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Small States— Big Worries

Choice and Purpose in the Security Policies of the Baltic States

Contents

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brief 21

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Choice and Purpose in the Security Policies of the Baltic States

Andreas Heinemann-Grüder

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Zusammen-fassung

German Summary

Der BICC brief *Small States—Big Worries. Choice and Purpose in the Security Policies of the Baltic States* untersucht die Bestimmungsfaktoren der baltischen Sicherheitspolitik seit der Erringung der Unabhängigkeit im Jahre 1991. Die Entwicklung von Sicherheitskonzepten und der Aufbau von Streitkräften im Baltikum können in zwei Phasen unterteilt werden – ein anfängliches Stadium der Nations- und Staatsbildung und eine zweite Phase, in der die Annäherung an die NATO bzw. an individuelle NATO-Staaten im Vordergrund stand. Der Aufbau militärischer Kapazitäten war in der ersten Phase vom organisatorischen Eigeninteresse der neu geschaffenen Streitkräfte bzw. der Verteidigungsministerien, von institutioneller Unsicherheit, einer Ad-hoc-Politik und konkurrierenden Visionen über die künftige Rolle der Streitkräfte geprägt. Zwischen deklarierten realpolitischen Absichten und der tatsächlichen Sicherheitspolitik ergaben sich folglich erhebliche Widersprüche.

In der zweiten Phase wurde die nationale Sicherheitspolitik durch Anforderungen der angestrebten NATO-Mitgliedschaft bestimmt. Die Kooperation mit der NATO hat den Schwerpunkt des Streitkräfteaufbaus von der Territorialverteidigung zur Interoperabilität mit der NATO und der Teilnahme an „out-of-area"-Operationen verlagert.

Politikwissenschaftlich ist weder ein neo-realistischer, noch ein institutionalistischer oder ein konstruktivistischer Ansatz hinlänglich in der Lage, die Sicherheitspolitik der baltischen Staaten in den 1990er Jahren zu erfassen. Die neorealistische Betonung von Misstrauen wird durch die baltische Wahrnehmung Russlands, aber auch durch die geringe Zusammenarbeit der baltischen Staaten untereinander bestätigt. Gleichwohl, die strukturellen Bedingungen der äußeren Umwelt erklären nicht die tatsächliche Entwicklung der baltischen Sicherheitspolitik. Anstelle der neo-realistischen Annahme, dass es den baltischen Staaten primär um das staatliche Überleben ging, wurde der Aufbau der Streitkräfte entscheidend durch interne Faktoren bestimmt. Darüber hinaus entwickelte sich, entgegen der (neo-)realistischen Annahme, Kooperation mit Russland.

Die baltischen Staaten haben für jene Sicherheitsinstitutionen optiert, von denen der größte Nutzen erwartet wurde, während andere Optionen an den Rand gedrängt wurden. Die Kooperation mit der NATO verringerte das Unsicherheitsgefühl der baltischen Staaten, zugleich half die NATO, die innenpolitisch labile Stellung des Militärs zu kompensieren. Die NATO-Kooperation schränkte jedoch zugleich den künftigen Handlungsspielraum der Balten ein.

In der Praxis ist die baltische Sicherheitspolitik stärker durch interne institutionelle, kulturelle und ökonomische Faktoren geprägt worden als durch „geopolitische Realpolitik". Einige interne Bestimmungsfaktoren für Sicherheitspolitik sind dabei in vergleichbarer Weise prägend geworden:

◼ Die Anfangsphase rief ein Gefühl der Überforderung hervor, es erforderte die Ausarbeitung von nationalen Sicherheitskonzepten, den Aufbau einer militärischen Infrastruktur und von militärischen Entscheidungsabläufen, die Annahme von grundlegenden Gesetzen und die Rekrutierung eines neuen Offizierskorps und von Wehrpflichtigen. Die Ineffizienz beim Sicherheitsmanagement kann so wenigstens z.T. mit dem frühen Stadium der Staatsbildung und entsprechenden Experimenten erklärt werden. Sicherheitspolitik ist währenddessen stark mit nationaler Identitätspolitik aufgeladen und zeichnet sich durch ein Übergewicht militärischer Aspekte aus.

◼ Das Militär, insbesondere das Offizierskorps, ist sowjetisch geschult und mental geprägt. Die post-kommunistische Geisteshaltung äußert sich dabei vor allem durch kurzfristige Planung, Entscheidungsfreude ohne Rücksicht auf Umsetzung, geringe Koordination und schleppende Informationsflüsse sowie ein mangelndes Verständnis für öffentliche Rechenschaftspflicht. Die sowjetische Militärkultur steht in Konflikt mit der professionellen Kultur von westlichen Militärberatern und baltischen Remigranten, vor allem aus den USA und Kanada.

◼ Angesichts anderer Prioritäten des Systemwechsels ist das Militär finanziell und personell nur mager ausgestattet. Da die baltischen Staaten Armeen von Grund auf aufbauten, reichten die Militärhaushalte in den 1990er Jahren kaum für mehr als den einfachen Unterhalt.

◼ Zuständigkeiten zwischen dem Präsidenten, dem Sicherheits- bzw. Verteidigungsrat, dem Verteidigungsminister und dem Generalstab sind nach wie vor unklar abgegrenzt, insbesondere für den militärischen Ernstfall.

◼ Die Kluft zwischen Sicherheitsrhetorik und mangelhafter Sicherheitsplanung ist erheblich. Sicherheitsbedrohungen waren offensichtlich nicht so ernst wie bisweilen deklariert. Wenn die russische Gefahr tatsächlich so prominent gewesen wäre wie bisweilen behauptet, hätte sich dies mutmaßlich im ergebnisorientierten Aufbau effektiver militärischer Kapazitäten niedergeschlagen.

Angesichts der geringen Popularität der Streitkräfte und der randständigen Bedeutung von Sicherheitsproblemen im Kontext des Systemwechsels konnte das Militär keine entscheidende Rolle für die Wiederherstellung von Nationalstolz oder für die Kollektividentitäten spielen. Der Militärdienst ist unpopulär, Sicherheitsthemen fehlen zumeist in Parteiprogrammen, schließlich spielt die Militär- und Sicherheitspolitik bei Verteilungsfragen nur eine nachgeordnete Rolle. Vor diesem Hintergrund wird mit der NATO-Mitgliedschaft die Erwartung verknüpft, die innenpolitisch angreifbare Stellung des Militärs außenpolitisch kompensieren zu können.

Das nach wie vor in allen baltischen Staaten gültige Konzept der „totalen Verteidigung" erfordert eine Personalstärke, die weit über dem liegt, was sie sich vernünftigerweise leisten können. Angesichts der defizitären Zusammenarbeit unter den baltischen Staaten kommt das Konzept der „totalen Verteidigung" einer Ressourcenverschwendung gleich. Die NATO-Mitgliedschaft wird in jedem Fall den Schwerpunkt von der „totalen Verteidigung" hin zu kleinen, professionellen Einheiten verschieben.

Reflektionen über Kosten und Nutzen der NATO-Mitgliedschaft werden in den baltischen Staaten selten angestellt. Unbeschadet der offiziellen Betonung einer Gleichwertigkeit von NATO- und EU-Mitgliedschaft verkörpert die NATO eher ein ideelles Zugehörigkeitsversprechen, während die Vorbereitung auf die EU-Mitgliedschaft weitaus substantiellere Veränderungen in Politik, Wirtschaft und Alltag hervorruft.

Die drängenden Sicherheitserfordernisse wie illegaler Grenzverkehr, Kriminalität, Terrorismus, inter-ethnische Spannungen und ökologische Gefahren legen eine enge Sicherheitskooperation der baltischen Staaten untereinander und mit ihren unmittelbaren Nachbarn, darunter Russland nahe. Sollte das Streben der baltischen Staaten nach NATO-Mitgliedschaft Ende 2002 nicht befriedigt werden, wäre erneut zu bedenken, ob die Gemeinsame Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik (GASP) der EU nicht eine langfristige Alternative verkörpert, zumal aus sicherheitspolitischen Gründen keine Dringlichkeit für die NATO-Erweiterung besteht. Für den höchst unwahrscheinlichen Fall einer militärischen Bedrohung der territorialen Integrität und staatlichen Souveränität könnten sowohl die NATO als auch die EU-Mitgliedsstaaten Beistandszusagen abgeben, die unterhalb der Schwelle der NATO-Mitgliedschaft liegen.

Der Faktor, der die baltische Sicherheit perspektivisch am stärksten beeinflusst, besteht weniger in militärischen Kapazitäten als in der wirtschaftlichen Vorbereitung auf die EU-Mitgliedschaft. Für die EU und insbesondere die baltischen Staaten wird von herausragender Bedeutung sein, ob die Grenze zu Russland und der Gemeinschaft Unabhängiger Staaten sich angesichts starker sozio-ökonomischer Gefälle physisch und politisch-kulturell verhärtet oder die baltischen Staaten zu einem offenen Tor sowohl in den postsowjetischen Raum als auch in die EU hinein werden.

Acknowledgments

Interview partners

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Introduction

When Words and Deeds Do Not Match

Following independence, the Baltic states defined their security policies 'from scratch', in an environment open to institutional choice as well as to diverse perceptions of potential threats. These states therefore represent a unique case for testing common assumptions about the sources of security policies. What are the factors determining the Baltic states' choice of security policies? The following study looks at the security debates in and around the Baltic states and relates them to the actual build-up of armed forces in the 1990s. How are policy deliberations and declarations related to the actual pursuit of security policies, and what does this teach us about the determinants of security policies?

The Baltic states are in a process of nation-state building. Their security preferences are part of an ongoing search for, and manifestation of, collective identity. 'Collective identity' is not treated here as a given: it emerges through domestic deliberations, through common practices with the external environment, through domestic decision-making, and the build-up of armed forces.

The example of the Baltic states demonstrates that common 'neo-realist', 'institutionalist', and 'constructivist' explanations face serious problems in explaining the mismatch between security concepts and the actual pursuit of security policies in the Baltic states. The currently most frequently applied modes of reflection about security policies do not sufficiently capture the contradictions between the epistemology of security policies, for example the security prose enshrined in doctrines and foreign policy declarations, and the actual pursuit of security policies.

'Neo-realists' treat security interests as the self-evident emanation of international structures, but fail to explain choices that do not conform to assumed interests. The 'institutionalist' argument stresses the socializing role of international institutions, but falls short in two crucial regards—why do certain international institutions win over others, and how are approaches to institutions shaped by domestic politics? Finally, 'constructivists' perceive security politics as the emanation of transnational discourses and national identities, but fail to explain discrepancies between words and deeds. Ideas and actual conduct may coincide, but often they do not. A closer look at the domestic sources of security policies in the Baltic states may help to fill these gaps.

The story of the Baltic states' security policies in the 1990s will sharpen our understanding of the interaction between proclaimed ideas and actual deeds. The practical relevance of this understanding is twofold. Actual policies can be measured against the security concerns of the people living in the Baltic states. In addition, a sober look at self-images, interests, and actual deeds may help to define outsiders' actions vis-a-vis Baltic expectations.

Summary of the Argument

I argue that the autonomy of the security establishment in policy formulation and decision-making is the key to understanding the security policies of the Baltic states. I claim that the decisive sources of security policies lie in the domestic environment of the Baltic states, and that security conceptions as well as the actual pursuit of the build-up of armed forces are linked to the functional needs and survival strategies of the military organizations (Katzenstein, 1996, p. 29). "Identities" and "norms" are not treated as the absolute root causes of security policies, but seen rather as instruments to satisfy the organizational needs of the security establishment. These interests emanate from a specific organizational culture, which combines strong residues of Soviet behavioral patterns, autonomy in deciding security matters, and a penchant for national security gains over common security gains.

Research Questions

My inquiry into the reasons behind security choices in the Baltic states is based on four lines of analysis. Firstly, how is security policy perceived and constructed domestically? Secondly, how does the regional and transnational environment affect security choices? Thirdly, how do domestic structures influence decision-making in security politics? And fourthly, how do security preferences translate into the concrete build-up of armed forces? The constitution of security policies is thus explained by the input of conceptions, the external environment, patterns of domestic decision-making, and the build-up of the armed forces.

The final part of this report evaluates the functionality of security choices in relation to declared aims, and speculates on the contribution of security based on confidence-building among potential adversaries. The normative assessment in the conclusion is 'utilitarian' in that it relates the conduct of security policies to the reduction of identifiable security threats. The evaluation is thus not based on idealistic moral principles or linked to the maximization of state interests. I shy away from any abstract juxtaposition of moralism versus *Realpolitik* (Hutchings, 1999, pp. 21 ff.). What I am ultimately aiming at is an assessment of the possibilities of changing behavioral patterns that reproduce the security dilemma instead of overcoming it. This, of course, implies that the security dilemma is man-made, not an eternal given.

The domestic setting, as I try to demonstrate, plays a key role in distributing the impact of the security establishment on preference aggregation. Peter Hall argued that:

"Institutional factors play two fundamental roles . . . on the one hand, the organization of policy-making affects the degree of power that one set of actors has over the policy outcomes. . . . On the other hand, organizational position also influences an actor's definition of his own interests, by establishing his institutional responsibilities and relationships to other actors. In this way, organizational factors affect both the degree of pressure an actor can bring to bear on policy and the likely direction of this pressure" (Hall, 1986, p. 9).

Actors and institutions in the field of security politics understandably demonstrate a vital interest in securing their own existence against purely instrumental approaches, and it is therefore of prime importance to assess their voice in defining priorities in security politics.

In contrast to common wisdom, I treat "security environment" not as being predominantly defined by the distribution of power and resources, but as the epistemological and institutional environment created by actors in security politics (Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein, 1996, p. 33 f.). I am thus departing from a view that sees the Baltic states' security policies as intrinsic to their geographical parameters. While not denying the impact of the distribution of power in international politics and of international institutions on state behavior, I pursue a comparative 'unit level' analysis. I take a look at the domestic sources of the security policies of the Baltic states and argue that the effects of material factors depend on perception and on domestic institutional factors (Wendt, 1999, Part I, pp. 47–190). If we conceive security policies as the result of diverse

formative influences and not as a conceptual blueprint which is implemented in reality, the build-up of armed forces demonstrates to what extent words are reflected in deeds.

The choice of security politics is explained by the input of conceptions, the external environment, domestic decision-making, and the build-up of the armed forces. I assume that some of these inputs, particularly security conceptions and domestic decision-making, are causal in the sense that they are antecedent to and independent of their effects, whereas others (resource allocation, external environment, and the build-up of armed forces) are constitutive of security policies.

I share the 'constructivist' stress on the perception and interpretation of power, yet I contend that security policies are not exclusively driven by norms and "national identities" (Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein, 1996, pp. 52 f.). The organizational interests of the security establishment have to be taken into consideration too. The projection of security norms onto the outside world is seen as a function of self-images and the interests of particular interest groups (for a contrasting view, see Kowert and Legro, 1996, pp. 462 ff.).

Apart from official documents and secondary literature, my findings are based on interviews with representatives of the respective Ministries of Defense, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, parliamentary commissions, armed forces, and academic experts in the Baltic states (see Annex for full list of interview partners).

Common Approaches

Any study of security policies in the Baltic states has to penetrate a thick layer of fundamentalist claims. It is worth briefly reviewing common approaches to security policies because they shape what count as 'hard facts';

they help to understand the underlying ideas of actors and how they perceive 'facts'; they define the range of 'facts' covered; and they have broad policy implications.

Ideas in security policies enjoy a double status. On the one hand, they express the actor's world views; on the other hand, they articulate academic modes of reflection about the actor's behavior. Any student of security politics should be aware of the difference between an actor embracing, for example, the rhetoric of *Realpolitik* and scholars claiming that *Realpolitik* is the only appropriate mode of understanding the actor.

There are three major modes of reflection on security politics which I will briefly review—'neo-realism', 'institutionalism', and 'constructivism'. 'Neo-realism' sees security policy as resulting from material structures embodied in the international system. The 'neo-realist' school claims that the distribution of resources and power among states determines security politics, thus critically diminishing the freedom of action (on realism see Morgenthau, 1963, pp. 49–60; on neo-realism Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 1994/95, pp. 5–49). The 'institutionalist' strand assigns a civilizing role to international institutions—security policies as a function of the binding, integrating, and socializing role of international institutions (Keohane, 1993, p. 271; Keohane and Martin, 1995, pp. 39–51; Ruggie, 1992, p. 561; Ruggie, 1995, pp. 62–70). Finally, the 'constructivist' school holds that the social construction and projection of identity defines security policies which are a projection of self-images as well as behavioral norms.

'Neo-realism'

'Neo-realism' makes five basic claims:

- The international system is anarchic.

- States are potentially dangerous to each other.

- They can never fully trust.

- They strive for survival.

- They act instrumentally rationally (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 10).

Following a 'neo-realist' argument, the security policies of the Baltic states would represent just one embodiment of a universal pattern, which would follow from their geographic location, the resources available for defense, and the impact of alliances. Waltz writes: "Definitions of structure must leave aside, or abstract from, the characteristics of units, their behavior, and their interactions . . . so that we can distinguish between variables at the level of the units and at the level of the system." (Waltz, 1979, p. 79). 'Neo-realists' claim that the lack of an international central authority, 'anarchy', determines the behavior of states as prime actors in international affairs (Waltz, 1979, pp. 79–101). For 'neo-realists', the state's behavior is independent of domestic structures, political regimes, or party preferences; it is a function of "objective" national interests and constraints imposed by international power configurations. 'Neo-realism' treats security as the embodiment of objective structure, it commonly dismisses "ideas" as epiphenomena of power relations in international politics.

'Neo-realists' treat insecurity as an unavoidable expression of anarchy in international relations. Since anarchy is armored, security is only conceivable as an adequate balancing of powers by means of armaments and military alliances. Under conditions of anarchy, well-informed mistrust would be the only rational form of behavior. In

'neo-realist' terms, security policy is thus embodied in the threat, use and control of military power.

The 'neo-realist' claim holds that the Baltic states are over-determined by external conditions, defined by their physical capabilities, betrayed by a history of victimhood, threatened by Russia as a malignant great power, in need of alliances, particularly with NATO, and without any options other than 'realist' ones. These kinds of assertions serve as an explanatory context for security, particularly defense policies, although they are part of the explanandum. The claims may be right or wrong; what is problematic is the status of the argument: Baltic security politics are reduced to 'geopolitics'. Agency supposedly does not make a difference. The language of geopolitical and historical self-evidence marginalizes the availability of possible choices, the consideration of domestic sources of security policies, and the very construction process of "national interests". A standard 'neo-realist' view thus reinforces the security dilemma by declaring it unavoidable, and is therefore potentially dangerous as a policy guideline (Ruggie, 1995, p. 70).

One particular branch of 'neo-realist' writing highlights the peculiarities of the foreign and security policy of small states. It sees the conduct of small states as a function of measurable criteria, such as population, territory, resources or income. The usefulness of the concept of 'small states' has been questioned from time to time: How should smallness be defined and how dependent is it on the relationship with its exterior world? (Amstrup, 1976, pp. 163–182). Notwithstanding these reservations, small states seem to share certain features. Due to their limited means, small states are usually confined to their own region. A small state may show an awareness on the part of its leaders "that it can never, acting alone or in a small group, make a significant impact on the system" (Keohane, 1969,

pp. 291–310, esp. p. 296). The record of past relations with neighboring great powers and experiences with alliances seem to inform small states' security perceptions in particular (Knudsen, 1996, p. 17). The survival of a small state may be more precarious than that of a major power. Fears of being swallowed up by, or integrated into, greater powers may be more common. Given their sense of vulnerability, small states may like to counter the dominance of one great power by joining alliances, by demanding an "import" of security guarantees, and by capitalizing on their smallness by producing "moral noise".

A 'neo-realist' treatment of small states follows the logic of balancing in crucial regards and is based on two disputable assumptions: neighboring great powers are expansionist, and cooperative security is almost impossible. Some authors nonetheless claim that compared with larger powers, small states are keen to reject confrontational norms (Sens, 1996, p. 87). The consequences of an increased perception of vulnerability are thus not as unequivocal as claimed by 'neo-realists'.

The dividing lines between 'neo-realists' on the one hand and 'institutionalists' or 'constructivists' on the other are usually well drawn. Yet, a specific strand of 'neo-realism'— 'defensive realism'—admits that structural factors and perceptual reasons conspire, that conflict among states is often generated by interactive processes, and that international institutions can change behavior by providing more and better information. 'Defensive realism' is skeptical about the impact of institutions and changes of mindset when it comes to vital, "irreconcilable" interests, though it acknowledges that institutions may exert dynamic and even unforeseen effects. As Robert Jervis writes: ". . . international arrangements can alter the power, beliefs, and goals of groups in society in ways that will affect

foreign relations" (Jervis, 1999, p. 61). This insight is of particular importance for the Baltic states because, contrary to 'hard-line' realist thinking, structural factors and ensuing distrust and fears vis-a-vis Russia could, at least theoretically, become subject to changes due to the international institutions in which the Baltic states participate.

Even authors who label themselves 'realists' are beginning to question the standard argument that "self-help" requires a striving for increases in relative power as the best way to increase security. Not competition, but cooperation could be the best way to increase security (Glaser, 1994/95, pp. 50–90). Instead of producing arms races, the logic of the security dilemma is seen as offering an opportunity. Charles Glaser concisely formulates:

"Increases in the adversary's security often increase one's own security because a more secure adversary has smaller incentives for pursuing an expansionist foreign policy, and therefore will pose a smaller" (Glaser, 1994/95, p. 76).

The mutual gain in security would consist in a change in the adversary's motives and not in relative gains in terms of military assets. Glaser consequently summarizes:

"In short, contrary to the problem identified by the logic of the relative-gains problem, if cooperation increases a country's security, the increases in the adversary's security are usually desirable, whether or not they exceed increases in the defender's security. In the security realm, instead of a relative-gains problem, we often have a mutual-gains benefit" (Glaser, 1994/95, p. 76).

This kind of 'realist' thinking—labeled 'contingent realism'—is not naive in opting for cooperation at any price. Dangers of cheating while cooperating, abilities to respond to violations, and abilities to monitor agreements should

be assessed soberly. In contrast to standard 'neo-realism', 'contingent realism' sees security as a mutual relationship with the potential adversary, and it explicitly takes into account the anticipated effects of various policy options on the opponent's domestic policies (Glaser, 1994/95, p. 86). It would thus be possible to argue, even from a 'neo-realist' point of view, that any perceived increase in Baltic security would have to consider the desired impact on Russia's domestic policy. Following the reverse logic of the security dilemma, increases in Baltic security at the expense of Russia's security would be counter-productive.

'Institutionalism'

The 'institutionalist' school highlights the importance of international institutions—they may mitigate fears of cheating, allow cooperation to emerge, alleviate fears of unequal gains from cooperation, provide for reciprocal flows of information, create issue linkages, and allow for more effective retaliation against cheats (Keohane and Martin, 1995, pp. 45 f.). These rather broad characterizations do not identify how institutions emerge, what kind of institutions are more efficient than others, and what kinds of problems are more amenable to institutionalization than others. Leading 'institutionalists' such as Robert Keohane are generally cautious with respect to "institutionalization" as encompassing conflict-solution strategy. Institutions only matter "sometimes", and they depend on an evident self-interest (Keohane and Martin, 1995, p. 40). Like 'neo-realism', 'institutionalism' considers the interests of states as a pre-existing given. National interests can be tamed by the civilizing effects of international institutions (Keohane, 1984). Promoters of 'collective security' argue likewise that systems such as NATO depend on compatibility among the great powers and that this compatibility is "a function of underlying interests

and intentions of states, not their participation in a collective security system" (Kupchan and Kupchan, 1995, p. 57).

Relating these insights to the security policies of the Baltic states, we would first have to look at varying interests in the emergence of regional institutions (Baltic or Nordic), inter-regional institutions (including Russia), and Western institutions (including NATO and the EU). Only after an evaluation of interests could we begin to assess the common ground of the actors involved in security institutions as well as the latter's likely effects. The 'institutionalist' stress on international institutions is of less importance for the study of Baltic security as long as the Baltic states do not belong to NATO or the EU. Nonetheless, preparation for NATO and EU membership may already be exerting socializing and constraining effects.

'Constructivism'

'Constructivism' highlights the active role of actors, for example the perceptions, politics of identity, and socialization of actors through international interaction. It treats security as a function of collective or national 'identity'. 'Constructivists' are therefore mainly interested in the process of image formation. Norms of behavior, defined as "collective expectations for the proper behavior of actors", would either constitute identities or specify the acting out of an already defined identity (Katzenstein, 1996, p. 5). 'Constructivism' is unambiguous in its interpretation of 'structures' as a result of constructed meanings. "Material capabilities as such explain nothing", writes Alexander Wendt, "their effects presuppose structures of shared knowledge, which vary and which are not reducible to capabilities" (Wendt, 1995, p. 73).

'Constructivism' explains security politics as politics of identity—changes of identity would affect interests and the pursuit of national security policies. In this view, "identity" becomes a kind of code preceding security policies—national interests are sometimes reduced to the self-manifestation of collective identities (Hall, 1999, pp. 26–50, esp. pp. 41 ff.).

States interact with one another on the basis of meanings (Wendt, 1992, pp. 396 f.). Security calculations, as the basic 'constructivist' claim holds, "depend on the intersubjective understandings and expectations of the 'distribution of knowledge' that constitute their conception of self and other . . . It is collective meanings that constitute the structures which organize our actions" (Wendt, 1992 pp. 394 f.; Wendt, 1995 pp. 73 f.). From this perspective, the security choices of the Baltic states could be explained by threat perceptions, politics of history, and the international setting for deliberation and norm production.

'Constructivists' such as Peter Katzen-stein suggest that the foreign policy of small states is at least co-determined by domestic factors—the openness of their economies and the inclusiveness of their political systems (Katzenstein, 1985). Small states, it is assumed, can make a difference—they are not over-determined by external factors, have choices, and their external "strength" may be significantly influenced by internal weaknesses (Väryrynen, 1997, pp. 41–75). In a similar vain the argument has been made that the ethnicization of a small state's foreign policy and its ensuing proneness to confrontation with the "motherland" of its minorities is, among other factors, dependent on ideology, patterns of domestic politics, the domestic distribution of power, elite behavior, and the form of government (Sheffer, 1996, p. 13).

'Constructivism' assumes that the external environment—geographic location, neighbors, regional interaction, alliances, and possible threats—is always processed by domestic perception. Repeated patterns of interaction have a socializing effect on actors, social 'constructivism' claims. 'Constructivists' hold that "material" factors such as geography and size depend on perception, for example ideas about the relative significance of various elements of security (Wendt, 1999). "Security" is not defined as the distribution of power and resources, but as a reflection of the epistemological and institutional environment (Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein, 1996, p. 33 f.). Expectations, interests, and commitments are formed in the course of interaction with the external environment.

According to the 'constructivist' argument, identities result from social practices:

"To analyze the social construction of international politics is to analyze how processes of interaction produce and reproduce the social structures—cooperative or conflictual—that shape actors' identities and interests and the significance of their material contexts" (Wendt, 1995, p. 81).

Once established by repeated practice, it is usually difficult to overcome behavioral patterns. If, for example, 'realist' notions dominate discourses, behavior and interaction over a period of some time, it is hard to substitute them with cooperative ones. With the repetition of signal games, patterns of partnership as well as distrust turn into informal or formal institutions, defecting from which would be ever more costly over time. In contrast to the 'realist' determination of small states' security policy, 'constructivism' opens up freedom of action—"security dilemmas are not acts of God: they are effects of practice" (Wendt, 1995, p. 77).

Following a 'constructivist' mood, "hard" or "soft" security would result from deliberations resulting either in confidence-building or harboring mistrust. Whereas 'neorealists' treat distrust and "hard" security as a feature of anarchy, 'constructivists' would argue that "trust versus distrust" or "hard versus soft security" follow from probabilities and expectations produced by interaction (Wendt, 1992, p. 404).

It seems safe to draw one conclusion with respect to the link between identity and security—it is not mono-dimensional, but reflects and reinforces relationship patterns. It is not, for example, Russia's military might *per se*, its capacities or the distribution of power between Russia and the Baltic states that cause concern, but the image of Russia as a foe. Conflicting identities may contribute to security problems. At the same time, security concerns may not only derive from opposing identities, but may foster and even generate identities. These feedback loops may exert mutually reinforcing effects. Security concerns are sustained due to opposite identities and opposite identities are sustained due to security concerns.

Linking Identities to Interests

'Constructivists' make the argument that "identities are the basis of interests" (Wendt, 1992, p. 398; Wendt, 1994, p. 385). We may assume a general "interest" in identity preservation, but this would treat interests merely as a dependent, "motivational" function of an otherwise irreducible identity. Similar to the chicken-egg riddle, it seems impossible to solve the interest-identity causation. Some authors have therefore opted for a "co-constitution" of "social process" by agent's preferences (interests) and structures, treating "identity" as a structural given (McSweeney, 1999, p. 210).

In contrast to a certain stream of 'constructivist' literature, which treats security policies as driven by ideas, I consider security identities not as the ultimate root cause of security policies, but as a means of providing frameworks for sustaining the organizational interests of the actors engaged in security politics (Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein, 1996, pp. 52 f.). This is not to deny the regulative role of identities and norms, but to stress their link to interests. Norms are regulative when linked up to vital interests; otherwise they remain weak and at best a regulative for legitimizing discourses. I contend that national legitimization needs to be linked to interests—where there are no valid interests in specific forms of legitimization, a crisis of legitimization will occur. The projection of security norms on the outside world is seen as a function of self-images and interests rather than of the norms themselves (for the opposite claim, see Kowert and Legro, 1996, pp. 462 ff.). To treat interests as a mere function of identity would "essentialize" identity. Taking "identity" as the fundamental building block of security policies would display a certain naiveté with respect to ideology. 'Constructivists' (and most descriptive accounts) treat policy declarations (military doctrines, security conceptions, threat analysis, etc.) as deeds, whereas they may belong to the "virtual" world of the imagination.

The reconstruction of security conceptions will not explain why some of them survive, whereas others do not. There must be some underlying reasons. The repertoire of various individual preferences contracts and transforms into collective choices. Two basic observations seem to be barely disputable. Whatever actors prefer and project to the outside world, they are constrained by available resources. On the other hand, it is equally obvious that structural conditions do not mechanically translate into behavior without the filtering and synthesizing of information as well as the domestic aggregation of interests. The

theoretically unlimited range of security preferences shrinks in this process of interest aggregation. What causes this selection? It seems fair to assume that identifications are unlikely to survive for long without an underlying self-interest. We can additionally infer that interests are informed by actors' structural positions which channel the selection of security options (Wendt, 1987, p. 359).

The actor's motivation to choose some as friend, some as rival, and some as foe might be motivated by a desire to maintain a positive self-concept, by favoring in-group mores over out-group norms and by sticking to a homogeneous negative out-group image (Operario and Fiske, 1999, pp. 42 ff.). The construction of collective identity and security identity respectively relies on one's own sense of equality and continuity in time and the desire to be recognized by others (Erikson, 2000, p. 21). Wendt underlines the mutual interests in stable role identities, too: "Such interests are rooted not only in the desire to minimize uncertainty and anxiety, manifested in efforts to confirm existing beliefs about the social world, but also in the desire to avoid the expected costs of breaking commitments made to others—notably domestic constituencies and foreign allies in the case of states—as part of past practices" (Wendt, 1992, p. 411). It might be that the most viable interest in security policy consists in its impact on social identity, in forging positive self-identifications pitched against negative out-group connotations.

International socialization, the 'constructivist' argument holds, leads to shared norms and values which in turn structure and give "meaning" to international political life (Finnemore, 1996, pp. 1–33, esp. p. 3). Security conceptions reflect and contribute to the formation of collective images of self and other, provide patterns of legitimization for the military, and define the breadth of tasks assumed by the military. The treatment of security policies as policies of identity may explain ingredients of 'national' or

'state' identity, yet it does not encompass the whole of security policies. The projection of self-images (identities) is one source of security policies, but not the only one. Repertoires and socially meaningful role models for identity politics are usually limited by history, and not all repertoires are equally accessible or socially salient (Abrams, 1999, pp. 197–229, esp. pp. 201 f.). Whereas 'neo-realism' takes national interests as a given, the social 'constructivist' brand of international relations theory usually downplays the impact of domestic interests.

The de-coupling of the emergence and enforcement of international norms from domestic interests, characteristic of both 'institutionalism' and 'constructivism', should make one suspicious. Norms demand obedience and loyalty and we should therefore ask whose purposes they serve. I contend that epistemic communities, international processes of deliberation, and the construction of 'social meaning' are linked to interests. Interests are not confined to material or 'strategic' interests; interests in sustaining and projecting favorable images of self may be equally powerful. Re-linking normative claims to interests is relevant on two accounts. The people living in the Baltic states may like to see whether their security concerns actually match observable policies, and an awareness of interests may assist in defining policy priorities.

Defining Security

The Baltic states share a dependence on their geographical conditions, limited capabilities, fears, and perceptions of threat. The Baltic states represent a "security complex", defined as "a set of states whose major security perceptions and concerns are so interlinked that their national security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another" (Buzan, 1998, p. 12).

Nonetheless, their interdependence does not mean that the Baltic states actually interact as a regional security system. The relationship between a national security strategy and different international security strategies will therefore play a major part in the following section. The two directions of security policy should not be treated as mutually exclusive, but as coexisting and competing at the same time.

According to Barry Buzan's definition that a national strategy attempts to increase strength and to reduce vulnerability, joining alliances would be part of a national strategy. National security strategies are seen as a "self-help" approach which, according to Buzan, "makes less sense for lesser powers", given their lack of sufficient resources (Buzan, 1991, p. 332). An international strategy "focuses on the sources and causes of threats, the purpose being not to block or offset the threats, but to reduce or eliminate them by political action" (Buzan, 1991, p. 334). An international strategy can take different forms: from more informal security regimes to "security communities" encompassing the security of the potential adversary. Karl Deutsch defined three indicators for the presence of a security community: "compatibility of major political values"; "capacity of the governments and politically relevant strata of the participating countries to respond to one another's messages, needs, and actions … without resort to violence"; and "mutual predictability of the relevant aspects of one another's political, economic, and social behavior" (Deutsch, 1968, p. 196).

Applying Deutsch's concept, Emanuel Adler discerns seven functions of a "security community":

■ Promoting political consultations and bilateral or multilateral agreements among countries

■ Elaborating liberal standards that can be applied to countries or to communities

■ Promoting the aversion of armed conflicts before they arise

■ Elaborating procedures for a peaceful resolution of existing conflicts

■ Forming a climate of mutual trust and transparency in the military field

■ Supporting the formation of democratic institutions and the development of market economies and

■ Supporting the restoration of state institutions and judicial systems after conflicts (Adler, 1997, pp. 249–278, esp. p. 270).

Along the continuum of national and international security strategies, the next section concerns the contribution of Baltic security conceptions to reducing or eliminating potential threats by political action. The problem faced by Baltic security policy seems to rest in the circular logic of the security dilemma—defending oneself against Russia by joining NATO may turn the perception of Russia as a malignant power into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Map No. 3876, UNITED NATIONS, Department of Public Information, Cartographic Section, February 1996

Security Conceptions

'Hard' versus 'Soft' Security

Security conceptions spell out ends and general ideas about the best means to reach these ends. The Baltic states' security orientation has been more or less stable and undisputed since the mid-1990s; one could even say that discussions about possible alternatives are suspiciously lacking. Security policy has been highly consensual, regardless of the kind of government in place. Expectations and interest in, and commitment to, security policy are determined by domestic institutional actors and in the course of interaction with the external environment. Regional and trans-national security cooperation pools national interests and reshapes them while experimenting with varying forms of cooperation. Once established by repeated practice, it is usually difficult to overcome patterns of perception. With the repetition of signal games, patterns of partnership or of distrust turn into informal or formal institutions, defecting from which becomes increasingly costly over time.

Despite the end of the Cold War and the significant demilitarization which took place in Europe during the 1990s, military threat and risk rhetoric is still dominant in the Baltic security discourse today. Baltic security policy is mainly perceived as state security and military defense policies. Baltic security is usually understood as the physical security of the state. Notwithstanding specific country peculiarities, the Baltic states' self-images reveal certain common features; they see themselves not only as small states, but also as weak states. Addressing the self-image of weakness, Toomas Varrak of the Estonian Defense Academy discerned

a "disbelief in one's own abilities and forces, a tendency to substitute for one's own ingenuity and collective effort the support and tutelage of the great powers" (Varrak, 1998, pp. 76–83). Threats and risks are defined in broad terms, and it is therefore difficult to get a precise idea of what is meant when documents deal with security policies. The concept of 'soft' security is frequently dismissed, especially if compared to so-called 'hard' security.

Another feature of Baltic security conceptions consists in their heavy reliance on historical analogies: history should not be repeated. National defense is thought of in terms of "total defense", whereas the international security strategy primarily means joining the Western alliance (Neumann, 1995; Möller, 2001). Meanwhile, national and international security strategies are largely disconnected. Furthermore, the wordy security rhetoric is not matched by clearly defined tasks of security agencies. Finally, the group of actors dealing with security policy in the Baltic states is extremely small. These people are nonetheless often the only source of expertise on which domestic politicians can rely, or which outside observers can use to build their image of the Baltic states.

Baltic security concepts usually include a sweeping list of potential threats but do not specify defense requirements. The misbalance between military institution-building and security conceptions turned into a heavy burden because costs and benefits did not coincide. The overall rationality of the build-up of armed forces is questionable if gain maximization refers first of all to the military

institutions themselves. If this observation holds true, the purposes of military institution-building are malleable according to the requirements of the military institutions for survival. It seems as if only preparation for NATO membership gives the armed forces a concrete sense of purpose (more below), although this objective is defined from outside and only loosely linked to identifiable security needs.

The realization of a state monopoly of power was the key priority of early state-building in the Baltic states. From the early 1990s, security concepts therefore highlighted the following main sources of threat: the presence of an alien army; uncontrolled foreign espionage; extremist activities on the part of various communist and "imperialist" groups; international crime; dependence on foreign energy resources; and a demographic situation that could be used by anti-independence activists (Ozolina, 1999, pp. 20 ff.; Raid, 1996, p. 11). The early stage of security policy has had a lasting impact—regardless of the fact that Russian troops stayed out of conflicts surrounding the Baltic independence movements, or that it was Yeltsin who immediately recognized the Baltic states on 24 August 1991, following the failed August putsch.

Having started their quest for independence with non-violent mass movements against the Soviet center, the Baltic states weighed various security policy options after 1991. In principle, small states can either opt for an isolationist policy of neutrality, pool resources, ally with a great power, or opt for inclusion in larger alliances or supranational organizations. Theoretically, the Baltic states could have opted for:

■ Self-reliance in the form of neutrality

■ Non-military security policies

■ Regional Baltic security

■ Expanded regional security (to include the Scandinavian countries)

■ Close cooperation with Russia

■ Reliance on the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

■ Membership of the Western European Union (WEU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

Each option would have suited different security perceptions and entailed different policies. The ensuing choice of options was determined by a mixture of self-images, images of Russia, and the structure of decision-making. Whereas a policy of neutrality ranked high on the agenda of the Baltic independence movements in the late 1980s, the desire for EU and NATO membership replaced the original neutralist stand soon after independence. Neutrality as pursued by the neighboring states of Sweden and Finland could theoretically have remained an option, but *de facto* the Baltic repertoire of security options has been contracting. There are four main reasons for this shift:

■ A changed perception of the threats emanating from Russia

■ Deficient regional security arrangements

■ Expected costs of neutrality and

■ Expected gains from NATO membership.

Neutrality, it was argued by some Baltic authors, would be too expensive compared with alliance membership (Nekrasas, 1996, p. 69). Eitvydas Bajarunas, then head of the multilateral relations division of the Lithuanian ministry of foreign affairs, declared in 1995 that all options of national or regional security had "proven unrealistic", with membership of NATO, the EU and WEU remaining the only way out (Bajarunas, 1995, p. 11). From the mid-1990s, membership of NATO and the WEU became the top priority of the Baltic states' foreign policy, temporarily even replacing the quest for EU membership. There was a joint Baltic foreign and security policy to establish as much distance as possible to Russia.

The Image of a 'Russian Threat'

Whenever security concerns have been discussed during the last decade, a potential "Russian threat" has figured as the key concern of Baltic defense policies (Rebas, 1996, pp. 27–39). Baltic security has been portrayed as overlaid by the larger pattern of Russia's great power presence (see Buzan, 1998, p. 11 on "overlay"). Russia figures as the main defining context. The Baltic image of Russia usually features five claims:

■ The recent history of annexation provides a possible pattern for the future.

■ Russia cannot abandon its imperialistic thinking; it is inherently expansionistic.

■ The Baltic states are of "strategic" importance for Russia.

■ Russian minorities can be manipulated as a fifth column.

■ Russia will be unable to consolidate its process of democratization.

The sheer size of Russia is perceived by the Baltic states as a potential threat. At times, Baltic politicians and security experts even fundamentalize the hostile relationship with Russia by portraying it as a kind of "clash of civilizations" (Bajarunas, 1995, p. 14; Lejins, 1997, p. 147). Furthermore, economic dependence on Russia, for example for electricity supplies, is sometimes interpreted as a potential menace (Raid, 1996, p. 11). The Russian financial crisis in August 1998 seriously affected Latvia and Lithuania. Both countries therefore define their dependence on foreign trade with Russia as a security issue (Baur, 2001, p. 536).

History figures as a prominent guideline for Baltic security conceptions. The main lessons are seen in preventing a repetition of the mistakes made in 1940 (lack of common security among the Baltic states); in not once again allowing a revanchist turn in Russia to affect Baltic independence; and in integrating the Baltic states into the West militarily, economically and politically. The perception of Russia as a threat is usually combined with heavily loaded metaphors such as "no man's land", "security vacuum", or "gray zone", which in turn are intended to justify the quest for "security guarantees" from NATO.

In theoretical terms, one could say that a 'realist' perception of Russia prevailed in the first half of the 1990s. Extending the "democratic peace" argument to Russia, it was assumed that Russia represented a potential danger to peace due to its shaky democratic credentials. From an 'institutionalist' perspective, the main obstacle to cooperation with Russia was seen in the lack of shared values and in opposing national interests.

The projected fear of an unpredictable Russia has to be seen in the domestic context. According to opinion polls, indigenous Baltic people are suspicious of Russia (Norkin and Russakov, 1998, pp. 8–11). The threat perception is nonetheless inconsistent with the prevailing popular stress on home-made security threats. In summer 1998,

1,000 adults were questioned about their security concerns in each Baltic state. Huge majorities (76 percent in Estonia, 81 percent in Latvia, 72 percent in Lithuania) believed their countries would not be able to defend themselves effectively. Yet, more than 95 percent of those questioned in each country were convinced that their state did not face any real military threat from another country—they obviously did not see a problem in the lack of military capacity vis-a-vis Russia. By contrast, 35 percent of Estonians, 62 percent of Latvians, and 45 percent of Lithuanians believed that there were domestic threats to security. From the perspective of Baltic citizens, the legitimacy problems of the post-socialist system—due to dissatisfaction with economic performance and distrust of the political system—were evidently just as important as potential external threats. Among the populaces, it was the weakness of domestic politics and the polity that caused major security concerns (Möller, 1998).

A similar mismatch between unanimous elite opinion and public ambiguity is found with respect to NATO membership. A bare majority (51 percent) of Lithuanians wanted to join NATO in 1998, compared with 43 percent in Estonia, and 37 percent in Latvia (*NOD & Conversion*, 1998, p. 16). In 2000, a poll taken among Estonians revealed that 24 percent definitely opted for joining NATO, 30 percent were rather for joining, 14 percent rather against joining, 7 percent definitely against joining, and 25 percent answered "don't know" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, Press Releases and News, No. 2-BI, 13 March 2000). Möller and Wellmann harshly conclude:

"They [the polls] indicate nevertheless that the unconditional support for NATO membership allegedly existing among the Baltic residents is a pure political invention. Further, they

indicate an unwillingness or inability on the part of the politicians to bridge the gap between their own policy priorities and the priorities of the citizenry" (Möller and Wellmann, 2001, p. 106).

How can we explain the misbalance between the experts' emphasis on the Russian threat and public concern about home-made insecurity? The images of Russia represent a cornerstone of the Baltic elite's post-Soviet identity. Pointing in the direction of Russia became a way of distracting from home-made political deficiencies and shortcomings in defining the tasks of security agencies. The image of Russia contributed to a narrow understanding of security policies as military defense policies, marginalizing the development of 'soft' security policies such as crisis prevention, conflict management, or confidence-building measures. As Zaneta Ozolina writes about the early stages of Latvian security policy: "The concept of security as such was left at the level of political rhetoric or replaced by the idea of defense" (Ozolina, 1996, p. 33).

Ten years after independence, the Baltic states still define their national and security identity to a significant extent against the backdrop of Soviet rule. Anatol Lieven linked the image of Russia to deliberate politics of history:

"The need to defend the Baltic cultures and traditions against Soviet influence prevented Baltic intellectuals, both within and outside the states themselves, from engaging critically with those traditions, as this would have seemed to give help to the enemy. The consequence was a conformism and unreflecting nationalism which characterise so much of Baltic intellectual life today" (Lieven, 1994, p. 83).

Past victimhood provides for moral righteousness; and blaming Russia for the imposition of Stalinist rule allows the denial of collaboration by significant parts of the contemporary political and technical elite in the Baltic states with the Soviet regime. Up to three-quarters of the Soviet elite in the

Baltic Union Republics originally came from the indigenous population. After independence, the weak internalization of liberal values among the indigenous, but Sovietized elites found an expression in the instrumental use of history in justifying anti-Russian security policies.

The Russian Minority as an Alleged Fifth Column?

The withdrawal of the former Soviet-Russian military, altogether some 120,000 troops, and their replacement by national armies featured high on the Baltic agenda. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the UN General Assembly supported the Baltic quest for troop withdrawal in 1992 and 1993 respectively—the issue had thus been internationalized. Despite friction over the terms of the Russian withdrawal, there was never a tangible threat to the Baltic states' independence. The withdrawal of Russian troops was completed in Lithuania on 13 August 1993, and in Estonia and Latvia in August 1994, thus removing the last remaining obstacle to full external sovereignty.

The potential mobilization of the Russian-speaking minorities and border disputes—particularly between Estonia, Latvia, and Russia—represent the two lasting issues of contention which I will consider briefly in the following section. The significance of the Russian populace for the Baltic states' security is far from unequivocal. There were attempts to manipulate the Russian-speaking minority in the Baltic states in 1990/91, particularly by the pro-Soviet 'Interfront' organizations. But the pro-Soviet movements fell apart soon after the failed August putsch in 1991 and most Soviet loyalists left for the Soviet Union. Anatol Lieven provides an explanation:

"... the loss of overt support from Moscow and the Soviet armed forces, the destruction of much of their structural base, the banning of the Communist Party and allied organisations, the confiscation of their property, and the nationalisation of the 'All-Union' factories ... It is precisely because the Russian communities were so tied to the Communist and Soviet loyalist banner that, in Lithuania and Latvia at least, they now find themselves so divided and leaderless" (Lieven, 1994, p. 200).

The Russian minorities in Latvia and Estonia have often been portrayed as an illegitimate result of Soviet annexation or as a Russian means of undermining independence. Yet, outright manipulation of the Russians in the Baltic states by pro-Soviet forces, Russian chauvinists, or Russian foreign policy has been limited. In the early 1990s, the Interfronts capitalized on feelings about language discrimination among the Russian-speakers and fears of unemployment (Lieven, 1994, pp. 188–201). The language requirements for acquiring citizenship, for a whole range of official and semi-official jobs, as well as for managing a business still cause feelings of denigration and discrimination among Russians in Estonia and Latvia. However, the Russian-speaking minorities have not turned into a chauvinist, pro-Soviet force, or a 'fifth column'. Most of the Russian migrant workers were just as appalled by the misuse of power under Soviet rule as the ethnic Balts and were therefore in favor of independence. Even if the claim by the Lithuanian and Latvian governments in 1991 that the majority of the Russians in their states were in favor of independence was probably exaggerated, it seems safe to say that Soviet loyalists represented a minority.

In 1992/93, the Russian government used its military presence as a bargaining chip for trying to improve the lot of Russians in the Baltic states. The impact was nonetheless modest. Having lost their strategic importance and purpose in the Russian defense

system, the Russian troops were actually disintegrating. The Soviet Russian military had never been a unified political force with a distinct sense of purpose. Many groups felt like leftovers of a crumbled imperial might. The only groups with particular pro-Soviet or later "Great Russia" sentiments are probably World War II Red Army veterans and some military pensioners. Members of both these groups are usually very old and without any significant powers to exert pressure on the Baltic governments. Parts of the Russian officer corps in the Baltic were engaged in the shadow economy, for example, using naval vehicles at the ports of Tallinn, Liepaja (Latvia), and Kaliningrad for private business. *De facto* the Russian troops in the Baltic states were more of a burden on than an asset to Russia's policy towards the Baltic states.

Throughout the 1990s, the 'Russian threat' was more a perceived than a real one. The Russian community is far from homogenous and most of the Russian groups in the Baltic states are at odds with each other (Lieven, 1994, pp. 200 f.). The Russian minority could not be held responsible for instigating Baltic-Russian animosity. The situation in Estonia differs from that in Latvia and Lithuania. The north-eastern part of Estonia, the Narva region, is densely populated by Russians, and in the early 1990s it was feared that this region might want to secede and join Russia. But the majority of the local Russians are against secession, and a referendum was never initiated on this issue (Lieven, 1994, p. 201).

Lithuania soon departed from the anti-Russian approach of the other Baltic states after Algirdas Brazauskas of the Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party, successor to the former Communist Party and winner of the 1992 parliamentary elections, took over from the conservative government under Vyautas Landsbergis. In late 1992, Russia agreed with Lithuania to withdraw its troops by August 1993.

Although troop withdrawal was agreed in principle for Latvia and Estonia too, Yeltsin justified the postponement of troop withdrawal from these two states by claiming discrimination against local Russians. The Russian government's friendlier approach towards Lithuania rewarded the integrative treatment of the Russian minority there. In contrast to Latvia and Estonia, Lithuania had granted Russians full citizenship immediately, regardless of whether they had belonged to the military or not. The Lithuanian approach seemed to pay off.

This Russian linkage between its military presence and the status of local Russians clearly interfered in the sovereign affairs of the Baltic states. A pattern of Russian behavior emerged in the course of troop withdrawal: differential treatment.

In contrast to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia rejected the idea of multiethnic citizenship on the grounds of their ethnicized concept of nationhood. Russian-speaking non-citizens were dissatisfied with Estonia's Citizenship Law of January 1995 and the Language Law of February 1995. An Estonian author likened the treatment of Russian non-citizens to "a sort of revenge for the humiliations which Estonians had constantly endured in the Soviet period" (Vares, 1999, p. 158). Estonia and Latvia seemed to have an underlying fear of a double loyalty on the part of the Russian minority, although the Russians were far from homogenous in their political outlook. It was feared that the roughly 120,000 Russophone residents without citizenship in Estonia and the 70,000 in Latvia could demand protection from Russia.

Among their ethnically based concerns, the Baltic states' security services fear the activities of the Russian intelligence services most of all. The Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVRR), the Federal Security Service (FSB), and military intelligence (GRU) are

expected to step up their operations (*Interfax*, 3 August 1998; FBIS-SOV-98-219; *Baltic News Service*, 3 August 1998; *Interfax*, 4 August 1998; FBIS-SOV-98-220). Military veterans and Russians associated with Soviet security agencies represent the most difficult cases for integration in the Baltic societies (Interviews with Aksel Kirch and Peter Vares). Some of the Russian military pensioners—their average age in 2000 was 68 years—complain about discrimination on the housing market (Interviews with Evteev and Czyzyk, 2000). The Russian government assumed responsibility for former Russian military personnel residing in the Baltic states, mainly military pensioners, who actually receive slightly higher pensions than their Baltic counterparts. A 1994 study of retired Russian servicemen in Estonia found that the problems which alarmed them most pertained to residence permits, the privatization of housing, and the threat that they might be compelled to leave Estonia (Institute of International and Social Studies, 1994). Apart from the OSCE, the Baltic Sea Council also intervened on behalf of the Russian minorities (Fischer, 5 July 2000; Möller and Wellmann, 2001, p. 110). Visa requirements mean that Russian non-citizens residing in Latvia and Estonia still experience discrimination as far as their freedom of movement is concerned. They also face significant labor market constraints.

In Estonia, the issue of the more than 10,000 Russian military pensioners remained a bone of contention throughout the 1990s, particularly with respect to the social problems they were facing. It is estimated that an additional 1,000 Russian former military personnel refused to return to Russia and remained in Estonia (Haab, 1995, p. 57). According to one Estonian author, the minority disputes remain "the only major issue to be solved with Russia" (Raid, 1996, p. 14).

Following a visit to Latvia by Russia's Vice-Foreign Minister, Sergei Krylov, in July 1995, disputes pertaining to the remaining Russian military personnel were settled through regular bilateral negotiations and consultations. An intergovernmental commission was set up with Latvia and contacts established between the parliaments of both countries (Lejins, 1996, p. 46). The remaining Russian military personnel left Latvia on 31 August 1994, leaving behind some 2,600 military pensioners.

The regulation of the citizenship issue for Russians in the Baltic states—under the mediating influence of the OSCE missions in Latvia and Estonia—has defused the minority questions, particularly with regard to retired Russian servicemen. Although the OSCE missions in Latvia and Estonia—and preparations for EU membership—have had a modifying influence on the treatment of the Russian minorities, this nonetheless remains a sensitive question in relations with Russia (Maibach, 1996, p. 266; OSCE, 1993). The OSCE also played a crucial role in monitoring the Russian troop withdrawal.

In the long run, the prospect of minority integration is largely connected to employment and business opportunities for the Russian minority. There is reason to believe that those willing to learn the respective native languages and to adapt to the dominant culture can, in time, expect to become fully integrated citizens (Laitin, 1998).

Talks with officials and private conversations in Riga and Tallinn in summer 2000 conveyed the picture that a significant number of younger former Russian officers, who did not return to Russia, occupy prominent positions in import-export businesses, in the service economy and in the

transport sector. At times, business rivalry between Balts and non-Balts feeds prejudices, with Russians (and other non-Balts) being blamed for Mafia-like practices. Anatol Lieven feeds these kinds of prejudices in his otherwise balanced account when he writes:

"The contrast between the Balts' sober cultural self-image and the enormous, visible wealth of flashy non-Balt former black marketeers is clearly a source for future tension. The Baltic governments are indeed faced with a dilemma. They have been much criticised, and often rightly, for maintaining restrictions on private business. Yet much of that business is in the hands of non-Balts, often of the most unscrupulous kind" (Lieven, 1994, p. 317).

Most Russians prefer to stay in their Baltic host countries due to higher living standards, and most of those who are willing to integrate have good chances of acquiring citizenship over a period of time (Lukas, 1998, p. 26). With a few exceptions, the Russian minorities are not involved in politics of historical revenge. The prime concerns of military pensioners usually pertain to social issues, such as housing and health insurance. Russians in the Baltic states may feel a certain denigration compared to their former status of "masters". Compared to their compatriots in Russia, however, they enjoy considerable material well-being and political freedom. Even at the beginning of the 1990s, most of the Baltic Russians were already looking more towards the West rather than expecting protection from Russia (Lieven, 1994, p. 377).

Improvements in the situation of the Russian minority could probably have a positive influence on compromises in other areas too. The provision of assimilation incentives to defuse the

minority issue would stabilize Estonia and Latvia and prevent Russia's foreign policy from exploiting Russians abroad. The prospect of EU membership provides an additional incentive— improvements in relations with Russia are becoming more urgent (Vares, 1999, p. 164).

Apart from the minority issue, other disputes involved the Estonian-Russian and Estonian-Latvian borders. Estonia and Latvia requested the recognition of the post-World War I borders, whereas Russia stuck to the borders of the USSR republics. In 1995, Estonia began to give in over the border issue, followed by Latvia. As Arkady Moshes pointed out: "The border issue *per se* is becoming less and less important for Russian-Baltic relations; in Russian-Latvian relations it has almost completely lost its political significance" (Moshes, 1999, p. 106). Russia has nonetheless postponed the ratification of the border treaties as a means of delaying NATO enlargement.

Russia's Interests

Russia's interest in the Baltic states is informed by a mixture of strategic, economic, and ethnic factors. The remnants of Russia's imperial legacy and its perceived 'humiliation' by the neighboring small nations seem to influence the mindset of parts of the Russian elite, which seek to prevent NATO membership of the Baltic states because they associate such membership with a further weakening of Russia's "geostrategic" position. Russian foreign policy additionally wants to preserve access to seaports in the Baltic states as well as guaranteed communication lines with the Kaliningrad region (Godzimirski, 1999, pp. 29–54). There is a specific link between Russia's domestic politics and its attitude towards the Baltic states: against the backdrop of Russia's post-Soviet identity crisis, concessions to the

Baltic states may lead to losses of power among nationalist constituencies (Sergeyev, 1999, pp. 20–28). Until 1995, Russia's foreign policy attacked Estonia and Latvia for violating human rights and for not integrating the Russian population. In the winter of 1997/98, Russian diplomacy once again raised the issue of the discrimination of the Russophone minorities in Estonia and Latvia. As ethnic tension grew in Latvia, the Russian government adopted economic measures by diverting oil exports usually shipped through the Latvian port of Ventspils. Nevertheless, the early stage of the Russian-Baltic "cold war" over the treatment of the Russian minority is largely over. Given the timing and inconsistency of Russia's reaction to the minority issue, the prospect of the Baltic states' accession to NATO and Russia's domestic policies seem to be interlocked. The Baltic image in Russia is further tainted by signs of indifference towards, or even tolerance of, Baltic participation in the Holocaust.

Notwithstanding the tension and stalemate over military non-alliance and the minority issue, the Baltic region has never gained high foreign-policy priority in Russia; particularly if compared with the importance of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the perceived threat of Islamic

fundamentalism, or the significance of relations with EU states (Baur, 2001, pp. 537 f.). Discounting rhetoric from the *Duma* opposition or non-influential extremist forces, the policies pursued by Russia's government in the 1990s indicate that it rather wanted to be a partner in Baltic developments. The lasting mistrust between the Baltic states and Russia is fed by the quest for NATO accession on the one hand and Russian conduct in the Chechnyan wars on the other.

Security Concepts of the Baltic States

Until 1995, the Latvian Defense Systems Concept stressed the presence of armed occupation forces and anti-state groupings, foreign espionage, organized crime, economic instability, and the demographic situation as major threats to its security (Ozolina, 1996, p. 41). It is interesting to note that both this concept as well as later versions did not assume an imminent military threat to Latvia. Once the Russian troops withdrew, Latvia's security policy diversified in four important ways: security is understood to be an all-encompassing concept, not just military defense; potential domestic sources of insecurity are explicitly recognized; national and regional security are seen as interdependent;

Estonian border guards check members of the Russian army returning to Russia on 28.08.1994. Photo: dpa

and any hindrance to Euro-Atlantic integration is treated as a security threat.

On 7 April 1995, Latvia's parliament adopted a Foreign Policy Concept and on 12 June 1995, the cabinet of ministers accepted the National Security Concept. Apart from expressing the desire to fully integrate into the EU and NATO, the security concept admitted that there was no direct military threat to the country. The main threats were seen in acts against independence and the democratic system; acts to make Latvia politically, economically or otherwise dependent on another country; to hamper Euro-Atlantic integration; to prevent the integration of various social and ethnic groups into one nation; and to hinder the increase of defense capabilities (National Security Concept, 1995, p. 1; Ozolina, 1999, p. 27). It is remarkable that the capacity to integrate different ethnic groups into one nation was seen as a key element of national security (Ulmanis, 1996, pp. 1–12).

In 1997, Latvia's cabinet of ministers adopted another version of the National Security Concept (www.modlv/english/08akti/02dk.php). This declared: "A threat to one of the Baltic nations is a threat to all three." For the first time, the concept outlined an implementation mechanism by assigning planning authority to the National Security Council and foreseeing institutionalized crisis management, including consultation mechanisms with NATO, the EU, the WEU, the OSCE and the UN. The security concept covers domestic, regional, and international security simultaneously: it addresses social and ethnic integration, fighting crime, border control, ecological disasters. The civil defense system—as part of the overall defense system—is assigned to protect civilians and the national economy as well as to assist in the event of environmental emergencies.

The Estonian National Security Concept, adopted by parliament on 6 March 2001, defines security in an all-encompassing manner. It states that "the danger of wide-ranging military conflict has dropped sharply" and that the "region as a whole remains stable" (www.vm.ee/eng/policy/Security/index.htm). It is acknowledged that Russia has reduced its forces stationed in Estonia's vicinity. The concept emphasizes the positive impact of the Intergovernmental Commission formed with Russia in 1998, as well as cooperation between Estonian and Russian border guards, customs and police authorities, and in the field of environmental protection. Furthermore, the security concept recognizes the positive impact of exchanges of military information with Russia in accordance with the OSCE Vienna Document of 1999 and defense cooperation with Russia within the framework of the Partnership for Peace (PfP). Security is treated as "indivisible" and its prime mechanism is seen in organizational cooperation, including collective defense, international peacekeeping operations, arms control and confidence-building measures (CSBM).

With respect to minorities, the Estonian security concept departs from the original idea of ethnicized citizenship by aiming at "a balanced and democratically multicultural society" and "creating conditions for maintaining ethnic differences, based on the recognition of the cultural rights of ethnic minorities". The Estonian defense system is assigned to provide military defense capability, participate in an international security system and build up crisis management mechanisms.

The Lithuanian National Security Strategy of December 1996 (amended in June 1998) resembles the Estonian security concept. While sharing the goal of Euro-Atlantic integration, it focuses on domestic sources of security, stressing "stable economic and social development" and "political stability". With respect to Russians, it simply states that Lithuania does not have any ethnic minority problems or external territorial disputes (www.kam.lt./balta/part_I/I_1.html). Lithuania's Basics of National Security identify as the main potential threats, among others, political pressure and dictate, discriminatory international agreements, threatening military capabilities close to its borders, spying and subversion, interference in domestic affairs, economic pressure, and international crime (The Basics of National Security of Lithuania, Part II, Chapter 9; Lithuanian Ministry of Defence, White Paper, 1999).

Despite the heavy rhetoric on security problems emanating from Russia, prudent Baltic politicians acknowledge that the most vital security issues lie in homemade deficiencies, such as weak political parties, corruption, organized crime, and inter-ethnic tensions (Bajarunas, 1995, p. 12 f.). Looking at the changing threat perceptions, one can discern a clear shift away from threats emanating from Russia towards threats created by socio-economic instability and the impact of globalization. Yet, the Baltic states' security policy is still over-determined by the desire for "security guarantees" and NATO membership, mostly at the expense of regional security cooperation. Aivars Stranga already concluded in 1997 that:

"The Baltic states must devote much greater attention to the non-traditional and non-canonical threats which they face (economic, social protection, etc.); it is these threats that are currently the most significant, and if they are not dealt with, Baltic movement towards Western European institutions will be impossible" (Stranga, 1997, p. 44).

Regional and Euro-Atlantic Cooperation

The Fragile Baltic Cooperation

Following independence, the Baltic states declared that it was their aim to cooperate closely with each other and with the Nordic states, as well as to intensify cooperation with the EU (Park and Salmon, 1999, p. 105). The following section will focus primarily on the emergence of patterns of intra-Baltic interaction as well as interaction with Scandinavian countries and NATO.

Common values, external threats, or powerful economic interests usually inform and reinforce regional integration. Regional integration pools values and goals, interests, and resources for common purposes. The Baltic states are small both in relation to their immediate neighbors and in the larger European context. Their geographic proximity and a shared threat perception are factors which determine their interest in cooperation. Furthermore, the Baltic states represent similar political units and political regimes and exhibit comparable security policy orientations. Conditions which help to further regional cooperation among the Baltic states might therefore be seen in their geographical location, their smallness, the distribution of power vis-a-vis Russia, their joint past as part of the Soviet Union, a shared perception of Russia, comparable problems in constructing security policies, and the outside view of the Baltic states as a region (Bailes, 1998, pp. 153–185; Ozolina, 1999). All these commonalties could point in the direction of regional security cooperation.

As a matter of fact, the Baltic states have established a wide array of common institutions: the Inter-Parliamentary Baltic Assembly, the Baltic Council for Foreign and Security Policy Cooperation, the Council of Baltic Presidents, and the Council of Ministers of the Baltic States. The Baltic Council of Ministers set up an impressive number of 19 committees and agreed to form a common free-trade zone, a common visa regime, a common customs union, and, since 1995, to cooperate on defense and military affairs. However, decisions have only been partially implemented, and intra-Baltic relations have remained competitive in many respects (Maibach, 1996, p. 278). The common Soviet past and the camaraderie of the independence movements, similarities in elite composition, similar political systems, common basic values, and homogenous foreign policy orientations—all these commonalties are obviously not sufficient for regional integration.

The dividend from Baltic "institution-building" is only marginal (Lejins, 1997, pp. 162 ff.). Baltic security cooperation is, to put it briefly, more or less a kind of window-dressing for western consumption. The Baltic Council may, for example, adopt decisions, but it has no implementation mechanism of its own. Rapprochement among the Baltic states is restricted to the function of preparation for EU membership. "Existing trilateral institutions became semi-dormant" and instead of wordy declarations of solidarity, trade competition set in (Park and Salmon, 1999, p. 106).

Western advisors have often reminded the Baltic states that unity among themselves was key to their security and stability. In 1995, the chairman of the International Defense Advisory Board for the Baltic states (IDAB), General Sir Gary Johnson, put it bluntly: "If the Balts don't stay together, they will hang separately" (Quoted after Lejins, in Krohn, 1996, p. 60). Despite this strong wording, the regional outlook was superseded by an almost exclusive westward orientation. Intra-Baltic cooperation is a means to another end—rapprochement with Western Europe.

At various times since 1994, there have been proposals to form a Baltic defense alliance in case the Baltic states are not admitted to NATO in the foreseeable future. The idea was debated at the Baltic Assembly in 1995, for example, but met with no significant support. The resources of the Baltic states are limited, particularly for defense spending, and it would not make a significant difference if their armaments were pooled. As far as western security guarantees are concerned, cost-benefit calculations speak in favor of outward orientation rather than intra-regional integration. Initiatives to form a Baltic Security Pact, such as the one proposed by Estonian actors (including General Alexander Einseln, Arnold Rüütel and E. Taro), therefore remain marginal episodes (Stranga, 1997, p. 32 f.).

Baltic intra-regional cooperation includes a joint battalion (Baltic Battalion—BaltBat), a joint military academy (Baltic Defense College—BaltDefCol) in Tartu, Estonia, a joint radar network for air defense (BaltNet), and a minesweeper squadron project called BalTron (Baltic Naval Squadron) (Alsauskas, 2000, pp. 33–37). BaltBat was initiated at a meeting of commanders of the armed forces of the Baltic states in August 1993. It was set up to participate in peace operations under the auspices of the UN or other international organizations. Coordinated by Denmark, BaltBat training involves representatives from the Nordic states,

the US, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK. The US has been the largest financial contributor to BaltBat.

At times, BaltBat has been portrayed as a major contribution to regional security as well as to peacekeeping operations. Yet, the projected image of BaltBat does not conform with reality. Its visibility stands in sharp contrast to its actual security value. BaltBat has contributed to common Baltic training methods and operating procedures, but it has not had an impact on the development of self-defense capabilities or on peacekeeping—the battalion has never been deployed independently (Kazocins, 1999, pp. 50–54). Small wonder that the efficiency of sustaining a whole battalion just for training purposes has been repeatedly questioned (Austin, 1999). Military leaders of the Baltic states see the BaltBat project as a purely political gesture to NATO.

Preparation for peacekeeping missions is a costly undertaking for the Baltic states. Intended to sell NATO the image of a "security provider", the contributions to peacekeeping missions—mainly on the Balkans—are exhausting significant parts of the defense budgets. For example, peacekeeping activities in 1998 amounted to 10% of Estonia's annual defense budget (Föhrenbach, 2000, p. 114).

From a Baltic perspective, participation in peacekeeping operations is hardly an aim in itself, not to speak of a priority task for the build-up of armed forces. The Baltic states, however, understand that NATO membership requires a visible security contribution. At the same time BaltBat is isolated from the rest of the defense forces. The main motive for officers joining BaltBat are the financial benefits related to service abroad. Furthermore, Baltic peacekeeping contributions via BaltBat are channeled and coordinated

exclusively by Nordic, mainly Danish, formations (Möller and Wellmann, 2001, pp. 102 ff.). BaltBat units have participated in several peacekeeping missions in former Yugoslavia and the Lebanon, usually as part of Danish or Norwegian missions. The development of BaltBat thus depends on external assistance in almost every respect. This includes donations of light mortars, mortars, sub-machine guns, recoilless guns, anti-tank rockets, rifles, and light vehicles from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and the US (Estonian Foreign Ministry, The Baltic Battalion, www.vm.ee/eng/estoday/1999/Baltbat.html). On the other hand, BaltBat is probably the only unit in the Baltic states which is interoperable with NATO and capable of participation in peacekeeping operations (Sapronas, 1999, pp. 55–70). Even if military cooperation has been described as the hallmark of Baltic integration, BaltBat is the best demonstration of the failure of multilateral efforts. After years of work, a Danish commander of the BaltBat training team concluded:

"Both the Baltic States and also some of the supporting countries have clearly shown a lack of interest and will to support the project. . . . I have seen a tendency to go more and more bilateral. This is from a military and economic perspective a better solution but dangerous if we forget to set common standards and interoperability demands" (Möller, 2000, pp. 38–42).

Interoperability among the Baltic states would, first of all, require a joint procurement strategy. But such cooperation is rare.

In July 1995, the three Baltic army commanders proposed a joint naval training group as an equivalent to BaltBat. BaltTron is a combined naval force geared towards joint counter-mine capabilities and aimed at interoperability with NATO or other international missions. Each Baltic state only owns a small number of warships, usually without meaningful armaments and communication systems. Joint surveillance of sea

borders and airspace is further limited by the lack of proper equipment in the respective navies. Like BaltBat, BalTron therefore depends on outside support. The same holds true for the Baltic Defense College, where western experts provide training for officers and civil servants. The College opened in 1999 and is intended to contribute toward the harmonization of curricula with NATO standards and to provide for NATO interoperability (Clemmesen, 1999a).

Cooperation among the Baltic states depends on the assistance and mediation of third parties. The BaltSea Forum is a further example: apart from the Baltic states, this organization consists of donor countries such as Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the US. The BaltSea Forum convenes thrice annually in order to define the priorities of western military assistance. Given the limited resources of the Baltic states, the main thrust for military cooperation stems from the desire to integrate into NATO and pressures from donor countries to pool resources. However, at times donor countries and the EU stimulate intra-Baltic competition for donations rather than encouraging cooperation.

An International Defense Advisory Board to the Baltic States (IDAB) was set up at the request of the ministers of defense of the Baltic states in March 1995. Involving high-ranking officers from the Scandinavian states, the UK, US, Germany, and France the IDAB offered advice on general security policy as well as on the build-up of armed forces. After five years of work, the IDAB provided a critical final assessment (IDAB Report 1999, www.mfa.gov.lv/eng/policy/security/idabreport.htm). With respect to NATO expansion, the IDAB saw "no virtue in arguments seeking

conclusively either to support or to deny that aspiration in strictly military terms". Despite noting growing skills in cooperation with western institutions, the report refers to the imprint of a strong Soviet legacy on political culture, featuring "conformity not initiative, control not delegation, compartmentalisation not cooperation, and secrecy not transparency".

The IDAB particularly stressed the need to practice mechanisms for the efficient functioning of government in times of crisis or emergency, to broaden public information on defense in a democratic society, and to secure long-term defense planning. With respect to international aid, the report made scathing remarks about "the plethora of advice and assistance, often uncoordinated and short-term in nature".

The state of regional cooperation was assessed at the annual meeting of the commanders of Nordic and Baltic defense forces in January 2001. While the Baltic Defense College (BaltDefCol) and work on the minesweeper squadron received good marks, the joint peacekeeping battalion (BaltBat) and the joint air surveillance system (BaltNet) were said to leave significant room for improvement (*Defence Review*, No. 05/2001, 24–30 January).

Why is security cooperation among the Baltic states so fragile and limited in scope? Answers can be found in structural constraints, limited interests and the content of security conceptions. Commonalties seem to be insufficient for institutionalized security cooperation among the Baltic states. Their ethnic composition and treatment of their (mainly Russian) minorities differ, and pre-socialist models of the inter-war period point them towards different states. The degree to which the Baltic states perceive Russia as a potential threat also varies, with Estonia being the most concerned and Lithuania the least. A negative image of Russia is not a sufficient stimulus for Baltic unity.

Apart from the joint Soviet experience, there are no common historical legacies which form an overarching identity among the Baltic states. The Baltic states owe their individual identities not only to differences in language, cultural traditions and outward orientations, but also to various definitions of "self" and "other", as strongly evidenced in the dissimilar status of Russian inhabitants as the defining "other". Regional security cooperation would require a change in features which the Baltic states owe to their post-Soviet identity, mainly the discourse of self-victimization. Resistance to identity changes supports the 'constructivist' argument—regional cooperation is unlikely to occur if it is not conducive to sustaining a certain self-image (Wendt, 1992, p. 419).

Despite the Soviet episode, the perception of Russia as a threat is obviously not as decisive as often proclaimed. The Baltic states speak different languages, with Russian—the language of the disliked "other"—as the only lingua franca. The Baltic states need a third language for cooperation. If this third language is English, English-speaking mediators or facilitators are usually required.

Cooperation generally requires investments in manpower and financial resources for common institution-building. Each Baltic state would have to make its respective commitments. Weak states can pool resources, but if even the combined force remains weak, the relative gains of cooperation seem to be low. The region cannot produce 'hard' security on its own. Furthermore, the Baltic states are aware that regional cooperation could become an alternative to admission to NATO. The urgency of NATO membership may decrease if regional integration is seen as a panacea.

As long as western security guarantees are perceived to be close at hand, cost-benefit calculations speak in favor of outward orientation rather than intra-regional integration. Individualistic behavior is seen as a more favorable strategy than Baltic cooperation. Security cooperation is usually embedded in broader areas of cooperation. But economic interdependence, for example, has only developed on a small scale among the Baltic states. The same holds true for border crossings between the three countries; in this respect the administrative system is "rudimentary and decision-making is slow and inefficient" (Ozolina, 1999, p. 41).

If security remains the only significant area of close cooperation, it lacks reinforcement from cooperative practices in other fields. The common interests of the Baltic states pertain to membership of the EU and NATO, not to Baltic integration *per se*, and cooperation is instrumental in reaching these goals. From a Baltic point of view, there is no particular interest in Baltic security cooperation *per se*.

Baltic defense cooperation is additionally inhibited by keeping open the option of individual NATO membership instead of joint inclusion. The existing forms of Baltic cooperation do not envisage automatic military assistance in the event that one of the countries is under attack—a commitment the Baltic states expect from NATO, but obviously not from one another.

Furthermore, security cooperation depends on trust. If distrust prevails, this actually means an increase in potential vulnerability. Distrust among elites is a strong feature of the Soviet legacy. The post-Soviet elites may espouse strong anti-Sovietism, but those socialized under socialism know better than to trust each other.

Regional cooperation is additionally constrained by diverging—even competing—national agendas, the inability to formulate a regional security agenda, limited economic and military resources, and inefficiencies of domestic decision-making. Some authors have stressed that Estonia and Latvia share a different history from Lithuania: the former are Protestant and belonged to the German Order State or the Swedish empire, whereas Catholic Lithuania traces its statehood back to medieval times (Gobins et al., 1998, p. 113).

All the above reasons for weak regional cooperation refer to domestic causes. The early stage of nation-state building could be held responsible for the mismatch between the declared intentions and reality. But what the flaws in Baltic security cooperation indicate most is a lack of urgency. Contrary to all the rhetoric, problems are *de facto* not perceived as pressing. Instead of solving problems, the actors are busy preserving their power status. Whereas the presence of Russian troops boosted efforts to cooperate, the eventual troop withdrawal decreased the urgency for regional cooperation. The modest degree of regional integration among the Baltic states and in the larger Baltic Sea area suggests that ideas alone are too weak an incentive for institutionalized cooperation. Institutionalization depends on a clear assessment of national interests and their potential common denominator.

Yeltsin's Offer of Security Guarantees

In 1997, Russia undertook a major initiative vis-a-vis the Baltic states by offering security guarantees to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. President Yeltsin particularly stated:

"On Russia's side, we have already declared that we guarantee the security of the Baltic states. In developing this

initiative, we propose that such guarantees should take the form of a unilateral undertaking by the Russian Federation, reinforced, probably, concerning international law, by the conclusion of an agreement of good-neighborliness and mutual security guarantees between Russia and individual Baltic states or between Russia and the three Baltic states together" (Quoted after Knudsen, 1998, pp. 29 f.).

The two open letters addressed to the Baltic states invited further discussion on a number of alternative ideas. Yeltsin called upon other states, such as the US, Germany, France and other western countries, to join the proposed agreements with the Baltic states. In a letter to President Clinton of 20 June 1996, Yeltsin repeated the offer of security guarantees and asked the US administration to exert a moderating influence on Latvia and Estonia's treatment of Russian "compatriots" (*Monthly Survey of Baltic and Post-Soviet Politics*, June 1996, pp. 1–3). Yeltsin explicitly suggested a multilateral guarantee which "might prevent any one guarantor from exerting unilateral pressure" (Knudsen, 1998, p. 53). While preferring trilateral security guarantees, Russia did not rule out guarantees by NATO that fell short of force deployment and nuclear weapons (Knudsen, 1999, p. 95). Russia thus signaled its openness to security guarantees which included the US or NATO.

The Baltic states refused any Russian security guarantees, even if joined by western states. It was feared that a "deal" could be struck behind their backs. The Latvian minister of foreign affairs took particular offense at Yeltsin's letter, accusing the Russian government of believing "that someone is entitled to decide the fortunes of other nations behind their back" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, 1996). Yeltsin's letter instigated a wave of Baltic activism in the US, among NATO members and at home calling for the rejection of "security guarantees" which would include Russia. It was underscored that

"lasting" security could only be ensured by NATO membership (Joint Declaration by the Presidents of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, 1996, pp. 1–2).

The meaning of Russian "security guarantees" therefore remained unexplored. It could have meant a 'positive' guarantee—a promise to assist in case of attack—or a 'negative' guarantee, e.g. a promise of non-aggression. The Baltic states rejected the very idea that Russia could become part of a security regime without further deliberating the meaning of the offer.

The idea of Russian security guarantees was obviously rejected on two grounds—a joint guarantee with the US or NATO would have replaced unilateral NATO guarantees and would have given Russia potential leverage over the kind of guarantees. The potential stabilizing effect of such an arrangement—the terms of which the Baltic states could have negotiated—was discarded. It would have implied a major change in Baltic identity. The urge to preserve the image of Russia's unpredictability outweighed the opportunity to reduce this very unpredictability.

Lithuania's security concept justified the rejection of the guarantees, but also offered some space for negotiations. The Russian proposals were based on "giving up the path towards NATO membership", it was said, and this made them *a priori* unacceptable. On the other hand, it was admitted, most of Russia's ideas had the character of regional Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs). This conflicts with the basic premise of Lithuanian security policy that security is indivisible and that there is no "regional security" at all. However, it was said, "if brought up in a context broader than regional, some of the Russian proposals can be discussed within such forums as the OSCE" (National Security and Defence Policy

of Lithuania, www.kam.lt/balta/ part_I/I_4.html). In contrast to the yearning for western security guarantees, the three Baltic Presidents dismissed the Russian proposal, declaring that "security guarantees do not correspond to the spirit of the new Europe" (Joint Communiqué: Meeting of the Presidents of the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia, and the Republic of Lithuania, Palanga, 10 November 1997).

Baltic Sea Region and Nordic Cooperation

The Baltic region is related to wider regions with different degrees of institutionalization: the loosely integrated Nordic countries (including Iceland, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden); the Baltic Sea Region (the Nordic countries minus Iceland but with Poland, Germany, and Russia added), and the so-called 5+3 Region (Nordic states plus Baltic states). Finally, one should also mention the EU. The Nordic countries are shaped politically by both the recent experience of joining the EU (Finland, Sweden) and common borders with Russia. In economic terms, they represent possible models of a social welfare state for the Baltic states. The Nordic countries are additionally faced with the prospect of NATO enlargement.

The potential security partners represent different security preferences—some are neutral (Finland and Sweden), some are old NATO members (Denmark, Germany, Norway), and one (Poland) is a post-socialist NATO member. What is striking about this menu of potential security partners is the selective way in which history is used as a guideline for making choices. Whereas Russia figures as a kind of eternal threat, the legacy of the German occupation during World War II plays no part in security considerations, and Poland's historical record of dominance in the Baltics is of no concern either.

The search for allies soon led the Baltic states to look for trans-regional partners: Estonia oriented itself towards the Nordic states, particularly Finland; Latvia towards Sweden, Germany, and Denmark; whereas Lithuania soon overcame older historic apprehensions and ethnic tensions and inclined towards Poland. Lithuanian-Polish military cooperation thus intensified throughout the second half of the 1990s, particularly in the form of a joint NATO-interoperable battalion (LITPOLBAT).

The Baltic Sea region and the Nordic countries are overloaded with a plethora of regional 'institutions', the oldest being the Nordic Council. This has existed since 1952 and fosters cooperation between Nordic parliaments and governments and contributes to practical solutions, even without a specific military agenda. The Nordic Council did not invite the Baltic states to join, thus leading to the separate formation of the Baltic Council in June 1994.

The Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS), which was founded on the basis of a German-Danish initiative in 1992, promotes cooperation on economic, technological, environmental, cultural, transportation, anti-crime and communication matters, but explicitly refrains from military security cooperation (Starosciak, 1999). It represents a forum for debate, a consultative body. The advantage of the CBSS consists in binding Russia into a multilateral framework and in providing a means for overcoming the asymmetric bilateral relationships between the Baltic states and Russia.

Baltic-Russian cooperation in the CBSS covers the police forces, border guards and customs, as well as immigration issues. Cooperation with Russia prevents confrontational politics and establishes a framework for dialogue. The asymmetry in Russian-Baltic relations and respective fears of

dominance, which are common to bilateral relations, can at least be partially offset by cooperation within the framework of the whole Baltic Sea region.

Until the mid-1990s, the CBSS was hampered by the lack of any implementation mechanism; it represented a forum for deliberation but not for policy implementation. This changed with the CBSS summit in Visby in 1995, when the President of the European Commission launched the Baltic Sea Region Initiative. Working groups were set up to deal with economic and technical cooperation, nuclear safety and democratic institutions, and a task force was established on fighting crime, following a German initiative (Ozolina, 1999, pp. 54 f.). The Baltic states also regard the CBSS as a means of soliciting support for EU membership from Finland, Sweden, and Denmark.

Cooperative ties with Russia and confidence-building measures developed in a promising direction following the withdrawal of the Russian troops. Apart from the dispute over NATO enlargement, there is currently no security issue discernable that could not be negotiated with Russia on a bilateral basis or in the multilateral framework of the Baltic Sea Council. Looking at these *de facto* instances of cooperation with Russia, one may question the need to unite the Baltic states in the face of a common security concern. In 1998, Toivo Klaar, Estonian Deputy Chief of Mission to NATO, summed up the improvement in Russian-Estonian relations: "It may not reflect a fundamental meeting of minds, but it does represent a certain infusion of normality in bilateral contacts" (Klaar, 1997, p. 27). Publicly, Russian politicians consistently oppose NATO expansion towards the Baltic states, though Russian-NATO relations have warmed up with Putin's presidency and particularly in the aftermath of the attacks in the US of 11 September 2001. Putin even went so far as to say that:

"If NATO takes on a different shade and is becoming a political organization, of course we would reconsider our position with regard to such expansion, if we are able to feel involved in such processes" (Drozdiak, 2001).

With the Vienna Document on CSBMs, Russia has limited its military options by agreeing to extended and more frequent exchanges of information, more frequent inspections, a political mechanism for crisis management, the prevention of a destabilizing concentration of forces in the Kaliningrad and Pskov regions, a limitation of forces in the Leningrad military district, a reduction in flexibility limits, a decrease in military movements in Belarus and, finally, troop withdrawals from Georgia and Moldova (Adomeit, 2001, p. 116).

In November 1994, the Baltic Assembly proposed the demilitarization of the Kaliningrad region, which would have eliminated the problem of Russian military transit. The Russian government did not endorse the idea, though both the value of conventional troops in this enclave as well as the "strategic" importance of the Russian Baltic Sea Fleet have diminished substantially (Nekrasas, 1996, p. 73). In 2000, Lithuania and Russia agreed on bilateral measures reinforcing mutual confidence by establishing verification visits to military forces stationed in Lithuania and the Kaliningrad region, which go beyond the ones already foreseen by the CFE Treaty (*Defence Review*, No. 05/2001, 24–30 January).

Since the first debates on Baltic NATO membership in 1993, the Baltic states have hesitated to join the CFE Treaty. The build-up of their own armed forces gives the impression that there is no urgent need for this step. The reasoning behind postponing accession to the CFE Treaty is closely linked to the prospect of NATO membership—

new CFE Treaty specifications for the Baltic states would, in all likelihood, significantly reduce the allowed upper limits of troop concentrations and extraordinary temporary dislocations in times of crisis (Schmidt, 2001). This would undermine the Baltic expectations of strong US troop support in times of military conflict. It is therefore of particular importance whether the Baltic states will request increased "territorial ceilings" for military equipment in order to receive foreign forces such as NATO troops (Bolving, 2000, pp. 31–66). The Baltic states are unlikely to foreclose the option of US conventional troop support before joining NATO. It has therefore been suggested that the Baltic states and Russia and Belarus could commit themselves outside the CFE framework to not using so-called Extraordinary Temporary Dislocations (Schmidt, 2001, pp. 36–40).

Several areas which enhance transparency, trust, and arms control could become important for CSBMs with Russia: military-to-military contacts between all the Baltic Sea states; exchanges of information on military presence; reciprocal limitations on certain types of military activity, especially in areas close to the borders; joint military training; cooperation in peacekeeping missions; participation in maneuvers; cooperation between border guards, particularly naval forces; disaster and relief cooperation (Norkus, 1996, pp. 68 f.).

In 1997, Finland came up with an initiative for a Northern Dimension to the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy in order to enhance economic relations between Europe and Russia and transform the common border between the EU and Russia "into a gateway for supportive cooperation with the new and democratic neighbor". The Baltic states, particularly Latvia, reacted cautiously. It was feared that Russia could diversify its transit and trade by enhancing the role of Finland (Herd, 1999, pp. 259–273). It was up to the

EU, starting with the Balladur Plan and the Stability Pact negotiations in 1994, to repeatedly express its wish for security cooperation with Russia. The 1996 Action Plan for Russia of the EU Council of Ministers and the EU's Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia of December 1997 explicitly included European security and foreign policy matters (Danilov and de Spiegeleire, 1998; Knudsen, 1998).

Following EU enlargement, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova will become direct neighbors of the EU, and it is therefore of key concern to the EU to soften the impact of social, economic, and political asymmetries along the future EU border, particularly with respect to minority questions, customs regulations, trans-border traffic, and international crime (Kempe and van Meurs, 1999).

The Baltic Round Table—another regular gathering—includes the Baltic states and Poland. It deals with good-neighborly relations as well as with minority and border issues among states applying for membership of the EU. There is also the Barents Euro-Arctic Council which concentrates, among other things, on the Arctic area and covers environmental policy, economic cooperation, regional infrastructure and indigenous people. Finally, the Helsinki Commission is dedicated to environmental protection in the Baltic Sea area.

In 1993, the Baltic states submitted to the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation the idea of establishing a Baltic Regional Security Table. However, the proposal never got off the ground. Only Poland, Germany and the United States reacted positively; the Nordic states rejected the idea. They obviously feared that the region might become isolated from the rest of Europe, that Russia and Germany might play a dominant role,

or that the national interests of the participants were too diverse (Norkus, 1996, p. 61). A Polish initiative on Regional Confidence and Security Building Measures for the Baltic Sea region, launched in March 1994 within the framework of the OSCE, also met with the same cold reception.

Generally speaking, one must note that the Baltic states devoted little attention to the potential of the OSCE for cooperative security (Stranga, 1997, p. 38). It was, reluctantly, accepted as a watchdog on minority issues and as a mediator on issues pertaining to the consequences of Russian troop withdrawal (Zellner and Lange, 1999). Whole-hearted OSCE orientation would have implied acknowledging legitimate Russian security interests and would have been short on "security guarantees".

At first glance, it seems irrational that the Nordic states rejected ideas to strengthen regional CSBMs. After all, their main concern is the same as that of the Baltic states—a disproportionate share of offensive weaponry and personnel is dislocated along their borders with Russia. Russia's military concentration in the north-western military districts of St. Petersburg and Pskow causes particular concern in the Baltic States, Norway, Finland, and Sweden (Maibach, 1996, p. 270). However, the wide array of existing institutions seems to satisfy cooperation needs from a Nordic perspective. The idea of a Nordic-Baltic security zone—initially supported by the US, the UK and Russia—was rejected by Finland and Sweden as well as by the Baltic states. The former do not wish to burden themselves with security guarantees for the Baltic states, whereas the latter fear that the regionalization of security would reduce the urgency of NATO membership and provide Russia with a voice in regional security affairs.

The weakness of intra-regional military cooperation can be explained by the limited strategic weight of the Baltic Sea area. Any regional security strategy has to be seen in the light of the expected benefits of future NATO enlargement and the shape of the EU's Foreign and Security Policy. As long as the scope of both options is undefined, a regionalization of security policy may forestall the transatlantic and European strategy. Against this backdrop, the existing Nordic-Baltic institutions represent the smallest common denominator (Nyberg, 1994, pp. 529–540).

What holds true of Baltic cooperation also applies to Nordic cooperation— no institutionalized regional security system emerged. Zaneta Ozolina offers an explanation:

"... the efficiency of community-building depends on the gradual development of three stages of relations among political units, starting with interaction, continuing through cooperation, and growing into integration ... The failure of raising expectations can be explained by substituting the simplest forms of interaction with illusions of integration" (Ozolina, 1997, p. 117).

But what are the deeper causes of the poor institutionalization of Nordic cooperation? The Baltic states' concern about Russia is obviously not shared by their Nordic neighbors. The Nordic states, particularly Sweden and Finland, do not share the Baltic threat perception vis-a-vis Russia and adhere to their traditional policy of military non-alliance, regardless of recent EU membership. Given the effects of drug smuggling, organized crime, trafficking in human beings, the Nordic states' prime security concerns pertain to the Baltic states' capacity to fight crime and to control their borders (Föhrenbach, 2000, p. 104). With their EU membership, Finland and Sweden not only accepted the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, but decided to actively participate in shaping it.

Cooperation with NATO

In December 1991, NATO formed the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) which included the then 16 NATO members as well as most of the former Warsaw Pact member states, including the Baltic states. The NACC engaged in providing expertise on defense planning, armed forces and command structures, civil-military relations, weapons procurement, air defense, emergency planning, crisis management, and peace keeping. The NACC barely represented more than a discussion forum but, due to joint membership, probably contributed to a rationalization of the debate between Baltic and Russian representatives (Föhrenbach, 2000, pp. 48 f.).

Baltic cooperation with NATO began at the 27th Session of the NATO Assembly in October 1991. Estonia became a member of the NATO Cooperation Council (NACC) on 20 December 1991 following a meeting between the then Estonian Foreign Minister, Lennart Meri, and NATO Secretary-General Manfred Wörner at the NATO summit. On 3 February 1994, Estonia signed the Framework Document of the Partnership for Peace Program, and on 11 July 1995, its individual Partnership Program. It became an observer in the Western European Union (WEU) on 30 November 1993, a status which was replaced by "associate membership" in May 1994. The sequence of rapprochement with NATO and the WEU was similar for Latvia and Lithuania too.

Associated membership of the WEU is largely seen by Baltic politicians as a means of facilitating membership of the EU, but is of limited significance for security politics. Associate membership does not involve a guarantee of military assistance. The

associate members are basically allowed to participate in the WEU's "Petersberg" missions—humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping, and "crisis management", but not collective defense (www.weu.int/eng/comm/92-petersberg.htm). Theoretically, membership of the WEU could have been perceived as an alternative to NATO membership, but the WEU and its still amorphous "defense identity" depend on NATO logistics and decision-making.

The Baltic states could have opted for an alliance with another great power. But this could only have meant the United States, and the US has been reluctant to offer unilateral security guarantees independently of NATO. The US-Baltic Charter of Partnership of January 1998 offered consultations in the case of a perceived threat or risk and "welcomed" the Baltic aspiration to join NATO, but refrained from any tangible commitment (Charter of Partnership, in Föhrenbach, 2000, pp. 207–212; US-Baltic Charter of Partnership: Commission Communiqué, 1999, pp. 1–4). Despite strong words of support, the US position on NATO enlargement is uncertain and ambiguous in practice (Rhodes, 2000, p. 100). It was clear in mid-1995 that the Baltic states would not be among the first to be invited to join NATO. The Baltic states therefore opted for a staged accession strategy.

NATO did not offer any military cooperation within the framework of NACC. The Baltic states therefore began to ask for "differentiation" among the NACC members, and, on 4 January 1994, Lithuania submitted its request to join NATO. The NATO summit in Brussels in January 1994 reacted to the growing pressure to "open up" for Eastern Europeans by launching the Partnership for Peace program as an alternative to membership (Föhrenbach, 2000, pp. 52 f.). Whereas the first round of

NATO expansion followed political reasoning rather than military considerations, NATO's Strategic Concept of 1999 asserted the necessity for added strategic value on the part of new members (Kommunique der Staats- und Regierungschefs, 1999, pp. 233–240).

Given the amorphous character of 'Nordic' cooperation, NATO membership signifies the easiest way to import 'hard' security vis-a-vis Russia and demonstrates a belonging to the West—particularly as long as the prospects of EU membership are mute. But apart from this identity-related reasoning, NATO membership is the easiest way to justify increased spending on the build-up of armed forces.

Keen to be included in NATO as soon as possible, the Baltic states like to demonstrate their efficiency and reliability as prospective NATO members (Gießmann, 1997). Preparing for NATO membership includes regular participation in military exercises, particularly within the framework of PfP (Daugherty, 2000, pp. 87–130).

Whereas PfP was initially designed as an alternative to NATO membership, the Baltic states saw it as a way station to full membership (Asmus and Nurick, 1996, pp. 121–142; Stranga, 1997, p. 25). In 1996, Asmus and Nurick published a study for the RAND corporation outlining the US double-track approach to NATO enlargement (Asmus and Nurick, 1996). It was recommended that, although excluded from the first round of NATO enlargement, the Baltic states should strengthen domestic reforms and cooperate among each other and with the Nordic states.

The importance of PfP consists mainly in obtaining training assistance to prepare commanders, staffs and troops for NATO-led "peace support" operations, search and rescue operations, and humanitarian aid operations (Loemaa, 1999, pp. 1–4). In the absence of a NATO security guarantee, the Baltic states value PfP highly as part of an international security strategy. PfP's consultation mechanism with NATO in the event of "a direct threat to its territorial integrity, political independence, or security" is perceived as a commitment by NATO not to leave the Baltic states alone. Baltic officers are regularly exposed to western teaching and training methods within the framework of PfP, but many PfP exercises do not concentrate on the given aim of increasing interoperability.

The NATO summit will decide upon inviting new members in December 2002. As with their rivalry over EU membership, the Baltic states are contemplating the pros and cons of an individual versus a joint NATO strategy. In May 2000, representatives of the three Baltic states and of Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Albania met in Vilnius in order to draw up a plan for their joint inclusion in the second round of NATO enlargement (the "big bang"). The "Vilnius Nine" group would like to create a climate suitable to overcoming the objections to a second round of enlargement; though it is unlikely that NATO will decide in favor of a "big bang", given the lack of active support for Baltic NATO membership by major NATO countries (Kuzio, 2000, pp. 14–17).

Against the backdrop of the wars in Kosovo and Macedonia and tensions between the US and the EU over National Missile Defense (NMD), NATO is shifting its priorities from expansion to urgent conflict areas, to cooperation with Russia and to defense

burden-sharing. Desperately feeling that NATO is impressed by capacities rather than moral noise, the Baltic states—together with the "Vilnius Nine"—are stepping up the pressure to keep NATO expansion on the agenda. As NATO is now giving priority to the fight against terrorism following the attacks in the US of 11 September 2001, efforts by the "Vilnius Nine" to attract attention might be perceived as a distraction rather than a contribution to a joint effort. The joint approach of the "Vilnius Nine" will, with all likelihood, coexist with individual strategies. Lithuania, for example, is trying to vaunt its good relations with Russia and its Russian minority as well as its advanced military reforms as an asset.

Among the Nordic countries, only Denmark promotes Baltic NATO membership. Even Norway, as a NATO member, has been reluctant to promote NATO extension towards the Baltic states. The Baltic states cannot therefore count on active support in building up an anti-Russian security arrangement. Neither do Finland and Sweden, direct neighbors of the Baltic states, want to be responsible for the Baltic states' security, or to inhibit their relations with Russia by promoting NATO extension towards the Baltics (Ozolina, 1997, p. 123). Poland to the west could, at least theoretically, play the role rejected by Sweden and Finland. After Denmark, Poland is indeed the most ardent supporter of the Baltic states' inclusion in NATO.

There are some general objections to further NATO enlargement. It is said that an enlarged alliance would be unwieldy, less efficient, mean only additional burdens for NATO, and further alienate Russia. All in all, Finland and Sweden are committed to their policy of non-alignment. The UK, the Netherlands, Norway and Germany have been hesitant to actively support the Baltic quest for NATO

membership. In the US, the Clinton administration demonstrated restraint, regardless of rhetoric to the contrary. The Bush administration and some Republican congressmen seem to be more supportive of the Baltic states, though their major concern is added military value (Föhrenbach, 2000, p. 39). Against the backdrop of the conflicts on the Balkans and the involvement of NATO troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Macedonia, NATO's European military interventionism is focused on South-Eastern Europe, not the peaceful Baltic Sea region.

Regardless of this hesitancy, the Baltic states and NATO have concluded Membership Action Plans (MAPs), which determine the 'homework' to be done. NATO experts evaluate progress in preparing for NATO membership by looking at the fulfillment of annual plans. The Baltic states have been told, among other things, to settle their international disputes by peaceful means, to unite their efforts towards collective defense, to provide forces for NATO missions, to enhance interoperability, and to significantly increase the share of military expenditures, at least compared with the average for the 1990s (Membership Action Plan (MAP), www.atlanterhavskomiteen.no/publikasjoner/andre/dokumenter/4.htm). Each applicant has agreed an individual national integration program with NATO. In Latvia's case, for example, this includes the development of a realistic Total Defense Concept, conformity with NATO's command, control, and communications (C3) requirements, the formation and equipment of three Mobile Reserve battalions, the development of a NATO-compatible logistics system, the development of a quick reaction force by the year 2003, and an overall increase in the professionalization of soldiers (Kristovskis, 1999, pp. 7–13).

The annual Membership Action Plans (MAP) of the Baltic states formulate criteria for preparation for membership without offering membership. The main goals of the MAPs consist in feedback mechanisms for applicants and measures to harmonize various programs, improve combat efficiency by means of joint exercises and training, raise defense expenditures, deliver arms and military equipment, and, finally, to build-up a military infrastructure that is interoperable with NATO (Kuzio, 2000, pp. 14–17). Among the Baltic states it is estimated that Lithuania has made the most progress in fulfilling its Membership Action Plan.

In 1999, NATO Headquarters additionally presented the Baltic states with Partnership Goals, a long list of staged tasks to be fulfilled by applicants by 2006. NATO formulates very concrete requirements which, if taken seriously, leave the applicants almost no leeway in defining priorities. Estonia, for example, is asked to field 25,000–30,000 men in the case of war, to develop rapid reaction forces, an air surveillance system, mines countermeasures, and to make communication systems compatible. Estonia is preparing for NATO membership by implementing the Partnership for Peace Planning and Review Process (PARP), Initial Partnership Goals (IPG), the Individual Partnership Program (IPP), and, since 1999, its Membership Action Plan (MAP).

Some NATO experts doubt whether Estonia is defendable by means of conventional forces due to its geographic position. A NATO study summarizes the skepticism: "Because it is unlikely that NATO members would wish to ensure a country's protection through a nuclear guarantee alone, these officials believe that Estonia's membership is unlikely until alliance

relations with Russia improve dramatically" (Woehrel, Kim and Ek, 2000; Petrauskaite, 1999, pp. 15–25). The major difference from Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic consists precisely in making the prior fulfillment of Partnership Goals and the improvement of relations with Russia a prerequisite for later membership.

The build-up of national defense capacities and cooperation with NATO poses a dilemma for the Baltic states. A very large number of PfP exercises are actually of limited value for the build-up of armed forces. As Estonia's participation in Partnership for Peace exercises proved, NATO cooperation requires a re-directing of investments that inhibit the construction of an effective territorial military infrastructure. Unintentionally, a dilemma has occurred between the requirements of national army formation and NATO cooperation prior to membership. Available assets can either be allocated to interoperability with NATO or to strengthening national self-defense capabilities. Although there is some overlap, in practice the tasks are not identical (Krivas, 1999, pp. 1–7). Civil-military friction has emerged on several occasions over putting NATO membership, as promoted by the civilian government, before territorial defense, as advocated by at least some parts of the military leadership.

As in the cases of Poland and Hungary, preparation for NATO membership has revealed the depths of military inefficiency. Whereas NATO membership was expected to import security, it actually requires a re-direction of priorities away from national defense towards an internatio-nal division of military duties.

Following an initial period of amateurish experiments, the Baltic states now realize that preparation for early NATO membership—2002 or 2006 are the currently debated time frames—requires modern command, control and communication systems, efficient training, and additional funding (*Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 13 January 2000). Compared to the 1990s' average, the Baltic states will have to increase the share of military expenditures in their budgets. The Baltic states are thus hostages of their commitment to join NATO, the rationale of which seems to consist in the collective enforcement of national loyalties identified with NATO expansion.

It has been argued by Baltic policy-makers and experts that NATO membership is a precondition for improved relations with Russia (Lejins and Ozolina, 1997, p. 41). This thesis implicitly holds that only assurances from NATO will allow the Baltic states to deal with Russia in a self-confident manner. Once members of NATO, the Baltic states would no longer have to fear intimidation from Russia. The argument is speculative, implying that not only would tensions with Russia over NATO membership fade away once the Baltic states joined the alliance, but that relations would actually improve. The record of Polish, Czech, and Hungarian relations with Russia following NATO membership does not confirm this thesis.

The almost exclusive westward orientation of the Baltic states has been detrimental to the development of a security community with Russia. The psychological border with Russia is reinforced by implying that the Baltic states mark a civilizational margin. Paradoxically, the exclusiveness of their westward orientation and their negationism regarding everything Russian reflect the degree to which the Baltic states are still bound to Russia in

their self-perception. It might be argued that an assured sense of belonging to Europe would free the Baltic states from the necessity to assert themselves vis-a-vis Russia. Yet, the opposite might be true—a sense of cooperation with Russia might have a positive influence on the prospects of EU integration as well as NATO membership.

Apart from cooperation with NATO, the Baltic states have also signed many bilateral agreements on military cooperation. Latvia, for example, has signed agreements with the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Norway, Poland, the UK, and Ukraine. Cooperation with the US is particularly intensive in the field of training for the paramilitary national guard. As Lejins reports on Latvian-US cooperation, the "biggest problem in the Latvian Army was that former Latvian Soviet officers thought in terms of Soviet military doctrine, in numbers of tanks, artillery, top-heavy staffs, vast armies, etc., and not in the new concepts of fast, small, mobile units" (Lejins, 1996, p. 55).

Taking into account the wide array of co-existing and overlaid institutions, it is not justified to talk of a "gray zone" or "security vacuum" (Kvaerno, 2000, pp. 73–90). After a decade of regained independence, Baltic decision-makers almost unanimously admit that:

"The type of tension most likely to occur in the Baltic is not a military threat, but rather the highly charged, tense political situation which could turn into violent actions, extremist group actions, drug trafficking, smuggling, illegal migration etc." (Bajarunas, 2000, p. 45).

These threats seem manageable within the framework of the existing institutions. They neither require NATO membership nor a Nordic

military alliance. The difference between the Baltic states and Sweden and Finland, as non-allied states, is marginal in terms of external security challenges.

The factor which influences regional stability much more significantly is the economic and social preparedness of the Baltic states to join the EU. In the foreseeable future it would be advisable to strive for inclusive cooperative security arrangements, aimed at increased interstate security and based on conflict prevention and conflict resolution among potential adversaries. Tensions between Russia and the Baltic states are unlikely to be resolved by the Baltic states joining an exclusive alliance, but by increased institutionalized cooperation in spheres of common interest. The desire of the Baltic states to be affiliated with alliances or groupings which exclude Russia may actually inhibit rapprochement with the EU, and possibly NATO too, because the burden of mitigating the impact on EU-Russian relations is shifted to the EU. If it is the unpredictability of Russia which is the ultimate cause for concern (Vike-Freiberga 2000, pp. 198–2000), it would be reasonable to expect that security policy should be based on reducing this unpredictability.

Security Decision-making in the Baltic States

All the Baltic states adopted legislation to ensure civil control over the military. Military interventionism has therefore not been a dominant issue. Instead, conflicts have occurred over the delineation of competencies between different branches of the government, primarily the president, the prime minister, and the defense minister. These inter-institutional conflicts are a common feature in the Baltic states. Though the parliaments exercise their right to draft and control the budget and to adopt security-related legislation, parliamentary expertise still does not allow for formulating security guidelines and performing viable control and accounting functions.

The president in all the Baltic states is the supreme commander of the armed forces, advised by a Defense or National Security Council. Nonetheless, the everyday pursuit of security affairs rests largely with the prime minister, defense minister, and minister of foreign affairs. In instances where the president and the prime minister belong to different parties, as has happened, conflicts occur over security prerogatives. In such cases, the General Staff repeatedly finds itself instrumentalized in inter-branch conflicts. The build-up of armed forces suffered not least from constant inter-branch conflicts.

In Estonia, though a parliamentary republic, the president is the supreme commander of the armed forces. Security decision-making involves the parliament (through its defense and foreign affairs committees) and the president, who is assisted by the Defense Council as an advisory body. Everyday decision-making is carried out by the prime minister, the minister of defense and the foreign minister. Although the main institutions are in place, the process lacks structure; information flows between the ministries involved are particularly unsatisfactory (Raid, 1996, p. 2).

The unclear responsibilities of the president and the division of labor between the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff of the armed forces were a constant cause of dispute in Estonia in the 1990s, most prominently in the case of open clashes between the minister of defense, Andrus Öövel, and the commander of the armed forces, Aleksander Einseln, (which led to the latter's resignation in December 1995). The president has direct access to military command, and the situation has become complicated especially in cases where the government and the president belong to different parties. Similar to the situation in Latvia, it is unclear whether the commander of the armed forces or the commander-in-chief is directly subordinate to the president in the event of an armed conflict. Further ambiguities existed for some time between the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff. The General Staff accused the ministry of interference in its jurisdictional and administrative affairs (Institute of International and Social Studies et al., 1997, p. 5).

The division of tasks between the government and parliament remained unclear too, thus causing conflicts in the military itself over lines of authority. As Mare Haab observed:

" . . . the conflicts reflect the different internal political ambitions of the opposing political powers of Estonia, and they reveal the danger that armed units whose loyalties are not clear can be more easily manipulated" (Haab, 1995, p. 3).

Furthermore, the majority of the more than 400 Estonian officers were trained in the Soviet army and often retained the latter's role models and culture, including abuse of, and violence against, conscripts. The frequent change of defense ministers—six alone in the first three years after Estonia's independence—seriously inhibited the build-up of an efficient defense administration too. Palace intrigues inside the Ministry of Defense and quarrels with the chief of the General Staff have been a constant feature of Estonia's military establishment.

In early 2000, Aare Raid, a renowned analyst of the Estonian military, scathingly remarked: "The note of one Russian military man that Moscow is satisfied with the development of the Estonian Defence Forces because nothing much has been achieved is probably no exaggeration" (*Defence Review*, No.02/2000, 5–11 January). Against this backdrop it comes as no surprise that the Estonian Defense Ministry defined its priorities in 2000 as follows: development of a legislative basis, long-term defense planning, reform of the command and control structure, and personnel policy (*Eesti Kaitseministeerium*, Estonian Defence Budget 2000). Whereas Latvia and Lithuania over the last decade have established a system of responsibilities that meets basic Western standards—at least on paper—Estonia is still working on a clear and suitable division of defense responsibilities (Clemmesen, 1999b, pp. 5–42).

In Latvia, the president is assigned the leading and coordinating role in security politics and defense affairs; he chairs the National Security Council,

which reports directly to him. This body, at least in theory, monitors state security, evaluates internal and external threats, develops strategies for averting threats, determines the operational direction of security agencies, oversees their structure and budget, and supervises the Constitutional Defense Bureau (Ozolina, 1996, p. 8). An institutional conflict is caused by the unclear division of responsibilities between the president and the commander of the armed forces. Given that 90 percent of Latvia's armed forces stem from the national guard, which is divided in its subordination between the president and the Ministry of Defense, crucial legislative clarification is missing. Although some people assume that the prime minister would become the commander-in-chief in the case of an armed conflict, the constitution does not mention such a role. Who would be the actual commander of Latvia's armed forces in the event of a military conflict?

It has been suggested that the National Security Council would be better placed under the prime minister because this would greatly help to implement its decisions. Finally, it might be argued that the division between troops assigned to the Ministry of Interior and to the Ministry of Defense could be overcome by merging both in one ministry of security affairs (Interview with Adamson, 14 June 2000). Two committees deal with security affairs in the Latvian parliament, but as these rely only on minor staff, almost no inquiries are made, not to speak of legislation initiated.

In Lithuania, the president is supreme commander of the armed forces and the highest political control organ. In the first years after independence, the president usually consulted with parliament on security policy-making, but President Algirdas Brazauskas changed this course in 1993 by deciding the majority of foreign,

defense and security policy issues without consulting the legislature (Nekrasas, 1996, p. 7). The Lithuanian State Defense Council, consisting of the prime minister, the chairman of parliament, the minister of defense and the commander-in-chief, and headed by the president, coordinates the Ministry of National Defense, the Ministry of Interior and the National Security Department; it is a consultative body assisting the president. Yet, *de facto* the State Defense Council does not seem to play a primary role in security decision-making (Nekrasas, 1996, p. 7). Apart from the State Defense Council, the president formed a Coordination Council on foreign policy, which comprises, among others, the minister of foreign affairs and the chairperson of the *Seimas* (parliament) committee of foreign affairs. Like the Defense Council, it has little impact on decision-making.

The minister of defense, a civilian, is appointed by the Lithuanian president and serves as the prime minister's senior advisor on defense policy. The commander-in-chief, also appointed by the president, is subordinate to the minister of national defense and responsible for overseeing the armed forces as well as the 'home guard'. The border police is subordinate to the Ministry of Interior. Finally, there is a civil defense department at the Ministry of Defense which is responsible for the protection of citizens in wartime and during crisis and emergency situations (Bajarunas, 1995, 20 f.).

Build-up of Armed Forces

Absence of Blue Print

The Baltic states built up new armies from scratch, without relying on those armies which already existed under socialism. The military build-up became part of an ongoing process of state- and nation-building and, later, largely responded to NATO requirements. In contrast to official material stating intentions and achievements, the following section highlights shortcomings and contradictions. Two major stages can be discerned: an *ad hoc* and largely unplanned formation of armed forces lasting until the mid-1990s, followed by active preparation for NATO membership. Most of the initial ambitions came to a halt due to financial constraints, institutional infighting, persistent Soviet military legacies, the misallocation of resources, and diverging priorities.

Only by pressing for NATO membership could the military establishment improve its otherwise miserable position as far as domestic financial allocations were concerned. Preparation for NATO membership streamlined the chaotic military build-up, particularly as far as command structures, the establishment of education and training priorities, and acquisition policies were concerned.

The build-up of armed forces in the Baltic states had a somewhat protracted start. The reasons are manifold: indecision over the kind of army to strive for, modest budgetary allocations, lack of weapons, and an unclear division of labor between the various security agencies, that is, regular armed forces, border guard, national guard, guard services as well as all kinds of police forces (on Baltic defense budgets, see Möller and Wellmann, 2001, p. 117). From the mid-1990s, the initial aim of forming national defense systems began to clash with the orientation towards NATO membership. Speeding up NATO integration involved a change in priorities, usually in favor of interoperable command and communication structures and peacekeeping forces and at the expense of territorial defense.

Against the backdrop of the non-violent independence movements, significant parts of the Baltic political elite initially questioned the necessity of national defense forces, particularly in Lithuania and Estonia. Border defense, a national guard and a strong police force would suffice, it was argued in Lithuania's parliament. Yet, this position was soon abandoned. In Estonia, a similar debate evolved after independence. Estonian Social Democrats and representatives of some rural parties preferred a small, professional army, combining border guards, national defense forces, and a rescue service. In 1994, a Law on Service in the Defense Forces was adopted in Estonia foreseeing compulsory service for all men between 18 and 27 as well as an alternative service of 15 months—the debate had come to an end. In 1992, some actors in Latvia, for example former Soviet KGB officer Janis Adamson, later twice Latvian minister of interior, also proposed a purely professional army, but this idea was not pursued either (Interview with Adamson, 16 June 2000).

The build-up of armed forces in the Baltic states was based on volunteers from the national movements, native Soviet officers who returned from other Soviet republics, and returning emigrants—mostly veterans from the US or Canadian armed forces or national guards. In 1990/91, Lithuania took the lead in building up voluntary forces for civil defense, border guards, and emergency police (Gobins, Ernecker, Kerner, Möller, 1998, pp. 126 f.). After independence, armies were formed under the newly established defense ministries. All the Baltic states opted for conscription-based armies, but allowed alternative service for conscientious objectors. The conscription period was set at 8–12 months. Two defense systems thus emerged in parallel, with separate command structures, budgets, and procurement.

The voluntary defense forces felt like "guardians of the revolution". Given their semi-official status, these forces initially showed little enthusiasm for civil obedience, which eventually led to mutinies in all three countries in the period 1993–96 (Gobins, Ernecker, Kerner, Möller, 1998, pp. 127 f.). An additional problem related to the legacy of the officer corps trained under Soviet rule. Not all the native Soviet officers who joined the armed forces of the Baltic states originally identified with the cause of independence and some of them were not only Russified, but belonged to the die-hard pro-Soviet forces, as for example the Latvian officer Viktor Alksnis, member of the Presidium of the last Council of People's Deputies of the USSR. Political identification did not necessarily coincide with ethnic belonging, and ethnic belonging did not necessarily qualify for the military. Furthermore, the Baltic states have faced huge difficulties in attracting soldiers and officers to their armed forces. Despite the official stress on threats emanating from Russia and calls for military service as a public duty, the military has been unpopular among

both conscripts and officers. Many young men evade conscription quoting health reasons, religious convictions, or enrolling in university studies. Draft dodging and officers quitting service immediately after completing training in western countries have been wide-spread problems. Additionally, the maltreatment of regular soldiers—called dedovchina in Soviet times—belongs to the unpleasant legacies with which the Baltic armies are still bestowed (*Defence Review*, No.12/2000, 22 March). Poor discipline, drunkenness, and the beating of inferiors have often been reported as features of the newly built armed forces.

The defense structure of the Baltic states exposes certain commonalties. All three have regular armed forces (including army, navy, and air force), voluntary paramilitary defense leagues (SKAT, Zemessardze, Kaitseliit), and border guards. The air force and navy are of minor importance compared with the land army. The co-existence of 'regular' armed forces, paramilitary organizations, and the border guards strongly reflects the transitional context and the competition between an outward-oriented regular army and territorial defense aimed at 'total defense' in the event of an invasion. Whereas the formation of regular armed forces relies heavily on nationals who have served in the Soviet armed forces, the territorial defense leagues, commanded by regional army commanders, represent paramilitary security services shaped largely by ethnic nationalists. During peacetime, professional servicemen, non-commissioned officers, officers and volunteers make up these territorial defense guards. The semi-official status of the defense guards is still under-regulated. Defense leagues act as private security firms as well as performing state functions. The overlap of governmental and private functions almost inevitably invites misuse of power.

Over time, the build-up of armed forces in the Baltic states, including the paramilitary defense leagues or national guards, has been strongly influenced by military cooperation with foreign countries. Cooperation with Finland and Sweden probably plays the most important role in Estonia (particularly the Estonian Defense League); with Denmark, Germany, and the US in Latvia; and with the US and Poland in Lithuania. The military academy in Lithuania, for example, has been shaped on the US West Point Academy, whilst the paramilitary units are fashioned on the US National Guards.

Territorial or 'Total' Defense

There is a consensus in the Baltic states' defense concepts that land forces should form the backbone of national defense, based on a field army with trained conscripts, territorial defense units based on volunteers, and a small "reaction force" capable of participating in international operations. Behind this semblance of a joint model, there nonetheless exist different views on likely threats and the way to respond to them. Should national defense efforts counter an invasion only by concentrating on a couple of strategic areas, or in the depth of the whole territory? Is it the task of the armed forces to maintain a bridgehead for external assistance, or should one follow a 'Chechnyan' scenario where the enemy will have to reckon with heavy losses from perma-nent guerilla warfare conducted by fast moving 'hit-and-run' squads (LaGrone, 2000, pp. 122–128; Zaccor, 1994, pp. 682–702; Clemmesen, 2000, pp. 115–121)?

Several scenarios have been proposed under the general heading of "territori-al defense": for example a professional reaction force supported by a reserve; a field army manned by mobilized conscripts; a purely territorial defense mobilizing the populace and involving

civil disobedience and guerilla tactics ("total defense"); or a mixed territorial-field army defense (Clemmesen, 2000, pp. 115–121). The latter seems to be the option regarded by most as superior. The Defense Concept of Lithuania, for example, foresees "total and unconditional" defense, which in the case of aggression includes military defense, guerilla warfare, civil disobedience, non-collaboration and the request for NATO assistance (*The Monthly Survey of Baltic and Post-Soviet Politics*, 1997, January, pp. 84-121).

In terms of defense capabilities, all the Baltic states combine concepts of 'territorial' (or 'total') defense with regular armed forces, based on compulsory conscription. On 21 October 1995, the defense guards of the three Baltic states signed an agreement foreseeing cooperation in the fields of training, staff, and field training exercises, as well as common sports contests (*ETA*, 16 January 2001). Yet, in practice cooperation barely goes beyond ceremonial events and minor projects on cooperation in the field of disaster control and youth training—a joint 'total defense' has never been developed (*ETA*, 28 April 2000).

Estonia's Armed Forces

Preparations to set up an army began immediately after independence in early fall 1991. The Fundamentals of National Defense, adopted by parliament on 15 March 1993, call for "total defense" based on professional soldiers, highly trained reservists and voluntary civilian forces—the defense league. The term of conscription is 12 months. The Estonian armed forces consist of the regular armed forces, the defense league, the border guard, and the regiment of the internal defense.

The main goal of the defense forces is to occupy and defend strategically important areas in the case of an armed attack. The ground forces' main task consists in resisting an aggressor by launching intermittent defense and counterattack operations as well as organizing guerilla operations (Laaneots, 1999). The navy is to guard and defend the coastal areas and territorial waters, whereas the Estonian air force is responsible for monitoring and controlling air space. At the end of the 1990s, the navy had five small ships, whereas the air force only existed on paper. The proposed wartime strength of the armed forces is 25–30,000 people, although it is questionable to what extent the defense league could be counted on as a mobilization reserve. The Estonian ground forces include six independent infantry battalions, an artillery battalion, an air defense battalion, and a peace operations center.

The main task of the defense league (*Kaitseliit*) consists in preparing reserve forces and contributing to rescue operations. Of the officially reported 8,500 members of *Kaitseliit*, only some 3,000 can be counted as active members (Interview with Tiit Norkoiv, 20 June 2000). The rest are older veterans—aged between 60 and 70—who retain their guns for personal (and

not always legal) use. The defense league relies additionally on auxiliary organizations such as the Women's Home Defense and the Home Daughters. In 2000, it was admitted at the Estonian Ministry of Defense that the defense league is a far cry from a real defense unit. Nonetheless, ambitions are literally flying high—the Estonian defense league wants to provide its members with flying expertise. The *Kaitseliit* plans to build up an air corps of its own based on 17 powered aircraft and some 57 gliders originally belonging to the Soviet paramilitary organization, DOSAAF, and handed over to the defense league by the Ministry of Defense in 2000. Sweden offered the *Kaitseliit* used jet trainers several years ago, but the Estonian side declined the offer, explaining that it lacked the funds for sustaining the aircraft (*Postimees*, 30 January 2001).

The Estonian air defense units consist of radar units, air defense artillery, missile units, and air squadrons. The naval forces are based on the coast guard, marines and the navy (Haab, 1995, pp. 42 f.). In 1992/93, the Estonian government planned a combined force strength of armed forces and border guards of 5,000 men. In 1999, Estonia's regular armed forces by far exceeded these initial figures.

With only three to four land force units, the peacetime composition of the armed forces is actually quite small. Their main task consists in mobile territorial defense throughout the territory in the event of an invasion (Öövel, 1996, pp. 7–10). In order to qualify for NATO membership, Estonia aims to increase the wartime strength of its defense forces, improve its airspace monitoring system, develop rapid reaction forces, increase its mine countermeasure capacity, and unify and improve its military training (*0*, 19 January 2000). Anti-aircraft defense, air surveillance, and anti-tank weapons are the priority for the armed forces (*Eesti Paevaleht*, 18 January 2001).

The procurement of the respective weaponry is not only expensive, but also complicated due to the security concerns of the provider countries. Currently, the Estonian armed forces are mainly armed with light infantry weapons and anti-tank weapons bought in Romania, China, Israel and Sweden. Additionally, the US donated some 40,000 M14 combat rifles, and Finland provided an unknown number of howitzers.

The build-up of Estonia's armed forces met with serious obstacles, some structural, some self-inflicted. Though the military budget was increased from 3 percent of the state budget in 1993 to 5 percent in 1994 and 4.7 percent in 1995, most of the money spent in the early years went on the reconstruction of military installations, leaving only small amounts for procurement. It is planned to reach the NATO target of two percent of GDP on military expenditures required for NATO membership by 2003.

Apart from an inadequate infrastructure, the most serious problem facing the Estonian armed forces is the shortage of officers, non-commissioned officers and trained technical personnel (Laaneots, 1999). In 1998, the commander-in-chief of Estonia's regular armed forces, Johannes Kert, reported that out of 1,200 posts for non-commissioned officers,

Figure 1: Estonia's Armed Forces in 1999

Source: Möller and Wellmann, 2001, p. 82

Regular Armed Forces			Border Guard	Defense League	Mobilization Reserves
5,456			2,913	8,500	14,000
Army	*Navy*	*Air Force*			
4,987	344	125			

only 400 were actually filled (*Baltic Times*, 5–11 March 1998). In response to this problem, the Estonian General Staff has on several occasions allowed the rapid promotion of officers—some following a mere 20-day reserve training course—in order to fill personnel gaps (*Defence Review*, No. 13/2000, 22–28 March). In January 2001, the Estonian defense minister, faced with strong criticism of the promotion practices, finally set specific qualification standards for officers: all officers must have undergone at least secondary education, while officers holding the post of battalion commander or above must have received higher education at civilian universities (*Defence Review*, No. 05/2001, 24–30 January). A law on military service passed by the Estonian parliament, *Riigikogo*, in March 2000 followed the same line of reasoning. The new law forces the army to discharge less capable and poorly educated non-commissioned officers who will not be allowed to command students. More intelligent students will even have to serve a longer period as conscripts—the full 12 months—while the less able can be discharged after serving eight months (*Defence Review*, No. 12/2000, 22 March).

Service in the armed forces is unpopular and draft dodging widespread. Embarking on a professional military career is not an attractive option for young Estonian males. Conscription is reported to be very unpopular. Units of the regular armed forces often do not reach their nominal strength (Corley, 1996, pp. 107–111). Of those drafted in the mid-1990s, up to 60 percent proved to be physically unsuited (Raid, 1996, p. 14). There has been a debate for some time now on allowing non-citizens—mainly Russians—to serve in paramilitary rescue units under the Ministry of Interior in order to bridge the personnel gap (Defence Review, No. 16/1999, 14–20 April). The Estonian laws do not permit non-citizens to join the army, and the idea of drafting non-citizens is not popular within the Estonian Ministry of Defense. Surprisingly, Russians with Estonian citizenship are, as a rule, more willing to join the military than Estonians. A frequent problem, however, is that these Russians do not understand Estonian (*Defence Review*, No. 16/1999, 14–20 April). A report on the first draft in January 2001 provides some insight into the structure of the draft cohort: out of 973 conscripts, four had undergone university training, 483 secondary or specialized secondary education, 376 basic education and 66 primary education. The number of men drafted annually is approximately 3,500 (*Postimees*, 13 January 2001).

The figures reflect a larger problem— the low level of education of members of the armed forces and the limited attraction of the armed forces as far as more highly qualified people are concerned. Like Latvia and Lithuania, Estonia also has Russian-speaking citizens serving in its armed forces, and the question has been raised of whether these ethnic Russians would switch sides in the event of a conflict with Russia. A sociological study conducted in 1999 dismissed the assumption that most of the ethnic Russians serving in the Estonian army would turn against the Estonian state, but admitted that a certain percentage would do so (*Defence Review*, No. 16/1999, 14–20 April).

Most of the money spent on the formation of the armed forces in the 1990s went on buying uniforms and individual weapons, and renovating barracks. Budgetary means do not allow for an effective procurement policy or for the buildup of a military infrastructure. Given the lack of significant funds for the formation of combat-ready armed forces, Estonia's regular armed forces resemble more a 'home defense' model than a modern Western army based on heavy weaponry or technology. The prominence of the territorial defense guard in the overall security concept reflects the adherence to "total defense" and "people in arms" (Estonian Ministry of Defense, 1996). With Estonia preparing for NATO membership, adherents of the "territorial defense" concept have clashed on several occasions with proponents of NATO requirements—for example President Meri dismissed the acting commander-in-chief, Urmas Roosimagi, in early 2000 on the grounds that he was not concentrating all his energy on speeding up NATO membership (*Defence Review*, No. 02/2000, 11 January).

Frequent conflicts between the regular armed forces and the territorial defense league mirrored the unclear division of authority and lack of civil control. The *Kaitselliit's* combination of military, civil, and business activities allowed the defense league not only to become involved in politics, but to misuse its powers (Institute of International and Social Studies et al., 1997, p. 17). The *Kaitselliit* and the border guard in Estonia gained a bad reputation for proliferating insecurity through bullying, corruption, weapons thefts, mutiny, shoot-outs with the police and—in the case of the border guard—participation in car smuggling (Kerner, 1994; Oll, 1996, p. 3). Some people obviously joined the defense league only in order to acquire weapons and military training while assuming a "Rambo" mentality (Interview with Tiit Norkoiv, 20 June 2000). Defense league members often work as auxiliary policemen. In 1999, for example, the city of Tallinn,

concluded an agreement on hiring *Kaitselliit* security services (*Defence Review*, No. 05/2001, 24–30 January). Given the tensions over the status of *Kaitselliit*, the Estonian government ultimately required approval of the statutes of the defense league, its structure, location, and procedure of forming in December 1999 (*Estonian News Agency*, 21 December 1999).

The Estonian armed forces' goals for the period until 2005 foresee, among others, the further development of mine warfare capabilities, rapid reaction forces, the modernization of logistics and social amenities, and the standardization of education (Luik, 1999, pp. 27–34). The ultimate vision of the Estonian armed forces is nonetheless under dispute. Major General Ants Laaneots is promoting future reliance on heavy arms along the lines of Swiss or Slovenian armory—Switzerland has 556 modern Leopard tanks and 812 armored personnel carriers (APC), whilst Slovenia has 100 tanks and 138 armored personnel carriers as well as some 200 artillery pieces. Laaneots justifies his proposal with the role model of the first Chechnyan war when the Chechens fought against Russia with tanks, APCs and cannon and mortars (*Postimees*, 22 January 2001).

There has not been a significant public debate in Estonia on the military traditions of Estonia's armed forces in connection with collaboration with Germany during World War II. There are veterans organizations of SS divisions which fought the Soviet army before and during the war, and about 1,500 such veterans met at a congress in the capital, Tallinn, on 11 July 1998. In contrast to their colleagues in Latvia, they were not supported by major political parties or parts of the Estonian government.

Latvia's Armed Forces

The *ad hoc* formation of the Latvian armed forces began soon after the intervention of the Soviet special forces (OMON) in Vilnius and Riga in January 1991. The Latvian national guard, *Zemessardze*, and the state security service were established on the basis of these voluntary paramilitary formations (Zalkalns, 1999, pp. 72–85). Based on legislation passed on 30 August 1994, the armed forces at this stage included border protection forces (3,662 men/300 officers), the army (1,630 men/166 officers), navy (899 men/59 officers) and air as well as air defense forces (234 men/47 officers). Similar to the old Soviet model, the Interior Ministry commanded regiments for internal purposes with a strength of approximately 2,100 men (Viksne, 1995, pp. 64 f.). The regular armed forces are complemented by the national guard, *Zemessardze*, which is organized territorially and subordinated to both the Defense Ministry as well as the president. It represents a mixture of a rural self-defense, semi-private security guard, veteran nationalists' organization, and training ground for guerilla operations.

The Latvian government originally aimed at a force of 9,000 men, consisting of 3,000 "volunteer regulars" and 6,000 conscripts. These figures did not actually say very much—it was not clear what the relationship of conscripts, officers, non-commissioned officers, reserve officers, mobilization reserves as well as permanent and temporary home guard people should be.

A national risk analysis and a military threat analysis were finally undertaken in 1994. These formed the basis for the National Security Concept and the Defense Concept which were approved by the cabinet in 1995, though both concepts still failed as operable planning guidance for the armed forces. Neither the numerical strength of the armed forces nor their equipment, for example, were determined on the basis of analyzed needs, and force structure plans such as the "NAF 2001" five-year plan were not backed by budgetary allocations (Zalkalns, September 2000).

In the year 2000, Latvia's armed forces allegedly consisted of 4,176 active troops, 14,500 reservists, 3,700 members of paramilitary units, and 16,000 members of the national guard (Föhrenbach, 2000, p. 34). Of the total number of 650 soldiers in the Baltic Battalion (BaltBat), some 200 soldiers serve in Latvia's company.

Figure 2: Military Personnel of Latvia 2000
(excluding Border Guard and National Guard)
Source: Möller and Wellmann, 2001, p. 82

Personnel	Number
Officers	634
NCO's	1,033
Soldiers	469
Draftees	1,528
Civilians	1,512
Total	**4,176**

The first obligatory service law, which was passed by the end of 1992, mandated an 18-month service period, resulting in an annual draft pool of about 15,000. Regardless of this formidable draft pool, the build-up of Latvia's armed forces lacked an idea of what purposes the army should serve for many years. Until the year 2000, recruits were drafted not only for the defense forces, but also for the troops of the Ministry of Interior (the prison guard brigade and the mobile police brigade), the border guard (under the Ministry of Interior) and the national guard, Zemessardze. The first priority of the build-up of Latvian armed forces was the establishment of the border guard which originally performed not only border control but also border defense duties. Originally it was possible for conscientious objectors to join an alternative service, and some 5 to 6 people actually did so. In the absence of a law on alternative service, this option was abolished in 1997.

Emphasis during initial training was on typical Soviet skills—physical training such as hand-to-hand combat and parachute training for special mission units, (though airplanes for an airborne reconnaissance battalion were lacking). Highflying ideas to acquire jet fighters and missiles, to form a tank battalion or to purchase battleships soon had to be abandoned. Approximately one third of the estimated annual draft pool are actually recruited, but without adequate weapons, ammunition, clothing, or even housing facilities they remain—in the words of Gundars Zalkalns—an "unarmed and untrained mob" (Zalkans, 2000). Soldiers with no more than a few months training often act as instructors and basic armament at the end of the 1990s consisted of a couple of thousand Kalashnikovs. The national guard, at least, was able to provide some, though by far not all, of its members with individual weapons after the US donated some 10,000 unused M-14 rifles to Latvia.

The establishment of a National Defense Academy (NDA) in 1993, closely cooperating with NATO's Marshall Center, was intended to train a NATO-interoperable officer corps. Yet, without clearly formulated requirements for personnel, training, operations, intelligence and logistics from the Ministry of Defense, the National Defense Academy had no idea what the needs of the armed forces were. The NDA is currently preparing platoon, company and battalion commanders, relying on NATO's tactical handbooks and focussing additionally on English language teaching (National Defense Academy of Latvia, Riga 2000; Interview with Ilmars Viksne, 21 June 2000; Viksne, 2000, pp. 17–29). The NDA is just beginning to train personnel for non-military tasks, such as medical relief and international peacekeeping operations, though most of this training is performed in Denmark.

Officers often left the armed forces immediately upon returning from extensive training in the West. The language and management skills acquired in the West gave them far better income opportunities in private industry. In 1998, out of 212 Latvian military personnel who underwent training in the West, only seven remained in the armed forces. The brain drain from the armed forces was stemmed somewhat after salary improvements came into effect in 1999. Given this state of affairs in the mid-1990s, the regular armed forces lagged far behind the national guard, the army of the Ministry of Interior and the state security service as far as combat capacities were concerned. The state security service, an anti-terrorist special mission unit, was transferred at some point from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Defense, and is since in search of a military mission.

Against the background of a mismanaged recruiting policy—personal connections, bribes, and faked medical certificates greatly helped in draft evasion—a highly oversized staff was created that kept itself busy throughout the 1990s with constant reorganization, fights over lines of subordination, and personal intrigues. The officer corps on which the Latvian army was built consisted mostly of indigenous Soviet officers aged between 45 and 60 who returned to their homeland while retaining their Russian pensions. When asked by the then minister of defense, Talavs Jundzis, to give up their Russian pensions or leave the armed forces, only seven out of a total of 70 officers decided to stay.

Serving in the Latvian armed forces usually meant promotion in rank, quickly leading to the same top-heavy officer corps one finds in other Eastern European countries. The Latvian armed forces became a safe heaven for Soviet officers who would otherwise have found themselves unemployed. Out of 700 Latvian officers who had served with the Soviet forces, some 300 found employment with the Latvian armed forces. It is estimated that in 2000 some 20–25 percent of the Latvian officer corps were still of Soviet extraction (Interview with Stanislavs Voicehovic, 20 June 2000). This would indicate that the majority of Soviet-trained officers have retired over the last ten years and a new cohort has emerged with training experience in the US, Germany, Denmark, Italy or other NATO countries.

Of the approximately 23,000 Russian military personnel demobilized in 1994, only very few—probably less than half a dozen—were recruited by the Latvian army. Most of the demobilized Russians returned to Russia or remained in Latvia as military pensioners with alien status. These former Russian officers do not

represent a social or political problem for Latvia, because they receive Russian pensions, which are much higher than the regular Latvian ones. An unknown number of demobilized Russian officers, most of whom are reported to be engaged in retail business, remain in Latvia illegally.

Though there has not been a screening of former Soviet officers, the step-by-step replacement of the older cohort may mitigate NATO's justified fears of security leaks. Fifteen standardized interviews with retired Soviet-Latvian officers, conducted within the framework of this project in Riga in July 2000, confirm that an identity change took place even among older Soviet-trained officers. NATO membership is generally favored; there is no discernable inclination towards authoritarian rule; and most of these former officers cope with the hardships of system change individually, not relying on veterans associations or the sharing of a unified political worldview.

In February 1997, a new service law was passed, reducing the service period to 12 months, eliminating the original exemption for farmers, allowing students to go directly into the reserves, thus bypassing the draft, and replacing the often corrupt regional induction system with a centralized one. The problems with the new service law are the lack of qualified reserve officers or of offers to non-citizens to join the army, and the *de facto* elimination of alternative service for conscientious objectors, "a concept that was included but was removed essentially due to the newness of such a concept and due to pressure from the 'big four' religions which strive for monopoly on moral issues" (Zalkalns, 2000). The shortage of officers was at least partially remedied by hiring officers from the national guard. In the longer term, there are plans to base the air force and navy solely on

professionals, whereas the ground forces will remain a mixture of professional soldiers and conscripts.

In the first years after independence, the national guard, *Zemessardze*, consisted mainly of patriotic farmers in the countryside, but as most Latvians were reluctant to join, it also had a significant share of Russian-speaking members, mostly ethnic Latvians from Eastern Latvia whose mother tongue is nonetheless Russian. The initial patriotism soon wore off. *Zemessardze* assumed responsibility for "law and order" in the countryside and performed guard duties, often competing with guard units under the Ministry of Interior. The Latvian police, in an attempt to establish a public monopoly of power instead of the national guard's "self-help", frequently accused *Zemessardze* of being undisciplined, trigger-happy, ethnically prejudiced, and corrupt (Lieven, 1994, p. 324). Immediately after independence, *Zemessardze's* reputation was badly shaken by its criminal record. As Lieven reports:

"In the first ten months of 1992, the National Guard was responsible for 54 shooting incidents, in which seven people were killed and 31 wounded. After one such occurrence in October 1992 in the predominantly Russian town of Ventspils, the town council called for the removal of the Guardsmen, describing them as more dangerous than the criminals" (Lieven, 1994, p. 324).

The frequent reports about both *Zemessardze* and the border guard's involvement in illegal activities point to common problems: under-funding of the security services, unclear division of labor, deficiencies in framework legislation for the security agencies, weak parliamentary oversight, and the instrumentalization of security services by representatives of the executive branch for personal interests and ambitions. Though *Zemessardze's* criminal record has improved in recent

years—"only" 200 members were discharged or penalized in the year 2000—of the three Baltic national guards, *Zemessardze* is probably the one causing politicians and law enforcement most concern.

Zemessardze had initially been under the formal control of Latvia's Supreme Soviet—the predecessor of the *Seimas*. *De facto* it was controlled by its commander, the Rightist deputy Girts Kristovsky, whom the defense and interior ministers accused in 1992 of establishing a second army outside the state (Lieven, 1994, p. 326). In 1995/96, two *Zemessardze* battalions even declared that they would not subordinate themselves to the Ministry of Defense. Since the mid-1990s, the control of the national guard has supposedly improved, particularly following the creation of a unified defense system (Interview with Talavs Jundzis, 15 June 2000).

Though the national guard was ultimately put under the Ministry of Defense and exposed to the training procedures of the Michigan National Guard, the mixture of "total defense" and policing tasks remains a cause of institutional rivalry and unclear command chains. The military part of the national guard is supervised by the Ministry of Defense, whereas the nonmilitary functions are commanded by the president. It is hard to say how many of the nominally 16,000 national guard members would actually be capable of contributing to "total defense" in the case of an armed conflict. There are reported to be some 1,600 full-time members, although other estimates number merely 1,000 (Interview with Talavs Jundzis, 15 June 2000). Approximately 30 percent of the 16,000 nominal members are armed with rifles. Others have pistols or are unarmed.

Throughout the 1990s, the Baltic armies' military traditions linked to collaboration with German forces

often caused international concern. Apart from the *Zemessardze*, another paramilitary force of radical Latvian nationalists was formed after independence—the *Aizsargi*. The *Aizsargi* was officially registered in 1994 and derives its name from an organization that existed in Latvia before 1940. During the German occupation in World War II, the *Aizsargi* served as a self-defense and auxiliary police unit. Once the Soviet troops occupied the Baltic states, members were persecuted as "supporters of the Germans".

In 1994, the reborn paramilitaries from Aizsargi were accused of bombing a World War II monument in Riga, of infiltrating the national guard in order to obtain weapons and of even planning a *coup d'état* (*RFE/RL Newsline, Central & Eastern Europe*, 11 June 1997; Lieven, 1994, p. 327). In 1998, several mysterious explosive devices were placed at the Russian Embassy and the one remaining synagogue in Riga. Tension had arisen following a protest by mostly Russian pensioners outside the Riga City Hall on 3 March 1998. The protest became disorderly and the Riga police used excessive means to disperse the elderly crowd.

Against the backdrop of these ethnic tensions, the *Aizsargi* legion organized a public parade in 1998, similar to the annual marches in Ulster. On 16 March 1944, the two divisions of the SS Latvian Legion in the German occupation army engaged in a major battle against the Red Army at the Velikaya River on USSR territory. Some 400 SS veterans held an annual parade on 16 March in Riga in 1998, 1999, and 2000 in commemoration of this event (*Defence Review*, No. 12/2000, 22 March). The government and the *Seimas* asked for officials and military leaders to stay away from the Latvian Legion parade. Yet, parliament proclaimed the very day of the

parade—16 March—as a day of commemoration for all Latvian soldiers "from all sides". Jewish organizations called for the cancellation of the parade and the Russian government strongly criticized Latvia. Under pressure from abroad, President Guntis Ulmanis finally stated that making 16 March a day of commemoration for all Latvian soldiers was "wrong" (Huang, 1999).

Aizsargi was banned in the aftermath of these events, but a Latvian National Front (LNF) has been attempting to revive the Latvian pro-Nazi movement since February 1998. The parliamentary declaration "On Legionnaires" of 29 October 1998 officially exonerated the Latvian SS divisions from guilt as war criminals and mandated that the Latvian government begin a worldwide campaign to clear their names. On 18 March 1999, almost a year after the bomb attack on the Riga synagogue, Lainis Kamaldins, head of the Office for the Defense of the Constitution, even stated at a press conference that perhaps "the Jews" themselves had planted the bomb to create an international outcry and vilify the good name of Latvia abroad (Tel Aviv University, The Stephen Roth Institute, 1998/99). Latvia's international reputation took a hard beating due to the government's reluctance to distance itself unequivocally from extremist military traditions.

Lithuania's Armed Forces

Lithuania began to form its armed forces without a national security concept or a defense doctrine. The Lithuanian ground forces have 4,300 servicemen. At the core of army is the "Iron Wolf" motorized infantry brigade (3,600 personnel) with eight battalions equipped with light weapons and armored combat vehicles (Bajarunas, 1995, pp. 20 f.). In 1991/1992, the Ministry of Defense laid ground for the formation of an air

force and a navy, which currently consists of a flotilla of vessels and patrol cutters, three radar stations, maintenance and logistics, and the coastal defense battalion. The airforce consists of 850 personnel, though it has neither combat units nor combat aircraft. The voluntary defense service, created in 1991, enrolled a total of some 12,000 volunteers, most of them only loosely attached. The border guard and coastal guard account for another 3,900 men. 27,700 men are in the Lithuanian reserve. In 2001, Lithuania had some 12,900 active troops, with 2,000 professional soldiers and conscripts, and an additional 11,300 volunteers belonging to the voluntary defense forces, the *SKAT*, which were renamed *KASP* in 1998 (FBIS-SOV-2001-0703).

The peacetime task of the voluntary defense service consists in preparing conscripts for the army; in wartime it would be responsible for mobilization and territorial defense, including civil disobedience, non-collaboration and other forms of non-violent defense. The staff company that deals with security and supplies is the only *KASP* unit formed of regular servicemen. *KASP* consists of 10 combined teams and 2 aviation squadrons.

Apart from the official home guard, a right wing paramilitary volunteer force was created too, the *Sauliai. Sauliai* was backed by the then Lithuanian Defense Minister Butkevicius and turned into a veritable threat to the stability of the governments under Presidents Landsbergis and Brazauskas (Lieven, 1994, p. 328).

Lithuania is portrayed by some observers as the Baltic country most advanced in preparing for NATO membership. If this is actually the case, it might be due to its focus on personnel training and improving servicemen's living conditions, thus causing a lower turnover of recently

Members of the modern Lithuanian National Army. Photo: Ria Nowosti

qualified personnel than in the other two Baltic states. Although relying heavily on former Soviet officers during the initial stage, there has been a massive "clean-up" in recent years. With a new generation of western-trained officers, the Soviet ones are treated as unwanted (*Kauno Diena-ELTA*, 17 July-15 September 2000). Lithuania profits from Polish experiences with NATO accession through its close cooperation with Poland. The Lithuanian-Polish battalion, LITPOLBAT, is preparing to participate in peacekeeping operations from 2001 onwards. A squadron of Lithuanian peacekeepers has already served in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Military plans see the "Iron Wolf" brigade ready for joint NATO operations by

2006. NATO has nonetheless judged that Lithuania's national defense plans are too ambitious and lack adequate financing (FBIS-SOV-2001-0703). This holds particularly true for weapons acquisition, and Lithuania therefore plans to increase the procurement share of its military budget up to 20 percent. Priority areas are purchases of anti-aircraft and anti-tank weaponry.

Lithuania is currently reorganizing its ground forces with the aim of strengthening the command and control system, combat potential, improving interoperability, and developing a long-term defense

planning scheme (Möller, Wollmann, 2001, 93). To this end, Lithuania will establish three military regions, form a rapid reaction brigade and obtain 67 obsolete M-113 armored personnel carriers from Germany (*ETA*, 27 August 2000). Although there are plans to increase the defense budget to 2 percent of GDP by 2001, this is not certain since the New Union party in parliament actually aims to cut the defense budget. Long-term priorities include furthermore the adoption of a new force structure, systematic education and training, logistics, and the development of infrastructure (Petrauskaite, 1999, p. 21). In terms of armaments, it is planned to reduce the diversity of weapon systems and types,

to increase the cost-effectiveness of maintenance and to provide NATO-compatible weaponry. The still weak air defense system should be enhanced by establishing the Regional Air Surveillance Coordination Center under BALTNET, the exchange of radar data with Poland and improvements in the infrastructure and logistics (Statkeviciute, 1999).

Weapons Acquisition

Building their armies from scratch with only minor production facilities for military goods (boots and uniforms, for example), the emerging Baltic armed forces face huge problems with modern equipment. Procurement in the early years barely covered the basic needs for clothing, accommodation, training, and ammunition. Weapons and equipment have been purchased rather haphazardly during the last ten years, according to the funds available. Due to the absence of a joint approach to defense, it took almost ten years following independence to form a Standardization Working Group and a Coordination Group in the field of combined production or the procurement of weaponry and equipment. Nonetheless, coordinated procurement among the Baltic states will, with all likelihood, only emerge after they have joined NATO.

Among the main providers of military assistance to the Baltic states—mainly training and weaponry—are Denmark (BaltBaT), Germany (BalTron), Norway (BaltNet), and Sweden (BaltDefCol). Whereas the early priorities for procurement consisted in basic clothing, small weapons, and training facilities, the next years will concentrate on communications and air surveillance (radar systems and command, control and information systems), air defense weapons, anti-tank defense, and mine-warfare equipment. All three Baltic states are still debating the necessity for heavy

armament, including artillery, tanks and a combat airforce.

Due to cost considerations, Latvia bought small quantities of Soviet-era light arms from Central and East European states (Lejins, 1996, p. 56). The basic equipment of its armed forces additionally includes sniper rifles bought from the UK, anti-tank systems and Soviet-era light arms. Anatol Lieven holds that significant parts of the Estonian stock of Makarov pistols and anti-tank rockets were confiscated from illegal arms dealers who use Estonia for transit. In 1992, the then Lithuanian Defense Minister Audrius Butkevicius cut a deal for automatic weapons and rockets headed for the Caucasus. Lithuania received a large part of the weaponry in return for allowing the weapons to pass through its territory (Lieven, 1994, p. 321).

These shadowy methods of weapons procurement in the early stages of state-building were subsequently replaced by western sales and donations and by the delivery of Polish (for example, for LITPOLBAT) or Czech weapons. Despite the legalization of arms acquisition, the Baltic states have played an infamous role as transit countries for arms trafficking throughout the 1990s. In Estonia, for example, several General Staff officers have been standing trial since May 1997 (!) for the illegal import and sale of small arms.

Western countries were hesitant about supplying modern weaponry to the Baltic states, mostly donating old equipment, such as vessels or armored vehicles after stripping them of modern communication systems. This "striptease" policy was adhered to by Norway when it donated a Storm Class fast patrol boat to Latvia. Sweden, to

quote another example, donated five 30-year old coast guard boats and removed all firepower from the 13 World War II-vintage armored personnel carriers which it donated to Latvia (and which could not be used because of Latvia's sandy terrain) (Lejins, 1996, p. 56).

Due to lack of funds for the procurement of weapons, Estonia relied to a large extent on defunct weaponry donated by western countries that would have otherwise been scrapped. Estonia bought assault rifles, grenades, carbines, mines and grenade launchers from China; 3,000 Kalashnikovs were purchased in Romania; Carl Gustaf grenade launchers were acquired from Sweden; some 40,500 M-14 rifles were bought in the US; whereas Germany donated 1,500 MG3 machine guns and Finland 19 105mm howitzers (*Eesti Pevaleht*, 13 July 2000). The German navy donated two former East German navy ships and two minesweepers to Estonia. In 2000, Germany also provided the mine-hunter *Cuxhaven*, built in 1959 and modernized in 1978/79, this time after refurbishing the ship for nearly DM 2.5 million (*Defence Review*, No. 12/ 2000, 22 March).

A diplomatic row took place between the Estonian Ministry of Defense and the Polish government over ten T-55AM tanks presented by the Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski. The Estonian government could not decide whether it actually wanted to have them. The idea of forming a Baltic joint armored battalion with each state receiving ten Polish tanks had been abandoned beforehand, and the Estonian Ministry of Defense was thus not sure why it should sustain these tanks at all. The only valid argument put forward for accepting the tanks was that they could teach soldiers not to fear armored vehicles (*Defence Review*, No. 12/2000, 22 March).

The well-published case of the Polish tanks revealed several crucial problems in the Estonian military establishment: the lack of a weapons acquisition policy that followed prior military planning; feuds between the Ministry of Defense's logistical department and the General Staff; and failure to coordinate the Baltic states' acquisition efforts. Another episode in 2000 confirmed the anarchy prevailing in Estonia's planning policy. When receiving four Robinson R-44 light helicopters from the US in May 2000, the air force commander, Colonel Teo Kerner, had to admit that the helicopters would remain without pilots. Intrigues in the Ministry of Defense and rows over priorities between the army and the air force had led to the cancellation of a pilot training program (*Defence Review*, No. 12/2000, 22 March).

At times, donations of military equipment caused the receiving party more problems than actually enhancing military strength. The Estonian Defense Ministry, for example, rejected US and Swedish offers of old-fashioned anti-aircraft missiles (Chaparral and RBS-70) instead of the more effective and mobile Stinger missiles (*Estonian News Agency*, 25 January 2001). Western suppliers—and particularly their governments—still consider certain sophisticated and highly effective weapons as provocative to Russia, or question whether their physical control can be guaranteed. Estonia could thus not acquire Stinger missiles. In 2000, the Russian arms concern Rasvooruzhenie offered precisely the types of portable anti-aircraft weapons, anti-tank weapons, ammunition and armored fighting vehicles which western suppliers were not willing to deliver. Although the Estonian Major General Laaneots visited the Russian producer, it is not known whether a deal was actually struck (*Postimees, Eesti Pevaleht*, 12 July 2000).

Generally speaking, the procurement policy often benefited the supply-side more than the Baltic states. In 1993, the right-wing Estonian government sanctioned purchases of arms and military equipment for air defense purposes worth about US $6–7 million (out of a total defense budget for 1994 of approximately US $20 million). These arms purchases have not been beneficial for Estonia. The equipment bought was partially obsolete, creating the illusion that Estonia was heavily equipped (Haab, 1995, p. 44). Since the Estonian budget for 2001 contains no funds for weapons acquisitions, weapons in the near future can only come as gifts or aid from partner countries (*Baltic News Agency*, 25 January 2001).

All in all, the procurement of NATO-compatible weapon systems makes the Baltic states dependent on the supplier nations and leads to increased international liabilities and obligations to service debts. Western military suppliers are already competing strongly for the Baltic market, as evidenced, among others, by US, French, Italian and British bids for air defense radar in Estonia. The Baltic states are contemplating stipulating that producers make investments in local industry in exchange for weapon purchases. The lack of modern equipment, especially communication systems, represents one of the major obstacles to the Baltic states' interoperability with NATO.

Conclusions

Q: *"What are the greatest threats to Estonia's national security and sovereignty?"*

A: *"The greatest threats are our own laziness and stupidity."*

(Lenart Meri, President of Estonia, in *Eesti Pevaleht*, 7 July 2000).

1) Baltic security conceptions and the build-up of armed forces in the Baltic states can be divided in two major stages—an initial state- and nation-building stage and, since the second half of the 1990s, a rapprochement with NATO and individual NATO members. Crucial determinants of the actual build-up of military capacities in the first stage were the organizational self-interest of the newly established armed forces and Ministries of Defense, institutional disarray, ad hoc policies, and competing visions of the future armed forces, resulting in a mismatch between declared 'realist' intentions and actual policy. In the second stage, cooperation with NATO members and preparation for NATO membership began to substitute the domestic agenda-setting and to exert a dominating external influence. Cooperation with NATO and qualification for membership shifts the focus of the Baltic military build-up from territorial defense towards interoperability in out-of-area operations.

2) Neither a 'neo-realist', 'institutionalist' or 'constructivist' approach alone can satisfactorily capture the construction of Baltic security politics in the 1990s. The neo-realist notion of distrust is confirmed by the lasting Baltic perception of Russia as a potential threat as well as the limits of cooperation among the Baltic states themselves. Yet, the structural features of the external environment do not sufficiently explain the actual construction process of security policies or the build-up of armed forces. There is a particular mismatch between the (neo-)realist worldview transpiring from Baltic security conceptions and the actual pursuit of security politics. The build-up of armed forces was critically shaped by domestic factors, instead of concerns of international power or survival. Furthermore, contrary to neo-realist predictions, cooperation with the potential adversary, Russia, though limited, did occur in vital fields.

3) The Baltic states opted for the institution with the greatest *expected* benefit—NATO—while sidelining other institutional options. Cooperation with NATO, even if short of membership, lessened the insecurity of the Baltic states' status as well as the domestic vulnerability of the military establishment. Confirming 'institutionalist' reasoning, cooperation with NATO shifted from being a functional means to an end—increased security—to a constraining and institutionalizing factor. One could additionally argue that the Baltic states' admission to NATO depends decisively on the pre-existing interests of the great powers. Yet, an institutionalist explanation does not capture the domestic reasons for opting for NATO, which are related to the organizational survival interests of the military establishment rather than security concerns.

4) Using 'constructivist' reasoning, one can argue that exclusive national discourses about security altered under the impact of increased international exchanges, both with NATO member states and Russia. Discourses and cooperative practices began to reshape the Baltic states' security identities—from the assertion of national sovereignty to a transatlantic and European commitment. Yet, transnational communication did not undermine corner stones of the Baltic states' self-images: the overwhelming sense of vulnerability, historical victimhood, the negation of Russia's Europeanness, and the primarily national instead of common Baltic identity. The friction between transnational and national self-understanding turned into a systemic feature.

5) Among the domestic conditions that determined the formulation of security policy and the build-up of armed forces in the Baltic states in the 1990s, some common factors stand out: a post-Soviet military establishment which faces financial constraints due to differing priorities of economic transition; an overload of national identity-related and military aspects in security conceptions; frequent changes of government, particularly defense ministers; unclear lines of authority between the president, the security (or defense) council, defense minister, and general staff; a strong Soviet military culture clashing with the professional culture of ex-patriates and western advisers; a post-communist mindset, including planning shortsightedness, avoidance of accountability, decision-making without regard to implementation, lack of coordination and information exchange, and a limited understanding of the value of public relations. In practice, the Baltic states' security policy was determined more by domestic institutional, cultural, and economic factors than 'realist' notions in their security perceptions.

6) Given that the Baltic states built their armies from scratch, the defense budgets throughout the 1990s barely allowed for more than basic maintenance. The ineffectiveness in managing security affairs can additionally be attributed to the early stage of state-building and the respective experimenting, particularly if one takes into account the fact that the military elite was fashioned Soviet-style. The initial phase created a sense of overburdening—it required the elaboration of national security conceptions, the build–up of military infrastructure, decision–making procedures, the adoption of fundamental legislation, and the recruitment of a new officer corps as well as the drafting of recruits.

7) The mismatch between security rhetoric and the lack of security planning is striking. Security threats were obviously not as imminent as publicly stated. The disorganization mirrors a deeper lack of urgency. Despite security rhetoric to the contrary, no imminent sense of danger existed. The overwhelming incrementalism in the Baltic build-up of armed forces instead of a designed approach resulted from under–institutionalization, the instrumental use of military institutions and resources by its prime actors, and—over time—shifting points of reference in the external environment. If the perception of a Russian threat had really been the prime concern of decision-makers, military capacity-building, intra-Baltic cooperation, and allying with NATO countries would probably have been more result-oriented.

8) Given the limited popularity of the armed forces and the low ranking of security issues on the transition agenda, the military could not play a decisive role in restoring national pride or embody a collective national ego. 'Psychological'

functions of the military seem to be confined to the security establishment itself. The identity connotations of security politics provided 'diffuse support' for orientations such as NATO membership, but they did not mean 'specific support', as evidenced by the unpopularity of military service, the lack of security agendas in party programs, and the low priority of military affairs in distributional politics. In view of domestic vulnerability, striving for NATO membership became a means of improving the military's weak position in domestic policy.

9) The planned strength of the Baltic armed forces is excessive, given what these states can afford to supply and arm. Though the concept of "total defense" has never been abandoned, it is inefficient and amounts to a waste of resources in view of the competitive nature of the Baltic states. The Baltic states are too small to launch "total defense" independently of one another. Furthermore, the Baltic defense leagues put a serious strain on civil control over the military; they frequently became a source of criminal activities, and are still not well integrated into a unified command structure. The prospect of NATO membership will in any case shift attention away from the "total defense" concept. Small, professional security services, unified under one security ministry would probably better suit the tangible security needs of the Baltic states.

10) Reflections on the costs and merits of NATO membership, compared to other options, are rare in the Baltic states. Regardless of official statements to the effect that NATO

and the EU are of equal importance, NATO membership represents an ideational inclination, whereas informed Baltic politicians realize that EU membership is more significant in its consequences. Detached from concrete threat assessments, NATO membership became an end in itself. Against the backdrop of Russia's objections, NATO orientation turned into a national and political test of loyalty.

11) Against the backdrop of the most urgent security problems, e.g. illegal trans-border traffic, crime, terrorism, interethnic tensions, and environmental hazards, it would be advisable in the foreseeable future to strive for inclusive security arrangements aimed at increased inter-state security and based on conflict prevention and conflict resolution among potential adversaries. Instead of increasing moral noise about NATO enlargement, the Baltic states would be better off concentrating on homemade insecurities. Tensions are likely to be resolved by increased institutionalized cooperation in spheres of common interest. If it is Russia's unpredictability which causes the ultimate concern, it would be reasonable to expect that security policy should be directed towards reducing this unpredictability. Instead of overloading the security debates with highly charged notions of national identity or loyalty, the military means should be linked in an accountable manner to identifiable security ends.

12) NATO has entered a consolidation phase and it is therefore likely to forestall a "big bang" enlargement in 2002. In contrast to the Visegard states' past ability to foster an environment favorable to expansion, the current impact of the Baltic states on public opinion in NATO countries is negligible. Key to the applicant states' NATO

membership is the outright support of the US. Yet, as of early 2002, Denmark and Poland are the only ardent supporters of the Baltic states' inclusion in NATO. If the logic of NATO consolidation holds true and if the momentum of NATO's cooperation with Russia in fighting terrorism in Afghanistan is sustained, NATO enlargement will be limited in scope and geared towards military value added.

13) If the striving for NATO membership is not satisfied in the foreseeable future, the question may arise of whether the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy could represent an alternative to NATO. Elusive as it is, the Common European Security and Defense Policy may suffice as a future conflict prevention and post-conflict management machinery for European purposes. The EU, through its CESDP, may perform peacekeeping functions in European affairs—a framework that would suit the applicants for EU membership too. Given that there is no dire security need for NATO enlargement, the candidates' security concerns could be dealt with in the framework of their preparations for EU membership. This would imply participation of the EU applicant states in formulating and designing the CESDP. Political, economic, and military aspects of security could be inter-linked far more efficiently than in the case of NATO enlargement. NATO membership would no longer function as a substitute for the lack of European leadership in defining the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Against the backdrop of a NATO strategy of deferment, it might be reasonable and far less expensive for Eastern European states which are striving for EU membership to concentrate their efforts on participating in the design of the CFSP.

14) NATO as well as the EU may develop strategies for those states that are not included in the alliance. A promise to assist in the case of a military threat or aggression may suffice, without obliging states in transition to spend scarce resources on military build-up or to contribute to NATO interventions in remote world regions. With interoperability developing within the Partnership for Peace framework and membership Action Plans, the dividing line between membership or non-membership may loose its salience. If NATO's main mission is actually going to change from collective defense towards pan-European collective security, it is reasonable to determine its division of labor with the OSCE and the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy before further enlargement.

15) The factor most significantly influencing regional stability is the economic and social preparedness of the Baltic states to join the EU, not military capacities. The desire of Baltic states to join NATO may inhibit rapprochement with the EU because the burden of mitigating the impact on EU-Russia relations is shifted to the EU. The question of whether EU enlargement will lead to a hardening or softening of the border with Russia (and the wider Commonwealth of Independent States) is of key concern for the Baltic states as future EU members.

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