



The Polish-Lithuanian Tandem

*Can It Advance U.S. Interests in the
New East Europe?*

September 15, 2008

Ryan R. Miller and Alexandros Petersen

The Polish-Lithuanian Tandem: Can It Advance U.S. Interests in the New East Europe?

A publication by the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA)

September 15, 2008

By Ryan R. Miller and Alexandros Petersen

Ryan R. Miller is a Research Analyst at CEPA, where he writes primarily on European energy security, Russian foreign policy and the Baltic and Black Sea regions.

Alexandros Petersen is a Senior Associate Scholar with CEPA. He concurrently serves as Southeast Europe Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and Adjunct Fellow with the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. He was previously Program Director of the Caspian Europe Center in Brussels and Senior ACD Researcher at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

Center for European Policy Analysis
1155 15th Street, NW
Suite 550
Washington, DC 20005
Tel: (202) 551-9200
Fax: (202) 296-3880
E-mail: info@cepa.org
www.cepa.org

© 2008 by the Center for European Policy Analysis, Washington, D.C.
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without permission in writing from the Center for European Policy Analysis, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in news articles, critical articles, or reviews. The views expressed in the publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff, officers, or board members of CEPA.

ISBN: 978-0-9797433-5-1

Introduction

The Georgia crisis this past August confirmed that the 27-member European Union (EU) is not a unified actor when confronting challenges in Russia's backyard. During and after the violence, many in Western Europe were slow to react diplomatically and overly cautious about upsetting Moscow in formulating a proper response. Meanwhile, countries in post-communist Central Europe - Poland and Lithuania in particular - were proactive and ahead of the curve, condemning Russian action early on as aggression,¹ leading a team of regional leaders out to Tbilisi to express solidarity with Georgia, and urging the EU to get more involved from the outset.

Moving forward, to what extent can America's Polish and Lithuanian allies play the role of regional platforms for advancing U.S. interests? Put more bluntly, can the United States outsource its East Europe policy to a Polish-Lithuanian tandem?

This is a pertinent question. With the westward expansion of Euro-Atlantic institutions, the former Soviet states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have become the "New East Europe," demanding U.S. attention on a number of fronts. These include the management of "frozen conflicts," NATO military-to-military cooperation, energy security, as well as promoting democracy and development. However, in the current international environment, U.S. power is stretched thin. With hot potatoes like Iraq, Iran and Israel-Palestine looming on the horizon, it is unclear how much time or energy the next U.S. president will have to further U.S. priorities in the former USSR. Realistically speaking, Washington may have to increasingly rely on close cooperation with its EU allies to formulate its East Europe policy. Though small, Central European countries have succeeded in many cases in carving out "niche" diplomatic capabilities within EU and NATO circles.

In recent years, Poland and Lithuania have been among the allies most aggressive in pushing Western engagement with the New East Europe, both within the EU and on an ad-hoc basis. With a population of 40 million, Poland is the largest country in Central Europe, and an increasingly influential player in Brussels. Currently, the Poles are playing the central role in setting up an Eastern Partnership initiative for the EU to engage the former Soviet states between Belarus and Azerbaijan. Smaller Lithuania punches above its weight through a proactive foreign policy, particularly in the South Caucasus, making the country a good wingman for Poland. During the Georgia crisis, both Senators John McCain and Barack Obama telephoned Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus and thanked him personally for the role his country played in managing a response to Russian actions.² Leaders in both Warsaw and Vilnius are eager to take up the mantle of promoting democracy, strategic stability and generally strengthening ties with post-Soviet

¹ "Lithuanian, Polish Presidents ask international community to stop destruction of Georgia," *Baltic News Service*, August 11, 2008; "Lithuanian President stresses need to rally all international efforts to stop aggression against Georgia," *Baltic News Service*, August 11, 2008; "Polish President says Russian intervention in Ossetia act of aggression," *PAP*, BBC Monitoring Reports, August 9, 2008.

² "President Adamkus believes that aggression against Georgia and massive vandalism in Georgia will receive principled assessment at the extraordinary meeting of NATO foreign ministers," Press Release, Office of the President of Lithuania, August 17, 2008. Available at < <http://www.president.lt/en/news.full/9507>>. "US Presidential Candidate McCain Supports Lithuanian Stance on Georgia," *Baltic News Service*, August 21, 2008.

countries. Together, Poland and Lithuania have made diplomatic inroads into the region, but they require strong backing from outside powers like the United States.

This report attempts to shed light on how effective Poland and Lithuania could be as America's watchmen on Europe's periphery. On the one hand, the tandem has coordinated closely and taken the lead on issues dear to America's heart. On the other hand, this tandem's actual influence is constrained and the two Baltic allies will only be able to shape policy at the EU level if they gain supporters with more "street cred" in Brussels. The United States should consider ways to tweak its policies in order to enhance the tandem's potential as a force-multiplier for U.S. priorities.

U.S. Interests in the New East Europe

U.S. interests in the New East Europe are multifarious and wide-ranging, but policy priorities center around three pillars: responsible development, Western integration and energy security. These pillars are set in the context of the broader Black Sea and Caspian areas as transforming "regions in between" - areas that have for centuries been borderlands. Economic gateways, these states have also been geopolitical battlegrounds amongst continental hegemony, but in the contemporary context all East European countries (with the notable exception of Belarus) are moving towards Euro-Atlantic structures and ideals on their own initiative. Despite similar U.S. interests across the region, the best approach to fully understanding those interests and their concordant policies lies in a country-specific analysis.

Russia's August 8 invasion of Georgia, and the Kremlin's subsequent recognition of the South Caucasus country's separatist territories (Abkhazia and South Ossetia), scrambled Western decision-makers across the board. Hit by an unexpected and surprisingly forceful blow during vacation season (and while President Bush was in China for the Olympics), Washington's reaction was necessarily one that fit regional developments into the broader picture of U.S.-Russia relations, marked not only by tensions over missile defense plans for Central Europe and NATO enlargement, but by disagreements ranging from sanctions on Zimbabwe to Russia's recent claim to much of the Arctic.³ Such an approach was appropriate because since Georgia's 2003 "Rose Revolution" its strategic significance has been amplified as a symbolic stage for geopolitical jockeying on the Eurasian landmass.

Georgia's enthusiastically pro-Western President and population, coupled with its rapid and uncompromising reforms, led to democratic poster child status in Washington. But its U.S.-backed NATO and EU membership hopes have infuriated the leadership of a resurgent Russia that views Georgia as within its Eurasian sphere of influence. The country's strategic role as the needle's eye through which Caspian energy resources reach Western markets, bypassing Kremlin-controlled routes, has accentuated Moscow's antagonism to the point that energy infrastructure was a major target of Russia's August invasion.⁴ The Russian monkey wrench thrown into Georgia's development has already required a strategic rethink of U.S. interests and policies in the New East Europe and

³ Alexandros Petersen, "Russia's Resurgence: Risks and Rewards," *International Herald Tribune*, July 25, 2008.

⁴ Alexandros Petersen, "Russia's war for oil," *Washington Examiner*, August 18, 2008.

Eurasia more broadly. While Georgia is likely to remain a cause célèbre among American decision-makers, a new administration may seek to disperse its eggs to other baskets in the region, shoring up good relations with Ukraine and Azerbaijan, while seeking to prevent the explosion of currently simmering and potential future separatist conflicts throughout the region.

Despite Georgia's importance, Russia's top concern in the region is Ukraine. Kiev's circumstances also present a challenge of identity and geopolitics with which NATO and EU decision-makers have yet to adequately grapple. While Ukraine's convoluted and contentious political milieu reflects a society deeply split between East and West, Russian and Ukrainian speakers, NATO membership opponents and enthusiasts, the majority of the country's population and politicians support EU membership and economic Western integration.⁵ That mix presents Moscow with a long-term challenge, but ample opportunities to use its extensive political and business contacts within Ukraine to scuttle its clear Euro-Atlantic trend. The Russian state's foundation origins in Kievan Rus, as well as its centuries of struggle to reach the Black Sea coast add a powerful emotional quality to Ukraine's strategic importance.

The country's Odessa-Brody oil pipeline is embroiled in a contentious process to restore its original purpose: exporting Caspian supplies to Central Europe, after its flow was reversed to export Russian crude. Disagreement over the pipeline stands as one of many sticking points that have torn at the threads of the nominally Western-leaning "Orange" coalition ahead of presidential elections in 2010.⁶ U.S. policymakers will be closely watching the run-up to those polls for signs of Russian meddling. However, ahead of the December NATO foreign ministers meeting in which Georgia and Ukraine's membership prospects are to be reexamined, Washington's policymakers will focus on Ukraine's majority ethnic Russian Crimean peninsula, still home to the Russian Black Sea Fleet and recently the site of passport distribution on the part of the Russia Federation: the primary facilitator of Moscow's claim to be protecting Russian citizens when moving into Georgia's South Ossetia.⁷

In the post-August 2008 context, Moldova's Russian-backed separatist region of Transnistria presents a festering impediment to Moldova's Western integration, as well as improved relations with the United States. But the conflict zone's border with Ukraine, Russian military presence, as well as Kiev's past involvement in negotiations over the disputed region, could thrust it into a more high-profile role regarding Ukraine's NATO prospects. Transnistria is also Central and East Europe's most prominent nexus of transnational threats. The governance "black hole" is a haven for drug and human trafficking, money laundering and an illegal arms trade that thrives on the reason for Russia's interest in the enclave: enormous Soviet-era arms depots at Colbansa and elsewhere. While Moldova's nominally communist President Vladimir Voronin has only mildly flirted with Western integration, his country's frozen conflict – the closest to the EU's borders – and geographic position will inevitably draw Chisinau into questions of Euro-Atlantic security and EU enlargement. Moscow already began preemptive measures

⁵ "Poll shows dwindling public support for NATO entry in Ukraine," UNIAN news agency, BBC Monitoring Reports, April 24, 2008. See also: Dan Bilefsky, "Ukraine to pursue EU entry," *International Herald Tribune*, September 14, 2006.

⁶ "Tymoshenko denies working with Russians," *Ukrainian Journal*, August 20, 2008.

⁷ Adrian Blomfeld, "Russia 'distributing passports in the Crimea'," *Daily Telegraph*, August 17, 2008.

in May 2008, presenting Voronin with a comprehensive peace plan for Transnistria in exchange for geopolitical fealty.⁸

At the crossroads of the overlapping Black Sea and Caspian regions, and just north of Iran, Azerbaijan holds the geographic potential to be the most strategically significant state in the New East Europe. Its solid Euro-Atlantic orientation, realized primarily through the development of the so-called East-West Transport Corridor from the Caspian to Western markets, has so far been carefully augmented by constructive relations with Moscow and Tehran. The construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline and its sister gas route, the South Caucasus pipeline, not only allowed Western consumers access, devoid of Russian control, to Caspian energy resources, but lay the foundation for an expanded transport corridor that can link Europe with Central Asia and beyond.

However, Russia's August challenge to Georgia, combined with fortuitous terrorist sabotage of the BTC in Turkey, has forced Azerbaijan to negotiate an oil swap export deal with Iran.⁹ Even before that, Baku entered into serious negotiations with Moscow regarding Gazprom's potential purchase of all of Azerbaijan's available natural gas supplies.¹⁰ Baku is beginning to second guess its path toward Western integration, due to a combination of lack of engagement on the part of Euro-Atlantic institutions, and concerns over the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh – the U.S.-backed negotiations over which have been stalled for years. U.S. interests and influence in Azerbaijan will remain strong, particularly as Baku begins to realize its role as a gateway for the West to the resources and markets of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. But, far more attention will have to be paid to providing real incentives for Western integration, and preventing Karabakh from reigniting, in what could be a conflict to dwarf the destruction seen over South Ossetia.

Armenia, on the other side of the Karabakh cease-fire line, has kept close ties to Moscow since the collapse of the Soviet Union. This has meant tacit Russian support for its position in the conflict, significant military and development aid and some diplomatic backing internationally. But, it has also translated into widespread Russian control over key infrastructure and business interests in the country. Armenia's regional isolation, due to Karabakh, a closed border with Turkey, and underdeveloped relations with Georgia, is only offset by its wealthy and active Diaspora population. The development and governance phenomenon that is the East-West Transport Corridor has conspicuously bypassed Armenian territory. Until earlier this year, its Euro-Atlantic links largely came as a result of efforts on the part of the West to approach the three South Caucasus states together.

However, in the aftermath of March 2008 elections that saw significant Western condemnation of a government crackdown on protestors in central Yerevan, President Serzh Sargsyan began to reach out to Brussels and Western institutions to improve ties.¹¹ U.S. policymakers will be closely watching possible rapprochement and negotiations to open the border with Turkey in the coming months. Such a development would begin the

⁸ "Russia warns Moldova against 'Georgian mistake'," RFE/RL, August 25, 2008.

⁹ "Azerbaijan exports oil via Iran as Med outlets fail," *Reuters*, August 25, 2008.

¹⁰ "Gazprom ready to buy all Azeri natural gas," *The Messenger*, September 2, 2008.

¹¹ Serzh Sargsyan, Arthur Baghdasaryan, "Moving Forward in Armenia," *The Washington Post*, March 17, 2008.

process of ending Armenia's isolation and may provide impetus for a peaceful resolution of the Karabakh conflict.

Belarus is consistently referred to as the "last dictatorship in Europe" since Condoleezza Rice described it as such in a 2005 visit to Vilnius.¹² Every day life in Poland and Lithuania's immediate neighbor to the East has changed little since Soviet times. Moscow's dominance was traded for the iron fist of Alexander Lukashenka, a former collective farm manager, who crushed Orange-style protests after fraudulent elections in 2006 handed him a third term. So far, U.S. relations with Belarus have been limited to sometimes-contentious discussions about governance, centering on the release of political prisoners and resolution of "disappearance" cases.¹³ That said, the suspension of unification talks between Moscow and Minsk should rightly be interpreted as Lukashenka distancing himself from the policies of the Kremlin. While his irresolute flirtations with improved Western relations have yet to bear any fruit, principled, but increased engagement of Belarus at several levels in society would not only be sound U.S. policy, but would square well with Polish and Lithuanian approaches.

The Tandem's Record on the New East Europe

Poland and Lithuania make a natural diplomatic tandem, sharing both a long history and common geopolitical interests. In the late 14th Century, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland united their realms into a single commonwealth. Bilateral cooperation, then as now, is driven to a large extent by concern about Russian power. Indeed, a major factor driving their current collaboration is a common distrust of "Putinism" – creeping Russian authoritarianism at home and increased assertiveness abroad. Because Poland and Lithuania are keen to reaffirm their strategic independence from Moscow, and minimize Russian influence over the "buffer states" of the New East Europe, the two countries have run a policy of active eastern engagement. They also work with like-minded EU nations, particularly nearby Estonia and Latvia – forming a diplomatic "Baltic quartet" in tackling strategic challenges emanating from the East.

On the whole, Poland's priority has been the two countries on its eastern flank: Ukraine and Belarus. Lithuania, for its part, has taken the lead in engaging smaller states, especially Georgia. Thematically, four areas of their activity are worth mentioning: (1) supporting resolutions to "frozen conflicts" in the region; (2) expanding Western military ties to the new East Europe; (3) checking Russia's energy grip on European nations; and (4) advancing regional democratization and development.

Supporting Resolutions to Europe's 'Frozen Conflicts'

The so-called frozen conflicts in the wider Black Sea region – Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh – represent persistent sores that breed criminality and foster instability. The recent flare-up between Russia and Georgia has brought home for folks in Washington the volatile nature of these conflicts – as well as Russia's often meddling role. Because of their close proximity to these areas, Central European states

¹² "Rice: Belarus 'Last Dictatorship in Europe'," *Associated Press*, April 22, 2005.

¹³ "Belarus officials face EU-US ban," *BBC News*, September 28, 2004.

are vocal about the need to bring closure to these conflicts. Poland, for instance, has in recent years said that it stands ready to participate in the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.¹⁴

Poland and Lithuania have for some time now been among the most ardent supporters of Georgia's territorial integrity. In May, Lithuania alone had the courage to argue that any talks between Brussels and Moscow on a new EU-Russia partnership agreement include language on greater EU involvement in solving frozen conflicts, as well as an assessment of Russia's progress in helping to end these territorial disputes.

When war between Russia and Georgia broke out in August over South Ossetia, the most forceful European support Tbilisi received was from capitals like Warsaw and Vilnius. Presidents Kaczyński and Adamkus spoke on the phone the day after Russia attacked Georgian territory and issued a subsequent press release calling on the international community to rein in Russia's military.¹⁵ Both also rapidly appointed special envoys for the crisis.¹⁶ On August 13, Kaczyński led the leaders of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine to Tbilisi to demonstrate solidarity with Georgia's leader, Mikheil Sakashvili. The Georgian leader would later say that the four leaders' presence strengthened his regime by deterring the Russians from bombing the Georgian capital.¹⁷

Furthermore, Polish officials were among the first to call for an emergency EU summit (something the EU dragged its feet on), and proposed an EU stabilization force for the South Caucasus, indicating Polish readiness to participate.¹⁸ At Lithuania's initiative, the EU Political and Security Committee scheduled a meeting to discuss the crisis, and Lithuania's Foreign Minister flew to Georgia to gather information and share it with his EU counterparts.¹⁹ With Secretary Rice's encouragement, he also worked the phones in Europe in an effort to "collect the votes" to demand a clear halt to Russian military action.²⁰ At a NATO meeting in mid-August, Lithuanian officials argued in favor of a common alliance position on Georgia's request for military assistance.²¹ The Lithuanians had already taken the initiative early on to send flights of humanitarian aid to Georgia,²² almost two weeks before the arrival of U.S. warships carrying such aid.²³ Ahead of the much-anticipated summit of EU heads of state on September 1, Lithuania coordinated its position with Estonia and Latvia, and pushed for a tougher line than that which was

¹⁴ "Poland intends to participate in Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement," *Today.az*, February 27, 2007. Available at <<http://www.today.az/news/politics/37084.html>>.

¹⁵ "Lithuania's and Poland's presidents call on international community to take very possible action to stop the destruction of Georgia," Press Release, Office of the Lithuanian President, August 10, 2008. Available at <<http://www.president.lt/en/news.full/9478>>.

¹⁶ "Lithuania Appoints Formin Secretary as Special Envoy for Georgia Crisis," *Baltic News Service*, August 11, 2008; "Polish Presidential Envoy Goes to Georgia," *PAP*, BBC Monitoring Reports, August 10, 2008.

¹⁷ "Saakashvili poblagodaryl kachinskovo za spaceniye Tbilisi ot bombardirovki," *Lenta.ru*, September 8, 2008. Available at <<http://www.lenta.ru/news/2008/09/08/salvador/>>.

¹⁸ "Poland to encourage EU leaders to produce common European response to crisis in Georgia," *Poland Business Newswire*, August 9, 2008; "Poland sets out Caucasus plea plan to EU," *Agence France Presse*, August 10, 2008.

¹⁹ "Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs visited a hospital in Tbilisi," Press Release, Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 9, 2008. Available at <<http://www.urm.lt/index.php?358980555>>.

²⁰ "Rice sees events in Georgia as shameful reminder of Soviet actions in Europe," *Baltic News Service*, August 11, 2008.

²¹ "NATO Formins to Discuss Situation in Georgia Over Extraordinary North Atlantic Council Meeting," *Baltic News Service*, August 19, 2008.

²² "C-27 Spartan of Lithuanian Air Force headed for Georgia with another batch of humanitarian aid," Press Release, Lithuanian Ministry of National Defense, August 12, 2008. Available at <<http://www.kam.lt/index.php/en/165546/>>.

²³ "U.S. Warship Delivers Humanitarian Aid to Georgia, While Russian Troops Remain," *RFE/RL*, August 24, 2008.

ultimately adopted.²⁴ Poland and Baltic countries said the EU should consider sanctions against Russia if the Kremlin failed to withdraw its forces from Georgian territory.²⁵ Together with Poland, the Baltics also lobbied for sending EU peacekeepers to Abkhazia and South Ossetia.²⁶

Expanding Western Military Ties to the New East Europe

The tandem sees an expansion of security ties to parts of the former USSR as an important component of foreign and security policy – so in this respect Poland and Lithuania’s priorities dovetail with America’s. In 2006, Lithuania’s then Defense Minister (and current Prime Minister) Gediminas Kirkilas declared that his country would continue defense cooperation with the New East Europe, adding that “the Euroatlantic security system cannot be complete without Ukraine, Moldova, the South Caucasus countries and even Belarus.”²⁷

Most notably, Poland and Lithuania have worked on bolstering political and military relations with nearby Ukraine. In 2005, they agreed to set up a joint Polish-Lithuanian-Ukrainian battalion (“POLUKRLITBAT”) for peacekeeping operations in the Balkans.²⁸ A tripartite parliamentary assembly is also set up with the goal, in the words of Polish Senate Speaker Bogdan Borusewicz, of “giving support to Ukraine’s integration with the uniting Europe, and to its effort to become a member of the EU and NATO.”²⁹

Lithuania in particular has worked closely with the Georgian military.³⁰ The Lithuanians supported Washington in the Georgia Train and Equip Program³¹ (in order to boost Tbilisi’s ability to fight terrorism) and provided training for Georgian military and civilian defense personnel at the Lithuanian Military Academy.³² Lithuania has also advised Moldova on military reform issues.³³

In the run-up to the Bucharest NATO summit last April, Poland and Lithuania sided with Washington, arguing in favor of awarding a Membership Action Plans (MAP) to Georgia and Ukraine – in order to provide a road map for future membership in the alliance. Western European nations, notably Germany, blocked this from happening. But Polish and Lithuanian enthusiasm for enlarging the alliance to the East has not dampened.

²⁴ “Aiming at Russia: Poland, Baltics rally EU unity on Georgia crisis,” EUBusiness.com, August 31, 2008. Available at <<http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/1220147237.22>>.

²⁵ Constant Brand, “EU nations urge Russia to comply with cease-fire,” *The Associated Press*, September 6, 2008.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Speech by Lithuanian Defense Minister, “NATO’s Defence Outreach to the New Democracies: Lithuanian Perspective. Gediminas Kirkilas, Minister of National Defence of Lithuania,” May 15, 2006, Vilnius, Lithuania. Available at <<http://www.kam.lt/index.php/en/97007/>>.

²⁸ “Letter of Intent concerning establishment of POLUKRLITBAT signed in Kiev,” Press Release, Lithuanian Ministry of National Defense, May 11, 2005. Available at <<http://www.kam.lt/index.php/en/74801/>>.

²⁹ “Poland, Lithuania to support Ukraine’s aspirations of joining EU, NATO – Polish Senate Speaker,” *Poland Business Newswire*, June 16, 2008.

³⁰ It should be noted that it is Bulgaria, not Lithuania, that has led in “mentoring” Georgia in NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) framework.

³¹ Janusz Bugajski, *The Eastern Dimension of America’s New European Allies*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S Army War College, 2007, p.112.

³² “Lithuania Restates Support for Georgia’s Bid to Join NATO,” *Baltic News Service*, June 12, 2006.

³³ “Lithuania-Moldova military co-operation discussed in Kisinev,” Press Release, Lithuanian Ministry of National Defense, November 3, 2006. Available at <<http://www.kam.lt/index.php/en/114988/>>.

Poland in June hosted a meeting of the New Group of Georgia's Friends – an informal inter-governmental coalition supporting Georgia's NATO aspirations.³⁴ Polish President Lech Kaczyński also recently declared, "Georgia and Ukraine will soon become NATO members. Nobody doubts that, and despite the fact that Poland lacks a deciding vote, we will be happy to support the decision to grant a Membership Action Plan to Georgia and Ukraine."³⁵ During a public forum in Washington, Prime Minister Kirkilas insisted that "support for the enlargement of transatlantic institutions is right both in moral as well as strategic [terms]."³⁶ As the Georgia crisis unfolded last August, Poland and Lithuania called in a joint statement for Georgia and Ukraine to be granted a MAP "as soon as possible."³⁷

Checking Russia's Energy Grip on European Nations

Joint concern about Russian energy dominance has pushed Warsaw and Vilnius to search for ways to bring alternative supplies into Central European markets and give Russian energy firms some competition. The Lithuanian President once declared that "Those who control your energy supply control you politically. This is unacceptable."³⁸ Sharing this sentiment, Poland has taken the lead in trying to make liquefied natural gas (LNG) work for Central Europe via a proposed LNG terminal on the Baltic coastline³⁹ – in order to give the Baltic region access to gas supplies from the Middle East or other points afar. Poland is also exploring the possibility of importing Norwegian gas through a pipeline to Denmark.⁴⁰

On the oil front, the two states are actively pushing to link Central Europe to the Caspian region's oil reserves via an extension of the Odessa-Brody pipeline in nearby Ukraine. This diversification project envisions Caspian crude sailing from Georgia's Black Sea terminals to Ukraine's port at Odessa. The oil will then be pumped north through the pipeline to Brody, Ukraine. From there, a new extension will carry the oil to Poland's Baltic port at Gdańsk.⁴¹

As mentioned above, Odessa-Brody is operating in reverse mode ever since a previous pro-Russian government in Kiev struck a deal with Moscow to ship Russian crude south to Ukraine's port at Odessa on the Black Sea. But Poland and Lithuania are working both within the EU and directly with Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan on laying the political and commercial groundwork so that the oil can flow in its originally-intended direction. With an annual capacity of 14 million tons, this pipeline could put a dent in Russia's oil monopoly on the Baltic region. Getting the pipeline reversed could also help reinforce Ukraine's westward orientation.

³⁴ "New Group of Georgia's Friends Convention Held in Warsaw," Polish Radio, June 26, 2008. Available at <<http://www.polskieradio.pl/zagranica/news/artykul85674.html>>.

³⁵ Quoted in: "Poland sure Georgia, Ukraine will soon join NATO," *RIA Novosti*, July 1, 2008.

³⁶ Remarks by PM Kirkilas, "Transatlantic Relations: Lessons and Perspectives," CSIS Statesmen Forum, Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 2, 2008, Washington, DC.

³⁷ "Lithuanian, Polish Presidents Suggesting to Give Georgia, Ukraine NATO Action Plan A.S.A.P.," *Baltic News Service*, August 19, 2008.

³⁸ Quoted in: "Lithuania Slams Russian 'blackmail,'" *RFE/RL Newswire*, July 12, 2006.

³⁹ "Polish Move On LNG, Lithuania Stalls," *World Gas Intelligence*, January 16, 2008.

⁴⁰ "Poland/Denmark: Baltic Pipe deal to be signed on 16 Nov," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 10, 2008.

⁴¹ Simon Wardell, "Ukrainian President Signs Decree on Reversing Odessa-Brody Pipeline," *Global Insight*, August 18, 2008.

With the horrors of communism still fresh in recent political memory, Poland and Lithuania pursue a values-based foreign policy when looking eastward. They understand that true stability and prosperity cannot come without the eventually necessary economic and political reforms. To a large degree, the two states serve as role models for countries further East; Poland and Lithuania have successfully shed the economic inefficiencies of command economies while simultaneously establishing law and order. But their utility goes beyond their demonstration effect. The tandem maintain active eastern policies geared around civil society building, training and technical assistance.

Poland and Lithuania have sought to increase economic and cultural ties with Belarus, presenting the people of “Europe’s last dictatorship” a favorable model to emulate. Poland has been particularly energetic. Warsaw subsidizes media outlets in Poland that publish in the Belarusian language. In 2006, Poland launched Radio Racja, a Belarusian-language radio station transmitting from Northeast Poland into Belarus.⁴² Lithuania also broadcasts Radio Racja.⁴³ The station is the only foreign station that focuses on Belarussian politics and news, providing an alternative to the state-run media.⁴⁴ Since December 2007, Poland has also been broadcasting satellite TV into Belarus.⁴⁵ The content of the TV programs are produced in Poland and Lithuania, as well Belarus itself.⁴⁶

Polish and Lithuanian heads of state have involved themselves personally in Ukraine’s westward trajectory. During the 2004 political crisis in Kiev accompanying the “Orange Revolution,” Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski and Lithuania’s Valdas Adamkus played a leadership role in helping to mediate a power transition amid electoral fraud.⁴⁷ In the words of one analyst, the two countries “dragged a reluctant EU” into these roundtable negotiations.⁴⁸ U.S. President George W. Bush thanked them for their leadership.⁴⁹

Lithuania has been particularly active in engaging smaller states, including Moldova, Georgia and Armenia, on items aimed at strengthening civil society or implementing administrative reforms. Vilnius supports Moldova’s EU aspirations,⁵⁰ and initiated the so-called “3+3 format” for cooperation between the Baltic States and the three states of the South Caucasus.⁵¹

⁴² Judy Dempsey, “Broadcasts from Poland try to break Belarus news monopoly,” *International Herald Tribune*, Feb. 24, 2006.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Andrew Curry, “Poland Revives Cold War Tactic: Democracy Via Radio,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 11, 2006.

⁴⁵ “TV Belsat Goes On The Air,” *The Warsaw Voice*, January 9, 2008. Available at <<http://www.warsawvoice.pl/view/16954/>>.

⁴⁶ Chris Dziadul, “Belsat TV prepares for launch,” *Broadband TV News*, December 7, 2007. Available at <<http://www.broadbandtvnews.com/?p=2954>>.

⁴⁷ “EU Hails Lithuanian President’s Contribution to Efforts to Resolve Ukraine Crisis,” *Baltic News Service*, December 14, 2004.

⁴⁸ Taras Kuzio, “Poland Plays Strategic Role in Ukraine’s ‘Orange Revolution’,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 1, Issue 144, December 10, 2004.

⁴⁹ “Bush phones Kwasniewski, Adamkus on Ukraine,” *Agence France Presse*, December 9, 2004.

⁵⁰ “Lithuania To Continue Providing Support For Moldova’s Reforms,” *Baltic News Service*, December 13, 2006.

⁵¹ “Lithuania urges Baltic, South Caucasus countries cooperate closer,” *Baltic News Service*, December 6, 2005.

Can the United States Rely on this Tandem to Advance U.S. Priorities?

As described above, Poland and Lithuania have been enterprising go-getters in their engagement of the New East Europe, and Polish-Lithuanian interests coincide neatly with those of the United States. But the fact that there is a correlation of interests is a different question from whether, from a policy perspective, the United States can actually leave the implementation of U.S. priorities to Warsaw and Vilnius. In other words, does it make sense for America, and does it have a chance of success? On these points, there are both reasons to be optimistic and pessimistic.

Reasons to be optimistic:

1. *Poland and Lithuania have a demonstrated partnership with the United States on other strategic issues.* The Baltic tandem comprises two of the most “pro-American” states in today’s Europe, and the two governments have a strong record when it comes to cooperation with the United States on common challenges.

Most notably, Poland and Lithuania are stalwart U.S. allies when it comes to stabilization and reconstruction operations. Poland maintained troops in Iraq from 2003-2008, and Lithuania still maintains forces in the country at a time when other coalition partners have long since pulled out. In Afghanistan, Polish troops have served along side their American counterparts, including in volatile parts of Southern Afghanistan, and the Poles are taking over NATO security operations in one of Afghanistan’s provinces.⁵² Since 2005, Lithuania has led a multinational provincial reconstruction team (PRT) in Afghanistan’s Ghor province.⁵³ Finally, there is active U.S. collaboration with Poland and Lithuania in the law enforcement and intelligence spheres.⁵⁴

2. *Increased Polish influence within the EU.* Following the Polish elections of 2007, and the entry of Donald Tusk to the political scene, Poland’s stature within EU circles has improved. The outgoing government of Jarosław Kaczyński (President Lech Kaczyński’s twin brother) strained relations with West European capitals over questions of EU integration, and also took a more ideologically-driven hard line towards Moscow than Mr. Tusk. Though still critical of Russian energy policies in the Baltic region, Tusk has made an effort to mend fences with Moscow and open lines of communication to decrease tensions. As analyst Igor Janke explained, “Poland’s current foreign policy is based more on rational calculation and less on emotions.”⁵⁵ At the same time, Tusk strived to convince Poland’s European partners to take a firm line with Russia during the Georgia crisis.⁵⁶

To some extent, the new Polish pragmatism could rein in Lithuania’s sometimes stridently anti-Russian tone. Elements of the Russian government reportedly complain that Vilnius is becoming the second-largest outpost of “anti-Russian extremism” after

⁵² “Polish troops to redeploy to take control of central province in Afghanistan,” *The Associated Press*, May 30, 2008.

⁵³ “Lithuanian Defense Minister Visiting Soldiers in Afghanistan,” *Baltic News Service*, July 29, 2008.

⁵⁴ See for example: “Heads of US CIA, Lithuania’s Secret Dept Discuss Further Cooperation,” *Baltic News Service*, June 30, 2005; “Lithuanian state security to increase cooperation with FBI,” *Agence France Presse*, Feb. 10, 2005; “Poland, U.S. agree to deepen intelligence sharing ahead of talks on missile defense,” *Associated Press Worldstream*, March 8, 2007.

⁵⁵ Igor Janke, “Polish Diplomacy: Rational Calculation Instead of Symbolic Gestures; Rapprochement with Russia pays off,” *Polish News Bulletin*, March 27, 2008.

⁵⁶ “Poland seeks hard EU line on Russia,” *Thompson Financial*, August 25, 2008.

London.⁵⁷ But Poland can help mitigate the over-enthusiasm of its Baltic cousin and serve as an honest broker when any Lithuanian-Russian frictions risk spilling over into a broader EU-Russia spat.

A major milestone for Poland's rising influence within Europe is the creation of the EU's Eastern Partnership Initiative, which puts Poland and Sweden in the driver's seat. The eastern counterpart to French President Nicholas Sarkozy's Mediterranean Union, the Partnership, first proposed in May and approved by the EU Council in June, seeks to afford special status within the European Neighborhood Policy for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Belarus is also included within the initiative's framework, but in a technical and expert-level capacity. In presenting the plan, Minister Sikorski made a point of stating that, "to the South, we have neighbors of Europe, to the East we have European neighbors."⁵⁸ The intention of the Polish-Swedish initiative is clear: to prepare the EU's eastern neighbors for full membership once "enlargement fatigue" has dissipated.

And it may just work. It has received active backing from the U.S., the UK, the Czech Republic and the Baltic States. Unlike the French plan, the Eastern Partnership is to be administered by the EU Commission and draws its funding from the European Neighborhood Policy's substantial budget.⁵⁹ With its focus on aid programs, economic, trade and visa policy, the initiative is both practical and ideological, according to Sikorski.⁶⁰ It should come as no surprise that of all EU foreign policy initiatives, the Eastern Partnership is most in line with U.S. priorities for the new East Europe.

3. The United States may want a Polish-Lithuanian lightning rod for Moscow's rhetoric while U.S. diplomats recruit Russian assistance on global strategic matters. A major reason why outsourcing East Europe policy to the tandem could make sense is so that Poland and Lithuania can absorb some of Russia's criticism about Western "meddling." This is particularly pertinent as U.S. officials seek Russian help in tackling global strategic challenges like arms control and nuclear proliferation. Based on their track records, Poland and Lithuania are not afraid of ruffling a few feathers in Moscow when standing up for their principles.

Reasons to be pessimistic:

1. Poland or Lithuania could end up distracted by domestic politics. A coherent state policy towards East Europe must not become politicized. But even "high politics" can fall victim to domestic political wrangling in Central Europe. In Lithuania, for instance, opposition parties appear willing to make an issue out of government programs relating to military conscription as well as NATO's military force posture in the Baltics – this on the heels of the Russian-Georgian war and ahead of parliamentary elections in Vilnius this October.⁶¹

⁵⁷ "Russia preparing Lithuanian offensive – claim," *The Baltic Times*, January 2, 2008.

⁵⁸ "EU: Poland, Sweden Breathe New Life Into Eastern Neighborhood," *RFE/RL*, May 26, 2008.

⁵⁹ Alexandros Petersen, "Open door policy best for EU," *Kiyv Post*, August 6, 2008.

⁶⁰ Marcin Wojciechowski, "Commentary: Success of Eastern Initiative helps Poland overcome EU 'stereotype,'" *Gazeta Wyborcza*, BBC Monitoring Reports, June 23, 2008; "Eastern Partnership' could lead to enlargement, Poland says," *EU Observer*, June 27, 2008.

⁶¹ "Proposals to deploy NATO bases in Lithuania mere pre-election speculations – PM," *Baltic News Service*, September 5, 2008; "Lithuania Conservatives would reform diplomatic service, defense policy after winning parl't polls," *Baltic News*

In Poland, signs have already emerged that the President and Prime Minister (of two different political parties) do not exactly see eye to eye on the recent Georgia crisis. In general, Tusk appears more concerned than Kaczyński about worsening relations between the EU and Russia in the name of standing up for Georgian sovereignty.⁶² Such internal political disagreements could, under the right circumstances, complicate a coherent foreign policy. What's more, Poland is due to have presidential elections in 2010, which promise to be as acrimonious and prickly as previous elections cycles. In such an environment, there is the incentive to ignore Polish national interests one way or the other in the name of sticking it to one's political opponent; conceivably, Polish politicians could criticize one another for being too soft or even too antagonistic towards Russia in pursuing an active East Europe policy.

2. *Europe's "Core" may not be interested in U.S.-Polish-Lithuanian priorities.* Parts of so-called "old Europe" – Germany and Italy in particular – seem more interested in a strategic political and business partnership with Russia than engagement with the states of the USSR's inner empire. In point of fact, classical German and Polish notions of an eastern policy are at odds with one another; for Berlin, "Ostpolitik" traditionally meant treating with the political center of the Russian or Soviet empires, while Warsaw's historic strategy of "Prometheism" has been to peel away the parts of this empire and make them Polish allies.⁶³ In today's Europe, we again see the German penchant for dealing with Russia without consulting with the countries with the greatest stake in good easterly relations – the new member states of Central Europe.

In a number of recent high-profile cases, Western European capitals blocked or stalled initiatives supported by Poland and Lithuania. In the spring of 2008, Germany provided some of the strongest opposition to awarding MAP to Ukraine and Georgia.⁶⁴ Since the Georgian crisis, Chancellor Merkel appears to have modified her position,⁶⁵ but there could very well be frictions within Germany's coalition government moving forward on the issue of NATO enlargement.

During Russia's invasion of Georgia, even holding a NATO special meeting of foreign ministers was considered controversial due to the trepidations of several West European states. Germany was among the most reluctant to use any sticks with respect to Moscow. Frank-Walter Steinmiller, the German foreign minister, commented that "I do not advise ... any knee-jerk reaction such as the suspending talks on a partnership and co-operation agreement [with the European Union]."⁶⁶ Ultimately, this was exactly what the EU as a whole agreed to on September 1 – and many considered this a somewhat meek response.

Service, August 27, 2008; "Lithuania's President urging parties to refrain from populist statements on national defense system," *Baltic News Service*, August 19, 2008.

⁶² Jan Cienski, "Regional leaders signal Georgian solidarity," *Financial Times*, August 12, 2008; Bernadeta Waszkielewicz and Edyta Zemla, "Lech Kaczyński's Eastern Plan," *Rzeczpospolita*, BBC Monitoring Reports, August 18, 2008; Vanessa Gera, "Polish president criticizes France, Germany," *The Associated Press*, August 16, 2008.

⁶³ Credit for this observation is owed in part to Slawomir Debski. See: Slawomir Debski, "Poland and Germany: together towards the East," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, BBC Monitoring Reports, August 6, 2008.

⁶⁴ Hugh Williamson, "Germany blocks ex-Soviets' Nato entry," *Financial Times*, March 31, 2008; Taras Kuzio, "Germany against Kyiv's Westward Push," *Kiev Post*, April 3, 2008.

⁶⁵ "Georgia 'Will' Join NATO: Merkel," *Agence France Presse*, August 17, 2008.

⁶⁶ Charles Clover, Catherine Belton, and James Politi, "Western leaders close ranks on Georgia," *Financial Times*, August 18, 2008.

Other German diplomats were reportedly upset that NATO, not the OSCE, ended up as the diplomatic body that took up the Russia-Georgia war.⁶⁷

Italy in particular appeared to position itself as a roadblock to a robust European response.⁶⁸ Amazingly, in the first few days of the crisis, the Italian foreign minister was opposed to the Polish request for a special EU meeting on South Ossetia on the grounds that “calling such a council is tantamount to seeking a verdict of guilty for Russia.”⁶⁹ He also warned against the formation of any European “anti-Russia coalition”⁷⁰ – a possible reference to the Baltic quartet’s proactive diplomacy in support of Georgia. In short, the schism between West and East-Central Europe was laid bare for all to see in last month’s crisis.

3. *Russia will always view Poland and Lithuania as upstarts.* Historical antipathy and the legacy of the Cold War may blunt any influence that Poland and Lithuania are able to exert over Moscow and within the New East Europe. In addition, overreliance on the part of Washington on Warsaw and Vilnius could trap U.S. policies within the sometimes-petty disagreements between the once Soviet center and its former vassals. It is certainly the case that Moscow reserves its most assertive policies for its Baltic neighbors. In statements never retracted by the Kremlin, the deputy chief of staff of Russia’s armed forces, General Anatoly Nogovitsyn threatened Poland with a nuclear strike in return for Warsaw’s agreement to place U.S. missile defense interceptors on its territory.⁷¹ And, until Russian oil flowing to the Czech Republic was cut off in July 2008, Lithuania had long been the only EU country to experience geopolitically motivated direct energy cut-offs.⁷²

It should be remembered that both Poland and Lithuania do not abut Russia-proper, but share a border with Russia’s intra-EU enclave of Kaliningrad. The site of the Second World War’s most permanent ethnic cleansing campaign will likely remain a geopolitical, military and environmental headache for both neighbors – not to mention NATO and the EU - for the foreseeable future. The importance of a warm water port for Russia’s Baltic fleet means Kaliningrad ensures that even if Belarus were to reorient its foreign policy towards the West, Poland and Lithuania will remain front line states. Russia’s tens of thousands of troops in the enclave and the need to adequately resupply them – whether by land or sea – will remain an issue of contention between Warsaw, Vilnius and Moscow that Washington may want to avoid.⁷³

What Should the United States Do?

When crises erupt in future, America might be tempted to turn to the familiar EU founding members, rather than Central European states. As Russia took the divisive step of recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in late August, U.S. politicians John McCain and Barack Obama lumped praise on France and Germany for

⁶⁷ Charles Krauthammer, “Old Europe fails to realise that more than Georgia is at stake,” *The Irish Times*, August 25, 2008.

⁶⁸ See: Guy Dinmore, “Italy a thorn in Cheney’s side over Georgia,” *Financial Times*, September 10, 2008.

⁶⁹ “Frattini: ‘Truce at Once, but Moscow Must Not Be Isolated,’” *La Stampa*, BBC Monitoring Reports, August 11, 2008.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ “Russia: Poland risks attack because of U.S. missiles,” *International Herald Tribune*, August 15, 2008.

⁷² “Russia won’t re-open oil pipeline, Lithuania says,” *Reuters*, October 11, 2007.

⁷³ *The Military Balance 2004*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, p. 93.

their role in convening international summits to discuss the crisis.⁷⁴ And indeed, France did step up to the plate in an effort to be a peacemaker. But it should be realized that there are clear limitations to what an EU driven by Paris and Berlin will do when the chips are down. In practice European unity can easily mean watered-down statements that tip-toe around the heart of the issue. National action, taken by select member states like Poland and Lithuania, in the words of one analyst, “keeps pressure on the European Union policy makers and acts as a brake on France, Germany and Italy’s appeasement of Moscow.”⁷⁵

The United States should consider a two-pronged approach, according to which France or other trusted allies in Rumsfeld’s “Old Europe” can supplement U.S. diplomacy towards Moscow, when necessary, through bilateral exchanges with the Kremlin. Meanwhile, states in “New Europe” (lead by a Polish-Lithuanian tandem) should be more clearly set up to play a leading role in engaging the rest of the former Soviet Union – and in shaping EU policies towards these states.

While a Polish-Lithuanian tandem – or even a Baltic quartet – might not alone have enough clout in the corridors of Brussels, its influence combined with states like Sweden and the UK would be significant. Sweden, under the new center-right government of Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt and Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, has emerged as a natural ally in Europe for both the United States and traditionally pro-American countries like Poland and Lithuania. Stockholm’s participation was key in drumming up support for the Polish-backed EU Eastern Partnership among Europe’s older members. Sikorski noted that “Sweden’s name was very helpful for the reputation of the initiative.”⁷⁶ Britain’s historical rivalry with the Russians, combined with recent political and commercial tensions, suggests that London too will be aligned with Europe’s new member states in dealing with Moscow.

One positive outcome of August events in Georgia is that they underscored the need for comprehensive conflict resolution and prevention in the New East Europe. No longer can Washington and Western institutions treat South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Transnistria or Nagorno-Karabakh as region-specific concerns. U.S.-Russia relations across the board will have to be re-engineered in the wake of the South Ossetian tinder-box being set alight. The broader West cannot risk the repercussions of regional repetition. Poland and Lithuania’s familiarity with the issues, obstacles and leaders involved should be leveraged to craft a comprehensive strategy for conflict resolution in the region. Warsaw and Vilnius’ experience of the Helsinki Process, which led to the creation of the OSCE should guide the scope and approach of any new holistic strategy.

The importance of bringing together not only the immediate participants in the conflict, but all of the region’s stakeholders, to emphasize the international implications of each conflict, cannot be stressed enough. High-level leadership from Washington will be instrumental in achieving such a quorum. That said, the United States would do well to encourage Poland and Lithuania to take the lead on developing a comprehensive strategy

⁷⁴ See: “Statement By John McCain On The Situation In Georgia,” August 26, 2008. Available at <<http://www.johnmccain.com/Informing/News/PressReleases/Read.aspx?guid=86607d0e-1044-4f33-b2e0-c9ce25b100ee>>; Statement from Senator Obama on Russia’s Decision to Recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as Independent States, August 26, 2008. Available at <<http://my.barackobama.com/page/community/post/amandascott/gG5dzy>>.

⁷⁵ Adam Lebor, “Despite history, Hungary finds the beat a necessity,” *The Times (London)*, August 22, 2008.

⁷⁶ “Polish foreign minister praises Sweden for joining EU eastern policy,” *PAP*, June 25, 2008.

within the EU. Not only will other European countries respond more favorably to an intra-EU initiative, but the taking on of what is now a pivotal responsibility will gain Warsaw and Vilnius much needed “street cred” in Brussels. What Washington can do is carefully nudge other Atlanticist Europeans behind the scenes, such as the Brits, Swedes, Dutch, Danes, Czechs and Romanians, to support the Polish-Lithuanian tandem. Subtly encouraging something akin to an “eastern engagement caucus” in this way could yield positive outcomes in terms of U.S. priorities in the New East Europe.

The implementation of a revitalized eastern engagement would best be served if it took place within the context of the EU Eastern Partnership, together with a similar joint U.S.-Polish-Lithuanian effort within NATO. An Eastern Initiative for the alliance would not only address the gaping oversights of security provision and enlargement in the New East Europe and the Caspian region beyond, but would finally activate a concerted, long-term mission for NATO at a time when such focus is needed more than ever. If anything, Russia’s invasion of Georgia underscored that the security and development of the greater Black Sea and Caspian regions is as strategically vital for the West as it is for Russia. When assuming his current position as NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer defined the overarching alliance objective as the need to “project stability where it matters.”⁷⁷ An Eastern Initiative would do just that.

A NATO Eastern Initiative would have to incorporate measures that complemented those of the EU, OSCE and Council of Europe to achieve comprehensive Western integration in all government sectors and at all levels of society. Poland, with Lithuanian support, has already taken the initiative of crafting the priorities and tools of the EU’s Eastern Partnership, which are similarly wide-ranging. The United States could support a similar joint initiative within NATO, perhaps with Swedish and British support, which would not only elevate the profile of Poland and Lithuania within the alliance, but could serve to revitalize its overall purpose.

As the Euro-Atlantic world’s security guarantor and facilitator of the stability, good governance and prosperity that characterizes it, NATO would not be living up to its creed were it not to reinforce its eastern dimension at this moment. If conducted with a keen understanding for Russia’s interests and a continued openness to realizing security cooperation with Moscow in the New East Europe, a NATO Eastern Initiative would also provide an opportunity to come to an eventual understanding with Russia about respective roles in the region. In the long run, stability and prosperity in Russia’s southeastern borderlands is a boon for its own security and economic development. With an emphasis on preparing the countries of Europe’s borderlands for full Western integration, not just on Article V defense priorities, such an initiative could in fact contribute to a dampening of tensions with Moscow, once the benefits of self-assured, flourishing neighbors become more apparent. Only if NATO has a greater presence in the region will Moscow respect its interests. And now more than ever, NATO’s future interests lie in the New East Europe.

⁷⁷ Alexandros Petersen, “Black Sea Security: The NATO Imperative”, *Western Policy Center Commentary*, August 20, 2004.