

How will integration into the Euro-Atlantic community help create security, stability, and economic development?

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States that control the Eurasian heartland control the periphery, and the states that control the periphery control the world.

Halford Mackinder (1904)

ABSTRACT

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expansion into the “three seas” region would not only help mitigate instability arising from regional rivalries and frozen conflicts, but would give NATO increased capacity for security and peacekeeping missions in Eurasia, Central Asia, and elsewhere. Although major obstacles to integration exist, fomenting wide-ranging cooperation in the “three seas” within the framework of the Trans-Atlantic Alliance is worth pursuing.

INTRODUCTION

Should “the three seas” region (the area between the Black Sea, Caspian Sea, and Mediterranean Sea) be integrated into the Euro-Atlantic security and economic structure? The need for an affirmative answer is becoming increasingly clear. The region between the seas has assumed greater strategic importance due to the presence of huge reserves of natural resources as well as major strategic transport corridors, the control of which will determine the geopolitical future of Eurasia. Both of these reasons have caused this region to become a focus of attention for security, economic, and stability interests of the primary global and regional powers.¹

The United States, the European Union (E.U), China, and Russia, along with several other countries are now trying to exert influence in the region because of the recognized wealth of energy resources.² Currently, most of the countries in “the three seas” region face not only security concerns but also troubles with the consolidation of democratic reforms, economic development, and social modernization. The creation of regional security and economic systems is a logical alternative to the status quo and one that corresponds to the interests of the region and NATO. The Euro-Atlantic structure shows the most potential for long range development on many fronts.

NATO has shown every intention of adapting to the changing strategic environment of the 21st century. NATO continues to assist countries so that they can deal effectively with security issues confronting them in a post Cold War world environment. Today’s key threats—terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), failed states, and organized crime—transcend the traditional confines of borders and continents. In an effort to meet these challenges, NATO is forging new security partnerships with countries across the Mediterranean, Caspian, and Black Seas.

Integration with the EU and NATO should be encouraged for several reasons. The first has to do with creating regional stability. The second would be to reduce the influence of regional actors, such as Russia. After years of maintaining a low key international posture, Russia has begun flexing its muscle: this time focusing on amassing economic power. Russia appears to be attempting to consolidate and expand its virtual gas monopoly throughout Europe. President Vladimir Putin is on record as saying he wants Russia to be an “energy super-power.”³ He plans to do so by controlling gas production and distribution systems not only in Russia but throughout Europe to gain geopolitical influence. The United States has strongly criticized Russia’s actions in this regard, taking Moscow to task for using “energy as a diplomatic weapon.”⁴

However, the United States and the EU seek to wield a diplomatic weapon of their own: an enlarged, fully-integrated NATO populated by Russia’s former Soviet satellites. A strong

¹ James Sperling, “Eurasian Security Governance: New Threats, Institutional Adaptations,” *In Limiting Institutions: The Challenge Of Eurasian Security Governance*, Edited by James Sperling, Sean Kay, and S. Victor Papacosma. (Manchester University Press, 2003).

² STRATFOR, FSU Net Assessment: In search of Revival, Oct 13, 2004.

³ Frederick Kempe, “Thinking Global: *Russia’s Power Play Has High Stakes*,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 2, 2006.

⁴ Peter Finn and Ann Tyson, “U.S.-Russian Exercises Postponed by Moscow,” *Washington Post*, September 6, 2006.

counter presence by NATO may well thwart Russia's ambitions to use energy resources as a vehicle for greater geopolitical dominance in the region. Incipient Ukrainian and Georgian moves to join the NATO alliance speak to the potential role the organization might play in Eurasia and the Caucasus. However, as NATO's potential increases, so too does Russia's sense of encroachment and insecurity. This dynamic tension between competing interests will only become more pronounced as countries grapple with the competing poles of NATO integration versus Russian influence.

If the three seas region were to be integrated into the NATO security alliance the region would be protected from the potential spillover of hostilities over border disputes and power successions. Integration would also prevent other countries from either intervening or being drawn into conflicts. On a similar front, countries in the region could be stabilized through participation in Partnership for Peace (PfP) exercises, which may also stem the growing hegemonic ambition of Russia. Increased relations and involvement would likely be mutually beneficial, providing increased security to Europe while also reducing fears of the Former Soviet Union (FSU) states that they would be left alone to face an increasingly powerful Russia.

Increased NATO and EU presence would have the additional benefit of reducing regional conflicts. This, in turn, would help to secure the oil and gas infrastructure. In short, integration under the NATO security umbrella would potentially enable the three seas region to build stability and security, which would enhance security beyond the current borders of NATO. Further expansion of the Euro-Atlantic security and economic reach would strengthen the region's ability to cope more effectively with security threats.

However, integration of the three seas region within the NATO or EU framework is not without problems. The discussion alone raises controversy and challenges views on how far and how quickly Europe can or should expand. Integrating the FSU states into a Western state system economically, politically, and militarily may make them a focus or intensify rivalry with Russia. Russia still perceives much, if not all, of the three seas region as part of its sphere of interest and deeply resents NATO and EU encroachment. Any attempt by NATO or the EU to integrate the region would alter the current strategic balance of power by pushing Western security forces and influence closer to Russia's borders. Ultimately, this has the potential to reopen conflicts between the United States and Russia.⁵ In fact, security cooperative trends that had been warming between the two nations post-September 11 have now grown considerably colder. This is most illustrative in the recent cancellation of joint U.S.-Russian military exercises.⁶

As it now stands, the acceptance of Ukraine and Georgia into NATO represents a crucial development in terms of security and politics in Russia's "near abroad." Speaking recently, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated, "the acceptance into NATO of Ukraine and Georgia will mean a colossal geopolitical shift and we assess such steps from the point of view of our interests."⁷ Those interests, not surprisingly, are increasingly inconsonant with U.S. and EU visions for the region. The Foreign Minister has been even more blunt in the past, saying: "We didn't want this enlargement, and we will continue to maintain a negative

⁵ STRATFOR, *Battle for the FSU: Cold War in Miniature*, January 9, 2004.

⁶ Stage three of joint military maneuvers, dubbed "Torgau," have been canceled. See Finn and Tyson, "U.S.-Russian Exercises Postponed by Moscow," *Washington Post*, September 6, 2006.

⁷ "Russia Warns Kiev over NATO Plans," *BBC News*, June 7, 2006.

attitude.”⁸ Putin also has made statements along these lines, explaining that NATO “encroachment” warrants the attention of his national security specialists.⁹ There is little doubt that Russia sees NATO enlargement as a clear threat.

To gain an understanding of Russia’s point of view, it is helpful to look at the candidate alliance members more closely. In terms of Georgia’s potential accession to NATO, an observer would need to look no further than its position as the fulcrum in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline to grasp its importance. In addition, the geography of Georgia offers NATO a potential base for operations along the Caspian Sea, giving the security organization the ability to “outflank potential trouble spots . . . [and] combat trafficking in drugs, people, and arms.”¹⁰ In Ukraine’s case, NATO membership would mean the addition of Kiev’s niche strategic air lift capacity to NATO’s burgeoning military capabilities.

The strong words used by Putin and his foreign minister demonstrate that Russia regards Ukrainian and Georgian membership in NATO as a major, unwelcome geopolitical shift.¹¹ Without Ukraine, Russia’s political, economic, and military survivability comes into question, and their geopolitical importance in the region is diminished. The stage is set for an increasingly serious struggle for control over influence in the region, the short and long term consequences of which remain to be seen.

Past discussions concerning integration have focused primarily on security, but current reality dictates these discussions now also encompass economic and environmental security. Both the EU and NATO have come to understand that real national security is dependent on multiple components: physical, trade, and energy security; economic and political development; strong rule of law; and human rights. However, this view is not always shared, or enacted, by the littoral states of the Black and Caspian Seas. States like Armenia and Azerbaijan have major blemishes on their human rights records in dealing with the roughly 1.5 million displaced persons that resulted from the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Moreover, the 2005 election of Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev was reported to be wrought with fraud by international election monitors. Moreover, the most significant reason for resistance of FSU and other littoral states of the region is that issues of military security involve state interests that are more central and jealously guarded than economics, trade, energy, and/or socio-cultural issues. States in the region have significantly different security priorities and regional ambitions that impact how willing they are to make the necessary commitments to integration.

Until full integration within a NATO framework is achieved, Russia likely will continue to exert undue influence on both the regional security and economic environment. Continued involvement by Russia will definitively impact Euro-Atlantic integration. Russia is likely to selectively manipulate and augment linkages and dependencies in order to continue to exert influence in the region. More in the vein of old-world *realpolitik*, it is in Moscow’s interests to perpetuate tensions in the region by complicating resolution of “frozen conflicts” and using natural resources as a tool of influence.¹² Russian strategy in this regard can be seen in the deals they have signed with Ukraine for the price of gas. On the surface this seems like a financial security problem, but the reality is more complicated and centers on the orientation

⁸ “Russia Defends ‘Paranoia’ over NATO Expansion,” *Agence France Presse*, April 2, 2004.

⁹ Oana Lungescu, “U.S. Calms Russia’s NATO Fears,” *BBC News*, March 29, 2004.

¹⁰ David Smith, “Georgia’s Role in NATO Expansion,” *American Chamber of Commerce in Georgia News Magazine*, Issue Three, 2006.

¹¹ “Geopolitical Diary: A Russian Message For NATO,” *STRATFOR*, June 8, 2006.

¹² Lionel Beemer, “Russia and the Frozen Wars,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, September 6, 2006.

of Ukraine between West and East, and over the ability of Russia to regenerate its geopolitical might. The action taken by Russia was meant to drive a wedge between Ukraine and Europe, and between Europe and the United States. The ultimate objective of Russia is to gain control of Europe's gas market by 2015. By 2010, Russia is on track to be the third largest energy exporter to the United States.¹³ Clearly, this is not a coincidence.

Conversely, the relationship between NATO and Russia does not have to be all doom and gloom. There is room for collaboration by way of added security to Russia's southern front. NATO forces are currently working to bring stability and security in Afghanistan, a region that has been of concern to Russian leaders for years.¹⁴ Moreover, issues concerning the security of gas and oil pipelines, transnational crime, the fear of radical Islamic extremism, and weak states, would all be mitigated through greater NATO involvement. This is an area that could be used to build a more collaborative relationship between Russia and NATO.

BACKGROUND

At the end of the Cold War, many believed that a new world environment with new state systems based on shared values, cooperation, and collective security would emerge. Indeed, this hope was expressed not only for Europe but for the entire world. President G.W. Bush termed the transformation a 'New World Order,'¹⁵ in reference to a new international system of states that would replace the bi-polar Cold War order and be based on a consensus among the major powers on international norms, principles of international law, and human rights.

What unfolded was just the opposite, particularly in Eurasia and throughout the FSU states. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, more instability and conflict¹⁶ emerged. The expectation of people during the early stages of post-Communist reform was that the newly independent states would merge seamlessly into a new era of justice, economic prosperity, rule of law, and stability resembling the prevailing status quo in Europe. Instead, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) quickly found themselves in a situation in which they were forced to turn to their own devices to ensure their security.¹⁷

The post Cold War experience in Western Europe suggests that political and economic progress and security integration are closely linked.¹⁸ Security is *sine qua non*—without security countries cannot devote the necessary resources to achieve political and economic stability. Once security has been established, more confidence, time, and resources are available to devote to long-term evolution.

¹³ Andrew E. Kramer, "Russia Re-Energized by Its Natural Resources," *World Security Network*, April 2006.

¹⁴ Ronald D. Asmus and Bruce P. Jackson, "The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom", *German Marshall Fund of the United States*, Policy Review, no. 125.

¹⁵ George Bush, Address to Congress, 11 September 1990, 'Iraqi Aggression Will not Stand', in *United States Policy Information and Texts*, no. 2111, 12 September 1990, 17. See also *National Security Strategy of the United States*. Washington DC, White House, August 1991.

¹⁶ Mohammed Ayoob, *State Making, State Breaking, and State Failure*. In *Turbulent Peace*, Edited by Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, (United States Institute of Peace Press: Washington, DC, 2001).

¹⁷ Sakwa and Webber, 1999.

¹⁸ Solana is quoted in Sean Kay, *NATO and the Future of European Security*, (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, MD, 1998), 108.

In retrospect, the demise of the FSU created a security vacuum in Eurasia and Central Asia which the major powers ignored. This vacuum caused the newly independent countries to take security affairs more or less into their own hands to try and work out bilateral security arrangements that best suited their needs. While long-lasting stability and regional cooperation is largely conditioned by bilateral relations, the requirement for a new "regional order" placed immediate pressure on the fledgling CIS states.¹⁹ Many new arrangements and bilateral relations were forged among the FSU countries without careful consideration of the long-term consequences or ramifications of certain provisions. As such, the mixture of motives and differing visions for future goals made the foundations for cooperation among the FSU creaky at best.

The myriad relationships, not always based on equality or mutual benefit, exacerbated this weak foundation.²⁰ Russia, for example, took advantage of the new states by securing terms and agreements which were highly advantageous to themselves at the expense of the new countries. In most cases, the newly independent states had commercial routes and transit infrastructures which were oriented toward Russia, not to the wider European market. Moscow exploited this dynamic and secured continued geopolitical influence with advantageous access rights to natural resources and other elements of national power that were formerly under the control of the Soviet Union. This is evidenced by the recent agreement between Armenia and Gazprom, the Russian energy monopoly, that makes all Armenian natural gas demands reliant on Russia's Gazprom until 2009.²¹

Today exclusion and fear of external and internal aggression has changed the political landscape as well as relations between countries in the region. This is especially noticeable in Russia's foreign policy, which in recent years has been predicated on a shifting calculation that places geopolitical influence equal if not ahead of economic benefits. For example, Moscow's cutoff of gas to Ukrainian (and, by extension, Western European) energy markets this past winter is an embodiment of this changed rationale. If geopolitical gains come through economic risk, it seems that Russia is willing to make that tradeoff.²² This policy bodes ill for wider security in the region. However, threats to instability in the region have more to do with the absence of institutionalized mechanisms for resolving the inevitable ecological, economic, political, ethnic, military, internal, or international conflicts. This is where NATO can play an important role.

Since the end of the Cold War, the concept of security has undergone drastic changes throughout the world. Much of the West no longer views security through a purely military lens. Increasingly, European powers have come to understand that security must include political and economic perspectives. In support of this new awareness, NATO has adjusted its mission to include crisis management, collective security, peace operations, and has endorsed the creation of a NATO Stability and Reconstruction Force (SRF).²³ NATO's emphasis has shifted from a purely defensive posture to a more proactive stance, which involves ensuring political and economic stability along the borders its member states share with the CIS countries.

¹⁹ Paul van Tongeren, Hans van de Veen, and Juliette Verhoeven ed., *Searching for Peace in Europe and Eurasia*, (Lynne Rienner: London, 2002), 351.

²⁰ Paul van Tongeren, et. al., 351.

²¹ Andrew E. Kramer, "Gazprom Reaches Deal with Armenia," *International Herald Tribune*, 7 April 2006.

²² "The Russian Reversal: Part 1," *STRATFOR*, January 26, 2006.

²³ Hans Binnendijk and Richard Kugler, "Needed—A NATO Stabilization and Reconstruction Force," *Defense Horizon* no. 45, September 2004.

In contrast, Eurasia and Central Asia security continues to be defined primarily as a military issue and little if any attention is spent on economic and political issues. This has created tension between these states and the Western model of holistic integration along economic, political, and military links. Indeed, even on the topic of military cooperation, there are differences. For example, and with some exceptions, the nations of Eurasia and Central Asia show little sincere interest in the fundamental values that underpin the nature of the NATO alliance.²⁴ While Western powers push for the democratizing and transparency-inducing effects of NATO integration (with the United States being the most “evangelical” in this regard), many acknowledge that a central problem lies with attempting to get undemocratic leaders to embrace democratic ideals.²⁵ In many respects, Eurasian and Central Asian nations who support integration see NATO membership in more pragmatic terms: increased national prestige, military modernization (doctrinal as well as technological), access to wider arms sales, and collective security.

THE PROBLEM

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union the balance of power in Eurasia has changed considerably. Security in Eurasia remains highly fluid and more complex because of the multitude of influential actors in the region.²⁶ Unless significant changes are made in the region this trend will continue. Russia, for example, faces growing Islamic extremism in its south, China’s rise to its east, NATO and U.S. “encroachment” to its west.

Additionally, the mixed results of the “colored” revolutions in Central Asia have further complicated matters in the region. Georgia’s Rose revolution brought in the much-praised Mikheil Saakashvili. Although the new government won immediate legitimacy by dismantling the bankrupt remnants of the Shevardnadze era, Georgians have not seen their quality of life or material well-being significantly improve. Furthermore, military adventures in Georgia’s separatist regions have directed resources away from true domestic reform.²⁷ The reversal of fortunes have been even more stark in Ukraine, where Victor Yushchenko’s rise has come full circle as the Russia-backed Yanukovich, the person he ousted, has been elected Prime Minister. While Kiev had made some progress down the path toward NATO, Yanukovich has bluntly stated that Ukraine is not ready to join NATO. While this might be true, the sentiments underpinning the statement speak to the growing obstacles toward NATO enlargement.²⁸

These internal political developments, coupled with wider discord over visions for regional security, signal that it will be extremely difficult to find common ground among nations in the region.

²⁴ Eugene Rumer and Jeffrey Simon, “Toward a Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region,” *The Institute for National Strategic Studies :Occasional Paper*, (National Defense University Press: Washington, DC, April 2006), 4.

²⁵ Martha Brill Olcott, “Prepared Testimony Before the House Committee on International Relations: Hearings on the Middle East and Central Asia,” U.S. House of Representatives, April 26, 2006.

²⁶ Richard Weitz, “Averting a New Great Game in Central Asia,” *The Washington Quarterly*, 29:3, 2006.155-167.

²⁷ Fiona Hill, “Beyond the Colored Revolutions,” Keynote Speech, Eurasian Studies Society 6th Annual Conference, Boston University, September 30, 2005.

²⁸ “Ukraine: Yanukovich Takes NATO off the Table,” *STRATFOR*, September 14, 2006.

Conflicts between countries within a region determine to what extent each country is willing to develop relations with the others in the sphere of their strategic interests. Ongoing conflicts inevitably prevent the creation of close relations between countries, hinder their full-scale participation in international institutions, and pose considerable difficulties for the development of security, political, and economic infrastructures.²⁹ Right now the Southern Caucasus countries of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia are all involved in separatist conflicts. In Central Asia, all five countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) still have problems with each other over border disputes and access to natural resources. These issues limit the potential for cooperation and undermine efforts aimed at moving the region toward greater integration.

One way to overcome these regional conflicts and threats and implement regional economic development projects is to create new comprehensive security structures that establish a basis for cooperation in the interests of all countries within the region. NATO stands poised to serve in this capacity. NATO and the EU have the experience and the mechanisms for effectively resolving and terminating conflicts. Extending the NATO security blanket over the region would allow their experience and capabilities in conflict prevention and crisis management to reach new areas. The benefits provided by NATO naturally pertain first to defense and security. To the extent that states fall under NATO's influence, it becomes progressively much more difficult to develop inter-member conflicts. NATO has the experience and processes in place to create a democratic political and military order among its members that will prevent conflicts from developing into full scale wars. The stability provided by NATO over the past four decades attracts other states because the systems in place restrain militaries, thereby forcing countries to build more democratic, transparent, and accountable governments and militaries in order to apply for membership.

WHY INTEGRATION IS NEEDED

The question that needs to be addressed is how relevant Eurasia is to the security concerns of the Trans-Atlantic community. If the political, economic, and security leaders of the EU decide that the situation in Eurasia will affect them, then Europe must make a concerted effort to integrate Eurasia into the Euro-Atlantic security network. One way of creating stability in the region is to integrate the region into the Euro-Atlantic security system, specifically NATO.

Successful integration of the region will close the security gap between Europe and the southern boundaries of NATO. Integration, in turn, will create greater stability for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in a broader Euro-Atlantic security and economic framework. It also would substantially reduce threats and risks to regional security because it would force states to resolve regional conflicts before being admitted. Additionally, integration would restrict China's global strategic position and provide the added benefit of improving the security of the oil and gas infrastructure and guaranteeing that no one state within the region could be held hostage to another.

²⁹ Alexander Goncharenko, "Caspian-Black Sea Security Challenges and the Regional Security Structures," *The Quarterly Journal*, vol. III, no. 2, June 2004.

Other nations and powers have begun to recognize their own self-interest in the region and to exert influence. U.S. interests in the region involve both economics and security. U.S. policy objectives for the region include the creation of an environment of security that enables governments to make hard economic choices. The long term security objective is stability, which requires democratization made up of the rule of law and good governance that is transparent and accountable. This approach hopefully will support the development of sovereign and independent countries who can withstand the influence of Russia.

If the CIS countries fail to successfully integrate into NATO and/or the EU, considerable security problems may lie ahead. The successes and failures of past collective security agreements have frequently been attributed to the extent of common values at stake and the willingness of states to shoulder the common burden.³⁰ The situation is no different in regard to the issue of NATO enlargement. What complicates matters is that there is little consensus among the existing NATO members on what these new memberships would entail.³¹ This inability to foster a collective identity encompassing the European and Eurasian states will impair international cooperation and institution building.

As previously stated, integration is not without its challenges. Eurasian states all share unfortunate traits such as porous borders and ethnic tension both within and across borders. They are generally poorer than European countries and cannot afford much in the way of military modernization, self-promotion, or investment development. Geopolitically, these are not substantial states, nor do they have much power—not because they have small armies or lack nuclear weapons. Rather, these are generally weak states as gauged by the degree to which they are unable to provide public goods, such as security and justice, with assured regularity. Additionally, their sovereign authority is often questioned. Yet their inability to ensure security does not equate to a need for less security. These states share a need for heightened security guarantees.³² Afghanistan and the Taliban takeover have shown the potential consequences for citizens, nearby nations and states, as well as the international system when a failed state is isolated from the rest of the world. It follows that security policy development, coordination, and cooperation are and will remain important to the region. The challenge will be to foster cooperation in such a manner that regional problems and rivalries will be mitigated rather than intensified.

Security is generally guaranteed when a state has a strong military to deter attacks. Yet, ironically, developing military strength is often seen as a threat by neighboring countries which then feel compelled to increase their own military investment. This process actually decreases security for all, rather than increasing security for a single state. Hence, any effort to develop a security policy that covers Eurasia and Central Asia has to focus on more than just military security. For the foreseeable future most of the states in the region will continue to rely heavily for their security on the development of well-organized national military forces. They will depend less on alliances or coalitions which are poorly institutionalized and could be a transient phenomena in a period of rapid transformation.³³

³⁰ Gregory Gleason and Marat Shaihtudinov, "Collective Security and Non-State Actors in Eurasia," *International Studies Perspectives*, vol. 6, no. 2, May 2005, 274-275.

³¹ "The Future of NATO-EU Relations," Conference Summary, *The Atlantic Council of the United States*, June 1-2, 2006.

³² Gleason and Shaihtudinov, 280.

³³ Roy Allison, "Sub-regional Cooperation and Security in the CIS," *Building Security in the New States of Eurasia*, East-West Institute, 2000.

For example, Kazakhstan will continue a close relationship with Russia because of:

- Uneasiness over the geopolitical potential of China,
- Large ethnic Russian population, and
- Joint and permeable border.

Tajikistan, in contrast to its neighbors, was the last holdout CIS state to join NATO's PFP, doing so only in the wake of the September 11 attacks on the United States.³⁴ In this vein, Dushanbe's response seemed to have more to do with pragmatic choices made in the national interest rather than ideological affinity for the Trans-Atlantic Alliance. This is coincident with the calculations made by many of the nations in the region. However, this need not be a blemish on cooperation potential among the states in the region. In recent years, a renewed focus on counter-terrorism and counter-trafficking (whether in humans, small arms, or drugs) cements the importance of the PFP. In many ways, the PFP has become a de facto institutional structure for security policy development in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

According to Karl Deutsch, there are four aspects to regional integration: "maintaining peace, attaining greater multipurpose capabilities, accomplishing some specific task, and gaining a new self-image and role identity."³⁵ To the degree that NATO and other security organizations effectively systematize and expand their "defense diplomacy" and mutual cooperation in the region, they will certainly facilitate accomplishment of all these goals for the region and establish new capabilities and a new identity for Europe, Eurasia, and its security.

NATO and the EU are confronted with the challenge of maintaining a stable, secure, and economically prosperous region when boarding states who are not part of an integrated Euro-Atlantic have known far too little of such conditions. Today NATO and the EU are at a critical juncture for future development. The Euro-Atlantic community is at a watershed as it considers bringing those states that border the northern fringes of the Black Sea into the fold. The Southern Caucasus states of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan have stated openly that they seek integration into the West—into a Europe that is whole and free. They recognize that they have accepted considerable political and economic risks by their public assertion. Especially because integrating into the Euro-Atlantic system likely will take decades to achieve.

Yet if the region is allowed to continue in its old ways, it likely will remain as it has been for much of the previous 70 years under the Russian influence and be a gray zone of weak, vulnerable, and insecure states. The legacy of ethnic tension, political diversity, and fragmented national identities permeates this former Soviet sphere. As such, it becomes an unstable region that would be dangerous and could require the involvement of outside powers to intervene if conflicts spill beyond the borders.

³⁴ Jeffrey Simon, "Partnership for Peace: Charting a Course for a New Era," *U.S. and NATO: An Alliance of Purpose*, U.S. Info-EJournal, June 2004. Available at: <<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itps/0604/ijpe/simon.htm>>.

³⁵ Karl Deutsch, *The Analysis of International Relations*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1978), 239-240; Farkhod Tolipov, "Nationalism as a Geopolitical Phenomenon: the Central Asian Case," *Central Asian Survey*, vol. XX, no. 2, June 2001, 192.

The real question is how deeply the Euro-Atlantic countries want to become involved in integration? At what pace? And at what price? How should NATO and the EU respond to requests by the FSU countries to join? Is either NATO or the EU really prepared to let requesting nations join? What other options are available? Can the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and the Pact's associated measures provide the needed framework and impetus for what is necessary in the region? These are among the critically important questions that now have to be addressed within the Euro-Atlantic community.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to facilitate the integration of Eurasia, there are policy considerations that the U.S. and Europe must take into account. By way of offering guidance in this regard, the following recommendations are made:

- Although an alliance with NATO (premised on security cooperation) offers the most direct route to tying into a common order the nations in the region, it is also important to note that long-term stability will be predicated on a shared cultural commitment to political participation, governmental transparency, and economic prosperity. To this end, the U.S. and Europe should use military cooperation measures as but one piece in a holistic approach to build ties.³⁶ Dramatically increasing funding for educational exchange programs such as the Fulbright and Humphrey Fellowships would help the cultivation of common ideals.³⁷ These programs also go some way in easing regional tensions by placing nationals into settings that allow for candid exchanges among nationalities that would otherwise not interact with one another (dialogue among Armenian and Azerbaijan graduate students for example).
- Interested states, regional organizations, and the Euro-Atlantic community should continue to strengthen their participation in partnership building forums and structures. Thus far, the best programs serving as conduits for cooperation are NATO's Partnership for Peace programs along with other outreach activities—those that cooperate on scientific and environmental programs.³⁸ “These programs offer opportunities to create a more favorable environment for stable development in the whole Euro-Atlantic area” without the political squabbling.³⁹ For example, NATO's science program is helping to fund the link-up of information systems of its institutes for seismological analysis with those institutes in Greece, Italy, and the UK, which is of great importance to Armenia⁴⁰. Additionally, “Azerbaijan has worked directly with NATO in its creation of a Partnership course at the Military academy in

³⁶ Olga Oliker and David Shlapak, “U.S. Interests in Central Asia: Policy Priorities and Military Roles,” *RAND*, 2005, 7.

³⁷ See the International Institute of Education for more information on these programs: <<http://www.iie.org>>.

³⁸ Paul De Witte, “Fostering stability and security in the Southern Caucasus,” *NATO publication*, vol. 47 no 1, Spring 1998.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Baku”.⁴¹ As such, political will from member states of the region and the Euro-Atlantic community needs to be strengthened to promote integration.

- The US and EU need to work in partnership with NATO, the United Nations, and the OSCE to pressure Moscow to make realistic efforts in resolving the frozen conflicts that have been detrimental to further integration, development, and regional security.⁴² The removal of Russian troops is paramount in the resolution of conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossentia, and Abkhazia.
- In place of a shared regional approach to security cooperation, Russian military bases have only fostered the proliferation of arms, a climate of intimidation, and protection rackets. Fifteen years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, it is time to make resolution of the frozen conflicts a top priority of our diplomacy with Russia.⁴³

Until recently, Euro-Atlantic institutions have had limited involvement with the resolution of the frozen conflicts. A combined effort to diplomatically pressure Moscow to work with the Euro-Atlantic community to resolve the frozen conflicts is necessary. The West should emphasize Russian benefits of regional stability, which include gaining energy security, countering terrorism, undercutting religious extremism, and preventing trans-national crime. Consolidation of Euro-Atlantic, OSCE, and regional forums and increased efforts to promote political buy-in from the West would provide the needed momentum along the path of integration. Opportunity exists for the integration of the three seas region into a Euro-Atlantic structure, with a phased approach to the process holding the most potential. In phase one over the next decade all of the states surrounding the Black Sea region could be brought into a NATO and a European Union security sphere. This is likely to produce a new security role for the EU.

Between now and then an enormous amount of work needs to be done. The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe should move soon to conferences and planning papers to concrete results. The incipient regional institutions for multilateral cooperation need to be nurtured and strengthened. The United States, European Union, NATO, OSCE, and other regional forums and second tier organizations have significant roles to play in this evolution and integration. No one institution has resolved all the problems in the Balkans and the same will be true for the littoral states of the three seas region.

Presumably, before much of this can transpire, the Western nations will require evidence of further economic and political reforms in the region. Again, the questions center on timing, results, and risk. The benefits for both the Western nations and littoral states are clear; an economically viable, politically secure, security reformed and stable region will have a large impact on current and future threats of terrorism, religious extremism, trans-national crime, and political and economic instability. All of which are of concern to the Euro-Atlantic community and the littoral states involved. At some point, the West will have to decide to stop looking for answers and act.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ronald D. Asmus and Bruce P. Jackson, “The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom,” *German Marshall Fund of the United States*. Policy review, no 125, 2005.

⁴³ Ibid., 8