



THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Cultures, Politics, Societies

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33 Security dilemmas, politics and major actors

1. The dilemmas

The purpose of a security community in the Baltic region is to solve security dilemmas. Thus, we need to consider the basic security problems in the region. Going from a narrow definition of security, i.e. freedom from the threat of military attack, to a more comprehensive concept, we can make an inventory of possible security problems today. This includes the following four comprehensive dilemmas:

1. *Maintaining independence* of the smaller countries in the region versus strategic and military objectives of major actors in Europe. This means the deployment of foreign forces, the building on new forms of defence capacity, transparency in military activities and the creation of security arrangements.
2. *Consolidating democratic forms of government versus* the fear of minorities being left out from the political process. This means creating societies with a durable democracy, and where secessionist elements can be restrained, by civilian society.
3. *Building states out of many peoples versus* building states dominated by one people. This entails questions of citizenship, voting rights, right to be elected and to hold office, as well as respect for differences in cultural heritage and political *views*.
4. *Achieving economic growth with Western integration versus* fear of groups or states being “left behind” with regard to economic development. This points to the dangers of uneven economic development nationally as well as regionally.

The security community is particularly focused on the first type of dilemma. The solution of other dilemmas is seen as contributing to the creation of the security community.

2. Security strategies after WW II

The peace arrangement agreed upon by the allied powers – the Soviet Union, the United States, Great Britain and France – after WW II was not one of stability. Soviet expansion in the three Baltic States and Central Europe soon developed into a new confrontation, the Cold War, between the Soviet Union and the Western powers.

The central piece in the Western strategy against an offensive threat from the Soviet Union was the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, in 1949. NATO was the US-led military alliance of Canada, the USA and West European states, which today

consists of 16 members. It was formed in the aftermath of the Prague coup in February 1948 and the Berlin Blockade later the same year.

The official strategy was *containment*. Its goal was to keep the Soviet threat against Western Europe and North America within limits. The *threat* was seen on several levels: First, the Communist Parties in Western Europe were perceived as a domestic arm of Soviet power. Second, there was the threat of the increasing offensive Soviet conventional capacity in Eastern Europe. Finally, Soviet behaviour against democratic or nationalist forces in Eastern Europe was an additional element in the Western threat image, as well as Stalinist terror in the enlarged Soviet Union itself.

Thus, Soviet armed forces were seen as a sign of strength at a time when Western military capacity was reduced, economic crisis was serious and difficult reconstruction work had begun. In the West, Soviet behaviour was not often seen as a reaction to uncertainty or fear of American superiority in a technological, nuclear and industrial capacity. The victories of the Communists in China and the Korean War were further indications of the expansionism and global reach of Soviet ambitions.

Throughout the entire subsequent Cold War period there were alternating periods of *détente* and confrontation. Basic societal cleavages remained, and investments in nuclear and conventional military technological development remained at a high level. Strategies of second strike nuclear capability were developed in the West: only if the West kept sufficient nuclear capacity to retaliate against a Soviet first strike with nuclear weapons could deterrence be achieved and Soviet aggressiveness contained, argued NATO and Western leaders.

Thus, a *nuclear arms race* ensued first in quantitative terms (each side acquiring as many and as varied nuclear forces as possibility) and later in qualitative terms (increased precision, multiple warheads, missile defences). This was accompanied by a high level of force readiness, continuous military manoeuvres involving both conventional and nuclear forces, a system of military bases around the globe, and support for different sides in wars in the Third World. Historically unprecedented amounts of resources were devoted to military research and development, as well as to large standing armies.

All this had implications for the Baltic Region. The region was divided between the two sides, with neutral Sweden and Finland in-between, and the less threatening NATO links to Norway. During the Cold War the Baltic Sea became a sea where military nerves were tested. Fleets from the two sides were permanently observing each other in Baltic waters. There was continuous surveillance by air.

The neutral countries in the region, Sweden and Finland, were under pressure from both sides. In the 1950s there were repeated crises between Sweden and the Soviet Union. The most serious incident was when the Soviet air force shot down a Swedish aircraft. Finland was exposed to direct political intervention from the Soviet authorities on several occasions, the most notable being the so-called Note Crisis of 1961. Repeated crises over Berlin, e.g. in 1953, 1958 and 1961 kept tension high. Militarily suppressed revolts in Poland showed the fragility of the Soviet-controlled Warsaw Pact (1956, 1970, 1980-1981). Alternative forms of government emerged but were quickly repressed (Prague 1968).

3. The Cold War ends

Only by the second half of the 1980s did the prospective combatants begin to move out of this chilling grip. Confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weap-

ons were initiated, especially at the Stockholm conference of 1986. A political dialogue was begun following the summit meeting in Geneva in 1985, and a joint position was developed on particular conflicts, e.g. the war between Iran and Iraq in 1987. Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was agreed upon in 1988. The first disarmament agreement, the INF treaty in 1987, was concluded on intermediate-range nuclear forces stating that the missiles should be abolished within three years. This agreement has been implemented.

The disarmament agreement on nuclear issues, the end of Communist monopoly of power in East European countries in 1989, and the unification of Germany paved the way for a more durable and hopeful structure for peace and security in Europe as a whole and, thus, for the Baltic Region. The development was not without setbacks, however. The independence movements in Lithuania and Latvia were met by military power in January 1991. The unsuccessful coup in Moscow in August 1991 was followed by the independence of the Baltic countries in September 1991 and, three months later, by the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The Warsaw Pact disappeared and NATO remained the only militarily effective international organisation in Europe.

4. NATO

The question has now emerged about the roles of NATO, created as an alliance in case of a major war in Europe. In 1991, when the Cold War ended, NATO's institutional design was criticised for being an historical anachronism lacking a clear objective for dealing with a new security environment with no visible enemies. Only in 1994 did it find a new task. In the Bosnian crisis the organisation was employed in military combat for the first time since its inception. This gave the alliance an opportunity to reformulate its old objectives and cast itself in the role of a peacekeeping organisation, especially in situations where the European countries in general would agree on the objectives and means of the possible missions. The new role of NATO was clearly demonstrated in October 1998 when it took the unprecedented step of issuing an activation order and threatening to bomb the sovereign state of Yugoslavia for its treatment of ethnic Albanians in the province of Kosovo. With the consent of the international community NATO began, on 24 March, a 78-day air campaign, which included more than 38,000 sorties and the deployment of 28,000 bombs and missiles.

In November 1993 President Clinton proposed the creation of Partnership for Peace (PFP) as an extension or complement to NATO. The offer was directed to all former Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union members in Europe. The first attempt at creating a complement to NATO was made in 1991 with the creation of the North Atlantic Co-Operation Council (NACC), consisting of NATO-members, the Central European states and all Soviet successor states. NACC was intended to be a forum for consultation on democratic practices, and would oversee such things as military-to-military liaisons for co-operation on the development of democratic institutions, civil-military coordination and approaches to peacekeeping, defence planning and disarmament. PFP was a further development of NACC, but focused more on the military aspects of the co-operation.

The US objective was clear: PFP would enhance transparency among the military establishments in Europe and include, for instance, joint training for peacekeeping missions. In effect, PFP paved the way for the countries of Eastern and Central Europe to become acquainted with Western military and political thinking. Some countries saw PFP as a way of

getting closer to NATO and enhancing their opportunities of a membership in the alliance, others considered it as a confidence-building measure between former enemies, thus creating conditions for equal co-operation between Russia and the West. PFP does not include any security guarantees and does not specify any external threats. In fact, it is operating as a set of bilateral agreements, rather than as a unified model. However, both NACC and PFP have served as incubators for NATO expansion.

In January 1994 the Clinton administration proposed a strategy for a new NATO. The primary components in this new strategy included new missions, new members and new partnerships. First, NATO needed to strengthen its core mission of self-defence and deterrence, but this would be coupled with the adaptation of taking on new challenges in order to strengthen security and stability in both the USA and Europe. Second, NATO should be prepared to take in new members from the former Warsaw-pact. Third, NATO needed to forge a strong co-operative relationship with Russia.

The new strategy for NATO was put into practice in 1997. In May that year, at a special NATO summit conference in Paris, the then sixteen NATO members signed the “Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian federation”. A similar agreement was also signed between NATO and Ukraine. With the NATO-Russian founding act, Russia was given an inclusive role in the formation of the strategy for a new NATO. This was primarily made by the development of an institutional mechanism in the form of the multi-level Permanent Joint Council, which provided both NATO and Russia with a platform for discussions and negotiations concerning issues of mutual interest. This open door policy also paved the way for the decision at the Madrid summit in July 1997 to enlarge the alliance by bringing in new members. On 30 April 1998, the US senate approved the inclusion of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic in NATO. The decision to expand the alliance has caused both expectations and disagreements in the Baltic area as to whether the enlargement will have positive or negative effects. The main obstacle to a further expansion of the alliance thus far has been Russia which strongly opposes NATO membership of the Baltic States and Ukraine.

5. Security thinking in Russia: the New Doctrine

Soviet security policy during the Cold War period was shaped by the experiences from the Second World War. Never again was war to be fought on Russian soil. Soviet defence was going to be placed on the same technological level as the Western powers and to have the capacity to attack quickly across borders. A war should be fought on enemy territory. Tanks and armed vehicles made up the core of the armaments. Research, development and production by indigenous military industry were aiming at keeping pace with Western military activities. As a consequence, Soviet defence became a burden on the civilian population and was perceived by the outside world as threatening. The end of the Cold War and the break-up of the Soviet Union changed the situation fundamentally.

In November 1993 President Yeltsin signed Russia's first military doctrine. It declared that the threat of a direct aggression against Russia had “considerably declined”, but the threat of military conflict remained. The threat caused by local conflicts within the former Soviet Union had taken priority over the threat from the West. Yet, several conceivable sources of external threats to Russian security were mentioned, which were easily identified as the result of a political conflict with the West. Among them were: the expansion of military blocs and

alliances to the detriment of the interests of Russia, the introduction of foreign troops on the territories of neighbouring states, and military build-up undermining the “strategic stability”, as well as neighbouring states allowing foreign deployment on their territory and the use of those territories for hostile and subversive activities against Russia. No direct enemy was pointed out, but judging from the description of potential sources and factors sustaining conflicts and wars, the authors of the doctrine have two groups in mind: neighbouring states and great powers including Western countries.

The doctrine gave the strategic nuclear deterrence an important role. The strategic nuclear force was to guarantee the destruction of an aggressor (*nanesenie zadannogo ushcherba agressoru*). Earlier Soviet declarations of no first strike of nuclear weapons were abandoned. Among the factors allowing a local war escalating into large-scale war, special attention was paid to “internal armed conflicts (inside Russia), which threaten the vitally important interests of the Russian Federation and may be used as an excuse for other states to intervene in its internal affairs”. Local wars, said the doctrine, have a potential for escalating into global war, involving the use of nuclear weapons.

Nevertheless, the doctrine pointed at armed conflicts and local wars in the vicinity of Russian borders as the most serious threat to Russian security. The main reasons for military conflict were to be found in social, political, territorial, religious, national/ethnic contradictions and “the desire of a number of states and political forces to resolve them by means of armed struggle”. Aggressive nationalism and religious intolerance were pointed out in particular. In order to prevent the escalation of local conflict and war into large-scale war, the doctrine emphasised the importance of “upholding stability in regions bordering Russia and its allies, as in the world in general”. Subsequently, the Russian government was very active after 1993 in trying to make the international community agree to Russian peacekeeping forces in the former Soviet Union under the auspices of the UN or the OSCE.

In February 2000 a revised military doctrine was signed by the then Acting President Vladimir Putin. It was followed in April by the National Security Concept (replacing a previous document from 1997), and in July by a Foreign Policy Concept (replacing a 1993 document). Other documents on specific aspects of security followed such as, for example, the doctrine on information security (September 2000). The National Security Concept was not the first to be published, though it is regarded as the basic document from which the other documents emanate. All these documents reflect the ideas of the Putin leadership. Yet, they are all compromise documents, and therefore give only general directions rather than solving issues of priorities in policy. Taken together they are used here to describe the new Russian doctrine.

The documents from 2000 reflect the deep concern of the Russian leadership with both the external and domestic security situation in Russia. As in the earlier evaluation the threat of large-scale war has drastically declined but the threat of military conflict remains and grows. The new doctrine reflects concern with Russia’s marginalisation in international affairs and the strategic change along Russia’s western and southern periphery. NATO’s bombing in the Kosovo conflict in the spring of 1999 is reflected; among the factors destabilising the international-political situation the military doctrine depicts the use of military force for “humanitarian intervention” without the sanction of the UN Security Council. In 2000 the description of external threats was given a more direct anti-NATO slant and more clearly traced back to NATO enlargement and an increased role of NATO in European military crisis management. The National Security Concept is very explicit on a developing threat that would result from NATO ignoring Russian interests.

Russia's strategic nuclear force is still given a vital role in Russian defence, and the wording with regard to the use of nuclear weapons is maintained. The great power status associated with strategic weapons is pointed out. In 2000 the military press also indicated a larger interest in the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons in local wars.

Terrorism as an external and internal threat to Russian security was briefly mentioned in the 1993 military doctrine. More attention was given to the internal threat of terrorism in the 2000 version. While the 1997 National Security Concept had already warned about terrorism, the Concept of 2000 concluded that "International terrorism is waging an open campaign to destabilise Russia". The issue of fighting terrorism is therefore presented as an urgent task for international cooperation.

Domestic threats to security have become more prevalent in the doctrine of 2000. The National Security Concept points at economic disintegration, social stratification and the dilution of spiritual values, which result in tension in society. Weak state institutions and deteriorating relations between state and society, an ongoing social and political polarisation, the criminalisation of social relations, growth of organised crime and terrorism threaten Russian security. Ethno-egoism, chauvinism and uncontrolled migration "promote nationalism, political and religious extremism and ethno-separatism, and create a breeding ground for conflicts". The Security Concept does pay attention to different aspects of security, thereby using a broad definition of security – among them the deteriorating state of public health and the declining demographic development. Yet, the activities of extremist nationalist, religious, separatist and terrorist movements and organisations are regarded as the most dangerous internal threat.

For the first time the 2000 military doctrine stipulates that military force can be used to repel not only external aggression but also to protect the state from "anti-constitutional actions and illegal armed violence" in domestic operations. In 1993 this task was given to the Interior Forces.

The main objective of the Foreign Policy Concept of 2000 is to serve Russia's economic recovery and build-up. This presupposes a stable international environment and Russian integration into the world economy. Yet, in spite of its weakness, Russia is to pursue an active diplomacy in order to increase its international standing. For this purpose Alexander Gorchakov, Foreign Minister in late 19th century Russia, was introduced as an example by Yevgenii Primakov during the second half of the 1990s. Gorchakov brought Russia back to international influence when it had been exhausted at the end of the Crimean war. Russian foreign policy under Putin is encouraged to follow Gorchakov's recipe: though still weak, a state can pursue an active diplomacy and strengthen its international standing. Gorchakov's recipe was international cooperation but also a skill for using differences and divisions between states to find the basis for coalition-building in international politics.

The formulation of Russian security thinking under Putin is torn between the threat associated with a larger role for NATO in Europe as well as threats from within Russia and the newly-independent states on former Soviet territory. In the latter, internal cleavages find a breeding ground in the difficult economic and social conditions under which large groups of the population live. Also, Russian thinking is torn between a traditional geopolitical approach where a larger Western engagement on former Soviet territory threatens Russian security and interests; and a more modern approach that tries to maintain an open mind for the benefits of international cooperation in a globalised world. Limited resources will, however, force Russian policy to make a choice between the different kinds of threats and approaches in order to better allocate resources and in a more effective way respond to challenges.

State building and boundary making

Today there is no land on earth that is not regulated by an international boundary. This situation is a recent development in political history. Only one hundred years ago, vast territories on many continents were not defined or demarcated as belonging to particular states. This was not necessarily a problem for the inhabitants, who handled their relations by other means than establishing boundaries in the modern sense of the word.

In Europe, the drawing of boundaries has been an intra-continental process, while boundary making in other parts of the world has been external.

There are three concepts used in connection with this subject. *Boundary* indicates the line separating two states, while *border* refers to the area where the boundary line is located. *Frontier* means a (legally) unregulated territory between two political centres, or just the outer reaches of a political centre. These concepts are often used without any distinction.

By the end of the 11th century there were no large unknown territories between political centres, i.e. frontiers, in Europe. Throughout the ages, the many small areas – parishes, cantons, bishoprics etc. – that existed from time to time, have functioned as “building pieces” in the many border changes that Europe has experienced, particularly after wars.

In the late 18th century the drawing of boundaries was presented as a form of peace making, by geographers in Europe and elsewhere. During the colonial period, when many European states expanded beyond their political centres, claims for mining, cultivation, the use of rivers, or control of mountain passes were often causes of armed conflict and wars. When state interests clashed over a certain territory, a precise delimitation and demarcation on the ground was considered a way of removing “every occasion for quarrel” (Vattel 1758, cited in Prescott, 1987, p. 58). This idea is also present today. When states conclude boundary agreements, the peace-making effect is often mentioned in the preamble of the agreement.

Today, the drawing of boundaries can be a way for both small states and major powers to strengthen their position. For instance, when a small state has internationally recognised boundaries with its neighbours, it also has the legal protection for these boundaries as it is formulated in international treaties. The Helsinki Final Act from 1975 stipulates that boundaries are inviolable. This treaty is now accepted by 53 states, among them all the states in Europe. The Final Act states that:

“The participating States regard as inviolable all one another’s frontiers as well as the frontiers of all States in Europe and therefore they will refrain now and in the future from assaulting these frontiers. Accordingly, they will also refrain from any demand for, or act of, seizure and usurpation of part or all of the territory of any participating State.” (From Helsinki Final Act, 1975)

States whose boundary relations are unclear may be tempted to establish “physical facts” on land that serves as borderlands. These facts can then be used as a point of reference for boundary negotiations. The typical example is the building of settlements, for instance for agricultural purposes, in areas which are not under forceful national jurisdiction.

Borders are often thought of as areas of separation, taxation and control, if not of overt conflict. But borders can also function as meeting-points and areas of co-operation and development. It is not easy to think of a well-functioning international community without borders and boundaries. They mark where one legal system ends and another begins, thus making clear the conditions for economic co-operation and development. A well-defined, internationally recognised boundary is a good point of reference for the development of resources, also

those that surround the boundary.

Finally, boundaries have a psychological function in being a physical mark of “what is ours”, and what is not. This works in two directions: it creates togetherness for those that accept the boundary – which can be something good in itself – but it creates opposite feelings for those who feel they are “on the wrong side”. When a boundary excludes people from one another, extreme ideologies, misperceptions and chauvinist sentiments are likely to develop. The best way of treating the emotions that may arise around boundaries is to make them penetrable. If a boundary is open for people and goods, it is not likely to cause problems.



Figure 124. Ethnic rivalry appears today in sports competition. Photo: Katarzyna Skalska

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