



# ΕΥΧΕΙΝΟΣ

Governance and Culture in the Black Sea Region

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## THE COMPLEXITIES OF BLACK SEA REGIONAL SECURITY

Guest Editor: Dimitrios Triantaphyllou (Istanbul)



BATUMI, Georgia (Oct. 17, 2011) Local Batumi children perform a traditional Georgian dance for the crew of the guided-missile cruiser USS Philippine Sea (CG 58). Philippine Sea is on a deployment in the Black Sea and serves to promote peace and security in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of responsibility. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Gary Prill/Released)

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## The Complexities of Black Sea Regional Security

This edition of the Euxeinos Newsletter aims to explore the various facets comprising the security context in the Black Sea Region today. Although it is by no means exhaustive, it is relatively comprehensive in that taken as a whole the five contributions provided a thorough assessment of the state of Black Sea security. In fact, the reader will realize that, despite their different perspectives, the five authors basically suggest that the security milieu of the region leaves much to be desired. Dimitrios Triantaphyllou provides an overview of the interplay of the various security concerns among the many stakeholders. He laments the loss of influence of the European Union and suggests that regionalism in the region finds itself in a process of disintegration. Yannis Tsantoulis presents a theoretical framework of the process of region-building and how the Black Sea Region has become both the subject and product of geopolitical engineering. Sinem Akgül Açıkmeşe explores the European Union's engagement in the region

by assessing its various policies and instruments. She reflects on the Union's inconsistencies and contradictions in its policy formulation. Mitat Çelikpala focuses, in particular, on Turkey's role on the evolving energy politics in the Black Sea Region and observes how it transcends the region and how technological advances keep making energy a game changer regionally and beyond. Hanna Shelest looks at the ongoing diplomatic processes to deal with the various protracted conflicts in the region. She suggests that these are bereft of originality and that the current status quo is favoured by most conflicting parties.

Whether the reader agrees with some or none of the conclusions and the arguments of the authors, he/she is certainly going to find much food for thought in these articles. The reader should also conclude that the Black Sea Region merits greater study and attention.

Dimitrios Triantaphyllou

# The Uncertain Times of Black Sea Regional Security

by Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, Kadir Has University, Istanbul

## Abstract

*The flux that can be discerned in the Black Sea Region is a cause for concern as it finds itself without a commonly agreed framework as to its future. There are numerous factors which define and reflect the current state of affairs, including the disappointment with regionalism or at least in its inability to redefine itself, the lacking attractiveness of the European Union despite its transformative powers, and the prevalent status quo preferences of some of the region's key stakeholders in spite of the prospect of divergent foreign policy agendas. This troubling situation is compounded by the evolving nature of politics of energy, the gridlock in the negotiations of the protracted conflicts and its linkage to the further militarization of some of the interested parties, and the region's growing democratic deficit.*

## THE CONTEXT

The Black Sea Region is in flux and therefore in trouble for a number of reasons. With a number of parallel processes of integration, regional cooperation, or lack thereof, and political alignment taking place simultaneously coupled with the existence and development of a number of competing narratives, the Black Sea Region increasingly finds itself without a singular point of reference. As a result, there is no clear trend as to the direction the Black Sea Region is going towards today. The verdict is still out as to whether, in geopolitical terms, it is border region or a "bridge or buffer zone", a 'pivot' that lies at the centre of a Mackinder-type 'geopolitical heartland'.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the delimitation of the region remains a bone of contention with some arguing for a narrow context defined by the geography of the Black Sea's six littoral states. This applies, in particular, to the military elite of Russia and Turkey that want to ensure that they have the first word in terms of maritime security.<sup>2</sup> The European Union defines the region

1 Felix Ciută, "Region? Why Region? Security, Hermeneutics, and the Making of the Black Sea Region," *Geopolitics* 13, no.1 (2008): 128-144.

2 The littoral states are Bulgaria, Georgia,

as one comprised of ten countries<sup>3</sup>, while for the Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) it consists of twelve member states.<sup>4</sup> For the United States, especially during the eight years of the Bush administration, the emphasis was on a much wider region, including parts of the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>5</sup> Except for the narrow definition of the region on the basis of its six littoral states, all other interpretations have transregional dimensions (for example, Southeastern Europe and the Middle East) and/or subregional ones (the South Caucasus) within them thereby reflecting the multiple geographic identities of the region's state actors. The same applies to political identities, given the membership of some regional states in the European Union and/or NATO or the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), inter alia.

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Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine.

3 The six littoral states as well as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Greece and Moldova.

4 The ten states comprised in the European Union's definition of the region plus Albania and Serbia.

5 Ronald D. Asmus, "Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea," in Ronald D. Asmus ed. *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea* (Washington, D.C.: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2006): 15-33.

One could also make the case that it is not a region at all as it might have been in the recent past; therefore, its value as a unit of analysis can be doubted or questioned. Consequently, the aforementioned parallel processes are left up to interpretation by the various stakeholders as to which processes are actually on track and which ones are not. It could also be argued that the course of regional integration finds itself in a period of inactivity where some sort of moratorium exists today between the key stakeholders.<sup>6</sup>

All of the above reflect a number of paradoxes in that the Black Sea Region is a point of reference or an area of study and analysis today, but not necessarily because it is regarded as a holistic region or concept; rather the mention refers to either some of its geographic components or to some of the issues (energy, frozen conflicts, environmental concerns, militarization, democratisation, etc..) at play in parts of the region or within and/between some of the countries that encompass it.

#### REGIONALISM ON HOLD

In the immediate post-Cold War era, the region was one marked by regionalism (the organisation of the world in terms of regions both as a tendency and a political commitment) and the establishment of “a specific regional project”,<sup>7</sup> over time the value of regionalism has come to be severely tested in the Black Sea Region. On

6 Mustafa Aydin, “Uniting Efforts in the Region,” in Valeriya Klymenko ed. *Enhancing Security in the Black Sea Region and Prospects for the Turkish-Ukrainian Cooperation* (Kyiv: Razumkov Centre and Zapovit Publishing House, 2011): 101-103.

7 Björn Hettne, “Beyond the ‘New’ Regionalism,” *New Political Economy* 10, no. 4: 543-571.

the one hand, the one institutionalized form of regionalism in place in the region since June 1992 (the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation – BSEC) has not necessarily been able to reach its full potential; on the other hand, the relationship between the key stakeholders has also evolved to one which makes cooperation more complex.

In 2010, the Commission on the Black Sea noted that “[a]round the Black Sea, there are two opposing conditions that affect the potential of regionalism. On the one hand, economic difficulties and the need for managing regional public goods such as the environment, trade and financial stability have generated demands for regional cooperation, integration and policy coordination. These need to be strengthened and efficiently channelled into regional policy making. On the other hand, important security issues such as the unresolved secessionist conflicts undermine the drive for regionalism and obstruct collective action and institutions. These adverse security conditions need to be eliminated or their impacts reduced.”<sup>8</sup> Yet, the very countries that took the lead in shaping the region’s regionalism – Turkey and Russia – are only playing lip service to it today; their aim is to ensure that they control the process which has been unable to escape its rather rigid top-down structural construct. The forthcoming anticlimactic 20th anniversary of the BSEC in late June 2012 and the failure to generate any serious interest or momentum in enhancing Black Sea regionalism is emblematic of the failure of institutional regionalism in the region, regardless of the fact that many proposals have been put forward to regenerate both its institutional

8 Mustafa Aydin and Dimitrios Triantaphyllou. *A 2020 Vision for the Black Sea Region: A Report by the Commission on the Black Sea* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2010): 39.

setup and the process of Black Sea regionalism.<sup>9</sup> In fact, other attempts at institutional regionalism either at the subregional level such as GUAM or with wider membership such as the Community of Democratic Choice (CDC) have also failed to deliver on their promise. Other factors influencing the weakness of Black Sea regionalism include the interplay and power play between the European Union and the region's traditional hegemons – Russia and Turkey, the prevalence of the evolving nature of energy politics, the disconnect between the process of regionalism and the resolution of the region's protracted conflicts and other security priorities, and the implications of the democratisation of Black Sea states either as a consequence of the post-Cold War exceedingly globalized context and, more recently, the impact of the Arab Awakenings.

#### WHITHER THE EUROPEAN UNION?

The EU was initially not instrumental in the Black Sea Region in shaping the process of Black Sea regionalism. It only began to show an interest in the region by timidly accepting that a Black Sea Region as such exists November 1997, five years after an indigenous regionalism in the guise of the BSEC had been

9 See, for example, Aydin and Triantaphyllou, *A 2020 Vision for the Black Sea Region*; Sergiu Celac, "The Role and Potential of the Organisation of the BSEC", *CIES Neighbourhood Policy Paper 01*, (Istanbul: CIES, November 2011); Panagiota Manoli, "Black Sea Regionalism in Perspective," *CIES Neighbourhood Policy Paper 02* (Istanbul: CIES, December 2011); Carol Weaver and Mukhtar Hajizada, "The Democratization of the BSEC Parliamentary Assembly and the Implications for Conflict-Resolution in the Wider Black Sea Region," *CIES Policy Brief 01* (Istanbul: CIES, December 2011).

initiated in June 1992.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the EU's late involvement and role has had a significant impact on the shape and future of Black Sea regionalism. Its potential and pro-active policies and instruments combined with its magnetic appeal to a number of countries of the region with aspirations to eventually join its ranks concerned (and may have even frightened) the region's key stakeholders. As with other EU regional initiatives such as the Euro-Mediterranean Process or Barcelona Process of 1995, and the Northern Dimension of 1999, the Union's approach to regionalism implied both top-down as well as bottom-up approaches; with the latter not necessarily finding all the region's stakeholders in agreement. In fact, the Union's Black Sea Synergy policy of 2007/2008 clearly demonstrates the aforementioned duality. The problem for the Union is that this regionalism was quickly dropped in favour of the Eastern Partnership in 2008/2009 with its value-laden imperatives aimed at the further integration of its targeted eastern neighbours to the detriment both of regionalism and finding a modus vivendi with Russia, in particular, in terms of how to better manage the common neighbourhood. This has been particularly reflected in the tense relationship between the EU and the BSEC in which the former holds the status of observer.<sup>11</sup>

#### Confounding the Union's ability to influence

10 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, Brussels, 14 November 1997, COM(97) 597 final.

11 In particular, see Tedo Japaridze, Panagiota Manoli, Dimitrios Triantaphyllou and Yannis Tsantoulis, "The EU's Ambivalent Relationship with the BSEC: Reflecting on the Past, Mapping out the Future," *ICBSS Policy Brief*, no.20 (Athens: ICBSS, January 2010).

the Black Sea Region significantly has been the impact of the economic/financial/sovereign debt crisis since 2008 which has led to a fundamental debate about the limits of further integration, the virtues of a common currency, as well as the slow take off of the new foreign policy apparatus in the guise of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and other such innovations as per the Lisbon Treaty. Consequently, while at the technocratic level (EC officials) the EU implements its relevant policies and programmes, there has been a discernible lack of EU-centred political guidance with regard to the Union's neighbourhood policy. This has meant a noticeable loss of the EU's soft power and the emergence of pro-active foreign policy actors among EU member states (such as Poland and Sweden) influencing the Union's foreign policy process and agenda through the extension of their own national interests, while that role had traditionally been reversed for the Union's Big 3 (Germany, France, and the United Kingdom) in the past. This has never been more evident that in the promotion of the Eastern Partnership whose principal sponsors were Poland and Sweden.<sup>12</sup> Also relevant is the fact that the EU's attempts at regionalism have suffered the same fate in the Mediterranean South as well with the Union for the Mediterranean which was launched in 2008 and became a victim of the Arab Awakenings. Hence, the Union has seen an almost parallel failure of its initiatives across its Eastern and Mediterranean neighbourhoods.

Another important element is the impact of the evolving security agenda with issues such as energy having a fundamental effect on the

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Radoslaw Sikorski, "The EU's 'Eastern Partnership' with former Soviet states holds the key to relations with Russia," *Europe's World*, Summer 2009.

limits of projecting the Union's soft power in the Black Sea Region. As a result, 'securitization' is taking precedence over the process of 'Europeanisation' with geopolitics and geoeconomics gaining ground as the motivation behind the policies of the key stakeholders in the region. In other words, the loss of steam in the EU's activities in the region impacts the future of regionalism, the security context, and the maturing and evolution of both institutions and human resources in the countries of the region.<sup>13</sup> Hence, the recent score of 'C+' by the European Council on Foreign Relations in its European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2012 for the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood policies well reflects its troubled policies.<sup>14</sup>

The problem of the EU is that, as long as it does not have a strategic blueprint and it does not become more assertive in pursuing its own interests, it leaves the region open to geopolitical rivalry between Russia, Turkey, China, and probably others. Consequently, the EU is perceived as being unable to achieve what it is trying to promote: its values and norms, its soft power, good governance, etc. As a result many 'soft power' cooperative approaches cannot be supported or are difficult to implement.

#### RUSSIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS

In this context, the Russian Federation and Turkey (both among the most prominent initiators of Black Sea regionalism) by virtue of

<sup>13</sup> For a comprehensive list regarding the need for greater EU involvement see, Aydin and Triantaphyllou, *A 2020 Vision for the Black Sea Region*.

<sup>14</sup> See Justin Vaisse et al., *European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2012* (London: ECFR, 2012), [http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR\\_SCORECARD\\_2012\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR_SCORECARD_2012_WEB.pdf).

their size, economies, and potential are considered to prefer the status quo in the region by stressing in particular the maritime security dimension by considering any revision of the Montreux Convention of 1936 as taboo and by enhancing cooperation through the BLACK-SEAFOR and Black Sea Harmony initiatives.<sup>15</sup> This conundrum between Russia and Turkey seems to be more powerful than whatever Alliance obligations each country might have. The non-revision of the terms of the Montreux Treaty could put Turkey at odds with some of its NATO allies as was evidenced during the Russo-Georgian War of August 2008 and the terms of engagement of US warships in the Black Sea. Also, to date NATO has no Black Sea policy to speak of even though three of the six littoral states of the Black Sea are NATO member states (Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey). Also, the poor state of relations among the six littoral states complicates the emergence of a viable maritime security framework necessary to meet common challenges such as fighting organised crime and nuclear smuggling.<sup>16</sup> While bilateral trade between the two countries amounted to some 30 Billion USD in 2011, it is set to reach some 100 Billion USD within the next ten years. Russia's recent membership in the World Trade Organisation also contributes to the growth in bilateral economic relations as it makes it more receptive to Turkish investments among others. The mutual elimination of visa requirements for stays of fewer than 30 days by both countries has led to record numbers of Russian tourists to Turkey with

15 See Yasar Yakis, "The Black Sea and the Georgian Crisis," *ICBSS Policy Brief* 10 (Athens: ICBSS, December 2008).

16 See, for example, Deborah Sanders, "Maritime security in the Black Sea: can regional solutions work?" *European Security* 18, no. 2 (2009): 101-124

the number expected to top 4 million in 2012. Questions remain though as to whether growing economic interaction will prevent political tension as foreign policy and energy imperatives differ.

More recently, Russo-Turkish cooperation has also been motivated by the energy security dimension, its storied competing pipelines context and the ability of both countries (Russia as both an energy producer and transit state and Turkey as a key transit state) to maintain a principal role in the energy security game in the form of a bargaining chip vis-à-vis the United States, the European Union, each other, and other relevant neighbouring states such as Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkmenistan.<sup>17</sup> At times, there seems to be collusion of interests; at other times, their energy policies clash. On foreign policy, issues such as the NATO missile shield to which Turkey is a party and divergent policies on Syria and the handling of the Arab Awakenings may negatively affect bilateral relations.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, though relations between the two countries are wider than their shared Black Sea neighbourhood, there is a commonality of interests in maintaining their joint influence over the region.

#### THE DEMOCRATISATION DEBATE

The EU's inability to 'impose' its agenda is also reflected in the growing debate about the future of democracy and democratisation in

17 Mitat Çelikpala, "The New Energy Politics of the Black Sea Region," in this volume.

18 See, for example, Vladimir Putin, "Russia and the Changing World," Valdai Discussion Club, 27 February 2012, <http://valdaiclub.com/politics/39300.html>; Faruk Akkan, "Bilateral ties between Turkey, Russia likely to improve under Putin's presidency," *Today's Zaman*, 11 March 2012.



the region. While both the Rose and Orange Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine respectively came to be regarded as a renaissance of democracy in the wider Black Sea Region, they have failed to stand the test of time to date. In fact, they can be characterized as representative of what the political scientist Dmitri Furman refers to as 'imitation democracies' - "characterized by a huge disparity between formal constitutional principles and the reality of authoritarian rule."<sup>19</sup> In Russia's Presidential elections of February 2012, Vladimir Putin, the winner, may have received 64% of the nationwide vote but his victory has been tarnished by widespread charges of fraud at the polls and the fact that less than half of Muscovites voted for him. According to the Bertelsmann's Foundation Transformation Index 2010, there is a widespread process of 'eroding democracy' in the post-Soviet space across the region as the "potency of the color revolutions has dissipated, and the region's autocratic regimes are increasingly consolidating their grip on power".<sup>20</sup> Turkey's institutions also find themselves in a period of flux with increasing examples of the curbing of the right of expression. While it is unclear whether a 'Black Sea Spring' is a possibility, the Arab Awakenings may over time impact the region's states and their governments as they have demonstrated the potential of 'people power' despite their mixed post-revolution settings. The European Union's perceived absence could imply that should the process of political transformation

19 Dmitri Furman, "Imitation Democracies – The Post-Soviet Penumbra," *New Left Review* 54 (Nov-Dec 2008): 29-47.

20 Bertelsmann Stiftung, *Transformation Index 2010 – Political Management in International Comparison* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2009), <http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/en/bti/>.

begin to take shape in Russia and elsewhere in the region, it could become chaotic if not properly channeled.

The democratic deficit implies a lack of accountability and the common interest of regional states to have top-down structures and decision-making processes in place that limit the influence of civil society and non-regional actors in the affairs of the region. The continued inability to find viable solutions to the many protracted conflicts in the region and the implications of inaction such as the growing militarization of countries like Armenia and Azerbaijan are a cause of growing concern.<sup>21</sup> In fact, the danger of a "regional war with global complications" over Nagorno-Karabakh is a very real possibility.<sup>22</sup>

#### LIVING WITH UNCERTAINTY

The uncertainty regarding the future direction of the Black Sea Region is a cause for concern. There are numerous factors which define and reflect the current state of affairs, including the disappointment with regionalism or at least in its inability to redefine itself, the lacking attractiveness of the European Union despite its transformative powers, and the prevalent status quo preferences of some of the region's key stakeholders in spite of the prospect of divergent foreign policy agendas. This troubling situation is compounded by the evolving nature of politics of energy, the gridlock in the negotiations of the protracted conflicts and its linkage to the further militarization of some of

21 See, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 2011. Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

22 Lawrence Scott Sheets, "A 'frozen conflict' that could boil over," *International Herald Tribune*, 9 March 2012.

the interested parties, and the region's growing democratic deficit. Some have argued that though the region lacks a security community, there is nevertheless the possibility for it to develop over the longer term predicated upon a system of 'balanced multipolarity' and the willingness of the stakeholders to ensure regional peace and stability.<sup>23</sup> In the current state of European security with the European Union having put on hold its ambitions and responsibilities and the United States becoming increasingly a Pacific power, the 'balanced multipolarity' model might make sense given that this is the best material the region's stakeholders have to work with. However, the increasingly unpredictability of the energy security dimension combined with the inability of the EU member states to develop a credible external energy policy, the volatility of the democratisation processes in the region in part because of the lack of a common referent point (which the EU could provide), and the precariousness of the protracted conflicts imply there is a fundamental need to ensure that the various centrifugal forces at play in the Black Sea Region do not tear it apart due to the inertia of the process of regionalism.

<sup>23</sup> Carol Weaver, "Black Sea regional security: present multipolarity and future possibilities," *European Security* 20, no. 1(2011): 1-19.

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# Region-building and its Failures: Writing Space, Producing Insecurity

by Yannis Tsantoulis, University College London

## Abstract

*This paper examines how region-builders (politicians, think-tank elites, academics, etc.) 'wrote' the Black Sea space and what implications this geopolitical exercise had for the region, paying particular attention to the underlying security logics/dimensions of this endeavour and the envisaged solutions to the perceived challenges. The focus is on the loosely coherent set of 'myths' surrounding the Black Sea, both as a policy project and a field of academic and policy oriented inquiry, and the objective is to showcase, even indirectly, the interplay between conceptual logic and political practise as well as to highlight the silences and overlooked assumptions omnipresent in the literature.*

## INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT AND KEY QUESTIONS

The Black Sea represents a remarkable case for understanding the evolution of security in the post-Cold War period; an evolution that can be distilled into two significant trends. The first is the expansion of the concept of security from the *war paradigm*, based on the narrow realist logic of security, to the *threat plus risk paradigm*.<sup>1</sup> The second trend is the rethinking of the 'regional' model, due in part to the removal of the Cold War

1 The end of the Cold War brought about the broadening of the security agenda with the adoption of the sectoral approach (i.e., security, political, military, economic, societal and environmental) and securitisation among others. New questions have been introduced (e.g. what is a security issue, who gets to decide, etc.) and security has become itself "a site or focal point for disputes between various power/knowledge interests". See Steve Smith, "The increasing insecurity of security studies: Conceptualizing security in the last twenty years," *Contemporary Security Policy* 20, no.3 (1999): 74. For an overview of security, see: Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen, *The Evolution of International Security Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Barry Buzan, "Rethinking Security after the Cold War," *Cooperation and Conflict* 32 (1997): 5-28.

overlay as well as a belief that both territorial and symbolical borders could be transcended and political space could be reconstructed.<sup>2</sup>

For better or for worse, the area surrounding the Black Sea was heavily affected by the momentous events of the late 1980s. The region began to acquire new and often conflicting meanings among the various foreign policy elites as it became the point of convergence for many powerful interests and major transformative policies.<sup>3</sup> Specific policy issues such

2 Challenging the dominant systemic-level orientations and globalist/neoliberal explanations for politics, a new – somehow diverse – regionalist scholarship arose that referred to an emerging regional architecture of world politics. Although many perceived the focus on the regional level as a reflection of the post-Cold War systemic confusion, it is no exaggeration to say that the resurrection and redefinition of the region as both a policy and conceptual framework has since given a distinctly 'regional flavour' to the fragmented discipline of IR. For an overview of regions in IR see, Rick Fawn "'Regions' and their study: wherefrom, what for and whereto?" *Review of International Studies* 35(2009): 5-34.

3 These policies primarily included but were not limited to the latest phase of the EU's enlargement and its foreign policy formulation, the US strategy of combating international terrorism, NATO's new agenda and priorities, Russia's

as frozen conflicts, energy security, integration with/into the West, democratisation, enlargement, and the Global War on Terror (GWOT) were given many different interpretations in the elite debates.

Essentially, the region-building discourse evolved around the following four sets of questions:

- i. *Is there a Black Sea region and why?*
- ii. *What geography does the Black Sea region encompass, and why does its spatial identity matter?*
- iii. *Is the Black Sea a security asset or a security burden?*
- iv. *What are the envisaged solutions for the region's security?*

In light of these questions and the results of the envisaged solutions (i.e. institutionalisation, integration), it becomes clear that the region-building process failed. Moreover, this failure can be explained by a fifth question, *Whose region?*, that highlights an under-examined dimension: how the various region-builders themselves sabotaged the process. To this end, this paper examines how these region-builders 'wrote' the Black Sea space and what implications this geopolitical exercise had for the region, paying particular attention to the underlying security logics/dimensions of the project and the envisaged solutions to the perceived challenges. The focus is on the loosely coherent set of 'myths' surrounding the Black Sea both as a policy project and a field of academic and policy oriented inquiry, and the objective is to showcase, even indirectly, the interplay between conceptual logic and political practise as well as to highlight the silences and overlooked assumptions omnipresent in the literature.

economic and political revival and its shifting stance towards its so-called 'near abroad', and Turkey's resurgent foreign policy activism, termed by many as Neo-Ottomanism.

#### WRITING SPACE

The process of 'writing space' and the deeply geopolitical exercise of region-building in the Black Sea reflected the divergent security logics of the actors involved, who were connected to contradictory interests and visions. This demonstrates the need to foreground "the politics of the geographical specification of politics"<sup>4</sup> instead of analysing spaces within pre-given, common-sense designations. The dominant views in the literature on the Black Sea, stemming from the legacy of traditional geopolitics, were based on certain meanings attached to spatial location and geopolitical imperatives. Thus various spatial representations of the Black Sea have thoroughly pervaded the literature on the region. Vigorous debates over the Black Sea were repeatedly contained in simplistic, unexamined, yet (geo)politically loaded assumptions about geography and territoriality.

It became a fad to characterise the Black Sea using ambivalent and somewhat catchy epithets such as 'frontiers of freedom'<sup>5</sup>, 'heartland'<sup>6</sup>,

4 Simon Dalby, "Critical Geopolitics: Discourse, Difference, and Dissent," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9, no.3 (1991):274.

5 Ron D. Asmus and Bruce P. Jackson, "The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom," *Policy Review* 125 (June-July 2004): 17-26.

6 Heartland is a fashionable term in the realm of traditional/classical geopolitics, and in the case of the Black Sea it actually triggered a debate regarding its exact position. See for instance, Mustafa Aydin, "Europe's Next Shore: The Black Sea region after EU Enlargement," *EU Institute for Security Studies Occasional Paper* 53 (2004):5; Liviu Bogdan Vlad, Gheorghe Hurduzeu and Andrei Josan, "Geopolitical reconfigurations in the Black Sea Area at the beginning of the 21st century,"

'barrier'<sup>7</sup>, 'bridge'<sup>8</sup>, 'hub'<sup>9</sup>, 'major crossroads',<sup>10</sup> an area that lies at the centre of a Mackinder-type 'geopolitical heartland'<sup>11</sup> or "the frontier between the Heartland and the Rimlands"<sup>12,13</sup>. The main question, however, is how these various spatial constructions and representations were connected to security. The key argument is that what appeared to be 'just' a geographical matter had significant political implications. The various geographical locations and roles proposed for the region by foreign policy elites had an

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*Romanian Review on Political Geography* XI, no.1 (2009): 65-76.

7 Jeffrey Simon, "The Black Sea: Building Bridges and Barriers," in Ronald Asmus (ed.), *Next steps in forging a euroatlantic strategy for the Wider Black Sea Area* (Washington, D.C.: GMFUS, 2006): 83-100.

8 Ian Lesser "Global Trends, Regional Consequences: Wider Strategic Influences on the Black Sea," *Xenophon Paper 4* (Athens: ICBSS, 2007): 9.

9 Svante Cornell, Anna Jonsson, Niklas Nilsson and Per Häggström, "The Wider Black Sea Region: An Emerging Hub in European Security," *Silk Road Paper* (Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program – A Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center, December 2006).

10 Eugene B. Rumer and Jeffrey Simon, "Toward a Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region," *Institute for National Strategic Studies Occasional Paper 3* (2006): 2.

11 Aydin, "Europe's Next Shore," 5.

12 Alexander Goncharenko, "The Wider Black Sea Area: New Geopolitical Realities, Regional Security Structures and Democratic Control: A Ukrainian View," *NATO Defence College Occasional Paper 11*, no.2 (2005): 23-32.

13 Felix Ciută, "Region? Why Region? Security, Hermeneutics, and the Making of the Black Sea Region," *Geopolitics* 13, no.1 (2008): 128-144.

impact on their understanding of the region's security. Spatial attributions ceased to be simple empirical or conceptual referents; as discussed below, it was the representation of space that defined the region in political and security terms. Geopolitics became a discursive and performative apparatus of policy making and region building in the post-Cold War period. Knowledge, in the form of geopolitics and as a technology of power, did not reflect a certain reality; it shaped it.

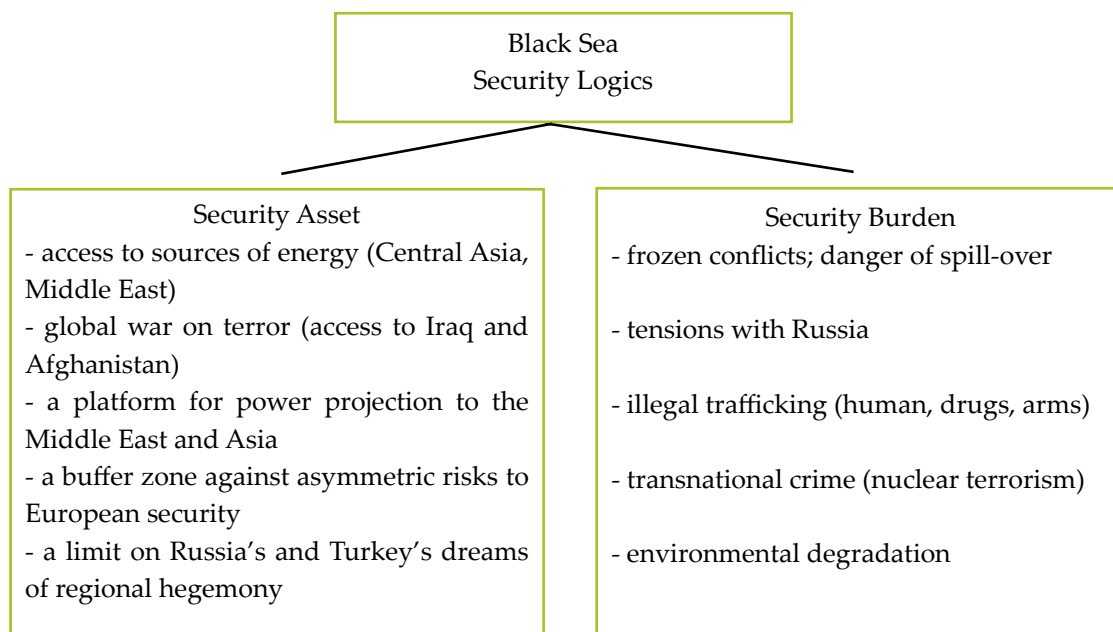
#### SECURITY LOGICS AND BINARIES

'Security', a term both ubiquitous and elastic, was a product of certain elites and their practices. Re-examining the spatial representations, it is clear that the region came to be considered by (and for) the extra-regional actors as both a *security asset* and a *security burden* based on competitive security logics.<sup>14</sup> To position the region 'on the margins' was to connect it to the long belt of conflicts stretching from North Africa to Southeast Asia; in this way, by highlighting its various crises, the region was presented as a burden, a problem that needs to be resolved. At the same time, however, by concentrating on energy or on the Global War on Terror, the Black Sea was also framed as a security asset which could act 'as a bridge' or even become a component of the core (i.e. the West).

Overall, such dual framings and understandings of security were expressed by different actors in various policy documents and other publications which formed part of the Black Sea region's diverse discursive origins, its *raison d'être*. These opposing perceptions also led to different region-building strategies, culminating in an enduring

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14 Ciută, "Region? Why Region?" 125-127.

Graph I: The Black Sea as a Security Asset vs. Security Burden<sup>16</sup>

confusion and uncertainty over the future of the region; the end result was the region's 'elite securitisation'<sup>15</sup>. As illustrated in Graph

15 The study of securitisation encompasses "who securitizes, on what issues (threats), for whom (referent object), why, with what results, and not least, under what conditions." Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998): 32. In contrast to mainstream/neorealist literature that focuses on material elements (distribution of power, military capabilities), securitisation investigates the process of how an issue is transformed into a security issue. In the case of the Black Sea one could discern several cases of elite-securitisation in the sense that this process was primarily limited to elite networks and did not draw the attention of the public, in contrast to classical securitisation which deals with larger audiences. For an introduction on securitisation, see: Ole Waæver, "Securitization and Desecuritization," in Ronnie D. Lipschutz ed. *On Security* (New York: Columbia University Press,

II, based on the policy flow, it was the political representations of space ('margin', 'frontier', etc.) that led to securitisation by elites and thus the nomenclature became linked both to security problems and security solutions.

#### POLICY SOLUTIONS, DERIVED PARADOXES

The spatial representations discussed above had security implications that in turn led to certain policy prescriptions, primarily in one of two forms: institutionalisation and integration with the West. Both occupied high-level positions in the debates as the various elites perceived them as the solutions to the problems

1995): 46-86.

16 Ciută, "Region? Why Region?" and Felix Ciută, "Parting the Black Sea (Region): Geopolitics, Institutionalisation and the Reconfiguration of European Security," *European Security* 16, no.1 (2007): 51-78.

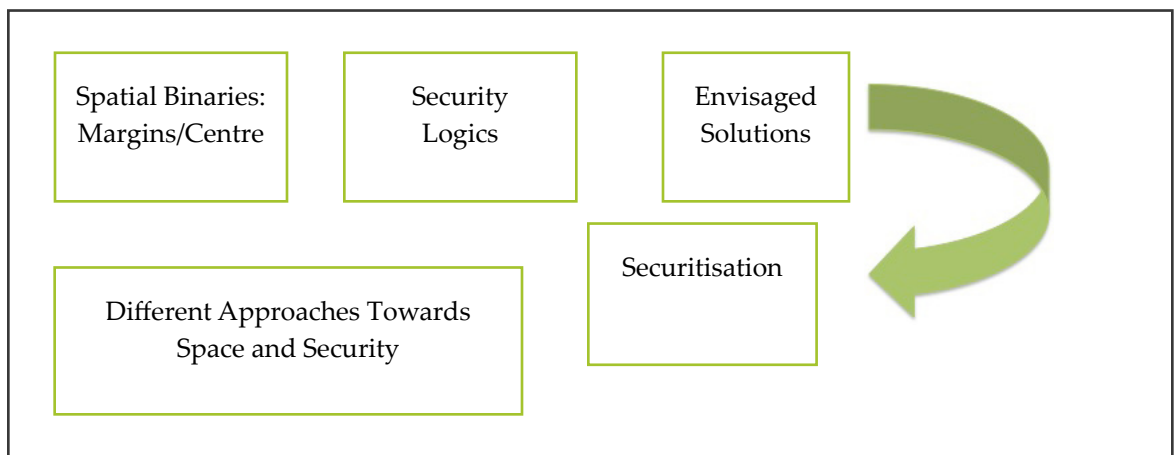
they had identified (lack of democratisation, absence of regional cooperation, 'frozen conflicts', etc.). Institutionalisation referred to the formation of regional organisations and the launching of policy initiatives with a regional scope, and was presented both as a way of strengthening links with the West and as an opportunity to demonstrate that the countries of the region had overcome their past. By and large, institutionalisation was presented as a recipe for success from the early 1990s onwards.

Integration in mainstream western organisations (NATO, EU) also acquired an important –if not privileged– position in the various discourses as a different kind of solution. Many actors started talking about a new Euro-Atlantic strategy towards the region, prompting many states of the region to redefine their foreign policy priorities. Most of the elites devoted their energies toward developing new narratives based on a shift of gravity towards the West, primarily based on

a perceived momentum of enlargement within the EU and NATO. However, this soon led to the securitisation of the integration agenda, this time primarily by certain regional actors (e.g. Russia) instead of foreign policy elites. Any EU or NATO policies towards the region through bilateral (e.g. ENP, PfP) or multilateral agreements were perceived to be 'Trojan horse' policies whose primary objective was the expansion of the West's influence. Any reference to the West as a new centre of gravity soon hindered the process of region-building. The two strategies of institutionalisation and integration became mutually exclusive instead of mutually reinforcing. For most states of the region, institutionalisation was seen not as a vehicle towards integration, but rather as an alternative solution.

The irony is that those who considered institutionalisation to be a prerequisite to integration chose integration in place of institutionalisation, while at the same time states favouring institutionalisation perceived

Graph II: The process of securitisation



integration as a threat. In this way, two strategies with strong similarities ended up being mutually exclusive in this place and time. Finally, the European and Russian logics of region-building were also conflicting. Even the use of phrases such as “Black Sea regionalism” or simply “the Black Sea region” led to securitisation, as there were key actors who defended the boundaries of the state and favoured the centre of political power over the margins, thus leaving little space for ‘regions’ or ‘regionality’.

#### CONCLUSIONS: LOGICS, PRACTISE, FRAGMENTATION

In a challenge to the inter-subjective understandings of the Cold War era, region-builders (politicians, think-tank elites, academics, etc.) approached this geographic space in the post-Cold War period with different tools and analytical criteria for different purposes. The region became both the subject and the product of geopolitical engineering. The indisputable diffusion of the aforementioned conceptual categories into political practise, as well as the hermeneutical and political implications of the geopolitical

framings of the region, were significant as they presupposed different logics of security. Overall, this conceptual plasticity and richness has produced political fragmentation. While a Black Sea region has indeed begun to emerge, it has simultaneously begun to break apart under the pressure of competing security logics and visions.

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# The EU's Black Sea Policies: Any Hopes for Success?

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## Abstract

*The 2004-2007 enlargements brought the EU onto the shores of the Black Sea region which is encircled with complex insecurities. Since then, the EU has been actively engaged in developing a vision for this problematic region through the various instruments of enlargement, CFSP/CSDP, European Neighborhood Policy, Black Sea Synergy as well as the Eastern Partnership. This paper aims at analysing the efficacy of EU's Black Sea policies in providing regional security, with a particular and a comparative focus on the impact of the Synergy as the only genuine regional Black Sea strategy.*

The Black Sea became almost an internal sea of the European Union (EU) with the accession of Romania and Bulgaria. This new neighbourhood surrounded by the insecurities of peoples, societies and states, various forms of “violent conflict, weak states, dysfunctional societies or exploding population growth” as reflected in the EU's Security Strategy poses serious challenges for the EU.<sup>1</sup> This security dynamic coupled with the opportunities provided by the strategic importance of the region as a bridge connecting the Caspian region, Central Asia and the Middle East with Europe and its potential as an energy hub fostered the regionalization efforts of the EU. Accordingly, instead of the ongoing compartmentalised strategies for the Black Sea, the EU has devised a holistic vision for the region as articulated in a Commission document titled “Black Sea Synergy-A New Regional Initiative” in April 2007.<sup>2</sup> In other

words, the Black Sea Synergy (BSS) was launched as a mechanism for recognising the whole region as strategic for the EU and consolidating the extant engagement mechanisms of the Union in the region. However, even before the ink was dry on this policy, the EU has failed to support the BSS, and thus the holistic perspective for the Black Sea. The EU has since reverted to its old inclination for bilateralism and micro-regionalism through the use of differentiated instruments of EU foreign policy instead of an all-encompassing regionalist approach. In other words, the EU's regionalisation attempt failed in the Black Sea, and instead the EU has been working through compartmentalised and interlinked strategies designed for different Black Sea countries such as accession, Eastern Partnership as a model for micro-regionalism operating under European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), strategic partnership, foreign economic instruments as well as CFSP/CSDP mechanisms.

In this general context, this paper, after evaluating the evolution of EU's policies towards the region, first argues how and why

1 *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*, 12 December 2003. Available at: <http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>.

2 Commission of the European Communities, *Communication From The Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: Black Sea Synergy - A New Regional Cooperation Initiative*, COM (2007) 160 final, 11 April 2007. This paper adopts the definition of the region by the Commission which

includes Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey.

EU-constructed regionalism in the Black Sea region through the BSS has failed and asks whether and to what extent these multiple formal arrangements of the EU can succeed in the region. Put differently, notwithstanding the lack of a coherent and holistic vision for the Black Sea region, this paper questions whether the EU might be regarded as a successful foreign policy actor in the Black Sea with recourse to its diverse instruments of a compartmentalised strategy.<sup>3</sup>

#### THE EVOLUTION

The Black Sea region, which was “far away and messy for the EU in the 1990s”, had been subject to the EU’s bilateral approach and a target of the EU’s differentiated strategies until the 2004/2007 enlargement rounds.<sup>4</sup> Immediately after the end of the Cold War, the EU began to approach the Black Sea region, albeit with baby-steps and mostly through bilateral relations. One of the first attempts was to conclude Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine and Russia for supporting their transition to European models of polity and economy governance. Apart from PCA targets, the EU perceived the region including a number of different groups of states with different types of agreements

3 For a detailed account of this compartmentalised strategy, see M. Aydin and S. Acikmese, “EU Engagement in the Black Sea: The Views from The Region,” in A. Balcer (ed.), *The Eastern Partnership in the Black Sea Region: towards a New Synergy*, Warsaw: Demos, 2011.

4 D. Triantaphyllou and Y. Tsantoulis, “The EU’s Policies towards its New Eastern Neighbours: A New Ostpolitik in the Making or a Mélange of Different Concepts and Priorities,” *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen*, Vol. 5 (2009), p. 9.

which it signed with them. Greece as a member country, Bulgaria and Romania as associate states and later as potential members as well as Turkey as an applicant since 1987 meant different focuses and divergent policies for the EU. However, none of these initiatives of the Union was designed for the Black Sea region per se. In a similar vein, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) which was initiated by a Commission Communication in March 2003, in the wake of the big bang enlargement round comprising countries from Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean South in its all-encompassing basket of various policies that were designed to operate through differentiated Action Plans on a bilateral basis.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Russia did not accept to be a part of the ENP, since in its claim as a regional power, it preferred to establish bilateral relations depending on a reciprocity clause. As a means to this end, the EU-Russia strategic partnership was formed in St. Petersburg in May 2003, thereby creating another instrument for the EU in dealing with the region.

Since 2004, the EU has also been engaged in the region through its CFSP/CSDP instruments, mainly by the appointment of Special Representatives to the South Caucasus as well as the conflict zones (South Ossetia and Abkhazia) and conducting civilian/military operations. Between 16 July 2004 and 14 July 2005, the EU conducted its first rule of law mission - EUJUST THEMIS - under the civilian crisis management instruments of its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in Georgia with the aim of providing guidance

5 *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, p. 4.

for the new criminal justice strategy and to support Georgian authorities in the field of judicial reform and anti-corruption.<sup>6</sup> The EU also deployed a team of advisors in September 2005 under the Special Representative's guidance, charged with the tasks of reporting on the border situation between Russia and Georgia, facilitating confidence building between Moscow and Tbilisi, establishing relevant contacts in conflict regions as well as assisting the Georgian authorities in implementing a comprehensive border management plan.<sup>7</sup> In 2005, the EU also launched the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) on the border between Ukraine and the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. After the August 2008 war, the EU initiated a monitoring mission (EUMM) in Georgia aimed at *stabilisation* through the monitoring of the implementation of the peace agreements between Russia and Georgia including troop withdrawals and violations of human rights; *normalisation* through monitoring the situation as regards to the rule of law, governance and the return of internally displaced people; *confidence-building* through the liaison and facilitation of contacts between parties; and finally providing *information* for European policy making.<sup>8</sup>

Even though the EU has operated through these

6 Council Joint Action 2004/523/CFSP of 28 June 2004 on the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Georgia, EUJUST THEMIS, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 228/21, 29 June 2004.

7 Council Joint Action 2005/582/CFSP of 28 July 2005 Amending and Extending the Mandate of the European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L199/92, 29 July 2005.

8 Council Joint Action 2008/736/CFSP of 15 September 2008 on the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, EUMM Georgia, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 248/26, 17 September 2008.

bilateral and differentiated policies in various contexts, it was the 2007 enlargement of the EU that triggered the regionalism tendencies that were already apparent in the south with the Barcelona Process and the Baltics in the form of the Northern Dimension. The Commission put forward Black Sea Synergy as a third regional cooperation initiative of the EU around the Union's regional seas in a communication to the Parliament and the Council in 2007. This new –but not novel– policy was formally launched in Kyiv in February 2008 by the Foreign Ministers of the Black Sea countries and of the EU.<sup>9</sup> The Black Sea Synergy targets Russia as a strategic partner, Turkey as a negotiating country as well as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Russia's participation in the Kyiv ministerial meeting in a way confirmed the regionalist dimension of the BSS.

The Black Sea Synergy identified thirteen topics for regional cooperation ranging from democracy promotion to a more active role through increased political engagement in the protracted conflicts, from environmental protection to a free trade area. In a 15 March 2010 memo, the EU demonstrated the utmost importance attached to sectoral partnerships in the areas of the environment, energy and transport, through which regional actors would cooperate in projects, the seed-money

9 The EU did attempt to initiate a genuine regional approach just designed for the Black Sea in 1997 by adopting a Communication on regional cooperation in the Black Sea region. 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, Brussels, 14 November 1997, COM(97) 597 final. However, this was sidelined due to the EU's intense occupation with enlargement.

for which would be provided by the EU.<sup>10</sup> Thus, rather than an EU-dictated policy, the BSS was devised as a regional cooperation initiative based on joint projects and joint ownerships, open to all the actors of the region (including regional initiatives such as the Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation – BSEC and the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution). In this context, a Black Sea Environment Partnership was launched in March 2010 as a forum for cooperating in areas such as an integrated coastal zone, river basin management or tackling pollution.

#### THE FAILURE

One year after the official launch of the Black Sea Synergy, the EU initiated the Eastern Partnership with the six Eastern European and South Caucasus ENP partner countries (Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Belarus) in May 2009 at summit in Prague as a specific Eastern dimension to the ENP designed to strengthen the bilateral political and economic relations through association agreements, deep and comprehensive free trade areas, steps towards visa liberalisation, deeper cooperation to enhance the energy security of the partners and the EU as well as support for economic and social policies designed to reduce disparities.<sup>11</sup> While the EaP has been designed as a sub-regional project bringing six ENP countries together through four

thematic platforms (namely democracy, good governance and stability; economic integration and convergence with EU policies, energy security. and contacts between people) and non-governmental initiatives (Civil Society Forum, Parliamentary Dimension-EURONEST, Local and Regional Assembly); the EU also deals with the specifications of each country bilaterally in order to align the partner countries to EU standards.

Even though the Commission insistently stated the fact that the BSS and every other Black Sea initiative would be complementary,<sup>12</sup> the establishment and the evolution of the EaP has led to the informal demise of the BSS.<sup>13</sup> The underlying dynamic behind this failure of the BSS is definitely the comprehensive character of the EaP, which incorporates both the bilateral and the regional tracks. On the bilateral side, it offers the partners association agreements, deep and comprehensive free trade areas and visa liberalization; and as argued in a FRIDE report “more advanced countries of the EaP may serve as a stimulus for those lagging behind”.<sup>14</sup> In other words, countries that come closer to EU standards would benefit more from the EU, thereby making the EaP a tailor-made policy, taking into account the specifications of each partner. On the regional side, the EaP opens up regional venues for governmental and non-governmental contacts. Regional platforms are devised not only for intensified relations

10 Memo/10/78, 15 March 2010, available at <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/10/78&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>.

11 Commission of the European Communities, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Eastern Partnership*, COM (2008) 823 final, 3 December 2008.

12 COM (2008), 23 final; *Commission Staff Working Document Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Eastern Partnership*, SEC (2008) 2974/3.

13 Personal interview with a high level official at the EEAS.

14 J. Boonstra and N. Shapovalova, *The EU's Eastern Partnership: One Year Backwards*, Madrid: FRIDE, 2010, p. 3.

between the EU and the countries of the Black Sea, but also among the countries of the region. For instance, on 7 May 2009, the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia held a bilateral meeting in Prague on the sidelines of the Eastern Partnership Summit. Thus, the combination of bilateralism and micro-regionalism in the form of keeping some Black Sea countries engaged in this new policy has apparently sidelined the Black Sea Synergy, which is based on a solely region-centered policy requiring cooperation between diverse regional actors, such as Turkey as an accession country and Russia as a strategic partner and five ENP states, all of which have divergent interests in the region.

#### THE FUTURE

The failure of the BSS, stemming from the aforementioned dichotomy of regionalism and bilateralism, has also been reflected in the European Parliament's Report on an EU Strategy for the Black Sea of December 2010. This report stated that the "BSS results have so far been rather limited and no clear and comprehensive picture exists of the current implementation results of the BSS" ... "through concrete objectives, benchmarks, reporting, monitoring, evaluation and follow-up mechanisms".<sup>15</sup> Even though the European Parliament has been trying to revitalise the initiative through recommendations, it is highly likely that the BSS will remain only as a paper initiative, as evidenced by the decreasing number of BSS reports and the increasing number of EaP papers by the Commission. In this context, the EU has given up its insistence on the primacy of regionalisation; and rather

15 European Parliament-Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Report on an EU Strategy for the Black Sea*, A7-0378/2010, 16 December 2010.

decided to "involve a much higher level of differentiation allowing each partner country to develop its links with the EU as far as its own aspirations, needs and capacities allow" in its revised ENP of May 2011.<sup>16</sup> In other words, the EU in the future will focus on its eastern neighbours primarily through a bilateral track, only seconded by regionalist dynamics, alongside its foreign policy instruments other than the ENP. Rather than creating a holistic vision for the Black Sea, the EU will deal with multi-faceted groupings of countries that require different types of EU engagement and that have differentiated expectations/capacities/capabilities for the EU's role in the region.

Thus, instead of the revival of the Black Sea Synergy, the EU will focus more on the bilateral dimension of the EaP. Since it is a well-known fact that money, market access and mobility are the main benefits for the EU's neighbours as a compensation for their exclusion from the Union's enlargement process, it is highly likely that the EU will focus more on the feasibility of the three 'Ms' for its Eastern partners. Accordingly, the success of the EU's future policies for the Black Sea will mainly depend on the record of the EU in providing these concrete benefits to the Eastern partners based on their differentiated performances.

Through the benefits of its policies towards the region including the advantages of financial assistance, market access and visa-free regimes, the EU has the potential on paper to use its "silent disciplining power",<sup>17</sup> thereby

16 *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood: A review of European Neighbourhood Policy*, Joint Communication by the High Representative of The Union For Foreign Affairs And Security Policy and the European Commission, Brussels, 25 May 2011.

17 Ole Wæver, "EU as a Security Actor:

reducing the risks of regional insecurities of the Black Sea. By focusing on such and other tangible offers and applying them coherently and consistently throughout the whole region and linking those to a credible conditionality clause which necessitates democratic reforms from its Eastern partners in return, the EU might have the chance to be regarded as a security actor in the region. However, the EU's track record has almost been hampered in the eyes of eastern partners, first due to its inconsistent and even contradictory policies (such as supporting self-determination for Armenia and respect for the territorial integrity for Azerbaijan in respective action plans) and secondly by a capabilities-expectations gap (such as offering visa-liberalisation in the long-term, while it can only provide visa-facilitation if conditions are met). Through such non-exhaustive examples, one can easily argue that the EU's role as a security actor in the region is merely an illusion, even though it created a paper tiger with its hundreds of pages of Black Sea and/or Eastern neighbourhood strategies.

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Reflections from a Pessimist Constructivist on Post-Sovereign Security Orders," in M. Kelstrup and M. C. Williams (eds.), *International Relations Theory and the Politics of European Integration: Power, Security and Community* (New York: Routledge, 2000): 260-261.

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# The New Energy Politics of the Black Sea Region

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## Abstract

*Turkey signed two significant energy agreements at the end of 2011. As a consequence, these accords set off a new competition for natural gas-centred energy projects around Turkey. Russia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Iran and the EU are the main actors of this competition. This paper aims to assess all the related and ensuing developments in the Black Sea Region through the lenses of Turkey's role in it.*

Turkey closed 2011 with two important energy agreements. The first one was the agreement signed on 27 December for the construction of Trans-Anatolia Gas Pipeline (TANAP) that aimed to transport Azeri natural gas from Shah Deniz II across Turkey to Europe. The second agreement, signed in Moscow on 29 December, called for cooperation in the field of natural gas regarding the construction of South Stream.

TANAP is expected to be completed in five years at the cost of five billion US dollars. Turkey will be able to use 6 bcm (billion cubic meters) of the 16 bcm natural gas that will flow through this pipeline for its own needs. Despite the partnership, the structure of the agreement can be changed in time. Under the current terms, Azerbaijan will own 80% of the pipeline and Turkey the remaining 20%.<sup>1</sup> Most importantly, this pipeline will extend the construction of the infrastructure to transport gas from the Shah Deniz II field to Turkey and to Europe across Turkey as well as Turkmen and Kazakh gas and even Iranian gas if favourable conditions exist.

The second agreement provided an advantage to Russia in the energy game.<sup>2</sup> The South Stream

1 "SOCAR to Take 80% of Trans-Anatolian Pipeline," *Natural Gas Europe*, 27 December 2011, <http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/socar-to-take-80-of-trans-anatolian-pipeline-4186>.

2 Jacob Gronholt-Pedersen, "Turkey

pipeline project will have a capacity of 63 bcm and enable Russia to sell natural gas directly to Europe through the Black Sea by bypassing Ukraine. By signing the agreement, Turkey allowed the new pipeline to pass through its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the Black Sea. In return for this, Russia discounted the cost of natural gas that Turkey purchases from Russia. Moreover, it was decided that Turkey will purchase in 2013 the three additional bcm natural gas which have not yet been consumed but was to be purchased from the already existing Druzhba pipeline within the framework of "take or pay" contracts. Thus, although no figures have been announced yet, Turkey secured more favourable terms regarding its accumulated payments for its natural gas purchases.

These two agreements set off a new competition for natural gas-centred energy projects around Turkey. There has been a revival in terms of projects to transport natural gas to European markets particularly across alternative pipelines to Russia's. The most important factor that revived this competition is the prospective introduction of Shah Deniz II gas to international markets by 2017. The possibility that this gas and potentially Turkmen and Kazakh gas may bring an end

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Approves Russian Gas Plan," *The Wall Street Journal*, 29 December 2011.

to the Russian monopoly has revealed the antagonism among alternative pipelines. The partners of the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) and the Interconnector-Turkey-Greece-Italy (ITGI) projects competing for Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz gas announced that they saw TANAP as the main supplier for their pipelines. In addition to claims that this project may spell the end of the Nabucco pipeline project, it is also asserted that Nabucco's partners offered Azerbaijan to collaborate in the TANAP project under certain conditions. It would not be wrong to argue that Nabucco took a backseat with Turkey, paving the way for South Stream.

Considering these agreements in general, it can be pointed out that Turkey has reinvigorated its energy policy. This reinvigoration is not without problems though. Russia remains the country's main natural gas supplier with Turkey's purchase of natural gas from Russia increasing to 44% in 2011. Disagreements with Iran, the second largest supplier, about the price of gas remain unresolved. Turkey has taken the issue to international arbitration. Turkey is also the biggest customer for Azeri natural gas. It is still unclear how Turkey will move beyond being a transit country and become a game-maker in the international arena after satisfying its domestic market in terms of price and amount. For the last few years, Turkey has been trying to implement a comprehensive energy and foreign policy by considering alternative pipelines. This has not been an easy task for a transit country. In this context, a change is noticeable in the general approach followed until recently. In terms of policy preferences a shift from projects that provide for cooperation with consumers to projects that aim toward collaboration with producers is obvious.

According to credible sources in the Energy

Ministry, Turkey has given priority to TANAP by putting Nabucco on the backburner. When Nabucco-South Stream competition is analysed in this context, it is understood that Turkey has shown its preference for the South Stream project. It can also be argued that Turkey's relations with Russia have taken precedence over its relations with the European Union. It is also understood that Turkey has strengthened Russia's hand in the discussions about whether the South Stream is really a new pipeline to be constructed or a lever in the hands of Russia against Ukraine.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's depiction, during the signing ceremony in December, of Turkey's permission to allow for the South Stream pipeline across its EEZ as a "New Year's gift" supports this evaluation. The intensification of Ukrainian-Russian negotiations in January 2012 and Russia's relaxed attitude in this process are also indicative of this situation.

From a different perspective, the competition between the Nabucco and South Stream pipeline projects affects the energy policy balances within the European Union. The main partners of South Stream are the big powers of Europe while those of Nabucco's are the smaller countries. While Europe's big powers such as Germany, France, and Italy cooperate with Russia, especially in the energy field, independently of the various elements of the EU, countries like Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania,

3 "Turkish Approval of South Stream gives huge boost to Russia," *Today's Zaman*, 28 December 2011; Wojciech Kononczuk et.al., "Russian-Turkish agreement on the South Stream pipeline – an instrument of pressure on Ukraine," *Eastweek*, Center for Eastern Studies, 4 January 2012, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/eastweek/2012-01-04/russianturkish-agreement-south-stream-pipeline-instrument-pressure-uk>.



and Austria seek to guarantee their positions by playing alone (in the absence of a specific EU energy policy). It can be argued that the implicit big power-small power competition in Europe puts Russia in a more advantageous position. In this process, questions about whether the Azerbaijan agreement supported by Turkmen and Kazakh resources will increase Turkey's influence in the area and possible new partnerships come to mind. East European countries come into play as possible new partners for Turkey. It would, thus, be rational for Turkey to re-evaluate partnerships with countries like Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia.

Energy competition in the Black Sea region, which was not in the spotlight in the post 2008 Russia-Georgia war period under the influence of the international financial crisis, has also been showing signs of revival with the prospects of economic recovery and the signing of new agreements. In this respect, the focus should be on addressing questions such as: "who will influence the new game?" and "who will be controlling the regional energy game?". Russia's near-abroad policy and the limits of its influence in this game should be well understood. It is obvious that Russia aims to keep its near-abroad, EU markets and the energy network under its control. Russia's uses almost standard tools to apply its policies: cooperation under Russia's control; sizing energy cooperation and creating dependency; dominating domestic markets; constructing-purchasing distribution, storage lines and pipelines; price discounts; signing particular agreements; acting tough when the situation requires it and applying different sanctions; and, when necessary, building new pipelines. Turkey's relations with Russia in the energy field have been compatible with Russia's expectations until now. Although this

situation has placed a heavy financial burden on Turkey's shoulders, it has been caused by necessity. Energy accounted for 23% of Turkey's total imports in 2011. In other words, more than one-fifth of Turkey's import bill comes from energy imports with Russia being the main benefactor in the trade balance. In this vein, the natural gas agreements which were signed recently indicate that Turkey has taken affirmative steps in, at least, the energy field. This situation may have negative implications for Turkish-Russian relations in the future although currently these are assessed as being positive.

Another situation that compels Russia and seems to affect Turkey as well is the negotiations between Russia and the EU. The EU adopted the Third Package for Electricity and Gas markets in 2009. This Package aims to separate production and supply from transmission networks, facilitate cross-border trade in energy, introduce more effective national regulators, promote cross-border collaboration and investment, enhance greater market transparency on network operation and supply, and increase solidarity among EU countries. This has had strong effects on the operations of vertically integrated companies such as Gazprom or, in other words, Russia. This item is still on the table among the issues that remain unresolved between the two sides. The Russian Energy Ministry proposed an intergovernmental agreement establishing a special regime for major international infrastructure projects while the EU has rejected this proposal.<sup>4</sup> It is

4 "Russia eyes legal opportunities to challenge EU's Third Energy Package," *Rianovosti*, 18 December 2011, <http://en.rian.ru/world/2011118/16881305.html>; James C. Coyle, "Russia Offers Possible Compromise on Third Energy Package," *Eurasian Energy Analysis*, 10

possible that this package will influence the agreements that Russia aims to shape through its bilateral dealings. Moreover, despite the claims that Russia will not be affected due to the natures of the South Stream and Nord Stream pipelines, there might be trouble in the future. Problems in Turkish-Iranian relations and EU-Iranian relations, decisions to go to international arbitration and embargo enforcement, and the recent developments in the Eastern Mediterranean region demand comprehensive thinking and consideration by Turkish energy policy-makers. Iran is Turkey's second largest natural gas supplier, providing some 20% of the country's needs. The basis for the supply is a major contract signed in 1996, set to run for 25 years, under which Iran would supply Turkey with 10 bcm per year. Despite the fact that some clauses in the "take or pay" agreement with Iran favoured Turkey in 2002, those clauses in the agreement were not deemed to be sufficient.<sup>5</sup> Newly signed agreements with Russia and Azerbaijan also encouraged Turkey to take further steps with respect to Iranian gas. Moreover, the decisions by the United States and EU member states to implement sanctions against Iran have also strengthened Turkey's position.

Another actor that should be considered in terms of regional energy balance is Ukraine. In addition to problems in energy field, Ukraine has difficult relations with Russia due to the EU's efforts to deepen its cooperation with

January 2012, <http://eurasianenergyanalysis.blogspot.com/2012/01/russia-offers-possible-compromise-on.html>.

5 Alex Jackson, "Turkey puts Pressure on Iran over Gas Prices," *Natural Gas Europe*, 23 January 2012, [http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/turkey-iran-over-gas-prices-;](http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/turkey-iran-over-gas-prices-; Iranian Sanctions and European Energy Security,) "Iranian Sanctions and European Energy Security," *Natural Gas Europe*, 29 January 2012, <http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/iranian-sanctions-and-european-energy-security>.

it. In order to lessen its dependence, Ukraine aims to halve the gas it imports from Russia. It seems that the regional balance might be affected by the Ukrainian efforts to implement a joint venture agreement for the construction of LNG (liquefied natural gas) plants to import natural gas directly from Azerbaijan. There have been attempts to construct an LNG plant in the Kulevi oil terminal on the Black Sea coast of Georgia for the direct transportation of Azeri gas to Ukraine. This is not a usual step in the Black Sea region as the system in the region is to transport the gas through pipelines which are usually under Moscow's control. Thus, technological developments and economic-political constraints can make LNG an alternative in the region, which may reduce Russia's influence.<sup>6</sup>

This also implies for Ukraine, which aims to collaborate for shale gas production with Exxon Mobil and increase its coal production, entry to the energy game through these diverse initiatives. Another option is to import natural gas across Turkey. The perception that the one who controls the pipelines will also control the markets and regional energy politics faces a challenge. Technological advances and regional as well as extra-regional developments pose challenges to Russia's dominant position. This situation also suggests new opportunities for Europe.

In sum, the Turkey-centric energy game in the region embracing the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Middle East and Europe is reminiscent of the one of the 2004-2008 period, during which the energy prices and the rivalry for constructing alternative pipelines were peaked. Under the dominance of traditional actors such as Russia, transit countries like

6 Michael Hikari Cecire, "Azerbaijani LNG Deal Boosts Ukraine's Energy Leverage," *Natural Gas Europe*, 31 January 2012.

Turkey and Ukraine have started to show their ambitions in the Black Sea Region's energy dynamics by seeking cooperation with producers such as Azerbaijan and Iran that also want to have their say in the new energy politics along with the major consumer, the EU. Advances in technology and the preferences of big actors are the factors to affect the course of the relations among the states of the region. For a while, thus, the issue of regional and global energy security will continue to take a large place in the security agenda.

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## Conflict Resolution Trends in the Black Sea Region

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*Abstract*

*The article assesses the main trends of the various conflict resolution processes in the Black Sea region. It emphasizes the transformation of the mediators' role, including the increase of the EU efforts in the various peace processes. The author states that the absence of military actions, the narrowness of the existing peace formats and competition between the various mediating parties for leadership lead to the militarization of the region, the absence of the conflicts' 'ripeness', new peace initiatives and an 'all or nothing' position on the part of the conflicting parties.*

The Black Sea – Caspian Sea region emerged on the international arena after the collapse of the Soviet Union with a series of so-called 'ethnic conflicts' in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria. From the very beginning these conflicts attracted the attention of the world community, leading to a number of

different mediation and peacekeeping efforts. Despite the efforts of concerned state actors and relevant international organisations the prospects for the final resolution of these conflicts remain distant.

The Russian-Georgian conflict of 2008 and the recognition by the Russian Federation of the independence of two former Georgian

territories (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) have not led to dramatic changes in the security situation of the region. In fact, the aforementioned events reflected the limited capabilities of the international organisations active as mediators and peacekeepers in the region (the United Nations, the Commonwealth of the Independent States and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe). They also demonstrated the evolution of the European Union as a peace broker.

The conflicts in the Black Sea region led to the introduction of a new term in the academic discourse – the term ‘frozen conflicts’. Despite the numerous protracted conflicts on the world map, only these conflicts in the post-Soviet space are traditionally regarded as ‘frozen’. The most acceptable explanation for this term is that regardless of the ceasefire agreements signed by the parties in the early 1990s and the absence of military action or fighting until 2008, the real peace and final resolution of the conflicts is still on agenda of the negotiations of all interested parties and mediators.

Nevertheless, several years ago both academics and political elites started to use a new term – conflicts with a frozen solution, meaning that the ‘freezing’ is less in the conflict behaviour of the parties themselves but in the process of the negotiations, with the presence of a number of external parties. Although there have been numerous peace initiatives, none has received solid support and been fully implemented.

The crisis of August 2008 in Georgia and the sporadic fighting on the Azeri-Armenian border have raised the question anew – how easily can a ‘frozen’ conflict become ‘unfrozen’ and turn into a ‘hot’ conflict? Have the conflicts in question ever been frozen or were they just another type of ‘protracted’ conflicts? The development of these conflicts has imposed

certain particularities not only in the relations between the parties to the conflict, but even more on the process of conflict management and resolution. If one of the main conditions for successful conflict resolution is usually described as the ripeness of the conflict or the conflicting parties, in these four conflicts, at a certain stage we could witness a situation where the conflicting parties may not be ready for a final resolution but the mediators and other interested parties, who have struggled hard to resolve the conflict, are. The difficulties of such a conflict resolution effort stems, primarily, from the fact that the absence of military actions and a prolonged status quo of sorts start satisfying both parties at some point, thereby leading to a situation where the bargaining can continue forever. There is no urgency in conflict resolution, so the conflicting parties start to promote an ‘all or nothing’ approach instead of searching for a win-win situation and an eventual compromise. The best example here is the Transnistrian conflict where the period between 2005 and 2011 can best be characterized as one of ‘talks for the sake of talks’, where every new initiative was declined without a justifiable explanation and most of the conditions put forth by the conflicting parties were procedural rather than substantive.

Prior to the 2008 summer war, the main third-party interveners in the Caucasian territorial conflicts were the United Nations Mission and the OSCE. The European Union played a secondary role. The EU’s role in conflict resolution and peace building has evolved in response to the changes in the international system, its own internal political dynamics, and the EU’s capacity and willingness to play a major role in regional and international

conflicts.<sup>1</sup> De facto until 2008, the European Union was providing mostly confidence-building measures in the region. It was generally more comfortable with a post-conflict rehabilitation and peace building role, and had been wary of becoming directly involved in conflict resolution. Yet, it could offer added value to the efforts of the UN and OSCE.<sup>2</sup> This policy upgrade notwithstanding, Brussels neither had an operational role with regard to peacekeeping forces in the two breakaway republics of Georgia nor was it a member of the principal multilateral negotiation formats dealing with the management and resolution of the conflicts – the Joint Control Commission (JCC) and the Geneva process.<sup>3</sup>

However the situation changed. This was due, in part, to the external conditions which the EU had to address after the latest round of enlargement. It also stemmed from an internal understanding of the changing role of the EU, the necessity to assume a bigger responsibility in world affairs, and a certain accommodation of the different national policies towards the crisis regions.

At times we can witness the substitution of notions, when other actions, which come under the category of peace building or prevention, are considered to be mediation. Thus, before 2008, the EU played the role of the sponsor of peace building and reconstruction efforts and

restoring the confidence between the parties. All these indirectly influenced the possible settlement of the conflict at hand, but were not the mediation process itself, as they mostly dealt with people-to-people contacts.

Despite the limited capacity of the various international organisations, they are still perceived as the best candidates for the role of mediator, as most state actors, such as the Russian Federation, the United States and Turkey, have either lost their credibility or are perceived to be partial.

While the UN and the OSCE thus have to be considered among the losers of the Russia-Georgia conflict of 2008, the EU, somewhat unexpectedly, was able to impose itself as a peacemaker. Due to the policy entrepreneurship of the French Presidency, the EU played the key role in bringing the short war to an end, in monitoring the ceasefire and in leading the international talks that were convened to deal with the fall-out from the conflict.<sup>4</sup>

This first attempt 'inspired' further EU involvement in the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. However this time, even though there is a general agreed position regarding the territorial integrity of Moldova, one can notice a 'three-faces-situation', where the EU, Germany and Romania are simultaneously pretenders to the role of mediator. This complicates the general peace process, as all three have a different level and quality of relations with the Russian Federation, a key party to the Transnistrian conflict. Moreover, Romania tries to be a provider of information for Brussels and in this way to enhance its position within the EU. In the Nagorno-Karabakh the possibility exists for the EU to replace France in the

1 Mehmet Bardakçı, "EU Engagement in Conflict Resolution in Georgia: Towards a More Proactive Role," *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* 4, no.3 (Summer 2010): 214-236. [http://cria-online.org/12\\_2.html](http://cria-online.org/12_2.html).

2 International Crisis Group, "Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU's Role," *International Crisis Group/Europe Report*, 173, 20 March 2006: 2.

3 Michael Merlingen and Rasa Ostrauskaite, "EU Peacebuilding in Georgia: Limits and Achievements," *CLEER Working Papers*, 2009/6: 9.

4 *Ibid.*, 10.

Minsk Group (where France, Russia and the USA share the co-chairmanship of this OSEC-led peace process). Factors such as the desire to utilise the gravitas of the EU and to decrease the influence of the French Armenian lobby on the peace process are behind the call for a greater role for the EU. However the EU's internal crisis has delayed initiatives on this front. This conflict has also demonstrated that sometimes it is necessary to mediate between the mediators such as the OSCE, and the Minsk Group, while Russia and France have at times launched separate peace efforts sometimes without even notifying their partners.

Taking into account that all four conflicts involve separatist movements, their resolution is closely connected with the issue/challenge of the status of the struggling territories. Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia have been de facto independent for years, even if the latter two were not formally recognized by a few countries until after the 2008 war. This special status presents additional difficulties to the process of conflict resolution, such as the concern of how the parties are seated at the negotiation table to the necessity of accommodating the different levels of political and economic development of the territories (such as, for example, the desire of Tbilisi and Chisinau for European integration with the Russian-led subsidiary status of Tiraspol and Tskhinvali). Since 2008 and the recognition of Kosovo, there are academic and political disputes on the similarities and differences of these cases. By pretending that Kosovo is a unique case for many years, Western states could not clearly explain the core of this uniqueness. As a result, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria with the support of the Russian Federation have regularly used the Kosovo precedent as a justification for their own actions. While some

87 states have already recognized Kosovo's independence, only four (Russia, Nauru, Venezuela and Nicaragua) have recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia while no country has recognized Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh. Also, in the case of Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh there is an acceleration of Russian mediation efforts; while in case of the former Georgian regions, in the diplomatic activity towards further recognition has stagnated.

The militarization of the region is one of the results of the unsolved conflicts both due to the countries involved and an inadequate peacekeeping format. In some way, all peacekeeping missions in the region should have been transformed many years ago into civilian missions. The militarization of the peacekeeping missions has not led to confidence-building in the regions but is further 'proof' of the hard security challenges and threats. However at the current stage of negotiations, a change of the peacekeeping format is possible only in Transnistria, with its transformation into civilian or civil-military mission and a change of the mandate with a more active role for the European Union.

Moldova, Romania, the United States and the EU have recently been forcefully insisting on the withdrawal of Russian troops from Transnistria as a fulfilment of the obligations agreed upon in 1999 at the OSCE meeting in Istanbul. They also promote the possibility of the transformation of the current peacekeeping format into a more international one, preferably under an EU mandate or the expansion of the OSCE mandate. De facto, this mission should be changed from a military one to a police mission with observation and monitoring functions, control of the borders (some of the functions of EU Border Assistance Mission – EUBAM), human rights monitoring, etc.

Ukraine, as one of the official peace guarantors and mediators, still hesitates with supporting such statements, even though it could easily justify its support as Ukraine is set to assume the Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2013. Thus, this can be presented as a proposal of the next Chairmanship within the framework of its obligations rather than perceived as an anti-Russian initiative. This would also be seen as a continuation of the Irish Chairmanship's agenda in the OSCE in 2012, as Dublin would like to share its conflict resolution experience in Northern Ireland in the post-Soviet space.

At the same time, one of the main challenges to institutional mediation today is that the mandate of an international organisation can be stopped at any time and its missions recalled. This occurred with the United Nations Mission in Georgia in 2008, when one of the Security Council's permanent members – Russia – vetoed its prolongation. The same fate was reserved for the OSCE Mission to Georgia in 2009. The second weak point of international organisations as mediators is their need to maintain a constant balance between the national interests of member states and the general mission of the organisation. This is a usual problem for the European Union, as is evident with its efforts in the Transnistrian peace process.

Today, the mediators of the Black Sea conflicts can act in two directions; they can be either “builders” or “gardeners”. Both create something. However, if the “builders” are creating a structure or framework of the future peace, they very often appear blocked within the very framework they have themselves built. On the other hand, “gardeners” create the conditions within which the peace can continue “to grow” and develop constantly, as well as generate the proper conditions for its durability. In the Black Sea conflicts today most

of the parties involved still act as “builders” by creating frameworks and conditions which influence the process but do not allow for its evolution outside or beyond their framework. Consequently, none of the ongoing initiatives presents something new. They simply repeat old peace plans with updated variations. None of the conflicting parties, both in Transnistria and in the Caucasian conflicts, are ready for substantial negotiations; they are instead trying to make use of the situation for bargaining and gaining the support of third parties which themselves seek regional leadership.

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