

**The Power of the Diaspora: How the Joint Baltic American National Committee Helped with
Baltic Admittance into NATO, 1996-2004**

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Contents

Abstract	iii
List of Figures	iv
Introduction	1
Historiography	4
The Baltic Diaspora in America	7
JBANC and NATO Enlargement	11
Critics and Supporters of Baltic Admittance into NATO	15
Conclusion	18
Works Cited	20

Abstract

Following the end of World War II, many in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania fled the oncoming Soviets. When the Soviet Union occupied and then annexed the Baltic states, many displaced peoples came to the United States. The Baltic diaspora formed different organizations in order to better adapt to life in the United States. These groups became increasingly political and eventually led to the formation of national Baltic-American groups. The Joint Baltic American National Committee, or JBANC, is one of these groups. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union they helped in the organization of the Baltic diaspora during NATO enlargement during the 1990's through the early 2000's. They worked towards getting the United States government's support to the admittance of the three Baltic countries into NATO. This paper looks at their role and the role of the Baltic diaspora in bringing about changes in foreign policy.

List of Figures

Figure 1. Map of the Baltic States	1
Figure 2. Map of NATO including the year countries were added.	11
Figure 3. JBANC Logo	11
Figure 4. Current Map of NATO Countries	16

Introduction

“Our Alliance has made a solemn pledge of protection, and anyone who would choose Lithuania as an enemy has also made an enemy of the United States of America. In the face of aggression, the brave people of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia will never again stand alone.”¹ President George W. Bush spoke these words in December of 2002 to a crowd of thankful citizens from Vilnius, Lithuania. It had just been announced that Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, along with four other countries, would be invited to join NATO. This brought hope to millions of Baltic residents. The Baltic diaspora in the United States was thankful that all of their work was paying off, that their efforts were bringing security to their former homelands. This had not been an easy road and there had been plenty of roadblocks during the admittance process, including dealing with their former occupiers, the Soviet Union.



Figure 1. Map of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Source: <http://aboutworldlanguages.com/awl-images/BalticBranch/images/BalticMap.jpg>

¹ Bush, George W. "Address to the Citizens of Vilnius Rotuse." Speech, Vilnius, Lithuania, December 1, 2002.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Baltic states decided to continue their quest towards becoming a part of the Western world. After creating a stable democracy and infrastructure, they looked for security. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania never wanted to become swallowed by one of their neighbors again, but they were small and had limited resources to develop a large military force. In order to get the security that they desired, the Baltic states strived to join NATO. However, Russia was still looking towards their former territories and still wanted to shape their economic and political environments. Russian experts highlighted their concern, "...a 1995 report by Moscow's Council on Foreign and Defence Policy warned that should NATO enlargement go ahead, 'the Baltic states and Ukraine would become a zone of intense strategic rivalry.'"² This threat did not stop the Baltic states from continuing to want to be a part of NATO. Even their diaspora community in the United States got involved in urging the United States government to push for Baltic admission into NATO.

During and after World War II, there were many from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania that immigrated to the United States. Many were the political and cultural elite that were trying to escape the Soviets and their mass deportations to Siberia. Those who made it to the United States settled across the country and shortly after, started to form cultural groups. One such group was the Wisconsin Latvian Association. These statewide groups led to nation-wide groups including the American Latvian Association, INC., the Estonian American National Council, INC., and the Lithuanian American Council, INC. These groups were formed or reorganized between 1940 and 1952. Each organization agreed to be represented by the Joint

² James Greene "Russian Responses to NATO and EU Enlargement and Outreach." *Russia and Eurasia Programme*, (June, 2012): 6, [https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Russia and Eurasia/0612bp_greene.pdf](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Russia%20and%20Eurasia/0612bp_greene.pdf) (accessed September 30, 2015).

Baltic American National Committee, or JBANC. JBANC was created in 1962 and worked as the public affairs bureau for the three parent organizations. JBANC worked with members of Congress, the White House, the State Department, and other agencies in order to promote the agenda of Baltic Americans.

JBANC played a large role in gaining support from the US government for the Baltic states to join NATO. With the help of its three parent organizations, the Baltic diaspora community mobilized and called on their state Senators to support NATO enlargement that would include Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Letters were sent, hearings and briefings were held, appeals to activists were sent, and meetings upon meetings took place in order to insure that the Baltic states would become a part of NATO. From 1996 until 2004 many people worked tirelessly to have this dream become a reality. While working as an intern at JBANC during the summer of 2015, I came across a compilation of documents that showed just how much effort went into NATO enlargement. Ordinary American citizens with Baltic heritage played their part and did what they could to make sure their former homeland would be protected.

Why did so many do so much to insure their ancestral land would become a part of NATO? What role did JBANC play in mobilizing the Baltic diaspora to achieve this goal? How have Baltic diaspora groups, like JBANC, played a role in foreign policy here in the United States? How has the purpose of these groups changed over time and become more political since the beginnings of the Cold War? This paper will investigate these questions and explore how Baltic organizations like JBANC have become a powerful and useful tool in getting the diaspora community more involved with foreign policy issues, especially when it comes to getting the United States more involved with Baltic issues like admittance into NATO.

Historiography

The Baltic states have been caught between two worlds for most of their existence. They have been the bridge between the East and the West. Throughout their times of independence and even during occupation by the Nazis and the Soviet Union, they have been looking West, wanting to become a part of the Western world. Much has been written on the Baltic states especially concerning their political situation during the 20th century. The end of World War II brought many Baltic refugees to the US, especially those who were in Displaced Persons camps at the end of the war. These refugees became a part of American society but also became quite vocal about the situation in their home countries and their being a part of the Soviet Bloc.

The Baltic Nations and Europe: Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania in the Twentieth Century by John Hiden and Patrick Salmon, focuses on the political atmosphere of the Baltic states during the 20th century. This book was published in 1991 but before the Baltic states became independent and before the Soviet Union ceased to exist by 1992. The authors discuss the early history of the Baltic nations and then their brief independence from 1918 to 1940. Their brief years of independence were rife with problems both politically and economically and also in developing an infrastructure within each of the three nations. Following 1940 the Baltic states were occupied by the Soviet Union, taken over by Nazi Germany, and then reoccupied and annexed by the Soviet Union where they became a part of the Soviet Bloc in 1945. The 1980's brought a reawakening of the Baltic republics thanks to glasnost and perestroika. "The current Baltic 're-awakening' consciously echoes the national awakening of the nineteenth century;

unlike the other Soviet nationalities the three republics draw on the achievements of twenty years of independent statehood between the First and Second World Wars; they take comfort too from the preservation of their national identities through fifty years of Soviet rule.”³

The end of World War II brought many Baltic refugees to the United States, especially those that fled towards Western Europe during the last few months of the war in order to escape the Soviets. Many of these individuals that fled were put into DP camps and later granted visas to live in the United States. Many of these refugees became not only passionate about assimilating into American culture but also in doing what they could do politically to help their former nations. “Convergence and Divergence Yesterday and Today in Diaspora- National Government Relations,” by Tony Smith, is an article that deals with these complex relations of, “American governmental foreign policy goals and those of diasporas (or ethnic groups) in the United States regarding US foreign policy toward their ancestral homelands.”⁴ The author pays special attention to the roles of the Poles, Czechoslovaks, Balts, Hungarians, Jews, Greeks, Armenians, and Cuban diasporas for their roles during the Cold War and putting pressure on the American government to be firm against Moscow.⁵

Jonathan H. L’Hommedieu writes in the chapter titled “The Baltic Freedom Committees: Politics and Policies of an Exile Community” from the book *The Inauguration of the “Organized Political Warfare,”* that it was vitally important for there to be organized political groups from

³ John Hiden and Patrick Salmon. *The Baltic Nations and Europe: Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Longman House 1991), 1

⁴ Tony Smith. "Convergence and Divergence Yesterday and Today in Diaspora-National Government Relations." In *Diaspora Lobbies and the US Government: Convergence and Divergence in Making Foreign Policy*, (NYU Press, 2014), 239

⁵ *Ibid.*, 247

the exiled Baltic community in order to work as lay people between the US government and those who were still living in the Baltic republics and their exiled governments. "From 1942 to 1945, roughly 60,000 Estonians, 100,000 Latvians, and 50,000 Lithuanians fled. Baltic Displaced Persons refused to repatriate to the Soviet Union from the American and British zones of occupation in Germany during the postwar period."⁶ The author highlights how this exiled community played a large role in helping American officials to serve as weapons against the Soviet Union. He highlights the importance of the Baltic community in bringing awareness to the American public through the commemoration of holidays and the publication of journals.⁷

In the article "Diaspora Politics: Ethnic Linkages, Foreign Policy, and Security in Eurasia," authors Charles King and Neil J. Melvin focus on the collapse of the Soviet Union and how that created a "big bang" in the study of the trans-state dimensions of ethnicity "...new states emerged that defined themselves as ethnic homelands even though their core nations stretched across newly established boundaries."⁸ The authors state that diasporas are mostly constructed by political and cultural elites and these individuals play a large part in the political involvement of diaspora communities. However, there are constraints between the host state and their dispersed ethnic group abroad. There can be domestic struggles in the kin state over the importance of relations with the diaspora, the sense of attachment to the homeland among

⁶ Jonathan H. L'Hommedieu, "The Baltic Freedom Committees: Politics and Policies of an Exile Community." In *The Inauguration of "Organized Political Warfare"*, (Central European University Press, 2013),pg 200

⁷ *Ibid.*, 218

⁸ Charles King and Neil J. Melvin. "Diaspora Politics: Ethnic Linkages, Foreign Policy, and Security in Eurasia." *International Security* 24, no. 3, (Winter, 1999-2000):110, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2539307> (accessed October 5, 2015).

the diaspora, competing foreign policy within the kin state, and economic resources to reach out to the diaspora.⁹ The authors compare and contrast several different Soviet successor states and their diaspora politics and their effectiveness or lack thereof. This article is important in illustrating the dimensions of ethnicity and how the diaspora from various states can or cannot play a role in foreign policy in order to benefit their kin state.

The Baltic Diaspora in America

The signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939 by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union brought with it not only war and destruction for much of Eastern Europe but also the end of independence for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. With the signing of the pact and the Nazi invasion of Poland, World War II officially began and the Baltic states were soon occupied by Soviet forces. This occupation brought mass deportations of the intelligentsia and the formation of a communist government in the three countries. Those who had the ways and means quickly fled westward but many could not escape. Then, in one of the largest military operations of the war, the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union on June 22nd, 1941. This occupation was also brutal, especially for the large Jewish population living within the three Baltic countries. In 1944 the Soviet Union pushed back the Nazis and reoccupied the Baltic states. Many Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians fled the oncoming Soviets. Some were so desperate that they fled on foot! The refugees made their way towards Germany and France and following the end of the war, were put into DP camps in the British and American controlled areas. Once the war ended, the Baltic states were annexed by the Soviet Union and became

⁹ King and Melvin, "Diaspora Politics: Ethnic Linkages, Foreign Policy, and Security in Eurasia," 110.

communist republics behind the Iron Curtain. Those Baltic refugees in DP camps knew there was no going back to their homeland so many of them immigrated to the United States.

Between 1944 and 1956, about 15,000 Estonians were accepted to immigrate to the United States.¹⁰ Around 30,000 Lithuanian refugees were accepted into the United States following the passage of the Displaced Persons Act of 1948.¹¹ The largest groups of Baltic refugees following World War II were Latvians; about 40,000 displaced persons came to the United States.¹² The Baltic refugees settled across the United States and worked towards establishing communal groups in order to ease their transition into American society. One of these groups was the Wisconsin Latvian Association. The exile population that came from the DP camps in Germany and Austria was a microcosm of the Latvian state, complete with social, political, economic, educational, and other cultural leaders that helped to successfully transplant camp life to the United States.¹³

The Wisconsin Latvian Association was established in 1950 and worked towards creating a strong Latvian community in Wisconsin. The location of the group was in Wauwatosa, County of Milwaukee, State of Wisconsin. The primary objectives of the club was: to aid, encourage, and foster rehabilitation and resettlement of displaced Latvians, to create friendships and maintain knowledge of Latvian art and culture, to assist all Latvians in learning and adjusting to

¹⁰ *Immigration to US*. <http://immigrationtous.net> (accessed October 26, 2015).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Juris Veidemanis. "Latvian Settlers in Wisconsin: A Comparative View." *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 45, no. 4 (Summer 1962):253 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4633772> . (accessed September 30, 2015).

life in the United States, and to aid and encourage Latvians to become good citizens of the United States.¹⁴ “Though virtually inoperative after 1955, the association established a pattern of state-wide contact and co-operation that has since been maintained.”¹⁵ Groups like this were extremely important in creating a community within the United States and set the foundation for diaspora groups to be involved not only with cultural activities but also political activism and forming support for their former homeland.

Nationwide groups also developed using the same ideas. The American Latvian Association was founded on February 24, 1951. There were 115 delegates who participated at the founding congress and they represented the local Latvian churches and organizations in the United States with 11,260 members. The main goals of the American Latvian Association were and are to facilitate cooperation within the Latvian American community and to support cultural activities. They also promote the study of Latvian history, language, and culture. When needed, the American Latvian Association has worked to seek peaceful and democratic development of Latvia by promoting understanding and support for Latvia through educational and informational efforts in the United States.¹⁶ The American Latvian Association is one of the parent organizations that makes up JBANC. The Estonian American National Council and the Lithuanian American Council share similar goals and are the other two parent organizations to JBANC. During the road for NATO enlargement, these three organizations worked alongside

¹⁴ Wisconsin Latvian Association, Articles of Organization, 1955.

¹⁵ Veidemanis, “Latvian Settlers in Wisconsin: A Comparative View” 253.

¹⁶ *American Latvian Association, LLC*. <http://www.alausa.org> (accessed October 20, 2015).

JBANC to mobilize their diaspora communities in order to have their elected officials in their state support the addition of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to NATO.

NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, was created during a gathering of representatives from a dozen nations of Europe and the Western Hemisphere on April 4, 1949.¹⁷ The twelve countries to sign the North Atlantic Treaty were Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, and the United States. The point of this treaty and the creation of NATO was to promote security, especially against the Soviet Union. “The North Atlantic Treaty’s critical component is Article 5, in which the signatories agree that ‘an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all,’ and pledges to assist one another...”¹⁸ The Soviet Union responded to the formation of NATO by creating the Warsaw Pact. This Pact was created on May 14, 1955 after West Germany joined NATO. The Warsaw Pact’s founding document was a mirror image of the North Atlantic Treaty but there was one enormous difference. The East European states did not join the Warsaw Pact of their own free will; Moscow forced them into it.¹⁹ The end of the Cold War and the

¹⁷ Zoltan Barany. “NATO at Sixty.” *Journal of Democracy* 20, no 2 (April, 2009):108 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/jod/summary/v020/20.2.barany.html>. (accessed December 1, 2015).

¹⁸ Ibid., 109.

¹⁹ Ibid., 111.

dissolution of the Soviet Union brought with it a flood of East European countries that wanted the added security of being a member of NATO.

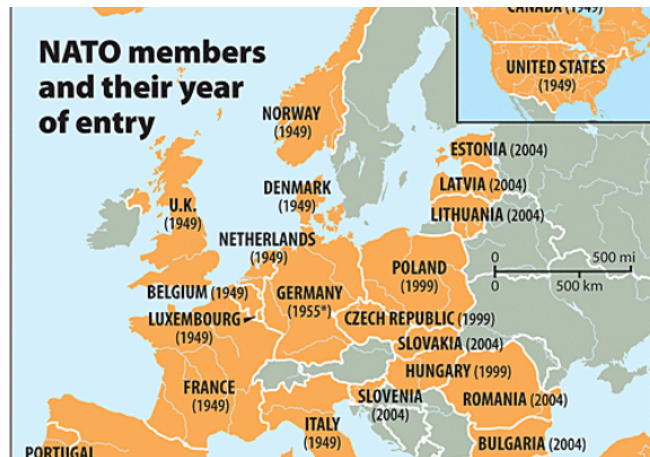


Figure 2. Map of NATO including the year countries were added. Source: http://images.csmonitor.com/csmarchives/2008/03/ONATO_G1_L.gif?alias=standard_600x400

JBANC and NATO Enlargement

JBANC was founded in 1961 as an organization that would coordinate efforts to help regain the freedom and independence of the three Baltic peoples. It worked not only to support the restoration of independence but also human rights and democracy to the Baltic countries by uniting the efforts of the Estonian American National Council, the American Latvian Association, and the Lithuanian American Council. It acted, and continues to do so today, as the liaison of the Baltic communities with Capitol Hill and the White House as well as the information agent to the three parent organizations.²⁰

²⁰ Vello Ederma. "The Baltic Road to NATO: JBANC's NATO Years 1996-2004" Activities of the Joint Baltic American National Committee to Help Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania Join NATO. Joint Baltic American National Committee, Rockville, MD pg 20.



Figure 3. Joint Baltic American National Committee logo. Source: <http://jbanc.org/>

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992, the Baltic countries had regained their independence and started to work their way to becoming a part of NATO. The United States and the European Union were eager to include many former Soviet Bloc countries into their fold and worked with them in order to meet the criteria to become a NATO member state. The support of the United States government was critical so the Baltic diaspora started their efforts. “We believe unequivocally that the only way to guarantee the future security, independence and prosperity of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania is membership in NATO. Anything else means gray zones, vacuums, red lines and spheres of influence that must remain in the past.”²¹ JBANC believed that a free, prosperous, and secure Baltic area would create stability and security in Europe which was in the national interest of the United States.²²

The process for NATO enlargement began in 1994 when the Baltic countries joined NATO’s Partnership for Peace program. Next came the Baltic Action Plan, which then became in January 1998, the U.S.-Baltic Partnership Charter. This charter was the tool for Baltic integration into the European and transatlantic communities. By the time of George W. Bush’s presidency, there was talk of support for NATO enlargement in the highest levels of the United States

²¹ Vello Ederma. “The Baltic Road to NATO: JBANC’s NATO Years 1996-2004”

²² Ibid.

government. October of 2002 brought the resolution called the “Transatlantic Security and NATO Enhancement Resolution of 2002,” which passed through the House 358-9. The NATO Summit of November 2002 brought with it invitations for the Baltic countries to begin membership negotiations with the Alliance. On May 8, 2003, the United States Senate voted in favor of NATO enlargement. Finally on March 29, 2004 the Prime Ministers of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania presented the protocols of accession to the United States Secretary of State Colin Powell and officially became a part of NATO.²³ This was a long road of hard work that was largely helped along by the loud voice of the Baltic diaspora and JBANC, along with their three parent organizations. Not only was the Baltic diaspora involved, but also many Eastern European countries like Poland and the Czech Republic helped in promoting Baltic admittance into NATO.

JBANC did what was needed in order to insure that the Baltic states would be added to NATO and vowed that they would work at it for as long as it took in order for their goal to be realized. In 1999, the new JBANC Chairman, Vello Ederma expressed his thoughts on JBANC and its role in NATO enlargement:

“For thirty years prior to 1991, JBANC worked for the independence of the three countries. We never gave up. We worked together. From 1991 to whenever it takes, JBANC will work, all together, to secure the independence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. From the JBANC perspective, it means Baltic membership in NATO. It will not be easy. We must avoid pitfalls. Lack of cooperation, coordination and contact hurts rather than helps. To be effective, our effort must be coordinated. JBANC is not interested in promoting itself. It is, however, interested in promoting and helping Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. We need the help of all Baltic Americans across the United States. Just as important, we need the help of all friends of the Baltic countries.”²⁴

²³ Vello Ederma. “The Baltic Road to NATO: JBANC’s NATO Years 1996-2004” 42.

²⁴ Ibid., JBANC 1999 Third Conference on Baltic Security Wrap-up, 78.

JBANC called on the Baltic diaspora to do their part and help to spread the word and volunteer their time as advocates for Baltic NATO admittance. They remind those that belonged to the three parent organizations and those that followed JBANC, that there is still more work to be done even if Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are independent.

JBANC organized conferences concerning Baltic security and admittance into NATO. The conference in 1999 was one that dealt with this issue. They had a wide variety of guest speakers from the former United States Ambassador to Estonia, Lawrence Taylor to Ms. Helle Bering, the Editorial page Editor of the "Washington Times."²⁵ Those who were a part of the Baltic diaspora and friends of it who were not able to attend the conference could read a summary of the remarks in the "JBANC Chronicle." The "JBANC Chronicle" and their webpage played a critical role in keeping the diaspora in the loop on what was going on in Washington and what they could do to help edge the process along. Letters were sent to Senators in 2001 reminding them of their Baltic constituents. The letter started by telling the Senators that JBANC represented the one million Americans of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian heritage and that they all strongly support NATO enlargement.²⁶ Newsletters were sent out to members of the three parent organizations that urged them to sign and send in a copy of a letter to their state representatives and senators urging them to support Baltic admittance into NATO. JBANC even sent out questionnaires to presidential candidates before the 2000 election in order to give the Baltic diaspora a better understanding of what candidates thoughts are on Baltic affairs

²⁵ Ederma. "The Baltic Road to NATO: JBANC's NATO Years 1996-2004" JBANC 1999 Third Conference on Baltic Security Wrap-up, 79.

²⁶ Ibid. Letter to Senators, pg 111.

and Baltic admittance into NATO.²⁷ The questions ranged from the candidates thoughts on the timetable for NATO expansion to what steps they would take to increase foreign aid and the efficiency of its spending. Hundreds of letters were sent to senators, state representatives, officials in the State Department, and the White House, reminding them about the one million Baltic Americans and their desire to see the Baltic states secure and a part of NATO.

Critics and Supporters of Baltic Admittance to NATO

One of the largest critics of Baltic admittance into NATO was Russia. In fact, it unconditionally opposed the Baltic states' admittance into NATO and even claimed that it would cause a rupture in relations between Russia and the West. "Moscow will, in any event, probably aim to preserve regional insecurity and prevent NATO's enlargement to the Baltic. Nonetheless, NATO is committed to enlargement and must accept its obligations."²⁸ Why would Russia view this as a catastrophic mistake? The general thought was that if NATO expanded to Russia's very borders, it would be a threat to their sovereignty and their security. Russia also viewed the Baltic Sea as their sphere of influence, not the West's.²⁹ Throughout history, that has been the view of Russia and continues even to this day.

Other critics argued that this would provoke Russia too much and cause political and economic repercussions. Some were even afraid that Baltic admittance into NATO would lead to heavy military pressure and the Balts being once again dependent on Moscow. Articles

²⁷ Ederma. "The Baltic Road to NATO: JBANC's NATO Years 1996-2004" JBANC Questionnaire for Presidential Candidates, 114.

²⁸ Stephen Blank. "NATO Enlargement, and the Baltic States." *World Affairs* 160, no. 3 (Winter, 1999): 115 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20672519>. (accessed September 30, 2015).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 251.

painted the picture that the United States Congress would vote against Baltic admittance because of these risks. "The Clinton Administration is seeking to give the Balts, and the Baltic-American lobbies, the impression that the Baltic states will definitely be invited to join NATO if not in the first round of enlargement, then without fail in the second. But it is by no means certain that the votes in Congress for such a radical step will in the end be forthcoming."³⁰ Many worried that if this did go through, the Russians would look at it as a major defeat and Russia would respond negatively towards the United States.

JBANC had to wage battle against these loud voices that expressed concern over how Baltic admittance into NATO would affect relations with Russia. The United States government and NATO reminded JBANC, the Baltic American community, and the Baltic governments to "not do anything stupid." This gentle reminder was put on JBANC's webpage and sent in emails to subscribers to remind them that they must stay the course and to not do anything that would jeopardize their admittance into NATO.³¹ They stressed that in order to make sure the Baltic states are admitted into NATO that everyone must work together, citizens and Baltic-American organizations. They must communicate and be careful to all have the same message, it would hurt, rather than help their cause. "We know that the Russians have launched a campaign to keep the Balts out of NATO. We stay out of shouting matches or name-calling. Their anger will harm them more than it will harm the Balts. Our anger could help kill the vote of a crucial senator. We stay factual and measured and raise decibels only when necessary. But

³⁰ Anatol Lieven,. "Baltic Iceberg Dead Ahead: NATO Beware." *The World Today* 52, no. 7 (1996): 175, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40475857> (accessed September 30, 2015).

³¹ Ederma. "The Baltic Road to NATO: JBANC's NATO Years 1996-2004" Notes on NATO and the Baltics email, (March 30, 2002): 67.

we must stay firm with our message.”³² JBANC would often write letters to newspapers and news stations if they noticed anything that was not reported correctly. They were always cordial and supported their thoughts with facts. These emails and letters were a way to remind the diaspora that JBANC was on top of things and that Baltic-Americans must stay calm during this critical time, especially when incorrect things were being reported in the news.

Besides the support of the Baltic-American community, many Eastern Europeans and their diaspora in the United State supported Baltic admittance into NATO. Following the admittance of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary in NATO, their diaspora community spoke avidly of their support for Baltic admittance. Even their governments said at a NATO summit in Madrid that there will be an “open door policy” towards more ne members.³³ The Central and East European Coalition worked with JBANC in order to make this become a reality. This organization is comprised of diaspora groups from 18 national membership organizations that represent more than 22 million Americans who trace their heritage to that part of the world.³⁴ This large number of Americans was a force to reckoned with, especially those that were avid speakers and supporters of Baltic admittance. By continuing their support for continued enlargement of NATO, United States officials heard and voted for Baltic admittance.

³² Ederma, “The Baltic Road to NATO: JBANC’s NATO Years 1996-2004” Notes on NATO and the Baltics email, (March 30, 2002): 68.

³³ Mark Kramer, "NATO, the Baltic States, and Russia: A Framework for Sustainable Enlargement." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 78, no. 4 (2002): 737 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3095754> (accessed September 30, 2015).

³⁴ Ederma. “The Baltic Road to NATO: JBANC’s NATO Years 1996-2004” CEEC Testimony before Foreign Operations Subcommittee. (April 2, 2003): 32.



Figure 3. NATO's 28 member countries as of today. Source: <http://www.google.com/>

Conclusion

With the addition of the Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into NATO, there is a sense of added security in Europe. The Baltic states also have a feeling of safety knowing that they are a part of a larger organization that will offer military support should they ever face attack from another country again. The work of the Joint Baltic American National Committee and its three parent organizations, the American Latvian Association, the Estonian American National Council, and the Lithuanian American Council, helped to mobilize their communities in the United States in order to make it happen. The effort of the diaspora community in regards to NATO enlargement was astounding. Individuals and diaspora groups like JBANC were able to educate and advocate for Baltic admittance into NATO. They worked together with other diaspora organizations from Central and East Europe to make their voices even louder.

JBANC and its parent organizations became the mouth piece and organizational force for the Baltic diaspora. They would tell their followers what needed to be said and gave them ways in which to do it. They became a unifying force in bringing together different Baltic-American organizations and the Baltic diaspora here in the United States. They became a fundamental link between the United States government and the Baltic embassies. They found ways to inform the diaspora community on what was going on in Washington by using the “JBANC Chronicle” and by sending emails to their subscribers to give them up to date information. Their advocacy, and that of the Baltic diaspora, helped pave the way towards Baltic admittance into NATO. The addition of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania has brought a greater sense of security to the Baltic countries. They participated in multiple NATO exercises and also were present with NATO forces in Afghanistan. They may be small countries, but the Baltic states are willing to work hard and participate in whatever their NATO allies ask of them. The hard work of JBANC, Baltic- American organizations, and the Baltic diaspora helped to bring about a positive change for their former and ancestral homelands.

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