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The Three Seas Initiative

ECR Three Seas Friendship Group



EUROPEAN CONSERVATIVES AND REFORMISTS

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Photo: three-seas.eu

Dear Reader,



I am pleased to present the second volume of the joint publication commissioned by the ECR Three Seas Initiative Friendship Group. The publication consists of four chapters describing a wide range of issues: from strategic concepts about the genesis of the Three Seas Initiative to the idea of including Ukraine in the 3SI and key digital issues related to the initiative.

The first chapter, entitled "The Three Seas Initiative: From Vision to Action," was prepared jointly by two former US ambassadors to Poland - Daniel Fried and Georgette Mosbacher, and the brother of the current US ambassador to Poland and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence - Ian Brzezinski, who is associated with the Atlantic Council. The text was originally published on the website of the Three Seas Association and caused a lot of controversy. It was edited by Ambassador Fried, whose views and political affiliation with the Democratic Party are reflected in the arguments contained in the text.

The following paper, authored by Professor Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski, is a critical polemic with the abovementioned article by the experts from DC. The main points of contention concern the genesis of the Three Seas Initiative, the role of Polish President Andrzej Duda and US President Donald Trump in shaping the Initiative, and Germany's position in this geopolitical puzzle.

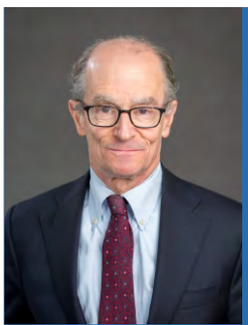
The third paper supplements all the previous ones, including those from the first volume of this publication. Its author, Maciej Olchawa, argues that the Three Seas Initiative will remain incomplete without Ukraine's participation. The article by the young Ukraine expert is even more relevant today, when despite the bloody aggression of Russia in Ukraine, the old countries of the European Union do not express the political will to grant our Eastern neighbours a fast-track path to membership. It is impossible to predict how the ongoing war will end, but the heroic attitude of the Ukrainians, combined with the complete incompetence of the Russian aggressor, give hope. After the conflict is over, all of Europe will be in Ukraine’s debt. Inviting our neighbours to the Three Seas Initiative would be the first step towards paying it off and rebuilding the infrastructure devastated by the Russians.

The fourth and last paper presents the perspective of an outside observer and globalization specialist - Salvatore Babones, an American professor living in Australia. In his work, the sociologist argues that the main field for the development of the Three Seas countries, including Poland, is the sphere of digitalization. According to the author, this is, among other things, due to the well-established position of industrial powers such as Germany and the creative spirit of Europeans in this part of the continent. The ongoing war in Ukraine and the potential reshuffle on the global stage can change a lot, but the digital market potential of the societies of our region remains high.

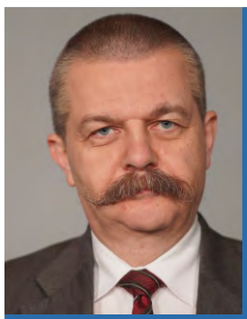
I wish you an interesting and inspiring reading.

Witold Waszczykowski
Member of the European Parliament
Chairman of the ECR’s Three Seas Initiative
Friendship Group in the European Parliament

Authors



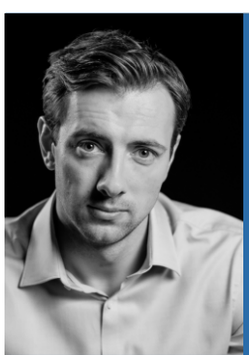
Daniel Fried
served as a Special Assistant and NSC Senior Director for Presidents Clinton and Bush, Ambassador to Poland, and Assistant Secretary of State for Europe (2005-09), Ambassador Fried helped craft the policy of NATO enlargement to include Central European nations.



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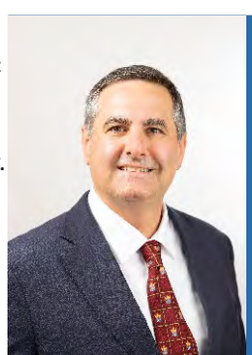
Georgette Mosbacher
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Salvatore Babones
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The Three Seas Initiative: From Vision to Action

By Daniel Fried, Georgette Mosbacher, Ian Brzezinski [1]

What is the Three Seas Initiative?

The Three Seas Initiative is a Central European launched and led project, supported by the US, that seeks to address some of the unfinished business of building a Europe whole, free, and at peace. Its specific objective is to accelerate the development of cross-border energy, transport, and digital infrastructure in the region by attracting capital to commercially viable projects. The Three Seas area – the countries between the Baltic, Black, and Adriatic Seas -- includes EU member states mostly from "post-1989 Europe": that part of Europe that fell to Soviet conquest at the end of World War II and suffered for the next 45 years not only from political domination by the Soviet Union but economic mis-development that continues to hinder its growth.

Central Europe's Soviet-era infrastructure that developed over the decades of communist rule was designed to maximize Moscow's leverage of these countries and limit regional economic interaction that might have given the "satellite" states of the USSR options to resist or ameliorate Soviet control. Thus, energy and transportation infrastructure was (and remains) both relatively weak overall and East-West oriented, reflecting Moscow's interest in ties with Germany, but neglected in a North-South direction. Even today, it is much harder to travel by rail, road, or plane from Warsaw to Bucharest than it is to travel between Warsaw and West European cities. That mis-development remains a strategic liability for the region, especially in energy: the region's Soviet-era legacy system of gas pipelines gives Moscow, by design, the ability to exert leverage over the Three Seas region through its relative (though now, happily, declining) dependence on Russian-origin gas. Conversely, infrastructure investment in the region would yield substantial benefits, both economic and strategic. [2]

The Three Seas countries are all European Union member states and have benefitted from the EU's impressive projects that have invested in transport infrastructure. They are aware of this and support for EU membership remains high, especially in Poland, one of the key leaders of the Three Seas Initiative. But Warsaw and the other Three Seas capitals– also sought to develop the Three Seas area as a regional group within the EU to encourage more support. This includes cross-border projects that would link the countries within the Three Seas region with each other as well as with Germany and Western Europe and projects that would address the Kremlin's still-impressive ability to use energy as a strategic tool, a problem potentially exacerbated by the Nord Stream gas pipeline projects.

Three Seas' strategic context.

The strategic context of the Three Seas Initiative has been paramount from the start and its strategic case has grown over time. First, its proponents have argued that Three Seas can help develop the physical underpinnings of the region so it can become in reality, not just in theory, part of an integrated European market, i.e., Three Seas helps make a united Europe a fact.

Second, the Three Seas leaders sought to involve the United States in the project from its beginning, not as a member but as a long-time and committed supporter of the region, as the US has been (at its best) since

1. Dan Fried is the Weiser Family Distinguished Fellow at the Atlantic Council and served as United States Ambassador to Poland among other top level positions in the US government. Georgette Mosbacher is a member of the Atlantic Council Board of Directors and served as United States Ambassador to Poland. Ian Brzezinski is a Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council and served as US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Europe and NATO Policy.
2. For a recent IMF assessment in the impact of infrastructure investment in the region, see: Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe After COVID-19: Securing the Recovery Through Wise Public Investment (imf.org)

1918 and President Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points Speech, and especially after the peoples of the Three Seas region overthrew communist rule in 1989. They seek US involvement not only as a source of investment capital but as a strategic guarantor. For many, if not most, leaders in the Three Seas region, the US role in their part of Europe is of immediate and not just sentimental concern.

The Poles and other leaders of the Three Seas Initiative had a point. After the Three Seas countries starting to join the EU in 2004, many in the US started to assume that the special role that the US had played in Central and Eastern Europe was over; that America's work there was done. Many Central European thought leaders were concerned as early as 2009 that the US was backing away from this role. These concerns had a basis in some of the early Obama Administration moves (e.g., its clumsy handling of missile defense). Russian President Vladimir Putin's attack on Ukraine in 2014 and the Kremlin's general turn toward subversion and aggression abroad and repression at home was taken as a threat by most of the Three Seas governments and beyond. This intensified their desire to keep the United States – that they saw despite the Obama Administration's ill-fated "reset" with the Kremlin as generally less tempted by premature amelioration with the Kremlin than some West European governments -- to remain engaged in their region.

The Obama Administration, however, also regarded Putin's invasion of Ukraine as a turning point and in its wake abandoned what was left of the reset and led NATO to eventually send battalion-strength combat forces to the Baltic States and Poland and sent in addition an armored brigade to Poland on a rotational basis. Poland and other regional governments have intensified their efforts to keep the US engaged, and in addition to its role in NATO, Three Seas would add a structured economic dimension to the US role.

China represents another sort of great power challenge to Central Europe. It started courting the Central and Eastern Europe, including the Three Seas countries, with its "17+1" initiative, a Central Europe version of its global One Belt One Road infrastructure initiative. "17+1" was launched in 2012 through a summit in Warsaw, during the time of the previous, liberal Polish government that, like most European governments, looked upon China as a welcome course of investment and not as a strategic challenge. That view has changed as China's government has become more assertive and even bullying (e.g., in its fight with the mayor of Prague), and as some recipients of One Belt One Road projects have complained about its unwelcome elements, such as debt traps and Chinese control over their economies. [3]

While there remain plenty of Central European officials happy or even eager to welcome Chinese investment, the reaction against perceived China Great Power bullying has been relatively swift. In 2021, for example, Latvia's foreign minister[4] and a leading Bulgarian liberal politician[5] both described the Three Seas Initiative as a potential defense against suspect Russian and Chinese influence alike and welcomed the US role in Three Seas as a counterweight against both.

Three Seas' emphasis on strengthening energy infrastructure has taken on special importance given the debate over the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. The Soviet-era legacy energy infrastructure in the Three Seas left the region (and nearby countries like Ukraine) dependent on Russian gas, with access to other gas sources relatively difficult. By giving Russia the option of exporting gas directly to Germany, bypassing Central Europe, Nord Stream 1 and 2 strengthened the Kremlin's ability to exploit that infrastructure weakness to gain strategic leverage over the Three Seas region.

Happily, many of the Three Seas governments (Lithuania, Poland, Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria especially) have worked to expand energy infrastructure to mitigate the mis-development in gas infrastructure. Projects include new LNG import facilities, a new pipeline from Norway to Poland (Baltic Pipe, that enjoyed EU backing, due to be completed in 2022), new or repurposed pipelines to bring gas

3. Should insert a supportive article re 1B1R problems
4. US leadership in NATO is important to Latvia - foreign minister (baltictimes.com)
5. Safeguarding Democracy Among Eastern Europe's Three Seas - Just Security

(even Russian gas) from Germany east to Three Seas countries and Ukraine. Three Seas seeks to build on these efforts, expanding them to include projects addressing non-Russian controlled gas needs in Hungary and the Balkans. If successful, these would substantially mitigate Nord Stream 1 and 2's strategic risks, and the similar risks of more southern pipelines bringing in Russian or Russian-controlled gas.

Finally, Three Seas followed the strategic logic of US-European (and EU) relations for the past 75 years. The US has consistently supported a strong, united Europe since 1945 (with the baleful exception of President Trump and some around him) and since 1989 and arguably before has regarded Central and Eastern Europe – which includes the Three Seas region -- as an integral part of that undivided Europe. The US championed both NATO and EU enlargement to advance that overall strategic purpose; Three Seas address one element of that larger purpose and thus US support for it was consistent with long-standing policy. Indeed, Three Seas gives the US common strategic purpose with the European Union executive arm, the European Commission, whose mandate includes projects to make that integration real. Far from being an instrument to weaken the EU by bringing the US into issues of Europe's construction, as some Three Seas skeptics feared, the Initiative has the potential (and even purpose) to bring together the US and EU in common purpose, applying to new tasks the tradition of US support for the great European project.

Origins and evolution of the Three Seas Initiative

The conceptual origins of the Three Seas Initiative began in 2012-13, in conversations between Polish business executives who were thinking about the next stages of Polish and regional development and (co-author of this piece) Ian Brzezinski. They agreed that European integration for Poland and the other countries of post-1989 Europe required physical underpinnings in the form of infrastructure to match the impressive political and organizational steps the region had taken since the 1990s. EU and NATO membership needed to be matched, they believed, by corresponding economic development.

The Atlantic Council followed up by establishing a task force -- chaired by former US National Security Advisor General Jim Jones (USMC-ret) and Pawel Olechnowicz, then President of the Management of Board of Grupa Lotos, a Polish energy firm, and directed by Ian Brzezinski and David Koryani -- that produced a 2014 report, "Completing Europe," elaborating on the infrastructure gap in Central Europe and suggesting ways to reduce it. The then-President of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic embraced the concept of a Central European-led initiative to promote infrastructure, hosting a summit on the margins of the UN General Assembly in September 2015 that addressed the conclusions and recommendations of the Atlantic Council report. That and other meetings hosted by Croatia led to formal launch of the Three Seas Initiative.

The first full Three Seas Summit was also held under Croatian auspices in Dubrovnik in 2016. The Dubrovnik Statement was a political statement that characterized the initiative as an "informal platform for security political support" for infrastructure projects in the region "without creating a parallel structure to the existing mechanisms of cooperation. Thus, geo-politics and geo-economics preceded commercial and organizational structures in Three Seas Initiative. Nevertheless, Central Europe since 1989 had developed a history of informal, political groupings that served to advance regional outlooks and limit re-nationalized politics that crippled Central Europe's ability to act together in the 1920s and 1930s, so the political signal was important.

The Three Seas Initiative Warsaw Summit in July 2017 brought the new Administration of President Donald Trump on board as a major supporter of the initiative. Trump attended the Summit in Warsaw as part of his visit to the Polish capital; the Atlantic Council, while non-partisan, reinforced the Summit's messaging via a simultaneously held Warsaw Global Forum. The Warsaw Summit's Joint Declaration was explicit that Three Seas intended to strengthen the European Union as whole and, while still modest on the practical

side of the initiative, established a "3 Seas Business Forum"- a personal recommendation of President Trump who felt it imperative for the initiative to more systematically harness the power and capacities of the private sector.

Nevertheless, President Trump's skepticism (or worse) about the EU in general led to suspicions in Germany and the EU that the Trump Administration saw Three Seas as a mechanism to divide the EU. Some speculated that the US, using its long history of support for Central Europe, might see Three Seas as an opportunity to advance its national interests at Europe's expense. This was a new variant on a years'-old concern that Central Europe could become Washington's "Trojan Horse" in Europe. There had been little basis for such suspicions until Trump's occasional hostility toward the EU revived them; Trump's seeming embrace of some of the Euro-skeptic governments in Central Europe led some in Western Europe to interpret his administration's support for Three Seas in a darker light than warranted. [9]

These concerns were exacerbated by some of the Euro-skeptic rhetoric coming from Warsaw in 2015. While the language in Three Seas declarations was pro-EU, some unofficial Polish speculation noted that Three Seas had origins in the pre-War Polish notion of an "Intermarium" alliance of Central Europeans, a valid idea but failed initiative that sought to enable the countries "in-between" to better deal with challenges from Soviet Russia and revanchist Germany. This was interpreted by some in Europe as a Polish effort to form a regional group, bringing in the US to give it weight, at the expense of European solidarity. This was a mistaken interpretation both of the Intermarium concept and Polish aims in Three Seas (which, after all, had its origins under the previous, liberal Polish government). But it did negatively affect the initial German approach to Three Seas.

The Bucharest Summit held in September 2018 had sub-text of Three Seas solidarity with the EU and Europe, skillfully promoted by the Romanian government hosts. Summit participation this time included not just the US (including Energy Secretary Rick Perry), but also the President of Germany, the President of the European Commission, the President of European Investment Bank, as well as representatives from the EBRD, and IBRD. It also featured the most practical steps to date to transform Three Seas from a political to an operational project. The Joint Declaration welcomed a list of priority infrastructure projects, and Letter of Intent to create a Three Seas Investment Fund with the mandate to identify commercial financing for 3SI projects. The LOI was led by Poland's Development Bank and signed by governmental development banks of Latvia, Czechia, Slovakia, Romania, and Croatia.

The 2019 Ljubljana Three Seas Summit also featured top level West European representation, with both EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier in attendance, along with US Secretary of Energy Perry. The Summit declaration was explicit that Three Seas is "complementary to the existing EU strategies and program" and welcomed establishment of the Three Seas Investment Fund (3SIIF), led by Poland's Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego (BKG) and Romania's Export-Import Bank.

The virtual Tallinn Three Summit held in October 2020 was, at last, able to note the beginning of a shift from the political to the operational: it highlighted pledges of investment into the Three Seas fund by nine of the twelve member states - with Poland increasing its pledge from $500M Euros to 750 million Euros. The United States delegation not only reiterated the pledge made by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo the previous February (at the Munich Security Conference) of up to $1 billion in potential Three Seas Investments, it operationalized it announcing a $300 million investment into the Three Seas Fund. IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva gave the project a boost just before the Tallinn summit, noting the need for regional infrastructure.

On December 2, 2020, the Three Seas Investment Fund's manager, Amber Infrastructure Group

9. For a recent example of German skepticism about Three Seas, see https://visegradinsight.eu/nudge-in-the-right-direction-three-seas-initiative/

announced the first Three Seas investment project, a regional digital infrastructure project led by an Estonian firm Greenergy Data Centers OU. As of April 2021, the fund has made two investments, one in each in the transport and digital sectors with a third said to be imminent in the energy sector.

The Three Seas Initiative developed slowly, but steadily grew from a political project based on sound strategic objectives – whose importance tended to grow over time – into an operational project with a commercial logic behind it. In the process, it picked up regional buy-in and managed to shed some unfortunate baggage and ease initial (and generally unfounded) German and EU concerns. Three Seas had US support from the start -- a rare case of a Trump Administration embrace of a multilateral initiative – and also managed to survive the transition from the Trump to Biden Administration, no small feat given the politics of US foreign policy team transitions.

Despite its association with the Trump Administration, some on the Biden campaign foreign policy team supported Three Seas early on and they brought those views into the Administration. Less than a month in office, Secretary of State Antony Blinken gave a video statement for a Bulgarian-hosted Three Seas foreign ministers' meeting in which he supported the initiative on both strategic and operational grounds, praising its public-private partnership approach embodied by the Three Seas Fund. Those familiar with the culture of new US Administrations will appreciate the unusual nature of this endorsement by a new Secretary of an initiative often associated with the previous Administration.

Taking Three Seas to the next stage

The Three Seas Initiative needs to accelerate the transition of its potential into accomplished business achievements that bring new infrastructure to the region. Having achieved an early and strong endorsement from the Biden Administration, it needs also to strengthen its support within the EU Commission and key member states, Germany especially. As it does, it should advance its "branding" as a pro-business, pro-European initiative that can advance, simultaneously, regional, European/EU, and transatlantic interests in the Three Seas region's development. Critical to its success will be its business logic as a public-private initiative able to attract private capital based on reliable rates of return on investment.

Further Development and Internationalization of the Three Seas International Investment Fund. The Fund is off to a solid start having generated some $1.4 billion dollars in capital commitments from nine of its member states, the United States and the Amber Infrastructure Group (which committed 10 million Euros of its own capital). This puts the Fund well on track to achieve its goal of achieving a pool of $3-5B Euros with which to catalyze and support regional infrastructure development.

In addition to securing Fund investments from member states Austria, Czech Republic and Slovakia, the Three Seas Initiative would benefit from a more collaborative strategy and effort among its member states to convince the development banks of other key transatlantic countries, such as Germany, France, Denmark and Norway to invest in the Fund. The Germans may be willing to take a second and more positive look at Three Seas; if they do, the Three Seas stakeholders should welcome it.

Such investments would have a three-fold effect.

First, this would show broad European support for Three Seas, (timely given Russian pressure, dramatically highlighted by the recent revelation of a 2014 GRU sabotage operation on Czech territory and the truculent Kremlin reaction). Second, participation by key development banks would increase the willingness of international financial institutions like the European Investment Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to invest in the Fund. Finally, this combination of capital, including the USG investment, would make the Fund all the more appealing to the primary target set of investors: international private and commercial finance.

A key challenge in this regard will be to convince countries and entities including Germany, France, and European Commission of the need to respect the independence of the Three Seas Fund from governmental influence – not just from the 3SI member states but also that of other significant institutional investors. That independence is critical to the Fund's ability to attract commercial capital.

A key current objective of European IFIs is to direct 3SI investments into green technologies and away from oil and gas infrastructure. This is laudable, and it is possible that some European support to energy infrastructure could be earmarked for green projects. That could be fit into the Three Seas objectives, which could be broadened to include a green energy pillar. But given Kremlin's use of gas as a political weapon, and Nord Stream 2 in that context, Germany especially would seem to have an obligation to support energy projects – including gas projects – that would mitigate Nord Stream 2's downside risks, such as LNG facilities and gas interconnectors. Gas is not green but is greener than coal and Germany's staunch defense of Nord Stream 2 means that it is past purity on green-only energy projects.

Three Seas Secretariat: Aside from the management of the Three Seas Fund, the Three Seas Initiative remains a largely episodic undertaking featuring annual summits and Business Forums complemented by 3SI Sherpa meetings and policy institute conferences. There is no standing structure with which governments, IFIs, and businesses can engage nor is there a continuous effort to market the Initiative and economic potentials of the Three Seas Region.

To raise itself to a higher level of effectiveness, the Three Seas Initiative should establish an international secretariat. Featuring a small staff that combines infrastructure, investment, and diplomatic expertise, a 3SI Secretariat should be based in a key West European financial center, such as Brussels, Berlin, London, or Amsterdam, a location that combines both an accumulation of commercial and governmental finance and geopolitical power.

The functions of the Secretariat should include the following:

✓ Marketing the economic vibrancy the Three Seas region and the opportunities it presents for profitable infrastructure investment
✓ Developing and making publicly available a continuously updated data base of infrastructure projects across the Three Seas region
✓ Serving as the logistical organizer of the annual Three Seas Summits and Business Forums as well as other events to drive the Initiative forward
✓ Fostering collaboration among Three Seas nations that would increase the region's attractiveness to international infrastructure investors. (This could include generating initiatives to further harmonize national regulations governing – and too often complicating -- cross-border projects and to incentivize foreign direct investment into Three Seas infrastructure projects.)

A Three Seas Secretariat could stand alone, or it could be stood-up as part of and be funded through the Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund, leveraging a small portion of the funds invested by Three Seas member states. Regardless of these options, a Secretariat has the potential to significantly elevate the profile of the Three Seas Initiative, increase its ability to effectively interface with commercial capital, and thereby increase its effectiveness as a beacon attracting international investment to the Three Seas region.

Extending the Three Seas Vision: An underlying and driving motivation of the Three Seas Initiative is the objective building a Europe that is undivided, secure, prosperous and free. The membership of the Three Seas Initiative consists only of EU member states, a fact that leverages the attributes of EU membership attractive to investors, including more established and trustworthy legal systems, regulatory harmonization, and other factors associated with stable and prosperous economies. EU member States, of course, do not encompass all of Central and Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, Moldova and the non-EU states of the Western Balkans.

The Three Seas Initiative needs to more clearly articulate a vision that encompasses these nations of Central and Eastern Europe whose eventual infrastructural integration is key to the completion of an undivided Europe. Three Seas Initiative fora that engage these European states on more regular basis should be established and effort should be made to identify and promote commercially viable infrastructure projects that would further bind these states and the Three Seas region.

In sum, the Three Seas Initiative has put itself on a road for potential success. Its political and strategic footing is sound. It needs now to prove itself in commercial and business terms, and is poised to do so.



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What does Fried, Mosbacher and Brzezinski's text actually tell us?

Prof. Żurawski vel Grajewski

In his polemic entitled “Three Seas and the USA in the optics of foreign policy experts” Vice President of the Three Seas Association Prof. Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski analyses the article “What is the Three Seas Initiative? From vision to action”, which appeared on our portal on Monday.

On July 5, an article by two former U.S. ambassadors to Poland was published on the Three Seas Portal: Dan Fried – who represented President Bill Clinton's Democratic administration in Warsaw from 1997 to 2000 – and Georgette Mosbacher – who held the post from 2018 to 2021 under Donald Trump's Republican administration. The third author of the text is Ian Brzezinski, an American foreign policy expert.
On the one hand, Ambassador Mosbacher's signature under a text strongly critical of Trump's presidency may come as a surprise, but on the other hand, it proves the cross-party interest of the American political elite in the Three Seas Initiative project, leaving aside the analysis of the nature of that interest, revealed in the article discussed below, and the real place of Ms. Mosbacher in the decision-making structures of the Republican Party.

In the aforementioned article, the authors presented a strongly tailored political version of the history and a proposal for the further development of the Three Seas Initiative (TSI). Thus, this is not a text providing reliable information on the history of this project, but rather a certain policy vision of the new US administration's attitude towards the Three Seas forum for Central European infrastructural cooperation.
In what situation of global change in American strategy was the text under discussion published? So what can we read in it, not treating it as a description of reality, but as a proposal to shape it in the future? What conclusions should be drawn from it, bearing in mind also the facts not touched upon in the article, but forming the context of the proposal presented to us in the form of the text under discussion? What vision of U.S. policy towards the Three Seas Initiative and towards Europe as a whole does emerge from it, and what does it mean for Poland?

A global shift in US policy

The United States is a real democracy, not a sham one. This democracy has been constantly fighting expeditionary wars for the past 20 years, since September 11, 2001, with a total of millions rather than hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops having already passed through overseas missions. It's a huge political overload for any democracy to send citizens into battle and win elections. Any politician running for president of the United States must, therefore, promise voters a reduction in the burden that rests on their shoulders from the US’ role as global security stabilizer. To do that, and not destabilize the world, you can't just cut spending and reduce the military. You have to shift at least some of that burden onto the shoulders of others. It was in this ascertainment that Donald Trump's pressure to increase the contribution of US allies to the cost of shared security was rooted. Americans have promised to support allies in need, but have refused to pay for their defence when those asking for it have reduced their military budgets and armies, and some like Germany, through their business dealings with Russia, have financed the armaments of hostile powers that NATO's eastern flank allies then asked Americans to defend against. (Nord Stream 2 is a symbol of just such a policy of Berlin, but let us also recall the German concept of the EU-Russia “partnership for modernization”, the peak efflorescence of which was the construction by Germany's Rheinmetall of the Russian Federation's Land Forces Training Center in Mulino near Nizhny Novgorod, implemented in 2011-2014).

The above-described American need to reduce the cost of stabilizing the world has led to an attempt to build a system of leading regional allies that would assume some of the burden of common defence from

the United States. In the Far East, the role of Washington's leading regional ally was assumed by Japan, which the U.S. induced to change its constitution, abandon its self-defence forces and build a real army. South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines had to take on a fair share of the burden.

In the Middle East, President Trump attempted to build an Israeli-Sunni alliance, which Poland helped him with by organizing the Warsaw conference (February 13-14, 2019). After all, Iran threatens Israel with annihilation and the Sunni monarchies of the Persian Gulf with Shiite revolution. These countries, bonded together under the aegis of the USA, were thus to take over responsibility for regional stability from the retreating Americans, who, by becoming oil and gas exporters in 2016, had lost much of their reason for bearing so much of the cost of stabilizing their Middle Eastern sources. However, the Middle East is an unstable region. Sunni monarchies (even absolute ones) have to take into account the mood of their societies, while Israel faces the growing influence of voters who came after 1991 from the former Soviet Union. At the same time, Moscow has an additional strong lever of pressure on this state in the form of its own military presence on its borders, i.e. in Syria. The Middle Eastern system is therefore in statu nascendi, and its growing strong is by no means certain.

In Europe, an attempt to build a similar system of leading allies led, while still under President Barack Obama, to the adoption at the NATO summit in Wales of a commitment to spend a minimum of 2% of GDP on armaments by US European allies. This met with prolonged opposition from Germany and resulted in Berlin's de facto refusal to step into the role envisaged for it by Washington. In this situation, the United States bet on the only ones willing to do so, i.e. NATO's eastern flank with Poland, Romania and the Baltic states in the lead role, despite the obvious drastic potential difference between them and Germany. This trend (already outlined at the NATO summit in Warsaw in 2016, and thus still during Obama's presidency, but already after the change of government in Poland to a conservative one, clearly oriented towards the US), has been fully developed under Donald Trump's presidency. Currently, under the administration of President Joe Biden, there is a U.S. retreat from this concept and a return to the traditional Democratic stakes on Germany, combined with attempts to find a modus vivendi in relations with Russia.

The political context of the article

The situation described above is the general political context of the article discussed. However, it also has its own specific context, directly affecting the theses contained therein. Four key circumstances provide this context: the deep division of the American political scene into supporters and opponents of Donald Trump, the cross-party consensus of the US Congress on the need to support the Three Seas Initiative and the above-mentioned shift in US foreign policy under the leadership of President Joe Biden away from Central Europe towards Germany as the desired regional ally leading the US, capable (thanks to its potential) of taking from Washington the lion's share of the burden of stabilizing the European part of the Atlantic world and leading it in an “alliance of American and European democracy against authoritarian rule”, i.e. in securing the US the support of the EU in confronting the Chinese challenge. The fourth circumstance shaping the content of the article is the authors' dislike of the conservative Polish government, which does not recognise Germany’s leadership in the EU and questions the acceptability of paying the price of recognition of this leadership by Central Europe and the USA. The price mentioned above would be the approval of German-Russian infrastructure projects (Nord Stream 2) and the de facto recognition of the EU's eastern neighbourhood as the Russian sphere of influence.

The first factor – the dislike of President Trump – should be attributed to marginalizing the importance of the support he gave during the 2017 Warsaw Summit of the Three Seas Initiative to the idea, which boosted the interest in the project on the part of NATO's eastern flank countries which feel the Russian threat and therefore have a strong orientation towards the United States. It was under the impression of Trump's speech as the US leader at the TSI summit in Warsaw that the Baltic states and Romania became deeply involved in the Initiative, and Germany stopped treating it as “an ephemera resulting from Polish megalomania”, dangerous for the German vision of the model of Central European countries’ participation

in the European integration process. Under this vision, the countries of the region should eagerly follow Berlin's lead and join all its initiatives, but they should not put forward their own projects, especially those in which Germany is not present. Trump's support, however, apparently convinced the German government that the project would not collapse on its own, and therefore that it should be joined and taken over rather than openly opposed. The next summit (in Bucharest, in 2018) was thus held under changed circumstances, with the participation of Germany, which was granted the observer status, and with the European Commission, represented by its president at that time - Jean-Claude Juncker. This confirmed a change in the officially dismissive stance of Berlin and Brussels and their recognition of the seriousness of the Three Seas Initiative. It also made it more difficult for its opponents to portray it as an "anti-European, competing with the EU" idea.

The aversion to Trump has led the authors of the article in question to present a historically incorrect thesis of constant – since 1945 – US support for European unity, to which the allegedly only exception would be the "bleak" period of Donald Trump's presidency. This is contradicted by the facts of 2003, when Germany and France, usurping the right to speak for the whole of the EU, and together with Belgium and Luxembourg being a minority group within it, opposed the US' decision to strike Iraq, pretending that it was an EU-US dispute. Washington's decisions were supported at the time by the majority of EU countries, led by the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands, and by all Central European countries that were then candidates for EU membership and those that had just been admitted (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic) or were applying (all the remaining ones) to join NATO. It was on this occasion that U.S. Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld made his famous division into "new and old Europe", and French President Jacques Chirac declared that "Poland (by supporting the U.S. - P.Ż.G.) missed an excellent opportunity to sit quietly", which sounded grotesque in the context of German-French complaints about "U.S. unilateralism", ignoring the opinion of the European allies.

The second factor, embodied in the resolution by the House of Representatives of the U.S. Congress of November 18, 2020, supporting the Three Seas Initiative, and adopted with the unanimous support of both Republicans and Democrats, has been widely taken into account by the authors of the discussed article. In the document, the congressmen pointed out the competitive nature of 3SI in relation to China's initiative of cooperation with Central Europe – 17+1 – and the necessity of expanding cooperation within the Three Seas Initiative to include Ukraine, Moldova and the Western Balkan states. These theses are reiterated in the Fried, Mosbacher and Brzezinski's text. Polish policymaking should take into account this aspect of the American view of the Three Seas Initiative and use it to point out the incoherence of the current American policy – its reliance on wishful thinking and detachment from reality in the context of the third factor, i.e. the role of Germany as imagined by the Americans. The competitiveness of 3SI against Chinese projects is obvious, but so is Berlin's push for an EU-China agreement in December 2020 in the final weeks of the German EU presidency, against which Poland was the only one to protest, in return for which it was "rewarded" with the de facto lifting of major U.S. sanctions on Nord Stream 2, which was also a "punishment" for the Germans and resulted in a visit to China by the head of Polish diplomacy.

The third factor – the turn of U.S. policy towards Germany – is most evident in the proposals included in the article discussed for further development of the Three Seas Initiative and in the comments on Nord Stream 2, which will be discussed separately in a separate paragraph.

The fourth factor – the aversion to the current Polish authorities should be attributed to a rather grotesque and funny juggling of facts that the authors did in order to avoid naming President Andrzej Duda as the main promoter of the Three Seas Initiative idea and the Polish government, appointed by the United Right [Polish: Zjednoczona Prawica], as its important implementer. This aversion has its roots also in the verbal quibbling about the disputes surrounding the idea of the Three Seas Initiative and the description of the origins of the whole concept. The authors enigmatically write about "some unofficial speculations in Poland" referring to the interwar idea of the Intermarium [Polish: Międzymorze] and about "a part of

Europe" that "interpreted" the idea of the Three Seas Initiative as competing with the EU. In addition, they seek the "genesis of this idea during the term of the previous liberal Polish government". PO and PSL (not mentioned by the authors as the sources of the "unofficial speculations" referred to), which devoted a lot of energy to mixing up the names of the Intermarium and Three Seas, in order to fight the latter dressed in the costume of the former as an anachronistic megalomania, disrupting the unity of the EU, must be deeply surprised to learn that they initiated the whole concept. However, these fantasies about the origins of the Three Seas Initiative and the silence about the evolutionary history of the concept may actually be useful. For it is not contrary to the interests of Poland for the Democrats in the US to claim the Three Seas project as their own. To be clear – I do not deny the fact of the conversation between Ian Brzeziński and Paweł Olechnowicz or its content, but it has as much connection with the establishment of the Three Seas Initiative as the ideas of Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski with the initiation of the European integration process – there is no trace of real decision makers in Poland being inspired by the thoughts of Brzeziński and Olechnowicz or in Brussels by the ideas of Czartoryski, initiating one or the other process. With all due respect to Croatia's undeniable and impossible to overestimate role in the beginning of the Three Seas Initiative, without Poland it would not have come into effect.

Dangerous ideas – the effects of Germany's priority in the new US policy

The article, apart from the aforementioned historical "inaccuracies", which we can generally treat as insignificant, nevertheless contains several threatening policy recommendations, and it is on these that we should focus our attention. This is because they do not concern one or another description of the past, but are proposals for the shaping of the future. And it should be added that these proposals are, to a significant extent, not favorable for Poland. These recommendations stem from the new Biden administration's erroneous assumption that U.S. policy in Europe towards Russia and China can be based on cooperation with Germany, from which Washington, ignoring past experience, expects loyalty. Berlin's policy towards the US is defined by the aforementioned push by the German EU presidency to reach an agreement with Beijing and by the hasty dispatch (February 4-6, 2021) of the head the EU's diplomacy Josep Borrell to Moscow (which would not have happened without Germany's consent) at the worst possible moment (in the context of Navalny's case), but during a power transition crisis in Washington, which made it possible to count on the lack of American reaction. The Democrats are apparently ignoring these signals, insisting on their own vision of Germany's desired role as a state that will take over the burden of responsibility for Europe from them and get along with Russia, while at the same time ensuring EU solidarity with Washington with regard China and no trouble from the Kremlin, allowing the US to concentrate on the Far East. The US's stake on Germany, rooted in the calculation described above, resulted in a series of threatening recommendations with regard to the Three Seas Initiative.

The authors recommend basing further development of the Three Seas Initiative on cooperation with Germany, disregarding the fact that the development of natural gas transit infrastructure in the Three Seas area is based on port terminals for the import of LNG from the U.S. and through the construction of the Baltic Pipe pipeline to import gas from Norwegian deposits is a competitive project to the German-Russian Nord Stream 2 pipeline. Either the Three Seas Initiative+ gas market of more than 170 million consumers (i.e. counted together with Ukraine, Moldova and the Western Balkans mentioned in the US Congress' resolution) will be opened to importing American LNG and Norwegian gas, or it will be saturated with Russian gas distributed from the German network. Under these conditions, expecting Germany to invest in the Three Seas system is at least naive or ignorant of reality.

Fried, Mosbacher and Brzeziński seemingly condemn Nord Stream 2, but by presenting it as a reason for Germany to compensate for the damage to the security of Central Europe caused by this project, they de facto call for the acceptance of this gas pipeline, additionally using it as a "key" opening the Three Seas Initiative to German domination, which, after all, would result from German involvement in it under the slogan of compensation. They combine this with the recommendation to adopt the goals of the climate policy promoted by Germany as one of the platforms for cooperation within the 3SI, which

de facto means orienting it to receive energy technologies mainly from Germany, and thus transferring the funds raised by the Three Seas Initiative countries for their infrastructural development to that country.
A peculiar recommendation of the authors is the establishment of a permanent Three Seas Initiative Secretariat, surprisingly based outside the Member States, preferably in Berlin, Brussels, London or Amsterdam. The UK is already out of the EU, so London was probably mentioned due to courtesy, while the other places mean a de facto domination of German interests. The establishment of a structure's administrative headquarters outside its territory would, moreover, be an unprecedented move in human history.

Recommendations worth considering

The recommended inclusion of Ukraine, Moldova and the Western Balkans into the cooperation within the Three Seas Initiative is worth considering, but under certain conditions. So far, the Three Seas Initiative has only grouped EU member states. They are all subject to the rules of the single European market, which greatly simplifies the legal dimension of the movement of goods, services, people and money, the free circulation of which lacks precisely the infrastructure. Its construction is the main objective of the Three Seas cooperation. Expanding beyond the EU would complicate the whole process, and politically it would probably undermine the Three Seas Initiative through the reluctance of some member states to expand the group to new countries. A strategic partnership (never mind the name) for Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia (the three countries of the recently formed Trio of Associated States of the Eastern Partnership, most advanced in the process of moving closer to the EU) and the same status for the Western Balkan candidate countries are perfectly acceptable. Ukraine is already a full-fledged participant in numerous projects implemented within the framework of the Three Seas Initiative (e.g. Via Carpatia, anti-flood monitoring system for hydrographic situation, several railway projects, connection of gas systems, etc.). There is no reason not to expand this cooperation without formally admitting it to the Three Seas Initiative, e.g. by adding the medical dimension – both anti-Covid and in terms of security (blood banks – very justified in view of similar percentage structure of occurrence of given blood groups in societies of the region – especially in Poland and Ukraine, useful in case of war and major disasters). The same is true of the other partner states mentioned in the article. Cooperation with Turkey (which, like Ukraine, already participates in the Via Carpatia project) is not addressed in this text. However, it would also be desirable and could include a dimension of cooperation between the arms industries.

The Nordic theme is interesting, though poorly emphasized. The Scandinavian countries are not part of the Three Seas Initiative, but they are a natural extension of its transport routes on the north-south axis, with ferry connections to Helsinki, Stockholm and Oslo already in operation and the Polish-Danish-Norwegian cooperation on gas imports being finalised. It would be very desirable, thought omitted in the text of the article, to broaden contacts in this direction with an arms industry cooperation. Scandinavia has well-developed technologies in this field, and its products are adapted to the needs of the theatre of military operations against the obvious potential aggressor – i.e. Russia, which is of vital interest to all the countries on NATO's eastern flank – the member states of the Three Seas Initiative.

It is interesting, however, that the authors point to France as a potential partner of the Three Seas Initiative. We are already seeing the first signs of Paris' interest in this initiative. But it is a symptom of French fears of growing German dominance and a search for a way to strengthen France's weakening position (France's debt is at 120% of GDP and growing due to Covid lockdowns. In 2017, the country experienced an implosion of the political scene, and today the position of President Emmanuel Macron, who represents the establishment, is fragile, and the outcome of the 2022 elections is highly uncertain). Bringing France into the Three Seas Initiative cooperation is therefore desirable from the Polish point of view, but it may contradict both Washington's stake on Germany and the interests of the U.S. energy industry. Poland would like to include nuclear energy in its energy mix. It will purchase the relevant

technology either from the U.S. or France. The American orientation towards Berlin obviously increases Poland's openness to the French option, and vice versa, while the French (and German) push towards an agreement with Russia, recently revealed by Poland, Romania, the Baltic and Scandinavian countries' blockade of Putin's invitation to the EU summit, reduces Paris' chances of obtaining a relevant contract from the government in Warsaw. The U.S. and France are therefore competitors to each other in this context. Germany, on the other hand, interested, as indicated above, in re-exporting gas imported from Russia (Nord Stream 2) to the Three Seas Initiative area, is generally opposed to the nuclearization of the Polish energy sector. Reconciling these divergent interests is impossible. The combination is thus one of the clearest examples of the internal contradiction of the article's recommendations.

Conclusions

The essence of the message contained in the text authored by Fried, Mosbacher and Brzezinski is to open the Three Seas Initiative to Germany and to fit in with the American policy of recognizing Berlin as a leading ally in Europe, while at the same time confirming the fact that the U.S., also under Biden, considers the Three Seas Initiative worth supporting and capable of serving it as an instrument to limit Chinese penetration of Central Europe, as well as a key to the gas market of the region, which is being opened to imports of American gas (LNG). The task of Polish diplomacy is to confirm the thesis about the competitiveness of the Three Seas Initiative with respect to Chinese projects and to make Americans aware of the contradiction between relying on Germany and opening the Central European gas market to imports from the USA. Biden's environmental rhetoric, however, may be indicative of the risk of current administration in Washington to ignore the interests of the US gas lobby and recognize that ceding this market to Germany and Russia per balance will pay off for the US given the Chinese challenge. Then the Three Seas Initiative will face hard times. But, fortunately, probably not for very long. For the Americans will succeed neither in an anti-Chinese alliance involving Germany, nor in satisfying Russia to the extent that it wants no more concessions and allows the United States to focus on the Far East. Opposition in the US Congress to the actual lifting of sanctions on Nord Stream 2 is strong. The dissolution of the illusion of being able to buy loyalty and solidarity from Germany and peace from Russia in this way will happen sooner rather than later and will strengthen the Congress' pressure to change this policy. What matters is that we get to that point in the best shape possible. Poland is determined in this respect. However, it must conscientiously explain this situation both on the Potomac River and to the other partners of the Three Seas Initiative whose attitude the success of the cooperation of this organization depends on.

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The Three Seas Initiative is not complete without Ukraine

Maciej Olchawa

As the Director of Works of the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893, Daniel H. Burnham asserted, "Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood."[1] The advice of the brilliant architect who designed the Flatiron Building in New York and Union Station in Washington, D.C. can certainly be applied to structures of international and regional cooperation. Policymakers and experts, the architects of the Three Seas Initiative (3SI), may want to take his words to heart. If the initiative is to stir anyone's blood (or at least their imagination) it needs to include Ukraine.

The Three Seas Initiative seeks to integrate the countries between the Baltic, Black, and Adriatic Seas in the fields of energy, transport, and digital infrastructure. But if the neglected north-south linkages are to be a way of facilitating a "Europe whole and free and at peace," then Ukraine cannot be left out. The interconnectedness of the region, especially in the diversification of energy supplies, is aimed to undercut the Kremlin's use of gas as a political tool. With the completion of the Russian-German Nord Stream 2 (NS2) gas pipeline, Kyiv may lose around $2.5 billion in gas transit fees per year.[2] Including Ukraine in the Three Seas would at least partially right some wrongs that have left the country and Central and Eastern Europe vulnerable to Russian neo-imperialism. One major, detrimental decision that undercuts European security was greenlighting the forementioned NS2; the other took place in 2008 at the NATO Summit in Bucharest when Ukraine and Georgia were not granted a Membership Action Plan (MAP). Germany's role in both cases is evident, which is why we should revisit them to draw lessons for the Three Seas Initiative; next, outline several options that would integrate Ukraine into the 3SI; and, lastly, consider Ukraine's role in the 3SI from the American perspective.

To better understand the difficult position in which Ukraine finds itself, it is necessary to consider the legacy of Chancellor Angela Merkel and Berlin's approach toward Kyiv's Euro-Atlantic ambitions.

What is tolerable for Russia

Although far from ideal, Ukraine's relations with the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance had been developing steadily since the signing of the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership in 1997 and there was new hope for closer ties following the Orange Revolution. In February 2006, President Victor Yushchenko visited Brussels where he stated that Ukraine was ready to join the Membership Action Plan (MAP) and a month later he signed a decree that created an interagency commission whose role was to prepare Ukraine for NATO accession. Yulia Tymoshenko's government, formed in late 2007, also displayed a pro-Western attitude and in January 2008, together with President Yushchenko and Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada Arseniy Yatsenyuk, she sent a letter to Brussels in which they declared Ukraine's readiness to partake in NATO's Membership Action Plan. President George W. Bush supported the request although the U.S. did initially did little to pursue Ukraine's case among the other Allies.[3] Nevertheless, granting MAP to Ukraine was not only supported by President Bush, but Democratic presidential hopefuls Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

With the campaign in full swing, both senators released statements concerning Ukraine's desire to join NATO's Membership Action Program. Obama welcomed the decision of Yushchenko, Tymoshenko, and Yatsenyuk to declare Ukraine's readiness to advance a MAP with NATO, noting that the "extension of NATO membership to new democracies in Europe has helped create a zone of peace and prosperity across Europe and enhanced NATO's military capability by facilitating contributions from new members." The Senator from Illinois applauded Ukraine's commitment to deepening the democratic reforms required of

1. Erik Larson, The Devil in the White City (New York: Crown Publishers, 2003), xiii.
2. https://jamestown.org/program/mitigating-the-nord-stream-2-impact-on-ukraine/
3. https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/ukraine-and-nato-dont-ask-do/

all NATO members and the leadership's determination to foster national unity and consult the Ukrainian people on the question of Ukraine's future in the Alliance: "NATO's upcoming summit in Bucharest in April 2008 is a critical opportunity to continue to build the Europe 'whole and free' that has been the goal of all recent U.S. presidents. I call on President Bush and all of NATO's leaders to seize that opportunity." [4]

Hillary Clinton, who visited Ukraine several times, stated, "I applaud the fact that Ukraine aspires to anchor itself firmly in the trans-Atlantic community through membership in NATO and look forward to working with Ukrainians and Ukrainian-Americans to reach that goal." She underscored that Ukraine remains an important partner for the United States and has contributed "to our common goal of building a Europe that is whole and free, peaceful and prosperous." She reminded of her visit to Ukraine in 1997, when visiting a memorial to the victims of Communist repression in Lviv, she made a commitment to the Ukrainian people on behalf of the United States: "In your fight for freedom, your fight for democracy, the American people will stand with you." Clinton emphasized that the United States always insisted on an open door policy for European democracies that want to join the Alliance and said that NATO enlargement is not directed against any state. She pledged to support Ukraine's efforts to meet the criteria for MAP and eventual membership: "The United States should actively encourage our NATO Allies to deepen their own ties with Ukraine, a country that has broken with an authoritarian past and pursues good relations with all its neighbors. Ukraine deserves a chance to pursue its aspirations for a wider role in the Euro-Atlantic community. […] As President, I will ensure that the United States does everything necessary to help Ukraine realize these important and achievable goals." Despite this strong endorsement by the U.S.,[5] Germany blocked MAP for Ukraine and Georgia.

Citing "legitimate security concerns" and divisions over NATO membership in Ukraine, German officials noted in 2008 it was "not yet ripe" for the Membership Action Plan.[6] What happened next was to be expected. Taking note of the lack of unity within the Alliance concerning MAP for the two former Soviet republics, Moscow took advantage of the situation in order to prevent them from getting closer to NATO. Just two weeks after the summit, Russia increased pressure on Tbilisi and the war began in August. The Kremlin thus successfully hindered Georgia's NATO aspirations. In six years, it did the same to Ukraine following the hybrid war in the Donbas and the Anschluss of Crimea. When asked about the conflict in Ukraine, Christoph Heusgen, Chancellor Angela Merkel's foreign policy adviser from 2005 to 2017, told Der Spiegel, "We did not want to promote that conflict. That is why, against strong opposition from the United States, she [Angela Merkel] prevented Ukraine from being granted the prospect of joining NATO; nor did the Association Agreement with the European Union open up any prospect of membership. She always kept in mind what was tolerable for Russia."[7]

Germany is not original in its flawed concerns about Russian hostility to NATO enlargement. The same arguments were made in the 1990s when NATO expanded eastward and they also proved to be wrong. Luckily, President Bill Clinton – and his Republican competitors, especially Senator Bob Dole – had the vision to enlarge NATO. Another argument made by some experts and policymakers is that Ukraine should first integrate with the European Union and then NATO – the same idea that was proposed in the 1990s for Central and Eastern European states. This wasn't a dual track approach; it was meant to put NATO on the backburner by first focusing on the economic integration. It was embodied in part by the EU's Association Agreement (and its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area) with Ukraine. It is without a doubt that some have made this policy recommendation in good faith – as did Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was an ardent defender of Ukraine and an outspoke critic of the Kremlin. But Christoph Heusgen states clearly in the same sentence that Chancellor Angela Merkel prevented Ukraine from being granted the prospect of joining NATO and the Association Agreement did not open up any prospect of EU membership. Germany has traditionally done just enough to have an alibi that it is helping Ukraine, but not enough to give Moscow the impression that it is tipping the scale in favor of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration. This is a problem in itself, but it is exacerbated by Berlin's insincere calls for European solidarity and unity.

4. Barack Obama, "Obama Statement on Ukraine's Commitment to Join NATO," Barack Obama: U.S. Senator for Illinois, http://obama.senate.gov/press/080128-obama_statement_118/.
5. Hilary Clinton, "Statement from Senator Hillary Clinton on Ukrainian Membership in NATO," Hilary for President, http://www.hillaryclinton.com/news/release/view/?id=5560.
6. Hugh Williamson, "Germany blocks ex-Soviets' Nato entry," Financial Times, 1 kwietnia 2008 r., https://www.ft.com/content/ab8eb6a6-ff44-11dc-b556-000077b07658.
7. Christiane Hoffmann and Christoph Schult, "'I have Eliminated 'the West' from My Vocabulary': Interview with Merkel's Former Foreign Policy Adviser," Der Spiegel, 23 września 2021 r., https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/interview-with-merkel-s-former-foreign-policy-adviser-i-have-eliminated-the-west-from-my-vocabulary-a-e3ab1e9d-998f-4d56-9b17-ab950cef5334.

The arguments against NATO Membership for Ukraine have traditionally been that a majority of Ukrainians don't want their country joining NATO, Ukraine hasn't implemented the necessary reforms, and that most NATO members are unwilling to risk fighting for Ukrainians, who are already at war with Russia. Ukraine can influence the first two factors, the third one is beyond its control and has to be addressed within the Alliance itself. In terms of attitudes toward NATO, the Pew Research Center reports that 53% of Ukrainians had a favorable view of the organization in 2019 – an increase of 19% from 2007[8]. Whereas 34% of Ukrainians said in 2014 that they would vote for Ukraine to join NATO, that number increased to 48% in 2021, according to a public opinion survey conducted by the International Republican Institute.[9] These double-digit upward trends are undoubtedly a result of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. Unfortunately, Germany often fails to differentiate between the victim and the aggressor.

In autumn 2021, Germany criticized Ukraine's efforts to defend itself despite the fact that Ukrainian soldiers are being killed every month as a result of shelling, sniper fire, or weaponized Russian drones.[10] When in October 2021, the Armed Forces of Ukraine used the Turkish-produced Bayraktar TB2 unmanned combat aerial vehicle to destroy a howitzer gun that was firing on Ukrainian positions in Hranitne (Donetsk Oblast), the Foreign Ministry's spokesperson was quick to condemn Ukraine stating that "Berlin is very concerned about the increase in the intensity of hostilities in eastern Ukraine, as well as the message of the General Staff of the Ukrainian army, according to which the Ukrainian Armed Forces, in response to shelling and the death of one soldier and wounding of another, used a Bayraktar-type drone"[11] Needless to say, this is not aligned with U.S. priorities that include "bolstering Ukraine's ability to defend itself against threats to its territorial integrity and deepening Ukraine's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions…"[12] or with U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken's statement that making sure "that Ukraine has the means to defend itself against any aggression" is a vital aspect of American support and assistance.[13]

Following the visit of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to the White House in September 2021, the Joint Statement on the U.S.-Ukraine Strategic Partnership noted that the United States supports Ukraine's right to decide its own future foreign policy course free from outside interference, including with respect to Ukraine's aspirations to become a member of NATO, and that the U.S. remains committed to assisting it with ongoing reforms.[14] NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also noted during a visit to the U.S. capital in October 2021 that members of the Alliance need to step up and do more for those aspirants countries, including training and capacity building, helping implement reforms for corruption, and building their security and defense institutions.[15] But without a clear membership perspective to NATO (or the EU for that matter), there is no real incentive and a danger of backsliding.

As noted by Alexander Vershbow, the former US ambassador to NATO and US ambassador to the Russian Federation, repeating the declaration of the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest that Ukraine and Georgia "'will become members' one day – but keeping the door shut in practice, NATO risks not only demoralizing the Ukrainians but signaling weakness to Moscow and acceptance of Putin's red line on NATO membership."[16] Vershbow suggests a way to help by adopting a more strategic approach to Ukraine's security Ukraine, which could take the form of a Ukrainian Deterrence Initiative (UDI) possibly as an extension of NATO's Enhanced Opportunity Partner (EOP) program: "Under this approach, Allies would make it a strategic objective to do everything possible, short of extending an Article 5 guarantee, to help Ukraine defend itself and resist Russian destabilization." In addition to providing military equipment and training, the UDI would also be aimed at helping counter Russian cyber-attacks, disinformation, and economic warfare in order to maximize "Ukraine's capacity to impose significant costs on Russia for future aggression." Raising the costs for the Kremlin will require a no-nonsense approach – the kind Zbigniew

8. Moira Fagan and Jacob Poushter, "NATO Seen Favorably Across Member States," Pew Research Center, 9 lutego 2020 r., https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/02/09/nato-seen-favorably-across-member-states/.
9. Public Opinion Survey of Residents of Ukraine, 13-21 marca 2021 r., Center for Insights Survey Research, International Republican Institute, https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/public_-_03.2021_national_eng-_public.pdf.
10. See: Nolan Peterson, "Exclusive Front-line Report: Modern Trench Warfare in Eastern Ukraine," Coffee or Die Magazine, October 26, 2021. https://coffeeordie.com/ukraine-front-line/.
11. Alya Shandra, "Berlin concerned by Ukraine using Bayraktar drone, but not by Russian-separatist side using banned weapons," Euromaidan Press, http://euromaidanpress.com/2021/10/28/berlin-concerned-by-ukraine-using-bayraktar-drone-but-not-by-russian-separatist-side-using-banned-weapons/.
12.U.S.-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership, U.S. Department of State, https://www.state.gov/u-s-ukraine-charter-on-strategic-partnership/.
13. Remarks by Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, U.S. Department of State, https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-and-ukrainian-foreign-minister-dmytro-kuleba/.
14. Joint Statement on the U.S.-Ukraine Strategic Partnership, The White House, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/01/joint-statement-on-the-u-s-ukraine-strategic-partnership/.
15. Aaron Mehta, "NATO Must 'Step Up' For Aspirant Members, Not Bow To Russia: Stoltenberg," Breaking Defense, https://breakingdefense.com/2021/10/nato-must-step-up-for-aspirant-members-not-bow-to-russia-stoltenberg/.

Brzezinski had toward the Soviets and Putin's Russia.
During Russia's ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine, Brzezinski advocated that the United States should be willing to provide Ukraine with weapons suitable for urban defense because he didn't rule out just how far Putin will go to in his attack on Ukraine. Alluding to the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, the former National Security Advisor noted that defensive weapons gain advantage in the urban context, which makes the assault extremely arduous for the attacker.[17] Brzezinski was adamant in sending a strong signal to Putin that any further military escalation should be met with unwavering support for Ukraine and argued, "We lost thousands and thousands of young Americans in Vietnam. Where did the Vietnamese get the weapons with which they killed our soldiers? Think about that. The Russians didn't hesitate."[18] Unfortunately, Berlin is unlikely to support the kind of firm resolve that President Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor advocated. When Bill Clinton said that Russia has no veto over NATO enlargement, he meant it. Today, given everything that has happened since 2008, statements to that effect seem like empty promises. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that, "It's only for NATO members and Georgia, and Ukraine, to decide when they're ready to join, not Russia, […]. So we support the efforts to modernize to reform to meet the NATO standards. And when 30 allies agree that they are ready to join, they will join."[19] Although there are opinions to the contrary,[20] it is hard to imagine the North Atlantic Alliance will be willing to extend an invitation to Ukraine while it's fighting a war with Russia and part of its territory is occupied. This de facto constitutes Russia's veto over NATO enlargement…and it was handed to Moscow to a large extent by Berlin. Coupled with Germany's insistence on making Europe more dependent on Gazprom, the obstruction of Ukraine Euro-Atlantic aspiration and the pursuit of policies that are "tolerable for Russia" already has made Europe less whole, less free, and certainly not at peace.

3SI: Ukraine in, Germany on the side lines

The Biden Administration's decision to wave sanctions on Nord Stream 2 AG was wrong and has emboldened Russia. Furthermore, this decision went against everything that was in the joint statement adopted by the U.S. and Germany in July 2021.[21] If the U.S. and Germany were "steadfast in their support for Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence, and chosen European path" then Germany would not have opted to endanger Ukraine and Central Europe with another pipeline that fills Putin's pockets, and the U.S. would not have given the NS2 its blessing arguing that the pipeline was almost complete anyway. A pipeline that is 95% finished is not finished.
Instead of joining Germany in a declaration to "recommit ourselves today to push back against Russian aggression and malign activities in Ukraine and beyond," the U.S. should have asked Berlin to consider what enables Russian aggression and malign activities in the first place. First and foremost, Nord Stream and Nord Stream 2 were designed as a means to bypass Ukraine and Poland by Gazprom, thus allowing the Kremlin to turn off the flow of gas to the countries it seeks to blackmail (especially in the winter months). Germany declared that it is in "Ukraine's and Europe's interest for gas transit via Ukraine to continue beyond 2024" and committed itself "to utilize all available leverage to facilitate an extension of up to 10 years to Ukraine's gas transit agreement with Russia…" The problem is that Berlin 1) has no available leverage over Moscow because the NS2 pipeline is a done deal 2) is reluctant to take any action anyway. Surely, a special envoy will be sent to Russia to cordially communicate Berlin's preferences, but as the Normandy Format and Minsk agreements show, this will have no tangible results. It is highly unlikely that if Russia attempts "to use energy as a weapon or commit further aggressive acts against Ukraine," Germany

16. Alexander Vershbow, "How NATO Can Help Ukraine Deter Russian Aggression," The National Interest, 7 listopada 2021 r., https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/how-nato-can-help-ukraine-deter-russian-aggression-195848
17. Samuel Ezerzer, "Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski Confronting Putin Russian Chauvanism," YouTube video, 37:25, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAV7gQYyPbo.
18. "Brzezinski Suggests Finland as Model for Ukraine (Transcript)," Bloomberg, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-04-11/brzezinski-suggests-finland-as-model-for-ukraine-transcript-.
19. Aaron Mehta, "NATO Must 'Step Up' For Aspirant Members, Not Bow To Russia: Stoltenberg," Breaking Defense, https://breakingdefense.com/2021/10/nato-must-step-up-for-aspirant-members-not-bow-to-russia-stoltenberg/.
20. Patrz: Adrian Hoefer, "Why Ukraine must join NATO," Ukraine Alert, Atlantic Council, 9 września 2021 r., https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/why-ukraine-must-join-nato/ and Dmytro Kuleba, "Why is Ukraine still not in NATO?" Ukraine Alert, Atlantic Council, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/why-is-ukraine-still-not-in-nato/.
21. Joint Statement of the United States and Germany on Support for Ukraine, European Energy Security, and our Climate Goals, U.S Department of State, https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-of-the-united-states-and-germany-on-support-for-ukraine-european-energy-security-and-our-climate-goals/.

will take action at the national level or EU level to sanction the Kremlin and "limit Russian export capabilities to Europe in the energy sector…" as it has committed itself to do in the joint statement. Furthermore, the joint statement reads like a list of insincere compensations for greenlighting NS2. The U.S. and Germany "express their strong support for the Three Seas Initiative and its efforts to strengthen infrastructure connectivity and energy security in Central and Eastern Europe," and Germany looks to expand its engagement with the initiative "with an eye toward financially supporting projects of the Three Seas Initiative in the fields of regional energy security and renewable energy" and also commits itself to "establish and administer a Green Fund for Ukraine to support Ukraine's energy transition, energy efficiency, and energy security." What this in fact means is that while Germany will be importing more gas from Russia and creating profits that the Kremlin can use to fund its war with Ukraine, Berlin will sell green technologies to Ukraine to increase its energy security. This is certainly a win-win for Germany, almost like abetting an arsonist with a canister of gasoline and then coming to the rescue with a fire extinguisher. What lessons does this present to the United States in context of the Three Seas Initiative?

1. Germany does not view Russia as an adversary and it is hard to image what it would take for Berlin to see Russia through the lens of Ukraine and other Central and Eastern European states. This means that as the Kremlin poisons more political opponents or coordinates with the Lukashenka regime hybrid warfare on the EU's external border, we can anticipate a few days of "deep concern" and then business as usual. Germany does not have a stake in punishing Moscow.

2. The primary concern today should not be whether Central Europe is the United States' "Trojan Horse" in Europe,[22] but whether Germany will be Russia's "Trojan Horse" in the Three Seas Initiative. In the initial stage of the Three Seas, the prevailing attitude in Washington was that if Germany is not included, then the Three Seas Initiative will crash before it launches. That has not been the case. In the hypothetical scenario of low supplies of American LNG, Germany would be more than happy to sell and pump Russian gas across its eastern border to countries like Poland. Furthermore, the influential pro-Kremlin lobby in Germany, the Putinversteher ("Putin understanders")[23] will continue to pressure policymakers to accommodate Russia, which is not a particularly difficult task.

3. Diplomatically speaking, the Three Seas Initiative "is not aimed against anyone," but it certainly is not in Russia's interest. That said, the U.S. should understand that Central and Eastern European states are justifiably cautious when it comes to politicians who advocate within the EU to take Russian concerns into account, to engage Moscow, to increase dialogue etc. and then following their tenure, they get lucrative posts on the boards of Russian oil and gas companies – a phenomenon known as Schröderizatsiya. Letting in the likes of Karin Kneissl or Francois Fillon into the Three Seas would result in distrust and undermine the initiative. Whereas Germany should be kept at an arm's length, the 3SI and the U.S. would benefit greatly if Ukraine was integrated into this timely endeavor.

3SI+UA…for now

During a meeting with the President of Poland, Andrzej Duda, in October 2020, President Volodymyr Zelensky expressed "Ukraine's substantive interest in joining this important initiative,"[24] which echoed his words from a meeting with Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid in November of 2019[25] Ukraine has enjoyed great support from both Poland and Estonia and at a press conference in Warsaw during the 230th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of 3 May, President Kaljulaid noted that the Three Seas Initiative can help Ukraine move closer to "our economies and to our understanding of Europe's future" and although Ukraine is not an EU member, it can receive assistance from various funds within 3SI.[26]

22. Daniel Fried, Georgette Mosbacher, and Ian Brzezinski, "What Is the Three Seas Initiative? From Vision to Action," Portal Trójmorze, https://trimarium.pl/en/fried-mosbacher-brzezinski-what-is-the-three-seas-initiative-from-vision-to-action/.
23. Kiron Skinner and Russell A. Berman, "Biden's Surrender to Merkel on Nord Stream 2," Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/07/26/biden-merkel-putin-nord-stream-2-gas-pipeline-germany-russia-ukraine-geopolitics-central-eastern-europe/.
24. "Zelensky, Duda discuss Ukraine's accession to Three Seas Initiative," Ukrinform, https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-polytics/3116226-zelensky-duda-discuss-ukraines-accession-to-three-seas-initiative.html.
25. "Zelensky says Ukraine interested in joining Three Seas Initiative," UNIAN, https://www.unian.info/politics/10769834-zelensky-says-ukraine-interested-in-joining-three-seas-initiative.html.
26. Joint Declaration of the Sixth Summit of the Three Seas Initiative, 3seas.eu, https://3seas.eu/event/joint-declaration-of-the-sixth-summit-of-the-three-seas-initiative.

During the sixth summit held in Sofia in July 2021, 3SI members expressed "readiness to involve, based on consensus, non-Three Seas Initiative countries in implementing regional priority projects, developed under the Three Seas Initiative."[27] Ukraine is already participating in several 3SI projects, including the Via Carpathia highway.[28]
Ukraine remains the keystone in the arch for European and transatlantic security and for that reason it should be intergraded into the Three Seas Initiative. The way in which this is carried out depends on political will. The options from most to least ambitious may include:

1. Widen the format of the Three Seas Initiative to include Ukraine, a non-EU state. This bold political decision would send a strong signal both to Kyiv and Washington that the 3SI recognizes that Ukraine is at the "scrimmage line for liberty"[29] and, while it is holding ground in the war with Russia, member countries reaffirm that Ukraine's place is in the Euro-Atlantic community.
2. Grant Ukraine special status (3SI+UA) and invite the president of Ukraine to Three Seas summits. The political importance of giving Ukraine a seat at the 3SI summits would not go unnoticed.

3. Offer Ukraine the status of a permanent observer equal to that of Germany and the European Commission, while underscoring that this status will change to full membership once Ukraine joins the EU.

Options two and three appear tangible in the short term, they can even be combined, and would pave the way to option one. All of them provide a way of compensating Ukraine for years of Germany blocking its Euro-Atlantic integration because of "what is tolerable for Russia." Nevertheless, the potential drawbacks in the choices mentioned above also need to be considered.

In his commentary about the 3SI, Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski makes very relevant points concerning Ukraine's role in the 3SI. First and foremost, Ukraine cannot become a member because it is not part of European Union. Although the joint declaration adopted at the second summit of 3SI noted that the "Initiative is open to interested business entities from all over the world and global partners," it stated that the "3 Seas Initiative shall function on the basis of several principles, most importantly: membership of the EU, long-term nature of joint plans, openness to business circles, as well as better defining and promoting drivers of modernization in the region…"[30] Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski aptly notes that existing member states abide by the rules of the EU's Single Market, which simplifies the legal dimension of the movement of goods, services, people, and capital. Moving outside of the EU would complicate the entire process.[31] Furthermore, despite the potential for wider geographic and thematic cooperation, granting membership to non-EU states "might sink under a burden of too many priorities and too many national initiatives" which is why "Poland has not invited Ukraine, Croatia has not invited Bosnia Hercegovina (in spite of its large Croat population), and Romania has not opened the door for Moldova."[32] Bringing Ukraine into this historic initiative will not be easy and existing members may argue that it could water down the 3SI. Despite these potential drawback, these hurdles can be overcome with political will and offset by increased American support and investments in the Three Seas.

The Three Seas across the Atlantic

To bring more attention to the Three Seas Initiative in the United States, it needs additional support from Congress, and one way to get the policymakers' attention is to include Ukraine. The 3SI has already enjoyed backing in the U.S. from both the Trump and Biden administrations and has allies in the House of

27. Patrz: Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski, "Twelve EU Countries on the Eastern Flank of NATO: What about Ukraine?" East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies 8, no 2 (2021): 71.
28. Kaptur, Congressional Ukraine Caucus Statement on Meeting with President Zelenskyy, Marcy Kaptur, September 1, 2021, https://kaptur.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/congressional-ukraine-caucus-statement-meeting-president-zelenskyy.
29. The Second Summit of the 3 Seas Initiative, Prezydent.pl,
Phttps://www.prezydent.pl/download/gfx/prezydent/pl/defaultaktualnosci/5378/664/1/ii_szczyt_inicjatywy_trojmorza_final_version.docx.
30. https://www.prezydent.pl/download/gfx/prezydent/pl/defaultaktualnosci/5378/664/1/ii_szczyt_inicjatywy_trojmorza_final_version.docx
31. https://trimarium.pl/en/prof-zurawski-vel-grajewski-what-does-fried-mosbacher-and-brzezinskis-text-actually-tell-us/
32. Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski, "Twelve EU Countries on the Eastern Flank of NATO: What about Ukraine?" East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies 8, no 2 (2021): 53.

Representatives but bipartisan political support is needed so that momentum is not lost and as more contributions for the 3SI Investment Fund roll out, the United States should move quickly to make its pledge of $1 billion in potential investments a reality. Including Ukraine would result in more "buzz" of the Three Seas in Washington and attract more policymakers to support it.

As in the case of the bipartisan opposition to the Nord Stream 2 project in both the House and Senate, Democrats and Republicans alike have expressed support for the Three Seas Initiative. Representative Marcy Kaptur from Ohio, has called the NS2 pipeline "extremely troubling" and has stated that Europe has to be very concerned about the dependence that can develop on Russian oil and gas over the long term. "Whether one lives in Poland, in Austria, or in Ukraine (whose future is at risk immediately because of Russia's invasion, but also because of the transit fees that it has received from the transit of Russian gas), each of these countries has to think about how to become energy independent."[33] According to Representative Kaptur, the Three Seas Initiative would link the Baltic, the Black, and the Adriatic Seas in a new energy corridor to help greater Europe and focus on new technologies: hydrogen, geothermal, renewable technologies like solar and wind, fuel cells, batteries, electric cars, which are "ways to position each country, and greater Europe, through interconnectedness, so they can be free from energy that comes from repressive regimes." Representative Kaptur notes that this is "a dangerous time for Ukraine, it is a dangerous time for all of Europe," and that the United States understands what can happen when states are not energy independent: prices can be raised, and supplies can be cut off. That is why she considers energy central to national security: "We can't make the European states do anything, those nations do what they wish, but I think that what we can do is to even work harder for the development of the Three Seas corridor and encourage each of the nations of Europe to be energy independent."[34]
Along with Adam Kinzinger, a Republican Representative from Illinois, Congresswoman Kaptur sponsored House Resolution 672, Expressing support of the Three Seas Initiative in its efforts to increase energy independence and infrastructure connectivity thereby strengthening the United States and European national security. In the Resolution, the House of Representatives "encourages Three Seas Initiative nations to extend this vision of enhanced regional infrastructural connectivity to non-European Union member states in the Three Seas region, including Ukraine, Moldova, and those in the Western Balkans."[35]
American policymakers understand that the development of LNG terminals, gas and oil pipelines, interconnectors, and storage facilities is the best way to undermine Russia's weaponization of energy.
In their statement following the Congressional Ukraine Caucus' meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in September 2021, members of the caucus underscored that "Ukraine is at the scrimmage line for liberty on the European Continent" and that from "providing security assistance that guarantees its defensive capabilities, to collaborating to rout the scourge of corruption, diversify its energy portfolio, and uplift its economy and its people – Ukraine has no greater friend than the United States House of Representatives."[36] When the Biden administration announced a new $60 million security assistance package, including additional Javelin anti-armor systems and other defensive lethal and non-lethal capabilities "to enable Ukraine to more effectively defend itself against Russian aggression,"[37] Rep. Kaptur, who is the Co-Chair of the Congressional Ukraine Caucus, released a statement saying that Congress looks "forward to partnering with President Zelenskyy to achieve Ukraine's accession to the European Union and NATO, and bring it into alliance with the democratic republics of the free world."[38] Clearly, the 3SI has allies in Congress.

An American Three Seas Coalition

"The United States will not be safe either economically or militarily without a safe Europe. Europe will not be safe unless the smallest European nation feels safe," testified Jan Nowak Jeziorański during a hearing

33. Interview with the author, July 2021.
34. H.Res.672 - Expressing support of the Three Seas Initiative in its efforts to increase energy independence and infrastructure connectivity thereby strengthening the United States and European national security, Congress.gov, November 18, 2020, https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/672/text.
35. https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/672/text
36. https://kaptur.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/congressional-ukraine-caucus-statement-meeting-president-zelenskyy
37. Since 2014, the United States has committed $2.5 billion in support of Ukraine's forces, including more than $400 million in 2021.
https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/01/joint-statement-on-the-u-s-ukraine-strategic-partnership/
38.https://kaptur.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/kaptur-statement-president-biden-s-commitment-ukraine

before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. The legendary Courier from Warsaw was speaking in November 1997 in context of NATO enlargement as the spokesman of the Central and Eastern European Coalition, which, he emphasized, united 22 million U.S. citizens from 14 ethnic communities. While representing the diasporas of CEE heritage, Nowak warned that "the Russian political ruling class has not reconciled itself to the loss of its empire."[39] Over two decades later, his diagnosis remains valid.

Despite the fact that many prominent members of the Clinton administration had initially opposed NATO enlargement, a blend of the President's vision and political calculation eventually allowed CEE countries to join the Alliance. A significant role in this process was played by individuals like Jan Nowak and the ethnic interest groups that represented Americans who cared about the security of their ancestral homelands in Central and Eastern Europe. These groups were successful because they were well-organized, seized an opportunity that arouse from far-reaching changes in the international arena, and found coalitions to shape a narrative focused on U.S. national interest. Today, similar efforts in the United States would elevate support for the Three Seas Initiative. Integrating Ukraine into the 3SI would spark the interest of Ukrainian Americans, constituents that could seek even greater bipartisan support for the 3SI. It is worth noting that in July 2021, the presidents of the Polish American Congress and the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America issued a joint statement stating: "While every new administration looks to take a fresh approach to foreign policy, our constituents took President Biden at his word when he described the Nord Stream 2 pipeline as 'fundamentally bad deal for Europe'."[40] Naturally, without a Ukraine that feels safe, the U.S. itself will not be safe economically or militarily. And there is no one better to articulate this message to U.S. policymakers than the Americans who trace their roots to Central and Eastern Europe. To get the U.S. genuinely involved in the 3S region, the importance of the initiative has to be framed within American security and national interest.

Although the 3SI is not focused on military integration, the advantages of building north-south infrastructure would not go unnoticed from the NATO's perspective. After all, all of the 3SI countries (except for Austria) are members of the Alliance. Andrew A. Michta observes that in order to strengthen NATO's deterrence along the frontier, the east-west infrastructure has to be supplemented by connectivity along the north-south lines: "In that regard the Three Seas Initiative is transformative, expanding operational planning options and thereby strengthening deterrence along the Eastern flank."[41] This echoes a statement by Ovidiu Dranga, Romania's ambassador to Poland, in which he emphasized that the 3SI is "about creating better connectivity in this north-south direction. Until now it was all east-west […] These three areas – transport, digitalization, and energy – are relevant not only for the region but for Europe in general. What we are aiming at is strategic resilience along the eastern frontier of NATO and the EU, as part of our contribution to Euro-Atlantic security and a stronger transatlantic link."[42] The success of the Three Seas Initiative will benefit NATO as a whole and that is certainly in the American national interest.

As in the case of 3S countries, the U.S. is vulnerable to Russian threats. For this reason, 3SI projects that increase transatlantic security, like investments that focus on cross-border energy and regional digital infrastructure, should be appealing to Washington. The Kremlin gives protection to criminal hackers who constantly attack U.S. companies and consumers, costing them millions of dollars,[43] and targets government entities and critical infrastructure. The SolarWinds hack of federal agencies and the ransomware attack on the Colonial Pipeline are just a taste what cybercriminals operating with impunity from Russia can do. Microsoft's Digital Defense Report, published in October 2021, identified Russia as the country of origin of 58% of cybercrime attacks between July 2020-June 2021. Globally, the U.S. was the most targeted nation (46% of attacks), with Ukraine coming in second (19%).[44] Studies on cybersecurity in the 3SI have recommended enhancing cybersecurity cooperation between the 3S region, the U.S., and the EU; a stronger engagement of the U.S. with respect to cyber capacity building and potentially establishing a cybersecurity hub that would bring together international and regional resources, along with the input of

39. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-105shrg46832/html/CHRG-105shrg46832.htm
40. https://pac1944.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2021-PAC-UCCA-Joint-Statement-Nord-Stream2-072921.pdf
41. https://www.19fortyfive.com/2021/11/the-three-seas-initiative-will-reorder-natos-eastern-flank/
42. James Shodder "Three Seas Seeks to Turn Tide on East-West Divide," Financial Times, November 22, 2018, quoted in Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski, "Twelve EU Countries on the Eastern Flank of NATO: What about Ukraine?" East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies 8, no 2 (2021): 58.
43. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CPRT-115SPRT28110/pdf/CPRT-115SPRT28110.pdf (pg.181-
44. https://query.prod.cms.rt.microsoft.com/cms/api/am/binary/RWMFIi

both the private and the public sector, in order to develop new solutions to cyberthreats.[45] The 3SI offers a platform to address Russian attacks against the U.S., the 3SI countries, and Ukraine.

On November 10, 2021, U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba signed the U.S.-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership, which replaced the existing Charter of December 2008. Two points that should be underscored include: "The United States and Ukraine are committed to further developing their partnership in cyber security, countering hybrid threats, combating the spread of disinformation while upholding freedom of expression, and strengthening Ukraine's cyber security infrastructure," (Section II: Security and Countering Russian Aggression, point 12) and "The United States and Ukraine intend to work together to promote commercial partnership between Ukrainian and U.S. companies to significantly increase their participation in both economies, particularly, projects in energy, agriculture, infrastructure, transportation, safety and security, healthcare, and with a special focus on digitalization," (Section IV: Economic Transformation, point 4). These priorities in U.S.-Ukraine relations overlap with the Three Seas Initiative's ambitions to integrate the region in the fields of energy, transport, and digital infrastructure. This means that if Ukraine is part of the 3SI, Washington could pursue its bilateral objectives through a more holistic, multilateral approach that would benefit Ukraine and its neighbors, thus strengthening the interconnectedness of whole region making it less susceptible to the Kremlin's malice.

Conclusion

As policymakers move forward with the 3SI, it should be remembered that Vladimir Putin wants to leave behind a legacy worthy of Russia's supreme imperial architects and does not want to go down in history as another Mikhail Gorbachev, who inadvertently deconstructed the Soviet empire and for whom Putin has profound disdain that is shared by many of his countrymen. The president of Russia wants all of Ukraine and not just Crimea and the eastern provinces. And because he wants all of it, Moscow will never accept Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic path. Unfortunately, Ukraine's aspirations have been repeatedly blocked by Germany.

Ukraine still has to do its homework, especially in its efforts to curb corruption, but it needs to be given a real perspective of becoming a member of the European Union and NATO. The only thing that emboldens Russia to attack its neighbors is its apologists' efforts to take into account Russia's "concerns." Ukraine's Foreign Minister pertinently observed that "One key lesson of the 2000s and 2010s is that nothing invites Kremlin aggression more than calls 'not to provoke' Russia."[46] There is a sense of stagnation in Europe and as Ukraine sits in the waiting room for NATO and the EU (without even being given a number), the Three Seas Initiative offers a chance to help while Ukrainians hold the line. Without clear declarations followed by actions, Ukraine will continue to be stuck in a geopolitical limbo.

In 1997, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Anthony Lake asked if the countries in the "gray zone" between Germany and Russia could "look to the West in confidence, or must they look to the East in fear?"[47] That questions remains relevant today as it was when NATO was preparing for the Madrid Summit. Policymakers need to make plans that consider where the Euro-Atlantic community wants to be ten or twenty years from now – far-reaching plans that stir hearts. In the 1980s, German unification seemed very unlikely to many people; in the early 1990s, NATO membership for former Warsaw Pact countries was not on the table. But leaders in the United States and Europe had the imagination and courage to get it done. Over two decades later, it remains to be seen whether we will learn from the failures of "resets" and use the Three Seas Initiative to make democracies on both sides of the Atlantic safe.

45. https://digital3seas.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/digital3seas_initiative_roadmap_report_2018.pdf
46. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/why-is-ukraine-still-not-in-nato/
47. Zbigniew Brzezinski and Anthony Lake, "For a New World, a New NATO," The New York Times, June 30, 1997.

Digital Development and the 3SI:
How the European Union's Less-Developed East Can Leverage Online Value Chains into Long-Term Economic Growth

Salvatore Babones

Introduction

The countries that lie in the region bounded by the Adriatic, Baltic, and Black Seas—both those that are inside the European Union, and those that are not—have long suffered the "tyranny of geography." For most of a millennium these countries have been squeezed by expansionist empires on all sides: at first Frankish, Turkish, and Mongol; later French and Russian; finally German and Soviet. For a while, multi-ethnic federations like the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Kingdom of Hungary and Croatia successfully pushed back against these advances, but these entities ultimately failed to hold back the tide of empire. In the modern era, almost all of the smaller states of central and eastern Europe lost their autonomy and were either incorporated into or came to be dominated by external powers. By the middle of the twentieth century, there was little political space for autonomous development policy in the Three Seas region.

The collapse of the communism in the 1990s and the expansion of the European Union in the 2000s at last restored meaningful freedom of action to the countries bounded by the Three Seas. In 2016, twelve of them met in Dubrovnik to establish the Three Seas Initiative (3SI), an "informal platform for securing political support and decisive action on specific cross-border and macro-regional projects of strategic importance."[1] Although all twelve 3SI countries are members of the European Union (EU), the 3SI is not itself a European Union body, and the limits of the Three Seas region extends well beyond the borders of both the 3SI countries and the EU itself. As an historical, economic, and geopolitical area, the larger Three Seas region takes in the twelve 3SI countries of the EU, the Balkan Peninsula, Ukraine, and Belarus.

Much has been made of the geographical similarity of the 3SI with the Intermarium project of the interwar Polish leader Józef Piłsudski.[2] It has also been compared to the "Third Europe" concept of Piłsudski's colleague, the Polish diplomat Józef Beck.[3] The parallels, while evocative, are neither historically nor politically valid. The 1920s Intermarium project was first and foremost a security concept.[4] Today's 3SI, though perhaps romantically inspired by Piłsudski's Intermarium, is not really its direct heir.[5] It focuses instead on "transport, energy and digitalization," with infrastructure as its "cornerstone."[6] The partnership of not only the European Union, but also the United States and even Germany with the 3SI clearly demonstrates its civil and inclusive constitution. Recent 3SI summits have focused on "smart connectivity" to inject digital sophistication into regional transportation and energy infrastructure projects. Analyzed from a developmental perspective, this is the right approach—but it does not go far enough. The 3SI countries should push much further down the digital path, pursuing rapid industrial upgrading by leveraging the emergence of new, twenty-first century online production networks. The global economy is currently in a state of flux, as the physical globalization of manufacturing production networks gives way to the intangible globalization of online production networks. Thus whereas the defining product of physical globalization was the smartphone, the defining product of the new phase of intangible globalization is the smartphone app. The new app economy has the potential to break the tyranny of geography that has hemmed in the Three Seas region for a millennium or more. By jumping from the physical to the intangible economy, the 3SI countries can reposition themselves from the European periphery to the global core.

1. Three Seas Initiative, 2016, "The Joint Statement on the Three Seas Initiative (The Dubrovnik Statement)," August 25.
2. Petar Kurečić, 2018, "The Three Seas Initiative: Geographical Determinants, Geopolitical Foundations, and Prospective Challenges," Hrvatski Geografski Glasnik 80(1): 99-124.
3. Andrea Schmidt, 2017, "From Intermarium to the Three Seas Initiative—Regional Integrations in Central and Eastern Europe and the Hungarian Foreign Policy," The Jagiellonian Idea, 6(51): 165-189.
4. Agnes Tycner, 2020, "Intermarium in the 21st Century," Institute of World Politics, 23 grudnia.
5. Robert Ištok, Irina Kozárová oraz Anna Polačková, 2021, "The Intermarium as a Polish Geopolitical Concept in History and in the Present," Geopolitics, 26(1): 314-341.
6. Three Seas Initiative, 2021, "Joint Declaration of the Sixth Summit of the Three Seas Initiative," July 9.

By contrast, improved physical connectivity among the 3SI countries, while welcome, has little potential to improve their economic prospects. As the postwar development of East Asia demonstrates, economic development generally follows a "flying geese" model, as relatively poorer countries benefit from spillover effects generated by economic integration with their richer neighbors[7]. Eleven of the twelve 3SI members are themselves middle-income countries, a circumstance that offers little scope for mutual aid. To be developmentally useful, their connections must extend outside the region. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the countries of the Three Seas region industrialized mainly as extensions of the German economic core of central Europe[8]. Throughout the Soviet occupation, this westward orientation of Three Seas economies was reversed, but it reasserted itself with the European integration that began in the 1990s. On their current trajectories, the 3SI countries and the broader Three Seas region are locked into a structural position on the eastern economic periphery of the European Union.A more ambitious approach to digital development would see the 3SI countries position themselves at the core of a set of new, intangible production networks for smartphone apps and other online products. This is no idle dream. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and individual freelancers from 3SI countries are already very active participants in global online production networks, but they generally fly below the radar screens of economic development strategists and receive relatively little coordinated state support. Considering that it took only two decades for technology startups like Apple and Microsoft to grow from garage operations into global behemoths, the leaders of the app economy of the 2040s are likely already incubating today. The 3SI countries produce a wealth of new economy talent; the key to the digital development of the Three Seas region is supporting those emerging entrepreneurs and persuading them to build their businesses at home.

This paper explains how conventional, physical-economy pathways to economic development will ensnare the 3SI countries in the "middle income trap," then lays out a strategy for escaping this path dependency by pursuing an intangible-economy approach to digital development. In contrast to conventional understandings of the role of the Three Seas region in the global economy, it identifies India as the main competitor to the 3SI countries for dominance in online production networks. As in India, one of the main threats to digital development in the 3SI countries is emigration; the paper proposes ways that 3SI countries can support their digital entrepreneurs and persuade them to stay in the region. The overarching take-away for policymakers is that the 3SI countries should focus on inserting their region into an advantageous position in global online production networks instead of reinforcing their peripheral position in the relatively slow-growth European economy.

Industrial upgrading in the app economy

Globalization is usually portrayed as a continuous, global process. It is better understood as a discrete step change from nation-based economies to regional ones, with long-distance trade links connecting the world's three major economic regions. Globalization is generally operationalized in terms of international trade (imports plus exports), which increased from 25% of global GDP in 1972 to 61% in 2008.[9] This period might aptly be called the "globalization era," since it witnessed a process of active transition from a time of highly regulated national economies (pre-1972) to a period of relatively open, globalized economies (2008-current). In 2009, there was a brief disruption of international trade flows, after which international trade leveled off. In the decade since 2010, international trade has been relatively stable in constant dollar terms but slowly declining when expressed as a percentage of global GDP. While the five decades beginning in the 1970s can be characterized as the "globalization" era, the decade of the 2010s would better be characterized as the beginning of a new "globalized" economy."But neither the concept "globalization" nor the data that are readily accessible for operationalizing it accurately describe the economic changes of 1972-2008. Our collective understanding of the globalization process has been shaped by viewing the global economy through the wide-angle lens of global trade statistics. In fact, the global economy hasn't so much globalized as regionalized. This is most apparent in Europe, where European Union integration has driven a massive increase in intraregional trade that appears in

7. Kaname Akamatsu, 1962, "A Historical Pattern of Economic Growth in Developing Countries," The Developing Economies 1(S1): 3-25.
8. Salvatore Babones, 2013, "A Structuralist Approach to the Economic Trajectories of Russia and the Countries of East-Central Europe since 1900," Geopolitics 18(3): 514-535.
9. World Bank, 2021, "Trade (% of GDP)," World Development Indicators, accessed November 20.

international statistics simply as an increase in trade, and thus as an indicator of globalization. There are in fact three regions of the world where intraregional trade outweighs extraregional trade: Europe, North America, and East Asia[10]. In these three regions, countries tend to trade more with their neighbors than with the rest of the world. Only outside these three regions have economies truly globalized, with individual countries trading directly into the global market.[11] Taken together, Europe, North America, and East Asia account for more than three-quarters of total global GDP.[12] Thus for countries outside of or on the peripheries of these regions, economic development has historically meant trading into one or more of the three major regions. Aside from a few pathological cases of low-population countries with massive natural resource endowments, there are few singletons in the global economy. Australia and New Zealand may be the only countries with diversified economies that combine high levels of GDP per capita with a geographical position outside of the major integrated regional economies, and their high levels of development are almost certainly a legacy of their pre-globalization status as settler colonies of a previous imperial superpower.[13] Leaving aside atypical cases like these, economic development in the globalization era was almost synonymous economic integration into one of the three major economic regions of the world. Post-2008, new opportunities have opened up. This is perhaps best illustrated by Estonia, a small 3SI country that has successfully portrayed itself as a new digital economy under the branding "e-Estonia." Through its "no legacy" principle, Estonia embraced a clean break with the patterns of the past, though this has been implemented more successfully in government administration than in economic development per se.[14] The OECD argues that Estonia should do more to promote the expansion of the digital economy outside the technology sector.[15] This is consistent with the 3SI grouping's focus on smart connectivity in infrastructure development, and there is certainly nothing wrong with the idea of injecting more information technology into existing economic processes. But going thus far—and no farther—risks leaving more transformative possibilities unexploited.The truly transformative opportunity offered by digital development is the opportunity for countries to leverage the deterritorialized production networks of the online app economy to break out of the regional development straightjackets of the globalization era. The smartphone and associated cloud computing technologies have rendered irrelevant the geographical constraints of physical production networks. As a result, the former keys to development (e.g., physical proximity to firms seeking to offshore component manufacturing; good transport links to final consumption markets) are likely to be less relevant in the emerging era of digital development. Instead, premiums will be placed on such factors as the availability of talent, institutional flexibility, and the density of subcontracting networks. Just like old-fashioned regional development, new digital development is likely to occur in clusters, but the geographies in which clusters form will be virtual, not territorial.

Periods of industrial transformations during which new leading industries emerge have historically been accompanied by the reconfiguration of production networks and their associated value chains.[16] Today, the lead firms of the world's major online production networks are overwhelmingly concentrated on the west coast of the United States: Amazon, Apple, Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Netflix, Uber, etc. These firms currently seize the lion's share of the economic value produced in the production networks they lead, but just as the lead firms of previous generations of economic development ultimately sought to offshore nodes in their production networks that generated relatively low levels of value-added, these digital behemoths are likewise shedding functions. This is creating opportunities for firms in other countries to gain footholds on the digital value chains of the future—footholds that they can use to help them climb up those chains. This twenty-first century version of the flying geese model offers opportunities for geographically-disadvantaged countries to achieve rapid upward mobility. The "tiger" economies of East Asia weren't always rich; they developed incrementally over time by climbing from node to node in (mostly) US-centered production networks, gaining greater and greater proportions of the total value

10. World Trade Organization, 2017, "WTO World and Regional Merchandise Export Profiles," World Trade Organization.
11. Salvatore Babones, 2019, "Economic Zones in a Global(ized) Economy," s. 619-625 w: The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies, red. Matthias Middell, Oxford: Routledge.
12. Salvatore Babones, 2020, "The Political Economy of the United States and the Structure of the Millennial World-System," s. 293-306 in Challenges of Globalization and Prospects for an Inter-civilizational World Order, red. Ino Rossi, New York: Springer.
13. Donald Horne, 1964, The Lucky Country: Australia in the Sixties, Melbourne: Penguin Australia.
14. Rainer Kattel and Ines Mergel, 2019, "Estonia's Digital Transformation: Mission Mystique and the Hiding Hand," s. 143-160 w: Great Policy Successes, red. Mallory Compton and Paul 't Hart, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
15. Unsigned, 2019, OECD Economic Surveys Estonia, Paris: OECD, s. 69.

generated by these networks until many of them became lead firms in their own rights. Meanwhile the American economy moved on to create new peak production networks. Even today, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are only as rich (in terms of GDP per capita) as the poorest US states.[17] That places them well ahead of most 3SI countries, and on a par with France, Italy, and Spain. But even though East Asia now dominates the high-technology physical production networks of computer hardware, these are no longer the world's leading production networks. They cannot match the profitability of the online production networks of the emerging app economy. There is a lesson here for the 3SI countries and their broader Three Seas hinterland: short of leading production networks themselves, countries can only climb as high as the second wrung on the value-added ladder. The current 3SI development strategy focused on infrastructure and energy is designed to better integrate the Three Seas region into the heavy industrial production networks of central and western Europe: those for automobiles, machinery, chemicals, and the like. This is good so far as it goes, but it can only go as far as the second wrung of these relatively secondary production networks. The most profitable production networks of the post-2008 era are focused on the west coast of the United States. There are greater gains to be had in climbing these online production networks—and, in time, taking leadership roles in them—than in further integrating with the European economy. Of course, the 3SI countries should attempt to do both. But the real opportunity for 3SI industrial upgrading is virtual, not territorial.

The new geography of digital development

The countries of the Three Seas region have always been relegated by geography to the status of an economic hinterland.[18] At their northwestern edge in Austria and Czechia and at their southeastern tip on the Bosporus they have at various times in history incorporated the cosmopolitan capitals of empires, but Vienna, Prague, and Constantinople have never been the heartland of the Three Seas region. In the early modern era, much of the Three Seas region was governed from Vienna, which retains a legacy as a major financial hub for the region. Other parts of the region were governed from Moscow, Berlin, and Istanbul. The region's major production networks were correspondingly outward-oriented, tying local economies into the orbits of these imperial capitals. Although the region has in the distant past been integrated politically, it has never been integrated economically.Over the last three decades, European Union accession and integration have reoriented most of the Three Seas region's production networks toward the European core. Although the 3SI countries are European Union members sharing in the de jure political rights accorded on an equal basis to all member states, they frankly do not enjoy a similar equality in the economic sphere. Even in formal institutions like the European Central Bank their voting rights are attenuated. In the informal power structures of production networks and value chains, they are at an even greater disadvantage. The 3SI countries can to some extent leverage their membership of the European Union to ensure that Europe-centered production networks expand into the Three Seas region, but they cannot use it to ensure upward mobility in those networks. Nor can they realistically leapfrog the currently leading countries in enough of those networks to achieve levels of development on a par with the western European average.

The transition to the new economy of online value chains has the potential to change these calculations. The Three Seas region is already a major outsourcing destination for the main industry at the ground level of online production networks: smartphone app development. App development is currently dominated by freelancing and subcontracting business models, leaving the door open for higher levels of organization in the future. There appear to be no systematic statistics published on numbers of app developers or revenues for app development by country, but Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, and Belarus are widely acknowledged to have large-scale app development outsourcing industries. A 2016 industry ranking of app developer skills placed five of the Three Seas countries in the global top twelve (Poland #3, Hungary #5, Czechia #9, Ukraine #11, Bulgaria #12), and with the top two slots being taken by China and Russia, that effectively gives the Three Seas region five out of the top ten slots among trusted outsourcing

16. Zenonas Norkus, 2018, Long Waves and Changes in the Structure of the Capitalist World System, s. 78-93 w: Global Inequalities in World-Systems Perspective: Theoretical Debates and Methodological Innovations, red. Manuela Boatca, Andrea Komlosy oraz H.H. Nolte. Oxford: Routledge.
17. Salvatore Babones, 2020, "The Political Economy of the United States and the Structure of the Millennial World-System," s. 293-306 w: Challenges of Globalization and Prospects for an Inter-civilizational World Order, red. Ino Rossi, New York: Springer.
18. Monika Bartoszewicz, 2021, "Intermarium: A Bid for Polycentric Europe," w: Geopolitics.

destinations.[19] The app development ecosystem is supplemented by lower-level employment in fields like website design, social media marketing, video editing, and simple image tagging. Above app development sit more sophisticated fields like cybersecurity, game design, virtual reality / augmented reality design, data science, cryptography, financial technology, and machine learning / artificial intelligence. All of these fields require extensive personal skills development on top of a solid engineering or mathematics base. The historical strength of the Three Seas countries in mathematics research and education provides the region with a solid foundation for workforce development, and the wide availability of personal skills tutorials online (many of them free) has given individual freelancers the ability to prepare themselves to succeed in the rapidly growing global app economy. Most of the 3SI countries, however, have only just begun to support the still largely private educational infrastructure of programming schools and "boot camps." As a result, many freelance programmers in the Three Seas region have turned to the industry out of desperation (i.e., due to the lack of good job offers in the formal economy) than out of aspiration.

The main global competition for the 3SI countries and the broader Three Seas region for value in the app economy is India.[20] Like the Three Seas region, India has a long history of high-quality mathematics and technical education. It also has a very large population (one-eighth of the world total), giving it an enormous internal market for the development, testing, and refinement of smartphone apps and other online tools. The main center of app development in India is Bangalore, with secondary centers in Hyderabad, Mumbai, Chennai, and Delhi. Not coincidentally, Bangalore is the home of the prestigious Indian Institute of Science, while each of the other cities hosts an elite Indian Institute of Technology. In India, the post-university training of the app economy workforce has been borne mainly by large information technology outsourcing companies like Tata Consulting Services, WIPRO, HCL, and Infosys. Alumni of these firms frequently go on to establish their own subcontracting firms or freelance consultancies.Economies of scale, systematic education, English competency, a well-established corporate ecosystem, and (of course) low wages make India a formidable contender for dominance in online production networks. And as India's rise in the app economy well-illustrates, the old rules of geographical proximity do not apply to the new online production networks. In the pre-2008 pattern of flying geese economic development, outsourcing spillovers benefitted neighboring countries because they were based either on the physical incorporation of simpler components into more complex products, or on the physical assembly of complex components into composite products. Here "neighboring" must be understood in terms of transportation costs; it includes not only physical distance, but access to inexpensive container shipping. The post-2008 pattern of digital development, by contrast, is mediated by bidding platforms like Toptal and Upwork. Since there is no physical delivery of final products, work can be performed anywhere in the world.

As a result, digital development is a globally-competitive game. To balance India's many competitive advantages, the 3SI countries benefit from a high-trust regulatory environment, better access to finance, secure electricity infrastructure, relatively low taxes, and access to highly skilled offshore labor in their own Three Seas periphery. In addition, it is not clear that the world's new online production networks will consolidate in a single geographical locations, on the model of the old physical production networks. While there are advantages to clustering, the geography of cyberspace does not necessarily correspond to the geography of physical space, and there is no obvious reason why (for example) a lead contractor in a 3SI country might not outsource subsidiary tasks to a subcontractor in India—or vice versa. It may turn out that successful digital development in the 3SI countries depends more on the strengthening of connections to businesses in Bangalore than on the improvement of rail connections to Germany or participation in China's Belt & Road Initiative.

Supporting digital entrepreneurs

The 3SI countries have made a good start in the new app economy, but to date they have done so without a region-wide policy commitment to digital development. In fact, the global management consultancy McKinsey & Company has even called for the creation of a regional "Digital Council" to coordinate action.[21] Were

19. Unsigned, 2016, "Which Country Would Win in the Programming Olympics?" HackerRank, August 25.
20. Salvatore Babones, 2021, "Bengaluru Is the New Shenzhen as Apps Displace Devices," Foreign Policy, January 12.
21. Joanna Iszkowska, Kamila Kawecka, Milena Malinowska, Tomasz Marciniak, Margarita Młodziejewska, Jurica Novak, Borys Pastusiak, Marcin Purta oraz Ivana Valachovicova, 2020, Digital Challengers in the Next Normal: Central and Eastern Europe on a Path to Digitally-Led Growth, McKinsey & Company, s. 50.

the 3SI countries to embrace this proposal, such a council might be incorporated under the auspices of the grouping, but with a remit to cover the entire Three Seas region, including countries that are not currently EU member states. As things stand, not only is there a lack of regional coordination, but even individual 3SI countries have generally done relatively little to directly support digital development. To date, government initiatives have focused mainly on the digitization of government services. This is a good start, but it represents only a very basic level of commitment. Governments could do much more without spending much more, especially by more aggressively promoting the consolidation of startup hubs in major cities.[22] Software development is already a major source of employment throughout the region, employing an estimated 250,000 people in Poland alone.[23] This compares favorably with the automobile assembly industry, which employs slightly over 200,000 people—at much lower average wages.[24] Yet the auto industry is a much more prominent focus of government support, presumably because the "lumpiness" of foreign investments in large-scale assembly plants raises their political profile. Governments are not called on to make major infrastructure investments to attract and retain app developers, but the same amount of money might go a longer way in supporting software employment than in supporting heavy industry. It might also have more attractive spillover effects: for example, promoting the revitalization of urban fringes, instead of requiring the large-scale spoliation of rural land. Few forms of economic development are as environmentally friendly as digital development.Member states of the 3SI (or indeed the grouping itself) might expand their support for digital development by providing flexible training credits, reforming tax laws to reduce the costs of employment, and promoting the emergence of urban innovation hubs. Flexible training credits could be used to subsidize non-degree short courses for professional development and skills upgrading. By subsidizing a substantial portion (but not the totality) of training costs, governments can leverage market mechanisms to ensure that government funds are used in responsive and cost-effective ways. High levels of social security taxation in many 3SI countries discourage direct employment, entrenching an outsourcing model the limits the ability of app developers to move up the information technology value chain. Well-crafted social security tax reform would encourage growing companies to shift staffing models from the gig sector into formal employment. And growing innovation hubs should be fertilized where they arise organically: in the major cities. The fashion for seeding incubators and accelerators widely throughout a country is politically understandable, but economically self-defeating.

Three Seas countries (both inside and outside the 3SI) should also work to improve the institutional environment for digital development. Countries throughout the region generally receive low scores for copyright protection and enforcement from the US Chamber of Commerce's intellectual property index[25]. This does not inspire trust in the security of intangible assets in the region. Although app developers and other information technology freelancers might initially perceive stricter copyright protection and enforcement as an imposition on their businesses, in the long run it would benefit the stronger and more conscientious players in the field and help weed out poor performers. This would tend to promote higher standards, higher productivity, a focus on the high-value-added segments of the market, and larger-scale production. Some marginal participants would be left behind, but employment as a whole would likely increase: when it comes to standards of business practice, a race to the top is always better than a race to the bottom.Of course, standards of governance are far lower on the 3SI hinterland in Ukraine and (especially) Belarus. As the app economy climbs up the online value chain in the 3SI countries, Ukraine and Belarus will increasingly be seen as attractive offshore production locations, instead of as direct competitors. Today, Ukraine boasts almost as many software developers as Poland,[26] but they bill at much lower rates, with the result that the software development industry as a whole is much smaller in Ukraine than in Poland. Belarus has an even smaller industry, but one that is roughly on a par with Ukraine on a per capita basis[27]. Both countries offer an opportunity for the 3SI countries to work together to raise governance standards while promoting economic development. Currently, many skilled workers from Belarus and Ukraine aspire to migrate to the European Union, where they are often relegated to irregular

22. Jurica Novak, Marcin Purta, Tomasz Marciniak, Karol Ignatowicz, Kacper Rozenbaum oraz Kasper Yearwood, 2018, The Rise of Digital Challengers: How Digitization Can Become the Next Growth Engine for Central and Eastern Europe, McKinsey & Company, s. 75.
23. Autor nieznany, 2019, IT/ICT Sector in Poland, Warsaw: Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, s. 40.
24. Autor nieznany, "Automotive Sector," Polish Investment & Trade Agency, accessed November 20, 2021.
25. Autor nieznany, 2020, Art of the Possible: U.S. Chamber International IP Index, Washington: U.S. Chamber of Commerce.
26. Andew Burak, undated, "Is Outsourcing to Poland Still Relevant?" Relevant.software, accessed November 20, 2021.
27. Andew Burak, undated, "Outsourcing Software Development to Eastern Europe in 2022: Which Destination to Choose?" Relevant.software, accessed November 20, 2021.

employment in the informal economy. It would better serve 3SI countries to help these aspiring migrants develop fulfilling careers in their home countries—by linking them into 3SI-centered production networks.[28] Support for digital entrepreneurs in the 3SI countries does not require a zero-sum competition with the nascent online industries of Ukraine and Belarus. Instead, these two countries (along with the rest of the non-3SI countries of the Three Seas region) should be viewed as an economic hinterland, the integration of which will help 3SI countries climb app economy value chains while simultaneously promoting economic development and improved governance in the remainder of the region. The 3SI countries should take inspiration from the European Union itself, which once saw many of them as a periphery of future member states. In light of the legacy of its historical borders, Poland in particular has an important role to play in the future integration of Ukraine and Belarus into the 3SI economic orbit.[29] But with EU accession on the agenda in the western Balkans, other 3SI members could potentially play similar roles as well. Ultimately, support for digital entrepreneurs means creating favorable institutional conditions for their success. Only the entrepreneurs themselves can make that success a reality, but governments—and the 3SI grouping as a whole—can do much to facilitate it. The first step is a simple one: the 3SI governments should recognize that the online economy is not only worth supporting, but likely to be the key to their future growth. It should be placed on a par with other major industries, like automobile assembly and machinery production. The online economy is, unfortunately, easy to overlook, because it is currently fragmented and dispersed. An active domestic policy focus on supporting digital entrepreneurship would go a long way toward improving the strategic position of 3SI countries in global production networks. And an active foreign policy focus on promoting business links between 3SI countries and the balance of the Three Seas region would help ensure the continued advance of 3SI-based entrepreneurs up online value chains.

Not Europeanization but globalization

For three decades, the eleven developing country members of the 3SI grouping have focused on European integration as their overriding development strategy. The twelfth member (Austria) played a key supporting role in these efforts. This European orientation was entirely appropriate for the period: it was economically necessary for the developing 3SI members to reestablish their historical links to central and western Europe and politically necessary for them to rejoin the European family. But this process of European integration is now complete. Intra-European trade expressed as a percentage of European Union GDP has been flat since 2008; the enlargement of the Eurozone has stalled; the United Kingdom has left the European Union entirely. The rhetoric of "ever closer union" is now all but a dead letter. This should neither be lamented nor celebrated in the context of 3SI; it is simply a fact. European integration was once absolutely necessary for the 3SI countries. It has now largely been accomplished.

The consolidation of the 3SI countries' positions in Europe, reinforced by European Union structural funds, contributed to the modernization of the 3SI countries, and anchored their economies in one of the world's most advanced economic regions. This process has, however, firmly anchored them at the bottom of European value chains. To renew their growth prospects, the 3SI countries should seek to embed themselves in wider, faster-growing global production networks that have greater potential for future value creation. Smartphone app production networks (and adjacent production networks for cybersecurity, game design, virtual reality / augmented reality design, data science, cryptography, financial technology, and machine learning / artificial intelligence) offer exactly these kinds of globalization opportunities.

There have been calls for the 3SI to establish a permanent political secretariat to coordinate its activities.[30] A permanent secretariat could potentially improve the ability of the 3SI countries to take group action, but it could also create a self-interested bureaucracy that stifles innovation. This paper offers no advice on the advisability of changing the 3SI's governance structure. Were a secretariat to be created, it might be charged with coordinating digital development efforts across the twelve 3SI countries. But given that the

28. Salvatore Babones, 2019, "Get the Society Right, and the Economy Will Follow," Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, July 8.
29. Salvatore Babones, 2021, "Can Poland Redraw Europe's Economic Map?" Wszystko Co Najważniejsze, January 22.
30. Daniel Fried, Georgette Mosbacher, and Ian Brzezinski, undated, "What Is the Three Seas Initiative? From Vision to Action," Trimarium.pl, accessed November 20, 2021.

politics of international cooperation would almost certainly result in a policy that every member country must host a digital development node, coordination by a dedicated secretariat might not add much to the effort beyond the standardization of goal-setting record-keeping. A more meaningful strategy might see the secretariat lead the 3SI countries in a single, unified effort to integrate the other countries of the Three Seas region into 3SI-focused value chains. Such a project would require the kind of sustained effort that can only be accomplished by permanent institutions, but it might be politically too ambitious to be brought to fruition.A decentralized alternative to the creation of a secretariat would be for the 3SI countries to "take responsibility" (whether individually or in teams) for the better integration of the non-3SI countries of the Three Seas region into 3SI-focused value chains. This was the approach taken by Germany in the 1990s for the integration of the former German Democratic Republic: individual German states took responsibility for institution-building in specific regions of the east. A 3SI institution-building project in the Three Seas hinterland might work in a similar way. To ease possible political tensions, it might even be organized at the sub-national level, with 3SI sub-national regions pairing with sub-national regions in neighboring countries. Such an effort could be coordinated at the intergovernmental level under the auspices of the 3SI without the need for a permanent secretariat to administer it.

Whether or not the 3SI countries seize the opportunity to take a leadership role in the digital development of their neighbors, they should certainly seize the opportunity to promote their own digital development by offering better-targeted support for app developers and adjacent industries. This need not be prohibitively expensive. Much of the necessary support might come from restructuring existing education funding, tax regimes, and regional development policies. Improvements in copyright protection and enforcement might also go a long way toward helping 3SI entrepreneurs upgrade their positions in global value chains. Whatever approach they take, policymakers should realize that employment in the online economy already exceeds that in many industries that have long been considered "strategic." Remuneration for app development and associated work also exceeds that in legacy industries that currently receive the bulk of policy attention and state support, and is much more likely to grow in the future.

Digital development should be much higher on the 3SI agenda, and the 3SI countries should formulate much more ambitious goals for digital development than the mere digitization of infrastructure and energy initiatives, or even the digitization of government services. Worthy as these goals are, they are far too modest. The governments of the 3SI countries should leverage the 3SI grouping as a platform for promoting private sector business development, particularly the expansion and consolidation of digital SMEs. A major goal should be to facilitate the timely transformation of online economy SMEs into larger-scale enterprises. This transition has the potential to pay for itself, as formal-sector employment replaces freelancing and tax revenues rise in consequence. Digital development is a rare area where 3SI countries posses strong international comparative advantages. Recognizing this, the 3SI member states should act quickly and decisively to upgrade their collective position in the intangible production networks of the twenty-first century online economy.

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Power engineering 1. High-voltage line from the Kozienice Power Plant, Photo: Łukasz Zaborowski

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