



RESEARCH PAPER

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Research Paper

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Editorial

The following two articles are about geographical space and its continued role (or not) in international relations. Because European integration has demanded so much intellectual time and treasure in the post-Cold War era, it is easy for political analysts to lapse into discussions about abstract principles, values, or other disembodied topics. Discussions about the physical foundations of international politics – i.e., their geopolitical essence – are then left strangely behind. The following two articles argue against this trend, especially in relation to Europe.

Peter Faber's article talks about the continued prevalence and utility of geopolitical approaches to multinational politics, despite the otherwise undeniable growth of geography-free forms of power. He also clarifies what geopolitical models currently "speak" to the European context, and which might shape the nature of NATO operations in the future.

Vasile Secăreș, in turn, looks at a specific geopolitical model that is still a work in progress – i.e., the Wider Black Sea Area. Such a concept, he argues, has tremendous utility not only in forging a comprehensive new identity for a historically divided area, but also in tying it necessarily to the Euro-Atlantic community.

We are pleased that Vasile Secăreș contributed to this particular Research Paper. The NATO Studies Center that he oversees in Bucharest, Romania, is a critical post-graduate "finishing school" for government personnel, academics, and private citizens that specialize in transatlantic and European security issues. The school's program parallels the structure of the NATO Defense College's Senior Course (two multi-month courses conducted twice a year) and it enjoys the firm support of NATO's leadership in Brussels. Its student body is also expanding to include individuals from Black Sea states, the Balkans, the South Caucasus, and countries from the Danube Delta (which is another potentially helpful form of geographical "packaging" that one might consider). The NATO Studies Center, in short, practices what it preaches – it increasingly reflects the Wider Black Sea Area concept both in its curriculum and in its members.

A final note: Changing realities in the Black Sea area require new thinking and perhaps new policies for NATO as well. To help this process along, the NATO Defense College will conduct its 14th Partnership for Peace International Research Seminar on 6-7 June 2005, in Constanta, Romania, on the topic of the Wider Black Sea Area. The Seminar will be jointly organized by the NATO Defense College and the NATO Studies Center. It will also build on the conclusions of the NDC's 13th PFP IRS on the Southern Caucasus, held in Helsinki in May 2004 (see http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/publications/seminar_20.pdf), and on a seminar in Baku, Azerbaijan, on the same subject, to be organized later this spring by the NATO Studies Center. Those interested in attending the 14th PFP IRS can contact research@ndc.nato.int for information.

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Thinking about geography: some competing geopolitical models for the 21st century

Peter R. FABER¹

Over the last 15 years, the trans-nationalization of Europe has become the dominant political, economic, and cultural “narrative” of the region, particularly among its western elites. Europe is inexorably becoming a post-modern space, the narrative argues. In place of the unjust, mischief-prone, and power-grasping Westphalian system of the past, its political leaders are installing a humane, sovereignty-compromising system based on collective rules and standards. This unprecedented system may not become a true federation, as its more “theological” adherents would like, but it certainly will be a Kantian space characterized by peace and stability. It will, in short, jettison the tooth-and-claw realism of the 19th century for something better, or so the dominant narrative affirms. But what if this commitment to post-modern trans-nationalism is just as much a matter of faith as it is an actual fact? Do its on-the-march adherents deliberately ignore the persistent role of geography in international relations to keep their theology intact? Does geography (and the way we “package” it) still matter in our political relationships, or are the trans-nationalists right – does the very idea of geopolitics also belong in the dustbin of history? The purpose of the following Research Paper is to meditate briefly on these questions. It argues that the perceived benefits of trans-nationalism should not blind its adherents to three brakes on their preferred worldview.

First: The geopolitical characterization and “packaging” of pan-European political relationships will remain necessary and appropriate for years to come, even if liberal internationalists have a legitimate point about the growing prevalence of non-territorial forms of power in international affairs.

Second: The current paradigm (or its variations) of a Greater Europe is not universally admired or shared by those it affects most. Its enthusiasts might do well to remember that there are at least seven competing models on how to define and/or characterize the same geographic

space, and that each model has its own supporters who may well have to be accommodated, co-opted, or even persuaded to modify their stance in the future.

Third: Regardless of what model one ultimately embraces, it inevitably binds his or her thinking – e.g., it helps determine what is “real” or not and it privileges certain political priorities or responses over others. These limitations matter. They matter because the model(s) ultimately embraced by the greater European community will determine just how much “wiggle room” a transformed NATO has to conduct future Article 5 or Non-Article 5 operations in new areas. To flesh these points out further, let us first focus on...

The Dominant Views of Political Geography Today

There are two traditional ways one can look at the significance of physical space in international affairs. Members of the *Geopolitical School* – Colin Gray and Zbigniew Brzezinski, for example – tend to believe the following.²

- The “grammar” of international relations is grounded in the reality of geography. In other words, geography is destiny. In the words of Hans Weigert, “it does not argue: it simply is.”³
- Because geographical context creates permanent interests in international relations, not only can we not help who and what we are, we also cannot help “where we are.”⁴
 - Advocates of geopolitical forms of analysis, therefore, argue that...
 - States are geographical entities in perpetual competition (if not outright conflict).
 - History has grand strategic geographical pivots, much like battlefields have operational or tactical-level “key positions.”
 - Geography-based analyses treat the world as it is – that

¹ The author is a Research Associate in the Academic Research Branch, NATO Defense College, Rome, Italy.

² For representative examples of their thinking, see Colin S. Gray and Martin Libicki, “A Debate on Geopolitics: The Continued Primacy of Geography,” *Orbis*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Spring 1996), pp. 247-64, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

³ Walter A. McDougall, “Why Geography Matters . . . But is So Little Learned,” *Orbis*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (Spring 2003), pp. 218 and 232.

⁴ Adam Garfinkle, “Geopolitics: Middle Eastern Notes and Anticipations,” *Orbis*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (Spring 2003), p. 275 (emphasis added).

is to say, as a place where the nature of international relations cannot be changed benignly. Change typically depends on power, and power typically depends on territorial control or geographic reach.⁵

Now the opposing school – traditionally identified as the *Liberal International School* – openly challenges this view of trans-national politics. As Christopher Fettweis observes, members of this school claim that the geopolitical approach to international relations contains at least three major flaws.⁶

- It assumes the existence of a closed international system where, in terms of power, zero sum games exist and win-lose dynamics apply.
- It presupposes conflict in the world system. In other words, it perceives the whole world as a battlefield where states try to find the most advantageous position they can in their on-going struggles for dominance in a finite space.
- It understandably ignores a simple truth – geopolitics, as a way of “packaging” international relations, is either dead (especially for the advanced societies of the Global North) or obsolete (for those nations operating at the “upper levels” of international relations).

Basically then, the *Liberal International School* believes that history has overtaken the geopolitical approach and its geography-based explanations of international relations.

The Internationalists specifically argue the following.⁷

- Globalization is slowly and partially erasing borders. Determining what is domestic or international, in or out, here or there, is becoming increasingly difficult *and unnecessary*.
- The growing size and number of information-based economies has been accompanied by a new definition of power and a new system of political incentives.
- What this reorientation really means, from a liberal internationalist perspective, is that...
 - Territory is no longer automatically related to national wealth and prestige.
 - Geopolitics is yielding to geo-economics; disposable capital is often more important than military firepower in determining power and influence.
 - Accumulating power can benefit all states in the system; international political economics can be a positive sum or win-win game.

- Socio-economic evolution has reduced the rewards of war. As a result, war between *advanced powers* is now obsolete, especially in the “Global North,” where there is no major military or ideological threat, and where an overarching acceptance of free market capitalism exists.⁸
- But perhaps most importantly, liberal internationalists believe in the “autonomous power of ideas.” As far as they are concerned, *the nature and structure of the international system can change, evolve, or adapt through “moral progress.”* Geography, in other words, *is NOT destiny. Ideas can change the very essence of the system over time*, and thereby challenge the geopolitical view that conflict is an inherent part of the international system. As Fettweis observes, “moral progress” raises the possibility that such a view is too reductive and deterministic to actually be “real.”

Therefore, to the liberal internationalist, free floating ideas matter, as illustrated by the growing presumption against war in the Global North. And this presumption, by the way, may mean the beginning of its slow demise (as a “reality”) in the Global South. Why? Because according to some liberal internationalists, the most powerful states “determine the structure, major processes, and general evolution of the [international] system.” They can have a “trickle down effect for peace.”⁹

The Dominant Models - Is it Really a Question of Either/Or?

As is often the case when discussing international relations, the above schools of thought seem rather stark in their mutual opposition. But are they in fact not both right, even in the case of greater Europe? After all, on-going European integration is nothing if not a testimony to the power of an idea – a basically anti-geopolitical idea committed to 1) the opening up of national spaces to the free flow of goods, capital, and ideas, and 2) a deliberate turning away from win-lose attempts to control space and its resources, often by use of force.

And yet, like the world in general, Europe also remains a combination of the old and the new. Large parts of today’s European space may be unprecedentedly stable and predictable, but *it is not a universal space*. Other parts of the

⁵ See Colin S. Gray, “In Defence of the Heartland: Sir Halford Mackinder and His Critics a Hundred Years On,” *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (January-March 2004), pp. 9-25.

⁶ Christopher J. Fettweis, “Revisiting Mackinder and Angell: The Obsolescence of Great Power Geopolitics,” *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (April-June 2003), pp. 109-129.

⁷ See Fettweis for a cogent discussion of some of these points, particularly his personal belief in the “autonomous power of ideas.”

⁸ An early and highly influential advocate of this view was Norman Angell. On the eve of the First World War, he argued that military technology had become so lethal and financial interdependencies so complete that the costs of “victory” had become just too high for nation-states. War had become, in short, an indirect form of military and economic suicide instead of a source of geopolitical gain. See Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion: A Study of the Military Power to National Advantage* (London: William Heinemann, 1909 and 1913), and *The Fruits of Victory: A Sequel to the Great Illusion* (New York: Garland, 1921 and 1973).

⁹ Jack S. Levy argues the first point in *War in the Great Power System, 1495-1975* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1983). See also Fettweis, p. 118.

world and other parts of greater Europe remain mired in time and space. They are decidedly not “post-modern.” So given the existence of an increasingly liberal international Global North and a geopolitical Global North and South, even the most dedicated trans-nationalist should be very careful about turning his or her back any time soon on geopolitical (i.e., spatial) approaches to international relations. To a large degree, these relations still occur in real geographical space AND in the realm of “autonomous ideas.” *It is this dual reality that defines the Euro-Atlantic community today and will continue to define it for years to come, and it is this very duality that makes transnational relations the wickedly complicated thing that it has become in the post-Cold War era.*

“Packaging Geography” – Seven Current Views on how to Define Geopolitical Space

Another reason for the complicated nature of Euro-Atlantic relations today is the genuine disagreements that exist over how to “package” or characterize trans-national relations within physical space. It is here where the dominant Greater Europe narrative has made its most ardent advocates rather tone deaf (if not willfully obtuse) about the thinking of others on 1) the continued role of geopolitics in their “neighborhood,” and 2) the appropriateness of different forms of European centralization. In the interests of clear policy development and informed debate, it might be helpful to list briefly seven alternative narratives (or models) to the dominant transnational one – e.g., models that by their very nature raise different security priorities and concerns for NATO in particular, however slight they might be.

1. *The Heartland Model*, as developed by Sir Halford Mackinder in his classic *Democratic Ideals and Reality*. Mackinder’s core idea goes as follows: “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; Who rules the World-Island commands the World.”¹⁰ Well, does Eurasia remain – even if only potentially – the strongest and greatest political, economic, and military “fortress” on Earth? If so, is it ultimately futile for France and Germany (from a long-term geopolitical standpoint) to try and preserve dual EU and national centers of power so far to the west? Is it, in other words, geo-strategically “unnatural”? Also, is the Heartland Model’s traditional emphasis on balancing potential

hegemony in the area and controlling finite space out of date, or will these requirements apply to Russia, Central Asia, or other immediate players?¹¹

2. *The Rim Land or “Outer Crescent” Model*, as articulated by Nicholas Spykman in the 1940s. This second classic model stresses the importance of “embanking” or containing continental powers, primarily by those rim land powers with ready access to land and sea.¹² (The greatest example of this model in the Cold War was the West’s Containment Policy against the Soviet Union.) Well, is embanking a thing of the past, or is it applicable to Europe and the Euro-Atlantic community in the future? Various combinations of “hard” or “soft” containment, regardless of how probable or not, could include the following: The Euro-Atlantic community, India, and Japan vs. China; the EU-China vs. the U.S.; China-Russia vs. the Euro-Atlantic community; the U.S.-Russia vs. the EU or the EU-Russia vs. the U.S., etc. The point here is not to predict which combination(s) might come to pass, but to emphasize that tensions between rim lands and core nations will not disappear any time soon and that they must be dealt with responsibly. One might additionally note that the United Kingdom’s current dance with the EU and the United States is a particularly adroit example of on-going rim land behavior.

One might argue over just how applicable the above two models are today, but they are not the only broad geopolitical ones available. Consider, for example, the very popular...

3. *North-South Model*, where the North is commonly characterized as a zone of “haves,” and of peace and prosperity, while the South is a zone of “have nots,” and of turmoil, instability and violence. For those progressives who routinely invoke this geographical model, the emphasis is on broad concepts of “human security,” including the just and equitable socio-economic development of the South.¹³ Representative variations of this outline include the Core States (developed) versus Peripheral States (mismanaged, underdeveloped, and often chaotic) model, and Joseph Nye’s popular vision of international relations as a three-dimensional space defined by unipolar U.S. military power, multipolar economic power, and the very real influence of “floating” non-state actors.¹⁴

¹⁰ See Halford Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (New York: H. Holt and Co., 1919), p. 150.

¹¹ As a liberal internationalist, Fettweis argues that these requirements no longer exist. Since the threat of military assault and conquest is absent in the area, “...power is *de facto* balanced no matter [what] the calculations of relative power.” And since there exist no competing economic and political philosophies either (democracy and free market capitalism are the unrivaled ideas, at least in principle), the Heartland is NOT unstable, which Fettweis argues is a necessary precondition for promoting any geopolitical view of international relations. See Fettweis, p. 122.

¹² The great and early proponent of this model was Nicholas Spykman. See his *America’s Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1942 and 1970).

¹³ See Max Singer and Aaron Wildavsky, *The Real World Order: Zones of Peace/Zones of Turmoil* (Chatham, New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers, 1996).

¹⁴ See James M. Goldgeger and Michael McFaul, “A Tale of Two Worlds: Core and Periphery in the Post-Cold War Era,” *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 467-491, and Joseph Nye, “The New Rome Meets the New Barbarians – America’s Power,” *The Economist*, March 23, 2002, p. 24. Those who “float,” by the way, tend to support abstract and disembodied principles more readily than those who remain anchored to nation-states and the dictates of geography.

As familiar as the above models may be, however, they do not prevent other power centers or groups from promoting alternative (and influential) forms of geographic “packaging.” Consider the following three contemporary cases, for example.

4. *The Greater Middle East Model* coincides or is synonymous with the *Arc of Instability or Crisis* concept. For those committed to this geographic concept, the emphasis is on treating the “arc” holistically (even if it theoretically extends from Morocco to the Philippines), and on developing security and stability via democratic reforms, even if local societies are temporarily disturbed in the process. The model’s detractors, in contrast, consider it so indiscriminate that it has little conceptual meaning – e.g., it blindly (and therefore irresponsibly) lumps dissimilar sub-regions and their problems together.

5. *The Transnational Caliphate Model* of Radical Islam. It is difficult to know just how many of the 15-20 million Muslims already living in Europe are committed (or even merely sympathetic) to this geographical model, but those who are believe a stateless, theocratic order should replace the state-based system currently in place. Their objectives are to create a unified political center for current *and* former Muslim lands, and on preventing or quarantining unwanted Western influences within them. The latter objectives, incidentally, highlight just how specious today’s arguments are over whether the radicals deplore “our policies, or who we are.” The geopolitics of the Caliphate Model demand that Southern Spain and other former Muslim lands must return to their rightful owners – general Western policies or processes have little to do with the desired objective itself.

6. *The “Eurasianist” Model* advocates potentially beneficial balance-of-power axes between Moscow and Berlin, Tokyo, and/or Tehran. For the Slavic conservatives typically associated with this geographical model, Eurasia is a distinct subcontinent that Russia should rightfully continue to “lead.” They further advocate the “Findlandization” of Europe and the conversion of northern China into nothing less than a Slavic security belt. (See

Aleksandr Dugin’s *Osnovi Geopolitiki: Geopoliticheskoye Budushiye Rossii* for an uncompromising example of this type of geopolitical thinking. It may seem crackpot from a distance, but it also has its “soft” adherents, including nativists associated with the Kremlin.)¹⁵

Finally, there is a geopolitical model that may not strictly qualify as one, but its preoccupation with spatial arrangements is sufficiently close to warrant the title.

7. *The Regional Suzerainty or Policeman Model*, where security and stability in a region could potentially be “sub-contracted” to local organizations or powers – the EU, a Wider Black Sea Area coalition, and even Iran, to cite some actual or budding examples. (With the recent collapse of the traditional balance of power triangle in the upper Persian Gulf – e.g., Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran – contemplating this particular role for Tehran might not be as eccentric as it first appears). The majority of those committed to this geographical model largely advocate a two-tiered international system where the United States only provides a global-level, last-step security guarantee and does not typically interfere in local problems – the regional agents would do that.

Conclusion

As noted at the beginning of this article, broadly meditating on the “packaging” of geographic space in today’s international and regional environments is not an idle exercise, even in the case of Europe. Such geopolitical frameworking will remain necessary and appropriate for years to come, even with the undeniable growth of non-territorial forms of power in international affairs. Additionally, enthusiasts for the current European Project would do well to remember that there are at least seven ways to define and/or characterize the same greater European space, and that each way has its own political constituencies that must be considered in varying degrees. Finally, it is always helpful to remember that models privilege certain political priorities or responses over others, and that such tendencies will inevitably shade how NATO operates in new areas in the future.

¹⁵ Aleksandr Dugin, *Osnovi Geopolitiki: Geopoliticheskoye Budushiye Rossii* (Moscow: Arctogia Centr, 1999). For a helpful analysis of Eurasianism, see Ilan Berman, “Slouching Toward Eurasia?,” *Perspective*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (September-October 2001), at <http://www.bu.edu/iscip/vol12/berman.html>.

The new strategic and security landscape of Southeast Europe: the case for a wider black sea area

Vasile SECĂREȘ¹

It is time for the Euro-Atlantic community to answer a simple question – *What's Next?* More precisely, what plans do NATO and the EU have for the next phase of their eastward enlargement? In the case of NATO, the Istanbul Summit communiqué of June 2004 not only stressed the general importance of the Black Sea region for Euro-Atlantic security, it also stressed the Alliance's specific responsibility to help "build upon existing forms of regional cooperation." Unfortunately, these general pronouncements, although welcome, hardly qualify as a blueprint or coherent strategy for what is rapidly becoming a "Wider Black Sea Area." In turn, the European Commission published proposals for a proactive *European Neighborhood Policy* on May 12, 2004, but they also fail to cover a significant part of the Wider Black Sea – i.e., the Southern Caucasus states of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Sentiment, one might therefore say, has thus far trumped substance when it comes to crafting long-term NATO and EU policies for Southeast Europe (SEE) and beyond. But that judgment would be too harsh. In 2004 the strategic community within Europe did pay significantly more attention – especially within NATO – to the security agenda and problematique of the Wider Black Sea Area, including the South Caucasus region.² Obviously, this newfound attention had something to do with growing Euro-Atlantic strategic interests in the area and with a series of events that have begun to push the Black Sea from the periphery to the center of Western preoccupations. Despite these positive developments, however, Euro-Atlantic policy makers are not really prepared to deal with the implications of the dual NATO-EU enlargements of 2004-2007, or with the consequences of an ongoing "geopolitical revolution" in Southeast Europe. This paper partially attempts to address these problems, but only after first sketching out the new geopolitical realities in the region and why they matter to the Euro-Atlantic community.

Southeast Europe – A New Geopolitical Space and why it Matters

2004-2007 is a watershed period for SEE. The large-scale

enlargement of NATO and the EU into the area is extraordinarily important; it will change its political geography and therefore its geopolitical and strategic significance. However, we cannot understand the geopolitical revolution occurring in Southeast Europe today unless we first place it within an even broader context – i.e., the current redefining and reshaping of global geopolitics itself. The latter process includes 1) pushing the "Institutional West" (NATO and the EU) eastwards, 2) establishing new security frontiers for the Euro-Atlantic area, and 3) promoting a new political-strategic agenda that facilitates the West's reach (and influence) into its rim-lands. Overall, the process is a contentious one; it is defined by a clash of competing interests, strategic positions and objectives, and perhaps most importantly, of world visions. It is also a process that has to deal with new asymmetric and unconventional security threats and new requirements in the defense-security sphere.³

This large-scale realignment is occurring at the immediate regional level as well. The dual enlargement of NATO and the EU, for example, is already creating a new geopolitical and security reality in the eastern and southeastern regions of the Euro-Atlantic area. *A major part of this new reality involves looking at geography differently – i.e., seeing Southeast Europe as a broader, more inclusive space that encompasses not only the Balkans or the Western Black Sea Area, but also the South Caucasus and Caspian Sea regions.* The preferred terms for this budding geopolitical reality include the *Larger (or Greater) Southeast Europe* or, more appropriately, the *Wider Black Sea Area*, which includes the littoral states of the Black Sea, Moldova, and the Southern Caucasus nations.

From a geopolitical perspective, the very idea of a Wider Black Sea Area both reflects and shapes a complex security and strategic agenda. Bruce Jackson, for example, predicts an "emerging Black Sea security system" in the area, while Vladimir Socor sees in it the "functional aggregate" or evolving "hub" of a "geo-strategic and geo-economic system that stretches from NATO Europe to Central Asia and

¹ Professor Doctor Vasile Secăreș is currently President of the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, and President of the NATO Studies Center, Bucharest, Romania.

² Reference reports specifically tailored for the Istanbul Summit, including those by Ronald D. Asmus, Konstantin Dimitrov and Joerg Forbrig, eds., *A New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region* (German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2004), [www.gmfus.org/apps/gmf/gmfwebfinal.nsf/\\$UNIDviewAll/9CBE5BC732DA608F85256EBA007F4CCE?opendocument&K1E73ABE9](http://www.gmfus.org/apps/gmf/gmfwebfinal.nsf/$UNIDviewAll/9CBE5BC732DA608F85256EBA007F4CCE?opendocument&K1E73ABE9); and the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, *Building Stability and Security in the South Caucasus: The Role of NATO* (School of Advanced International Studies, John Hopkins University, 2004).

³ See Vasile Secăreș, "NATO and the New Geopolitical Landscape of SEE", in *NATO Studies Center Newsletter* (Bucharest, RO), no. 1/2003, p. 1.

Afghanistan.”⁴ Finally, this larger system, in the opinion of many, is beginning to be or eventually should be a NATO-EU area (including the South Caucasus, which is currently “a direct neighbor” to the Institutional West).⁵ But even if we acknowledge all of these possibilities or trends, a fundamental question still remains – why should this Wider Black Sea Area matter to the Euro-Atlantic community?

Reason No. 1: The area’s immediate sub-regions – the Black Sea and Caspian Sea – are important in their own right.

- They connect or interface with important rim land areas for Euro–Atlantic security – i.e., the “fault lines” of Central Asia and the Greater Middle East.
- For better or for worse, they include the security challenges and problems that preoccupy today’s Euro–Atlantic community – transnational terrorism, criminal networks, human trafficking or illegal immigration, weapons proliferation, etc.
- They include a line of still “frozen conflicts” that starts in Transnistria and reaches Nagorno-Karabakh. (All these conflicts are located in the northern portion of the Black Sea, and neither NATO nor the EU can indefinitely ignore them.)⁶

Reason No.2: The eastward projection of Euro-Atlantic values and influence either impacts the region directly or transits through it. Projecting “hard” power includes accessing bases and operating areas either locally or in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Greater Middle East, or Central Asia. Projecting “soft” power includes supporting democratic reconstruction and development in the same areas.

Reason No.3: The Wider Black Sea Area – with all of its projected gas and oil routes – will be an important energy corridor not only for Europe, but also for the Euro-Atlantic community in general. The corridor will link Euro-Atlantic security to the energy supplies provided by the states of the Caspian Basin and Central Asia.⁷

First Steps towards Developing a Euro-Atlantic Vision

Given the above challenges and realities, the Euro-Atlantic community needs to develop a coherent vision and policy towards the Wider Black Sea Area. It is a crucial need, although the minimum first step in realizing it should be to ponder the following questions and notional answers.

Question No.1: When we speak about a Wider Black Sea

Area are we dealing with an existing geopolitical reality or one that is in the making? The truth is that this area is an identity in the making. Previously, the nations of the region belonged to different geopolitical subsystems and had no tradition of cooperation (except for some recent efforts in the 1990’s). Additionally, the area continues to be marred by intra-regional conflicts, which are more or less frozen (Armenia and Azerbaijan, for example, still do not have diplomatic relations);⁸ by the attempted secession of national territories; and most importantly, by the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. (The states of the South Caucasus continue to have little enthusiasm for regional cooperation and have made no real effort towards regional confidence building. In the end, without truly solving the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, the wider Euro-Atlantic “anchoring” of the region will remain just wishful thinking.)

On the positive side of the ledger, however, the European and Euro–Atlantic orientation of political-intellectual elites in the region, along with their active cooperation with Western security institutions (especially in the fight against terrorism) provide solid foundation stones for making the Wider Black Sea Area concept a durable and permanent reality.

Question No.2: Is Russia part of a Wider Black Sea Area or not? In terms of political geography, Russia is a natural component of the area. It will be “a factor of influence” on the northern frontier of what will most probably be a Euro–Atlantic security perimeter. Having acknowledged this, it is also true that the cooperative engagement of Russia is essential for the security management of the wider region. Bruce Jackson is right to stress the necessity of giving “Russia a meaningful role in this part of the world,” which in turn would transform the Black Sea Area into “a pivot point” for establishing “mature relationships” between Russia and NATO-EU.⁹ For this to happen, however, Russia will have to help solve the “frozen” conflicts in the region.¹⁰ Such a step, incidentally, would help clarify future partnerships in the area (between Russia in the north, Ukraine in the West, and NATO-EU in the area in general), and provide an “essential rallying point” for the political evolution of Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Question No.3: What should be the Fundamental Western Orientation towards the Wider Black Sea Area in the Following Decades? Here the Institutional West – i.e., NATO and the EU – must abandon the ambiguous posture it continues to have about anchoring the Wider Black Sea Area to the Euro–Atlantic community. Serious NATO-EU

⁴ Bruce Jackson, “The Archaeology of Modern Europe,” in *Strategic Issues Review*, NATO Studies Center (Bucharest, RO) 2004, p. 16; see also Vladimir Socor, “NATO Prospects in the South Caucasus (1),” in *IASPS Policy Briefings*, no. 60, April 22, 2004.

⁵ Socor, p. 2.

⁶ Jackson, p. 18.

⁷ Ronald Asmus and Bruce Jackson, “The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom,” in Ronald D. Asmus et al. (eds.), *A New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region* (German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2004), p. 19.

⁸ Gayane Novikova, “A View from Armenia,” in *Southeast European Security. After the 2004 Dual Enlargement*, The Institute for Political Studies in Defense and Military History (Bucharest, RO), 2004, p. 87.

⁹ Jackson, p. 17.

¹⁰ Lionel Ponsard, “La Géorgie à la croisée des intérêts russes et américains,” in NATO Defense College *Research Paper No. 3*, April 2004, p. 6. (See http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/publications/rp_03.pdf)

engagement is a must (given the broad reasons cited earlier), as is pursuing long-term political, economic and security integration with the area. Of course, Georgia or Azerbaijan are still years away from qualifying for NATO or EU membership, but without mutual engagement and proper course setting, the future of the South Caucasus could follow a different logic than we might want (consider the “Caucasus - Central Asia Entity” idea, for example). Seen from this overall perspective, Vladimir Socor is right to worry that the “EU remains the great absentee from the economic, political and security affairs of this region.”¹¹

Question No.4: Are there Benefits for the Institutional West to Enlarge into a Wider Black Sea Area? Absolutely. As is true for the Balkans, the Wider Black Sea Area is a potential laboratory and/or test bed for enhanced NATO-EU cooperation. Since the idea of an expanded Euro-Atlantic security zone will be meaningless without the strong cooperation of both institutions, developing a complementary and coherent approach for the gradual integration of the area is essential. Mutual cooperation could also help reduce the “variable geometry” that presently exists between NATO and the EU on security matters, while further developing their complementary conflict management skills (by helping eliminate the “controlled instability” in the Wider Black Sea Area, and by blunting the de facto control Russia currently has over local breakaway “statelets”).¹²

What We Need – Some Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

This brief paper has argued that 1) there is geopolitical utility in further developing a Wider Black Sea Area identity, and 2) that NATO and the EU have a vested interest in jointly (and coherently) helping bring it about. What is

needed in the latter case, however, is *not cooperation per se, but cooperation focused on internal and external integration, and on meeting both local and Euro-Atlantic security objectives*. NATO should play a key role in this regard by developing a comprehensive strategy for expanded Black Sea military cooperation. By taking this step, the serious security deficits that exist in the area would slowly decrease. The political and development deficits that exist would also begin to diminish if the EU pursued an ambitious engagement strategy of its own, AND if it adopted a coherent division of labor with NATO.¹³ In all cases, however, these two institutions should accomplish the following, either singly or together.

- Take the *appropriate* experiences and lessons learned from the Balkans and apply them to the Greater Black Sea Region. Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey could play an especially important role in this context.
- Incorporate the above step into a common NATO-EU *Stability Pact for Security and Reconstruction* in the region. (In fact, a more manageable template could first be experimented with in the Balkans.)
- Continue to “export” stability, democratic development, and a common identity by further invigorating existing instruments or means, including NATO's South East Europe Initiative (SEEI), the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, the South East Europe Co-operation Process (SEECOP), the South East Defence Ministers process (SEDM), and more.
- Create a substantive Greater Black Sea Defense Ministerial structure and at least consider the possibility of building a joint expeditionary Black Sea Task Force.¹⁴
- And finally, enhance the PIP program, extend it across the region, and complement it, when desired, with assorted action plans and other instruments that create the “ties that bind.”

After an experimental year, the Research Branch of the NATO Defense College has decided to focus upon the publication of three products : Research Paper, NDC Occasional Paper and Immediate Report (limited distribution). Articles can be published by members of the College and external researchers.

Members of the Research Branch wish now to receive comments and suggestions from their readers which will allow them to address current affairs and long-term concerns.

Après un an d'exploration, la branche recherche du Collège de l'OTAN a choisi de concentrer ses publications sur trois produits : les Research Paper, les NDC Occasional Paper et les Immediate Report (ces derniers à diffusion limitée). Nos colonnes sont ouvertes aux membres du Collège comme aux chercheurs extérieurs.

Les membres de la branche recherche souhaitent maintenant recevoir de leurs lecteurs des remarques et propositions qui leur permettent d'aborder de nouveaux sujets d'actualité ou de fonds.

¹¹ Vladimir Socor, “NATO Prospects in the South Caucasus (2)”, in *IAPS Policy Briefings*, no. 61, April 26, 2004.

¹² See the arguments of Vladimir Socor in “Frozen Conflicts in the Black Sea – South Caucasus Region”, in *IAPS Policy Briefings*, no. 53, February 24, 2004, p. 1.

¹³ See the proposals of Heather Grabbe, “Towards a More Ambitious EU Policy for the Black Sea Region,” in *GMFUS Report*, p. 106.

¹⁴ As suggested by Jeffrey Simon in *PIP at the Istanbul Summit: Dead on Arrival or Revival?*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University (Washington, DC), 2004.