THE REGIONAL DIMENSION
IN LATVIAN SECURITY POLICY

by Žaneta Ozoliņa

HARMONIE PAPER 8

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The Centre for European Security Studies is an independent and non-profit foundation engaged in research, education and training on foreign policy and security affairs affecting the whole of Europe. A key mission is to promote democratic structures and decision-making procedures in this field, especially throughout Central and Eastern Europe where it works to support those organisations and individuals striving to establish civil societies under the rule of law. By facilitating a comprehensive process of learning, it aims to contribute to mutual understanding on all security matters, thus helping to build a stable all-European order.

FOREWORD

By Peter Volten

When the Centre for European Security Studies (CESS) first approached the Volkswagen Foundation to seek funding for our European Fellowship Programme (EFP), we stressed two features of our scheme. One was the opportunity we wished to provide: for scholars from Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) to examine an aspect of their own nation's transition in the defence field, under our professional supervision and with a period of 'study abroad' in the Netherlands. The other was the results we could expect: authoritative, original research on *civil-military relations* and *security policy-making* in CEECs – the two themes on which we decided the EFP should focus – and hence valuable additions to an English-language literature on these subjects which had been dominated hitherto by general (and often superficial) essays by Western analysts.

In terms of these aims, the programme has succeeded beyond our expectations. It is now in its final months, but by the end of 1999 some 25 fellows will have taken part in it and most will have seen their work published in this monograph series. For this success I have to thank all those members of my staff who have been involved in the exercise. In particular, I must mention EFP Co-ordinator Sipke de Hoop, who has been responsible for the selection of Fellows and overall management of the programme since early 1997; Joost Herman, who fulfilled this role at the start of the venture in 1996/97; and our administrators – Elena Herman and, later, Joke Venema – who have provided office support for everyone and much practical help to the Fellows themselves.

Coming from CEECs, our Fellows have faced the formidable challenge of writing-up their research in English, which for each of them has been a second language (or even a third). All have risen to this challenge, some impressively. Not surprisingly, however, their final submissions have required careful editing prior to publication. The lion's share of this demanding and time-consuming work has fallen to David Greenwood, Research Director at CESS. To him we owe a substantial debt for the effort he has expended in 'helping authors to say what it is they have to say' (in his own formulation). Thanks are also due to Sergei Malkin – and, latterly, Elzaline Schraa – for undertaking the final preparation of copy for our printer.

One last debt of gratitude I must acknowledge is to the Volkswagen Foundation, for providing the academic venture capital that made our programme possible. This was a courageous investment; but it has yielded regular dividends, of which this volume is a good example.

So far as the present study is concerned, Žaneta Ozoliņa has written for us a most illuminating account of Latvia's security policy-making in the 1990s, with particular reference to the regional dimension. She explains how local dealings with the other Baltic States – Estonia and Lithuania – have evolved (trilateral co-operation), how the country has engaged – with these immediate neighbours – in building relations with

the Scandinavians (Baltic-Nordic co-operation), and how Riga has viewed links with all the countries of the Baltic littoral, including Russia (in the Council of Baltic Sea States). Her analyses are comprehensive, though the emphasis throughout is on the role of regional ties in safeguarding Latvian *security* (broadly defined). They are also insightful, especially in exposing the tension between fostering new connections at the regional level – which some might call the sub-regional level – and the strong desire of all three Baltic States to join established Euro-Atlantic structures (essentially the European Union and NATO).

A further feature of the essay is the author's brave effort to locate her analyses in the conceptual (and terminological) landscape that international relations theorists have been striving to map in recent years. Naturally, opinions differ as to how far our understanding is really advanced by agonising about what constitutes a 'region'; and by introducing terms like 'regionalism', 'regionality' and 'regionalisation' into the scholarly vocabulary. What cannot be disputed is that Žaneta Ozoliņa has performed a useful service by extracting what might be of value in this semantic differentiation for elucidating the processes that are her particular concern.

Finally, the timing of this study's appearance could hardly have been better, on two counts. First, during the Finnish Presidency of the EU (July-December 1999), special attention to the 'Northern Dimension' of Union affairs has been promised. It will be interesting to see whether this results in policy innovation that will ease some of the Baltic States' dilemmas in pursuing their European vocation while at the same time learning to live beside a troubled Russian Federation. Secondly, one of the next publications in this series will be an analysis of the regional dimension of a south-east European country's security policy-making (by a young Romanian scholar, Adina Stefan). It will be interesting, when that work appears later this year, to consider Baltic and Black Sea experiences from a comparative standpoint – in precisely the manner that the EFP exercise was designed to permit.

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I. INTRODUCTION

It is possible to draw a circle on a map and define this circle as a new region and await the events. We invented a region, and a bit to our surprise, it became a reality. Sverre Jervell.

Latvia enjoyed a brief period of statehood between the two World Wars. This was associated with rapid economic, educational and democratic development. The experience created the conviction that if there had not been a 50-year-long occupation of the Baltic States these countries would now be in the same situation as other small European nations – like for example the Scandinavian states and the Benelux countries. It is important to look at the political movement of Latvia and the other two Baltic States toward Western countries (the USA and Western European democracies), regions (Western Europe, Northern Europe, the Baltic Sea Region (BSR)) and organisations (the EU and NATO) from this point of view. Politicians believe that the Baltic States belong to the Western countries in terms of historical, cultural and political orientations; and that Western connections are the key to security and stability.

Since the restoration of its independence in 1990, Latvia has actively sought to become involved in international political processes. But the objective need to achieve guarantees for the state's security as quickly as possible and with the most effective available resources has kept the country from evaluating and utilising those opportunities – including regionalism, institutionalism and multilevel regional co-operation – which the logic of the global transformation of the international system began to offer in the early 1990s. The attention of politicians and society alike was focused on major-country relationships, the role of alliances in security policy, and the ability of small countries to implement their policies autonomously under conditions when a large neighbouring state limits opportunities for political activities.

Thus many issues – a co-operative approach to security matters, regionalisation in the BSR, comprehensive security provision comprising national, regional and international dimensions – remained outside the range of theoretical and practical discussions. However, these issues nevertheless are of considerable significance in the context of the transformation of the international system, because they feature increasingly on the agenda of global politics.

Before analysing the role of the regional dimension in Latvia's security policy, let us ask why on the eve of the twenty-first century we are emphasising its potential significance. One answer can be found in the aforementioned transformation of the international system. Countries have rid themselves of bipolarity, i.e. the control of major countries over political processes; and there has been a search for more effective forms of co-operation. The fact that isolation and separation from integration tendencies in the mutually-linked system of international relations is not an advantage and can even be threatening proved to be a lesson which some countries learned through experiencing two World Wars and one Cold War. Attitudes began to change with respect to the significance of mutual co-operation in relationships among states and other political entities. The Cold War countries operated in closed systems, in which entry and exit were almost impossible, but the new situation has been

favourable for the establishment of open associations of states. For that reason, the question arises 'what is the most effective form of collective organisation?' One option is regional co-operation, because it does not limit the autonomy of countries, it mobilises resources in pursuit of common goals, it increases the potential of governments to participate in the international system, and it facilitates adaptation to new circumstances and various situations in the world.

A second answer is that identified by a British researcher, Christopher Harvie. He writes that, at the end of the 1980s, the idea of 'a Europe of regions' suddenly became policy.[1] Naturally, this had to do with the evolution of the European Community/European Union.

Third, as the intensity of integration in Europe has increased, governments and societies have faced new problems of a trans-national nature. This phenomenon has been called the *new agenda*. Over the last 50 years, major political issues were usually resolved at the level of national governments or alliances, but in present-day circumstances the efficiency of using national resources alone has been declining when it comes to resolving global or regional problems. As they transcend national boundaries, they take on a trans-national nature. This is particularly true when it comes to small countries, which have not only limited material resources of various kinds, but also few resources for political influence. Mutual links can also be seen in a different light. As the intensity of reciprocal action among political entities increases, the range of excluded participants declines. Countries join together not *against* another country or group of countries, but rather *for* the creation of common welfare and stability. One must agree with the Finnish researcher Pertti Joenniemi, who has written that 'security and prosperity of one of the players cannot be assured in opposition to another. By their very nature, these issues have to be handled jointly based on inclusive, and no longer exclusive, politics'.[2]

If the third answer has to do with the new agenda, then the fourth answer has to do with the *new world order*. After the collapse of bipolarity, there was much speculation among theoreticians and practitioners about the possible look of the future international system. How would countries adapt to it, how purposefully would they be able to establish and govern it? For that reason, in the late 1980s, when universal trends in political processes were evaluated, it was concluded that there were several development scenarios. One would involve the maintenance of the dominance of individual countries and the implementation of power and interests through international relations. Another was based on global processes – in economics and in other areas – which would bring countries and nations together. But the success of the models of the old order, as well as the success of the predicted new relationships, seemed to be less than promising, because countries saw greater advantage in merging not separating their power. Hopes with respect to the establishment of a new and just order were reduced because of increasing interethnic conflicts. Soon, there was talk about a new world *disorder*. One of the most realistic models that was proposed by peace researchers in order to implement and utilise the globalisation, integration and

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[1] Christopher Harvie, *The Rise of Regional Europe* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.4-8.
[2] Perti Joenniemi, *Security in the Baltic Sea Region*, Paper presented at the Baltic-Nordic Peace Research Conference (Lohusalu, 2 July 1995), p.33.

harmonisation of national interests, therefore, was 'new regionalism'.[3]

As its title indicates, the purpose of this study is to explore the regional dimension in Latvian security policy. Any author who writes about such an issue is placed into the framework of the specific subject, and this may give the impression that the researcher is ignoring other important considerations. This writer may face accusations that Latvian security cannot be guaranteed with regional resources. In order to counter this sort of challenge, I should like to emphasise that membership of NATO and the EU is a high-priority element of Latvia's foreign and security policy, and it cannot be replaced by any other security-policy choice. But, given the objective international processes that are occurring, as well as the opportunities which they create for government and non-government entities to take advantage of a multiplicity of mechanisms for the defence of their interests, this paper will look at one of these supplementary, not exclusive, political resources. Bringing greater variety to security policy, regionalism may have an important role to play in guaranteeing Latvia's survival and stability.

In the following pages, the analysis of Latvian security policy is conducted from the following perspectives. The last decade could be characterised by the diversification of forms of regional security arrangements. Therefore, the second section reviews the main concepts (region, regionalisation, forms of regional co-operation) dealing with regional security. From the existing theories particular value is found in Karl Deutsch's *security community* concept, which offers a wide range of variables for evaluating co-operative activities. The concept is based on the assumption that multilevel integration in different sectors contributes to the security of the involved parties even in the absence of direct military security guarantees.[4] In the third section, Latvian security policy is examined in its contemporary (and regional) setting. The argument shows that the country, being located in a favourable geographical position, is involved in different integrative processes, which could be used for strengthening national and regional stability. Therefore, the fourth section looks at the most important models of co-operation: trilateral Baltic co-operation, Baltic-Nordic co-operation and the interaction taking place within the Council of the Baltic Sea States.

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[3] See: Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner, 1997); Bjorn Hettne, 'Global Interdependence or regionalism ?: The Emerging Context of Interregional Relations', in Bjorn Hettne and Helge Hveem (eds.), *Regionalism and Interregional Relations* (Gothenburg: Padrigu, 1988), pp.76-101; Bjorn Hettne and Andras Inotai, *The New Regionalism. Implications for Global Development and International Security* (Helsinki: The United Nations University/World Institute for Development Economics Research, 1994); Bjorn Hettne, *Globalism, Regionalism and the New Third World* (Copenhagen: DUPI, 1997); Bjorn Hettne, 'Europe in a World of Regions', in Richard Falk and Tamas Szentes (eds.), *A New Europe in the Changing Global System* (New York: The United Nations University Press, 1997), pp.16-40; Pertti Joenniemi, 'Norden as a Post-Nationalist Construction', in Pertti Joenniemi (ed.), *Neo-Nationalism or Regionality ? The Restructuring of Political Space around the Baltic Rim* (Stockholm: NordREFO, 1997), pp.181-234.

[4] Karl W. Deutsch, *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957); Karl W. Deutsch (ed.), *The Analysis of International Relations* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968); Karl W. Deutsch, *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area: International Organizations in the Light of Historical Experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968).

II. REGIONALISM IN SECURITY POLICY: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. What makes regionalism attractive to security policy experts?

The increased interest in regions and their functioning has created favourable conditions for creative thinking in this area of international politics. If in the 1960s the single concept of a 'region' encompassed all manifestations of this word, then in the 1990s, not only the regions themselves but also the various concepts associated with them have become much more extensive and varied. We now discuss 'regionalism', 'new regionalism', 'regionalisation', 'establishment of regions', 'regionality' and so on.

Attention to regions and the processes that are associated with their formation has not been uniform throughout international politics. But compared to other concepts, we can see a certain amount of logic in the evolution of this one. Usually interest in a union of states occurs at times when the number of participants in the international system is rising.[5] The specific aspect here is the fact that an increase in the elements of the international system occurs as new countries are formed – countries which are small, with limited resources and with weak potential, but with a clearly expressed desire to become involved in international processes and to affect them in their own interests. They seek out support, partners and allies. The most accessible political units are usually neighbouring countries, which either have similar problems and interests or are stable states that do not want to find themselves adjacent to a source of restlessness and conflicts or else see in the new participants allies in balancing or influencing other countries.

The establishment of regions is not a peculiar feature of any individual area in the world; rather, it is a global phenomenon. This means that countries have increased opportunities to select the right formation to help them to respond to the demands that have been created by regionalism and globalism, and to find cheaper and more effective solutions. If during the Cold War regional choices were limited and dependent on the priorities and power interests of the big countries, then today we see the number of regions increasing, and the regions expanding, engaging in deeper co-operation, and even overlapping. On the one hand, this may cause problems for effective participation, but on the other hand it does allow countries to find a

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[5] The appearance of new countries on the world map is not an accident. Rather, it is a transformation that results from significant conflicts or wars. In our century we can talk of three time periods during which we saw an increase in the number of small countries, as well as the formation of various unions of countries. The period after World War I (examples included the establishment of the League of Nations and attempts to form a Baltic Entente) after World War II (NATO, the Benelux countries, the Nordic Council, the European Community) and after the end of the Cold War (CEFTA, the Baltic Council, the Council of Baltic Sea States). The role of regions in each specific international system is not identical. Thus, for example, under the conditions of the Cold War regions were subjects of major political games, and they were given a passive role with a limited range of functions, mostly to serve the interests of the major powers. Today regions are acknowledged objects of global politics, with specific identities, potential, goals, legal bases and decision-making procedures. The role of regions is recognised both by national entities, because they increase the range of resources available for implementing national policies, and from the perspective of international interests.

multiplicity of ways to pursue their own interests. Thus for Latvia, the Baltic Sea Region, for example, is not an alternative but rather a part of the common European regional structure.

If one accepts that modern-day regionalism dates from the 1960s, we should ask why, during this period, there was greater theoretical and practical interest in these groupings of countries. It was mentioned already, the increased number of political entities, all of which are seeking out their roles in the anarchistic international system. A second explanation is cited by proponents of pluralism or neo-liberalism, who say that an all-encompassing international system creates favourable conditions for economic integration both in microeconomic and in macroeconomic organisations, and these can be accessed to help avert potential conflicts. [6]

Relevant, too, is the fact that until the early 1990s scholarly literature based its analysis of regions largely on those in existence at that time. These were researched in great detail, with emphasis being put on the prerequisites for their establishment, as well as the process of their development. Over the last decade, new regions have emerged, and the functions of regions have multiplied. This means that theory must focus not so much on the evaluation of older associations of states as on the potential and possible development of newly-emerging entities at the national, the regional and the international level. This is particularly important in Latvia's case, because geographically speaking the country and its residents are in an environment that promotes all kinds of regional co-operation. These processes have begun, but they are still in their infancy. This is why it is important to provide a theoretical underpinning for the various development options that are available, and such a theoretical study would help highlight the opportunities that regionalism affords. Although the overall interest in regional affairs has been increasing those countries with limited experience in comprehensive co-operation are still searching for their interpretation of regions and regional advantages in a security context. It means that the next step to be taken is to define a region.

2. The definition of a region

Notable among writers who have tried to elucidate the basic concept of regions in international politics is Bruce Russet. He uses five features to describe a region: social and cultural homogeneity; political attitudes or external behaviour; political institutes; the level of economic interdependence and geographical proximity.[7] In another classic work, Louis Cantori and Stieven Spiegel emphasise four features: geographical proximity; international interaction; common ties (ethnic, linguistic, cultural, social and historical); and a sense of identity that is sometimes increased by activities and attitudes vis-à-vis the external system.[8] Another well-known authority

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[6] Robert Keohane and Richard Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971).

[7] Bruce M. Russett, *International Regions and the International System: A Study in Political Ecology* (Chicago, IL: Rand McNally, 1967), p.11.

[8] J. Louis Cantori and Stieven L. Spiegel (eds.), *The International Politics of Regions. A Comparative Approach* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), pp.6-7.

on integration processes, Amitai Etzioni, in writing about the Nordic region, emphasises similar features: a set of cultural and social values, which include language, culture, traditions, ethnic sources, political structures and religion.[9] The Danish author Ole Waever uses a brief formulation. He writes that in the case of regions, we are dealing with a territorially specific political unit that is not a nation state. The region has all of the characteristics of a nation-state except one: it has territoriality, but not sovereignty.[10]

All these classic definitions of a region are quite similar. Differences occur in terms of the emphasis placed on various indicators. One feature is stressed, while the others are subordinated to it, dependent on the (original) interpretation of the term 'region'. When theories about regions began to emerge after World War II, the interpretation focused on alliances: security regions and a specification of their mutual links and behaviour. Trans-national relations were ignored and the explanation of a region was – sooner or later and after greater or lesser speculation about commonalties of cultural and religious values – reduced to the political and security level. Economic and social dimensions were relegated to the status of resources for the preservation of a security region. The operations of regions were regulated by states and their legal interests. The logic of establishing regions and their functions was dictated by self-defence needs, not motives of co-operation. During the Cold War, regions were seen as instruments of major powers and regional powers, subjected to the goals which dominant political actors were seeking to reach.[11] We can conclude that this was a static interpretation, based on maintaining the existing international system and on guaranteeing the survival of each country – in the context of the struggle between superpowers.

Along with other changes in the theories of international politics that arose from systemic changes in the late 1980s, there was an interest in non-traditional approaches to international relationships. The choices of regional policies offered many favourable opportunities to balance out national and international interests, giving preference to the latter. Political actors gave preference to new *motifs*. The physical proximity of countries ceased to be a sufficient guarantee for the establishment of a region. Economic factors can play a much greater role than geographical location, encouraging countries to launch mutually advantageous co-operation. The geographical location of countries remains significant, however, in resolving various security issues, when potential threats must be evaluated along with the political situation in neighbouring states. We can conclude that although these new emphases are undeniably producing innovation, it is impossible to ignore traditional criteria. A region encompasses state and non-state political actors among whom there is interaction in one or more areas of public life, which are joined by geographical proximity, common goals and resources for the achievement of those goals which are to be sought outside of national limitations.

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[9] Amitai Etzioni, *Political Unification: A Comparative Study of Leaders and Forces* (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p.184-228.

[10] Ole Waever, 'The Baltic Sea Area: A Region After-Post-Modernity?', in Pertti Joenniemi (ed.), *Neo-Nationalism or Regionality? The Restructuring of Political Space around the Baltic Rim* (Stockholm: NordREFO, 1997), p.298.

[11] Iver Neumann, *Regions in International Relations Theory: The Case for a Region-Building Approach* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 1992), p.11.

3. Regionalism

Regionalism is a process of interaction in which government and non-governmental international political units seek to mobilise the national resources of the participating states in order to react to global processes. *Regionalism* is an uncontrolled and non-goal-oriented process which is initiated by pragmatism and the logic of survival, as well as the principle of maintaining sovereignty and autonomy. This *process* has lasted as long as power relationships have existed among political units. But in each specific historical phase regionalism has had its own causes and its own specific forms of expression.

In order to characterise the specifics of regionalism since the Cold War, the concept of 'new regionalism' has been coined. The Swedish peace researcher Bjorn Hettne has noted that old regionalism was mostly characterised by its closed-off essence, with limited opportunities for political units to become involved in various regional processes.[12] New regionalism is developing under conditions of multipolarity, where there are limited opportunities for the hegemony that was inseparable from bipolarity between the United states and the Soviet Union (hegemonic regionalism), but where the opportunities for manoeuvring by all countries have increased. If the old regionalism was formed from the top down, as a project for the political elite, then in the new conditions there is spontaneous movement from the bottom up, where co-operation is seen as a matter of survival and development, and where various groups from society are participating. If old regionalism was 'closed', the new regionalism can be seen as 'open' in the sense that it must help countries to adapt to the trends of mutual economic dependency and globalisation. If the old regionalism was aimed at specific goals (usually economic or security goals), then new regionalism is multidimensional and all-encompassing, including also the social sector, ecology, culture, and so on. If in old regional processes the main actors were governments, then non-governmental formations such as institutes, organisations and movements are now playing a major role. Hettne concludes that new regionalism is much broader than just free trade and economic co-operation, but aims at the establishment of new regional homogeneity and identity.[13] Unlike the logic of regional formation under conditions of bipolarity, on the eve of the twenty-first century we are seeing a trend to link well-developed units with less-developed ones. Traditionally democratic countries are coming together with post-communist ones.[14]

Regionalism is a process of decentralisation during the course of which administrative power moves from the centre (the state) to the periphery, and functions are redistributed. The goal is the mobilisation and effective use of resources. It is a process that involves social ties (language, culture, history, religion, common historical self-understanding), economic links (trade models, economic complimentarianism), political bonds (regimes, ideologies) and organisational innovation (formal regional institutions), the result of which is a strengthening of

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[12] Bjorn Hettne, *Globalism, Regionalism and the New Third World* (Copenhagen: DUPI, 1997), p.6.
[13] Ibid, pp.6-8.
[14] Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell (eds.), *Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.2.

mutual dependence.[15] It involves the creation of regional identities, but the existence of this homogeneity does not automatically mean that all regional projects are destined to succeed.

Regionalism creates an opportunity to develop overlapping power structures with respect to the surrounding environment. This is important to small countries. Latvia's external environment, for example, includes Russia. It is only with an overlapping network of power that the small state can influence the big country, because it does not have sufficient national resources or resources of international power (alliance, international organisations, allies) to do so otherwise. (It is important that, as the overlapping process develops, Russia itself can become involved. This would help the country overcome its backwardness and gradually accustom it to democratic models of behaviour.)

Another specific aspect of regionalism is the development of multiple identities. For Western democracies and societies, this is commonplace, dictated by their involvement in the European Union and other institutions that help to set the regional rules of the game. The identity of Latvia was established and is being maintained by differentiation from the Soviet Union, then Russia, and now the post-Soviet system. Indeed, Latvia is dominated by this principle in the formation of its identity.

If *regionalism* is one of the trends in contemporary international politics, under which countries harmonise their interests and seek out collective resources for implementing them, then the process in which various political actors consciously and purposefully participate in creating the conditions that are necessary for the formation of regions is known as *regionalisation*. This term means the conscious organisation of a political space that creates the necessary conditions for heterogeneous social activity that is measured against the surrounding environment. This external reference is expressed in two ways: joint evaluation of the external environment and aversion of possible threats; and harmonisation of national interests and their transformation into shared interests. The fact that entities which are involved in regionalisation have acted consciously – and on the basis of their interests and needs – means that these entities are not interested in blocking or halting regional development. Quite the contrary, they wish to reach joint agreements, sometimes yielding and making sacrifices to promote regional co-operation.

Regionalisation is easier to conceptualise. Andrew Hurrell claims that this can be done with such concepts as 'complexes', 'flows', 'networks' and 'mosaics'. This emphasises that regionalisation involves many levels and intensities of links which lead to the establishment of common identity at the state and the non-state level. A second conclusion drawn by this author is that regionalisation does not automatically have to do with geographical boundaries. These conclusions allow the author to develop a precise characterisation of contemporary regionalisation – the establishment of so-called 'trans-national regions', which can facilitate the development of transit corridors, the establishment of industrially-developed zones, and the creation of other positive economic effects (China and East Asia, California and Mexico).[16]

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[15] Andrew Hurrell, 'Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective', in Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell (eds.), cited in previous note, p.38.
[16] Ibid, p.40.

Regionalisation entails the establishment of informal agreements among the participating entities with respect to the promotion of mutual co-operation and integration through a variety of means. Given that political actions are based on voluntarism and mutual interest, regionalisation automatically provides for a unique form of balance involving 'gains and losses' in politics. Regionalisation, in other words, is a calculated payment for benefits over the long-term perspective.

4. Conditions for the formation of a region

The establishment of regions is a time-consuming process that occurs in a concrete international environment. On the one hand, a region reflects the existing distribution of power and the tendency of states to utilise this structure in their own interests. On the other hand, when a region is formed and when it functions and develops, participants are forced to acknowledge that this might be a changed balance of power. The greater the ability of political entities to understand the factors that influence the process of establishing a region, as well as to adapt to the situations of the future, the greater the abilities of the region to obtain maximum benefit from international relationships.

Identifying the dominant conditions for the formation of a region is a complicated exercise, because a region can be formed naturally, without the purposeful involvement of social forces and the elaboration of programmatic political documents. Sometimes it is precisely these regions that are most effective and long-lasting. A region can be formed on the basis of objective and subjective factors, and the definition of the latter group is hampered both by the specifics of social analysis and by the fact that the subjects that are involved in the process are by no means heterogeneous. A region can be formed both from the top down and from the bottom up. In each instance there is a specific logic, and confusion of the focus at work can create the problem of presenting the desirable as the existing.[17] The units that are involved in a regional project can have different ideas and hopes with respect to the region. The harmonisation and balancing of these is one of the prerequisites of success.

Thus in the analysis of regions, we must avoid the 'either-or' approach. A region does not exclude the existence of national interests or international participation. The clearer the rules of the game that are to be implemented in the region from the national level, the greater the opportunities to achieve optimum results. Differentiation of interests and policies, not delegation of power is what makes a region different from a formalised international structure. The advantage of participating in a region is that it allows countries to avoid undesirable political processes and to choose those which best conform to the country's goals. Regions simultaneously involve centralisation and decentralisation, integration and disintegration, differentiation and unification, co-operation and competition – allowing countries numerous opportunities to implement their policies while

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[17] Bjorn Hettne and Andras Inotai, *The New Regionalism. Implications for Global Development and International Security* (Helsinki: The United Nations University/World Institute for Development Economics Research, 1994), p.194.

balancing national, regional and international interests.

Taking into account the growing role of regions in international and domestic politics, what are the main conditions that promote the organisation of political units in pursuit of common goals? First, geographical location: even though geographical considerations are losing their determining role in our time, we cannot completely ignore them either. Secondly, the international environment. Thirdly, common values and expectations of regional co-operation. Fourthly, the ability to formulate the region's agenda in a precise way: an announcement of new co-operation says nothing if there is not a concrete explanation of the ideas and principles that will underpin the co-operation. Fifth, the distribution of power in the region and the ensuing consequences: for example who is the leader in the region, which countries are powerful and which ones are weak? (In the Baltic Sea Region why is there caution due to a fear of Russia, why does Germany not want to see the involvement of the United States?)

These are the factors promoting regional co-operation. But we should note also those conditions that hamper co-operation, overcoming idealism and accounting for the failure of some regional projects. A fairly all-encompassing analysis of these factors has been offered by Alyson Bailes.[18] She divides the factors that impede co-operation into three major groups: the first of these is political and security factors[19]; the second factor is domestic policy factors[20]; the third, economic and financial factors.[21] These considerations make it very clear why the various proposals for regional co-operation that flowered after the end of the Cold War did not meet with any great enthusiasm and were never developed beyond theoretical constructs. Among these regional association proposals in which Latvia was involved, the most attractive were a Baltic Sea-Black Sea Commonwealth, the Central-Eastern European

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[18] Alyson Bailes, 'The Role of Subregional Co-operation in Post-Cold War Europe: Integration, Security, Democracy', in Andrew Cottey and Thorvald Stoltenberg (eds.), *Subregional Co-operation in the New Europe* (New York: Macmillan, 1998), pp.153-185.

[19] The following major arguments have been mentioned. Countries prefer an unregulated surrounding international environment, because then there is greater ability to manoeuvre and greater freedom of choice. However for big countries it is much easier to use the mechanisms of power in defence of their interests if the surrounding environment is regulated. Preference is given to bilateralism, because it appeals to small countries. Furthermore, large countries favour a framework of bilateral relations; and the priority given to national interests by large and medium-sized countries keeps them from taking responsibility for small and weak countries, while small and medium-sized countries fear that the big ones might dominate the region. This may be exacerbated by sensitive frontier zones and related questions. Also relations with countries that are outside the region can be a hindering factor, because these may see regional co-operation as something that is aimed against them, thus provoking unpredictable and hostile policies.

[20] The major counter-arguments relate to those who live in frontier zones or who are minority representatives, who may fear that their freedom will be limited in various ways. Second, there may be historical distrust of neighbouring countries. Third, there is a lack of experience in terms of regional co-operation and a fear of the great political costs that may be involved.

[21] The third group includes the following factors: a protectionist attitude toward national economies and/or frontier-zone economies, which politicians seek to subordinate to national logic instead of the logic of regional co-operation; the possible competition for investments and foreign trade with neighbours; the costs of the bureaucracy that is needed to govern regional co-operation; the fear of larger and more developed countries of finding themselves in a situation where they must cover the costs of weaker states; the fear of weaker countries, in turn, of becoming overly dependent on major countries, thus losing sovereignty and autonomy.

Space of Stability and Security, NATO-2.[22]

Only a balanced analysis of the benefits and losses of regional co-operation can lead to a positive result – the formation of a new region. The pre-conditions are even more important when security regions are at stake. What makes security regions different?

5. The specific aspects of security regions

More than is the case with other regions, the establishment of a security region requires certain external conditions. The first of these is the international system as such, with its leading elements – such as balance of power, superpowers, international institutions, alliances, international law – in which condition the operational abilities of regions. Another is the international environment in the proximity of each region, influencing its operational goals and logic. The dynamics of a security region are also dependent on the extent to which countries and other entities involved are interested in the regional project. Another important factor is the regional balance of power. Internal factors are significant in terms of material provisions for the implementation of security policies at the regional level, as well as in terms of the political will of each country to be active in regional co-operation projects.

The regional groupings that were formed during the Cold War were all security regions; even in those cases where security interests were not the main point of emphasis, they were still dominant. The European Community, for example, grew out of co-operation in that sector of industry – coal and steel – that was needed in order to make war. A second reason was the need to put limitations on Germany through the process of integration. Today regions are more broadly based, and this is because international life has become more varied. However, the security *motif*, albeit in a wider understanding, continues to be present. It is interesting that the argument of security does feature in international relations, but politicians are careful in mentioning it and in bringing it on the agenda of regional co-operation. What we are seeing might be called 'de-securitisation' of security in such organisations as the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR), the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). In the short-term view, the avoidance of security issues in regional forums may seem attractive, because this opens up the possibility of involving various countries, occasionally ones that have contradictory orientations. In the long-term perspective, however, this evasion can cause problems, because one of the purposes of modern regions is crisis aversion and management. The one country in the Baltic Sea Region that is most likely to precipitate a crisis may well be Russia, while crisis resolution in the region is supposed to involve that country. How can this contradiction be resolved, given that there are various visions on how to do it, various material conditions, various levels of armament, and various levels of involvement in other organisations? How can a crisis management plan be elaborated hand-in-hand with Russia?

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[22] See D. Bleiere, 'Baltic Security in the Post-Socialist Conditions: Multilateral and Bilateral Relations with Poland, Ukraine and Belarus', in Atis Lejins and Daina Bleiere (eds.), *Baltic States: Search for Security* (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 1996), pp.114-140.

Security-based regions involve a permanent dilemma of choosing between inclusion and exclusion. This dilemma emanates from the very complex overall security situation that exists in the world today. If countries can clearly define their goals and interests, then the dilemma is resolved by itself. Countries can reach agreements that are rooted in a common understanding and implementation of security considerations. But if the security situation is complex and the political entities that are involved are not just countries but also non-governmental units brought together by an understanding of the value and need for co-operation on security, then the dilemma can soon engender disputes – between the national and the regional, between the governmental and the non-governmental, among various security agendas that are proposed and between stability that has already been reached and a desire not to threaten it. (The fact that the Nordic Council (NC) has not wanted to let the Baltic Council (BC) join it can be seen as a concrete expression of this dilemma.)

Security-based groupings also have a completely different level of responsibility and involvement. Security policy touches on so-called 'high policy' – the structures of power politics – and this can have important consequences for a country and its society. Olev Knudsen has written that any co-operation starts with the agreement of a regional group to regulate and systematise its activities. This suggests that exclusion occurs, without any major consequences. But if countries agree to co-operation in the security sector, then excluded countries can perceive this as a regional agreement against themselves, thus threatening security and encouraging confrontation and, possibly, outright conflict.[23]

A regional affiliation can play at least three different roles in the implementation of a country's security policy. First of all, a security region can serve as an alternative to an alliance or a broader security association by countries. Second, it can be a platform for movement toward a community or a union. Third, a security region may supplement existing security policy dispositions. In that case there is parallel political activity by which the security of the state and its society is enhanced.

There can be at least four different kinds of security regions in the world today. The most well-known and effective one is an alliance, which represents a formal agreement among countries on military co-operation and collective defence in the case of external threats. Alliances are also regional formations but lie outside the scope of this study. In addition to alliances, there are also *security regimes*, *security complexes* and *security communities*. They all have two very important characteristics distinguishing them from alliances: they are informal in nature; and the involvement of countries therein is dependent not on a formal decision of accession, but rather on voluntary, multilateral and multi-faceted participation and integration. In order to analyse Latvian involvement in regional security affairs it is necessary to identify which of them are more effective and corresponding to national and regional interests.

A *security regime* is a concept of international politics that is used in order to describe the principles and operational logic of a union formed by political actors.[24] The concept offers many interesting tools for security analysis because of its high

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[23] Olav F. Knudsen, *Bound to Fail? Regional Security Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Area and Northeast Asia* (Oslo: NUPI, 1996), pp.16-17.

[24] See: Stephen Krasner (ed.), *International Regimes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Volker Rittberger (ed.), *International Regimes in East-West Politics* (London: Pinter Publisher, 1990).

level of generalisation.[25] However, it does not help to learn how regions can be formed, what are the factors favouring security co-operation, what are the effects of security regions and others. The term will be interpreted here as a description of a regional formation, not as an organisational structure as such.

The notion of a *security complex* dates from the early 1980s.[26] Until recently this was one of the most fashionable concepts of international politics. Its popularity was underpinned not so much by the theoretical foundation – which its originator, Barry Buzan, elaborated down to the most detailed elements – but rather by the author's courageous attempt to open up the traditional confines of international politics. Buzan felt that there must be a place for sub-systems in the analysis of the world's processes, and the concept of security complexes allows us to study regional security relationships as such. According to Buzan, a security complex is 'a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another'.[27]

That said, this approach is not able to elucidate how Latvia can best utilise the processes of regionalisation that are occurring in its immediate international environment, for the following reasons. First, a security complex is an analytical construct that is used to specify the role of a sub-system in international politics. If the task were to find out how the different associations Latvia is participating in are gradually becoming involved in global processes and to analyse the relationship between these processes and other security processes, then Buzan's approach would be optimal. The focus here, however, is more on the motivations for becoming involved in political units, and on the processes and factors in implementing regional co-operation that promote these.

Second, Buzan has noted that countries may refuse to recognise the existence of a security complex, acting within its framework without any purposeful use of it, or any strategy for influencing it. The Baltic Sea area is not an idealistic construction, but rather a real entity with clearly identified participants, more or less precisely formulated policies by these actors with respect to the region, definite institutionalised relationships and agreements, as well as defined boundaries. All of these are usually hard to find in security complexes.

Third, in elaborating his approach to security complexes, Buzan chose to emphasise the power relationships between countries in harmonising security interests. The reason for that is that the concept was designed in the bipolar era. In regional security arrangements in the Baltic Sea area power relations *are* of great

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[25] Latvian security policy has evolved in terms of needing to find ways to deal with a large variety of political choices, so this concept is not going to be the place where politicians could find answers. Countries that have been excluded from international processes – including integrative ones – for a long period cannot afford to base their policies on generalised concepts that offer pleasant linguistic and philosophical interpretation but offer no answers with respect to the present and future national, regional and international security arrangements. To a certain extent Latvia, together with Estonia and Lithuania, has already experienced the variety of concepts that can exist when it comes to security regimes, but there has been no real headway in this area. We can mention just a few: a collective security regime, a European security regime, a European security architecture regime, and so on.

[26] Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester/Wheatsheaf and New York: Lynne Rienner, 1991), pp.186-229.

[27] Ibid, p.190.

significance. However, more weight is given to integrative factors. They are the foundation of security in this region, because actors in the region do not see it as a military alliance or as a forum in which to harmonise classical security interests. Rather, they see it as an environment in which multi-channel interaction takes place and, as the intensity of this interaction increases, mutual dependency increases, along with the level of integration. Stability and security are arising from the purposeful or accidental activities of the political actors.

The concept of a *security community* elaborated by Karl Deutsch in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, provides us with the most effective analytical instrument applicable to the regionalisation processes in the Baltic Sea area. Deutsch defines such a security community as a group of people which has become 'integrated'.[28] At the same time he indicates the main stages and conditions for successful regional co-operation leading to a security community.[29] The process of integration among countries and social entities, according to Deutsch, begins with a desire among the actors are involved to evaluate the possible benefits and losses of potential mutual co-operation. However, it would be too simple to say that the more integration, the stronger the security community. Increasing interaction among government and non-government entities is closely linked to their ability to handle the weight of integration, working with and consuming that which integration offers in terms of opportunities. In his analysis of security community, Deutsch also pointed to indicators that can be used to evaluate the success and sustainability of the functioning of communities. He cites three major considerations: '…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. Mutual predictability of the relevant aspects of one another's political, economic, and social behaviour'.[30]

One of the most important conclusions that Deutsch reached is the idea that the process of integration is not a linear progression from a lower level of unity to a higher one. It is a gradual strengthening of multilateral relations and mutual co-operation that yields integration. The most drastic changes begin to appear when countries and other political entities within the region begin to recognise mutual significance, when national interests are linked to regional interests, and when there is a search for appropriate political instruments to regulate and govern relations.

Numerous researchers have used the security community concept. One of them is Emanuel Adler who has applied the notion to the OSCE in a way adapted in the present study to assessment of the role of the CBSS in the Latvian security policy

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[28] Karl W. Deutsch, *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), p.5.

[29] Deutsch offers a number of criteria which can be used to evaluate whether the goals posited at the beginning of the integration process are likely to be reached and whether the integration process is likely to lead to a positive result. They are: the maintenance of peace in a community ; the extent to which there are opportunities to implement national and common goals, measured by the growth of joint functions, joint institutions, and joint resources; the ability of individual entities to lose or sacrifice certain things in pursuit of common and specific goals; the establishment of a new identity in a security community.

[30] Karl W. Deutsch (ed.), *The Analysis of International Relations* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p.196.

agenda. Looking at the OSCE. Adler sees seven functions of such an organisation that serve the establishment 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.[31]

In evaluating the concepts of a security regime, a security complex and a security community, the conclusion is that – considering the implementation of Latvia's security interests and taking the Baltic Sea area as the relevant regional environment – the most effective model is the latter one. It helps to take an all-encompassing look at the prospects for increasing co-operation in the future. Its advantage in the analysis of contemporary security processes has been described by Hettne, who notes 'attempts by the states in a particular geographic area – a region in the making – to transform a security complex with conflict-generating interstate relations towards a security community with co-operative relations...[implying] a lower degree of conflict'.[32]

The theoretical framework set up in this section underlies the remainder of this essay. In the next section, the role of regionalism in Latvian security policy is considered, along with the growing interest of the international community in these matters and the concept of 'new regionalism'. It is important to know if Latvia's security developments are proceeding in accord with regionalisation tendencies in Europe. The third section addresses the question whether arrangements emerging in the Baltic Sea area are really yielding a 'region' (in the sense of a coherent security grouping). The conditions fostering and hindering regionalisation in the area are tested. Reflecting the utility of the security community concept the main criteria considered are: compatibility of major values; mutual responsiveness on all levels; and the reaction of the region to challenges posed by the external environment. (notably the EU and NATO).

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[31] Emanuel Adler, 'Imagined (Security) Communities: Cognitive Regions in International Relations', *Millennium*, vol. 26, no. 2 (Spring 1997), p.270.

[32] Bjorn Hettne, *The fate of Territoriality beyond Westphalia*, Paper for the conference 'The 350th Anniversary of the Peace of Westphalia' (Enschede, 16-19 July 1998), p.8.

III. REGIONALISM IN LATVIAN SECURITY POLICY

1. Latvia in the international system

In considering Latvia's view of regional developments, its ability to adapt to them and to use them effectively in security policy account must be taken of both the external environment and processes that are occurring inside the country. The establishment of Latvia's security policy is subject to the same trends and factors that affect other countries: changes in the geopolitical space; institutional transformation; the increase in integrative elements in international relations; regionalisation and globalisation. On the one hand we might say that Latvia, which has just started the process of state-building –a process which is linked to the many contradictions that are typical of all countries in transition that have little experience in implementing foreign and security policy – cannot be an equal partner to the mature democracies of the West. On the other hand, as the international system has changed since the collapse of bipolarity, all countries have had to undergo a process of international self-identification and adaptation. This is proven by the heated discussions about the future of NATO, the prospects of the WEU and the role of the EU in the future global system, the role of the United States in Europe and the world, the future of Russia's development.

These considerations are particularly important when a place in the international system is being sought by a small country with limited resources and little experience in foreign affairs, which is located next to a large country that is maintaining the behavioural models of a bygone empire while simultaneously trying to establish democratic structures, that wants to integrate into Western structures but is hampering this process by refusing to yield its former spheres of influence. The issue of the surrounding environment has also become more timely because there are frequent claims that Latvia's geopolitical destiny and its unfavourable geographical location, limit the country's choices when it comes to a national security policy. The relevance of this approach is also related to historical experience, which shows that it was precisely their geopolitical situation that affected the fate of the Baltic nations in the twentieth century. Unlike in the recent past, however, they are now located in a more favourable international environment.

If we provisionally divide this into the eastern and western sphere, then we can say that to the east of Latvia there is Russia, which is developing in an unclear and uneven way. This will continue to make it difficult for Latvia to develop policies vis-à-vis Russia. Quite the opposite situation exists to the West, however. First of all, the Western European system that was closed during the period of bipolarity has now been opened up to new countries – something that has been expressed both through the establishment of bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relationships, and by the opening of European organisations to post-communist countries. The enlargement of the EU and NATO are concrete examples of the new opportunities that are at hand. Second, the world's sole remaining superpower, the United States, has offered a framework for concrete and varied co-operation by signing the US-Baltic Charter and by setting up mechanisms for its implementation. Even though the term 'bandwagoning' has been used purely in a military and political sense so far, we can

offer a more modern interpretation, what is happening now is 'soft bandwagoning'[33]. Third, the establishment of Baltic security policies has coincided with new searches for security at the European level. Latvia has an opportunity to participate in the formation of new structures. This is particularly timely in terms of discussions about the EU's future Common Foreign and Security Policy. Finally, it is most important that Latvia's immediate international environment is itself regional in essence. In fact it is a group of overlapping and mutually complementary sub-regions, each of which can offer unique security solutions. The most significant are: the three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania); the five Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden); the Baltic States plus the Scandinavian countries; the Baltic States, *all* the Scandinavian countries and the United States, which brings a transatlantic dimension into the Baltic Sea Region; the Baltic States and the three Scandinavian countries that are members of the EU (Denmark, Finland and Sweden); the Council of Baltic Sea States (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Russia, Poland), which brings together new democracies that are hoping to join Western European institutions, plus Russia and the EU. All of these formations have one thing in common: they express regionalisation – or the conscious organisation of a political space that creates the necessary conditions and terms for heterogeneous social activity, measured against the surrounding environment.

If one compares the co-operative processes on the regional level that are occurring in the East and in the West, in terms of their intensity, their variety and the group of conditions that can be used to implement national security policies, then these two dimensions are simply not comparable. Latvia must look westwards. It is precisely the country's 'geopolitical destiny' – its location in the Baltic Sea Region – that provides a favourable environment for the implementation of its national security interests.

2. The first lessons in security policy-making

The modern history of Latvia's security policy covers less than ten years. In this comparatively short period of time, Latvia has gone a long way from a simple understanding of what a security policy really is to its application to join in the enlargement of the EU and NATO alongside countries that have had independence for decades or even centuries. Latvia's security policy is nevertheless being developed at a time when the 'older' countries of Europe do not themselves have a clear vision of their future security. It is impractical to analyse all of the process of establishing a security system in Latvia, because then it would be necessary to look at legislation, the formation of armed forces, the specifics of the political actors involved, decision-making, and so on. Therefore, as we delve more deeply into the evolution of Latvia's security policy, we will mostly focus on explaining the extent to which these developments have been a reaction to regionalisation. This illuminates the various political choices that have been made. Furthermore, as Latvia develops its future

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[33] Bandwagoning is an alignment by a small state with a large state in the interests of seeking protection and avoiding conflict.

strategic directions, the analysis can take into account the attitudes of other countries and organisations toward regionalisation.

Latvia's security policy has passed through four developmental phases. The first phase coincided with the involvement of Latvian society in the restoration of the country's independence – between 1988 and 1990. This phase, unlike later ones, saw little attention to security issues, because the restoration of independence overshadowed any and all other political aspects. During this time, however, Latvia developed its initial ideas about the security of the state and its society in the future. The dominant factor affecting the understanding of security was the need to analyse and predict the USSR's reaction.[34]

However, security policies featured in the discussion that began in 1988 and 1989 about the possibility that young men born in Latvia might be stationed in the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) during their service in the Soviet armed forces. At the congress of the Latvian Popular Front (LPF) on 18 December 1998, delegates adopted a document entitled *On attitudes toward the armed forces of the USSR*. In it, the LPF set out in a very general way the views that society held at that time. It was practically impossible to speak about the formation of national armed forces, because that would have provoked a radical reaction from the USSR that might well have put a stop to the non-violent movement toward independence that had been launched. The idea was popularised, however, albeit in an indirect way.[35]

One year later, at the second congress of the LPF, several documents were adopted that applied directly to the security sector, and these were of enormous significance later, when Latvia's security policy was elaborated. The delegates to this congress accepted an LPF programme, and one section of it was devoted to demilitarisation, seen in the broader context of détente. Also at the same congress, delegates began to prepare for real political dialogue with the USSR. Thus, for example, they talked about the establishment of a commission to supervise the operations of the armed forces in concert with Latvian law; the issue of putting a halt to the flow of retired Soviet military officers into the country and halting the placement of new military bases in Latvia; about taking control over those Soviet army installations that were not being used for military purposes and getting the Soviet Defence Ministry to pay rent for the land that it was using; about elaborating a new law on alternatives to military service; about halting military training in schools and universities and the withdrawal of military schools from Latvia.[36]

None of these ideas could be implemented at that particular time, but later they served as a foundation for negotiations between Latvia and Russia about the withdrawal of the Russian armed forces. At that point Latvia was still far from political independence, but it was already clear that security and independence are closely linked phenomena. The issue of greatest interest for present purposes, however, is the fact that the idea of regionality appeared on the LPF agenda, and became more salient during each phase in the development of Latvia's security policy.

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[34] Latvia's reluctance to debate security policy issues openly was determined by bloody events in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia. It was difficult to predict to what extent Soviet officials would be willing to use military force in case Latvian claims would become more explicit.

[35] *Latvian Popular Front* (Riga: LTF, 1989), p.246.

[36] *Latvian Popular Front* (Riga: LTF, 1990), p.19.

At this particular stage, regional elements were not considered in a direct way because, again, the achievement of independence was the only issue. Indirectly, however, the common goal of the three Baltic States at this time – withdrawing from the USSR – was measured in relation to the common adversary, and this served to bring the three countries into closer and tighter integration than had ever been the case before. Joint political activity, an identical view of the future, as well as historical experience – all of these served to link the three countries in the eyes of international society, as well as the political elite.[37] This remained true until the summer of 1997, when Estonia was 'detached' by virtue of its being invited to begin membership negotiations with the EU. Until then, the Baltic States were seen as a regional grouping to be called 'the Baltics'.

3. Building foundations of Latvian security policy

The second 'developmental phase' of Latvian security policy covered the period from 4 May 1990 until late August 1991. The beginning of this period was marked by the Declaration of Independence. This was adopted by the newly-elected parliament, at that time still the Supreme Council, stating that Latvia was starting its transitional period to full independence and separation from the Soviet Union. During this time security issues were not given much attention in domestic political processes, because the aim was international recognition of independence, without provoking the USSR, which was still able at that time to put an end to the fragile beginnings of independence. After the election of the Supreme Council of the Latvian SSR in 1990, a transition period toward independence was declared.[38] In this Latvia was different from Lithuania, which proclaimed itself immediately to be a subject of international relations. The goal Latvia set for itself determined the main political priorities, the most important of which was a gradual reduction of the country's dependence on the Soviet Union. Initial experience, in other words, dealt not with involvement in a grouping of states, but with separation from the totalitarian USSR. Regionalisation was not an issue at that time. The resources for political tactics, meanwhile, were rooted largely in economic considerations. Because it was difficult to forecast Moscow's reaction to the Latvian declaration of independence, the country also chose neutrality as part of its security policy.

A turn in the development of security issues occurred as a result of the events of January 1991, when the first defence formations emerged more or less spontaneously. These later served as a foundation for the Latvian Home Guard and security services. The episode began in November 1990 when the leader of the Latvian Communist party, Alfreds Rubiks, gave a command to occupy a Press House which published almost all newspapers in Latvia. The occupation was implemented by special military formations (OMON) and provoked a range of clashes on the streets. The political situation worsened during January 1991 – in Latvia and Lithuania – leading to a mobilisation of the population. When military conflicts broke

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[37] On joint actions undertaken by the Baltic States at that time see section IV.

[38] The Supreme Council was elected not on party preferences at that time. The pre-election campaign was focused on one topical issue, namely, independence.

out in Vilnius and 14 civilians were killed and 110 injured on 13 January, the next morning the Latvian population, after a demonstration (500,000 participants took part in the event from all over the country), started to build barricades around strategic sites expecting continuation of military actions in Riga as well. From 14 to 21 January there were numerous armed conflicts on the streets of Riga provoked by the OMON. On 21 January 1991 shooting took place, killing 5 civilians. As a result of the Soviet military actions in Latvia the Council of Ministers established a Department of Civil Security to create a system of self-defence and co-ordinate activities of all existing voluntary defence units.[39]

These two months of military confrontation influenced the further developments in Latvian security policy. First of all, it became clear that the state's sovereignty and the security of its people were threatened by the Soviet Union. Secondly, Latvia needed its military structures to counter possible provocation.

Because security and defence issues for Latvia were linked to direct threats from the Soviet Union, which did not want to yield the three Baltic States, so security topics were put into a very strict framework. Latvia's security meant the ability to protect itself against threats, contrived conflicts and direct military activities by the Soviet Union. During this period Latvia's available choices did not include a utilisation of the opportunities afforded by regionalism. The process of self-identification did not allow anyone to hope that some external political entity might become involved, encouraging regional integration with Latvia, Estonia or Lithuania. However, the mutual support demonstrated by all three countries during January 1991 was a real example of Baltic unity.

Even though signs of regionalism were not noted in the classic security sector, as the first foreign policy activities began to unfold, other trends appeared. If security policy could be successful only if Latvia separated from the USSR and embraced the principle of self-sufficiency, then in foreign policy the greatest attention was devoted to Latvia's abilities to integrate into the international scene initially by the establishment of international contacts and the winning of international recognition for Latvia's statehood. In the pursuit of both, the most active support was given by the Scandinavian countries closest to Latvia.[40] This marked the first sign of the possibilities of regionalism outside of the existing political and historical concept of the 'Baltic region'.

4. From ideas to practical solutions: the withdrawal of Russian troops

The third phase in the early evolution of Latvian security policy began on 21 August 1991 when the country finally won full independence and basic security policy goals were set. This phase lasted until August 1994 when Russian troops were finally withdrawn. It must be noted that Latvia waited for a long time for international recognition; but once it came, it came very suddenly and quickly, and this undeniably was a challenge to the professionals who were involved in foreign and security policy. They suddenly had to operate in a completely different environment and on the basis

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[39] Daina Bleiere, *Latvija: Notikumu hronika 1985-1996* (Riga: NIMS, 1996), pp.43-50.
[40] See more on that in section IV. 2 on Baltic-Nordic co-operation.

of very different rules of the game. Within three months of the restoration of independence, Latvia had won recognition from 104 countries and diplomatic relations had been set up with 53 states. In September 1991 Latvia joined the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) and the United Nations. In December the country joined the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC), establishing a link to NATO. Later, in January 1994, Latvia accepted an invitation to participate in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme and in February 1994 Latvia became an associate partner in the Western European Union (WEU).

During this new phase, Latvia's security policy was completely focused on two basic issues to which all other political activities were subordinated. First of all, there was the strengthening of the state's independence, ensuring its irreversibility by joining international processes and seeking out allies and partners. For that purpose Latvia utilised the existing dialogue with Estonia and Lithuania and links with its Scandinavian neighbours. Among the Baltic States it was possible to address international problems multilaterally, while bilateral talks were chosen in dealing with the Nordic countries, since they had too diverse interests vis-à-vis the new republics. Second, a key condition for the sustainability and stability of independence was the withdrawal of Soviet/Russian armed forces from Latvia. So policy was focused on military issues. The last issue dominated the Latvian security agenda and propelled further developments in Latvian security policy.

The third period could also be characterised as one in which the necessary political, institutional and legal framework for building a national security and defence system was prepared.[41] One of the key documents that was adopted during this third phase and that in a concentrated way addressed Latvia's main security problems was the Latvian Defence System Concept, which was elaborated in 1994 on the basis of an earlier document, the Latvian Defence Concept, which had been accepted in 1991. The new document stated the main sources of threats in Latvia: the presence of an alien army in the country; the uncontrolled operations of foreign espionage and counterespionage units; the presence and extremist activities of various communist, imperialist and other anti-independence organisations; a high level of crime involving the activities of armed, international and organised criminal groups; economic instability and the country's dependence on foreign energy resources; and the demographic situation that could be used by anti-independence activists in their own interests.[42]

This enumeration of threats also dictated the choice of political instruments to be applied in averting them. At that time Latvia's integration into regional and international structures was very low and sources of threats were domestic. Therefore, regional security solutions were not of great significance. Latvia's security policy choices were very limited. For one thing, Latvia's political elite had very little experience of high-level security policy-making. Limited financial and human

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[41] Among the most important laws were: 'On national defense' (4 November 1992); 'On the armed forces (4 November 1992); 'On emergency situations' (2 December 1992); 'On civil defense in the Republic of Latvia' (15 December 1992); 'On the Home Guard' (6 April 1993); 'On the Constitutional Defense Bureau' (5 May 1994); and 'On the state's security institutions' (5 May 1994). These legal documents defined the main actors in Latvian security policy. On the decision making process and key institutions, see the supplementary note at the end of this section.

[42] *The Latvian Defense System Concept* (Riga: Ministry of Defense, 1994), p.2.

resources exacerbated this lack of experience.

During this third phase, however, a few specific trends emerged that were of significance in the further development of Latvia's security policy: dominance of defence matters, leading to a narrow interpretation of security; limited vision of how security policy should be implemented and what could be the most efficient means; and a vague division of responsibilities among political actors involved in security policy-making. First of all, wider security issues were fully overshadowed or replaced by foreign policy and defence matters (the military aspect of security). This was because the state and its society had for 50 years been cut off from the theoretical debates and practical implementation of security policy. During Soviet times security was concentrated solely in the hands of Moscow, and it was used to fulfil certain ideological functions. Latvia's involvement in security-related discussions began only in 1990. The narrow focus is explained by two factors: the dominating security issue, namely, the Russian troops withdrawal that needed an immediate solution; and the division of power in the Parliament, where 71 per cent of members had voted for independence so that the vision of national security was quite constricted.

Thus Latvia established the narrow understanding of security that has its legacy today. The agenda was dominated by state security, while such components as individual, regional and international security were ignored or were evaluated inadequately. One example of this is the definition given to the concept of national security in the law on Latvia's security institutions: 'National security in Latvia is a blend of political, economic, social, military and legal steps taken by institutions of state authority and governance, judicial authority and local governance, to protect the country's constitutional system, state independence and territorial inviolability, and the state's economic, scientific, technical and military potential, to protect state secrets, the environment (the ecological situation) and other vitally important state interests against external and internal threats, and to ensure the political rights and freedoms of the citizens of the state, and the normal operations of public and political organisations and the institutions that implement state authority and its distribution, under the framework of the Constitution'.[43] State security institutions are defined in the law as institutions which, within their range of authority, conduct espionage (counterespionage) activities and operational activities.

At the beginning of 1994 the Interior Minister, Ziedonis Cevers, prepared an alternative concept of Latvia's internal security. All security-related issues in this document were reduced to the establishment of a law enforcement system that would ensure the necessary public order in the country, defending its constitutional system and protecting its political, economic and territorial sovereignty. The author saw national security as a group of three sub-systems – state defence, state security and public order in the state.[44]

In a narrow understanding of security, the object and subject of security flow together, they are the state. Accordingly, such entities as individuals and society, as well as the regional and international system, remain outside the scope of political activities. Resources to implement security are found only within the state itself. Undeniably, for a country that is large, or one that is small but powerful and endowed

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[43] *Law on the State's Security Institutions* (5 May 1994), p.1.
[44] Ziedonis Cevers, 'Latvijas iekseja drosibas koncepcija', *Latvijas Vesture*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1994), p.64.

with a wealth of resources, this approach could be implemented without much difficulty. In Latvia's case, however, the narrow interpretation of security hampered not only the elaboration of a modern security policy, but also integration into the processes of Western countries and the search for alternative security solutions. This was true of other post-communist countries, as well. Polish author Krzysztof Zydowicz has written that while the former socialist countries were occupied with restoring their states and territories, going through the fairly painful process of setting up nation-states, Western Europe was dealing with overcoming the pooling of sovereignty.[45] The fact that domestic considerations were dominant in the perception of threats dictated the choices that were made about security policy. Because the country would not be able to protect itself in the case of direct military threats, involvement in international security organisations was seen as the only method to guarantee security. This is why NATO membership became a goal in Latvia's security policy.

Preoccupation with the issue of Russian military withdrawal and military issues reinforced this tendency. Hence the strong yearning of Latvia (as well as Estonia and Lithuania) for quick security guarantees in the form of an alliance. Other alternatives, including the possibilities that regional security might provide in the future, were ignored. For instance, formalised dialogue among the Baltic States was established only in 1993. The participation in the Council of the Baltic Sea States was hesitant in the very beginning. Relations with Central and Eastern European countries were neglected. In December 1993 the Minister of Baltic and Nordic Affairs – at that time Gunars Meierovics – said that there were some examples of good co-operation among the Baltic partners and sometimes with Nordic states as well, but there were no indications that the Baltic States were co-ordinating their efforts on a more comprehensive level. He emphasised that they had not used all possible co-operative policies with respect to Russia, Russian troop withdrawal and international organisations.[46]

Because there was a lack of understanding about the essence of security, there was also an inadequate evaluation of the political entities that should be involved in the elaboration of policy. As a result of this, security issues were turned over to the Latvian Defence Ministry, while the Foreign Ministry was charged with maintaining dialogue with foreign countries. Taking into consideration that the Defence Ministry was preoccupied with establishing the Latvian Armed Forces and formulating the Defence Concept, political aspects of security were ignored. The gap between the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs increased and it was not until 1998 that the two ministries produced a *joint* paper on Latvian NATO policy. This structure did not facilitate the spread of a comprehensive understanding of security, hampering the study and analysis of varied sources of threats, as well as the search for rational and effective mechanisms for the solution of associated problems.

Despite the dominance of military elements in security calculations, from 1992 Latvia began to acknowledge the possibilities of regionalism. Thus the main security

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[45] Krzysztof Zydowicz, 'Nationality Versus Regionality: A Central-East European Perspective Pertaining to the Southern Baltic', in Pertti Joenniemi (ed.), *Neo-Nationalism or Regionality? The Restructuring of Political Space around the Baltic Rim* (Stockholm: NordREFO, 1997), p.61.
[46] *Lauku Avize* (17 December 1993).

concern of Latvia, the withdrawal of Russian troops, became regionalised and internationalised; and the transformation of European structures and their enlargement policies offered paths to the European Union, NATO and WEU.

On the first of these themes, after initial expressions of goodwill in the relationship between Latvia and Russia, the large neighbouring country hesitated, gradually demonstrating its unwillingness to yield its military positions in the Baltic States. The issue of military withdrawal, therefore, could not be resolved at the bilateral level. Accordingly, all three Baltic States launched activities at the CSCE and the United Nations, because these were the only organisations available at that time. It was a major achievement for this diplomacy that, on 10 July 1992, the CSCE adopted a declaration, 'On the rapid and complete withdrawal of the Russian armed forces from the Baltic States'. Later that year the United Nations, at the 47th session of its General Assembly, adopted a similar declaration, 'On the full withdrawal of foreign armed forces from the territory of the Baltic States'.

From the perspective of the Latvian State, the CSCE (later OCSE) was supporting three independent countries in their efforts to get rid of a foreign military force, but in fact this was an issue of regional security. The presence of undesirable military structures in the territories of the new countries meant another potential source of conflict for Europe, and a resolution to such conflicts would have had to be sought by European security institutions. The issue of Russian military withdrawal was one of the emerging cornerstones of developing regional co-operation for the Baltic States. It was also a factor that sometimes divided the three countries, because it was precisely on this issue that Russia began to differentiate its attitudes toward them.[47] The issue unambiguously strengthened ties between the Baltic States and the Nordic countries, who promoted the regulation of the matter at the bilateral and the multilateral level, with Denmark and Sweden being the most active in this area.[48]

On the broader (enlargement-related) theme, the success of the movement from totalitarianism to democracy – and the ability to resolve contradictions and problems emerging during this transition period – would foster Latvia's inclusion into European security structures.

A new, more comprehensive interpretation of security was developed after the national elections in 1993 when the pro-European liberal party Latvia's Way comprised the government. Local politicians started to emphasise the necessity to take full advantage of links with Western institutions. For instance, at the beginning of 1994 Latvian Prime Minister Valdis Birkavs stated: 'The real situation is that because of objective circumstances, we cannot receive firm security guarantees which would immediately solve all our problems… We will have to resolve our security problems thread by thread, weaving together our own security blanket, instead of

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[47] The Russian troops were withdrawn from Lithuania in August 1993, from Latvia and Estonia in 1994. This caused tension between Lithuania and both Estonia and Latvia. The last two thought that Russian troops might interfere in their domestic affairs. They perceived Russia's favourable attitude toward Lithuania as a punishment for Estonia and Latvia. Tension also appeared when Latvia signed its agreement with Russia with a condition that an early-warning radar station would remain on Latvian territory till August 1998. Estonian politicians blamed Latvians for this, being afraid that Russia could pose some extra conditions in an Estonian-Russian agreement.
[48] See more on that in section IV. 2 on Baltic-Nordic co-operation.

purchasing one ready-made'.[49] He said that the 'threads' could be interpreted as political and military co-operation with different international organisations – like NATO, the EU, the WEU, the OSCE – and individual countries.

While Russian troops were located in Latvia there were no serious debates about Latvian security and foreign policy. However, as foreign and security policy makers began to stress the necessity to be integrated into European structures, more opposite views were expressed. One of the leaders of right wing party For Fatherland and Freedom, Aigars Jirgens, said: 'During this Saeima activities, when politicians are looking for arguments either 'for' or 'against' one or another decision, integration has been named as a goal itself, without paying more attention to what price Latvia might have to pay for that and to what extent integration will serve to the country's security interests'.[50] However, Prime Minister Valdis Birkavs insisted that membership in the EU and NATO should be the main foreign policy priority of the country, though this was not stated in official form because Russian troops were still stationed in the country.

Some other opportunities for regional co-operation arose for Latvia and its Baltic counterparts. These were regular meetings within the frameworks of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC), the Partnership for Peace (PfP), the Western European Union (WEU), the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Baltic Council (BC) and the Nordic Council (NC). Yet, even though the beginning of the third phase in the development of Latvian security policy offered several opportunities to develop the regional dimension in Latvia's foreign and security policy, these were not exploited, because the country never defined its *regional* security interests, choosing instead to emphasise aspects of *national* security. Approaching the end of the period, when the inevitability of Russian troop withdrawal became obvious to Latvian politicians, a regional policy came closer.

5. Diversification of Latvian security policy – regionalism ahead

After the Russian armed forces were withdrawn, in August 1994, the fourth phase of security policy development could begin. It was only after this withdrawal that the country could freely define its foreign and security goals. The main source of threats – the presence of an alien army in the country – was no longer present. Even before the troops left, debate began in Latvia about the country's future and its policies vis-à-vis the international system. The tone of these discussions was dictated by changes in the balance of power in Parliament as the result of elections in 1993. The Latvia's Way party was the one which clearly favoured Latvia's movement toward European institutions, rejecting neutrality and beginning the elaboration of foreign and security concepts.

On 7 April 1995 the Parliament adopted a Latvian foreign policy concept and on 12 June 1995 the Cabinet of Ministers adopted the Latvian national security concept. Both documents formulate Latvia's national interests, and the main ones are

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[49] *Diena* (9 March 1994).
[50] *Labrit* (29 September 1994).

full integration into the EU and NATO.[51] The national security concept clearly states the goal of maintaining and preserving national independence, territorial integrity, language and national identity, as well as protecting parliamentary democracy, residents and society. It is noted that, in establishing its own security, Latvia does not pose a threat against any other country or against minorities within its own territory.[52] Compared to other documents that had previously set out security policy, this one was an important step in terms of understanding and interpreting the essence of security, because it marked a movement from a narrow understanding in which the dominant role is played by issues of national defence to a broader understanding in which society and the guarantee of its rights has a specific place. In this sense Latvia has moved closer to the contemporary understanding of Western countries about security.

Unlike concepts in the West, however, the Latvian document does not address international security and its links to national security. Latvia's security situation is not considered in the broader regional and international context. This must be underscored because Latvia, having long been isolated from the international environment, is limited in its choice of foreign policy mechanisms, and it cannot in and of itself guarantee the survival of the country and society. There is good reason, therefore, to ask why Latvia wants to join international security institutions if it is so bent on resolving national security issues with internal resources alone, failing to see itself as a part of international processes in which the dominant trend is increased mutual dependence, not separation. Of course, the preparedness to undertake responsibility for internal reforms is a laudable thing. Such missions as stabilising the economic and political situation, guaranteeing social security, implementation of state and public activities that are based on the rule of the law, development of numerically small but effective armed forces structures, and observance of international human rights norms – all are part of the strong side of the concept. The ability of the country to resolve internal problems and to avert a spread of international instability to the point where it affects the international system and Latvia's neighbours is a positive achievement in the building of the new country.

The security concept did implement a few new accents with respect to threats, however. For the first time, the state admitted that Latvia is not facing any direct military threats, although opportunities to destabilise the internal situation continue to exist. The main forms of threat, in Latvia's eyes, are attempts to act against the country's independence and democratic system; to make it politically, economically or otherwise dependent on another country; to hamper Latvia's Euro-Atlantic integration; to prevent the unification of society and the integration of various social and ethnic groups into a single nation; and to hinder economic and social development and the increase in defence capabilities. Other forms of threats – ecological, economic, political and social – are not forgotten, and the document notes the close

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[51] When the Latvian Foreign Policy Concept was on the Parliament's agenda there were no serious discussions with respect to foreign policy priorities and instruments of its implementation. Foreign policy issues were not raised during the pre-election campaign and had been treated as less important matters than economic and social transformation. Latvian politicians during the third phase agreed that the future of Latvia could be related only with the western orientation and within the western structures. Differentiation of opinions emerged one year later when parties offered their visions of how these policies should be implemented.

[52] *National security concept* (Riga, 1995), p.1.

interrelationship between internal and external threats, which means that international tensions can create internal crises.

Concept documents play a very important role in prioritising external and internal concerns, but they do not automatically guarantee the success and rapid achievement of political goals. This is true both with respect to the foreign policy concept and the security policy concept. The Latvian security policy concept was well-intended, and corresponds to modern thinking, but it has not really gone into operation because of institutional disorder. The preparation of the document took place without the involvement of the political elite and the public. Its adoption doomed the document to failure from the very beginning. The document was made up of two parts, one of which is a text that sets out basic principles. The idea was to supplement this with a national security plan on a yearly basis, embodying proposals from the various ministries. On 29 June 1995 Prime Minister Maris Gailis ordered all of the ministries, the Bank of Latvia and the prosecutor's office to prepare security plans for their sectors. The work was to be completed by 28 July. By the end of the year, however, only a few ministries had completed the assignment, and in fact a complete plan has not been produced to this very day.

The adoption of the concept took two years, but the document remained on paper, without any real mechanism for implementation. In order to give it life, President Guntis Ulmanis in the spring of 1997 ordered that a new law on national security be drafted and that the old law be declared void. The main reason for this was the fact that the concept, although adopted by the Cabinet, lacked a broader legislative context that would regulate its implementation. As noted, it should, in fact, be a group of documents, which brings together programmatic and legal acts to form a unified prospectus with a distribution of implementation functions.

Despite the fact that the Latvian security concept, adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers in May 1997 as well as the Latvian defence concept, adopted in May 1995, are in effect, the consideration of a unified security law has been delayed in Parliament and security policy issues have not been brought into order. This hesitation, which led to the absence of a concept that could be operational under normal and crisis conditions, bore fruit in the spring of 1998. The main sources of threat in the concept were seen as possible Russian provocation. When pro-Communist and pro-soviet groupings initiated disorders in Riga on 3 March 1998 blocking traffic, neither politicians involved in security policy-making nor the police were prepared to deal with the situation. It turned out that laws and the multitude of security structures that were on the ground could not deal with something that had been handled on paper innumerable times.

Delay in adopting the Law on National Security is a vulnerability of itself. As it was stated by the advisor of the President on security matters, Vilnis Zalkalns, even up to the beginning of 1999 it is not clear what would happen if a president or a head of parliament were not able to discharge their responsibilities. What could happen if in a case of emergency the Cabinet of Ministers does not have a quorum and could not announce a state of emergency and undertake necessary measures?[53]

However, despite the fact that official documents do not define the role of

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[53] Gundars Zalkalns, *Valsts drosibas uz aizsardzibas izvertejums, Latvijas republikai ieejot 21. Gadsimta* (Riga: Latvijas Arpolitikas Instituts, 1998), p.7-8.

regionalism in Latvian security policy, the political process itself demonstrates that gradually regional co-operation has become a more important element of foreign and security affairs. In the next section three relevant models of regional co-operation will be analysed: three-nation Baltic co-operation, Baltic-Nordic ties, and the Council of the Baltic Sea States. But at the present stage it is important to underline that the fourth period saw Latvia's increasing international involvement via neighbouring countries and international institutions. At the very beginning of this phase Latvia put its resources into pursuing EU and NATO membership sending a clear message to the international community that the country's future is closely tied with the democratic institutions. When the first round of enlargement started and it became clear that it would take a longer time to be accepted than imagined by Latvian politicians, regionalism again was included in the security agenda. As a proof it suffices to cite the speeches of Minister of Foreign Affairs Valdis Birkavs. Recently almost all of them have emphasised regionalism as an essential part of Latvian security policy.

The foreign and security concepts are documents with a comprehensive vision of Latvia's long-term policies with respect the international environment. However, from time to time the political elite has to face new challenges and to focus on short-term security priorities. Thus early in 1999, politicians realised that sometimes messages they send have not been perceived correctly. When Prime Minister Vilis Kristopans took office he gave an interview to the Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. He stated that one of his tasks would be to get Latvian-Russian relations back on track. He saw no reason 'why Latvian-Russian relations could not be as good as Russian-Finnish relations'.[54] On the basis of this interview an American think-tank predicted significant changes in Latvian foreign and security policy, suggesting that Latvia would turn away from its NATO track and seek policy options in the eastern neighbourhood.[55]

Partly to counter such misunderstanding, Minister of Foreign Affairs Valdis Birkavs told the Latvian diplomatic corps on 28 January 1999 that he proposed to elaborate a document, which would be confidential and for internal use only, presenting the main foreign and security policy directions in a very condensed way. This would help policy makers to give clear messages to the international community that Latvia is following the priorities formulated in 1995. While underlining that at different times priority might be given to different themes, the Minister claimed that there were four main aspirations: accession to the EU, NATO membership, good relations with Russia, and regional co-operation.[56]

Looking at the way in which Latvia's security policy was established, we must conclude that, despite an unchanging movement toward Western European structures, reservations about regionalisation remained in place. There is still a question, however: why did such a situation emerge? On the one hand, Latvia wants to join European structures, which are following a logic of regional co-operation. On the other hand, Latvia is failing to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the regional environment. Regional co-operation has been assigned a subordinate role in security policy. There are several explanations. One is what Pertti Joenniemi has

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[54] *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (3 November 1998).
[55] www.LETA.lv (17 January 1999).
[56] *Diena* (29 January 1999).

called a collision between the modern and post-modern security agenda. It is possible that an excessive desire to reduce everything to direct security guarantees hampered the development of co-operation and regionalisation in the Baltic Sea Region in the very early days of this process. This led to disappointment and reduced interest in regional initiatives. The new countries initially did not give full credit to the opportunities that regional partners were offering, nor to the possibilities of regional co-operation as such.

Unlike Latvia, which has only one kind of regionalism experience – that which was learned under the Soviet system – the West is used to operating collectively, and it sees the advantage of this approach. As Thomas Christiansen puts it: 'While in Western Europe there is a general recognition that joint decision-making and multilevel governance is the order of the day, Eastern European politics tends to cling to the territory-society-autonomy image. There is clearly a dilemma here in the sense that on the one hand there is a search for 'independence' and newly-found sovereignty, while on the other there is recognition of the need for some form of regional co-operation, if not integration. This probing and testing of the limits of national 'choices' explains both the emergence of co-operative ventures such as the Pentagonale and the Commonwealth of Independent States as well as their eventual failure'.[57]

During 50 years of occupation, the Baltic States learned something else about regionalism. All authority resided in Moscow, leaving to the Republics only insignificant areas and ideological political declarations. Hence they were consumed by anti-regionalism.[58] The limited use of political choices created by the trends of regionalism was also affected by the fact that, from the very start of regional co-operation, international relations with the West were unidirectional in nature. One set of partners represented donors, while the other set represented recipients. The effect was that the latter were often passive.

The highly varied nature of regionalism – and its positive and negative characteristics – have served to divide observers of regionalism into two camps. One group claims that a new period of regionalism has set in, and there is a transfer from the militarism of geopolitics to the functionalism of geo-economics because of increasing and multidimensional regional co-operation.[59] Others think that 'a world of regions is nothing but a return to a multipolar balance of power system'.[60]

There is some truth in both viewpoints. And they reveal attitudes presented in Latvian security policy. The things that are happening in the Baltic Sea Region represent not a sudden arrival of new relations and agenda into the region, but rather a gradual transformation of the East-West division into a new regional configuration. Transformation as such, however, does not mean that old models have ceased to exist. It is hard to provide a definite answer to whether the things that analysts have planned

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[57] Thomas Christiansen, 'A European Meso-Region? European Union Perspectives on the Baltic Sea Region', in Pertti Joenniemi (ed.), *Neo-Nationalism or Regionality? The Restructuring of Political Space around the Baltic Rim* (Stockholm: NordREFO, 1997), p.262.
[58] Hain Rebas, 'Baltic Co-operation – problem or opportunity?', *Perspectives* 9 (1997/1998), p.72.
[59] Bjorn Hettne, 'Europe in a World of Regions', in Richard Falk and Tamas Szentes (eds.), *A New Europe in the Changing Global System* (New York: The United Nations University, 1997), pp.16-40.
[60] Kenneth Waltz, 'The Emerging Structure of International Politics', *International Security*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp.44-79.

can become political reality, and it is a fact that even if this does happen, it will be a long and confused process. This means that politicians must adapt to the most varied scenarios, so that political actors can become actively involved in the formation of the region instead of being passive observers of the process.

The very complicated process for elaborating and implementing Latvia's security policy can be explained in part by the fact that there has been a relatively brief period of time during which Latvia has been able to accumulate experience in this area. However, despite the limited attention paid to regional opportunities, there are some areas in which prospects for co-operation have emerged in the context of the processes of regionalisation. These are examined in the next section.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE

The decision-making process in terms of Latvian security policy is divided up among the president, Parliament as the legislative authority, and the government as the executive authority. The president has a leading and co-ordinating role in state security and defence, because he is the head of the national defence system and chairs the National Security Council, which is a consultative security policy institution in Latvia. The council supervises and evaluates the situation in protecting the state's security and its resident, internal and external threats, and various resources to avert threats. It sets out the main areas of operations for security institutions, supervising their structure, operations and budget. The Constitutional Defence Bureau and its director are directly subordinated to the National Defence Council, which can appoint or fire the director. Parliament is involved in security policy by passing laws that regulate the activities of the respective organisations and individuals. Parliament also plays an important role in providing budget resources to security institutions and the defence system. Parliament ratifies or abrogates international treaties and agreements that are of importance in national and in international security (e.g., the agreement on the Baltbat). Parliament carries out its activities through the work of three commissions – National Security, Defence and Interior Affairs, and Foreign Affairs. The Cabinet of Ministers is the main institution to implement security policy through implementing laws, as well as establishing the infrastructure, managing and co-ordinating institutions, and selecting officials to do the work. The most important ministries are Defence, Interior Affairs and Foreign Affairs.

IV. REGIONAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS

1. Three-nation Baltic co-operation

If one starts to evaluate regional opportunities in Latvian security policy, the first choice, of course, falls on co-operation among the Baltic States. Latvia's security is inextricably bound up with that of neighbouring countries Estonia and Lithuania. This is because of common historical experience. All three nations gained their independence at the end of World War I, and lost it in 1940. All three regained their sovereign status in 1990. Moreover, all have identical foreign and security policy priorities. They are located in one geographical space, they have common experiences (Soviet occupation and struggle for independence) and values (democracy and basic human ideals); and they share the same goals (EU and NATO membership). Lithuania and Latvia even have linguistic similarities.

There have been several phases in the recent emergence of the Baltic 'region', demonstrating the logic and possible development of relationships among the Baltic States at present and in the future. They have corresponded closely to the stages in the evolution of Latvian security policy already discussed. For instance, before the restoration of complete independence in August 1991, relations among the three were very close at the person-to-person level, even without the help of special structures.[61] This was dictated by the common aim of the restoration of independence and shared views on how to reach the goal, stressing non-violent opposition and gradual processes of reform. The greater the pressure from the Soviet authorities, the greater the unity of the Baltic States.[62] A clear vision of possible threats to the basic values of all three republics promoted the creation of a network that facilitated later co-operation on higher levels.

The foundations of substantive co-operation were laid in early 1990 with the declarations of national independence and the signing of a joint declaration by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on mutual understanding and co-operation, renewing an earlier agreement. In June 1990 this declaration was followed by another one which

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[61] For instance, on 23 August 1989 at the annual commemoration for those who suffered from the consequences of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, almost 2 million people formed a chain from Tallinn through Riga to Vilnius. It was the biggest rally in the history of the Baltic States.

[62] We can cite several facts as evidence of this. In May 1990 the leaders of the Baltic States agreed to organise the Baltic States Council, signing the 'Declaration on unanimity and co-operation among the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania'. All three countries unanimously refused to sign the new union agreement that Mikhail Gorbachev sought to press upon them with the threat of various economic sanctions. There were also joint efforts in foreign policy. When in July 1991 the American Senate began debates about the awarding of Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to the Soviet Union, the Baltic prime ministers signed a declaration in which they sought to distance themselves from the MFN treaty, asking that the document not make any mention of the Baltic States belonging to the USSR. As a result of this, the United States awarded MFN status to the Baltic States separately in August 1990. In 1992, at the Helsinki Conference of the OSCE, the Baltic States worked together in proposing the issue of the withdrawal of Russia's armed forces, thus internationalising a regional and a national problem. One year later a similar initiative was launched at the United Nations, and in November 1993 a resolution was adopted 'On the full withdrawal of foreign armed force from the Baltic States'.

declared that the three states could not join any agreements on a new (Soviet) Union and that the Soviet Constitution did not apply in the territories of the Baltics.[63] From the aspect of unity this initial stage of co-operation was one of the brightest and most active, since the Baltic States were aware of their common historical experience and common prospects for the future: either all three would reclaim independence or they would be drawn into a 'new Union'. A sense of a shared past, present and future was the factor that forced Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to search for common ground in the strategy for future action.

Having declared independence, the three states signed a large number of agreements on mutual co-operation in various fields, altogether 36. On the one hand, these were evidence of a wish to resolve transitional problems jointly and thereby lessen possible Soviet intervention and continuing dependence on the USSR. On the other hand, their content, the haste in which they were signed and the lack of implementation mechanisms and control over implementation led to a situation where little was actually accomplished.

Through 1990-1992 initiatives appeared at a rapid pace; but again due to limited resources and experience their development was weak and only partial. The greatest activity was in the political arena, especially after the coup of August 1991 when opponents of democratisation in Russia detained Gorbachev and tried to re-establish a communist regime. In addition, the international recognition of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania stimulated their co-operation in international organisations and at a regional level.

The initial stage of trilateral co-operation was dominated by two important tendencies. A definite integrating factor was the presence of Russian troops in the Baltic States. In view of the fact that this was an important – if not the most important – national security issue for these states, the concentration of political efforts on this issue strengthened co-operation among the three. The dominance of national security issues in a wider regional context led to a substantial result in 1993-1994 when the Baltic Battalion (Baltbat) was established. At the same time concentration on the most pressing aspects of national survival overshadowed other important areas of co-operation. One such case was the creation in April 1990 of a Baltic Co-operation Council to co-ordinate the work of the three ministries of economics. This remained a purely formal institution and economic and trade contacts were very weak. For example in 1992 Lithuania's trade with Latvia made up 5 per cent and with Estonia only 1 per cent of the nation's commerce. On the one hand, of course, sluggish economic co-operation is quite understandable, since during Soviet times the economies of the three countries had similar specialities and so they could only offer each other similar goods and services once their economies became independent. However, that is no argument in the long-term perspective, because the development of national economies has been inexcusably slow. So, too, has been the creation of a harmonised and regionally effective economic system directed towards entering the EU and establishing fundamentally new economic relations.

The most positive of the first initiatives were in the fields of energy and

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[63] One element of Gorbachev's *perestroika* was to work out a new agreement on a *Union* – promising republics more autonomy. By that Moscow officials wanted to distract the attention of the public and local political elites from their claims for independence.

transport, which were regulated by a newly-established Baltic Energy Council, which regularly met to discuss problems relating to the export and import of electricity. Ironically, this was the area of greatest activity due to the fact that energy was never a problem in the Baltics, because of ties with Russia and its strategy in that field.

Domestic transformations of the Baltic States and the opening of international links stabilised the international position of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Despite the presence of Russian troops it was already clear that, year by year, their independence became more and more irreversible. However, this gave them freedom of action; and the first differences started to appear between the countries. Estonia developed its natural geographic and linguistic link with Finland, while Lithuania started to reconsider Poland's strategic position in Europe and the advantages that that link could provide. Latvia's position was conditioned by geographic location and necessitated emphasis on Baltic co-operation.

At the same time, common foreign and security policy goals stimulated the development of regular consultative bodies. Also, external pressure was applied by the closest Nordic neighbours and international organisations. So, motivated by inner necessity and outside pressure, the Baltic States began activating shared endeavours. For example, the Baltic Parliamentary Assembly was established in November 1991. In August 1993 a Baltic States summit took place in Jurmala, attended by the three Baltic presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers. Here the institutional foundations were laid for wide-ranging co-operation with the creation of the Baltic Council of Ministers. In addition, forms of co-operation with the EU were discussed and a draft of a Baltic free trade agreement was passed for signing the following month. It should be noted that during the first years of co-operation all three countries were equally interested in common projects and there were not too many differences in their national visions of the Baltic future.

When the Russian troops were withdrawn from the Baltic territories in 1994 all three countries were able to define further prospects of co-operation in a more independent manner. Expectations were exaggerated because a number of signed agreements and existing Baltic institutions created an impression that a Baltic union would be established in a short period of time. Nothing came of this and new problems bedevilled the emerging co-operative structure. Differences and even unsettled points of contention surprised the public. Noteworthy were a Estonian-Latvian sea border dispute, which got the name of 'herring war'; and a Lithuanian-Latvian dispute over oil exploration in the Baltic Sea.[64]

In spite of all the contradictions, however, the development of Baltic co-operation proceeded with gradualism in all its aspects and a general strengthening of mutual ties. Notwithstanding the significance of economic and political co-operation, the greatest activity and success has been recorded in the area of security and defence, since collaboration here is based on joint national interests, foreign policy aims and even the basic physical existence of the three Baltic States. They share a history of gaining independence from Russian in 1918-1920, losing it as a result of Soviet occupation and regaining it with international recognition in 1991. So, if Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania ever have to tackle the issue of physical survival of their states,

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[64] New problems appeared in 1997-1998 when the Free Trade Area (FTA) on agricultural goods was introduced. Now there are such 'wars' going as 'a pork war', 'an egg war' and a 'minced meat war'.

they will have to do so together, regardless of the differences in growth of each country's GNP and other economic indicators, or between institutions for political co-operation.

Evidence of successful military co-operation is provided by several concrete forms of interaction among the Baltic States. Three are especially significant.

- The Baltbat (The Baltic Battalion) was created in 1994. First proposed by Commander of the Estonian Defence Forces Lieutenant General Aleksander Einseln, the formation was set up to operate under the auspices of the UN and other international organisations for authorised international peace operations. Technical support was offered by Denmark, Sweden, Finland, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Baltbat has been fully operational since 1997 and has performed several missions in Bosnia and South Lebanon.
- The Baltic Air-surveillance Network (Baltnet) is a system for the acquisition, co-ordination, distribution and display of air surveillance information. It is compatible with and can be combined with other European systems, facilitating further integration into NATO.
- The Baltic Naval Squadron (Baltron) is a combined Naval Force aimed at developing mine counter-measure capabilities, providing for NATO interoperability and compatibility, and participating in internationally mandated missions.

Each of the Baltic States took a responsibility for one of these projects. Thus, Latvia is heading the Baltbat project, Lithuania Baltnet and Estonia Baltron. In February 1999 the Baltic Defence College was opened where officers and civil servants dealing with security issues will be trained by Western experts using curricula compatible with those of NATO countries.

There are several reasons for this successful military co-operation.

- First of all, security considerations have been of primary importance in the Baltic States since the restoration of independence. The issue has been how to preserve the newly-restored countries in an unstable structure of international relations that is being established by overall global transformations, as well as by the initial steps toward democratisation that are being taken in Russia.
- Second, the organisation of security and defence systems in all three countries was started completely from scratch, which meant that the three needed to share experience and to co-ordinate resources as much as possible.
- Third, the Baltic States all have identical security policy goals, namely full EU and NATO membership.
- Fourth, as turbulence emerged in the European and international security environment, there arose an opportunity to participate in international peacekeeping missions, even with the small military contingents that the Baltic States could offer.

- Fifth, the process of NATO enlargement signalled that the Baltic States should not expect early membership, but it also dictated the need to form a co-operation network in the defence field.[65]
- Finally, the positive pressure from neighbouring countries and the United States to co-ordinate resources in pursuit of joint projects played a very significant role.

The Baltic States have moved consistently toward increased co-operation in the defence field. The fact that this process has occurred systematically and in full observance of the principle of succession in mutual relations is what has allowed the three countries to reach the present-day level in this area. In a very condensed way the rationale has been expressed by the ex-Commander of the National Armed Forces of Latvia, Colonel Juris Dalbins: 'This project [Baltbat] serves a number of important purposes: the Baltic States can begin to play a serious part in international peacekeeping, thus demonstrating their willingness to share international responsibilities; and Baltic military training is given a significant boost with the development of common training methods and operating procedures, all with decidedly Western orientation. But most important of all, the Baltbat is a practical expression of military co-operation without which regional security would be problematic and future membership of NATO would be questionable'.[66]

Having in mind the wide range of co-operation taking place among the Baltic States in security and defence matters the question why they do not opt for a Baltic alliance could be raised. This issue came to the fore in 1994 and from time to time has been raised again by different politicians. The initiator was Estonian Commander-in-Chief Aleksander Einselm. The idea was debated in the Baltic Assembly in 1995.

The advocates of the alliance state that the Baltic States in the foreseeable future will not be included in NATO.[67] However, the military conditions are already in place for a three-nation association that would be created via various inter-Baltic projects. Baltbat, Baltnet and Baltron, in fact, represent directions in which defence potential is truly developing in concert with regional security interests and in observance of NATO standards.

The proponents of the idea do not have too many followers, however, for several reasons. First of all, existing military structures have been organised for work in international and regional missions. The agreements which provide their legal underpinnings do not provide for the use of the formations to repel an external enemy if one of the Baltic States comes under attack. The golden thread of an alliance – like

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[65] People have often asked why the integration of the Baltic States into European structures has been so contradictory. On the one hand, they have all moved much closer to the European Union, which in essence is a regional association based on multilateral integration. But it is precisely the process of enlargement of the European Union, as well as the mechanism for its implementation, that have caused many tensions in Baltic co-operation. On the other hand, neither NATO as an alliance nor any of its member countries have ever emphasised military co-operation among the Baltic States as a condition for their accession, even though it is in the security and defence areas that the three countries have had their most significant achievements.

[66] Juris Dalbins, 'Baltic co-operation – the key to wider security', *NATO Review* (January 1996), p.10.

[67] *On an Agreement on Military Co-operation between the Baltic States*, Resolution of the Baltic Assembly (November 1995).

the NATO charter's fifth article, which provides that an attack on one member country is seen as an attack on all of them, with collective action to follow in response – is not included in any of these Baltic co-operation projects. It should also be noted that none of the Baltic formations is a three-country project alone; they involve neighbouring countries, as well as other European states. It is virtually impossible to hope that Western European countries might participate in co-operation projects that are based on the principle of an alliance.[68]

Although the general picture of Baltic military co-operation looks nicely painted, there are some difficulties hampering further developments. One of the most serious problems for all three countries is related to transformation of the society and the restructuring of the economy. These processes do not allow adequate funding for security and defence needs. The first problem refers to overall expenditure. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are lagging behind NATO countries in their defence spending. As Table 1 shows, the three are spending less than 2 per cent of GDP for military purposes – though aiming to reach this proportion – and this is clearly not enough to keep military structures on the level compatible with NATO standards. Taking into consideration that all three countries started to build their armed forces from 'zero', then even 2 per cent of GDP is not enough order to establish credible structures. The declared intention to reach a level of budgetary spending comparable with NATO countries will not guarantee that armies will meet the requirements. Note also that there are marked differences in the defence/GDP proportions shown in Table 1. If these persist it may prove difficult to maintain various co-operation-enhancing initiatives. In the fall of 1998, when Latvia was discussing its budget for 1999 it was already clear that funding would not grow to reach the level of spending in the other two countries.[69] Both Estonia and Lithuania criticised this, pointing out that Latvia was threatening several regional co-operation initiatives.

Table 1. Defence spending in the Baltic States (as a percentage of GDP)

Country	1998	1999	2000
Estonia	1.1	1.3	
Latvia	0.67	1.0	2 (in 5 years)
Lithuania	1.49	1.5	2

Source: Jundzis Talavs, *Cik maksa valsts aizsardziba* (How much does a country's defence cost?), (Riga: Junda, 1998), pp.13-14.

A second problem relates to armament levels, summarised in table 2. None of the three countries has very much military equipment; and none is spending very much to acquire weapons systems. When defence budgets are minimal, most of the money goes to salaries, taxes and maintenance of facilities, and there is virtually nothing left

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[68] Žaneta Ozoliņa , 'Los estados bálticos y sus vecinos nórdicos: Política exterior y de seguridad', *Cuadernos del Este*, 19 (1996), pp.30-31.
[69] The Latvian Parliament was hesitant to increase defence spending because several violations of financial regulations in the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence were revealed by journalists.

to spend on arms.[70] Purchases are small, random and uncoordinated, and they are not subject to any ideas about promoting or implementing regional co-operation. This problem is exacerbated by well-meaning assistance from the West, which is also uncoordinated when it comes to the Baltic States. The situation is all the more difficult because the arms that are received are often technically out-of-date, and units are not compatible with one another. Moreover, the maintenance and repair of such equipment itself requires extensive resources, and this is not an efficient way to spend money.

Table 2. The level of armaments in the armies of the Baltic States[71]

Type of armament	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Armoured personnel carriers	39	15	34
Tanks	0	0	0
Aircraft	2	4	11
Helicopters	3	7	8
Frigates	0	0	2
Patrol boats	3	13	3
Mine sweepers	2	2	0

Source: *Diena*, 18 May 1998.

Another factor hindering co-operation is the fact that the three countries do not have a united attitude toward EU and NATO enlargement. In 1996 an American think-tank urged that at least one of the Baltic States should be admitted to the EU – namely Estonia.[72] In 1997 Lithuania put forward a similar argument, claiming that at least one Baltic state – presumably Lithuania – should be invited to join NATO.[73] These suggestions caused confusion not only in relations among the Baltic States, but also in the White House and in Brussels. At the military level the Baltic States are working together in order to prepare themselves for NATO membership, but some policy makers seek unilateral advantage.

It is difficult to imagine that a single Baltic country might be invited to join NATO, with the other two left out, but this idea persists. Thus Lithuania has regularly increased its defence spending and feels that soon it will pull away from its neighbours and be ready for NATO membership, and that the country's strategic partnership with Poland will help in this. After successful implementation of its EU policies, which led to a start of formal membership negotiations, Estonia will now be able to concentrate its resources to a much greater extent in the direction of NATO.

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[70] This has been pointed out by former Latvian Defence Minister Tâlavs Jundzis, who has written: 'We have to spend resources on defence by maintaining people whom we have not armed or equipped sufficiently to allow them to carry out the tasks for which we are paying them.' Jundzis, T., *Cik maksa valsts aizsardziba* (How much does a country's defence cost?) (Riga: Junda, 1998), p.9.

[71] This table shows total inventory: many of the units are not in working order or are under repair.

[72] Asmus Ronald and Robert Nurick, 'NATO enlargement and the Baltic States', *Survival*, vol. 38, no. 2 (1996).

[73] Statement made by Vitautas Landsbergis – at that time speaker of the Lithuanian Parliament – at the session of the Baltic Assembly (26 April 1997).

The interaction between the Baltic States is none the less solid evidence that the process of integration has begun and the first positive results have been achieved. However, at present it is difficult to predict its future development and the principal constraints. It is clear that the countries themselves are unsure of what type of regional framework would be best for them. Therefore, interpretations vary from union, alliance, or a Benelux or Nordic co-operation model to the view that trilateral co-operation should not overtake the emphasis on moving towards EU and NATO. It must be noted, though, that there is a dominant view: the recognition that common guarantees for security problems should be sought, since there is a common potential source of threat. That is why a *security community* would be the optimal solution – but in a wider context, and not among the three states alone.

This is confirmed by Deutsch's testing of the criteria for Baltic co-operation. If integration is based on the recognition by states that interaction will give the most positive results, then in the case of the Baltic States the stimulus for integration has not come from national political sources, but from outside pressure: first as a reaction to Soviet ambitions for a renewed empire and then under international pressure to come forth as a united regional actor. The process of internal regional self-identification has been slow and fitful.

Deutsch lists at least four aims of integration (see Section II) of which the most important for the Baltic States is preservation of independence. It would be difficult to preserve independence individually, because of lack of resources and influence in international affairs. However, taking into consideration declared foreign and security policy goals, mutual integration could serve as a stimulus and precondition for integration into Europe. As regards the background conditions for limited three-state integration, these are simply not in evidence. Mutual economic interdependence is at a relatively low level, which is shown by the small scale of mutual trade. In 1998, 4.5 per cent of Latvia's exports went to Estonia, with imports from Estonia making up 6.6 per cent. Latvia's exports to Lithuania were 7.4 per cent and its imports 6.3 per cent of the respective totals.[74] There is also a tendency not to co-ordinate on important issues – applications to EU and NATO were, for example, submitted at different times – and a low level of interdependence also in politics and culture. Indeed, a sense of common generalised identity is not very evident in the Baltic States. For instance, a survey done on identity in Latvia showed that only 38.4 per cent of respondents felt linked to the other republics.[75]

One of the factors hindering co-operation and regional development is the fact that the Baltic States do not have an obvious leader to orchestrate political processes within the area. Geographically this role should go to Latvia, which is already recognised at an institutional level. For example, the secretariat of the Baltic Council of Ministers and the Euro-faculty are in Riga. However, this view is not fully shared by the country's neighbours. Estonia feels that it has gone further in economic reforms and should therefore either take on the role of leader or move away completely in order to consolidate its ties with Finland and not become too involved with the Baltic region, which has less to offer. For its part, Lithuania argues that it is

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[74] Monthly Bulletin of Latvian Statistics (Riga: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 1/56, 1999), p.115.
[75] *Euroidentity and National Identity: Latvia's international tendencies*, Report (Riga: Latvian Shipping Company, 1995), p.7.

the largest of the three and yet sometimes feels left at the periphery, stimulating its move closer to Poland and, therefore, to the Visegrad countries.

Although it is impossible to say which regional model is best for the Baltic States, because they are still underdeveloped, co-operation in general and over a wide area is imperative. Very convincing arguments for this are put forward by Danish political scientist Lars Johansson. He holds the view that the Baltic States are seen as a bloc by politicians, experts and public opinion. They may choose not to accept this and emphasise their differences, but this stereotype will remain, especially with respect to issues of European enlargement. Co-operation among the three is also an indicator of how they will act within other international organisations. Given that the EU is sensitive about its structural and institutional changes, the behaviour that new partners bring to the EU decision-making process is important. The question may arise whether Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will be reliable partners in the EU if they cannot agree amongst themselves and find effective mechanisms for regulating political processes. Therefore, the attitude of Europe may be guarded. A survey of the decisions and implementation mechanisms associated with Baltic co-operation – for example, on border crossings between the countries – shows that the administrative system is rudimentary and decision-making is slow and inefficient. This is not a good sign when assessing the three states' readiness to integrate into European structures. Johansson also registers another important consideration. The Baltic States have some very close links, especially in the field of security. If one of them is left outside of an institution while the others are accepted, the opportunity arises for Russia to expand its sphere of influence. This is something that neither the Baltic States nor Europe nor the international community wants. The fact that the trio have similar economies is somewhat of a constraint, but on the other hand economies can be restructured and aligned with global economic processes, thereby finding their niche and integrating more swiftly into Europe. A Baltic economic zone could be one of the first steps in this direction.[76]

Another area in which the Baltic States would like to see better results is one that has considerable significance in the context of EU enlargement. It is a potential litmus test of the ability of the countries to co-ordinate their operations at the sub-regional level, which might make their integration into a larger international association easier. This is economic co-operation, aimed at and eventually leading to a unified economic space. This would help the three countries move from three small markets to one medium-sized market; and that would create new opportunities for production and make the trio more attractive for foreign investment. Another positive aspect would be the ability to maintain more balanced economic relations with the West and with Russia, reducing dependence on the latter country. When EU enlargement started and Estonia was chosen as a first-wave aspirant, the necessity and effectiveness of intra-Baltic co-operation was questioned. Latvia in that situation became its most ardent advocate. In Prime Minister Vilis Kristopans' words: 'We should never forget about Baltic unity. … If we cannot agree about fundamentals between three Baltic States, what are we going to do in the European Union?'.[77]

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[76] L. Johansson, 'The Road to Europe via Baltic Co-operation', *Baltic Independent* (30 June - 6 July 1995).

[77] www.bns.lv. (1 February 1999).

To sum up: the three-country Baltic Region currently has both elements of competition and elements of co-operation. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are in a single geographic space. They have common goals, and they are similar in quantitative and qualitative terms. If the theoretical framework of region formation is applied to the Baltic States, it is found that they display an excellent potential. Still, none of them has taken full advantage of this. It turns out that the explanation for this can also be found in regionalism. Each state has a wide variety of regional relationships. Each seeks full membership in the EU and NATO. For that reason, political processes pursue balance between the accessible and the desired. The greater the opportunities to use individual potential in moving closer to the EU and NATO, the greater the preference given to national resources and interests. The more distant the possibility to join the union or the alliance, the greater the effort invested in joint projects and promoting local co-operation. Countries can state common goals with relative ease, and formalised structures – co-operation at the level of presidents, parliaments, governments and ministries – suggest a united front. But the selection and application of resources aimed at achieving these goals have been left to each country individually, and this has hampered the effectiveness of the implementation of joint endeavours.[78]

From the Latvian perspective the Baltic Region (narrowly defined) is a unique area for experiments, providing a favourable foundation for preparation for more extensive regional co-operation, such as membership in the EU and NATO. During a 1997 visit to Denmark Latvian President Guntis Ulmanis stated clearly his country's position on three-nation co-operation. He said: 'Mutually co-ordinated co-operation and integration of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania is a historical necessity, which brings these countries closer to their common strategic aim – involvement in European and transatlantic structures. Trilateral co-operation and inclusion into European integration are complementary processes. Co-operation is taking place on two levels – political and practical. Generally speaking, the Baltics is already a single space where countries are implementing joint projects with participation of European institutions. That brings the Baltic States closer to European integration'.[79]

What, though, of the greater Baltic Region (broadly defined)? What of the infant republics' relations with their Nordic neighbours? To what extent has 'region-making' progressed in this context?

2. Baltic-Nordic Co-operation

A substantial part of Latvian security policy is closely associated not only with trilateral co-operation but with ties to Northern neighbours as well. From the very beginning of the restoration of their independence, the Baltic countries asserted co-

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[78] The issue of withdrawing the Russian armed forces, for example, was settled in bilateral negotiations, not on the basis of a '3+1' formula, which allowed Russia to throw a spoke into the wheels of Baltic unity by withdrawing its army from Lithuania in 1993. During the negotiations with Latvia, Riga was forced to yield on the issue of the Skrunda radar station. This was seen as a negative factor by Estonia, which said that now Russia would be able to foist its will upon Tallinn, too.
[79] *Latvijas Vestnesis* (21 March 1997).

operation with their Nordic neighbours as a foreign policy priority. This was affirmed in a 1995 statement of Latvia's basic foreign policy directions for the next decade.[80] However, it should be noted that from the very beginning Baltic-Nordic co-operation was a 'one-way street'. Latvia always supported the region-building process, but the implementation of that process was initiated mostly by the northern counterparts. Therefore, it is almost impossible to talk about a specific Latvian perspective on the Baltic-Nordic region, since Latvia has been a country responding to activities undertaken by the Scandinavian partners. At the same time there has never been any doubt that co-operation between the Baltic and the Nordic countries – starting with the simplest forms of collaboration and ranging through complex processes of integration and region-building – would be of critical importance for the survival of the newly-established states. There are several reasons for this.

From an *historical* perspective, both groups had similar levels of development before World War II. As small countries, the Nordic states provided a good example of how to deal with major powers – managing to maintain their identity as sovereign entities in the international system while achieving successful economic and social development.

In a *geographical* context the Nordic countries have good reason for co-operation, and perhaps region-building, on the Baltic Sea littoral. Indeed, there were already examples of co-operation in ecological, cultural and educational matters during the Cold War period.

Economically the Nordic countries present a successful model of welfare states: they are prosperous societies with attractive social security systems. This is one of explanations why, immediately after the restoration of independence, politicians in all Baltic countries opted for Scandinavian models. Latvia's former minister of Baltic-Nordic affairs, Gunars Meierovics, has noted that the Nordic countries reciprocated by showing deep sympathies to Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian independence.[81] Furthermore their governments were able to assist the infant republics with a wide range of programmes, investing in building market economies, democratic institutions, education and defence.[82]

Politically, the Nordic countries form the closest international environment where nearly all of the political processes that are important for Latvia, as well as Europe, come together. It means that Baltic/Nordic co-operation has specific benefits. The Nordic countries, except Denmark, were involved in the most recent round of EU enlargement. The same countries are the most ardent supporters of the Baltic States in their quest for EU membership. Similar considerations apply with respect to NATO enlargement. Denmark, Iceland and Norway are long-standing NATO members and it is very important to have the link. It means that security concerns are gradually becoming more synchronised. Generally, the well-established democracies on the northern shore of the Baltic Sea can help the southern shore countries which are

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[80] *Basic Directions of Latvia's Foreign Policy to the Year 2005* (Riga: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1995), p.1.
[81] Gunars Meierovics, *Interview with the author* (4 May 1998).
[82] See, for instance, Žaneta Ozoliņa , 'The Nordic and the Baltic countries: a sub-region in the making?', in Atis Lejins and Daina Bleiere (eds.), *The Baltic States: Search for Security* (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 1996), pp.93-112.

emerging from totalitarianism – with all of the attendant instability and complexity – and steadily moving towards traditional Western practices. One more important aspect of the political relevance of the Nordic countries, which strengthens their central role, is their relations with the United States and Russia. These may well serve as a point of reference for the Baltic States' future relationships with these powers.

Following the theoretical framework outlined earlier it is instructive to define the main factors promoting and hindering Baltic-Nordic co-operation. What kind of co-operation model is developing among these countries? What are the implications for security co-operation?

Considering factors working in favour of such co-operation, the first unifying pre-requisite is obviously geographic location. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and the main Nordic countries all lie on the shores of the Baltic Sea, and this serves as the basis for the creation of a regional grouping. The institutional framework has been established, including the Council of Baltic Sea States, the Baltic Parliamentary Assembly, the Baltic Council, the Nordic Council, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Baltic Council of Ministers. There is liaison among these institutions. Links also exist at the sub-national level, through the Union of Baltic Cities, as well as under the auspices of various bilateral consortia, trans-regional co-operation programmes, functional networks and business enterprises.[83]

Although there are differing levels of involvement in the various European political and security structures, both the Baltic States and the Nordic countries have stated their commitment to the four pillars of Europe's new political architecture: NATO and its Partnership for Peace programme, the EU, the OSCE and (for the time being) the WEU. Common interests are seen with respect to the Baltic Sea itself, especially in the area of environmental concerns. Several examples of mutual co-operation have already been established, much has been invested in terms of resources, and the first positive results are already being felt.[84]

Changes in Europe and corresponding alterations in the continent's security structure have caused states to seek their own place therein. NATO and EU enlargement challenge both the Baltics and the Nordics. During the last few years there have been attempts to establish regional relations at the non-governmental level, which could serve as an example for broader co-operation at the governmental level. The establishment of a 'region' in the Baltic Sea area would create the necessary conditions for favourable relations with larger countries *and* prevent them from seeking or achieving domination over the zone. This is of major importance both to the Baltic and to the Nordic states.

The complex economic and political situation in Russia represents the largest source of threats against the Baltic and Nordic states. Joint efforts to create a security region would help to prevent conflict. They would also help to expand and deepen the assistance which the Nordic countries provide in consolidating democracy in the

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[83] Carl-Einar Stalvant, *The Nordic-Baltic States in European Economic Integration*, Paper presented at the seminar 'An Emerging Profile of the Baltic States in the Baltic Sea Region' (Riga, 1992), p.9.

[84] As more important achievements the following could be mentioned: Latvian peacekeepers participated in missions in Bosnia within the Danish Battalion, Latvian naval forces took part in minesweeping operations with Swedish partners, both parties are trying to establish a joint programme on crisis management in the Baltic Sea.

transitional Baltic States, making the process irreversible and thereby creating a certain type of security guarantee for the Nordics themselves. Particular Nordic states further serve as a security link with international organisations such as the European Union and NATO, in which Baltic initiatives have been promoted (like that proposed by the Finnish government to develop the EU's Northern Dimension).[85]

At the same time there are factors hindering Nordic-Baltic co-operation. There are differences in the respective countries' security interests and their commitment to the 'region'. Within the framework of '5+3' there are several sub-models. First of all, the Baltic States and Denmark and Norway are actively co-operating so far as the NATO enlargement process is concerned, while Finland and Sweden are more distant in debating such issues. Secondly, there is a 'duo-troika' – consisting of the Baltic States and the Nordic EU members (Denmark, Finland and Sweden) – whose primary concern is the admission of all three Baltic countries into the EU.[86] The third sub-model was introduced by Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs Valdis Birkavs. After NATO's 1997 Madrid summit, the ministers of defence and foreign affairs of the Baltic and Nordic countries met in Bergen to discuss security co-operation in the region. On his arrival the Minister stated that there is a new formula developing, namely, '5+3+1': where the 'one' is the United States, which looms large in Baltic-Nordic affairs.[87]

Despite the existence of these sub-models the common understanding of Baltic-Nordic co-operation embraces all relevant countries reflecting multilevel interactions and cross-border relationships, some at sub-regional or sectoral level. For instance, Norway cannot be compared with Denmark and Sweden with respect to involvement in Latvia's affairs, but at the same time Norwegian participation in joint projects grows year by year. Although Iceland's involvement cannot be compared with Denmark's or Sweden's, Reykjavik gave the Baltic States political support before independence and assistance in international organisations thereafter.

An inhibiting factor for Baltic-Nordic co-operation is Russia, which would like to dominate any new regional grouping.[88] On the one hand, Russia cannot be excluded from the co-operative process. But on the other hand, ambiguity about the position of Russia and its role in European structures brings uncertainty.

Another consideration is that a well-functioning and stable system of co-operation on the basis of an international organisation – the Nordic Council – already exists in Northern Europe. The Norwegian expert Olev Knudsen considers that the establishment of a Nordic-Baltic grouping might lead to greater instability in the region. He notes the volatile situation in the region; the power vacuum that exists; an

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[85] The Northern Dimension was elaborated by the Finnish government as an EU policy towards Northern Europe. The Finnish proposal was accepted by the European Council at the Vienna summit in December 1998. See more in the next sub-section on The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS).

[86] The term 'duo-troika' was introduced by Danish researcher Hans Mouritzen. See: Hans Mouritzen, *Theory and Practice of International Relations* (London: Ashgate, 1998), p.98.

[87] *Diena* (14 September 1997).

[88] For instance, when the Council of the Baltic Sea States was established to promote dialogue between regional countries, Russia wanted to establish a post for Commissioner on Human Rights and Minorities. This issue was not the most important in the area, but because of Russia's pressure it was considered and led to appointment of a different profile: a Commissioner for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. The Danish professor Ole Esspersen holds the post.

absence of agreement on the criteria for new solutions in economics, politics, military and social affairs; the fact that the security situation in the Baltic Sea area seems to be of primary importance only to the Baltic countries, not to others in the area; and the strains of transition and ethnic dissatisfaction.[89] Despite the stable system of Nordic co-operation, the five Nordic countries have always been and still are quite diverse. If a new system of relations were to be established, the differences would become even more pronounced, because the states would have new options before them. Thus, for example, the Norwegians have already started to promote the idea of establishing a Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR).

Still, there are more factors working in favour of Baltic-Nordic co-operation than there are inhibiting the region-making process. However, it is still important to find an answer to the key question: how has Baltic-Nordic regionality developed so far and how is it contributing to the security of Latvia and the other Baltic States? Is there a security community in the making between Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and their Nordic partners?

Baltic-Nordic co-operation has developed in parallel with the evolution of Latvian security policy and trilateral Baltic co-operation. When Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania declared their aim to restore independent states in the late 1980s two contradictory strands in Baltic-Nordic relations became evident. The first reflected the fact that in a silent European corner the three Soviet republics were disturbing the peace with their claims for independence. Therefore, messages were sent by the Scandinavian countries 'not to rock Gorbachev's boat of *perestroika'*. At that time only Iceland and Denmark participated actively in Baltic affairs (at an unofficial level). The second approach addressed Baltic-Nordic relations from a different perspective, claiming that Nordic political support was crucial, given Western reluctance even to mention the Baltic question. The Nordic countries could be a link to the Western world.[90]

As soon as the irreversibility of change became evident, however, first Denmark changed its hidden sympathetic policy towards the Baltic States to a more open one. This shift has been described by Danish analyst Hans Mouritzen. He argues that the involvement of the Nordic countries in Baltic affairs is determined by geopolitical and strategic considerations. Thus, Denmark – being a front-line state in case of military attack in the Baltic Sea during the Cold War period – was the country most keen to show its willingness to participate in regional transformations. Norway, Sweden and Finland were more circumspect. That could be explained by the total devotion to non-alignment in the last two countries and their proximity to the Soviet

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[89] Olav Knudsen, *Subregional Security Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Area: Toward an International Regime on CSCE Principles* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 1993), p.1-5.

[90] Starting from 1989/90 these countries provided help to the Popular Fronts in the Baltic States, organised informal meetings with politicians, business representatives, and invited Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to participate in meetings of the Nordic Council and international organisations. However, they were hesitant to recognise Baltic independence. Such caution could be explained by several reasons. There was an illusion in the West that the Soviet Union could be transformed into a democratic society if Gorbachev's reforms could be implemented. Thus, anything that might undermine the existing balance of power was not welcomed. This led to the first disruptions in Nordic unity when only Iceland recognised the Baltics' independence immediately.

Union's – and later Russia's – borders.[91]

Although, the most active Baltic supporter was Denmark, it would not be correct to say Finland, Sweden and Norway were indifferent towards the Baltic States.[92] The next test came in November 1990 during a meeting of the CSCE. The Baltic politicians sought the status of official observers. Before the conference the Danish and Icelandic delegations declared their positive attitude to Baltic independence and regretted the unwillingness of Western countries to do likewise. Norway concurred and even sought to establish a Baltic support group within the CSCE.[93] Sweden withheld support. The lowest profile was taken by Finland. The Finns did not participate in any kind of pro-Baltic campaign. However, even at that time they communicated with Estonia about further co-operation and partnership.[94]

The official basis for Baltic-Nordic co-operation was established in December 1990. During the session of the Nordic Council a meeting was organised with the Baltic ministers of foreign affairs in order to work out where Nordic assistance was most needed. Each Baltic state presented its own programme. One outcome of the meeting was the establishment of an Information Bureau of the Nordic Council with its headquarters in Riga.[95] However, there was no consensus among the Nordic partners regarding practical help. The foundation for co-operation was laid but differences in attitudes towards the Baltic States remained. These are still influencing Baltic-Nordic co-operation, which often is overshadowed by Nordic competition for a leadership role in the region.[96] Such competition among the Scandinavians has its positive side as well. According to Mouritzen: 'There is no doubt, however, that the re-emergence of the Baltic States has blown a new lease of life into Danish-Swedish-Finnish mutual co-operation and competition; in addition to their parallel actions, the Baltic challenge presents a novel and huge common task of its own. They have now

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[91] Citation at note 104 below.

[92] Denmark was the first Nordic country to sign a protocol on co-operation before the Baltics' independence was recognised internationally. This document stated that Denmark was looking forward to establishing diplomatic relations with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. It was the Danish minister of foreign affairs Uffe Ellemann-Jensen who helped to establish contacts with politicians in the UN, the CSCE, the European Parliament, and the Council of Europe. He was one of the first politicians to elaborate on future prospects of the Baltic Sea region.

[93] Ozoliņa , 'The Nordic and the Baltic countries: a Sub-region in the making?', pp.94-98.

[94] Under the Soviet occupation, because of geographic proximity and linguistic similarities, Finland had its influence on Estonia via tourism, black market activities and mass media. Only the Estonian population in the ex-USSR were able to watch Finnish TV channels.

[95] At that meeting discord among the Nordic countries increased. During the session a proposal was made to adopt a communique on Baltic independence. Denmark, Iceland and Norway were willing to sign this document, Finland and Sweden were not. Finally, a document on further co-operation was signed by all countries.

[96] During the first years of independence Denmark played the leading part in the region. An explanation for that was that it was the only Nordic country fully integrated into NATO and the EU, thus having all necessary preconditions for free action not referring all the time to Russia's reaction. When the Baltic States expressed their willingness to join the European structures and Russian troops were withdrawn from the region, Sweden decided to use its capacities as an EU member but not a NATO member, thus being able politically to avoid Russia's aggressive reaction towards NATO expansion and to serve as a regional mediator and leader. In 1995/1996 the country started to increase its investments in the Baltic States. However, very active Swedish involvement in regional affairs was met by Finnish countermeasures when Finland urged that the EU's external policy towards Northern Europe should focus on Russia's future role in Europe.

even more in common than before'.[97]

The next phase in Baltic-Nordic co-operation started after international recognition of the Baltic States' independence. The Scandinavian countries focused on two basic issues. One was related to support for democratic transformation of societies and led to a wide range of assistance programmes. The other was a security matter, the issue of Russian troop withdrawals from the Baltic States. Both democracy support and security concerns represented common interests for future co-operation. Internationalisation of the troops withdrawal issue, which became possible with the active assistance of neighbours, brought new topics to the regional agenda. The involvement of Nordic countries –the most active were Denmark, Sweden and partly Norway – in a main security concern of the Baltic States had a significant impact on further developments in the region.[98] On the one hand, this issue overshadowed other areas of co-operation hindering the growth of investments and foreign trade. But, on other hand, developing ties acquired a new security dimension. Thus, Baltic-Nordic co-operation moved even further than established Nordic co-operation where security matters were never discussed; and a basis for harmonising security interests was laid. When Russian troops left the Baltic States, Baltic-Nordic co-operation could move further in areas relevant for all concerned.

The next phase in this area co-operation started when the three Baltic States defined their own foreign and security goals – with EU and NATO membership as the most important short-term priorities. Because the Nordic countries had different visions of these institutions this caused uneasiness in the region, but this was followed by several success stories.[99]

The most controversial matter is NATO enlargement. While the subject does not have such a high profile in regional debates as EU enlargement, it brings discussion on regional security issues on the agenda. Danish Minister of Defence Hans Hekkerup – the most consistent supporter of the Baltic States – has argued that their exclusion from the enlargement process could damage regional stability. He writes: 'What would happen if NATO were *not* expanded and the Baltic States did not become members? It is my firm conviction that then we would all stand to lose. The Baltic States would lose the opportunity to become full-blooded members of Europe. This degradation as 'second-class citizens' would provide fertile soil for populists and nationalists. The arguments would be: Why should we suffer so much and strive so hard to follow western rules when it does not help us any? To me the choice is simple: Either we export stability or we import instability. And instability leads to

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[97] Hans Mouritzen, 'Denmark in the Post-Cold War Era: The Salient Action Spheres', in Bertel Heurlin and Hans Mouritzen (eds.), *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 1997* (Copenhagen: DUPI, 1997), pp.33-51.

[98] Changes in the Swedish government and the arrival of Carl Bildt in the prime minister's office significantly influenced the county's policy toward the Baltic States. In September 1993 Bildt said that Sweden would not remain neutral if there were a crisis in the Baltics. (*Svenska Dagbladet* (20 March 1994).). During the Helsinki summit in 1992 Carl Bildt had put the question of Russian troop withdrawal on the agenda saying: 'When we call for the conclusion 'without delays' of bilateral agreements on the 'speedy, orderly and complete withdrawal of Russian forces', we do so in the interest of the stability of all Europe'.

[99] Denmark, Iceland and Norway are NATO countries but Sweden and Finland are even reluctant to mention alliance enlargement issues in internal political debates. This caused a question: what will happen if the Baltic States would be accepted as NATO members?

insecurity, and insecurity leads to extremism. We have seen it very clearly in Germany's development'.[100]

Even if the other Nordic countries in their official positions with respect to NATO enlargement were not so explicitly supportive, the realisation that security concerns of the region are tightly linked together created favourable conditions for assistance programmes in building the Baltic States' defence capability. Thus Sweden at the very early stages of Baltic independence contributed field kitchens and boots and in May 1998 lifted its embargo on arms sales.[101] As a result the country is going to give Latvia used training planes. (In connection with its defence forces contraction programme, Sweden will close three air force bases and will no longer have any use for about thirty SL-60 and Saab-105 training aircraft.) Other military equipment worth around SEK20 million will be provided in 1999.[102]

In one or another capacity all Nordic countries except Finland are actively participating in regional security projects - Baltbat, Baltron, Baltnet, Baltdefcol and Baltsea.[103] Particular interest attaches to the last two. Baltdefcol (Baltic Defence College) is a Baltic-Nordic project aimed at training officers to NATO standards. It is located in Tartu (Estonia) and Finland *is* taking part. Baltsea (Baltic Security Assistance) was established in September 1997 to co-ordinate the assistance to the armed forces of the Baltic States. The countries involved in Balbat plus Iceland and Switzerland are participating in the project.

Although military co-operation has never been accorded high priority in Baltic-Nordic co-operation, these developments demonstrate increasing interaction. Gradually the security interests of the countries are coalescing. This process will continue as wider debate on the future European architecture proceeds.

The EU enlargement process has been another test of Nordic claims that the three Baltic States are foreign policy priorities. The Nordic EU members – especially Finland and Sweden – had to cope with two difficult problems in the mid-1990s. On the one hand, they had to integrate themselves into the EU and develop their own adaptation polices. On the other hand, they had to pursue Baltic interests with respect to EU enlargement. From 1995/1996 all three Nordic EU states supported an approach that the next accession talks should start with all candidate countries together and the membership issue should be decided later on the merits of individual performance. However, this position was undermined in Amsterdam when Finland decided to endorse the European Commission's recommendation to invite only Estonia to start negotiations. A sharp reaction from Sweden and Denmark

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[100] Hans Hekkerup, 'NATO in the 21st century: The future of Transatlantic relationship and security in Europe', in *Visions of European Security – Focal point Sweden and Northern Europe* (Stockholm: The Olof Palme International Centre, 1996), p.137.

[101] Sweden had an embargo for two reasons: Swedish policy of non-alignment and general concern that arms would be used in a conflict with Russia what could threaten Western-Russian relations. In 1998 Sweden set aside its reservation on these counts.

[102] *Svenska Dagbladet* (18 January 1998).

[103] The United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands participated in the creation of Baltbat; Baltron involves the three Baltic States and Poland, with assistance provided by Germany, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden; Baltnet was created with the help of the United States.

followed.[104] The Finnish position changed when – in Luxembourg, after very intensive Swedish and Danish lobbying – the positive decision for Latvia and Lithuania to introduce two-track negotiations was accepted. Policy-makers stated that they always supported Baltic EU membership.[105]

The EU has a variety of impacts on Baltic-Nordic co-operation. First of all, financial assistance has been attached to the implementation of the Baltics' pre-accession policies. Secondly, the Nordic EU countries can advise on how to negotiate with the EU. Thirdly, these states can serve as an integrating factor for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – under the circumstances that only Estonia has been included in the fast-track entry negotiations. Fourthly, political lobbying in different EU institutions will be needed in the immediate future.

Statistical evidence on the regionalisation process is provided by data on the growth of Latvian foreign trade, presented in Table 3; and information on investments shown in Table 4.

Table 3. Foreign trade of Latvia with the Nordic countries (in thousand LVS)

Country	Export 1997	Export		Import 1997	Import	
		1998	%		1998	%
EU	474807	604459	56.6	841225	1039492	55.5
CIS	286848	202611	19.0	312160	301063	16.0
Denmark	37653	54454	5.1	55227	70985	3.8
Norway	5721	8237	0.8	23738	29049	1.6
Finland	15048	22949	2.1	153418	179189	9.5
Sweden	80651	110017	10.3	121466	135096	7.2

Source: *Latvijas statistikas ikmenesa biletens (*Riga: Latvijas Republikas Statistikas komiteja, 1999), p.115.

Table 4. Foreign Direct Investment Stock by Investing Country (in thousand LVS)

Country	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997 VI
Denmark	132.2	2099.8	45689.8	71346.5	99400.3	99157.0
Norway		73.0	36.1	52.0	1498.1	1865.0
Finland	803.0	1522.7	3817.6	7760.1	10371.5	11364.4
Sweden	1594.8	4106.7	5001.3	7600.8	18473.8	16317.4

Source: *Latvijas statistikas ikmenesa biletens* (Riga: Latvijas Republikas Statistikas komiteja, 1997), p.40.

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[104] For more on this see: Ozoliņa , 'The Nordic and the Baltic Countries: a Sub-region in the making?', pp.93-109; Žaneta Ozoliņa , 'Latvija pec Luksemburgas', *Latvija un Eiropas Savieniba*, No. 8 (1998), pp.12-14; Žaneta Ozoliņa 'Latvia and the European Union: Before and After Amsterdam', in Barbara Lippert and Mathias Jopp (eds.), *EU Enlargement: Visions for the Baltic Sea Area* (Bonn: Institute fur Europaische Institut, 1999 forthcomming); Žaneta Ozoliņa , 'Latvia', in Hans Mouritzen, *Bordering Russia: Theory and Prospects for Europe's Baltic Rim* (London: Ashgate, 1998).

[105]*Diena* (3 November 1997).

The trade figures require no comment. Regarding the foreign direct investment data, it is important to note that in the early 1990s the Nordic countries were cautious. But attitudes have changed in recent years. At the moment it is possible to declare that almost all the biggest Scandinavian companies are present in Latvia and the other Baltic States. Investments brought to Latvia are significant for economic development because they cover such areas as telecommunication, transport, energy resources, industry, and services.

Economic relations are developing on other levels also building mutual interdependence. Thus, for example, the Union of the Baltic Cities – consisting of 65 towns around the Baltic Sea – is implementing numerous projects on economic, environmental, cultural, and social developments.[106] These tendencies do not, however, indicate that a new security region based on *defence* co-operation is emerging between Baltic and Nordic states. There is a commonly accepted agreement that this would not correspond to the contemporary understanding of security. In the word of a Danish policy statement 'Security in Europe cannot be regionalism, but the regional co-operation structures can make a useful contribution to general stability'.[107] Security is nevertheless an essential part of the overall regional agenda.[108] Adaptation of European structures to systemic changes in international relations is based on inclusionist policies. Countries willing to join existing institutions are provided with assistance programmes. Relevant activities cover security issues. Participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace Programme, minesweeping operations in the Baltic Sea, special task forces for combating crime in the area have brought the Baltic States and Nordic countries together. Moreover, many national problems, associated with globalisation, regionalisation and interdependence cannot be solved only by national means. Regional instruments are needed to make the solutions less costly and more efficient. For instance, it is hardly possible to deal on a national level with such diverse problems as an ecological crisis in the Baltic sea, organised crime, flows of refugees, air space control.

Investigation of relations among the Baltic and the Nordic countries leads to the conclusion that from the very beginning of mutual co-operation, the parties have expressed a willingness and readiness to contribute to a more stable and peaceful environment in the Baltic Sea area. Co-operation has been established at various levels: governmental, non-governmental, bilateral and multilateral. The Nordic

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[106] *Baltic Cities Bulletin* (2/1996).

[107] *Danish and European Security* (Copenhagen: The Danish Commission on Security and Disarmament, 1995), p.25.

[108] The attitude of the respective countries towards regionalisation of security in the Baltic area was tested by Russia in 1997, when President Boris Yeltsin proposed security guarantees for the Baltic States and a Pact for Regional Security and Stability (PRSS). The last document was widely discussed. The official Swedish and Finnish position was summarised in a paper on *Co-operative Security for the Baltic Sea Region*. They rejected the PRSS as not corresponding to a modern vision of European security. Preference should be given to existing institutions, though some proposed issues could be discussed within those organisations; regional institutions should complement the agendas of the existing institutions. It is clear that co-operation on security matters will continue in the region, and between Baltic and Nordic countries, but there will not be any alternative security organisation undermining already existing ones.

countries were the first supporters of the independence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and they were the first to promote the Baltic issue in international organisations. Despite the fact that there are no official policies toward the Baltic countries and that there is no regular co-ordination of joint efforts among the Nordic states to assist and support the new democracies, the practical implementation of Scandinavian policies has led to a permanent and gradually increasing interest in regional affairs, starting with ecological, cultural and educational matters and progressing to economic, financial and security considerations. It is very important that co-operation is comprehensive, because it is almost impossible to create a region among the Baltic and the Nordic countries if relations are oriented toward only one area, be it ecology, security, or any other concern.

The great merit of Baltic-Nordic co-operation is that this region falls into the framework of the concept of 'new regionalism'. Countries not only share geographical proximity, historical, linguistic and culture values but also interest in openness of structures, multiplicity of functions, and diversity of participation. Regarding security concerns, Ole Weaver has noted several areas where security elements feature. The diversity of areas and actors involved increases regional homogeneity and promotes regional identity. The expansion of co-operation in different fields and the growth of channels of interaction on all levels influence every person in the region. People *feel* more secure and protected, especially those who for many years felt abandoned (and still do, so far as NATO enlargement is concerned). Involvement in regional affairs diminishes this stereotype. There has been co-operation on quasi-military issues: on arms control and such topics as assistance to overcome legacies of the Soviet occupation – like withdrawal of troops, transfer and settlement of retired officers and others. It is possible to keep under control sources of potential frontier disputes and ethnic conflicts through cross-border co-operation. Generally, the logic of co-operation long embraced by the Northern neighbours helps to bring together countries with different security agendas.[109]

3. The Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS)

Trilateral and multilateral (Nordic) co-operation represent informal relationships in the area to which Latvia belongs. They have been established on the basis of mutual advantage. One of the indicators of the effectiveness of co-operation, however, is the ability to establish an institution which organises and governs intercourse. An answer to the question why such a great role must be assigned to institutionalism has been offered by Jane Sweeney, who has written that 'institutions are an important *outcome* of the integration process, that is, they are a measure of the success of the integration project'.[110]

The countries of the Baltic Sea Region took a necessary step toward

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[109] Ole Waever, 'The Baltic Sea Area: A Region After Post-Modernity?', in Pertti Joenniemi (ed.), *Neo-Nationalism or Regionality? Restructuring of Political Space Around the Baltic Rim* (Stockholm: NordREFO, 1997), pp.309-310.

[110] Jane Sweeney, *The First European Elections: Neofunctionalism and the European Parliament* (London: Boulder, 1984), p.25.

integration in 1992, when the Council of Baltic Sea States was set up. The Council's goals in its initial phases were to consider and elaborate a common strategy for regional policies and economic development, and to promote to promote and co-ordinate regional co-operation.[111] It became a forum for debate on many issues, but *not* security. This was because of the diversity of member countries' security agendas.[112] In some respects they were contradictory, especially if we remember that, until August 1994, Russian armed forces were present in the Baltic States. Also in the mid-1990s the transformations that were proceeding in the international system were unpredictable in terms of their final outcome. When the CBSS was founded, bipolar structures were still present in the region, and the new Northern European order was still at the level of intellectual constructs. In any event the Council was conceived primarily as a consultative body.[113]

The Baltic States were both interested in the formation of the CBSS and cautious with respect to it. Because of their acute need for security guarantees they devoted greater attention to institutions which dealt directly with what the CBSS very pointedly avoided. However, as interaction increased, security issues came onto the Council's agenda in a natural way. The first to make an open proposal was Poland in 1994, and it was soon joined in the call by Russia. The reason was the announcement that NATO was going to enlarge, eastwards. Poland's view was that the CBSS could soften Russia's opposition. Russia's interest was to use the CBSS to hamper the enlargement process.[114]

The efforts of the CBSS to promote multilateral integration were undeniably an important step in stimulating regionalisation. The slow and in many cases unclear beginning of this process in the early 1990s, however, hampered the council's development of an identity, and this limited the trust which countries placed in it. There was a lack of understanding about the logic of co-operation, as well as a lack of knowledge about the objective conditions for it. Politicians launched an ambitious project, which was not supported at the beginning by public and other political entities. The CBSS was established when 'new regionalism' was underway, but the project in this area was based on wishful thinking.

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[111] *Council of Baltic Sea States* (1994), p.2.

[112] This remains true in 1999. Denmark, Germany, Poland and Norway are NATO members, the Baltic States are actively striving for NATO membership, Finland and Sweden are not, while Russia opposes NATO.

[113] The Committee of Senior Officials of the CBSS, for example, was not given executive authority. An illustration of the consequences of this fact is the Via Baltica project. The project, which is aimed at building a road from Helsinki to Warsaw, was officially accepted in 1992, but work actually began only three years later. It must be noted that financial problems played an important role in the delay. Most CBSS undertakings require financial support, and they are in some way connected to the EU budget, with money coming from PHARE/TACIS economic aid, the Democracy Program, TEMPUS, the Cross-Border Co-operation Facility, the Copenhagen Co-Financing Facility, infrastructure projects under the umbrella of trans-European networks, and environmental projects within the LIFE program – as well as, in some instances, loans from the European Investment Bank. Considering the European Commission's freedom in selecting and adopting individual projects, participation in the CBSS is naturally an important link with a view to restructuring the spending of this aid in a more 'regional' manner.

[114] *Council of the Baltic Sea States*, Special Issue of the CBSS Monitor on the Occasion of the CBSS III Ministerial Session in Tallinn (24-25 May 1994), pp.2-3.

One of the basic difficulties was the fact that the CBSS was established as a discussion forum but its members did not consider how defined problems or projects should be implemented – despite the clear prescriptions of integration theory. As David Mitrany has observed, the essence and logic of functional integration in the organisation of international affairs require that activities 'be selected specifically and organised separately, each according to its nature, to the conditions under which it has to operate, and to the needs of the moment...[with] freedom for practical variation in the organisation of the several functions, as well as in the working of particular functions as needs and conditions alter'.[115] But setting the limits of functional integration does not in and of itself guarantee a successful result. A method of implementation is needed. Here Mitrany says 'we discover …the virtue of technical self-determination. The functional *dimensions*…determine themselves. In a like manner, the function determines its appropriate *organs*. It also reveals through practice the nature of the action required under given conditions, and in that way the *powers* needed by the respective authority. The function, one might say, determines the executive instrument suitable for its proper activity, and by the same process provides a need for the reform of that instrument at every stage'.[116]

With respect to the CBSS, Mitrany's theory is apposite, because when the functional areas of this co-operation and *organs* or instruments were elaborated – at Visby in 1995 – the institution obtained a completely different development dynamic compared to previous years. The work of the Council entered a new phase because, as the process of mutual interaction increased, goals that previously had been at the level of hypothesis obtained true substance. Accordingly, attitudes toward the organisation became more positive, and its potential was better understood. This change reflected the multi-level nature of the integration process and the specifics of each level. An understanding of these can promote the dynamics of international relations, while ignoring them can inhibit developments. In the case of the CBSS, institutional issues moved ahead of events. When accidental interaction turned into purposeful and regular co-operation, a need arose to oversee this process in a way that would promote multilateral integration.

At the Visby summit changes occurred in several respects. First of all, real content was given to CBSS operations through clearly formulated projects, and these were made more concrete a few months later during a ministerial meeting at Kalmar. This produced the CBSS Action Programme. It included three main elements:

(1) co-operation at the level of societies, 'human-to-human' contacts and promotion of civil or societal security;
(2) economic development and integration and;
(3) increased environmental protection.[117]

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[115] David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System: An Argument for the Functional Development of International Organisation* (London: RIIA, 1943), pp.32-33.
[116] Ibid, p.35.
[117] *Communique*, Fifth Ministerial Session (Kalmar, 2-3 July 1996), p.3.

Details were worked out at a senior officials meeting at Vasa in October 1996.[118]

It is noteworthy that security issues appeared, in a fairly modern interpretation: the form of societal security, emphasising individual and social aspects of security. The advantage was that the Council itself could define the concept and give it a content that corresponded to regional interests. By initially stressing those aspects of security on which agreement could be reached most quickly, the CBSS created a favourable foundation for further movement toward other political and security matters.

The Baltic Sea Region was internationalised in European context: the President of the European Commission attended the Visby summit in order to present a document entitled *The Baltic Sea Region Initiative*[119], which had been accepted by the EU in December 1995. This highlighted the special role of the Baltic Sea Region in Europe, as an area in which multi-faceted co-operation was developing very rapidly, along with democracy and market economics – those values that dominate in the EU itself – thus bringing the Baltic littoral states closer to overall integration processes in Western Europe.

At this time (1999) there are more than 500 projects proceeding under the auspices of the CBSS. The most important ones focus on overcoming the economic differences between the eastern and western shores of the region and creating a macroeconomic identity for the region. Several projects that are particularly important to the three Baltic States have also been launched.

It was under the Swedish presidency of the CBSS in 1995 and 1996 that the action programme was prepared. In 1996-1997 Latvia took over the presidency and started to implement some of the prescribed projects. Thus, Latvia had a key role in moving the CBSS from a discussion forum to practical forms of co-operation, something that would facilitate the transformation of this association of countries into a regional organisation.[120] The experience that Latvia already had in promoting co-operation among the Baltic States helped. When Denmark took over the Council in 1997, it received fully operational working groups: on economic and technical co-operation (Germany presiding);); nuclear safety and radiation issues (Finland); and a democratic institutions support group (Latvia).

Another very active body was set up at Visby: a task force to fight crime. This was initiated by Germany, in anticipation of a flow of criminal structures into that country via its eastern border. The task force works at the highest level, involving

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[118] They covered: support for preparations by Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland to join the EU; support for the ratification of the EU-Russian partnership and co-operation agreement; promotion of co-operation among the police, border guard, customs structures, immigration services and coastguards; stimulation of contacts at the individual level; support for the preparations of the Baltic States and Russia for membership in the World Trade Organisation; promotion of the establishment of a free trade zone in the Baltic States; support for making border crossing and customs procedures easier; and more intensive co-operation in such areas as and nuclear safety (Minutes of the Committee Meeting, 1996).

[119] This document was based on two previous ones: 'Orientations for a Union Approach Towards the Baltic Sea Region' (October 1994) and 'The Current State of and Perspectives for Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region' (December 1995).

[120] See Žaneta Ozoliņa , 'Baltic-Nordic Interaction, Co-operation and Integration', in Atis Lejins and Žaneta Ozoliņa (eds.), *Small States in a Turbulent Environment: The Baltic Perspective* (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 1997), pp.135-140.

interior ministers, their deputies or state secretaries, as well as prime ministerial advisers. The high level of effectiveness in this group can be linked to the fact that a very clearly defined goal has been set, and it must be reached in a defined time frame. That is why the mandate of the task force was extended after a meeting of Heads of State in Riga in January 1998.

Each successive meeting of the leaders of CBSS countries marks a growing interest in expanding and deepening co-operation. The meeting in Riga in 1998 put into effect a new dynamism in the interaction. This was linked to a series of fundamentally new positions, set out in the declaration of the presidency. The first was linked to the unanimous recognition by all of the represented countries that regional co-operation had become an immutable part of the politics of each country. The second affirmed the Baltic Sea Region as a European region. For that reason, co-operation in it is an investment in the development of a stable, democratic, welfare-oriented and indivisible Europe. The leaders of the various countries also noted that EU expansion is one of the elements in Baltic Sea Region policy. Special support was expressed for the concept of negotiations with all candidate countries at the same time, for the co-operation agreement between Russia and the EU, and for a Northern Dimension in EU policy.[121]

For the first time in the short history of the CBSS, there was a discussion in Riga about the development of an identity for the Baltic Sea Region that would be based not on the desires expressed by the leaders of the various countries, but rather on good-neighbourly relations, a common history, a common cultural heritage, and the observance of democratic values in human rights and fundamental freedoms.[122] The final document also noted those areas of co-operation which, in the view of the country leaders, are of key priority in terms of regional operations. First of all, these include promotion of democracy, human rights and civil security, which can be achieved through the actions of the Council's Commissioner for Democracy and Minority Rights. There is also the fight against crime through extension of the task force mandate; elaboration of policies covering refugees and asylum seekers; participation of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland in two Joint Actions of the EU on Combating Trade in Human Beings and on Sexual Exploitation of Children; and joint efforts related to rescue arrangements and early warning systems. The document also addressed economic co-operation, in which of particular importance from the perspective of Baltic State interests is the establishment of a Baltic electricity grid, something that would lessen the dependency of the Baltic States on Russia for energy resources. The same can be said about the proposal to establish a natural gas supply network. In the area of economic co-operation we can also note plans to develop investments, transportation, and information technologies. A final area that was given special emphasis is higher education, where there is a need to continue and speed up reforms.[123] All of these efforts are set in the context of the EU, which means that institutional arrangements are in line with the European integration process.

In 1999 the CBSS faces several new challenges that impinge on Latvia's security. First, the existing institutions within the region – the Nordic Council, the

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[121] *Presidency Declaration*, Baltic Sea States Summit (Riga, 22-23 January 1998), p.1.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid., pp.2-5.

Nordic Council of Ministers and the Council of Baltic Sea States – have all been expanding their areas of operation, supplementing their existing supervision and facilitation of the co-operation network with attention to issues that have to do with EU and NATO enlargement. In the near future developments in the region will be closely linked to the transformation of these two very important institutions and the accession of new member countries. For that reason, the effectiveness of the Baltic Sea Region's institutions will very much depend on the extent to which initiatives are placed on the agenda that accord with European integration. As mentioned earlier, Finnish assistance to the Estonian bid for membership in the EU delivered positive results. It is in Latvia's interest to utilise the regional network to speed-up its own pre-accession process.

A new test for the CBSS, and for relationships at other levels, will be the 'Northern Dimension' that has been proposed by Finland (and will be explained during that country's tenure of the EU presidency in the second half of 1999 and subsequently). The Finnish initiative incorporates provision for enhancing economic relations between Europe and Russia. This produced diverse reactions from Latvian politicians and businessmen.[124] Latvia enjoys its location and well-developed port facilities that allow it to offer transit services to eastern and western partners. At the moment there is no serious competitor for Latvian companies in this business. For this reason, and in the absence of clarification on how it could influence other countries and already developing initiatives under the auspices of the CBSS, the Finnish proposal was not warmly welcomed by the Latvian political elite. However, now that the Northern Dimension is an EU initiative Latvia will participate in its further elaboration.

Undeniably a positive role will also be played by the newly-established CBSS secretariat – located in Stockholm – which will offer technical and administrative assistance to the council, placing the greatest emphasis on information. A Polish diplomat, Jacek Starosciak, has been chosen as head of the secretariat.

The intensification of CBSS operations proves that the trends of co-operation and regionalisation in its area are on the rise, and there is a need to formalise the processes that are occurring at various levels. Despite the very different nature of the various actors involved – entities that represent national interests that in some instances are quite contradictory – the overall trend *is* toward regionalisation, because countries fear isolation. The CBSS also provides evidence of another fundamentally important factor, which is significant from the perspective of Latvia's interests. This is the fact that the agenda of debates has begun to include security issues which require regional resources. This means that as multilateral integration in the region increases, the security of the state and its society will also increase. The change in the CBSS profile, and the institutionalisation of the organisation, have created a positive surrounding environment for Latvia. That can serve as an effective resource in implementing national interests not only in the Baltic Sea Region, but also in a broader European context. This is particularly true given that all of the countries in the region are in one way or another linked to the EU (member countries, candidate countries, EFTA countries, and Russia, which regulates its relationships with the EU through the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement).

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[124] *OSCE Review. Special Issue on the Northern Dimension* (6 February 1998).

To sum up: it has been shown that the channels for interaction among countries and non-governmental entities are expanding at various levels in the Baltic Sea Region. Mutual responsiveness has become an accepted part of the region's operations. The various parties involved are all interested in implementation of the regional project. These connections in the larger regional space foreshadow the creation of a security community in the Baltic Sea Region to organise mutual interaction in an institutionalised way. That is what the CBSS could be used for.

V. CONCLUSION

Latvia has established – and legally underpinned – a security policy mechanism. However, during the first years of independence, the regional dimension of security policy was not very prominent. This could be explained by apprehension. The Soviet Union was a regional association with a strong centre ruling all aspects of life. Therefore, during these years there was no place for regionalism as such. Nor was it on the agenda after 1994 when Latvia defined its foreign and security policy goals in terms of EU and NATO membership. Policy makers were afraid that any kind of regional co-operation could be perceived as a substitute for association with both these institutions.

Difficulties in defining Latvia's security policy options stem from several sources. First of all, the security institutions that have been set up are young and inexperienced, so their operations are often ill-co-ordinated. Priority issues are often ignored in battles for influence among the various institutions. Secondly, there is still a considerable gap between the political elite and ordinary people. Indeed, society-at-large is basically not involved at all in the elaboration of security policies on the basis of its own interests. This is dangerous, because if a crisis erupts in which the general public must become involved, it may turn out that the political elite is isolated.

Besides, it is still unclear which are the main actors involved in security policy-making and what their responsibilities are. For instance, according to legislation the main role in security policy has been assigned to the president, but the institution of the presidency in Latvia is weakly defined, and the president has only limited power in other areas of public and national life. This creates a contradictory situation. The president's role does not correspond to the true distribution of power in the overall political structure. In addition, there are several other actors dealing with national security issues and defence matters. But there is no single institution overseeing all dispositions; and none approaching security from a regional perspective. This means that a regional security policy element is not included in the national policy agenda.

A most important – if not *the* most important – shortcoming, however, is the lack of understanding about security and security policies. There is no adequate concept that correlates in a general way the interests of society, the basic principles of a security policy, the distribution of functions, and the main areas of operation – a concept that would ensure that, as the strength of political parties shifts, the basic tenets of security policy, as defined by society, remain constant. Until the beginning of 1995 it was believed that the main thing was an analysis of threats and that a more general concept was not necessary in the malleable environment of the contemporary world. The absence of a concept, however, kept the country from articulating a unified statement of Latvia's national interests.

Despite the fact that attitudes toward the advantages of regionalism and its exploitation have not been consistent in Latvia, the interest of governmental and non-governmental entities in collective co-operation and organisation, growing. This is explained by the need to seek out as many resources as possible to guarantee security and stability, and by the international environment itself, which is providing favourable conditions for the creation of associations of states.

The more intensive the European integration process became, the more attractive regionalism was for Latvian policy-makers. On the one hand, the political process taking place in Europe is itself regional. The EU fosters co-operative measures initiated by members and would-be members according to its political and financial means. On the other hand, Latvia was forced to opt for regionalism in its wider sense because, in comparison with its neighbours, the country does not have bilateral policy alternatives. Thus, Estonia and Lithuania are much more cautious to regionalisation tendencies, because Estonia is taking full advantage of Finnish assistance and Lithuania is very much relying on a strategic relationship with Poland. Latvia being 'sandwiched' between two bilateral models can opt either for closer co-operation with Russia and the CIS or enjoy regional advantages offered by the Baltic Sea area.

From the Latvian perspective, the Baltic Sea Region, which is already evolving into a security community, is the most favourable regional model. There are several explanations for the preference. First of all, it unites countries with diverse foreign and security policy interests. There are already different interactions taking place in the area. This is a region which corresponds to a concept of 'new regionalism' with all that this implies. It is inclusive and open, both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' processes are emerging and the main participants are not only states but non-governmental structures as well. The gradually increasing interactions among the countries will lead to complex interdependence and later to integration. Multilevel co-operation in different areas will contribute to regional security and stability. Multiplication and diversification of co-operation is a security provider complementary to hard security guarantees, such as can be offered by NATO.

In the region, an increasingly important role is being played by institutionalised relationships among the countries. A few years ago evaluation of the Council of Baltic Sea States tended to be quite sceptical – with people seeing it as a talking shop without any real levers of influence, oriented mainly on ecological projects. In 1999 we can speak of a significant entity. It is not an organisation as such, but it is an association of countries among which there are more unifying than differing viewpoints and approaches. In the early 1990s the Nordic Council was a venerable institution of five countries. Now representatives of the three Baltic States also participate in its work. Only recently there was talk about whether the Nordic Council was needed at all, today the rapid institutional expansion of Europe is creating new opportunities for its operations. It is difficult to see these two institutions on equal terms from the Latvian perspective, because the Baltic States are full members of the CBSS, while they have only observer status at the Nordic Council. However, it is important in the context of Baltic security to evaluate how it is possible to use *all* formalised international connections in implementing an individual country's interests.

At the time of writing moment Latvia *is* fully involved in all regional arrangements available to the country. It is keeping a high profile in trilateral co-operation, taking full advantage of Baltic-Nordic integrative processes, as well as utilising opportunities offered by institutions available in the immediate neighbourhood, namely the CBSS. However, none of the regional models reviewed in this study can be treated as substitutes for EU and NATO membership. The

formation of a security community of which Latvia is a part can contribute to stability and comprehensive security in the area, but cannot provide long-term 'hard' security guarantees. Therefore, Latvia's attitude towards regionalism is –and will remain– ambivalent. There has been an increase of attention to the regional dimension in Latvian security policy. However, NATO and EU membership remain the country's key foreign and security policy goals.

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