

# NATO and the Northern Baltic Sea Region

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20. June 2003

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## Abbreviations

CFE	Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
DCC	Defence Capabilities Initiative
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EU	European Union
ISAF	International Forces in Afghanistan
MAP	Membership Action Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NBC	Nuclear, biological and chemical
NRC	NATO-Russia Council
NRF	NATO Response Force
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PARP	Planning and Review Process
PCC	Prague Capabilities Commitment
PfP	Partnership for Peace
SACLANT	Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic
WMD	Weapons of mass destruction

# NATO and the Northern Baltic Sea Region

## Introduction

During the cold war, the Baltic Sea was an inner sea of the Warsaw Pact with a heavily concentrated military presence on its southern shore. The region also contains St. Petersburg, Russian second great city, founded three hundred years ago by Peter the Great as his "Window to the West." Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, there have been two rounds of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) enlargement, and the Baltic is now becoming an inner sea for NATO. Despite this, the very dramatic changes that have taken place in the Baltic Sea region's security structures and environment over the last decade have been peaceful.

After 9/11, NATO rapidly began to renew itself in order to tackle the new threats of international terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the new threats which produced the first real changes in NATO since the end of the cold war. The two most significant changes occurred even before the Prague Summit in November 2002: the working partnership with Russia, and NATO's preparedness to act outside its traditional area of responsibility. These new international threats and NATO's transformation have made possible real cooperation between NATO and Russia, a partnership that has an enormous significance for the stability of the Baltic Sea region. As a consequence of their common threats, NATO and Russia have moved from adversaries to partners. To the security and stability of the Northern Baltic Sea region this is one of the most important factors since the end of the Second World War.

Before the Prague Summit there was only one serious threat to the future of NATO, the growing gap in military capabilities between the United States and European allies. With the Prague Summit, disagreements within NATO over the Iraq war now form the other threat to the future of the alliance. The future of NATO will surely have its reflections also to the Northern Baltic Sea region. The other key factors that influence the security and stability of the Northern Baltic Sea region are naturally Russia and the relations between Russia and NATO. There is still too much potential for instability in Russia, which makes the future of Russia with some extend uncertain.

This paper is a policy paper on NATO transformation and enlargement and their consequences for security and stability in the Northern Baltic Sea region. The objectives of the paper are to: (1) give an overview of NATO transformation and enlargement; (2) describe Russia NATO relations and Russian interest in the Baltic Sea region and how NATO transformation and enlargement may effect these; (3) describe the Baltic States reasons for applying NATO membership and estimate their readiness for the membership; (4) formulate policy recommendations with regard to Finnish NATO policy.

## Section I – Will NATO survive?

### The Prague Summit and NATO transformation

*“The old NATO will not be enough to meet today’s risks and challenges.”*<sup>1</sup> These words from NATO’s Secretary General Lord Robertson reflect well the extent of the transformation in NATO, the decisions of which were endorsed during the Prague Summit in November 2002. During the 1990s there was a lot of talk in NATO about new threats,<sup>2</sup> but the money was mostly used for conventional heavy forces in order to tackle the traditional threats, while most of the forces were used on peacekeeping missions. There was a clear conflict between these three facts.

The Prague Summit in November 2002 was the first NATO summit to deal with NATO transformation after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States. Because of NATO’s very marginal role in the fight against terrorism,<sup>3</sup> there were many doubts on both sides of the Atlantic about its continued relevance, and NATO had to demonstrate at the summit that it was still in business with regard to transatlantic security cooperation. There were also fears that if the summit only delivered new membership invitations, the United States would lose interest in NATO as a military alliance. After all, in the war against terrorism, the United States chose the

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<sup>1</sup> Keynote address by NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson at the Conference on “The UN, the EU, NATO and other regional actors: Partners in Peace, 11 October 2002. See the whole article <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2002/s021011a.htm> (loaded 11.10.2002)

<sup>2</sup> 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 <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/b911108a.htm> “Alliance security interests can be affected by other risks of a wider nature, including proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, disruption of the flow of vital resources and actions of terrorism and sabotage.” The Alliance's Strategic Concept, approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Washington D.C. 23 and 24 April 1999 <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm> “Alliance security must also take account of the global context. Alliance security interests can be affected by other risks of a wider nature, including acts of terrorism, sabotage and organised crime, and by the disruption of the flow of vital resources.”

<sup>3</sup> The list of NATO activities; 11 September - NATO's Contribution to the Fight against Terrorism <http://www.nato.int/terrorism/factsheet.htm>

coalition of the willing and able instead of NATO to defeat the Taleban in Afghanistan. Thus, the decisions made in Prague also had to convince the United States about the willingness of the European NATO nations to carry their burden.

NATO's first step was to change the summit's agenda from enlargement to transformation. The second step was that NATO was simply forced to find a balance between its traditional European-focused defence role and the need to tackle the new security threats, even when they are outside its traditional area of operations. The third step was that the alliance had to enhance its capabilities, including the command structure, in order to fight effectively against the new threats "wherever needed" and besides the American forces. In addition to new threats and capabilities, there were two other issues on the Prague agenda: enlargement and the enhancement of NATO's different partnership programs.

NATO invoked Article 5 of the Washington Treaty one day after the terrorist attacks in the United States of 11 September 2001. With this, NATO mandated that it would fight against terrorism and non-state actors, which was totally new concept of self-defence for the alliance. This was accepted at Prague Summit and, as a result, NATO's new anti-terrorist role was accepted. The other new area concerning threats was the proliferation of WMD and their delivery means and NATO made clear during the summit where it stood with regard to WMD by launching five new initiatives; disease surveillance system; nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) event response team; deployable NBC analytical laboratory; NATO biological and chemical defence stockpile; and NBC training<sup>4</sup>.

After this, the debate within NATO whether to conduct out-of-area operations also came to an end. In fact the decision that NATO also had to be ready to act outside its traditional Euro-

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<sup>4</sup> The NATO Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence Initiatives, <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2002/0211-prague/exhibition/nnbcdi.pdf>



Atlantic area of operations and deploy forces “wherever needed” had already been made at the NATO ministerial meeting in Reykjavik in May 2002,<sup>5</sup> but it was endorsed in Prague. The decision was also made credible with an agreement which will provide Germany and the Netherlands with NATO planning and support once they take command of the International Forces in Afghanistan (ISAF).

In Prague NATO also decided to ensure that the alliance is militarily equipped for the whole variety of future operations against the new threats. In so doing, it made it clear that the heavy forces of the cold war are out of date: the new threats and the need for the alliance to be ready to deploy forces “wherever needed” made it clear that NATO needs forces that are able to move and be transported faster and further than before and that can be sustained in combat and apply forces more effectively. Just as important is the need for interoperability, especially between the European and American forces.

NATO leaders also endorsed three main decisions in order to improve its capabilities to meet these new requirements: (1) A new capabilities initiative, the Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC); (2) Creation of a NATO Response Force (NRF); and (3) a new command structure. The one critical part which was not renewed was NATO’s decision-making system.

PCC covers more than 400 specific areas and differs from the 1999 Defence Capabilities Initiative (DCI) approved in Washington at least three ways. First, PCC is more focused on key areas such as enhanced rapid deployment and sustainment, improvement of interoperability especially between the American and European forces, enhancement of command, control and information systems, and improvement of ability to defend against weapons of mass destruction<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Final Communiqué, Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Reykjavik 14 May 2002 <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2002/p02-059e.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Speech by General Harald Kujat at the Dr. Manfred Wörner Circle, February 11, 2003 “The Alliance after Prague”. See the whole speech <http://www.nato.int/ims/2003/s030211e.htm> (loaded 3.5.2003)

Second, at Prague, NATO countries agreed for the first time to promote multinational cooperation and role specialization in order to create synergies and to maximize efficient defence spending. Third, DCI was NATO's earlier common commitment to improve most of its capabilities, and all members had agreed to improve all listed capabilities. But the PCC is based on definite, nation-specific commitments. Each nation was given their own commitments and they have all committed to do their own specific improvements. However, endorsing the principles of nation-specific commitments, role specialization, and common acquisition and funding of key assets represents a radical break with NATO's past. This time NATO knows which nation has agreed to improve which capabilities; however the alliance has no mechanism to force nations to fulfil their commitments.<sup>7</sup>

NATO cannot still be sure that PCC will be successful because it is mainly a political commitment, and the national parliaments of the member states that will finance PCC hold the power to make the final decisions. So far, some European countries have agreed to increase their military spending, while others have indicated that they will not. At the same time, new capabilities are of course not only a question of how much money a nation is willing to spend, but also of how the money is spent.

With PCC the United States sent a message to its European allies that in its eyes it is now a question of whether NATO would be modernised or marginalised. But Europe also delivered a message to Washington during the meeting: If the United States wants the Europeans to share the risks and responsibilities of dealing with today's threats, it must be prepared to transfer the

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<sup>7</sup> Prague Capabilities Commitment explained on video by Edgar Buckley, Assistant Secretary General for Defence and Planning Operations in NATO. <http://www.nato.int/multi/video/2002/v021206/v021206a.htm> (loaded 12.9.2002)

technology needed to modernise Europe's armed forces. And in fact there have been some signs that this transformation of new technology may happen.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps with Afghanistan in mind and Washington's estimation that NATO could not act there, the United States proposed a NATO Reaction Force (NRF) at Prague, which should be able to deploy at a week's notice, undertake the full range of military missions, and sustain itself in the field for months. This force should also be able to cooperate effectively with the American troops and will be commanded by NATO's Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) headquarters. It will consist of powerful fighting units with ground, air, and naval forces. The force's size will depend on the mission, but would consist of air assets and command and control capabilities to support up to 200 combat sorties per day, a brigade-sized land force, and maritime forces up to the size of a NATO Standing Naval Force.<sup>9</sup> In practice this means roughly 21,000 personnel. Member nations will contribute forces on a six-month rotating basis from a pool of high-readiness units. The reaction force is due to become operational by 2006 but its first parts will be operational as early as 2003.<sup>10</sup>

NRF will serve two separate but mutually reinforcing purposes. It will provide a joint and combined high-readiness force able to react very quickly to crises in or beyond NATO territory. It will also be a mechanism for NATO's transformation in order to meet the new security challenges. Through experimentation and rotation, NRF will enlarge NATO's common base with regard to transformation. The creation of a response force will also make NATO's European

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<sup>8</sup> The change in NATO command structure at a strategic level is a clear sign that the United States is more willing than before to release new military technology. The new Transformation Command of NATO deployed to the United States will be responsible for all developments in NATO military.

<sup>9</sup> The White House Office of the Press Secretary; Fact Sheet: NATO: Building New Capabilities for New Challenges. <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/nato/02112111.htm> (loaded 12.4.2002). More information about the United States view on the Prague Summit see <http://usinfo.state.gov/admin/020/>

<sup>10</sup> AP article: Key Issues Facing Leaders at NATO Summit, 15 November 2002 <http://www.topica.com/lists/nato1/read/message.html?sort=d&mid=905815070&start=376> (loaded 11.18.2002).

nations able to take part in offensive operations alongside American forces wherever needed. From the United States point of view, NRF can also be seen as a kind of a political commitment from Europe to act alongside American forces outside the traditional area of operations. The NRF and the related work of the European Union (EU) Headline Goal are parallel and should mutually reinforce each other.<sup>11</sup>

To ensure flexibility and the ability to act rapidly, NATO had to reform and streamline its command structure. The alliance's command structure was made for territorial defence in the European continent; it is not meant to take care of new out-of-area operations. The new command structure reflects changing strategic circumstances and better supports a transforming force structure, and it deals better with the likely tasks, risks, and potential threats.

NATO's new command structure has two commands at the strategic level. The strategic commander for operations will be responsible for all preparations and the conduct of all operations, including the previous responsibilities of the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT). The Allied Transformation Command will replace SACLANT. It will be functional, focusing on transforming NATO's capabilities. The transformation command will be responsible for the continuing adaptation of military capabilities and for promoting the interoperability of NATO forces. It will fulfil its tasks in co-operation with the strategic operational commander.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, lower-level headquarters will be redesigned to command joint task forces with varying sizes and compositions. Some of the headquarters will specialize in functions such

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Prague Capabilities Commitment explained on video by Edgar Buckley, Assistant Secretary General for Defence and Planning Operations in NATO.

<sup>11</sup> Prague Summit Declaration, issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Prague 21 November 2002 <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2002/p02-127e.htm> (loaded 11.21.2002)

<sup>12</sup> Speech by General Harald Kujat at the Dr. Manfred Wörner Circle, February 11, 2003 "The Alliance after Prague"

as special forces operations or transport operations.<sup>13</sup> There will also be a significant reduction of headquarters and Combined Air Operations Centres. Final decisions concerning the geographic locations of command structure headquarters and other elements will be taken by NATO Defence Ministers in June 2003.<sup>14</sup>

With the new capabilities and transformations they endorsed in Prague, the European NATO nations have the opportunity to confirm their seriousness to the United States. But if they fail at these tasks, it will increase American doubts about NATO and sideline it into becoming a purely political alliance, useful for bringing along the nations of the former Soviet Union, but no longer a military alliance. In addition, PCC and the EU's efforts to develop military capabilities are intended to be mutually reinforcing. If the nations stick to their commitments, both NATO and the EU will benefit. At the same time, the failure will also have repercussions for Europe itself, because the EU's Headline Goal<sup>15</sup> is also heavily dependant on these capabilities.

The one thing that was not touched on in Prague was NATO's decision-making process. NATO has traditionally made all decisions by consensus, a system that was created in the beginning of the alliance with 12 members. However, after the new members enter, the number of the members will increase to 26, and there are many doubts, especially from the American side, that the decision-making process could be a problem during a crisis. A taste of this was seen in the winter of 2002-03 during the question of defending Turkey against possible aggression of Iraq.

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<sup>13</sup> The new NATO command structure will have a clear uniformity to present US command structure. Allied Command Operations (ACO) equals to the US operational commands as CENTCOM, Allied Command Transformation (ACT) equals to the US Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) and in fact is based in Norfolk, Virginia, and so-located with the U.S. JFCOM. The lower-level NATO headquarters equals to the U.S. Specified Commands. The White House Office of the Press Secretary; Fact Sheet: NATO: Building New Capabilities for New Challenges.

<sup>14</sup> Prague Summit Declaration, issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Prague 21 November 2002

## NATO enlargement

In Prague, NATO decided to invite seven new members to join – Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Three of these are former Soviet republics, three are former Warsaw Pact members, and one is a former Yugoslav republic.

Accession protocols were signed at the end of March 2003 and the ratification process should be completed before the next NATO summit in May 2004. During this process, the coming members will still have to work in order to fulfil all their commitments under the Membership Action Plan (MAP)<sup>16</sup>. The most important ones are the continuation of the defence reform process and the reorganisation of their military forces.

What were the goals set by NATO for the candidates? At the Washington Summit in 1999, NATO launched MAP, whose main aim was to show that NATO's door will be kept open to new members in the future and to prepare candidate countries for membership. All invited members have participated in the MAP since its inception in 1999, and because of this, these countries are expected to be better prepared for membership than Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, the first three countries to join NATO after the cold war.

According to MAP, coming members have taken action on dozens of specific areas to achieve NATO requirements. The general estimate is that all others except Bulgaria and Romania had made sufficient progress of MAP's political and economic chapters before Prague. The legal chapter was fulfilled by all and the security chapter will need some special procedures with some countries before membership. The most difficult chapter to fulfil will be the military requirements, as NATO expects the candidate countries to provide forces and capabilities for

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<sup>15</sup> More information about Helsinki Headline Goal and the European Union <http://europa.eu.int/>

<sup>16</sup> NATO's Membership Action Plan, April 2000 <http://www.nato.int/docu/facts/2000/nato-map.htm>.

NATO missions, to participate in the NATO military structure, agencies and planning, and to pursue standardization and interoperability.

However, before the summit, NATO had emphasized that none of the goals set by MAP or any other NATO activities should be considered a list of criteria for membership. NATO stressed that the invitations to join the alliance would be based on consensus among the members.<sup>17</sup> This can be translated to mean that strategic and geological perspectives determined NATO enlargement more than any MAP criteria. This can be seen very clearly in the cases of Romania and Bulgaria which did not fulfil all the MAP requirements but were still invited to become members.<sup>18</sup> Becoming a member without fulfilling these requirements should raise questions as to whether these countries are likely to contribute much to NATO, are able to participate fully in NATO activities, or are their societies that share the same values. On the other hand if a country has worked hard and fulfils the requirements and is not be invited to become a member of the alliance it would call NATO's open door policy into question and it would also create frustration and instability in the long run.

The new members' military structures differ and will continue to influence their adaptation to NATO structures. All three former Warsaw Pact countries (Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia) had large military establishments from the cold war era, while the remaining four countries basically had to start from scratch after their independence in the early 1990s. Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia have been forced to reduce their number of forces and to make their equipment compatible with NATO; the other four countries have faced totally different kinds of

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<sup>17</sup> Study on NATO Enlargement, September 1995, paragraphs 4-7 and 70-78; <http://www.nato.int/docu/basic/txt/enl-9501.htm> (loaded 10.5.2002)

<sup>18</sup> The U.S. has also planned to redeploy its forces from Germany to Romania and Bulgaria, which are closer to the probable areas of the future crisis.

problems, and during the last ten years they have tried to build up NATO-compatible military forces.

### Population, GDP and Defence Expenditures per capita in 2001<sup>19</sup>

	Population, million	GDP US\$ per capita	Defence Expenditure US\$ per capita
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>1,700</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Estonia</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>3,872</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Latvia</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>3,118</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Lithuania</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3,236</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Romania</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>1,773</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Slovakia</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>3,694</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Slovenia</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>9,430</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>NATO Europe</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>20,188</b>	<b>325</b>
<b>Finland</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>23,950</b>	<b>275</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>23,841</b>	<b>443</b>

Lack of resources has been a fundamental constraint to achieving the military requirement in each of the coming member states. If we compare their per capita GDP the coming members can be divided in three groups: Slovenia has the highest level of affluence, just after Portugal and Greece; Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia form a middle category which falls below the level of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic but is higher level than the current least affluent NATO member, Turkey; Bulgaria and Romania fall below Turkey's level. An other way to view their resources is that the coming seven members have a combined current level of annual defence expenditure of about \$2.4 billion, which is approximately 1.4% of the

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<sup>19</sup> Military Balance 2001-02



total European NATO nations combined defence expenditures.<sup>20</sup> The new members will increase the number of active NATO European forces by about 10% and the number of NATO European reserve forces by more than 20%.<sup>21</sup>

The enlargement will also have an impact on NATO capabilities. The coming members lack both resources and modern military equipment - they basically use former Soviet era equipment. This means that NATO will face new challenges in terms of interoperability and compatibility and that the enlargement will widen the gap between the American and European militaries and even between the European NATO nations. As the “old” NATO European members try to close the gap between the United States and their “military capabilities, they will simultaneously widen the gap between “old” and “new” European NATO nations. This may also serve as an argument for some “old” European countries against increasing their military spending. In addition, most of the new forces are out of date, and that will not make any substantial difference in NATO’s military capabilities. Furthermore, none of the new members can provide forces and capabilities that would be unique to NATO.

The enlargement could divide NATO politically in to two blocks. The new members are far too dependant on the United States and simply have to support the United States view inside the alliance. And they do not seemingly count on European NATO nations and EU’s capabilities to protect them against possible threats. The enlargement clearly reflects the fact that NATO is changing and becoming of a more political alliance instead of one that is purely military.

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<sup>20</sup> GDP figures are based on European Union’s documents [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/docs/pdf/eurostat\\_june2002.pdf](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/docs/pdf/eurostat_june2002.pdf) (loaded 10.21.2002). Military expenditures are based on figures from The Military Balance 2002-2003

<sup>21</sup> The percentages have been calculated from the numbers given by The Military Balance 2002-2003.

## **After Iraq – is NATO still needed and how can the alliance survive?**

Due to the disputes over Iraq, NATO is today deeply divided. NATO also faced divisions during the cold war but this time the division is deeper than ever before, and some European countries and the United States are now considering alternatives to NATO. Some European countries are looking for the EU to form a military capabilities while the United States seeks coalitions assembled from the willing and capable.

Nevertheless, in spite of NATO members' disputes over the Iraq war, there are at least two factors which strongly support the continued existence of the alliance. First, the trans-Atlantic link is simply too valuable to lose, especially for Europeans, and the United States needs militarily capable allies, which most of the coalition members during the latest Gulf war were not. It would be too costly for both to end up competing with each others, and even then, Europe could never challenge the United States militarily, even if they doubled their defence expenditures.

Second, NATO is the only organisation that is militarily capable to deal effectively with new possible long-term new security threats such as terrorism, to the benefit of both sides of the Atlantic. All the coalitions that have been formed after 9/11 to fight against terrorism have been based at least to some extent on NATO. The great majority of NATO nations have been involved in Afghanistan from the very beginning, even if NATO itself has not been involved until recently. Furthermore the interoperability among NATO militaries and common NATO training exercises with common procedures have without doubt enhanced the capabilities within the coalitions.

What are the necessary measures to keep the alliance alive? First, Afghanistan and Iraq should be regarded as political opportunities to heal the wounds within the alliance. The United States should give NATO, including France and Germany, a role in the stabilizing force also in Iraq. The European allies should on their side be ready to take these responsibilities as they have decided to do with regard to Afghanistan.

Second, European NATO nations should be ready to fulfil all that they agreed to at the Prague Summit with regard to NATO military capabilities. This would help restore the United States confidence with regard to the military of its European allies and it would take its European allies more seriously again. This would also lend back up to genuine military cooperation within the alliance and give more influence to the European allies within NATO.

Third, NATO's decision-making system needs to be sharpened. It worked well during the cold war when the adversary was well known, the threat was common, and the number of members and the diversity of their interests were smaller. But the new threats, like terrorism, are more difficult to predict. NATO's decision-making system needs to be able to react quicker and it should not give a veto right to every member. Making decisions by majority would speed up the process and using a majority would require that only the willing should take part in to the agreed operations outside Article 5 operations. This would develop NATO into becoming more of a pool of forces from which the necessary coalitions could be assembled.

## Section II – Russia and NATO

### Russian national interests and NATO

Even after the cold war, Russian relations with NATO have been one of the key elements of European security. According to the Russian view, without its cooperation NATO is not in a position to deal with threats of this century or to implement far-reaching plans for the formation of a common European security and cooperation space. This view is also very much held in NATO.

There has not been any significant change on Russian attitudes to NATO during the recent years.<sup>22</sup> According to opinion polls the majority of Russians still regard it as an aggressive military alliance and as still representing a potential threat to Russia's security. Nevertheless, since 1997 the vast majority of the Russians have hoped Russia would strengthen its cooperation with NATO. In addition some 68 percent of Russians regret the disintegration of the Soviet Union.<sup>23</sup>

In spite of the general opinion of the Russian people, the attitude of the Russian government on NATO has changed since Putin came to power, with the most significant change occurred after 9/11. Before Putin and before 9/11 especially Russia was very reserved towards NATO and especially to enlargement.

One pattern where the change of the official Russian views of NATO can be estimated is President Putin's Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation which is delivered in mid-April. In his speech in April 2001 (before 9/11) NATO was not seen as an ally

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<sup>22</sup> The Public Opinion Foundation (in Russia). To see more about Russian opinion on the world affairs <http://english.fom.ru/>

or a friend. President Putin more or less saw that there was a grave problem with NATO relations because, according to him, it acted outside the international community and international law:

*We believe that the problem that we have is because this organization [NATO] often ignores the opinion of the international community and the provisions of documents of international law when adopting its decisions. This is the cause of the main problem.*<sup>24</sup>

However, in his speech the next year (2002), President Putin's tone of voice towards NATO had changed and was more friendly and constructive. Here his vision was of Russia building a new world security system alongside NATO and the United States:

*we are taking part in devising a new security system; maintain[ing] permanent dialogue with the United States, work[ing] to improve the quality of our relations with NATO.*

In the same connection he put great emphasis on finding allies and on Russia being a reliable ally of others.<sup>25</sup>

President Putin expressed even warmer feelings about NATO Russian relations in his press conference following his meeting with NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson on 11 November 2002, just before the NATO Prague Summit:

*if the relations with NATO develop as positively as they do now, if NATO transforms itself, carries out an appropriate reform within itself, if our cooperation meets the national interests of the Russian Federation, and if this is the instrument with the aid of which we will be able to realize our national interests, then cooperation with NATO will expand, will alter and will be more full-format and more complete.*<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> An opinion poll by Interfax Information Agency, 12.30.2002.

[http://www.interfax.ru/show\\_one\\_news.html?lang=EN&group\\_id=28&id\\_news=5613376&tz=0&tz\\_format=MSK&req=opinion%20poll%20soviet%20union](http://www.interfax.ru/show_one_news.html?lang=EN&group_id=28&id_news=5613376&tz=0&tz_format=MSK&req=opinion%20poll%20soviet%20union) (loaded 1.3.2003)

<sup>24</sup> Annual Address by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, the Kremlin, Moscow, April 3, 2001. <http://www.russiaeurope.mid.ru/RussiaEurope/speech7.html> (loaded 12.18.2002)

<sup>25</sup> Annual Address by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, the Kremlin, Moscow, April 18, 2002 <http://www.russiaeurope.mid.ru/RussiaEurope/speech16.html> (loaded 11.10.2002)

<sup>26</sup> Remarks and Answers to Questions by Russian President Vladimir Putin at Joint Press Opportunity Following Meeting with George Robertson, Brussels, November 11, 2002. <http://www.in.mid.ru> (loaded 12.11.2002)

Putin clearly emphasized that even if relations with NATO were warm cooperation had two preconditions. First it has to meet the national interests of Russia; second NATO has to carry out an appropriate reform from the Russian perspective. What are these Russian main national interests that have to be met?

The first and most obvious is Russia's internal and external security. The second main interest, in spite of Russian internal difficulties, is the effort to increase or at least sustain Russian influence among the states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIF)<sup>27</sup> and Russia's leading role in this alliance. The third interest is Russia's strong aspirations to create a multipolar world order in order to replace the United States led unipolar world order and at the same time decrease the United States hegemony. The fourth main interest is Russia attention to her economic growth and the prosperity of her people. In addition to the CIS countries, Russia considers both China and India as its closest partners<sup>28, 29</sup>.

Russian leadership sees that today there is not a single state or alliance, including NATO, that threatens Russia or acts as its enemy.<sup>30</sup> The security problems which Russia is facing today exist in the first place in southern Russia. Islamic fundamentalism is also a challenge to Russian security in the Caucasus and in Central Asia. Terrorism and all its related criminal activities are the most dangerous threats to Russian security.<sup>31</sup> This is where Russian national interests merge with NATO's security interests. According to the Russian view, NATO's and the United States

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<sup>27</sup> More information about the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIF) <http://www.cisstat.com/eng/cis.htm>

<sup>28</sup> Newspaper article of Igor Ivanov, Russian Foreign Minister, "What Kind of World Do We Need?" published in Kommersant-Daily, November 20, 2002. In his article he wrote: "...relations with Europe, in particular with the US and NATO, or in the Russian-American relations, not to speak of closest partners – the CIS countries, China and India." See the whole article <http://www.in.mid.ru> (loaded 11.21.2002)

<sup>29</sup> 2000 Russian National Security Concept. See the whole document <http://www.russiaeurope.mid.ru/RussiaEurope/russiastrat2000.html> (loaded 1.13.2003)

<sup>30</sup> Newspaper article of Igor Ivanov, Russian Foreign Minister, "What Kind of World Do We Need?"

<sup>31</sup> 2000 Russian National Security Concept.

war against terrorism is parallel with the Russian security interests. It has also given Russia a freer hand with regard to handling its own security threats in the southern border area.

But there is also a risk that this war against terrorism and the war against Iraq may have very different consequences to its relationship with NATO and to the other vital Russian interest, the unity of the CIS. This is mainly due to the fact that unlike Russia, some CIS countries<sup>32</sup> supported the United States during the war against Iraq and also allowed the United States to deploy its forces on their bases during the campaign against terrorism in Afghanistan. As a result Russia is at the moment struggling with the pros and cons of these two divergent factors, the universal war against terrorism and the United States increasing influence in the CIS countries.

The Russians also view NATO enlargement to the Baltic States as a threat to the unity of the CIS countries. Even if the Baltic States did not join CIS after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the decision to enlarge NATO to the Baltic States and at the same time to the area of the former Soviet Union may encourage CIS countries to seek NATO membership. Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia have already given signs of their aspiration towards NATO membership, while the Baltic States membership in NATO could increase the possibility of the collapse of CIS.

During the last few years Russia has showed more consideration than before for strengthening its relations with the EU as a partner. Russia has also realized EU's increasing role in European policy. Characteristic of Russia's relations with Europe is Russia's economic dependence on the EU's market. In 2001 almost 45%<sup>33</sup> of Russia's exports went to the EU member states and, after the enlargement, the share will grow. This economic relationship also has a strong influence on security, and it is vital to meet the Russian interests in economic

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<sup>32</sup> The White House: Operation Iraqi Freedom 4.3.2003 <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/news/20030327-10.html> Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan were publicly committed to the Coalition

growth. Russia has also been interested in cooperation with the EU within the framework of European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). After the EU and NATO reached a mutual understanding on this matter at the end of 2002, Russia also hopes for impetus to be given to EU-Russia cooperation concerning ESDP.

What kind of NATO transformation are the Russians expecting to see? After 9/11 and especially after the Prague Summit, Russia has realized that NATO does not regard it as an enemy anymore but rather as a partner in the struggle against new threats and challenges. Such a transformation of NATO attitudes has a fundamental significance for Russia.<sup>34</sup>

From the Russian point of view, Russia and NATO now have a whole range of issues to collaborate on, and one of the main things is to begin to put into practical actions what has been set forth in the Rome Declaration.<sup>35</sup> Russia regards the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) as a mechanism for the elaboration, adoption and implementation of joint decisions, and it has announced that it is ready to develop and deepen cooperation with NATO with regard to the war against terrorism and other global threats such as proliferation of WMD. According to the Russian view, they can even act as allies with NATO with regard to the new security threats. Russian priorities at the NRC also include crisis management and civilian emergency planning.<sup>36</sup>

Russia feels herself as an equal partner with the NATO nations in the NATO-Russia council, Council at 20. In Russia, the NRC is also regarded as a part of NATO's new role and transformation, which also parallels Russian interests. The Russians have also realized that

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<sup>33</sup> The site of Russian Foreign Trade: <http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~chegeo/>

<sup>34</sup> Remarks at Press Conference Following Russia-NATO Council Meeting, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Ivanov, Prague, November 22, 2002. See the whole text <http://www.ln.mid.ru> (loaded 11.25.2002)

<sup>35</sup> NATO nations and Russia signed the Rome Declaration 5.28.2002, which established a new body NATO-Russia Council. <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2002/0205-rome/rome-eng.pdf><http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2002/0205-rome/rome-eng.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Article of Alexander Yakovenko, Director of the Russian MFA Information and Press department, "The Philosophy of Security" published in Rossiiskaya Gazeta on November 21, 2002. See the whole article <http://www.ln.mid.ru> (loaded 11.21.2002)



herein lays their real chance to take part and achieve success in the ongoing formation of a new world order and European security structure.<sup>37</sup>

After the NATO-Russia Council<sup>38</sup> meeting at the Prague Summit, Russia emphasized that all the council's members were determined to promote the formation of new security architecture in the Euro-Atlantic space and to bear joint responsibility for decisions to be adopted. Russia would greatly like to develop the council to become one of the supporting elements of the new system of Euro-Atlantic security. Will this mean that the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) will be replaced with the NRC or that the NRC will to some extent decrease the meaning of OSCE?<sup>39</sup>

While some have argued that the NRC will become a kind of "back door" for Russia to entering NATO, the Russian leadership has declared clearly and distinctly that Russia does not desire to join NATO through any door. The NRC and its activities are regarded in Russia as an adequate response to the present challenges which occur between Russia and NATO. Russia sees itself as a self-sufficient state which is capable of ensuring its own security independently, this does not mean, however, that it does not want to deepen its cooperation with NATO.<sup>40</sup>

The instability of the Russian economy in the 1990s reflected in military spending. As a result of this, the capacity of both Russian military personnel and equipment have decreased dramatically over the last ten years. The equipment of the Russian armed forces is rapidly going out of date, and according to many estimations, large-scale procurements of new equipment

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<sup>37</sup> Article of Igor Ivanov, Russian Foreign Minister, "What Kind of World Do We Need?"

<sup>38</sup> In Russian articles and documents the council is called Russia-NATO Council.

<sup>39</sup> Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Ivanov's Remarks at Press Conference Following Russia-NATO Council Meeting, Prague, November 22, 2002.

<sup>40</sup> Article of Alexander Yakovenko, Director of the Russian MFA Information and Press department, "The Philosophy of Security" published in Rossiiskaya Gazeta on November 21, 2002

cannot be launched before the beginning of the next decade. And the precondition for this is that the Russian economy grows as fast as it has been doing during the last few years.

Russia's official defence budget in 2002 was about 14.5 % of the state budget and since 1998 defence expenditures have increased steadily, from \$52bil on 2000 to \$65bil on 2001, based on purchasing-power parity (PPP) has increased. In spite of inflation, the real value of Russian military expenditures has increased. In 2001 the share of the military expenditures, including all military-related expenditures, was about 27% of the state budget and about 4.2% of Russia's GNP. A significant share, 40 % of the annual state defence orders between 2002 and 2005, will be used on research and development projects that will create the preconditions for new acquisition programs.<sup>41</sup>

Strategic nuclear forces, consisting of nuclear weapon systems that can be launched from the ground, sea or air, make up the most important parts of Russian defence. Maintaining this capability over the long term will not be possible without substantial nuclear weapon reductions or significant additional economical resources. They have tried to sustain and improve the capacity of their other latest equipment by modernization programs.

At the end of 2002 the Russians approved a three-step modernization plan for their military. Accordingly, the Russian military will be transformed from conscription to all voluntary forces by 2011. In the first stage of this program from the year 2004 the high-readiness forces of the army, airborne, and marines will be transformed to all voluntary forces. The aim is also to develop their high-readiness forces into a modern and mobile force. In addition to the

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<sup>41</sup> According to Military Balance 2002-2003, page 273-276 Russia's official National Defence budget for 2001 was about US\$7.5bn. Taking into account military related spending, as military pensions, funding for military reform and other items that are clearly defence-related costs outside the National Budget, they bring the overall military related expenditure to around US\$13bn. Russian military expenditure based on PPP rates in 2001 is estimated by Military Balance 2002-03.

The SIPRI Military Expenditure Database estimates Russian military expenditure based on PPP rates in 2001 US\$44bn which is about 4% of GDP. [http://projects.sipri.se/milex/mex\\_database1.html](http://projects.sipri.se/milex/mex_database1.html)

armed forces, Russian also has a significant amount of other armed organizations at different levels, mainly for internal purposes.<sup>42</sup>

### **Russian interests in the Northern Baltic Sea region and NATO**

In 1991 when Russia gave up the control of the Baltic States it lost one of the most advanced and prosperous parts of the Soviet Union. This was difficult issue for Russians to admit and for some time they hoped, they could bond the Baltic States tighter or looser back to Russia. In spite of this, today the Baltic Sea is the most peaceful and stable region in economic, military and political respects. This is mainly due to various regional cooperation institutions as well as multilateral and bilateral agreements and treaties on arms control and confidence-building. But from Russia's point of view the region is not free of challenges.

Two main factors can be found behind the Russian interests in the Baltic Sea region, which are mainly related either to the Russian security or economy, though some of Russia interests are also related to humanitarian interests, which play a role in its domestic policy. And behind all these there are the Russian attempts to resist increasing United States influence in the region.

While the Baltic Sea region is one of the key areas for Russian security and for Russian attempts to influence European security issues, This has been made more problematic for the Russians during the recent years because of increased American influence in the region. In order to sustain its own influence in the region Russia is therefore forced to be more positively

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<sup>42</sup> "New look army to rely on old conscription", article at Gazeta 11.20.2002, <http://www.gazeta.ru/2002/11/22/Newlookarmyt.shtml> (loaded 11.22.2002)

engaged to counterbalance the Americans. A more aggressive Soviet-type attitude would only harm Russia and its national interests in the region.

The Baltic States membership in NATO has a strong psychological effect on Russian security and military. The Russian military still sees NATO as an adversary and they are strongly against NATO enlargement to the Baltic States. Throughout history, the Baltic region has always been one of the key areas with regard to the Russian security and defence. Since the end of the cold war the region has been a kind of a “buffer zone” between Russia and NATO, and it has offered for both the possibility of provide an early warning if needed. But from the Russian perspective, the membership of the Baltic States in NATO will do away with this early warning possibility and bring NATO forces to the brink of Russia’s main areas. According to the Russian view this will largely change the military-political situation in the region.<sup>43</sup>

Even if in the light of the new relationship with NATO and even if Russia does not regard NATO enlargement anymore as a direct military threat, the approach of the military potential of NATO to the Russian border,<sup>44</sup> a mere 150 kilometres from St. Petersburg, cannot leave the Russians indifferent. The St. Petersburg area is the second largest industrial and population centre in Russia after Moscow and on the whole a very important area for Russia. It plays a significantly important role in the Russian economy, and both the St. Petersburg area and the Pskov area south of St. Petersburg have significant military importance. The other key areas to Russian security in north-eastern Russia are the Kola Peninsula, Kaliningrad, and the sea routes on the Baltic Sea. The Kola Peninsula is the only area which is not directly affected by NATO enlargement to the Baltic States.

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<sup>43</sup> Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Yevgeny Gusev to author’s question regarding the security environment in the Baltic Sea region, see the whole answer: [http://www.interfax.ru/show\\_one\\_news.html](http://www.interfax.ru/show_one_news.html) (loaded 10/11/2002)

The Kaliningrad enclave is a 15,000 km<sup>2</sup> area between Poland and Lithuania with a Russian population of almost one million.<sup>45</sup> After the Baltic States membership, it will be surrounded by NATO. It does not have a land connection to Russia and it is the main base for the Russian Baltic Fleet, so the only routes which will not cross the NATO territory are the sea and air routes on and over the Baltic Sea. The Kaliningrad enclave is therefore becoming a similar area for NATO as Berlin was for the Soviet Union during the cold war, and it would be very easy for NATO to stop all traffic to and from Kaliningrad. But what could the consequences be? Berlin did not become a reason for a war during the cold war, so why should Kaliningrad be different when relations between NATO and Russia are closer than they ever were during the cold war?

For Russia, the most sensitive aspect is preserving free communication with the rest of its territory. Of particular importance is the issue of ensuring maximum freedom of movement for its people. This has not been an issue between NATO and Russia; it has been more an issue between Russia and EU. Russia is pleased with the solution reached at the EU-Russia summit at the end of the year 2002, as the agreement does not question Russian sovereignty over the Kaliningrad region and protects the right of Russian citizens to move freely between various parts of the country. Russia sees that this reflects the EU's need to preserve and strengthen a strategic partnership with Russia and the EU's readiness to take its opinions into account.<sup>46</sup>

Both Latvia and Estonia have a border with Russia which is not settled, which is due to Russia's unwillingness to settle the issue. By this, the Russians tried to make it harder for the

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<sup>44</sup> Before the Baltic States membership in NATO Russia and NATO have had common border, 402 km, in the northern part of Norway and in Kaliningrad Oblast. After the Baltic States membership the common border will increase to 1140 km. CIA: The World Fact Book 2002 <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>

<sup>45</sup> To see more information about the Kaliningrad Region, see [http://www.gov.kaliningrad.ru/en\\_region.php3](http://www.gov.kaliningrad.ru/en_region.php3)

<sup>46</sup> Article of Igor Ivanov, Russian Foreign Minister, "What Kind of World Do We Need?" published in Kommersant-Daily, November 20, 2002

Baltic States to enter NATO and to give Russia more say over the minority issue in Estonia and Latvia. But Moscow's refusal to move ahead with the border issue has also had opposite influence and drove the Baltic States to seek NATO membership more eagerly. The Balts questioned Russian motives behind this and were afraid of Russians aspirations to merge the Baltic States back to Russia.

Russia has great economic interests in the Northern Baltic Sea region, and when the Baltic States re-gained their independence Russia lost about 4400 kilometres<sup>47</sup> of coastline and the greater part of its harbour capacity in the Baltic Sea. Today Russia has a Baltic coastline only at the Kaliningrad enclave and at the far end of the Gulf of Finland.

The biggest stake of Russian foreign export in the region is raw materials to Northern Europe. The Baltic harbours played an important role for Russian trade, especially for oil exports and in the beginning of the 1990's the Russians sought to protect Russian interests by gaining some influence over the Baltic State's harbours. But this did not work as the Russians hoped.

The importance of the Baltic harbours is now decreasing as Russia builds its own capacities at the far end of the Gulf of Finland. But this will still take years and in the meantime Russia's trade is heavily dependant on the Baltic harbours. In addition the new Russian harbour capacity is not free of ice all year round, whereas most of the Baltic harbours are. And Russia today is seriously lacking in ice-breaker capacity.

Russia is not willing to become dependant on NATO countries harbors in the future, as NATO or the Baltic States could easily block Russian exports through these harbors. On the other hand, NATO will surely be very reluctant to block Russian trade or to let the Baltic States use this "weapon" against Russia. In this sense, the Baltic States membership could be a

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<sup>47</sup> According to CIA's World Factbook 2002 Estonia has 3794 kilometers, Latvia 531 kilometers, and Lithuania 99 kilometers coastline at the Baltic Sea.

stabilizing factor in the region. On the other hand Western Europe is becoming more dependants on Russian oil and gas supplies, which gives to Russia an opportunity to have an economic veto over some NATO countries. At the same time, the Russia's economy is heavily dependant on the income that it gets from these supplies.

In Russian domestic policy there are two things that have been strongly agreed and which are related to the Baltic States. First, there has always been unanimous opposition NATO enlargement into the Baltic States. The vast majority of the Russian still think that it poses a threat to Russia security and the result is similar with regard to the membership of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.<sup>48</sup> Russians do not accept NATO enlargement to the territory of the former Soviet Union. And because of this it does not increase the security of the Baltic States, NATO or Russia.

Second, Russians strongly agree with the need to protect Russian minorities abroad, especially in Latvia and Estonia. In Estonia the share of the Russian minorities is about 28 % and in Latvia about 30 %.<sup>49</sup> The treatment of the Russian minorities has generally been soft, even if the Estonians and Latvians have sometimes treated the minorities not so well. In order to monitor progress on ethnic issues, the OSCE established offices in Riga and Tallinn. In late 2001 both Latvia and Estonia met all of the OSCE requirements and the OSCE offices were closed down on the end of December 2001. For Lithuania the minority issue has not been a problem because after independence Lithuania granted citizenship to all ethnic Russians living there. But the question of minorities in Estonia and Latvia remains an important issue in Russian domestic policy.

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<sup>48</sup> The Public Opinion Foundation (in Russia)

<sup>49</sup> CIA: World Fact Book 2002

The big change in the Russian government's attitude towards the Baltic States membership on NATO occurred in September 2001 when Russia gave up its unconditional resistance to the issue. Russian president Vladimir Putin announced during his visit to Finland on 3 September 2001 that Russia respect the lawful right of each state, including the Baltic States, to decide for itself in which international structure it is to participate.

In spite of this, Russia still has a strong negative attitude towards NATO enlargement to the Baltics, and Russia has continued to emphasize that a mechanical NATO enlargement to the region is unlikely to meet Russia's interests of security. The expansion is also seen as a mistake for both NATO and the Baltic States. According to the Russian view, NATO enlargement to the Baltics is a fundamental mistake that does not increase the security either in Europe or Northern Baltic Sea region. Russia also claims that the enlargement is an answer to the threats which existed during the cold war but does not respond to the present situation.

The invitation of the Baltic States into NATO meant a new humiliation for Russia even if this was merely symbolic. Why didn't Russia resist it harder than it did? Its options were very limited, and Russia had neither the power nor the influence to block the Baltic States membership. And even if Russia had opposed their membership harder than it did, it would have very likely failed in any case. Stronger opposition would only have harmed Russian relations to other Euro-Atlantic countries and perhaps changed the West's sympathetic attitude towards Russia and its own war against terrorism. In addition, any stronger countermeasures would have easily turned against Russian own interests and economy.

Russians may have also learned from the first enlargement round, which did not cause any actual military threats to Russia or diminish Russia's security. On the contrary, relations between Russia and Poland, for example, have even improved after Poland entered NATO.



Furthermore, before the Prague Summit cooperation between Russia and NATO had developed to the point that sacrificing them by opposing the membership of the Baltic States too hard would not have been rational.

During the previous enlargement Russia's security concerns were addressed by NATO as part of the process. NATO promised not to deploy forces or nuclear weapons to new member states during peacetime. With the enlargement to the Baltic there is no reason to doubt that NATO would not follow the same policy it did during the previous enlargement round and Russia will surely insist on it. In fact, NATO has already given some signs which indicate this direction.<sup>50</sup>

As a part of these limitations for NATO, Russia has constantly required the Baltic States accession to the 1990 Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, since this would limit military forces and equipment and make all military activities and the deployment of allied forces in the Baltic States more transparent. Russia has seen that documents govern the Russia-NATO relations and Russia expects that all new NATO members, while entering NATO, will adhere to these agreements and be guided by the same principles. In this regard, Russia is attaching special importance to ratification of the adapted CEF Treaty and to the Baltic States joining this treaty as well. If the Baltic States sign the adapted CFE Treaty, this could dispel a lot of Russia's fears.

The Baltic States membership in NATO may also have positive consequences for Russia, as it creates the opportunity for Russia to improve its relations with them. Russia expects that the Baltic States future membership will have no adverse effects on their bilateral relations. Moreover, Russia expects that NATO will exercise a positive influence on the Baltic States,

above all when it comes to the question of ensuring the rights of Russian minorities in both Estonia and in Latvia.<sup>51</sup>

NATO today has no interest in provoking Russia in any way, and it is clear that they will be very conscious of this after accepting the Baltic States as members. That is why it is very probable that NATO will take a close watch over the Baltic States policy towards Russia and intervene immediately if any possibility for the conflict between Russia and the states occurs.

Even if the Russian military is in decline, Russia still maintains significant military force and readiness in the Leningrad Military District<sup>52</sup>, which covers the northern Baltic Sea region and is one of the Russia's most important military areas. Russia's objectives in the region are mainly related to maintaining its strategic nuclear deterrence and of securing of the St. Petersburg area, Kaliningrad enclave, and Russian trade and military routes on the Baltic Sea. One airborne, one marine and two army high readiness formations are deployed in the district. In addition to these the number of forces in lower level readiness and to be formed through mobilization is still significant.

After the cold war, and especially after Putin came in power, Russia's policy towards NATO has developed more pragmatic. Russia has realized that in stead of confrontation, the good working relations serve also best Russian interests. But there is still too much uncertainty in Russia and the key question is that is this change in Russian policy permanent, how big is the risk of the change of this policy?

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<sup>50</sup> Speech by NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson at The European Business Club, Moscow, December 9, 2002 "Russia: Security and prosperity on the European continent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century". See the whole speech <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2002/s021209a.htm>

<sup>51</sup> Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Chizkov , interview with Czech Television, Moscow, November 20, 2002. <http://www.ln.mid.ru/B1.nsf/arh/CAFED3E1187EA19F43256C7800551F9E?OpenDocument> (loaded 11.21.2002)

<sup>52</sup> Even though the city of Leningrad was given back its traditional name of St Petersburg, the military has not changed the name of its military district.

## **Section III – The Baltic States and NATO**

### **How do the Baltic States benefit from NATO membership?**

History is too often forgotten with regard to the Baltic States' view of security in the Northern Baltic Sea region. The Baltic area has often been overrun and destroyed by various military forces during the numerous wars that have been fought there. The Baltic States first time gained their independence from Russia in the aftermath of the First World War, but after twenty years they lost it at the beginning of the Second World War, when the Soviet forces occupied the countries in the fall of 1939. During the war the population loss in the Baltic States was grave, and in the aftermath of the war a big portion of Balts was deported to the Soviet concentration camps. So, it has not only been the uncertainty of the future that has driven the Baltic States to seek membership in Western alliances, it has also been the lessons learned from the past.

NATO has set preconditions for the new members, and one of them is that they are not allowed to have unsolved problems or disputes with their neighbouring countries. Keeping this very much in mind, all the Baltics have been eager to assure NATO that there are no external threats to their security and that no country acts as an enemy to them. They have been especially reluctant to name Russia as any kind of a threat. By saying this Baltic States have closely tracked NATO's position with regard to Russia, according to which Russia no longer poses a military threat to European nations.

According to the Baltic States' national security concepts, they regard the likelihood of military confrontation in today's Northern Baltic Sea region as very small, but they do not reject the possibility entirely. Nevertheless, they do not officially regard any state as their adversary. According to them, the majority of challenges to their security are global and non-military in

nature, which is why they see that individual states cannot respond to these threats alone.

According to Baltic official view the biggest threats against their security are terrorism, organized crime, arms proliferation, drug traffic, the illegal migration, ecological risks, ethnic conflicts and the spread of epidemics. Because terrorism and proliferation of arms are the main global threats, the Baltic States estimate that they also pose significant threats to their security.<sup>53</sup>

In reality, the Balts consider that their security environment has not yet completed its evolution, which is why they are lacking security and have been ready to apply to membership in the Western alliances. The major risk to their security is instability nearby, mainly in Russia and Belarus. As long as the Euro-Atlantic security framework, including Russia, is developing, there is the potential for tension, so in their view only membership in NATO's collective defence system assures them long-term security and stability. As future EU members they also support the extension of the EU defence dimension, insofar it does not challenge the role of NATO.<sup>54</sup>

The first and most obvious benefit to the Baltic States from the membership in NATO is stability. After their independence the Baltic States were often considered a "grey zone" without credible defence capabilities. In many articles during the 1990s there were question marks over the Baltic States with regard to their future. Russia especially did not regard them as sovereign states in the same way as it regarded the other states in the region. Membership in NATO will definitely end this more than ten-year period of insecurity and will strengthen the Baltic States position among other sovereign states. This will also have a strong influence on their economies, as foreign investors will consider the Baltic States a more secure area to invest in.

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<sup>53</sup> National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia. [http://www.vm.ee/eng/kat\\_177/](http://www.vm.ee/eng/kat_177/) (loaded 11.19.2002)  
The Republic of Lithuania, National Security Strategy <http://www.kam.lt/isakymai/NSS.doc> (loaded 11.19.2002)  
and Lithuanian Defence Policy, White Paper <http://www.kam.lt/en/main.php?cat=ministerija&sub=20> (loaded 11.19.2002)

The National Security Concept of The Republic of Latvia <http://www.mod.gov.lv/english/08akti/02dk.php> (loaded 12.12.2002)

<sup>54</sup> Ibid

Second, the membership will also guarantee the Baltics a credible level of defence, as the deterrence effect of NATO will reduce the risk of any aggression towards them. This is especially the case if any negative development should happen in Russia. Without NATO membership, credible deterrence through an independent defence would be very difficult to achieve in the coming years, especially with regard to highly developed and expensive defence systems, like air defence.

Third, the membership in NATO and the EU will support the Baltic States position with regard to Russia, and it will make it possible for them to enhance their relations with Russia as a part of the alliance without fear and prejudice. Membership will create an opportunity for the Baltic States to act as active players between NATO and Russia. After all, the Baltic States have common borders with Russia, the Balts are very experienced in dealing with the Russians, and they also know the language better than any other members in the alliance.

For the Baltic States the NATO membership will clearly mean a new page in their history. From the Baltics point of view, NATO membership will be the most important requirement for their lasting security.

### **Are the Baltic States ready for NATO membership?**

Before the Prague Summit there was a large discussion in NATO concerning the possible membership of the Baltic States in the alliance. Those who opposed their membership had basically three main arguments: 1) the accession of the Baltic States to NATO would weaken the relationship between Russia and NATO; 2) Baltic States membership would weaken the alliance

through giving Article 5 commitments that would be very difficult to fulfil, and perhaps the most commonly used argument; 3) the Baltic States did not fulfil the requirements for membership.

The first argument, concerning NATO-Russia relations, has not proven to be very accurate. In fact after the summer 2001 and especially after September 11, relations have on the contrary been enhanced even if though it was very obvious that all three Baltic States would be invited to become members at Prague. The NATO-Russia Council and its achievements are good evidence of this.

The second argument concerning Article 5 commitments was used in a too traditional way, in the way it may have been used during the cold war. In today's Europe it is very unlikely that any country would use military force against a NATO nation, because by doing so it would put itself in a position where it would have to face the whole military power of NATO, including the United States.<sup>55</sup> NATO was created in order to give security guarantees to its members, which it successfully managed to do during the cold war. There is no reason why NATO could not fulfil Article 5 guarantees today, after its main adversary in the cold war era has fallen to pieces and there is no real military challenger to NATO military power in the foreseeable future. The deterrence of the alliance today is much greater than it used to be during the cold war.

As for the third argument, why is it said that the Baltic States do not fulfil the membership requirements? The political and military requirements have been named in MAP. From the political side, the arguments have consisted of external territorial disputes with Russia and the question of the Russian minorities, which according the arguments could pose a threat to

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<sup>55</sup> According the Washington Treaty article 5: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by [Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations](#), will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area." See the whole treaty <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/treaty.htm>

internal security in both Estonia and Latvia. From the military side the argument has been that the Baltic States do not have effective enough military capabilities to defend their own territories or to contribute to NATO's collective defence.

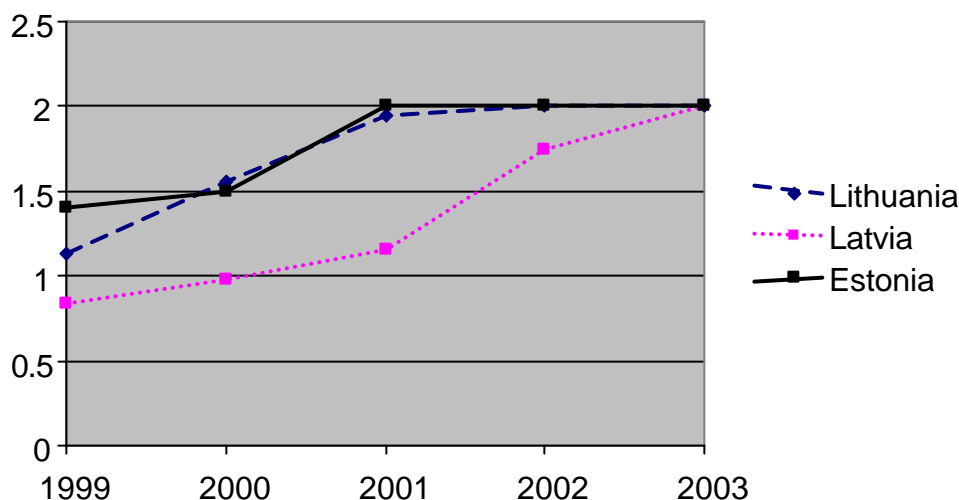
When it comes to the first argument about border issues, Lithuania has signed an agreement with Russia with regard to the Kaliningrad enclave. Estonia and Latvia do not have formal border agreements with Russia, but they have negotiated agreements. Russia's purpose in not ratifying an agreement was to postpone Estonian and Latvian memberships in NATO, but from NATO's point of view it was more a question of Russia's unwillingness to ratify what had already been agreed. After the Baltic States join NATO, it is very likely that the border issue will also come to its end, while the relationships between Russia and the Baltic States have the opportunity to improve.

The second argument concerned the treatment of the Russian minorities in Latvia and Estonia. If we compare the minority question in the Baltic States to other NATO members, it is much better than for example the Kurds' position in Turkey. NATO and EU had quit equal political requirements for new members, and the EU also considered that Estonia and Latvia had fulfilled the requirements.

From the military point of view the basic argument has been that the Baltic States do not have much to offer NATO. In this it is obvious that the military contribution the Baltic States can make is very limited and that they cannot defend themselves alone against a large-scale military attack. But, this has never been a requirement for NATO membership. On the contrary, most of the European NATO members have joined the alliance because they did not have military capabilities to defend themselves on their own.

NATO has made a 2 % of GDP goal for the military expenditures of the new members. Five years ago the Baltic States defence expenditures were far from this level,<sup>56</sup> but since 1999 they have all increased their military spending and reached the goal by 2003. They have also committed to sustain their military spending at least the 2 % of GDP level during the coming years. But the question is whether this increase of defence expenditures is permanent or was it used only in order to achieve a membership requirement?<sup>57</sup>

**The Baltic States' defence expenditures, as % of GDP<sup>58</sup>**



The European NATO average of 2 % of GDP for military expenditures does not give the whole picture of the capabilities of the Baltic States military. The Baltic States started to develop their defence systems and forces from scratch a little more than ten years ago and the work is still

<sup>56</sup> According to SIPRI Military Expenditure Database [http://first.sipri.org/non\\_first/result\\_milex.php?send](http://first.sipri.org/non_first/result_milex.php?send) military expenditure in 1993-1999 in Lithuania was from 0.7% to 1.1%, in Estonian from 0.8% to 1.4% and in Latvian from 0.8% to 1.0% of GDP

<sup>57</sup> Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence: Lithuania's Defence Budget 2002: Planning our resources the NATO way <http://www.kam.lt/en/news.php?id=298> (loaded 11.19.2002)

Ministry of Defence of Republic of Latvia: The defence budget of the Republic of Latvia for 2003. Facts and Figures [http://www.mod.gov.lv/english/03budzets/03\\_2003expl.php](http://www.mod.gov.lv/english/03budzets/03_2003expl.php) (loaded 24.3.2003)

Estonian Defence Forces 2002-2006 <http://www.mod.gov.ee/?op=body&id=178> (loaded 11.19.2002)

<sup>58</sup> Ibid



only half way done. A great deal of their equipment has been donated by other European nations and it is not the latest model or the highest technology. The current quantity and quality of the military capabilities of the Baltic States defence forces is significantly lower than the current average of European NATO nations.

Comparing the per capita defence expenditures of the Baltic States with European NATO nations, it is clear that all the Baltics fall well below the NATO European average of \$325. Estonian expenditure per capita is \$66, Latvian \$35 and Lithuanian \$57. At the moment the lowest defence expenditure per capita in European NATO states is Poland (\$88). Taking the current level of the Baltic States military and their military expenditure into account, there is a danger that the gap between “the old NATO nations” and the Baltic States military capabilities could widen even more in the future, even if the Baltic States continue to use 2 % of their GDP on defence.<sup>59</sup>

In spite of their lack of resources, the Baltics have been preparing themselves for membership for several years. They have actively engaged themselves in the Partnership for Peace (PfP) Program, the Force Planning Program (PARP), and the Membership Action Plan (MAP). In addition they have taken part in NATO peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo.

During the MAP process the structure of the armed forces of all the Baltic States was reviewed and priority has been given to developing the rapid reaction capability, efficiency and mobility of the ground forces. The role of the air force and navy in each of the countries is very modest, mostly to control the area and prepare to provide host nation support to other NATO

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<sup>59</sup> Defence expenditures and defence expenditures per capita are based on the information from The Military Balance 2002-03

forces. The defence solution in the Baltic States will also be based on future conscription and mobilization.<sup>60</sup>

The ground forces structure will be quite similar in all three Baltic States. They will consist of about a brigade-size force, and a number of combat support and combat service support units, and territorial defence units. The brigades should be ready and fully NATO-interoperable by 2006. They will only be used on the territory of the nation in order to defend the nation together with other NATO forces. Since the beginning of 2003 each Baltic country has had one mechanised NATO-interoperable infantry battalion from their brigades ready and available for NATO operations outside their national borders. In the future these battalions will be available also for Article 5 operations. They are the most valuable Baltic military contribution to NATO missions, especially when it comes to peacekeeping missions. In addition to these three battalions, the Baltic States can offer NATO smaller military units, for example military police.<sup>61</sup>

The Baltic States' air forces and navies have very limited capabilities. They do not have any significant combat capabilities and with the current level of defence expenditure it is not even possible to achieve them. The priority therefore has been given to the development of host nation support for other NATO forces. The Baltic States are not even planning to increase the combat capabilities of their air forces or navies in the future; their air defence and most of the maritime actions of the Baltic States must be thus left the responsibility of NATO.<sup>62</sup>

What can the Baltic States contribute to NATO in addition to the above-mentioned military units? Their membership will provide NATO with the possibility of operating on their

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<sup>60</sup> National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia  
National Security Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania and Lithuanian Defence Policy, White Paper  
The National Security Concept of The Republic of Latvia

<sup>61</sup> Lithuanian Defence Policy, White Paper  
Estonian Defence Forces 2002  
Report of the Minister of Defence (White Book) [http://www.mod.gov.lv/english/09inform/wb\\_2001/03balta.php](http://www.mod.gov.lv/english/09inform/wb_2001/03balta.php)  
(loaded 11.19.2002)

territory and in their air space. This will bring benefits especially to NATO's intelligence capabilities with regard to Russia. In addition the Baltic States and their air space will offer to NATO facilities for training both ground and air forces.

All in all the Baltic States fulfil the membership requirements. From the political side the requirements were quite similar to those for the EU. To become invited to both alliances is a clear evidence of fulfilling the requirements. From the military side the Baltic States, with three battalions, can offer comparatively more than some bigger members.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid

## Section IV – Finland, Sweden, and NATO

After the Baltic States join NATO, Finland and Sweden will be the only militarily non-aligned countries in the Baltic Sea region. Neither Finland nor Sweden is at the moment seeking NATO membership, but they are as close to the alliance as possible without actually being members. They have actively taken part in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program and Planning and Review Process (PARP) and actively supported the creation of the Baltic States military and their membership in NATO. Both countries have also taken part in NATO-led peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo. Finland even took the brigade level lead-nation role in Kosovo at the beginning of May 2003, which was the first time in NATO history that a non-member state was given this role

Finland and Sweden both basically fulfil all political and military requirements for membership, they have reached a very high degree of interoperability with NATO and are in the midst of renewing their militaries. So what prevents them from applying NATO membership? The main reason is that public opinion in both countries is very much against NATO membership. Only about 27 % of Swedes were in favour of NATO membership in January 2003 and at about the same time, December 2002; only 22 % of Finns were in favour of membership. Nor has the Baltic States coming NATO membership had any significant influence on Swedish or Finnish attitudes towards NATO membership.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> "Lundgren tror på Natomedlemskap", article in "Dagens Nyheter" 1.19.2003. The latest opinion poll with regard to the Swedish NATO membership is published in this article. According to this article 53% of the Swedes are against NATO membership. The number is 7% bigger than the year before.

<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=1042&a=98575> (in Swedish)

Finnish Ministry of Defence. The latest opinion poll with regard to the Finnish military alliance found that 70% of Finns are against alliance. The portion was 79% a year before. <http://www.puolustusministerio.fi/mts-kuvat/kuva03-1.gif> (in Finnish)

Nor is the political leadership in either Finland or Sweden in favour of membership. According to the new Finnish government's program, from April 2003, the country's security policy is still based on militarily non-alignment and credible defence,<sup>64</sup> though this policy will be reviewed in the government's next security and defence policy report in 2004. NATO membership has been a possible option for Finland since 1997, in contrast to Sweden, which does not at the moment regard NATO membership as an option for its security. Sweden has been militarily non-aligned for almost two centuries and, unlike Finland, it has served Swedes well also during the two world wars.

What are the consequences of the Baltic States NATO membership to Sweden and Finland? Both countries supported the Baltic States membership, and expect that it will clearly increase their own security as well as the stability of the whole region. The Soviet Union had considerable military force in the region during the cold war. In case of crisis, they had the capacity also to invade both Sweden and Finland over the Baltic Sea. After the independence of the Baltic States and the departure of the Russian troops in the early 1990s, the Baltics constituted a military vacuum. NATO membership will put an end to this period of uncertainty. For Sweden this will seal the most significant improvement in its own strategic situation. Sweden will be surrounded by NATO nations and Finland, with which it has very close co-operation, including in the military field. For Finland the most significant change is that the uncertainty over the future of the Baltic States will vanish and the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland will have permanent NATO military structures.

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<sup>64</sup> Pääministeri Anneli Jäätteenmäen hallituksen ohjelma 17.4.2003  
<http://www.valtioneuvosto.fi/tiedostot/pdf/fi/36117.pdf> (in Finnish) (Loaded 4.20.2003)  
The Program of Prime Minister Anneli Jäätteenmäki's Government, Summary  
<http://www.valtioneuvosto.fi/tiedostot/pdf/en/36146.pdf> (in English) (Loaded 4.20.2003)

The question of Swedish and Finnish membership has popped up many times during the last ten years, so it is very unlikely that these countries will rapidly change their security policy concerning military nonalignment before they see the real consequences of the Baltic States membership. But if the Baltic States NATO membership has no severe negative consequences to NATO-Russian relations, one major reason used, especially against Finnish NATO membership, will vanish. On the other hand, if the Baltic States membership leads back to confrontation in the region between NATO and unstable Russia, military nonalignment is still a good option for Sweden. To Finland, with a 1340 kilometre-long border with Russia, the situation may be more difficult.

How could the Finnish and Swedish membership in NATO effect to the security environment of the region? From the Russian point of view, it would be easier for them to accept Swedish membership, as it would have no significant or direct consequences to Russian interests in the Northern Baltic Sea region. Finnish membership, however would bring NATO closer to Russian security interests; NATO would have a new 1340 kilometres common border with Russia; a new NATO nation would be just 150 kilometres from St. Petersburg and would also border the Kola Peninsula which deploys the vital part of the Russian nuclear triad. In addition, after Finland's membership, the Gulf of Finland, Russia's main sea route, would be under total NATO control. But these arguments are valid only if relations between NATO and Russia worsen and Russia feels that Finnish membership threatened its interests. If NATO-Russian relations stay as they are or even deepen, these arguments may become worthless against a possible Finnish membership.

On the other hand, in the case of a crisis between NATO and Russia, both Finland and Sweden would easily be drawn into the conflict. NATO would definitely need Swedish airspace

and sea region in order to avoid possible Russian countermeasures from the Kaliningrad enclave, and Finnish territory and airspace would be vital to Russia in order to prevent NATO actions through Finland against St. Petersburg region, the Kola Peninsula, and the connections between these two areas. On the other hand, Finnish territory would be useful also to NATO in order for it to act against these areas.

NATO is in the midst of transforming itself and is starting new operations in Afghanistan and supporting Poland in Iraq. The alliance's resources are limited and there are real questions as to additional PfP activities in the Northern Baltic Sea region. From NATO's point of view, after the Baltic States join the alliance, Finland and Sweden could easily be categorized with the other countries that have no real interest in joining, such as Russia, Belarus, and the other former Soviet Union republics. This development may very well force Finland and Sweden to seek new forms of co-operation with NATO.

## **Conclusions and policy recommendations**

At the Prague Summit the heads of states and governments radically transformed NATO and decided on tools with which to tackle the new threats. After this, the alliance was no longer supposed to be a cold war era military alliance. The lessons recently learned from the war against Iraq also prove that the priorities NATO set itself at Prague with regard to military capabilities were the right ones: heavy airlift capabilities; enhanced intelligence, surveillance and command capabilities; smart weapon systems, and defence against WMD.

A coherent and militarily capable NATO should also be in the interests of all the Northern Baltic Sea nations. It is the best available option with a stable Russia to increase security in the region. If NATO fell apart, the consequences to the European security and stability in the Northern Baltic Sea region would be dramatic. First, in the military field, there would be no organization to cooperate with the Russians. The EU is not ready or capable of doing so and Russia still wants herself to be regarded as a superpower with nuclear weapons, dealing with equals; in other words, with the United States. But without working military relations and cooperation with NATO and the United States, Russia would feel herself easily threatened. This would give more space to conservative and revanchist attitudes in Russia and easily decrease the security and stability in the Northern Baltic Sea region, especially in the Baltic States.

Second, if NATO fell apart, the United States would still need allies and a military presence in Europe. NATO's falling apart would also end the Baltic States security guarantees,



and during the war against Iraq the Baltic States openly supported the United States from the very beginning. This is where the United States and the Baltic States interests would merge if NATO fell apart. One consequence could be bilateral agreements and that the United States security guarantees to the Baltic States. However, increased United States military presence and influence in the region would be very much against Russian interests and could lead up to confrontation between the two and very much destabilize the region. To prevent this, a strong and working NATO is the best option.

The rest of this conclusion suggests policy recommendations for the Finns with regard to the future security and stability of the Northern Baltic Sea region. The recommendations are as follows:

1. NATO's falling apart and a weak trans-Atlantic link would very likely lead to increased American presence and influence in the Northern Baltic Sea. This would very likely cause some Russian counteractions and could easily lead to a new United States-Russian confrontation, the focus of which is in the Northern Baltic Sea region. This development would dramatically destabilize the region. It is very much in accord with Finnish interests that trans-Atlantic relations return to normal and that NATO becomes united. For its part, Finland should support the unity of NATO and strong trans-Atlantic relations.
2. Finland should support all developments which will enhance stability and democracy in Russia. Russia, together with NATO and the United States, is a key factor with regard to security and stability of the region. Instability in Russia could also easily have direct

effects on Finland. And in the case NATO does fall apart, Russian prospects of reintegrating the Baltic States back to the Russian empire would increase.

3. Good NATO-Russia relations have stabilizing consequences on the security and stability of the Northern Baltic Sea region. As long as Russia and NATO have good-working partnership and cooperation, including in the military field, it is very unlikely that the enlargement will bring any negative consequences to the region. On the contrary, NRC may be the forum to increase NATO-Russia cooperation in the region. Finland should support every effort to make NRC a more valuable tool with regard to European security.
4. In order for its own voice to be better heard with regard to the above-mentioned issues, Finland should apply for NATO membership. By doing so Finland has the opportunity to influence more effectively those issues which have consequences on her security. The Baltic States coming NATO membership without considerable backlash from Russia can also be regarded as a significant change on Russian attitudes towards NATO and its enlargement.

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