



Groundings Undergraduate Academic Journal  
University of Glasgow | Glasgow University Union

---

## **How has NATO enlargement impacted on NATO-Russia relations?**

**Author(s):** Tom Disney

**Source:** Groundings Undergraduate, April 2010, Vol. 3, pp. 35-54

**Published by:** Glasgow University Dialectic Society, University of Glasgow

**ISSNs:** 1754-7474 (Print) | 1755-2702 (Online)

**Licensing:** This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

The CC BY 4.0 license is a Creative Commons license. This is a non-copyleft free license that is good for art and entertainment works, and educational works. It is compatible with all versions of the GNU GPL; however, like all CC licenses, it should not be used on software. People are free to: Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format; Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. But they must conform to the following terms: Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

---

---

# How has NATO enlargement impacted on NATO-Russia relations?

Tom Disney

---

Relations between NATO and the Russian Federation have been turbulent, particularly since the end of the Cold War and the 'second wave' of NATO expansion. Despite some initial evidence of cooperation between the two, this has not been present in the majority of cases, and Russian concerns have often been sidelined. Vital in understanding this relationship is the attitudes of both to the Baltic States, and the strain that their status brought to early Russo-NATO engagement. Indeed, perhaps the greatest tension has been caused by NATO expansion into those states, illustrating a central concern in contemporary international society.

The eastward expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (hereafter NATO) since the collapse of the Soviet Union has had a notable impact on each of the post-Soviet States. Here it will be argued that this expansion has resulted in aggravated relations between NATO and the Russian Federation. This will be explored by focussing specifically on the second wave of NATO enlargement since the collapse of the USSR and using the specific example of the Baltic States as they were seen as the most contentious area during this phase of NATO's eastern expansion. While the prospect of NATO membership for the other ex-Soviet republics has arguably been even more controversial, I have decided to discuss to the Baltic States as they have actually been successful in gaining admission to NATO, and there is, so far, no definite plan for the other ex-Soviet republics to become NATO members. NATO expansion will be discussed in three different periods in post-socialist Europe, the first being the

---

TOM DISNEY studies Russian and Central and East European Studies, with particular interest in the language, politics and state welfare policies of Russia. Due to graduate in June 2010, he has recently applied for the 1+3 ESRC open studentship competition at the University of Birmingham to study an MA focussing on these academic interests, after which he intends to complete a PhD.

immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the second being from the 'Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and Russia' (hereafter the Founding Act) and the Madrid Summit till the year 2000, finally the third being the 2004 enlargement and beyond. In each period the article will look at the perspectives of the West/NATO, the Baltic States and Russia. Obviously this subject area is incredibly complex and therefore these three areas are not completely separate, and they frequently overlap, but the issues are divided thus for the sake of clarity.

## THE END OF THE COLD WAR

The end of the Cold War brought the West to a difficult crossroads; what was the security threat now? Was NATO still relevant? The general consensus among the Western countries was that NATO was still relevant because 'while conventional dangers were declining, there was a corresponding increase in the probability of a different, multifaceted, and a hard to contain type of risk.'<sup>1</sup> There was fear of a security vacuum allowing conflicts which had been suppressed for more than half a century to erupt. NATO quickly set about diversifying its role within Europe and produced a series of initiatives such as 'the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (now renamed the Euro-Atlantic Co-operation Council), the Partnership for Peace (PfP), the establishment of a security council between NATO and Russia, the offer of NATO forces for utilization by the UN and OSCE in peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions'<sup>2</sup>. NATO expansion in some regards began with the Partnership for Peace (hereafter PfP) programme, whose purpose 'is to increase stability, diminish threats to peace and build strengthened security relationships between individual Partner countries and NATO, as well as among Partner countries.'<sup>3</sup> It

---

<sup>1</sup> Gheciu, A. (2005) *NATO in the "New Europe": The Politics of International Socialization after the Cold War* California: Stanford University Press. P 60

<sup>2</sup> Lane, T. (1997) *The Baltic States, the enlargement of NATO and Russia* 'Journal of Baltic Studies'. P 299 (Volume 28, Issue 4)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nato.int/issues/pfp/index.html>

was the alliance's first foray into the former Warsaw Pact, and even Russia joined the programme, albeit reluctantly.

NATO expansion itself was not initially considered as the Central and East European States showed little interest in joining, preferring EU membership, and, as in the Czech case, some were considering whether or not they really required an army anymore.<sup>4</sup> But as NATO adapted to its new role within the 'new Europe' there was a realisation that the organisation could be used to cement democratic changes in Eastern Europe. As Lane argues NATO members felt that 'NATO should emphasize its general security functions by incorporating the East Central European states into the alliance.'<sup>5</sup> It was felt by some in the West that Russia would not be threatened by this as enlargement was seen to offer many advantages to Russia as well; consolidating stability and democracy in the states on her borders and locking German power into Europe.<sup>6</sup> There was even some speculation that perhaps Russia might also join NATO at some point.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand 'there was a strong conviction on the part of many leading figures in the Alliance that "pushing Russia away" would be too high a price for NATO enlargement.'<sup>8</sup> There were also fears that 'expansion of NATO was sure to encourage anti-Western political forces in Russia,'<sup>9</sup> and a strongly democratic pro-Western Russia was seen as the greatest guarantee of European security.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania emerged as independent states in 1990-1991 and their shared history with the Soviet Union is crucial to understanding their position on NATO enlargement. As Andrus Park explains the incorporation of

---

<sup>4</sup> Barany, Z. (2004) "Europe moves Eastward: NATO's Peaceful Advance", *Journal of Democracy*, 15 (1): 63-76. p. 64

<sup>5</sup> Lane, T. (1997) p. 298

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. p. 298

<sup>7</sup> Black, J. L. (2000) *'Russia Faces NATO Expansion: Bearing Gifts or Bearing Arms?'* Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, inc. p. 9

<sup>8</sup> Lane, T. (1997) p. 301

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

the Baltic States into the Soviet Union was seen as entirely illegal, for Estonia 'from a legal point of view there is no difference between the 1938-1945 Nazi occupations of various European countries and the Soviet occupation of Estonia.'<sup>10</sup> The other two Baltic States feel the same about the Soviet occupation; Lithuania has repeatedly demanded recognition of the occupation, and Latvia has equally fought for Russia to accept that the Soviet Union annexed the Baltic States.<sup>11</sup> While Western countries tend to side with the Baltics, Russia has never accepted that the Soviet Union annexed the Baltic States, and this issue has continued affect Russo-Baltic relations and has been a cause for strained relations.

Park describes the security environment in Estonia in the period of 1990-1994 as being characterised by the following points:

- Russia was perceived as the only tangible source of foreign threat by Estonian politicians and security experts;
- Estonian thinking was deeply sceptical about the prospects of Russian democracy;
- Speedy integration with the West was considered to be the main means of guaranteeing Estonia's security.<sup>12</sup>

The National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia confirms Park's points, but suggests that Russia does not constitute a direct military threat: 'Estonia does not see a direct military threat to its security neither now, nor in the foreseeable future.'<sup>13</sup> However fears about the stability of Russian democracy are reflected in the National Security Concept; 'the major risk to

---

<sup>10</sup> Park, A. (1995) *'Russia and Estonia Security Dilemmas'* Europe-Asia Studies 47:1:27-45. p. 30

<sup>11</sup> Karabeshkin, L. A. & Spechler, D. R. (2007) *'EU and NATO Enlargement: Russia's Expectations, Responses and Options for the Future'* European Security: 16:3:307-328. p. 311

<sup>12</sup> Park, A. (1995) p. 27

<sup>13</sup> National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia. p. 8

Estonia's security is potential instability and developments in the international arena that are politically uncontrollable,<sup>14</sup> and in the section devoted to 'Relations with the Russian Federation', reference is made to the 'ongoing instability in Russia' representing a general threat to the security of the Baltic Sea region.<sup>15</sup> Baltic scepticism regarding the stability of Russian democracy has been a key factor in their desire for NATO membership, and while the early government of Yeltsin was pro-Western and pro-reformist, nationalists prevailed in the 1993 Duma elections who took a 'hard-line' approach to the Baltic States and the West.<sup>16</sup>

Russian opposition to NATO expansion into the Baltic States was clear, but only served to strengthen the Baltic desire for NATO accession; Estonian Foreign Minister Jüri Luik responded to an address by Yeltsin and 'said that Russia had made its interests absolutely clear, giving itself 'liberty to interfere in other states' domestic affairs whenever it thinks it necessary'<sup>17</sup>.

The new approach for NATO as an organisation that could be used to consolidate democracy is reflected in the National Security Concepts of the three Baltic States. Estonia's desire to join NATO is explained as 'the best way to protect and consolidate the modern democratic state.'<sup>18</sup> Similarly the National Security Concept of the Republic of Lithuania states that NATO membership is key to 'ensuring both internal and regional security and stability in the future.'<sup>19</sup> Latvia's State Defence Concept also refers to the stability that NATO memberships brings.<sup>20</sup> There was also considerable widespread support for

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 8

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 15

<sup>16</sup> Black, J. L. (2000) p. 8

<sup>17</sup> Park, A. (1995) p. 30

<sup>18</sup> National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia. p. 10

<sup>19</sup> National Security Concept of the Republic of Lithuania. p. 8

<sup>20</sup> State Defence Concept of the Republic of Latvia. p. 2

NATO membership among the population with 65% in Estonia, 64% in Latvia and 84% in Lithuania supporting NATO membership in 1996.<sup>21</sup>

Russia's perspectives on NATO enlargement can be characterised as principally negative, and were influenced by the situation in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. As Black points out the Russian Federation 'inherited everything from the USSR except its territorial integrity, secure borders and a sense of being an impregnable power.'<sup>22</sup> With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia lost not only territory but also influence, which made it sensitive to NATO's actions within its traditional 'sphere of influence'. Russia also questioned the point of NATO's continued existence, preferring (as the Soviet Union had) the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (hereafter OSCE) as a pan-European security organisation, and Russia criticised NATO for becoming involved in peacekeeping exercises which Moscow claimed 'lay entirely within the domain of the United Nations Security Council.'<sup>23</sup> In this sense it is obvious that to some extent relations were already strained in other areas before the issue of expansion was considered.

While some in the West thought in this period that expansion might consolidate democratic states on Russia's borders and therefore be advantageous to Russia, Moscow saw NATO enlargement 'as the creation of a buffer zone in reverse, a means to isolate the new Russia from continental Europe.'<sup>24</sup> The Baltic States in particular were a 'red-line' for Russia which it warned the West not to cross and from the very beginning 'Moscow regarded the prospect of Baltic membership in NATO as a threat to Russia's military security.'<sup>25</sup> Not only did (and still does) Russia fear encirclement by a 'hostile' security organisation,

---

<sup>21</sup> Kostadinova, T. (2000) *'East European Public Support for NATO Membership: Fears and Aspirations'* Journal of Peace Research 37:2:235-259. p. 242

<sup>22</sup> Black, J. L. (2000) p. 7

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 8

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 9

<sup>25</sup> Karabeshkin, L. A. & Spechler, D. R. (2007) p. 314

but the use of former Soviet by NATO was also considered a threat and unacceptable.<sup>26</sup>

## THE FOUNDING ACT AND THE MADRID SUMMIT

At the Madrid Summit from 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> July 1997 the first wave of NATO enlargement since the Cold War began, but critically no countries outside the Visegrad were admitted to the accession process. Gherciu argues that the countries outside this group were not asked due to ‘considerations of cost and concerns about the impact of a “big bang” enlargement on NATO’s effectiveness’<sup>27</sup> which were clearly were issues for NATO, but a central concern remained Russia’s intense resistance to NATO expansion into the Baltic States and Russia’s opposition became even more apparent when on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1997 Russia threatened Estonia with economic sanctions if it still continued with its policy of NATO accession.<sup>28</sup>

As Gherciu points out, it is interesting to note that NATO was never under any obligation to ask any of the post-socialist states to join, and as described in Article 10 of the Washing Treaty if a state is to gain admission it ‘must not only subscribe to the principles of the treaty but also contribute to the security of the Atlantic area as a whole.’<sup>29</sup> Applying this to the Baltic States it is possible that many of the NATO states questioned whether they would be able to contribute to the alliance. This is also a criticism that Russia has employed when attacking the policy of NATO expansion into the Baltic States, as characterised by Vice-Prime Minister Sergey Ivanov in a 2008 interview in the Russian newspaper Izvestia asking what the Baltic States brought to the alliance:

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. P 315

<sup>27</sup> Gherciu, A. (2005) p. 73

<sup>28</sup> Black, J. L. (2000)

<sup>29</sup> Gherciu, A. (2005) p. 74



‘If Georgia and the Ukraine are chosen, as previously with the Baltic States, will it strengthen the security of NATO? Did the appointment of the Baltic countries sharply increase their authority in the struggle with international terrorism?’<sup>30</sup>

Despite the fact that support for the Baltic States at this time was weak among the strongest European powers in the alliance (Germany, France and Great Britain,<sup>31</sup>), America and Turkey actively encouraged the Baltic States to pursue NATO membership.<sup>32</sup> The Clinton administration in America went as far as creating the ‘Charter of Partnership with Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania’, which stated that the integration of the Baltic States into ‘European and transatlantic political, economic, security and defence institutions is a common goal of all parties.’<sup>33</sup> While there was still a sense that NATO enlargement to the Baltic States could undermine the democratic forces in Russia, NATO was firmly reoriented to reward democratisation in Eastern Europe with membership, and in ‘the Madrid Declaration NATO specifically recognized the progress achieved in Romania, Slovenia, and the Baltic countries.’<sup>34</sup> This sent a clear signal to Russia about the aims of NATO in terms of enlargement, and effectively ignored Russia’s objections; ‘already in early 2000 the prevailing understanding seemed to be that NATO should not postpone launching a new wave of enlargement beyond 2002-2003.’<sup>35</sup>

Relations with Russia had already begun to chill by 1997 as accession for the first wave of post-Cold War enlargement started, and in attempt to repair relations ‘NATO suggested an agreement that would assure Russia’s

---

<sup>30</sup> Ivanov, S. B. (2008) Interview in Izvestia ‘*Vise-Premier Sergey Ivanov: “Rossiya yavlayetsya idealnym chelnom NATO”*’

<sup>31</sup> Asmus, R. D. & Nurick, R. C. (1996) ‘*NATO Enlargement and the Baltic States*’ Survival: 38:2:121-142. P 123

<sup>32</sup> Black, J. L. (2000) p. 207

<sup>33</sup> Gheciu, A. (2005) p. 75

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

participation in European affairs through a mechanism of regular consultations.<sup>36</sup> This resulted in the signing of the Founding Act and formation of the Permanent Joint Council (hereafter PJC). The Founding Act and the PJC were a success for NATO; they improved relations with Russia by giving her a voice but not a veto in European security<sup>37</sup> because the Founding Act was not binding in any juridical sense, and the PJC was kept separate from NATO's own decision making body, the North Atlantic Council. The Founding Act also reiterated that NATO would not station nuclear weapons on the new member states territory, which had been a major concern for Moscow and an important factor in straining relations.<sup>38</sup>

The Baltic States continued to actively pursue NATO membership throughout 1997 despite obvious objections from Russia and relatively lukewarm support from various NATO members. Relations with Russia became predictably strained with Moscow threatening economic sanctions against Estonia for its continued calls for NATO membership.<sup>39</sup> Tensions increased between Russia and Latvia after Valdis Birkavs the Latvian Foreign Minister 'told a German correspondent in Munich that his country wanted NATO membership precisely to guarantee its security against Russia.'<sup>40</sup> Russian-Latvian relations further soured when a Soviet war memorial in Liepaja was vandalized in March, and when protests by Russian pensioners were broken up by the police it sparked an outcry in Russia. Further outrage was caused when the Latvian government gave permission for the Latvian voluntary SS to celebrate its 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Ponsard, L. (2007) *Russia, NATO and Cooperative Security: Bridging the gap.* London: Routledge. P 70

<sup>37</sup> NATO (1997), 'Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation'

<sup>38</sup> Ponsard, L. (2007) p. 70, p. 10

<sup>39</sup> Black, J. L. (2000) p. 203

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 204

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p.215

It is important to bear these factors mind when considering the impact that NATO enlargement into the Baltic States had on NATO-Russia relations, because Russia's grievances with the Baltic States were soon directed at NATO as it became clearer and clearer that the Baltic States would become NATO members.

While the Founding Act and the PJC managed to repair relations between NATO and Russia to some extent, the Baltic States arguably undid some of the goodwill in their reactions to the Founding Act and PJC. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania's reaction to the Founding Act was to call for early admission in NATO, and as Black points out, the Baltic meetings 'ensured that the cautiously optimistic attitude with which the Russian media greeted the Founding Act would dissipate quickly.'<sup>42</sup>

In 2000 Russia affirmed a National Security Concept that stated fundamental threats included:

- The strengthening of military-political blocs and alliances, above all NATO's eastward expansion.
- The possible emergence of foreign military bases and major military presences in the immediate proximity of Russian borders.<sup>43</sup>

Showing to what extent relations had been affected by NATO's expansion, and further potential expansion.

While the Founding Act initially served to improve relations between Russia and NATO cracks soon appeared; Russia took the Founding Act as an 'indication that NATO was ready to grant Moscow a new mechanism to influence the Alliance policies.'<sup>44</sup> But as it has already been stated in the article,

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p.206

<sup>43</sup> National Security Concept of the Russian Federation.

<sup>44</sup> Ponsard, L. (2007) p. 70

the Founding Act was not a legally binding document, merely political, and the PJC did not give Russia the kind of political leverage it was hoping for in NATO, and because of this Moscow felt somewhat betrayed by NATO.

In an attempt to avoid NATO expansion into the Baltic States Yeltsin again reiterated that Baltic accession into NATO was unacceptable, and offered 'to provide security guarantees to the Baltic States, jointly with NATO if necessary.'<sup>45</sup> This in many ways seemed like a solution to the issue of NATO expansion and Baltic security fears, but his 'guarantees were unanimously rejected in the Baltic capitals.'<sup>46</sup> Baltic rejection was another step in further aggravating relations with Moscow.

Karabeshkin and Spechler argue that Russia's determination at this time to look at NATO as a military alliance means that Moscow misses the point of NATO membership to solidify democracy.<sup>47</sup> But the fact remains that NATO is fundamentally a military organisation with additional traits of democratisation, this also ignores the other organisations that help to solidify democracy and stability as more primary goals such as the European Union and the OSCE which have both worked in the Baltic States to ensure democracy with the offer of potential membership of both organisations. Zoltan Barany's arguments in 'NATO Expansion, Round Two: Making Matters Worse' further undermines their claim. His theory is that NATO expansion was in response to Russia, which rings true if only from the perspective of the Baltic States, and gives credence to the idea that NATO expansion was instrumental in causing poor relations between NATO and Russia.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p. 96

<sup>46</sup> Karabeshkin, L. A. & Spechler, D. R. (2007) p. 319

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p. 318

<sup>48</sup> Barany, Z. (2002) '*NATO Expansion, Round Two: Making Matters Worse*' Security Studies:11:3:123-157. p. 126

Russia's relations with NATO worsened further after Moscow called for the Baltic States to ratify the Agreement on Conventional Forces in Europe (hereafter CFE) if Russia was to even consider Baltic membership of NATO. This was rejected, and NATO in turn demanded that Russia withdraw its own forces from Georgia and Moldova.<sup>49</sup> To date none of the Baltic States have signed the CFE treaty.<sup>50</sup>

The status of the exclave of Kaliningrad was also a source of contention for Russia. Moscow feared that 'military transit through the territory of the Republic of Lithuania could be disrupted.'<sup>51</sup> Lithuania decided not to sign a new bilateral agreement on military transit and this has been a source of discomfort for Russia, and strained relations further.<sup>52</sup> Again Russia's sense of encirclement is key as NATO expansion would leave Kaliningrad completely surrounded by NATO countries.

Perceptions of NATO as an unwanted force in the former Soviet states was echoed in this period in the Russian population, much in the way that the populations of the Baltic States were pro-NATO, Russians were becoming progressively anti-NATO; 'polls taken in Russia in March [1998] showed that a majority of citizens wanted their government to levy sanctions against Latvia,' and 'economic sanctions were, indeed imposed as of 1<sup>st</sup> July.'<sup>53</sup>

## 2004 ENLARGEMENT AND BEYOND

The West continued to encourage the Baltic States to apply for membership in NATO, on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2001 an article appeared in the Baltic Times hinting that Germany would support Latvian membership of NATO.<sup>54</sup> Similarly on 7<sup>th</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> Karabeshkin, L. A. & Spechler, D. R. (2007) p. 315

<sup>50</sup> [http://www.osce.org/documents/doclib/1999/11/13760\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/doclib/1999/11/13760_en.pdf) (Accessed on 03/03/09)

<sup>51</sup> Karabeshkin, L. A. & Spechler, D. R. (2007) p. 316

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Black, J. L. (2000) p. 216

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/5667/> (Accessed 20/02/09)

February 2002 the Baltic Times reported that Canada would support Lithuanian candidacy for NATO membership.<sup>55</sup> At the Prague Summit on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2002, despite Russian concerns, NATO formally invited Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia to begin accession talks to join the alliance.

At the same time the West attempted a balancing act of trying to placate Russia and repair some of the grievances that arose from the period of the Founding Act and the Madrid Summit; ‘the NATO-Russia Council, created in May 2002, established nine different areas for cooperation, all of them of real interest to Russia, and enlargement to the Baltics has not affected joint work on these issues.’<sup>56</sup> This went some way to repairing the damage done by what Russia felt was a betrayal after the Founding Act.

On 29<sup>th</sup> March Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joined NATO, and ‘since 2004, the air space over the Baltics has been patrolled on an *ad hoc* basis by four aircraft from various NATO member states.’<sup>57</sup> At the time of writing no land forces have been positioned in the Baltic States, and Karabeshkin and Spechler correctly argue that the regional instability that Russia so feared has not occurred, and they quote Ivanov as saying that the aircraft patrols do not constitute a threat to Russia’s security.<sup>58</sup>

However relations between NATO and Russia have most certainly been damaged by the West’s insistence on expansion, and they rightly go on to point out that ‘up to 30 military sites have reportedly been reconstructed with financial assistance from the US, and a system of electronic reconnaissance is

---

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/5989/> (Accessed 20/02/09)

<sup>56</sup> Karabeshkin, L. A. & Spechler, D. R. (2007) p. 316

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p. 315

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 315-6

being created in the Baltic States. The Russian military cannot be too pleased with these developments.<sup>59</sup>

First and foremost the Baltic States' position on Russia since accession has remained largely the same; they still call for Russia to accept that the Baltic States were illegally annexed by the Soviet Union. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have if anything become more strident in their interaction with Russia; in 2004 Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga again called for Russia to accept responsibility for the annexation of the Baltic States, and 'in 2006 she suggested that NATO [should] not invite Russia to its summit to be held in Riga, arguing that Russia's presence would unreasonably widen the agenda.'<sup>60</sup> Lithuania has acted in a similarly bold fashion, demanding compensation from Russia in the region of twenty billion dollars for the years of occupation suffered under the Soviet Union, Russia angrily rejected this demand, and it has done little to improve relations since the accession of the Baltic States.<sup>61</sup>

The Baltic policy since accession has also been interesting; they have all been active in the Commonwealth of Independent States<sup>62</sup> which Russia sees as its sphere of influence. On 4<sup>th</sup> April 2008 the Baltic Times reported that at the Bucharest Summit Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania would voice their support for Ukrainian and Georgian membership of NATO.<sup>63</sup> Russian opposition to this is clear, and again it has strained relations between NATO and Russia.

Russian reactions to the 2004 accession of the Baltic States were predictably negative, but some politicians comments in the press were particularly extreme; on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2004 Vladimir Zhirinovsky, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia gave an interview to the Russian newspaper Pravda

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 316

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 317

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1143601.html> (Accessed 03/03/09)

<sup>62</sup> Karabeshkin, L. A. & Spechler, D. R. (2007) p. 312

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/20167/> (Accessed 20/02/09)

in which he stated ‘Russia will bomb Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn.’<sup>64</sup> Zhirinovskiy is symbolic of the more nationalist sentiments in Russia, and his views are not necessarily that of the Kremlin, but it is a useful example to illustrate the extent to which relations were strained in the eyes of some Russians.

In his address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2007 Vladimir Putin argued that NATO countries such as the Baltic States, which have not signed up to the CFE treaty ‘represent a real threat for us’.<sup>65</sup> As previously stated, Russia had called for Baltic States to sign the CFE treaty as a prerequisite to even potential NATO membership. He cites this a reason for Russia pulling out of the CFE treaty, which is yet another indicator of how NATO-Russia relations have been affected by NATO enlargement, albeit in an indirect fashion.

Karabeshkin and Spechler argue that Russia’s fears about the effect Baltic admission into NATO on regional stability and security have not appeared, but they eventually concede that ‘overall, however, NATO membership in the Baltic States has not had a positive impact on Russia-Baltic relations’<sup>66</sup> or NATO as a whole for that matter.

## CONCLUSION

Post-Cold War relations between NATO and Russia have been turbulent. However in the initial phase of post-Cold War relations there seemed to be a genuine opportunity for an effective partnership to be created between NATO and Russia; Russia joined NATO’s PfP and there was dialogue between the alliance and Moscow. NATO was also initially considerate of the effects that enlargement could have on the democratic forces within Russia, the loss of

---

<sup>64</sup> Zhirinovskiy, V. V. (2004) Interview in Pravda ‘*Rossiya budet bombit Vilinus, Rigu i Tallin*’

<sup>65</sup> Putin, V. V. (2007) Speech ‘*Poslaniye Federalnomu Cobraniu Possiiskoi Feredatsii*’

<sup>66</sup> Karabeshkin, L. A. & Spechler, D. R. (2007) p. 318



which could have serious destabilising effects on the security environment in Europe. As previously described, strained relations were an early feature of Russo-Baltic relations for various reasons such as the Baltic States' continued calls for recognition of their annexation by the Soviet Union, and Russian threats against moves towards NATO membership. These relations fed into NATO-Russian relations and NATO attempted to improve relations by means of the 1997 Founding Act and the creation of the PJC, however while these were clearly a success from the perspective of NATO, initial Russian optimism evaporated as NATO continued to act seemingly ignoring Russian concerns. That NATO expansion was labelled as a threat in the National Security Concept of the Russian Federation exemplifies the extent to which this affected relations between the alliance and Moscow. Equally the state of relations between NATO and Russia are demonstrated well in the Russian press which has seen several prominent politicians show their displeasure with NATO enlargement. Perhaps the greatest strain on NATO-Russia relations has been since expansion into the Baltic States, as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have stepped up their activity in the Commonwealth of Independent States, which Russia sees as its traditional sphere of influence, and have become increasingly bold in their interactions with Russia, and as members of NATO the poor state of Russo-Baltic relations has been inherited by NATO itself. The effect then of NATO expansion into the Baltic States has had negative impact not only since accession, but beyond it as well.

## REFERENCES

- Asmus, R. D. & Nurick, R. C. (1996) 'NATO Enlargement and the Baltic States' *Survival*, 38 (2): 121-142.
- Barany, Z. (2004) 'Europe moves Eastward: NATO's Peaceful Advance', *Journal of Democracy*, 15 (1): 63-76.
- Barany, Z. (2002) 'NATO Expansion, Round Two: Making Matters Worse' *Security Studies*, 11:3:123-157.
- Black, J. L. (2000) *Russia Faces NATO Expansion: Bearing Gifts or Bearing Arms?* Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Gheciu, A. (2005) *NATO in the "New Europe": The Politics of International Socialization after the Cold War* California: Stanford University Press.
- Karabeshkin, L. A. & Spechler, D. R. (2007) 'EU and NATO Enlargement: Russia's Expectations, Responses and Options for the Future' *European Security*, 16(3): 307-328.
- Kostadinova, T. (2000) 'East European Public Support for NATO Membership: Fears and Aspirations' *Journal of Peace Research*, 37 (2): 235-259.
- Lane, T. (1997) 'The Baltic States, the enlargement of NATO and Russia' *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 28 (4): 295-308.
- Park, A. (1995) 'Russia and Estonia Security Dilemmas' *Europe-Asia Studies*, 47 (1): 27-45.
- Ponsard, L. (2007) *Russia, NATO and Cooperative Security: Bridging the gap*. London: Routledge.

## DOCUMENTS

- Agreement on Adaption of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.  
Available at [http://www.osce.org/documents/doclib/1999/11/13760\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/doclib/1999/11/13760_en.pdf)  
[Accessed on 03/03/09].

- Baltic Times article (2008) '*Baltics urge NATO expansion during Bucharest Summit*' Available at <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/20167/> [Accessed on 20/02/09].
- Baltic Times article (2001) '*Germany sheds light on NATO expansion*' Available at <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/5667/> [Accessed on 20/02/09].
- Baltic Times article (2002) '*Top official on mission to open doors*' Available at <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/5989/> [Accessed on 20/02/09].
- Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation (1997). Available at <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/fndact-a.htm> [Accessed on 02/02/09].
- Ivanov, S. B. (2008) Interview in Izvestia '*Vise-Premier Sergey Ivanov: "Rossiya yavlayetsya idealnym chelnom NATO"*' Available at <http://www.izvestia.ru/russia/article3123861/> [Accessed on 02/02/09].
- National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia. Available at <http://web-static.vm.ee/static/failid/335/SecurityConcept.pdf> [Accessed on 27/02/09].
- National Security Concept of the Republic of Lithuania. Available at <http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers/LithuaniaNationalSecurity-2002.doc> [Accessed on 27/03/09].
- National Security Concept of the Russian Federation. Available at <http://www.russiaeurope.mid.ru/russiastrat2000.html> [Accessed on 02/02/09].
- Putin, V. V. (2007) Speech '*Poslaniye Federalnomu Cobraniu Possiiskoi Feredatsii*' Available at: [http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2007/04/26/1156\\_type63372type63374type82634\\_125339.shtml](http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2007/04/26/1156_type63372type63374type82634_125339.shtml) [Accessed on 5/2/09].
- Radio Free Europe article (2006) '*Russia rejects Lithuanian demand for Compensation*' Available at <http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1143601.html> [Accessed on 03/03/09].

State Defence Concept of the Republic of Latvia. Available at  
<http://www.am.gov.lv/en/security/basic/4537/> [Accessed on 27/02/09].

Zhirinovsky, V. V. (2004) Interview in Pravda '*Rossiya budet bombit Vilinus, Rigu i Tallin*' Available at <http://www.pravda.ru/news/politics/24-03-2004/20279-0>  
[Accessed 02/02/09].

