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RKK ICDS
ADRIATIC-BALTIC-BLACK SEA
VISIONS OF COOPERATION

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Preface

The goal of the current publication, Adriatic – Baltic – Black Sea: Visions of Cooperation, is to outline the specifics of the Three Seas Initiative (Inicjatywa Trójmorza), to situate it in the appropriate historical as well as geopolitical context, and to identify the most important aspects affecting its future development.

The Three Seas Initiative is a project aimed at promoting and developing economic cooperation among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. As its name indicates, the initiative primarily includes states located between the Adriatic, Baltic, and Black seas. In a sense, it can be considered as an outgrowth of the original Intermarium concept by interwar Polish Chief of State Józef Piłsudski, which was aimed at creating a federation of the countries of the region. While a separate federation may no longer be the goal—thanks to the existence and expansion of the EU and NATO—thanks both to recent history and current trends, the Three Seas Initiative may evolve in a number of different directions. It is also important to highlight that the current initiative is based on a rather different set of motivations: contemporary realities have transformed the defence-focused interwar Intermarium into a modern Trimarium aimed at finding synergies through cooperation.

At the moment, the primary fields of cooperation among the Three Seas Initiative members—that is, the Baltic states and the countries of the Visegrád Group as well as Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, and Slovenia—are transport, energy and digitisation. Declarations in these areas were adopted at the Initiative's first summit in Dubrovnik on 25-26 August 2016. This year's summit in Warsaw was attended by US President Donald Trump, whose presence ensured greater international recognition for the project.

By its very existence, the Initiative demonstrates that North-South cross-border cooperation—which due to historical circumstances was never able to emerge—is in fact possible. In a wider sense, this cooperation is also aimed at strengthening NATO-EU relations. From the perspective of the Initiative, Central and Eastern European countries must serve as a source of strength the broader European community—despite the enormous challenges posed by a less-integrated and weakened European Union. However, before they can play this role more effectively, they must focus on building a more coherent position within the EU through both deepened internal integration and balanced regional development.

Nevertheless, the implementation of this project will be extremely difficult as the aims of its members are still not precisely defined, while the project itself is still in its early stages. Moreover, the constraints inherent in modern international relations would prevent the immediate implementation of the project even if its goals were set out in exact detail. Accordingly, the desired reforms and solutions will not be carried out for some time. That said, however, this sustained period of implementation does lend the project a certain degree of flexibility and adaptability.

What does the Three Seas Initiative need to unleash its full potential? It seems that the solution to the problems facing the project can be found not in endless theoretical discussion, but in sustainable and concrete action. In other words, as the Initiative develops in practice, its conceptualisation will evolve accordingly. Certainly, the increase in security and competitiveness of participating countries as the project progresses should also spur further cooperation as well as the gradual equalisation of economic disparities.
We hope that this publication will not only give you greater insight into the underlying mechanisms of the Three Seas Initiative, but will also deepen your interest in the project—while perhaps encouraging you to take active steps towards exploring or even strengthening it further in the future.

Dr Kinga Redłowska
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Introductory remarks

This paper is to present a – not the – Polish view on the Polish-Croatian Trimarium Initiative (TI) launched by the presidents of the two countries (Andrzej Duda and Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović) in 2015.¹ Formalized at the first TI summit in Dubrovnik (August 25-26),² the initiative gained new momentum at its second summit in Warsaw on July 6-7 of this year³, especially given that it was combined with and supported by the visit of US President Donald Trump to the Polish capital ⁴. The paper is divided into two main parts: the first is devoted to a description of the TI as it is understood today – i.e., primarily in terms of infrastructure – while the second considers possible potential extension of cooperation within TI both in a geographical sense and as far as the specific areas of cooperation (political, military etc.) are concerned.

Geographically Trimarium is a space covering the basins of three seas: the Adriatic, the Baltic and the Black. Politically, however, it is defined more narrowly–at least for the time being. It has its earliest conceptual origins in the Polish interwar idea of Intermarium (the political and military cooperation of the Central and Eastern European states that were threatened by German and Soviet imperialism).⁵ Today the international milieu is substantially different, of course, given the American military presence on the ground, the existence of NATO and the EU, and the fact that Germany is now an allied democracy. However, the Russian challenge remains a factor in the region.

Trimarium is geographically wider than was Intermarium, since – at least potentially – it is open not only to the countries situated between the three seas, but also those located around the Baltic Sea, such as the Scandinavian states that are not yet participants but

⁵ For more, see: P. Okulewicz, Koncepcja „Międzymorza” w myśli i praktyce politycznej obozu Józefa Piłsudskiego w latach 1918-1926, Poznań 2001, pp.417.
that are perceived as desirable and attractive potential partners in Poland and in the Baltic states. Unlike Intermarium, which was above all intended as an answer to the military threat to the region and whose original backbone was the Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Romanian anti-Soviet alliances of 1920 and 1921, today’s Trimarium is not primarily about security but about infrastructure. (Moreover, while Ukraine is not yet a core country of Trimarium cooperation, though it remains a potentially an important partner for the group; for its part, Romania remains one of the leading powers in the construction of the modern initiative.)

Formally Trimarium is a cooperation project of 12 European Union member states: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Currently, the project’s dimensions are primarily infrastructural and economic. The key to Trimarium cooperation is the participants’ shared membership in the EU; its political goal is to deepen sectoral cooperation and strengthen cohesion among the states of the Eastern flank of the EU. Ultimately, the initiative is intended to strengthen the traditional links among Central and Eastern European states and to include them into the process of the European integration as active creators, not merely passive consumers of ideas and projects conceived in the “core” EU countries. Trimarium therefore is not an alternative to the EU, but a complement to it.

The very idea of the TI is still in statu nascendi (under construction). Its final shape remains to be determined, though the dynamic nature of politics allows us to predict confidently that this process will never – and should never – be completed. In order to function, develop, and thrive, Trimarium will have to evolve and be modified repeatedly in order to adjust to the new challenges that will emerge in the future. Fukuyama was wrong – there is no such a thing as the end of history – so Trimarium will continue to evolve until the end of its political lifespan.

Given that the Initiative is still under construction today, this allows us however to identify the two main factors behind its birth: the European and the American. The first is obvious, since its very construction is an attempt to organize the central-eastern part of Europe in an integrated political group. The second, however, has been added to Trimarium by the visit of President Donald Trump. The political support of the world superpower for this local initiative has given it new momentum while making it harder for its opponents to portray it as unserious or based on unrealistic wishful thinking.

The infrastructure dimension of Trimarium – that is, within the group of 12 states – is today the basic political task for the initiative. Nevertheless, the potential for wider cooperation – both geographically and thematically – is considerable. There is obvious room for cooperation within NATO and the EU and to some extent with other partner countries (Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia) in infrastructure (transport and communication as well as energy and energy raw materials transfer), security (including military industry and technology), and political cooperation (eastern NATO flank strengthening, immigration policy, structural funds, equal standards for all in the EU, one speed Europe instead of two speed one, opposition to German-Russian infrastructural projects like Nord Stream 2 etc.). Each particular topic added to Trimarium will result in variable geometry, since one can hardly expect all the countries of the region to be equally interested in deep cooperation in each of the fields mentioned above. However, work on each issue does not take place in complete isolation, as the success or failure of the group in one field will have an impact on its activity in other fields as well. Let us turn now to examine the three main dimensions of Trimarium cooperation as they are seen from Poland.
I. The Trimarrium Initiative Today: Infrastructure Cooperation as a Core Project

There are two main areas of cooperation in the infrastructure dimension of Trimarrium: transportation (rail lines and highways) and energy (LNG and oil terminals, gas and oil pipelines, gas storage facilities, electricity connections, etc.). The Visegrád Group (V4; that is, – Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) plus Croatia constitutes the core countries in this field of cooperation. According to the declaration signed at the Dubrovnik summit in 2016, Trimarrium aims to contribute to the construction of the Single European Market in the region by strengthening sectoral cooperation in the fields pointed out above. A longer-term but obviously necessary priority is the development of East-West transport infrastructure, which must be coupled with enhanced North-South connections. Central and Eastern European cohesion is crucial for Poland, a country situated at the crossroads of two macro-regions: the Baltic and Danube. The infrastructure links between them, neglected in previous centuries by the empires that ruled the region, should be strengthened to benefit the free nations of today.

The Visegrád Group and the formats associated to it, such as V4+ (i.e., the four countries plus one external partner – usually Croatia, Romania, Slovenia, or Ukraine, with the last being the principal non-EU partner) or V4+NB8 (adding the five Nordic and three Baltic states) have great potential for cooperation on bilateral and regional infrastructure projects both in transport and communication. The leading area for this kind of activity are north-south rail lines and highways to connect the countries of the region and to spark further development in their economies. The most famous example is the Via Carpatia – the highway planned to begin in the Greek city of Thessaloniki and end either in the Lithuanian port of Klaipėda or to extend even further to the Estonian capital of Tallinn, with onward ferry connections to Helsinki. On the southern end, this highway will have branches across Bulgaria to Istanbul and to the Romanian Black Sea port of Constanţa. Another potential area for this kind of cooperation are the Sudeten Mountains, where there is room for potential bilateral Polish-Czech projects to construct rail links.

The Polish section of Via Carpatia (570 km) runs along the S19 road and is planned to be completed by 2023. The estimated cost of the section, in which the investor is GDDKiA, is 30 billion złoty (€7 billion). The S19 road runs from Barwinek on the Slovak border to Budzisko on the Lithuanian frontier, connecting cities such as Rzeszów and Lublin, among others. The route offers some promising additional connections to Ukraine (Rzeszów-Przemysł-Lviv, Zamość-Volodymyr Vołynskyi-Lutsk and Lublin-Chelm-Kovel). Moreover, it is not only the Polish section of Via Carpatia that can be extended to Ukraine; connections are possible to the Slovak (via the Mukachevo-Uzhhorod-Košice) and Hungarian (Mukachevo-Debrecen) segments as well.

Via Baltica is another project of the same nature as Via Carpatia. It is a part of Branch B of Pan-European Tran91-km Polish section, planned for completion in 2018-2021, is estimated to cost 3.5 billion złoty (€820 million), with GDDKiA again serving as the investor. The highway project will begin with a Berlin-Warsaw connection and then turn north...
along the existing S8 and S61 roads through Ostrów Mazowiecka, Łomża, Elk and Suwałki before reaching the Lithuanian border at Budzisko; it will then, as described earlier, continue onward to Kaunas, Riga, Tallinn and Helsinki.

Currently under construction and scheduled for completion by 2022, the A1 route—known as the Amber Highway in Poland and running from Gorzyczki at the Czech border to Gdańsk via Katowice, Częstochowa, Łódź, and Toruń—is another example of improvements to the road transport network. It will form part of the European transport corridor E75 that runs from Vardø in far northern Norway through Finland, onward via the Helmsinki-Gdynia ferry connection to Poland, before proceeding through Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, and Macedonia to Greece. It intersects the E30 (Cork, Ireland to Omsk, Russia) and E40 (Calais, France to Ridder, Kazakhstan), making it an important element of European transport infrastructure.

The S3 expressway (from Świnoujście to Lubawka on the Czech border) is to be completed by 2018 and supplemented with an onward connection to Czechia by 2023. It constitutes a part of the European transport corridor E65 as well as Central European Transport Corridor (CETC) Route 65, and runs from Sweden (via the Malmö-Świnoujście ferry connection) to Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Kosovo, Serbia, Macedonia, and Greece, with a ferry connection to Crete.

Last but not least of the infrastructure projects worth mentioning in this context is the so-called Go Highway Odesa-Gdańsk, which is aimed at connecting Ukraine and Poland but which can also constitute a part of the Chinese Belt and Road initiative.

It is not just road but also rail infrastructure that will be developed in the Trimarium. The priority project is Rail Baltica (Warsaw-Tallinn), which is expected to be completed by 2025 with an undersea tunnel to Helsinki by the mid-2030s.

The success of the Kyiv-Lviv-Przemyśl rail connection opened by Ukrzaliznytsia (Ukrainian Railways) in December 2016 shows us another potential for cooperation in the region. That example is worth being followed—and even replicated elsewhere. Dedicated new rail service along the routes Wrocław-Kraków-Przemyśl-Ternopil-Kyiv and Warsaw-Lublin-Chelm-Kovel-Korosten-Kyiv would reduce traffic at the overloaded Polish-Ukrainian road border crossings—a matter that has become more urgent since visa-free travel for Ukrainians to the EU began in June 2017. Local trains on the routes Lublin-Chelm-Kovel-Rivne-Zhytomyr and Przemyśl-Lviv-Ivano-Frankivsk-Chernivtsi would also help reduce border congestion.

The transport system in the Trimarium region also comprises the so-called Go Highway Odesa-Gdańsk, which is aimed at connecting Ukraine and Poland but which can also constitute a part of the Chinese Belt and Road initiative.

The energy dimension of TI cooperation was born as a tool to meet the Russian challenge clearly demonstrated to the region by the so-called Russian-Ukrainian “gas wars.”

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7 Ibidem, p.31-35.
8 Ibidem, p.3. Other countries were the subject of Russian gas blackmail since the beginning of the 1990s as well too. (P. Żurawski vel Grajewski, Polityka Unii Europejskiej wobec Rosji a interesy Polski 1991-2004, Kraków 2008,
The Trimarium answer to that challenge is embodied in the North-South Corridor project - the planned connection between the already existing LNG terminal in Świnoujście on the Baltic coast, not far from the Polish-German border, and the planned facility on the Croatian island of Krk on the Adriatic. The Corridor actually began with the Polish-Danish-Norwegian Northern Gateway project, consisting of a Baltic pipeline to bring gas from Norwegian fields to Poland. The planned investors are: Gaz-System (Poland), Gassco (Norway), and Energinet (Denmark). The Polish main gas distributor PGNiG is also engaged in the project, as its subsidiary PGNiG Upstream Norway holds shares in 20 Norwegian gas fields in the North Sea. The project, which has an estimated cost of between €1.6-2.2 billion and a planned capacity of 10 billion cubic meters (bcm) per year, is scheduled to be completed between 2017-2022, and will be able to operate in reverse mode as well.\(^9\) For these investments to be effective, however, they must be coupled with the construction of interconnectors between the V4 countries and their Trimarium neighbors as well as Ukraine. In particular, the creation of the North-South gas transit corridor demands the construction of three further interconnectors: Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Slovak – both already planned to be completed by 2020—and Polish-Czech, for which a deadline has yet to be established.

The Polish-Slovak interconnector is planned to be built between Strachocin and Velké Kapušany. Its annual capacity will be 4.7 bcm (Poland to Slovakia) and 5.7 bcm (Slovakia to Poland). The main investors are Gaz-System (Poland) and Eustream (Slovakia) and the estimated cost is 356 million złoty (€83 million). The project has been supported with €108m in EU funding provided within the framework of the Connecting Europe Facility instrument.

The Polish-Czech interconnector will stretch from Libhošť (Czechia) to Haf (Polish-Czech border) and on to Kędzierzyn Koźle (Poland). Its capacity is planned to be 5 bcm (Poland to Czechia) and 2.5 bcm in the reverse direction; costs have not yet been estimated, though the main investors will be Gaz-System (Poland) and Netgas (Czechia).

As for the Polish-Ukrainian interconnector, its route is planned to stretch from Hermanowice (Poland) – Bilche Volytsia (Ukraine) with a compressor station in Strachocin (Poland). With a planned capacity between 5 to 8 bcm per year, the interconnector’s main investors are Gaz-System and Ukrtranshaz.

For Poland and Ukraine the project is rooted in energy security concerns; the Russo-Ukrainian war in particular has forced Ukraine to seek gas suppliers besides Russia’s Gazprom. For Czechia and Slovakia, the respective interconnectors have a much more economic dimension; nonetheless, the Russian-German pipeline Nord Stream 2 represents a fundamental threat to the Slovak position as the main transit country for Russian gas, thereby forcing Bratislava to search for alternatives.

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The North-South corridor, as mentioned above, is to be combined with LNG terminals at both ends, Świnoujście and Krk respectively. In Poland, the project is treated as a kind of reinsurance to guarantee security of supply to the region in the event that Russia causes any interruptions of LNG shipments to Świnoujście via the Baltic Sea.10

Apart from the North-South corridor, the Gas Interconnector Poland-Lithuania (GIPL) is planned to connect Poland to its northeastern neighbor, linking Hołowczyce (Poland) and Jauninuai (Lithuania) by 2021. The investors are Gaz-System, Amber Grid (Lithuania), and the Innovation Network Executive Agency – INEA (EU). With an estimated cost of €558 m, GIPL is intended to connect the Baltic states’ gas grid with that of the rest of the European Union; however, it will likely be complicated with the competitive nature of the LNG terminals – the existing facilities in Polish Świnoujście and the floating storage regasification unit (FSRU) in Klaipėda, as well as the additional FSRUs planned to be built in Skulte (Latvia), Tallinn and Paldiski (Estonia)11 and Constanța (Romania).12

The common struggle against the German-Russian13 Nord Stream 2 project engages the interests of Poland and Slovakia14 within the TI as well as Ukraine and Belarus outside of it. All of these states are currently the main transit countries for Russian gas and oil exports to the EU.15 It is highly probable that these states will cooperate with the Scandinavian and the Baltic countries on this issue, since all of them fear Russian domination in the region and perceive Russian gas exports as an instrument of the Kremlin’s foreign policy; for these reasons, they protested against Nord Stream 1 as well.16

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10 Planowana infrastruktura Trójmorza…, p.6-11.
The energy infrastructure of TI may be completed as well by the two electricity interconnections, one the LitPol Link between Elk in Poland and Alytus in Lithuania, thereby connecting Poland and the Baltic states, as well as another link between Poland and Ukraine currently only in the planning phase.\textsuperscript{17}

The first experimental American gas shipment to Świnoujście LNG terminal on June 8\textsuperscript{18}, together with President Trump’s announcement in Warsaw in July\textsuperscript{19} that the US will supply Central Europe with American LNG, has lent considerable political momentum to Trimarium cooperation in the energy dimension, making its success very likely.

In its present configuration of 12 countries, Trimarium is home to 105 million people and has a combined GDP of $3.3 trillion (€2.8 trillion).\textsuperscript{20} The economic potential of the region within the EU is thus certainly not negligible. From a German perspective the Polish market alone is more than twice as large as that of Russia, while the combined V4 market is greater than that of France.\textsuperscript{21} For years, Czechia was the second largest market for Poland, after Germany (in 2015 – €111.9 billion, or 8.4% of exports, compared with €5.1b or 2.9% of exports to Russia); only in 2015 did Czechia fall to third place after the UK (€12.1b, 8.5%). In 2015, Polish exports to Hungary (€4.8b, 2.7%) were only slightly smaller than those to Russia.\textsuperscript{22} The TI countries offer each other stable trade conditions, low political risk, personal and legal security to entrepreneurs and their employees, geographical proximity (thereby lowering transportation costs), and consumers with relatively large – and growing – purchasing power who are moreover not dispersed over a large territory unlike Russia; similarly, compared to Russia the level of corruption is relatively low and dropping further. When factoring in the impact on regional development of the TI initiative’s infrastructure projects, the region may become a powerful and attractive market for the entire EU.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Planowana infrastruktura Trójmorza…, p.27-30.
\item \textsuperscript{21} In 2016 German exports to Russia amounted to €21.57 billion, while those to Poland were €54.79b. German exports to France were €101.3b, with those to the V4 countries €128.2 b (Poland – €54.79b, Czechia €38.2 b, Hungary €22.7 b, and Slovakia €12.7 b). Among other Trimarium states, Romania alone adds €13.57 b to that sum, for example. Foreign trade. Ranking of Germany’s trading partners in foreign trade 2016, Statistisches Bundesamt, July 20, 2017, p.2
\item \textsuperscript{22} Rocznik Statystyczny Handlu Zagranicznego 2016, GUS, Warszawa 2016, s.63 and 116.
\end{itemize}
II. Potential of the future cooperation in the Trimarium region

a) Trimarium and the security dimension

Trimarium Initiative is not about security, many of its countries still share the same position on the military dimension of international relations in the region and – especially after 2014 – have the same or similar perception of the Russian threat. Regional integration in the security field began at a November 2015 summit of NATO’s eastern flank, convened at the initiative of Poland and Romania. At this summit, the “Bucharest 9” (Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia) officially came into being. Given the context of Russian aggression in Ukraine, the 9 appealed to NATO for the reinforcement of the Alliance’s eastern flank. Of these countries, those that share a common land or maritime border with Russia (the Baltic states, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria) formally requested the presence of Allied troops on their soil, while those lucky enough not to have such a neighbor (Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia) offered the others their political solidarity and support. These requests—except for that Bulgaria, given its further southern location—were accepted at the Warsaw NATO summit in July 2016 and are now being implemented.

The core countries for security cooperation in the Trimarium geographical space are Poland, Romania, and the Baltic states. However, the Nordic countries (both those that are NATO member states – Denmark and Norway—as well as neutral or nonaligned Finland and Sweden) represent an important security factor in the region and remain attractive cooperation partners for all of Central and Eastern Europe.

The Scandinavian perception of the Russian threat is the similar to that of Poland or the Baltic states; moreover, given that the Nordic states belong to “old Europe,” their


26 Iceland is a Nordic country too and a NATO member, though it does not have a military of its own and its geographical distant situation from the Baltic region makes it hardly a potential member of TI and this is why it is not considered here.

27 Of course there are some differences even among the Nordic states, caused primarily by geographical factors. Finland is a direct neighbor of Russia, as the two share a common land border, Sweden is more maritime oriented and still focused on the Baltic Sea, Norway focuses on North Atlantic and Arctic, while Denmark—relatively less threatened—also focuses on the Arctic. On the history and perspectives of the Nordic military cooperation see: T. Dąbrowowski, M. Gniazdowski, J. Gotkowska, J. Groszkowski, A. Sadecki, A. Wilk, J. Hyndle-Hussein, W regio nie siła? Stan i perspektywy współpracy wojskowej wybranych państw obszaru od Morza Bałtyckiego do Morza Czarnego, ed. by J. Gotkowska, O. Osica, Center for Eastern Studies, Warsaw 2012, p.22-27. See as well: J. Gotkowska,
voices are often more powerful than those of the “new” members of NATO and the EU; accordingly, the Nordic countries are often listened to more carefully and treated more seriously. That fact has a political value for Poland, the Baltic states, and Romania that is difficult to overestimate. Scandinavian opinions on the security situation in our part of Europe resonate and harmonize with our own opinions, making them more credible and powerful. This helps to reduce the impact of the Russian propaganda narrative about the “hysterical, historically-motivated Russophobia” of Warsaw, Vilnius, or Tallinn. Moreover, the high quality of state administration in the Nordic countries would be an important resource for Trumarium if the former were to join it. This kind of “network assets” (well-trained, high quality civil servants loyal to their mother countries while employed in prominent positions in EU and NATO structures) would be difficult to overestimate as a means of promoting the shared Scandinavian-Baltic-Polish-Romanian point of view on the nature of Russian policies and politics.

The economic potential and high technological level of the Nordic countries – especially their military industry – are a further reason why the Trumarium Initiative should be extended to the North. Currently, the broader region threatened by Russia is engaged in an intensive program of rearmament. For Poles, Balts, and Romanians, the Nordic armament industry production as well as military know-how is considerably attractive. Since 2001-2002, Polish-Finnish military industry cooperation has been a reality, as best symbolized by the Polish Army wheeled armored personnel carrier Rosomak – which is based on the construction of the modified Finnish Patria Armoed Modular Vehicle (AMV). Finland is also a leading regional producer of ballistic protection systems (companies such as: Ballistic Protection Burgmann, Verseidag Ballistic Protection, Exote Armour, FY-Composites, and Temet) as well as of electronic military systems (Control Express Finland, Electro-Hill, Elektrobit, and Elesco).

Polish-Norwegian military industry cooperation was inaugurated on May 24th 2016 during the visit of Polish President Andrzej Duda to Oslo. At that time, the Polish Armament Group and the Norwegian firm Kongsberg Defence & Aerospace AS signed a letter


of intent on cooperation, as Poland wants to purchase elements of the Norwegian NA-SAMS air defense system.33

Sweden’s military industry is one of the strongest in the region and has enjoyed great prestige in Poland since the interwar period (Bofors anti-aircraft canons fighting Luftwaffe in 1939 are an icon of Polish popular memory). The Hungarian and Czech air forces have been using Swedish-made Saab JAS 39 Gripen fighter jets since 2001 and 2005 respectively. For the last few years, Poland has been considering replacing its old Soviet-made MiG 29 and Su-22 jets by 2021, with the Gripen as one of the options under review.34

The Swedish military industry also produces armored vehicles, artillery and guided missiles (BAE Hagglunds, BAE Bofors), aircraft (Saab), ships (Kockums), munitions (Åkers Krutbuk, BAE Hagglunds, Nammo Sweden, Norma), ballistic protection systems (Åkers Krutbuk, Bofors, CSM Materialteknik, Saab Barracuda), radio and other communications-related electronics (Ericsson, Saab), optoelectronics (Aimpoint, Flir), and simulators and training items (NSC, Saab). Sweden is also a leading producer of stealth technology.

Nordic participation in the political dimension of extended Trimarium security cooperation into the area of security is equally attractive. Just like their Central European counterparts, Nordic countries rely on American military protection and support and therefore belong to the core of the pro-American camp in Europe along with the Baltic states, Poland, and Romania.

Military cooperation in the Trimarium region, however fragmented, is already a reality. The Nordic states actively cooperate among themselves, as do the Baltic states. Moreover, Nordic-Baltic cooperation on security and defense issues dates to the beginning of the 1990s.35 Poland and Lithuania had a common peacekeeping battalion between 1999-2008, as did Poland and Ukraine from 1995-2010; a common brigade among the three countries became operational in 2017. A Polish-German-Danish Multinational Corps North East (MC NE) has existed since 1998, while a Visegrád European Union Battle Group open to cooperation with Ukraine was created in 2011.36

The above-described potential for Trimarium cooperation in security and defence thus encompasses the northern and eastern flanks of NATO and the EU. Its backbone is constituted of the Nordic and Baltic states, Poland, and Romania that can count on some kind of cooperation and solidarity from the other V4 countries as well as the Western Balkan NATO member states. Some potential for cooperation of this group with Ukraine exists as well. Combined, all those countries combined may form a group to playing the role of an American military and political anchor in Europe. The core countries for such a construction are: Poland, as the keystone state and as the country that has the largest demographic and military potential in the region; Romania, the second largest country in the group, with second (after Poland) largest military potential on NATO eastern flank, a very realistic (i.e. free from illusions) approach to Russia and a very pro-American and pro-Polish orientation of both

the elites and the public opinion, Scandinavia with its military industry & technology, political prestige, and power combined with its geostrategic position (along the maritime routes that connect the North Atlantic and northwestern Baltic Sea)—the most probable area of Russian action aimed at testing the credibility and unity of NATO.

b) Trimarium and the EU – “No to a Multi-Speed Europe!”

Although TI is not formally intended to coordinate regional cooperation within the EU, such cooperation still exists in some areas and has the potential to be extended to others—perhaps with the addition of new partners as well. This is primarily about the immigration crisis and the threat of marginalization of the countries of the Trimarium region resulting from the idea of a “multispeed” or “double-speed” Europe.

Today the V4 has a common position on the immigration crisis in the EU. Poland and Slovakia (which are situated outside the main immigration routes from the south) as well as Czechia (which does not border any country outside the Schengen zone at all) are not “frontline countries” that are forced to meet the challenge directly. However, the crisis powerfully hit Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, and Bulgaria while also threatening Romania. The V4 countries have shown mutual solidarity to each other in collectively rejecting the compulsory quota system of immigrant redistribution that the European Commission has tried to impose on them.

The second problem— the marginalization of the Trimarium states within the EU—is much more serious and has more destructive political potential. This potential marginalization already has a long history. In 2012, while the Fiscal Pact was being negotiated, French diplomatic pressure deprived Poland and the other non-EMU (Monetary and Economic Union) EU states (in the broader region, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Hungary, Romania and Sweden) permanent observer status at Eurozone summits. It is in the interests of the European Union as a whole to overcome discriminatory practices that result in the strengthening of dividing lines within the EU. Poland wants to end the practice of withdrawing Trimarium countries from European decision-making structures, and it counts on the cooperation of other countries in a similar position. Any transfer of decision-making power from treaty-based EU institutions to informal or narrower bodies and formats (the “first-tier EU”) is perceived by our countries as a step towards the disintegration of the European Union by dividing its member states into a “directorate” group of leading powers—the decision makers—and a group of subordinate states expected “not to miss the opportunity to keep silent,” in the infamous words of former French president Jacques Chirac, and to accept the domination of the “leaders” or face being declared “bad Europeans.” Certainly, Poland will not accept any such status for the TI countries. Poland wants a powerful and united European Union that enjoys the support of its citizens, not one where its administrative structures suffer from a deficit of democracy.

Conclusions

The Trimarium Initiative is not intended to replace the EU or NATO, and has not been created “against” something or somebody, but to promote regional cooperation. Even with its present focus on infrastructure, it may also strengthen transatlantic relations by attracting US engagement via LNG supplies to the region.

Moreover, the Trimarium Initiative may also evolve to encompass security and polit-
cal dimensions; indeed, some specific groups of states within the Trimarium area (V4, V4+, V4+NB8, the “Bucharest 9”) have already undertaken such cooperation. There is a great potential to include the Nordic countries in all possible dimensions of the initiative as well.

Poland is still the largest country of Trimarium by population; together with the Czechs and Hungarians, it shares a specific dual experience of dominating and of being dominated; having such a historical memory the Poles are eager to expand this initiative based on mutual respect and equality among the partners. The success of the initiative depends on the genuine support of the smaller states and this may be won only by real—not merely rhetorical—respect for their dignity and interests. The role of Croatia as a co-initiator of the project therefore cannot be overestimated.

Even though it was created by EU member states, Trimarium does not mean that we are turning our backs on our non-EU neighbors Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, or those in the Balkans. In fact, the reality is just the opposite. TI is also a tool for intensifying cooperation with these neighbors, making it more substantial and concrete than mere pleasant-sounding declarations of friendship. Although the Trimarium of today is not the same as Intermarium of the 1920s and 1930s, the spirit of the latter—a desire to guarantee the independence and sovereignty of Central and Eastern Europe—remains alive and inspiring for Poland.

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The Three Seas Initiative: A vision for a way forward for South Eastern EU member states

Andreana Baeva Motusic

Most analyses of the Three Seas Initiative focus on placing the initiative in a historical context, often by linking it to previous (failed) attempts to increase the cooperation among the neighboring countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Such an approach is very common not only among analysts from the CEE region, but also among the general public which often finds it hard to focus on discussions concerning the future without evoking the past. At this stage, the Three Seas Initiative is an idea which has not yet been fully conceptualized, let alone operationalized. Therefore, any analyses of the initiative reflect the individual authors’ visions rather than the characteristics of the initiative itself. Such a critical approach towards ideas which are still in their early development is based on an assumption that Central and Eastern Europe is incapable of overcoming its past or of generating a new model for an economic and cultural renaissance. Furthermore, these analyses can unfortunately become self-fulfilling prophecies resulting in the imitation of past projects, or even worse, the abandonment of the Three Seas Initiative idea even before its potential has been properly explored. It is much more productive to focus on the future potential of the Three Seas Initiative and on the establishing of realistic and beneficial objectives instead.

1. Compromise and debate – the foundations of future cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe

The countries of Central and Eastern Europe are very diverse and their interests often diverge. It is therefore clear that cooperation among them cannot be uniform or all-encompassing. It does not need to be so since their relations are regulated through the institutions and legislation of the European Union. The CEE countries have today some of the highest levels of support for the EU. They have undergone strenuous accession processes to become EU members. Now that those processes have been successfully completed, it is time for them to also accept the responsibility of becoming real and equal partners to “old” EU member states.

The European Union is in a process of transformation which had been initiated by the global financial crisis, deepened by the European refugee crisis, and necessitated by Brexit. A significant number of European citizens are unhappy with their economic situation in particular, and with liberal democracy in general, leading to a rise in support for both the extreme right and left. It is also evident that growing dissatisfaction with the free movement of (cheaper) labor has led some to question the other freedoms guaranteed by the single market, and that the EU’s financial mechanisms are insufficiently agile and
market-oriented to be able to increase the Union’s global competitiveness. US investment funds, Chinese banks and even crowdfunding platforms all provide faster and more flexible sources of investment than do European governments.

Despite the significant economic growth which the CEE states have experienced over the past two and a half decades, this has failed to generate an improvement in the standard of living of a large number of these countries’ citizens. The Eurobarometer Qualitative Study on Europeans and the European Union1 conducted in 19 EU member states in 2014 reveals a deep rift between the east and the west of Europe. While respondents from the CEE states expressed mostly negative views about their work prospects, citizens of Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, France and Sweden were notably more positive in the assessment of their personal situation. Eastern Europeans’ negative views are mostly related to feelings of insecurity and instability stemming from employment-related issues and financial concerns.2 Additionally, because of the increasing popularity of a two-tiered approach to further European integration – structured around German-French cooperation and focusing on more developed member states – many East Europeans fear that they might become second-class citizens. These fears are intensified by the way they see themselves covered by the popular press in Western Europe: frequently, they are depicted as low-wage migrants stealing local jobs, while the fact that their migration was often preceded by the closing of workplaces and factories in their home countries goes unmentioned. The recent scandal about the use of cheaper ingredients in products sold in the CEE states has also deeply resonated in those countries’ societies evoking communist-era memories of shortages and poor product quality.

In order for the single market to benefit all EU member states, the free movement of goods and services needs to go hand in hand with the free movement of labor. Yet, the dissatisfaction of the less-educated and lower-paid citizens of the “old” member states with the inflow of migrants from the EU’s periphery was one of the reasons for Brexit and for the growth of nationalism in a number of Western countries. In the east, many (inefficient) factories and businesses have been shut down, leaving a significant number of people unemployed; meanwhile, better-paid higher-ranking positions in international companies are mostly reserved for Western Europeans. As a result, many well-educated young people have been turned into emigrants and separated from their families.

The provided by the European Union structural and cohesion funding has been insufficient to replace national subsidies and to equalize the levels of development of “new” and “old” member states. Moreover, a significant amount of this funding was not absorbed by the economies of recipient countries, but instead quickly returned to the more developed Western countries through the purchase of products and services. With talks about the reform of EU funding mechanisms under way, it appears likely that this source of support would soon be unavailable for less developed member states. Once structural and cohesion funding is significantly reduced or abolished altogether, an increased reliance on bank loans is not going to be to the advantage of CEE citizens and businesses either as the price of borrowing is much higher in “new” member states than in “old” ones. That leaves the CEE countries with two choices: to support their businesses through national

2 ibid, pp. 5-6
subsidies, or to find an alternative and more open market-oriented approach to increase their competitiveness.

The countries of Central and Eastern Europe emerged from communism hungry for political and economic change. In most of them, there was a widespread consensus that the best path to follow was that of democracy and liberal capitalism. The old communist regimes – as well as Russia, which had been closely associated with them – were compromised, and there was a true hope that this time, unlike in the past, Eastern Europe would be treated as an equal partner by both the European Union and the United States. While the acceptance of the CEE countries in NATO was above all a political decision, obtaining EU membership was much more difficult economically, requiring the making of significant sacrifices. Nevertheless, the appeal of the European Union was strong in both practical (i.e., by providing an opportunity to improve citizens’ standard of living) as well as symbolic terms. The principles as democracy, equality and freedom of expression and assembly were adopted as a rejection of the values of the previous totalitarian regimes. EU membership was worth the sacrifices. Yet, now that those sacrifices have been made, it appears that the CEE region must start on a new journey towards becoming an equal partner to its western neighbors. Although it is challenging to walk shoulder to shoulder with some of the world’s most efficient economies, the journey is possible if the CEE countries prepare for it in a serious, planned and structured manner. The Three Seas Initiative is a step in this direction.

So far, the CEE states have based their economic development on fiscal policy and on low labor costs. This model is increasingly questioned and threatened. It was not an accident that Emmanuel Macron advocated the harmonizing of the tax regimes across the Union and spoke out against “social dumping” during his campaign for the French presidency. France has already announced reductions in its own corporate and income taxes, and other “old” member states might follow its example. To address this trend, the CEE countries need a joint stance on the preservation of their fiscal independence. The question of the harmonization of interest rates across the Union also needs to be raised. Most importantly, a reorganization of national economies and a search for alternative competitive advantages need to take place. Central and Eastern Europe needs to cease building its competitive advantage on cheap labor and start supporting innovation, high-tech development and manufacturing. From a political perspective, Franco-German efforts to reform the Union might lead to a marginalization of the eastern point of view – as was the case during the refugee crisis in 2015 – and a joint response by the CEE member states would likely increase their leverage. The European Union has always been reformed through compromise and negotiations, and the CEE countries need not only to learn how to think long-term but also to overcome past cleavages and form more effective alliances among themselves. They also need to try to develop a more global outlook that includes issues which do not concern them directly. Finally, the CEE states need to learn how to present their perspective in a clear manner, how to prioritize, and how to negotiate and make compromises.

2. The Three Seas Initiative – areas of cooperation

From the point of view of the EU member states located in the south-eastern part of the Union (Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania), the Three Seas Initiative has the potential to turn into a platform for cooperation in the following five areas: educational reform, rule of law, transport infrastructure, digital economy and the ICT sector, and energy diversification and security. The following section briefly describes the perspectives for cooperation in each of these areas.

2.1. Educational reform and increased investments in R&D

The south-eastern member states of the European Union have excellent engineers, programmers, chemists, IT system architects, doctors, university professors, and indeed experts in almost any field. However, these experts’ knowledge and success is to a large extent due to their own efforts to learn, create and be successful rather than to the quality of these states’ educational systems. Unfortunately, the region has experienced a tremendous “brain drain” which will have a long-term impact on its economy. To reduce this impact, it is important that future generations receive a first-class education, and that overall educational competencies are raised to educate entrepreneurs and innovators rather than workers. National economies can no longer afford to rely only on individual achievement but instead need to focus more broadly on ensuring the development of an innovative, entrepreneurial and productive work force that can serve as the engine for economic growth. Educational systems should be subject to periodic incremental and comprehensive reforms, with countries sharing best practices and intensifying regional exchanges of teaching staff.

In addition, positive education needs to be introduced—that is, education that focuses on maximizing each student’s potential rather than stigmatizing failure. While working as a teaching assistant at University College London, I had no difficulty identifying the students from South-East Europe: they were the ones who kept quiet and took notes. This attitude towards education – which is also reflected in the region’s approach towards R&D – needs to be changed. Students and scientists need to be encouraged to be proactive, to take risks, and to question existing paradigms. Investments in R&D need to be significantly increased, especially in the areas of artificial intelligence, automation and cybersecurity; cooperation across countries and sectors should be also intensified. It is the responsibility of the governments of these countries jointly to create a vision of the kind of educational system they would like to see in the region—and then to put in place a plan for its implementation. Such a strategy does not need to be created in a vacuum but can draw on the examples of those countries that have a healthier approach towards R&D. Border mobility in the region also needs to be intensified; moreover, the standard of English-language instruction should be improved, following the example of the Scandinavian countries.

2.2. Strengthening the rule of law

If the south-eastern EU member states want to be taken seriously by business, they need to take their own legal systems seriously as well. Reforms might require significant changes in existing legislation, especially in the commercial sphere; moreover, the legal system as a whole needs to become faster, more predictable, less dependent on local in-
terests, and more business-friendly. Additionally, legislation related to cybersecurity and digital privacy needs to ensure both the freedom and the security of the region’s citizens. Unfortunately, it is difficult to bring about quick change in the informal culture established by judges, attorneys and prosecutors in these countries, which is passed from generation to generation and blocks effectively major reforms. A step in the right direction is to establish more rigorous criteria for selecting the judges who serve as educators and mentors of their younger colleagues. Furthermore, judges need to receive special training in order to become more familiar with business-related legislation.

2.3. Improving transport infrastructure and shortening travel times

Connections among CEE states are much worse than those between these countries and their western neighbors. The quality of roads is uneven; in particular, cross-border roads are not always expressways, negatively impacting both business and tourism. According to a 2016 research study on transport infrastructure in Central and Eastern Europe commissioned by the European Parliament’s Committee on Transport, rail travel times on major connection routes in “old” member states are three to four times faster than those in the CEE states. Additionally, passenger rail transport is significantly faster than road transport in western EU member states, while in Central and Eastern Europe the reverse is frequently true.\(^4\) There are no high-speed rail networks in South-East Europe, which is something that needs to change. Furthermore, since Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania are not part of the Schengen zone, border delays – in particular for trucks – further increase transport times. Additionally, the transport sector in the CEE states is more dependent on fossil fuels compared to that in more developed western economies, increasing costs as well as harm to the environment.

Air travel is also less efficient, with direct connections among the south-eastern EU member states being less frequent—if they exist at all. This impedes cooperation as well as cultural and business exchange. It is for example virtually impossible for Croatian teachers based anywhere outside of Zagreb to reach a Bulgarian or Romanian school with the travel allowance provided by Erasmus+ grants. It is more attractive for teachers in this situation to choose as a destination one of Western Europe’s capital cities instead.

Lastly, the maritime industry has been negatively impacted by the end of national protectionism, the banning of national subsidies, and the competition from large international manufacturers. Ports and their railway connections to inland destinations face limitations at both ends of the Baltic-Adriatic corridor, while the use of the Danube is also highly limited.

Although EU funding is available for projects aimed at improving transport systems within, and connectivity between, member states, they are insufficient to bring the level of the transport infrastructure in the CEE states up to that of the “old” member states. Additionally, connectivity with eastern neighbors which are not members of the EU is even less developed. The CEE states need to work together on identifying crucial transport connections and on finding means to finance their construction/ expansion.

2.4. Deepening of the digital economy and increasing interconnectivity in the ICT sector

Because of their small size and of the insufficient funding available to their businesses, south-eastern EU member states have not benefited to a large extent from the single market. In addition, their status as latecomers (with the exception of Slovenia) has also presented itself as an obstacle to the gaining of market share and to the securing of EU funding. Apart from those funds specifically dedicated to them, they have not used significantly major community programs. For example, as of June 2017, under the Investment Plan for Europe of the Juncker Commission, there are five approved Infrastructure and Innovation projects in Romania, four in Croatia, one in Bulgaria, and none in Slovenia. The share of Bulgaria, which has received the largest amount of financing in absolute terms, some €206.9 million, represents only 0.06% of the €315 billion total that is planned to be spent in 2015-2017. For comparison purposes, Sweden which has roughly the same population as Bulgaria has 19 approved projects with a total value of almost three times that of the projects taking place in all four south-eastern states combined. It thus appears that the size of national markets is not a key factor in the allocation of funding. Moreover, the degree of innovation of the proposed projects does not seem to be the determining factor either. For example, one of the financed projects in Sweden and the Netherlands is the expansion of those countries’ 4G mobile networks, which is a mere incremental improvement. At the time being, it does not appear that the Juncker Plan will have a significant positive impact on the economies of the south-eastern member states. Accordingly, the region needs to come up with its own plan for the creation of jobs and the generation of sustainable growth.

The high-tech sector appears to be the most logical engine for such a plan. All CEE countries have qualified IT professionals, and younger people have a natural inclination towards technology. Most elementary and secondary schools offer highly popular robotics and IT classes. Nevertheless, future economic growth will likely come from the areas of artificial intelligence and automation which are currently not sufficiently researched in the CEE states. In order to stop being followers and instead become leaders in the ICT sector, the states in the region need to invest heavily in ICT research and development. The times when start-ups emerged from garages and student dorms are over. Nowadays, even giants like Google and Tesla partner with other companies and with local authorities to pool financial and human resources. Cooperation in the CEE region can be established by the founding of joint investment funds which would provide start-ups with the financing needed to grow. Additionally, due to the complexity of the contemporary IT sector, the CEE states need to identify complementary areas in which to specialize. For example, a Croatian company (Rimac Automobili) has produced the fastest accelerating electric vehicle in the world. Nevertheless, despite the quality of the product, it is unable to compete financially with companies coming from larger countries (e.g. Tesla). A pooling of resources in the CEE region would not only provide a larger amount of funding for such innovative products, but would also spread research and production across several countries. For example, Croatia could focus on producing the vehicle, Bulgaria – on de-

6 ibid
veloping the software which would power it, Poland – on building the charging stations, Slovakia – on producing cutting-edge batteries, and Estonia – on providing operations management. This is just an example, but it demonstrates the competitive advantage of such an approach.

Lastly, cooperation in the area of cybersecurity is crucial and is one in which the CEE states should not lag behind the EU’s core. On the one hand, cybersecurity is a growing sector which will generate significant income and employment in the near future. On the other hand, because of the region’s geostrategic position, it is important that institutions and businesses have access to the latest digital security technology.

2.5. Increasing energy diversification and security

The region needs to diversify its energy sources. Diversification brings the opportunity to choose whether to import energy from the east, north or the south, depending on delivery conditions and stability in addition to price. It could also mean the enforcement of higher environmental standards. Additionally, energy connectivity and cooperation among the south-eastern EU member states is poor, and without diversification, there is a lack of flexibility in dealing with both excesses and shortages. LNG terminals in Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania need to be built and investments in pipelines made. If Nord Stream II is indeed constructed, then there is no reason that the South Stream project should not become relevant again as well. President Trump’s recent endorsement of the Three Seas Initiative and China’s Silk Road project might turn out to be the international boost needed to diversify sources of supply and thus increase the region’s energy independence.

What Western European countries fail to understand is that in the eyes of many East Europeans, the US has served for a long time as a representation of democracy and economic prosperity. Opposed to the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the US exemplified everything East Europeans wanted but could not have. It was the symbol that kept their hopes alive, and it would be very difficult to break that bond. Additionally, the US has not disappointed the CEE states in the years after the end of the Cold War. All of the CEE countries which are members of the EU are also members of NATO, and with the re-emergence of Russia as a geopolitical factor in the region, NATO remains crucial for ensuring Central and Eastern European security.

Conclusion

The CEE countries need a strong lobby in the EU if their common interests are to be taken into account. The EU is no longer an association of countries which show solidarity with each other, but rather a place where each country fights for its national interest. A recent example is the competition to host the European Medicines Agency (EMA). While each of the “old” EU member states hosts at least one decentralized EU agency, with some home to two, and France to four, five “new” member states (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Romania and Slovakia) still do not host any such institution. Yet, those countries are not likely to have an advantage over the other member states in the battle to host the EMA, despite their capacity to do just as good a job. If the “old” EU member states are unwilling to share the benefits associated with EU integration, the East will need to play catch-up for a long
time. It is clear that the sustainable economic development of the region depends on its countries’ ability to coordinate their policies, to have a clear common vision of what needs to be achieved, and to protect their common interests. Because of the differences among the CEE countries, however, and because of past rivalries, it should be expected that conflicts will still emerge; accordingly, mechanisms need to be established for them to manage such conflicts without jeopardizing common objectives.

Ultimately, in order for the European Union to become stronger, the CEE member states need to get stronger as well. Otherwise, this part of the Union will never speak with an equal voice, and popular dissatisfaction with the EU – among the populations of both “old” and “new” member states alike – will only continue to grow.

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