

### Abstract of the Final Report

In many European countries an intensive debate on NATO's transformation and enlargement has become a feature of political process and an area of public interest. Unfortunately, in the course of this discussion excessive emotions rather than an impartial analysis have been more often demonstrated in Belarus. It was claimed in the government-controlled press that NATO generated a serious threat to the Belarusian national security. This was accompanied by the argument that the "aggressive nature" of NATO remained unaltered being just camouflaged by the "shrewd Western propaganda".

In 1996-97, the government press in Belarus emphasised the following main points:

- The Atlantic Alliance has not changed; it is the same military organisation that still prefers to resolve international problems from positions of strength.
- NATO's decision to extend the Alliance to the east was a strategic mistake. This was a mistake in building a new Europe and in structuring the entire system of international relations.
- The related political, military, and psychological aspects of NATO enlargement will create new dividing lines in Europe and may recreate confrontation.
- The Atlantic Alliance should transform itself in order to adjust to the realities of the post-confrontation era, and abandon the functions, doctrines and structures created by the Cold War.
- It is necessary to counter the prevailing NATO-centrist line in the European security debate.

In 1996-97, the Belarusian independent press, as a rule, adhered to a more balanced approach to NATO. To a certain extent, it was questioning anti-NATO statements and attitude of the government.

The independent press presented more complex and multifaceted views on the role of the Atlantic Alliance in the emerging new European security architecture. In general, the independent press was more objective with regard to NATO's evolution in the 1990s.

**Democratic Institutions**  
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Comparative Analysis of Publications on NATO's Transformation  
and Enlargement in Belarusian Independent and Government Press,  
1996-1997

Final Report

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## Introduction

This research project is aimed at examination of differences in evaluation of NATO's evolution, the role of the Atlantic Alliance in the emerging new European security architecture, and the prospect of NATO enlargement. These differences can be traced on the level of analytical articles in official and independent newspapers, magazines, and journals published in Belarus in 1996-97.

The number of newspapers and magazines in Belarus increased from 282 and 138 in 1991 to, respectively, 522 and 214 in 1996.<sup>i</sup> However, a large proportion of the registered newspapers and magazines are published irregularly and in small circulation, or exist only on paper. In fact, there are only several dozens politically and news oriented periodicals that have a real audience.<sup>ii</sup>

The audience of state-run newspapers and magazines is much larger than that of independent periodicals. The state-controlled press disseminates views that are intended to present the government policy as the only acceptable way of dealing with the current problems. It operates in accordance with ideologically checked model of informing the public. As a rule, it offers to readers a thoroughly controlled interpretation of major events in Belarus and abroad. Materials reflecting the alternative opinions are practically absent in the government press. Tough government control over the periodicals has become a graphic feature of public life in the light of the Decree "On Certain Issues of the Government Information Policy" adopted by President Lukashenko on January 4, 1996.

Independent Belarusian print media is one of the main sources of information for the Belarusian people. According to the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies, the trust of Belarusian readers in the sources of information tends to decline steadily with respect to the government national newspapers, and to increase

with respect to non-governmental print media.<sup>iii</sup> The non-government publications help to fill in the information vacuum with an alternative assessment of the political and economic situation in Belarus, as well as international relations and foreign policy issues.

In the list of government print media addressing foreign policy matters on a regular basis and having a large audience, one should note dailies *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, *Respublica*, journals *Belaruskaya Dymka* and *Armiya*. The comparatively well-established non-government press is best represented by the newspapers *Belorusskaya Gazeta*, *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*, magazines *Belarus in the World* and *Vector*.

### I. NATO in a New Europe

In general, the government-controlled press imposed on readers a negative outlook of NATO and NATO enlargement within the context of the official Belarusian attitude towards the Atlantic Alliance. The essence of the position of the Belarusian authorities regarding NATO presented by the official press in 1996-97, is as follows. NATO is a product of former bipolar confrontation. As such, the Atlantic Alliance should have been dissolved after the end of the Cold War and disappearance of the Warsaw Pact. An expanded Atlantic Alliance will sharply change the geopolitical situation in Europe and will inevitably create new dividing lines. In the words of President Lukashenko, NATO enlargement is a “historical mistake”.<sup>iv</sup> A presentation of NATO’s expansion as a mistake of historic proportion has been and continues to be the central topic of the government press with regard to NATO.

The official position of the Republic of Belarus on NATO and NATO enlargement was outlined by the State Secretary of the Security Council of the Republic of Belarus Victor Sheiman at the meeting of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in

Madrid on July 9, 1997.<sup>v</sup> *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* explained this position in the editorial dated July 10, 1997.<sup>vi</sup>

According to this position, Belarus believes that the creation of new dividing lines in Europe in the course of NATO enlargement will be counter-productive. The extension of NATO to the east is fraught with a possible NATO-centrist design of the future system of European security. By this design, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) will be deprived of part of its significance while Belarus, Russia, as well as other countries may find itself on the margin of the European processes of co-operation and interaction.

The Belarusian concept of European security relies on fundamentally different approach: security should rest on all international institutes active in Europe (the OSCE, the European Union, Western European Union, Council of Europe, and NATO). This does not infringe on the role that belongs to NATO: Belarus is aware of NATO's real role in Europe. A European Security Model, which is being developed within the framework of the OSCE, should take into consideration NATO and the EAPC. However, the common rules or principles of conduct in the political and military field must be developed by the OSCE as the only truly universal European organisation. This approach is not aimed at any downgrading of the role of other institutions. On the contrary, it envisages the establishment of an ongoing productive dialogue on security issues between the active European and transatlantic organisations, as well as eventual integration of all such institutions into one system.

Belarus believes that an expansion of the Atlantic Alliance should be accompanied by its internal transformation from a military-political to a political-military entity and by broader involvement in a dialogue with NATO of countries whose interests are most affected by NATO enlargement.

Belarus sees the signing of the NATO-Russia Founding Act as an important goodwill step towards the creation of a new European security architecture. From the Belarusian leadership's point of view, the fact that Russia and NATO entered into an open dialogue concerning problematic questions in a procedural context established in the Founding Act is a positive development.

Belarus intends to see that its interests are taken into account as NATO expands. Belarus has strongly suggested that its relationship with the Atlantic Alliance be institutionalised. Belarus has proposed expanding practical co-operation with NATO, and at the same time negotiating an agreement on partnership and co-operation with the Alliance.

Some elements of Belarus' position, as they have been presented in top level statements, can raise brows. For instance, Ivan Antonovich, then the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, said that "in view of the current realities we would like to restate our opposition to the expansion of NATO as a military organisation and support its transformation into a comprehensive European entity ensuring peace and security".<sup>vii</sup> How is one to understand Belarus' readiness for NATO to be converted into a "comprehensive" European structure? Would it not mean that NATO has to grow to maximum proportions? The approach is totally inappropriate in the context of the overall negative attitude to the expansion of the Atlantic Alliance expressed officially by Minsk.

Western analysts hold that NATO enlargement, Poland's membership in NATO, and the current specifics of Belarus' policies point to the possibility of nuclear weapons making a comeback to its soil.<sup>viii</sup> Unfortunately, careless, ill-conceived statements sometimes validate such opinions by Minsk. For instance, the assistant to the President of the Republic of Belarus Sergei Posokhov made quite a stir by his remarks in early

August 1997. In his opinion, it is only a matter of time before nuclear weapons are stationed in the new NATO members. Therefore, “our national interests would be well served by the creation of an anti-NATO coalition and an inevitable return of nuclear weapons to Belarus”.<sup>ix</sup> According to Sergei Posokhov, the CIS Treaty on Collective Security could provide a legal foundation for an anti-NATO bloc. In military terms, he referred to deployment of certain “coalition units” and tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus.

Such remarks are far from being harmless. They can send misleading signals about Belarus’ position. Calls for an “anti-NATO coalition”, given the current conditions, are remnants of confrontational thinking. At this juncture, a confrontational mentality has the potential of bringing back international tension. Also, efforts at setting up an anti-NATO bloc would be futile considering the underdeveloped security system of the CIS Collective Security Treaty. As for tactical nuclear weapons, Russian politicians and military experts are not short sighted enough to create unnecessary problems.

In 1996-97, the Belarusian independent press, as a rule, adhered to a more balanced approach to NATO. To a certain extent, it was questioning anti-NATO statements and attitude of the government. Independent analysts highlighted the following points in assessing NATO and the Belarus-NATO relationship in articles and comments in non-government newspapers and magazines.<sup>x</sup>

First, Belarus has been and remains of a certain strategic interest to NATO, especially in the context of its eastward expansion. There is validity to the remark by Sherman Garnett that, given Poland's membership in NATO, Belarus will increasingly become a matter of Alliance’s interest as well.<sup>xi</sup> Due to the prominent geo-strategic location of Belarus and the trend for Belarus-Russia rapprochement, Minsk will remain,

as Michael Dobbs put it in the *Washington Post*, “a long-term strategic headache for Washington”.<sup>xii</sup>

Second, its former excessively anti-NATO rhetoric and its rigid engagement with Russia’s position have put Belarus at a relative disadvantage where its timid attempts at establishing a constructive relationship with NATO have received the cold shoulder treatment. A different example was provided by Russia and Ukraine who were able to manoeuvre at the right time, display a certain efficiency and flexibility and set about structuring their relations with NATO on a different basis. Therefore, Belarus, a nation whose history prods it harder than any other nation towards building a “belt of good-neighbourliness” along its borders and away from becoming some “grey zone” between NATO and Russia, has so far failed to regulate adequately its relationship with the Atlantic Alliance which will be making an ever stronger impact on the creation of the European security architecture and on the situation in Central and Eastern Europe. Undoubtedly, as was mentioned by President Lukashenko, “Russia’s and Ukraine’s agreements with NATO which build up confidence measures and create obstacles in the way of advancement to the east of troops, arms, and military infrastructures objectively meet the interests of our country as well”.<sup>xiii</sup> And yet one would like to see Belarus make a contribution of its own to the establishment of constructive partnership with NATO.

The national interests of Belarus would benefit from an even, stable and dynamic relationship with the Atlantic Alliance. However, such a relationship is hard to build while denying the Western values that essentially underlie NATO. It is appropriate to mention that the preamble of the North Atlantic Treaty signed on April 4, 1949 in Washington D.C. specifies that the Parties to this Treaty “are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the

principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law”.<sup>xiv</sup> If there is anybody who can appreciate references to the fact that we have our own interpretation of democracy and human rights it is a strictly domestic audience. And Nicholas Burns, a spokesman for the US State Department, already told at April 4, 1997 briefing that the words “free and democratic”, while applicable to Russia, are hard to apply to Belarus.<sup>xv</sup> One can disagree and argue at will, but one cannot ignore the fact that such sentiments currently prevail in Western capitals.

Third, the prospects of “special” relations with NATO, similar to those between NATO and Russia and NATO and Ukraine, being established in the near future, as well as the prospects of advanced formalisation of such relations are not as favourable as portrayed by the Belarusian authorities. In his address at an October 1997 session of the National Assembly, Alexander Lukashenko argued that the preparation of an agreement with NATO “will soon enter the final stage”.<sup>xvi</sup> However, NATO has made it clear that a deeper and formalised relationship with the Alliance cannot start from scratch. It requires appropriate preparation, including motivated and active involvement via the Partnership for Peace (PfP). Belarus has delayed, without any reasonable justification, the drafting of its Individual Partnership Program. This program was only submitted to NATO in May 1997. It is true, however, that NATO quickly approved the program. On the whole, the former pace of building a dialogue with the Atlantic Alliance, largely determined by anti-NATO sentiments and financial considerations, is far from being impressive.

Fourth, Belarus would do well to display a maximum amount of flexibility in its foreign policy, and genuine pragmatism which would make it open to various scenarios, instead of swinging wildly from one extreme position to another. The equally problematic experience of drafting the Russia-NATO Founding Act and the way Russia

informed the Belarusian leadership of the progress of its negotiations with NATO also provides food for thought. Belarus should not allow itself to become hostage to decisions made beyond its borders and without due consideration of its interests, whether in Washington, Brussels, or in Moscow.

Fifth, interaction with NATO may be enhanced gradually and at select directions. In particular, there is no secret that the Belarusian public opinion is strongly negative toward NATO, in part due to stereotypes resulting from decades of anti-Western and anti-NATO propaganda. The lack of objective information about NATO, about how the Alliance has reformed itself since the end of the Cold War is a mighty obstacle in the way of constructive co-operation. That problem could be addressed by setting up in Minsk, as it has been done in Moscow and Kiev, a NATO documentation centre. It would help create a more favourable background for the development of more constructive relations with the Atlantic Alliance.

## II. Discussion on NATO Enlargement

In 1996-97, the magazine *Belarus in the World* initiated a discussion on NATO enlargement.<sup>xvii</sup> In the course of the discussion, analysts and politicians from Moscow, Minsk, Kiev, and Brussels presented a variety of views on this topic. This discussion deserves special and detailed examination because, in fact, it was the most extensive and multifaceted debate on NATO in the Belarusian press.

Sergei Rogov, a director of the USA and Canada Studies Institute in Moscow, elaborated on the issue of "Russia and NATO". He argued that both NATO and Russia have formidable military forces in Europe, so they cannot ignore each other. NATO-Russia bilateral relations could be either confrontational or co-operative. In his opinion, theoretically, one could not exclude a revival of military and political rivalry between

Russia and NATO leading to a new division of Europe.<sup>xviii</sup> Prevention of such confrontation demands the reshaping of relations between Russia and NATO on the principles of co-operation and respect of each other's interests.

Russia regards the decision to enlarge NATO as a “zero sum game”, an attempt to consolidate the results of victory over the Soviet Union in the Cold War and isolate Moscow further. NATO expansion, according to this reasoning, means an end to the efforts to establish a new security system “from Vancouver to Vladivostok” that would unite all former Cold War adversaries.

Dr. Rogov pointed out that as far as the European security is concerned, the key problem is not NATO enlargement, but relations between Russia and the West. If the partnership between Russia and NATO were not of a declarative character, but were instead developing in conformity with the current security problems, the process of NATO enlargement would not be endangering Russia's vital interests. NATO's eastern expansion would only be dangerous if Russia and NATO resumed military and political rivalry. This would not mean the beginning of a new Cold War. Rather, it would not be possible to establish a mechanism of positive co-operation between Russia and the West in military and political spheres.

To prevent a definite breakdown of the declared partnership between Russia and the West, both sides should bridge, before it is too late, the gap between declarations and reality. Equal partnership suggests that common interests be identified through common efforts. Russia and NATO could link their efforts on the basis of their important strategic interests and develop a common position concerning issues of stability and security in the world.

Strong inertia stemming from decades of military and political confrontation colours the present day relations between Russia and NATO. Despite the fact that over the past

few years, radical changes have occurred in international affairs, this inertia has not been overcome. Russia and NATO could come to terms on matters that concern the need to maintain military and political stability, to provide fulfilment of commitments regarding arms limitations, and to prevent changes in the existing military balance in Europe. These commitments could also be aimed at providing the co-ordination of defence policies of Russia and NATO.<sup>xix</sup>

General Leonid Ivashov of the Russian Ministry of Defence made a point that the ongoing debate on European security issues brings into focus the role of NATO as a key element of an emerging new security system in Europe. In this debate, eastward expansion of NATO remains one of the most controversial issues.<sup>xx</sup> Russian officials, supported by their Belarusian colleagues, firmly oppose NATO expansion, saying out of hand that it is unacceptable.

General Ivashov touched upon a question of whether an enlarged Alliance is a threat to Russia or not. From his point of view, the danger posed to Russia by the enlargement of NATO is obvious. Basically, the Atlantic Alliance gets closer to Russian borders. Russia has a limited choice of somewhat inadequate measures to counter NATO's expansion. Amongst these Leonid Ivashov mentioned the possibility of combining military capabilities and joint containment measures in co-operation with Belarus, some increase of Russia's military capabilities, and tactical nuclear weapons "bluffing". However applied, this will be "a defensive response and in no way an emerging military threat to the West"<sup>xxi</sup>.

Andrei Sannikov, then Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, noted that both the supporters and the critics of the eastward expansion of NATO are confident that they are absolutely right. The advocates of expansion make a majority, those who are against it, or, at least, those who may be affected by this sort of

NATO's decision, are few in number. Belarus is one of them. Nevertheless, simple arithmetic in security matters can hardly be an acceptable criterion.<sup>xxii</sup>

The end of the Cold War has caused major discussions about the future of European security. The opening opportunities for co-operation of the former enemies and prospects for a new world order caused a kind of euphoria. This was not the only emotion that the politicians of both the East and the West experienced; this euphoria was well mixed with confusion which originated from the absence of realistic ideas of how to create the new system of security in Europe. At the same time, the first attempts to fill in the empty space reflected the mentality of Western strategists, which tended to think of "inclusion" and "involvement" rather than "exclusion" and "alienation".

Organisational models for the new Europe had the final objective of creating a community based on the principles of democracy, modern economy, respect for human rights. The Soviet Union and later the new independent states were seen as an inalienable component of achieving these objectives. Today the idea of a Europe of changing geometry or of concentric circles, as well as the NATO's idea of interlocking institutions in Europe, in Andrei Sannikov's view, have disappeared. The enlargement of NATO has been declared as the only salvation.

A number of questions arise from the idea of expanding NATO. The explanation is that the expansion of NATO will strengthen the transatlantic component of European security due to the increase in the number of countries that recognise the role of the United States in Europe. The importance of preservation and development of this component is not questioned by serious analysts. At the same time, the role of the state situated in Europe is often being forgotten. Russia will not leave Europe and it will remain one of the centres of power and a major factor influencing European process.

It is being often said that new risks and threats connected with local ethnic, religious and territorial conflicts, possible nuclear terrorism require the preservation and strengthening of NATO as the only reliable organisation in Europe. At the same time, this kind of approach distracts one's attention from resources and means that may cause these risks.

According to the candidate countries, the main objective of joining the Atlantic Alliance for them is to have reliable security guarantees. Within the OSCE there is a discussion on common and comprehensive security model for Europe of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One of the conclusions that the participants of discussion have come to is the recognition of the fact that military security is no longer a key factor under the present conditions and that the priority today lies in ensuring economic, environmental and humanitarian aspects of security. All NATO member states take part in this discussion; however, they still tend to secure the military component of security by means of NATO enlargement.

New NATO member states may be provided with security guarantees but this security may prove unstable in itself. The question of security guarantees presupposes the existence of permanent threat, and since we are talking about the guarantees from the military organisation, that would mean the existence of the concept of a permanent military threat that will be associated with the former USSR. Accelerated enlargement of NATO underestimates and pushes aside the possibilities of strengthening security and providing security guarantees through other European organisations, such as the OSCE and the European Union.

NATO enlargement causes an increasing divide in the European affairs. Countries are forced to look for allies, very often not even having the opportunity to choose. A group of "reliable" countries appeared in Europe and these are enjoying the most

favourable status, mainly from the EU. Former neutral states and countries which used to be fairly reserved on the question of military alliances now discuss the possibilities of establishing close links with military structures of Western Europe. The important component of stability in Europe based on neutrality and non-participation in military alliances may now disappear. All this will lead to separation and not consolidation.

The discussion of NATO enlargement started off on a very high note. This usually leads to a situation where the parties only take into account political considerations, rather than the common sense, and as a result the discussion is still very ardent.

Members and candidate members of NATO are trailblazing the process of split-up in Europe under the slogan of the consolidation of democratic Europe. But since everyone is striving to create common grounds for the development and security in Europe, the basic principle should be that they look for mutually acceptable decisions, Andrei Sannikov concluded.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Konstantin Grishchenko, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine, argued that expansion and deepening of co-operation between Ukraine and NATO was aimed at contributing to stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic region. This process has become an important component of the European security architecture.<sup>xxiv</sup>

At first, Ukraine was cautious enough about the enlargement of NATO. As Konstantin Grishchenko indicated, without denying NATO enlargement in principle and seeing it as a natural and inalienable right of any state to provide for its own interests of security, Ukraine favoured the evolutionary way of the enlargement of the Atlantic Alliance. The implementation of this decision should have been done on the basis of the principle of the integrity of European security and the necessity to avoid the appearance of new dividing lines in Europe, which is impossible to do without taking into account the interests of all the countries including Ukraine.

The revival of Russia as a great power with uncertain priorities and values and attempts on the part of Russia to regard the development of Ukraine's independence and the co-operation of Ukraine with Euro-Atlantic security institutions through the prism of Russia's own geopolitical interests, force Ukraine to pursue active policies of non-participation in military and political blocs. At the same time, this requires a more active involvement of Ukraine in the East-West debate in order to protect its own national security interests. These interests, in terms of content, are similar to the interests of the other European states to create a stable and integrated Europe without any dividing lines and military confrontation.

It is appropriate to add here that since Ukraine restored its independence, official Kiev has developed its vision of NATO as one of the effective structures for maintaining stability and peace in Europe. Ukraine regards NATO as an organisation called upon to protect democratic values and achievements of the democratic nations, and Ukraine has proclaimed that it shared such values. In line with this reasoning, Ukrainian leaders see NATO enlargement as a process of expanding the area of stability and democracy.

Although the issue of Ukraine's membership of NATO is not on the agenda today, it is said that Ukraine's Constitution, the Main Guidelines of Ukraine's Foreign Policy, approved by the Verkhovna Rada, do not exclude Ukraine's accession to the security organisations in principle.

In 1995, Leonid Kuchma voiced the idea of Ukraine to establish special partnership relations with the Atlantic Alliance. It took two years for this idea to be materialised in the form of the Ukraine-NATO Charter signed at the NATO summit in Madrid in July 1997. As a result of the Charter, NATO-Ukraine relations gained a solid foundation and a better framework. Now, NATO-Ukraine dialogue and co-operation is better

structured. In fact, the Charter, establishing a formal link between Brussels and Kiev, is important as a symbol: NATO cares about Ukraine, and says so. The State Program of Ukraine-NATO Co-operation has been worked out. Its successful implementation is regarded in Ukraine as an important element of the strategic course aimed at integration in European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

The Belarusian position on NATO's role in Europe and NATO enlargement is quite different from that of Ukraine. Belarus has been most vocal in backing Russia's criticism of the Atlantic Alliance. Opposing NATO enlargement, Minsk echoes Moscow's concerns at the Atlantic Alliance's policy to accept new members. NATO officials regarded negative statements by the Belarusian leaders concerning NATO as “inconsistent”.

The article of NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana published by *Belarus in the World* in 1996 explained how NATO contributed to European security.<sup>xxv</sup> Mr. Solana noted that for many in Belarus, and in its Russian neighbour, NATO is still seen as a relic of the Cold War. This is a mistaken view, he claimed. “Security today is not about military balance, but promoting stability. This requires a framework of co-operation, which includes, rather than excludes, as many countries as possible. NATO has therefore adapted its policies and structures to fit the new strategic environment to create stability in new circumstances. Both in structure and purpose, the NATO of today bears little resemblance to its Cold War ancestor”.

In 1990, NATO offered the hand of friendship to all countries of the Warsaw Pact. In 1991, NATO created the North Atlantic Co-operation Council as a forum in which NATO and the former Warsaw Pact countries could discuss issues of common security. In the same year, 1991, NATO adopted a new Strategic Concept that put the emphasis

on preventing and managing crises rather than preparing for large-scale military operations.

In 1994, the Atlantic Alliance invited all countries of the OSCE area to develop with NATO's 16 member countries the Partnership for Peace. 27 countries, including Russia, have taken up this offer. Through the practical measures offered by the Partnership, relations between Allies and Partners have deepened to a point almost unimaginable a decade ago.

On the military side, NATO nations have made major reductions in defence expenditures and considerably reduced and reconfigured their armed forces into smaller, more mobile units better able to carry out the new missions of peacekeeping. Several Allies have reduced or altogether abolished mandatory military service. Levels of military forces in NATO countries have gone down considerably. U.S. forces stationed in Europe have been cut by over 60%. Overall readiness levels of forces have been lowered. NATO's nuclear forces have been cut by over 80%. NATO has withdrawn and destroyed all land-based nuclear missiles from Europe.

In the opinion of Javier Solana, the NATO of today thus bears little resemblance to the Alliance of the Cold War. An organisation which was once geared to meeting solely defence purposes of Western Europe, is now transforming into a bulwark for stability across the whole of Europe. It is the new NATO, not the old one, which is opening its doors to new members. Welcoming new members into NATO does not require an enemy to justify it. Indeed, the countries who seek closer ties to institutions, such as NATO or the European Union, do not do so because they feel a threat. They would just like to be part of a Euro-Atlantic community to which they feel they legitimately belong. And the Alliance they seek to join is an Alliance which has made a closer relationship with the Partners a key part of its policy.

NATO does not see itself as having any enemies, nor does it wish to make enemies. It follows that, if NATO's vision of a new European security order is to be realised, Russia must have an important place in it. Indeed, NATO wants Russia to play its full constructive part as a major European and international power. For the basic fact remains: NATO and Russia are two major contributors to European security.

NATO Secretary General indicated that he would like to see a stronger relationship with Belarus. A solid partnership between Belarus and NATO would constitute another important step towards a Europe which has left the Cold War divisions firmly behind.

In the opinion of Sergei Martynov, the First Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Belarus<sup>xxvi</sup>, Europe is at a critical crossroads. The success or failure in constructing genuinely common, indivisible security architecture for the 21<sup>st</sup> century in this region depends on the road that Europe is going to choose. The role of NATO in this choice is prominent. NATO is the only effective security structure that remained after the Cold War. This provides the Alliance with the immediate advantage of being a centre of coagulation in an amorphous space of the unsettled security. Moreover, NATO brings together a group of the most important—in military and economic terms—states of the world. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including Belarus, are “doomed” to co-operate with these states and their institutions and organisations in economic and other areas.

At the same time, according to Sergei Martynov, NATO has found itself in crisis of a principled nature. Under the new conditions, with the threat from the East fading away, NATO has—to a great extent, if not entirely—lost its *raison d'être*. In this respect, NATO is a “victim” of the break-up of the previous foundations of European and global security, like other organisations that have become part of history. This factor is important, since it pulls NATO and other nations together in their search for a new

security system, the one that would provide a new rationale for the Alliance. This is the basis for extremely important internal transformation of NATO. Without such a new rationale NATO would face erosion leading to the loss of its effectiveness.

Many Western leaders have regarded NATO enlargement as the way out of NATO's internal crisis both in geographical and political terms. Many analysts, however, do not agree that the driving force of NATO expansion is the need to protect its new members from a threat to their security. Such a threat does not exist and many observers, including those in the West, share this view. Therefore, it is logical to suggest, Sergei Martynov noted, that the genuine purpose of NATO expansion is not underpinned by security concerns but is motivated by political aim of drawing new member states into the political orbit and system of values of the Western world. The driving force here is the need for new *raison d'être* for NATO, and, to a considerable extent, internal political considerations.

In fact, under the present security situation in Europe, the enlargement means a radical change in the main contextual fundamentals of NATO existence, those that were laid as foundation of the organisation at its inception and had been cementing it for decades. The shift of emphasis in the Alliance's *raison d'être* from threats to the matters of accommodation of the new members to a new system of political values and orientations, provides the basis for further transformation of NATO from military-political to primarily politico-military organisation.

The character of the new security system which is being formed in Europe will depend to a great extent on whether or not NATO will take this path of internal transformation that would turn it into an organisation with new contents, and how far it will go. It could be either a system based on the balance of competing interests or a

system of indivisible and intertwined security in Europe and across the space from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

Is the expansion of NATO the best, the most prudent response to security demands under the new conditions? Many people, not only in Belarus and Russia, have serious and well-grounded doubts about this. One should point out that many of today's advocates of NATO enlargement have had serious reservations about the idea of the Alliance's expansion when it was originally put forward. This idea has brought about the major concern that its implementation could lead to the emergence of the new dividing lines or re-emergence of the now shifted old ones, replicating the security system based on confrontation instead of guaranteeing integrity and indivisibility of the new security in Europe.

However, theoretical discussions about shortcomings and advantages of the enlargement are over. NATO enlargement has become a *fait accompli* in political terms. In politics facts are the first thing to take account of. The task of statesmen from both sides of the expansion issue is to play their parts so that the establishment of a stable and fair new security structure in Europe could be facilitated and new confrontation prevented. On this path one may identify a number of consecutive objectives.

First of all, NATO enlargement should be carried out so that it would not damage other nations' security. Otherwise, common security on the continent and, accordingly, the level of security of NATO member states would be jeopardised. This is a critical and challenging task. Successful implementation of this task will make it possible to achieve the following objective: to transform the changing NATO into an important building block in the new structure of European security. To achieve these goals European states should agree on the principles of building the common system of European security.

At the July 1997 EAPC meeting in Madrid, Belarus put forward its proposal on such principles. Among the most important are the universal nature of the new security system; involvement of all interested states, without any exception; respect of justified security interests of all countries concerned; renunciation of the old and new dividing lines. One could hardly disagree with these principles. In their declarations, many states support these principles. However, it is important to see the political agreement transformed into practical one through the system of actions consistent with these principles in developing NATO and improving the functioning mechanisms of interaction.

Particularly, in terms of defence, such a transformation should lead to the de-emphasising of the military component of the Atlantic Alliance while providing for the increasing importance of the political component for the latter to become a core of the transforming NATO. The Alliance might be interested in following this line under the new conditions, since it meets the demand for changing its *raison d'être* and provides for positive perception of NATO as a factor of the regional and global security. Secondly, the military infrastructure that might be built in the new member states should not give rise to concern of the neighbouring countries.

With regard to mechanisms of the new security system in Europe, Belarus is interested in the 21<sup>st</sup> century's architecture of European security based on the achievements of the already existing organisations, such as the OSCE, the EU, Council of Europe, and NATO.

While admitting inalienable right of the states to freely choose methods of guaranteeing their security, including the right to enter into agreements and alliances, Belarus places special emphasis on issues of security of those states which are not members of military alliances. Security of such states should be guaranteed through an

appropriate set of all-European and sub-regional measures. These measures should be both active (lowering of the levels of armaments and, in some cases, their elimination, or non-deployment according to certain parameters) and passive (political and international law instruments providing for security guarantees).

Belarus supports the idea of co-operative security put forward by the European Union, coupled with the proposal of defining capabilities of the OSCE in conflict prevention. The mechanism of interaction among security-related regional organisations, proposed by the European Union, is worthy of support. It envisages transparency, exchange of information on crisis-response measures, regular meetings of representatives of the organisations and special consultations, establishment of contact offices, joint actions, and division of responsibilities.

The extremely important component of the new mechanisms for providing future security should be the development of relations with the main states on the periphery of the enlarging NATO, particularly with those who are not interested in NATO membership in the immediate or foreseeable future. These relations have to be of a special character. Such an approach seems to be appropriate for several reasons. First, those states that set the goal to join NATO cannot perceive the Alliance's enlargement as a negative factor. Correspondingly, there appears to be no objective need for a special settlement of their relations with the enlarging NATO. Secondly, the states that have no intention to join NATO, but geographically are quite far from its new frontiers, find themselves geo-politically in a situation different from that of the countries contiguous to the enlarging NATO.

Because of the particular situation and concern of the latter group of states their special relations with the enlarging Alliance should obviously be extended beyond the PfP and the EAPC. It seems natural that such an approach does not deny the necessity

and expediency of their practical involvement in the PfP under respective Individual Partnership Programmes and in the EAPC. Rather, along with this involvement, special status presupposes legal formalisation of the character and mechanism of the relationship and mutual guarantees for providing for common security. However, it should be stressed that the term “special status” does not imply that this status is something of the same contents for every case. Its subject matter should vary according to specific conditions—military, political, geographic, and others.

In the opinion of Sergei Martynov, Belarus has shown more initiative and political will than NATO in trying to resolve problems related to providing mutual security, including through special relationship. Having been among the most consistent opponents of NATO enlargement for years, Belarus, being fully aware of the factor of reality, called on the Alliance to start negotiations on a charter of co-operation and partnership.

Sergei Martynov argued that NATO—not less than Belarus—could be interested in reaching the adequate level of special relations with Belarus for a number of reasons.<sup>xxvii</sup> In military terms, Belarus, like Russia and Ukraine, is one of the most important former Soviet republics. Belarus has almost the longest border with the new, enlarging NATO in the region. The strategic location of Belarus makes it unavoidably prominent factor in any military-political calculations and balances. Lack of balance in the level of formal settlement of relations with Belarus vis-à-vis Russia and Ukraine could lead to transformation of this country into a sort of corridor for circumvention or undermining NATO’s agreements with Russia and Ukraine. Finally, postponement of the settling of the relations through negotiations would mean politicisation of the problem of security, which is counter-productive from the point of view of the creation of indivisible system of European security.

It seems that not only NATO but also Europe as a whole should be interested in NATO–Belarus relations being converted into a building block in the basis of the new security architecture rather than into an element of tension weakening the whole construction. NATO leaders repeatedly stressed that with the end of the Cold War the Alliance was being transformed into an “absolutely new NATO”. The new and internally evolving NATO has nothing to divide with the new Belarus. Their common goal is to build, together with neighbours, the common security system in Europe, Sergei Martynov concluded.

The most prominent article on NATO enlargement published in 1996-97 in the leading government newspaper *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* was that of Anatol Maisenya.<sup>xxviii</sup> The article was strongly against NATO enlargement. It is precisely for this reason that it appeared in *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* despite the fact that Anatol Maisenya was an outspoken critic of Alexander Lukashenko’s policy.

Anatol Maisenya noted that time and again one may reiterate that NATO's expansion will not bring about new demarcation lines in Europe but, on the contrary, will strengthen security and enhance stability on the continent. However, this will not change what he called “the catastrophic essence of the consequences of such a step”. In his view, the debate on the issue of NATO's expansion has already split Europe. Over the past years Europe was transformed into a confrontation of two clearly outlined and irreconcilable positions represented by two “power centres” — the West where the United States is the indisputable leader, and Russia.

According to Anatol Maisenya, the decision to expand NATO has in fact stopped the discussion of a new architecture of European security and has generated lots of illusions that Europe can become safe and stable by incrementing the NATO structures. Instead of being in search of its place in the system of all-European security, NATO is going to

substitute that system. NATO's corporate interests were declared to be above the interests of unified and indivisible security for the whole of Europe, including Western European countries that are not member states of NATO, Balkan countries, the Baltic states, the CIS countries, and Russia.

By taking a decision to expand NATO, the leaders of the NATO countries have produced a widespread "effect of waiting" among Central and East European countries where any delay in fixing the concrete time of their entry into NATO is perceived as a betrayal of the cause of democracy and unilateral concession to Moscow.

One of the reasons why NATO is advancing eastward is the fact that official Washington is worried about the rapid process of European integration and institutional changes brought about by the all-European initiatives. Being aware of the inevitable redistribution of roles in Europe, and, above all, given the emergence of the unified Germany on the international arena, the United States has grave misgivings about the process of European integration, the military and political field included, that may become autonomous. The initiative of Paris associated with the signing of the Pact on Stability in Europe has aroused Washington's suspicion about "breakaway" sentiments among its European partners. The United States is trying to prevent the erosion of the Atlantic institutions and the decline of its influence on European affairs. America has made a stake on an alternative scenario — the development of "European dimension" inside NATO, and taking the Central and Eastern European countries into the NATO orbit. This will ensure the US participation in all great European building projects as the first among the equal states. Hence emanates Washington's ideology of NATO-centrism laid down in a number of official documents, including the US national security strategy. Official Washington had been the main force in the NATO expansion project from the very beginning. The Yugoslav crisis has greatly facilitated the solution of the

problem by the Clinton Administration to persuade the Western European allies that it is necessary to make such a step. Even the biggest sceptics of NATO could not ignore the two lessons learnt from the developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, in this connection, the future of NATO. First, as of today, there is no alternative to NATO in Europe when force needs to be applied to resolve conflicts on the continent. Second, NATO's transatlantic dimension due to the US participation in NATO's operations, remains the critical precondition of their effectiveness. The Yugoslav crisis has noticeably cooled the Euro-centrist feeling that in late 1990s was tantamount to a challenge to Washington.

Another motive to expand NATO, in Anatol Maisenya's assessment, is of pure American origin. In proclaiming the policy of integrating the democratic Central and Eastern European countries into the Atlantic Alliance, the Clinton Administration have been acting in complete accordance with the logic of the American election campaign. It became a sort of response to the intense pressure being put on Washington by politically organised ethnic groups and communities in America and, above all, by the influential Chicago-based Polish-American Congress.

Due to a divergence of the actual motives behind NATO's expansion and the current problems of creating a new system of security in Europe, the consequences of such a step might be quite opposite to the formally declared objectives. Anatol Maisenya claimed that in spite of the high-sounding phrases of the West, the advance of the Atlantic Alliance to the east has a destabilising effect for Europe. Firstly, NATO's expansion will eventually result in a new re-division of Europe, since this initiative provides for greater security for some countries at the expense of others. In the foreseeable future NATO will continue to be an elite club, where the idea of an "all-European home" has a rather limited meaning. While giving reasons for their accession

to NATO, the Eastern European countries are systematically exploiting the argument of “grey zone of security” in which, according to their assertions, they found themselves after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Initially, one may dispute the essence of this new term and its application to the present-day situation in Europe, when no one threatens anyone. But the irony is like the following. Should their aspirations come true, the “grey zone of security” will not vanish, but only be shifted to the east and south of Europe to form a real “buffer zone”. And then it will not be an imaginary but a real “grey zone of security” in which the Baltic states, Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine will find themselves. They will be forced to play the role of “buffer states” after the new re-division of Europe. Each of these states does not have the slightest chance to enter NATO in the near future.

Secondly, no matter how much and often the Western countries and NATO's leadership might hold Russia in deep reverence in words, the expansion of the Atlantic Alliance objectively leads to a revision of the principal gains of the epoch of détente and Gorbachev's *perestroika*. This expansion undermines confidence and mutual understanding between East and West, between NATO and Russia, which are the two leading "centres of power" in the Euro-Atlantic space. Against the background of never ending assurances of support to the cause of democracy in Russia, this policy of the West can only be understood as a policy of double standards. The perspective of Russia's isolation and the growth of tensions on the continent is becoming obvious. The official circles and the political elite in the countries seeking NATO membership as soon as possible, are forced to pursue a deliberate policy of showing Russia as a demon, in many respects exploiting the real historic contradictions. A biased interpretation of events in Russia and the formation of blocs with all anti-Russian forces inside the CIS are the integral parts of the campaign aimed at creating the image of "neo-imperial

Russia" as a source of threat to security, freedom, and economic prosperity of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe. And here is the key moment in relations between Russia and the West. One cannot but admit that the political and economic instability in Russia, the trend towards separatism and the existence therein of regions of armed conflicts, radiate a potential threat to stability in Europe and elsewhere.

What should our attitude be towards the present-day situation in Russia? Is it a state of transition when Russia is trying to overcome the legacy of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes and to be integrated as full-fledged member of the community of democratic nations? And then, by the logic of things, we should, in every way possible, support Russia in its democratic transformations. Or is it a state of "the permanent Russian rebellion and revolution", of a new Russian empire that is but changing its just another disguise, yet retaining its immanent expansionist essence? In this case, the formation of a new "sanitary cordon" around Russia and its allies is a normal reaction in the interests of self-preservation. The very logic of NATO's expansion promotes the development of a negative perception of Russia in the West and in the Central and Eastern European countries.

Thirdly, the perspective of Russia's isolation and dislodgement from the Central and Eastern European region gives rise to a "complex of defeatism" in Russia itself, and provokes an upsurge in ultra-patriotic and nationalistic sentiments in the policy pursued by Russia. This shift to radical nationalism can already be seen in many cases in Russia, and this is testified to by the anti-NATO agenda of various political circles. The dimension of that shift may considerably grow in the event of NATO's further efforts to expand to the East. In this connection, NATO's expansion not only fails to promote the consolidation of democracy in Russia but, on the contrary, poses a threat to Russia's democratic development. Those politicians, who are exploiting the image of "imperial

Russia”, fail to understand that they are objectively doing everything to have a self-fulfilling prophecy come true. Trying to justify their plans to expand NATO by instability in Russia as a threat to security in Europe, they are provoking still greater instability in Russia and, hence, greater threat to security in Europe.

Fourthly, the filling by NATO of the so-called “security vacuum” in Central and Eastern Europe will result in a geopolitical re-partition of the continent, in a critical upsetting of the institutional balance in the sphere of European security, and in a deformation of its structural component. The institutional balance is called upon to secure sustainability and stability of the system of European security, uniform distribution of loads on its structural elements, and interaction between them. Like in everyday life, the construction of a system of European security presumes that optimal architectural and design features be sought first. For stability in Europe to be ensured, structural security is of no less important than the purely military aspect of security — the combat strength of armed forces and the number of available arms. The approach of NATO's infrastructure to the borders of the former USSR will finally upset the conventional institutional balance, which exists in the present-day transitional and post-confrontation period. This institutional balance is, in turn, an important prerequisite for establishing a new comprehensive system of European security. As a result, such a step could reanimate the logic of military-bloc confrontation, the “balance of fear” as the foundation of European security.

Fifthly, the admission of the Central and Eastern European states to membership in the Atlantic Alliance might damage the CFE Treaty. The principle of parity between the West and East in terms of five most important categories of conventional armaments, on which the CFE Treaty is based, will ultimately be compromised. Furthermore, as a

result of serious economic difficulties faced by Russia, the role of nuclear forces in Russia's military doctrine will adequately increase.

Again, such concepts as “the sphere of influence”, “the zone of responsibility”, “the sphere of vital interests” etc., will be revived from the vocabulary of traditional geopolitics. In reality, this would mean powerful processes of consolidation of the military and political space round the two “centres of power” — NATO and Russia. The very logic of the protection of national interests will instigate Russia to integrate the neighbouring countries into its own system of security. Moscow will be exerting greater pressure on neighbouring states with a view of co-ordinating military policy and developing a unified system of defence. Objectively, this plays into the hands of the national-patriotic forces, which are strengthening their influence in the Russian politics and dreaming of the “Great Russia”, “the Russia within the borders of 1917”. This thesis has been confirmed in the report of Russia's Council on Foreign and Defence Policies on the future of the post-Soviet Space. In particular, that report stated that NATO's advancement to the eastern borders of Russia would turn Belarus into a “protectorate” of Russia and put more pressure on Ukraine.

Anatol Maisenya was convinced that the decision to expand NATO would eventually lead to “the Doomsday for Belarus and its sovereignty”. For Ukraine, this may cause an eruption of separatism and a split of the country from inside. Hence comes his sixth conclusion. The expansion of NATO is an objective threat to the sovereignty of the newly independent states which are on the western borders of the former USSR.

Seventhly, the entry into NATO of Central European countries may have a negative effect on the efficiency of the Atlantic Alliance. The expansion of NATO may precipitate a crisis of the organisation from inside. The experience of complex and protracted adaptation of Turkey and Greece to NATO sends a warning that the problems

of operational interaction and management of troops, compatibility of weapons standards, cultural distinctions and language barriers, will call for a lot of time, money, and special programs.

Finally, there is the problem of an international mandate. After the Yugoslav crisis we have seen the obvious changes in the nature of NATO, which has ceased to be a purely defensive alliance and has been claiming to play the role of the organisation of European security having new functions and goals. It has been stated at all recent NATO meetings that the Atlantic Alliance is a guarantor of a stable and safe Europe and that henceforth NATO will be conducting, when necessary, peace-keeping operations on the European continent, outside the territory of its member states. In turn, this brings to the forefront the problem of legitimacy of NATO's extra-territorial activities. Who will mandate NATO to conduct operations outside the territory of its member states? In principle, NATO can get an international mandate only by mutual consent of all the main participants in the European process, including those countries that are not NATO member states. Otherwise, this will breed mistrust and mutual dissatisfaction. And more accusations of dictate from the position of strength will be made against the Atlantic Alliance. The model of NATO's legitimate peacekeeping operations under the UN Security Council's mandate, which was being elaborated during the Yugoslav crisis, has, in Anatol Maisenya's assessment, no future. He concluded that although in January 1994, the Western leaders put the issue of NATO's expansion on the agenda of the Atlantic and world community, they have failed to define the laws NATO would have to observe in Europe.

Anatol Maisenya thus presented a set of systematised arguments against NATO enlargement, which were not unknown to the informed public. To the average reader of *Sovietskaya Belorussiya* these arguments looked rather impressive. That is why the

editor of *Sovietskaya Belorussiya* provided unusually large newspaper space for this article. Nevertheless, it was clear that some of the arguments, put forward by Anatol Maisenya, were doubtful and misleading. Other analysts subsequently demonstrated evident incorrectness in his reasoning and, in some instances, lack of grounds for his conclusions.<sup>xxix</sup>

The most controversial argument of Anatol Maisenya related to NATO enlargement was that this move would inevitably lead to the alleged “isolation” of Russia. There is the concern that NATO enlargement will shut Russia out from its rightful and essential place in Europe, thereby undercutting Russia's nascent democracy and its security co-operation with the West. It stands to reason that NATO enlargement is not increasing Russia's influence in European affairs, but it is hardly appropriate to talk about any serious “isolation” of Russia in the real context of NATO enlargement.

NATO's policy vis-à-vis Russia is “not against them and not without them.” Russia may be a country of many contradictions and is uncertain of its role in the new emerging Europe. But one thing is clear: there cannot be security in Europe without Russia. Russia's military is in disarray (except for its rocket forces) and its economy is in a financial meltdown. Nevertheless, NATO cannot do anything in the Balkans, Bosnia or Kosovo without conferring with, and getting participation from, Russia.<sup>xxx</sup>

It is not unlikely that, in the words of Samuel Berger, “NATO's enlargement will benefit Russia, above all by increasing stability in Central and Eastern Europe, where Russia twice has been pulled into world war in this century.”<sup>xxxi</sup> While many Russians may find it difficult to see beyond the Cold War stereotypes of NATO, Russia may eventually recognise the profound transformation of the Atlantic Alliance after the Cold War. As NATO and Russia will work together, the advantages of co-operation for both sides could be more apparent.

Russia's response to NATO enlargement was, to put it mildly, not enthusiastic, but when it became clear that the decision to enlarge NATO would not be derailed, Russia sought damage control. These events led Russia to seek an agreement that would enhance its relations with NATO.

It goes without saying that Moscow considers NATO an instrument in the service of the United States. The Atlantic Alliance still symbolises the unfettered strength of its former Cold War opponent. As long as Moscow claims a big-power status, it will not refrain from lashing out at NATO and directing its rhetoric against the United States. Russia will not willingly relinquish its pretension to be a global player and ever-present power.

Another controversial idea of Anatol Maysenya was his assertion that NATO enlargement would mean the Doomsday for Belarus and its sovereignty. The actual development of events has proved that this alarmist scenario was far from reality. It is evident that the Belarusian sovereignty does not depend on NATO enlargement. At the end of the day, Moscow's reaction to NATO's eastward expansion was rather cautious and not provocative. No additional encroachment on the independence of Belarus and Ukraine on the part of Russia has happened in connection with NATO enlargement.

In a way, Anatol Maisenya underestimated the character of NATO's transformation in the 1990s. In the course of the discussion with Anatol Maisenya other experts described how NATO has evolved after the Cold War, especially in the framework of strengthening of the European pillar of the Alliance.<sup>xxxii</sup> It was specifically mentioned that in 1990, NATO began its adaptation to a modern instrument of North Atlantic and European security, revising strategy and restructuring force posture to reflect the changed European security environment and the disappearance of "the Soviet threat". One major development has been NATO's decision to adapt its standards to the

growing European capabilities in the security field. The June 1996' North Atlantic Council Ministerial in Berlin took major steps to give Europeans a larger role within a single, flexible Alliance structure. NATO Foreign Ministers agreed that the European role, known as the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI), would be developed within the Alliance. ESDI will permit creation of coherent military forces capable of co-operating under political and strategic direction of the WEU. NATO assets, such as logistics or headquarters units, could be made available to the WEU on a case-by-case basis, as well as the appropriate command arrangements to support and conduct operations under WEU leadership. When ready, these arrangements will allow Europeans and the WEU to conduct security operations by drawing upon some of the Alliance's military assets. The Berlin Ministerial also agreed on the concept of Combined Joint Task Forces. This concept will provide the Alliance with more flexible and mobile forces. And headquarters' element to be used, for example, in WEU-led operations or in missions including non-NATO countries.

### III. NATO Enlargement and Belarus-Russia Military Integration

The military analysts in Belarus interpreted NATO enlargement as a serious threat to Belarus' security. In their publications in *Armiya*, the journal of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Belarus, they insisted on fostering Belarusian-Russian defence co-operation to counter a potential NATO military build-up.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Major-General Yuriy Portnov argued that Belarus and Russia should jointly maintain certain facilities of the military infrastructure in Belarus (command and control centres, communication centres, airfields, transport routes, and so on) under conditions of consolidated allocation of required resources, which is vital for strategic interests of the Russian Federation.

Integration of Belarus and Russia in the military sphere has become a notable phenomenon affecting the regional situation. The advanced form of such integration could have a significant impact on the regional balance of forces and entail tangible consequences for Ukraine, the Baltic states, and Poland. If military co-operation between Belarus and Russia is considered in the context of NATO enlargement and interpreted in terms of confrontation, then the dynamics of Belarusian-Russian military integration can be perceived with concern and seen as a possible source of future confrontation. However, if one starts from the assumption that military co-operation between Belarus and Russia is a natural process, consistently evolving within the framework of the general integration paradigm, irrespective of NATO enlargement, then the assessments will be less disturbing.

Belarus has moved steadily toward greater military integration with Russia. Russian-Belarusian military co-operation began in 1992 with a series of agreements that settled basic questions on the status of strategic nuclear forces that remained in Belarus. In January 1995, Russia and Belarus concluded technical agreements, permitting long-term Russian leasing of a naval communications site in Vileika and an early-warning radar facility in Baranovichi. They were followed in February 1995 by the Russian-Belarusian treaty on joint efforts in the area of border protection of the Republic of Belarus. By the end of 1995, Belarus and Russia agreed on further military co-operation, particularly measures to strengthen ties between the military-industrial enterprises of the two states, to establish a joint system of air defence, and to coordinate regional military planning efforts.

Even though the withdrawal of Russian strategic forces from Belarus was completed by the end of 1996, this pattern of close military co-operation has raised questions in the West and in the neighbouring countries. Some of the steps to deepen Belarusian-

Russian military ties have been labelled "counter-measures" to NATO expansion, although Russian interest in close military co-operation with Belarus predates any serious prospects for NATO expansion.

Western analysts point out to the possibility of a forward deployment of Russian forces on the Belarusian land in case of a rapid development of the military integration between the two countries. But the chances for this are not big. In December 1997, the Defence Ministers of Belarus and Russia signed the Belarusian-Russian Treaty on Military Co-operation and an agreement on joint provision for regional security in the military sphere. However, these documents have not caused any fundamental change in relations between the military structures of the two countries. The achieved agreements did not envisage the creation of joint military structures or formations.<sup>xxxiv</sup> In the foreseeable future, Belarusian-Russian military integration is unlikely to bring about the deployment of Russian forces on the territory of Belarus, even if a "regional grouping of troops" is established. Neither Belarus nor Russia is interested in restoring military confrontation with the West, and they will avoid any steps that compromise their position.

### Conclusions

In many European countries an intensive debate on NATO's transformation and enlargement has become a feature of political process and an area of public interest. Unfortunately, in the course of this discussion excessive emotions rather than an impartial analysis have been more often demonstrated in Belarus. It was claimed in the government-controlled press that NATO troops were advancing to the borders of Belarus, generating a serious threat to the Belarusian national security. This was

accompanied by the argument that the “aggressive nature” of NATO remains unaltered being just camouflaged by the “shrewd Western propaganda”.<sup>xxxv</sup>

In 1996-97, the government press in Belarus emphasised the following main points:

- The Atlantic Alliance has not changed: it is the same military organisation that still prefers to resolve international problems from positions of strength.
- NATO's decision to extend the Alliance to the east was a strategic mistake. This was a mistake in building a new Europe and in structuring the entire system of international relations.
- The related political, military, and psychological aspects of NATO enlargement will create new dividing lines in Europe and may recreate confrontation.
- NATO strengthens its geopolitical positions and military might, NATO enlargement is a real threat to the Belarusian national security.

• T  
The Atlantic Alliance should transform itself in order to adjust to the realities of the post-confrontation era, and abandon the functions, doctrines and structures created by the Cold War.

• I  
It is necessary to counter the emerging NATO-centrist line in the European security debate.

• B  
Because of its wide membership and wide competence as a regional arrangement according to Article VIII of the UN Charter, the OSCE can and should become a co-ordinator of the European security institutions.

• T  
The OSCE should be a norm-setting organisation.

- he OSCE is able to become a reliable and generally acceptable instrument to maintain peace and stability which all the member-states need.

In essence, according to this position, NATO is a relic of the Cold War. The Atlantic Alliance should have been dissolved after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. NATO enlargement is fraught with a possible NATO-centrist design of the future system of European security. The road to Europe without dividing lines lies through strengthening the OSCE as an all-European organisation; NATO's transformation into a political and military structure that would enhance security for all countries in the OSCE region; and co-operation among Euro-Atlantic organisations dealing with the problems of European security. This position puts an emphasis on the OSCE as the leading organisation among the European security institutions.

Undoubtedly, the OSCE is a useful and valuable component of the European security architecture. It is the only regional forum bringing together all the countries of Europe, as well as Canada and the United States, under a common framework with respect to human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, the rule of law, and security.

The OSCE may become a more effective instrument of preventive diplomacy and conflict management. The OSCE is a body combining “hard” and “soft” security issues. None of the other arrangements on the continent can boast such a complex and integrated approach to security.

However, one should not lose sight of the fact that the OSCE contains serious shortcomings. It does not provide security guarantees; decisions require nearly consensus (minus one state); OSCE has no mechanisms to implement most of its own decisions. In particular, it does not have military arm and hence its capability to conduct

peacekeeping operations is limited. In other words, the OSCE possesses diplomatic rather than military strength.

The capacities of the OSCE at present and for the foreseeable future are quite rigidly limited, on both the institutional and operational levels. Not surprisingly, in the West the OSCE is viewed largely as a toothless talking-shop. There is too much disparity among its members to institutionalise the military resources and structures needed for significant military operations. Thus, looking realistically into the nearest future, it is hard to imagine a situation in which the OSCE would provide the main pillar of European security and stability.

The government-controlled press, while stressing risks and dangers associated with NATO enlargement, said much less about NATO's internal and external adaptation in the 1990s.

The independent press presented a more complex and multifaceted approach to European security and NATO. In general, the independent press was more objective with regard to NATO's evolution in the 1990s, especially in the field of strengthening of the European pillar of the Alliance.

In the course of the discussion on NATO, it was noted, in particular, that NATO member states have identified new missions for the Alliance and have sought to establish more effective sharing of Alliance burdens between the United States and the European Allies. In November 1991 the Allies issued a New Strategic Concept, pointing the way toward a more flexible alliance able to deal with a wide range of challenges. Toward this end, at a NATO Summit in Brussels in January 1994, the Allies agreed to establish Combined Joint Task Force headquarters in the NATO structure to facilitate rapid and appropriate military responses to new challenges.

In Berlin in June 1996, the Allies took a step toward better transatlantic burden sharing in the future, agreeing to facilitate Western European Union military operations by making NATO assets available for approved WEU operations. In addition, NATO and the WEU have intensified and regularised consultative arrangements. In Madrid in July 1997, the Allies agreed to review NATO's New Strategic Concept "to ensure that it is fully consistent with Europe's new security situation and challenges." In December 1997, the Allies agreed in principle on a new command structure that reflects the reduced requirements for collective defence and the increased requirements for flexibility.

The new consultative NATO-Russia and NATO-Ukraine relationships have become a visible part of an emerging Euro-Atlantic cooperative security system.

It was mentioned that NATO is a political institution that harnessed national military interests to a process of co-operation and integration and as a transatlantic link that ensured the continuing involvement of the United States and Canada in European security matters.

In the opinion of some independent analysts, it is not impossible that NATO enlargement will bring broader European stability. Historically, when the security status of Central and Eastern Europe has been left unclear, the resulting uncertainty has exerted a strong and dangerously destabilising influence for the whole of Europe. In the wake of such events, states of both the East and West of Europe's centre have suffered. By fostering stability and confidence, NATO enlargement could advance the longer-term security interests of the states throughout the region.

The independent press was more consistently expressing the view that the problem of European security is not going to be dealt with through one single instrument or one single organisation. NATO is not likely to become the principal organisation which can

provide security for this entire region. The OSCE is also not going to be the sole organisation guaranteeing security. What the OSCE can do — because it is a broad organisation and it embodies the underlying values and directions which all the countries signed on to — to play a really important role in giving a sense of common direction, common methods, and common values which, when taken together, add up to a common security space.

In the foreseeable future, there will be both challenges and opportunities for the Atlantic Alliance. There are critical longer-term issues that could create uncertainties well into the 21st century. These include, for example, questions about Russia's place in Europe, the balance between U.S. and European roles in the Alliance, the effect of enlargement on Alliance cohesion and effectiveness, the dangers arising from instability to the south and east of the Alliance and from proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

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<sup>i</sup> Serguei Novikov, «Mass Media in Belarus: Coming into Being», *Vector*, No.2, 1997, p. 4.

<sup>ii</sup> «Mass Media Situation in Belarus», *Minsk News*, December 2, 1997, p. 3.

<sup>iii</sup> Serguei Novikov, «Mass Media in Belarus: Coming into Being», *Vector*, No. 2, 1997, p. 2.

<sup>iv</sup> Alexander Lukashenko, "NATO Enlargement Is Probably the Most Serious Mistake of Western Politicians in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century", *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, July 8, 1997.

<sup>v</sup> Remarks by Victor Sheiman, official representative of President Alexander Lukashenko, at a meeting of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in Madrid, July 9, 1997.

<sup>vi</sup> "Dividing Lines in Europe Are Counterproductive", *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, July 10, 1997.

<sup>vii</sup> *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, October 9, 1997.

<sup>viii</sup> David H. Swartz, «The Slavic Heartland: A Millennial Key to European Security», *Belarusian Review*, No. 4, Winter 1996/97.

<sup>ix</sup> «Summertime. And the Living is Easy?», *Belorusskaya Gazeta*, August 4, 1997, p. 5.

<sup>x</sup> Anatoli Rozanov, "Belarus-NATO: Problems of Co-operation", *Belarus in the World*, No. 2, 1997.

<sup>xi</sup> Sherman W. Garnett, *Keystone in the Arch* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1997), p. 106.

<sup>xii</sup> Michael Dobbs, «Political Shift in Belarus Poses U.S. Policy Dilemma», *The Washington Post*, April 4, 1997, p. A18.

<sup>xiii</sup> *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, October 11, 1997.

<sup>xiv</sup> The North Atlantic Treaty, Washington D.C., April 4, 1949, *The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Facts and Figures* (Brussels: NATO Information Service, 1989), p.376.

<sup>xv</sup> Transcript: State Department Noon Briefing, *USIS Washington File*, April 4, 1997.

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<sup>xvii</sup> "NATO Enlargement: Pro et Contra", *Belarus in the World*, Vol. 1, No. 1, June 1996.

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