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## Europe's next shore: the Black Sea region after EU enlargement

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## Europe's next shore: the Black Sea region after EU enlargement

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*With its mosaic of problems, and their potential consequences, the wider Black Sea region is one of the more important challenges that the enlarged European Union will face. So far, the EU and the Black Sea region are linked together by a member state (Greece) and accession countries (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey), as well as special relations with Ukraine and Russia. Once Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey become EU members, the Union will directly border the Black Sea, accounting for half of its coastline. The question now is not whether but rather when the EU will become a Black Sea power. As such, it will have to develop policies for regional issues and deal with threats to regional stability, because it will be virtually impossible to prevent various crises around the Black Sea from affecting EU Europe. Finding ways to prevent likely destabilising factors from arising at the regional level and dealing with them before they affect the EU area will be a trial for the enlarged Union.*

*Although the EU has so far consistently favoured individual country approaches in the region, this paper proposes that it should develop a regional approach towards the Black Sea and enhance its institutional linkages with regional organisations in order to ensure the smooth transformation of the troublesome states in the wider Black Sea region into viable and stable entities, and to facilitate their further integration into the emerging European architecture. This would allow the EU to deal with inherently regional problems within compact regional settings, consistent with the regional approach it has adopted in northern Europe, the Mediterranean, and South-Eastern Europe.*

*Creating a unique 'Black Sea component' within the EU, combining a number of member countries, negotiating and non-negotiating accession countries, partner countries and non-EU (with and without the intention to apply for membership) countries, would allow the EU to deal more efficiently with enlargement and post-enlargement problems in a vast region from South-Eastern Europe to the shores of the Caspian Sea. It would form a balanced grouping where none of the countries feels itself excluded from the benefits of further integration into the EU and where the EU itself would not need to decide its final borders once and for all. This would enable the EU to retain its most important trump card and to continue to push for further reforms and transformation in its 'Black Sea neighbourhood' without promising membership options.*

*Within the region, the Black Sea countries have, since the end of the Cold War, created a multitude of intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations and cooperation schemes. With the recent enlargement of the European Union, the region stands to benefit from*

*the experience and stability of the latter. The EU is set to extend its borders to the last of Europe's seas where it faces a new region that has diverse problems. The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) organisation, bringing together 350 million people in an area covering 20 million square kilometres, is the most comprehensive and institutionalised structure within the region. Since its initiation in 1992, it has succeeded in creating an extensive cooperation scheme in one of the most conflict-prone regions of the post-Cold War world. Despite the number of ethnic-political conflicts the region has faced, the BSEC, with its wide-ranging interests and declared intention of cooperating closely with the EU, has been able to establish a permanent dialogue between its member countries and a spirit of cooperation towards mutual economic benefits.*

*The EU has so far resisted calls to develop a regional approach towards the Black Sea and actively participate to the Black Sea Economic Cooperation organisation. Now is the right time to reconsider the EU position within the 'wider Europe-neighbourhood' context, and to start fully integrating this problematic but energy-rich and strategic region firmly into the EU mould.*

## Introduction

The European Union (EU) has undergone another round of enlargement, which clearly will not be its last. Every enlargement so far not only brought new members and territories to the Union, affecting its inner structures, but also created new borders, neighbours and problems, forcing it to meet unique challenges and generating new dynamics. The latest round, completed in May 2004 with the accession of ten new members,<sup>1</sup> is even more problematic since it takes the EU into a completely new geography and a set of neighbours with which it has so far had limited experience. The sixth (expected to be completed with Romania and Bulgaria by 2007) and seventh (to be achieved in a longer time-frame with currently non-negotiating accession country, Turkey) rounds of enlargements will extend the EU even further to the East – to the shores of the Black Sea.

This will make the EU a Black Sea player, sharing its riches as well as its problems with instability-prone states. Taken together, these enlargements will transform the shape of the European continent, drawing borders between the EU and non-EU Europe more or less permanently. As the EU is fast approaching its final borders, not only the member states, but also those left out are looking apprehensively to see what the implications of enlargement will be

and how the EU will proceed with its external relations. How the EU handles being transformed from a ‘Western’ European institution to a Europe-wide entity will determine future developments across wider Europe, including non-EU Mediterranean, Black Sea and Caucasian countries.<sup>2</sup>

Situated at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, as well as Russia and the Middle East, and linked to southern Europe with access to the Mediterranean and to Central Europe through the Danube River/Canal system, the Black Sea is more than a region of local strategic significance, representing ‘an axis of increasing geo-political importance in the enlarging European Union’.<sup>3</sup> Lying at the centre of a Mackinder-type ‘geopolitical heartland’ as well as a Huntingtonian style of civilisational fault line, dotted with various ethnic and political conflicts, the Black Sea region has in the past played a major role in shaping European history. The diversity of people living side by side for centuries has been both a source of potential conflicts and of cultural enrichment. Since antiquity, when Jason and the Argonauts went in search for the Golden Fleece, Europeans have shown great interest in the region. For them, it has been a source of awe, fear, threat and trade – all at the same time.

<sup>1</sup> Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘wider Europe’, as used in this paper, refers to a political rather than geographical region, and is ‘wider’ than the EU Commission’s current definition of ‘wider Europe’, including the Caucasus. See, ‘Wider Europe-Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours’, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, COM(2003) 104 final, Brussels, 11 March 2003.

<sup>3</sup> EU Commission, Press Release, Brussels, IP/01/1531, 31 October 2001. A political construction rather than a simple geographical space, the Black Sea region includes riparian states (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine) as well as nearby states (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Greece, Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia and Montenegro), affected by and effecting developments across a broad region from South-Eastern Europe to the shores of the Caspian. For semantic reasons rather than political-geographical significance, in this paper, I have used ‘Black Sea’, ‘Black Sea region’, ‘Black Sea area’ and ‘wider Black Sea’ interchangeably. ‘Black Sea Basin’ on the other hand covers almost 2 million square kilometres and includes parts of 19 countries: Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey, Ukraine, and Serbia and Montenegro.

The relevance of the area for the EU has increased since the end of the Cold War for a number of reasons. First of all, located at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, the Black Sea had been a zone of conflict and confrontation. During the Cold War, it lay on the frontier of East-West rivalry, and the overwhelming presence of the superpowers provided stability, albeit strained, in the region for more than forty years. In the post-Cold War era, however, it has become more complicated and difficult to manage, as the demise of the Soviet Union unleashed tensions that the Cold War had suppressed and masked. As a result, most of the surrounding countries were thrown into conflict and/or left destitute. Most of the open conflicts following the end of the Cold War have now ebbed, yet none of them has been resolved. Thus, the region remains riddled with dormant conflicts waiting to be solved or to re-explode. Contested borders, mixed national and ethnic groups, enforced migration, economic deprivation, widespread unemployment, authoritarian regimes, bad governance and competition from outsiders for influence continue to pose risks for regional security. Other volatile and widespread elements, such as poverty, corruption, organised crime and territorial claims, threaten continuously to undermine both the existing regimes and the equilibrium in the region. The consequences of such an event would be felt throughout Eurasia and would have a significant impact on Europe.<sup>4</sup> The territorial, nationalistic, ethnic and religious disputes in the region since the end of the Cold War have provided for various flash-points (former Yugoslavia, Transnistria, Crimea, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Chechnya, Nagorno-Karabakh, etc.) from one end of the region to the other. Existing conflict resolution and peacekeeping instruments such as the UN, OSCE and NATO, as well as the security and confidence-building agreements like the CFE Treaty, have not been

adequate to deal with these new/old challenges, and have so far been only partially successful in containing (not solving) them.

Secondly, since antiquity the region has always been a backyard of one power or the other, or has witnessed a competition between great powers to dominate it. It saw the dominance of the Byzantine, Ottoman, and finally Russian Empires that successfully closed it to the outside world for many years. A similar situation existed during the Cold War – except for Turkey, the Black Sea was surrounded by the Soviet Union and its satellites, largely closing it to outside influence and interaction. The fundamental geopolitical changes since the end of the Cold War, however, have led to an entirely new setting in the wider Black Sea area, and opened the possibility of establishing a truly pluralist international future for the region for the first time since antiquity. This, together with regional organisations to compensate for the inherent weaknesses of broader international collective security arrangements, raises hope for future cooperation and stability.

There are geostrategic reasons to link the 'Black Sea' area (in the strict geographical sense, consisting only of the six littoral states) with the wider geographic areas of the Caucasus, the Caspian, and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe when dealing with the political and economic security and stability of the region. Although there is no doubt that South-East Europe, the Black Sea, the Caucasus and the Caspian are separate regions in the turbulent post-Soviet Eurasia, with different political dynamics and plenty of internal diversity and conflicts, the working definition of 'Black Sea region' used in this paper, tracing the interplay of economic, political and strategic interests of the various actors across these areas, has considerable utility as a framework for describing and explaining the complexity of this important and dynamic area.

<sup>4</sup> For further analysis of regional problems and their relevance to Europe see Mustafa Aydin, 'Sources of Insecurity and Conflict in the Caucasus and the Black Sea Region', *Turkey Insight*, November 2001, pp. 125-47; and 'Volatile Politics and Constancy of Instability in the Caucasus and its Effects on the Mediterranean Stability and Security', in Antonio Marquina and Hans Guenter Brauch (eds.), *The Mediterranean Space and Its Borders: Geography, Politics, Economics and Environment* (Mosbach, Afes-Press & Madrid, UNISCI, 2001), pp. 167-98.



The area remains of interest and concern to Russia, which is ever-sensitive to external influence in, or the possibility of actual physical threats to the region. For years, the immediate surroundings of the Black Sea region were controlled by Moscow. Today, as a result of the USSR's disintegration and geopolitical realignments, the number of political, economic and military actors who can influence the region's future has multiplied, while Russia's borders with the Sea have diminished. Within the emerging geopolitical equation, various factors push the newly independent countries and former Soviet satellite states to gravitate geopolitically away from their historic Russian/Soviet bond. Among others, the combined effects of geographic proximity, economic opportunity, cultural ties and political expediency gently push the evolution of the new states in a westerly direction, toward historical-political preferences that were interrupted by the USSR's sealing off of these areas to its own advantage.

The existence of mostly Western-based multinational oil companies in the Caspian Basin, at the eastern end of the Black Sea region, indicates the increased Western interest in gaining access to Caspian oil and gas through the Black Sea. What happens in and around the Black Sea region affects Western (thus European) interests. While the possibility of transferring oil and gas from large-scale deposits to industrialised Europe raises hopes for regional economic development and prosperity, at the same time it gives substance to 'the belief that whoever secures the major share of oil pipeline transit will gain enhanced influence not only throughout the Black Sea and the Caspian Regions, but also on a global political scale.' This increases concerns for the future stability of the region. In terms of regional geopolitics, control movement through it, represents a prize of considerable value, which lowers the threshold of possible armed conflicts erupting in the

region.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, rivalry over the Caspian Basin energy resources, transport routes through and around the Black Sea, interaction with many regional conflicts in the South Caucasus, and international involvement in these conflicts, confer on the region a unique geopolitical interest, harbouring various threats to regional and international peace and stability.

Moreover, problems emanating from the wider Black Sea region – ranging from environmental disasters and the smuggling of drugs, people and guns across the region to ethnically based conflicts, border problems and demographic challenges – have the potential to spill over into the EU area, threatening a disruption of the smooth functioning of the EU's economy and its political stability. With the latest round of enlargement and further enlargements planned in the near future, these issues acquire ever-greater urgency for the EU, which must find ways to avoid an escalation of various problems before they affect member countries.

Accordingly, this paper will look at two inter-related issues. First, the questions addressed are: what importance does this region have for the EU and why should EU member countries be interested in it? In this context, the various problems the EU will face after its sixth round of enlargement and its involvement as an institution so far in the wider Black Sea area will be explored. Second, the ability and the potential of the countries of the region to cooperate with each other and the EU through institutionalised settings will be explored. In this context, various regional cooperation schemes, with or without EU involvement, since the end of the Cold War, will be summarised to provide background for the argument that there has emerged a regional identity in and around the Black Sea which is coherent and compact enough for the EU to take seriously. The EU may exploit this regional identity in order to move towards a regional institutionalised cooperation scheme which

<sup>5</sup> Charles W. Blandy, 'The Caucasus Region and Caspian Basin: Change, Complication and Challenge', Sandhurst, The Royal Military Academy, 1998, p. 4; and Clive Schofield and Martin Pratt, 'Claims to the Caspian Sea', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, February 1996, p. 75.

will induce regional countries to continue to adapt to EU norms and standards without necessarily demanding the prospect of membership. In conclusion, the paper offers proposals

for consideration within the EU and Black Sea circles aimed at enhanced cooperation between the EU and Black Sea countries.

## Enlarged European Union and the wider Black Sea

Since the end of the Cold War, the Black Sea as a region has become an important area for the European Union, not only because most of the Black Sea countries have established various forms of cooperation on different levels with the EU, but also since the region borders both the energy-rich Caspian Basin and the conflict-prone Caucasus, thus acting alternately as a gateway and a barrier. The latest round of EU enlargement, completed in May 2004, brings the EU even closer to the region, raising doubts and questions for both the EU and the regional countries about how to proceed with their relations. This section will look first at the implications of EU enlargement for the region and identify the complications it may cause on both sides. The remainder of the section will summarise and assess the EU's activities in the region so far. In this context, the factors and considerations that force the EU to consider a greater role in the region will also be explored.

### *2.1 The enlargement process and the EU's external relations*

There is a general recognition that the EU is approaching its final borders, and while there could be further enlargements, there would inevitably be long in coming. This semi-permanent new geography, apart from internal problems of transformation, will call for new and creative policies towards those states that are left (either permanently or temporarily) out of the

EU borders, so that they do not feel abandoned and continue to interact with the EU Europe. While doing so, the EU has to aim at not creating new dividing lines in Europe but at bringing neighbouring countries closer. In order to feel secure within its new borders, the EU has to foster stability in wider Europe. Unless areas around the EU are stabilised politically and transformed economically, the ramifications will be clearly felt within the EU.

In the past, the EU has found innovative ways to deal with the problems of expansion for its immediate environs and has created institutional linkages with neighbouring countries in a way that ensures their cooperation on crucial issues and continual transformation towards EU norms.<sup>6</sup> Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the form of the Barcelona process, the Northern Dimension, Central and Eastern Europe, and the Stability Pact for South-East Europe, are results of this policy. They have created instruments that enable outsiders to participate in and benefit from the European project. In return, outsiders have strived to reform their political systems, open up their economies and in general comply with the various norms, rules and regulations of the EU. This has clearly showed on the one hand that those left outside can still benefit from close cooperation with the EU, and on the other hand that the EU does not need to enlarge indefinitely 'to be able to impose its orders on others'.<sup>7</sup>

The related issue of 'regionalisation' of the EU's external relations has been a somewhat

<sup>6</sup> Hiski Haukkala, 'A Hole in the Wall? Dimensionalism and the EU's "New Neighbourhood Policy"', *UPI Working Papers*, 41, 2003, pp. 7-8.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8. See also William Wallace, 'Europe after the Cold War: Interstate Order or Post-Sovereign Regional System?', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 25, no. 5, 1999, pp. 201-23; and Ole Wæver, 'Imperial Metaphors: Emerging European Analogies to Pre-Nation-State Imperial Systems', in Ola Tunander, Pavel Baev and Victoria Ingrid Einagel (eds.), *Geopolitics in Post-Wall Europe: Security, Territory and Identity* (London: Sage, 1997), pp. 59-93.

unintended consequence of successive enlargement processes. As the Union has enlarged beyond the critical number of countries, where all the members were more or less interested in every region, the inevitable result has been that some members have felt more interest in, and passion and capability for, issues close to their border than others would. Thus, while Germany has appeared to be more interested in Central and Eastern Europe, Spain, Italy, Greece and France have been instrumental in introducing Mediterranean-related issues into the EU agenda, just as Finland has been more interested in 'northern' issues. However, following the EU's biggest enlargement so far, there are concerns that the new members may also bring in their own 'dimensions', which might create competition among members devoting their energies to different 'dimensions' or 'neighbourhoods' of the EU, thus creating a multitude of different approaches in the EU's external relations. There are also fears that the further 'dimensionalisation' of the EU's external relations might come to signify 'a form of exclusion', in a sense that a state might end up as a partner in one of the dimensions if it has no chance of being recognised as a candidate.<sup>8</sup> A crucial problem is that the creation of clear dividing lines between 'ins' and 'outs' deprives the EU of its most important instrument for influencing the transformation of its neighbours: holding out the possibility of membership, however distant, as a prize.

There is also a danger that the partners in dimensions might start to see themselves as being in an irreversible process leading towards

full membership, and thus come to expect to become members once they confirm fully with the requirements of the EU, whereas the EU might, for various reasons, have no intention of accepting them as members. In the words of the President of the European Commission Romano Prodi, the European Union 'cannot go on enlarging forever'.<sup>9</sup> There will always be states that are left out. This leads to the related and more fundamental questions: where are the borders of the European Union; how can peace and stability beyond the borders of the EU-Europe be ensured?

Recognising the different challenges that the latest enlargement could pose to the Union in its external relations, a discussion process within the EU was launched in April 2002, which led to the publication of the Commission's 'Wider Europe Neighbourhood' Communication a year later.<sup>10</sup> The new initiative was discussed with the non-EU European and 'Eastern' neighbours at the 16 April 2003 meeting of the European Conference, and with 'Southern' neighbours on 16-17 May 2003 at the Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Affairs Conference. During the Thessaloniki European Council, the Secretary General/High Representative, Javier Solana, also presented his 'vision' for wider Europe, dealing with political and security aspects of the Commission's Communication.<sup>11</sup> Then the Council agreed conclusions on 'Wider Europe New Neighbourhood' on 16 June 2003, on the basis of the Commission's Communication, but also taking into account the contributions made by the High Representative, member states and acceding countries.<sup>12</sup> Finally, on

<sup>8</sup> Haukkala, 'A Hole in the Wall?', p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Romano Prodi, 'A Wider Europe – A Proximity Policy as the Key to Stability', Speech delivered to the Sixth ESCA-World Conference 'Peace, Security, Stability – International Dialogue and the Role of the EU', Brussels, 5-6 December 2002.

<sup>10</sup> 'Wider Europe-Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours', Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, COM(2003) 104 final, Brussels, 11 March 2003. In the Communication, the Commission offered 'enhanced relations' to its neighbours based on shared values. The aim is closer integration between the EU and its neighbours. To achieve this, the Commission, in return for adaptation of EU norms and standards, offers closer economic integration and prospect of achieving the so-called 'four freedoms' without decision-making powers to the countries in the 'wider Europe'. For further evaluation of the Wider Europe-New Neighbourhood policy see Judy Batt et al., 'Partners and neighbours: a CFSP for a wider Europe', *Chaillot Paper* 64 (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, September 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, 'A secure Europe in a better world', report to the European Council, Thessaloniki, 20 June 2003.

<sup>12</sup> See 'Council Conclusions on Wider Europe – New Neighbourhood', 16 June 2003; [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/we/doc/cc06\\_03.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/we/doc/cc06_03.pdf).

9 July, the Commission put Commissioner Günter Verheugen, assisted by a Wider Europe Task Force, in charge of further developing the concept of new neighbourhood policy and drawing up action plans with the countries and regions concerned.<sup>13</sup>

Although the Commission's Communication and Solana's paper have indicated new avenues for the EU in its external relations, the anticipated discussions about how best the EU should relate to its neighbourhood after the fifth round of enlargement started long ago with the creation of Europe's 'Northern Dimension', mostly as a result of Finland's apprehension that its concerns could be marginalised in the EU after the 'Eastern' enlargement of the Union.<sup>14</sup> As if to lend credit to this apprehension, Poland, most active of the most recent accession states, circulated its ideas on 'Enlarged EU's eastern policy' as early as March 1998, which generated further discussions within both academic and diplomatic circles.<sup>15</sup> In the South, Malta and Cyprus, who were already participating in EU's Barcelona Process, have also expressed, though less loudly, their interest in developing EU's 'Southern' or 'Mediterranean dimension'.

In the face of these proposals for 'over-dimensionalisation', it appears that the Commission has tried to overcome possible clashes within the Community by opting for a policy that has not only included the newly proposed 'Eastern dimension', but also effectively tried to stop further 'dimensionalisation' of the EU's external relations. Though the EU's Northern Dimension and Barcelona process will continue

to exist, the longer-term implication of the 'Wider Europe New Neighbourhood' initiative will be that they will gradually merge into a single external policy.

Although this would be a great leap towards developing the CFSP, it also lumps a number of unlikely countries together in EU's new 'neighbourhood' in a rather insignificant and in some instances counter-productive way. Ukraine and Moldova have already expressed their displeasure at being included in the same basket as the Mediterranean countries that have no membership prospects. Similarly, Russia's position is rather ambiguous: on the one hand the EU-Russia strategic partnership is considered separately from other countries as an existing policy to be reinforced; on the other, the proposed way to reinforce the EU-Russia strategic partnership is to implement the new neighbourhood policies.<sup>16</sup>

The Commission's new policy proposal can be criticised not only from the perspective of the countries it concerns, but also for the countries it has left out. Most importantly, south Caucasian countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), which are already members of the Council of Europe and will be within the immediate 'neighbourhood' of the EU once the current negotiating countries (Bulgaria, Romania) become members, have been left out.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, their strategic importance to the EU will increase as the EU enlarges to the east. Moreover, Caucasian countries, especially Azerbaijan and Georgia, have a pivotal role to play in the opening up of alternative transportation routes for trade, and oil and gas, from the Caspian and

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.europe.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/we/intro/ip03\\_963.htm](http://www.europe.eu.int/comm/external_relations/we/intro/ip03_963.htm).

<sup>14</sup> Hiski Haukkala, 'Towards a Union of Dimensions; The effects of eastern enlargement on the Northern Dimension', *FIIA Report 2/2002*, p. 8, argues that, behind the Finnish initiative of September 1997 to establish Northern Dimension, 'was a desire to ensure that questions of importance to Finland would be on the EU agenda before an eastward enlargement'.

<sup>15</sup> For Polish views see, Pawel Kowal (ed.), *The EU's 'Eastern Dimension' – An Opportunity for the Idée Fixe of Poland's Policy?* (Warsaw: Centre for International Relations, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> Presentation by Antonio de Castro Carpeno, Principal Administrator, General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union to the Conference on 'The New European Architecture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; Promoting Regional Cooperation in the Wider Black Sea Area', Milos Island, Greece, 3-7 September 2002.

<sup>17</sup> All the Commission was prepared to say about the Southern Caucasus was summarised in the footnote 4 of the 'Wider Europe-Neighbourhood' Communication: 'Given their location, the Southern Caucasus therefore also fall outside the geographical scope of this initiative for the time being'.

Central Asia to Europe. It is therefore important that the Caucasian countries should be helped to prepare for their EU neighbourhood. Recognising the problematic nature of the Communication, the Thessaloniki Council of Ministers statement declared that the position of the south Caucasian countries as 'outsiders' of the 'new neighbourhood' would be examined in future.<sup>18</sup> Once that revision takes place, all the wider Black Sea countries will be connected with the EU in one form or another. In the meantime, the Solana paper tried to remedy this omission and referred, however briefly, to the Southern Caucasus as a region 'which will in due course become 'a neighbouring region'.<sup>19</sup> Then, as a further compensatory gesture towards the region, on 7 July 2003 Heikki Talvitie was appointed EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus, reflecting the Council's 'willingness to play a more active political role in the South Caucasus'.<sup>20</sup> His appointment as one of the six EU Special Representatives indicates EU member states' increasing interest in the region, and the current discussion within Community circles already suggests that the South Caucasus would receive even greater attention in the revised Solana paper.<sup>21</sup>

## 2.2 European interest and involvement in the wider Black Sea

It has already been mentioned that with the expected membership of Bulgaria and Romania, and eventually Turkey, the EU will truly become

a Black Sea power, accounting for half of its coastline, and all the non-EU Black Sea countries will border at least one EU member state. As they become EU members, 'their interests become axiomatically EU interests'.<sup>22</sup> Even before that happens, the EU presence in the Black Sea will shortly become a reality as accession countries (and to a lesser extent Partnership and Cooperation Agreement countries) increasingly adopt EU legislation and policies. Moreover, Europe is already connected with the wider Black Sea region in a number of projects and programmes to such a degree that it is almost impossible to disentangle these regions and imagine that problems of the one do not have an affect on the other.

A key external relations priority for the EU is to promote prosperity, democracy, peace, stability and security in its immediate environs.<sup>23</sup> These aspirations are more urgent for the wider Black Sea region not only because of the political, economic, administrative, ecological and social challenges with which the basin is faced, but also in view of the recurrent conflicts/instability in the region of the EU's eastern flank. The fact that two of the EU's three Common Strategies in external relations to date have concerned two Black Sea countries (Ukraine and Russia) attests the region's importance in EU eyes.<sup>24</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the EU is concerned that the clear exclusion of some neighbouring countries from the EU accession process would produce negative responses and would deprive the EU of its most effective instrument (eventual membership) for forcing them to adopt European norms and standards, without which the EU would not feel safe within its borders. In the

<sup>18</sup> 'Council Conclusions on Wider Europe - New Neighbourhood', 16 June 2003, para. 3; [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/we/doc/cc06\\_03.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/we/doc/cc06_03.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Solana, 'A secure Europe in a better world', p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> Council Joint Action 2003/496/CFSP; [http://ue.eu.int/pesc/envoye/cv/talvitie/l\\_16920030708en00740075.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/pesc/envoye/cv/talvitie/l_16920030708en00740075.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Private discussions with EU officials in Brussels, 9-10 October 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Emerson and Marius Vahl, 'Europe's Black Sea Dimension - Model European Regionalism, Prêt-à-Porter', in Adams et al., *Europe's Black Sea Dimension*, p. 21.

<sup>23</sup> See, 'Wider Europe-Neighbourhood'; also 'Euro-Med Partnership', *Regional Strategy Paper 2002-2006*, p. 4; and 'CARDS Assistance Programme to the Western Balkans', *Regional Strategy Paper 2002-2006*, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> See, the European Council, 'Common Strategy of the European Union of 4 June 1999 on Russia', 1999/414/CFSP; and European Council Common Strategy of 11 December 1999 on Ukraine, 1999/877/CFSP.

Black Sea region, apart from the states that the EU has already offered the prospect of membership, Ukraine and Moldova have already announced their interest in the EU, though the latter is at the moment not inclined to give a positive answer. Russia and Belarus are clearly not interested in the EU, and South Caucasian countries are all but totally excluded from the EU forecast, even those countries currently eligible to apply for membership. Short of an innovative regional approach, it is not clear how the EU would encourage these states to continue to reform and move closer to the EU norms and standards. Though there are currently individual programmes, particularly carefully prepared for Russia and Ukraine, it is still far from certain that a clear rejection of Ukraine, which is pressing for an answer, and South Caucasian countries already refused, where the United States has been playing an increasingly larger role since the 11 September events, would not gradually gravitate towards other centres of power – Russia and the United States respectively.<sup>25</sup>

The EU clearly wishes to extend and deepen its relations with Russia and Ukraine without holding out the prospect of membership. The Black Sea region could in the East play the same role that the Northern Dimension has played in extending cooperation with Russia in the North. Moreover, it is important to show Russia that the EU is not coming to the Black Sea with zero-sum intentions. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union was overly jealous about guarding its rights in and around the Black Sea. Non-threatening approaches to the other Black Sea riparian states through BSEC since the end of the Cold War have eased and lessened its successor's (the Russian Federation) fears in the region. It is important not to recreate those concerns with the arrival of another 'great power' in the Black Sea for the first time since 1833, when Czarist Russia forced the Ottoman Empire to sign the Hunkar Iskelesi Treaty, thus effectively

closing the Black Sea to outside powers. Following the same principle, the Montreux Straits Convention of 1936, though accepting the general principle of 'freedom of the seas', enumerated limitations for the number and the tonnage of non-merchant ships that non-Black Sea powers can keep at any given time in the Black Sea. Though it will be long, if ever, before the EU develops its own naval forces, further development of the CFSP and the arrival of the EU in the Black Sea with all its rules and norms is bound to raise a few eyebrows in Moscow.

Apart from enlargement-related issues, a number of existing concerns in the region link Black Sea politics to the EU. First of all, they are connected via the energy dimension. As European dependency on Middle Eastern oil and Russian natural gas continues, together with declining North Sea production, the safe and uninterrupted supply of new sources of energy from the Caspian Basin through and around the Black Sea region assumes great importance. The question of the security of Europe's energy supplies inevitable brings a number of related Caspian issues to Europe's doorstep. These include disagreement on the status of the Caspian Sea; competition among the regional countries to host pipelines (among them, EU candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey, EU member Greece, as well as Russia and Ukraine) serving Europe and the world markets; and threats to the secure and steady supply of energy sources as a result of regional rivalries or domestic instabilities in the region, would clearly effect wider Europe, especially once the projected oil and gas pipelines linking Europe with the Caspian become operational, thus changing the combination of European energy supply in the longer term.

Environmental concerns emanating from the Black Sea region or Europe would also link the two regions, which are already recognised by the Commission's Danube-Black Sea Basin

<sup>25</sup> These concerns have already found resonance within the Commission and the Council of Europe bureaucracy. Personal interviews with various EU officials, Brussels, 9-10 October 2003.

Communication.<sup>26</sup> When Romania and Bulgaria become members, EU norms regarding environmental protection will have to apply to the Black Sea, 'protection of [which] and its coastal environment will become an inescapable responsibility of the enlarged Community but one that will require cooperation beyond its frontiers'.<sup>27</sup> This will not only increase EU investment on environmental projects, but also will have an effect on tanker transportation in the Black Sea, where current safety requirements are lower than EU standards. Unless it takes a regionally based multilateral approach, it is not clear how the EU would convince the regional oil producers (mainly Russia and Azerbaijan, as well as US-based oil majors) to cooperate with the EU on tanker safety standards; or how the EU could ensure that its heavy environmental investment in the Danube basin is not wasted without also taking the Dnieper and Don River basins in the wider Black Sea into account. Moreover, the increased risk of tanker collisions, particularly within the Turkish Straits, poses dangers not only to Turkey or the Black Sea per se, but also to the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas, and clearly calls for Europe-wide regional cooperation and solutions. Increasing environmental problems related to water scarcity and with radioactive waste are also growing challenges that may threaten the wider Europe.<sup>28</sup>

At the moment, the Black Sea is not even mentioned in the existing European Water Framework Directive, though two EU members (Germany and Austria) account for a significant area of the Black Sea Basin.<sup>29</sup> The percentage has

increased even more since Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovakia became members in May 2004, and will rise again when Bulgaria and Romania join around 2007. Although the Commission has been active in providing technical assistance to the UN Black Sea Environment Programme (BSEP) and its own Strategic Action Plan through TACIS and PHARE, it has been very 'careful to avoid any statement that may be constructed as a legal obligation to protect the Black Sea ecosystem'.<sup>30</sup> However, this is exactly what is going to happen when Bulgaria and Romania become full members. Recognising this eventuality, the Commission has already become an observer in the Black Sea Commission, which oversees the implementation of the 1992 Bucharest Convention for the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution, and will have to no doubt become signatory to it soon. In fact, a Danube and Black Sea Region (DABLAS) Task Force was established in March 2002 with EU support under the Commission's chairmanship 'to provide a platform for co-operation for the protection of water and water related ecosystems of the wider Black Sea Region'.<sup>31</sup> This will inevitably change the policy-making process in the region significantly. Finally, in the spring of 2003, the EU, responding to the new reality of the soon-to-be enlarged Union, launched the IASON (International Conference on the Sustainable Development of the Mediterranean and Black Sea Environment) initiative to set up a transnational and multi-disciplinary cooperation network to treat and protect the Mediterranean as well as the Black Sea.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>26</sup> EU Commission, 'Communication from the Commission on Environmental Cooperation in the Danube-Black Sea Region', COM(2001) 615 final, Brussels, 30 October 2001. It concludes that: 'The environmental degradation of the Danube and Black Sea region requires urgent attention and can only be tackled through a joint effort of environmental rehabilitation, conducted at regional level. This much-required effort will become a prime tool to promote and then secure the sustainable development of the region'.

<sup>27</sup> Mee, 'Protecting the Black Sea Environment', p. 81.

<sup>28</sup> For example, an official at the EU Council described Chernobyl-type nuclear station owned by Armenia as a threat to the EU countries; personal interview, Brussels, 10 October 2003.

<sup>29</sup> European Commission, 'Directive 2000/60/EC of the European parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy', *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L 327, 2000.

<sup>30</sup> Mee, 'Protecting the Black Sea Environment', p. 120.

<sup>31</sup> See, 'Terms of Reference of the DABLAS Task Force for co-operation on water protection in the wider Black Sea Region (DABLAS Task Force)', Brussels, 26 November 2001, DABLAS/2001/01rev1; at <http://europa.eu.int>.

<sup>32</sup> For more information on IASON initiative, see, *RTD Info; Magazine on European Research*, no. 38, July 2003, pp. 3-7.



From the financial perspective, there are already a number of European companies operating in the wider Black Sea region, so that the national interests of European states are affected by the region's instabilities and structural problems. Integration of the Black Sea markets with Europe would be a significant advantage from a purely economic perspective. But beyond that, threats to stability of the Black Sea region, an obvious gateway between energy-rich Central Asia, the Caucasus and Europe without much alternative, would eventually affect European economies. Therefore, the EU is naturally interested in the resolution of the several conflicts in the region and in changing the code of conduct between regional countries. The multilateral cooperation schemes in the Black Sea are already creating possibilities for such a change: countries that do not have formal bilateral relations (for example Turkey and Armenia, and Armenia and Azerbaijan) are talking to each other and cooperating within the BSEC umbrella. The EU needs to give more support to such formats to help transform the region from a conflict-prone area on its borders to a peaceful and stable neighbourhood.

Furthermore, the EU members have already declared that they are interested in the 'consolidation of state sovereignty and the strengthening of regional stability throughout Eurasia', which are more or less prerequisites for further democratisation and economic reform in the region. The EU has also increasingly emphasised that adherence to democratic principles and respect for human rights are fundamental objectives of the EU in the region, and thus conditions for its contribution towards the region. In this context, the EU has inserted political conditions and human rights clauses into the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements signed with countries in the region.<sup>33</sup> In fact, the EU has been a fairly important instrument in the creation of civil society and independent media in the newly independent states of the

Black Sea. However, development of vibrant and critical media and civil society has been prevented in most of the newly independent states, on the grounds that political liberalisation poses a danger to the state's existence. The systems of government in the Black Sea region range from struggling democracies to authoritarian regimes. The newly independent countries in the region in particular, following a period of instability after independence, have moved towards centralised, authoritarian and conservative regimes, with a concentration of power in the hands of the heads of states.

All this could be more easily tackled within multilateral structures with indirect and non-threatening programmes and approaches than through direct bilateral pressures. For example, the EU has failed so far to find ways to affect political reform positively in Belarus, ethnically problematic Georgia, or territorially threatened Azerbaijan. Conflicts in the South Caucasus affect in particular trade, security and regional cooperation. Instability in the North Caucasus only adds to the problems. For example, there are numerous Chechen refugees living both in Georgia and to a lesser extent in Azerbaijan. Their presence is problematic from the humanitarian and political viewpoints. In the wider perspective, all these are related to economic benefits, obtainable through cooperation among the regional states, in the sense that states that are distracted by domestic or regional instabilities would find it more difficult to concentrate on political and economic transformation, thus losing out on greater trade and cooperation.

Europe might also be affected by the increasing threat of radicalised Islam that is emerging especially in the northern Caucasus. Apart from the fact that the perceived threat of Islamic extremism and related concerns of instability in the region might cause further postponement of democratisation, thus constraining the relationship between European countries and states

<sup>33</sup> For individual Partnership and Cooperation Agreements, see, EU Commission's External Relations web page at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/ceeca/pca](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/ceeca/pca). Currently, TACIS is the main financial instrument supporting the implementation of PCAs, assisting the Caucasian countries to strengthen democracy and the rule of law, the consolidation of market economies, and strengthening their administrative capacities.

in the region, there exists an even more salient threat to European stability. As has been seen in the past, some groups, whether or not they have Islamist connections, fighting for their rights, autonomy, national consolidation or independence, might find it more convenient to stage terrorist activities in the wider Europe, particularly to attract Western media attention.

Moreover, illegal immigration, drug trafficking and growing criminal activities in general cause concern in Europe. With the emergence of the former Soviet republics as independent countries, international borders appeared that were not well guarded. The border control agencies in the newly independent countries have often been inefficient and open to corruption. Moreover, low incomes, decreasing social security and the erosion of public institutions have created conditions conducive to crime and corruption. As a result, organised crime networks in the region have become well established, highly violent and increasingly international. What is more, the region acts as a staging post for much of the heroin seized in the EU. Recognising these potential destabilising effects, in September 2002 the EU member states agreed an Action Plan aimed at combating drug trafficking between Central Asia and the EU passing through the Caucasus and the BSEC area.<sup>34</sup> However, increasing violence throughout the region linked to drugs and illegal activities is still a challenge that the EU will have to deal with.

Finally, border regions also pose security risks because of the concentration of minority populations across borders. Since many of the countries in the region have a history of interethnic conflict, there exist processes that discriminate against minorities, some of which have already opted for armed conflict and secessionism that have resulted in further wars and millions of refugees. None of these separatist conflicts in Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria or Chechnya has yet been resolved satisfactorily, and the prospects are not very

promising. The continuing instability due to these frozen conflicts continues to feed profitable criminal activities (drug trafficking, illegal arms trade), terrorism, and further migration. Political stability in the region cannot be guaranteed while these conflicts remain unsolved.

Demographic changes, migratory pressures and refugee flows are obviously major concerns for Europe. It is clear that the migration and population displacements emerging as a result of various conflicts, decreasing standards of living or environmental catastrophes can create insecurity, heighten ethnic tensions, undermine the regional social order and consequently affect nearby EU countries. One of the great concerns for Europe in this context is the number of asylum-seekers originating from the northern Black Sea area, which has increased dramatically since 1999.

In a sense, regional cooperation provides a general framework within which innovative solutions to these problems could be more easily found than through bilateral connections. As regional cooperation in the Black Sea region has been essentially an extension of the EU's philosophy that deeper cooperation with neighbouring countries can provide national as well as regional stability and growth, serving the mutual interests of all countries concerned, the regional approach in the Black Sea might be even distinctly more successful than the other regions in which it has already been tried by the EU. Since none of the Black Sea countries (leaving aside Russia) misses an opportunity to reiterate that regional cooperation in the region is complementary to its ultimate goal of EU membership,<sup>35</sup> the EU has a unique chance, with willing collaborators in the region, to become influential and effective. This was clearly articulated when the regional leaders signed the Summit Declaration on Black Sea Economic Cooperation in 1992, in which they described their action as an 'effort that would

<sup>34</sup> Council of the EU, 'Action Plan on Drugs between the EU and Central Asian Republics', Brussels, 25 September 2002, 12353/02 CORDROGUE 78 CODRO 1 NIS 107.

<sup>35</sup> See for example, statements from Romanian President Ion Iliescu to the BSEC Bucharest Summit Conference (30 June 1995), Bulgarian Foreign Minister Nadejda Mihailova (*RFE/RL Newslines*, 23 October 1998), former Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller (*OMRI Daily Digest*, 11 February 1997), and Moldavian Foreign Minister Tabacaru (*FBIS-EEU*, 27 April 2000).

facilitate the process and structures of European integration'.<sup>36</sup>

Most of the institutions of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation organisation (BSEC), the most successful multilateral cooperation scheme in the region, have even been designed along the lines of the EU institutions, and its members continually try to strengthen their institutional relationship with the EU, as exemplified by the Platform for Cooperation between the BSEC and the EU document of April 1999, which listed opportunities for cooperation that the BSEC might offer and invited the EU 'to consider the possibility for the European Commission to obtain observer status [in the organisation] that will lay ground for a future structured relationship between the BSEC and the EU'.<sup>37</sup> Further, during the BSEC 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Summit in Istanbul in June 2002, member countries declared their determination to encourage regional cooperation and to take concrete steps to increase cooperation with the EU.<sup>38</sup> Thus, for regional countries 'the BSEC is a preparation ground for integration with a larger Europe. [It could] promote suitable means for the dissemination to and adoption by its members of certain norms, standards and practices as well as principles and policies of the EU'.<sup>39</sup>

In turn, the EU clearly prefers an individual country approach to institutional arrangements in the region. At present, the EU's relations with the countries of the wider Black Sea region are guided by a number of different arrangements, and there is no multilateral framework for coordination and establishing a comprehensive partnership similar to the Barcelona process or the Northern Dimension. As far as the EU is concerned, the Black Sea

region includes a number of different groups of states, and has made different forms of agreements with them:

- EU member state: Greece since 1981;
- EU accession countries; could still be divided into negotiating candidates (Bulgaria and Romania with Europe Agreements signed in 1992 and 1993 respectively) and non-negotiating candidate (Turkey with Association Agreement since 1963 and Customs Union since 1995);
- non-EU countries with Partnership Cooperation Agreements but no membership prospect for the foreseeable future: Armenia (PCA signed in 1999), Azerbaijan (1999), Georgia (1999), Moldova (1999), Ukraine (1998) and Russia (1997), three of which (those in the South Caucasus) are not even included in the New Neighbourhood framework;
- non-EU countries in the Stabilisation and Association Process, with eventual EU membership prospects: Albania, Macedonia (applicant for the BSEC membership), and Serbia and Montenegro (applicant for the BSEC membership);
- Stability Pact countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Turkey, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro).

These different types of status in relations with the EU 'mean different operating policies and programmes, legal bases and financial instruments [for the EU]. To cut across these different types raises considerable administrative and legal complications'.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the individual Black Sea countries tend to carefully guard their relative advantages vis-à-vis each other in their relations with the EU.

<sup>36</sup> 'The Bosphorus Statement', 25 June 1992, Istanbul, <http://www.turkey.org/politics/bsec/nsec8.htm>.

<sup>37</sup> 'Platform for Cooperation between the BSEC and the EU', Attachment 3 to Annex V to BS/FM/R(99)1, Tbilisi, 30 April 1999.

<sup>38</sup> 'The Istanbul Decennial Summit Declaration', 25 June 2002; <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/af/bsec12.htm>.

<sup>39</sup> Ercan Ozer, 'The Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the EU', *Romanian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1997, p. 109.

<sup>40</sup> Emerson and Vahl, 'Europe's Black Sea Dimension', pp. 19-20. The same point was stressed by Michael Emerson during a discussion in CEPS, Brussels, 9 October 2003. He also suggested that streamlining all these different approaches, with different budget lines, would decrease the costs for the EU of running uncoordinated programmes in the region, thus increasing, at the same time, amounts available to the region as a whole. Although the Commission officials concur with this view, they are nevertheless sceptical, for bureaucratic reasons, about the feasibility of combining all the existing budget lines under a single title for the Black Sea. Personal interviews with the Commission officials, Brussels, 9-10 October 2003.

The negotiating accession candidates, Romania and Bulgaria, receive economic and technical assistance from the EU aimed at preparing them for the EU membership. Turkey has a special financial protocol with the EU. The non-candidate states of South Eastern Europe, including Albania, are beneficiaries of the CARDS programme of financial and technical assistance. The CIS states are beneficiaries of the TACIS programme. The distinctions between these programmes are very marked.<sup>41</sup>

Not only do they differ in the amounts of per capita aid they receive from the EU, but also the types and cycles of support programmes would differ greatly, leading to different administrative processes and difficulties of coordination on issues of multilateral importance. In short, 'on issues that require multinational cooperation among countries with different relationships with the EU, the EU approach poses problems for such regional cooperation'.<sup>42</sup>

On the other hand, it was clearly the EU Commission's intention as far back as 1997 to develop a 'Black Sea connection' with the regional countries when it adopted its Communication on regional cooperation in the Black Sea region, which was defined as 'Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova in the west; Ukraine and Russia in the north; Georgia,

Armenia and Azerbaijan in the east and Turkey in the south' – clearly BSEC territory. Acknowledging the 'growing strategic importance to the European Union of the Black Sea region', the Commission expressed 'its intention to develop a new regional cooperation strategy' (emphasis added). It further listed the areas in which cooperation could be promoted as transport, energy and telecommunications networks, trade, ecologically sustainable development, and justice and home affairs.<sup>43</sup> Further, in its report 'Agenda 2000: For a stronger and wider Union', the Commission listed the BSEC among the regional initiatives it 'welcomed and supported' in northern, central and south-eastern Europe.<sup>44</sup> Also the idea of becoming an observer in the BSEC was floated briefly.

However, while the other initiatives found advocates within the EU and were actively supported by the Union in connection with its enlargement process, the regional approach towards the Black Sea was in time accorded a lower priority. While the EU Commission has become a member of the Council of the Baltic Sea States and is one of the founding partners of the Barents Euro-Artic Council (two organisations that were launched almost simultaneously with the BSEC), attempts to get the EU involved in the same way in the BSEC have been unsuccessful and the recent Wider Europe-Neighbourhood Communication does not include any reference to it.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>43</sup> European Commission, 'Regional cooperation in the Black Sea area: State of play, perspectives for EU action encouraging its development', Communication from the Commission to the Council, COM(97) 597 final, Brussels, 14 November 1997.

<sup>44</sup> European Commission, 'Agenda 2000: For a stronger and wider Union', Commission communication to the Council, COM(97), 659, Brussels, December 1997.

<sup>45</sup> Fraser Cameron and Antoinette Primatarova, 'Enlargement, CFSP and the Convention: The Role of the Accession States', *European Policy Institute Network Working Paper* no. 5 (Brussels: CEPS, June 2003), p. 8. One official from the EU Commission argued that the BSEC has not done enough to attract the attention of the EU and that 'the offer we received is so vague'. An official at the Council argued that as the enlargement process took over priority, the impetus was lost and the people who were more interested in the Commission to see a Black Sea dimension develop, have moved on. Moreover, as the Commission lost some ground with the Santer Commission vis-à-vis the Council, argued Michael Emerson of CEPS, pressures from certain member countries to move on were instrumental, despite the fact that the Commission agrees privately that the EU should include Black Sea regionalism. Personal interviews, Brussels, 9-10 October 2003.

## Regionalisation and regional cooperation around the Black Sea

In an increasingly interdependent world economic system, regionalisation has been seen as an agent of further integration and as a catalyst for transformation from centrally planned economic systems and totalitarian regimes to market economies and democratic institutionalisation. It is also hoped that regional groupings, with their localised confidence-building measures, can contribute to geopolitical stability by facilitating collaborative action against contemporary problems (such as organised crime, terrorism, and illicit drug and arms trafficking) that threaten regional (and thus global) security and stability.<sup>46</sup>

It is argued that regionalisation can 'counteract the establishment of new dividing lines by creating multi-layered, trans-boundary, cooperative networks'.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, by dealing with non-military security issues in the political, economic and environmental fields, as well as social and cultural issues, regional organisations build a sense of common interest and, to a certain extent, a shared identity. Clearly, their existence simply induces their members to develop non-coercive attitudes and 'reduces the tendency to resort to non-peaceful means in pursuit of national interests'.<sup>48</sup> By providing forums in which state, substate and non-state actors can interact on a range of issues, they contribute to the development of regional security. In short, they can enhance security simply by fostering dialogue, personal contacts and mutual understanding.

Regional organisations can also play a complementary role to broader arrangements like the EU by preparing their members for future accession in the larger organisation through stronger economic and social foundations for integration and pre-adoption of certain norms and standards of these organisations.<sup>49</sup> In this context, EU candidate countries since the end of the Cold War have come to regard regional organisations as a means of facilitating membership and have been active participants in bilateral, trilateral, and sub-regional cooperation initiatives. By doing so, they have also responded to EU encouragement to develop cooperative efforts and good-neighbourly relations prior to their membership. The EU, on the other hand, has hoped to strengthen regional stability and security by encouraging sub-regional cooperation and urging candidate countries to resolve any unsettled boundary disputes or cross-border minority problems. Thus, with EU encouragement, various Baltic Sea and Barents Sea organisations were grouped under the Northern Dimension, Mediterranean countries were brought together around the Barcelona process and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe tidied up the Balkans. The missing part of this picture is the region around the Black Sea, where regional countries have been busy since the end of the Cold War in establishing all sorts of multinational regional cooperation schemes. It is thus surprising to see that the EU has not so far targeted the Black Sea region, with

<sup>46</sup> For representation of alternative views on regionalisation and its connection with security in the post-Cold War world, see David A. Lake and Patrick M. Morgan, *Regional Orders; Building Security in a New World* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

<sup>47</sup> Ercan Ozer, 'The Black Sea Economic Cooperation and Regional Security', *Perceptions, Journal of International Affairs*, vol. II, no. 3, September-November 1997, p. 78.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

its home-grown regional projects, as one of its regional initiatives. Even more so because all the Black Sea countries have expressed their willingness to cooperate more closely with the EU on an institutional level through their most comprehensive organisation – BSEC.

Some analysts are opposed to an institutionalised EU connection with the Black Sea countries because, according to them, the area does not form a region with a common identity. They argue that the Black Sea, an 'intellectually constructed region', is not seen as such from the outside (by the international community), nor from inside (by the Black Sea countries themselves).<sup>50</sup> Clearly, for most of the countries in the area, the 'Black Sea identity' has been of secondary importance to their wider international agendas, and more or less all the countries in the region look for affiliation beyond the regional structures. Moreover, there are wide discrepancies among the Black Sea countries in economic, political, social and cultural terms. From this perspective, the Black Sea area has neither internal nor external potential for region-building. Also, what is happening in the Black Sea area, with the BSEC for example, can be considered a 'side-effect of European integration' rather than region-building in itself. In this context, the diversity (of people, cultures, economies, political systems and indeed geography) within the region stands out as one of the important reasons why the regional countries have, so far, failed to develop a sense of common identity.

On the other hand, all the regions and the regional identities, in a sense, are first and foremost a construction of region-wide intellectual endeavours. Initially, all regions are created in the minds of people: intellectual, political, and governmental élites as well as business communities. Therefore, whether or not 'the region' exists geographically in the first place is not a question, as there is no definitive list of essentials that define a region. It is the political will of the interested countries and constant intellec-

tual engagement with the idea of regional identity that turn a geographical area into a (geo)political region. As such, although the usage of the term 'Black Sea' to refer to a distinct political region as opposed to a simple geographic area is a fairly recent phenomenon, it will no doubt generate its own momentum as the region's intellectual and political élites continue to use it.

Moreover, the impetus for use of the term 'Black Sea' to refer to a political region has originated from within the region. This is a source of strength, as it does not need outside encouragement, and thus does not create resentment among the local people; and also it shows their will to interact with each other, recognise each other as sharing the same geography and interests, and be recognised by others as such. Finally, regions lie where politicians want them to lie. For political reasons and the simplicity they provide, 'regional definitions are often based on political boundaries, although these boundaries usually encompass important internal differences'.<sup>51</sup> When looked at from this perspective, the Black Sea constitutes a region; the will of the governments to develop the region was demonstrated by the creation of the BSEC in 1992. However, this does not mean that the area has always been a region: it is a new creation much as the willingness to cooperate in the region. Thus, the Black Sea area is more of a 'region' today than it was ten years ago.

For historical reasons of division and the fragmented nature of the region in modern times, regional cooperation and integration between Black Sea countries have in the past been difficult and tentative. However, since the end of the Cold War, the regional countries have shown their willingness to work together within various regional cooperative initiatives and a new era of opportunity has come to the fore, creating genuine hope that the region, 'especially after the 11th of September 2001, [the region] could become an excellent example of how

<sup>50</sup> Discussions with experts on Black Sea affairs during the International Conference 'The New European Architecture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; Promoting Regional Cooperation in the Wider Black Sea Area', Milos Island, Greece, 3-7 September 2002.

<sup>51</sup> Ralph Clem, 'The New Central Asia: Prospects for Development' in Michael Bradshaw (ed.), *Geography and Transition in the Post-Soviet Republics* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1997), p. 165.

countries so different from each other cannot only co-exist but also cooperate closely in many fields'.<sup>52</sup>

Though not comprehensive, the following table summarises the main part of the institutionalised involvement of regional countries

**Participation of wider Black Sea countries in regional and selected international organisations**

	BSEC	EU	NATO	OSCE	GUUAM	CIS	Tashkent Treaty	SECI	Stability Pact-SEE	WTO	Council of Europe
<b>Albania</b>	X	SAA	EAPC	X				X	X	X	X
<b>Armenia</b>	X	PCA	EAPC	X		X	X			X	X
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	X	PCA	EAPC	X	X	X				O	X
<b>Belarus</b>			EAPC	X		X	X			O	
<b>Bulgaria</b>	X	A	EAPC	X				X	X	X	X
<b>Georgia</b>	X	PCA	EAPC	X	X	X				X	X
<b>Greece</b>	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X
<b>Macedonia</b>	AC	SAA	EAPC	X				X	X	X	X
<b>Moldova</b>	X	PCA	EAPC	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
<b>Romania</b>	X	A	EAPC	X				X	X	X	X
<b>Russia</b>	X	PCA	EAPC	X		X	X			O	X
<b>Serbia &amp; Montenegro</b>	AC	SAA		X				X	X	O	X
<b>Turkey</b>	X	N-N A	X	X				X	X	X	X
<b>Ukraine</b>	X	PCA	EAPC	X	X	X				O	X

X: Member State;

A: Accession Country

N-NA: Non-Negotiating Accession Country;

AC: Applicant Country;

EAPC: Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council;

O: Observer State;

PCA: Partnership and Cooperation Agreement;

SAA: Stability and Association Agreement

<sup>52</sup> Yannis Papanikolaou, 'Preface', in Terry D. Adams, et al., *Europe's Black Sea Dimension* (Brussels: CEPS, June 2002), p. i.

since the end of the Cold War. Clearly, the regional countries have shown their cooperative capacity to act as a region on number of issue areas, and thus deserve to be treated as such by outsiders, especially the EU. The following section, which describes various cooperative attempts in the region, especially in that period, will clearly demonstrate the region-building potential of the Black Sea countries which, if utilised by the EU, could easily complement its efforts to create a 'security-community' around the EU-Europe, extending its norms and regulations without actually providing the prospect of full membership for the regional countries. Moreover, the long experience gained by the regional countries through their cooperation within the context of the BSEC, which modelled most of its institutions on those of the EU, shows the ability and the suitability of the regional countries to cooperate with the EU within a more structured and institutionalised framework.

### *3.1 The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) organisation*

Among others, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) organisation stands out as the most institutionalised organisation in the region. Established in June 1992, the BSEC officially became a 'regional economic organisation' with an international legal identity on 1 May 1999 with the entry into force of its Charter. It is the only organisation that includes all six countries on the Black Sea (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine) as well as five neighbouring countries (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Greece, and Moldova). Ten countries have applied for full membership (Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro are closest to membership), and Austria, Egypt,

France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Tunisia, BSEC Business Council and the International Black Sea Club have observer status.

Under the BSEC umbrella, member countries have three interrelated and mutually reinforcing goals: to achieve cooperation rather than conflict, to support regionalism as well as globalisation and to avoid new divisions in Europe. To this end, member countries have agreed 'to create a presumption of cooperation in a region that has much potential for tension and conflict'.<sup>53</sup> The results obtained so far at an institutional level, given the region's history, are indeed impressive, and clearly establish a 'presumption of cooperation'.

So far, the organisation seems to prefer a project-based approach, mostly in the area of economic cooperation. The BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future, adopted by the Council of Ministers in Moscow in March 2001, listed several areas for future cooperation and emphasised the importance of joint projects which would bring in tangible benefits and stimulate internal reforms and integration of national economies in the region.<sup>54</sup> It stressed that the BSEC would facilitate economic development in the region by: (a) implementing regional or transregional projects that could contribute to the success of economic reforms and democratic transformation; (b) concentrating on actions, programmes and joint projects, which could be accomplished in a predictable timeframe; (c) accelerating the transition from feasibility studies stage to project implementation; (d) developing and improving the mechanism of country coordinators, as well as other coordination mechanisms in relevant areas of regional cooperation; and (e) encouraging transborder cooperation, aiming at projects and programmes of interest to local communities and agreed upon by the member states concerned.

Moreover, as areas needing immediate attention, it highlighted the adoption of macroeconomic reforms, the establishment of strong and

<sup>53</sup> See 'The Work Programme of Turkey during Its Chairmanship of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation, 1 May-1 November 2001'; <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/af/bsec10.htm>.

<sup>54</sup> See 'BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future: Towards a more consolidated, effective and viable BSEC partnership', March 2001, BS/SOM/R(01)2, Annex III.



resilient financial systems, the adaptation of existing economic institutions to the market economy, encouraging support for national stabilisation and development programmes, deregulating product and service markets, and improving capital markets, promoting the use of new technologies and encouraging the exchange of economic experts between member states. In a similar way, the BSEC Charter sees the organisation's priority areas as trade and economic development; banking and finance; communications; energy; transport; agriculture and agro-industry; health care and pharmaceuticals; environmental protection; tourism; science and technology; exchange of statistical data and economic information; collaboration between customs and other border authorities; human contacts; combating organised crime, the illicit trafficking of drugs, weapons and radioactive materials, all acts of terrorism and illegal migration.<sup>55</sup>

On the other hand, the organisation has also from the beginning aimed at establishing peace and security in the region, though without actually developing clear-cut and distinctive policies, due to the clear preference of some of its members not to mix economic cooperation and political-security issues. However, the 1992 Summit Declaration announced that the promotion of economic cooperation among Black Sea countries was viewed as a contribution to regional peace and security.<sup>56</sup> In the words of the man who thought out the idea of creating a 'Black Sea Cooperation and Prosperity Region' in the first place, the most important objective of the BSEC is 'to turn the Black Sea basin into a haven of peace, stability and prosperity'.<sup>57</sup> As most member countries came to realise that without a viable security dimension and solution to the

region's many problems the organisation could not move ahead, the Decennial Summit of Istanbul called the Council of Ministers 'to consider ways and means of enhancing contribution of the BSEC to strengthening security and stability in the region', thus (hard) security cooperation in the BSEC area is now on the agenda.<sup>58</sup>

The intention to create a 'free trade zone' among the BSEC members that was emphasised early on proved difficult in practice, as members' existing commitments (towards, for instance, the EU) had to be taken into account. Nevertheless, in February 1997 the summit of foreign and economy ministers in Istanbul made a 'Declaration of Intent for the establishment of BSEC free trade area'. The European Commission expressed its readiness to act as a partner in the proposed free trade zone, but also emphasised that it should take place gradually, that existing agreements between individual BSEC countries and the EU should be taken into account, and that all the BSEC countries should be admitted to the WTO before a free trade zone was created. As a result, the 2001 BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future adopted the long-term step-by-step approach proposed by the EU Commission.

Although essentially an intergovernmental organisation, over the years the BSEC has paid close attention to developing non-governmental networks and representative bodies around the Black Sea – so much so that establishment of its parliamentary assembly predated the formation of its Permanent Secretariat (PERMIS) in 1994. The Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC (PABSEC) was established in 1993 with parliamentarians from 10 of 11 BSEC members (Bulgarian parliamentarians joined the Assembly in 1997). The Assembly meets twice a year and has

<sup>55</sup> 'Charter of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation'; <http://www.bsec.gov.tr/charter.htm>.

<sup>56</sup> For the full text of the 'Summit Declaration on Black Sea Economic Cooperation', Istanbul, 25 June 1992, see <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/af/Bsec7.htm>.

<sup>57</sup> Turkish Ambassador (retired) Sükrü Elekdag, 'Karadeniz Isbirligi ve Refah Bolgesi', *Cumhuriyet*, 20 February 1990; and 'Karadeniz Ekonomik Isbirligi', in Sebahattin Sen (ed.), *Yeni Dunya Duzeni ve Turkiye* (Istanbul: Baglam, 1994), pp. 207-8.

<sup>58</sup> 'The Istanbul Decennial Summit Declaration', 25 June 2002; . In the soft security issues such as organised crime, environmental protection, illegal immigration, etc., the BSEC has already been active, which provided member countries additional channels for multilateral dialogue and cooperation. See, Oleksandr Pavliuk, 'The Black Sea Economic Cooperation: Will Hopes Become Reality?', in Andrew Cottey (ed.), *Subregional Cooperation in the New Europe: Building Security and Solidarity from the Barents to the Black Sea* (London: MacMillan, 1999).

three committees: Economic, Commercial, Technical, and Environmental Relations; Legal and Political Relations; and Educational, Cultural, and Social Relations. It has its own Secretariat based in Istanbul has in time moved beyond its initial aim of harmonisation of legislation required to implement BSEC projects, covering now many initiatives to promote sub-national cooperation. In this context, for example, the Association of Black Sea Capitals (BSCA) was established following an initiative by the PABSEC, which aims at strengthening the pluralistic democratic structure and political stability in the region.

To involve the private sector in cooperation efforts around the Black Sea, the Business Council (BSECBC) with the representatives of business councils from all the BSEC countries was established in 1992 to contribute to 'the greater integration of the Black Sea to the world economy'.<sup>59</sup> It is run by a Board of Directors headed by a Secretary General, and has observer status in BSEC and its own Secretariat in Istanbul.

The decision to create the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB) was taken in 1994, though it was not implemented until 1998 and become operational in June 1999. It was established as an autonomous financial institution with an initial capital of \$300 million, expected to rise to \$1.5 billion. Greece, Russia and Turkey each have 16.5 per cent of the shares, Romania, Bulgaria and Ukraine 13.5 per cent, and Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova 2 per cent each. BSTDB represents the financial component of the BSEC and aims to play a key role in the region with its support for project-based regional cooperation initiatives. It has so far provided more than \$100 million to different regional projects, mainly related to interregional trade.<sup>60</sup>

Academic cooperation between universities of the Black Sea countries was started with the initiation of the Black Sea Universities Network

in 1997 to identify and enhance intellectual resources badly needed in the region for sustainable development. It has so far arranged cooperation between more than 50 universities. The BSEC Standing Academic Committee was established in 1998 to promote academic cooperation and support joint scientific projects. Finally, the International Center for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) was opened in Athens in 1998 to carry out policy-oriented, practical research in fulfilment of BSEC goals. Also, recognising that the different statistical systems within the region have been the main obstacle to the preparation of comparable data, the Coordination Centre for the Exchange of Statistical Data and Economic Information was established in October 1993 in Ankara as a unit within the State Institute of Statistics of Turkey to collect, coordinate, analyse and circulate statistics and economic information on the region.

Still on the subnational level, cooperation between local governments around the Black Sea started in July 1992 with the establishment of the International Black Sea Club (IBSC) as a non-profit-making organisation involving the mayors of towns in the Black Sea region. The Club aims at stimulating direct contacts between companies and enterprises and the exchange of economic and commercial information. It is also involved in the implementation of environmental protection and supports cultural contacts in the region.

In addition, the BSEC has all the usual inter-governmental bodies, mostly adopted from the EU institutions. Its Summit Meetings of Heads of State and Government have so far met irregularly (1992, 1995, 1996, 1998, 1999 and 2002). Its main function is to decide the strategic direction of BSEC cooperation at the highest level, such as its establishment in 1992, its transformation into a formal regional organisation in 1998, and requesting Council of Ministers in 2002 to look into the possibility of giving the organisation a security dimension.

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<sup>59</sup> <http://www.bsec-busines.org/content.asp?cat=43>.

<sup>60</sup> For further details, see, Black Sea Trade and Development Bank Web Site at <http://www.bstadb.org/default1.htm>.

The main regular decision-making body of the BSEC is the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, which meets twice a year, in April and October, chaired by the country holding the six-monthly rotating Chairmanship. The BSEC Chairman is supported by a Committee of Senior Officials, seconded by member countries and organised as sectoral Working Groups.<sup>61</sup> To ensure continuity, a Troika system with the participation of past, current and future chairpersons was introduced in 1995.

The BSEC Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS) was established in Istanbul in March 1994 to coordinate BSEC activities under the guidance of Chairperson-in-Office. It has its own budget, to which all member states contribute. Currently PERMIS does not have legal authority to become a contracting party on behalf of the BSEC. It coordinates the activities of the Working Groups. At present, ways to increase its stature and effectiveness are being discussed, to be supported by the establishment of a Council of Permanent Representatives with permanent member state delegations accredited to the BSEC. To this end, the BSEC Headquarters Agreement was signed and entered into force in August 2000.

### *3.2 Non-BSEC cooperation in the Black Sea region*

In addition to the BSEC, there are various other forms of regional bilateral and multilateral cooperation projects and programmes in the region, with or without the participation of international organisations such as the UN, the

EU and NATO. A number of initiatives were started in the early days of the post-Cold War era, and cooperation on the environment, transport, energy infrastructure and soft security issues especially seems to be thriving at the moment.

Environmental protection is already the most developed area of cooperation both within the Black Sea region and also between Black Sea countries and EU member states. Apart from EU support for the implementation of the Black Sea Environment Programme (BSEP), the crucial role of the EU in Black Sea environmental protection was reflected in the EU Commission's Communication on Environmental Cooperation in the Danube-Black Sea Region.<sup>62</sup> This document clearly shows the direct causality between the Black Sea and the regions at the very centre of the EU, such as Germany and Austria, as well as Central and South-Eastern Europe. It is clear that the environmental problems of the Black Sea cannot be solved without the cooperation of all the Black Sea Basin countries, 'even though some of them are landlocked'.<sup>63</sup>

During the Cold War, as the Sea was divided between the communist north and Turkey in the south, there was little cooperation. Bulgaria, Romania and the USSR tried to cooperate by signing the Varna Fisheries Agreement in 1959, and Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey cooperated with the General Fisheries Council for the Mediterranean, but these were ephemeral attempts that did not have any real effect. Another early attempt at environmental protection in the Black Sea was the MARPOL Convention of 1973. Although all the Black Sea countries ratified the agreement, which designated

<sup>61</sup> There are currently 15 Working Groups: Agriculture and Agro Industry, Banking and Finance, Combating Crime, Communications, Emergency Assistance, Energy, Environmental Protection, Electronic Communication Network, Health Care and Pharmaceuticals, Scientific and Technological Cooperation, Statistical Data and Economic Information Exchange, Tourism Cooperation, Trade and Economic Development, Transport, Academics-Untapped Regional Resources, SMEs.

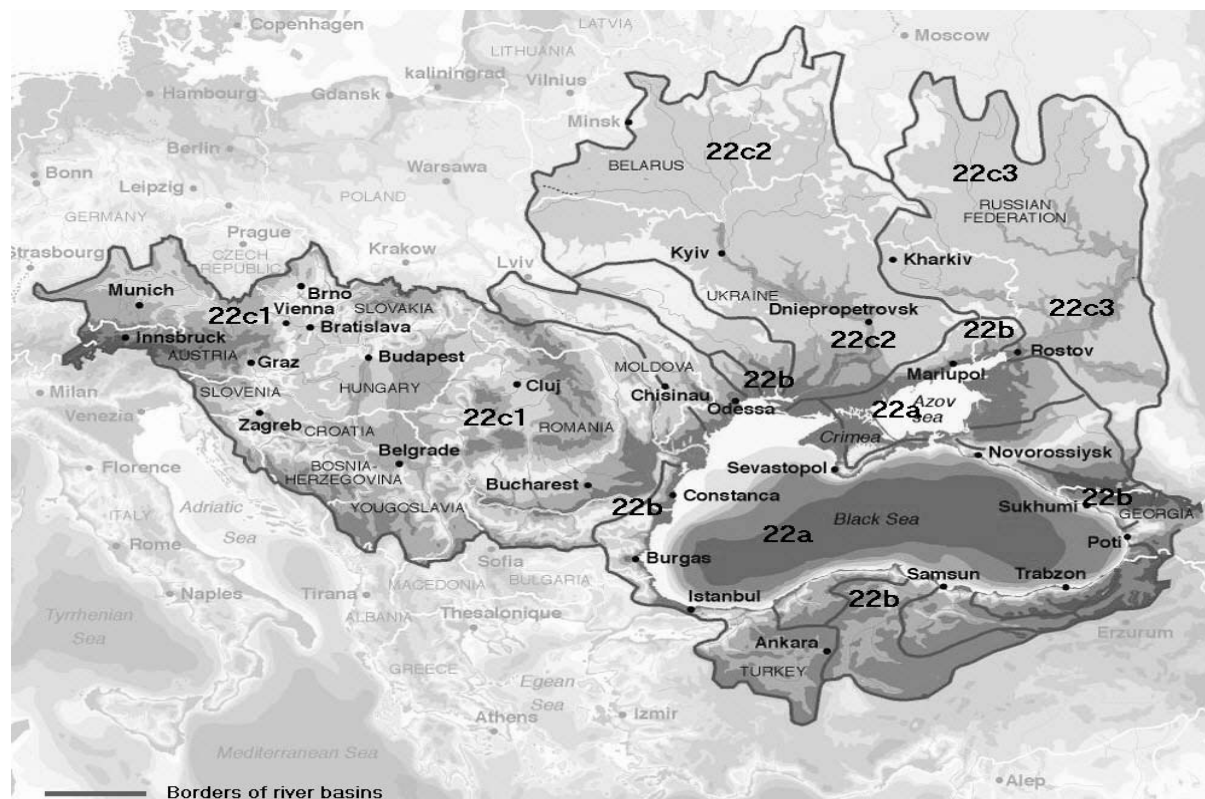
<sup>62</sup> EU Commission, 'Communication from the Commission on Environmental Cooperation in the Danube-Black Sea Region', COM (2001) 615 final, Brussels, 30 October 2001.

<sup>63</sup> Laurence David Mee, 'Protecting the Black Sea Environment. A Challenge for Cooperation and Sustainable Development in Europe', Terry Adams et al., *Europe's Black Sea Dimension* (Brussels: CEPS, 2002), p. 107. About 60 per cent of contaminants reaching to the Black Sea come through Danube and its subsidiaries, and about 30 per cent from the non-coastal countries: Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Serbia and Montenegro, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Slovakia and Slovenia. The largest polluters, though, are Romania and Bulgaria, two Black Sea accession countries to the EU.

the Black Sea as a 'specially protected area', it has not so far had any chance of being implemented because of lack of financial support and the need to delimit the national exclusive economic zones.<sup>64</sup>

to prepare a common policy framework for environmental protection and as a result the Black Sea Environment Programme was established in June 1993 with the support of the UN and the EU. The BSEP secretariat shares the same build-

### The Black Sea Basin



After the end of the Cold War, in 1992 six littoral states of the Black Sea signed the Bucharest Convention for the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution, which was later ratified and came into effect in 1994.<sup>65</sup> The Black Sea Commission was established in 1995 to oversee its implementation, but its real activation was delayed until 2000 when it opened a small secretariat of two people in Istanbul. In the meantime, all the Black Sea countries had come together in Odessa, Ukraine, in April 1993

ing as the Black Sea Commission's secretariat in Istanbul, and has conducted an analysis of environmental problems (Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis) in the region, at the end of which it developed a Strategic Action Plan (SAP), signed by the six littoral states in 1996, for the rehabilitation and protection of the Black Sea. Also, to oversee local implementation of the BSEP, regional activity centres have been established in all the Black Sea countries, though most of them still lack the financial means to be of much use.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 88-90.

<sup>65</sup> The Convention had three attached protocols: Protocol on Protection of the Black Sea Marine Environment against Pollution from Land-Based Sources; Protocol on Cooperation in Combating Pollution of the Black Sea Marine Environment by Oil and Other Harmful Substances in Emergency Situations; and the Protocol on the Protection of the Black Sea Marine Environment against Pollution by Dumping.

A significant aspect of this cooperation has been that, at the time of its signature, Ukraine and Russia were engaged in a war of words over the fate of the former Soviet Black Sea Fleet, and Georgia was engulfed in a civil war in which there were clear signs of Russian meddling. It was gratifying to see that environmental concerns finally transcended the 'high political' issues.<sup>66</sup> A separate regional council of cooperation on environmental issues between Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Romania and Turkey was agreed upon in December 2000, and in November 2001 all 19 countries in the Black Sea Basin came together and signed the Declaration on Water and Water Related Ecosystems in the Wider Black Sea Region.<sup>67</sup>

In the meantime, the EU has developed and supported a number of multilateral infrastructure programmes for wider Eurasia that centres on the Black Sea. The Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA), launched in 1993 to link the eight former Soviet countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus with Europe, has been developing transport alternatives on the East-West axis across and around the Black Sea region. With its EU-funded technical assistance, TRACECA has helped to attract international investment for vast transport infrastructure projects in the region.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, at the third European Conference of Ministers of Transport in 1997, the Black Sea was chosen as one of the four Pan-European Transport Areas (PETrAS). Later on, representatives from the eight participating countries (the six littoral states plus Greece and Moldova) and the EU Commission established a Steering Group in 1999 to oversee the implementation of various transport projects with EU support. Finally, four sectoral working groups and a technical secretariat (housed by the PERMIS) were established and an annually revised Action Plan was drafted.

INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe), launched in 1995, is another EU-funded regional programme that concentrates technical assistance and some investment support for hydrocarbon infrastructure in the wider Black Sea region. At its first summit in 1999, an Umbrella Agreement was signed on the development of hydrocarbon transportation networks between the Caspian Basin and Europe across the Black Sea region. The agreement allows countries not covered by EU's TACIS programme to join infrastructure projects, and has been signed so far by 21 countries, including all the BSEC members except Russia. A secretariat for INOGATE was set up in Kyiv in November 2000.

The EU Commission, under its SYNERGY programme, initiated the establishment of the Black Sea Regional Energy Centre (BSREC) in February 1995. In addition to the Commission, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine joined immediately, Macedonia signed in January 1999 and Serbia and Montenegro in October 2001. Based in Sofia, the Centre aims at developing cooperation in the energy field between Black Sea region countries and the EU, as well as among the countries themselves.<sup>69</sup> The Centre promotes development and implementation of market oriented energy policy, encourages restructuring of monopolies, supports energy efficiency projects and advocates policy reforms in line with EU Energy Directives. It has so far supported various project-based energy ventures around the Black Sea, and organised training sessions for regional experts.

In June 2000, six Black Sea countries decided to establish a multinational naval force, the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR) to cooperate in search and rescue operations in the event of maritime

<sup>66</sup> Mee, 'Protecting the Black Sea Environment', p. 95.

<sup>67</sup> See [http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/enlarg/pdf/danube\\_declaration.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/enlarg/pdf/danube_declaration.pdf).

<sup>68</sup> For further information on TRACECA activities around the Black Sea, see Black Sea Pan-European Transport Area (BS-PETrA) Web Site, at <http://www.bs-petra.org/6>.

<sup>69</sup> See <http://www.bsrece.bg/newsbsrec/firstpage.html>.

emergencies, mine-clearing, humanitarian assistance, environmental protection, goodwill visits between Black Sea countries and peace support operations in conjunction with the UN or the OSCE.<sup>70</sup> In addition, the mission of the force was described by the cooperating countries as 'to contribute to the further strengthening of friendship, good relations and mutual confidence among the Black Sea littoral states, as well as to improve peace and stability in the region'.<sup>71</sup> First proposed by Turkey in 1998, the agreement was finally signed in 2 April 2001 and the force became operational in September 2001, initially with a Turkish commander, to be replaced in line with member countries' six-monthly rotating presidencies. The force has no permanent headquarters, but at least one joint exercise is planned each year. Although the force is intended for the Black Sea, it could be deployed to other seas if the participating states agreed.

Apart from these multilateral cooperation initiatives, a number of Black Sea countries have set up trilateral meetings, a Romanian initiative, for cooperation on regional issues. Trilateral combinations exist between Romania-Moldova-Ukraine, Romania-Bulgaria-Turkey, Romania-Poland-Ukraine, Romania-Bulgaria-Greece and Romania-Hungary-Austria. Moreover, most of the BSEC members have also joined other subregional organisations such as the Royaumont Process, SECI, SEECP, Stability Pact, CEI, CEFTA, and GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova). Moreover, Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Greece, Italy, Romania, and Turkey signed an agreement to set up a multinational peacekeeping force for South-Eastern Europe (SEEBRIG) in September 1998, involving a number of BSEC and NATO member countries. The force was activated in August 1999.

Following a UNESCO initiative, the Mediterranean and Black Sea Regional Tolerance Network was established in September 1996 as a non-governmental peer group to fight against intolerance, discrimination and violence. The goals of the Network are 'to coordinate the international community's response' to the above-mentioned challenges, as well as 'research and monitoring in support of policy-making and standard-setting action by member states'.<sup>72</sup> In a similar vein, a Black Sea NGO Network (BSNN) was established in 1998 as a regional independent, non-political and non-profit association of NGOs from all the Black Sea littoral states to create and bring the importance of a healthy Black Sea and a sustainable future to the public's attention. The BSNN currently numbers 54 regional NGOs, which are concerned at the decreasing environmental quality of the Black Sea as well as the need to adopt democratic values and practices in the Black Sea countries that follow the ideals of sustainability.

In mid-2000, at a conference organised by BSEC member states, participants decided to create and implement a joint agricultural strategy to guarantee food in the region in case of famine. In May 1999, the Regional Centre for Combating Trans-border Crime, in association with SECI, was opened with the participation of six BSEC members and two applicants (Macedonia and Serbia-Montenegro) as well as BSEC as an organisation. Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine cooperate in the Federation of Euro-Asian Stock Exchanges to encourage investments within their region and create joint investment guarantee schemes. Finally, discussions for drafting a Convention for Fisheries in the Black Sea are currently under way between the Black Sea littoral states.

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<sup>70</sup> See Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group web page at <http://www.blackseafor.org/backgr.htm>, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> Joint press release issued after the Third Experts Meeting of the BSEC countries, Istanbul, 26 February 1999; [http://www.photius.com/blakseafor/990226\\_mfa.html](http://www.photius.com/blakseafor/990226_mfa.html).

<sup>72</sup> For further information see <http://www.unesco.org/tolerance/medmet.htm>.

## Conclusions

**T**he Black Sea remains a region in the making, with plenty of conflicts. Active encouragement and support of the Black Sea cooperative process is very important in this regard, and the EU has an important role to play in the promotion of stability in the wider Black Sea region. For successful region-building and constructing an environment more conducive to regional peace and stability, it is essential to link the Black Sea region with the EU, not only in the realm of energy (oil and gas), but also in the field of infrastructure (construction of highways and railways, linking electricity grids, etc.) to enhance the connection and interaction between Europe, the Middle East, the Black Sea and the Caspian region. There is a clear political dimension in this cooperation, since the development of alternative regional infrastructures particularly strengthens the independence of the newly independent countries (which are in the transition from central to market economy and from totalitarianism to democracy) and enhances their autonomy from outside pressures.

One of the most efficient ways to deal with regional security problems would be to establish conflict prevention and crisis management mechanisms, which could be developed easily with European help and expertise. Otherwise, the worst-case scenario could include an armed conflict spreading from the Black Sea region (especially from the Caucasus), disrupting regional communication and cooperation, creating further instability and refugees, and eventually embroiling the EU members in an intractable conflict.

Although diversity of geography, economic capabilities, political systems and cultural affinities in the Black Sea may be cited as obstacles to successful region-building, what may at first sight be seen as weakness, i.e. diversity, could easily become a source of strength if the differences are used to complement each other instead of creating rifts between states. The EU experience in complementarity is immense and could help the regional countries to overcome a mutual distrust that is based on differences.

The EU's insistence on having individually tailored policies towards the Black Sea countries is certainly a problem for both the EU and the regional countries to tackle. Changing the EU's preferred approach will need a concerted effort both inside and outside the EU. For all the EU's other 'regional approaches' there have been strong sponsors within the EU. In the case of the Black Sea, Greece's efforts so far have not been enough to bring about changes.<sup>73</sup> It is also more difficult for the Black Sea, because its main attempt at regional cooperation, the BSEC, was not established with the support and/or initiative of the EU. On the contrary, some members, at least at the beginning, saw it as an alternative to the EU, though these views have now changed.

The most important reason for general ignorance of the BSEC in the EU, however, can possibly be found in the attitudes of the BSEC countries towards the EU. Clearly, the EU plays an important role in the economic and political agendas of BSEC member countries. As a result, most BSEC countries are trying hard to improve their bilateral ties with the EU, often to the

<sup>73</sup> It was expected both inside the Commission and the BSEC circles that the Greek Presidency during January-June 2003 would bring the issue of institutional connection between the BSEC and the EU on the agenda. However, Greek Presidency did not put it on the table both because they 'got distracted trying to do so many things' and 'did not wish to crowd the agenda of the Thessaloniki Summit in June 2003, where important issues for the EU were discussed'. Interviews with officials from the Commission and the Council of the EU, Brussels, 9-10 October 2003.

detriment of a more regional and multilateral approach. This attitude, unsurprisingly, has tended to push other initiatives into the background. Moreover, due to the diversified connections of the Black Sea countries with the EU in the past, they have all obtained different concessions, support and status from the EU. They do not wish to lose them by taking a multilateral approach.

Moreover, the BSEC non-EU candidate countries in particular are generally (though not universally) seen in EU circles as a source of problems that they show no intention of tackling soon, with or without outside mediation. The EU also points out that it is up to these countries to move forward closer to the EU by implementing various reforms in their political and economic systems and attempt at involving the EU in their efforts. This has certainly not happened, especially in the South Caucasian countries. There is clearly overwhelming agreement in EU circles that the region will have to overcome its many problems before it can successfully develop closer institutional relations with the EU.<sup>74</sup>

#### *4.1 Recommendations for change in the Black Sea*

What, then, should the Black Sea countries do to receive/attract more attention from the EU?

- (1) First of all, as there is already an example of a successful region-wide institutionalisation attempt (i.e. the BSEC), the Black Sea countries should continue to strengthen their region-building efforts around the BSEC, and concentrate on deepening of the regionalisation through cooperation and increased interaction with each other. This would send a clear signal to outsiders of the intention of the regional countries to be seen as a close-knit region, and present a unified and strong appeal for institutional cooperation with the EU.
- (2) The BSEC needs to look again at itself and its role in its region, taking into account its members' national priorities, creating tangible benefits and value for them, so that they accord priority to region-wide policies rather than individualistic approaches. At the same time, cooperation between the BSEC and the EU would be greatly advanced if the BSEC could present to the EU an overall plan of collaboration embracing all the wider Black Sea countries, yet taking into account the individual strategies pursued by each country for closer links with the EU.
- (3) Black Sea countries need to bring more concentrated pressure to bear on the EU for the development of institutional ties with the BSEC. If they want the EU to take the BSEC more seriously, then the regional countries should be more forthcoming with their support for the BSEC agenda vis-à-vis the EU.
- (4) The BSEC should present itself as a conduit between the EU and the non-EU candidate BSEC countries to negotiate, facilitate, promote and follow up framework agreements to prepare its member states for close cooperation with the EU. This strategy should complement, not rival, the measure aimed at promoting schemes for deepening inter-regional cooperation with or without the financial support of the EU, and initiating joint projects in selected areas, such as energy, transport, environment, tourism, etc.
- (5) Though a specialised regional organisation, the BSEC is still too disorganised in the sense that there is no clear prioritisation of its areas of interest. It has created no less than 15

<sup>74</sup> Personal interviews with the EU officials from the Commission and the Council, Brussels, 9-10 October 2003.



working groups, with varying degrees of success. It should prioritise and select fewer areas where it has more interest and ability to intervene, so that it can present itself as a useful interlocutor to other countries and organisations. Energy cooperation, transportation, environmental cooperation, fisheries and tourism are some such areas. Moreover, it ought to develop a conflict management system, if not a conflict resolution one, as the continuing or dormant regional conflicts form the main stumbling block to further cooperation in the wider Black Sea region.

- (6) In various areas where the BSEC can play an important role (environment, energy cooperation, soft security, etc.), there exist other institutions outside the BSEC realm, such as BlackSeaFor, Black Sea Environment Programme, Bucharest Convention, TRACECA and the EU's INOGATE. These areas and successful institutional initiatives have to be brought either into the BSEC realm or coordinated to prevent a duplication of effort and distraction of the EU's attention because there are too many unrelated initiatives.
- (7) There is no real locomotive within the Black Sea region to push for further integration and effectiveness. A dynamic core state is essential for successful region-building. This is more related to intellectual and political leadership than a centrally located geographical position of prospective core countries. Such a core state(s) should be willing to take the lead and if necessary meet the costs of developing a more regional approach and also a functional nucleus of issues to concentrate on. Without a clear and forceful direction from a determined leadership, both region-building in the Black Sea area and the BSEC organisation stand to lose in the longer run.

## 4.2 Recommendations for the EU

The EU on the other hand, should develop a more comprehensive approach towards the region, moving beyond its Regional Cooperation in the Black Sea document of November 1997 and covering the following aspects.

- (1) The EU should elaborate and implement a strategy directed towards encouraging subregional cooperation, stability, good-neighbourly relations and economic development. It could play a pivotal role in advancing regional cooperation among the BSEC countries in particular and eventually integrating this group into the wider Europe as a region. The starting point for this could be setting up of a Black Sea Cooperation Initiative (BSCI), along the lines of the Baltic initiative or the Southeast European Cooperation Initiative (SECI), bringing together all the BSEC member states and other countries from the wider Black Sea region.
- (2) As the various unresolved dormant conflicts of the region present the main obstacle to further regional cooperation and enhancement of peace and stability on the doorstep of EU Europe, the EU should help in resolving them by offering its good offices as a way out of the current deadlock. The appointment of the EU Special Representative to the South Caucasus is a start. However, the EU might also have to consider becoming more involved in the solution of the Transnistrian conflict, where the Union might have more leverage as a result of Moldova's position regarding EU membership. 'Europeanisation' has been successful as an instrument of conflict resolution and democratisation in Central and Eastern Europe since the end of the Cold War.<sup>75</sup> It is now time to enlarge the

<sup>75</sup> See Bruno Coppieters et al., 'European Institutional Models as Instruments of Conflict Resolution in the Divided States of the European Periphery', *CEPS Working Document 195* (Brussels: CEPS, July 2003).

perimeter and try to apply it to the countries of the wider Black Sea. After successful solution of the various conflicts, the next step would be to support the rehabilitation of the former conflict zones.

- (3) The EU should continue to support grass-roots civil initiatives and NGO activities, as well as emphasising human and minority rights, in an attempt to further consolidate civil society and democratisation in the region. As part of the ethno-political problems in the region stem from the intolerance of majorities toward minorities, further democratisation would also contribute to solving the conflicts. Supporting cross-border civil society contacts and initiatives would be helpful as well. Promoting democracy and human rights, and reducing poverty, are the only way to ensure long-term stability in the region. Therefore, in order to eliminate sources of political and social tension in the region, the EU should support reforms aimed at establishing good governance, the rule of law, functioning civil societies and respect for fundamental freedoms.
- (4) The EU could help regional states to set up more efficient border control regimes and an adequate security apparatus to reduce cross-border crime rates. The EU's experience in this domain is already extensive and its area of interest could easily be expanded to include the Black Sea region.
- (5) Given the importance of multilateral cooperation in the field of energy and the EU's need for diversified resources, it should increase its support for the implementation of new energy interconnection network projects in the region. In this, construction of interconnected electricity grids should get as much attention as the oil and natural gas links have been attracting. The main aim for the latter

should be to establish direct, secure and stable connections between the producing fields of the East and the consuming markets of the West. In doing so, security of supply, competitiveness and protection of the environment should be highlighted as priority goals for the EU.

- (6) To overcome infrastructure (legal, commercial, transportation, etc.) bottlenecks in the region and to improve climate for trade and investment, the EU needs to prepare a region-wide multilateral cooperation agreement/strategy to complement existing bilateral treaties, and support projects with an emphasis on regional cooperation. Support given to the promotion of further regional trade and economic cooperation would in the longer run also help build the capabilities of the regional states for cooperation as well as conflict resolution.
- (7) Extending trans-European networks (transport, energy etc.) to cover all the Black Sea countries, the EU should support development of regional solutions to transport, energy and environmental problems, as well as increasing its support for the creation of suitable environmental infrastructure for sustainable development.
- (8) Finally, following on from the EU's successful cooperation with Ukraine on JHA, other Black Sea countries should gradually be incorporated into the EU's third-pillar activities.

All of these, of course, would require better coordination of various EU financial instruments (EU Budget, PHARE, TACIS, etc.) that are already offered to the Black Sea countries, either individually or as part of other groupings. In order to incorporate the various aspects mentioned above into a coherent whole and facilitate the consolidation of the different budget

lines accordingly, the EU could consider development of a common position on the Black Sea region as an interim solution before moving into a more institutionalised regional approach in the medium to long term.

Despite a number of EU-sponsored projects, mainly through TACIS, European involvement in the Black Sea region has been largely limited to the energy sphere, and lacks a political and strategic dimension. Although there have been discussions among scholars as to whether to consider the Black Sea countries together with either South-Eastern Europe or the Mediterranean, and the latest strategy paper of Javier Solana tried to develop some ideas regarding selected individual Black Sea countries, there has been no systematic attempt yet to develop a common policy towards the region as a whole. On the contrary, there has been reluctance among EU member countries to recognise even the existence of the region as such, preferring instead to develop individually tailored policies.<sup>76</sup>

This paper offers an alternative view to the current EU policy, proposing that the 'Black Sea' be made a single component within the wider Europe,<sup>77</sup> putting together a number of member countries, negotiating and non-negotiating candidate countries, partner countries, and non-EU countries (with and without an intention to apply for membership). This will allow the European Union to deal successfully with enlargement and post-enlargement problems in a vast region from South-Eastern Europe to the shores of the Caspian Sea. It will form a balanced grouping where none of the countries feels excluded from the benefits of further integration with the EU, and the EU itself would not need to decide the border issue once and for all, which would leave out some countries permanently. That way, the EU would keep its most important trump card and would be able to con-

tinue to push for further reforms and transformation without actually promising further membership options. Moreover, as the Black Sea region already includes three large European actors (Russia, Turkey and Ukraine) as well as a score of smaller ones, the advent of the EU as the non-belligerent fourth would create 'a quite balanced and non-hegemonic [geopolitical] setting',<sup>78</sup> favourable to successful region-building, stability and integration. As the EU starts to digest its sixth round of enlargement, it will also recognise the need to develop properly structured regional policies and the necessity to be present in the shores of all its seas. Moreover, as the EU approaches its seventh round of enlargement, Black Sea issues will force themselves onto the EU agenda. Thus, it would be a logical next step now to start thinking about the Black Sea as a region.

Within the region, the BSEC, with its sound political base and the clear political will behind its creation, could be successful in developing a functional, comprehensive and project-oriented regional organisation if given a chance. It is clear that the main focus of most of the Black Sea countries is their relations with the EU, and they have been trying to develop cooperative initiatives in the Black Sea region that the EU has been encouraging, since the end of the Cold War, in its neighbouring areas beyond its immediate borders. In the Balkans and the Mediterranean, the EU had to push the regional countries into developing cooperative structures, sometimes taking the lead, e.g. the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. In the Black Sea, regional countries have already demonstrated their willingness and ability to create and cooperate within regional institutional bodies. It would be a pity should the EU miss the opportunity to turn this regional cooperative effort, with a small financial contribution, diplomatic support and EU

<sup>76</sup> Interviews with EU officials in the Commission and the Council, Brussels, 9-10 October 2003.

<sup>77</sup> Tsardinidis argues that the Black Sea region, under the current arrangements, is a part of 'broader Europe' but not yet 'wider Europe'. Emerson, on the other hand thinks that it is in the 'borderland Europe'. See Charalambos Tsardinidis, 'The BSEC: From New Regionalism to Inter-Regionalism?', Paper presented at the International Conference 'The New European Architecture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; Promoting Regional Cooperation in the Wider Black Sea Area', Milos Island, Greece, 3-7 September 2002, p. 19; and Michael Emerson, *The Elephant and the Bear: The European Union, Russia and their Near Abroads* (Brussels: CEPS, 2001), pp. 3-4.

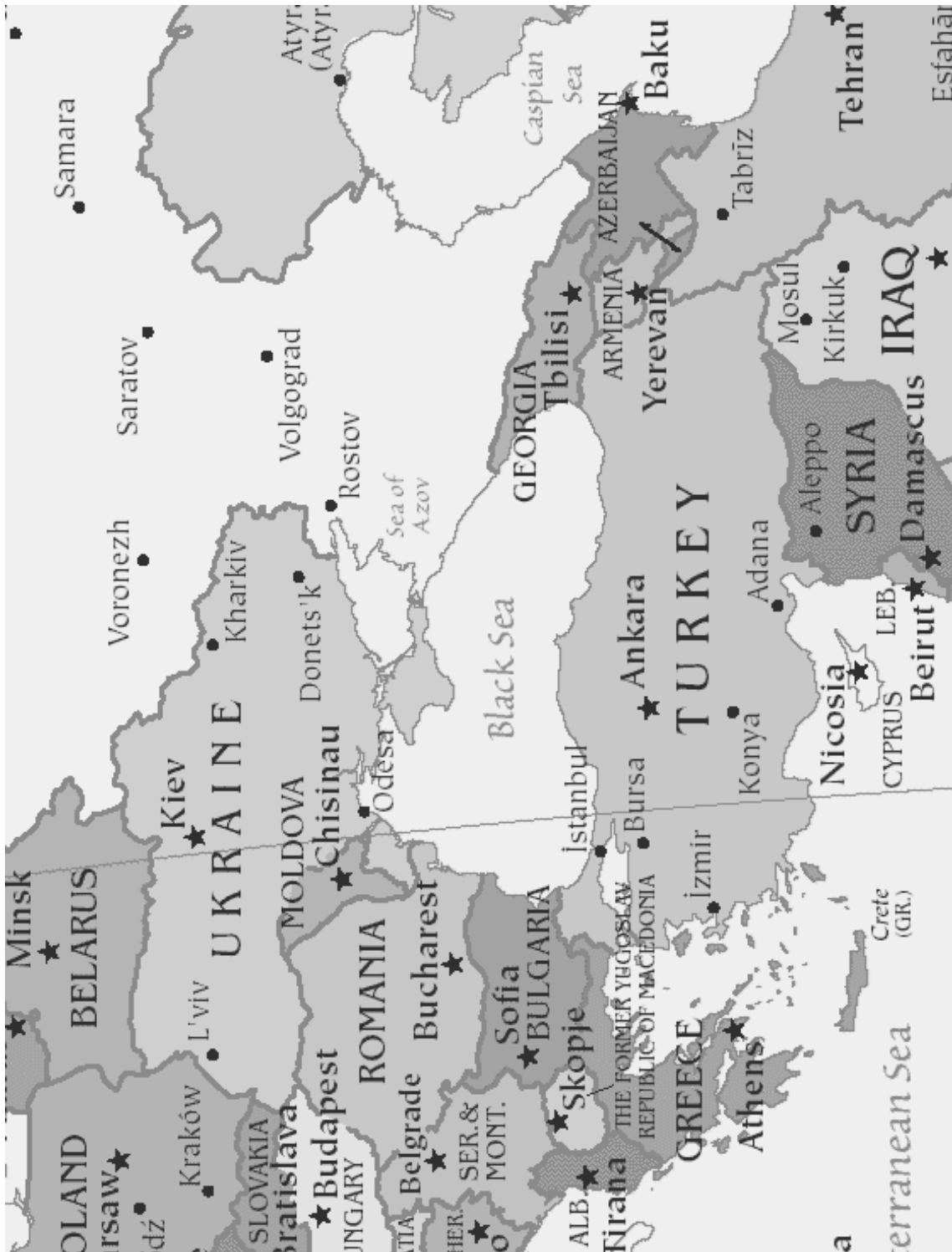
<sup>78</sup> Emerson and Vahl, 'Europe's Black Sea Dimension', p. 32.

expertise, into a successful region-building exercise, which would surely enhance security and stability in this turbulent neighbourhood of the enlarged EU. Clearly, increasing integration of the wider Black Sea region into the EU Europe will be a significant achievement in the EU's new neighbourhood for various political, economic, strategic and security reasons, and the BSEC can

help towards pan-European integration by complementing the EU with its regional perspective. For the Black Sea countries, too, the organisation can provide a preparation ground for integration into wider Europe. In short, the Black Sea, with its multidimensional existence, could become an important pillar of overall European architecture in a wider Eurasian space.

## Annexes

### The Black Sea and neighbouring countries



Map source: <http://www.mytravelguide.com/travel-tools/maps/Black-Sea-map.php>

## Abbreviations

BLACKSEAFOR	Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Force
BSCA	Association of Black Sea Capitals
BSEC	Black Sea Economic Cooperation organisation
BSCEBC	BSEC Business Council
BSEP	UN Black Sea Environment Program
BSNN	Black Sea NGO Network
BSREC	Black Sea Regional Energy Centre
BSTDB	Black Sea Trade and Development Bank
CARDS	EU Support Programme for the Western Balkans from 2000 to 2006
CEI	Central European Initiative
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CFSP	EU Common Foreign and Security Policy
CFE	Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DABLAS	Danube-Black Sea Region Task Force
EAPC	Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council
EU	European Union
GUUAM	Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova
IBSC	International Black Sea Club
ICBSS	International Center for Black Sea Studies
INOGATE	Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe
MARPOL	International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
PABSEC	Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC
PERMIS	BSEC Permanent International Secretariat
PETrAS	Pan-European Transport Areas
SAA	Stability and Association Agreement
SAP	Strategic Action Plan
SECI	Southeast European Cooperation Initiative
SEE	South-Eastern Europe
SEEBRIG	South-Eastern Europe Brigade

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SEEC	South-East European Cooperation Process
SYNERGY	Energy Supported Programmes of the European Commission
TACIS	EU Technical Assistance to the CIS countries and Mongolia.
TRACECA	EU Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO	World Trade Organisation





the  $\mathbb{R}^n$  is a linear space over  $\mathbb{R}$  with the usual addition and scalar multiplication. The inner product is defined by

$$(x, y) = \sum_{i=1}^n x_i y_i \quad (1)$$

where  $x = (x_1, \dots, x_n)$  and  $y = (y_1, \dots, y_n)$ . The norm of  $x$  is defined by

$$\|x\| = \sqrt{(x, x)} = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i^2} \quad (2)$$

The distance between  $x$  and  $y$  is defined by

$$d(x, y) = \|x - y\| = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - y_i)^2} \quad (3)$$

The set of all points  $x$  such that  $\|x\| = r$  is a sphere of radius  $r$  centered at the origin. The set of all points  $x$  such that  $\|x\| \leq r$  is a solid sphere of radius  $r$  centered at the origin.

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