Introduction

Many outside observers recognize achievements of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - which celebrate 10 years of the restored independence - in implementing democracy, establishing functioning free market economy, and engaging into the wider world international co-operation. Baltic foreign and security policies contributed to making them stand for stability, openness, dynamic development and ability to cope with the many challenges of globalization. Commemoration of a decade of a successful return to the global community marks the right time to appraise the main security challenges of the Baltic Sea region, to examine current accomplishments of the three Baltic countries in their security cooperation and, in that respect, to project major future tasks.

What is the Baltic security agenda?

Assessing the security situation of the Baltic countries U.S. Secretary of State M. Albright in her speech in Vilnius in July 1997 presented it in such way: “... perhaps no part of Europe has suffered more from the old pattern of geopolitics than the Baltic states ... and no part of Europe will benefit more if we are successful in overcoming these old patterns and replace them with new habits of cooperation”. That is a most elegant expression valid even today.

Indeed, viewed from the historical perspective, the Baltic Sea region has experienced a turbulent history where major European powers - Russia (in the last century – the Soviet Union), Germany and others - have regularly tried to exercise strategic and ideological influence. Throughout history fundamental rights have been ignored. The smaller countries in the region have suffered disproportionately through repeated occupation and oppression by their larger neighbors.
For centuries they have found themselves in a gray zone of uncertainty, governed by power not by principles of law or moral.

The peace treaties of 1920 between the Baltic countries and Russia were the first signs of Russia’s acceptance of their sovereignty, although it never reconciled itself with the loss of the Baltic countries. The Soviet Russia occupied the three countries in 1939, after Hitler donated them to Stalin in the secret Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. The Yalta meeting of 1945 became a funeral for Baltic independence. During the Cold War the dividing line of Europe went across the Baltic Sea region, which became a strategic backwater that received little focus on international agendas.

However, since the end of the Cold War, the region has become an important focal point where U.S.’, EU’s and Russia’s policies are intercrossed. There is a widespread understanding that the Baltic Sea region is one of the most dynamically developing, outward-looking and promising regions in Europe. The region offers the world-market excellent trade opportunities, a good climate of foreign investments, transit routes, and a steadily growing network of international, governmental and non-governmental arrangements.

The region has enormous potential, given the 90 millions people who live there, with rich natural and human resources and excellent transit opportunities. It has an investment conducive environment, a highly skilled labor force, and is hi-tech oriented.

The fall of the Soviet Union and other totalitarian regimes in the East, the unification of Germany, restoration of independence of the Baltic countries, Finish and Swedish membership in the EU and the Polish membership of NATO, followed by continuing European and Transatlantic integration processes all provide unique opportunities for creating stability and well-being around the Baltic Sea. The Baltic region has become a laboratory example to other parts of Europe for promoting closer regional cooperation, and as a test case for the Western approach to an undivided Europe. A significant factor here is the present day Russia’s involvement in partnership relationship with the Western institutions. The U.S. and the EU are key players in the Baltic Sea region. Other countries in the region - Nordic, Poland, and Germany - also have great interests in the stability of the area.

Indeed, the Baltic Sea region might be considered as one of the most expanding regions in Europe and after the Baltic and Polish membership in EU, the region will be able to reveal its entire potential. Four EU members – Denmark, Germany, Finland and Sweden - border the Baltic Sea, four others - Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland - are on the road to accede the Union and it is only a question of time when it happens. Finally, Russia is in a partnership and co-operation arrangement with EU (although limited because of continued Chechen war) and declares its intention to expand her relationship with the Union. For these reasons the Baltic Sea has been called a future “inner EU lake”.

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Today, only one decade after the end of the Cold War and the restored independence of the Baltic countries, the issues of the zones of influence, boundary disputes, ethnic hatred and other past problems have become irrelevant on the security agendas of the Baltic Region. Indeed, immediately after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, there were many warnings that the end of the old socialist system might revitalize old hatreds in Central and Eastern Europe. For 40 years communism had suppressed ethnic nationalism, frontier disputes and minority discontents. Today we can see that none of these evils has come to pass - with the exception of Caucasus, some parts in Central Asia and Western Balkans. Everywhere else minority rights have been guaranteed and existing borders were either reaffirmed or changed by consent. This extraordinary success is above all due to the enlargement processes of the EU and NATO to the East. It has promised prosperity and stability to potential new members in return for their willingness to carry through market reforms, protect minority rights and settle their disputes peacefully.

The Baltic Sea region today appears to be safe from destructive forces that could cause tension among its states and for the moment traditional military security is less relevant in this region. Problems, which dominated agendas in the first years of independence - the presence of Russian troops on the soil of the Baltic countries, a high degree of militarization in the Baltic neighborhood, tensions due to unsolved minority and human rights issues in Estonia and Latvia, unilateral dependency from the Eastern energy supply etc. - no longer dominate the security agendas. The type of tension most likely to occur in the Baltic is not a military threat, but rather the highly charged, tense political situation which could turn into violent actions, extremist group actions, drug trafficking, smuggling, illegal migration etc.

But even these threats are regarded as manageable within the existing institutions and cooperative structures. More important is to detect what elements of challenges, ambiguity and certain instability of a wider scope that still characterize the region, to notice if distrust, which may come to us from the past, still dominates relationships, if asymmetrical balance of capability still remain a source of tensions - is it possible that a Cold war type of conflict again can become pertinent in the regional context?

These are more theoretical questions, but there are many practical issues as the economic security, enlargement of both the EU and NATO, regional cooperation and neighborhood issues, including Russia and its Kaliningrad region, the U.S. presence and the wider security context.

Finally, not all states in the region enjoy an equal sense of security status. Neighbors of the three Baltic countries - Nordic countries - are solidly integrated both internally and with the rest of Europe. Presently many outsiders still regard the case of the Baltic trio as somewhat different. Although a joined community of sovereign countries, institutionally and mentally they are still apart. This pattern of ambiguity shows that further reflec-
Enlargement of the European Union

One can say that what is happening in the enlargement process of the EU is that Europe is returning to where it belongs, to its original sites, from which it had to withdraw temporarily. Membership in the EU is a precondition for modernization of the Baltic countries’ economies and societies as well as for fully-fledged participation in the international community. Three small states will contribute to the economic, political and social progress in Europe, to the promotion of cultural diversity and the development of common values.

At the same time, the EU’s enlargement towards the Baltics is more than just an economic factor or recognition of their European cultural heritage. The Baltic countries’ membership of the EU would mean a dramatic shift in Baltic geopolitics. For several centuries being forcefully kept under totalitarian regimes or during the short prewar period of independence fluctuating in between the East and West, the Baltic countries in case of EU membership would for the forthcoming years be earmarked as a constituent part of the democratic West.

Indeed, the Baltic’s as well as other countries’ membership in the EU will have a positive impact on the stability in the region and will be beneficial to its neighbors. Baltic Sea states regional cooperation, particularly among the states of the Baltic Sea, Latvia and Estonia, as well as the strategic partnership with Poland, is of special importance to Lithuania. Together with the other Member States of the EU, Lithuania would contribute to strengthening the role of the EU in Northern and Eastern Europe, particularly in its relations with Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. At the same time, Eastwards enlargement of EU would increase political stability in the Baltic Sea region, guarantee the consolidation of democracy, rule of law, and the human and minority rights protection.

That is why it is of crucial importance for the EU to continue the enlargement process. EU, unfortunately, is badly conflicted on the issue of expanding the Union-membership. Some countries, e.g. Germany, would like EU membership for some of its eastern neighbors, but is concerned about the free movement of eastern workers into Germany and illegal immigrants. EU politicians also shrink from farm-subsidy reforms regarded as necessary if the EU is to bear the cost of the entry of heavily agricultural states.

Be as it is the EU has already started its journey towards the Baltics. Estonia in 1997 became the first Baltic country to start negotiations and by that making a breakthrough in Baltic geopolitics. On December 1999 the Helsinki EU Council approved the Commission’s recommendation to open accession negotiations with Latvia and Lithuania. Progress in negotiation go hand in hand with progress in incorporating the EU acquis into national legislation and implementing it. The Union commits itself to be ready to accept new members beginning
with the end of 2002. On its side, Lithuania stated it’s readiness to finalize negotiation during the year 2002 and as from the 2004 it should be ready to implement EU’s requirements. Estonia and Latvia have even more ambitious plans.

Economic cohesion and level of integration of the Baltic countries might even suggest that three of them for practical purposes alone can be admitted to the EU during the same wave of enlargement. Such proposals have already been mentioned from the Commission. That is not to say that the EU needs to have an approach of “geopolitical entity”. It is a mere practical and pragmatic approach on how to avoid building temporary borders in between a single economic and social space. At the same time, case-by-case approach need to be preserved and better prepared Baltic candidates should not have to wait for their neighbors, which are lagging behind.

The EU enlargement has provided new dynamism to the Baltic Sea region. The space of co-operation between Russia and the EU is expanding; the context of relations between candidate countries and Russia is subjected to changes as well. The candidate countries face dual EU enlargement challenges – on the one hand, they have to fulfill their membership requirements and, on the other, they have to assist the neighboring regions of Russia in making use of the possibilities offered by the EU enlargement process.

The interdependence between Russia and the rest of Europe is emphasized in the Baltic Sea region. Today Russia is more dependent than ever before on income generated through exports to Europe. The EU will remain Russia’s largest trading partner and the main export market for its natural resources. Forty percent of Russian foreign trade is with the Union.

The Union’s enlargement to the Baltic region raises a question of security and many in Lithuania ask - does the EU provide the necessary security and stability to the region? The EU does not provide any formal security guarantees but, of course, membership in the Union will definitely strengthen Baltic security. Regular exchange of information and common decision-making has already proved to decrease the possibility of conflict among its members. The fact of co-ordination of foreign policies among EU members also decreases the possibility of external risks. Although membership of the EU would be an important stability factor in the Baltic Sea region only NATO can provide formal security guarantees.

Of course, the strengthening of home and justice affairs of the EU is on its way and any future EU member will be capable to contest so called “new threats”, i.e., smuggling, crime, etc. That, together with the increased role of EU in crisis management, would bring a stronger sense of stability and security to the region.

Indeed, strengthening of EU’s crisis management and military and civilian capabilities is a positive development by itself. Seen from a Baltic Sea perspective, the development of the Common European Security and Defense policy/European Security and Defense Identity, firstly,
should benefit the European security environment and, at the same time, not weaken but reinforce the transatlantic link lying at the heart of European security. Putting in practice the common European policy on security and defense concerns more than only the current EU members, and is an issue for consideration among all contributors to the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area, including EU and NATO candidate countries.

The EU is not just a club of wealthy nations and well functioning economies, but also the Union of countries with the increased determination to coordinate efforts in response to external political and security challenges. The Kosovo crisis once again has revealed the fact that the European countries have to have effective European crisis management capabilities in order to cope with potential crises that might occur at the periphery of Europe in the future.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as active applicants for NATO membership, associated countries with EU, and associated partner with the WEU attentively follow the processes on the strengthening of European crisis management, i.e., ESDP/ESDI. Lithuania together with other Associated Partners with the WEU stresses the need for the adoption of the proper decisions enabling Associated Partners; to take part in all ongoing consultations and activities related to the European security and defence policy in relevant modalities, to join future European-led exercises and operations by committing forces, having the same obligations and rights as other active participants, and to contribute to the efforts aimed at enhancing European operational capabilities. That would make EU’s crisis management arrangements pertinent to the Baltic Sea region as well.

**NATO’s openness**

NATO membership of the Baltic countries is the biggest challenges ahead of us. Neither EU membership of the Baltic countries, nor the increased defense role of the EU can act as an alternative to NATO - EU is not designed to provide “hard” security guarantees, although a scenario where one EU member state is threaten and the other members stay away just because of the absent of formal defense guarantees is unimaginable.

After 50 years NATO continues to guarantee and safeguard freedom and acts as the prerequisite for economic and social prosperity. Lithuania’s membership in NATO would make final recognition and consolidation of the chosen path of reforms.

Integration into NATO is interpreted differently east from us, namely Russia, although it is clearly not a threat to anyone. All states have the right to freely choose their security arrangements and the path to well being. By admitting Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into NATO the Alliance would consolidate the zone of stability and security in Europe. It would also in a positive way affect the traditional attitudes in the East, would help to diminish the established stereotypes and would open the way for further and closer co-operation between NATO and Russia.
Lithuania’s membership in NATO would be an extension of the zone of security and stability and a reinforcement of confidence in Lithuanian-Russian relations. Indeed Baltic membership in NATO should be viewed as a positive factor, consolidating bilateral relations and ensuring their further progress. Their accession into NATO would be demonstration and proof that relations between the Alliance and Russia are reaching an entirely new level, thereby confirming that the Alliance and Russia may not only undertake joint operations but also coexist in close proximity. Our countries joining the Alliance would be an additional psychological guarantee, affirming the Baltics as full-fledged partners in their relations with Russia. The accession of new members strengthens the Alliance and increases confidence and security of neighboring countries.

There is no doubt that the security and stability of the Baltic Sea region cannot be considered separately from European security and stability. Just as the other Baltic States, Lithuania will be fully secure only after being integrated into NATO. Lithuania’s membership in the Alliance will be a historic act of European unification, making all chances of turning back the clock impossible. The NATO enlargement should continue to deny any attempts to draw new “red lines” in Europe. The new Euro-Atlantic security system can only be envisaged if old dividing lines are removed and the creation of new ones avoided.

Though, presently the Baltic countries do not face a direct military threat they still border regions with a high degree of uncertainty and unpredictability. In an environment of multiple challenges and risks, the significance of the Alliance remains important for the countries of the region. New risks still exist and NATO’s steady hand still saves lives and stops the spread of violence as it was shown in Bosnia and Kosovo. Various local rivals and new challenges to the common European security can be more effectively solved with deeper involvement and closer co-operation with partner countries.

The spread of weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism, internal instabilities caused by a mixture of socio-economic and political imbalances and political fundamentalism could very well lead to crisis requiring a reaction from NATO. A wide range of common risks and challenges can affect Alliance interests. This calls for a broad, comprehensive and joint strategy of the Euro-Atlantic institutions. As a democratic organization based upon the rule of law, NATO must continue to show its commitment to international peace and security, while defending the vital direct interests of the Euro-Atlantic region. If the Alliance continues to adapt rapidly to the realities of the European security, it will retain its strength and vitality.

One of the most important tasks of the new NATO is to promote security integration in Europe across former divides. There is no better way to safeguard security and to strengthen stability in Europe than by linking nations together in close and binding co-operation. The Strategic Concept approved in Washington-
ton by the NATO Heads of State and Government in April 1999 contained a new concept, which could have some relevance for the Baltic Region. It introduced a concept of “non-Article 5” crisis management. The document stated that an important aim of NATO is to keep risks at a distance by dealing with potential crisis outside current Alliance’s territory at an early stage.

Integration to NATO, first of all, is based on the adherence to the common values that have characterized the Western part of the globe for many years and that have united those countries to form common institutions to preserve stability and promote prosperity. The enlargement should continue to provide a visible and well articulated individual recognition of achievements of a country that has built a viable democratic society with an expanding free market economy. We do also believe that the limited capabilities of small countries, like Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, can be most affective only when combined with the collective actions of other countries sharing the same values and interests.

The Baltic countries are not asking for a free seat at the table when they apply for membership in NATO. They have proven themselves as among those who are able and willing to make tangible contributions to secure peace and stability on the European continent. The mere prospect of future NATO membership has encouraged states to make strenuous efforts towards democratization and reform and to improve and strengthen relations with one another. Lithuania is linked to the West by the ties of culture, religion, beliefs and common values, and economy. These ties are well complimented by active co-operation in the fields of defense, foreign policy and infrastructure development.

Lithuania is ready to assume the obligations and commitments under the Washington Treaty, is fully prepared to share the roles, risks, responsibilities, benefits and burdens of common security and collective defence and to subscribe to the Strategic Concept.

The admission of new members into the Alliance is important not only to NATO’s expanded security and stability but also to the destiny of the values and principles that communism denied and in whose name communism was resisted and ultimately brought down. NATO enlargement is a natural and continuing consequence of the emergence of an undivided and increasingly democratic Europe.

At the 1997 Madrid Summit where three Baltic countries were indirectly mentioned in the “open door” part of communiqué, and two years later, at the Washington Summit, leaders of the Alliance made it clear that the Alliance is on an irreversible path of changes. The invitation of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to NATO was the best illustration of that. In Washington last year the Alliance leaders went even further in the case of Baltic countries by naming them explicitly and recognized progress made by them and other aspiring countries and reiterated NATO’s openness by setting a target date - 2002 - for the next revision of the enlargement process. They provided a solid mechanism - the Membership Ac-
tion Plan (MAP) - to assist the applicants in preparations for eventual accession. These facts are encouraging in a way to double efforts to be qualified for membership in the second round of enlargement.

Lithuania expects the MAP together with an enhanced PfP program to constitute a very practical and membership-tailored element of NATO’s “open door” policy. However, even without the MAP Action Plan Lithuania is well on the way to prepare to assume membership obligations. We have worked hard to get ready for membership not for the sake of membership in itself, but in the interest of our country.

Lithuania has prepared and submitted a NATO integration programme, which details the financial and military commitments Lithuania is prepared to make to NATO. As part of these commitments Lithuania is ready to spend 2% of its Gross Domestic Product on defence by 2002. On the practical side we are concentrated on C3, the adoption of a new force structure, systematized education and training system, including English language training, logistics, quality of life improvement, development of infrastructure, armament and equipment procurement, and air defence. We are creating an armed forces based on Western models, which can be integrated into NATO and also if need function independently of other armed forces.

The Programme places great emphasis on the need to prepare force structures, to contribute militarily to collective defence and to the Alliance’s new missions. Lithuania has adapted a firm commitment to a progressive ten-year modernization and procurement programme to improve its military capabilities. A ten-year armed forces development plan foresees an active military force of 25,000. We have already begun to reform our reserve force. After completion of the reform we will have a complementary force of over one hundred thousand highly motivated reservists who can be activated in case of a crisis situation.

Lithuania is developing the overall capabilities of its armed forces and enhancing interoperability by acquiring anti-tank and anti-air weapons. This will enable Lithuania to defend its sovereignty and protect its democratic values, while simultaneously contributing to the effectiveness of the Alliance, contribute militarily to collective defence and to the Alliance’s new missions. The development of self-defence capabilities and the development of Armed Forces capabilities of operating in conjunction with NATO or as a part of the Alliance Forces are an enormous task requiring strong determination of our political and military leadership.

The successful implementation of the MAP mechanisms is essential for a credible and continuous enlargement process. We note the Alliance’s readiness to provide advice, assistance and practical support to the aspirant countries and in this context expect focused and candid feedback on our preparations for NATO membership.

The enlargement should continue to demonstrate the credibility of the Alliance’s “open door” policy by launching individually tailored and membership...
oriented programmes of measures designed to assist aspiring members in their practical preparation for accession. Lithuania has made significant and substantive progress in meeting the criteria for NATO membership, it is a fully functioning, stable democracy where human rights, freedom of expression, the rule of law and free and fair elections are respected.

The enlargement of NATO is a factor for stability in Europe and the Alliance should not close its door to well qualified candidates. We hope that this process and timely evaluation of the progress made by individual aspirants will enable the NATO Summit, which will be held no later than 2002, to launch a subsequent round of enlargement by extending new invitations to qualified candidates, including Lithuania, to start accession negotiations.

Let us be frank - there is little evidence at the moment that NATO’s leaders are considering inviting new countries to start pre-accession talks already by 2002. The expansion to include Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic into NATO has turned out to be more problematic and expensive than originally expected - a factor that has made many member states reluctant to start new accession negotiations.

First, the second round of enlargement definitely suffer from a lack of leadership in the West. In the U.S. everything is overruled by the presidential elections, which traditionally tend to be “inward looking”. In Europe enthusiasm for enlargement is decreasing drastically: Germany lost its rationale and political will (with the change of political leadership) and even strategic necessity (with Polish membership of NATO). France traditionally gives the EU first priority. Three Nordic Allies – Denmark, Iceland and Norway – and three newcomers – The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland – are keeping the debate on enlargement open, but they lack essential political influence at the negotiation tables.

Second, the whole argumentation for the second round differs from that of the first round. Value-driven motives are being replaced by cool geopolitics: What are the new countries capable of contributing to NATO, are they important in respect of NATO’s new missions, are these countries defendable etc.?

Third, the enlargement issue has moved down on the NATO agendas. Operations in Bosnia and especially in Kosovo, the ongoing debate on Defence Capability Initiative, ESDI (burden sharing), and relations with Russia are presently given first priority. Indeed, ethnic tensions in Kosovo continue and there is little evidence that the World community will be able reach a political solution to the most difficult case in Balkan crisis any time soon.

Fourth, growing tensions between the U.S. and Europe (and between the U.S. and Russia) on the National Missile Defence (NMD) issue also contributes little to the enlargement process. Most likely the U.S. Administration will go along with the NMD and Europe will have to decide whether to join the project or not observing the risk of creating a double standard security – one for the U.S. and one for the European Allies. If Europe decide
to join the NMD there will be little spare money left to be spend on the European defence ambitions.

Finally, the Russian factor still dominates NATO’s thoughts on openness. From one side, Russia’s leadership continues a policy with strong rhetoric against any further NATO enlargement. From the other, the pragmatic and realistic approach with which Russia’s President Putin has renewed the relationship with the Alliance will most likely influence the enlargement process – NATO will not be in a position to brake cooperation with Russia by any unfriendly move (and that is how Russia continue to view the enlargement process).

Such a new context of the NATO enlargement forces the Baltic countries to choose different strategies: Instead of forcing NATO to consider their candidacies or of demonstrating their individual qualities, a strong front of all nine NATO aspirants named in Washington Summit is required.

Indeed, on 19 May 2000 in Vilnius, Lithuania, the ministers of foreign affairs from nine aspiring NATO members came together to remind NATO leaders of their obligation to open the Alliance. The message of the meeting, which was called by Lithuania and Slovenia was simple - only when all of Europe is gathered within the borders of NATO can we say that the wounds of the Cold War have been healed. In other words, we are talking about a vision for a stable, prosperous and unified continent, allied with the United States to further the common interests and values of both. The Vilnius meeting erases the “red line” the Russians have drawn.

Too often in the past, neighbors have been jostling to position themselves for inclusion in the exclusive clubs of the West, but the Vilnius meeting showed that aspirants (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Albania and Macedonia) are willing to cooperate in order to obtain the common goal of NATO membership negotiations by the year 2002. The statement by the nine read in part: “Our goal will not be reached until each of us, as well as other European democracies sharing the values of the Euro-Atlantic community and able to bear its common responsibilities, has been fully integrated into these institutions. We call upon the member states of NATO to fulfill this promise of the Washington Summit to build a Europe whole and free. We call upon the members states at the next NATO summit in 2002 to invite our democracies to join NATO.”

The declaration signifies that eastern and central Europe has achieved an astonishing solidarity. Here are nine nations, that 10 years ago we feared would be confused by endless ethnic disputes, and which even today we might cynically predict would promote their own individual admissions into NATO at the expense of their neighbors cooperating towards the same end goal.

The three Baltic States, who enjoy strong support from their Nordic neighbors, have claimed to possess the strongest democratic credentials and will therefore be easier to digest than their southern rivals. Other NATO experts have argued that NATO’s air war in Kosovo and its large peacekeeping force in the
Balkans proved the Alliance’s primary threat is no longer potential aggression by Russia but instability in southeastern Europe. In the wake of the Kosovo war, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania and Macedonia won lavish praise from NATO commanders for their crucial support role.

The Vilnius meeting, however, is designed to stop such antagonism and make the case that NATO needs to make. The nine countries hope that by banding together they can repeat the success of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland; whose joint efforts at lobbying for membership succeeded last year. Now, that’s a challenge that can be heard and which will demand a response in Washington and the capitals of Europe.

The Vilnius Nine have achieved their end goal: They’ve set the terms of the debate and formed a powerful lobby group to move a distracted Europe and the next U.S. president (both U.S. presidential candidates - Texas Gov. George W. Bush and Vice President Al Gore - in their letters to the conference expressed commitment to an open-door NATO policy). There was immediate positive response from the NATO Foreign Ministers.

The action taken by the nine nations places a huge burden of responsibility on NATO to come up with its own strategy on how to accommodate their ambitions while not paralyzing the institutions of a military alliance that operates on a basis of consensus.

Baltic defence cooperation and participation in the PfP

Currently a defence development plan in Lithuania is on the way. It is envisaged that the armed forces can function autonomously, are interoperable with and also can well be integrated into NATO structures. The development of Lithuanian defence structures envisages such priorities and directions. First, to enhance self defence capabilities through the development of infrastructure, the establishment of a new military structure, and the improvement of force readiness through training, purchases of new communications equipment, and anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons. Second, to achieve interoperability with NATO - through PfP, PARP mechanisms and using both bilateral and multilateral military cooperation.

Strengthening bilateral military cooperation with other nations is an indispensable part of general efforts to promote partnership and to develop ability to work together. Trilateral Baltic cooperation contributes to that.

Everyone, interested in Baltic security and defence, know the trilateral projects, which all starts with “Blat-”. All these projects are embraced by the Baltic Security Assistance Group - BaltSea for short - which for the purpose of improving coordination of bilateral assistance rendered by the countries supporting Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in the field of security and defense has been established in April 1997 in Oslo. At the moment there is quite a number of supporting states which actively participate in the BaltSea framework: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands Norway, Poland, Switzer-
Life do not permit us to sleep on the laurels, thus the “Blat” projects are undergoing rapid developments. The Baltic Peacekeeping battalion - BaltBat - is undergoing reorganisation from a peacekeeping to a full capacity infantry battalion enabling it to participate in all types of peace operations. Most importantly the unit needs to become part of the defence capabilities of the Baltic countries. The Baltic Air Surveillance Network – BaltNet - after the completion of the equipment installation, personnel training and radar connection has already started its operations in the beginning of the year 2000. Lithuania hosts the regional air surveillance center, capable of being integrated into the NATO network. Lithuanian contribution to the Baltic Squadron - BaltRon - by the end of 1999 was augmented by a mine hunter procured from Germany. All three Baltic countries send their officers to the Baltic Defense College - BaltDefCol - which is rapidly becoming the main venue for the Baltic military elite education. Finally, BaltPers, a Swedish sponsored project, involves the creation of a modern military registration system in the form of a mobilisation database.

Indeed, the importance of the Baltic co-operation in the field of defence is not decreasing. At the moment, a practical need to organize joint procurement activities and possibilities of facilitating co-operation between national defence industries are underlined.

The equipment procurement policy is oriented toward NATO-compatible systems, which makes Lithuania turn to the Western market, as it becomes increasingly open to the Central European democracies. Lithuania has already procured weapons and other defence equipment such as tactical radios, transport vehicles, coastal surveillance equipment, anti-tank weapons from a number of Western countries. Governments of the Western countries are authorising their defence ministries to sell or donate excess equipment that is being decommissioned as they downsize their armed forces. Also, as part of the package, these countries undertake to train Lithuanian military personnel in operating the transferred equipment. Lithuania expects this developing trend to continue in the future.

Lithuania is further preparing its armed forces for participation in peacekeeping and other operations consistent with international law. The primary emphasis is placed on participation in NATO-led PfP operations. Practical preparation is being conducted using PfP mechanisms, and Enhanced and More Operational PfP (EMOP) gains special importance. The tasks in the process of preparation vary from adequate training and interoperability to enhancing military representation in the military structure of NATO and developing appropriate national decision-making co-ordination mechanisms. Therefore, the Political-Military Framework for NATO-led PfP Operations (PMF), the Operational Capabilities Concept for NATO-led PfP Operations (OCC), Expanded and Adapted PARP, Defence-Related and Military Co-operation, PfP Training and Edu-
cation Enhancement Programme play a major role in developing Lithuania’s crisis response and management capabilities.

Lithuania intends to continue to fully support and participate in the development of various activities and initiatives in the framework of EAPC (such as consultations on security issues, civil emergency planning, humanitarian de-mining, small arms control etc.); the activities of PfP (exercises, implementation of training and education programme, PfP decision-making and planning etc.). Lithuania was constantly using the EAPC to promote practical regional security cooperation: at the end of 1998 the NATO/EAPC seminar “Developments of the Baltic defense structures”, which took place in Vilnius.

Especially close co-operation is in security field. The formation of common peace keeping battalion, known as a LITPOLBAT, common military training and participation in peace operations increase Lithuania’s, which is aspiring for membership in Alliance and Poland’s, which this year became a member of NATO, role as stabilising powers in the region. On September 18 last year 30 Lithuanian soldiers have been sent to NATO’s peacekeeping mission in Kosovo (KFOR) where they joined a polish battalion which is compound unit in the USA brigade.

**Russia in the Baltic Sea region**

In developing relations with Russia all three Baltic countries seek to perform bilateral relations, which would ensure equal beneficial co-operation in spirit of good neighborhood, strengthening mutual understanding and confidence and extend goodwill for our countries’ integration into European and Transatlantic structures. On it side, it is in the interest of Russia that neighboring countries are stable, democratic and integrated into the European institutions.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union the Russian military doctrine and political thought developed the concept of the “near abroad” (which also covered three Baltic countries). The political aim of Russian leadership in the 1990s has been the reunion of the areas of the former Soviet Union into a more of less cohesive unit. Russian military doctrine of that period presented repression of Russian speaking population in the “near abroad” as an acceptable reason for the use of military force - and it was left to the Russians to decide when the minorities were being repressed. In addition, Russians abandoned their “no-first-use” doctrine concerning nuclear arsenals.

At the same time, Russia made a good name for itself in 1992-1994 by withdrawing its forces from the Baltic countries (although, afterwards almost regretting this move). Although trade between the Baltics and Russia was not flourishing, Russia has shown an economic interest in elaborating its relations with the Baltics not least where the passage of goods is concerned.

In 1997 Russia shifted its Baltic policy to a more positive stance by offering security guarantees and cooperative projects to the Baltic countries. In 1997 Russian President Yeltsin made, in connection with Lithuanian President Brazauskas visit
to Moscow, an offer of security guarantees to the Baltic countries. Later followed a complementary proposal to include cross-security guarantees of the U.S., Germany and France by Russia. The three Baltic countries turned down the proposals. As a rule, guarantees are offered to states threatened by third countries, but in this case Russia proposed guarantees aimed at deterring threats which the Baltic countries perceive to emanate from Russia itself.

It seems that concern with Russia’s degraded power status and wounded sense of identity has fuelled preoccupations with territorial integrity. Border agreements between Russia and Estonia and Latvia remained unsigned, although both agreements remain nearly ready for several years and despite the fact that a border agreement with Lithuania was reached. Issues related with Russian speaking minorities, residing in Estonia and Latvia are still a high priority on their bilateral agendas. Russia needs to realize that the ethnic Russian minorities in the Baltic countries will soon become citizens of the EU, thereby creating a valuable bridge on economic and cultural levels between different peoples. Most importantly, Russians still need to assume responsibility for past misdeeds - the annexation of the Baltic countries, the deportations of thousands of inhabitants, and the destruction of their property and cultural heritage.

The 1991 bilateral Treaty between Russia and Lithuania reaffirmed the right of each country to freely choose different security arrangements. Numerous interstate treaties and inter-governmental agreements, including the Treaty on the Foundations of Inter-State Relations and a Border Treaty, have been signed between Lithuania and Russia. An Intergovernmental Commission was established in 1996. The Commission consists of eleven working groups addressing the issues of trade and economy, energy, agriculture, transport, archives, social affairs, science and culture, illegal migration, regional cooperation, properties of diplomatic missions, and financial claims.

Rights of national minorities, including Russians, are fully respected in Lithuania. Lithuania granted the right to obtain Lithuanian citizenship for all the inhabitants that resided in Lithuania up until the declaration of the independence. The Russian population represents approximately 8 per cent of the population of Lithuania and they enjoy full social, cultural and linguistic autonomy guaranteed by the Lithuanian laws and according to international standards.

It is too early to speculate on how new Russian President’s foreign and security policy will be developed with regard to the relationship vis-à-vis the Baltic States. We simply hope that declared “pragmatism” and “realism” will not develop into the policy of political and economic pressure that we are witnesses of in Latvia.

On our side, we support the development of democracy, market economy and civic society in Russia, believing that Russia will finally go away from the “territorial mentality”. Admission of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to NATO and the EU will facilitate the changes in Russia’s position and will help Russia to perceive...
herself as a modern player in the Baltic Sea region.

Strong Russian resistance against the Baltic membership of NATO is a well-known fact. But whatever psychological barriers there may exist among Russia’s decision-makers, they will be reinforced if NATO stops the enlargement process short of its stated goal of a reunited, democratic Europe. Redrawing “red lines” on the map of Europe evidences the remnants of old thinking. The NATO commitment to cross over these imaginary barriers, is the greatest assistance the West can offer Russia in helping it to find its rightful place in a democratic Trans-Atlantic community. This is why the inclusion of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and other well-qualified countries in the next round of the NATO enlargement could be one of NATO’s most important tasks, demonstrating unequivocally that NATO’s “open door” policy is credible and firm.

We often hear from Russia’s leaders that Russia is prepared to use only political and diplomatic means in its effort to prevent the alliance’s eastward expansion. But if one accepts the Russian demand that countries wishing to join NATO should not join because of the Russian opposition, it will actually mean accepting the Russian view that these countries are in the Russian “sphere of influence”. The best way to disabuse Russians of the notion of “sphere of influence” would be to acknowledge the Baltic request for NATO membership and to put it on the Alliance’s agenda.

In contrast to Moscow’s way of thinking, NATO expansion would bring greater stability along Russia’s western frontiers. During the Cold War the border between Russia and NATO was a completely closed and chilly border, but today it is a very relaxed border of cooperation between good neighbors. NATO’s enlargement has so far stabilized Russia’s frontiers rather than threatened them. If Moscow opposes enlargement because it wishes to dominate its former satellites, NATO should discourage such revanchism.

Maintenance of an open and productive dialogue and engagement with Russia has been one of NATO’s most important goals since the end of the Cold War. Lithuania has the same goal, and has actually been successful in maintaining friendly and co-operative relations with Russia. All political, economic and security-related questions with Russia are being solved through constructive and mutually beneficial dialogues.

Lithuania recognizes the importance of the NATO-Russia Founding Act and welcomes the Alliance’s commitment to its partnership with Russia under the Founding Act. Lithuania welcomes the involvement of Russia in restoring peace in Kosovo and is encouraged by Russia’s re-engagement with NATO. As NATO’s Secretary General said in Vilnius “we need to get NATO-Russia relations back on track... a new European security architecture cannot be built without Russia”. Russia has resumed cooperation with NATO after having frozen contacts for nearly a year in disagreement over the NATO bombing campaign in Yugoslavia. That is a positive development indeed.
Transatlantic links and the Baltic Sea region

Further strengthening of relations with all European partners and with the U.S. and Canada, who support the Baltic’s European and transatlantic integration, is key priority. The U.S. geopolitical position, combined with its capabilities, make a counterbalancing effect in the Baltic Sea region. It has been a backbone of politico-military support for the Baltic countries ever since the Cold war (even during, as it was seen in the non-recognition of Baltic incorporation policy), and continues to play this role. The U.S. commitment is a strong reminder that the region is an integral part of an Euro-Atlantic context.

Some say that the Baltic Sea region is the one region in Europe where an U.S.-Russian confrontation is still conceivable. Thus, the U.S. has a strong stake in defusing the potential for conflict in the region and promoting its stable economic and political development.

U.S. engagement in the region is characterized by the North European Initiative, the Barrens cooperation and the U.S.-Baltic Partnership.

The Charter of Partnership between the United States of America and the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia, and the Republic of Lithuania, signed in Washington D.C. on January 16, 1998, establishes the institutional framework that promotes the furtherance of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, reciprocal support to the Euro-Atlantic integration and common efforts designed for the consolidation of security, prosperity, and stability within the region and Euro-Atlantic area as a whole.

The Charter underscored a common goal of the partners to work together in enhancing the security of all states through the integration of Baltic countries into the European and transatlantic security, political, and economic institutions. The US-Baltic Partnership Charter states the United State’s “real, profound and enduring” interest in the independence and security of the three countries and furthers the US’s commitment to help Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to deepen their integration and prepare for membership in the European Union and NATO. The Charter declares that the integration of the Baltic States into European and Transatlantic political, economic, security and defence institutions is a common goal of all signatories.

The Partnership charter provides the framework for concrete and issue-oriented discussions on how the Lithuanian defence establishment with U.S. support moves forward in building self-defence capabilities while simultaneously preparing for Lithuania’s membership of NATO.

The Baltic security in a wider European and global context

The changes in the world and the ever-increasing globalization have made us all well aware not only of our own “back yard” but also of the wider regional and global issues. Having suffered through occupations and destructive policy of violence, the Baltic countries seek to contrib-
ute to the security and stability of the international community and to fight against modern challenges.

Lithuania reconfirms its commitment to the principles of settlement of international disputes by peaceful means and refrains from the use of threat or force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

If the Baltic countries want their security to be respected, they simply cannot stay away from the processes outside their region. The Baltic way of dealing with the challenges as well as opportunities of the modern age is twofold - through the active participation in the UN and OSCE, and taking part in peace implementation efforts and co-operation.

First, the UN. In UN framework, especially, on security issues the Baltics are less dynamic as they concentrate primarily on European issues. Lithuania seeks for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for a term of 2004-2005, which will allow using the experience of good neighborly relations in strengthening peace and stability at a regional and global level.

For several years the Baltic countries have participated vigorously in all efforts - of the UN, OSCE, NATO and WEU - to maintain security and stability in Europe. Baltics are regular participants in the international missions they contribute civil experts to OSCE missions and contribute civilian police to the UN, OSCE, and WEU mission.

Since 1994 Lithuania has been a constant and fully-fledged troop-contributing country to complex UN peacekeeping operations in Croatia (UNPROFOR), Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES and UN police support group in the Danube region), Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) and Kosovo (UNMIK). Since the deployment of the first Lithuanian platoon within the Danish Peacekeeping Battalion to the UNPROFOR mission in the former Yugoslavia, some 30 civilian policemen and as many as 100 troops have served in the cause of peace within the UN missions. Moreover, Lithuanian military platoons, which hitherto total 480 troops, have served with the NATO-led missions IFOR/SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina and lately with KFOR in the Kosovo province. At the height of tensions in the Balkans in the summer of 1999 a Lithuanian military medical team joined the Czech Military hospital fielded in Albania during the NATO Allied Harbour humanitarian operation. Lithuanian police officers have significantly contributed to the authority and expertise of the OSCE monitoring group in Croatia and the Kosovo Verification Mission. Seeking to upgrade Lithuanian peacekeeping capabilities and readiness, two major projects have been launched. Two peacekeeping battalions LITPOLBAT and BALTBAT were established with our Polish, Latvian, and Estonian neighbours. Now both battalions are fully operational and their further development is under way. Lithuania is also a member of the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

In January 1998, Lithuania joined the Standby Arrangements System for UN peacekeeping operations that was set up to accelerate the process of deployment of peacekeepers. Lithuania was one of the first countries to sign with the Memo-
randum of Understanding with the UN, according to which 24 Lithuanian civil-
ian police officers, military observers and staff officers were put on stand-by and
could be made available for deployment to a new mission within 30 days upon a
request by the UN.

There are two “OSCE type” issues, which are pertinent to the Baltic Sea re-
gion. One is Confidence Building Measures and the second – the CFE Treaty.

The OSCE-wide format is best guaran-
tee to keep Baltic security issues on a Eu-
ropean scale and to avoid artificial notion of “regional security” to constantly reemerge. Security is indivisible and there is no doubt that the security and stabili-
ity of the Baltic Sea region cannot be considered separately from European se-
curity and stability. There is no regional security. One can only speak about re-
gional security cooperation.

At the same time, there is still room for improvement of the atmosphere of mutual confidence in the region. Already 1998 Lithuanian President Adamkus in
his Statement “On the development of
tions with Russia and the confidence and security building measures” made
proposals for a more effective use of the instruments of the Vienna Document of
1999. Based on the President’s Statement, Lithuania proposed to Russia in accord-
ance with the provisions of the Vienna Document and on the basis of reciproc-
ity to exchange a passive quota of one additional evaluation visit beyond the quota established under the relevant para-
graphs of the Vienna Document and to exchange information on military forces
located in the territories of Lithuania and Kaliningrad region in accordance to the
formats of the CFE Treaty.

As part of our efforts to contribute to disarmament and arms control process, Lithuania already last year expressed its interest in the membership in the adopted
CFE Treaty, which Lithuania regards as a cornerstone of European security. Also
Estonia and Latvia are interested in the

Lithuania looked positively to the fact that the adapted CFE Treaty, after a rati-
fication process is over, will be open to new accessions. As it was stated by Presi-
dent Adamkus, at the OSCE Summit in Istanbul, Lithuania considers the possi-
bility of accession to the Treaty, provided the accession terms are in our national
interests. Accession terms should not im-
pede the development of legitimate de-
fensive structures of new member-states, new CFE member-states should have a
right to full access to the general flexibil-
ity mechanism that will be set forth in the adapted CFE Treaty, including the
right for Exceptional Temporary Deploy-
ment and an accession of the new states-
parties to the Treaty as “groups of states” or “geopolitical units/regional settings”
should be avoided and individual ap-
proach should prevail.

Since the adapted Treaty will no longer be based on the Group to Group struc-
ture Lithuania considers that there are no direct linkage between NATO member-
ship and participation in the CFE Treaty. Internal preparations have already begun, such as the established interagency group, the Arms control and verification group established in the framework of National
Defense Staff, which will be a small, but competent force.

**Conclusion**

Continuous attention from the West is essential in the development of the Baltic Sea region still undergoing a period of transformation. This may take the form of direct investment and trade from Europe and North America and of enlarging Transatlantic institutions, thereby providing unique opportunities for stability and well-being around the Baltic Sea, and thus contributing to an integrated Europe whole and free. On the other side, continuous Baltic effort to promote trilateral cooperation is also evident.

The Western world needs to understand that the Baltic countries are tied to Europe historically and culturally. They share Western values and aspirations. Having thrown off the shackles of communism and Soviet domination, the Baltics, like their counterparts in Central Europe, want to join Europe and the Euro-Atlantic institutions. The Baltic security rests increasingly on interdependence, cooperation, and the expansion of joint infrastructures and common values. Cooperation in the Baltic Sea region can be a significant contribution to the enhancement of European unity, of transatlantic relations, and of East-West reconciliation on a wider scale.