

Soft Security in the Baltic Sea Region

Russian interests in the Council of Baltic Sea States

Ingmar Oldberg

Research Associate, Swedish Institute of International Affairs



ü

Index

Executive summary	2
Introduction.....	3
The emergence of the CBSS in a changing context.....	5
The CBSS structure	9
CBSS limitations	12
Evolving Russian views of the CBSS and its relation to the EU	14
Russia takes over the presidency	17
Fields of cooperation.....	19
Economic development and trade promotion	19
Border and visa issues.....	22
Energy issues	25
Environmental issues	31
Democracy and human rights	38
Culture and education	43
Civil security and law enforcement	46
Hard security	51
Summarizing Russia's role in the CBSS structure	53
Summarizing Russian and CBSS priorities.....	54
Concluding remarks	60
About the author	62

Executive summary

This paper deals with the role of Russia in CBSS activities mainly during the last decade, analyzing its interests, aims and priorities as compared with the commonly agreed views in the most important fields of cooperation. Russia has especially pushed for economic cooperation and foreign investments in Russia, liberalization of the visa regimes, energy demand security, and cooperation against organized crime including terrorism. A special case in several respects is Kaliningrad, where Russia has high hopes on cooperation with Germany. Russia has profited from CBSS support for Eurofaculties in Russia, social and environmental projects and scientific and youth exchange.

However, in the case of visa issues the CBSS has not been of much use to Russia other than as a forum because the Schengen rules are decided by all EU members. Concerning energy cooperation in the CBSS, which is a vital concern for Russia, it has met resistance from the Baltic states and Poland, which strive to reduce their dependence on imports from Russia, and the other states put more emphasis on energy efficiency and diversification. The Western states have made environment a top priority in the CBSS, which Russia has reluctantly had to accept. In the 2000s Russia also met resistance, when it used the CBSS as a means to help the Russian-speaking minorities and exercise pressure on the Estonian and Latvian governments. It further raised the terrorism issue, and made a brief attempt to include military contacts in the agenda. In short Russia has shown a penchant for state-controlled economic and security-related issues, thus reflecting its society, while the CBSS agenda has a very broad, soft and civil security profile, reflecting western democratic values.

Despite these different priorities in the CBSS, however, Russia has participated in and contributed to decisions and action plans of all sorts, seeking consensus and avoiding

conflicts. In spite of claims to great power status, Russia is thus able to cooperate on an equal basis with several small neighbours. It is probably the country which has been most interested in maintaining and developing the CBSS both in its own right and as a link to Western Europe. If Russia's political relations with the EU or NATO would worsen or if the cohesion of these organizations would weaken, Russia can be expected to engage even more in regional organizations like the CBSS, where it is a full member. But if President Putin stakes on hard security, political control and restricts Western influence, this may hamper its cooperation also in the CBSS.

Introduction

Russia is not only the world's biggest country conducting a multilateral and multi-vector foreign policy all over the globe, but also a regional power. It is primarily anxious to retain its influence in the post-Soviet space, earlier called the near abroad. In the far abroad, Russia is especially engaged in bilateral and multilateral relations with its West European neighbours. The Baltic Sea region is of key importance to Russia for a number of security-related, political and economic reasons, and Russia is the biggest Baltic Sea state, second to Germany in the economic sphere.

This paper deals with the role of Russia both as an object and as a subject in the CBSS since 1992 but with a focus on the last decade. The CBSS is of special interest since it is the first inter-governmental forum in the region, which includes both Russia, NATO and non-allied states, and it soon became a model for other regional councils. A topical reason for this study is the fact that Russia in July 2012 took over the CBSS presidency for one year, and the study can give a background for this. A detailed analysis of Russian policy in the CBSS may serve as an invitation to study also the policies of other member states deserving scrutiny for other reasons.¹ It will be demonstrated that activities in the CBSS, however small as an organization, clearly

¹ For some comparisons, see Tobias Etzold (2010) *Live and Let Die: Adaptability and endurance of*

mirror the various interests of Russia and the other member states as well as development trends in the Baltic Sea region and beyond.

A study of Russian policy in the CBSS inevitably requires an analysis of the structure, aims and development of this organization. A further reason for this report is the fact that attention to and research on the CBSS appears to have waned in recent years, at least in Sweden.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the Russian interests, aims and priorities in the CBSS as expressed by its state officials and to what extent they have been met or opposed by the other members in common statements. When necessary the context outside the CBSS is presented in order to reach a full understanding of the issues at hand. In order to broaden the perspective Russian policy in the CBSS will also when appropriate be compared with its role in the other two most important councils in this part of Europe, namely the Barents and Arctic Councils.²

An overriding question is whether Russia as aspiring to be a great power tries to impose its will or cooperates on an equal footing with the other members. As the CBSS avoids hard, military security issues, this paper deals with a range of soft security issues even if the distinction is sometimes blurred.³ Since the CBSS is an intergovernmental organization the paper focuses on the actions and views of top officials and their appointees, and only occasionally other views are taken into account.

² These have been scrutinized in a previous study along similar lines in Oldberg (2011) *Soft Security in the Arctic. The role of Russia in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Arctic Council*, UI Occasional Paper, no. 4, 2011.

³ For a discussion on soft, civic and civil security in the CBSS, see Helmut Hubel, "Soft security risks in the region and the role of the CBSS", *Baltinfo*, , no. 40, 2001, pp. 3 f.

As a general background the paper first sketches the development and structure of the CBSS including Russia's position in it. After examining how Russian officials view the CBSS in relation to the EU enlargement in the region, the activities of the CBSS in its most prominent fields of cooperation are then analysed and compared with how Russian officials have viewed and taken part in these activities. After a summary of the findings some concluding remarks are made.

The research material mainly consists of official CBSS material, declarations, statutes and reports to be found on the homepage, on the one hand, and Russian official statements on the Foreign Ministry website, on the other hand. For context and evaluation various research reports, press material and material from other institutions have been used.⁴

The emergence of the CBSS in a changing context

While Russia's position in the Arctic region changed very little as a consequence of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, its position in the Baltic Sea region (and Eastern Europe) changed dramatically. During the 40 odd years of Cold War, the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies Poland and the GDR held the southern and eastern shores of the Baltic Sea, and the Soviet navy dominated over NATO fleets in the Baltic Sea. After the communists lost power in Central Europe in 1989, the Warsaw Pact was dissolved, Germany was reunited and Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary later joined NATO. The three Baltic states regained their independence in 1991 when the Soviet Union fell apart, and also joined NATO

⁴ The author is grateful for constructive comments on an earlier draft from participants of an International Relations seminar, at the National Defence College, Stockholm, on 14 June 2012, especially Dr. Tobias Etzold of the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin and for valuable information material provided by the CBSS staff.

and the EU in 2004. The Russian Kaliningrad region became an exposed exclave and the only Russian foothold by the Baltic Sea along with the inner part of the Gulf of Finland. Russia's military presence in the area was thus drastically reduced and it instead focused on new threats emerging in southern Russia. In contrast to the Arctic, Russia has not promulgated any security strategy for the Baltic Sea region, either because it does not see any big problems there or because the region is viewed as part and parcel of its European/EU policy.⁵

At the same time the Baltic Sea region became important to Russia in other, soft-security oriented ways. A good deal of the political leadership headed by Vladimir Putin originated from St. Petersburg, which is Russia's second biggest city. The transition to a market economy and the persistent economy crisis in the 1990s made Russia more interested in trade with and investments from its European neighbours, especially Germany, but also the Nordic countries. When the world market prices on energy rose after 1999, Russian exports to the West increased, a large part of which went through the Baltic Sea region.⁶ The Russian economy recovered and became dependent on the EU states as markets for its energy exports and as suppliers of modern technology and consumer goods, at the same time as several EU states became heavily dependent on Russian energy. The Baltic Sea region became the most intensive area of interaction between Russia and the EU.

⁵ Pekka Sutela, "Economics and trade around the Baltic Rim: Does Russia have a strategy?", in Robert Nurick and Magnus Nordenman (eds.) *Nordic-Baltic Security in the 21st Century*, Atlantic Council, Washington DC, 2011, p.44.

⁶ Ten percent of global oil cargo now crosses the Baltic Sea. Oil transport through the Gulf of Finland has risen by seven times since 1995. (Sutela, p. 45).

In line with this the political and economic cooperation around the Baltic Sea developed beyond the already well established Nordic organizations.⁷ At the invitation of the Danish and German foreign ministers, the foreign ministers of all the littoral states plus a representative of the European Commission at a conference in Copenhagen on 5-6 March 1992 agreed to form a Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). The declared aim of the CBSS was to serve as a political forum for regional intergovernmental cooperation, promoting political and economic stability as well as forming a regional identity.⁸ Hard security issues were to be avoided.

This was the first regional intergovernmental institution comprising both Russia, non-allied and NATO states. It was soon followed by the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, initiated by Norway (1993) and the Arctic Council on Canadian initiative (1996). The CBSS started to cooperate with these Councils as well as with other more specialized economic, environmental and sub-regional bodies in the Baltic Sea area. Most important among these probably was the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), a permanent body established in 1980 on the basis of the 1974 Convention on the Protection of the Baltic Sea Area, the main aim of which is to protect the Baltic Sea from pollution and to promote sustainable economic activities.⁹ On the parliamentary level there were the annual Baltic Sea parliamentary conferences, which began

⁷ The main ones are the parliamentary Nordic Council, founded in 1952, comprising the five Nordic states and their dependencies, and the Nordic Council of Ministers, founded in 1971, consisting of their ministerial councils in various fields.

⁸ Council of the Baltic Sea States (henceforth CBSS), Coordination, *1992 CBSS 1st Ministerial Session – Copenhagen Declaration*, March 5-6 1992, , www.cbss.org, retrieved 26 October 2011. For analysis of its structure, development and aims, see Etzold (2010), pp. 86 ff.

⁹ Helsinki Commission, www.helcom.fi/helcom, retrieved 27 October 2011.

already in 1991.¹⁰ Business and investments were focused in the framework of the Baltic Development Forum founded in 1999.¹¹

The role of the CBSS soon changed as first Sweden and Finland (1995), then Poland and the Baltic States joined the wider European Union. The EU, which already in 1991 had started aid projects including Russia, for instance in Kaliningrad,¹² on Finnish initiative launched an EU Northern Dimension (ND) in 1998, which included the Baltic Sea region but mainly intended to support and develop Russia's northwestern regions. The EU deepened its partnership with Russia by creating four "common spaces" (economy; freedom, security and justice; external security; research and education) and the Northern Dimension in 2006 was transformed into a policy framework with four formally equal members, namely the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland.¹³ When Sweden held the EU chairmanship in 2009, the Union adopted a Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region with a broad agenda and vast resources. Russia was not a member but was invited to cooperate in various projects.

In view of these changes the CBSS in 2008 decided to reform itself by becoming more project and result-oriented and focusing on five long-term priorities, namely environment, economic development, energy, education and culture, and civil security & the human dimension. The heads of government drew attention to the importance

¹⁰ BSPC, *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference*, www.bspc.net/page/show/355, retrieved 28 February 2012.

¹¹ CBSS, Cooperation, Baltic Development Forum, <http://www.bdforum.org/bdf-summit-2012-in-copenhagen-18-19-june>; retrieved 29 May 2012; Etzold, p. 100.

¹² Oldberg (2001) *Kaliningrad: Russian exclave, European enclave*, Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), Stockholm 2001, p. 37 ff.

¹³ Pami Aalto, Helge Blakkisrud and Hanna Smith, "Introduction" in their *The New Northern Dimension of the European Neighbourhood*, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels 2008, pp. 7 ff.

of the CBSS as a participant of the ND. The issues of public health and social well-being were transferred to a Northern Dimension office, which however was co-located with the Secretariat. A vision for the region by 2020 was also adopted.¹⁴ The various priorities will be analysed below.

The CBSS structure

The CBSS consists of the nine littoral Baltic Sea states plus the peripheral Norway, Iceland (since 1995), and the European Commission. Thus, like in the BEAC and the AC, Russia here cooperates with an overlapping number of NATO and EU states. The CBSS further has ten observer states, as well as a number of organisations, mostly regional, with the status of ‘strategic partners’, who may take part in meetings and activities along with special guests.¹⁵ Russia long pushed for its close ally Belarus to be admitted as an observer,¹⁶ but this was resisted by the other full members because of its undemocratic regime. In June 2009 Belarus was finally accepted (along with Romania and Spain), which was linked to its rapprochement with the EU and its inclusion in the EU Eastern Partnership programme at that time,¹⁷ but the ensuing crackdown on the democratic opposition in late 2010 has made its presence at CBSS meetings more difficult.

¹⁴ CBSS, Council Presidency, *Riga Declaration on the reform of the Council of Baltic Sea States*, 3 June 2008, 7th *Baltic Sea States Summit*, Chairman’s conclusions, Riga, 4 June 2008; “Vilnius Declaration”, 2 June 2010, www.cbss.org, retrieved 26 October 2011. See also Stefan Gänzle, “Der Ostseerat führt zu neuen regionalen Kooperationen”, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 21 February 2012.

¹⁵ CBSS, Cooperation, *Principles and guidelines for third party participation*, April 2009, www.cbss.org/cooperation, retrieved 7 June 2010. Observers in 2011 were: Belarus, France, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom and the USA.

¹⁶ *Ministerstvo Inostrannykh Del Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (henceforth MID) “Statia ofitsialnogo predstavitelia MID Rossii A.V. Iakovenko, 8 June 2005, retrieved 3 November 2011.

¹⁷ *Embassy of the Republic of Belarus in the Kingdom of Sweden*, “Multilateral cooperation”, www.sweden.belembassy.org/eng, retrieved 27 October 2011. Gabriele Kötschau, “Belarus -- on her way to become a Baltic Sea country?”, *Balticness*, winter 2010, p. 16.

The CBSS Ministerial Council is composed by the foreign ministers of the member states and an EU Commissioner, with the chairmanship rotating every year between the foreign ministers. A troika of the former, current and future chairmanships ensures continuity. Each country formulates its own priorities when taking over the chairmanship but is limited by the statutes, former common decisions and the troika setup.

The incumbent chair coordinates the activities, organizes ministerial meetings every odd year. Since 1996 the heads of governments and the EU Commission presidency also hold summits every even year, which, though not part of the structure, give overall political guidance. Other ministers, for example for trade or energy, also have CBSS meetings on an ad hoc basis. Below the ministerial level there is a Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) serving as the main discussion and decision-making forum between the ministerial meetings and monitoring the work of time-limited expert groups. To support the chairmanships and the working bodies the CBSS in 1998 established a permanent secretariat in Stockholm with a staff recruited from among the member states.¹⁸ The CBSS finally has several specialized structures under its umbrella, with different levels, degrees and natures of affiliation, based on their own needs and trying to avoid duplications.¹⁹ Council meetings are conducted in English, German and Russian, but other meetings and CBSS documents are in English.

Russia has taken an active part in all that. The CBSS activities give Russian officials ample opportunities to meet their counterparts in the other member countries and the EU to discuss both bilateral and multilateral cooperation, thus serving to integrate

¹⁸ CBSS, Council, *Terms of reference*, www.cbss.org/CBSS-The-Council, retrieved 15 February 2012.

¹⁹ Christer Pursiainen, “Civil security matters”, *Balticness*, autumn 2009, p. 8.

Russia in European affairs.²⁰ As the last member state in line Russia held its first chairmanship in 2001-2002. Celebrating the tenth anniversary Russia organized both a ministerial meeting in March 2002 and a summit in St. Petersburg in June of the same year. Prime Minister Kasianov took part in both and President Putin opened the second. Russian premiers participated in the subsequent summits, but to the summits in Riga in 2008 and Vilnius in 2010 Putin, when he was prime minister, sent his first deputy Viktor Zubkov instead.²¹ It may be noted that Putin did not visit the Baltic countries at all when he was president, which can be seen as a stricture, since he visited many other small countries. At the CSO level Russia did not always send a high-level representative, but, *nota bene*, the Russian foreign minister participated in more ministerial meetings than most colleagues.²²

By taking over the CBSS presidency in July 2012 Russia got fresh opportunities to propagate its cause. However, its priorities were not published on the CBSS website as usual.²³ Only after two months two pages (as compared with several pages during preceding presidencies) appeared on the Foreign Ministry website, and the foreign minister commented on them in an exclusive interview in a new, glossy journal called *Amber Bridge* published by a Russian fund presented as a general CBSS partner.²⁴

²⁰ Adrian Hyde-Price, "The European Union as an actor in the Baltic Sea region", in Helmut Hubel (ed.) *EU Enlargement and Beyond: the Baltic States and Russia*, Berlin Verlag, 2002, p. 51.

²¹ In May 2012 the First Deputy Prime Minister represented Russia. (CBSS, Coordination, 9th Baltic Sea States Summit, p. 1. <http://www.cbss.org/Summits-and-Council-Ministerials>, retrieved, 4 June 2012.

²² Etzold, p. 117 with table of attendance 2000-2009.

²³ After four months there are only three lines in bad English on what Russia is *expected* to prioritize. (CBSS, Council Presidency)

²⁴ Vasilii Voropaev, "Most nad Baltikoi", *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 29 June 2002, www.rg.ru/2012/06/29/journal.html, retrieved 13 September 2012. The fund was introduced to the CBSS at a CSO meeting in April 2012. (Vladimir Smelov, "Finish for Germany, start for Russia", *Amber Bridge*, no. 2, 2012, pp. 19 ff.

Against this background it will be interesting to see how Russia uses its presidency in practice.

CBSS limitations

One major limitation of the CBSS is its relatively low level of institutionalization. It was founded by a ministerial declaration, not by a treaty which had to be ratified, and in this it became a model also for the Barents and Arctic Councils. It lacks a system of sanctions and has a low level of obligations and commitments. Decisions are taken by consensus and only result in recommendations to be implemented by the respective governments.²⁵ The Council primarily serves as a forum for political dialogue, information and coordination of activities, but the latter must not infringe on the responsibilities of other ministers.²⁶ At the same time the CBSS has a broad agenda with many priorities.

Another major problem for the CBSS (as well as for the BEAC and the AC), is its limited financial resources, which makes it dependent on stronger organizations, particularly the EU in the form of its Northern Dimension and the new Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. It does not even have a general budget or project fund. Member states are responsible for funding common activities and/or seeking and coordinating financing from other sources. Relative to their size, the member states share the costs of the secretariat in Stockholm, which overviews the possible funding sources, but as the host country Sweden has contributed more than its share.²⁷ At present the secretariat has a budget of 2.7 million euros and an employed staff of

²⁵ Stefan Gänzle and Helmut Hubel, “The Council of the Baltic Sea States and the EU: Dealing with soft security risks in a European subregion”, in Hubel (ed.), pp. 397, 412; Etzold, p. 134.

²⁶ CBSS, Council, *Terms of reference*, 2009, pp. 1 f.

²⁷ CBSS, Council, www.cbss.org, 15 February 2012. The small Baltic states and Iceland pay 4 per cent of the costs, the other “big” states pay 12 per cent each. (CBSS, Permanent Secretariat, *Terms of reference*, p. 2.

about 20 persons. The chair country bears the costs of its meetings, though the participants cover their own travel and accommodation expenses.

However, since the CBSS has resolved to generate and implement its own projects, it intends to build up its own project fund and set aside resources in the form of seed money.²⁸ This means that the secretariat may come to play a greater role in the future, thus resembling the evolution of the BEAC and the AC. The 2012 summit in Germany decided to establish a Project Support Facility budget line at the CBSS secretariat for the years 2013-2015, in the first phase to be used for a programme in Kaliningrad (see below). The CBSS also hopes to contribute to the North-West Russia Socio-Economic Development Strategy starting in 2012. Yet, the new resources of the CBSS are limited to one million euros and the efforts are to be coordinated with financially stronger institutions, the EU and its Northern Dimension, its Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, and the Nordic Council of Ministers.²⁹

Russia has regularly contributed to financing CBSS activities, but not all of them.³⁰ Compared with the BEAC the CBSS is less focused on activities inside Russia, and Russia has thus gained less directly from the CBSS and its projects in economic terms. Russia consistently calls for more resources to the CBSS. The political reasons for this will be elucidated next.

²⁸ "Summer night city" (interview with Ambassador Dag Briseid during the Norwegian presidency), *Balticness*, summer 2011, pp. 11 ff.

²⁹ CBSS, Council, *20th Anniversary of the CBSS*; 9th Baltic Sea States Summit, p. 2.

³⁰ Concerning environment and children at risk. See CBSS, Council, Committee of Senior Officials (henceforth CSO), *Lithuanian Presidency 2009-2010 Annual Report*, p. 89.

Evolving Russian views of the CBSS and its relation to the EU

During the 1990s Russia kept a low profile in the CBSS, preoccupied as it was by domestic problems, but especially since it held its first chairmanship from 2001 it became more active. Russian officials have consistently been quite positive of the CBSS and its activities.³¹ When presenting the Russian programme, Foreign Minister Ivanov stated that the Council had an enormous potential not only for the members but also for creating a united greater Europe both as a coordinator and as a source of initiatives. On another occasion Ivanov stated that the CBSS helped stabilize the region and created conditions for its dynamic development and the pragmatic solution of all issues on the agenda. The region was in fact the most stable in Europe, maybe not only there, and one of the fastest developing regions.³² Similarly, President Putin when opening the 2002 summit in St. Petersburg held that the Council had become “a firm and authoritative” structure, which was “capable of becoming, and should, become an effective instrument in European policy in international security issues”. He expected it to remain a coordinator of versatile interaction, mainly focused on developing economic and human relations, deepening regional cooperation and developing the infrastructure. Russia’s CBSS chairmanship had played a positive role

³¹ Etzold, p. 96: See also Viktor Cherkosov, a presidential plenipotentiary, quoted by Uffe Elleman-Jensen in “Baltic Sea region – from words to deeds”, p. 1, and Igor Yurgens, “CBSS as viewed from Moscow”, p. 4, both in *Baltinfo*, no. 41, October 2001.

³² Igor S. Ivanov, “Baltic Sea Cooperation: Establishing a new type of relationship in Northern Europe”, *Baltinfo*, No. 40, 2001, p. 1; MID, ”Stenogramma vystupleniia Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii S.V. Lavrova na zasedanii sessii Soveta gosudarstv Baltiiskogo moria ”, 10 June 2005, www.ln.mid/bdomp, retrieved 3 November 2011.

in choosing priorities of Russian foreign policy, Putin claimed.³³ Similar appreciation was expressed throughout the 2000s.

However, the enlargement of the EU to Poland and the Baltic states greatly affected the CBSS and this apparently worried the Russian leadership. Foreign Minister Ivanov did not want the CBSS to be only an umbrella for EU projects³⁴ and wished that it should continue to develop as an important, largely unique element of the European security architecture. He hoped EU enlargement would help intensify the interaction, and not create new dividing lines.³⁵ A Russian foreign ministry official in 2005 worried about the dilution of the CBSS identity and about attempts by Baltic countries to transform it into, if not an appendix, an additional forum for dialogue.³⁶ Expanding on these thoughts, the new foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said that making the CBSS an instrument of the EU would undermine its existence. The CBSS should seek a sensible balance of interests in its work. The EU should be useful for the CBSS activities, without duplication of the mechanisms of the new Northern Dimension. The CBSS had considerable practical experience, particularly in border and inter-regional cooperation, and it could even teach Brussels something, he argued.³⁷

On the other hand Russia appreciated its own agreement with the EU on the four common spaces (see above) and wanted the CBSS to concentrate on practical matters. Lavrov conceded that it was necessary to coordinate the regional organizations in Northern Europe. A division of labour was necessary and duplications should be avoided. He still thought that the forthcoming EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region

³³ MID, "Vystuplenie Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii V.V. Putina na otkrytii 4-i vstrechy", 10 June 2002, p. 1, 3, www.in.mid/bdomp retrieved 3 November 2011.

³⁴ Ivanov (2001) p. 2.

³⁵ MID, "Vystuplenie Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii I.S. Ivanova", 11 June 2003.

³⁶ MID, "Statiya ofitsialnogo predstavitelia MID Rossii A.V. Iakovenko", 8 June 2005.

³⁷ MID, "Stenogramma vystupleniia Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii S.V. Lavrova", 10 June 2005.

should be adapted to the needs of the CBSS.³⁸ A foreign ministry spokesman in 2009 even opined that the CBSS remained the leading organization for intergovernmental cooperation in the region, and that as it reformed itself, its role as the main coordinator of intensive multidirectional cooperation would be solidified.³⁹ When Germany took over the chairmanship in 2011 to be followed by Russia, Lavrov announced that there was an understanding between them on harmonizing the chairmanships in developing “all-round” projects.⁴⁰ Indeed, Germany foresaw cooperation with the Russian chairmanship by launching a two-year programme of modernizing the south-eastern Baltic Sea area (SEBA), particularly Kaliningrad and the surrounding area. (More on this programme later.) On the other hand Germany declared that it would make use of the CBSS potential in implementing the EU strategy in the Baltic Sea region, and work closely with the EU and with Poland and Denmark, which would hold the EU presidency during the German CBSS presidency.⁴¹

In the 2000s Russia thus remained an ardent supporter of the CBSS, even when four of the members joined the EU. It resisted their attempts to subordinate the Council to the EU and even held that it was the EU that should adapt its Baltic Sea strategy to the needs of the CBSS. However, Russia realized that the Council had to be reformed and that it could still bring benefits for Russia, especially in cooperation with its most esteemed partner Germany. The CBSS just like the BEAC and the Arctic Council remained a forum for regional cooperation with Western neighbours, where Russia was an equal and full partner. Indeed, Russia probably was the country most interested in the CBSS, whereas the Baltic states and Poland were more anxious about

³⁸ MID, “Vystuplenie Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii C.V. Lavrov na 15-i sessii”, 4 June 2009.

³⁹ MID, “Interviu ofitsialnogo predstavitelia MID Rossii A.A. Nesterenko RIA Novosti”, 1 June 2009.

⁴⁰ MID, “Stenogramma vystupleniia i otvetov Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii, Oslo, 7 June”, p. 2.

⁴¹ CBSS, *German Presidency*, <http://www.cbss.org/CBSS-The-Council/council-presidency>, retrieved 26 November 2011.

integration in the EU. Russian experts gloomily commented that the main function of the CBSS had been to serve as a first step for them to join the EU, whereas Russia was side-stepped.⁴² A fear of being isolated may thus have been a reason for engaging more in CBSS activities.⁴³ Another reason clearly was that the Russian economy developed and became more dependent on cooperation with Europe, and more involvement in the CBSS was no big burden anyway.

Russia takes over the presidency

After Russia took over the CBSS presidency in July 2012 for one year, Foreign Minister Lavrov gave an exclusive interview to *Amber Bridge*, in which he summarized the current Russian view of the CBSS and the Russian priorities. In his view, the CBSS during its twenty years of existence has helped erase the dividing lines in Europe and become a full-fledged cooperation forum creating a space of confidence, good-neighbourliness, stability and sustainable development. He now perceived a quality shift towards efficient coordination between countries in cross-border projects. The CBSS should actively cooperate with other regional councils and organizations but without any hierarchic ladders or integration schemes, all being equal, independent and mutually complementary.

Concerning the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region Lavrov made clear that Russia could not be either a subject or an object in it, since it was designed according to EU rules and interests, and therefore Russia had elaborated its own strategy for its northwestern federal district up to 2020. True, consultations were held with the European Commission on cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, a list of potential projects had been worked out, and a number of projects were already under way, but

⁴² J.S. Deriabin & N.M. Antiushina (eds.) *Severnaia Evropa – Region novogo razvitiia*, Ves Mir, Moscow 2008, p. 365.

⁴³ Etzold, p. 96.

the platforms for the implementation of the projects had to be regional organizations such as the CBSS.

The main task of the Russian presidency according to Lavrov was to “promote the CBSS role as the main coordinator of regional cooperation so that all important issues were resolved with due account of Russian national interests”. The presidency would go under the slogan of continuity and modernization as a stage in reforming the Council towards project-oriented activities and innovative breakthroughs.⁴⁴

Before the five long-term CBSS priorities (environment, economic development, energy, education and culture, civil security and the human dimension) the Russian presidency programme mentions the following priority areas:

1. Development of cooperation in the field of modernization and innovation with a focus on clusters of growth
2. Establishment of a network of public-private partnerships as a platform for sustainable growth and setting up a regional private equity fund
3. Promotion of the traditions of tolerance as a means of combating tendencies of radicalism and extremism.
4. Promotion of people-to-people contacts, facilitating the visa regime

Just like the 2001 presidency programme there is an emphasis on economic cooperation and issues developed under the German presidency, but also specific political issues dear to Russia. In the following the Russian priorities will be analysed in the context of the CBSS priorities as they have evolved since the 1990s.

⁴⁴ Sergei Lavrov (2012), “Practical task is to synergize efforts”, *Amber Bridge*, no. 3, 2012, pp. 6-13, quote on p. 10.

Fields of cooperation

Economic development and trade promotion

Economic growth and trade promotion has been one of the most important topics in the CBSS since its inception. The founding declaration of 1992 wanted to promote the region as a new zone of growth and recognized the need for assistance in the transition from planned to market economies.⁴⁵ A special working group was created aiming to promote *inter alia* trade and investment, cross-border business cooperation and entrepreneurship. The ministers in 1995 adopted a complex plan, called Visions and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010 (VASAB), including infrastructure projects and spatial planning, which international financial institutions were invited to support.⁴⁶ In 2001 the CBSS decided to set up a Fund for Sub-regional Development, building on voluntary contributions from member states. The Council launched the so-called Moscow Action plan on making the region a common investment area, characterized by transparency, predictability and the rule of law, and combating corruption. Kaliningrad was to become an example of fruitful EU-Russia interaction.⁴⁷

However, the fund never started working. In connection with the CBSS reform the working group was abolished in 2009 and was replaced by an expert group focused on maritime policy, but economic development was maintained as the second most

⁴⁵ CBSS, Coordination, *1992 CBSS 1st ministerial Declaration*, p. 2.

⁴⁶ CBSS, Economic development, VASAB, Coordination, *1995 CBSS Ministerial session*, p. 3, Deriabin & Antiushina (eds.) p. 358.

⁴⁷ CBSS, *10th Ministerial Session*, Hamburg Communiqué, p. 2, Annex 1; 4th CBSS Ministerial Session on trade and economy, 20 March 2002, p. 3; 4th *Baltic Sea States Summit*, Chairman's conclusions, p.2. For Kaliningrad as a pilot region for EU-Russian cooperation, see also "The Baltic Sea Region in Europe – Regional cooperation for continued success", *Balticness Tour Compendium*, Summer 2008, p. 12.

important priority. The Vilnius vision for the region until 2020 stressed the goals of creating investment-friendly economies, integrated maritime policy and transport networks.⁴⁸ The German presidency in 2011 put economic development first on its list, in particular the SEBA modernization partnership for Kaliningrad, which gave priority to the issues of youth, sustainable development, tourism, public-private partnerships and university cooperation.⁴⁹ In 2011 the CBSS further initiated a two-year public-private partnership cooperation network (P3CN) in order to strengthen competitiveness and regional sustainability.⁵⁰

Due to its economic crisis in the 1990s, Russia was of course very keen on promoting economic cooperation in the CBSS. It made this its first priority during its first chairmanship in 2001, and brought special attention to the socio-economic development of the Kaliningrad. It praised the establishment of the fund for sub-regional development,⁵¹ and probably was disappointed when it did not function. At the summit in St. Petersburg President Putin stressed that the CBSS could promote trade between Russia's northwestern regions and the Baltic states, and assured that Russia was working on improving the judicial safeguards for foreign investments.⁵² Foreign Minister Lavrov hoped that the "idea" of a special financing mechanism would facilitate investments in Russia, and when the Council was reformed in 2008, Russia opposed the elimination of the working group on economic development.⁵³ When President Medvedev then made modernization of the Russian economy a

⁴⁸ CBSS, Coordination, *Declaration on the reform*, 3 June 2008, p. 2.; "Vilnius Declaration", 1-2 June 2010.

⁴⁹ CBSS, *German Presidency*, Programme of work, pp. 2 f; CBSS, Economic development, SEBA.

⁵⁰ CBSS, Economic development, P3CN, www.cbss.org/Economic-Development, retrieved 19 September 2012.

⁵¹ Ivanov (2001), p. 2.

⁵² MID, "Vystuplenie Prezidenta", 10 June 2002, p. 2.

⁵³ MID, "Stenogramma vystupleniia ministra inostrannykh del Rossii S.V. Lavrova", 10 June 2005, p. 2; CBSS, Communication, "Annual report 2008-2009", p. 5.

priority and concluded partnerships with Western states to promote this, Lavrov wanted Germany to make this a priority also in the CBSS, when it took over the chairmanship, and so it did.⁵⁴

As mentioned the Russian presidency programme gave priority to economic issues. Foreign Minister Lavrov lauded the decision to boost project financing up to one million euros, which meant a seven-fold increase, and promised to continue the SEBA project, which would receive most of the funds.⁵⁵ Russia would create a large-scale innovation fund for direct investments through public-private partnerships, for which a recent Russian-German bank agreement was a good step. A portfolio of bids for over seven billion rubles had already been formed.⁵⁶ The Russian idea clearly was to attract investments and high-tech to Russia, whereas the European side had a more general vision of modernization, including legal and socio-political reform.⁵⁷

A major problem hampering economic cooperation and trade with Russia was its state protectionism, lacking legal guarantees, bureaucracy and corruption. Partly for these reasons Russia, unlike the other CBSS members, was not a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Russia long insisted on special conditions, and some WTO and CBSS members at various points also opposed Russian membership for political reasons. The CBSS repeatedly called on Russia to join the WTO as a way to

⁵⁴ MID, "Vystupleniia ministra" 4 June 2009, p. 2; "Summary of remarks by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, 7 June 2011, p. 1.

⁵⁵ The project included a tourism centre, waterway tourism, PPP, the Baltic youth camp Artek and a European law institute. (CBSS-Russia, Modernisation partnership for south-eastern Baltic area, (www.cbss-russia.ru/en/projects-eng/seba, retrieved 11 Sept. 2012.

⁵⁶ Lavrov (2012), pp. 9-11.

⁵⁷ Pertti Joenniemi & Alexander Sergunin, "Kaliningrad: Less of an outpost, more of a bridge", in Baltic Development Forum, *Political State of the Region* 2012, p. 28.

improve the opportunities for expanded trade and investments.⁵⁸ Finally, after 18 years of negotiations Russia in 2011 was admitted to join the organization (in August 2012). It remains to be seen whether this will affect the systemic problems in Russia. When Putin again became president, Medvedev's drive for modernization and reform was replaced with an emphasis on political stability and control.⁵⁹

Border and visa issues

Already at the creation of the CBSS, the development of transport and communication was recognized as a necessity for increased trade and cooperation. The Council backed EU efforts to upgrade border crossings, including those with Russia, and develop transport networks, rail, roads, shipping and IT, and a corresponding working group was formed.⁶⁰ However, the Via Baltica from Helsinki to Berlin, which bypassed Russia, was especially supported.

In 1995 a working group on customs cooperation was formed, *inter alia* aiming to focus on illegal traders and reducing the time for border crossings of goods to two hours. However, the latter proved to be a tough problem. In 2002 the Council again set the same goal,⁶¹ and in 2004 a new working group for customs cooperation and border crossings was formed, later transformed into an expert group. It adopted Multi Annual Action plans, including time measurement studies at border crossings, and tried to harmonize customs practices and promote common training. In 2011, also this expert group was disbanded with the explanation that the main aspects of its work had

⁵⁸ CBSS, 2001 10th Ministerial Session, p. 3. See also *Joint Communiqué of the 14th session*, 12-13 June 2007, p. 5.

⁵⁹ More on this and the problems of modernisation in Lena Jonson & Stephen White, *Waiting for reform under Putin and Medvedev*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills and New York 2012, pp. 245 f.

⁶⁰ CBSS, 1992 CBSS First Ministerial Session, p. 3; Economic development, "History". P. 2; 4th Baltic Sea States Summit, 2002, pp. 2-3.

⁶¹ CBSS, 2001 CBSS 10th Ministerial Session, p. 3.

been taken over by an EU working group on customs border issues with Russia vested with stronger execution powers.⁶²

The issues of foreign trade and transport across borders are intimately connected with the problem of visas. (For the security aspect of border crossings, see section on civil security below.) When Poland and the Baltic states joined the EU in 2004, they also had to adopt the Schengen *acquis* on introducing visas for non-EU member states, thereby giving up various visa-free regimes with Russia. Russia criticized this establishment of a “Schengen wall”, and instead advocated a visa-free regime with the EU.⁶³ This was especially a problem for the Russian exclave Kaliningrad, surrounded on land by Lithuania and Poland as it is. Russian officials took up this issue not only in talks with the EU and the individual countries but also at CBSS meetings. Significantly, Russia as chairing country held the CBSS 10th anniversary meeting in 2002 at Svetlogorsk in the Kaliningrad oblast, where Prime Minister Kasianov took part and discussed the issue with EU commissioner for external affairs Chris Patten.⁶⁴ President Putin likewise took up the issue at the CBSS summit in St. Petersburg. He proposed rules of passage to Kaliningrad (across two countries) similar to those between West Berlin and the rest of Germany in the 1970s, arguing that a preferential visa regime only for Kaliningrad would break up Russia’s sovereign territory and that all Russians should have the same visa regime.⁶⁵ Being no party to the issue, the CBSS summit could only hope for a mutually acceptable solution and that the region should become an example of fruitful EU-Russia interaction.⁶⁶ Poland and Lithuania

⁶² CBSS, *Annual report Norwegian Presidency 201-2011*, pp. 49 f.

⁶³ Oldberg (2004), *Membership or Partnership. The Relations of Russia and Its Neighbours with NATO and the EU in the Enlargement Context*, FOI Report, October 2004, pp. 49 ff.

⁶⁴ MID, ”Stenogramma vystupleniia Ministra”, 5 March 2002, p. 2.

⁶⁵ MID, “Zakliuchitelnoe slovo Prezidenta”, 10 June 2002, “Vystuplenie Prezidenta”, 10 June 2002, www.ln.mid.ru.

⁶⁶ CBSS, *4th Baltic Sea Summit*, Chairman’s conclusions, p. 1.

flatly rejected the idea of free Russian passage as a violation of their territorial integrity.

In the end, Russia and the EU reached a compromise in November 2002, according to which so-called Facilitated Rail Transit Documents instead of visas were introduced, based on personal data submitted at the train ticket offices.⁶⁷ At the Council meeting in 2003, Foreign Minister Ivanov praised the “Kaliningrad transit” decision and hoped that Russia and the EU would solve other problems in the same spirit, avoiding a Schengen visa barrier between the countries. He noted that cooperation between the border and customs services was developing successfully, and mentioned Finland as a positive example.⁶⁸ Indeed, especially Finland with its long border on Russia improved the transport routes and border stations and made a liberal interpretation of the Schengen visa rules, all of which led to vastly increased cross-border trade and travel. To various extents also Norway (non-EU), Sweden and Poland have done so and advocated visa-free travel for Russia.⁶⁹ At the CBSS meeting in 2009, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov praised the Lithuanian chairmanship for making border cooperation one of its priorities and counted on the CBSS to help simplify EU visa rules, especially for the border regions. Abolition of visas would meet human and cultural needs and also have economic effects, he said.⁷⁰ In fact, in 2011 an agreement was reached on simplified visa rules for residents of the Kaliningrad region and a Polish border zone, which was praised by the Kaliningrad governor as a step towards

⁶⁷ Oldberg (2004), pp. 49 ff.

⁶⁸ MID, “Vystuplenie ministra”, 11 June 2003, www.ln.mid.ru, retrieved 16 September 2003.

⁶⁹ Oldberg (2011) pp. 18-20, Tobias Etzold & Hiski Haukkala, “Is there a Nordic Russia policy?”, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, vol. 19, No. 2, p. 253. See also CBSS, *Declaration of the 16th Ministerial Session*, Oslo, 7 June 2011, p. 3, where bilateral agreements with Russia were greeted.

⁷⁰ MID, “Vystuplenie Ministra”, 4 June 2009.

visa-free travel between Russia and the EU.⁷¹ The Russian presidency programme of 2012 also took up the issue of facilitating people-to-people contacts and facilitating the visa regime.⁷² This time there was no call to abolish visas.

However, there were problems also on the Russian side. The EU has complained about the technical quality of Russian passports, lacking control of southern borders, Russian issuance of passports for residents of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, etc.⁷³

Thus the issues of transport, border passages and visa rules became a problem mainly in Russia's relations with the EU with its vast economic resources and comprehensive legislation, as the Union enlarged in the Baltic Sea region, but Russia could still use the CBSS as a forum for discussing the issues. Kaliningrad was a special case, which remained a problem for Russia and the CBSS in several aspects.

Energy issues

Turning now to energy issues, already the first CBSS ministerial conference in 1992 emphasized that cooperation in the field of energy is an integral part of efforts to improve the environment and ensure sustainable economic growth, at the same time as it stressed production efficiency and the high priority of energy savings.⁷⁴ In 1998 the ministers of energy of the member states and an EU Commission representative held their first meeting in Norway (which is a major producer) and set up the Baltic Sea Energy Cooperation (BASREC), as part of the CBSS and an instrument of the EU

⁷¹ Auswärtiges Amt, "Speech by Ambassador Gerhard Almer", 27 August 2012, www.auswaertiges-amt.de, retrieved 30 August 2012, p. 3; Valery Biryukov, "Enclave in no isolation", *Amber bridge*, no. 4, 2011, p. 15.

⁷² MID, CBSS, Priorities, p. 1, Lavrov, p. 11.

⁷³ Oldberg (2011), p. 20. See also Pertti Joenniemi & Alexander Sergunin, p. 31.

⁷⁴ CBSS, 1992 CBSS 1st Ministerial session, p. 2.

Northern Dimension and backed by a group of senior officials, a secretariat and a separate budget, primarily financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the EU. The primary aims were – and still are – to secure energy supply, seen as “fundamental” for economic growth, but also to develop and integrate the energy infrastructure by creating efficient market competition and interconnecting with the European energy network as well as to promote energy efficiency and savings, the use of renewable sources, thus reducing dependency on imported fuels.⁷⁵ Studies were carried out on creating integrated natural gas grids and a Baltic Sea “electric” ring, which resulted in the formation of a special body (BALTREL).⁷⁶ After the CBSS reform in 2008, energy became the second long-term priority after economic development, and during the German chairmanship 2011-2012, the foreign ministers adopted a declaration on energy security, which *inter alia* stressed the importance of diversifying supply and demand, energy sources, transportation routes as well as the need for transparency, competitiveness, respect for international law and common rules. Projects were launched with a budget of one million euros for 2009-2011 and as much for the next period.⁷⁷

Russia is especially interested in energy cooperation in the CBSS, since it is a world power in producing and exporting oil, gas and nuclear power, and it has the biggest gas reserves. In the world. Energy is also crucial for the Russian economy, it accounts

⁷⁵ CBSS, *1st Meeting of the CBSS Energy Ministers*, Stavanger, 30 November 1998, pp. 1-2, *7th Baltic Sea Summit*, 2008, p. 2; *5th Meeting of the CBSS Energy Ministers*, 17-18 February 2009, CBSS, Energy, “Baltic Sea Regional Energy Cooperation”.

⁷⁶ Global Energy Network Institute, *2nd Heads of Government Meeting on Baltic Sea Co-operation*, Riga, 22-23 January 1998, www.geni.org/global/energy/library/organizations/baltic-ring/fact-sheet-dk9865, retrieved 21 March 2012.

⁷⁷ CBSS, *German Presidency 2011-2012*, Programme of work, p. 6; *Declaration on Energy Security*, 5 February 2012, pp. 1 f. The BASREC communiqué also mentioned that some states were interested in exploring domestic shale gas and oil as a means to increase energy security, CBSS-Russia, News, www.cbss-russia.ru/en/news/145-communiqu, retrieved 27 August 2012.

for a major share of its exports, and most of it goes to the EU. The state therefore keeps tight control over the sector, especially the gas sector, where Gazprom has an export monopoly. Among the CBSS members the Baltic states, Poland and Finland remain heavily dependent on Russian oil and gas since Soviet times, and western EU states like Germany have increased gas and oil imports from Russia since the 1990s, so that Russia now is the biggest energy supplier to the whole Union.⁷⁸

On the strength of this dependency Russia has reduced or stopped deliveries to the Baltic (and some CIS) countries on several occasions for various reasons, for instance to take over companies, settle price and debt disputes and in connection with political crises.⁷⁹ Russia has at the same time built new export terminals at Primorsk and Ust-Luga in the Gulf of Finland, and Gazprom, mainly together with German companies, has constructed the Nord Stream gas pipeline across the Baltic Sea directly to Germany – all in order to avoid or reduce its own dependence on transit countries such as Ukraine, Belarus, Poland and the Baltic states. The latter countries in their turn want to keep Russian transit across their countries as a source of income and have at the same time striven to reduce their dependence on Russia by self-reliance, liberalization, energy savings and efficiency, and diversification of imports. Several littoral states are building terminals for receiving LNG (liquefied natural gas), for example from Norway.

The EU members also adhere to a common EU energy strategy, which includes an Energy Charter and the so-called Third Energy Packet. The latter aims inter alia at

⁷⁸ Susanne Oxenstierna (2009) *Russia in Perspective. Scenarios of Russia's Economic Future 10 to 20 Years Ahead*, FOI, Stockholm, pp. 27 ff; Tomas MalmLöf (2010) *Ryskt ekonomiskt inflytande i de baltiska staterna*, FOI, pp. 63 ff;

⁷⁹ Robert L. Larsson (2006), *Russia's Energy Policy: Security Dimensions and Russia's Reliability as an Energy Supplier*, FOI, pp. 173 ff

liberalizing energy trade by separating production, transport and distribution.⁸⁰ Particularly Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland and Sweden raised environmental, economic and political objections to Nord Stream, while German companies were co-founders.⁸¹

The Russian interest in maintaining and expanding its influence in the energy sector is also mirrored in the CBSS framework. When Russia took over the chairmanship of the CBSS and BASREC in 2001, an official of the Ministry of Energy counted on growing needs of power and natural gas up to 2030, and wished to maintain Russia's leading role in supplying the Baltic Sea countries with gas coupled with wider involvement of foreign investors in Russian gas production. As examples he mentioned pipelines and gas storage facilities and praised the BALTREL project of creating a common power market in the region. Russia was interested in energy savings, he said but admitted that it lacked skilled personnel to plan and implement measures, and appreciated that EU centres in Russian regions spread knowledge in the field.⁸²

At the 2006 CBSS summit Prime Minister Fradkov underlined that the gas pipeline across the Baltic would solve many transport problems and enhance energy security in the region, and he wanted the littoral states to support the project.⁸³ Similarly Foreign Minister Lavrov assured that the Nord Stream company, allegedly "in view of the vulnerability of the Baltic Sea" not only considered economic criteria but also

⁸⁰ Robert L. Larsson (2007b), *Tackling Dependency. The EU and its Energy Security Challenges*, FOI, pp. 20 ff.

⁸¹ Robert L. Larsson (2007a) *Nordstream, Sweden and Baltic Sea Security*, FOI, pp. 50 ff.

⁸² Andrei A. Rezinin, "An outlook for Baltic Sea Region Energy Cooperation", in *Baltinfo*, No. 41, October 2001 (Baltic Development Forum) p. 2; see also Deriabin & Antiusjina (ed.) p. 362.

⁸³ MID, "Ob uchastii Predsedatelja Pravitelstva", 6 June 2006, p. 2.

ecological ones, “the strictest in the world”. He was surprised that some EU members made objections even though the project had been declared a priority by the EU Commission and accused them of double ecological standards.⁸⁴ In the end, the Nordic countries in 2009 permitted Nord Stream to lay the pipeline across their economic zones, though the Baltic states and Poland remained largely critical for economic and political reasons. It should be added that Russia would probably not have applied such strict ecological standards in the Nord Stream project, had not the neighbouring states insisted on them.

With the Nord Stream project thus secured, Russia returned the attention of the CBSS to the Baltic Energy Ring project. At the 2011 Council meeting Lavrov suggested that a nuclear power plant in the Kaliningrad region could be part of it, promising that the implementation would be flawless in terms of environmental safety standards.⁸⁵ This also was a contentious proposal. Lithuania had previously been forced by the EU to close down the Ignalina nuclear plant and first tried to build a new one together with Estonia, Latvia and Poland, then decided to do it alone. Also Poland and Belarus have decided to construct their own nuclear power plants. By contrast Germany in 2011 opted to close down all its nuclear power stations by 2022 under the impression of the Fukushima disaster. Russia used this opportunity to offer Germany and other EU states to invest in the Kaliningrad nuclear power plant, for the first time in the nuclear

⁸⁴ MID, ”Vystuplenie Ministra inostrannykh del, 4 June 2009, pp. 2 f. In fact the EU supported not only this project, and critics argued that a pipeline on land would be cheaper and more environmentally friendly.(Larsson (2007b) *Nord Stream, Sweden and Baltic Sea Security*, FOI, pp. 26 ff.)

⁸⁵ MID, ”Summary of remarks by Russian Foreign Minister”, 7 June 2011, p. 2. Russia is also building a second gas power plant in the Kaliningrad region, which will make it self-sufficient regarding electricity, when the Baltic states decouple from the Russian network.(Arne Grove, “Energy cooperation within the Baltic Sea region. A Kaliningrad perspective”, *Baltic Rim Economies*, 29 April 2009, p. 26.)

sector.⁸⁶ The Russian presidency programme of 2012 verbally accepted the CBSS emphasis on energy efficiency, renewable energy and market mechanisms, but it also wanted to develop the power supply network. Similarly Foreign Minister Lavrov underlined the importance of the second pipeline of the Nord Stream and pleaded for the benefits of the Kaliningrad nuclear plant.⁸⁷

CBSS joint declarations on energy security and diversifying supply and demand thus concealed sharp internal differences. The Baltic states worked to connect their energy system to the Nordic system and the rest of the EU, and put more emphasis on security of supply and diversification of supplying countries.⁸⁸ Russia wanted to connect to the EU energy market and to safeguard security of demand and diversification of its own supply routes so as to avoid transit problems. It was also more interested than the other CBSS members in increasing production (satisfying demand) than in energy savings and renewable energy. Russia did not accept the EU Energy Charter and its Third Energy Packet, which threatened to reduce its influence on EU markets. President Putin argued that the package could lead to higher prices by producing intermediaries who would try to profit from the supply.⁸⁹ As already noted Russia in August 2012 joined the WTO, which may liberalize energy trade also among the CBSS members, but soon after this Putin issued a decree prohibiting

⁸⁶ Iurii Solovev, “Mirnyi atom dlia 100 millionov zhitelei Baltiki”, *Jantarnyi most*, no. 1, 2011, pp. 18 f; Christer Pursiainen, “The meltdown of nuclear dreams”, *Balticness*, summer 2011, pp. 20 ff; Susanne Oxenstierna, *Russia's Nuclear Power Expansion*, FOI, December 2010, pp. 27 f.

⁸⁷ MID, CBSS, Priorities, p. 2, Lavrov (2012), pp. 9 f.

⁸⁸ “Russia in the Baltic Sea Region: its role, opportunities and prospects”, *Balticness Tour Compendium*, Summer 2008,

⁸⁹ Galina Sergeeva, “Gas Gulf stream from Russia”, *Amber Bridge*, no. 4, 2011, p. 8.

Russian companies to provide information to agencies of foreign states trying to build antitrust cases without approval.⁹⁰

The CBSS thus provided a forum for Russia to pursue its interests and to voice its opinion on energy issues, but key decisions were made elsewhere, so few results were reached. Also concerning energy issues Russia's real opposite numbers were the EU, to which most CBSS countries belonged, by force of its economic resources, or the individual governments.

Environmental issues

As shown above, already the CBSS founding declaration of 1992 linked energy cooperation to environmental protection and stressed the need for sustainable development and energy savings. The ministers expressed their “deep concern” about the pollution of the Baltic Sea and supported common efforts to enhance nuclear safety.⁹¹ As in the BEAC, with the Chernobyl disaster still in fresh memory, the CBSS initially turned most attention to the latter issue (see civil security chapter below).

The CBSS did not do much regarding other environmental problems until the Swedish chairmanship from 1996, when the prime ministers initiated a working group on sustainable development – Baltic 21 – and an agenda was adopted to be implemented in cooperation with HELCOM, which focuses on the maritime environment. The working group aimed at integrating environmental concerns in many sectors – from agriculture and fishing to industry and tourism, and a number of

⁹⁰ Andrew E. Kramer, “Putin impedes European Inquiry of state fuel supplier”, *New York Times*, 11 September 2012.

⁹¹ CBSS, *1992 CBSS 1st Ministerial session*, pp. 2 f.

so-called lighthouse projects were started, which should serve as models. The financing should be based on the “polluter pays” principle, and domestic efforts were seen as decisive, but since transition countries could not tackle all their problems, external sources were offered, for instance from the Nordic governments and the EU Phare and TACIS programmes.⁹²

In the 2000s environmental issues became increasingly prominent, including climate change. The CBSS energy unit (BASREC) set up a testing ground for flexible mechanisms under the Kyoto protocol. A special declaration by the ministers of environment drew special attention to the need of harmonizing environmental legislation and norms between the EU and Russia, of using environmental assessments in decision-making on investments, and to the threats to the Baltic Sea emanating from eutrophication and increased shipping, especially oil transports.⁹³

One important reason for the latter problem was the steady growth of Russian oil exports in huge tankers, mainly from its new terminal Primorsk, and cargo transport from Ust-Luga, both situated in the Gulf of Finland.⁹⁴ The Baltic Sea is especially vulnerable due to its shallow, brackish and cool water, as well as its archipelagos and narrow straits, which make crossing traffic a particular risk. While major accidents as with *Prestige* carrying Russian oil off Galicia in 2002 have so far been avoided, minor accidents have occurred, for instance with the Chinese bulk carrier *Fu Shan Hai* off Bornholm in 2003, which have scared the Baltic littoral states.⁹⁵ The CBSS supported

⁹² CBSS, *1st Ministerial Meeting of the CBSS Ministers of Environment*, Saltsjöbaden, 20-21 October 2006; pp. 3 ff;

⁹³ CBSS, Environment, *CBSS Ministerial Meeting*, Luleå, 29 August 2003, pp. 3-5.

⁹⁴ Elisa Holma, “Strong recovery in maritime transport volumes stalled with economic uncertainty”, *Baltic Rim Economies*, 21 December 2011, pp. 52 f, Baltic Master, Work Package II Report, p. 3, www.balticmaster.org, retrieved 9 May 2012.

⁹⁵ Baltic Master, *Lägesrapport*, October 2006, p. 37,

HELCOM measures to promote safety at sea and welcomed steps taken by the UN International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to accelerate the phasing out of single-hull tankers and a ban on transporting heavy grades of oil in such tankers at all Baltic Sea ports by 2005.⁹⁶ When the Council was reformed in 2008, the heads of governments expressed “profound concern” about the state of the land and marine environment in the region, and environment became the very first long-term priority for Baltic Sea cooperation.⁹⁷ In 2011 the ministerial council welcomed that all the coastal states had prepared implementation plans in support of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.⁹⁸ Since 2010 the Baltic 21 unit is an expert group fully integrated into the CBSS structure. For the period 2010-2015 it focuses on four strategic areas, namely climate change, sustainable urban and rural development, sustainable consumption and production, and innovations and education.⁹⁹

In 2009 a special expert group on maritime shipping was created aiming to reconcile economic, social and environmental interests.¹⁰⁰ Norway made this one of its presidency priorities and organized a conference recommending the use of LNG as a means to reduce emissions from ships, and Germany decided to follow this up during its presidency. In 2012 the CBSS foreign ministers also agreed to reduce such sulphur emissions and to examine alternative fuels such as LNG. The background was that

⁹⁶ CBSS, *2001 CBSS 10th Ministerial session*, Hamburg, 7 June 2001, pp. 4 f, Annex 2, CBSS, *5th Baltic Sea States Summit*, 2004, p. 3.

⁹⁷ CBSS, *7th Baltic Sea States Summit*, Riga, 4 June 2008.

⁹⁸ CBSS, Council, *Declaration of the 16th Ministerial Session*, p. 3; CBSS, *German Presidency*, p. 3.

⁹⁹ CBSS, Environment, [www.cbss.org/Environment/Baltic 21](http://www.cbss.org/Environment/Baltic%2021), retrieved 26 March 2012; Mia Crawford, “Baltic 21 joins the CBSS family”, *Balticness*, autumn 2009, p. 5.

¹⁰⁰ CBSS, Economic development, “Expert group on maritime policy”, *Terms of reference*, 2 June 2009,

new restrictions on sulphur oxides from shipping will be introduced in the Baltic Sea, which became a control area already in 1997.¹⁰¹

As hinted at above, Russia in the 1990s played a passive role concerning environmental cooperation in the CBSS for well-known economic reasons, and in the 2000s it still appeared rather reluctant and defensive. When presenting the priorities of the Russian 2001 presidency, Foreign Minister Ivanov conceded that environment should become an integral part of all future decisions on regional projects concerning energy, industry and transport, but the issue landed in the middle of the to-do list. Concerning the issue of safe navigation and a cleaner marine environment Russia would rely on HELCOM.¹⁰² Like the others Russia signed the 1991 Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and abided by it regarding the Nord Stream project, but it did not ratify it or any such legally binding bilateral or multilateral agreement in the region.¹⁰³

In 2005 Ivanov's successor Lavrov declared that environment was a priority and of course Russia agreed that preserving the unique ecology of the Baltic Sea was a joint task. However, according to Lavrov, extreme positions should be avoided and the views of all countries be considered. He doubted that any state would put environment ahead of everything and transform the Baltic Sea into a natural reserve without concern for development. Evidently in response to Lithuanian fears Lavrov assured that Russia was sticking to the highest ecological standards at its oil fields off

¹⁰¹ "Are we on the threshold of maritime century?", *Balticness*, autumn 2010, pp. 18 f; "Summer night city", "LNG as a fuel of now", *Balticness*, summer 2011", pp. 12 f. and 18 respectively; CBSS, German presidency, Declaration on energy security, 5 February 2012, p.2.

¹⁰² Ivanov (2001), pp. 1, 3.

¹⁰³ Kaja Peterson, Valdur Lahtvee, "The Russian Federation and the Espoo Convention. Current situation and Future Challenges", Stockholm Environmental Institute Tallinn Centre, Tallinn 2007, pp. 24 f.

the Kaliningrad region and was taking measures to reduce water pollution from factories in that region.¹⁰⁴

Regarding the risk of oil spills from ships Lavrov mentioned that no single-hull tankers sailed under Russian flag in the Baltic, and claimed that only ten per cent of water pollution in the Baltic derives from shipping, while the rest comes for land sources. He called for a resolute but balanced view on safety at sea on the basis of universal norms of the IMO.¹⁰⁵ It deserves to be remarked that many tankers were registered in third world countries and that Russia stood for a big share of land-based pollution.¹⁰⁶

A few years later Lavrov again told his CBSS colleagues that Russia saw environment in the region, especially the Baltic Sea, as an “absolute priority”, but also meant that the main mechanism for ecological cooperation in the region instead was HELCOM, in which Russia now held the chairmanship.¹⁰⁷ Thus Prime Minister Putin participated in a HELCOM summit concerning its Action Plan for the Baltic Sea 2010 in February 2010. Underlining that Russia submitted practically all big projects to strict ecological control and improved its legislation, Putin repeated the high praise for Russian environmental standards in building the Nord Stream gas pipeline. He hailed the creation of a yet another national park in the Gulf of Finland as well as the fast reduction of air and water pollution, for example by building water purification plants

¹⁰⁴ MID, ”Stenogramma vystupleniia”, 10 June 2005, pp. 3 f, www.ln.mid.ru, retrieved 3 November 2011.

¹⁰⁵ See also MID, “”Transcript of replies to media questions”, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, “Towards a Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication”, *HELCOM Overview 2007*, pp. 14 ff., http://www.helcom.fi/stc/files/Krakow2007/Eutrophication_MM2007.pdf, retrieved 9 May 2012.

¹⁰⁷ MID, ”Vystuplenie Ministra”, 4 June 2009, pp. 2 f. See also MID, “Summary of remarks by Russian foreign minister, 7 June 2011.

in St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad. In the latter case he thanked Baltic Sea neighbours for assistance, while noting that Russia also took the necessary costs.¹⁰⁸ The preference for HELCOM may help to account for the fact that Russia was alone in not paying its due in financing the Baltic 21 for several years until its budget was fully integrated into the main CBSS budget in 2010.¹⁰⁹

However, concerning the issue of maritime safety and environment it should be remarked that when the IMO in 2003 adopted a convention on phasing out tankers, several exceptions were made largely due to Russian resistance. Furthermore, Russia refused to join, when the other Baltic Sea countries in 2003 turned to the IMO with a proposal of declaring the sea a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) with protective measures such as traffic separation schemes.¹¹⁰ The proposal was adopted excluding Russian waters. Russia has still not joined the PSSA, and more protective measures need to be adopted for its regime to be meaningful.¹¹¹ Concerning eco-friendly shipping and LNG, Russia seems to be reluctant to comply with the restrictions on sulphur emissions,¹¹² and it is slow to build LNG terminals. It resisted environmental

¹⁰⁸ Pravitelstvo Rossiiskoi Federatsii, Rabochii den, 10 February 2010, <http://www.premier.gov.ru/events/news/9368>, retrieved 17 February 2010.

¹⁰⁹ CBSS, Council, *Annual Report 2001-2002*, p. 30, 2005-2006, p. 37. 2009-2020, p. 89. Sweden repeatedly made additional contributions to strengthen Russian (and Belarusian and Ukrainian) participation in Baltic 21 lighthouse projects. (CBSS, *Lithuanian Presidency 2009-2010 Annual Report*, p. 89; *Norwegian Presidency 2010-2011 Annual report*, p. 79.)

¹¹⁰ Olav F. Knudsen, "Transport interests and environmental regimes: The Baltic Sea transit of Russian oil exports", *Energy Policy*, vol. 35, issue 1, pp.151 ff, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article, retrieved 21 May 2012, Ingmar Oldberg, "Östersjöns strategiska betydelse och Rysslands intressen", *Östersjöseminarium 24-25 februari 2004*, Karlskrona 2004, pp. 11 f.

¹¹¹ Baltic Master, *Vision of PSSA 2020*, World Wildlife Fund, "Increasing protection: Particularly sensitive sea areas, www.panda.org/what_we_do, retrieved 9 May 2012.

¹¹² Janeta Toma, "European Union policies promoting sustainable maritime transport", CBSS, Norwegian Presidency, workshop, 13 March 2011, p. 9. Russian resistance may explain why the CBSS ministers only agreed to investigate alternative fuel, not recommending them.

restrictions on its maritime shipping in the Baltic Sea, which is a vital issue also for HELCOM.¹¹³

The Russian 2012 presidency programme indeed mentioned the topic of transition to environmentally friendly marine fuels, but in the context of developing the maritime infrastructure. The programme further dwelt on the issues of monitoring the radiation situation in the region, the safety of coastal areas and waters, construction of sewage treatment and waste recycling plants, and creating “recreational clusters”.¹¹⁴ Foreign Minister Lavrov stressed the need for active interaction with other Councils and the HELCOM and promised to implement the HELCOM Action Plan and to hold a high-level conference on protecting the Baltic Sea.¹¹⁵ It remains to see what this means in practice.

Thus regarding environmental cooperation Russia formally agreed with the other CBSS members and willingly received all assistance it could get, while stressing its environmental awareness and big efforts. However, Russia considered economic development more important and did not contribute much money to common CBSS efforts in this field, especially not outside its borders. It preferred HELCOM to CBSS cooperation in this field, whether because of its narrower agenda or its stronger legal status. Concerning climate, Russia signed the Kyoto protocol unlike the USA, but rarely took up such issues at CBSS meetings and played a passive role in Baltic 21. Unlike the other countries, the Russian leadership has accused the domestic environmental groups of serving Western economic interests and keeps them under tight control.

¹¹³ HELCOM, “Summary of the four main segments of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan”, pp. 2 f, www.helcom.fi/BCAP/ActionPlan, retrieved 9 May 2012.

¹¹⁴ MID, CBSS, Priorities, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ Lavrov (2012), pp. 6 f.

Democracy and human rights

After the Communist parties lost power in Russia, Poland and the recreated Baltic states it was quite natural that assistance to new democratic institutions became the first priority at the formation of the CBSS in 1992. The founding document declared that “democracy is the political system most conducive to individual freedom, respect for human rights and economic growth”. The Council professed commitment to the principles of the CSCE and promised to cooperate with its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Council of Europe.¹¹⁶ A working group was established, which launched an action plan and made recommendations with respect to *inter alia* the rule of law, civil society, transparency, access to information and local democracy in the member states. In 1994 the position of a special Commissioner on Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, was added. The commissioner issued recommendations and produced a number of analytical surveys in various fields, and worked as a kind of regional Ombudsman, to whom individual citizens of the member states could turn with complaints and requests for assistance. In 2000 the institution was renamed into CBSS Commissioner for Democratic Development.¹¹⁷ These activities were supported at the following Council meetings, for instance during the German chairmanship in 2001.¹¹⁸

However, gradually the role of these issues was reduced. In 2003 the Commissioner’s position was eliminated, allegedly “in the light of the region’s progress in the field of democratic development”, and when the Council was reformed in 2008, the working group was dissolved and its task of promoting tolerance was mentioned last under the

¹¹⁶ CBSS, 1992 CBSS 1st ministerial session, p. 1.

¹¹⁷ CBSS, Civil security and the human dimension, History, www.cbss.org, retrieved 27 October 2011.

¹¹⁸ CBSS, 2001 CBSS 10th Ministerial Session, Hamburg, 7 June 2001, p. 3.

fifth priority Civil Security and the Human Dimension.¹¹⁹ Still, the 2010 Vilnius declaration on long-term goals called for respect for democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law, and the 2012 summit made an unusually strong reference to these principles, active civil societies and developed social dialogue and social cohesion as preconditions for progress.¹²⁰ Cooperation among the NGOs as one aspect of promoting democracy remained an important element of CBSS activities in different fields, and annual forums are held in the presiding countries.¹²¹ Germany made a special effort during its presidency by holding a “Baltic Sea Days” gathering in Berlin in April 2012 with over 1800 participants, including a first Baltic Sea Youth session. It was claimed that what makes the CBSS so unique is its bottom-up approach.¹²²

Turning now to the Russian role in this, the main reason for the elimination of the working group for democratic institutions clearly was the fact that its issues became a bone of contention, especially between Russia and the Baltic states. Just as in many other international forums, Russia at almost every CBSS meeting brought up the issue of the Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia and Latvia, who allegedly were subject to discrimination. While the intention may have been to improve their situation, this critique also served to undermine the legitimacy of the governments and counteract their ambition to join the European Union and NATO, where democracy was a

¹¹⁹ CBSS, *Declaration on the reform*, 3 June 2008, pp. 1 f.

¹²⁰ CBSS, *Vilnius Declaration*, p. 1; 9th Baltic Sea States Summit, p. 1.

¹²¹ [CBSS](#), Council, *Lithuanian Presidency 2009-2010 Annual Report*, pp. 75 f; CBSS, *German Presidency*, “Baltic Sea Days 23-27 April 2012”, p. 28; <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/>;

¹²² Auswärtiges Amt, “Speech by Ambassador Gerhard Almer”, 27 August 2012, www.auswaertiges-amt.de, retrieved 30 August 2012. When assuming the presidency Germany in 2012 concluded that the CBSS had done a great deal in “recreating a genuine democratic community” around the Baltic Sea. (CBSS, Council, German presidency, p. 1)

condition for membership.¹²³ Thus it was Russia that proposed the institution of a special commissar dealing with national minorities. Democratic development was one of the priorities, when Russia held the CBSS chairmanship in 2001-2002, but in order to avoid confrontation it was stressed that human rights issues should be an area of cooperation. Russia initiated meetings between national and parliamentary ombudsmen in the region in 2002.¹²⁴ Before the CBSS foreign ministerial meeting in Svetlogorsk, a Russian spokesman more offensively claimed that the stability and security in the Baltic Sea region as well as the implementation of economic and social projects depended on the solution of the minority problems in Estonia and Latvia. It is easy to suspect Russian influence, when the St. Petersburg CBSS summit proclaimed democracy and human rights, including national minorities, as well as combating all manifestations of racism and xenophobia to be an *integral* part of its activities, and that the CBSS commissar was of *particular* importance. (Compare Council statement of 2001 above).¹²⁵

While the concerned Baltic countries rejected this criticism and got support from the others for abolishing the commissar's position, Russia naturally first defended it and then relied on the working group to take over his tasks.¹²⁶ When Sweden took over the chairmanship of the group, Foreign Minister Lavrov hoped it would do so in the spirit of its well-known allegiance to human rights values. At the 2006 summit Prime Minister Fradkov again expressed "serious worry" over the situation of national minorities in the region, while vowing to make uniform standards in the development

¹²³ Oldberg (2003), *Reluctant rapprochement. Russia and the Baltic States in the Context of NATO and EU Enlargements*, FOI, pp. 37 ff.

¹²⁴ Ivanov (2001), pp. 2 f.

¹²⁵ CBSS, 4th *Baltic Sea States Summit*, pp. 2. The Svetlogorsk declaration only talked of democracy and human rights as integral parts. (2002 CBSS 11th ministerial session, p. 3)

¹²⁶ MID, "Otvety ofitsialnogo predstavitelia", 10 June 2003, , p. 3.

of democracy one of Russia's central themes.¹²⁷ In 2007 Lavrov took up the issue of the reburial of Soviet wartime soldiers in Tallinn at a CBSS meeting and wanted such sensitive issues to be solved in accordance with international norms.¹²⁸ After the working group on democracy and human rights had been scrapped in 2009, Lavrov insisted that problems such as massive non-citizenship remained in the region and should be solved according to the recommendations of the UN, OSCE and the Council of Europe. He (in vain) proposed creating a new expert group on education on tolerance in order to fight xenophobia, ethnic tension and intolerance.¹²⁹

However, when Poland in 2005 asked for Russian support in defending the Polish minority against repression in Belarus, whose application for observer status Russia favoured, Lavrov replied that the CBSS should focus on its member states and not rush to civilizational "missioning".¹³⁰ This issue had relevance for Russia, too. During the 2000s, the other CBSS states in several forums increasingly criticized Russia for the impairing situation with regard to democratic principles, the rule of law and human rights, including national minorities, while Russia rejected this critique as unjustified hectoring. Even if this is not on record in CBSS official documents, the issues were surely discussed off the record.¹³¹ A hint of this is an opinion article in the CBSS newsletter by Daria Akhutina, Russian head of the Norden association in St.

¹²⁷ MID, "Stenogramma vystupleniia", 10 June 2005, pp. 2 f, "Ob uchastii Predsedatelia", 8 June 2006, top of p. 1.

¹²⁸ MID, "Stenogramma otvetov", 13 June 2007, www.ln.mid.ru.brp_4nsf, retrieved 14 August 2007.

¹²⁹ MID, "Vystuplenie Ministra", 5 June 2009, pp. 3 f. St. Petersburg governor Valentina Matvienko had earlier supported this idea, referring to a tolerance programme in her city. (Valentina Matvienko, "Harmony in Diversity for our great city", *Balticness*, autumn 2008, pp. 4 f.

¹³⁰ MID, "Transcript of replies to media questions", 11 June 2005.

¹³¹ For comparison one could note that the hard sentence on the Pussy Riots protest group in 2012 provoked a lively debate at a Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in St. Petersburg. (Baltic Development Forum, "21st Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference", 28-29 August 2012, www.bdforum.org, retrieved 13 September 2012.)

Petersburg. It cautiously blamed the Russian law on NGOs signed in 2006, which forbids foreign citizens to be founders or members of Russian NGOs unless they have a legal presence there, for its vagueness: A roundtable in St. Petersburg decided to send complaints to the President's Council for such issues and his human rights ombudsman.¹³² After Putin again became president in 2012, new laws curtailing the political opposition were adopted. NGOs which received money from abroad for instance had to re-register as "foreign agents".

At the NGO forum in Berlin in April 2012 the above-mentioned Akhutina, now echoing the official view, proposed including NGOs in projects and programmes both at national, regional and municipal levels and joint financing of common actions by all member states. In her view, the joint actions of the NGOs should be aimed at reducing the risk of conflict and tension and encourage tolerance. The president of the Amber Bridge Fund, Yuri Sizov argued that peoples on the Baltic had understood each other better a thousand years ago than now and that tolerance could keep national states in Europe away from racism in light of massive labor migration. He held that the task of public and non-governmental organizations was to overcome negative images of neighbours and proposed that the efficiency of numerous dialogue and cooperation platforms in Northern Europe should be assessed, a proposal which according to his journal found support at the Berlin forum.¹³³ He did not say who should carry out the assessment and according to which criteria.

Such views also found their way into Russia's new CBSS presidency programme, which made the "promotion of the traditions of tolerance as a means of combating

¹³² Daria Akhutina, "The new Russian laws on NGOs causing dilemmas", *Baltinfo*, May-June 2006, pp. 8 f.

¹³³ Vladimir Smelov, "Finish for Germany – start for Russia", *Amber Bridge*, No. 2, 2012, pp. 20 ff. <http://www.amberbridge.org/article?id=104&lang=eng#j06>, retrieved 11 Sept. 2012.

tendencies of radicalism and extremism” the third of its four priorities.¹³⁴ Lavrov added xenophobia and nationalism to the list. Russia thus opens the door for again raising the Baltic Russian issue in the CBSS framework as well as rejecting all kinds of criticism as extremism.

In sum, the issues of democracy and human rights became a bone of contention in the CBSS between Russia and the other members and therefore became more declaratory and long-term, while cooperation among the NGOs was intensified. Russia had to accept the scrapping of the working group but continued to push for its view in other terms. As for NGOs Russia tends to view them as instruments of official policy. A Russian observer has noted that the priorities of the Russian presidency have not been initiated by NGOs, companies or think-tanks and that the Foreign Ministry instead will seek for partners to implement its priorities top-down.¹³⁵ This is probably also true for the other CBSS states, as the CBSS is inter-governmental, but to a varying and much smaller extent.

Culture and education

Already at the creation of the CBSS in 1992, cooperation in the field of culture and education became one of the priorities. The Council ministers declared that the fundamental purpose for this was to strengthen the idea of regional identity, claiming that a shared cultural heritage binds them together and forms a fertile ground for developing the cultural ties. They stressed the value of youth exchanges and tourism, praised the *Ars Baltica* initiative taken by the ministers of culture in the previous year, as well as the importance of good education for the construction of democratic societies.¹³⁶ In 1993 the CBSS ministers of culture held their first meeting, and a

¹³⁴ MID, *Priorities*, p. 1.

¹³⁵ Dmitri Lanko, “Russia’s 2012/2013 CBSS Presidency”, *Baltic Rim Economies*, 21 December 2011, p. 70.

¹³⁶ CBSS, *1992 CBSS 1st ministerial declaration*, p. 3.

EuroFaculty programme started at the universities in Tartu, Riga and Vilnius with the aim of assisting in transforming curricula and training academic staff in the subjects of economics, public administration/ political science and law. In 2000 a EuroFaculty was opened also at the university in Kaliningrad, financed by six CBSS states with Denmark as the lead country, and geared to conform with the EU Bologna process on uniform educational standards.¹³⁷ In 2005 the EuroFaculties in the Baltic states were terminated, and in 2007 the one in Kaliningrad was succeeded by one in Pskov, led by Sweden, financed mainly by all the member states and aiming at upgrading education in business economics at two institutes, which then merged into a university.¹³⁸

In 1997 the CBSS ministers of education adopted an action plan for cooperation on cultural heritage preservation, and later agreed on an Agenda 21 for education for sustainable development in the region.¹³⁹ The Latvian presidency made education one of its priorities and launched the *Balticness* project in order to promote a regional identity, and the CBSS journal was renamed accordingly in 2008.¹⁴⁰ When the CBSS was reformed, education and culture were retained as one of five priorities, and the current German presidency mentions education as a top priority, emphasizing meetings among young people, a network of partner schools (227) and supporting a

¹³⁷ CBSS, Education & Culture, “History”, www.cbss.org/Education-Culture, retrieved 25 April 2012; 1992 CBSS 3rd ministerial session, 1994, p. 2; Sergei Tymma, “CBSS EuroFaculty project in Kaliningrad”, *Baltinfo*, Sept/Oct/Nov 2007, p. 4-6; Deriabin & Antiushina (ed), p. 360; Etzold, pp. 101 f.

¹³⁸ CBSS, EuroFaculty Pskov, “An assessment of the status and progress of the CBSS EuroFaculty project in Pskov”, www.cbss.org/Education-Culture, retrieved 26 April 2012. It was prolonged for three years from 2012. (CBSS, *Declaration of the 16th ministerial session*”, Oslo, 7 June 2011, p. 2.

¹³⁹ CBSS, *1st CBSS Ministers of Education meeting*, Haga declaration, 23-24 March 2000, p. 1 ff.

¹⁴⁰ CBSS, *7th Baltic Sea States Summit*, 4 June 2008, pp. 3 f. For a CBSS discussion on the concept, see “Summit week”, *Balticness*, autumn 2008, pp. 8 f.

Baltic Sea history project as means to foster a shared identity.¹⁴¹ As on other issues, the CBSS mainly acted as an umbrella or coordinator for various rather independent projects in the cultural and educational sector.

Turning to the role of Russia, it of course participated in the aforementioned activities in the 1990s and subscribed to the goal of a common identity, when it assumed the CBSS presidency in 2001. However, culture and education were not mentioned among its many priorities,¹⁴² and placed far down the list of aims on later occasions – with one exception: Russia proposed the extension of the EuroFaculty to Kaliningrad and Pskov, and the faculty was described as one of the “clearly positive” examples of concrete projects characterizing the CBSS. Foreign Minister Lavrov called it a good investment in the future, and Russia befittingly decided to co-finance the extension to Pskov.¹⁴³ However, even though the Russian teachers in Pskov were found to be very motivated, the CBSS expert group fretted about a slow start and a complicated system of transferring funds to it from the Ministry of Education.¹⁴⁴

In the context of sustainable development, Lavrov further stated that “such important components as culture and education should not be forgotten”, since regional projects in this sphere promote human creativity and mutual cultural enrichment. He proposed a project on the Amber Road (stretching from the Baltic to the Adriatic) which could contribute to the “popular and economically favourable industry of cultural tourism”,

¹⁴¹ CBSS, *German Presidency 2011-2012*, Programme of work, pp. 7 f; Jörg Hackmann, “Does history pose an obstacle to Baltic identity?”, *Baltic Rim Economies*, 29 February 2012, p. 56.

¹⁴² Ivanov (2001), pp. 1 f.

¹⁴³ MID, “Statia ofitsialnogo predstavitelia MID”, 8 June 2005, Bjarke W. Bötcher, Dennis Kugay, “Education without boundaries”, *Balticness*, spring 2009, pp. 6 f.

¹⁴⁴ CBSS, *Lithuanian Presidency 2009-2010 Annual Report*, pp. 42 f.

as well as projects on underwater heritage and coastal culture.¹⁴⁵ The Russian presidency programme in 2012 reiterated support for the EuroFaculty concept as a form of increasing academic mobility of young people and the value of preserving monuments of cultural heritage, and several cultural events in Russia were announced.¹⁴⁶

Summing up, the CBSS has retained culture and education as one of its priorities and maintained a broad range of activities (even without an expert group), and the EuroFaculties are considered as successes. Russia has clearly benefitted from and appreciated this, but otherwise shown rather scant interest in promoting cooperation in culture and education in the CBSS framework so far, especially if it means propagation of Western conceptions of democracy and human rights. Even though the CBSS since its inception aims at creating a common regional identity and the issue was promoted by Latvia, it must be observed that there are formidable problems. Most people in the small Baltic states and Poland find it hard to accept the notion of a common identity with Russia and Germany for historical reasons, and the Nordic states have formed their own community.¹⁴⁷ Russia is unlikely to adopt a common Baltic Sea identity, because of its size and its still uncertain national identity. All states including Russia, however, subscribe to the notion of an overarching European identity.

Civil security and law enforcement

Concerning security matters the CBSS (as mentioned in the environmental chapter above) initially paid most attention to the nuclear safety issue in the region, specifically concerning the modernization of the Soviet-built reactors in Russia and

¹⁴⁵ MID, "Vystuplenie Ministra", 5 June 2009, p. 3; "The Baltic Sea region – a transnational cooperation laboratory", *Balticness*, Autumn 2009.

¹⁴⁶ MID, CBSS, Priorities, pp. 1 f. See also Lavrov (2012), pp. 7 f.

¹⁴⁷ More on this in Etzold, pp. 136 ff and Hackmann, "Does history pose a threat".

Lithuania and the dismantlement of the nuclear submarine base at Paldiski in Estonia. The Council called for a regional agreement of early warning of nuclear accidents, and a working group on nuclear and radiation safety worked out an action plan, which resulted in an international legally binding agreement on Exchange of Radiation Monitoring, the first ever of its kind.¹⁴⁸ Even if safety problems at the nuclear sites were brought under control (in Estonia and Lithuania through closures), mainly with EU assistance, a CBSS expert group on nuclear and radiation safety continues to work with monitoring and training.¹⁴⁹ As already shown nuclear energy and safety remain hot issues in the region.

The CBSS in the 1990s also paid attention to humanitarian and social problems among its eastern members, especially Russia, as a result of its economic crisis and political instability, and the spread of organized crime and illegal migration across the opening borders to the west.¹⁵⁰ At the first summit in Visby in 1996 the heads of government set up a Task Force on Organized Crime, supervising an operative committee (OPC), which brings together their personal representatives from the police, customs, border guard and prosecution authorities. The task force cooperates with INTERPOL and EUROPOL, which provides the overall operative framework, including cooperation with Russia, and a new agreement was negotiated in 2011.¹⁵¹ In

¹⁴⁸ CBSS, *1994 CBSS 3rd Ministerial Session*, Tallinn, 24-25 May 1994, pp. 2 f; Etzold (2010), p. 101; Deriabin & Antiushina, p. 361; Pursiainen (2010).

¹⁴⁹ CBSS, <http://www.cbss.org/Civil-Security-and-the-Human-Dimension/working-group-on-nuclear-and-radiation-safety>, retrieved 27 March 2012; *1996 CBSS 5th Ministerial Session*, Kalmar 2-3 May 1996, p. 4; Pursiainen (2010), pp. 9 f.

¹⁵⁰ CBSS, *1992 CBSS 1st Ministerial session*, p. 2; *1994 CBSS 3rd Ministerial Session*, 1994, p. 4; Deriabin & Antiushina, pp. 360 f.

¹⁵¹ Pursiainen (2010), p. 8; Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the European Union, <http://www.russianmission.eu/en/news/russia-and-europol-negotiate-new-cooperation-agreement>, retrieved 3 May 2012; Jaako Christensen, "Organised fight against organised crime", *Baltinfo*, May-June 2006, pp. 4 f.

this framework there is a Network of Public Prosecutors General, which deals with practical matters such as mutual legal assistance and joint investigations, further a Senior Officials Network on Tax Cooperation, dealing with fraud and evasion, a Border Control Cooperation body, which organizes operations in combating illegal immigration, trafficking, terrorism etc. and has developed a encrypted communication system (CoastNet), as well as a Civil Protection network since 2002, usually coordinated by the national rescue services and dealing with emergencies such as floods.

Finally, concerning the social dimensions of regional safety and security the CBSS has a Task Force against Trafficking, focusing on adults, the only forum in its kind in Europe, developed from a Nordic core in 2006, and an Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk, at present focusing on sexual exploitation.¹⁵² Civil Security and the Human Dimension became one of the five CBSS priorities in 2008, and the German Presidency 2011-2012 in this field put emphasis on the protection of children, combating trafficking, on youth affairs and disaster control.¹⁵³

Russia played a role also in these activities and decisions. When it assumed its first chairmanship in 2001, civil security was not mentioned among the priorities, but Foreign Minister Ivanov informed that Russia was willing to participate actively in the development of cooperation among the law enforcement authorities of the Baltic Sea states. The Russian Ministry of Interior would invite the personal representatives

¹⁵² CBSS, Civil security and the human dimension, www.cbss.org, retrieved 2 May 2012; CBSS, *Declaration, 15th CBSS Ministerial Session*, 4 June 2009, pp. 9 ff; Pursiainen (2009) pp. 8 ff. For advice on trafficking, see *Handbook for diplomatic and consular personnel*, CBSS, Stockholm 2011, for a report on children at risk in the region, including Russia, see Rasa Erentaite, *Keeping the door open*, Vilnius 2008.

¹⁵³ CBSS, *German Presidency*, pp. 9 f.

of the heads of government on combating organized crime for an OPC meeting to deal with trafficking with illegal drugs and vehicles as well as money laundering and smuggling.¹⁵⁴ The Ministry of Interior reported later that meetings on illegal migration and car thefts were held in Russian border regions, which was appreciated by foreign partners as a sign of growing interest in practical cooperation.¹⁵⁵ This can be seen as an admission that Russia indeed had problems in these regards. However, when Russia held its CBSS summit in 2002, Prime Minister Kasianov rejected the idea that the simplification of visa controls for the Kaliningrad region would unleash a wave of organized crime, claiming that the crime rate in that region was not higher than in many other neighbouring regions. He added that the CBSS had acquired huge experience in fighting organized crime, which he saw as a fight for democracy.¹⁵⁶

In this context Russian leaders often raised the issue of international terrorism and wanted to have it included on the CBSS agenda. In 2005, for instance, Foreign Minister Lavrov underlined the importance of making ports and sea routes maximally protected against terrorism and called on the CBSS task force on organized crime to take it up.¹⁵⁷ The well-known background for this was the fact that Russia in those years fought a war against separatists in Chechnya and was struck by several serious terrorist attacks. While supporting the US war on terrorism in Afghanistan, Russia wanted support for its own war, including the extradition of suspected Chechen terrorists seeking refuge in Western states. Indeed, at the CBSS summit in Russia in 2002 the prime ministers agreed to “deem terrorism one of the greatest threats to modern civilized societies” and to include in the agenda of the task force.¹⁵⁸ This must

¹⁵⁴ Ivanov (2001), pp. 2 f.

¹⁵⁵ MID, “O vzaimodeistvii MVD Rossii so stranami gruppy SGBM”, 27 January 2004, www.in.mid.ru, retrieved 3 November 2011.

¹⁵⁶ MID, “Ob uchastii Predsedatelia Pravitelstva”, 10 June 2002, p. 1.

¹⁵⁷ MID, “Transcript of replies to media questions”, 10 June 2005, p. 1.

¹⁵⁸ CBSS, *4th Baltic Sea States Summit*, p. 4.

be seen as an admission to Russia. However, Western democratic states in general criticized the Russian war in Chechnya and did not trust the Russian judiciary enough to extradite Chechens. Terrorism did not become an important theme in the task force on organized crime and the CBSS did not include it among its long-term priorities.

Nevertheless, in recent years Russian officials have expressed appreciation of civil security in all its aspects as one of the long-term CBSS priorities without directly raising the terrorism issue. In 2009 a big CBSS conference on sexual exploitation and child safety on the internet was held in Moscow, where the strong participation of regional Russian children's ombudsmen and other officials was noted. However, the conference was organized by the CBSS secretariat with EU money and the need for closer contacts with Russian colleagues and participation in research projects was also highlighted.¹⁵⁹ While regional authorities in St. Petersburg are engaged in the matter, the Russian Ministry of Education has very rarely participated in the meetings of the expert group on children, and Russia is the only country (sometimes joined by Latvia) not paying its voluntary contribution to the budget of the unit.¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, when assuming the presidency in 2012 Russia also wanted to head this expert group. The presidency programme set the goal to combat human trafficking with special attention to sexual exploitation of children including through internet channels and advocated protection of them from information harmful to health and socialization.¹⁶¹ A new Russian law on child pornography has been adopted, which opens the door for

¹⁵⁹ CBSS, *Lithuanian Presidency Annual Report*, pp. 69 f; Lars löf, "Child Safety on the Internet", *Balticness*, winter 2010, p. 5.

¹⁶⁰ CBSS, *Lithuanian Presidency*, p. 89, CBSS, *Annual report from the chairman of the Committee of Senior Officials 2004-2005*, Poland, 9-10 June 2005, p. 43.

¹⁶¹ MID, CBSS, *Priorities*, p. 2.

restrictions of the internet. Laws against abusing officials and hurting religious feelings have also been taken.¹⁶²

Thus, while the CBSS in the field of civil security had a broad array of topics and activities, Russia apparently was chiefly interested in combating organized crime and advancing the terrorism issue. The former remains an important issue, as illegal immigration, drugs and trafficking are growing problems, where Russia and the other CBSS states have some common interests, but concerning terrorism Russia and the others have opposite views. Russian federal authorities thus seem relatively unconcerned about soft issues like child abuse in the CBSS framework except for the judicial aspects.

Hard security

Even though the CBSS as shown above focused on a number of soft security issues, this does not exclude that hard security issues have been discussed off the record. Indeed, cooperation with military authorities is sometimes necessary, for example in handling emergency situations, conducting search and rescue operations and cleaning up nuclear material and chemical weapons from the sea bottom, border control, etc. Thus the civil authorities are well informed about the use of radioactive sources and radiation protection measures undertaken by the military authorities. Also monitoring and surveillance of air and sea traffic in the Baltic Sea region has military implications.¹⁶³

¹⁶² “V UK RF poiavitsia statia “Oskorblenie reliognykh ubezhdenii”, *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 25 September 2012, www.rg.ru/politics/news, retrieved 25 September 2012, Kalle Kniivilä, “Putins sju skruvar sätter stop för allt”, 20 July 2012, www.kniivila.net/2012/putin-satter-stopp-for-allt, retrieved 25 September 2012.

¹⁶³ CBSS, *Annual Report 1997-1998*, p. 8; *Annual report 2004-2005*, pp. 25 f.

Due to its general priorities Russia has been keener on including military issues in the CBSS framework than the other states. Thus when assuming the chairmanship in 2001, Russia – on top of its above-mentioned priorities – wanted to initiate a “constructive dialogue” on new fields of cooperation, in particular contacts between military authorities, arguing that this constitutes an important element of confidence-building.¹⁶⁴ Later, Foreign Minister Ivanov conceded that military cooperation was not in the purview of the CBSS, and that the liquidation of chemical weapons dumped in the Baltic Sea during or after the war was not discussed in detail. However, the problems of ecological and radioactive security in the region were allegedly discussed extensively and the need for joint measures was underlined. Ivanov reminded that Russia just had signed an agreement on monitoring and information exchange concerning radioactive security.¹⁶⁵ Similarly, President Putin at the summit ending the Russian chairmanship stated that in view of new global threats, the CBSS could and should be an effective instrument in European security policy. Exchange of information, coordination of military activity and military planning were a topic, which concerns not only the defence ministers.¹⁶⁶ Even though Russia is not on record criticizing NATO enlargement at CBSS meetings, which was topical at the time, these suggestions can be seen as a way at least to soften the effects of the enlargement in the Baltic Sea region.

However, the above-mentioned Russian proposals were not repeated in later statements, which either means that Russia no chance of success or that Russia was content with the pertinent agreements reached. Curiously, a German newspaper quite recently quoted *Bundespräsident* Joachim Gauck as commending Russia for raising initiatives as joint air surveillance and a “hot line” between its military command in

¹⁶⁴ Ivanov (2001) p. 3.

¹⁶⁵ MID, ”Stenogramma vystupleniia”, 11 March 2002, pp. 4 f.

¹⁶⁶ MID, ”Vystuplenie Prezidenta”, 10 June 2002, p. 1.

Kaliningrad and the other littoral states.¹⁶⁷ Considering its agenda the CBSS could probably not be very helpful here. Needless to say, especially the Baltic states and Poland were unwilling to discuss hard security in the CBSS framework, as they had recently become NATO members and relied on NATO for their security.

Summarizing Russia's role in the CBSS structure

Russia has an equal voice and position in the CBSS as all other eleven members, and since all decisions in the CBSS have to be taken by consensus, they are the results of compromises representing the lowest common denominator. Consequently, Russia has backed or at least accepted all decisions concerning the structure, reforms, priorities, projects and activities of the organisation, otherwise they could not be taken. On the other hand Russia like the other states has its own distinct interests and advanced many proposals to further them. As chair Russia has presented its priorities but within the agreed format. The fact that the decisions only have the form of recommendations to be implemented by the governments and that no sanctions can be imposed apparently suits Russia, which sees itself as a great power not to be pushed around by small states.

The CBSS obviously is a small organization with a limited budget, which means that the Russian share is no real burden to it. On the other hand the CBSS has so far been less focused than for example the Barents Council on development projects in Russia and Russia has gained less from them in economic terms. Nevertheless, the organization can serve as a useful advocate for applications for money from other and richer Western sources like the EU with its Northern Dimension framework or its new Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

¹⁶⁷ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 25 April 2012, p. 5.

With some variations Russian representatives have regularly, especially since its chairmanship in 2001-2002, taken part in and charge of many high-level political meetings, working and expert groups, and task forces. This serves Russia's declared interest in political dialogue, exchanging information and coordinating activities in a wide range of fields with its Western partners. Most important among these partners in the CBSS is Germany, a great economic power, which is more anxious than most to cooperate with Russia in different fields. Their consecutive presidencies in 2011-2012 show a higher level of coordination of activities than before, for instance with a new project focusing on Kaliningrad.

Russian leaders and officials consistently praised the CBSS for contributing to stability in Europe and for its practical work. When Poland and the three Baltic states joined the EU (and NATO) in 2004 and got increasingly engaged there, Russia became its most ardent defender. It wanted the CBSS to retain its role and resisted suggestions that it should be subordinated to or a tool for the EU, even suggesting that the EU should adapt itself. However, Russia at the same time also developed its bilateral relations with the EU and accepted that the CBSS had to be reformed. It could still help in getting EU support for projects profitable for Russia. The CBSS indeed could serve as a conduit for Russia in its relations with the bigger EU.

Summarizing Russian and CBSS priorities

Due to its economic problems Russia's first priority in the CBSS was to get support for its **economic development** through trade and foreign investments, especially in the Kaliningrad region. Indeed, economic growth and trade promotion became one of the first priorities when the CBSS was founded. However, against Russian wishes the working group was replaced by an expert group concentrating on maritime policy, Further, the CBSS resources were still limited and projects depended on cooperation with stronger institutions. Economic cooperation was further hampered by restrictions on free trade and foreign investments, bureaucracy and corruption in Russia, which

together with Russia's call for special conditions long contributed to prevent it from becoming a member of the WTO. But Russia's accession to the WTO in the near future may now facilitate its trade also in the Baltic Sea region.

Turning to the CBSS, economic development became the second priority, when the CBSS was reformed in 2009, and as Germany took over the presidency in 2011, it put it in the first place and launched a modernization partnership focused on Kaliningrad (SEBA). The 2012 summit decided to create a special project support facility, mainly for Kaliningrad. This certainly pleased Russian authorities, who decided to promote it during its presidency.

Another problem hampering Russian trade was that of **borders and visas**. It became urgent when the EU created the Schengen rules, which also Poland and the Baltic states had to accept on accession. In 2002 Russia took up this issue at CBSS meetings, called for a visa-free agreement with the EU, especially with regard to the Kaliningrad exclave, which according to Putin should have free passage to the rest of Russia. At CBSS meetings Russia thereafter urged the CBSS members to help simplify the Schengen rules.

Indeed, the CBSS recognised border crossings as a hindrance to trade, e.g. by setting up a working group on customs cooperation in 1995, which later became an expert group, and actions plans were adopted. However, in 2011 the expert group was disbanded because the topic had been taken over by an EU working group with wider powers. Concerning the Kaliningrad visa issue, Russia concluded a compromise agreement with the EU, which the CBSS members may have contributed to. Several countries from Norway to Poland facilitated their Schengen visa regimes with Russia on a bilateral basis.

Since Russia is one of the world's leading energy producers and heavily dependent on energy export, it was especially interested in **energy cooperation** in the CBSS. It wished to maintain its leading role in supplying the Baltic Sea countries with gas and called for more foreign investments. Russia saw the Nord Stream pipeline project as a means to energy security and called on member states to join it. Russia also backed the idea of an electric ring around the Baltic, suggesting that a nuclear power plant in the Kaliningrad region could be part of it.

The CBSS indeed made energy one of its priorities and agreed that energy supply was essential for economic growth, but it also stressed the importance of market competition, energy efficiency and savings, as well as of renewable energy. To fulfill these aims a separate Baltic Sea Energy (BASREC) unit with its own secretariat was set up, primarily financed by the Nordic Council and the EU. In 2012 the foreign ministers adopted a declaration on energy security underlining the need of diversifying both supply and demand, energy sources, transportation routes as well as transparency and competition.

However, the CBSS declarations concealed deep splits. While Germany joined the Nord Stream project and the Nordic states only accepted it with strict ecological conditions, the Baltic states and Poland to varying extents opposed it. These states wanted to keep Russian transit traffic across their territory as sources of income and at the same time to reduce their energy dependence on Russia, which could be used as political pressure, by diversifying supplying countries and connecting to the EU energy systems. Russia wanted to secure demand and to diversify its own supply routes and avoid transit. It resisted EU demands to liberalize the energy market by separating production, transport and distribution companies.

Concerning **environment** Russian ministers assured the CBSS that it was a priority (even “absolute”) and that Russia was sticking to the highest standards in protecting the Baltic from pollution. In the mid-00s Russia allegedly had no single-hull oil tankers in the Baltic. Contributions from the other states to make environmental investments such as building purification plants in Russia were welcomed. Russia also signed the Kyoto Protocol to avert climate change. On the other hand Foreign Minister Lavrov told the CBSS to avoid extreme positions, doubting that any state would put environment ahead of everything and called for a resolute but balanced view of maritime shipping on the basis of universal norms. Russia further regarded HELCOM, which administered a UN convention, rather than CBSS as the main mechanism for ecological cooperation in the region, and for a number of years it did not contribute its due to the CBSS working/expert group on sustainable development. Nor did it endorse the proposal of the other littoral states to make the Baltic a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area and seemed reluctant to accept binding reductions on ship fuel emissions. Like the other CBSS states Russia signed the 1991 Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment but it did not ratify it or any similar legally binding bilateral or multilateral agreement in the region.

By contrast, the CBSS as a group in the 2000s made environment, including climate change, a top priority, which should influence all economic activity, and repeatedly expressed deep concern over state of the vulnerable Baltic Sea. The threats here were not only land-based pollution but also the growing sea transport across the sea, in particular tankers bringing Russian oil to the west. In 2009 a special expert group on maritime shipping was created. Thus while Russia gave priority to economic development and kept environmental groups under strict control, the CBSS majority gave more weight environmental protection and encouraged “the greens”.

Turning now to more “human” issues in the CBSS such as **democracy and human rights**, Russia was the country that initiated the post of a special commissioner dealing with such issues, including national minorities, and made this one of its priorities as chair in 2001. Similarly as in other international forums, this enabled Russia to criticize Estonia and Latvia for their handling of the Russian-speaking minorities at many CBSS meetings ever since the 1990s.

Indeed, assistance to new democratic institutions was the first priority when the CBSS was founded in 1992, a working group was established and democracy, human rights and the rule of law were mentioned among the long-term goals in 2010. Cooperation among the NGOs became an important aspect of promoting democracy. Yet, the post of commissioner was abolished in 2003 and the working group in 2008, and the issues do not figure among the five priorities since then. This was officially explained by the democratic progress made, but the real reason obviously was the issue became a bone of contention in the CBSS. The Baltic states rejected the Russian use of the forum and in this received support from the others. Another likely reason was that in Western views the state of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Russia deteriorated during the 2000s and Russia rejected all criticism as hectoring.

Proceeding to the field of **culture and education**, Russia subscribed to the goal of creating a common “Balticness” identity and was very positive to the extension of EuroFaculties to Kaliningrad and Pskov, mainly funded as they were by the other CBSS states. Russia showed a growing interest in cultural and scientific exchange and even proposed a project on cultural tourism. But Russia did not make culture and education a priority, while in CBSS declarations they played a greater role. The issues were retained as one of five priorities when the CBSS was reformed and Germany declared education as a top priority. Concerning the aim of creating a common

identity Russia could not be expected to give up its great power tradition, nor would the small Baltic states and Poland accept a common identity with Russia or Poland.

Concerning **civil security** this was no Russian priority in 2001 but among the various issues it showed most interest in cooperation among the law enforcement authorities fighting organized crime. In this context Russian leaders often raised the issue of international terrorism. Indeed, in 2002 the CBSS summit agreed to consider it as one of the greatest threats to civilized societies and to include it in the agenda of the task force on organized crime. The context was the war in Chechnya and the wave of terrorism acts in Russia and the West. However, the Western states did not accept the Russian definition of terrorism or how to fight it, and terrorism was not included among the long-term priorities of the CBSS.

Regarding other aspects of civil security, the CBSS instituted a task force on trafficking and an expert group focusing on sexual exploitation of children, where Sweden and some Western neighbours were engaged, but in this case Russia's federal authorities showed little concern and did not pay its share for the group, even though these social problems are serious in Russia.

Instead Russia showed more interest in matters involving **military security**, even if this generally was outside the CBSS field of activities. In the early 1990s the CBSS was much concerned with nuclear safety including military assets in the former Soviet Union, and Russia contributed to an agreement on monitoring and information of radioactive security. More remarkably, when Russia assumed its CBSS chairmanship in 2001, the foreign minister called for new contacts between military authorities in order to build confidence, and President Putin at the concluding summit proposed exchange of information, coordination of military activity and planning. This can be

seen as ripostes to the ongoing NATO enlargement in the region. However, thereafter Russia did not take up these issues at CBSS meetings, at least not on record.

Concluding remarks

In conclusion, among the CBSS priorities Russia since the 2000s has especially pushed for economic cooperation and foreign investments in Russia, liberalization of the visa regimes, energy demand security, cooperation against organized crime including terrorism. A special case in several respects is Kaliningrad, where Russia has high hopes on cooperation with Germany. It has profited from CBSS support for environmental projects and Eurofaculties in Russia, social projects and scientific exchange.

However, in the case of visa issues the CBSS has not been of much use to Russia other than as a forum because the Schengen rules are decided by all EU members. Concerning energy cooperation in the CBSS, which is a vital concern for Russia, it has met resistance from the Baltic states and Poland, which strive to reduce their dependence on imports from Russia, and the other states put more emphasis on energy efficiency and renewables. The Western states have made environment a top priority in the CBSS, which Russia has had to accept. Russia has also met resistance, when it used the CBSS as a means to help the Russian-speaking minorities and exercise pressure on the Estonian and Latvian governments, further when it raised the terrorism issue, and made a brief attempt to include military contacts in the agenda. In short Russia has shown a penchant for state-controlled economic and security-related issues, while the CBSS agenda has a very broad, soft and civil-security-oriented profile.

Despite these different priorities in the CBSS, however, Russia has participated in and contributed to decisions and action plans of all sorts, seeking consensus and avoiding

conflicts. When making its own proposals, also Russia is bound by jointly agreed priorities, plans and programmes, and there is a high degree of continuity. In spite of being a big power, Russia has thus been able to cooperate on an equal basis with several quite different and small neighbours. If Russia would not play by the rules and make serious efforts to impose its will in the CBSS framework, the other members would likely lose interest in the forum and relinquish it in favour of the EU and more specialised regional organizations. Even if Russia in general may prefer bilateral meetings, where it often is the stronger side, multilateral forums like the CBSS do not preclude but on the contrary gives opportunities for more businesslike meetings and agreements on a bilateral basis with friendly nations such as Germany.

As mentioned, Russia has probably been the country most interested in maintaining and developing the CBSS both in its own right and as a link to Western Europe. If Russia's political relations with the EU or NATO would worsen or if the cohesion of these organizations would weaken, Russia can be expected to engage even more in regional organizations like the CBSS, where it is a member. If the Russian economy continues to grow, it should be more able to contribute to CBSS activities and less in need of assistance projects.

Still, Russian policy in the CBSS is not only dictated by the advantages and limitations of this council or Russia's relations with the other members and other organizations. In the final resort Russian foreign policy is rooted in its domestic needs, where the economic ones are not the only ones. As illustrated above, Russia is a more authoritarian society than the other CBSS members with its own distinct traditions. Russia's conception of the rule of law, democracy and human rights and its emphasis on security and political control has hampered its cooperation also within the CBSS. As Russia now under Putin's third presidency again seems to stake on hard security, restrictions on political opposition and increased control of NGOs, in

combination with talk of Western interference and calls for respect, this may well impinge on its willingness to cooperate within the CBSS in the future. How Russia implements its CBSS presidency policy thus is a topic deserving continued scrutiny.

About the author

Ingmar Oldberg is a Research Associate at UI since 2009, specialising in Russian foreign and security policy. Formerly he was a Deputy Director of Research at the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) and a member of its Russia programme. His many publications in English include: *Russia's Great Power Strategy under Putin and Medvedev*, UI Occasional Papers, No. 1, 2010 and *The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Powerhouse or Paper Tiger?* (FOI, 2007) He also contributed chapters to and co-edited *Russia as a Great Power* (Routledge, 2005.)

UI Occasional papers

NR 12, 2012

*UI Occasional Papers granskas av seniora och sakkunniga forskare på institutet.
De åsikter som uttrycks i denna publikation är författarnas.*

Publicerat: 31 oktober 2012
ISBN: 978-91-86704-92-6