

THE BLACK SEA REGION: AN ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL POLITICS AND  
COOPERATION IN THE POST COLD WAR ERA

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THE BLACK SEA REGION: AN ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL POLITICS AND  
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“The Black Sea Region: An Analysis of Regional Politics and Cooperation in the Post Cold War Era” a thesis prepared by Utku Kundakcı in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree at the Ataturk Institute for Modern Turkish History of Boğaziçi University.

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Title: The Black Sea Region: An Analysis of Regional Politics and Cooperation in the Post Cold War Era

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the regional politics in the Black Sea region in the post Cold War era from an international relations perspective. The objective of the thesis is to analyze the politics of the Black Sea in the post Cold War era, evaluate the current developments, and reflect the positions of the main actors such as Turkey, Russia, the EU, and the USA. The most important issues that pertain to the region are evaluated. In this context, the study concentrates on frozen conflicts and the new security threats (NTSs) and analyzes energy politics and democratization movements in the region, and the regional cooperation organization, namely the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). The thesis investigates the areas in which fruitful cooperation has been taking place within the mandate of the BSEC. The increasing global importance of the Black Sea draws the attention of major international actors towards the region. The study puts special emphasis on the EU's and the USA's changing policies toward the region and evaluates the regional countries' reactions to these global actors. The study investigates the cooperation opportunities regarding economic interaction, security, energy, and democratization. In this context, the major actors' roles and the BSEC's potential with respect to these issues are considered. The thesis concludes that the potential to deepen regional cooperation exists; however, in order to realize this, all of the involved actors should assume positive approaches and follow constructive policies.

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Başlık: Karadeniz Bölgesi: Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Dönemde Bölgesel Siyaset ve İşbirliği

Bu çalışma, Soğuk Savaş sonrasında Karadeniz'e yönelik bölgesel politikaların uluslararası ilişkiler açısından kapsamlı bir analizini sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu tezin hedefleri arasında, Soğuk Savaş sonrasında Karadeniz bölgesi politikalarını incelemenin yanı sıra, mevcut gelişmeleri analiz etmek ve Türkiye, Rusya, AB ve ABD gibi aktörlerin pozisyonlarını ortaya koymak bulunmaktadır. Güvenlik başlığı altında donmuş ihtilaflara ve literatürde yeni güvenlik tehditleri olarak tanımlanan kavramlara odaklanılmakta, bölgedeki enerji politikaları ve demokratikleşme hareketleri incelenmektedir. Ayrıca, tek kapsamlı bölgesel işbirliği örgütü olan Karadeniz Ekonomik İşbirliği Teşkilatı'na (KEİ) yer verilmekte ve bu örgüt bünyesinde gerçekleştirilmekte olan işbirliğine değinilmektedir. Karadeniz'in artmakta olan küresel önemi sebebiyle, bölgeye uluslararası aktörlerin ilgisi yoğunlaşmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, tez, AB'nin ve ABD'nin bölgeye yönelik değişen politikalarını incelemekte ve bölge ülkelerinin bu küresel aktörlerin politikalarına karşı pozisyonlarını değerlendirmektedir. İncelenen bu konularla birlikte, ekonomik etkileşim, güvenlik, enerji ve demokratikleşmeye yönelik olarak işbirliğinden doğan fırsatlar değerlendirilmektedir. Bu bağlamda, bölgeyle ilgili temel aktörlerin rolleri ve KEİ'nin bu konulara yönelik potansiyeli göz önünde bulundurulmaktadır. Tüm bu incelemelerden ve değerlendirmelerden yola çıkılarak, bölgesel işbirliğini güçlendirme imkânının var olduğu ancak bu amaca ulaşılabilmesi için tüm aktörlerin olumlu bir yaklaşım sergileyerek yapıcı politikalar oluşturmaları gerektiği sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır.

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## PREFACE

Although I had been a political science and international relations student for four years at the time, it was only on 7-10 November 2005, in the Armenian capital Yerevan that I first became aware of the politics of the Black Sea region. The workshop entitled “Challenges and Opportunities for the Youth to Enhance Stability in the Black Sea Region” enabled me to meet with approximately twenty young participants representing ten different Black Sea countries. This event was the first opportunity for me to discuss the regional politics and discern different perspectives on the future of the Black Sea region. It was the discussions that took place during the workshop which led me to begin thinking seriously about the comprehensive set of issues and challenges with which the region is faced.

The increasing global importance of the Black Sea is the main drive for focusing on the Black Sea region and examining regional politics in this thesis. Essentially, the objective of the thesis is to analyze the politics of the Black Sea in the post Cold War era, evaluate the current developments, and reflect the positions of the main actors such as Turkey, Russia, the EU, and the USA. The thesis brings forward a comprehensive analysis of the main topics that currently are related to the Black Sea region, and evaluates the areas of cooperation and contention among the actors involved. Throughout the thesis, I follow an international relations approach in which the main actors of the regional politics are set as the nation states.

In order to make a detailed examination of the regional issues, I investigated the main literature on the topic and read the major studies concerning Black Sea politics. In fact, together with the increasing importance of the region, studies concerning the wider Black Sea have multiplied in the past few years. More scholars



and international relations experts are interested in the topic and follow the developments closely. There were a number of studies conducted a few years ago that offer a detailed background. The most important among them are the *Politics of the Black Sea: Dynamics of Cooperation and Conflict*, edited by Tunç Aybak; and the *Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building*, edited by Oleksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Tsintsadze. These two studies offer detailed analyses of the politics in the Black Sea region. They look from different perspectives and enable the reader to acquire an extended opinion about the regional issues.

Nevertheless, Aybak's study has a disadvantage since it was published in 2001 and thereby is to a certain extent outdated. The reader feels the deficiency of the lack of the influence of the attacks of 11 September 2001 on the Black Sea region. However, this does not suggest that this study is not a valuable source for understanding the post Cold War picture of the region. In any case, it provides a significant background of understanding for the emergence of the Black Sea region as a unit of analysis in international affairs. In contrast to Aybak's study, Pavliuk's and Tsintsadze's edited volume offers a more up-to-date analysis. This piece is an important source for the comprehension of the cooperation potential in the region. It examines the most important issues that have pertained to the Black Sea for the last few years. The study offers a comprehensive analysis of the security situation in the region, as well as touches upon the issues of energy and democratization. In this regard, it is a substantial academic contribution to the literature on Black Sea politics.

In addition to these two main pieces, new studies and reports are constantly being added to the already existing literature. In this context, a recent publication by the German Marshall Fund of the United States, namely *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, edited by Ronald D. Asmus, is a clear

indication of the global interest in the region. This piece enables the reader to grasp the rationale behind the rising interest in the Black Sea region on the part of the Western world. It provides the views of the USA and the EU as the main Western actors interested in the region. In addition to these, the study also looks through the other side of the prism and includes the perspectives of regional countries about the most significant issues in the region and integration with the Western world. A serious problem regarding the study is that it does not contain a Russian view of the Black Sea. Although this situation harms the integrity of the analysis, the study is a valuable one in terms of understanding the possible Western integration of the regional countries.

These three edited versions constitute the main studies in the area, provide comprehensive analysis of the developments in the Black Sea, and reflect the positions of the regional actors. In addition to these, the quarterly academic *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, published by the International Center for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) is a valuable source. Since its first publication, the journal has addressed a wide range of issues regarding the region and brings together different views. This periodical is a major academic contribution to region-building in the Black Sea.

In addition to these sources, official websites like that of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the ministries of foreign affairs of the regional countries have a central place in giving access to various documents, important events, and other valuable materials.

Last but not least, various think tanks and NGOs in Europe and the USA closely follow regional issues, monitor contemporary developments, and provide extensive databases. These institutions generate reports and booklets on the regional

issues, and constantly update their studies. Especially their commentaries and newsletters enable the readers to see not only the current developments but also to overview the recent history of the Black Sea region. The Centre for European Policy Studies, the Jamestown Foundation, the European Union Institute for Security Studies, the International Crisis Group, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the International Relations and Security Network, the World Security Network, the Power and Interest News Report, and Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty are among these institutions.

In line with this non-governmental interest in the Black Sea region, the Economy Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV) and the International Center for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) jointly organized a seminar and roundtable discussion meeting on 24 June 2007 at Yıldız Technical University which brought together the most prominent Black Sea experts and officials from Turkey and abroad. This event with its wide range of participants gave the opportunity to have first hand information on the issues that are related to Black Sea politics. Participation in this meeting led me to cancel my plans to conduct interviews since most of the prominent figures were involved in this event and I had the chance to hear their views on the topic.

Having given this information on the sources, the thesis comprises four main chapters in addition to the introduction and conclusion sections. Following a brief introduction that is expected to ease the reader into the topic, the second chapter provides a theoretical background for regionalism and security studies. This chapter analyzes the development of regionalism and security studies following the end of the Cold War. It also looks at the effects of the 11 September attacks on security studies. The chapter attempts to offer answers to questions such as “What is a region

and what is regionalism?”, “Why did regionalism come onto the agenda again following the end of the Cold War?”, “How did the end of the Cold War affect security studies?”, “What has the outcomes of the 11 September attacks been on the redefinition of security and threats?”.

The third chapter is devoted to the discussion of challenges and opportunities that the Black Sea region has been faced since the end of the Cold War. In this sense, this chapter is an overview of the most important aspects in regional politics. First, it concentrates on the political, economic, and socio-cultural characteristics of the region. The chapter goes on with the evaluation of main topics of interest regarding the Black Sea. In this context, it emphasizes security as one of the most important issues with which the region is confronted. The effects of the long-term frozen conflicts on the regional agenda are discussed. Furthermore, the Black Sea region’s significance regarding the struggle with New Security Threats (NSTs) is highlighted. An evaluation of energy politics in the Black Sea region follows this part. Lastly, another significant issue regarding the region, namely reform movements and democratization, are assessed. Hence, the three widely mentioned topics on the Black Sea region, namely security, energy, and democratization are covered in the third chapter.

The fourth chapter introduces the sole regional cooperation organization that incorporates all the regional actors. The emergence of the BSEC and the political rationale behind its development are summarized at the beginning of the chapter. It surveys the BSEC’s organizational structure and its development into a full-fledged regional organization. An evaluation of the main areas of cooperation within the BSEC framework follows. Lastly, it looks at the issues that limit the enhancement of cooperation within the organization.

Although there have been other attempts to establish cooperative frameworks in the region during past fifteen years, their discussion is consciously avoided in this chapter. These frameworks (amongst them the Community of Democratic Choice [CDC], Black Sea Forum, and GUAM) have not been able to unite all regional actors around their declared goals, have excluded some regional powers, and thereby have contributed to the divisions in the region rather than facilitating cooperation. Obviously this is not a one-sided situation and the excluded actors also have responsibility, but still, whatever the reason, these attempts have so far not been successful. On the contrary, the BSEC has been a fact in Black Sea politics since the end of the Cold War. Although it has serious shortcomings, this organization is the sole body that has been able to bring together all the Black Sea actors. Its inclusiveness and comprehensive character makes the BSEC unique in the region. In this sense, a separate chapter on this organization is necessary. Obviously, the other regional frameworks simply cannot be ignored in a study analyzing Black Sea politics. Therefore, most of them are also mentioned separately in the relevant sections of the thesis.

The fifth chapter relates to the Black Sea region's integration to the Euroatlantic world. As a result of recent developments, such as the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU and the eastern enlargement of NATO, the Black Sea region has shifted from the periphery of European politics to its centre. Thus, an increased interest has arisen among the Euroatlantic circles towards the region. This chapter assesses the potential role of NATO and the EU in the Black Sea. It also attempts to underline the reaction of regional powers to the likely integration of the region with the Euroatlantic world.

Briefly, this thesis is a humble contribution to the international relations field in the sense that it tries to offer a general picture of the Black Sea region with special emphasis on issues that are considered to be at the core of regional politics. It gathers the already existing research on the topic together and adds recent developments that are expected to have outstanding effects on the relations between the regional countries. In this regard, this study is an attempt to draw attention to the politics of the Black Sea region, which has often been overshadowed by developments in other more problematic regions of the world.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

25 June 2007 was an ordinary summer day for most of the residents of Istanbul. It was a hot Monday and the avenues of the city were blocked by traffic as usual. One of the reasons that contributed to the intensity of traffic on that particular day, although many citizens were not aware of it that morning, was an important event that was taking place in the city. This event was the fifteenth anniversary of the foundation of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), which brought together the heads of state or government of the member states including Vladimir Putin of Russia, İlham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, Boris Tadić of Serbia, Victor Yuschenko of Ukraine, Kostas Karamanlis of Greece and other ministers of foreign affairs and high level diplomats. Additionally, high representatives of observer states and international organizations also participated in the summit meeting.

This anniversary summit coincided with Turkey's chairmanship of the organization, thereby it was paid special attention by high level Turkish officials and observers. Turkey's leading role in the establishment of the BSEC fifteen years ago made the anniversary summit even more important in the eyes of Turkish officials. In line with this, prominent Turkish international relations experts publicized articles in various magazines and newspapers regarding the wider Black Sea region prior to the meeting. Turkish think tanks organized conferences and workshops with international participants at which the politics of the Black Sea region and the BSEC's place in this architecture was elaborated. At the end, the summit meeting

was widely covered by media; the daily newspapers and TV channels took the issue seriously and concentrated on the energy talks, transportation agreements and other discussions that took place during the bilateral and multilateral meetings.

In fact, the Black Sea region and the BSEC have not been able to draw as much attention from the Turkish officials, media, and public. Compared to other regions around Turkey with their everlasting problems, the Black Sea region has been considered as more stable and thus has been neglected to a certain extent. Nevertheless, as one of the leading powers of the region, any development in the Black Sea is especially important for Turkey. In this sense, the coincidence of its chairmanship and the anniversary enabled Turkey to remember its special interests in the Black Sea region and its ties with the regional countries. In addition to this, the participation of the leaders of the Black Sea region as well as high level representatives of other states and organizations was one of the signs of the increase in the international interest in the Black Sea during the last few years.

Within this context, the EU's increasing interest in the region and the BSEC is particularly important. The EU, after the accession of Romania and Bulgaria, became a Black Sea power. Up to this year, the EU's relations with the Black Sea region were based on bilateral relations with individual countries. However, the last enlargement generated the necessity on the part of the EU to devise a comprehensive plan towards the region. Obviously, the EU's changing policy is especially important for Turkey as a leading Black Sea actor as well as for the future of the BSEC.

Essentially, the Black Sea's emergence as a region with its specific political and economic relations can be traced back to the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War, the Black Sea was divided between the two rival camps and it is not possible to speak about political or economic cooperation at that time. The policies



of the then-Black Sea countries, namely the USSR, Romania, and Bulgaria in the socialist block and Turkey in the Western block, were conditioned in line with the political architecture of the Cold War era. Relations between the region's countries were limited and any development was read through the lenses of the Cold War understanding.

Since the regional countries were divided along ideological lines and their perceptions of each other were determined by a confrontational logic, it is not even possible to talk about a Black Sea region in its real sense at that time. During the Cold War, the Black Sea region was not a region in the sense that we define regions today. In other words, relations between the region's countries did not possess the characteristics, quality, and depth for the generation of the preconditions for the emergence of regional cooperation. Hence, the Black Sea and its surrounding territories might have been called as the Black Sea region in this period, but surely, this definition was only in geographical terms.

Nevertheless, the end of the Cold War had a tremendous effect and turned the Black Sea region upside down in political, economic, and socio-cultural terms. The picture of the Black Sea after the collapse of the USSR was utterly different from what it had been previously. This development led to the emergence of new independent states in the wider region and altered the political borders. This was a major development in itself; it heralded a completely new political structure and set of relations in the region.

The disappearance of the Cold War barriers enabled the regional countries to enhance bilateral and multilateral relations. In this context, a cooperative understanding started to replace the confrontational logic of the Cold War. The first impression was a rather optimistic one; a new era was expected in the region in

which conflict was going to be shelved and cooperation was going to widen and deepen. However, the consequent years revealed that this earlier expectation was not quite accurate.

The dissolution of rival blocks marked a significant progress in terms of laying the ground work for peaceful coexistence, but obviously, it was not enough to eliminate all conflicts. It is true that the end of the Cold War abrogated the possibility of the outbreak of a nuclear war. However, this development also unleashed a number of frictions, especially ones based on ethnic and religious identities. Some of the tensions that had been overshadowed by global issues during the Cold War came on to the agenda and created serious conflicts. Since then, these long-lasting local conflicts that emerged in the Black Sea region have been a major obstacle to the establishment of a common vision and genuine cooperation.

The negative developments were not limited to local conflicts. After a short period, the Russian Federation started to recover from the ruins of the collapse of the USSR and immediately began to look for ways to re-establish its hegemony in the former Soviet territories. The planned penetration of the Western powers into these areas triggered a reaction on the part of the Russians, as it was perceived as a threat to legitimate Russian interests. Agitated by the increasing role of its former rival, the USA, in the “near abroad,” Moscow mobilized its potential in its former territories, becoming actively involved in the tensions and increasingly contributed to the destabilization of the Black Sea region and other former Soviet territories. Be it a negative factor in many instances, Russia is one of the major actors in the Black Sea and regional cooperation cannot be effective as long as the Russian giant is ignored or excluded.

Currently, the politics of the Black Sea region mainly are dominated by three issues, security, energy, and democratization. Based on these issues, as has already been mentioned, the importance of the Black Sea region has increased during the last few years. This increase has created a gradually intensifying interest in the region on the part of major international actors and pushed the Black Sea region towards the centre of international politics. The EU's and the USA's interest in the regional politics has grown in recent years and this development has materialized in the policies of these powers.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: REGIONALISM AND THE CHANGING CONCEPTION OF SECURITY

There have been numerous studies on regionalism and security, and especially after the end of the Cold War, the number of these studies multiplied. Many scholars have tried to define regions and understand the dynamics that lead to the reemergence of regional cooperation. At the same time, prominent scholars and experts have tried to figure out the changing nature of security; how the perception of threats has changed since the end of the Cold War.

One of the first and most important subjects that should be tackled in regionalism studies is to define what constitutes a region. It is mandatory to consider how “a particular area in various respects constitutes a distinct entity, which can be distinguished as a relatively coherent territorial subsystem from the rest of the global system.”<sup>1</sup>

In its broadest sense a region can be “defined as a group of countries located in the same geographically specified area.”<sup>2</sup> This kind of a simplistic definition is based on the notion that regions are natural outcomes of interaction among neighboring nation states. It is true that geographic proximity is the foremost criterion of a region. However, surely, sole geographic proximity is not an adequate factor. Indeed, “a region implies more than just close physical proximity among the

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<sup>1</sup> Bjorn Hettne and Fredrik Soderbaum, “Theorising the Rise of Regionness,” *New Political Economy*, 5 no. 3 (November 2000), p. 461.

<sup>2</sup> Edward D. Mansfield and Helen V. Milner, “The New Wave of Regionalism,” *International Organization*, 53 no. 3 (Summer 1999), p. 590.

constituent states.”<sup>3</sup> Besides the geography factor, economic interconnectedness based on the circulation of goods, people and services can be a major component. Equally important, facing common security or political challenges can be a driving factor that pushes for the emergence of distinct regions. Moreover, migration, shared histories, cultural similarities, or similar customs among a number of states and peoples can lead the actors that prevail on a defined territory to develop a regional identity. In short, a region can be defined as a given geography comprising a set of state and non-state actors that have intense economic and social relations, have common interests and face common challenges in political and security domains, with populations possessing analogous identities and cultures built upon interaction in the past. Given the multiplicity of factors that contribute to the emergence of regions, it is clear that these are neither natural nor given entities, but they are the results of global transformations and hence, are mentally constructed.<sup>4</sup>

Based on these characteristics of regions, one definition of regionalism is “cooperation among governments or non-governmental organizations in three or more geographically proximate and interdependent countries for the pursuit of mutual gain in one or more issue areas.”<sup>5</sup> Another definition is “the organization of cooperative activity in a natural geographic-historical region of states that find themselves on different sides of some important political divides.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 591.

<sup>4</sup> Hettne and Soderbaum, p. 461.

<sup>5</sup> Muthiah Alagappa, “Regional Institutions, the UN, and International Security: A Framework for Analysis,” *Third World Quarterly*, 18 no. 3 (1997), p. 423.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Emerson, “The Black Sea as Epicentre of the Aftershocks of the EU’s Earthquake,” *CEPS Policy Brief*, no. 79 (July 2005), p. 5.

## Region-Building

Given the multiplicity of inherent characteristics, regional groupings can be built on the basis of numerous mandates and frameworks. Effective cooperation can take place in fields such as security, environmental protection, regional conflict resolution, trade, economic activities including infrastructure building, energy, socio-cultural interaction in the form of human exchanges, education programs or sports, and tourism.

Since regions are constructed entities and their construction is directly attached to the international political and economic context, success in region building in one domain does not necessarily suggest that the actors in that particular territory are also able to succeed in furthering cooperation in other areas. In other words, establishing a regional economic cooperation organization and ensuring its smooth functioning does not guarantee that the participating regional actors are also doing well in terms of regional cooperation in, for instance, security or environmental protection. In fact, an overambitious approach during the initial phases of region building might have a negative effect on the prospects of future cooperation. Therefore, it would be wise to stick to a rather loose definition of regionalism in order to preserve the possibility of enlarging the scope of “regionness” should the regionalist drive spreads to other domains as well.<sup>7</sup>

It is a widely acknowledged fact that regionalism is not a new phenomenon. The emergence of nation states played a key role in the earlier waves of regionalism. Together with the rapid growth of global – particularly European – economy, integration and mutual dependence acquired new dimensions during the late

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<sup>7</sup> Hettne and Soderbaum, p. 462.

nineteenth century. During this period, increasing economic activity connected local areas with each other and lay the foundations of economic regionalism. However, the economic interdependence was not matched by political cooperation. On the contrary, hostilities emerged and for most of the early twentieth century, regionalism was a factor that deepened the economic and political crisis. Following the Second World War, the regional cooperation mentality was overshadowed by the superpower confrontation.<sup>8</sup>

With the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, the bipolar international structure and inter-block hostility disappeared and a rapid globalization process took place. The easing of the ideological tensions of the Cold War period enabled individual states and other international actors, which formerly had been divided along ideological lines, to meet at common points and provided a relatively better ground for economic and political cooperation. These developments created a suitable environment for a new wave of regionalism.<sup>9</sup> In other words, “the end of the Cold War [. . .] led to the development of new attitudes towards international cooperation and a decentralization of the international system.”<sup>10</sup> This development was also backed by the remaining superpower, the USA. In this new international political and economic system, the USA actively promoted regional integration and hence regionalism emerged as a major trend in international politics.<sup>11</sup>

Another important aspect of regionalism relates to the units that contribute to the regionalization of a defined territory. If a top-down approach is assumed, this unit

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<sup>8</sup> Mansfield and Milner, pp. 595–601.

<sup>9</sup> Hettne and Soderbaum, p. 457.

<sup>10</sup> Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, 18 July 2006, *The Black Sea Region and Its Growing Influence*, <http://harvard-bssp.org/publications/?id=270> [10 December 2006].

<sup>11</sup> Mansfield and Milner, p. 621.

is basically the nation state. It is plausible to argue that the nation states are still the main actors in the international arena. Thus, region building, with its institutional structure and legal regime, lies within the domain of nation states. In this sense, “rising regionness does not mean that the so-called nation states are becoming obsolete or disappearing, but rather that they are undergoing major restructuring in the context of regionalization (and globalization) and the complex interplay of state-market-society relations.”<sup>12</sup>

Having said that, given the increasing interconnectedness of societies in the globalization process, the nation states are obviously not alone in the international environment. A wide range of non-state actors, including transnational corporations, trade and labor unions; nongovernmental organizations; think tanks; youth, minority and women’s movements should seriously be taken into consideration. Obviously, without the legal and institutional basis provided by nation states, it is difficult to talk about region building. However, it is also true that any region building attempt that does not include these non-state actors is destined to fail.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, “the actors behind regionalist projects are not states only, but a large number of different types of institutions, organizations and movements and non-state actors.”<sup>14</sup> The inclusion of the non-state actors enables the region building process to acquire a bottom-up nature in the sense that it facilitates the emergence of a real regionalist drive at the grass roots level.

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<sup>12</sup> Hettne and Soderbaum, p. 465.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 465.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 471.



It is clear that there is mutual dependence between state and non-state activity in the formation of regions. This necessitates the effective mobilization of all these forces in order to realize a smooth and successful region building process.<sup>15</sup>

#### Regionalism vs. Globalization: Contradictory or Compatible?

There is also an ongoing debate on the compatibility of regionalism and globalization. At first sight, these two concepts seem contradictory. However, regionalism can be a factor that fosters international economic activity, enlarges global trade flows, and increases political cooperation between states if the relations between the different regions are based on peaceful coexistence. This way, regionalism can contribute to globalization. On the other hand, if the emergent regionalism is based on the member states' need to compete with other regional groupings, in other words, if different regional blocks are hostile to each other, than an increase in regionalism impedes globalization trends. In the former case, regionalism is a factor that enhances international peace and stability whereas in the latter it becomes a tool for furthering polarization, deepening interstate conflict, and curtailing any possibility of global economic growth and prosperity.<sup>16</sup>

From the other perspective, globalization can have different effects on region building. It can be perceived as a negative trend in some regions since its outcomes can be evaluated as harmful to the nation state and its related social forces. The effects of globalization can be interpreted as eroding the concept of nation state and undermining national unity. In such a case, globalization can be an impediment to

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<sup>15</sup> Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> Mansfield and Milner, p. 612.

region building and to effective cooperation among nation states. In this sense, global trends, if their effects are felt negatively in some countries, can lead to more closed economies and political systems, and thereby avoid attempts at opening up national borders to intrastate cooperation. On the other hand, the rapid increase in international transactions, economic activity, and mutual interdependence can also lead the nation states to comprehend the benefits of cooperation. This way, the forces of globalization can consolidate region building efforts.<sup>17</sup>

The effectiveness of region building process is directly related to the announced objectives of the member states. The design of the relevant regional organization, and the scope and diversity of regional activities are determined in line with these objectives. For obvious reasons, the level of integration and the pace of region building are affected by the commitment of the regional states and their capacity to face the challenges. Nevertheless, for a regional grouping whose main task is to enhance economic cooperation, the main regional organ would emphasize the means necessary to foster trade between the members. These measures can range from amending the legal regimes of the member states to building the necessary infrastructure to enable the easy transaction of goods, people, and services or to the education of human resources. Such a regional organization can also aim to enhance the capacity of the regional states to operate at the global level. In this sense, another main objective would be to harmonize the member states economic activities with the rest of the global economy. Thus, cooperation with global economic institutions and the harmonization of regional trade regimes with the global trends could be vital topics of regional cooperation. If a regional grouping the main task of which consists of providing security exists, the organizational aspects will be different. If it is based

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<sup>17</sup> Buzan and Waeber, p. 15.

on environment protection, then the cooperation scheme will assume a quite distinct shape. In short, the determined areas of cooperation and the practical expectations from the regional organization determine the general characteristics and the level of integration in the region building process.

Other important factors that have direct impact on the level and success of cooperation are the diversity and quality of membership. Including the major regional powers is vital for the effectiveness of a regional organization. Without the presence of the major regional powers, region building can be born dead. Diversifying membership as much as possible to all the related actors also enables relatively smaller states to multilateralize intrastate relations and provides the opportunity to sit around the same table with the major powers regarding the discussion of significant regional issues.<sup>18</sup>

There can be more than one regional organization in one single region. These organizations can be complementary or they can compete with each other. In any scenario, the overlapping mandates of regional institutions, whether they are complementary or hostile, complicate the region building process.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, regionalism can achieve a considerable level of success if the regional countries can exactly determine the boundaries of cooperation. Channeling resources to fields that generate joint material benefits and enhancing mutual interdependence result in the deepening of integration.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ian Bremmer and Alyson Bailes, "Sub-Regionalism in the Newly Independent States," *International Affairs*, 74 no. 1 (January 1998), p. 136.

<sup>19</sup> Alagappa, p. 422.

<sup>20</sup> Bremmer and Bailes, p. 135.

## The Transformation of Security Perceptions

During the Cold War, security perceptions were directly attached to the ongoing bipolar international structure and especially to a threat of nuclear war between the two superpowers. This rather simplistic notion of security has dramatically shifted with the transformation to multipolarity in the international arena.

If the first shock to security analysts was the collapse of the Soviet Union, the second was undoubtedly the attacks in New York that took place in 2001. These two events have often been referred as the main landmarks in the recent world history. Apart from their deep impact on almost all global political, economic, and social affairs, they signify turning points in the field of security studies. It is widely acknowledged that “more of the than in the past, there are new and sometimes unexpected linkages between political, security and economic concerns, which have challenged the capacity of the state both to recognize and to respond to new challenges and needs for action.”<sup>21</sup>

Regarding security studies, the importance of the end of the Cold War lies at its effect on the exacerbation of the confusion on the definition and scope of security. With this important event, the traditional definition of security, namely security understanding based on the threat of conventional or nuclear war between nation states, started to be replaced by other conceptions. A number of factors have been influential in this shift. First, one of the major security threats has simply vanished. The collapse of the Soviet Union put an end to the superpower confrontation. The

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<sup>21</sup> Kostas Ifantis, “International Security: A Paradigm Shift,” in *International Security Today: Understanding Change and Debating Strategy*, ed. Mustafa Aydın and Kostas Ifantis (Ankara: Center for Strategic Research (SAM), 2006), p. 19.

elimination of the risk of a direct conflict between the two blocks enabled a number of domestic factors to gain prominent places in security studies. The international effects of domestic security gradually became a concern for state and non-state actors. This shift in security perception brought issues such as economic development, organized crime, illegal migration, protection of the environment, human rights, ethnic tensions, and democracy building to the top of the global security agenda. Surely, the conventional threats, namely wars between sovereign nation states, have not been abated, but their elimination from the headlines enabled experts to concentrate on the mentioned subjects. Obviously, these subjects were not inventions of the 1990s; they have prevailed for decades. What happened was, however, the lifting of the curtain of traditional security threats over the existing soft security or non-conventional threats.<sup>22</sup>

In this process, the threats emanating from non-state actors became increasingly important. Their inherent characteristics made them almost impossible to tackle through the traditional methods of security. Since they originate from transnational sources, they are hard to control and keep at a certain risk level. “In the absence of a full-fledged state as the clearly defined enemy, classical deterrence may have a ‘limited’ effect against the non-state actors who have malign intentions to attack other nations.”<sup>23</sup> Therefore, new methods are required to cope with these threats. In essence, this general change in security perception signifies a broadening of security studies.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Terry Teriff, Stuart Croft, Lucy James and Patrick M. Morgan, *Security Studies Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), pp. 1–28.

<sup>23</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Contemporary Security Challenges: Is Classical Deterrence an Adequate Response?,” in *International Security Today: Understanding Change and Debating Strategy*, ed. Mustafa Aydın and Kostas Ifantis (Ankara: Center for Strategic Research (SAM), 2006), p. 207.

<sup>24</sup> Teriff et al., p. 135.

The second event that dramatically changed global socio-political conditions and the security perceptions was the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York on 11 September 2001. This event immediately created a great shock wave around the globe and opened a new page in world history. As expected, an event of this caliber has produced enduring outcomes for security studies.

The immediate response of the USA to 9/11 was the declaration of a “war on terror.” This decision marked a turning point in the security perception and brought international terrorism to the top of the global security agenda. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction followed it as another serious security concern. For sure, terror was not invented by the fanatic Islamists who realized these attacks. In other words, it is not a new phenomenon. However, the scope of the attacks and the organization of the terrorist network were new. This, similar to the first shift in security studies, necessitated the reconsideration of the basic premises of the notion of security.

International terror, like other soft-security threats, utilizes non-conventional methods. There is an obvious power asymmetry. The goal is not to conquer territory or to force the enemy to surrender. The Bush administration was quick to declare war on terror, but ironically, apart from the shabby Taliban regime in Afghanistan, there was no one around to fight against with traditional methods.<sup>25</sup> Hence, the results were strict restrictions, increased security spending, and an immoral war in Iraq. In short, these “new” threats were of the kind that required the serious restructuring of the security domain.

Given the multilateral character of non-conventional threats, it is evident that no single country can be successful in securing its own citizens or its borders without

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<sup>25</sup> Peter Shearman, “Reconceptualizing Security after 9/11,” in *European Security after 9/11*, ed. Peter Shearman and Matthew Sussex (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004), pp. 14–15.

effective collaboration with other states as well as non-state actors. In this sense, regionalism can be utilized as a means to struggle with these threats. Their transborder penetration capacity makes it necessary for countries that share the same region and face similar threats to coordinate their security based activities. Regional initiatives and cooperation organizations can become practical tools for coordinating such activity. Thus, non-traditional threats provide a good basis for regional cooperation.<sup>26</sup>

The transformation that followed the end of the Cold War became a catalyst for nation states to seek regional cooperation in areas where possible. The end of the Cold War enabled the flourishing of regional level security arrangements since “the post Cold War environment both dictated and demanded greater regional involvement in the maintenance of peace and security.”<sup>27</sup> With the disappearance of superpower hegemony, region building emerged as a viable option. Given “the region refers to the level where states or other units link together sufficiently closely that their securities cannot be considered separate from each other,”<sup>28</sup> regional level cooperation on security affairs gradually acquired a prominent place in the consideration of security related actors.

The fact that single states are not powerful enough to cope with the challenges of the global security threats has further increased the need for cooperation. In this process, “regionalism has become more relevant and more

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<sup>26</sup> Bremmer and Bailes, pp. 134–141.

<sup>27</sup> Louise Fawcett, “The Evolving Architecture of Regionalization,” in *The United Nations and Regional Security: Europe and Beyond*, ed. Michael Pugh and Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), p. 16.

<sup>28</sup> Buzan and Waever, p. 43.

important because of the regionalization of international security”<sup>29</sup> and hence regional institutions started to assume increasing roles in maintaining peace and stability.<sup>30</sup>

Another factor that connects regionalism and security is related to the perceptions of states in the international arena. In order to develop a real sense of security, states should establish mutual trust. To this end, the international behavior of states should be predictable and reliable. Otherwise, it is not possible for a state to foresee its neighbors’ reactions towards international developments. This creates uncertainty and harms international peace. In other words, “states operate under a security dilemma. They cannot be certain about the intentions of other states [ . . . ] uncertainty about a given state’s motives, or the belief that a state is motivated by greed rather than security concerns, will increase another state’s sense of insecurity.”<sup>31</sup>

Regional organizations play a key role in reducing uncertainty among states and thereby enhancing conflict prevention. If the members are united around common goals, regional organizations have the capacity to prevent interstate conflict. Although, “regionalism is [ ] no panacea, it can help overcome the failure of states [ ] to address what Richard Falk pessimistically calls the pathological anarchism of the international system.”<sup>32</sup>

If the regional organization has no military assets, which means it is not a security cooperation organization, it is not possible for it to play a deterrence role

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<sup>29</sup> Andrew Hurrell and Louise Fawcett, “Conclusion: Regionalism and International Order?,” in *Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order*, ed. Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 310.

<sup>30</sup> Alagappa, p. 421.

<sup>31</sup> Ifantis, p. 14.

<sup>32</sup> Fawcett, p. 18.



against external threats. However, the lack of military power does not necessarily mean that the regional organization is unable to exert diplomatic pressure to avoid conflict.<sup>33</sup> The existence of economic and political ties between the member states contributes to mutual understanding and reduces the possibility of hostilities.

One important note about the possibility of regionalism to avoid conflict relates to the domestic stability of the regional countries. In fact, the domestic stability of states is a necessary precondition for predictable international behavior. In this sense, regional organizations cannot ensure security if their members are struggling with internal instability. Those organizations which solely focus on interstate relations cannot cope with domestic violence which can easily escalate into international problems. Therefore, the exclusion of domestic affairs is a deficiency in terms of security building.<sup>34</sup> However, given the widely accepted principle of domestic non-intervention, it is not easy for regional organizations to intervene in domestic affairs. Doubtlessly, this fact limits regional organizations' capacity to provide security. However, this principle is currently being challenged on many grounds.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Alagappa, p. 433.

<sup>34</sup> Laurie Nathan, "Domestic Instability and Security Communities," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 12 No. 2 (June 2006), p. 294.

<sup>35</sup> Alagappa, p. 430.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE BLACK SEA REGION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Following the end of the Cold War, the post Soviet space, former socialist areas and their immediate neighbourhood were most dramatically affected by the drastic transformation.<sup>36</sup> Along with the increasing importance of non-state actors such as civil society organizations and big business associations, the former ideological barriers between neighbour countries disappeared and a more suitable environment for the establishment of regional cooperative initiatives emerged. While some older conceptions of regions based on ideological coalitions disappeared, new regional initiatives based on economic links, political interests and social and identity based relations were ready to be launched.

During this transformation, the Black Sea region, which could hardly be defined as a place for regional cooperation for surrounding actors during the Cold War, emerged with a new definition, this time not just restricted with geographic proximity but with a great potential of economic interconnectedness based on flourishing trade and investment ties and gradually emerging common interests regarding security and stability. In other words, “since the end of the Cold War opened regional borders regional cooperation across the Black Sea has been growing steadily. Trade and economic interaction, travel and human contacts have increased dramatically.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Bülent Gökay, “The Politics of Oil in the Black Sea Area,” in *Politics of the Black Sea: Dynamics of Cooperation and Conflict*, ed. Tunç Aybak (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001), pp. 15-16.

<sup>37</sup> Pavliuk, “Conclusion,” in *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building*, ed. Oleksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze (New York: East West Institute (EWI), 2004), p. 292.

In this sense, the collapse of the USSR as the dominant power of the region and the eradication of the ideological barriers of the Cold War enabled a fresh start in the politics of the Black Sea region. In this regard, the political and economic power vacuum, which emerged because of the withdrawal of the superpowers from the Black Sea scene, opened the door to the regional countries to consider frameworks for reconciliation and cooperation. Indeed, the early attempts at region building in the Black Sea were in line with the rising global interest of the post Cold War era in regional identities and groupings. This rising interest in regionalism was one of the main factors that made it possible for the regional actors to realize the strategic importance of the region, common interests and to accept and implement measures for region building.<sup>38</sup>

#### Evaluation of the Black Sea Region

The conception of the Black Sea region is not restricted only to the littoral territories adjacent to the sea, but to a wider zone the boundaries of which will be provided in the following section. Nevertheless, the conceptualization of this area as a region deserves special attention since regionness depends on a number of factors. It is necessary to elaborate if the factors that define a region are applicable to the Black Sea in order to decide if it has the potential to bring regional actors together in the process of cooperative region building.

One of the first issues in defining the Black Sea region is to decide whether it comprises only littoral states or also the neighbouring countries. Although, countries such as Azerbaijan, Moldova, Armenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina,

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<sup>38</sup> Tunç Aybak, "Introduction," in *Politics of the Black Sea: Dynamics of Cooperation and Conflict*, ed. Tunç Aybak (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001), pp. 1-6.

Croatia, Albania and Greece do not have direct access to the sea, they have close ties with the littoral countries and are directly affected by any development in the Black Sea. In fact, the inclusion of these countries is directly related to the criterion that we use while defining the region. If the definition is made through an ecological perspective, it can be claimed that the region covers more countries whose policies have influence on the Black Sea ecological space. If the region is defined through membership to political organizations, it is plausible to argue that the area covering various regional organizations' member states constitute the Black Sea region.<sup>39</sup> If the region building in the Black Sea is restricted to naval activity and the security of the sea, than the Black Sea region is composed of the sea and the coastal territories of the six littoral states. Moreover, it can be claimed that the energy resources, transportation routes and security of these sources and routes are the main building blocks of the region. In this case, the Black Sea region stretches from Eastern Europe to Central Asia, including the energy rich Caspian Sea and its surrounding areas.

Nevertheless, it would be rational to concentrate on the core Black Sea area, comprising the littoral states and the immediate neighbourhood which has direct linkages with this core. It appears that “there is a consensus of including in the Black Sea region the six littoral states plus adjacent countries [ . . . ] this ensemble is also sometimes referred to as the Wider Black Sea Area or the Greater Black Sea Area.”<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, from time to time, other countries from Central Asia, the Caspian Sea and Eastern Europe are of importance for the politics of the Black Sea region; there is intense interdependence between the Black Sea region and its adjacent areas.

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<sup>39</sup> Charles King, “Is the Black Sea a Region?” in *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building*, ed. Oleksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze (New York: East West Institute (EWI), 2004), pp. 17-18.

<sup>40</sup> Bert Mittel, 24 July 2006, *Frameworks and Areas of Cooperation in the Black Sea Region*, <http://harvard-bssp.org/publications/?id=262> [10 December 2006].

Therefore, for relevant subjects these surrounding countries are taken into consideration in the agendas of regional politics.

Consequently, it would be plausible to argue that the Black Sea region stands at the centre of a wider geography and constitutes a corridor for key economic activities; oil and gas pipelines, roads, railroads and sea routes connect Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Therefore, it is a playing field for political, social, and cultural interaction among a number of regional and external actors.

It is clear that Black Sea regionalism is not restricted to the six littoral states. The definition based on economic, political, and social interaction demonstrates the need for the inclusion of surrounding countries for a clear understanding of the politics of the Black Sea region. At this point, it is important to highlight the fact that these countries are not identical. Each country in the region is unique to itself while some of them share common characteristics.

### Political Aspects

A short review of the development of relations between different international institutions and the Black Sea countries during the post Cold War period reveals the different levels and characteristics of relations. Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece are NATO and EU members, while Turkey is a NATO member and a candidate for the EU. These countries are completely settled in the Western world through these ties and their memberships to other western international institutions.

While Ukraine and Georgia<sup>41</sup> set their ultimate political goal as full integration with the Western institutions,<sup>42</sup> Azerbaijan, Moldova, and Armenia have their special political conditions and relations with the regional and outside actors. The most critical problem regarding Georgia and Moldova is their inability to establish control over national territories due to the problems with the de facto independent separatist provinces. A similar situation prevails in Azerbaijan and this problem not only affects its relations with Armenia, but also stands as a barrier to regional cooperation in the South Caucasus. In fact, these so-called frozen conflicts, namely Transnistria in Moldova, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia in Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, constitute some of the most important challenges the region has been facing since the end of the Cold War.

In the Balkans, national borders have been in a continuous process of change since the end of the Cold War. In fact, Montenegro has recently become an independent state while it seems that Kosovo will be the latest member of the nation states community in the near future. Following the end of the violent ethnic wars of the 1990s in the former Yugoslav states, the Balkans has gradually stabilized in political terms. NATO's prospective enlargement towards the Balkans and the EU's declaration that the future of the region lies in the EU are two main major factors that contributed to this stabilization. Croatia started accession negotiations with the EU last year and will become a member of NATO in the near future. Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia (FYROM) will most probably join NATO in the

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<sup>41</sup> Liz Fuller, 2 June 2006, *Georgia: Is Tbilisi Moving toward NATO Membership?*, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticleprint/2006/06/be7f7673-9e6b-4fcd-b817-e07323b1fa29.html> [10 December 2006].

<sup>42</sup> Andrew Rettman, 27 October 2006, *Ukraine Enlargement Plea Falls on Deaf Ears*, <http://euobserver.com/9/22755/?rk=1> [10 December 2006]; Mikheil Saakashvili, "Georgia's Role in International Security Policy," *Hampton Roads International Security Quarterly*, no.2 (April 2006), pp. 5-7.

forthcoming years. Overall, the successful integration of the Balkans into Western institutions will be not only a stabilizer but also a factor that will contribute considerably to the cooperation efforts in the Black Sea region.

Last, at the northern shore of the Black Sea, Russia stands as a former global superpower which is currently struggling to regain some of its power after the collapse of the socialist block. Russia, with its special relations with the EU and NATO, is a key actor in Black Sea politics because of its historical ties and social and economic relations with the regional countries.

As for their level of domestic political development, it appears that the regional states have serious problems regarding democracy building and the establishment of the rule of law. All Black Sea countries – excluding Greece and Turkey— have socialist legacies and they experienced significant political transformation during the 1990s. However, since the end of the transformation they have not been entirely successful in establishing functioning democratic systems. Although Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey have achieved significant progress due mainly to the EU accession process, they are still weak in terms of a strong civil society, state institutions, and the violation of human rights and restrictions on freedom of expression persist. The colour revolutions of Ukraine and Georgia signified cornerstones in these countries' transformation processes, but today both are considerably below the level of universally acceptable democratic standards. The remaining countries of the wider region are in worse conditions regarding democratic development. Overall, the Black Sea countries lag behind their counterparts in other parts of Europe.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> King, pp. 21-22; Pavliuk, "Conclusion," in *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building*, p.297.

## Economic Aspects

At the economic level, again, except for Turkey and Greece, all of the Black Sea countries are former socialist block members. Some of them were not independent nation states but parts of Cold War states like the USSR and Yugoslavia. Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan were constituent parts of the USSR. Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia constituted Yugoslavia until its collapse. On the other hand, Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania were independent states during the Cold War. All of these countries, including Russia, passed through quite serious economic restructuring and tried to build free market economies after decades of state-centred socialist experience. However, each has different level of success in their transformation efforts.

In this regard, Bulgaria and Romania have achieved better degrees of integration with Western economic institutions and have been doing well in terms of establishing capitalist free market economies, albeit they still experience serious problems such as corruption. Despite institutional deficiencies, Bulgaria and Romania have become EU members. On the other hand, former members of the USSR remain backward in their economic transformation compared to these two Balkan states of the Black Sea region. Though they were part of the socialist block, countries that remained independent states during the Cold War have been relatively more successful than the others. Overall, the Balkan states are much more successful than Ukraine, Moldova and the South Caucasian ones in their transformation, thanks to the prospects of future EU membership, their proximity to Europe and the lack of direct Russian influence over the Balkans.



On the other hand, Russia was not successful in its transition during the 1990s. During the few years following the collapse of the USSR, the Russian economy waned considerably and became quite instable. The rapid and unplanned attempt to convert the socialist state into a capitalist market economy brought about undesirable consequences. Negative outcomes of rapid and unmonitored privatization and the high level of the inequality of income distribution are among these. In fact, it was not until a number of years ago that Russia was able to achieve political stability and, due mainly to the utilization of oil and gas revenues, some degree of economic recovery. It is this political and economic progress that has allowed Russia to try to regain and consolidate its influence over the former USSR territories.

As for Greece and Turkey, these countries were in the capitalist block during the Cold War and did not experience the same dramatic change with the collapse of the socialist block. Greece, being a member of the EU and Euro zone, appears to have the most successful economy among the Black Sea countries. On the other hand, Turkey, which also has a close partnership with the EU on the basis of the Customs Union, is a large growing economy in the region. Although this country experienced chronic problems and went through three serious economic crises due to structural and institutional weaknesses in the 1990s and early 2000s, it has been growing rapidly during the last several years. The prospects of EU accession and cooperation with western financial institutions have enabled the country to attract considerable amounts of foreign investment and simultaneously solve problems such as chronic inflation. However, Turkey still has a long way to go in order to stabilize and consolidate its markets and become a smoothly functioning market economy.

Consequently, a general overview of the regional economies shows that each country is at a different development level. Overall, even the regional countries, which are integrated with the western institutions, are lagging behind the countries in the rest of the Europe. In other words, the Black Sea region as a whole is less developed than the rest of Europe in economic terms and continues the process of development.

### Socio-Cultural Aspects

A brief analysis of the political and economic situation reveals that the countries of the Black Sea region have diverse characteristics and each is at a different level of economic and political development and integration with the rest of the world and Europe. Surely, this diversity in political and economic affairs does not show that the Black Sea region lacks the potential to bring its actors under a regional umbrella. In fact, it can be claimed that economic and political diversity lead to a greater necessity for cooperation in order to overcome the challenges in the region. Additionally, while economic and political aspects are important in the definition of regions, it is also important to consider the social and cultural interaction among the members of the region in order to comprehend the opportunities for regional cooperation.

A historical overview reveals that the Black Sea region has always been a place for interaction among different cultures. In terms of region building, this historical interconnection has played a key role. The perceptions of individuals and social communities about the region beyond their national or religious identities have been shaped by the patterns of this historical interaction. It is of utmost importance to consider the role of social exchange mechanisms such as migration and trade

between different societies in the emergence of any regional identity or sense of belonging. In fact, these social and cultural interactions have also been paralleled by interdependence in economic and political domains and connectedness of cultures.<sup>44</sup>

It is mandatory to look at the current diversity in national and religious identities around the Black Sea region in order to understand the effects of this interconnectedness on the opportunities of regional cooperation. Although the Black Sea region is divided between nation states, it is evident that the national borders are not clear-cut division lines between distinct nationalities and religions. In the Black Sea region, writes Valinakis, “which is populated by more than twenty different larger ethnic groups and nationalities, [ . . . ] administrative and national borders are frequently in sharp contrast with the perceptions of the local population about the entitlement of certain ethnic groups to specific territories.”<sup>45</sup> The national frontiers in the Black Sea region, like they are in many other places, do not draw lines that categorically divide nations and ethnic and religious communities. Indeed, the nation states of the Black Sea region have national, ethnic, and religious diversity.

The region is the homeland of a considerable number of nations, cultures, ethnic and religious communities. While Turkey is the home of Greek, Armenian, and Jewish minorities, considerable numbers of Turks live in Greece and Bulgaria. The Balkans are entirely multi-cultural on the basis of the diversity of nationalities and religions that prevail in the region’s countries. On the northern shore of the Black Sea, Ukraine has Russians and Crimean Tatars, while many Ukrainians, Georgians, and Armenians live in Russian territories. This general trend of intermixture in these areas is also valid for the Southern Caucasus. The national

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<sup>44</sup> King, p. 16.

<sup>45</sup> Yannis Valinakis, July 1999, *The Black Sea Region: Challenges and Opportunities for Europe*, <http://www.iss-eu.org/> [10 December 2006].

borders leave many Armenians in Azerbaijani and Georgian territories.<sup>46</sup>

Additionally, the Kurds living in Turkey and various ethnic groups, particularly the Chechens in Russia, have significant influence on the developments in the region and have created important political, economic, and cultural consequences.

Regarding the religious identity of the region, nearly all Orthodox countries are located around the Black Sea. Additionally, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Albania, and Bosnia Herzegovina are predominantly Muslim countries. Religious communities are not divided along national borders, similar to the case for ethnic groups. The existence of various religious communities in the different Black Sea countries is parallel with the dispersion of ethnic minorities. In this sense, the region is also intermixed in terms of religious identities. All these facts regarding the ethnic and religious diversity points to the fact that, as Pavliuk writes, “the Black Sea is one of the most heterogeneous and complex areas in wider Europe.”<sup>47</sup>

This diversity of identities has both had positive and negative outcomes for the region. On the one hand, it has offered common characteristics, shared values, traditions and commonalities for the different societies of the region, and opened a way to mutual understanding. On the other hand, it has also remained one of the major sources of tension within the region and had detrimental effects on the emergence of any regional identity beyond national or religious identities.

Nevertheless, it is questionable whether a common and strong Black Sea identity that connects the different societies in the region exists. If this kind of an identity prevails, it is evident that it does not have prior importance among national

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<sup>46</sup> Nikolai Kovalsky, “Russia and the Black Sea Realities,” in *Politics of the Black Sea: Dynamics of Cooperation and Conflict*, ed. Tunç Aybak (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001), pp. 164-165.

<sup>47</sup> Oleksandr Pavliuk, “Introduction,” in *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building*, ed. Oleksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze (New York: East West Institute (EWI), 2004), p. 7.

and religious identities. In other words, “Balkan, European, Islamic and Slav seem to be far more important to average citizens than an attachment to the sea.”<sup>48</sup> However, this doubt about a Black Sea identity having more importance compared to other identities does not mean that the Black Sea does not have the potential to become a region. In fact, as King quotes, “regions are not about essential identities but rather concern a set of essential connections that binds together the lives of peoples and polities.”<sup>49</sup> In this sense, whether the Black Sea possesses a common identity or not, it is the political, economic, and social interests and challenges, generating interconnectedness among the states and societies that define it as a region.

The Black Sea has been a zone of common interests and challenges for the surrounding actors. It is exactly these interests and challenges - some of them particular to the region, some of them as extensions of global issues - that raise awareness among the regional actors about their common interest in sustaining stability in the region. Therefore, this situation urges them to evaluate their policies on a regional basis together with an effort to establish cooperative frameworks.

### Interests and Challenges

An analysis of the political, economic and social situation of the Black Sea reveals that the region is composed of countries at different levels of political and economic development, with ethnically and religiously diverse and intermixed populations. While diversity stands as the major characteristic of the region, a number of issues also produce common grounds which are of importance for all the regional actors. In some instances, these issues and their related outcomes lead to conflicting interests

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<sup>48</sup> King, p. 17.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

and harm any attempt to establish regional cooperation. However, in many other cases, the obviousness of the need for cooperation rather than competition dominates the agenda and leads the regional actors of diverse characteristics to unite around various goals. In this sense, the regional character of the Black Sea originates from these issues. Whether they lead to disagreement and conflict among the regional actors or on the contrary generate cooperative mentality, it is the political, economic, and social common ground which emerges in relation to these issues that gives rise to a regional approach. Additionally, these issues are also a source of outside interest in the region and critical in understanding the course of relations between these outside actors and regional players. The forthcoming sections will concentrate on these issues: the background that lead to their emergence or reappearance as significant factors on both global and regional scale, their effects on the formulation of both regional and outside actors' policies and their importance regarding the regional cooperation motives.

### Security in the Black Sea Region

The outcomes of the end of the Cold War radically altered the international order. This new environment led to significant changes for the politics in the Black Sea region. Particularly, the transformation in the understanding of security has been an important issue with considerable effect on the developments. In other words, the change in the global security environment and its effect on the Black Sea have been important factors in the evolution of a wide range of issues in the region.

Although the classical notion of security based on confrontation and mutual deterrence among nation states has remained valid, it is clear that the end of Cold

War led to an ease in the emphasis on military and naval competition. This global trend of “the decline of traditional geopolitics” has had significant impact on the politics of the Black Sea.<sup>50</sup> Allison writes that “the likelihood of open military conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, between Russia and Georgia, between Greece and Turkey or between Romania and Hungary is not high”<sup>51</sup> but competition and tension among these countries still exist.

The Black Sea was on the southeastern separation line of military and naval forces of the two rival camps; particularly between the USSR and USA-backed Turkey. Nevertheless, the global consequences of the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the USSR and the inability of successor Russian Federation to replace it in military terms led to the gradual decline of militarization and the elimination of the threat of a war between the major regional powers. Indeed, particularly for the Black Sea region, the post Cold War period has been characterized by flourishing economic ties, increasing communication between regional communities and the regional cooperation efforts of nation states. This economic and social interaction has been matched by “the development of military confidence building measures and mutually acceptable policies of arms control, the strengthening of trust and the launching of joint initiatives aimed at enhancing regional stability and security.”<sup>52</sup>

Additionally, recent developments also suggest that there is a reverse trend in terms of arms control and security building. The insistence of Washington to establish a missile shield in Europe generated strong reaction in Moscow and led

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<sup>50</sup> Pavliuk, “Conclusion,” in *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building*, p. 294.

<sup>51</sup> Roy Allison, “The Unresolved Conflicts in the Black Sea Region: Threats, Impacts on Regionalism, and Regional Strategies for Conflict Resolution,” in *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building*, ed. Oleksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Klymush-Tsintsadze (New York: East West Institute (EWI), 2004), p. 87.

<sup>52</sup> Pavliuk, “Conclusion,” in *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building*, p. 294.

Russia to terminate the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, which was a landmark arms control treaty of the post Cold War. This development is particularly important for the security of the Black Sea region since regional countries will be mostly affected by a new arms race between Moscow and Washington. Such a development will be quite negative in terms of region and security building in the Black Sea region.

Nevertheless, the developments in the initial phases of the post Cold War pointed to the gradual emergence of a favourable environment for regional security cooperation during the 1990s. However, the mentality change of the post Cold War era and the decline of military confrontation was not enough in itself for the eradication of all sets of problems in the region. It is true that the collapse of the USSR has turned the Black Sea region from a place of military confrontation between the two rival camps into a zone of potential cooperation fitting into the framework of regionalism. However, it also led to the emergence of a favourable environment for the rise of conflicts in the region that had been suppressed and invisible under the sensitive balances of the Cold War. In other words, as Aybak writes, “the end of the Cold War not only opened up new potential in regional areas for regional cooperation, but it has also revived the historical sources of ethnic, national, and religious conflicts.”<sup>53</sup>

The inability of the international system to fill in the power vacuum in the post Soviet spaces generated by the collapse of the USSR with legitimate and strong international institutions has been an important factor in the emergence of problems in the Black Sea basin. The declining international attention paid to the Black Sea region during the early 1990s and the shifting interest towards other regions such as

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<sup>53</sup> Aybak, “Introduction,” in *Politics of the Black Sea: Dynamics of Cooperation and Conflict*, p. 1.



Eastern Europe obviously did not contribute to the regional actors' efforts to sustain stability. Particularly, the positive effects of the European integration which appeared as the major political and economic stabilizer in the post Cold War period was hardly felt in the region during the 1990s. The EU as the sole international body which is capable of contributing to political and economic development and thereby to security and stability, was not able to present opportunities similar to the ones it presented in the Eastern European case, for the Black Sea. In fact, the European integration and its prospects have only become a reality for most of the regional countries during the last few years albeit with serious ambiguities.

Together with these international factors, the political outcomes of the fall of USSR which Aybak lists as “the end of Marxism-Leninism as a ruling ideology, the weakening of the Soviet-era political and economic institutions, the rise of opposition forces, [and] the emerging religious and nationalist forces in the Post-Soviet states,”<sup>54</sup> facilitated the emergence of serious security challenges. The political, economic, and military weakness of the newly independent states and their inability to establish control over their territories and populations further complicated the picture, harmed the prospects of cooperation, and destabilized the Black Sea region.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze, “Cooperative Efforts in the Black Sea Region,” in *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building*, ed. Oleksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze (New York: East West Institute (EWI), 2004), p. 35.

## The Frozen Conflicts

As has been mentioned, the fall of the USSR has allowed the emergence of ethnic, national, and religious conflicts in the Black Sea. Given the ethnic and cultural diversity in the Black Sea region, the disappearance of the USSR as a central power with its stabilization effect, unleashed a number of formerly suppressed tensions in the form of violent conflicts in the early 1990s. Valinakis explains that “the striving of smaller ethnic communities for the attributes of nationhood [came] into conflict with previously established borders”<sup>56</sup> and the tensions in the region materialized in the form of direct armed conflict between the security forces of the newly independent post Soviet states and separatist entities within these countries. Conflicts in the secessionist regions of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Ajaria in Georgia and Transdniestria in Moldova were of this kind. In the Nagorno-Karabakh case, the armed conflict involved two newly independent states, Armenia militarily and economically supporting the separatist cause of the predominantly ethnic Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh region located in Azerbaijani territory.

Following the military clashes, the parties were able to establish cease-fires, and solution efforts have been made with the involvement of the OSCE, Russia, the USA, and other Western powers. In all of the cases, the secessionist regions were able to defeat the military forces of the central states and their political elites were able to establish full political and economic control over their respective territories. In the Nagorno-Karabakh case, the military forces of the region backed by the Armenian military even occupied Azerbaijani territories outside of the region in order to establish direct land connection with Armenia.

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<sup>56</sup> Yannis Valinakis, July 1999, *The Black Sea Region: Challenges and Opportunities for Europe*, <http://www.iss-eu.org/> [10 December 2006].

Nevertheless, the cease-fires were not followed by international agreements which would define the status of these de facto independent states.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, no country has recognized these regions as independent states and as Celac writes “their current legal status is that of separatist provinces inside the recognized borders of sovereign states.”<sup>58</sup> The international community respects the territorial integrity of Georgia, Moldova, and Azerbaijan and accepts the secessionist armed conflicts as aggressive acts. In other words, the international community has preferred territorial integrity to self-determination in these ethnically originated conflicts of the wider Black Sea region.

The parties have been supported to find peaceful solutions to the outstanding conflicts and several frameworks have been established for this goal. Although the efforts have not produce viable solutions acceptable to all the involved parties yet, since the declaration of cease-fires, only minor clashes have occurred between the forces of the secessionist regions and the central states. Thereby, the situation has largely remained stable in terms of military clashes. This illusion of stability has led to declining international interest and thus the current situation has gradually become the status quo ante. Nevertheless, this understanding is harmful not only for the conflicting parties but also for the regional actors since it curtails the efforts to find solutions to the problems and makes regional cooperation difficult.

These frozen conflicts and the ambiguity they create have remained one of the major sources of instability and negatively affected the general security environment in the wider Black Sea region.<sup>59</sup> What Allison calls, “the current state of

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<sup>57</sup> It was only Ajaria conflict, which was resolved within the territorial integrity of Georgia in 2004.

<sup>58</sup> Celac, p. 280.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 279; and Jeffrey Simon, 19 January 2006, *Black Sea Regional Security Cooperation: Building Bridges and Barriers*, <http://harvard-bssp.org/publications/?id=210> [10 December 2006].

no peace no war”<sup>60</sup> has had detrimental effects on the economic and political development of the region by seriously hindering the regional cooperation and region building efforts. In fact, “the frozen conflicts not only drain economic resources and political energies from weak and poor countries; they also generate corruption and organized crime, prevent the consolidation of the rule of law, and enhance instability across the region.”<sup>61</sup> In addition, as was emphasized by the Romanian president Traian Basescu, “these conflicts are responsible for large scale violation of human rights, breed arms and human trafficking, and contribute to the undermining of democratic institutions.”<sup>62</sup>

As has already been mentioned, the diverse ethnic and religious composition of the Black Sea region stands as a barrier to the emergence of a regional identity. These conflicts that took place during the early 1990s further aggravated the already existing tensions. The horrible outcomes of the armed conflicts and their effect on the civilian populations have generated not only awful memories for the involved parties but also created negative perceptions on the part of the other populations that prevail in the Black Sea region. These conflicts and their long lasting effects have had a considerable negative impact on the possibility of the development of a regional identity and cooperation. Allison writes that, “the bitter military antagonisms of the first half of the 1990s, and the unresolved legacy of people displaced by civil conflict in this period, remain a serious impediment to the development of larger regional identities rather than ones defined by more exclusive

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<sup>60</sup> Allison, p. 88.

<sup>61</sup> Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, 18 July 2006, *The Black Sea Region and Its Growing Influence*, <http://harvard-bssp.org/publications/?id=270> [10 December 2006].

<sup>62</sup> Eugen Tomiuc, 5 June 2006, *Black Sea: Searching For a New Vision*, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/06/e4460339-8f85-4720-adcb-a8b626fc448c.html> [10 December 2006].

ethnic and nationalist criteria.”<sup>63</sup> In this sense, it is imperative to find peaceful solutions to these problems that will satisfy all of the parties involved in order to perpetuate the Black Sea region building process.

The existence of the belt of unresolved conflict stretching from the Northern part of the Black Sea to the Southern Caucasus has been one of most significant problems for the overall security and stability in the wider Black Sea region. In addition to their potential to breed armed conflict again, these unresolved conflicts create problems in the relations between regional countries which have diverging views about the future of these entities and have different levels of relations with the sovereign states in which these conflict zones are located. For instance, the Nagorno-Karabakh problem led to serious tensions between Turkey and Russia during the early 1990s and it has been one of the leading causes of strained Turkish-Armenian relations.<sup>64</sup>

Additionally, the secessionist entities in Georgia and Moldova have been sources of fierce tension between these states and Russia. The existence of the separatist provinces enables Russia to exert pressure on former Soviet states by implicitly supporting the unrecognized governments.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, it is plausible to argue that Russia has often employed the complicated character of these conflicts in its relations with the recognized states of the region in order to regain its influence in these former Soviet territories. In a recent example, Russian authorities announced that they would establish direct trade connections with Transnistria and Abkhazia, which can be interpreted as the recognition of these breakaway provinces as trade

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<sup>63</sup> Allison, p. 87.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 89-90.

<sup>65</sup> Vladimir Socor, 23 February 2007, *Secessionist Leaders Coordinate Activities in Moscow*, [http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article\\_id=2371943](http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2371943) [25 February 2007].

partners of Russia. It is clear that Moscow's goal is to discipline the "disobedient" Moldova and Georgia by abusing the already problematic and complicated issues.<sup>66</sup>

All these facts reveal that the frozen conflicts have had the potential to "counteract efforts to develop otherwise logical and advantageous interactions on a regional level."<sup>67</sup> Particularly in terms of military-security issues, region-wide cooperation seems impossible if "regional powers are viewed as advancing geopolitical agendas through proxy relations with parties in these conflicts."<sup>68</sup>

The unresolved conflicts have also direct negative effects on the economic activity in the region. The instability originating from these conflicts harm economic development by undermining economic transaction between regional actors and by spoiling the sine qua non of investments: a safe and stable business environment. The conflict zones avoid the regional actors to utilize the key strategic location of the region to the fullest extent by blocking road and railroad communications.<sup>69</sup>

Although it is strategically situated between Europe, the Caspian Sea, Central Asia, and the Greater Middle East, the existence of the conflict zones and the security risks that they pose, keep the Black Sea region from becoming a safe heaven for the transportation of goods, people, services, and energy. In this sense, the security problems generated by these frozen conflicts have detrimental effects on the transportation and energy security in the region. In particular, they negatively affect

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<sup>66</sup> Vladimir Socor, 10 November 2006, *Bucking the WTO, Russia Broadens Economic Measures Against Georgia and Moldova*, [http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?volume\\_id=414&issue\\_id=3920&article\\_id=2371639](http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?volume_id=414&issue_id=3920&article_id=2371639) [10 December 2006].

<sup>67</sup> Allison, p. 86.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

outstanding projects such as the European Union's TRACECA<sup>70</sup> programme and they distort the security of critical energy routes passing from the South Caucasus.<sup>71</sup>

The frozen conflicts in the Black Sea region also have relevance to global security considerations in terms of their connection to the “new security threats (NSTs),” which will be evaluated in detail in the following section. The end of the Cold War was a cornerstone in the proliferation of the NSTs, generally covering the illegal activities such as money laundering, drugs and weapons smuggling, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), illegal migration, human trafficking and lastly, especially following the attacks to Twin Towers, terrorism. The conflict regions in the Black Sea region have commonly been accepted as fertile environments for the breeding of the NSTs. It is reasonable to argue that these regions are not secure and stable areas but, as Asmus suggests, “are festering wounds that breed corruption and organised crime. [In this respect] they inhibit democratization and incite instability.”<sup>72</sup>

The territories and activities of the unrecognized de facto independent states cannot be monitored and controlled by international organizations. Together with the unrecognized governments' desire to find methods to maintain their political control, these areas become suitable for any form of profitable criminal activity. Since their de facto independence is a result of success in armed struggles, the governments feel

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<sup>70</sup> Also referred as the “New Silk Road” project, TRACECA stands for “Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia” and its main goal is to develop economic relations, trade and transport communications along this Corridor. It is not just a corridor; in fact, it is a regional network of multimodal transport routes. TRACECA was established in 1993 during a conference in Brussels by originally eight nations and nowadays thirteen nations aiming at improvements in trade and transport along the Europe - Caucasus - Asia Corridor. For more information about the project please see <http://www.traceca-org.org/default.php?l=en>

<sup>71</sup> Allison, pp. 89-93.

<sup>72</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, 8 September 2004, *Anchor the Black Sea Region to the West*, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=4484> [15 January 2007].

the necessity to keep their armed forces strong in order to guarantee their political survival. They can easily find the needed weaponry for this purpose by getting involved in the illegal arms trade and financing them via other criminal activities.

Essentially, the deadlock in the settlement of these conflicts is also connected with the criminal activity, which is a source of tremendous profits.<sup>73</sup> Not only local rulers, but also international criminal groups and terrorist networks find it easy to conduct business in these regions. In this regard, as Celac highlights, “these hotbeds of tension are a serious challenge to security and stability in the Black Sea region precisely because of their specific relevance to the international effort to combat terrorism and its abettors and suppliers at the source.”<sup>74</sup>

#### The New Security Threats (NSTs)

Although criminal activities which are the source of new security threats (NSTs) had been in force and widespread previously, the security outcomes of these activities started to assume a global dimension following the end of the Cold War and international attention to NSTs rapidly grew after the terrorist attacks on September 11. The shock wave following September 11 radically altered global security dynamics and the struggle against the new security threats emerged as a significant element in maintaining international security and stability. In this context, NSTs and possible methods for the elimination of their harmful consequences started to be a prominent issue in the security strategies of the USA, the EU and other global

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<sup>73</sup> Leonid Polyakov, “New Security Threats in the Black Sea Region,” in *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building*, ed. Oleksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze (New York: East West Institute (EWI), 2004), p. 213.

<sup>74</sup> Celac, p. 279.



actors.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, international organizations such as the UN, NATO, and the OSCE started to pay special attention to NSTs and emphasize their adverse effects on global security.

This transformation in global security dynamics had important outcomes for the Black Sea region. NSTs have been on the agenda of the regional countries and the means of struggle against them discussed among regional circles prior to September 11. However, particularly after the terrorist attacks, the regional actors were able to realize the dreadful effects of these threats more clearly and since then NSTs have occupied a central place in the regional security agenda. In other words, during the post September 11 period, “attention to the analysis and countering of new threats started growing, that officials began to focus on issues of regional cooperation for combating these threats, especially in their public statements and declarations.”<sup>76</sup>

NSTs have relevance to the Black Sea basin through three dimensions. First, with its current political and economic situation, the region provides a suitable environment for the breeding of these non-conventional threats. Second, the Black Sea countries have been the target of NSTs themselves and have experienced their destabilizing effects. Last, the region, strategically located between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, is a natural transit route of illegal activity between these regions.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> The White House, 17 September 2002, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf> [10 December 2006]; Commission of the European Communities, 12 December 2003, *A Secure Europe in a Secure World: European Security Strategy*, <http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf> [10 December 2006]; Sergei Blagov, 16 February 2007, *Moscow-Beijing-New Delhi Axis Moves in Slow Motion*, [http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article\\_id=2371920](http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2371920) [20 February 2007].

<sup>76</sup> Polyakov, p. 212.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

As has been demonstrated in the previous section, the existence of the unrecognized statelets is a major factor that contributes to the proliferation of NSTs in the Black Sea region. These unrecognized breakaway regions offer the criminal networks a business environment in which they can operate without feeling the pressure of security forces and law. The lack of powerful political authorities who are responsible to domestic and international actors have enabled these regions to emerge as hot spots of criminal activity.

In addition to the frozen conflicts, the inability of the newly independent states to establish full control over their territories and failure in the state building process are other factors that facilitate the conduct of illegal business in the region. The problems of democratic governance procedures and the enforcement of the rule of law, the lack of effective institutional mechanisms of public administration, the fruitless transformation from the socialist model to the free market system that has created deficient economic structures, and futile security sector reform has enabled “corrupt politicians and representatives of security structures in [the] regional countries to be routinely involved in unlawful activities together with criminals and rich criminalized businessmen.”<sup>78</sup> This irregular system appears to have generated a self-fulfilling prophecy for the newly independent states of the Black Sea region and further destabilize the already weak social structures. While the shortfalls in democratic state building enable sustainable criminal activity and foster the emergence of NSTs, the negative outcomes of all sorts of illegal activities avoid the political and economic development of these countries, undermine the probability of democratic transformation, and hinder the successful fight against NSTs.

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

As has already been mentioned, social and economic relations rapidly grew in the last two decades and the Black Sea basin emerged as a key transit route for commerce and energy transportation between Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Nevertheless, this positive development also had a negative side effect since it made the region “a natural juncture between places of criminal demand and criminal supply.”<sup>79</sup> On the one hand, the construction of new roads and railroads and utilization of new maritime routes for meeting the needs of increasing economic interaction, simultaneously provide new opportunities to criminal networks for easier transportation of illegal materials. On the other hand, the need to pull the standards of security to an admissible level in order to ensure smooth economic activity also leads to growing efforts to combat illegal criminal activity.<sup>80</sup> In this respect, the increasing economic interconnectedness brought both positive and negative outcomes regarding the NSTs in the Black Sea region.

#### Illegal Migration and the Trafficking of Human Beings

Illegal migration stands as a significant non-conventional global threat to the welfare of societies in the twenty-first century. The rapidly widening economic gap between different regions and nation states, suppressive practices of undemocratic political regimes and various armed conflicts that threaten the lives of civilians have forced masses of people to leave their homelands and seek for better places to settle.

Migration “becomes illegal when individuals themselves or with the assistance of organized criminal groups attempt to enter countries clandestinely due

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

to the fact that they may not enter or stay in a country legitimately.”<sup>81</sup> This flow of illegal migration has severe social and economic consequences for both the migrants, the transit and the destination countries on the regional and global scale. First of all, it causes significant human suffering on the part of the migrants and it poses a greater threat if it takes the form of the trafficking of human beings “because of its grave social danger — the direct targeting of young women and children for sexual slavery, the pornography industry and, organ transplants.”<sup>82</sup> Second, the fact that illegal migration is closely interconnected with other sorts of criminal activities makes it necessary for this crime to be considered as a national security threat by the Black Sea region countries. The enormous profits - profits generated by organized crime groups involved in the trafficking of human beings are estimated by the UN and IOM at between USD 7 and 10 billion a year globally<sup>83</sup> - raised by illegal migration and human trafficking have often been used in order to finance other criminal activities, and in the worst cases, terrorist networks. This interconnectedness entails giving priority to illegal migration and human trafficking both in national and regional security agendas.

### Drug Smuggling

The Black Sea region is significant for the fight against drug smuggling in two ways.

First, although the drugs production capacity is limited compared to other regions –

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<sup>81</sup> Europol, 1 March 2006, *Organized Illegal Migration into the European Union*, [http://www.europol.europa.eu/publications/SeriousCrimeOverviews/2005/overview\\_illegal\\_immigration.pdf](http://www.europol.europa.eu/publications/SeriousCrimeOverviews/2005/overview_illegal_immigration.pdf) [12 January 2007].

<sup>82</sup> Polyakov, p. 221.

<sup>83</sup> Europol, 25 October 2005, *2005 EU Organized Crime Report*, [http://www.europol.europa.eu/publications/EUOrganisedCrimeSitRep/2005/EU\\_OrganisedCrimeReport2005.pdf](http://www.europol.europa.eu/publications/EUOrganisedCrimeSitRep/2005/EU_OrganisedCrimeReport2005.pdf) [12 January 2007].

thereby it matters less in the global fight against drugs in this regard – the Black Sea region constitutes a key transit route for smugglers with its proximity to production areas and major markets. The region has importance for smugglers in the sense that it provides the easiest access to markets with what Polyakov describes as, “poorly protected national borders and inexpensive transport routes on waterways connecting the Black Sea with the Mediterranean through the Bosphorus and with the heart of Western Europe via the Danube.”<sup>84</sup> With the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU, the Black Sea maritime route has become more attractive to criminal networks since it provides direct access to the EU market via these new member states.<sup>85</sup> Most of the heroin that is found in the European market is of Afghan origin, and the Black Sea region, particularly Turkey, constitutes the most important transit route in the transportation of Afghan heroin to the Western markets. Indeed, the massive amounts of heroin seized during the operations in Turkey in 2004 gives an idea about the real the size of the illegal trade: 6,515 kg of heroin and 4,491 kg of morphine base.<sup>86</sup> Second, the region also has an increasing share in the huge profits criminal networks make due to the growing demand coming from within the regional countries.

The increasing transportation and consumption of drugs destabilizes the region by not only contributing to the escalation of ethnic tensions in the breakaway regions but also harming the already weak social and economic structures and the democratic state building processes.<sup>87</sup> It also spoils the overall security in the Black

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<sup>84</sup> Polyakov, p. 214.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>86</sup> Europol, 2006, *Drugs 2006*, <http://www.europol.europa.eu/publications/SeriousCrimeOverviews/2005/drugs2005.pdf> [12 January 2007].

<sup>87</sup> Polyakov, p. 227.

Sea region in another way: there is direct relationship between drugs trafficking and other criminal activity. It is also a well-known fact that PKK, a terrorist organization in Turkey, has benefited from the traffic of drugs via Turkish territory and Chechen separatists are related to this criminal activity. Furthermore, given that the major source of heroin in Europe is Afghanistan, it is of significance particularly for global security to consider how much of the profit raised from this illegal trade is transferred to the al Qaeda network to finance future terrorist activity. All these factors point to the detrimental effect of illegal drugs smuggling on regional and global security and stability.

#### Weapons Smuggling and the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)

Given the huge amounts of stockpiles and the arms production capacity left after the Cold War, the existence of organized criminal groups in the Black Sea region, and growing global and regional demand for arms, it is almost needless to say that weapons smuggling has been a key illegal sector in the Black Sea region and constitutes a significant threat to both regional and global security and stability.<sup>88</sup> Similar to other NSTs, with its inherent characteristics, the Black Sea region provides excellent opportunities for illegal arms traders to carry on their business. Chief amongst them is the existence of unrecognized statelets whose survival is mainly dependent on illegal activities. Since it is almost impossible to control the borders of these statelets in the absence of binding international regulations, these entities are significant contributors to any kind of illegal trafficking.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, defects

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 230.

in controlling the borders and cross border trade are chronic problems in the Black Sea region given the inability of most of the regional states to consolidate their statehood. In addition, individual criminal figures play important roles in the illegal arms trade and difficulties in bringing them in front of international justice further complicates the problem.<sup>90</sup>

The illegal arms trade has had a number of adverse effects on security in the Black Sea region. Profits made through arms trade enable criminal networks to sustain other operations and taken together with underground relations with corrupt officials, as a whole it undermines the rule of law and harms state authority. Additionally, it provides easy and uncontrolled access to small arms, boosts individual weapons ownership, and thus poses a serious risk for the stability of modern society. Furthermore, the abundance of various types of arms in the market fuels ethnic and religious tensions by facilitating the insurgent groups to turn to violent struggle methods. Last but not least, the illegal arms trade is not only a profitable business for terrorist organizations but also provides them with the necessary stockpiles to continue their harmful activities.

As for the proliferation of WMDs, it is one of the most serious security threats the global system is facing in the twenty-first century due to the potential heavy costs of the inability to avoid the production and spread of these weapons. The consequences will be too grave and the damage will be immeasurable if a terrorist group was to acquire and decide to use WMDs. Furthermore, the eagerness of nation states to acquire WMDs has harmful effects on the already fragile international order, deepening mutual distrust, triggering new arms races both on the regional and global scale, and avoiding any possibility of cooperation.

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<sup>90</sup> Douglas Farah and Stephen Braun, "The Merchant of Death," *Foreign Policy*, (November/December 2006), pp. 53-61.

## International Terror

The events September 11 and the following attacks in Istanbul, London, Madrid, and elsewhere give a clear idea about the serious threat posed by global terror in the twenty-first century. The growing international attention to terrorism due to this series of major terrorist activities has had important outcomes for the Black Sea region like other regions of the world. In addition to the subjects mentioned above, a number of other NST factors can be listed.

First, the rise of international terrorism dramatically altered the security perception in the region and urged a shift of emphasis from conventional threats to the NSTs. In other words, as Celac claims, “territorial defence, important as it is, tends to recede as the primary objective of security policy and to relinquish pride of place to a more comprehensive vision of security.”<sup>91</sup> Second, all of the regional countries have given political support to the global struggle against terror and its strategic location forced international actors to take the region into consideration and to seek new cooperative frameworks. Moreover, the necessity of cooperation has led to a growing awareness among regional countries for further security and intelligence cooperation in order to eliminate the threat. Hence, cooperative efforts have taken place at both the bilateral and multilateral levels. Last, given the fact that “it is easy for destabilized regions and weak or failed states to become breeding grounds of terrorism,”<sup>92</sup> the economic and political weakness of some Black Sea countries once again comes onto the agenda and this has produced an eagerness to find viable solutions to the chronic problems that the region has been facing for years.

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<sup>91</sup> Celac, p. 278.

<sup>92</sup> Pavliuk, “Introduction,” in *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building*, p. 6.



## Energy Politics in the Black Sea Region

Since the harmful environmental outcomes of the growing usage of carbon-based energy sources have been observed more and more in the recent years, the world has entered into a search process of the utilization of alternative energy sources which will cut down on the suffering of the earth. A quick look at the ads in one of the issues of the weekly *Economist* will reveal that even major energy companies are forced to offer new alternatives due mainly to rising public awareness and pressures. Yet, it is not quite clear how long the transformation from fossil fuels to renewable sources will take. Nevertheless, it unfortunately appears that fossil fuels and politics evolving around them will dominate the global energy debates for a considerable period. In this sense, as Celac argues, “competition for the political control of still vital traditional resources will grow rather than abate – and so will opportunities for the countries that are strategically positioned to take advantage of the newly arising circumstances.”<sup>93</sup>

This specified fact is of particular importance for the Black Sea countries and the future of regional cooperation. As has already been repeated a number of times, the Black Sea region has a key location between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East and this feature makes the region quite valuable for a number of policy domains. Energy is chief among them since “the wider Black Sea region straddles and indeed dominates the entire Euro-Asian energy corridor from trans-Ukrainian oil and gas pipelines running to the markets in Europe’s north to the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan pipeline running to the Mediterranean.”<sup>94</sup> The Black Sea region presents the sole

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<sup>93</sup> Celac, p. 281.

<sup>94</sup> Ronald D. Asmus and Bruce P. Jackson, “The Black Sea and Frontiers of Freedom,” *Policy Review*, no.125 (June 2004), p. 22.

alternative to Middle Eastern oil and is almost a monopoly in natural gas due to the Russian factor in meeting the growing energy demands of Europe.

In addition to its importance as the main energy transportation route from Central Asia and Russia to Europe and beyond, the region is itself a producer of oil and natural gas. The Black Sea basin has considerable amounts of oil reserves, albeit less than it has been found in Gulf oil fields. In terms of natural gas, Russia remains the major supplier of world markets and has a monopoly power over Europe.

Energy politics in the region are not restricted to the relations with outside actors but is a determiner of intra regional developments and the course of relations among regional countries as well. Due to its monopoly position in the region, Russia has been utilizing its energy card for sustaining its influence and increasing its interests in the former Soviet areas. In this sense, recent years have witnessed various energy crises between Russia and Ukraine, Georgia, and Belarus that have further complicated the energy game in the region. In fact, the Russian goal has been to destabilize the governments of the first two countries since these pro-Western governments are perceived as threats to Russian interests in the Black Sea region. In this sense, Russia has been pursuing an active policy of energy domination in the region.<sup>95</sup> Given this ambiguous environment regarding energy politics in the Black Sea, it appears that “promoting diversity of suppliers and transportation routes as well as developing alternative sources of energy and reducing dependence on volatile and risky regions and countries will be the major efforts of the near future.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ognyan Minchev, “Major Interests and Strategies for the Black Sea Region,” *Institute for Regional and International Studies Framework Analytical Review*, (September 2006), pp. 13-14.

<sup>96</sup> Necdet Pamir, “Energy and Pipeline Security,” in *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building*, ed. Oleksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze (New York: East West Institute (EWI), 2004), p. 135.

Turkey has a special place in the energy politics of the Black Sea region. It is precisely situated on both the Eastern-Western and Northern-Southern current and potential energy routes. This feature enables the country to occupy a central place in the global energy considerations. Turkey's role in the distribution of Caspian oil to international markets rose up with the activation of Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline in mid-2006. Regarding natural gas, as Roberts notes, "Turkey's ability to carry gas from a variety of current or prospective suppliers, including Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Iraq, and other parts of the Middle East and Egypt, to markets in Europe by means of pipelines across Turkey" will transform Turkey into another chief energy supplier to Europe.<sup>97</sup> While Turkey's emergence as an alternative for the European market is expected to generate fierce competition between Turkey and Russia, the recent course of relations between the two countries have proved these predictions wrong. Indeed, the activation of the Blue Stream gas pipeline bringing gas from Russia to Turkey across the Black Sea, "reinforced a burgeoning economic relationship between those two historic competitors."<sup>98</sup>

The side effects of the crises in the Black Sea region were strongly felt in European cities and hence forced these countries to consider energy security more seriously. In this respect, curbing the energy demand, sustaining uninterrupted and safe access to abundant energy by the diversification of current routes and suppliers, devising an energy technology plan for increasing efficient use of energy, the

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<sup>97</sup> John M. Roberts, "The Black Sea and European Energy Security," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, vol. 6 no. 2 (June 2006), pp. 216-217.

<sup>98</sup> *The Economist*, 28 May 2005.

establishment of a competitive internal energy market and shifting to alternative energy sources have become priorities of the EU's energy policy.<sup>99</sup>

Similar to the EU's policy, energy security means "a lot more than assigning more guards to derricks, pumping stations or refineries" for the Black Sea region countries. Indeed, as Celac argues, "it touches on the very essence of national interest and international stability, since it relates to a vital sustainable growth and increased prosperity."<sup>100</sup> In this sense, energy politics constitute a vital leg of relations, both cooperative and competitive, among the regional actors and "today pipelines are as important for geopolitical relations on the Eurasian continent as railways were all over Europe in the nineteenth century."<sup>101</sup>

#### Political Transformation: Reform Movements

The first wave of democratic transition took place in the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) during the fifteen years following the end of the Cold War. The second wave of this transition is related to the Western Balkans. With the anchor of the EU membership, the Balkan countries are expected to establish viable democracies in the near future. While the political transformation of these regions was on the agenda, the Black Sea regions integration to the western structures through a Black Sea wave of democratization was relatively neglected. However,

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<sup>99</sup> Commission of the European Communities, 8 March 2006, *Green Paper: A European Strategy for Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy*, [http://ec.europa.eu/energy/green-paper-energy/doc/2006\\_03\\_08\\_gp\\_document\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/green-paper-energy/doc/2006_03_08_gp_document_en.pdf) [10 December 2006].

<sup>100</sup> Celac, p. 282.

<sup>101</sup> Michael Thumann, "European Energy Security, The Black Sea and Russian Interests – Can There be a Common Strategy," in *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, ed. Ronald D. Asmus (Washington D.C.: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2006), p. 126.

developments in Ukraine and Georgia during the recent years have drawn attention to the political process at the core of the Black Sea region.

The colour revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia created a fresh start for political reform and democratization in the region. Although these movements have not been able to transform Ukraine and Georgia into democratic systems completely, they signified a critical turning point in the development of the region. Undeniably, democratization entered onto the agenda of the Black Sea region as a driving force, which ensured a central place in the future political development of the regional countries. While democratization has emerged as one of the main pillars of regional cooperation,<sup>102</sup> it also has contributed to the widening of friction lines that have already been in effect.

Governmental reform attempts in post-Soviet countries have raised concerns on the part of Russia. Moscow views these movements in its neighbourhood as a plot of the Western world. From the Russian perspective, the change of regime has reduced Russian influence in these countries and the West has penetrated into the backyard of Russia through these political manoeuvres. This perception of threat determines the Russian reaction to reform movements. Moscow strongly opposes any Western influence and reform in its domestic affairs and in the “near abroad.” This opposition has led to tensions between the new regimes of the Black Sea countries and Russia. Aware of their individual vulnerability against Russia, the reformist regimes in the region seek for ways to enhance cooperation. In this regard, they founded the GUAM Group<sup>103</sup> or the Community of Democratic Choice (CDC).<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Bert Mittel, 24 July 2006, *Frameworks and Areas of Cooperation in the Black Sea Region*, <http://harvard-bssp.org/publications/?id=262> [10 December 2006].

<sup>103</sup> GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) Group was formally founded as a political, economic, and strategic alliance designed to strengthen the independence and sovereignty of these

However, these initiatives have not been able to significantly strengthen these countries' position against Russia and have not produced tangible results yet.

Although the “fragile and inexperienced reformist elites tend to produce hectic political coalitions, easy to block while in government, overburdened by interpersonal animosities and discords,”<sup>105</sup> these reformist movements have been successful in changing the mentality of political thinking. Most importantly, the Ukrainian and Georgian reformist movements have urged the democratic societies to take the Black Sea region seriously, even to go beyond the boundaries of these two countries, and press for democratic transition in other authoritarian countries such as Armenia and Azerbaijan. Thus, the Western world has been able to apprehend the fact that it has “a key interest in seeing the countries of this region successfully transform themselves into the kind of democratic and stable societies that can, in turn, serve as a platform for the spread of Western values further east and south.”<sup>106</sup> In this respect, the Western institutions, particularly the EU and NATO, have historic responsibility in the transformation of the wider Black Sea region and the successful integration of it to Western world. In essence, as Sherr concludes, “if the area of the Black Sea is at risk of becoming a more dangerous place rather than a more coherent

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former Soviet Union republics. The group was expected to be a platform that would enable these countries to resist Russian suppression.

<sup>104</sup> The Community of Democratic Choice is an international organization established on December 2005 by nine states of Eastern Europe in Kiev. It was mainly signed by countries from the region between the Baltic, Black Sea, and Caspian Sea (“The three Seas”). Its main task is to promote democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in these regions.

<sup>105</sup> Minchev, p. 5.

<sup>106</sup> Asmus and Jackson, p. 22.

region, [therefore poses significant security threats to the surrounding regions, including Europe], the democratic deficit is very largely responsible.”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> James Sherr, “Democracy: The Missing Link,” in *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building*, ed. Oleksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze (New York: East West Institute (EWI), 2004), p. 245.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION (BSEC)

The idea of building a regional cooperation organization in the Black Sea region was initially proposed by Turkey in 1990 to the then-littoral states of the Black Sea, the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and Romania. The idea aroused interest among these states and preparations started for the establishment of a cooperation organization which would create a common Black Sea economic zone. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the demise of the socialist block, this initial attempt almost came to a standstill. Nevertheless, due to the intense efforts of Turkey and the special support of the USA, the project gradually revived in the two years following the end of the Cold War. Ultimately, an international summit was organized in Istanbul in June 1992 and the heads of states or governments of eleven Black Sea states<sup>108</sup> on 25 June 1992 signed the declaration on the Black Sea Economic Cooperation that drew the framework of the project. On the same day, they also adopted the Bosphorus Statement, which designated the political objectives of the cooperation.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> In addition to the six littoral states (Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Russian Federation, Georgia), five non-littoral states (Greece, Albania, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan) which have close ties with and special interests in the developments in the Black Sea signed the document and became the founding members of the BSEC. Serbia and Montenegro joined the BSEC as its twelfth member in April 2004. After the dissolution of this country, Serbia's membership continued, whereas Montenegro lost its member status.

<sup>109</sup> Tunç Aybak, "Black Sea Economic Cooperation and Turkey," in *Politics of the Black Sea: Dynamics of Cooperation and Conflict*, ed. Tunç Aybak (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001), p. 32.



## Founding Documents

In the BSEC declaration of 1992, the founding states announced that the initiative was a response to the rapid changes that had taken place in Europe. Based on the idea that “a prosperous and united Europe will evolve on shared values such as democracy based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, prosperity through economic liberty and social justice”, the Black Sea region states “aim to ensure that the Black Sea becomes a sea of peace, stability and prosperity, striving to promote friendly and good neighbourly relations.”<sup>110</sup> In this respect, they confirmed their “intention to develop economic cooperation as a contribution to the CSCE<sup>111</sup> process, to the establishment of a Europe-wide economic area, as well as to the achievement of a higher degree of integration of the Participating States into the world economy.”<sup>112</sup> In order to achieve these ends, the Black Sea states decided to promote “gradual economic cooperation” within a “comprehensive multilateral and bilateral” framework by realizing “projects of common interest” in fields such as “transport and communications including their infrastructure, informatics, exchange of economic and commercial information including statistics, standardization and certification of products, energy, mining and processing of mineral raw materials, tourism, agriculture and agro-industries, veterinary and sanitary protection, health care and pharmaceuticals, and science and technology.”<sup>113</sup> Additionally, the member

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<sup>110</sup> Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, 25 June 1992, *Summit Declaration on Black Sea Economic Cooperation*, [http://www.bsec-organization.org/documents.aspx?ID=Summit\\_Declarations&DID=26](http://www.bsec-organization.org/documents.aspx?ID=Summit_Declarations&DID=26) [25 February 2007].

<sup>111</sup> CSCE stands for the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. In 1995, this initiative was reorganized as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

<sup>112</sup> BSEC, *Summit Declaration on Black Sea Economic Cooperation*.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

states emphasized the importance of the protection of the environment of the Black Sea simultaneously with their economic development.

The founding states reiterated their willingness to promote “peaceful and constructive relations among their peoples, based on the general principles of the UN charter and the CSCE documents and with the objective of creating adequate conditions for a mutually beneficial prosperity”<sup>114</sup> in the Bosphorus Statement which followed the BSEC declaration. They stressed the existence of serious conflicts in the region and underlined the need to find peaceful solutions. In this regard, “they further reaffirmed their determination in resisting aggression, violence, terrorism and lawlessness and their resolve to help establish and restore peace and justice.”<sup>115</sup> Finally, they highlighted the role that the Black Sea region countries and people will play in the future of Europe and added that “the Black Sea Economic Cooperation constituted an effort that would facilitate the processes and structures of European integration.”<sup>116</sup>

#### Political Rationale behind the BSEC

The establishment of a Black Sea cooperation organization was originally a Turkish idea and it was Turkish officials who endeavoured most for the realization of this initiative following the disintegration of the USSR. Essentially, what Turgut Özal, the then-president of Turkey, had in mind was to create “an instrument to initiate free

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<sup>114</sup> Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, 25 June 1992, *The Bosphorus Statement*, [http://www.bsec-organization.org/documents.aspx?ID=Summit\\_Declarations&DID=26](http://www.bsec-organization.org/documents.aspx?ID=Summit_Declarations&DID=26) [25 February 2007].

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

circulation of individuals and goods in the Black Sea basin.”<sup>117</sup> This organization would contribute to the transformation of the former socialist economies and the integration of the regional economies with the global markets. In fact, deeper lay some other strategic and political considerations in the Turkish understanding, regarding Turkey’s position in the newly emerging post Cold War environment.

Turkey had occupied a special place in NATO during the Cold War due to its unique assets. It was the sole NATO member which had direct land frontiers with the USSR. Its territories were fundamental for the NATO’s military observation operations. The Turkish military was the second largest NATO army in terms of the numbers of its conventional forces. In addition, due to its control over the straits Turkey had the ability to control the maritime traffic in and out the Black Sea.

However, with the end of the bipolar confrontation, Turkish officials believed that this special place Turkey had enjoyed in the Western alliance would start to diminish. Given the shift in international community’s attention from the Cold War’s strongholds to regions such as Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and the Central Asia, Turkish officials entered into a search for a new strategy which would ensure Turkey a secure place in the new post Cold War international environment. Russia’s inability to maintain influence in the post-Soviet territories immediately after its collapse encouraged Turkey to seek influence in the Black Sea-Caucasus and Central Asia. Ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural similarities with most of the newly independent states of the Caucasus and Central Asia became major driving factors in Turkey’s initial engagement.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Cengiz Çandar, 3 July 2006, *Turkey: Connecting Link between the Greater Black Sea and the ‘Visionary’ EU*, <http://www.thenewanatolian.com/opinion-10075.html> [10 December 2006].

<sup>118</sup> Gökay, pp. 16-19.

In the early 1990s, Turkey tried to develop its relations with these states rapidly through economic and cultural agreements, humanitarian and in some instances military assistance. Turkish companies operating in construction, telecommunications, transportation, and finance established strong business connections in these new markets. Initially the newly independent states were pleased with Turkey's political and economic attention. In this environment, as Gökay notes, "...excited by the new opportunities emerging in its geostrategic space [ . . . ] Turkish statesmen looked with pride and confidence to a new world in which Turkey would shine as the star of Eurasia." Given the USA's backing of Turkey's attempt to acquire a central role in these regions, the prospects in its wider neighbourhood seemed to be positive for Turkey.<sup>119</sup>

Nevertheless, during the few years following Turkey's opening up to these newly independent states, it became apparent that this initial policy of establishing leadership in these regions and "embracing" these states were not feasible and indeed was overambitious. Essentially, Turkey lacked the necessary political, economic, and military means to assume any leadership role. Limited economic capabilities made it difficult to carry on the initial growth of economic relations in the form of investments and slowed down the pace of cooperation projects. Besides, it was also understood that the possible effects of cultural bonds with these states was exaggerated. In the Turkic Summit of 1992, the "Central Asian leaders made it clear that they neither desired nor envisaged an exclusive relationship with Turkey, or wished to become Turkey's younger brothers."<sup>120</sup> Moreover, they expressed their discomfort with Turkey's patronizing attitude. In addition to all these factors, the potential role and influence of Russia in these areas had been miscalculated. The

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-19.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. pp. 16-19.

organic links between the newly independent states and Russia were underestimated. After the initial shock of disintegration, Russia rapidly regained its power and sought to stop any Turkish domination in the areas that it perceived as its own backyard.<sup>121</sup> Given the fact that “Moscow would not accept the prospect of being reduced to just another country of the region [. . .] and could not accept the idea of losing an empire and the status of superpower,” it came up with the doctrine of “near abroad” in 1992 which asserted special Russian interests in these regions.<sup>122</sup>

Overall, Turkey’s proposal to establish a Black Sea cooperation organization perfectly fit into its expectations from the new global environment. In this sense, the BSEC was designed to contribute Turkey’s potential central role in the post Cold War period as a key regional power.<sup>123</sup> In other words, as Aybak suggests, “the BSEC was the product of Turkey’s, post Cold War, regionalist drive to locate itself at the centre of the Black Sea region.”<sup>124</sup>

While, Turkey was lured by the prospects of being a central power in its wider neighbourhood in the post Cold War era, Russia was experiencing an opposite process and “unlike Turkey, [it], in the 1990s, was in strategic retreat.”<sup>125</sup> Any increase in Turkey’s influence in the post Soviet areas was a contribution to this retreat and perceived as a threat from the Russian side. Hence, “Turkish expectations, i.e. to lead its BSEC partners towards integration with the EC and thus play unifying

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>122</sup> Nicholas Dima, “The Black Sea Region: New Economic Cooperation and Old Geopolitics,” *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, no.28 (Spring 2003), pp. 82-85.

<sup>123</sup> Cengiz Çandar, 3 July 2006, *Turkey: Connecting Link between the Greater Black Sea and the ‘Visionary’ EU*, <http://www.thenewanatolian.com/opinion-10075.html> [10 December 2006].

<sup>124</sup> Aybak, “Introduction,” in *Politics of the Black Sea: Dynamics of Cooperation and Conflict*, p. 4.

<sup>125</sup> Arkady Moshes, “Littoral States and Region Building Around the Black Sea,” in *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building*, ed. Oleksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze (New York: East West Institute (EWI), 2004), p. 66.

and vanguard role in the Black Sea and neighbouring regions, were not acceptable to Russia.<sup>126</sup> On the other hand, Turkey's proposal was received positively by the other littoral states since they considered involvement in the Black Sea economic cooperation as a good way of integrating with the rest of the world economy. They also perceived the organization as a way to diminish Russian influence in the Black Sea region further. Consequently, though it was not enthusiastic about the initiative, Russia realized that being left out of the project would be more harmful to its own interests and since "it could not afford to be left out," decided to join the cooperation.<sup>127</sup>

Nevertheless, Russia was not alone in its initial reluctance concerning the BSEC. There was also deep mistrust on the Greek side towards the organization. Greece perceived the BSEC as a new tool in Turkey's foreign policy which was aimed at increasing influence in its neighbourhood and assuming leadership role. As a result, Athens did not regard the BSEC as a beneficial institution for enhancing cooperation in the region. Thus, its participation in the organization as a founding member can be attributed to its goal of keeping Turkey establishing a hegemony in the region through the utilization of the organization. In this sense, Greece aimed to minimize Turkey's role and influence in the BSEC. On the other hand, Turkey's initial approach to Greece's participation as a founding member of the BSEC was positive. Given that Greece was closely connected to the Black Sea due to economic, cultural and historical factors and it had been the sole EU member state in the region until the recent Bulgarian and Romanian accessions, it was apparent that sustainable

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<sup>126</sup> Gökay, p. 18.

<sup>127</sup> Dima, p. 79.

and successful cooperation in the Black Sea region without the participation of Greece was not realistic.<sup>128</sup>

Although the BSEC encountered the suspicion of Athens and Moscow in the initial stages, with the gradual shift in Turkish foreign policy towards a less ambitious stance in the following years,<sup>129</sup> these major regional powers also started to perceive the organization as a useful tool for cooperation in the region. Indeed, Greece realized in due course that stability and prosperity in the Black Sea was to its own advantage, and hence any attempt to enhance cooperation in the region was beneficial.<sup>130</sup> Additionally, the emergence of a favourable atmosphere in bilateral relations between Turkey and Greece in the late 1990s contributed to the potential cooperation of the two countries within the BSEC framework.

Simultaneously, during the last fifteen years Turkish-Russian relations have gradually improved. Though problems persist in bilateral relations mainly concerning the Kurdish and Chechen separatism in Turkey and Russia respectively in the 1990s, the establishment of close economic relations based on the suitcase trade, construction projects and tourism has positively affected the mutual perceptions in the forthcoming years. This improvement in bilateral relations has been further strengthened by closer relations in energy sphere well into recent years.<sup>131</sup> Additionally, Russia understood that the fears of Turkey establishing regional hegemony within the framework of the BSEC are not well grounded. These positive

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<sup>128</sup> Aybak, "Black Sea Economic Cooperation and Turkey," in *Politics of the Black Sea: Dynamics of Cooperation and Conflict*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>129</sup> Moshes, p. 66.

<sup>130</sup> Tunç Aybak, "Black Sea Economic Cooperation and Turkey," in *Politics of the Black Sea: Dynamics of Cooperation and Conflict*, p. 52.

<sup>131</sup> Moshes, pp. 72-73.

developments in the bilateral relations of the major Black Sea powers multiplied the possibility of genuine cooperation in the region under the umbrella of BSEC.

Despite the initial negative perceptions among the major Black Sea states and other problems in the Black Sea region that adversely affected the cooperation opportunities, the BSEC, following its establishment, was able to obtain the support of its member states and, albeit at a slow pace, was able to develop into a valid regional organization. It offered the opportunity to meet and continue communication for its member states which have problems in their relations at various levels. In this sense, the BSEC emerged as a platform of dialogue among representatives and high officials of Black Sea states since “it was initially developed as a multilateral mechanism for regular meetings and consultations and the exchange of views and experiences.”<sup>132</sup> The BSEC meetings have enabled the officials of Black Sea states to meet in a common forum to discuss the problematic issues and seek enhancing cooperation in the region. In this framework, the BSEC was able to bring together the officials of “states that are in open conflict (Armenia-Azerbaijan), do not have diplomatic relations (Turkey-Armenia), experience long-lasting uneasiness in their relations (Turkey-Greece) and have difficulties in settling their bilateral agendas in various areas (Russia, Ukraine, Georgia and others).<sup>133</sup>

### Development and Institutionalization

Following the BSEC Declaration and Bosphorus Statement of 1992, the member states moved towards enhancing cooperation within the BSEC and pushed for the

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<sup>132</sup> Klypush-Tsintsadze, pp. 28-29.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., pp. 28-29.



establishment of necessary institutions in order to realize the goals set for regional cooperation.

The establishment of the BSEC Headquarters - the Permanent International Secretariat of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC PERMIS) - in March 1994 in Istanbul was an important turning point in the development of the BSEC. It was a sign that the initial suspicions regarding the BSEC were gradually disappearing and the member states were eager to solidify the organizations' structure and hence its capability to effectively operate for realizing cooperation on the specific areas.

The PERMIS is located at the core of the BSEC activities and designed to cover all the secretarial activities of the organization. It acts as a centre of communication among other BSEC organs and member states and performs the function of coordinating the cooperation initiatives and projects that fall under the BSEC framework. The Secretary General, the chief administrative officer of the PERMIS who is appointed for three-year periods, is responsible for the execution of the responsibilities of the PERMIS which functions under the authority of the Chairman-in-office of the BSEC.<sup>134</sup>

Initially, the BSEC was designed as a forum for member states, which lacked a legal status and international personality. It was a platform for realizing regional cooperation projects in various areas and searching for new cooperation opportunities. Nevertheless, in the following years the member states realized the need to transform the BSEC into an internationally recognized regional organization

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<sup>134</sup> Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *Regulations for the Staff of the Permanent International Secretariat of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation*, [http://www.bsec-organization.org/documents.aspx?ID=Statutory\\_Documents](http://www.bsec-organization.org/documents.aspx?ID=Statutory_Documents) [25 February 2007].

due to the increasing global importance of the Black Sea region and to further utilize the cooperation opportunities within the BSEC framework.

Under these circumstances, the member states “conscious of the growing role and importance of regional initiatives in promoting progress and shaping contemporary international life” and the benefits of enhancing economic cooperation in Black Sea region, recognized “that the progress of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation since its inception increased the need to consolidate the international legal personality of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation”<sup>135</sup> and decided to transform the BSEC into a regional economic organization.

The breakthrough in the development of the BSEC came when the heads of states or the governments of the member countries signed the Charter of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization on 5 June 1998 and established the BSEC as a regional economic organization. Following the ratification by the member states, the Charter entered into force on 1 May 1999, and the organization acquired an international legal identity and became a fully-fledged regional economic organization.<sup>136</sup> With the charter the goals, principles, and areas of cooperation were determined, the functions and responsibilities of the BSEC organs were drawn and the legal and institutional basis of the organization was embodied. In October 1999, the General Assembly of the United Nations granted the BSEC observer status and passed a resolution in which it urged the UN organs to hold consultations with the BSEC in order to engage in and facilitate cooperation in areas where joint action is

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<sup>135</sup> Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *Charter of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation*, <http://www.bsec-organization.org/main.aspx?ID=Charter> [25 February 2007].

<sup>136</sup> Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *About BSEC*, [http://www.bsec-organization.org/main.aspx?ID=About\\_BSEC](http://www.bsec-organization.org/main.aspx?ID=About_BSEC) [25 February 2007].

possible.<sup>137</sup> In this way, the BSEC became a member of the international community and consolidated its role as the main platform for cooperation in the Black Sea region.

The BSEC is an intergovernmental organization. The chairmanship rotates every six months among the member states and the chairman state is responsible for coordinating all activities and ensuring the implementation of all decisions within the BSEC framework. The principal regular decision making organ of the organization is the Council of Foreign Ministers. The Council meets at least once every six months, “decides on all issues pertaining to the functioning of the BSEC” and it “may charge subsidiary organs to make a decision on a particular question and inform the Council on it.” The Council decides on the “admission of new Member States in the BSEC, granting and extending of observer status to third states and international organizations, establishing dialogue partnership and sectoral dialogue partnership with third parties, creation of new organs of the BSEC; defining, modifying and terminating their mandates and structural mechanisms, adoption and modification of the Rules of Procedure, adoption of the agenda for the BSEC meetings if the issues included therein require consensus, approval of cooperation projects and financial commitments affecting all Member States” with the consent of all member states. In addition, resolutions are adopted on the basis of unanimity. Decisions on other issues can be taken by the 2/3 majority of the member states.<sup>138</sup>

The working groups assigned by the council of foreign ministers occupy a central place in the functioning of the organization. There are sixteen established

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<sup>137</sup> Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *BSEC Economic Agenda*, [http://www.bsec-organization.org/main.aspx?ID=BSEC\\_Economic\\_Agenda](http://www.bsec-organization.org/main.aspx?ID=BSEC_Economic_Agenda) [25 February 2007].

<sup>138</sup> BSEC, Charter of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation; and Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *Rules of Procedure of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)*, [http://www.bsec-organization.org/documents.aspx?ID=Statutory\\_Documents](http://www.bsec-organization.org/documents.aspx?ID=Statutory_Documents) [25 February 2007].

working groups specialized on subjects such as transport, banking, and finance, energy, cooperation in combating crime, environmental protection, emergency assistance, etc. These groups search for methods to expand cooperation, “draw up joint projects as well as pursuing the implementation of such projects/activities in their respective areas” and submit reports and recommendations to the council of foreign ministers. The Committee of Senior Officials, representing the foreign ministers of member states, reviews the work conducted by the working groups, evaluates the implementation of decisions and recommendations of the council, works on the organizational issues and deals with the formulation of the annual budget.<sup>139</sup> Both the working groups and committee work on a consultative basis.

In addition to these organs, there are several BSEC related bodies designed to contribute to its goals. The Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC (PABSEC), composed of the seventy-six parliamentarians of the member states, was established in June 1992. It contributes to BSEC objectives by creating a legal basis for cooperation and providing support for the legislations necessary for the implementation of BSEC decisions. The PABSEC also offers a common platform for the parliamentarians of the member states which contributes to the development of mutual understanding and willingness of regional cooperation between the member states’ parliaments. The BSEC Business Council is composed of the representatives of the business circles and designed to facilitate communication between the business communities and official circles of the member states. Given the economic cooperation logic of the BSEC, the business council aims to contribute realization of business related cooperation projects with the close participation of private business. The academic background for the cooperation initiatives in the Black Sea region is

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<sup>139</sup> BSEC, Charter of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

provided by the International Center for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), an independent research and training centre, established in Athens in 1998. The centre aims to study ways and methods to enhance cooperation in the Black Sea region and to foster BSEC-EU relations. The centre carries out research and suggests policy proposals in fields which are of interest to the BSEC. Last but not least, the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB) was established in June 1999 in order to contribute to the economic development of the region and the BSEC's economic goals by financing and promoting regional projects. Located in Thessalonica, the bank is financed by the member states and considered as the financial pillar of organization.<sup>140</sup>

Taken as a whole, the BSEC has been able to develop into a full-fledged regional organization with a defined set of objectives and procedures including a comprehensive institutional structure. It has a legal identity as a regional economic organization which is recognized by the international community. Its legal capacity enables it “to contract, to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property and to initiate legal proceedings.”<sup>141</sup> The decisions taken within the framework of BSEC have a binding effect on the member states. Although unanimity is sought for the most important decisions of the BSEC and the member countries have quite a number of discrepancies and disagreements, they were able to perpetuate the BSEC as a valid and functioning organization. Indeed, the gradual consolidation of the BSEC reveals the political willingness for cooperation among the member states.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *Related Bodies and Affiliated Centers*, [http://www.bsec-organization.org/related\\_bodies\\_affiliated\\_centers.aspx?DID=23](http://www.bsec-organization.org/related_bodies_affiliated_centers.aspx?DID=23) [25 February 2007]; and BSEC, Charter of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Klympush-Tsintsadze, p. 29.

## Areas of Cooperation

Given that economic development lies at the centre of its rationale, cooperation in trade and economic development has been considered as the locomotive of the BSEC process. The member states gave special importance to improving foreign trade with particular emphasis on intra regional trade. Increasing trade volumes has been considered as a way to foster the economic development of the regional states, widen the areas of cooperation, and thereby ensure prosperity in the region.<sup>143</sup>

Turning the region into a zone of trade and investment has been seen as a major goal. However, full economic integration on a regional scale is not defined as a goal since individual countries have obligations regarding their membership to other organizations, particularly to the EU. Since, Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania are EU members and Turkey has a customs union with the EU, it is not possible to establish a free trade area within the framework of the BSEC. Additionally, some BSEC members are WTO members while others remain non-members. This further complicates the situation and leads to the formulation of BSEC's goal as to facilitate economic activity in accordance with its stated objectives which is obviously a less ambitious goal than to full regional economic integration. In fact, an earlier attempt to liberalize trade in the BSEC region has failed due to the mentioned obstacles.<sup>144</sup> Indeed, given the inclination of the non-member Black Sea states to join the

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<sup>143</sup> Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *Areas of Cooperation – Trade and Economic Development*, [http://www.bsec-organization.org/areas\\_of\\_cooperation.aspx?ID=Trade\\_Economic\\_Development](http://www.bsec-organization.org/areas_of_cooperation.aspx?ID=Trade_Economic_Development) [25 February 2007].

<sup>144</sup> Sergiu Celac and Panagiota Manoli, "Towards a New Model of Comprehensive Regionalism in the Black Sea Area," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 6 no. 2 (June 2006), p. 196.

organization, the “WTO seems to be a more appropriate framework within which to facilitate the liberalization of regional trade amongst the BSEC countries.”<sup>145</sup>

Regarding investment and business development, attracting foreign direct investment remains a key factor in the economic development of the region given the scarcity of regional capital. Still, the establishment of the BSTDB and the activities of the BSEC Business Council are beneficial for supporting local investment in the BSEC region.<sup>146</sup> The BSEC members agreed on certain principles for fostering a favourable investment environment in the region but this did not create the expected outcomes per se. It appears that the exclusion of private business from the BSEC decision-making mechanisms and businesspersons’ lack of interest in utilizing the BSEC as a business development tool remain one of the major barriers to promoting economic development.<sup>147</sup>

Among the BSEC cooperation areas, communication and transportation occupy key places. The BSEC has been actively working on the development of the network of communication in the region and to this end has realized a number of important projects which have connected most of the regional states.<sup>148</sup> The improvement of regional communication opportunities is perceived as a major instrument to facilitate cooperation in other areas.

The BSEC members accept the development of transport and telecommunication networks as strategic components of national, regional, and international integration process. In this regard, the BSEC aims to create a regional

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<sup>145</sup> Tunç Aybak, “Black Sea Economic Cooperation and Turkey,” in *Politics of the Black Sea: Dynamics of Cooperation and Conflict*, p. 39.

<sup>146</sup> Klympush-Tsintsadze, p. 31.

<sup>147</sup> Celac and Manoli, p. 197.

<sup>148</sup> Klympush-Tsintsadze, p. 30.

transport network which is fully integrated into the European transport networks. Particular attention is paid to the Pan-European corridors No. #7, 8, and 9, which connect the Danube-Don-Volga, the Adriatic Sea-Black Sea-Central Asia and the Baltic Sea-Center of Russia-Azov Sea-Black Sea.<sup>149</sup> In line with this goal, the BSEC particularly emphasizes the establishment of a seven thousand kilometres long ring road around the Black Sea and a network of ports on the Black Sea, Caspian, and Mediterranean.<sup>150</sup> These networks will link the European transport network with the whole Black Sea region and beyond and contribute to economic activity and human interaction within the region.<sup>151</sup> Indeed, the establishment of region wide transportation networks is recognized as a practical contribution to boosting economic interaction in the region hence as a vital function of the BSEC.

Given the vast energy resources in the region and its increasing importance as a global energy hub, cooperation in the energy sphere within the BSEC framework is gradually gaining more importance among the member states. Although energy politics related to oil and natural gas have been a source of friction and national interests have avoided virtually any cooperation in this field. Long-term planning and prioritization of energy projects on a gradual basis would be an opportunity for the Black Sea cooperation and “may significantly contribute to the creation of lasting peace and accelerate BSEC wide progress and prosperity.”<sup>152</sup> Initiating and

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<sup>149</sup> Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *Areas of Cooperation – Transport*, [http://www.bsec-organization.org/areas\\_of\\_cooperation.aspx?ID=Transport](http://www.bsec-organization.org/areas_of_cooperation.aspx?ID=Transport) [25 February 2007].

<sup>150</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, *Transcript of Speech by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at the Fifteenth Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs*, [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/2504c1464b13542dc325721a00251beb?OpenDocument](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/2504c1464b13542dc325721a00251beb?OpenDocument) [12 January 2007].

<sup>151</sup> Michael Kuser, 16 October 2006, *BSEC Pursues Black Sea Ring Road and Ports Project*, <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=56780> [10 February 2007].

<sup>152</sup> Klympush-Tsintsadze, p. 31.



continuing energy cooperation at technical level and avoiding political aspects to obstruct the potential would be a sustainable method to push energy cooperation into the BSEC agenda. Apart from oil and natural gas, a project which connects the electric power systems of all member states in order to “bring about a rational and more effective production and utilization of electric power in the region” is under progress within the BSEC framework.<sup>153</sup>

Another area of cooperation within the BSEC which has gradually received higher priority is cooperation in combating organized crime. Being aware of the serious threats that organized crime poses to the health, security and welfare of human beings and the detrimental effects on the economic, cultural and political foundations of society, the member states agreed to cooperate closely on the issue of fighting against organized crime within the BSEC framework.<sup>154</sup> To this end, the member states signed an agreement on cooperation in combating crime, in particular in its organized form, in October 1998. With the agreement, the member states decided to cooperate for the prevention, suppression, detection, disclosure, and investigation of crimes such as acts of terrorism, drugs trade, illegal weapons trade, any form of smuggling, criminal activities related to migration, corruption, and high-tech crime. The agreement determined the forms and means of cooperation.<sup>155</sup> In order to deepen cooperation in this field, the BSEC members signed two additional protocols on March 2002 and December 2004. With the first one, they agreed to set

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<sup>153</sup> Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *Areas of Cooperation – Energy*, “[http://www.bsec-organization.org/areas\\_of\\_cooperation.aspx?ID=Energy](http://www.bsec-organization.org/areas_of_cooperation.aspx?ID=Energy) [25 February 2007].

<sup>154</sup> Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *Areas of Cooperation – Cooperation in Combating Crime*, [http://www.bsec-organization.org/areas\\_of\\_cooperation.aspx?ID=Cooperation\\_in\\_Combating\\_Crime](http://www.bsec-organization.org/areas_of_cooperation.aspx?ID=Cooperation_in_Combating_Crime) [25 February 2007].

<sup>155</sup> Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, 2 October 1998, *Agreement Among the Governments of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Participating States on Cooperation in Combating Crime, in Particular in its Organized Form*, <http://www.bsec-organization.org/documents.aspx?ID=Agreements> [25 February 2007].

up a BSEC Central Network of Liaison Officers in Combating Crime, which aims to facilitate coordination between the member states and to establish an information exchange network.

In addition to the specified areas, the member states carry on cooperation in several other areas such as environmental protection, agriculture, education, science and technology, culture and small and medium sized enterprises. Various regional projects are in progress in these cooperation areas.

### Major Obstacles to Cooperation

Though the BSEC has been able to develop gradually during the fifteen years of its existence and achieved considerable success in a number of fields, there are several obstacles to fostering cooperation that limit the ability of the organization to widen and deepen its functions. Among these problems, the internal weakness of the member states has been the foremost problem that the region and the organization face. The economic and political problems that persist in the BSEC states hamper effective cooperation. Even the richest countries of the BSEC region lack the necessary means to lead the organization and to contribute significantly in financial terms. In this sense, the economic weakness of the regional states hampers the success of the BSEC. Apart from this, the diversity of member states in political, economic, cultural, and military terms and the multiplicity of national interest which intersect with each other in many instances slow down the development of cooperation.

The persistence of regional conflicts has a central role in the disharmony of national policies of the member states. Given the Black Sea identity is not prior to

other identities, the BSEC may fail to obtain the strong commitment of member states most of the time and lacks necessary visibility in the public opinion.<sup>156</sup>

Last but not least, the institutional weaknesses of the organization are an obstacle to enhance cooperation as well. While the decision-making mechanism impedes the realization of cooperation projects, the institutional structure of the organization is often criticized for being over bureaucratized. Furthermore, coordination problems between BSEC organs and the lack of strategic planning on the basis of the determination of priorities and targets constitute serious obstacles for the realization of the full potential of the BSEC.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Klypush-Tsintsadze, pp. 35-37.

<sup>157</sup> BSEC, BSEC Economic Agenda.

## CHAPTER 5

### EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION AND THE BLACK SEA REGION

#### A Test Case: Central and Eastern Europe

Following the end of the Cold War, the integration of the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) with the Western world became a priority. The 1990s and the first half of the first years of the twenty-first century witnessed the intense efforts of both Central and Eastern European (CEE) and Western politicians and populations for the successful accession of the CEECs into the major Western institutions including the Council of Europe, NATO, the EU, etc. After decades of decoupling from the rest of Europe, during this fifteen years long process, the CEE has ceased to exist as the periphery of Europe, converged with the Western world and finally regenerated at the very centre of the European continent. During this period, the CEECs have passed through a painful and rapid process of transformation, not only in political and economic, but also in social and cultural terms. This transformation has led to a redefinition of the concept of Europe; mental categories that portray the boundaries of the old continent have been redrawn in a new format which undoubtedly allocates a central place to these countries.

The basic political rationale behind the efforts to transform the CEECs was to provide unending security and stability to the European continent in the post Cold War era. This political goal could not be considered separately from ensuring economic prosperity that is based on long-term sustainable economic development through the transformation of the former socialist states into Western style free

market economies. At the end, the goal was to create a unified and peaceful Europe with stable democratic regimes and prosperous societies. Today, with Bulgarian and Romanian accession to the EU at the beginning of 2007, the goal of integrating the CEE into the Western world is almost completed.<sup>158</sup> Now, the former socialist countries are fully integrated into the Western institutions and as was highlighted in the European Security Strategy document, “Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free.”<sup>159</sup> However, many experts believe that this success is not an end in itself; rather it signifies an important step in the reunification process of European continent. In this sense, there is a “strategic argument that the extension of the institutions of the Euro Atlantic community from the Western end of the Black Sea to the Eastern end [is] the next step in the project of reunify Europe.”<sup>160</sup>

Two major Western institutions have assumed leading roles in the integration of the CEECs into the Western world. NATO’s continuous enlargement towards the East has widened the security umbrella of the Western alliance and constituted a milestone in the CEECs post Cold War restructuring. NATO membership not only converted the militaries and security institutions of these countries, but also contributed to the reshaping of perceptions. In this sense, NATO membership was an assurance of the incontestable place of the region within the Western world in the post Cold War era. The second major actor of this process was the EU. The prospects of EU membership created the main drive for rapid reforms in the region. The harmonization of almost every aspect of political, economic, and social life with the EU norms and practices ensured a smooth process of transition and consolidated

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<sup>158</sup> This process will be finalized after the NATO and EU membership of entire Western Balkans.

<sup>159</sup> Commission of the European Communities, *A Secure Europe in a Secure World: European Security Strategy*.

<sup>160</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, “Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea,” in *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, ed. Ronald D. Asmus (Washington, D.C.: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2006), p. 16.

their integration with the Western world. In this regard, the CEECs accession to the EU has accomplished what was started by the NATO enlargement and these two institutions have assumed complementary goals in this process.

### Euro-Atlantic Integration and the Black Sea Region

The successful transformation of the CEECs and its positive outcomes for Europe in terms of increasing security and prosperity has urged the Western world to consider the prospects of widening the Euro Atlantic integration further into the East.

Essentially, with the latest round of enlargement, the Euro Atlantic institutions became Black Sea actors. From another perspective, for the Black Sea region, which has been perceived as the periphery of Europe and often ignored by the Western powers compared to the CEECs, integration with the Western World emerged as a real possibility.

As has already been discussed, the Black Sea region is in a process of gaining increasing importance with its strategic location between Central Asia, the Middle East and Europe. As a transit route of trade and energy between these regions and with its population and economic potential, the Black Sea is of utmost importance for Europe's strategic interests. The Black Sea region has also had an important place in the Euro-Atlantic security structure. It is accepted that the region is an essential part of Euro-Atlantic security.<sup>161</sup> In this sense, the deterioration of the security situation in the region can have a domino effect and negatively affect European security. In other words, the stability of the Black Sea region has direct repercussions on the stability of Europe. As a result, the democratization of the regional countries, the political and

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<sup>161</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 28 June 2004, *NATO Istanbul Summit Communique*, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2004/pr04-096e.htm> [20 March 2007].

economic development of the region is significant for the Western world. Thus, what had been envisaged for the CEECs fifteen years ago holds true, to a certain extent, for the Black Sea region as well.

In this regard, as Asmus and Jackson suggests, “the successful example of the ‘Big Bang’ of NATO and EU enlargements has helped awaken aspirations in the wider Black Sea region.”<sup>162</sup> Following the last Euro Atlantic enlargement, the Black Sea region countries and the Western powers sought to establish closer institutional links with the EU and NATO through the frameworks of specific programs and projects. Cooperation within these frameworks and increasing Western interest in the region gave rise to hopes of future membership for both organizations. Regional governments expressed their willingness to intensify cooperation and some of them openly declared their willingness to join these two Western clubs. Indeed, “a new generation of democratic leaders in the region openly proclaimed the desire to bring their countries closer to and eventually to join the Euro-Atlantic community.”<sup>163</sup> While the US-led NATO supported enlargement towards the Black Sea region and expressed a positive view regarding closer cooperation with the regional actors, the EU assumed a more cautious approach and kept itself at a distance to widening further into the region. Instead of taking an overambitious stance and directly offering membership, the EU expanded its neighbourhood policy as to cover the regional countries. Although the EU did not openly declare its willingness for future membership of the regional states, it did not completely close the door. Overall, a Western strategy for the full integration of the Black Sea region with the Euro-Atlantic structures is built upon the potential roles of NATO and the EU in the region.

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<sup>162</sup> Asmus and Jackson, p. 19.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

Nevertheless, the development of a Western strategy for the Black Sea region has a number of problems. Obviously, such a strategy should take into account the expectation of the regional states and satisfy their demands. Given the diversity of interests in the region, this goal appears to pose serious difficulty. This is especially true when one considers the growing Russian resistance to the West's efforts to penetrate into the Black Sea region. It is a well-known fact that Russia is concerned with NATO's goal to further enlarge towards the Black Sea region and to accept Ukraine and Georgia to membership. Additionally, the US objective to realize the NATO naval presence in the Black sea, raises serious concerns not only for Russia but also for a long-lasting NATO ally, Turkey. In addition to these obstacles for a Euro-Atlantic strategy, the lack of a strong commitment on the part of the Western countries, both within the framework of NATO and the EU, also complicates the picture and makes it harder to devise a common strategy towards the region. In the next sections, these issues will be elaborated in a more detailed fashion.

### The USA and NATO

Essentially, NATO has been a Black Sea power for more than five decades. During the Cold War, with Turkish membership, NATO's frontiers reached the shores of the Black Sea and the region became a border between the Western alliance and the Socialist block. Following the end of the Cold War, with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, new states emerged and the former socialist countries' policies dramatically changed. These developments led to a shift in the politics of the Black Sea region. The last NATO enlargement added more importance to the Black Sea from the perspective of the alliance. Bulgarian and Romanian accession to the



organization consolidated the alliance's role in the Black Sea. This generated the first impetus for the development of a strategy for the Black Sea countries in the post Cold War era.

The most important blow triggering a NATO strategy for the region came with the terrorist attacks in the USA on 11 September 2001. Following this important event, a new page was opened in the history of the alliance. The allies' perception of a new threat environment led to the formation of a military concept for defence against terrorism. The allies sought intensified cooperation in military and intelligence cooperation against the threats posed by international terrorism. In this context, given its relevance to the new threats due to its bridge and barrier functions, regional security cooperation in the Black Sea emerged as a particular item on the agendas of the USA and NATO.<sup>164</sup>

Another important topic that created attention in the part of NATO is energy security. Given the Black Sea region's role as a strategic transit route of energy between the European markets and the Caucasus and Caspian, the region has a key place in ensuring the energy security of the Western world with its capacity to diversify the current energy supplies. In this regard, the existence of stable and reliable governments on this strategic route is particularly important. The alliance has a special place in providing the necessary means to anchor the regional countries in the Western world.

The democratic development of the region has gained particular attention with the twenty-first century, following the colour revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia. Given the existence of democratic and stable regimes are vital for ensuring peace and security in the wider Europe, it is particularly important for the Western

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<sup>164</sup> Jeffrey Simon, 19 January 2006, *Black Sea Regional Security Cooperation: Building Bridges and Barriers*, <http://harvard-bssp.org/publications/?id=210> [10 December 2006].

world to support the reformist regimes that came to power in Ukraine and Georgia. NATO is expected to play a key role in the anchoring of these rapidly transforming nation states into the western world. In fact, the democratic movements in these countries have played a significant roles in the emergence of a responsibility within Western circles. The earlier successful experiences of the CEECs convinced the Western officials to mobilize the prospects of NATO membership for the Black Sea states for guarantying the continuity of the reform aspirations in the region. The role assigned to NATO in this picture is to contribute to the democratization with the possible accession of Ukraine and Georgia which will ensure these countries place in the Euro Atlantic world and assist them to countervail the destabilizing side effects of this rapid democratization process. In essence, this move will not only contribute to democracy building in these two countries, but is expected to create a favourable environment for the flourishing of reformist agendas in other countries in the Black Sea region. Therefore, the ultimate goal is to ensure security and peace in wider Europe with the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Black Sea region countries, which will consolidate democracy and stability in the end.<sup>165</sup>

#### The US Policy toward the Region

Nevertheless, the US official view regarding the Black Sea is of utmost importance for the development of a comprehensive strategy towards the region. Given its proclamation that extending democracy, security, and free market economy further into Europe's East is beneficial for the Western World, the US is the main driving force behind a concrete strategy which will enable the successful integration of the

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<sup>165</sup> Asmus, "Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea," in *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, p. 17.

region with the west. The US interest stems also from the three main factors discussed above, promotion of democracy and liberal values, ensuring uninterrupted energy flows and trade and establishing a security environment. In this context, the US aims to employ specific programs which will involve the regional governments, multilateral organizations, private sector and non-governmental organizations.<sup>166</sup> In this sense, as Bryza states, “the US vision for Black Sea cooperation is non-exclusive and premised on building regional cooperation with concrete, feasible projects.”<sup>167</sup>

The importance of the most effective use of already existing organizations in the future strategy is acknowledged. In this regard, the programs are devised in special ways in order to contribute to the existing cooperation schemes. The US works with the BSEC in the areas of economy and environment. In terms of energy security, “the ultimate goal of the US is a ring of pipelines circumventing the Black Sea, with Gasprom continuing to supply Europe to the North and a Southern Corridor from the Caspian Sea and Iraq providing healthy commercial competition via Turkey into the rest of Europe.” Within the context of promoting democracy and enhancement of civil society, the US plans to contribute to the Black Sea Trust, which would support democracy building, civil society development, and good governance. Last, regarding security cooperation, the US and NATO support border security initiatives which aims to avoid the illicit trafficking of drugs, human beings and WMD materials and also welcome the Turkish-led naval security cooperation, the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR) and its related

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<sup>166</sup> Matthew J. Bryza, “The Policy of the United States toward the Black Sea Region,” in *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, ed. Ronald D. Asmus (Washington, D.C.: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2006), pp. 37-42.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

Operation Black Sea Harmony (OBSH).<sup>168</sup> Essentially, maritime security in the Black Sea and its political implications are of significance for Euro-Atlantic integration and the future of regional cooperation, hence is worthy of particular attention.

### Maritime Security and Colliding Interests

The maritime security of the Black Sea stands as an important factor in the build up of a regional dimension in the region. This importance not only arises from the fact that this issue is perceived as a vital domain by the leading regional powers, but also it has considerable impact on the prospects of the future of efficient regional cooperation and the Euro Atlantic integration.

The Black Sea region has historically been a zone of contention between the littoral states surrounding it and leading global powers. Until the rise of the Russian Empire, it was an inner lake of the Ottoman Empire. With the nineteenth century, the Black Sea witnessed fierce hostilities between these two empires and the great powers of the era often interfered in Black Sea politics. Following the disintegration of the Ottoman and Russian Empires and with the implementation of the Montreux Convention,<sup>169</sup> the legal status of the Turkish straits was determined and hence the naval regime of the Black Sea was finalized. In fact, even during tense period of the Cold War, thanks to Montreux, the Black Sea was “kept out of major international focus” and “remained largely immune to confrontation between the two

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., pp. 40-42.

<sup>169</sup> The Montreux Convention was signed on 20 July 1936 by Bulgaria, France, Great Britain, Greece, Japan, Romania, Turkey, the USSR, and Yugoslavia.

superpowers.”<sup>170</sup> In this sense, a certain balance was set in the Black Sea which basically avoided the resurfacing of historical tensions.

This balance and the legal regime of the straits and the Black Sea are fundamentally important for Turkey. The Montreux Convention confirms Turkish jurisdiction over the straits; Turkey’s control over the straits is internationally guaranteed. In addition, the Montreux Convention, together with the Lousanne Treaty are the founding documents of the Turkish Republic as a sovereign nation state. Furthermore, the status of the Turkish straits and Turkey’s implicit control over the Black Sea maritime activity enables Turkey to have a central place in the politics of the region which is currently dominated with globally important subjects such as the energy security, reform movements, frozen conflicts and new security threats including the struggle against terrorism.<sup>171</sup>

The Montreux Convention sets certain limits to the non-Black Sea states’ naval presence in the Black Sea. Any individual state’s deployment is limited with nine warships and the total weight of these ships cannot exceed 30,000 tons. Additionally, total non-Black Sea fleets that patrol in the Black Sea at the same time cannot exceed 45000 tonnes. Submarines and aircraft carriers of non-Black Sea states are not allowed into the Black Sea. Furthermore, the convention limits the

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<sup>170</sup> Suat Kınıkloğlu, “Turkey’s Black Sea Policy: Strategic Interplay at a Critical Junction,” in *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, ed. Ronald D. Asmus (Washington, D.C.: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2006), p. 56.

<sup>171</sup> Zeynep Güranlı, 13 April 2006, *The Montreux Dilemma*, <http://www.thenewanatolian.com/tna-4689.html> [20 March 2007]; Kınıkloğlu, “Turkey’s Black Sea Policy: Strategic Interplay at a Critical Junction,” in *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, p. 57.

period that the non-Black Sea states can deploy navies in the Black Sea to twenty-one days.<sup>172</sup>

Under these circumstances, Turkey, as a key and indispensable player in the region, has a Black Sea policy which is based on a clear distinction between maritime security and the wider Black Sea regional security issues. For Turkey, the Montreux Convention is vital to keeping the balance in the Black Sea maritime domain. The Convention is the single most important document that ensures maritime stability and avoids any confrontation between the littoral states.<sup>173</sup> In this sense, it is also critical in maintaining the balance between Turkey and Russia in the Black Sea, and hence helps to keep the improvement in Turkish-Russian relations on track.<sup>174</sup>

So, what makes Turkey anxious about the existing status in the Black Sea and the Montreux Convention? This is where the Western interests, particularly those of the US, and NATO involvement in the Black Sea region enter into the picture. In 2005, the US announced its goal of expanding current NATO maritime mission in the Mediterranean, namely Operation Active Endeavour,<sup>175</sup> by including the Black Sea.<sup>176</sup> With this goal, the US wanted not only to ensure the security of the Black Sea

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<sup>172</sup> Hryhoriy Perepelytsya, "Military and Naval Balance in the Black Sea Region," in *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building*, ed. Oleksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Klymush-Tsintsadze (New York: East West Institute (EWI), 2004), pp. 194-195.

<sup>173</sup> Kınıkkoğlu, "Turkey's Black Sea Policy: Strategic Interplay at a Critical Junction," in *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, pp. 56-60.

<sup>174</sup> Sergei Shakarjants, 28 February 2006, *The Black Sea – Caspian Gambit*, <http://harvard-bssp.org/publications/?id=227> [20 March 2007].

<sup>175</sup> Operation Active Endeavour was established in the Mediterranean Sea in accordance with the international fight against terrorism following the September 11 terrorist attacks against the US. The operation aims at monitoring commercial ships to deter criminal and potential terrorist activity. The force consists of a combination of naval units from the United States, Britain, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and Turkey. Russia and Ukraine have also offered support and the modalities of their participation are being finalized.

<sup>176</sup> Senem Çağlayan, 2 March 2006, *Turkey Sees No Need for NATO Operation in Black Sea*,

as part of the fight against terrorism, but also to enter into the region with its military assets, to consolidate its place and thereby actively contribute to the transformation process in the region. In this sense, the US assesses the region from a broader perspective which includes supporting political and social change and the enhancement of a market economy system in the region, in addition to the view based on the security domain.<sup>177</sup>

Turkey finds the US policy dangerous for the stability of the region. Given the negative consequences of the US intervention in Iraq and its detrimental effects on the neighbouring countries, Turkey wants to avoid its northern sphere of influence to sharing a similar fate. Moreover, such a policy shift in the region would agitate Russia and might jeopardize rapidly developing Turkish-Russian relations.<sup>178</sup> In this context, as Kınıklıoğlu argues, “Turkey believes that excluding Russia from a Black Sea strategy or allowing NATO navies to have a physical presence in the maritime domain will significantly alter the balance of power in the Black Sea region and would, unnecessarily create tension in the region.”<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, given its restrictions on the presence of non-Black Sea navies in the Black Sea, the expansion of the NATO mission is not possible as long as the legal regime provided by the Montreux Convention is in force. In this sense, Turkey also has felt uncomfortable since this move can call the Montreux Convention’s validity into question.<sup>180</sup>

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<http://www.thenewanatolian.com/tna-1926.html> [20 March 2007].

<sup>177</sup> Erdal Şafak, 2 March 2006, Black Sea Crisis (*Karadeniz Krizi*), <http://www.sabah.com.tr/2006/03/02/yaz08-40132.html> [20 March 2007].

<sup>178</sup> Zeynep Güranlı, 13 April 2006, *The Montreux Dilemma*, <http://www.thenewanatolian.com/tna-4689.html> [20 March 2007].

<sup>179</sup> Kınıklıoğlu, “Turkey’s Black Sea Policy: Strategic Interplay at a Critical Junction,” in *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, p. 58.

<sup>180</sup> In his testimony before the Subcommittee on European Affairs-Committee on Foreign Relations of the US Senate, entitled “The Future of Democracy in the Black Sea Region” on 8 March 2005, influential neo-conservative Senator Bruce Pittman Jackson openly declared that the “archaic”

As a result, Turkey has firmly sided with Russia, which strongly opposes NATO navies in the Black Sea, and rejected the expansion of Operation Active Endeavour. On the other hand, at the initial stages, Bulgaria and Romania seemed to support the initiative and Ukraine and Georgia found it favourable.<sup>181</sup>

Turkey argues that as three of the six littoral states are NATO members, a new NATO initiative in the Black Sea is bluntly unnecessary. Moreover, there are already established mechanisms in the Black Sea which are specifically focused on maintaining maritime security. Turkey assumed the leadership role of cooperation on this issue and in April 2001 the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR) was established. Currently, all littoral states contribute to its operations and the task force is available for employment in the United Nations (UN) or the Organization For Security And Cooperation In Europe (OSCE)-mandated operations.<sup>182</sup> Its goal of combating with new security threats makes BLACKSEAFOR a major contribution to security not only in the Black Sea but also in Europe.

Furthermore, in March 2004, Turkey initiated another mechanism that aimed at guarantying maritime security in the Black Sea. Operation Black Sea Harmony (OBHS) was designed as a NATO affiliated operation in which Turkey shared information with the NATO assets operating in Mediterranean. What Turkey wishes is to make the OBHS a multinational operation and keep it as a complementary to

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Montreux Convention should be overturned in order to enable the extension of Operation Active Endeavor to the Black Sea. On the other hand, other US officials, for instance Kurt Volker - a high-ranking official of the US State Department, refrained from alienating Turkey, assumed a more cautious approach and declared that the US has no intention to create pressure on a NATO member state about this issue by using NATO.

<sup>181</sup> Senem Çağlayan, 2 March 2006, *Turkey Sees No Need for NATO Operation in Black Sea*, <http://www.thenewanatolian.com/tna-1926.html> [20 March 2007].

<sup>182</sup> Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR), *Operational Aspects*, [http://www.blackseafor.org/English/Operational\\_Home.asp](http://www.blackseafor.org/English/Operational_Home.asp) [20 March 2007].



NATO's Active Endeavour Operation in Mediterranean.<sup>183</sup> Presently, Russia is contributing to this initiative and Ukraine declared its intention to join.<sup>184</sup> In addition, Romania is allegedly close to joining and Georgia is participating in related intelligence activities.<sup>185</sup>

During the BLACKSEAFOR and Black Sea Harmony operations, the participating naval assets detected quite few threats which illustrated that the Black Sea is a relatively secure environment.<sup>186</sup> The US officials also accept that currently there are no serious threats in the Black Sea as such. However, this security environment should be sustained by continuous monitoring of maritime activity. Nevertheless, for the time being, the US officials have changed their earlier policy of pushing for direct NATO involvement in the Black Sea and have devised a new strategy which rather emphasizes Turkey's leadership role in the region. In this sense, the shift in the US policy in the last couple of months reveals that the US realizes its allies' reservations and concerns regarding this issue and tried to achieve Turkey's support. To this end, the US has started to promote the value of the Black Sea Harmony for regional security and asked the other states to actively contribute to this operation.<sup>187</sup> Consequently, these milder policies facilitate multilateral cooperation in the Black Sea, contribute to the progress in the Western World's

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<sup>183</sup> Kınıklioğlu, "Turkey's Black Sea Policy: Strategic Interplay at a Critical Junction," in *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, p. 61.

<sup>184</sup> Ayhan Şimşek, 10 July 2006, *Ukraine to Join Black Sea Harmony*, <http://www.thenewanatolian.com/tna-10494.html> [20 March 2007].

<sup>185</sup> Joshua Kucera, 2 March 2007, *US Develops a Strategic Black Sea Plan*, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=17314> [3 March 2007].

<sup>186</sup> Suat Kınıklioğlu, 16 June 2006, *Struggling was the Black Sea*, <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/article.cfm?id=194> [10 December 2007].

<sup>187</sup> Joshua Kucera, 2 March 2007, *US Develops a Strategic Black Sea Plan*, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=17314> [3 March 2007].

relations with the region's countries and keep the US and NATO from being perceived as dodgy actors for the region.

### The EU and the Black Sea Region

Stability and security in the near vicinity of the Black Sea region is of utmost importance for the EU. Indeed, Europe's own security and prosperity is directly related to the developments in the European neighbourhood. In this sense, the existence of democratic and stable regimes with functioning liberal economies in its immediate neighbourhood is an advantage for the EU. Being aware of this fact, the EU has devised various strategies and policies that are aimed at enhancing cooperation with the neighbouring regions and facilitating the political and economic transformation of the countries in these regions. The EU developed the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in order to offer a European perspective for the countries in its neighbourhood at a time when further enlargements did not appear in its agenda for the short and medium term. In addition to the ENP, the EU devised regional strategies for improving relations with its neighbour states and contributing to regional cooperation schemes. In this context, the EU put into practice the Northern Dimension, the Stabilization and Association process for South East Europe, and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. With these initiatives all of the EU's surrounding regions were included in regional strategies, except the Black Sea region. In other words, "the Black Sea has so far been the only natural region of the EU's periphery to have been ignored."<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Emerson, p. 6.

Essentially, the EU's policy towards the Black Sea region has so far developed on the basis of bilateral relations with the regional states and various sectoral initiatives. The EU has lacked a coherent regional strategy towards the region; its approach diverge at certain levels and this leads to overlaps in various fields. A number of regional countries are members of the EU, some others are currently undergoing accession negotiations. The EU's relations with Russia are conducted through a partnership and cooperation agreement and the understanding of four common spaces. On the other hand, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan are included in the ENP framework.

The ENP, which emerged as a potential tool for anchoring the neighbouring regions to Europe, enabled the EU to deepen its relations with the regional countries but at the same time avoid building a comprehensive strategy. The lack of a strategic objective in the form of prospective membership created mixed feelings among the countries included.<sup>189</sup> In addition, the initial hesitation of the Union in including South Caucasian countries in the ENP framework also injured the initiatives potential opening up to the Black Sea region.

In addition to bilateral relations and the ENP, the EU's approach towards the region is composed of a number of sectoral initiatives. Although these initiatives are critical in addressing particular concerns, together they lack coherent targets and an integrated approach to the region. The Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe (INOGATE), the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) and the Danube Black Sea Environmental Task Force (DANBLAS) are among these sectoral initiatives.

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<sup>189</sup> Carl Hartzell, "Developing the European Union's Role in its Eastern Neighbourhood: Managing Expectations and Setting a Common Agenda," in *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, ed. Ronald D. Asmus (Washington, D.C.: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2006), p. 72.

Nevertheless, with the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, the Black Sea's significance for the EU has considerably increased. Given the region's increasing geostrategic importance on the grounds of sustainable security, energy diversification and the spread of Western values within the context of democratization trends, the EU does not have the luxury to ignore the Black Sea as a region. Given the transnational nature of the challenges and opportunities originating from the region, it is not possible for the EU and the regional governments to tackle these through bilateral or sectoral initiatives.<sup>190</sup> Indeed, the realities of the region clearly necessitate a holistic approach and a strategy with clearly defined priorities and objectives.

Romania and Bulgaria's membership have facilitated the process of building a Black Sea strategy in the EU in the sense that this development enabled the emergence of "a Brussels lobby pushing for the Black Sea" similar to previous lobbies for the Mediterranean and the Baltic.<sup>191</sup> Moreover, Germany has set the relations with the Black Sea region as one of the EU's foreign policy priorities with its presidency that started on 1 January 2007. German officials have emphasized the importance of the region for the EU and the need to examine the effectiveness of the ENP, thereby giving the signals of a new strategy towards the Black Sea.<sup>192</sup> These factors enabled the preparation of a Black Sea Synergy – a new regional cooperation initiative during the German presidency which was publicized on 11 April 2007 by the European Commission.

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<sup>190</sup> Fabrizio Tassinari, "A Synergy for Black Sea Regional Cooperation: Guidelines for an EU Initiative," *CEPS Policy Brief*, no. 105 (June 2006), p. 2.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>192</sup> Ahto Lobjakas, 19 December 2006, *EU: German Presidency's Focus on Central Asia, Black Sea, Russia*, [http://www.rferl.org/features/features\\_Article.aspx?m=12&y=2006&id=27FD5568-A750-45DB-8C75-7308342A9222](http://www.rferl.org/features/features_Article.aspx?m=12&y=2006&id=27FD5568-A750-45DB-8C75-7308342A9222) [21 December 2006].

## The Black Sea Synergy – A New Regional Cooperation Initiative

This new initiative highlights the importance of the Black Sea region for the EU and states the need for a regional policy. “The primary task of Black Sea synergy would be the development of cooperation within the Black Sea region and also the region as a whole and the EU.” It is clearly emphasized that this new initiative is complementary to already existing schemes. In this sense, “it would enhance synergies with and built upon experiences of existing regional initiatives linking the Black Sea to the EU.” A number of cooperation areas are defined and various tasks are formulated. These areas are specified as democracy, respect for human rights and good governance, managing movement and improving security, the frozen conflicts, energy, transport, environment, maritime policy, fisheries, trade, research and education networks, science and technology, employment and social affairs, and regional development.

The EU Commission commits itself to enhancing cooperation in these areas, encouraging cross border cooperation within the Black Sea program, and strengthening the ENP. In doing so, the Commission is not proposing the creation of new institutions but “the Black Sea states would remain the EU’s main interlocutors whether in a bilateral framework or during discussions at the regional level.” At the same time, the Commission underlines the importance of the BSEC for successful cooperation and holds that EU-BSEC links would contribute to dialogue. In this sense, the Commission responds to the BSEC’s offer and “intends to seek observer status and to support EU member states’ application for observer status.”<sup>193</sup>

Furthermore, the Commission proposes to organize regular ministerial meetings and

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<sup>193</sup> The Commission of the European Communities was granted observer status in the special meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC member states in 25 June 2007.

underlines the importance of the existing links between the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC for the future of regional cooperation.<sup>194</sup>

Essentially, the Black Sea Synergy constitutes a fresh start in the EU's relations with the Black Sea region. It is the first time that the Union has come up with a broad policy document aimed at improving cooperation within and with the Black Sea region. This document proves that the EU has become a Black Sea actor with the latest domestic and external developments. Moreover, it is also a clear statement of the European character of the Black Sea region.

Although the document does not explicitly reveal how to incorporate the existing sectoral initiatives into the new cooperation scheme, it still offers an opportunity to regulate these independent and sometimes overlapping initiatives under a broader and common framework. This will hopefully avoid the loss of resources and furnish the most effective utilization of the sectoral initiatives.

Though the Commission mentions frozen conflicts among the cooperation areas within the Black Sea Synergy framework, it still refrains from directly involving in these persistent problems and assuming a conflict resolution role. Instead, the EU's role is limited to facilitating the implementation of confidence-building measures.

Given the willingness to cooperate with the established regional organizations, the Black Sea Synergy employs an inclusive approach. In this sense, it recognizes the importance of local ownership of any regional initiative. The attention paid to the BSEC is also particularly important for this regional organization. This will facilitate regional governments' attempts to improve the BSEC's capacity to address the challenges of the region and widen its mandate.

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<sup>194</sup> Commission of the European Communities, 11 April 2007, *Black Sea Synergy – A New Regional Cooperation Initiative*, [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com07\\_160\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com07_160_en.pdf) [12 April 2007].

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

This study investigated the characteristics of the Black Sea region and demonstrated a comprehensive picture of regional politics. In doing so, first, the political, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of the regional countries were examined in order to understand if the territories that surround the Black Sea really have the features that make it a region in political terms. Following this analysis based on the theoretical framework drawn on regions and region building, the most prominent current issues related to the Black Sea region were evaluated since the regional countries' approach to confronting these common interests and challenges will determine the fate of cooperation in the region.

When it comes to the issue of cooperation in the Black Sea region, the only effective platform that makes genuine cooperation possible is the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). Thus, a general overview of the BSEC's history, institutionalization, and areas of cooperation were offered in order to understand if this entity has the capacity to facilitate region building in the Black Sea. Following the BSEC section, the increasing international interest in the Black Sea region is being investigated. Within this context, the USA's approach to the region and the EU's plans were evaluated.

Before proceeding with the conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis of regional politics, cooperation efforts, and international interest, the first question that should be concentrated on is whether the Black Sea is a region in the sense defined in regionalism literature.

The examination of political, economic, and socio-cultural features demonstrates that one of the best words that can define the Black Sea region is diversity. As was illustrated in the third chapter, the Black Sea countries are at different levels regarding their political and economic development. Following the dramatic shift following the end of the Cold War, most of the regional countries entered into a period of rapid transformation. Obviously, this transformation took place at different paces and hence today the region is composed of countries that differ from each other in terms of political systems. However, a Western orientation prevails in the region as a general inclination. Economically, all of the Black Sea countries, most of them with rapidly growing economies, are integrated into the global capitalist system. In addition, the amount of trade volumes and economic activity among the regional countries has multiplied during the past fifteen years. This development points to closer relations within the region.

However, it is not possible to claim that the political and economic interaction in the region led to the emergence of a distinct Black Sea identity amongst the peoples of the regional countries. The region is a composition of distinct national and religious identities and these identities have strong priority. The lack of such an identity is not a bottleneck for the Black Sea to be identified as a region. In fact, the Black Sea is a region where diverse nations and religions have been living for centuries with constant interaction, where there are intense political and economic relations between regional countries and societies, and where a community of states and peoples face common challenges and share common interests. In short, apart from being a geographically defined piece of territory, the Black Sea is a distinct entity and constitutes a region.



The next question asked was whether the actors in this region are capable of enhancing regional interaction. The organization of cooperation and intensification of intra regional relations lies at the core of regionalism or region building. In this sense, the Black Sea region has been in a process of regionalization since the end of the Cold War. At the bilateral level, relations have been in a continuous process of improvement with some exceptions.<sup>195</sup> At the multilateral level, the regional countries have so far been able to cooperate on some specific issues that are not necessarily related with their strategic national interests. The establishment and development of the BSEC should be evaluated from this perspective.

This regional organization is a product of Turkey's willingness to replace the power vacuum in the region immediately after the end of the Cold War. It started as a regional platform that will facilitate the transformation of former socialist regional countries and their integration with the global economy. It aimed to enhance security and stability in the region by emphasizing economic development and interconnectedness. Following its establishment, the organization passed through a slow maturation process in which it acquired the status of a regional organization with international legal personality. In the due process, the member states were able to develop a number of important regional projects within the context of BSEC. In this sense, the organization inoculated the idea of regional cooperation in the Black Sea region.

Nevertheless, the achievements of the BSEC and its future contribution to the regionalization should not be overestimated. The BSEC's potential is limited currently; the member states should definitely avoid overstretching its capabilities.

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<sup>195</sup> The main exceptions at this point are Russia's relations with Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova. Another set of problematic relations is between Turkey and Azerbaijan block vs. Armenia. Apart from these problems Black Sea countries have generally been able to establish fruitful relations at bilateral level albeit minor problems.

Indeed, the achievements of the organization and its successful institutionalization are based on this understanding. Rather than trying to include controversial issues on the agenda, the organization has preferred to keep cooperation in limited fields which do not have the potential to create contention among the member states. While sticking to the original objectives of the organization, namely contributing to regional stability by fostering economic development, the member states also agreed on new areas of cooperation, which are beneficial for all regional countries. The member states should proceed with this cooperation method in order to enhance region building in the Black Sea gradually.

One of the most important achievements of the BSEC has been its ability to include Russia within the cooperative framework. Russian policy towards its former influence zones has been destabilizing since it lost control over these areas. In this regard, it is difficult to regard Russia as a cooperative actor in the region. Nevertheless, within the BSEC context, Russia has been one of the actors that has been in search of deepening cooperation in the already established fields. Moscow continues its efforts for more cooperation albeit serious problems with individual countries at the bilateral level. The BSEC has been a dialogue platform in the region. The willingness of regional countries to cooperate materialized in the existence of the BSEC.

The BSEC is the sole inclusive regional organization the Black Sea region whose global importance has been increasing. Situated at the centre of Eurasia, having a privileged place on the important trade and energy routes between Europe, Central Asia, and rapidly growing East and South Asia, the Black Sea region is particularly significant for economic activity between these regions. In this context, the facilitation of trade and economic activity is an important issue in Black Sea

politics. The BSEC has a significant role to this end. Its experience in implementing transportation and infrastructure projects makes it a significant entity that is taken into consideration by international actors including the EU. In this sense, the Black Sea countries should consider ways to enhance cooperation in these fields within the framework of the BSEC. Trade, transportation, and infrastructure offer generous cooperation opportunities for the regional countries.

Its special place on trade and energy routes and its vicinity to Europe makes the security of the Black Sea an important issue for European security. The region is in a process of moving from the periphery of Europe to the centre. In the last fifteen years, the Black Sea countries have moved towards integrating with the West, particularly with the EU. Today, with the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, the EU has become a Black Sea actor. All these facts reveal that security and stability in the Black Sea is of importance to the EU.

Any conflict that can originate from the frozen conflicts in the Black Sea region will negatively affect European security. Such a development will also destabilize the trade and energy routes. Therefore, the frozen conflicts should be tackled seriously by the regional countries and the EU should assume a more active role in the settlement of these long-standing problems. On the other hand, expectations from the BSEC should be kept at a minimum since trying to widen the mandate of the organization to this critical sphere might be harmful for cooperation efforts. The BSEC can facilitate the process by its capacity to enhance mutual dialogue.

The relevance of the Black Sea region with the NSTs, which are highlighted in prominent EU documents, consolidates the place of the region within the European security architecture. As was highlighted in the theoretical background

chapter, NSTs have gained particular importance since the 9/11 attacks in New York. The Black Sea region is a significant transit route for criminal activity towards Europe and a source of NSTs. The existence of conflict zones provides a fertile environment for illegal organizations and facilitates the conduct of criminal activity. Given their increasing importance in Western security perceptions, the capability of the Black Sea region countries to struggle with NSTs becomes even more important.

Security building in the region is first and foremost important for the stability and prosperity of regional countries. Without a secure environment, it is not possible to sustain economic development and build democratic political systems. However, given their nature, it is not possible for countries to cope with NSTs individually. Therefore, regional cooperation in the sphere of security is a vital precondition for the security of the Black Sea region.

The BSEC has a special place in this context due to its success in bringing the regional countries together in the fight against organized crime. The organization is an efficient platform for cooperation in this field and offers the member states the opportunity to share knowledge and capabilities. The member states should intensify cooperation efforts in order to guarantee the security of the region. Additionally, both the EU and the BSEC should establish channels for cooperation in the security sphere.

The rising energy demands of Europe are another factor that increases the global importance of the Black Sea. The region is rich in energy resources and has a unique place in the EU's plans to diversify its energy supply. Up to now, energy politics has been an issue of competition rather than cooperation among regional countries. The national interests of the Black Sea countries regarding energy are widely divergent and this precludes genuine cooperation in this field. Hence, it

appears that the BSEC cannot have an effective mandate on the energy issue. Indeed, the organization should concentrate on low-level projects such as the ongoing project of the connection of electricity gridlines of regional countries. The EU, on the other hand, should develop a coherent approach towards the Black Sea region regarding energy. Regional countries should also avoid using energy as a blackmail tool and thereby jeopardize regional cooperation efforts.

For the last few years, the Black Sea region has also come to the international agenda with the reform movements. It appears that the economic transformation of the 1990s is now being complemented by political transformation. Bulgaria and Romania have been relatively successful because of the prospects of EU membership. Turkey has also achieved rapid progress on its path to EU membership.

As part of the integration of the region with the West, serious reform movements have taken place in Georgia and Ukraine and these developments have drawn the attention of the West to the region. Given the Black Sea region is an integral part of European politics, the EU does not have the luxury to ignore these demands for freer and democratic regimes. The West, in particular the EU, should be ready to offer “carrots” to the Black Sea countries and actively contribute to the democratization of the region. Without democratic and reliable regimes, it is not possible to ensure security and prosperity in the European neighbourhood.

As part of Black Sea region’s Western integration, the US and the NATO also play noteworthy roles. The US assesses the region from a security perspective. It regards the integration of Black Sea countries into NATO as a strategic goal that will ensure the stability of the region. However, especially US involvement in the Black Sea region has been perceived as a threat by Russia. Moscow interprets possible

NATO membership of the regional countries as well as the reform movements as part of the Western agenda that includes curtailing Russian influence in the former socialist block territories. Additionally, even a loyal NATO member can be sceptical about US plans. Turkey, while supporting the NATO membership of the Black Sea countries, has been sceptical about NATO's penetration into the region in the maritime domain. On this particular issue, Ankara and Moscow have sided together.

Black Sea politics are based on sensitive balances between the regional powers as well as international actors. Compared to other regions, the Black Sea is a much more stable area. This stability is dependent on the balances that prevail in the region. Any feckless outside intervention into the regional affairs can deteriorate the situation. Without the consent of the major regional actors, any hasty attempt to alter the status in the region can produce undesirable consequences. This will obviously be harmful for the regional countries and region building efforts. Therefore, Washington should refrain from acting unilaterally in the region and endangering regional stability.

Before bringing my arguments to an end, I should definitely underline Turkey's special place and potential role in the Black Sea region. Undoubtedly, Turkey is one of the leading Black Sea powers. With its growing economy and consolidating democracy, it can assume a more active role in regional politics. Prior experience has proved that it has the capacity to direct regional countries towards effective region building. Today, as a candidate, it can facilitate the EU's entry into the region and enhance BSEC-EU cooperation. Indeed, Turkey's position and capacity regarding the Black Sea can and should be utilized as an asset in its membership process.

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