

Pursuit of Stability in the Baltic States: Conflicting Russian and Scandinavian Perspectives

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Introduction

For little over half a century, the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were frozen into the ice block of republic status within the Soviet Union. During most of that time, they were as well a part of the Cold War belt of states against which the West created North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as a containing force. And yet, during that time frame, the three Baltic republics were unique in many ways. Unlike the rest of the Soviet republics, they had enjoyed an independent status as nation-states on their own in the interwar period. Further, they were special targets of Russianization within the Soviet system. Soviet authorities forced many of them to re-locate to the Russian Republic for higher education and later jobs. In turn, the regime moved many ethnic Russians, through material incentives, into those three republics. The longer term objective was clearly dilution of ethnicity within the three republics, although émigrés from those republics used stronger terms such as “genocide.” An additional special feature of the Baltics was their relatively higher level of education and economic status, in comparison with their poorer counterparts in the rest of the vast Soviet Union. Subsequently, their ability to trade with the other parts of the nation was very high, as their product quality received a certain respect.

However, the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991, in part due to the rebellious leadership within the Baltic republics, radically changed their situation. In one sense, they returned to the status as independent nations that they had lost in 1940. In another sense, their prospects were deeply transformed after 1991. They shifted their focus quickly to the West instead of the East, and they joined both the European Union (EU) and NATO a mere thirteen years later. In spite of this clear move towards the West, their status in many ways remained uncertain. Russia still maintained a powerful interest in the plight of the Russian minorities in those republics. That ethnic group had moved from being part of the dominant ethnic group in the Soviet Union to being a minority in each of the three Baltic nations. At

the same time, the Scandinavian nations developed a renewed interest in the Baltics, as they all shared the same geographic space in northern Europe. Stability on the eastern flank of the Baltic Sea was an important value for the Scandinavian nations. In addition, Poland and Germany had interests that overlapped with and included the Baltic states as well. As a result, the three new Baltic nations really emerged as ice floes in a changing sea, after the rather quick melting of the Soviet led empire.

This paper will contain four distinct sections. The first will examine Russian interests and concerns in the post-1991 period. What crises have emerged, and how do they display the clash of perspectives between Russia and its three former republics? A second section will put the spotlight directly on the three Baltic Republics themselves. What interests do they share, and on which particular issues do they differ? Third, a study of Scandinavian attitudes and policies toward the Baltics will receive attention. Is there a unified Scandinavian approach to the Baltic states, or do the differences among the Scandinavian nations themselves lead to a variety of policies? Fourth, what organizations have emerged that can now offer broad forums for discussion among the ten Baltic nations? In addition to the EU and NATO, there are at least seven organizations that can offer the promise of acting as stabilizing factors within the region. Finally a conclusion will look to a future in which the rich mix of nations and regional organizations can interact to create a very new type of stability.

Russian Concerns

Russia has stated an overall strategy for dealing in a positive way with the Baltic region as a whole. That strategy includes both a set of broad policy goals and a willingness to work with some of the organizations that operate in the region. One key policy intention entails promotion of the economic progress of the area. Further, Russian foreign policy goals stress the need for “sustainable development” that is sensitive to the multitude of social and economic factors in the individual

countries. The Russian leadership also calls for development that is sensitive to the need to protect the environment as well as to the role of indigenous peoples. Russian assertions also include a willingness to work with the Northern Dimension, the Arctic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, and the Nordic Council of Ministers (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2008). Russia itself is a member of the first three of those organizations but not of the last named one. It is easy to be skeptical of such noble policy goals, in light of the Soviet/Russian record on environmental values and on protection of minority rights. However, such a list of policy goals and organizations does give an overall purpose and direction to Russian decisions about the area.

Close proximity of the Baltic nations to Russian territory makes some of the region's issues very critical, and Russia has paid attention to a few of those. For example, Russia and Latvia had not ratified an agreement that made official the post-Soviet borders between the two countries for a full fifteen years after the 1991 break-up of the state. However, on March 27, 2007, the Russian Prime Minister Michail Fradkov and his Latvian counterpart Aigars Kalvitis finally signed an agreement. A key concession by Latvia was the Pskov Oblast, a territory that had been part of Latvia prior to World War II (SME 2007a). The concession by Latvia was understandable in light of the temporary decision made by Transneft in February 2003, to shut off all oil supplies to Latvia (*The Economist*, June 7, 2003, p. 42). Perhaps an agreement would make future threats less likely. Similarly, Russia had a strong incentive to create some sort of viable framework for joint projects with Estonia. Since Estonia is only 160 kilometers from St. Petersburg, Russia, pursuit of common political and economic interests was important (*Global Information Network*, April 15, 2004, p. 1).

At the same time, provocative acts took place that created tension between Russia and its immediate region. In the summer of 2007, Lithuania closed down its only remaining Russian TV news show. The Lithuanian leadership contended that the ratings of the program had fallen to one per cent.

However, the Russians countered that 16.6 % of the Lithuanian population spoke Russian and would be poorly served by such a decision (Izvestia 2007a). A few days later, the Russians dispatched two Tu-95 bombers over the North Sea in a show of force. They flew in an unusual pattern to an area between Norway and Scotland, and the real target may have been British complaints about the murder of a former KGB agent (SME 2007b). Given the small area and close proximity of the various northern nations, this over-flight cast a shadow over the rest as well. What were Russian intentions and tactics for the entire region?

Russian tensions with Estonia peaked in the spring of the same year. Estonian leaders decided to relocate a bronze statue of a Soviet soldier who had assisted in the liberation of the region during World War II. They transferred it from the center of Tallinn to a military cemetery outside of town. Russian leaders issued sharp complaints and threatened to cut exports of oil based products, coal, and metal to Estonia by one half. Many of those products were slated for transit to additional nations of West Europe (iDNES 2007). In late summer, Russia warned about further dangerous influences in Estonia. They noted that a fascist group called "Erna" was holding exercises in the Estonian forests, with sponsorship from the Estonia Ministry of Defense. Apparently, the fascists were recreating events from July 1941, a time when the Third Reich attacked Soviet troops (Izvestia 2007b). In the fall, the Russian media sought to downplay another issue from the World War II era. In response to Estonian anger about the deportation and killing of many of its citizens by the Soviet Union in the 1940-53 period, the media spotlighted a recent book entitled "Myth of Genocide," written by a young Russian historian named Alexander Djukov (Izvestia 2007c). Thus, the events of World War II made their way into Russian-Estonian relations on a number of fronts. A very recent event was undoubtedly likely to engender even further tensions. Estonia put on trial four men who had sought to defend the bronze Soviet soldier (Izvestia 2008).

Another vexing issue from the Russian perspective was the fate of Kaliningrad, the Russian enclave separated from Russia by Lithuania and Belarus. Russia's regional governments have taken a great interest in border definition, and they have voiced concerns about borders among the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), about the plight of the Russian minorities living in the Baltic states, and also about Kaliningrad (Busygina 2007, p. 79). With Lithuania in the European Union, the Schengen Regime of that organization applied to the new border with Russia. Russians who desired to go to Kaliningrad needed visas in order to transit Lithuania (White and Light, 2007, pp. 45-49). In addition, the fact that Kaliningrad was now surrounded by NATO both increased its sense of vulnerability and provoked Russia into proposed reconfiguration of its North-West Force (Averre, 2007, p. 93). In February 2008, Russia revealed its ability to make use of Kaliningrad as a pawn during discussions about the American plan to build a radar station in the Czech Republic as well as anti-missile interceptors in Poland. At that time, they threatened to respond by deploying missiles in the Baltic Sea region of Kaliningrad (*USA Today*, July 15, 2008).

In 2002, Russia negotiated a promising Facilitated Transit Document (FTD) with the EU and Lithuania, and the agreement went into effect the following year (Averre, pp. 123-124). An accompanying Facilitated Railway Transit Document (FRTD) also went into effect. Together, the two agreements offered some hope of stable relations in the future. Russian citizens traveling to Kaliningrad would need both of these documents, but the EU agreed to finance them. After 2004, Russians would need to carry a passport as well. This new thrust was based on admission of both Lithuania and Poland to the EU in that year. Poles and citizens of Kaliningrad would also need visas when they moved back and forth, but there would be no cost for those visas (Michta, 2007, pp. 82-86).

It is difficult to overstate the significance of the Kaliningrad conflict in Baltic-Russian relations. Since the expansion of the EU in 2004, trade patterns of the enclave have dramatically shifted. Prior to

2004, a majority of Kaliningrad's trade was with the EU, but 40% was still with Russia. In the years after 2004, the per cent of trade with Russia declined, while the proportion of trade with the EU shot up to 75%. There was some logic in attaching Kaliningrad to Lithuania itself, but the continuing Russian military presence in the enclave made that a difficult move. Russia clearly wants to maintain its bases there, as they provide key logistical support to its Baltic Fleet. Further, Baltiysk Base in Kaliningrad is Russia's best intelligence gathering station in the region. Russian leverage in the Baltic Sea and Gulf of Finland rely heavily on that base (Michta, pp. 78-82).

Overall, it is apparent that the optimistic goals that the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs presents do not square with the reality of continuing tension between Russia and the Baltic states. It is hard to anticipate much progress on the overall Russian strategy while both sides are provocative. Russia can stir emotions with its demonstrations of military power in the area. Individual Baltic countries are very able to jangle Russian nerves and sensitivities both through policies directed at the Russian minorities within their borders and through manipulation of World War II symbols that still have meaning to Russian leaders. At the same time, Russian responses on both types of issues are powerful and often equally provocative.

Perspectives of the Baltic States

Certainly, a significant experience for the individual Baltic nations was the NATO admission process in the aftermath of the break-up of the Soviet Union. In 1999, the alliance expanded to include Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. At the Prague Summit in 2002, NATO announced plans that would eventually include seven more nations. Thus, the three Baltic countries all entered the alliance officially in 2004. Similarly, they entered the European Union in the same year, and this organization had announced creation of a European Security and Defense (ESDF) at its St. Malo meeting in December,

1998 (Michta, pp. 99-104). Both the Balkan Wars of the 1990s and post-9/11 terrorism had made expansion of both organizations imperative. Thus, by the end of 2004, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were all part of two organizations that had created an infrastructure for collective security.

Although small, the three Baltic nations do share perspectives about the priorities for NATO and the EU. For example, they have prodded the EU to upgrade the issue of Russia on its agenda. In fact, the Baltic nations envision Russia as the most important EU agenda item. Their perspectives are not the same as those of Germany, which has periodically been more interested in cultivating relations with Russia than in confronting it (Michta, p. 28). The three have also been very interested in the role of the eastern neighbors of the EU. They have prompted the EU to place a high priority on the democratic reform process in Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia (Newton, 2007, pp. 216-219). With respect to NATO, the Baltics have clearly turned away from the nonalignment option that was one possibility in the immediate aftermath of independence in 1991. With NATO assistance they have created their own military forces from the ground up (Michta, pp. 18-19). In these ways, they seek to use their two new organizations to increase the security and stability of their own neighborhood.

Of course, the Baltic nations are not a monolith or carbon copies of one another. Each one has somewhat different needs and views about security and stability. For instance, NATO decided to locate its air space patrol for the region in Lithuania. Lockheed-Martin sent some of its F-16's, and they were located in Lithuania to assist in the project (*Defense Daily*, March 30, 2004, p. 1). Lithuania's vulnerability became apparent the next year, as a Russian fighter crashed on its territory. Lithuania had been frustrated for some time by the tendency of Russian planes to fly very close to the Russian-Lithuanian border. As a result, a minor crisis occurred when Lithuania decided to hold the plane for awhile, instead of returning it to Russia (*The Economist*, October 1, 2005, p. 39). Finally, in mid-2008, Lithuania provoked the Russians by banning the use of the hammer and sickle symbol throughout the

nation. At the same time, the Lithuanian legislature began consideration of potential participation in the American anti-rocket system. After Russian reactions broke out, Lithuanian politicians explained that the proposed law was directed at extremists rather than explicitly at communists (*iDNES* 2008).

In spite of this tempest with Russia, in some ways Lithuania has the basis for building some common links with Russia. Its capacity in that regard may exceed the abilities of the other two. For instance, Lithuania has embraced radical market reforms more slowly than the other two. As a result, they have more large Soviet-style industries that were characteristic of the communist era past. Only one-twelfth of their population is ethnic Russian, and so the issue of treatment of the Russian minority is less divisive than it is for Latvia. Occasionally, Lithuania chooses not to goad Russia when the other two Baltic states are provocative. For example, in 2005, Lithuania was the only Baltic country that sent representatives to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of V-E Day in Moscow (*Newsweek, Atlantic Edition*, February 21, 2005, p. 27).

In some ways, Latvia has a more tempestuous relationship with Russia than does Lithuania, and this makes its security situation more unstable. World War II actions by the Soviet Union still grate on the Latvian memory. Latvia still clamors for an apology by Russia for the 1940 annexation of the country. They also demand reparations payments for the damage and deportations that took place at the same time. From the vantage point of Russia, equally aggravating is the policy of Latvia towards the Russian minority, a substantial 40% of the population. Russia resents the parades that former SS Latvians occasionally conduct. They also are angered by Latvian education and citizenship reforms. For example, Latvia has required that ethnic Russian teachers deliver their classes in the Latvian language. In addition, they have created tests in the Latvian language and history that are prerequisites for citizenship (*Newsweek, Atlantic Edition*, September 12, 2005, p. 45). On the other hand, finally in late 2007, Latvia and Russia signed a treaty that clarified their border. American leaders commented

positively on this treaty as a step towards more Baltic stability (*U.S. Federal News Service*, December 18, 2007).

Estonian-Russian tensions create few grounds for optimism about future stability. In 2004, Estonia moved firmly into the NATO structure and contributed key capabilities. These included special forces, demining squads, and nuclear/biological/chemical forces. NATO offered to provide air cover so that Estonia and the others would not need to purchase expensive fighter jets (*Defense Daily*, March 30, 2004, p. 1). The previously mentioned decision by Estonia to move the Soviet bronze soldier clearly did severe additional damage to any prospects for Estonian-Russia cooperation. The move of the statue was rooted in a law passed in February 2007. That bill prohibited monuments that might have celebrated the occupation of Estonia. Its legal justification was based on a law passed the previous month that sought to protect war graves from damage or deterioration. While Russians looked at the bronze soldier as a symbol of liberation from fascism, Estonians saw the statue as a reminder of Soviet repression (Boryk, 2008, pp. 1-4).

Russia responded with cyber-attacks against Estonia. This was particularly harmful to that nation, for Estonia had become quite advanced with conversion of voting and banking largely to online services (*USA Today*, 2007a). In fact, the Minister of Defense of Estonia stated that Russia had become more dangerous through this crisis. Further, in the fall of 2007, he warned that the West in general underestimated the new higher level of the Russian threat (SME 2007c). In early 2008, the Estonian Prime Minister Andrus Ansip added another wrinkle to the danger. He noted that Russia had created obstacles to the work of the British Council in Estonia. This was a real problem, for that Council had been involved in teaching English to members of both the Estonian and Russian ethnic groups. The overall effort of Estonia to cement itself in western institutions hinged in part on increased facility of its

people in the English language (*U.S. Federal News Service*, January 17, 2008). It is clear that the spiral of antagonistic statements and acts by the two nations had not yet died down or been resolved.

Thus, it is possible to glean both common themes and differences among the three Baltic partners. All have joined western alliances that can provide a modicum of security in light of the risks to them. However, a number of issues make the security situation of each different. With the highest proportion of Russian speakers, Latvia risks the most in terms of its Russian relationship when it creates reform legislation in that issue area. The single provocative act of relocating the bronze statue of the Russian soldier led to an unending round of hostile, accusatory actions by both Estonia and Russia. Perhaps Lithuania bore the most potential for creating a stable relationship with Russia. In spite of the over-flight issue, Lithuania's economic situation and ethnic make-up may have provided the foundation for the most understanding between a Baltic nation and Russia.

Scandinavian Responses

Regional organizational patterns in the Scandinavian nations are more varied than they are for the three Baltic nations. Whereas all the Baltic nations now have several years of common membership experiences in both NATO and the EU, the historical membership patterns of the key Scandinavian countries present some differences. Finland and Sweden have not opted for membership in NATO, while Norway continues to keep its distance from the EU. However, all four have a common concern about Russian intentions and ambitions in the region. Thus, they have all provided assistance to help modernize the Baltic military forces (Michta, pp. 7-9). In addition, since early 2005, the Baltic states have been members of the Scandinavian Investment Bank. This is unusual in two respects. It is the first time that the Bank has offered membership to nations outside of Scandinavia, and it is the first experience that the Baltics have had in being part of a Scandinavian organization. Now, the Baltic

nations are able to borrow money on better terms as well as share in the Bank's profits. Common membership of all the Baltic countries and three of the Scandinavian nations in the EU has enabled this institutional activity to take place (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden 2008a). Such military and financial bridges between Scandinavia and the Baltics help anchor the latter in western institutions and also offer the promise of increased future stability.

It is also useful to look at the overtures made by the individual Scandinavian nations towards the Baltic partners, as there are some differences among the nations. Finland had closer relations with the Soviet Union during the Cold War than did the other Scandinavian nations. They are now keenly aware of the significance of energy imports from Russia and thus have made their own proposal to engage Russia on a variety of fronts. Under prodding from NATO, they also issued a Defense Reform Report in 2004. That report calls for upgrading their military equipment and spotlights Northern Europe as a very high priority area for NATO. In contrast, Norway is geographically more distant from Russia. Its geopolitical position leads its leaders to think in more Atlanticist terms. While NATO membership leads them to rate Russia as a major concern, their western location within Scandinavia suggests to them that the Baltics are less important. Denmark is different in that it has played a central role in NATO, and so for them its projects are of great importance. Denmark actually took part in the 1999 Kosovo operation, has helped create the NATO Response Force, and has supported the United States on the Iraq War. In overall planning toward the Baltics, each Scandinavian nation has taken on a special obligation in the area of defense reform. Finland has provided special assistance to Estonia, while Norway has focused on Latvia, and Denmark has developed special ties with Lithuania (Michta, 52-68).

In its defense policy, Sweden has been evolving away from its historic pattern of neutrality in the early part of the twentieth century through World War II era "military nonalignment" to a post-Cold War strategy of "non-participation in military alliances." The last theme explains the Swede's lack of

interest in NATO membership. At the same time, the phrase does open the door to cooperative activity in selected international operations. For example, Swedes have participated in creation of the EU Rapid Reaction Force and have also contributed to various UN peacekeeping operations. In terms of the Baltic region, Sweden has provided assistance in creating new military forces, in building civil defense capabilities, in improving coast guard systems, and in border control (Michta, pp. 49-52). Specifically, Sweden has also pushed for development of an EU Baltic Sea strategy. Cornerstones of that strategy, from the Swedish perspective, include environmental protection and economic growth. Sweden is preparing to chair a key EU committee on the Baltics in 2009, and so they looked ahead to development of an agenda (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden 2007b). Much of Sweden's work with the Baltics rests on Country Strategies that they developed with each in 2002. Perspectives and goals included in that strategy parallel in several ways Sweden's strategies for Central and East Europe (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden 2007c).

Part and parcel of the work of the Scandinavian countries with the Baltic states is concern with the Russian factor. On the one hand, there has been some outreach by Russia towards the area to its immediate west. The north-western Russian republics have signed trans-border agreements with Norway, Finland, Lithuania, and also Poland. In particular, the Karelian Republic has established agreements with Finland in order to smooth out border ambiguities and also to increase contacts in the areas of culture and tourism. Those republics have also taken part in some of the regional organizations that have been created to serve the needs of the area as a whole (Busygina, 2007, pp. 82-86). In addition, some of the Scandinavian nations have reached out to Russia in hopes of increasing stability in the Baltic Sea area. Sweden has established solid contacts with Russia at the local, regional, and national levels. Strikingly, trade between the two nations doubled between 2005 and 2008. As a member of the EU, Sweden has taken steps to improve relations between that organization and Russia.

While both the EU and Sweden support Russia's aspiration to join the World Trade Organization (WTO), they are careful to include in the dialogue contentious issues such as Chechnya, human rights, and individual freedoms (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden 2008d).

All is not tranquil, however, in the three-part formula of Russia, the Baltics, and Scandinavia. In July, 2007, Norway became quite aroused by two separate incidents involving flights by Russian bombers. First, two Russian Tu-95 bombers flew south along the Norwegian coast in international air space. Second, a few days later, two Tu-160 bombers flew near Norwegian air space over the Barents Sea. These Russian bomber flights penetrated further south along the coast than normal and may have been related to the clash between Russia and the United Kingdom over the Litvinenko killing in Britain and Russia's refusal to turn over the main suspect to London (USA Today 2007b). Lingering concerns about Russian intentions continued into the fall. Norwegian Minister of Defense Sverre Diesen worried publicly that Norway could not count on much help from NATO if a real crisis that involved Russia took place. He reasoned that the military alliance's preoccupation with the war on terrorism in locations such as Afghanistan sapped its capabilities as well as its ability to put the spotlight on threats in other parts of the world such as the Baltic region (DAGENS NYHETER 2007).

In 2008, both Sweden and Finland were angered by Russian reactions to Estonia's relocation of the bronze Soviet soldier. Russia's cyberattacks on Estonia were nettlesome, but so was the blockade of Estonia's embassy in Moscow. One incident in the blockade was an attack on the Swedish ambassador's automobile, and thereby Swedish interests were engaged. Sweden was also concerned about expansion of the Russian fleet in the Baltic Sea. As Russia made plans to build a gas pipeline to Germany across the Baltic seabed, it would seem obvious that Russia would increase its military presence in order to protect the new pipeline. Finland's proximity to Russia made their complaints less vigorous (*The Economist*, June 30, 2007, p. 50). Obviously, Russia casts a military shadow over its immediate northwest. Military

movements in that region counter some of the work done by the Scandinavian nations to build bridges to Russia.

In sum, Scandinavian nations have become quite involved in the process of rebuilding both the military and economic capabilities of the three Baltic nations. In the process, they have created good will and nurtured both stability and a presence that can prevent the emergence of a dangerous vacuum in the area. In addition, the individual Scandinavian nations have looked further east towards Russia. They have intended both to ease some of Russia's anxieties and to nurture its relationship with the EU. Expanded trade with Russia can provide all concerned with a stake in the stability of the area. At the same time, Russian military moves and overreactions have heightened anxieties within the Baltic states and also in Scandinavia. Bomber over-flights and cyberattacks have made the target countries wary again of Russian intentions. They have also created setbacks to Russian interests in the stability of the Baltic Sea area.

Organizational Links

Of course, NATO and the EU are vital organizations that include the three Baltic nations and some of the Scandinavian countries. Each organization interacts frequently with Russia, sometimes in a cooperative framework and at other times in a tension-filled one. In addition, at least seven other organizations have sprung up to deal with pieces of the Baltic puzzle. A number of them do not include Russia, and those organizations are the Nordic Council of Ministers, BALTNET, and BALTBAT. Others do include Russia, and those are the Council of Baltic Sea States, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Arctic Council, and the Northern Dimension. Each of these nine organizations has unique features and can potentially contribute to stability and continuing dialogue among the various national actors.

Organizations That Do Not Include Russia

The Nordic Council of Ministers includes the Prime Ministers of the individual Scandinavian nations. They have met on a regular basis since the organization's founding in 1971. The Chair position rotates among the five key nations. Members include Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. In addition, the Åland Islands, Faroe Islands, and Greenland are technically members as well but do not share in the leadership responsibility (www.norden.org).

BALTNET is the acronym for the Baltic Air Surveillance Network. The member nations created this organization in 2000, and it works closely with NATO. The organization coordinates the radar-based surveillance of the various partners and also pools information that is acquired. The individual countries share air pictures with each other and with NATO leadership. The center is in Lithuania, and the United States has provided much of the funding. U.S.-based Lockheed-Martin installed a number of the surveillance centers. One advantage of this structure is that NATO standards become the common pattern for each of the Scandinavian and Baltic countries that take part in it. For example, Norway has assisted in setting up communication links. Estonia envisions BALTNET as a tool for developing its own Air Force. With BALTNET Estonia expects to achieve full control of its airspace in a shorter time (www.mil.ee).

BALTBAT is an organization whose full title is Baltic Battalion, and its home base is Latvia (Michta, p. 90). It was originally created as a peacekeeping unit in 1994. In April, 1999, the members signed a document entitled Political Guidance in an effort to raise the defense capabilities of the Baltic nations. The plan was to create infrastructure that would inevitably smooth the path of entry into NATO in the near future. Eventually, the battalion might be upgraded to a brigade (Kazocins, 1999, pp. 47-54). Its mission has undergone changes throughout its brief history. During Phase I, from 1994 to 1997, the emphasis was on provision of weapons for self-defense only. The militaries in the three Baltic states

received training and then held exercises. However, finances were limited, and thus Phase II was established in 1997. The individual militaries trained as a light infantry battalion that could provide support to peacekeeping operations. In theory, the BALTBAT Training Team was supposed to inject British tactics and doctrine into the exercises. However, the commanders were from the individual Baltic nations and preferred to follow their own patterns rather than the British model. A portion of the battalion joined the Danish contingent in Bosnia after 1998, but there continued to be an abiding need for more multilateral coordination (Møller, 1999, pp. 38-42).

Organizations that do Include Russia

The Council of the Baltic Sea States is an extensive organization that operates at national, regional, and local levels. The founders set it up in Copenhagen on March 5, 1992. The organization now includes the three Baltic nations, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Poland, Russia, and a representative from the European Commission. For the last ten years, the Permanent Secretariat has been located in Stockholm, Sweden. Policy concerns of the organization radiate in many directions. The Council is interested in lowering barriers to trade and investment. In addition, they focus on improved nuclear safety, on promotion of human rights and democracy, and on stimulating cross-border cooperation.

They also have a great interest in transformation of post-secondary education according to the Bologna Process. In the latter regard, they have been involved in curriculum and teaching reform at three universities in the individual Baltic states (cbss 2008a). They also have had an impact on Kaliningrad. Their focus there was Immanuel Kant State University of Russia. Specifically, the Council's representatives helped revise its curriculum of Economics and Law Studies. They also assisted in creation of new Bachelor and Masters' Degrees in Economics. Under their tutelage, the university injected more student participation in classes and upgraded library/information technology capabilities.

They made it possible for one hundred instructors from Immanuel Kant to visit partner universities in foreign countries, and in turn thirty-five foreign lecturers came to Kaliningrad to offer classes. Student exchanges were also part of the plan, and a full one hundred twenty economics and law students attended partner institutions in foreign countries (cbss 2008b). Thus, the Council was involved in very concrete programs that would bring educational patterns in the northern region in tune with broader trends within the rest of the EU.

In terms of organizational structure, the Council organizes meetings of the member states' Ministers of Foreign Affairs. Each year the chair position rotates from country to country. They publish a journal entitled *Baltinfo* twice per month. In 2006, they decided to grant observer status to France, Italy, Netherlands, Slovakia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States. They also have engaged in joint work during the last few years with a number of Strategic Partners. Those Partners include the Baltic Development Forum, the Baltic Sea Chamber of Commerce Association, the Baltic Sea Forum, the Baltic Sea NGO Forum, the Baltic Sea Trade Union Network, the Helsinki Commission, and the Scan Belt (cbss 2008c). Thus, they have taken organizational steps to ensure as wide a discussion as possible.

An additional priority of the Council is the nurturing of local and regional public administration and democracy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden 2008e). For example, in 1993, the Council founded the Baltic Sea States Sub-Regional Co-operation organization in Stavanger, Norway. All ten Baltic Sea states are participants, and the main thrust is the economic development of sub-regions within the individual nations. In 2006-08, their key priorities include transportation, maritime policy, sustainable development, energy production/efficiency, quality of life, public health, and civil security. The Board that governs the organization includes two persons from each of the countries. In addition, there is a Chair and Secretariat.

Further, the Council has sponsored creation of a Union of the Baltic Cities. There are a full one hundred three cities that are part of this Union. Organizationally, they include a President, three Vice Presidents, a Secretariat, an Executive Board, and a General Conference that meets every other year. In addition to the policy concerns noted above for the Sub-Regional organization, the Union also places an emphasis on gender equality, the information society, sport, tourism, urban planning, and youth issues (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden 2008f). With such a significant array of issue concerns, the sweep of the Council's activities penetrates deeply into local communities.

The Barents Euroarctic Council (BEAC) is an additional piece of machinery available to assist with Baltic matters. Its founders set up the organization in 1993, and they included the five Scandinavian countries, Russia, and the European Commission. In fact, Russia serves as the Chair in the 2007-09 period. In 2007, they set up an International Barents Secretariat with headquarters in Rovaniemi, Finland. The Secretariat provides technical support on behalf of this intergovernmental organization (beac 2008).

Additionally, an Arctic Council that is much broader in membership also exists. Its membership includes the five Scandinavian nations, Greenland, the Faroe Islands, Russia, and the United States. Inclusion of both the United States and Russia brings superpower considerations to the table, and its discussions, of course, center on purely Arctic Sea matters. Under the leadership of its Chair, Norway, the Arctic Council declared 2007-08 to be the International Polar Year (arctic-council 2008). While the Baltic nations were not formally part of this organization, they clearly had a stake in many of its discussions.

A final organization is the EU-sponsored Northern Dimension. The EU established this program in 1998, and in part its original intention was to defuse some of the tension between the EU and Russia

over EU expansion matters (White and Light, pp. 49-50). Members include Iceland, Norway, Russia, and the entire EU. Since the whole EU is involved, the three Baltic states, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland are members as well. Their policy thrusts include, among others, the situation of indigenous peoples, public health, external security, research, education, and culture (ec 2008). In addition, the Northern Dimension developed an e-dimension Action Plan (NeDAP), and the EU Commission funded it to the tune of twelve million euros. Both Baltic and Scandinavian countries can entertain the possibility of chairing this Northern Dimension. For instance, Sweden was the Chair from 2003-05, and Lithuania then took over for the period 2005-07 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden 2008g).

In sum, a full nine organizations are currently working to provide a framework of stability and security in Northern Europe. Each one is unique, and together they create a rich and interesting tapestry. They collectively contain a capability of dealing with a range of pressing and complicated issues. Some of these organizations are partly designed to protect against Russian ambitions, while others include Russia in a very central way in the dialogue. Most of them are products of the post-Cold War period, and as such they offer promise in an era when so many of the world's resources focus on the global war on terrorism in other places.

Conclusion

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the thaw that ended the Cold War freed the three Baltic nations from the ice block of the Soviet Union and left them as ice floes in the region. Certainly, one conclusion of this paper is that those floes have many possibilities for new connections. Each of the Scandinavian nations has reached out to them in helpful ways. At least nine organizations exist to provide meaningful partnerships into the future. Even Russia, with its occasionally provocative moves, could be a potential ally on certain kinds of issues. The Baltic states do have a range of choices that could further their own development and potential. As they firm up ties with new allies and

organizations, perhaps they can escape from the fate of being frozen into one bloc or of floating aimlessly in the Baltic Sea. A third option would prioritize the ability of the Baltic nations to plot their own course.

Russia's ability to help build more stability in the Baltic region has not yet come to fruition. Russian leaders have undercut their positive overtures to the region with very de-stabilizing actions and reactions. Understandably, they have a concern and interest in the fate of Kaliningrad, a piece of their territory that is now lodged to the west of the Baltic nations. However, their anxiousness to hang on to base rights in that enclave creates genuine fear among the smaller nations in the neighborhood. While it was Estonia that removed the bronze Soviet soldier from Tallinn, Russia did blow the issue out of proportion and angered the Swedes as well as the Estonians. Russian concerns about the plight of the ethnic Russian minorities, especially in Latvia, are legitimate ones. However, there is a case to be made that the Russians in those Baltic states should become proficient in the languages of their new countries, if they expect to progress in the education and economic arenas. Perhaps a good starting point for improved relations in the future would be confidence building measures adopted by the sub-regional and urban components of the Council of Baltic Sea States. City-to-city partnerships and region-to-region connections can bring Russia and the Baltic states into contact on concrete local problems and can perhaps avoid the higher level conflicts at the national levels.

Collectively, the three Baltic states have discovered new levels of security through their membership in NATO and the EU. At the same time, their membership in those organizations increased the wariness of Russia. Expansion of NATO to the Russian door step was the greatest challenge posed by the two new organizational links in the region. However, the expanded EU also raised new questions about its new neighborhood further east. The Baltic states collectively were very interested in integrating some of the neighborhood countries like Ukraine into the EU framework, and that

perspective clearly bothered Russia. In another sense, the security of each Baltic player rested on its own unique circumstances. Estonia is still dealing with the echo of the crisis over its re-location of the bronze Soviet soldier. Latvia is still evolving its policies toward the large Russian minority within. Lithuania is most centrally involved in the tensions over Kaliningrad and the accompanying matter of transit rights. Given the small size of the three Baltic nations, it is likely that they can best resolve these controversies by accepting the multi-faceted offers of assistance from neighboring countries and regional organizations.

Scandinavia has a double view of the situation in the Baltic states. First, those states are naturally interested in assisting the Baltics with economic, social, and environmental progress. It is in the interests of the Scandinavian nations that the democracies of Northern Europe all move forward together. Second, they always keep an eye on Russia and its intentions in the region. Russian military shows of force, plans for Kaliningrad, overreactions to events in the Baltics, and oil/gas politics all create concern within Scandinavia. Further, each of the Scandinavian nations has its own perspective about the future of the region. Finland's effort to preserve close ties with Russia contrasts with Norway's Atlanticist outlook. Denmark's leadership role in NATO is acutely different from Sweden's celebrated distance from formal military organizations. However, the Scandinavian nations have much to offer in building stability in the region. Their relative prosperity enables them to partner economically with the Baltic states. Their long-standing reputation in international mediation and peacekeeping operations provides them with the understandings necessary to bring Russia into the Baltic framework.

Finally, the presence of so many organizations in the region offers short-term hope for constructing stability at a time when so many other parts of the world are awash in violence, terrorism, and instability. Organizations like BALTNET and BALTBAT can provide an umbrella of security for Estonia, Latvia, and Estonia. With further development, these structures can provide a modicum of

defense preparedness in the case of future Russian provocations or overreactions. Organizations such as the Council of Baltic Sea States and Northern Dimension can stretch the umbrella to include Russia on a number of concrete projects and plans. The work of the Council with institutions of higher education now includes a Russian university in Kaliningrad as well as three universities in the Baltic nations. The productive work of the Northern Dimension on such a range of local challenges and problems offers the continuing potential both to galvanize the resources of the EU and to ensure that Brussels looks north as well as east. It may be that the three Baltic states have the most incentive to utilize such organizations to ensure regional progress and stability. The Baltic nations may then become the tug boats that pilot the progress of the region, rather than powerless ice floes or the frozen prisoners of larger entities.

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