in 2002, published in *7 Dnej*. 13 April 2002.

⁹⁷ Belarusians Don't Fear NATO and Want to Join Europe. *Charter 97*. On-line. 10 October 2002. Available: <http://www.charter97.org/eng/news/2002/10/10/18>

Table 2. Dynamics of answers to the question:

"If today there were a referendum on the unification of Belarus and Russia, how would you vote?" (in per cent)

Answer	March 1999	April 2000	April 2001	April 2002
For unification	41,8	55,7	56,6	53,8
Against unification	40,4	27,6	28,4	23,0
Would not go to the polls	14,7	15,6	14,6	11,6

Table 3. Distribution of answers to the question:

"Russian president proposed to hold in spring 2003 a referendum on the issue: 'Do you agree that Russia and Belarus should merge into a single state on the basis of the following principles:

- a) equal rights and freedoms of all citizens*
- b) equality of the Russian regions and Belarus*
- c) formation of the union's bodies of power under the Russian Constitution?"*

In case such a plebiscite takes place, how would you vote?" (September 2002)

Answer	Per cent
I will say that I agree	32,3
I will say that I do not agree	26,3
I do not know yet/depending on the situation	31,7
Would not take part in such a referendum	8,0

Table 4. Dynamics of answers to the question:

"Does NATO enlargement pose a danger to Belarus?"(in per cent)

Answer	June 1999	November 1999	April 2001	September 2002
No	17,6	20,2	23,5	41,2
Yes	47,7	43,7	36,8	31,3

Appendix 4.

Estimates of external threats to national security in the Belarusian printed mass media⁹⁸

The perceptions of external threats to national security in Belarusian state-owned and non-governmental printed mass media can be subdivided into two broad categories: official and alternative (opposition). Due to the specifics of the problem itself, as well as because of the non-specialized popular genre of the mass media, oriented toward the mass audience, external threats, featured both in the official and the alternative discourses are not covered in a systematic manner. They are often not differentiated from their own sources (i.e. a threat and its source may pose as interchangeable concepts), and present an evaluation of the priority of international issues and their relevance to the national security of the country from the vantage point of the government or the opposition. At the same time, an integrated image of national security or sectoral threats is being fragmented into concrete perceptions of threats to specific political values.

For the purposes of the Project some interpretations of external threats to Belarus' national security most typical both for the government and the opposition have been selected from state and non-state printed mass media. They have been summarized along the criteria of explicitness, topicality and reference frequency in the competing political discourses. The selection has been made with regard to the most debatable issues of the international position of the country: the state of its relations with the international community as a whole, with the West, with Russia, the consequences of NATO eastern enlargement, the Belarusian perspective of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The main task has been to determine not the quantitative, but some comparative qualitative (value) characteristics of the official and alternative discourses of national security.

According to **the official estimates** external threats to national security may be presented as follows:

- a) civilizational, cultural, geopolitical, information etc. threats by the West, manifest in the interference in the domestic affairs and support of the opposition, the danger of economic and political dependence of the country on the West as a result of its integration in the international community on unequal conditions;
- b) NATO enlargement;
- c) isolation on the part of the international community;

⁹⁸ Paznyak, Vyachaslau. "Estimates of external threats to national security in the Belarusian printed mass media." In: *The Mass Media in the Political System of Belarus* [in Russian]. Ed. by Vyachaslau Paznyak. IIPS Information and Analytical Materials, Issue No. 3. Minsk: International Institute for Policy Studies, 2000, pp.14-16. The latter publication came as a result of a research project, implemented by the International Institute for Policy Studies (a Belarusian non-governmental think-tank) in 1996-2000.

- d) failure of the Russo-Belarusian Union;
- e) failure of the CIS;
- f) new transnational threats: international terrorism, international organized crime, drug trafficking, illegal migration, etc.

Alternative (opposition) political forces in Belarus perceive the external threats to national security as follows:

- a) Russia (“Russian imperialism,” instability in Russia and its setback to authoritarianism);
- b) Russo-Belarusian union as a threat to the sovereignty of Belarus;
- c) isolation of Belarus on the part of the international community;
- d) NATO enlargement as a factor consolidating the political regime in Belarus;
- e) new transnational threats: international terrorism, international organized crime, drug trafficking, illegal migration, etc.

The parameters of an analytical framework “*estimates of threats to national security*” may be defined as follows:

1. threat identification
2. threat source
3. threat target (area)
4. corresponding political values (explicit or implied), that are threatened
5. implications, which can be interpreted as threats in their own right.

This frame, used for a comparative analysis of the estimates of threats found in the official and alternative discourses, makes it possible to represent them in a table format (see **Tables 1** and **2**). The tables reflect the key points in the security discourses in recent years. The official security discourse stresses the West as a major threat source, while integration with Russia is perceived as an unequivocal value to be defended. The opposition discourse is suspicious of Russia, negative to Russo-Belarusian integration in the political sphere and stresses sovereignty as an absolute value. For the opposition the CIS is not a security issue.

Comparisons of the two security discourses show some formal similarities which are, nevertheless, essentially different. This is true, for example, of the principally different interpretations of the causes and consequences of international isolation. New transnational risks are also perceived differently with regard to Russo-Belarusian

integration. Thus, the official and opposition interpretations of external threats to national security reflect diametrically opposite approaches, which are being circulated through the mass media and serve to preserve and reinforce this juxtaposition in the public consciousness.

Table 1. Official discourse of external threats to Belarus national security

Threat identification	Threat source	Threat target (area)	Corresponding implied values threatened	Implications
The U.S. and the West: a multifaceted threat; geopolitical, civilizational, etc. Interference in Belarus' domestic affairs, support of the opposition.	the West	Slavic civilization, Regional geopolitical balance	Slavic civilization, the CIS, Russo-Belarusian Union, political, economic, social order and constitutional power	Destabilization, internal conflicts, foreign interference and dependence foreign powers
NATO and its enlargement	NATO, the West	Geopolitical and military position of Belarus, regional strategic stability and the balance of forces	Slavic civilization, Belarus' existence as a state and its future	Belarus becoming a «new dividing line» in Europe
Isolation of Belarus in the international community	the West, the U.S.	Belarusian political leadership	Russo-Belarusian Union, political, economic, social order and constitutional power	Destabilization of social, political and economic order, breaking away from Russia, dependence on the West
Failure of the Russo-Belarusian Union	the West, the U.S., some forces in Russia	Russo-Belarusian Union	Russo-Belarusian Union, Slavic civilization, common history and values	Destabilization of social, political and economic order, breaking away from Russia, dependence on the West
Failure of the CIS	the West, the U.S.	the CIS	the CIS; a renewed union of the FSU republics	Control of the post Soviet space by the West
International crime: drug trafficking, illegal migration, etc.	International organized criminal groups, terrorists	Various aspects of national security	Belarusian society and state	Damage to national security, society and the state

Table 2. Alternative discourse of external threats to Belarus national security

Threat identification	Threat source	Threat target (area)	Corresponding implied values threatened	Implications
Russia,, «Russian imperialism»	A segment of the Russian political elite	Belarus' sovereignty and independence	Belarus' sovereignty and independence	Loss of sovereignty; incorporation of Belarus in Russia; «spillover» of Russian problems on Belarus
Russo-Belarusian Union	Russian and Belarusian leadership, «Russian imperialism»	Belarus' sovereignty and independence	Belarus' sovereignty and independence	Loss of sovereignty; incorporation of Belarus in Russia; «spillover» of Russian problems on Belarus
NATO enlargement	NATO	Indirectly works to consolidate conservative forces in Belarus and Russia	Indirectly – Belarus' sovereignty	Belarus becoming a «new dividing line» in Europe and an anti-NATO bridgehead
Isolation of Belarus in the international community	Internal source: the political regime in Belarus	Political regime in Belarus	Belarus as part of Europe, European identity of Belarus	Political and economical stagnation
Transnational threats	International criminal groups, terrorists	Social, economic and political security of society	The future of Belarusi an society and state	Being intensified as a result of integration with Russia

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