

RUSSIA AND THE BALTIC STATES: ON THE ROAD TOWARD A NEW EUROPE

Anton V. Vushkarnik

Since 1990, when the Baltic republics Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania proclaimed their independence, Russian-Baltic relations have evolved through at least two distinct periods. The first one, that of 1990-1991, could be characterized as "romantic"; many in Russia believe that in that time both Russian and Baltic democrats were united in a common struggle against totalitarianism. The years from 1992 to 1995 constitute the "post-Soviet" period of Russian-Baltic relations. Controversies over withdrawal of troops, status of Russian-speaking minorities, and border issues quickly turned recent "allies" into irreconcilable opponents. Presently, we are observing a new phase of Russian-Baltic relations, which could probably be termed as a "European" period.

Signs of the transition to this period first appeared in 1995. It was then that the Baltic States concluded agreements of association with the EU; in the same year, the importance for Moscow of relations with the Baltics was highlighted by the discussion of the prospects for NATO enlargement. However, the true beginning of the "European" period was marked by the Madrid Summit of NATO in 1997. Many analysts in Russia believe that decisions made in Madrid have far-reaching consequences for the future of Europe as a whole. Alexey Pushkov expressed this idea probably better than any one else, saying that the Madrid decisions created a framework for the shaping of a new European order, which will determine the general state and development of Europe in the 21. century. The basic meaning of this process is the gradual inclusion of Central and Eastern European countries, as well as some of the former Soviet republics, into NATO and the EU. The basic question is the role and place of Russia in the emerging new European order and the new system of Transatlantic relations.

This analysis leads to two major conclusions. First, with the Baltic States being involved in the process of the enlargement of the Atlantic community, Moscow policy towards these countries appears to be a part of its overall European policy. Second, in the context of the ongoing process, the state of affairs in Russia's relationship with the West and the Western institutions that are becoming the core of a new European order seem to be of preponderant importance for Russian-Baltic relations.

The present paper is based on these two assumptions. It consists of two parts, of which the first is rather theoretical and highlights the general context in which Russian Baltic policy is evolving. This context is being shaped by the overall pattern of Russian foreign policy designed by Foreign Minister Evgeny Primakov, and the influence of different groups having a say in Russian relations with the Balts. The second part focuses on particular problems of Russian-Baltic relations based on the assumption that their new "European" period has begun.

"The Primakov Doctrine": Russia in the multipolar world

In his speech at a collegium of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in May 1998 Yeltsin declared: "The long discussion concerning the priorities of our foreign policy is over. The conception of Russian foreign policy has got precise outlines and, as for its basic elements, relies on growing consent among different social and political forces of the country". While the significance of this statement should not be exaggerated, nevertheless, it can be stated that this certain consent does exist in Russia as far as the theoretical comprehension of the current state of international relations and the status of Russia within. As the discussions on the pages of the magazine "Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn" (= International Affairs) (sponsored by the MFA) demonstrate, there are a number of points, which are common among the leading Russian

experts in the field of foreign policy. Summarizing all of the discussions and opinions given in the mass media, it is possible to draw certain conclusions.

The current system of international relations in Russia is considered to be in transition towards the idea of a "multipolar world". soon after his appointment as a Foreign Minister at the beginning of 1996 Primakov announced: "After the end of the Cold War the transition from the confrontation of a bipolar world to a multipolar one began its development". The essence of the "multipolar world" theory consists of the necessity to form a system of international relations in which the dictates of force or a type of "leader and follower" relation, proper to a "unipolar world", would be excluded. According to Primakov, one of the features of the multipolar world should be an "equal partnership" system in international relations as opposed to a "balance of power" system. Consequently, relations in a multipolar world should be based on cooperation, collaboration and interaction.

Some Russian experts advocate a policy of "external political isolationism" for Russia, a kind of isolated development. Even though such ideas cannot be ignored, they do have a priority. A majority of analysts agree that there is no alternative to joining Western international institutions or institutions set up under Western leadership that are at the core of the current system of international cooperation. Furthermore, only the participation in such institutions and cooperation with them will help to fully implement Russian interests.

At the same time, close cooperation with the West within the frame work of a multipolar world concept does not mean that the Russian foreign policy will simply follow the Western countries. As Sergey Rogov, Director of the Institute for US and Canadian studies of the Russian Academy of sciences, pointed out, only a multipolar world in which Russia is one of the "poles" would fit Russian interests. Primakov himself stated that confrontation with the West is not necessarily the unique alternative to rapprochement "at any price", with which he referred to the policy of his predecessor Andrey Kozyrev: "Russia can and should actively search for the fields of converging interests, and 'plough up' these fields with other countries. Where the interests do not converge – and we should not exclude such cases – we should find solutions that, on the one hand, ensure our vitally important interests, and on the other hand, do not lead to confrontation".

Another point of the "Primakov doctrine", shared by many Russian analysts, is the assumption that the nature of international relations in a transitional period has not yet been defined, and movement forward to a "multipolar world" cannot be taken for granted. Therefore Russia should actively participate in the shaping of such a world, looking forward to promote its interests. Such a policy should be pursued regardless of the current weaknesses in the Russian economy, and even if divergences with the West would seem to be excessive and risk reducing the prospects for Western financial assistance.

Concerning the relationship between Russia and its neighbors within the concept of a "multipolar world", two moments are of particular importance. First is the question of the "post-Soviet integration". Some observers believe that the theory of transition to a multipolar world is used to establish an ideological basis for integration in the post-Soviet area, by which Russia strives to become one of the world "poles". In fact, the question of increasing cooperation within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is one of the most important issues for Russia. However, it seems that in its current policy in the post-Soviet area Moscow is more interested in supporting Russian industry connected to the markets of former Soviet republics rather than converting Russia into an independent powerful global "pole". Some experts even affirm that integration today will damage the Russian economy. As Sergey Karaganov stated: "The time for integration has passed in 1992-94, and it looks like on many points, rapprochement (between former Soviet republics, A. V.) today is next to impossible. Integrating impoverished neighbors and their corrupted regimes will inevitably lead to the exhaustion of Russian resources, which are small enough even without it".

The second observation concerns the principles that govern the relations between Russia and its neighbors and partners within the scheme of a "multipolar world". Russian experts believe that in the process of transition to such a world, these principles would undergo significant changes. As Vladimir Lukov, Director of Foreign Policy Planning Department of Russian MFA, put it, "qualitative changes in the inventory of tools used to maximize the world poles' potential are observed. Now, the ability to maximize national power depends on the degree of effectiveness of the state's involvement in the process of economic cooperation".

In other words, in the minds of Russian analysts, economics currently has the highest priority, and the economic potential of states increases depending on the degree of their involvement in global economic integration and cooperation. Evidently, with this process in place, the traditional notions of "spheres of influence" and "balance of power" lose their significance. To a certain degree, the very notion of "state sovereignty" has to be of a lesser importance: "We have to finally be aware of the features of the modern world ... The world has changed, and not separate states but common problems now shape the face of the planet. Not military potential, but economics. The world is globalizing, governments are playing a less important role, and the competence of states is becoming narrower".

As for Russian-Baltic relations, at first sight, the above ideas belong to an optimistic mood. Evidently, Russia is striving for international cooperation and looking forward to increase its economic, not military, potential; this would not threaten the small Baltic neighbors, which would just profit from that. At the same time, the concept of "multipolar world" suggests that Moscow will firmly stand on what it considers to be its interests. The question now is to understand what are the interests of the different social and political groups having a say in Russian foreign policy, and how they are strengthened by the concept of a "multipolar world". Here, the interests of the groups having a say in Russian Baltic policy are of primary importance for us.

The groups of influence in Russian Baltic policy

One of the priorities Primakov set from the very beginning of his tenure as a Foreign Minister, was to enhance and bolster the leading and coordinating role of the Foreign Ministry in the elaboration and implementation of Russian foreign policy. As a result, at the end of 1998, common opinion had it that the MFA would be the principal agency dealing with foreign policy matters in Russia. It does not mean that different social groups, parties or institutions would not contribute to the shaping of foreign policy; rather, their influence is, if not fully controlled, then at least efficiently managed by the MFA. Regarding Russian Baltic policy, the "external potential" of the military, the parliamentarians and business lobbyists is of special interest.

The military. In 1992-1994, concerns about the military's role in Moscow external policy arose following the independent actions taken by Russian military commanders in the crisis-stricken regions of the former USSR. As for Russian-Baltic relations, the interference of the military was obvious as well: Ministry of Defense officials on several occasions declared the suspension of the withdrawal of troops from the Baltic states. Moreover, according to some sources, agreements conditioning the pullback of troops had been completely written by the military.

However, despite all of these facts, it is difficult to assert that the military has seriously affected Russian-Baltic relations in a negative sense. The "Baltic policy" of the Russian military had nothing in common with their actions in some CIS states (where the main concern of the military was, after all, the protection of the Russian Federation from the spilling-over of military conflicts from its neighbors). As for stopping the withdrawal of the troops, this can be explained in large part by the improper housing conditions in the areas of

future deployment of these troops, and not by the linkage with the Russian speaking minorities situation; the proof is that the withdrawal was completed in time in August 1994. Analysts predicted a favorable disposition toward cooperation with the West on the part of Russian senior military officials, arguing that they would push for a "moderate national" foreign policy. Fully aware of the current weakness of the Russian armed forces, the military now supports the line which aims to avoid confrontation with the Western countries. These considerations also guide Russian military policy in regarding the neighbor countries. As for the Baltic region, recent examples have been a 40% cut in armed forces personnel in the Russian North-West, announced by Yeltsin in December 1997 and completed in December 1998, and the beginning of cooperation between the Russian military and its Baltic counterparts. The same logic – fear of confrontation with the West – explains the sharp denouncement by Defense Minister Igor Sergeev of the increasing NATO military activities in Northern Europe, made at the meeting with his Norwegian counterpart in Moscow, in January 1999.

The Parliament. Another important group of influence, in terms of its impact on Russian Baltic policy, are the parliamentarians, primarily the deputies of the State Duma, the lower house of Russian Parliament. The group "Narodovlastie" (People's Power) led by Sergey Baburin and Nikolay Ryzhkov, the LDPR party of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, and the Communists are among those in the Duma having the greatest interest with regard to Baltic policy. Generally, they demonstrate a much less tolerant attitude towards the Baltic states than does official Moscow.

The parliamentarians were among the first in raising the issue of the Russian minorities situation in Estonia and than Latvia. In 1992, citing the situation with Russian speaking minorities, the Parliament did not ratify the inter-state treaty between Russia and Latvia, signed in 1991; it also planned to recall an earlier ratification of an analogous treaty between Russia and Estonia. On several occasions the deputies called on the President and the Government to introduce economic sanctions against the Balts "until they stop discriminating against the Russians". Moscow's policies on the ethnic issue have been shaped to a great extent in response to the pressure of parliamentary opposition.

Another point of interest for the parliamentarians is the interpretation of the events of 1940, when Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joined the USSR. In October 1996, in response to the "Declaration of Occupation" issued by the Latvian Saeima, the State Duma adopted a resolution that in fact was a reaffirmation of the old Soviet position, which was that the Baltic States joined the USSR after the victories of their Socialist Revolutions and following the formal request of its legally elected Supreme Councils. In January 1998, the vice-chairman of the State Duma Baburin was one of the initiators of the letter to the MFA, in which the latter was asked to clarify its position concerning the events of 1940.

Many deputies of the State Duma are also sensitive toward the border issues between Russia and the Baltic states. Even in the case of Lithuania, which had never claimed the rights on Russian territory (as it did Latvia and Estonia with their insistence that Russia should recognize the peace treaties of 1920,) there is a real possibility that the border agreement between Russia and Lithuania, signed in October 1997, will not be ratified by the Duma. Generally, according to the new Constitution, adopted in December 1993, the Parliament's influence in the field of foreign policy is significantly limited. Yet the importance of the parliamentarians' influence in that field should not be underestimated. Russian legislature still possesses considerable means to express its opinion on international politics, and to influence Moscow's foreign policy line.

Under Primakov, the Russian Foreign Ministry was able to pursue its own line, while channeling the excessive demands of the deputies. It is not yet clear whether the successor of Primakov, Igor Ivanov, will follow the same line. It is clear, however, that regarding the

relations with the West, and the Baltic States, any move to a more strict line on the part of Moscow will certainly be backed by the Russian legislature.

Business lobbyists. Until recently, the common point among the analysts was that given the involvement of such Russian companies as Gazprom and Lukoil in business affairs with the Balts, businessmen would primarily be interested in the stability of Russian-Baltic relations. It is primarily due to the business lobbyists' efforts that "economic sanctions" against the Balts, so frequently recommended by the parliamentarians, have never been introduced by the Government. However, the tensions in Russian-Latvian relations in the spring of 1998, apparently caused by the brutal breaking-up of the protest of Russian pensioners by Latvian police, and the march of the Latvian SS Legion in Riga, give a different picture. According to some observers, the Russian oil companies, angry with the Latvian refusal to lower oil transportation costs at the port of Ventspils – the second largest export terminal for Russian oil; and the limitation of Russian participation in the privatization of state assets in this port, helped to spark the feud between Russia and Latvia. Given the downward trend in world prices, lowering the profit of oil export, the slowdown in Russian exports via Ventspils (up to 20% between April and June of 1998) should not be attributed to a unilateral decision on the part of Moscow for "economic sanctions". However, it does show that Moscow's firm stand in its relations with the neighbors could be influenced even by groups having great economic interests there.

All in all, it can be stated that there is only one political group in Russia explicitly advocating a more strict line towards the Baltic states, namely, the nationalists in the Parliament; however, their practical influence on Russian foreign policy seems to be limited. On the other hand, there are also no voices arguing in favor of improvements in Russian-Baltic relations. Another conclusion we can draw from the analysis of the interests of different political groups influencing Russian Baltic policy is that virtually all of these groups seem to be more or less comfortable with the current policy line of the MFA. For the first time since the collapse of the USSR, Moscow's foreign policy is not dramatically affected by the contradiction between growing economic and political weakness of the Russian state and its aspiration to remain a great power on the international arena. The concept of a "multipolar world" avoids this basic contradiction, by providing an ideological and theoretical foundation for the necessity of close cooperation with the West, while reserving for Russia the rights to a "special position" in particular problems of international affairs. Not surprisingly, this concept has gained the support of practically all political forces in the country.

As for Russian-Baltic relations, from the Russian part their development is influenced not so much by political or economic groups, but to a greater extent by the state of affairs in the Russian-Western relationship. This point is elaborated below.

The European period of Russian-Baltic relations: old problems, new approaches

In Russian-Baltic relations, a move toward a new European order involves efforts from both sides. Thus, in the end of 1996-beginning of 1997, expecting a decision of the EU on the beginning of further accession negotiations, the Balts stepped back from their insistence that Russia recognize the peace treaties of 1920. It opened the way to resolving border issues between Russia and Estonia and Latvia. The conclusion of the corresponding agreements seems now to be only a matter of time. In turn, the forthcoming Baltic membership in the EU pushes Moscow to reconsider its policy of using economic contacts for the purpose of political pressure. Currently, Russian diplomats express concern that in view of existing barriers in trade between the EU and Russia, and EU dumping procedures against some categories of Russian exports, Baltic joining the EU would hamper Russian trade with these countries.

However, another factor appears to be most important for Russian-Baltic relations in their "European" period. Many Russian and Western scientists and politicians have stressed the significant role that relations between Russia and the West has for the situation in the Baltic region, not least, for Russian policy towards the Baltic States. After 1997, Russian-Western relations are of crucial importance for Moscow's Baltic policy. This is evidenced by two spheres of principal importance for Russia regarding its relations with the Balts: the situation with Russian minorities in Latvia and Estonia and security issues in the Baltic region. While in the former case Russian-Western cooperation brings positive results, in the latter, divergence of views between Moscow and Western capitals fuels distrust at the regional level.

Ethnic issues in Russian-Baltic relations

In 1992-1995, after laws on citizenship were adopted in Latvia and Estonia, Russians there found themselves discriminated in a number of spheres.

First of all, having become non-citizens, they were deprived of political rights. In Latvia, after the law of citizenship was adopted in 1994, around 700,000 persons at once became non-citizens. In Estonia, restoration of the law of citizenship of 1938, in February, 1992, did not concern more than 300,000 persons, mostly Russians who arrived in the country after 1940, or their descendants. In the meantime, national and local elections were held in both countries. Russians have also been deprived of some social and economic rights. In Latvia, up to 60 differences between the legal status of citizens and non-citizens have been registered, of which a third are profession bans. In Estonia, the analysis of privatization legislation revealed a tendency of discrimination against Russians. This gave Russia cause to claim human rights violations in the Baltic States.

Raising the question of human rights violations in Latvia and Estonia on the international arena, Russian officials expected that the West would support the Russian case. These expectations are based on the assumption that, since the end of the Cold War, Russia and the West share common democratic values that provide the basis for their partnership. Andrey Kozyrev wrote that national minorities' rights protection should be one of the top priorities of the Russian-Western partnership. New, democratic Russia joined "the civilized world", the community of Western-style democracies, and therefore Russian demands based on the rules that govern this world should be fully satisfied. Yeltsin stated at the Helsinki CSCE Summit in July 1992: "In former times, other countries insisted that Russia should respect human rights. Nowadays Russia itself insists on this".

However, the Western governments were slow to recognize the danger of possible ethnic conflict in the Baltic's, and the damage it would cause to their relations with Moscow. Contrary to Russian expectations, some Western institutions even approved the Baltic legislation on citizenship based on "concept of continuity" of the legal existence of Latvia and Estonia between 1940 and 1991. Thus, in 1993, the experts of the Council of Europe stated that Russians in Estonia were not a "historical minority" as they arrived in the country during "the period of occupation". Therefore they could be treated as guest workers, and their non-participation in national elections and the referendum on the constitution is legally justified. Differences regarding the situation of human rights in the Baltic States was one of the reasons for the cooling-off in Russian-Western relations in 1994-1995.

Since then, the approaches of both sides have been significantly corrected. The policy of the West now resembles the strategy suggested by some Western observers from the very beginning of the ethnic disputes in the Baltic. Overall, this strategy consists in guaranteeing the Russian speaking minorities in the Baltic States rights in the social, economic and educational spheres, while preserving a balanced predominance of Balts.

As for Russia, with Primakov as a Foreign Minister it followed a less ideological and more balanced policy on the ethnic issue. The emphasis is now given to facilitating the integration

of Russian minorities in Latvia and Estonia. For that, Moscow relies first of all on the recommendations of the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, Max van der Stoep, and Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) Commissioner for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Ole Espersen. Their recommendations call for easing the demands placed on applicants for citizenship by history and language tests; release from these tests for certain categories of applicants, especially the elderly; granting citizenship to children of non-citizens born in the Baltic states; granting permanent residence permits to non-citizens living in the country for no less than five years (Estonia) or providing them with non-citizen passports without delay (Latvia); etc. Such a policy is justified both from the point of view of Russian foreign policy priorities and the internal situation in the country. By promoting the integration of Russians, Russia protects itself from the flow of immigrants from the Baltic states to its North-Western regions. In 1992-1997, this flow, if much less significant compared to the immigration from the ex-Soviet republics of Caucasus or Asia, was considerable enough. Stressing the integrationist aspects of the situation with Russian minorities, Moscow pushes the Balts to resolve these problems; in view of the accession negotiations with the EU, the Balts are more sensitive toward the problems of Russian minorities. At the same time, by relying on the recommendations of Western experts, Moscow demonstrates to the West its commitment to the rule of law in international affairs.

Converging efforts on the part of Russia and the West bring results. Thus, in the spring of 1998, the Latvian government initiated the amendments to the Law on citizenship, which have finally been adopted at the referendum in October of that year. According to these amendments, the so called "window system" of the Law has been abrogated. In addition, after the referendum, stateless children born after 21 August, 1991 have been granted Latvian citizenship.

Gradual changes with the minorities' situation are being observed in Estonia. The special Foundation for Integrating Non-Estonians was established in March of 1998. 6 million kroons have been allocated from the state budget to cover the activities of the Foundation. In June, Parliament approved the government's integration policy, making it possible to start implementing the integration strategy. That encloses three major directions: reducing the number of persons without any citizenship, emphasis on teaching the state language, enabling aliens to participate in the social and political life of the country. In August of 1998 the Estonian government adopted amendments to the Law on Aliens, according to which certain categories of foreigners can be granted residence permits outside the official annual immigration quota. Finally, last December, Parliament adopted amendments to the Law on Citizenship enabling children of non-citizens born in Estonia after February 26, 1992, to become Estonian citizens.

The problems of Russian speaking minorities in the Baltic States are far from being resolved. In some spheres, for example, concerning the usage of the native tongue, the situation of 650,000 non-citizens in Latvia and 200,000 "aliens" in Estonia can always be aggravated. In fact, this is what we are observing now. In Estonia, the law requiring a high level of proficiency in Estonian for those aspiring to become members of local or national parliaments was adopted in January of 1999; in Latvia, a language law imposing strict demands on Russians is being discussed. However, convergence of Russian and Western interests in promoting the integration of Russians in the Baltic States, which has been lately observed, brings a positive perspective for resolving these problems.

Security issues in Russian-Baltic relations

In Russia, rethinking European security issues on the eve of the NATO Madrid Summit is probably the main impulse to make more visible its strategy in the Baltic region. However, little progress has been observed so far in the process of searching for security arrangements

satisfying both Russians and the Balts. The main reason is that managing these arrangements is much more a matter of Russian-Western, not Russian-Baltic, relations.

In fact, the problems of security in Russian-Baltic relations should not be seen as a clash of mutually exclusive approaches - that of the Russians absolutely refusing even the possibility of discussing the prospect of Baltic membership into NATO, or the Baltic blind insistence to join; the likelihood of Baltic membership in NATO is not higher today than it was on the eve of the Madrid Summit; nor is the likelihood of creating a separate subregional security system to satisfy the Balts concerns for their security outside NATO. Swedish and Finnish reactions to proposals of that type clearly demonstrate their unwillingness to discuss any subregional security arrangements that could limit their ability to cooperate with pan-European institutions, including the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and NATO itself.

To be fair, the fact that the Baltic States were not invited to join the Alliance at its July Summit of 1997 had become evident long before the event. Ronald Asmus and Robert Nurick cite insufficient political support for the Balts' candidacy for NATO membership as a basic reason why the Baltic States were not included in the first round of NATO enlargement. It is highly unlikely that a further invitation to join will be issued at the Washington Summit in April 1999; a period of consolidation will certainly succeed the formal admission of the three new members. Then, even most ardent supporters of the idea of expansion argue that such a move should be made with a clear understanding of the future of the Alliance. Will NATO continue to exist as an alliance of collective defense, or will it turn into a system of collective security, "an alliance of interests"? In the former case, additional members should be judged primarily by the degree to which they may enhance the Alliance's politico-military potential; and it seems that US Defense Secretary William Perry's assessment of Baltic armed forces made in 1996 is still relevant today. In the later case, additional members should be judged by the extent to which they could increase the scope of political stability; and it seems that stability in the sphere of security in Europe is impossible without Russian participation; that excludes Baltic membership in NATO. So far, there is no clear vision of a future NATO mission among its members.. In addition, the Balts are not the exclusive next invitees: the South European members advocate the candidacy of Romania and Slovenia.

The security problems in the Baltic region will be resolved only in a different European security environment than the one existing today. It requires primarily the building of a security system based on close NATO-Russia cooperation, in which Russia would possess de facto membership. It is only a cooperation of that type that would avoid all troubles regarding further Alliance enlargement; in fact, with such a system in place, formal membership in NATO might lose its significance for most countries included in this cooperation.

Evidently, the building of such a system would require efforts at the regional level as well. Recent events have signaled a move to a more positive direction from both sides, Russian and Baltic. Certain statements from Russian officials have suggested understanding of an existing "European connection" that has security related problems in the Baltic region. Positive developments are the Russian proposal for further confidence building measures at the regional level, including those extended beyond OSCE Vienna 1994 Document clauses, and the development of a "civil security" concept in the frame of the Council of Baltic Sea States. As for the Balts, their continued efforts to persuade Western leaders to take them into the Alliance look more and more like an ongoing policy rather than a definitely set goal. As Olaf Knudsen put it, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania express the desire for NATO membership primarily in order for the possibility to be taken seriously by the leading powers, not least Russia.

However, much more depends on Western-Russian cooperation in the field of European security. Until the NATO-Russia based security system in Europe is a reality, any further move on the part of the Baltic States, other Eastern European countries and ex-neutrals closer to the Alliance will be considered in Moscow as a threat to its security interests, while the

invitation for these countries to join NATO may lead to the collapse of Russian-Western interaction.

Concluding remarks

The beginning of a new, "European" period of Russian-Baltic relations does not mean that these relations will be less controversial or less problematic; simply, the problems in bilateral relations will definitely be approached by both sides with a European perspective in mind. Implementation of the "Primakov doctrine", with its emphasis on the necessity of cooperation and collaboration in international affairs, allows to synchronize the movement of Russia and the Baltic states toward a new European order, but it cannot resolve all the problems of Russian-Baltic relations, as the most important of them are primarily a matter of Russian-Western dialogue.

However, the "Primakov doctrine" creates an effective framework for Russian cooperation with the West, and helps to identify solutions to the problems in Russian-Baltic relations. This is probably the most valuable contribution, because a new European order should not be seen as a strictly defined goal; the creation of this order is a process, in which interests and needs of all participating states are ensured.

Anton V. Vushkarnik
Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Second European Department

Erschienen in:
Informationen zur Sicherheitspolitik Nr.23 (Oktober 1999);
Die Beziehungen zwischen Rußland und den baltischen Staaten;