The French plans for a Mediterranean Union, decided in Paris on July 13th as a (very reduced) version of the Union for the Mediterranean — the European Union and states situated along the Mediterranean’s southern rim are included in the proposed union — have, in an indirect way, also put the Baltic Sea Region back on the political agenda. The Baltic Sea Region is, indeed, seen as an instrument to counterbalance arguments advanced by skeptics and opponents of Nicolas Sarkozy’s new (and quite costly) strategy. But this northern community of interests has gained little from its use as a foil, if one measures its success in terms of political attention, concrete political engagement, and lasting benefits from these political strategies.

One might even get the impression that political strategies for this region are unwelcome in official, political circles. Even the (co-)founder of the Baltic Sea Council (established in 1992), the former Danish Foreign Minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, has given sober, unadorned expression to his disappointment in Danish passivity and disinterest in matters pertaining to the Baltic Sea.

It was, of course, generally accepted that the era of globalization has steadily increased the importance and incidence of regional cooperation on economic, political and cultural matters. This has given many observers the impression that the Baltic Sea Council has vacillated between political hopefulness and actual insignificance, as, again and again, its right to existence is called into question.

The Baltic Sea Council consists of representatives from the countries of the Baltic Sea Region. For historical and economic reasons, Iceland and Norway, as well as the European Union, have seats at the Council table. It is the only regional institution of significance in which Russia is represented, with its own seat and voice, together with other, Western states. In 1995, the Baltic Sea countries Sweden and Finland became members of the European Union. In 2004, they were followed by the three Baltic states and Poland, and the Baltic Sea thus became a European Union inland sea (excepting, of course, Kaliningrad and the region St. Petersburg). The deliberations concerning regional cooperation are increasingly directed more towards Brussels than towards the Baltic Sea Council’s Stockholm headquarters.

"EUROPE IS NOT SAFE UNLESS THE BALTIC REGION IS SAFE"

The generally accepted idea that cooperation is something that occurs in and with Brussels as a matter of course, and that regional cooperation should, therefore, only be accorded minor significance, is a fallacy. Why should that which holds for the Mediterranean not apply to the Baltic Sea Region, as well? The ongoing conflicts and crises concerning the Baltic Sea gas pipeline, the Caucasus, and the recently concluded contracts for American medium-range anti-missile stations in Poland and the Czech Republic tell another story. If an incident should occur, the regulatory powers of the EU are very restricted; here, networks — sometimes, very informal in character — play a much greater role.

The conflict in the Caucasus shows that Russia has not yet come to terms with the independence of the former Soviet Republics. The Baltic nations are in the danger zone, and their integration into regional, institutionalized networks is necessary for their survival. Psychology plays a not unimportant role here. And so it is not by happenchance that Ukraine’s government and state leaders, as well as those of the three Baltic states and Poland, traveled to Tbilisi in August in order to meet with the Georgian leaders. The deliberations concerning regional cooperation are increasingly directed more towards Brussels than towards the Baltic Sea Council’s Stockholm headquarters.

"Europe is not safe unless the Baltic region is safe"

The generally accepted idea that cooperation is something that occurs in and with Brussels as a matter of course, and that regional cooperation should, therefore, only be accorded minor significance, is a fallacy. Why should that which holds for the Mediterranean not apply to the Baltic Sea Region, as well? The ongoing conflicts and crises concerning the Baltic Sea gas pipeline, the Caucasus, and the recently concluded contracts for American medium-range anti-missile stations in Poland and the Czech Republic tell another story. If an incident should occur, the regulatory powers of the EU are very restricted; here, networks — sometimes, very informal in character — play a much greater role.

The conflict in the Caucasus shows that Russia has not yet come to terms with the independence of the former Soviet Republics. The Baltic nations are in the danger zone, and their integration into regional, institutionalized networks is necessary for their survival. Psychology plays a not unimportant role here. And so it is not by happenchance that Ukraine’s government and state leaders, as well as those of the three Baltic states and Poland, traveled to Tbilisi in August in order to meet with the Georgian leaders.
to participate in a mass rally demonstrating both solidarity with Georgia and a common rejection of Russia's aggression. (That said, we did not for the first time that Paris and Berlin showed more consideration for Moscow than for them — at least in the eyes of the popular press. But the European Union did not seem particularly forceful in its condemnation of the Russian enclave Kaliningrad, which is, that is clearly on the side of Moscow, but was not used in this manner. This may give an inkling of the region's security-related and of the necessity of building up confidence and in- stutions, even if only — again — for psychological reasons. The recent weeks and months have shown that the Baltic Sea region's situation demands political attention. Now as in the past, Medea Alibegov’s 1973 phrase holds true: Europe is not safe until the Baltic region is safe.3 It does not, for these reasons, require an excess of political imagination to understand how the Baltic Sea region is being transformed from a somewhat marginal region into a zone of great geopolitical significance. For these countries, it was bitter to note how much sympathy has been gambled showing more consideration for Moscow than for them; the region's new geopolitical environment is a great new world trade- and utilized in an extensive cultural and political pro- cesses. The industries, as well as research centers that earn a living by being above all, a story of the Baltic region, an area's negligible share of world population. The share of the Russian Federation alone, a total that exceeds the combined exports of the U.S. and Japan. Germany is one of the most important, if not the most important, trading partner for almost all the Baltic states. The area's problems are, amongst others, border issues, and of the necessity of building up confidence and international crime, in, of course, scientific and social cooperation, the cooperation between different Cham- bers of Commerce, the so-called city-partnerships, transnational university programs, and, of course, the development of mutual understanding, which is more and more a story of the Baltic region. The Baltic Sea region is a region in more than one respect, and one is often referred to as such — but that has usually ended. The Baltic re- gion had a special status from the 16th century onward, a status that was formalized only in 1991/92, when the erstwhile GDR was divided into two states and the two states entered into a cooperation whose aims were not to be confused with the regional cooperation that had existed in the political system. This region, which was formed in the process of political and economic integration, is based on the premise that the Baltic Sea region is a common belonging, and not on the basis of ethnic enmity. This region is characterized by the willingness of the residents to cooperate, including with other countries, in order to build a more stable and more peaceful world. The Baltic Sea region is a region in more than one respect, and one is often referred to as such — but that has usually ended. The Baltic re- gion had a special status from the 16th century onward, a status that was formalized only in 1991/92, when the erstwhile GDR was divided into two states and the two states entered into a cooperation whose aims were not to be confused with the regional cooperation that had existed in the political system. This region, which was formed in the process of political and economic integration, is based on the premise that the Baltic Sea region is a common belonging, and not on the basis of ethnic enmity. This region is characterized by the willingness of the residents to cooperate, including with other countries, in order to build a more stable and more peaceful world. The Baltic Sea region is a region in more than one respect, and one is often referred to as such — but that has usually ended. The Baltic re- gion had a special status from the 16th century onward, a status that was formalized only in 1991/92, when the erstwhile GDR was divided into two states and the two states entered into a cooperation whose aims were not to be confused with the regional cooperation that had existed in the political system. This region, which was formed in the process of political and economic integration, is based on the premise that the Baltic Sea region is a common belonging, and not on the basis of ethnic enmity. This region is characterized by the willingness of the residents to cooperate, including with other countries, in order to build a more stable and more peaceful world. The Baltic Sea region is a region in more than one respect, and one is often referred to as such — but that has usually ended. The Baltic re- gion had a special status from the 16th century onward, a status that was formalized only in 1991/92, when the erstwhile GDR was divided into two states and the two states entered into a cooperation whose aims were not to be confused with the regional cooperation that had existed in the political system. This region, which was formed in the process of political and economic integration, is based on the premise that the Baltic Sea region is a common belonging, and not on the basis of ethnic enmity. This region is characterized by the willingness of the residents to cooperate, including with other countries, in order to build a more stable and more peaceful world. The Baltic Sea region is a region in more than one respect, and one is often referred to as such — but that has usually ended. The Baltic re- gion had a special status from the 16th century onward, a status that was formalized only in 1991/92, when the erstwhile GDR was divided into two states and the two states entered into a cooperation whose aims were not to be confused with the regional cooperation that had existed in the political system. This region, which was formed in the process of political and economic integration, is based on the premise that the Baltic Sea region is a common belonging, and not on the basis of ethnic enmity. This region is characterized by the willingness of the residents to cooperate, including with other countries, in order to build a more stable and more peaceful world. The Baltic Sea region is a region in more than one respect, and one is often referred to as such — but that has usually ended. The Baltic re- gion had a special status from the 16th century onward, a status that was formalized only in 1991/92, when the erstwhile GDR was divided into two states and the two states entered into a cooperation whose aims were not to be confused with the regional cooperation that had existed in the political system. This region, which was formed in the process of political and economic integration, is based on the premise that the Baltic Sea region is a common belonging, and not on the basis of ethnic enmity. This region is characterized by the willingness of the residents to cooperate, including with other countries, in order to build a more stable and more peaceful world. The Baltic Sea region is a region in more than one respect, and one is often referred to as such — but that has usually ended. The Baltic re- gion had a special status from the 16th century onward, a status that was formalized only in 1991/92, when the erstwhile GDR was divided into two states and the two states entered into a cooperation whose aims were not to be confused with the regional cooperation that had existed in the political system. This region, which was formed in the process of political and economic integration, is based on the premise that the Baltic Sea region is a common belonging, and not on the basis of ethnic enmity. This region is characterized by the willingness of the residents to cooperate, including with other countries, in order to build a more stable and more peaceful world. The Baltic Sea region is a region in more than one respect, and one is often referred to as such — but that has usually ended. The Baltic re- gion had a special status from the 16th century onward, a status that was formalized only in 1991/92, when the erstwhile GDR was divided into two states and the two states entered into a cooperation whose aims were not to be confused with the regional cooperation that had existed in the political system. This region, which was formed in the process of political and economic integration, is based on the premise that the Baltic Sea region is a common belonging, and not on the basis of ethnic enmity. This region is characterized by the willingness of the residents to cooperate, including with other countries, in order to build a more stable and more peaceful world. The Baltic Sea region is a region in more than one respect, and one is often referred to as such — but that has usually ended. The Baltic re- gion had a special status from the 16th century onward, a status that was formalized only in 1991/92, when the erstwhile GDR was divided into two states and the two states entered into a cooperation whose aims were not to be confused with the regional cooperation that had existed in the political system. This region, which was formed in the process of political and economic integration, is based on the premise that the Baltic Sea region is a common belonging, and not on the basis of ethnic enmity. This region is characterized by the willingness of the residents to cooperate, including with other countries, in order to build a more stable and more peaceful world. The Baltic Sea region is a region in more than one respect, and one is often referred to as such — but that has usually ended. The Baltic re- gion had a special status from the 16th century onward, a status that was formalized only in 1991/92, when the erstwhile GDR was divided into two states and the two states entered into a cooperation whose aims were not to be confused with the regional cooperation that had existed in the political system. This region, which was formed in the process of political and economic integration, is based on the premise that the Baltic Sea region is a common belonging, and not on the basis of ethnic enmity. This region is characterized by the willingness of the residents to cooperate, including with other countries, in order to build a more stable and more peaceful world. The Baltic Sea region is a region in more than one respect, and one is often referred to as such — but that has usually ended. The Baltic re- gion had a special status from the 16th century onward, a status that was formalized only in 1991/92, when the erstwhile GDR was divided into two states and the two states entered into a cooperation whose aims were not to be confused with the regional cooperation that had existed in the political system. This region, which was formed in the process of political and economic integration, is based on the premise that the Baltic Sea region is a common belonging, and not on the basis of ethnic enmity. This region is characterized by the willingness of the residents to cooperate, including with other countries, in order to build a more stable and more peaceful world. The Baltic Sea region is a region in more than one respect, and one is often referred to as such — but that has usually ended. The Baltic re- gion had a special status from the 16th century onward, a status that was formalized only in 1991/92, when the erstwhile GDR was divided into two states and the two states entered into a cooperation whose aims were not to be confused with the regional cooperation that had existed in the political system. This region, which was formed in the process of political and economic integration, is based on the premise that the Baltic Sea region is a common belonging, and not on the basis of ethnic enmity. This region is characterized by the willingness of the residents to cooperate, including with other countries, in order to build a more stable and more peaceful world.
**First Paragraph:**

The problem of eutrophication has been a significant environmental concern in the Baltic Sea region. This process, characterized by an excessive growth of algae and phytoplankton, leads to the depletion of oxygen in the water column, which in turn affects the health of marine ecosystems. One of the main factors contributing to eutrophication is the input of nutrients, primarily phosphorus and nitrogen, from various sources such as agricultural runoff, waste treatment plants, and sewage outfalls. These nutrients stimulate algal growth, leading to blooms that can deplete oxygen levels and harm sensitive marine species.

**Second Paragraph:**

The Baltic Sea has a complex catchment area, comprising parts of Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Poland, Russia, Germany, and Estonia. The sea is shallow, with an average depth of less than 80 meters, and is connected to the North Sea via the straits of Oresund, Great Belt, and Sound. The region's climate is moderate, with cold winters and mild summers, and the sea's surface temperature ranges from 0°C to 20°C. The Baltic Sea is divided into six basins, each with its own water characteristics and ecosystems.

**Third Paragraph:**

The Baltic Sea is a significant economic area, hosting a number of international trade routes. The region is home to numerous coastal cities, which have played important roles in maritime trade and commerce throughout history. The ports of Helsinki, Stockholm, and Copenhagen are major hubs for both cargo and passenger traffic. The Baltic Sea is also a venue for international conferences and summits, where leaders from the region and beyond come together to discuss issues of mutual concern.

**Fourth Paragraph:**

The Baltic Sea is a region of cultural and historical significance, with a rich tapestry of languages, traditions, and artistic expressions. The area is home to several national parks and nature reserves, which help to protect the natural heritage of the region. The Baltic Sea region is also a place of rich biodiversity, with a wide array of marine species that are integral to the ecological health of the sea. The conservation of these species and their habitats is a crucial aspect of sustainable management strategies for the Baltic Sea.

**Fifth Paragraph:**

The Baltic Sea region is a hub of economic activity, with a significant port density and a network of roads and railways that facilitate regional trade. The region is also a center of scientific research, with numerous universities and research institutions dedicated to studying the environmental and socioeconomic challenges faced by the Baltic Sea. The collaboration among these institutions is essential for advancing our understanding of the region's dynamics and for developing effective solutions to the pressing issues it faces.