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Toward a Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region

by Eugene B. Rumer and Jeffrey Simon

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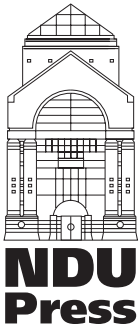

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Toward a Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region

Summary

The Black Sea region is increasingly important to Europe and the United States as a major east-west energy supply bridge and as a barrier against many transnational threats. The security environment in the region is a product of diverse interests of littoral states and their neighbors. Some of these interests coincide with those of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members, while others reflect a unique regional security agenda.

As the continent's principal security organization, NATO must address that regional agenda if it is to succeed in its goal of building bridges to the region and erecting secure barriers to threats emanating from it. While the European Union (EU) is not considering expansion across the Black Sea, it, too, cannot ignore the security situation in the region.

This environment warrants a Euro-Atlantic strategy to bolster institutions and activities initiated by Black Sea littoral states as a means to temper regional suspicion and rivalries inimical to stability and broader mutual interests. This strategy should ensure local ownership by littoral states and constructively engage Turkey and Russia.

NATO governments could engage partners in a Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council/Partnership for Peace (PFP) Working Group comprised of littoral states and others in the greater Black Sea region to identify common security concerns and to develop ideas for practical cooperative activities, including better integration of existing PFP and relevant EU programs.

Certain littoral states could be encouraged to take the lead in various sectors:

- Supporting Turkey's Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group and *Black Sea Harmony* initiatives and linking them to relevant NATO operations in the eastern Mediterranean seem prudent.
- Airspace reconnaissance offers another means for building regional cooperation, but it is costly and will require a long-term effort. The United States could use its evolving presence in Romania and Bulgaria, and military relations with Turkey, to encourage regional cooperation in this sector.
- Border controls and coastal security offer near-term opportunities for NATO and EU governments to support counterdrug/-crime/-terrorism cooperation with regional grouping in southeastern

Europe, the Black Sea, and central Asia. Romania and Bulgaria would readily take the lead here.

- Growing civil-military emergency planning cooperation in southeast Europe might be deepened by creating a Regional Civil Protection Coordination Center and then widening it to the Black Sea region. Ukraine might take the lead in this sector.

Introduction

What kind of strategy should the United States and its European allies and partners pursue for building greater stability in the Black Sea region? This question looms large given the region's growing importance as a major crossroads of energy, commerce, and criminal and terrorist activity. The enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) also shows the area's increasing significance. The goal of Europe whole, free, prosperous, and secure was pursued by successive U.S. and European governments through the policy of twin enlargement, which opened doors of existing European and Euro-Atlantic institutions to new members in Eastern Europe.

But the second round of NATO enlargement also raised questions about the Alliance's geographic scope. Does NATO's open door policy apply to all aspirants regardless of their geographic location? Are some nations on the periphery of Europe, or even outside of Europe, eligible for membership? And finally, how should the Alliance build cooperative partnerships with states that are not likely ever to be members, that do not aspire to membership, or that even view NATO expansion as a constraint on their freedom of action? EU governments, while not considering expansion across the Black Sea, cannot ignore the security situation in the region.

For the Black Sea's littoral states, these all are portentous questions that have acquired more urgency since the 9/11 attacks, as the Alliance now confronts threats that originate far from Europe's periphery and Eastern Europe's integration into NATO and the EU has assumed growing importance. After all, without partnerships to the south and east, the task of erecting new barriers to transnational threats would have been impossible. At the same time, that task forced NATO and EU governments to confront yet another difficult issue: how to ensure that barriers to new threats do not block bridges that they are building to their newest members, partners, and aspirants.

First Response

The Alliance response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 was immediate and unprecedented. For the first time in its history, NATO invoked Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, which states that "an armed attack against one or more of the Allies in Europe or North America shall be considered as an attack against all."[1] Most subsequent steps, however, fell in the category of barriers, intended to shield NATO members from new threats.

Operation *Active Endeavor,* launched in October 2001, entails use of allied and partners' naval assets to conduct maritime surveillance, interception, and boarding operations against suspected terrorist activities in the Mediterranean. Offers of assistance from individual allies and partners to the United States in support of Operation *Enduring Freedom* starting on October 2001 ranged from use of airspace to intelligence-sharing to military participation in the U.S.-led alliance against terrorism.[2] Following the Bonn agreements among various Afghan factions, the Alliance committed to help the new post-Taliban government of Afghanistan maintain security for reconstruction and train Afghan security forces.[3]

The Alliance also took on the task of conceptual adaptation to the new post-9/11 environment. At the 2002 NATO Prague Summit, member states endorsed the new *Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism* that identified four broad roles for military operations with concrete actions:

- antiterrorism (enacting defense measures to reduce vulnerabilities to attack)
- consequence management (dealing with and reducing the effects of an attack after it has occurred)
- counterterrorism (taking offensive military action to reduce terrorist capabilities where NATO plays a lead or supporting role)
- military cooperation (coordinating military and civil authorities—such as police, customs, and immigration, ministries of finance and interior, and intelligence and security services—to maximize effectiveness against terrorism).

Specifically, the *Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism* calls for "improved intelligence sharing and crisis response arrangements [and commitment *with* partners] to fully implement the Civil Emergency Planning (CEP) Action Plan . . . against possible attacks by . . . chemical, biological, or radiological (CBR) agents."[4]

Also at Prague, on November 22, 2002, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) approved a *Partnership Action Plan Against Terrorism* (PAP–T) that developed an agenda for partners to combat terrorism at home and share information and experience abroad. The initiative called on partners to intensify political consultations; share information on armaments and civil emergency planning; promote security sector reforms; enhance exchange of banking information; and improve border controls and customs procedures to impede weapons of mass destruction (WMD), as well as small and other conventional arms trafficking. NATO also pledged to assist partners' efforts against terrorism through the Political-Military Steering Committee (PMSC) Clearing House mechanism and establishment of a Partnership for Peace (PFP) Trust Fund.[5]

But above all else, the attacks of 9/11 demonstrated to NATO governments that new members, and even more so partners and aspirants, required concrete assistance to develop both national capabilities and regional cooperation to deal more effectively with transnational threats, secure their borders, and act as a barrier to new challenges facing the Euro-Atlantic region. Meager resources, weak domestic institutions, and the lack of a clear external threat left NATO's newest partners ill-equipped to handle such threats as transnational terror networks and WMD proliferation. The Alliance thus acquired an even more compelling rationale for building bridges to these new members and aspirants and extending the Euro-Atlantic security framework to them.

The Final Frontier

NATO's initial response to the 9/11 attacks did not fulfill the need for a long-term vision to guide Alliance and partner efforts to meet the new security challenges, while overcoming the legacy of old divisions. Nowhere is this deficit felt more acutely than in the Black Sea region.

In northern and central Europe, NATO enlargement has reached its natural limits. In the north, Russia remains an unlikely candidate, while Finland and Sweden are already integrated in the Euro-Atlantic structures through their active participation in the PFP program and membership in the European Union. All other countries on Europe's northern flank are in NATO. In central Europe, Belarus, whose fortunes are closely tied to those of Russia, remains the lone holdout.

The situation is different, however, in the region surrounding the Black Sea, where NATO maintains active relations with a new generation of partners and aspirants. In practical terms, the question of NATO's

open door policy, geographic scope, and direction translates into whether the Alliance will admit new members and extend its security framework deeper into the Black Sea region and beyond. The open door policy is really one of receptiveness to prospective members in the Black Sea region, the final frontier of Euro-Atlantic security.

Why not then simply rely on the policy of open doors as one of the founding principles of the Alliance that has served its members so well? To start with, after two rounds of enlargement and after the emergence of new threats to its members, NATO activities and partnerships reach and exceed the geographic boundaries of Europe and the Euro-Atlantic region. The Alliance has been pursuing cooperative relationships well beyond the geographic boundaries of Europe—with Kazakhstan and Pakistan, for example—and has engaged in operations in Afghanistan.

Second, the Alliance is facing the issue of membership by nations that did not even exist in 1949, when the North Atlantic Treaty was signed. The Alliance already includes several new members that were not on the map in 1949—Slovenia and Slovakia. Others—Georgia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan, for example—have made their aspirations for membership well known. Does the Alliance automatically build on the established precedent and extend its open door policy to them as European states? And would its failure to do so erect barriers to Euro-Atlantic integration by nations on the frontlines of European security?

By extending a welcome to Georgia or Azerbaijan, the Alliance will close a major gap in Euro-Atlantic security architecture. But NATO's policy of open doors to the nations of the south Caucasus should not be mistaken for ambitions of limitless expansion—a caveat that the Allies should clearly articulate.

While the south Caucasus may represent the natural limit to NATO's potential membership roster, the former Soviet states of central Asia lie beyond it. These countries are well outside the geographic or political definitions of European or Euro-Atlantic regions, have shown little commitment to the Alliance's fundamental shared values, and are oriented toward the major Asian powers—Russia, China, and India—that will most likely play important roles in the fate of central Asia in the future. NATO can and, depending on its interests and concerns, should maintain productive security relations with central Asia, as well as political dialogue through its already established fora—EAPC and PFP—but holding out the prospect of membership to these countries would be misleading and even counterproductive.

If the Alliance stands by its founding principles and holds its doors open to membership by Georgia or Azerbaijan, however, it must do so with a full understanding of the new burdens it will have to shoulder.

Cooperation with the EU in this context is a necessary precondition for success. The two organizations have a huge stake in realizing the bridge/barrier vision for the Black Sea region. Failure to do so could have long-term negative effects on the member countries of both organizations. Although the EU does not currently consider expansion across the Black Sea, it ignores the security situation in the region only at its peril. From energy security to dealing with transnational threats to completing Romania's and Bulgaria's successful accession to the European Union to managing relationships with Turkey and Ukraine and their respective bids for EU membership, the future of the Black Sea region is an issue the EU cannot ignore. Moreover, each organization—NATO and the EU—brings unique and critical resources to the region, which will be indispensable in its quest for stability and security. The Black Sea region is uniquely positioned to benefit from coordinated and mutually reinforcing efforts by the EU and NATO.

The Black Sea Security Environment

The Black Sea littoral is a region where NATO and the Warsaw Pact tensely watched each other across land and maritime boundaries during the Cold War; where the Iron Curtain was superimposed on an ancient mosaic of ethnic, political, and religious fault lines; where current borders are a product of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and centuries-old Ottoman and Russian imperial conquests; and where, after the second round of enlargement in 2004, NATO has emerged as the preeminent security organization.

Three out of six littoral states—Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania—are members of the Alliance; Ukraine and Georgia have at different times declared their interest in joining it and are actively participating in the Partnership for Peace; and Russia, while opposed to Alliance expansion, is developing its own security relationship with it.

Big changes in the economic and commercial life of the Black Sea region have occurred in the past two decades. With economic transition and return to economic growth throughout the former Soviet bloc, commercial traffic across, into, and out of the Black Sea took off.[6] The revival of tourism has resulted in new flows of Russian, Ukrainian, and other nationals from former Soviet lands to the ports and tourist attractions of

the Mediterranean.[7] Two new pipelines built in the 1990s—one from Baku, Azerbaijan, and another from northern Kazakhstan[8]—pump Caspian oil to Black Sea ports in Georgia and Russia, whence it is carried by tankers to markets in Europe and elsewhere (see figure 1).[9] The Blue Stream underwater gas pipeline from Russia to Turkey opened officially in November 2005 (see figure 2). In essence, the Black Sea has been transformed into a busy commercial thoroughfare connecting Europe's heartland, via its southeastern shores, to the Caucasus and other parts of Asia (see figure 3).

But this transformation of the region has not come without cost. Black Sea traffic has included illegal immigrants bound for Europe from countries well beyond the region. Along with commercial cargo from the littoral states, Black Sea traffic has included weapons, military equipment, and ammunition from Cold War–era depots and factories still producing hardware that few of the militaries in the region need or can afford to procure. Loose or even nonexistent customs and border controls in many of the post-Soviet lands, including some unrecognized breakaway territories in the vicinity of the Black Sea, make it an ideal gateway to or

Figure 1. Black and Caspian Sea Oil Pipelines

Source: U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Agency, "Caspian Sea: Maps," Country Analysis Briefs, September 2005, <www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Caspian/Maps.html>.

Figure 2. Black and Caspian Sea Gas Pipelines

Source: U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Agency, "Caspian Sea: Maps," Country Analysis Briefs, September 2005, <www.eia.doe.gov.gov/emeu/cabs/Caspian/Maps.html>.

from Europe and much of Asia for illegal arms merchants and smugglers of drugs, people, and various other kinds of cargo commonly associated with globalization's dark side.[10]

Competition of Interests

For NATO, the challenge of promoting a durable and effective security regime around the Black Sea is compounded by the fact that the region is home to a collection of countries with diverse and often competing interests, security agendas, and urgent problems. These interests and agendas cannot be overlooked, for the Alliance's ability to address them will be critical to its ability to enlist the support and cooperation of the states that comprise the region.

Turkey's Agenda

The end of the Cold War has had a profound effect on Turkey's regional agenda and standing. Long a pivotal member of NATO, it was presented with an opportunity for regional leadership, based on

Figure 3. Proposed Black Sea Bypass Routes

Source: U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Agency, "Caspian Sea: Maps," Country Analysis Briefs, September 2005, <www.eia.doe.gov.gov/emeu/cabs/Caspian/Maps.html>.

geographic position, multiple historic ties, and strategic heft. While its special relationship with the United States is a matter of public record, an expanded American, as well as NATO, role in the Black Sea region would risk complicating Turkey's own role there.

Despite longstanding historical and strategic differences, Turkey deepened its economic and political relations with Russia after the end of the Cold War, a relationship that has a powerful constituency inside Turkey. Russia currently ranks as Turkey's third largest source of imports, ahead of the United States.[11] Russian-Turkish trade is worth billions of dollars and includes natural gas (imports from Russia account for close to 70 percent of Turkish gas consumption),[12] construction, and tourism. The Blue Stream gas pipeline, built under the Black Sea according to a 1997 agreement between Ankara and Moscow, was in direct competition with the East-West energy corridor from the Caspian to the Mediterranean, which Ankara labeled its top strategic priority in the region at the time and which it pressed Washington to support.

But other factors are likely to affect Turkey's policy with regard to U.S. involvement in the Black Sea region. These include, but are not limited to, tensions in bilateral U.S.-Turkish relations over the Iraq war and its aftermath; Turkish concerns about the impact of developments in Iraq on Turkey's own Kurdish population; and Ankara's reluctance to take a back seat to the United States in regional activities that directly affect Turkey's national interests.

While Turkey is bound to play an important role in any U.S. or NATO policy in the Black Sea region, it is not content to serve merely as a conduit of U.S. and NATO policies in the far southeastern corner of Europe, or as the bridge between the Euro-Atlantic community, the south Caucasus, and beyond. Thus, there is no substitute for direct U.S. and wider NATO involvement in the region.

Romania and Bulgaria

Romania and Bulgaria share the experience of having been Soviet satellites and Warsaw Pact members during the Cold War. Both have successfully navigated a course toward NATO membership in 2004 and are well on the way toward EU membership in 2007.

However, these similarities do not mean that their motivations and future behavior are likely to be the same. The two countries pursued very different paths during the Cold War. Bulgaria was the Soviet Union's loyal ally, at times bordering on joining it. Romania, by contrast, sometimes pursued a different course from the Soviet Union in Europe and Asia, including opposing the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and maintaining diplomatic ties with Israel.

Thus, the shared past and recent experiences of these two nations do not guarantee identical patterns of behavior in the future. For example, Bulgaria's proximity to and history of difficult relations with Turkey could affect its policy toward Russia, which historically sided with the fellow Slavs in Sofia to protect them from Turkey. At the same time, Romania's interest in neighboring Moldova and the latter's difficult relationship with Russia, which has long backed the Russian separatist regime in Transniestria, would likely cast a shadow on Romanian attitudes toward Moscow.

Despite these differences, Romania and Bulgaria see themselves as part of both the NATO and EU bridge to trade and energy and the barrier to transnational threats emanating from the Black Sea region. Both want to be part of the solution and are apprehensive about the risk of exposure to such threats as NATO's new "southeastern front." While

they have cooperated well with Turkey on subregional initiatives over the past decade, they are also apprehensive about the prospect of dealing with Turkey by themselves. Both would welcome a wider NATO/EU role. To compound the problem, both countries suffer from some of the same problems, such as corruption, smuggling, and weak rule of law, that plague many of their neighbors further east. They will continue to need assistance from NATO and the EU in addressing these problems, but their wider engagement in the Black Sea could help their development and offer lessons learned in the transition to their neighbors.

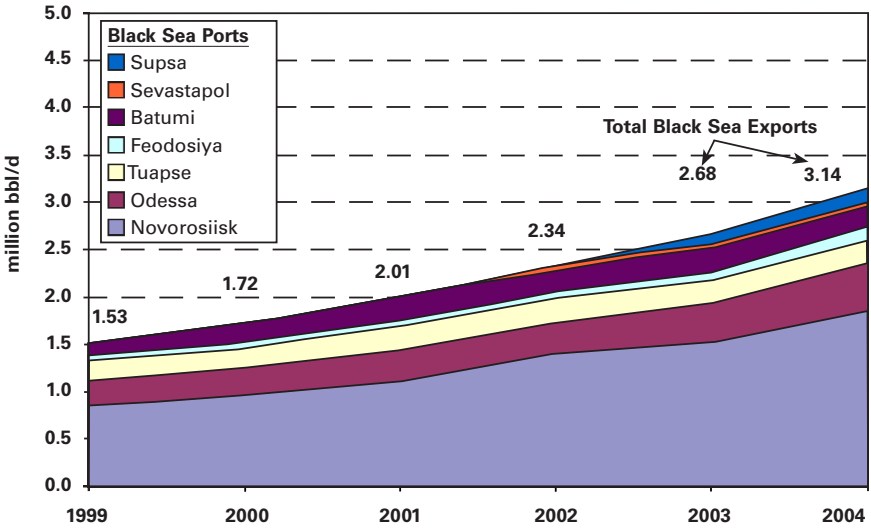
The Question of Russia

No nation in the Black Sea region has seen a greater reversal of its fortunes in the past two decades than Russia. The Soviet Union, through its control of Warsaw Pact allies Romania and Bulgaria, as well as possession of Ukraine and Georgia, had a presence on the Black Sea coastline from one Turkish border to the other. Russia, by contrast, has been reduced to a relatively narrow strip of the coast on the northeastern shores of the Black Sea and a handful of naval facilities leased from Ukraine in Crimea. Although Russia's footprint in the Black Sea has shrunk, its interests there have not. The region's lofty position on Moscow's economic, foreign, and security policy agenda is secure. The fall of the Iron Curtain has led to significant growth in Russian-Turkish commerce.[13] The critical role of energy exports in the economic recovery of Russia further underscores the importance of its oil export facilities in Novorossiysk (see figure 4).[14]

The Black Sea region is unequalled on the Russian national security agenda. Top among the concerns is the long-running insurgency in Chechnya. Its consequences have been felt throughout the Caucasus, where the threat of the Chechen conflict spilling over into Dagestan or Georgia is fraught with dire external and internal consequences for Russia and other countries in the region.

Although the active military phase of the Chechen war has long ended and the Russian government has embarked on a political strategy toward normalization of the situation, including elections of legislative and executive organs, the conflict is far from over. A series of terrorist attacks in recent years—in Moscow, Beslan, and Nalchik—involving Chechen terrorists, as well as members of other ethnic groups from the Caucasus region, suggests that the conflict has not been localized despite all the Russian government's efforts to contain and extinguish it.

Figure 4. FSU Black Sea Exports by Point of Origin



Source: U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Agency, "Russia: Oil Exports," Country Analysis Briefs, January 2005, <www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Russia/Oil_exports.html>. An 89 percent capacity factor for shipping is used.

Moreover, it threatens the rest of the north Caucasus—a worrisome development reportedly recognized even by senior Russian officials.[15]

The Chechen conflict has cast a long shadow over Russia's already-tense relations with Georgia, which Moscow has accused of sheltering Chechen fighters and exercising insufficient control over its borders. Russian-Georgian tensions, however, predate the Chechen conflict and include a wide range of issues—from residency permits and visa regimes for Georgian laborers in Russia, to Russian military bases in Georgia, to Russian support for and involvement in the breakaway Georgian provinces of Abkhazia and North Ossetia. In light of this, Georgia's stated objectives of NATO membership and a close security relationship with the United States and NATO have no doubt been an irritant for Russia.

Russian-Azerbaijani relations have seen their share of tensions in the past as well, focusing on alleged Azeri support for Chechen fighters and Baku's pursuit of oil export routes that bypass Russia. In recent years the relationship has normalized, although Azerbaijan has stated its intentions of joining NATO and maintaining a close security relationship with the United States.

With Georgia and Azerbaijan pursuing active engagement policies with NATO, Armenia has emerged as Russia's sole strategic partner in the South Caucasus. The stalemate in Nagorno-Karabakh and the longstanding animosity between Armenia and Turkey have made Russia Armenia's principal strategic partner—a historic relationship that has its roots in the 19th century and that retains considerable importance for Russia in the present day.

Traditional—some would say archaic—Russian notions of security in the Caucasus region originate in the experience of the 19th century, when Russia fought against Ottoman Turkey, Persia, and local princes and warlords. These notions call for establishing two lines of defenses—north and south of the Caucasus ridge—in effect cutting off the difficult region from external support in the south and securing the plains of southern Russia from the troublesome north Caucasus.

Russian-Turkish and Russian-Iranian relations have improved, but the need for securing a dual line of defense north and south of the Caucasus ridge has not gone away. A major Russian contention regarding the conflict in Chechnya has been that the insurgency and the terrorist activity there and elsewhere in the north Caucasus have been fed by foreign support—from the Middle East, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and others. According to this logic, the weak states of the south Caucasus cannot provide Russia with the secure shield against foreign infiltrators that it needs to combat what Russian authorities have described as the "counterterrorist operation" in Chechnya and to stabilize the north Caucasus region. Russian security, therefore, is too important to be left to Georgia and Azerbaijan, while Armenia represents the essential Russian foothold in the south Caucasus.

In this light, Russian authorities are likely to view stepped-up NATO and U.S. involvement in the south Caucasus region as inimical to Russian interests and counter to the goal of establishing control over the south and north Caucasus. Putting aside the issue of general Russian resistance to NATO involvement in the affairs of the former Soviet bloc, Russian perceptions of this involvement are certain to be shaped by the experience of the "rose," "orange," and "pink" revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, which Russian official and unofficial security analysts have perceived as detrimental to Russian interests, designed to undermine Russian influence, and generally destabilizing.

Russian notions of security in the Caucasus region do not seem as retrograde as they might first appear when compared with NATO's and Washington's post-9/11 security concerns in the Black Sea region—control

over land, air, and maritime traffic, secure borders and communications—reflected in the dual bridge/barrier approach to regional security. There is, however, one important difference: while Russian and U.S./NATO objectives may be similar, they differ on the means. While the United States, NATO, and the EU promote democratic change in the region as key to long-term stability, it is viewed as destabilizing by Russian authorities, who tend to emphasize concrete interests and physical control rather than abstract principles and institutional development.

Thus, the challenge for the United States and the Alliance as a whole is to find the right posture in the Black Sea region that keeps Russia and Turkey actively and constructively engaged, yet demonstrates direct, hands-on U.S. and NATO involvement. No viable Black Sea strategy for the Alliance can be implemented without the region's two biggest economic and military powers. Russia is likely to resist NATO's stepped-up involvement in the region. However, the United States and the Alliance as a whole have considerable leverage with Turkey, whose active, constructive participation would thus become a necessary, pivotal condition for a successful NATO strategy. Once such a strategy is in place and gaining momentum, Russia too may find that its own interests are being served.

Moreover, if Russian authorities find their efforts to stabilize the north Caucasus unproductive, their attitude toward NATO and U.S. activities in the south Caucasus may shift, especially if these activities bring tangible results to the participants, are fully transparent to Russia and are not intended to undermine its security and isolate it, and hold the door open to Russian participation in the economic and security spheres.

Ukraine: Going West

Ukraine is certain to be a more cooperative partner to NATO in the Black Sea region than Russia, reflecting the young country's unique interests and priorities. Its Euro-Atlantic orientation has been a staple of its foreign policy throughout the Leonid Kuchma and Victor Yushchenko administrations and has withstood the test of political changes in Kyiv, as well as severe crises in U.S.-Ukrainian, NATO-Ukrainian, and Russian-Ukrainian relations. Ukraine has been an active participant in PFP from its earliest days. Ukrainian troops have taken part in numerous peacekeeping operations, including in the Balkans and Iraq.

Yet Ukraine has had to tread carefully in pursuit of its key security policy objectives. The principal reason for its NATO membership aspirations is to secure its independence from Russia and emerge from its shadow. In that respect, Ukraine's rationale for seeking NATO

membership is no different from that of some other former Soviet and Warsaw Pact states where the memory of Soviet and Russian occupation is alive and well.

At the same time, the prospect of Ukrainian membership in the Alliance is met with apprehension by a substantial segment of Ukrainian citizenry of Russian origin, whose ties to Russia remain strong and whose outlook on Ukrainian foreign policy is influenced by the inertia of Cold War propaganda. These sentiments are reinforced by Russian opposition to NATO's enlargement. Thus, support for NATO membership among the Ukrainian public in general remains quite low, ranging from 15 to 25 percent.[16]

In the ranks of new NATO members and aspirants, none can match Ukraine's legacy of long and close association with Russia, including geographic, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, economic, and many other ties. None of this disqualifies Ukraine from Alliance membership. But the lack of strong domestic grassroots support, let alone pressure, for membership in NATO, combined with turbulent domestic politics in the wake of the orange revolution, suggests that Ukraine's domestic reforms agenda, which is far more important for the country's stability and security, ought to take precedence over NATO membership on the policy agenda of the Yushchenko administration.

This, in turn, bodes well for Ukraine's prospects for participation in Black Sea cooperative regional security programs. None of these programs require membership in the Alliance; most seek to build and improve indigenous and cooperative capabilities that participant countries need to develop regardless of their relationship with NATO; and all of them should be open to and transparent to Russia, whether or not it decides to participate in them.

Georgia: A Matter of Sovereignty

Each of the three south Caucasus states discussed in this section brings a uniquely difficult set of considerations to the task of building cooperative security arrangements in the Black Sea region. Topping Georgia's list of interests and concerns are the twin strategic goals of restoring its sovereignty and securing a good neighborly relationship with Russia—while maintaining Georgian independence and freedom of strategic choice.

For Georgia, participation in Black Sea regional security activities, participation in PFP, and aspirations for membership in NATO are inseparable from its main security challenges: restoring its sovereignty over

Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Both depend to a large degree on Georgia's relationship with Russia, which has supported both breakaway regions and is likely to oppose Georgia's pursuit of NATO membership. This tension between Georgian objectives and Russian perceptions of its security needs represents one of the biggest challenges for Georgia's foreign policy.

This tension also presents a dilemma for the Alliance. Its active involvement in south Caucasus security affairs is a precondition for success of its Black Sea regional initiatives. Yet this involvement is also the main obstacle to those initiatives if they are to include Russia, which is firmly opposed to NATO's stepped-up role in the region. With Georgia as the crossroads of these complex relationships, it appears the Alliance has no option but to engage Russia in a focused and difficult dialogue about the way ahead in a region where both have interests.

Armenia: Proceed with Caution

Armenia's attitude toward Black Sea regional security activities is likely to be a product of its own unique security requirements and its strategic alliance with Russia. Armenia's military victory in Nagorno-Karabakh has yet to produce the political recognition and real sense of security that the embattled country needs to survive and prosper in a region where security rests on the legacy of centuries-old Russian, Turkish, and Persian imperial competition and stalemated post-Soviet conflicts.

Armenia is the one country in the region that knows isolation first-hand, as a result of being cut off from the outside world during its war with Azerbaijan in the early 1990s. Thus, pursuit of broad international acceptance and close relations with key political and security organizations, which happen to be Euro-Atlantic—NATO, EU, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe—would appear to be a logical priority for Armenia. Ironically, Armenia's Euro-Atlantic integration—the antidote to regional security problems pursued by its neighbors Azerbaijan and Georgia—is limited by its relationship with its historic protector Russia and its historic adversary Turkey.

For Armenia, wedged between long-time enemies Turkey and Azerbaijan, Georgia and Iran have provided critical links to the outside world. Neither Georgia, mired in its own domestic troubles and often teetering on the brink of chaos in its first decade of independence, nor Iran, itself isolated in the international arena, makes for a reliable strategic partner for Armenia. Russia, Armenia's traditional protector against the Ottomans and the only major power to have taken an active interest

in the Caucasus region, is Armenia's principal interlocutor in security matters almost by default.

Russian-Armenian relations are not as simple as the preceding exposition would suggest, however. Russia's limited capability for playing the role of regional security manager has not escaped the attention of Armenian leaders. Moreover, Moscow's support for Azerbaijan during the war for Nagorno-Karabakh has not been forgotten in Armenia.[17]

At the same time, the United States has been a supporter of Armenian independence and is by far the biggest donor of aid to Armenia. NATO has emerged as the principal security organization in all of Europe. Both Azerbaijan and Georgia have been pursuing active political and security relationships with the United States and NATO. For Armenia to be left out of this expanding web of relationships would only underscore its isolation.

Thus, Armenia must proceed cautiously in developing its relations with NATO. The Alliance still has the misfortune of being closely associated with Turkey in the minds of many Armenians. And Russia, despite its diminished capabilities, is still the key partner whom Armenia can ill afford to antagonize.

Nonetheless, these complex circumstances bode well for Armenian participation in Black Sea regional security initiatives, especially if Russia is participating as well. Their multilateral nature, transparency, and regional origins and ownership would make this the right venue for Armenia's cautious progress toward Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Armenia's attitude to expanded NATO involvement in regional security affairs—including the issue of "frozen conflicts," of which none is more important for Caucasus security and stability than Nagorno-Karabakh—would likely be less forthcoming. Turkey's role in the Alliance would automatically make Armenia suspicious of NATO's activities and its potentially more prominent role in the south Caucasus.

Azerbaijan: Beyond the Pipelines

By contrast, Azerbaijan has been and probably will continue to be a more willing partner for the Alliance with a large stake in Black Sea security despite its location at the opposite end of the Caucasus ridge. As the region's key oil exporter, Azerbaijan's fortunes are closely tied to the Black Sea's continuing ability to play the role of a bridge to European markets. With the goal of building multiple pipelines for its oil to bypass Russia on the way to world markets now safely within reach, Azerbaijan's top foreign and security policy priority is the return of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Having lost the war for Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, Azerbaijan is also keenly interested in mustering international support for its claim to restore its territorial integrity. The combination of Azerbaijan's close partnership with Turkey and Russia's belated support for Armenia has made Azerbaijan a willing partner with the Alliance. Just as Armenia's reluctance to move closer to NATO is a product of its fears for Nagorno-Karabakh and its ability to retain it, Azerbaijan's interest in NATO and Euro-Atlantic integration is driven by its desire to regain control of Nagorno-Karabakh and enlist the support of the Euro-Atlantic community on behalf of its cause.

Moldova: The Forgotten Neighbor

Few countries in the Black Sea region can compete with Moldova for the title of the most difficult strategic predicament of the post–Cold War era. Moldova's security environment is a product of centuries-old Russo-Turkish imperial rivalries, the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, Soviet occupation of Europe after World War II, and the Soviet collapse in 1991. All of these factors left a legacy that the small and impoverished country—the poorest in Europe—is struggling to overcome to the present day. The separatist conflict in Transniestria is stalemated with no hope for resolution in sight.

Relations with Russia are strained; Russia retains considerable leverage over Moldova as its energy supplier and supporter of the separatist regime in Transniestria. Russia has also stalled on carrying out the 1999 pledge to withdraw the remaining weapons, ammunition, and equipment of the former Soviet 14th Army headquartered in Moldova during the Soviet era.

Neither of its immediate neighbors—Ukraine and Romania—has been willing to play the role of Moldova's strategic partner. Ukraine has been undergoing a turbulent transition of its own. Romania, despite early post–Cold War talk of unification with Moldova, also has gone through a difficult transition and has lacked the weight and recognition in the international community to take up Moldova's cause. Moreover, Romania's activism on this issue would run the risk of rekindling the lingering suspicions of Transniestrian separatists about Moldovan-Romanian unification.

Europe and the United States have assisted Moldova with domestic reforms, as well as with the standoff with Transniestria. Neither has shown sufficient interest in this country, however, to take up its cause and

actively promote a settlement to its internal conflict, which remains its principal security challenge.

Moldova is a PFP member and participates in other regional fora (Southeast Europe Cooperation Initiative, Southeast European Defense Ministers), as either a member or an observer. With Transniestria as its principal security challenge, its activities in PFP and other organizations no doubt are subordinated to the goal of mobilizing international support to help resolve the impasse with the separatists. Most likely, Moldova will be a willing partner in various Black Sea regional activities.

Its interest would be reinforced by the fact that Transniestria reportedly has been a source of conventional arms and munitions from Chechnya to the Balkans.[18] A regional effort to crack down on arms trafficking would weaken the separatist regime in Transniestria and boost Moldova's international standing. Although Moldova has few, if any, resources to contribute to region-wide maritime efforts in the Black Sea, its proximity to Transniestria and cooperation could play an important role in containing trafficking from the breakaway province. Moreover, its position next to Romania, slated to join the EU in 2007, is bound to focus Europe's attention on this troubled country, as both an EU neighbor and a frozen conflict on its doorstep. Romania's membership in the EU is thus likely to benefit Moldova.

Moldova's biggest challenge, then, will be forging a modus vivendi with Russia in its capacity as an informal protector of the Transniestrian regime. Its participation in Black Sea regional security activities is likely to be helpful in this regard as both an additional channel for dialogue between the two countries and as a venue in which Russia would be confronted with further evidence that its support for Transniestria is fraught with dire consequences at home—in the north Caucasus.

If these competing rationales on the surface pose insurmountable odds to NATO's involvement in the greater Black Sea region, they also present opportunities for creative and dynamic diplomacy. This is likely to be especially true if all parties recognize that the status quo is neither satisfactory nor sustainable and that the alternative to Euro-Atlantic integration is isolation.

Elements of a Black Sea Strategy

NATO needs to be more explicit about a Black Sea strategy, precisely because a serious commitment to extending its security framework into this region cannot follow the model of NATO's enlargement in eastern

and central Europe. The Black Sea region's patchwork quilt of simmering conflicts, new states, old imperial rivalries, and religious and ethnic tensions (combined with abundant but poorly secured arsenals of small, conventional, and nonconventional weapons) means that without a well-calibrated strategy and resources to implement it, the Alliance will simply stumble into the neighborhood.

To its credit, NATO did not come to the Black Sea shores in the aftermath of 9/11 unprepared. The Alliance already had the successful experience of extending its security framework into central and southeastern Europe. The prospect of integration into the transatlantic security structure proved to be a powerful incentive for a successful post-Communist transition. The promise of "membership in the club" can have important domestic political benefits in a transitioning country, as well as keep the "club" itself actively engaged in the aspirant's affairs. It was thus natural for the Allies to carry on in the Black Sea region with the same approach that has worked well elsewhere in Europe.

The most difficult question for NATO to resolve is that of will and capacity. Does the Alliance have the will and the means to commit itself to the task of securing the south Caucasus region as it did with eastern Europe? The challenges in the south Caucasus will be far greater for reasons discussed earlier—conflicts in Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and South Ossetia represent tests that are well beyond the capabilities of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan to overcome. The Alliance will have to get involved and stay involved for a long time, just as it did in the Balkans.

Whether NATO takes on the challenge of the south Caucasus is not likely to be a matter of resources. The Alliance is comprised of the world's richest nations, and a superficial tally of their military and economic means suggests that even a price tag in the tens of billions of dollars would not break the bank. Rather, the deciding factors will be NATO's political will and strategic vision. Will the Alliance's leaders develop and articulate the latter to mobilize the former and generate the support for NATO's newest mission? This remains to be seen. To date, NATO's efforts in the Black Sea region have been limited and ad hoc, hampered by many longstanding regional fault lines. These problems cannot and will not be overcome until the region can realistically aspire to become integrated with the continent to which it rightfully belongs. And until such commitment is made and such vision is in place, NATO will lack a critical ingredient in its effort to build a stronger system of transatlantic and European security.

Enhancing Regional Cooperation

As NATO members seek to determine whether they can muster the will, vision, and resources to take on challenges looming in the greater Black Sea region, it is important to point out that regional cooperation is by no means a blank slate. The fact that the area already has hosted several regional groups and activities provides a useful foundation for the Alliance to build on as it strives to build bridges to new partners and aspirants in the region and erect firm barriers to new threats.

Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) was created in 1992 to promote regional cooperation on economic, transportation, energy, and environmental issues. BSEC membership includes the six littoral states—Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Georgia, Romania, Bulgaria—as well as Albania, Armenia, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Greece, and Serbia-Montenegro.[19] In 1998, it established a working group to combat crime and deal with natural disasters. In 2002, BSEC established working groups to deal with border controls, crisis management, and counterterrorism, and in early December 2004, its ministers of interior agreed to create a network of liaison offices. BSEC also provides a forum for the 12 Black Sea foreign ministers to discuss security issues. In 2005, the United States applied for and was granted an observer status at BSEC.

BLACKSEAFOR

The Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR), comprising the six littoral Black Sea states, was formally established in April 2001 with tasks of search and rescue operations, humanitarian assistance, mine countermeasures, environmental protection, and goodwill visits. Since August 2001, BLACKSEAFOR has convened annual 30-day maritime activation exercises under rotating national command. In 2004, with Turkey in the lead, member nations decided to transform their annual exercise into a more dynamic undertaking better suited to deal with contemporary maritime threats. They agreed to establish a permanent operation control center; draft a multilateral memorandum of understanding for information exchanges among member states; and carry out unscheduled activations to shadow and trail suspicious ships. In March 2005, BLACKSEAFOR further expanded its mandate to fight terrorism, as well as WMD proliferation, by adopting a document entitled "Maritime Risk Assessment in the Black Sea."

Black Sea Harmony

In March 2004, the Turkish navy launched a new operation—*Black Sea Harmony*—with the same objectives as NATO's Operation *Active Endeavor* in the Mediterranean: to establish maritime presence along the sea lines of communication and to shadow suspicious ships. Turkey extended an invitation to other littoral states to join *Black Sea Harmony.* Ukraine and Russia have declared their intention to join.

These nascent institutions offer an important point of departure for any new Black Sea strategy. While the states of the region lack a strong common identity, possible new forms of cooperation are most likely to take root if they build upon, rather than supplant, current activities. By the same token, the region's frozen conflicts remain a major stumbling block to such patterns of regional cooperation actually evolving. This factor suggests that new forms of cooperation should be tailored to take advantage of opportunities to mediate or resolve problems. Finally, any regional cooperation must be (and perceived as) locally developed and owned and not imposed from the outside. This last factor may be the more challenging for NATO, since the Alliance will have to consider ways and means of deflecting reactions by some who will portray its involvement in the Black Sea region in precisely those terms.

Within the contours of the foregoing considerations, the modalities of future cooperation fall into four categories.

Maritime Activities

Multinational security cooperation in the maritime domain is currently dominated by Russia and Turkey under the banners of BLACKSEAFOR/*Black Sea Harmony* activities. Neither country has been receptive to the idea of allowing NATO-sponsored Operation *Active Endeavor* into the Black Sea. The reasons for this on the Turkish side are complex and are woven into issues that extend beyond the Black Sea arena. Some have portrayed the 1936 Montreux Convention provisions regarding transits through the Bosporus and Dardanelles as a distinctive impediment to naval cooperation, but whatever restrictions they may impose, the issue is ultimately a political one—Turkish attitudes toward the use of the straits it controls—and must be engaged on that basis.

According to some assessments, only 10 percent of illicit trafficking through the region passes aboard maritime traffic. If so, the maritime status quo might be acceptable from a security perspective.[20] From a confidence- and security-building perspective, however, Bulgarian

and Romanian (as well as Georgian and possibly Ukrainian) confidence could waver, unless the United States (and NATO) provided alternate enhancements—air, coast guard/border defense, and civil protection—as a counterbalancing gesture.

Air Reconnaissance

The concept of joint air reconnaissance and interdiction, though more operationally challenging in some respects, might be a more productive venue for building regional cooperation. The major constraints in the region include a lack of capabilities, coordination among numerous initiatives, and the difficulty of breaking old habits of competition.

Though many different Black Sea national air security systems exist, both NATO and non-NATO, there are prospects for interoperability and software adaptations. Current shortfalls to be overcome involve developing some compatibility among the different national systems, doctrines, and standards. In addition, numerous capabilities gaps need to be addressed—with radars, communications and information systems, identification friend or foe, interception, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and information exchanges. Although all three NATO members have air sovereignty operations centers (ASOC), problems still exist with radars, command and control, National Military Command Center connectivity, reconnaissance, and interdiction.[21]

Another possible entry point for U.S. involvement is the contribution and basing of unmanned aerial vehicles for air reconnaissance and border defense. This could be presented as a short-term solution until the six Black Sea littoral states can agree on a more permanent arrangement. If all three Black Sea allies had sufficient ASOC integration with NATO, this would only cover altitudes above 10,000 feet. Hence, lower flying aircraft would remain invisible to detection. Finally, even if all this were implemented and operational, the three members would be unable to exchange information with their partners on the Black Sea.

The path ahead can now only be sketched as an ideal objective with the following requirements: participation of all six littoral states in Black Sea air reconnaissance; modernization and compatibility of national and NATO capabilities, combined and joint training, and common SOPs compatible with NATO; and capacity to develop a common air/maritime picture and coordinate decisionmaking procedures.

Coast Guard/Border Defense

With U.S. initiative and support, the Southeast European Cooperation Initiative (SECI) was launched in December 1996 to encourage cooperation among the states of southeastern Europe on economic, transportation, and environmental matters as a way to facilitate their European integration. Now linked with the European Police Office, the SECI Center in Bucharest, Romania, comprises 12 members (all 10 Balkan countries from Slovenia to Turkey, plus Hungary and Moldova) and 13 permanent observers.[22] All 12 members maintain 24 police and customs officers at the SECI Center. In October 2000, SECI broadened its activities to combat transborder crime involving trafficking of drugs, weapons, and human beings, as well as money laundering. In 2003, it added task forces on antismuggling, antifraud, and antiterrorism to include small arms and light weapons and WMD.

While SECI has demonstrated some impressive successes, many limitations remain. For example, of 500 human traffickers arrested as a result of SECI cooperation by the end of 2004, only 50 went to trial, and only 5 were convicted.[23] This clearly demonstrates the "limited institutional capacities and weaknesses" among some of its member countries, demonstrating why SECI in cooperation with its members' judicial authorities (for example, its Prosecutor's Advisory Group) adopted general guidelines for activities and competence in December 2004. Also, it demonstrates the importance of NATO's Partnership Action Plan on Defense Institution Building (PAP–DIB) adopted at the Istanbul Summit and the EU (which should count Bulgaria and Romania among its membership in January 2007) good neighbor policy.[24]

SECI, though, is also limited by the fact that some Black Sea littoral states (for example, Russia and Ukraine) do *not* participate, further degrading border defense capabilities. SECI, though, provides a model for GUAM members—Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova—to build a similar law enforcement center to cover (without Russia) the northern Black Sea littoral. In addition, in November 2004, representatives from the five central Asian states, Russia, and Azerbaijan met in Tashkent, Uzbekistan (with Interpol, EU, and the 12 SECI members as observers), to discuss establishing a Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC) for the purpose of monitoring and tracking the estimated 700 tons of heroin flowing from Afghanistan through Azerbaijan.[25] Following project team meetings in January and March 2005, on May 30–June 1, 2005, CARICC finalized a number of

documents that included an agreement to be signed by heads of states, a set of regulations, the CARICC organizational structure, and concepts on information-sharing, the role and responsibilities of liaison officers, and observer status accreditation.

Although the SECI does not yet provide coverage of the entire Black Sea littoral, the six Black Sea littoral-state coast guards established the Black Sea Border Coordination and Information Center (BBCIC) in Burgas, Bulgaria, in 2003, which provides important information regarding illegal Black Sea activities. In the past 18 months, the Black Sea littoral coast guards have exchanged information more than 400 times. While most BBCIC cases have involved different sorts of illegal activities with no apparent systematic pattern, none yet have involved terrorism or WMD proliferation. While the BBCIC has great potential for maritime border protection, it is not yet connected to, nor coordinated with, the SECI Center. Obviously, this weakness needs to be corrected and should become a high priority.

In summary, NATO allies Romania and Bulgaria, who host the SECI and BBCIC, provide a bilateral core for coordinating NATO and EU programs in promoting border security and coastal defense along the western Black Sea. With U.S. sponsorship and likely future presence, and further U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) support, the two countries could become the platform needed for a coordinated regional border and coastal control system that might be broadened eventually to include more Black Sea littoral states. As a NATO member, Turkey should be drawn into this arrangement, but Bulgaria's and Romania's impending EU membership provides them with leverage that they presently do not enjoy with Turkey on maritime security.

This strategy suggests that USEUCOM, in coordination with NATO and the EU, would need to focus more attention and assistance on Bulgarian and Romanian border controls and Coast Guard elements, rather than providing naval support. One of USEUCOM's potential drawbacks, though, is that compared with its impressive blue-water naval capabilities and experience, its brown-water coast guard capacities are more limited, while the EU has comparative advantages in border control management. This points to the need for integrated NATO–EU planning.

Civil Protection

Some progress can already be marked in civil emergency planning in southeast Europe. In 1996, annual meetings of the Southeast European Defense Ministers (SEDM) commenced to enhance transparency and

build cooperation in southeastern Europe.[26] In 1999, the SEDM approved the creation of the Southeast European Brigade (SEEBRIG), with headquarters now in Constanta, Romania, that comprises a 25,000-troop force that can be assembled as needed to support peace support operations under NATO or the EU. In April and October 2004, respectively, Joint Forces Command in Naples certified (albeit noting some shortfalls) SEEBRIG with initial operational capability and full operational capability. In addition, SEEBRIG has begun focusing on developing disaster relief capabilities. In light of these developments, it is now time to build upon SEDM and SEEBRIG successes to deal with the new risk environment consistent with NATO guidance. The SEDM should be broadened to include interior minister participation as SEEBRIG begins to move into emergency planning.

In April 2001, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia formalized the Civil-Military Emergency Planning Council in Southeastern Europe (CMEPCSEE). The council's role is to facilitate regional cooperation in disaster management through consultation and coordination among its members. Open to other members sharing the Council's objectives, Romania joined in 2002 and Turkey in 2003. The members have agreed to develop common standards for planning and responding to regional disasters or emergencies; create emergency response databases and digital maps of southeastern European countries' roads, rails, pipelines, and airports; establish emergency operating centers in each country with common communication procedures; and conduct national and multinational exercises. Bulgaria, for example, hosted a civil-military emergency planning field exercise comprising all council members (with observers and visitors from Moldova, Greece, Serbia-Montenegro, and the United States) with the aim of improving the collective ability to respond to disaster.

The recent evolution of southeastern European civil-military emergency planning is also a positive development. The CMEPCSEE is important in that it not only incorporates military and civil institutions fostering necessary coordination and cooperation at the national level, but also pushes planning to the regional level. For this effort to become sufficient, the CMEPCSEE might consider merging with SEDM (which would require accepting Albania as an observer or member) and creating a Regional Civil Protection Coordination Center to harmonize training procedures, establish a regional training plan, and explore, with SEEBRIG, ways in which that organization might address issues of civil

protection. Such a union of interior and defense ministers would formalize the necessary conditions for further advancing regional cooperation.

Could this CMEPCSEE–SEDM civil-military emergency planning model be extended to the Black Sea region? The BBCIC in Burgas, Bulgaria, provides the key to building such cooperation and for planning priorities among the six Black Sea littoral states. To have any chance of success, the BBCIC needs to be linked to SECI.

Bottom Line: Ownership Is a Two-Way Street

To facilitate regional cooperation and its own involvement in the Black Sea region, NATO could establish a Black Sea Group, which would serve as a forum to develop PFP programs with a regional focus. The standard tools available to Allies and partners—the Planning and Review Process (PARP); Membership Action Plan (MAP); the Individual Partnership Action Plan (I–PAP); the PAP–T; and the PAP–DIB—could be brought under the umbrella of the Black Sea Group. The group could also serve as a forum where the Black Sea states could take the lead in developing a regional strategy for the Alliance.

A further sign of the Alliance's interest in the Black Sea region and tangible proof of its commitment to it would be the endowment of a trust fund to support regional cooperation and PFP activities focused on the Black Sea region. This trust fund would be open to both partners and new members of the Alliance.

One of the key preconditions for a successful Black Sea strategy for the Alliance entails developing a sense of ownership of that strategy among the Black Sea states themselves. This is crucial for the success of BLACKSEAFOR, *Black Sea Harmony*, as well as NATO's ability to integrate these regional efforts with its own *Active Endeavor*.

The task of developing such a sense of ownership on the part of the Black Sea states, however, represents a serious challenge for the Alliance. The chief reason for it is in the Allies' understandable tendency to promote or express an interest in regional initiatives that address their security needs.

Indeed, BLACKSEAFOR, *Black Sea Harmony*, and *Active Endeavor* are targeting problems that threaten the Allies themselves first and foremost: illegal migration, trafficking, proliferation of WMD, and so forth. These threats are universally recognized as important but are viewed as second-tier issues throughout much of the Black Sea region.

In fact, for some countries in the Black Sea region, illegal migration is not so much a part of their problem as part of their solution to poverty, legacy of conflict, and ethnic tensions. Separatism, ethnic conflict, and day-to-day physical survival are far more pressing issues for the region's average inhabitants, as well as their leaders. To be successful in integrating this region into Europe whole and free, to foster ownership of Alliance-sponsored activities, NATO must make itself relevant to the pressing needs as they are viewed by the locals.

This challenge cannot be met without NATO's firm and public commitment to make the Black Sea region's top-tier problems its own problems. This does not mean that NATO must step in and solve the Nagorno-Karabakh problem for Armenia and Azerbaijan, for example. But it does mean that NATO must pledge to assist the two nations to help with security arrangements for maintaining peace *after* they agree on a mutually acceptable solution. By developing a conceptual peacekeeping plan for Nagorno-Karabakh and soliciting pledges of future contributions and participation from allies and partners, NATO would send a powerful signal to Baku and Yerevan that it views their security as an integral part of European security. Similar plans and pledges could be generated for the region's other frozen conflicts. Without such actions, however, the Black Sea region would see NATO's commitment to it as a one-way street, an abstract concept and a sign that the Alliance is more interested in erecting barriers than building bridges.

In the political sphere, the Alliance should include the Black Sea region in the top tier of its agenda. The establishment of the Black Sea Group would be a step toward that objective. Active participation by the Allies, especially the United States and other key members, would send a strong signal of NATO's political commitment to the region.

Moreover, security in the Black Sea region, an area of strategic significance to Moscow, should be one of the key issues discussed at the NATO–Russia Council. Transparency and inclusion with respect to Russia would be of paramount importance if NATO is to be successful in pursuing its objectives, just as Russian participation in future peacekeeping operations in Nagorno-Karabakh or in support of resolution for some other frozen conflict in the region would have to be a key element of planning for such contingencies from the outset.

In sum, ownership of Black Sea regional security must become a two-way process. NATO will have to demonstrate its stake in the region's most pressing security concerns in order for the countries of the Black Sea region to reciprocate in regard to the threats and challenges that NATO

considers to be at the top of its own security agenda. This in turn means that the Alliance will have to develop a Black Sea strategy that deals with what ails the region the most, not with what the Allies perceive as the greatest threat from that region.

Notes

[1] "Invocation of Article 5 Comfirmed," *NATO Update*, October 3, 2001, available at <www.nato.int/docu/update/2001/1001/e1002a.htm>.

[2] David J. Gerleman, Jennifer E. Stevens, and Steven A. Hildreth, "Operation *Enduring Freedom*: Foreign Pledges of Military and Intelligence Support" (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, October 17, 2001), available at <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/6207.pdf>.

[3] "NATO in Afghanistan," *NATO Topics*, January 19, 2006, available at <www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan/index.html>.

[4] NATO, "Prague Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government of the North Atlantic Council in Prague on 21 November 2002," press release (2002) 127, available at <www.nato.int/docu/pr/2002/p02-127e.htm>.

[5] NATO, "Partnership Action Plan Against Terrorism," November 22, 2002, 16.1–16.5, available at <www.nato.int/docu/basictxt/b021122e.htm>.

[6] The Turkish Straits are among the world's busiest waterways, with a traffic volume of 50,000 vessels annually, including 5,500 oil tankers. These statistics do not include the more than 2,000 local vessels that cross the straits daily. Oil flows in 2004 represented 3.1 million barrels per day, nearly all of it southbound. U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Agency, "World Oil Transit Chokepoints: Bosporus," Country Analysis Briefs, November 2005, available at <www.eia.gov/emeu/cabs/World_Oil_Transit_Chokepoints/Bosporus_TurkishStraits.html>.

[7] In the case of Russia, in 2003, the greater Black Sea region (including Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Turkey, Moldova, and Ukraine) represented 40 percent of all outbound Russian tourism, of which Turkey alone represented 18.3 percent. Between 1995 and 2003, outbound Russian tourism overall increased by 117 percent. A.L. Kevesh et al., eds., *Tourism and Tourist Resources in Russia: 2004 Statistical Handbook* (Moscow: Federal Service of State Statistics, 2004), 25, 33.

[8] The capacity of the Baku-Supsa pipeline is 150,000 barrels per day. The CPC pipeline expansion, connecting Kazakhstan's Caspian Sea area oil deposits with Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiysk, could add an incremental 750,000 barrels per day of oil traffic through the Turkish Straits. U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Agency, "Caspian Sea: Oil and Natural Gas Export Issues," Country Analysis Briefs, September 2005, available at <www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Caspian/ExportIssues.html>.

[9] Although Bosporus traffic poses a major security and environmental risk, Turkey expects a decrease after the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline reaches major capacity and eases the Black Sea oil flow. However, since the economic viability of the BTC pipeline is as of yet untested, Novorossiysk exports, along with those of Batumi, Supsa, and Odessa, are likely to remain at current levels for the near future (approximately 1.7 million barrels per day in 2003). U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Agency, "Russia: Oil Exports," Country Analysis Briefs, January 2006, available at <www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Russia/Oil_exports.html>.

[10] For instance, a 2002 report by the Moldovan delegation to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Joint Control Commission on Transnistria presented evidence that at least six factories in Moldova's breakaway region produce abundant quantities of conventional arms—including rocket-propelled grenades, antitank grenades, portable missile launchers, and internationally banned antipersonnel mines—that have been used by insurgents in Chechnya, Abkhazia, and the Balkans. In October 2005, Moldovan prime minister Vasily Tarlev made similar allegations (denied by the Russian Ministry of Defense) about sales of weapons from Russian stockpiles in Transnistria to Chechen separatists. Nikolai Poroskov, "*Pridnestrovsky arsenal* [Transnistrian arsenal]," *Vremya Novostei*, no. 225 (December 5, 2002), available at <www.vremya.ru/print/30012.html>; NewsRu.com, "*Russkoe voennoe rukovodstvo oprovergaet zayavlenie premiera Moldovii o popadanii v ruki boevikov oruzhiya so skladov v Prodnesdtrovii* [Russian military leadership denies allegations by Moldovan premier that weapons from Russian stockpiles in Transniestria fall into hands of insurgents]," available at <www.newru.com>.

[11] *Pocket World in Figures*, 2005 ed. (London: The Economist Books, 2005), 227.

[12] U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Agency, "Turkey," Country Analysis Briefs, July 2006, available at <www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/turkey.html>.

[13] Russian Federation, President of Russia, "Official Visit to Republic of Turkey," December 5–6, 2005, available at <http://president.kremlin.ru/eng/events/articles/2004/12/80760/80759.shtml>.

[14] U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Agency, "Russia: Background," Country Analysis Briefs, January 2006, available at <www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/russia.html>.

[15] Liz Fuller, "North Caucasus: Dmitrii Kozak—Troubleshooter or Whipping Boy?" Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, June 20, 2005, available at <www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/6/5A2EA0A7-20F5-413E-8A7A-C791EF0BB7A2.html>.

[16] "U.S. Backs Ukraine's NATO Bid, Kiev Sees No Russia Block," *MosNews*, October 24, 2005, available at <www.mosnews.com/news/2005/10/24/ukrussnato.shtml>; "EU Appealing in Ukraine, but Not NATO," *Ukrainian Monitor*, February 24, 2005, available at <http://foreignpolicy.org.ua/eng/headlines/society/opinion/index.shtml?id=4244>.

[17] Despite the legacy of Russian support for Armenia, during the final years of the Soviet Union, Moscow supported Azerbaijan against Armenia, which was seen as one of the most independence-minded breakaway republics of the Soviet Union. Moscow's opposition to Armenia's independence was the principal reason for siding with Azerbaijan in that conflict.

[18] Poroskov, *"Pridnestrovsky arsenal"*; NewsRu.com, October 27, 2005.

[19] For further information on the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, see <www.bsec.gov.tr>.

[20] Author interview with senior Turkish military official, Sofia, Bulgaria, June 21, 2005.

[21] Bulgaria still has not met its minimum military requirements for ASOC and has yet to integrate its national ASOC with the NATO defense system. Bulgaria and Romania still need identification friend or foe capability.

[22] The members are Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Georgia, Italy, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

[23] John F. Markey, director, Office of Law Enforcement, U.S. Department of State, at Center for Strategic and International Studies conference, Romania, October 19, 2004.

[24] SECI's EU membership will expand to five when Romania and Bulgaria join Hungary, Slovenia, and Greece in January 2007.

[25] Markey.

[26] SEDM's membership comprises Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, and Croatia (since October 2000), with the United States, Italy, and, more recently, Ukraine and Moldova, as observers. Also at the November 5, 2004, SEDM ministerial in Ljubljana, Slovenia, Serbia-Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina were guests, and Ukraine requested full SEDM membership.

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