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Changing Security Regime in the
Baltic Sea Region

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Introduction

The Baltic Sea region is a typical European region where, just as in Europe itself, a great variety of nations, states and policies meet in a relatively small space. Therefore, it is not surprising that the history of the Baltic Sea region has seen a number of conflicts among states wishing to establish their rule. Russia and Germany, the region's two largest states, have always shown their power there. In certain periods, other smaller states had also succeeded in gaining leadership in the competition for dominance. For example, the 17th century can be considered a Swedish century in the Baltic Sea region. The Swedish kings spared no efforts to and almost succeeded in making the Baltic Sea an internal lake of Sweden. However, in the beginning of the 18th century the Swedish power was challenged by the growing Russian empire, which gradually established itself on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea for a long time.

The Baltic Sea region is nevertheless quite specific even in the European context. Even in the most turbulent times it managed to remain a certain oasis of stability, where economics, trade and culture flourished. Today, as Europe is uniting, a unique case of regional cooperation, the Hansa League, is often remembered as an example to be followed. Hansa is a commercial and political union of North German, Nordic and Baltic towns that existed in the 11-15th centuries and was active in the Baltic Sea region. Owing to Hansa, trading centres developed and new centres emerged around the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, and their ties strengthened. One may say that Hansa was the first European economic community that covered a vast territory from London in the west to Russia's Novgorod in the east. Peaceful and defensive nature of this community still seems attractive today. The union was required for the expansion of markets and involvement of new towns and countries in civilization, not for the occupation and enslavement of territories.

In time the great geographic discoveries lessened the importance of the Baltic region, guaranteeing a relative peacefulness to it. As a result of these discoveries the main competition of power interests shifted to other countries. The collapse of both the German and Russian empires near the Baltic Sea after the World War I, with no emergence of a new hegemon, provided conditions for restoration/formation of as much as five states that had been erased from the map – Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, and afforded opportunities for their stable and successful development, trading and maintaining ties with the world, together with Germany, Sweden and Denmark as old-timers of the region, up until the World War II; these five countries formed a sub-region of Europe, a kind of model of stability.

From the security standpoint, in the period between the two World Wars no major conflicts took place in the Baltic region until Germany and Russia, which had withdrawn from the region entirely, started showing territorial ambitions. Therefore most (though not all) potential conflicts over the delimitation of the new states in the region were resolved peacefully through successful use of advantages of a new international organisation, the League of Nations. A peaceful resolution of a Swedish-Finnish conflict over the Aland Islands can be cited as an example of successful

mediation of the League of Nations. However, the Ribbentrop-Molotov transaction of 1939 brought dramatic changes and disasters to the Baltic States; it freed hands for Germany's aggression against Poland, Denmark and Norway and for the Soviet aggression against practically all of the five eastern states of the Baltic Sea region. Since Soviet Union was among the winners of the World War II, the latter states remained within the Soviet orbit after the war. It was only the end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union that brought substantial changes to the political map of the region and the fate of its nations.

Nevertheless, the Baltic region remained a specific and peculiar one even during the years of the Cold War when almost entire Europe and the world were divided into two camps. Though the security regime established in the region was a reflection of a constellation of the Cold War system, this constellation had its specificity in the Baltic Sea region. In this region, the main rivals of the Cold War were separated by a multi-layered buffer: in the southern part of the region - by the sea, and in the northern part - by the neutrality of Sweden and Finland, which was different in each case. Therefore, one may say that the realia of the Cold War had divided the Baltic Sea region into three rather than two parts, i.e. the western part - NATO (Denmark and Germany), the eastern communist part (USSR, Poland and East Germany), and the northern neutral part (Sweden and Finland).

It goes without saying that this specificity of the Baltic Sea region did not remain unnoticed and was analysed in a number of academic studies.¹ After the end of the Cold War, however, even more interesting developments started in the region. A unique mixture of stability and dynamism could be observed in the security policy of the Baltic states. On the one hand, right after the Cold War a dynamic process of reorganisation of the whole region and its security system in particular started. A number of changes took place, and almost all of them had a substantial impact upon the existing security pattern. Among the most important events that had influenced the security situation in the region, mention should be made of disintegration of the USSR, restoration of the three independent Baltic Republics, changes in Sweden's and Finland's neutrality etc. One must note, along with new developments in foreign policy of these states, an unprecedented activity of international institutions in the region. In various periods the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the Council of Europe had an opportunity to act there. Enlargement of the European Union that covered Sweden and Finland and Poland's accession to NATO was of particular importance for the constellation of regional security. Finally, it is appropriate to mention international institutions of regional significance such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Nordic Council and the Baltic Council, whose activities also provide important impulses for the region's general security atmosphere. However, even today when we may view the dynamic last decade from a historical perspective, we cannot assert that the formation of the security system of the Baltic region has been completed. It seems that today there are no grounds for doubting NATO's and European Union's enlargement at least up to the point of the three Baltic States' accession to these international structures.

¹ The so-called "Nordic balance" was widely discussed in various publications during the Cold War, in the Nordic countries in particular. See for instance: Brundtland A.O., "The Nordic Balance", *Cooperation and Conflict*, 1966, no. 2.

On the other hand, despite many important changes in the Baltic Sea region and renewing dynamism of security system, it is universally recognised that the region was and remains one of the most stable places in Europe. As bloody conflicts raged in the former Yugoslavia in the last decade, reporters more than once compared the Baltic region with the Balkans in order to stress that, despite similarity of sounding of the names, the troublesome Balkans could learn much from stable Baltic area. It seems that today we already have a quite exhaustive answer to the question as to why the Balkans are so unstable. The problem has been analysed very thoroughly, while the question about the Baltic region's stability has received much less attention. This is understandable – stability is not a thing that hits the headlines frequently. However, as one looks more closely, one sees that the phenomenon of regional stability is perhaps not less interesting than the problem of regional conflicts. The fact that grandiose changes that took place in the Baltic Sea region over the last decade of the 20th century had no impact upon its stability and the existing conflict pressures had not transformed into open conflicts and use of force, forms a sufficient basis for raising a question what supports such stability and what are the mechanisms of its reproduction and prospects of its further development.

Answers to these questions should be first of all sought in analytical literature devoted to the problems of the Baltic Sea region security. It should be noted that, generally, these problems receive really much attention on the part of researchers. Over the last decade a multitude of articles and books on this subject have been published; it is difficult to count conferences and workshops devoted to it. The Baltic region studies have been developed intensively both in the Baltic States themselves and in the research centres of other countries. A visitor to the web sites of the most famous research centres and universities will undoubtedly find literature on the subject of the Baltic Sea region security.² Voices of researchers from the smallest of the Baltic Sea States are heard more and more frequently³. As quite many countries are situated around the Baltic Sea, it has become a tradition to hold international conferences or launch international projects and publish collective monographs in which official or unofficial expert opinions from all countries of the region on various regional security aspects are presented.⁴ Admittedly, the number of monographs by individual authors is smaller. The number of authors is proportional to the number of countries covered by the monographs. Usually they are devoted to the Nordic or the Baltic States rather than to the Baltic Sea region as a whole.⁵

² See useful links: <http://www.usemb.se/BalticSec/links.html>; http://www.csm.org.pl/en_index.html

³ Probably the leader position among Baltic research institutions is keeping the Latvian Institute of International Affairs (<http://www.lai.lv>). Also see useful links: <http://www.evi.ee/english/link.html>.

⁴ See for example: Wellmann C., ed., *The Baltic Sea Region: Conflict or Cooperation? Region – Making, Security, Disarmament and Conversion. Proceedings of the TAPRI-PFK-Workshop, Kiel, December 6-8, 1991*, Munster, Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1992; Joenniemi P & Vares P., eds., *New Actors on the International Arena: The Foreign Policies of the Baltic Countries*, Tampere: TAPRI, 1993 (Research Report, No. 50); Petersen N., eds., *The Baltic States in International Politics*, Copenhagen: DJØF Publishing, 1993; Arteus G., Lejins A., eds., *Baltic Security. Looking towards the 21st century*, Riga and Stockholm, 1997; Mouritzen H., ed., *Bordering Russia: Theory and Prospects for Europe's Baltic Rim*, Ashgate, 1998; Rotfeld A.D. ed., *The New Security Dimensions. Europe After the NATO and EU Enlargements. Report of the Frosunda Conference*, Frosunda, April 20-21, 2001, Stockholm: SIPRI, 2001; etc.

⁵ The following publications are nevertheless worth mentioning: Hidden J., Salmon P., *The Baltic Nations and Europe. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the Twentieth Century*, revised edition, London and New York: Longman, 1995.; Knudsen O.F., "Cooperative security in the Baltic Sea region", *Chaillot Paper 33*, Paris: Institute for Security Studies of WEU, 1998. Web edition - <http://www.iss->

Thus literature is really abundant and one just cannot encompass all the sources available. The abundance of publications on the Baltic security issue not only testifies to comprehensiveness and exhaustiveness of its study but also leaves little space for innovations. After familiarisation with the literature one gets an impression that it would be difficult or practically impossible to say something new about these problems. Various aspects ranging from “hard” security to “soft” security, from foreign policy of individual states to the strategic balance and dynamics of the region have been examined. Therefore, the efforts of a researcher studying the Baltic Sea security problems could be compared to an attempt to discover an unknown island in the Baltic Sea.

It is obvious that today one cannot expect to discover such island in the Baltic Sea but nevertheless white spots can always be found in the system of knowledge built by us. And, as regards the above-mentioned issue – how the Baltic region’s exceptional stability could be explained – such studies are not so numerous. Among the latest publications, mention should be made of an article by Rikard Bengtson⁶, in which the author seeks to find an answer to the question as to which conditions of a stable regional peace are already in place and which are still lacking. Though the definition of stable peace is quite complicated, the conclusion drawn by the author is simple: “the analysis shows that the extensive web of cooperative schemes in place in the region shows the promise of a move towards stable peace”⁷. Thus the study, though identifying current trends, is focussed on future prospects.

Future is the main concern of perhaps the largest study on the Baltic Sea region that has appeared in recent years: a collective monograph edited by Olaf F. Knudsen, entitled “Stability and Security in the Baltic Sea Region”⁸. Collective nature of the monograph means that the range of the aspects covered is very wide, while the analysis of the problem is based on various theoretical approaches. However, despite the common title of the book the very phenomenon of the Baltic Sea region stability has not become a subject of direct study. It is interesting to note that, though in the beginning the authors usually do not deny that the region is stable enough, in the course of analysis attention becomes focussed on the ways to strengthen stability further. In other words, an assumption is as if programmed at the subconscious level of the authors’ minds that the region is actually not so stable as it seems and that the real stability still needs to be achieved. Therefore, this book, just as a number of other publications, pursues a “normative” objective: to provide guidelines on what should be done further. So it is not surprising that these studies do not give a more exhaustive explanation of the stability phenomenon itself. It is namely this gap in the analytical literature that the present work intends to fill.

eu.org/chailot/chai33e.html, accessed June 1, 2002; Perry Ch. M., Sweeney M.J., Winner A.C., *Strategic Dynamics in the Nordic-Baltic Region. Implications for US Policy*, Brassaeys, 2000; Vaahtorana T., Forsberg T., “Post-Neutral or Pre-Allied?. Finnish and Swedish Security Policies on the EU and NATO as Security Organizations”, *Working Paper of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs*, Helsinki, 2000, no. 29; Clemens W. C. Jr., *The Baltic Transformed: Complexity Theory and European Security*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefields Publishers, 2001.

⁶ Bengtson R., “Towards a Stable Peace in the Baltic Sea Region?” *Cooperation and Conflict*, 2000, vol. 35 (4), pp. 355-388.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

⁸ Knudsen O.F., ed., *Stability and Security in the Baltic Sea Region*, London: Franc Cass, 1999.

The main assumption or working hypothesis underlying this project, which should assist in searching for an answer, is an idea that there exists something behind the individual foreign policy actors in the Baltic Sea region that maintains stability, because no power in the region is seeking to satisfy its interests to a full extent. And that “something” is nothing but adherence to certain standards of behaviour, which are probably generated by certain international institutions. In this case, the motives inducing the states of the region to act in a specific way are not of primary importance. The most important thing is the fact that the existence of certain norms and rules can be observed in practice. In this context, it is worthwhile to remember Stephen Krasner’s definition of international regimes (1988), which has already become classical:

international regimes are defined as principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given issue-area⁹.

If we agree with an assumption that, in the Baltic Sea region, security issues are mostly regulated by norms, rules of behaviour or conventions acceptable to all local actors, then we have a sufficiently strong basis for the formulation of a hypothesis that a definite security regime has been manifesting itself (has formed or is forming) in the region over the last decade, and it is namely this regime that generates stability observed in the region.

Of course, this hypothesis has drawbacks but one may dissociate from them quite easily. First of all, it may seem that the definition of an international regime is more adapted to an analysis of international economic or environmental relations and not to security problems. However, a justification for the use of this definition in an analysis of international security has already been provided long ago by Robert Jervis¹⁰ but bipolar political reality of the Cold War was not favourable to the development of this concept. Therefore we still see a situation where the role of various international institutions (to which international regimes are attributable) has not been studied to a sufficient extent. The editors and authors of a recent monograph "Imperfect Unions: Security Institutions over Time and Space" also point to underestimation of the role of international institutions in analysing international security problems:

In this volume we argue that the institutional dimensions of both alliances and security management institutions are important, and often overlooked. Institutions play a role in security relations by affecting state's cost-benefit calculations; by shaping their strategies; by inducing conformity to establish conventions and norms; and even, in the long run, by altering how societies view their interests and the mandates that states have to act in world politics. Even in security affairs important phenomena such as management and resolutions of regional and local conflicts, the form and pace of alliance formation, and the development of security cooperation in different regions of the world can only be explained if we pay attention to institutions¹¹.

⁹ Stephen D. Krasner, "Structural causes and regime consequences: regimes as intervening variables" in Stephen D. Krasner, ed., *International Regimes*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988, p. 2.

¹⁰ See: Jervis R., "Security regimes", *International Organization*, 1982, vol. 36, n. 2, pp. 357-378.; Jervis R., "From Balance to Concert: a study of International Security Cooperation", *World Politics*, 1985, vol. 38, n.1, pp.58-79.

¹¹ "Introduction" in Wallander C.A., Hafetndorf H., Keohane R.O. eds., *Imperfect Unions: Security Institutions over Time and Space*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p.1.

Secondly, the application of this definition of security regime to specific regions may be a bit doubtful. This is really problematic because, as shown by analysis of relevant literature, it is virtually impossible to provide an unquestionable definition of a region. But in this case we have not relied upon a strict geographical definition of the Baltic Sea region. The focus of attention embraced not only the Baltic States but also all other actors that were, for some reason, involved in or related to, in one way or another, control and regulation of the central conflict line, i.e. the dilemma of security of the Baltic States and Russia. Therefore, in principle, an international security regime functioning in a region must not necessarily be regional itself. In this case one should speak about the specificity of a regional operation of a regime with wider coverage.

Finally, the security regime existing, forming or just manifesting itself in the Baltic Sea region could hardly be described as a classical international regime with a well-developed institutional and decision-making infrastructure. But here we may invoke an argument that our hypothetical regime may belong to the group of the so-called tacit regimes¹². The tacit regimes are not characterised by any well-developed formal rules. However, their existence is testified to by a very high level of convergence of actor behaviour and expectations. For instance, the “Concert of Europe” of the 19th century or the “Nordic balance” of the Cold War years mentioned above may be considered tacit regimes of similar type. Thus one may make an assumption that the security regime currently forming in the Baltic Sea region was not specifically agreed upon or established by all the interested parties; it is forming (or has already formed) spontaneously on the basis of the main actors’ foreign policies favourable for its emergence.

Thus the main objective of this research project is to try to characterise the security regime forming in the Baltic region including the transformations of its principles and norms over the last decade, from the end of the Cold War up to the present, when the Baltic States are on the threshold of the NATO membership and new shape of security co-existence of the West and Russia is emerging.

The very concept of the “security regime” helps define the basic methodological approach of the study – neoliberal institutionalism. This theoretical approach¹³ has formed in the 1980s as a reaction to a neorealist theory of international relations elaborated in 1979 in Kenneth Waltz’ book “Theory of International Politics”¹⁴. Neoliberal institutionalism agrees with neorealism that states and balance of power play a central role in international politics. However, this school notes at the same time that, while placing emphasis on competitive nature of international politics, neorealism underestimates the fact that states not only compete but also cooperate and even create certain international norms, rules and institutions, which, on their turn, start influencing politics of these states. Therefore, according to the theorists of

¹² More on classification of international regimes see: Levy M. A., Young O. R., Zürn M., “The Study of International Regimes”, *European Journal of International Relations*, 1995, vol. 1, No. 3, p. 272.

¹³ See for instance: Axelrod, Robert (1984), *Evolution of Cooperation*, New York: Basic Books; Oye, Kenneth, ed. (1986), *Cooperation Under Anarchy*: Princeton: Princeton University Press; Keohane, Robert O. (1989), *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory*, Boulder, CO: Westview.

¹⁴ Waltz, Kenneth N. (1979), *Theory of International Politics*, Reading (Mass.) etc.: Addison- Wesley Publishing Company, 1979.

neoliberal institutionalism, in order to grasp international political processes one must analyse both the states' power balance and the existing international institutions with their inherent norms and conventions of international behaviour. Numerous international institutions and organisations of various type are established for the purpose of uniting the states' efforts in attaining certain aims or of simply facilitating interstate cooperation, however, according to the representatives of this school, in certain circumstances international institutions may even play a decisive role in resolving or regulating problems of international politics.

Finally, one must note that, along with the principal neoliberal institutionalist approach, the study also employs historical analysis, by means of which the author attempted to identify the stages and specificity of changes that have taken place in the area of the Baltic Sea regional security as well as to describe the evolution of the main institutions engaged in security issues, first of all CSCE and NATO. The main stages which suggested the structure of the paper had been identified according to substantial changes in the constellation of regional security. The first stage covers a period from the end of the Cold War till the end of 1994, when the legacy of the Cold War was intensively eliminated in both the Baltic Sea region and Eastern Europe as a whole. The second stage, from 1995 till 2001, is substantially a period when the main actors of the region still could not make final decisions and considered several alternatives for the future security regime in the Baltic Sea region. The year 2001 may be regarded as a kind of threshold when a NATO-centric security regime supported by two main pillars – the balanced groups of NATO states and NATO partners – is finally established in the region.

1. 1990 – 1994: The Takedown of the Nordic Balance

As it has already been mentioned, during the Cold War the confrontation between the superpowers and their allies was diluted by certain specificity in the Baltic Sea region. A rather peculiar model of security regime had formed in this region, called a Nordic balance by analysts. This meant that the confrontation in the Baltic Sea region was not direct as in Germany; the areas under the influence of the superpowers and their allies were delimited by neutral buffer states, Sweden and Finland. Even the neutrality of these two states had different features. Though formally neutral, Sweden was nevertheless connected with NATO by numerous informal security ties¹⁵. Meanwhile, Finland was forced to sign an unfavourable Friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance agreement (FCMA) with the Soviet Union in 1948. Under this agreement Finland practically lost the opportunity for pursuing an independent national security policy, even though the Soviets, in exchange for this restriction, did not interfere with Finland's internal affairs and the country could independently develop economic and cultural ties with European states. Thus unwritten security norms and rules in this region were slightly different from those of Eastern Europe and though nobody was very much satisfied with them, there were neither intentions nor possibilities for changing them substantially.

The dynamic process of changes in the Baltic Sea region after the Cold War and the end of global confrontation transformed the main lines of potential interstate conflicts in the region. The main point of conflicts and the source of security dynamics shifted to the sphere of relations of the restored Baltic States – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – with Russia. If not for the huge difference in the power of the small Baltic Republics and Russia and for the peculiar geopolitical position of the Baltic States denying Russia's access to the Baltic Sea, the significance of this conflict line would be not so great. Security of the Baltic States poses a problem first of all because the Baltic region will always remain the one of strategic importance to Russia. In spite of the fact that Russia's interests are much wider and cannot be concentrated upon a single region, Russia does not wish and cannot withdraw for many reasons. Therefore, the Russian-Baltic relations have created and should continue to create pressure in the region first of all due to significant differences in these states' attitudes towards the security problem. Other countries of the region and international institutions unavoidably had to react these pressures. All this constituted a conflict axis around which the new security regime of the Baltic Sea region has started to form.

However, before examining the evolution of the situation in the Baltic Sea region it is worthwhile to remember pan-European processes since changes in the region were determined by these processes.

1.1. Changes in the European Security Architecture

¹⁵ See for details: Vaahtorana T, Forsberg T., "Post-Neutral or Pre-Allied?. Finnish and Swedish Security Policies on the EU and NATO as Security Organizations" *Working Papers of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs*, Helsinki, 2000, no. 29. pp. 7-9

Naturally, the process has a long-term one and it still continues. But its beginning may be dated quite accurately. The Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) held in Paris in November 1990 and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe adopted there may be considered a date probably most important for the entire security architecture of Europe. At the very beginning, the text of the Charter directly states that

...the era of confrontation and division of Europe has ended. We declare that henceforth our relations will be founded on respect and co-operation.¹⁶

To tell the truth, this summit meeting saw a manifestation of the forming new conflict line. The delegations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – the three Baltic States still not formally recognised and actually controlled by the Soviet Union – had arrived to Paris in November 1990. Despite that delegations from the Baltic republics were invited as "distinguished guests" of the French government, they were expelled, reportedly at the insistence of the Soviet Union. Thus, though the Cold War had ended formally, representatives of certain nations could not take part in the adoption of the Charter even as observers. Time has shown, however, that this was not a defeat but a moral victory of the Baltic Republics, a manifestation of inconsistency of Gorbachev's policy, and finally, the first sign of the new conflict line in an international context.

It is highly important to note that the Charter for New Europe not just announced the end of the Cold War but also established a permanent institutional structure of CSCE, which previously had been merely a forum for discussions. The first standing institutions were the Conflict Prevention Centre in Vienna, the Office for Free Elections in Warsaw (now known as the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) and the Secretariat in Prague. The Paris Charter also created three political consultation and decision-making bodies: regular summit meetings of Heads of State or Government; the Council of Ministers consisting of foreign ministers from the participating States; and the Committee of Senior Officials to assist the Council and manage day-to-day business. As we can see now this reorganisation was very important for the regulation of security problems of both Europe and the Baltic Sea region specifically. At the same meeting, representatives of 16 NATO states and 6 Warsaw Pact states announced that these organisations no longer considered each other antagonists and signed the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE).

The change in the general international situation formalised in the Paris Charter soon told upon other European security organisations. In February 1991 the states of the Warsaw Pact agreed upon and on 1 July signed a protocol stating that the Warsaw treaty organisation no longer exists and its former members will seek to ensure security through pan-European structures based on the CSCE Paris Charter. It is interesting to note that the Soviet Union, though agreeing not to oppose the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, unsuccessfully strived for achieving that the former allies would undertake, similarly to Finland in 1948, not to join military alliances that seemed hostile to the Soviet Union. Naturally, nobody wanted to assume such

¹⁶ Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 1990 Summit, Paris, 19 - 21 November 1990, *Charter of Paris for a New Europe*, internet <http://www.osce.org/docs/english/1990-1999/summits/paris90e.htm#Anchor--Meeti-26723>, accessed on June 1, 2002.

obligations and nobody assumed it. Meanwhile, having signed the Paris Charter, NATO states started debates over the restructuring and adapting of the existing military/defence structure. Though the Soviet Union made hints that NATO could be dissolved just as the Warsaw Pact, NATO states even did not discuss such proposal. None of the governments of NATO states did come put for the dissolution of the organisation. A discussion over the projected review of the strategic concept started; as a result, the Alliance's New Strategic Concept was adopted at the NATO summit meeting in Rome on 7-8 November 1991. It stated that, in changed international environment, NATO military forces would be smaller but more mobile and flexible, and with the capability to be built up when necessary¹⁷.

Along with the changes in the Alliance's strategic concept, the resolution of NATO states to invite the former Warsaw Pact countries to cooperate more closely in the matters of European security thus contributing to stability in Central and Eastern Europe is very important for the European security architecture. The above-mentioned NATO summit meeting in Rome invited the former Warsaw Pact countries and the three Baltic States that had just been recognised internationally to regularly discuss, together with the NATO states, common security issues at the foreign minister level, calling this forum the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC)¹⁸. As it is known the proposal was accepted and the first NACC inauguration meeting was held in Brussels in December 1991.

NACC operated in the form of regular annual meetings of ministers of foreign affairs. In addition, extra meetings were convened when necessary. Apart from consultations on security issues, civil control over armed forces, conversion of military industries and other security-related problems were discussed at the meetings. The NACC members were afforded a possibility for joining NATO's research and environmental programmes.

NACC appeared to be a quite successful project because NATO made it possible for the new democracies to share expertise and opened a way for further strengthening of ties and public discussion of security concerns by the neighbouring countries. In March 1992, eleven members of the Commonwealth of Independent States acceded to the NACC, followed by Georgia and Albania in a few months. The increasing importance of NACC for European security is testified by the fact that more and more states which previously had not belonged to either NATO or the Warsaw Pact have expressed a wish to joint these activities. The neutral Finland participated in the NACC meeting of June 1992 as an observer; in 1994, NACC consisted already of 38 countries, with Finland, Slovenia and Sweden participating as observers.

According to NATO's leaders, NACC did not aim to replace CSCE; on the contrary, it was set up in order to assist CSCE in performing its mission. J. J. Holst, Foreign Minister of Norway, has said that NACC

¹⁷ See: NATO, *The Alliance's Strategic Concept agreed by the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council*, Rome, 8 November 1991, internet <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/b911108a.htm>, accessed on June 1, 2002.

¹⁸ See: NATO, *Declaration on Peace and Cooperation issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council (including decisions leading to the creation of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC)) ("The Rome Declaration")*, internet <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/b911108b.htm>, accessed on June 1, 2002.

... it is by no means a substitute for the CSCE nor a mechanism for excluding the neutral and non-aligned states in Europe from influencing the creation of a new order <...>. Rather, it enables the former adversaries to erase the vestiges of confrontation and suspicion. NACC provides a mechanism for integrating the newly independent states into the system of East-West arms control and the standards of behaviour developed within the CSCE and the other core institutions - NATO, the European Community, the Western European Union (WEU), the Council of Europe and the OECD.¹⁹

These were the most important changes in the European security architecture after the Cold War, forming a context for the development of the new Baltic Sea region security regime. Of course, the first step was to dismantle the old Nordic balance, which, as it has already been stated, was not very pleasant for most Baltic States. Some aspects of the Nordic balance were eliminated quite quickly, while others required several years and even intermediation of international institutions such as CSCE.

1.2. Main Changes in the Baltic Sea Region after the Cold War

Changes in the Baltic Sea region started a bit later than in Eastern Europe. If by the end of 1989 almost all Central European states were liberated from the communist rule and restored their sovereignty, in the Baltic region the forthcoming changes were foretold by the national liberation movements in the three republics still controlled by the Soviet Union – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. But Moscow did not intend to abandon control over them in spite of fundamental changes in its posture on the international arena. Even the issue of Finland, whose sovereignty has been restricted by the FCMA agreement of 1948, was not discussed in publicity at that time, though the uniting of Germany accomplished in 1990 meant that, substantially, any restrictions on sovereignty of Germany and its former allies should be finally removed. Therefore, the most important change that provided an impetus for fundamental developments in the Baltic Sea region was not Gorbachev's policy aimed at ending confrontation with the USA and its allies but the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991. The disappearance of this empire from the political map both made a substantial change in the geopolitical situation and opened entirely new opportunities never considered earlier.

It was namely due to this substantial change that the Baltic Sea region changed beyond recognition during 1991-1994. All the states of the region, just as other Central and Eastern European countries, regained freedom and sovereignty and could establish such mutual relations as they deemed necessary. Therefore, much depended on the choice of orientation and security policy by the governments of the states no longer restricted by external limitations. For example, in 1991 Sweden, one of the region's most important states, decided to join the European Community and submitted an application to the European Commission; in May 1992 the Swedish Parliament revoked neutrality, the Swedish foreign policy principle of long standing, and announced that Sweden would remain neutral only in case of war. This opened an

¹⁹ Holst J.J., "Pursuing a Durable Peace in the Aftermath of the Cold War" *NATO Review*, No. 4, Aug. 1992, vol. 40, pp. 9-13; web edition - <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/1992/9204-2.htm>, accessed on June 1, 2002.

opportunity for Sweden to cooperate with other states and organisations in peacetime and to seek membership of the European Communities.

Important developments also took place in security policy of Poland - another Eastern European state important for the Baltic region. During the Cold War this country had found itself in a quite ambiguous situation in terms of security. Its sovereignty was restricted considerably both by the power of the Soviet Union and by security guarantees provided by the latter. Western territories acquired by Poland after the World War II was a kind of compensation for the lost eastern lands, which today form part of the Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania. However, together with the "regained" western lands Poland received a threat that, in case of change in the international situation and uniting of Germany, part of its territory may once again become an object of claims on the part of Germany. Therefore, it is very important for the stability of the region that Poland would regulate its relations with its neighbours Germany, the Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania without any intermediaries. Poland managed to achieve this by 1994.

The main thing, however, that the Baltic Sea region states wished to secure after the collapse of the Soviet Union was, undoubtedly, final and irrevocable dismantling of the relics testifying to the former Soviet predominance on the eastern Baltic seacoast: the above-mentioned FCMA in case of Finland and the withdrawal of the Russian troops in case of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Since these problems were central to the dismantling of the old security regime in the region we will dwell upon them in greater detail.

1.2.1. Changing of Finland's Status or "Definlandisation"

The initial term of validity of FCMA treaty concluded by Finland and Soviet Union in 1948 was ten years but in 1955 it was re-written so as to extend the term up to twenty years. The term was extended again in 1970 and 1983. Even in March 1991 the 43rd anniversary of the agreement was marked as usual. Thus it seemed that, despite substantial changes in Europe, the Soviet Union tended to change nothing, maintaining the Nordic balance regime in the Baltic Sea region which was advantageous to it. However, the failure of the communist putch in August 1991 revealed that the Soviet Union was no longer in a position to stop changes in the Baltic Sea region.

On 23 September 1991, Paavo Vayrynen, the foreign minister of Finland, announced after discussions with the Soviet foreign minister Boris Pankin in the UN headquarters in New York, that negotiations for amendments to FCMA would start in October. A preliminary draft agreement to be signed in December was agreed upon in November. It is interesting to note that Finland held parallel negotiations both with the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. As it turned out later these double negotiations made sense because as the date of signing of the Finnish-Soviet agreement approached the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation announced about its objections to the signing of the agreement. The Finnish foreign minister had to cancel its visit to Moscow on 18 December and to postpone the signing of the agreement. However, the Soviet Union as a geopolitical reality ceased existence a few days later. Therefore soon, i.e. on 20 January 1992, Russia and Finland entered into

the Treaty on the Foundations of the Relations, though it was in principle the same agreement that Finland had negotiated for with the Soviet Union.

The key interest of Finland in these negotiations was, undoubtedly, a wish to eliminate any hint to the spirit of the previous FCMA; it strived that even no mention would be made in the text of the new agreement. According to the Finnish negotiator Jaakko Blomberg,

All in all, the difficult heritage of the FCMA treaty was buried without a notable discord and the new treaty included no special bilateral security policy obligations that go beyond those binding all European States already on the basis of agreed-upon general conventions.²⁰

Thus multilateral international agreements (such as the UN Charter, the Final Act of the European Conference for Security and Cooperation in Helsinki and the Paris Charter) outlining the states' standards of behaviour rather than a complicated history of Finnish-Russian relations formed a framework for a new treaty. In other words, Finland sought to place new relations with Russia into a wider international context and to finally stop a sad practice of the past "special" relations. Thus in this treaty one may see an important element, which afterwards became one of the key principles in resolved other Russia-related security problems in the Baltic Sea region. Upon restoration of independence, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania sought to shape their relations with Russia in a similar manner.

1.2.2. Treaties on the Withdrawal of Russian Army

Though parliaments of the three Baltic Republics declared, upon the first independent elections in spring of 1990, independence of their states and separation from the Soviet Union, neither Russia nor Western democracies did not hurry to recognise their independence. Only the tiny Iceland announced on 30 January 1991 that it recognised the Republic of Lithuania having made the bravest declaration. In July 1991, Russian Federation, which was a rival of the Soviet Union's central government, did the same. However, it was only the Moscow putsch of August 1991 that opened the way for independence of the Baltic Republics. On 6 September 1991 the State Council of the Soviet Union adopted a unanimous resolution on the recognition of independence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. After that the Baltic States were almost "instantly" recognised by the international community. On 10 September the three states were admitted to the CSCE; on 17 September they became members of the UNO.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of independent Baltic States was probably one of the principal incitements that changed the entire geostrategic situation in the Baltic Sea region. While Soviet Union was a dominating power in the Baltic Sea region, the Russian Federation as its heir received only insignificant areas on the Baltic seacoast: the Kaliningrad exclave and St. Petersburg region. However, such change in the situation gave rise to a new line of conflict between the Baltic States and Russia, with the ensuing threat to the regional security. And a possibility of direct Russian intervention was not the main cause of the pressure. The new Russian state

²⁰ Quoted in Pursiainen C., "Finland's Policy Towards Russia. How to Deal With the Security Dilemma?", *Northern Dimensions 2000. Yearbook of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs*, Helsinki, 2000, p. 70.

and its political leaders could not question the Baltic States' independence itself – at least having regard of the earlier development of mutual relations where Russian politicians attempted to use the Baltic States in their competition with the Soviet Union's leaders. However, as the Soviet Union was disintegrated and replaced by Russia, both the legal form and content of bilateral Baltic-Russian relations had to change inevitably. Though nobody disputed independence of the Baltic States, the choice of the status quo of their relations with Russia was rather wide as of the end of 1991. The Baltic States still accommodated armed forces controlled by Russia; the economy of the new states was fully integrated in the economic space of the former Soviet Union; many Russians - immigrants from the Soviet Union – lived in the Baltic States, who suddenly found themselves living abroad as the Soviet Union collapsed. Therefore, it is quite natural that in this period the Baltic States and Russia faced many unresolved issues related to the dismantling of the Soviet Union's legacy.

From the standpoint of regional security, the main problems for the Baltic States, just as for the entire Central and Eastern Europe, included the withdrawal of army controlled by Russia and the legalisation of state borders, former administrative boundaries of the Soviet republics. It turned out soon that reaching an agreement on these issues with Russia was quite difficult for the Baltic States. Russia's unwillingness to agree was determined by both objective and subjective reasons. Russia had to meet the obligations of army withdrawal from East Germany and Poland. Furthermore, the withdrawn troops had to be accommodated in new places of dislocation, which were overfilled or not yet fitted out. Russia inherited a huge army from the Soviet Union, which held the entire democratic world in pressure but which was clearly excessive for the purposes of Russia's defence. For this reason the Russian government was interested in delaying withdrawal, at least from the Baltic States, as long as possible. Therefore, no date of withdrawal was mentioned at the beginning of negotiations; later, 1997-1999 were started to be mentioned as the time limit for withdrawal.²¹

Thus the only way for a speedy resolution of the problem of foreign army's withdrawal that the political leaders of the Baltic States could choose was immediate internationalisation of the problem, making it a problem of the entire international community. In this situation the Baltic States had considerable opportunities as members of the principal international organisations, UN and CSCE. Vytautas Landsbergis, President of the Lithuanian Parliament, stressed in his first speech made on the occasion of Lithuania's admission to the UN, that Lithuania wished to extend non-nuclear and high confidence zones and, therefore, demanded that all the foreign

²¹ The first negotiations between Russia and all three Baltic states on the issue of troop withdrawals took place on January 31 - February 2, 1992. The talks with Lithuania and Latvia concluded with an agreement that troops would begin to leave the Baltic States in February. But no indication of a date for the completion of troop withdrawals was given. Talks between the Russian Federation and separate delegations from all three states appeared to be making little progress. In May 4-7, 1992 Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister Fyodor Shelov-Kovedyayev accompanied by a delegation including Col.-Gen. Valery Mironov, Commander of the North-western Group of forces toured Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In response to Baltic demands for immediate troop withdrawal, the Russian side repeated that the withdrawal of former Soviet forces from the Baltic States before 1997-99 would depend on material provision for the servicemen.

troops illegally dislocated in its territory would be withdrawn; he also emphasised that Lithuania felt no hostility or revenge toward any its neighbours²².

Strict and no-compromise position of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on the issue of the Russian army withdrawal in international forums bore fruits and undoubtedly encouraged constructive position and sufficient attention to this important security issue on the part of the international community. In June-July 1992, a number of international forums took place (meeting of NATO's foreign ministers, CSCE preparatory conference in Budapest, G-7 summit meeting in Munich), where the above-mentioned demand of the Baltic States received support. For example, during the G-7 summit meeting held in Munich on 8 July 1998, Russia was urged to show initiative by publishing a timetable of troops withdrawal from the Baltic States. Furthermore, the Western democracies' interest in the resolution of this problem was confirmed by the take-on of specific financial obligations related to re-dislocation of the Russian troops. At the CSCE follow-up meeting in Helsinki in the same month, paragraph 15 of the Political Declaration of the Final Document was formulated in a manner very favourable to the Baltic States. The CSCE accord called on "participating states concerned to conclude, without delay, appropriate bilateral agreements, including timetables, for the easy, orderly and complete withdrawal of such foreign troops from the territories of the Baltic States"²³. The inclusion of this article relating to troop withdrawals was made at the insistence of the leaders of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania who had reportedly threatened not to sign the declaration, so preventing its adoption, without an agreement on the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic states.

Russia's position, which had come under pressure in the CSCE summit in July, appeared to be softening when at a meeting with his Baltic counterparts on August 6 Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev proposed a 1994 withdrawal date. On September 8, following an apparent reversal of Russian policy, Russian and Lithuanian Defence Ministers signed an agreement on the withdrawal of former Soviet troops from Lithuanian territory even by August 31, 1993. In an interview with the "Kuranty" newspaper on September 8, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vitaly Churkin explained that withdrawing the troops from Latvia and Estonia presented other problems. He specified certain military installations "which Russia cannot give up so easily", and the legislation affecting the Russian-speaking population of Latvia and Estonia, specifically the citizenship laws. Churkin referred to the forthcoming elections in Estonia for which the non-Estonian population was disenfranchised.

Strict internationalisation of the problem of the Russian troops' withdrawal was a tactics that brought both success and certain costs to the Baltic States. In this respect, Lithuania was in a less vulnerable position and therefore could achieve withdrawal as early as in 1993. In the meanwhile, Latvia and Estonia did not manage to reach agreement on withdrawal and their relations with Russia worsened to such extent that they could be even called a regional cold war. The reason for the conflict was the legal status of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia and Estonia. Of the three

²² See "The Speech of Vytautas Landsbergis at the United Nations", *Lietuvos Aidas*, 19 September 1991 - in Lithuanian.

²³ Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Summit of Heads of State or Government, *Helsinki Document 1992: The Challenges of Change*, Helsinki, July 9-10, 1992, internet <http://www.osce.org/docs/english/1990-1999/summits/hels92e.htm>, accessed on June 1, 2002.

Baltic states, Latvia and Estonia had proportionally bigger Russian-speaking minority²⁴. Therefore, while there was no discrimination of Russian-speaking population under the Lithuanian law on citizenship and these persons could receive Lithuanian citizenship without any obstacles, the situation in Latvia and Estonia was completely different. In Estonia the question of citizenship and consequently of eligibility to participate in 1992 elections was disputed, with legislation passed in February limiting citizenship to those who were citizens of the pre-war republic and their descendants and instituting stringent procedures for naturalization. This provoked angry reaction from the Russian Supreme Soviet, which, in July, warned about possible economic sanctions in protest against violation of human rights. In Latvia the new language laws passed in April also fuelled controversy over the rights of Latvian non-indigenous population, while in October the decision to limit automatic rights to citizenship and eligibility to vote to citizens of pre-war Latvia and their direct descendants led to worsening in relations with Russia. Through the summer Russian officials began to link withdrawal of troops from Estonia and Latvia to the question of the Russian minority rights. In addition, Russia was now in a position to link the withdrawal not only to the situation of Russian-speaking population in the Baltic States but also to strive for internationalisation of this issue in response to the Baltic States' attempts to make the troops withdrawal problem international. Already in 1992 Russia applied to the European Council and CSCE drawing these organisations' attention to the human rights' situation in the Baltic States.

Russia's cold war with Latvia and Estonia, which started in 1992, impeded the conclusion of troops withdrawal agreements, therefore Russia conducted withdrawal from these states on its own discretion. It was only on 30 April 1994 that the presidents of Latvia and Russia signed an agreement under which the 10000 Russian troops remaining in Latvia were to withdraw. A handful of Russian service of 500-600 personnel were to remain to operate the Skrunda radar station on the Baltic coast until its closure some years later. In July Yeltsin agreed to withdraw the remaining 2000 Russian troops in Estonia at talks with President Meri in Moscow. Under a separate agreement signed in July, some 200 Russian specialists were to remain at the Russian submarine base in Paldiski, under civil supervision, to dismantle the base by September 1995. The last Russian units officially left Estonia and Latvia on 29 August 1994.

1.3. Specific Features of Management of the Main Problems of the Baltic Sea Region Security in 1991-1994

As one could notice already, the states of the Baltic Sea region, the majority of which did not belong to any defence unions or groupings, attempted to regulate their security relations in a traditional way: they negotiated for and concluded agreements governing mutual relations. During four years, a number of important agreements forming a basis for future interstate relations in the region were concluded. When in 1994 the European Union started, on the initiative of France, negotiations for a Pact on Stability in Europe aimed at bilateral and multilateral settlements and agreements

²⁴ According to the latest census figures, ethnic Russians formed 8,7 per cent of the Lithuanian population, as against the 30,4 per cent in Latvia and 28,1 per cent in Estonia.

concerning good-neighbourly relations and minority and border issues, the Baltic States could offer for inclusion in the Pact a lot of similar bilateral agreements.

On the other hand, as important geopolitical changes were underway in the region and new foundations for relations in the region were formed, the influence of international institutions that were active in the region, CSCE in particular, was very important if not crucial. In case of Finland there was no direct involvement of CSCE but the provisions of CSCE documents laid a basis for a new interstate relations agreement with Russia. In the meanwhile, the role of CSCE in resolving dilemmas concerning the Baltic-Russian relations and in maintaining regional stability was crucial in most cases. Without any doubt, the influence of CSCE induced Russia to change its position on the withdrawal of its army from the Baltic States and to decide on the completion of this process in 1994, along with the withdrawal of the remaining troops from Germany and Poland.

The stabilising role of CSCE and the European Council manifested itself also in managing the rising conflict between Russia and Latvia/Estonia over the position of Russian-speaking population. Russia expected that it would achieve, through internationalisation of the issue, that international institutions would make Latvia and Estonia grant citizenship to all present residents, however, as it turned out later, the international community, though tending to mediate in settling the situation, nevertheless rejected the idea of linking the issue of national minorities with that of withdrawal of troops. Numerous delegations of foreign inspectors and observer missions did not find any serious violations of human rights in the Estonian and Latvian laws on citizenship and naturalisation. Therefore, one even has grounds for asserting that it was namely owing to the influence of international institutions that "Russia's internationalization of ethnic issues in Estonia and Latvia created a situation that, in terms of balance, worked in favour of the Baltic States."²⁵

Thus, in the period from 1991 to 1994, CSCE played an undoubtedly central role in the Baltic Sea region as regards establishing of rules and norms of the states' behaviour in the area of security relations. Other international institutions active in Europe and relevant to the Baltic Sea region's security – NATO and the European Communities – were focussed on internal restructurisation processes and did not undertake a more active role in the security issues of the region. In 1992, the EC member states that wished to deepen integration and to enrich it with a political and economic/monetary union encountered a crisis of ratification of Maastricht Treaty; the crisis was overcome only in 1993. Therefore, an attempt of the Baltic States to raise the problem of withdrawal of Russian troops at the Council of the Baltic States (initiated by Denmark and Germany, members of EC), failed²⁶.

²⁵ Norkus R., "Preventing Conflict in the Baltic States: A Success Story That Will Hold?" in Bonvicini G, et al., eds., *Preventing Violent Conflict. Issues from the Baltic and Caucasus*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1998, p.153.

²⁶ On March 5-6, 1992 the foreign ministers of all 10 Baltic littoral states met in Copenhagen, Denmark, and agreed to establish a Council of Baltic States. The German-Danish initiative brought together Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden. Its aim was to create a community in which assistance could be given to Russia, Poland and the three former Soviet Baltic states to transform themselves into free-market societies. However, Danish Foreign Minister and co-chairman of the meeting Uffe Ellemann-Jensen emphasized that the Council would be closely linked to existing European organizations. He foresaw the Baltic region as a "region within the European Communities" and said that regional co-operation would "facilitate the linkages of

NATO, which was experiencing the time of changes, adaptation to new conditions and establishment of a new dialogue with the former antagonists though NACC, also did not demonstrate any activity in or wish to participate in the Baltic Sea region's security issues. Nonetheless NATO did not withdraw from the security problems of the region and made it clear that it intended to exert "a stabilising influence" there. On 11-16 March, 1992 the Secretary General of NATO, Manfred Wörner visited Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Through his tour he repeated NATO's pledge that no "security vacuum" would be allowed to develop in Eastern Europe. He insisted that all countries of the region would benefit from NATO's stabilizing influence, but warned that the alliance would not be able to offer formal security guarantees or membership.

1.4. Background of the New Security Regime of the Baltic Sea Region

One cannot speak about any special security regime of the Baltic Sea region in the first years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It should only be noted that the region succeeded in managing interstate tensions and prevent potential conflicts based on the widely recognised international norms embodied in the Helsinki Final Act of the CSCE. However, though CSCE demonstrated that it was an organisation capable of regulating security issues and implementing conflict prevention under "peaceful" conditions, it appeared that it was helpless in case of crisis when one had to act very quickly or even apply force to control the conflicting sides. The CSCE's attempts to manage the process of Yugoslavia's disintegration failed: the resolution of problems of conflict prevention in Moldavia, Caucasus and Transcaucasus was very difficult.

Therefore, it is quite natural that Central and Eastern European states, having restored their sovereignty successfully, nevertheless experienced a certain deficit of security and tended to look for more solid security guarantees than those offered by CSCE. As early as in 1992 there appeared signs showing that the former Warsaw Pact members from the Central Europe intended to seek active membership of NATO, seeing this as fundamental aim of their policy of "returning to democratic Europe". The Russian government still had no clear and unequivocal position toward the problem of Central European security and the idea of NATO enlargement, though, relying upon geopolitical logic alone, one could expect that Russia would oppose such project. A proof of this was the "shock diplomacy" demonstrated by the Russian foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev in Stockholm in December 1992.²⁷ The lack of definition of the then position of the Russian government is reflected by the following statement of Kozyrev provided to the "NATO Review" at the beginning of 1993:

the European Communities with the non-member countries of the region". On March 6 Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania attempted to raise the issue of the delay in the withdrawal of former Soviet troops from their territory. However, Ellemann-Jensen stressed that the work of the Council would not duplicate that of existing international organizations and that security matters fell outside the scope of the new body.

²⁷ At the CSCE Council meeting Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev prompted surprise and confusion when he delivered an aggressively hard-line speech to the meeting of foreign ministers. In his speech Kozyrev accused Western powers of interfering in the former Soviet Union, claimed the rights to use military actions in the area. He later took the floor again to explain his remarks as "shock diplomacy", intended to illustrate the tone which Russian policy could adopt if the political opponents of Yeltsin were to come to power.

In relations with the nations of Eastern Europe, it is vital for us to achieve a fundamentally new level of political and economic links, making use of previously acquired positive experiences in practical aspects of collaboration. The future of Eastern Europe lies in its transformation – not into some kind of buffer zone, but into a bridge linking the East and West of the continent²⁸.

It is difficult to say what this "bridge linking the continent" could mean but, in any case, the Central and Eastern European states were not enchanted with this vague proposal. As regards regulation of European security issues, the CSCE reorganised in an unclear way would be sufficient, according to the Russian leaders. In the same article Kozyrev states:

In the near future, the CSCE will have to transform itself from a forum for political dialogue into an organization guaranteeing security, stability and the development of cooperation in the European space. The CSCE is being vested with additional powers, mechanisms and potential to take measures of a practical nature. Implementation of the principles and planned programmes of the CSCE is perhaps the most important area of cooperation between the new Russia and the states united in the Atlantic Alliance²⁹.

Particularly many speculations on the NATO enlargement issue were evoked by the Russian president Yeltsin himself, who during his visit to Poland in August 24-26 1993 discussed Poland's wish to join NATO with the Polish President Lech Walesa. It was stated in a joint Russian-Polish declaration that "in long term such a decision... does not go against the interests of other countries including... Russia". Time has shown that this statement was a lack of position rather than a political position, because already at the end of September the Russian leaders, probably discontented with the resulting speculations and encountering a huge opposition in their own country, formulated a final negative Russia's position towards the NATO enlargement. This position was set out in Yeltsin's letter to the leaders of the largest states – the USA, Great Britain, France and Germany, which, *inter alia*, contained a warning that the opening of the NATO membership to the former communist states of the Central and Eastern Europe would be a violation of the 1990 Treaty on the Final Settlement on Germany.

Thus, at the end of 1993, the issue of NATO's eventual enlargement to Eastern Europe and explicit opposition of Russia became perhaps the most often discussed issue on the political agenda. In October the pressure was further increased by an armed conflict between the President and the supporters of the revolted Parliament in Moscow. Finally, unexpected results of the election to Russian Parliament, where the Liberal-Democratic Party headed by the Russian ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and communists received a majority, prompted the leaders of the three Baltic States to state, at a meeting in Tallinn on 13 December, that their countries ask NATO to help ensure their security. Taking account of the situation, the NATO countries had to decide on this urgent issue and give an answer, both to the countries wishing to join the organisation and to Russia.

However, this time a decision was adopted not to enlarge the Alliance and to approve, in principle, of Russia's idea concerning strengthening of CSCE and transforming it

²⁸ Kozyrev A., "The New Russia and the Atlantic Alliance", *NATO Review*, no. 1 – Feb. 1993, vol. 41, pp. 3-6.; web edition - <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/1993/9301-1.htm>

²⁹ Ibidem.

to a pan-European security system. At the same time, NATO's official representatives stated that such decision arose not from Russia's pressure but from the US proposal that the NATO enlargement should be advanced slowly in the form of natural evolution, starting limited-scope defence agreements with individual Central and East European countries³⁰. As it is known, the NATO summit meeting in January 1994 approved this plan, entitling it "Partnership for Peace (PfP)"

PfP became a very important instrument of stabilisation of security situation in the Eastern Europe, and its importance was increasing. Though it has been decided, in 1994, to launch a CSCE reform and to reorganise it in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) from 1995, its role and significance, at least in the Baltic Sea region, was decreasing because this organisation, focussed on conflict prevention and management, did not dispose of the necessary means and could not respond to the security strengthening needs of the states in the region. In the meanwhile, PfP, though having no intention to replace CSCE or push it out, inevitably became an important framework in which the NATO's stabilising effect became much more stronger perceived than before. It was of vital importance that "Partnership for Peace: Framework Document" clearly stated that "NATO will consult any active participant in the Partnership if the Partner perceives a direct threat to its territorial integrity, political independence, or security"³¹.

PfP and Russia's joining in it finalised the process of dismantling of the old security regime and meant the formation of a new security situation in the Central and Eastern Europe. The resolution of Sweden and Finland on joining the PfP was of particular significance for the Baltic Region. Thus, by the end of 1994, PfP involving all states of the region became another uniting factor along with CSCE. In a sense, one may say that "Partnership for Peace: Framework Document" became as if a document setting out the most important norms and rules of security regime established in the Baltic Sea region. On the other hand, one may also say that, after withdrawal of the Russian troops from the Baltic States and Poland was completed at the end of 1994, when the implementation of PfP started, the Baltic Sea region finally lost its specificity that had been shaped in the years of the Cold War, becoming an integral part of a wider security system. But further evolution of events has shown that such conclusion would be a hasty one, because the security system of both the Baltic Sea region and Europe as a whole was still under formation, at least because normalisation of Baltic-Russian relations was not completed yet. The Cold War between these states that started in 1992 did not end with the withdrawal of the army.

³⁰ US Defence Secretary Les Aspin at the informal NATO Defence Ministers meeting on October 20-21, 1993 in Travemunde denied that delays in admitting new members showed the deference to Russian opinion said "it is not that we are afraid of Russian threats". Les Aspin said that the question of new membership had been considered in the context of the US proposal for series of limited defence arrangements, or "partnership for peace" between NATO and individual eastern European countries. Underlining the merits of this plan which was said to have been unanimously endorsed, Aspin said that it would lay the "military groundwork" for eventual integration of the new members into NATO.

³¹ NATO, *Partnership for Peace: Framework Document issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council*, Brussels, January 10, 1994, internet <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/b940110b.htm>, accessed on June 1, 2002.

2. Vicious Circle of Insecurity in 1995 - 2000

The year 1995 was, in a sense, a turning point in the development of the Baltic region security system because the main conflict line threatening security in the region acquired new quality upon withdrawal of the Russian troops from Poland and the Baltic States. Unequivocal resolution of Poland and the three Baltic States to relate their security guarantees with the projected membership of the North Atlantic Organisation was the main reason for disagreement and pressure. Meanwhile, Russia adhered to a provision that the Baltic Sea region was secure enough – no state posed a military threat to any other state, therefore, NATO enlargement was an unnecessary and provocative step that had to be opposed. This was probably the main factor that complicated relations between the Baltic States and Russia after the withdrawal of the Russian Army. Though the global Cold War has ended, the “minor” Cold War that had started in 1992 continued in the Baltic Sea region. Therefore, the status of security atmosphere in the entire region was to depend on further development of security relations between Russia and its former subordinates.

2.1. *Deadlock in the Baltic-Russian Relations*

On the one hand, it appeared that there were no grounds for fearing that Russia may again become a direct threat to the sovereignty and security of the three Baltic States. The Russian Federation pursued a policy favourable to the Baltic States - in 1990-1991, when it supported these states' struggle against the central government of the Soviet Union. Later, as the Soviet Union disintegrated, Russia fulfilled, with great difficulty, its international obligation to withdraw the occupational army from the Baltic Republics, though frequently expressing dissatisfaction with the situation of Russian-speaking population in the Baltic States. Therefore, despite threats on the part of Russia's radical politicians, it seemed that this power should not become an actual threat to the Baltic States, at least from military point of view. The more so that the Russian troops were reduced, not only withdrawn. For example, the scope of Russian military forces dislocated in Kaliningrad region was reduced from 103,000 military men in 1993 to 24,000 in 1995³², while the size of its forces was set and controlled in accordance with the CFE Treaty.

Nevertheless, the Baltic States continued to treat Russia as the main threat to their security. This attitude will probably never change, at least for the following reasons:

- the Baltic States are too small to feel secure beside one of the world's greatest states without any additional and tangible security guarantees. Russia's goodwill is a sound guarantee but it is clearly insufficient because the Baltic States have never had and will not have any influence over it;

³² Military Balance 1993-1994, 1995-1996.

- despite all reductions of the Russian army, it is in principle incomparable with symbolic armed forces of the Baltic States, either in terms of personnel or armament. Though the Baltic States received huge technical, material and moral assistance from Western democratic states and developed quite modern military forces in several years, which are organised and managed much better than the Russian army, the military misbalance is nevertheless too large to make the Baltic States feel secure;
- emotional and historical reasons must be added to this. Friendly and favourable policy of Russia in 1990-1991 was just a short episode in comparison with a long history of threats and occupations, the reminiscences of the annexation of 1940 and its consequences still alive in people's minds. But Russia refuses, in principle, to recognise that the Baltic States were occupied and annexed against their will in 1940.

Thus the resolution of the Baltic States to seek NATO membership instead of relying upon their own defence forces, Russia's benevolence and OSCE which is actually not effective may be easily understood and explained. The Baltic States strive for the membership in order to secure NATO as a key factor discouraging Russia from taking actions against the Baltic States' security rather than in order for the Alliance to defend them against eventual aggression. NATO is highly valued in the Baltic States due to its political role and not due its nature as a war machine that is presently unmatched. The political elite of the Baltic States, which has started, since 1991, implementing a complex project of formation of independent democratic and flourishing states in this quite dangerous area of Europe, needs a serious "insurance company" whose policy would make the states feel much more secure. Probably nobody will doubt that NATO is the most serious among all security organisations active in Europe. It is well known that insurance policies are never given out for nothing. But it seems that the Baltic States understand this and are ready to pay an appropriate price both by allotting a considerable share of their GNPs for defence and by taking an active part in NATO's PfP programme and international peacemaking operations led by NATO.

Being in substance satisfied with the favourable security situation in the Baltic region, Russia, in its turn, perceives such choice of the Baltic States as a main challenge to Russia's remaining positions in the Baltic Sea region if not as to its security. This is because, for Russia, NATO is first of all a war machine, not a collective defence alliance or an "insurance company". Therefore, according to a Russian analyst Arkady Moshes, Russia will be forced to take response military measures:

Already the first wave of NATO enlargement worsens the military aspect of the situation around Kaliningrad: any further enlargement could make this enclave non-defensible by conventional weapons, something which would require Russia to rely on tactical nuclear weapons, not necessarily land-based, with their following deployment³³

However, until no decision of NATO's enlargement to the Baltic Sea region is adopted, Russia feels obliged to take any measures to ensure that such scenario would not be turned into reality. Two main lines main be identified in this policy. The main line is an attempt to discredit the Baltic States in the eyes of the NATO states – as

³³ Moshes A., "Changing Security Environment in the Baltic Sea Region and Russia" in Arteus G., Lejins A., eds., *Baltic Security: Looking Towards the 21st century*, Riga – Stockholm, 1998, p. 141.

countries not suitable for membership in the Alliance. The following main measures of this policy could be mentioned:

- demanding that the situation of Russian-speaking population in Estonia and Latvia would be improved, at the same time indicating that the unwillingness, or, to be more exact, inability of these countries to integrate the Russian community in their societies raises doubts over their democratic nature and respect for minority rights;
- refusing to finally settle the issue of state borders. Russia has signed a state border treaty with Lithuania only (1997). However, up until now (June 2002) the treaty has not been ratified and has not come into effect thus the Lithuanian-Russian border (Kaliningrad region) is, in essence, a temporary one. The status of Russia's borders with Latvia and Estonia is also temporary though no treaties have been signed as yet. Thus Russia clearly seeks to demonstrate NATO states that the latter risk to accept countries with undefined borders, thus involving the Alliance into territorial disputes;
- using the problem of military transit to Kaliningrad region via Lithuanian territory. In this case, also, Russia and Lithuania have just a temporary agreement on the conditions of movement via Lithuania's territory of troops withdrawn from Germany; the agreement was reached at the end of 1993. Even upon completion of withdrawal from Germany, Lithuania could not succeed in agreeing with Russia on new transit conditions, therefore the old temporary agreement remained in force as a compromise solution. By this Russia as it seeks to demonstrate that Lithuania is not a state capable of resolving military transit issues, therefore, again, the entire Alliance will be mixed up in these problems.

Without any doubt, this list could be continued with more examples, among which "unintentional" violations of the Baltic States' territory or air space should be mentioned; Russia as if seeks to demonstrate that protection of borders of these states will burden the Alliance.

Apart from these circumstances, mention should also be made of another line of Russian policy, which probably less important. The question is one of the direct attempts to influence governments of the Baltic States so that they would change their attitude. One of the examples is Russia's proposal for provision of security guarantees to the Baltic States by entering into binding bilateral treaties or a multilateral "regional security and stability pact" (end of 1997). However, this policy line is less significant and plays a secondary role, because Russian politicians and diplomats soon became convinced that no "tempting" with Russian security guarantees or economic or other means would change the attitude of the Baltic States' political elite.

Thus even after the withdrawal of the Russian army the Baltic-Russian relations did not substantially change or improve because neither party intended to change their totally opposite positions towards security policy. A Finnish analyst Raimo Vayrynen is absolutely right in asserting that

Stalemate is perhaps the best way to describe the current Baltic-Russian relationship; both parties consider the major concessions impossible, while Russia as the bigger power is unwilling, and possibly, to use force to break the political logjam.³⁴

Of course, this deadlock of Baltic-Russian relations does not mean that the states have ceased communicating. However their relations have not been fully normalised despite withdrawal of troops and therefore give rise to pressures in the entire region³⁵. In essence, a situation has formed where the sides of the conflict cannot and, to tell the truth, are even not interested to make concessions and seek agreement. A certain "vicious circle of insecurity" has formed in the Baltic Sea region, and the main actors cannot get out of it by their own efforts. Therefore, policy measures pursued by them are focussed on influencing international environment and, first of all, push NATO in a certain direction rather than on affecting one another. In other words, there has been no substantial change in the situation since 1995 – it only became clear that this security dilemma may only be resolved in a wider international context, probably upon developing a security regime acceptable to both conflicting sides. However, as decisions of such nature are born very slowly, a situation of uncertainty and waiting has formed in the Baltic Sea region. The parties have found themselves in a certain transitional period the ending date of which could not be stated by anybody.

Thus upon dismantling of the legacy of the Cold War a new security dilemma arose in the Baltic Sea region; a search for alternative solutions for the dilemma became the main issue on the political agenda. According to the nature of the main security problem, in 1995 the region did not differ much from Central Europe because the Czech Republic's Hungary's and Poland's object to join NATO may be explained by the same motives. Similarly, Russia's evaluation of this aspiration of the Central European countries was negative and it openly opposed it. Nevertheless, peculiarity to the situation in the Baltic Sea region was lent by the proximity of Russia and by special posture of Sweden and Finland because these countries have chosen, this time voluntarily, a security policy strategy different from that of Central European and Baltic States. They, first of all, decided to seek membership in the European Union, not in NATO, and to participate in the formation of the EU common foreign and security policy. While the Baltic States foremost made a bid for NATO but not for the EU membership.

2.2. Sweden's and Finland's Choice and Its Importance

It is not very easy to understand why Sweden and especially Finland did not use the opportunity for joining the North Atlantic Alliance upon the end of the Cold War, postponing this project for the future. However, as one goes into the heart of the matter, one may identify at least five reasons why these states had decided to remain military non-allied, at least for the time being:

³⁴ Väyrynen R., "The Security of the Baltic Countries: Cooperation and Defection" in Knudsen O.F., ed., *Stability and the Security in the Baltic Sea Region*, London: Franc Cass, 1999, p. 205

³⁵ At the web site of the Estonian Ministry of the Foreign Affairs we could the following estimation, which is valid for Latvian and Lithuanian relations with Russia as well: "A primary factor hindering the pace of developing relations is the incomplete basis of interstate treaties. Lacking are primarily such mutual agreements as a border agreement, an agreement on trade and economic co-operation and an agreement on the avoidance of double taxation". See: Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Estonia and Russia", internet: http://www.vm.ee/eng/kat_176/1430.html, accessed on 01 06 2002.

- their governments officially declare that they had taken this position in order to secure a freedom of choice in case of war, remaining neutral if necessary;
- the states are concerned that their accession to NATO may evoke a hardly foreseeable reaction of Russia and will likely destabilise both relations with Russia and regional security as a whole, while military threat is hardly probable after collapse of the Soviet Union;
- Swedish and Finnish societies feel secure and military non-alignment is popular among both the electorate and politicians. The main political parties and the public opinion do not support a proposal for joining NATO; even increase in the European Union's defence capabilities is poorly supported;
- these states consider membership of the EU very important from security standpoint. Even though EU does not provide specific security guarantees, there is a possibility for influencing the European Union and for stimulating strengthening of its crisis prevention and management capabilities;
- NATO is not a closed organisation and a state may apply for admission at any time. The more so that even non-members of the Alliance are afforded possibilities for very intense cooperation with it, which is actually being done. Since 1992 both states have been NACC observers. In 1994 they acceded PfP and managed to achieve, during several years of collaboration, that the armed forces of Sweden and Finland are almost interoperable with NATO. In 1997 both states joined the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC)³⁶.

Thus the choice of Sweden and Finland created a precedence of how democratic states in the Baltic Sea region may resolve their security problems without joining defence alliances irrespective of threatening neighbourhood. This circumstance undoubtedly influenced the debates that have started over the future of security of the Baltic Sea region. The choice was as if indirect offer of an alternative security policy strategy for the Baltic States living in a complicated security situation and stubbornly seeking NATO membership. The more so that there appeared more indications in 1996 that, despite their efforts, the Baltic States would not fall within the first wave of NATO enlargement. At the same time, however, one should note that neither Sweden, nor Finland (after some doubts) did not intend to dissuade the Baltic States from their strive for NATO membership; in the relevant debates they took a position very favourable for the Baltic States, emphasising the right of every state to select its security strategy. It is a paradox that the Swedes and Finns, having created a precedent of joining NATO, have stated more than once that non-admission of the Baltic States to NATO almost would be a wrongdoing³⁷.

2.3. Search for Alternative Security Guarantees for the Baltic States

In spite of a consistent official policy of the Baltic States aimed at continuing NATO pre-accession, there have been numerous proposals, ideas and discussions on how the

³⁶ For more detailed account see: Vaahtorana T, Forsberg T., "Post-Neutral or Pre-Allied?. Finnish and Swedish Security Policies on the EU and NATO as Security Organizations" *Working Papers of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs*, Helsinki, 2000, no. 29.

³⁷ See: Bildt C., "The Baltic Litmus Test", *Foreign Affairs*, 1994, vol. 73, no. 5, pp. 72-85.

Baltic security issue and, at the same time, the security regime of the entire region, could be settled alternatively, leaving the Baltic States beyond NATO temporarily or even for ever. Though these discussions did not have any practical impact upon policies of the Baltic States, they were sufficiently important in the sense that they had to assist both NATO member states and Russia in deciding on further attitudes toward the Baltic States.

Probably the main idea that was widely discussed at that time was the “regionalisation” of the Baltic Sea region’s security, creation of a kind of regional security regime with its participants restricted to military non-aligned Baltic and Scandinavian states. For example, in May 1996 Douglas Herd, former British Secretary of Foreign Affairs, proposed to establish "a Baltic security sub-zone"³⁸. At first sight the idea seemed quite logical because the Baltic Sea region consisting of small democratic and peaceful countries may easily form a classical regime with common norms, rules and decision-adoption procedures. It seemed clear that norms of cooperative security rather than unilateral attempts to ensure security by military means would easily take root in the region. By the way, this proposal received immediate support in both Bonn and Moscow. Even Sweden supported it in part. However, the Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson expressed only a qualified support for the idea during its visit to the USA in August 1996. The Prime Minister stressed that though Sweden would have been the largest participant in this group it did not undertake to act as a guarantee of the Baltic States’ security, since the status of Sweden as a non-aligned state did not permit it to assume any military obligations in respect of the Baltic States. Therefore, according to Persson, the governments of the Baltic States know very well that, in order to balance eventual restoration of Russian imperialism, they need much greater help than that offered by the northern neighbours. While visiting the Baltic States in the same year Persson expressed a sympathy towards the wish of the Baltic States to get into NATO as soon as possible - "if such was their choice"³⁹.

In the context of debate concerning security of the Baltic Sea region, a novel proposal from Ronald Asmus and Robert Nurick, Rand corporation analysts, was met with greatest attention. In summer of 1996, Asmus and Nurick wrote that, probably, the Baltic States would not get into NATO with the first wave of candidates and, until the issue of their future membership of NATO is decided, Western policy towards the Baltic States should be based on the following five principles:

- support for economic and social reforms taking place in these countries because growing economics would reduce social and national tensions in these countries;
- encouraging closer cooperation in defence area between the Baltic States and the Nordic states;
- EU accession by the Baltic States or at least Estonia as soon as possible; admission of a more advanced Estonia would speed up reforms in Latvia and Lithuania;

³⁸ Quoted in: Peter van Ham, "The Baltic States and Europe" in Hansen B., Heurlin B. (eds.), *The Baltic States in World Politics*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998, p. 38.

³⁹ Quoted in: Hultdt B., "Introduction" in Arteus G., Lejins A. (eds), *Baltic Security: Looking Towards the 21st Century*, Riga – Stockholm, 1997, p. 12.

- explicit statement that non-admission of the Baltic States to NATO with the first group of candidates does not mean that they will not be allowed to join the organisation later;
- inclusion of Russia in cooperation programmes of various format and nature, where the Russians and the Balts could cooperate as equal partners. At the same time it should be made clear to Russia that its aggressive position toward the Baltic States may damage its relations with the entire Western world⁴⁰.

Thus, bearing in mind that Sweden and Finland do not approve of the concept of creating a regional security regime, Asmus and Nurick advanced a quite controversial and provocative idea that speedy accession of Estonia to the European Union and making its status equal to that of Sweden and Finland would constitute an alternative for the Baltic States membership of NATO. To tell the truth, this proposal was presented only as a temporary answer to the question as to what could be undertaken after the Baltic States will not be invited to the Alliance at the Madrid meeting in July 1997. The authors of the study recognise that

NATO - and only NATO - can create the overall security framework, which will make it easier for the EU to enlarge to the Baltic States and easier for non-NATO countries to become more involved as well⁴¹.

Finally, speaking about alternative ways of ensuring security of the Baltic States one should not forget that there were people, both in Russia and the West, who thought that NATO enlargement to the Baltic States was a wrong and irresponsible undertaking. As an illustration we may present reasoning of a Swedish researcher Lena Jonson. While studying Russian politics toward CIS countries she notes a large gap between what Russia declares and what it would like to do in respect of the so-called "Near Abroad". Not in a position to use military force, Russia makes use of weaknesses of the new states and tries to interfere with the internal political processes and exert influence that is beneficial to it. The researcher is of the opinion that this conclusion may also be adapted to security of the Baltic States. Therefore, the response of the West should be appropriate:

In terms of the Baltic States' vulnerable national security, the eventual threat from Russia would more likely include the use of political pressure rather than military force or threats. Subsequently, the West answers to this challenge would be help to minimize all economic and political vulnerabilities of the Baltic States in relations to Russia⁴².

A logical conclusion made on the basis of Jonson's and other similar reasoning would be that not the NATO enlargement but the Baltic States' accession to the EU would be an adequate measure to resolve the issue of security of the Baltic Sea region, since membership of the EU would provide the most important security guarantee – smooth socio-economic development of the states, restricting Russia's possibilities for directing these processes in a way favourable to Russia.

⁴⁰ See: Asmus R., Nurick R., "NATO Enlargement and the Baltic States", *Survival*, Summer 1996, vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 121-142.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 139.

⁴² Jonson L., "Russia and the "Near Abroad" in Hansen B., Heurlin B. (eds.), *The Baltic States in World Politics*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998, p. 128.

2.4. First Wave of NATO Enlargement and Russia's Security Guarantees

The intention of NATO to enlarge was officially approved in the NATO summit meeting in Brussels in January 1994. However, for a long time it was not clear how this will be implemented. The "Study on NATO Enlargement" published in September 1995 set out NATO's position on future enlargement in detail, justifying it by the necessity to take a step forward to strengthening stability and security of the North Atlantic region. It was stated in the Study that enlargement would not change the defence nature of the organisation and will not be aimed against states not participating in it. The study also identified the main requirements set for the candidate countries concerning acceptance of and compliance with the principles, standards and procedures of the organisation valid at the time of accession⁴³. However, the candidate countries to be invited and the time of invitation were not specified. Therefore, the period 1995-1996 was a period of intense diplomacy, when not only the three East European States (Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary) but also the Baltic States, Romania and Slovenia expected to receive an invitation for negotiations. Meanwhile, Russia pursued an intense diplomatic campaign against NATO enlargement.

Therefore, it was only after the meeting of defence ministers of NATO countries in Bergen in September 1996 that it became clear that NATO will not be stopped by opposition from Moscow: the organisation will be enlarged to the East. NATO's ministers were not surprised when their guest, the Russian defence minister Igor Rodionov, stood against new members' admission to NATO. But, at the same time, the ministers tried not to antagonise Russia, anticipating, prior to start of negotiations with the new candidate countries in summer of 1997, an elaboration of a plan for drawing Russia closer to the Alliance and integrating it in the European security architecture. All the 16 NATO defence ministers supported the proposal made by the German foreign minister Klaus Kinkel for summarisation of collaboration with Moscow in a special charter.

However, Bergen sent not the best message to the Baltic States. William Perry, the US Secretary of Defence, was the first high official from a NATO country to indicate that the Baltic States would surely not be invited during the first round of enlargement as states not prepared for this process. NATO's position on the Baltic States' possible membership of NATO expressed for the first time in Bergen remained unchanged, and only Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland were invited to start accession negotiations in July 1997 at the Madrid summit meeting. As it is known these countries became full members of NATO on 12 March 1999 after all the NATO members ratified the accession protocols of these countries. However, the Madrid meeting stressed – which was very important for the future – that NATO enlargement was a process which did not end with this stage of admission and that NATO would continue to pursue its policy of "open doors" based on Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Therefore, the Baltic States had to console themselves with the following recognition of their efforts contained in a single sentence:

⁴³ See for details: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "The 1995 Study on NATO's Enlargement" in *NATO Handbook*, internet: <http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001/hb030101.htm>, accessed on June 1, 2002.

At the same time, we recognise the progress achieved towards greater stability and cooperation by the states in the Baltic region which are also aspiring members.⁴⁴

However, there were probably two factors important for the security situation of the Baltic Sea region and its further development. First of all, a state which both belonged to Central Europe and was important for the region – Poland – was invited to NATO. The Polish-Lithuanian border became the first border of the Baltic States with a NATO country. This gave a certain hope for the future that NATO's enlargement will be continued.

Another fact that seemed very important for the Baltic region occurred before the publishing of the Madrid declaration. This was Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris on 27 May 1997⁴⁵. The Act confirmed once again that NATO and Russia did not consider each other as adversaries. Under the Act the Permanent Joint Council (PCJ) was founded as a forum of consultations and joint decisions in case of agreement by the parties. The document also identified problems on which consultations between NATO and Russia could be held: prevention of conflicts, distribution of mass annihilation weapon, exchange of information on security and defence matters, conversion of defence industries, environmental protection, civil safety etc. It was stated in the Act that, upon signing the document, NATO did not become subordinate to any other organisation or state and that it did not intend to modify its obligations to present and future NATO members in the security area. The Act contained no guarantees for Russia concerning stopping of NATO's enlargement.

Such document regulating NATO-Russian relations was undoubtedly a new phenomenon in security environment; it demonstrated, for the first time, that there existed certain principles, norms and rules that could be subscribed for even by the former Cold War antagonists. This was a step forward in comparison with a quite limited agreement between NATO and Russia within the framework of PFP. However, on the other hand, it was obvious that the document as though lacked certain link which would unite the two forces that still seemed opposing rather than collaborating. This was perhaps owing to the fact that each side viewed the importance of the Act differently and had different expectations. By forming a permanent joint council, NATO member states expected to mitigate Russia's negative reaction after the forthcoming announcement in July that Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary will be admitted to NATO after two years. Meanwhile, Russia probably expected that it would have greater influence over NATO's decisions and would be able to stop further enlargement, first of all, to the Baltic Sea region, after the accession of the above-mentioned countries. Tending to treat the signing of the Act and NATO's decision on limited enlargement as Russia's victory, Russia now evidently decided that it was high time to take over the initiative, to stop the cold war with the Baltic States and to start pursuing a more active policy in the Baltic Sea region.

The most obvious manifestation of such modified Russian policy, a kind of détente, was Russia's decision to signed a state border treaty with Lithuania in 1997 and,

⁴⁴ NATO Summit. Madrid, July 8-9, 1997, *Madrid Declaration on Euro-Atlantic Security and Cooperation*, internet <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1997/p97-081e.htm>, accessed on June 1, 2002.

⁴⁵ NATO – Russian Summit, *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation*, May 27, 1997, internet <http://www.nato.int/docu/basic/txt/fndact-a.htm>, accessed on June 1, 2002.

within this framework, offer Lithuania and other Baltic States to enter into a treaty on security guarantees. One could make sure of the change in Russia's tactics in its relations with the Baltic States upon familiarisation with an unpublished report entitled "Russia and the Baltic States" issued by the Russian Foreign and Defence Policy Council. Apparently for the purpose of influencing the public of opinion in Lithuania and other Baltic countries, a copy of the report was handed over to Lithuanian daily "Lietuvos Rytas", which published the main ideas of the document. In this document, the Council of Russian experts approved of the "positive agenda of Russia and the Baltic States", though not so long ago these states were treated as the "Near Abroad" where interests of Russian-speaking population could be defended both by political measures and military force. A pragmatic attitude towards the Baltic States and Russia's interests have been formulated clearly in the document. It stated that "in the context of NATO's enlargement to the East and active efforts to get into the second invitation round by Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, Russian-Baltic relations acquire particular importance". Therefore it was proposed that the current situation where a positive programme for the Russian-Baltic relations was lacking had to be abandoned. Positive policy was to replace stagnant or even antagonist relations between Russia and the Baltic States. In the opinion of the authors, Russia had to offer the Baltic States "a respectful dialogue on security issues" and present its own ways of ensuring security in the region⁴⁶.

Speaking at the UN General Assembly on 22 September 1997, Yevgeny Primakov, Russian Foreign Minister (who had replaced Andrey Kozyrev in 1996), stated officially that Russia was interested in the stability of the Baltic States and wished to ensure their security. According to Primakov, Russia could undertake to guarantee their security upon signing agreements on good neighbourhood relations. In the opinion of the minister, such agreements could develop into a regional security pact. Algirdas Brazauskas, President of Lithuania, heard the same statement during his official visit to Moscow in October. Yeltsin guaranteed that no unexpected things were awaiting Lithuania on the part of Moscow. "And if any threat to Lithuania arises, that state will have to deal with us", stressed the Russian President, though he did not specify any states that could pose such threat⁴⁷. As one could forecast, Lithuania and other Baltic States rejected Russia's initiative. It was stated in a document published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania that "neither unilateral security guarantees legalised in the form of a treaty nor regional security pacts can safeguard security for Europe, including Lithuania. In the opinion of Lithuania, the security and stability space in Europe will be extended by the Baltic States' integration in the European Union and NATO"⁴⁸.

Why a proposal, so attractive from the first glance, was rejected? One can hardly find an explanation better than that provided by Zbigniew Brzezinski, as early as in 1991, in his book "The Grand Chessboard":

⁴⁶ Gaižauskaitė V., "Aggressive Moscow's tone is changing, but interests remain the same", *Lietuvos Rytas*, September 22, 1997 – in Lithuanian.

⁴⁷ Sakalauskaitė R., [Two Presidents confirmed contestable boundaries. Yesterday A. Brazauskas and B. Yeltsin signed two interstate agreements], *Lietuvos rytas*, October 25, 1997. – in Lithuanian.

⁴⁸ ELTA, "Russian guarantees cannot safeguard security for Lithuania", October 30, 1997. – in Lithuanian.

... the Russian Democrats simply could not understand either the depth of indignation that the Central European people felt over more than fifty years' dominance of Moscow or the depth of their wish to become part of a larger Euro-Atlantic system.⁴⁹

Thus the détente in Russian-Baltic relations was quite short. No further progress took place in these relations. Finally, the Permanent Joint Council of NATO and Russia appeared to be completely ineffective; its work was finally stopped due to Russia's protest against NATO's actions aimed at resolving the Kosovo crisis by military force.

2.5. Temporary "Settlement" of the Baltic Issue

During the NATO summit meeting in Madrid in 1997, a news that was not very joyful for the Baltic States. It was announced that consideration of their applications for NATO accession was postponed for an indefinite future. However, after NATO made known its decision to enlarge, a new situation started forming in Europe, with new contours of security architecture, where a place could be found for the Baltic States. Therefore, though it seems paradoxical, namely the Baltic States could adapt their policy to the changing situations most easily. Nothing had to be changed substantially – only the work started within the PfP and EAPC framework had to be continued. Having not received invitation to NATO, the Baltic States had to satisfy themselves with, and successfully made use of, their status of countries almost universally recognised as NATO candidate countries. They understood that NATO faced serious difficulties in including them in the first round of enlargement. But the first successful enlargement formed a solid basis for final settlement of the region's security problems in the way desired by the Baltic States.

All the Baltic States after the "first rejection" were trying to substantiate their membership credentials by participating as fully as possible within the PfP, trying to demonstrate that they were not only "consumers" of security, but were and would be, a valuable asset for a Alliance as a whole. Baltic participation in Bosnia Implementation Force (IFOR) was therefore symbolically very important. In Bosnia, Baltic Forces worked together with Swedish, Finnish and Polish contingents in a Nordic Brigade, operating side by side with Russian troops, all under US command and under NATO auspices. The Baltic States also often participated in PfP annual exercises like *Baltic Challenge*. All three countries also participated in the PfP Planning and Review Process, which was designed to advance interoperability and increase transparency among Allies and partner countries. The desire to strengthen ties with NATO in order to ultimately join the Alliance, had already positively influenced cooperation among the Baltic States in security and defence fields (BaltBat), and had also speeded up internal defence policy reviews.

Meanwhile the USA, having regard of the urgency of the Baltic problem and seeking to demonstrate that the door to NATO remained open, initiated a US - Baltic Charter of Partnership, which was signed in January 1998. The primary importance of this document for the Baltic States and their security was related to the fact that, probably for the first time on the highest political level, it has been confirmed by the signature

⁴⁹ Brzezinsky Z., *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Interests*, Moskva: Mezhdunarodnyje otnosheniya, 1999, p. 124. - in Russian.

of the US President that their wish to join NATO was treated sufficiently seriously. While the Baltic Charter did not specifically provide a US guarantee of Baltic security or NATO membership, it declared that the ultimate goal of the signatories was to incorporate the Baltics into European and transatlantic political, economic, security, and defence institutions⁵⁰. Although the Baltic Charter did not specifically guarantee that the Baltic republics would become members of NATO, US Administration statements left little doubt that the United States was committed to helping create the conditions for Baltic membership within NATO's ongoing enlargement process. Administration support for Baltic membership in NATO was confirmed during the Baltic Charter signing ceremony when President Clinton declared, "America is determined to create the conditions under which Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia can one day walk through [NATO's] door."

* * *

The period 1995 – 2000 were the years when debates took place and preparations were made for the decision on which of the two Baltic Sea regional security scenarios was more suitable and therefore worth greater political support. One of the basic scenarios proposed, which, despite its attractiveness, seemed unreal enough, was NATO's consistent development and final involvement of the Baltic region in Euro-Atlantic security zone. As an alternative, the idea of "regionalisation" of the Baltic Sea region security was advanced in one form or another. The debate was particularly intensified when a decision not to include the Baltic States in the first wave of enlargement was adopted. However, this specific security regime based on a special regional agreement or a regional security pact appeared to be unacceptable to the Baltic Sea states except Russia. In this context one may also mention debates initiated by the European Union and certain actions aimed at forming the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). To tell the truth, the title of this initiative is slightly misleading because it has nothing to do with defence and cannot constitute an alternative to NATO, which is a collective defence organization and plays the leadership role in crisis management. The ESDP applies only to the so-called Petersberg tasks. Nevertheless the Baltic States supported the EU's Headline Goal in 2003 (Catalogue of Forces) but their contributions are the same as those they pledge for NATO operations.

Thus no turning point in defining security architecture in the Baltic Sea region occurred in the period concerned. A situation of uncertainty was preserved. On the one hand, the Baltic States were never told that they would not be admitted to NATO in the future. On the contrary, they became as if official candidate countries for accession to the Alliance. The evolution of NATO's strategic concept recorded in the NATO summit meeting in Washington was of particular importance in this respect. On the other hand, the prospects of NATO membership of these countries nonetheless remained quite vague because NATO-Russian relations were sharpened by dynamic changes in international situation, ineffectiveness of the NATO-Russian Permanent Joint Council, and Kosovo crisis; therefore, speedy and wide development of NATO, where the Baltic States could probably find a place, became quite doubtful. Anyway, the NATO-Russian agreement of 1997 was particularly important for the developing

⁵⁰ A Charter of Partnership Among the United States of America and the Republic of Estonia, Republic of Latvia, and Republic of Lithuania, internet: http://www.usemb.se/BalticSec/baltic_charter.html, accessed June 1, 2002.

Baltic Sea region, at least formally. The very fact of NATO-Russian attempts to create a new regime of mutual relations was significant. It was only a lack of political will that impeded the use of the infrastructure built. However, as it appeared later, situations may sometimes form when political will changes quite quickly.

3. 2001: the Lacking Link Found?

In 1999-2000, discussion over the European security architecture and NATO enlargement as if quieted down because it became clear that it was still not time for principal decisions. Changes in power had matured in the two most important states of the process, the USA and Russia. The second term of office of the US President Bill Clinton was nearing completion and pre-election campaign started. Meanwhile, Russia was struck by replacement of leadership initiated by President Yeltsin, the war in Chechnya was renewed in 1999, finally, Yeltsin himself announced about his resignation on the eve of 2000 – as always, unexpectedly. Therefore, presidential election had to take place in Russia in March 2000.

However, it did not seem after completion of changes in the governments of the USA and Russia that positive developments were expected in the international situation. On the contrary, it sometimes appeared that the new Russian president, Vladimir Putin, tended to make its opposing position towards the West stricter and even attempted to form a bloc of states hostile to the USA. The new Russian president visited China, North Korea, Cuba and even Libya. Authoritative trends apparently strengthened within Russia. Meanwhile, after George W. Bush was elected president after a complicated vote recounting procedure and took over direction of the US foreign policy, contradictions between the USA and its allies in Western Europe as if became sharper. The governments of largest West European states were quite sceptical in respect of the US initiative to start creating a national anti-missile defence system and of statements concerning USA's potential withdrawal from the Balkans.

In this context the issue of the future of NATO's enlargement had as if retreated to the background. Since it was only in November 2002 that principal decisions were expected, such uncertain situation gave birth to various enlargement scenarios and speculations. Some were of the opinion that even if NATO was going to enlarge in this situation of uncertain relations with Russia and disagreement with West Europe, the enlargement would be very limited – only Slovenia and Slovakia important from defence and strategic point of view would be admitted. As regards the Baltic States, the commentators were particularly cautious. Even such alternatives as the repetition of the scenario selected by the EU in 1997 were seriously considered. As it is known, the EU then decided to invite for negotiations only one Baltic state, Estonia. Now such experience could be adapted for NATO's enlargement by inviting Slovenia, Slovakia, one of the Baltic States – Lithuania, because of its relatively small Russian minority and geographical contiguity with NATO. In such a case one would expect that Russia would not be antagonised completely, at the same time showing it that NATO moved forward, though slowly but in planned way⁵¹.

However, all these speculations as if lost their basis after the new US administration publicly expressed its position on NATO enlargement for the first time. The Baltic States and all other states willing to join NATO heard good news from the President

⁵¹ Gordon P., Steinberg J.B., "NATO Enlargement: Moving Forward; Expanding the Alliance and Completing Europe's Integration", *The Brookings Institution Policy Brief*, n. 90, November 2001, internet: <http://www.brook.edu/comm/policybriefs/pb90.htm>, accessed June 1, 2002.

Bush in June 2001 during his visit to Poland. The President said at his meeting with teachers and students of the Warsaw University:

I believe in NATO membership for all of Europe's democracies that seek it and are ready to share the responsibilities that NATO brings. The question of "when" may still be up for debate within NATO; the question of "whether" should not be. As we plan to enlarge NATO, no nation should be used as a pawn in the agendas of others. We will not trade away the fate of free European peoples. No more Munichs. No more Yaltas. Let us tell all those who have struggled to build democracy and free markets what we have told the Poles: from now on, what you build, you keep. No one can take away your freedom or your country.

Next year, NATO's leaders will meet in Prague. The United States will be prepared to make concrete, historic decisions with its allies to advance NATO enlargement. Poland and America share a vision. As we plan the Prague Summit, we should not calculate how little we can get away with, but how much we can do to advance the cause of freedom.

The expansion of NATO has fulfilled NATO's promise. And that promise now leads eastward and southward, northward and onward⁵².

One can see that the statement was sufficiently clear and strict; but, at that time, few noticed that Russia's reaction to this statement was reserved and calm as never before. Later in the summer, Putin took a further step toward acknowledging the inevitability of enlargement by expressing the view that Russia might itself want to join NATO, as an alternative to his preferred option of seeing NATO disappear. As it appeared later it was not an accident but a manifestation of first changes in Russian foreign policy. There were also other signs of these changes. Already from the very start of 2000, albeit giving mixed signals regarding Russia's pro-Western orientation, newly elected President Putin paved the way for more constructive co-operation. As a result, already in May 2000 the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC) resumed its work, which was ceased in protest over NATO's air campaign against Serbia, and further on gradually expanded its agenda. Later it was followed by the opening of NATO's information office in Moscow in February 2001. Nevertheless the turning point took place on 11 September 2001. Putin position in respect of dreadful terrorist acts in New York, expressed clearly and unequivocally, testified to the fact that finally a basis for US-Russian rapprochement appeared. In other words, the missing link – the "common enemy" that both sides wished and had to fight – was found.

The consequences of these changes for the Baltic Sea region were characterised best, perhaps, by the British weekly "Economist", which presented overviews of latest developments in the Russian-NATO relations, particularly having regard of the projected NATO enlargement and possible Baltic States' membership of the Alliance, which, according to the magazine, had seemed impossible five years ago. Now the Baltic States may expect an invitation to NATO because Russia, after such radical changes on the international politics stage and emergence of new threats, ceases being intractable and sees no sense in fierce opposition to the admission of the Baltic States; it even can afford saying that NATO enlargement is no longer relevant to Russia's security. Even more, Putin is now in a position to explain the domestic opposition and the Russian hard-liners that NATO loses its military importance because, as shown by the military campaign in Afghanistan, the organisation is not very useful in fighting

⁵² Bush G.W., Remarks by the President in Address to Faculty and Students of Warsaw University, internet: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/06/20010615-1.html>, accessed June 1, 2002.

terrorism – the USA adopts the most important decisions unilaterally and selects partners for specific operations at its own discretion⁵³.

Thus it became clear at the beginning of 2002 that the issue of NATO's enlargement to the Baltic Sea region has been in substance resolved. However, the final shape of the region's security regime depended on the specific legal and institutional results to be brought by the rapprochement between Russia and NATO. This was cleared up in May 2002 in Reykjavik where a meeting of NATO's and Russia's foreign ministers was held. An agreement on a closer cooperation between NATO and Russia was finalised in Reykjavik. The document entitled "NATO-Russia Relations: A New Quality" formally establishing the NATO-Russia Council was signed on 28 May 2002 in Rome during the NATO-Russia summit meeting.

Formally and officially, the document should facilitate and strengthen fighting against the main threat of the 21st century – international terrorism. The main difference between this documents and the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997 lies in the clause under which Russia will participate in the adoption of NATO's decisions. Up until now NATO states first adopted a decision and then acquainted Russia with it. This has been the main cause of Russia's dissatisfaction. Now Russia is going to be involved in consultations. For this purpose a new council headed by a secretary general is being formed. However, not all the security issues will be covered by the council. The council, just as in case of the Act of 1997, will be a place for agreeing on cooperation in fighting international terrorism, disarmament and joint aid in case of natural disasters. The activities of the council will help form a common attitude toward prevention of distribution of mass annihilation weapons, joint work aimed at developing the anti-missile defence system, performing of peacemaking operations etc. However, at the same time the document emphasises that Russia will have no veto right in resolving issues related to NATO's enlargement⁵⁴. In addition, NATO does not refuse from one of the central provisions of the North Atlantic Treaty, which states that an attack against any country of the Alliance means an attack against the Alliance as a whole. Therefore, in such a case NATO will not ask Russia's permission to fight the aggressor.

Of course, today it is difficult to say how will this new NATO-Russia Council act and whether it will not experience the fate of the previous Permanent Joint Council. According to the commentators from "Radio Liberty", the format of the latter council also provided conditions for cooperation; however, problems had arisen because Russia did not show any will for such cooperation. Now there are grounds for expecting such political will to exist, with Russia having equal rights with NATO's members in resolving the issues of the Rome Declaration⁵⁵.

If the NATO-Russia Council will be an effective one, one may expect that the states of the Baltic Sea region should become members of the Council upon joining NATO. Therefore, their security relations with Russia should acquire new quality, which

⁵³ "Putin's unscrambled eggs: Russia, NATO and even the Baltic states may end up friends", *Economist*, March 9, 2002.

⁵⁴ Fact Sheet "NATO-Russia Council", internet:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/05/20020528-3.html>, accessed June 1, 2002.

⁵⁵ Radio Liberty, "New relations between NATO and Russia", internet:

http://www.svoboda.org/archive/ll_world/0502/ll.051602-1.asp, accessed June 1, 2002 – in Russian.

could be called the embodiment of the new security regime in the region. Anyway, the main parties to the conflict line in the Baltic Sea region – Russia and the Baltic States – would be finally placed in a wider international context, which, on its turn, would provide conditions for final normalisation of their relations and enable to end this "minor" Cold War.

Conclusion

To summarise results of the study, the development in the security regime of the Baltic Sea region could be shown in the simplified table format:

Table 1. Changing security regime in the Baltic sea region

Period	Main Challenges	International legal acts containing principles, norms and rules important for the region's security
before 1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold War • Nordic Balance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN Charter, • Finnish - Soviet FCMA Treaty • CSCE: Helsinki Final Act
1991 - 1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dismantling of the old regime • Withdrawal of the Russian troops from the Baltic States 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSCE: Paris Charter for New Europe • NACC • PfP Invitation and Framework Document
1995 - 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miniature Cold War between Russia and the Baltic States • First NATO enlargement • Search for alternative solutions of the Baltic States' security problems and rejection of the security "regionalisation" alternative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAPC / Enhanced PfP programme • NATO - Russia Founding Act • US – Baltic Charter
since 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fighting terrorism as a new grounds for NATO-Russia rapprochement • Admission of the Baltic States to NATO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rome Declaration "NATO-Russia Relations: A New Quality" • North Atlantic Treaty and the Alliance's Strategic Concept

Both the entire study and the table presented clearly show that the institutions limited to the Baltic States themselves and even the European Union practically are significant only as facilitators for so-called "soft" security issues, which have nothing in common with defence. The attempts to raise the issues of security of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania at the Council of the Baltic Sea States as well as the idea of the regional security pact were rejected at once and without any wider discussion as the ones not adequate to the scope of the problem. Though the Baltic Sea region appears to be an ideal place for the formation of a classical regional security regime with common norms, rules and decision-adoption procedures, this assumption appears to be substantially wrong for one simple reason – Russia, though today it is not Soviet Union already, cannot accommodate itself in this regional format.

The regional security regime in the Baltic Sea region, with all the rim states (and Russia) included, could not successfully exist due to obvious dominance of Russia. However, the regime itself could not exist without Russia because the main conflict line and the greatest security challenge in the region are related to this country. Therefore, only international institutions of a wider scope are capable of resolving the dilemma of Baltic security and performing the conflict prevention function.

We could see that CSCE had successfully coped with this task in 1991-1994. CSCE was the international format that ensured successful withdrawal of the Russian troops from the Baltic States. However it soon became clear that the organisation is of little use in further settlement and normalisation of the Baltic-Russian relations. As it is known the conflict acquired another shape upon withdrawal of the Russian army: a miniature cold war between the Baltic States and Russia started, with its periods of sharpening of conflict and détente. Meanwhile CSCE could undertake practically nothing to contribute to the end of this war. In the best case, it could preserve the *status quo* but could not act as a sufficient factor helping to settle security problems. Therefore the regional Cold War could only be ended by the influence of international institutions capable to conduct equal dialogue with Russia. And NATO could become such institution. After uniting its former antagonists into NACC, then into EAPC and PfP, it managed to find a peculiar form of institutionalisation of relations with Russia – a Permanent Joint Council, which began its activities from the decision to start enlarging the Alliance by admitting three states of the Central Europe. Thus, the stabilising role of NATO was strengthening and was increasingly present in the region. However, one must state that even this role was not an adequate factor that could determine final normalisation of Baltic-Russian relations. Therefore, the security regime that existed in the Baltic Sea region almost up to 2002 can be characterised as a preserved situation of uncertainty, the resolution of which was constantly postponed for the future.

Finally, it appears, in June 2002 when the last lines of this study are written, that after long hesitations and preparations NATO has at last decided on admitting the Baltic States to its ranks (though formal decisions are still to be made in November). If this is so, one may say that the formation of the security regime in the Baltic Sea region will reach a new quality level. It will become a more NATO-centric regime than before because even countries formally not members of NATO will have established solid relations with this organisation. This applies to Finland and Sweden for a long time already. There is a chance now that the same will soon apply to Russia whose partnership relations with NATO have already been established in the Rome Declaration of 28 May 2002. Thus, in the future, the Baltic Sea region's security regime could transform into a structure supported by two main pillars and embracing all the actors in the region:

- states of the Baltic Sea region – NATO members – Germany, Denmark, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia;
- states of the Baltic Sea region – NATO partners – Sweden, Finland and Russia.

Of course, for the time being it is not clear how the structure will work, and will it work at all. We will see this from the development of relations between Russia and the Baltic States, however, today it seems that all preconditions exist for ensuring security and stability without ignoring or leaving anybody overboard.

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