

The Black Sea Region: Bringing Future Decision Makers Together in the Changing World

A Collection of
Conference Speeches and Articles
14-15 March, 2013

The Black Sea Region: Bringing Future Decision Makers Together in the Changing World: Collection of conference speeches and articles

Prepared for publication by
Armenian Atlantic Association

The publication is a collection of welcome and keynote speeches, articles written by project participants and recommendations elaborated during the international youth conference “The Black Sea Region: Bringing Future Decision Makers Together in the Changing World”, which took place on 14-15 March, 2013 in Yerevan, Armenia. This publication reflects the authors’ personal opinions and perspectives only.

The international youth conference was organized by the Armenian Atlantic Association and its Youth Branch, with the grant provided by the Black Sea Trust, a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. **Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent those of the Black Sea Trust, the German Marshall Fund, Armenian Atlantic Association or their partners.**

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Geographically and historically, the Black Sea region, including the South Caucasus countries, has been part of Europe. Its strategic location at the crossroads of Europe, Middle East and Central Asia made the Black Sea a subject of centuries-long disputes and wars among powers vying for its control. Nowadays, the Black Sea region is in a new historical phase. A specific interest for the Black Sea region with respect to energy and security is expressed by major global actors from both sides of the Atlantic (the USA and the EU), the neighboring countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, South Caucasus, the Mediterranean Sea and the Far East (e.g. China, India, et. al.).

The Black Sea Region is treated as a strategically crucial area for Euro-Atlantic security. The region is a very large market, which can benefit tremendously from regional integration. It is the border to Europe, which gives it enormous importance for European and transatlantic security. There are enormous opportunities for making this region a model of cooperation and an engine of growth and prosperity. However, the road toward this goal is still marked with difficult turns.

The countries of wider Black Sea region are going through different stages of transformation to democracy and a market economy, while sharing a problematic history of mutual coexistence. In addition to its economic problems, the Black Sea region has suffered significant conflicts, some of which are still pending.

The current unsolved issues in the Black Sea Region will be discussed tomorrow by the new generation of leaders who will sometime in the future act on the official level. As a matter of fact, young people are the most dynamic part of the society and as such usually are not limited within historical, traditional, ethnical and other restrictions. They are more flexible for creating dialogues with young representatives of the other countries. It is also true that the mindsets of the youth are still subject for transformation and certain stereotypes can be easily changed through intercultural and social communication.

Thus, the Armenian Atlantic Association by the support of the Black Sea Trust, a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, proposes to inform and educate the

young leaders and future decision makers from different Black Sea Region countries by establishing a dialogue between them and providing an open, transparent platform for voicing concerns, exchanging ideas and suggesting possible solutions.

The main goal of this youth conference was to establish a dialogue among the representatives of the next generation of stakeholders from the Black Sea Region countries and give them a floor for regional cooperation, by fostering discussions and assessing the conflict management and security challenges the Black Sea Region faces, with a view to identify obstacles to regional security and cooperation.

We believe that new things the participants will learn and new people they will meet during this conference will open up a new horizon for them as future decision makers to take really brave steps towards change in their societies,.

Astghik Injeyan

Project Coordinator

Armenian Atlantic Association

The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) strengthens transatlantic cooperation on regional, national, and global challenges and opportunities in the spirit of the Marshall Plan.

GMF does this by supporting individuals and institutions working in the transatlantic sphere, by convening leaders and members of the policy and business communities, by contributing research and analysis on transatlantic topics, and by providing exchange opportunities to foster renewed commitment to the transatlantic relationship. In addition, GMF supports a number of initiatives to strengthen democracies.

Founded in 1972 as a non-partisan, non-profit organization through a gift from Germany as a permanent memorial to Marshall Plan assistance, GMF maintains a strong presence on both sides of the Atlantic. In addition to its headquarters in Washington, DC, GMF has seven offices in Europe: Berlin, Paris, Brussels, Belgrade, Ankara, Bucharest, and Warsaw. GMF also has smaller representations in Bratislava, Turin, and Stockholm.

For more information please visit <http://www.gmfus.org/>

The Armenian Atlantic Association (AAA) is a non-governmental organization established on October 2001, which aims to foster Armenia's links with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and promote better understanding within Armenia of NATO's mission and activities in the changing international environment.

To that end, the Association strives to correct misperceptions about NATO and its policies that exist among Armenia's political elite and ordinary citizens. The Association adheres to the principles of equality, self-governance and public service. The Association does not pursue political aims and is not affiliated with any political group.

In 2003 AAA has established its Youth branch as the Armenian Youth Atlantic Association (AYAA) to introduce Armenian youth with the NATO mission and policy as well as its upcoming goals for establishing strong links between the young leaders from NATO and PfP countries on the bases of mutual confidence and dignity. These actions are aimed at promoting regional cooperation, and facilitating the contact and dialogue between its national affiliates.

The main goal of the AYAA is to increase and strengthen the dialogue and understanding between the youth of Armenia and national YATAs. One of the key tasks of the AYAA is to involve young leaders and decision-makers of Armenia in expanding NATO's new role and mission in the world and the region particularly.

For more information please visit <http://euro-atlantic.am/>

About Conference

The international youth conference entitled “The Black Sea Region: Bringing Future Decision Makers Together in the Changing World”, took place on 14-15 March, 2013 in Yerevan, Armenia. It was organized by the Armenian Atlantic Association (AAA) and its youth branch Armenian Youth Atlantic Association (AYAA), supported by the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, a project of the German Marshall Fund.

The main goal of this youth conference entitled “The Black Sea Region: Bringing Future Decision Makers Together in the Changing World” was to establish a dialogue among the representatives of the next generation of stakeholders from the Black Sea Region countries and give them a floor for regional cooperation, by fostering discussions and assessing the conflict management and security challenges the Black Sea Region faces, with a view to identify obstacles to regional security and cooperation.

The conference brought together young professionals from the Black Sea Region who worked and interacted together, had an opportunity to gain insights into the issues of importance for the Black Sea Region presented by experts and policy makers. They participated in workshops, and eventually, a video-conference. They were also provided an intensive training on negotiation and leadership skills. To conclude the activities of the conference, the participants developed recommendations on increasing the level of cooperation in the Black Sea Region from youth perspective, which are presented in this publication. The publication includes as well articles written by conference participants on a theme “Black sea region as a space for partnership and cooperation: A youth perspective”.

Welcome and Key-note Speech

Mr. Tevan Poghosyan

President of the Armenian Atlantic Association

First of all, welcome to Armenia everyone!

I am very glad that an idea once born in the Armenian Atlantic Association - to build up a Black Sea platform for the Euro-Atlantic youth groups – eventually, little by little, is reviving again after the economic crisis.

Unfortunately, as you can see, because of the economic crisis you can be here only for 2 days, but it is still very good that some small steps from the previous years and ideas are again revived with the help of the donor communities. Traditionally we always thank the Black Sea Trust for their generosity, and though no representative is with us today, we would like to express our gratitude to the *Black Sea Trust, a project of the German Marshall fund of the United States* for trusting in our idea.

Welcome again to Armenia! In these two and half days you will be able to have a lot of fun; you will establish new friendships, and on top of all these you will gain knowledge. So, please let me open the conference *The Black Sea Region - Bringing Future Decision Makers Together in the Changing World*. The title already suggests that we already believe that you are on the path of decision making, and thus you are the ones who would be changing the world, and hopefully towards a better one, towards prosperity, much nicer life, safer ecology, peaceful situation, and great economy, things that are missing in the Black Sea area as a whole. Some countries do better of course than the others, but I'm talking about the region as a whole.

Let's just have a look at what we have today. The big countries like Ukraine, Turkey, and Russia on the Black Sea each have their own problems: Turkey has declared that it promulgates a "zero problems with neighbors" policy, and it seems that now, after so many years, there is zero neighbors without problems. In Russia there is some sort of democracy and nevertheless, you see that more and more autocratic regimes are

being established. And now the concept of some Eurasian union is looming in the horizon, which sometimes reminds me of these obsolete ideas of reviving the Soviet Union, through some political pressure is rather tangible. In Ukraine there is a crisis in the Parliament, though some democratic reforms are obvious. The EU is trying to promote some integration ideas, but as we see from the Timoshenko's case not everything is perfect.

But I can say that transformation is possible. I still remember how I became a witness of change in Eastern Europe. I have regularly visited Bulgaria and Romania since late 90s, and in the beginning these were still 2 countries of the former socialist camp. Then in 2000-2002 they already started some EU membership talks and today these are EU countries. I have seen this transformation, how they, once part of the Black Sea region, then identified themselves as part of the EU region. Indeed, the geography has not changed, but the perceptions in peoples' minds have and are changing.

Bulgaria has its own crisis in the government, namely the high level of corruption. Romania has similar issues, with low level of trust in the government. However, everyone is coping with its own issues, which are unique. EU membership does not provide uniform solutions, but creates favorable conditions for the solution of the existing problems. The power struggle will go on for a long time, and as future decision makers you need to be able to develop a vision where your country should go.

Greece. The dream country for spending your summer vacation! They also teach us how democracy may work: I can't imagine a day without demonstrations in Greece. The most important thing is that eventually Greece stands up on their feet, and another EU country becomes a haven of economic prosperity and democratic institutions. I hope that you as young people are much smarter and more creative to analyze any of these examples and use this knowledge for future decision making.

Now let's have a look at smaller countries. Many times people do not agree that small countries are important, but for the Black Sea region sometimes small countries do much more, or their factor can be much more important, than generally accepted, because this or that small country can become a very big problem for the whole region. For instance, Moldova which has implemented a number of important reforms seemed

to finally come to an understanding where the country should head. However, recently the new developments seem to suggest that the coalition is falling apart, and now everyone is anticipating in suspense where things will end up.

Georgia is generally regarded as a champion in reforms, but there are still conflicts there. Certainly, there has been a significant change with the last democratic transition, but we sometimes read quite worrying news on what is going on in Georgia. It is great to observe from outside and to see how Georgia will cope with its issues, because quite serious lessons can be learnt. Whatever happens in Georgia, is strongly echoed in Armenia, because it's the only country through which we have access to the rest of the world. Any tension in Georgia immediately hits Armenia, and our geographical proximity requires us to be watchful.

In Armenia everything is perfect. As an Armenian I should say so, and because you are here for these two days, we will definitely ask that no revolutions and fights take place over this time. We have guests and they need to enjoy the Armenian weather and nature, and I hope that you will be enjoying the peace as well. But if I get serious, I have to let you know that things are not as perfect as we would have liked. For instance, after the presidential elections the opposition leader Raffi Hovhannisyan is on hunger strike at this very moment. If interested, walk to the Freedom Square in the evenings and see young Armenians demonstrating. Everything is peaceful though.

Azerbaijan. You all know that for the recent days there has some tension between the youth and the government; some demonstrators were even beaten. There will be presidential elections in Azerbaijan this year. It is very important that everything goes on without the use of muscle power and peacefully. Situation with democracy seems alarming, but for Armenia it is very difficult to give any kind of assessment for Azerbaijan. You can read much more in the news. I just know that sooner or later Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh Republic will find a way out of the conflict.

Why I've made this overview is because all these developments, conflicting situations, causes, and crises can be interpreted in two ways: you can regard those and unsurpassable problems, or you can have view those as new opportunities for new solutions and new ways to move forward. I hope that you will opt for the second interpretation,

and will be able to build up a strong social capital based on your education background, past experiences, relationship, and that will be able to enrich this capital through participation in various practice groups, networks, and learning processes. This is a life-long learning process, and you have to start it now to become genuinely effective decision makers in your countries. And some day we will be proud we have hosted you here in Armenia.

But where does NATO come in in all of these? NATO is in our hearts and in our mind, because the Black Sea region is one of the regions where NATO has been a key player to secure a very interesting transition and transformation in our minds. Once it has been our antagonistic camp, but today we have some countries which have been a NATO member all along, some others that have fought NATO members, but today have joined the same camp. There is another bunch of countries in the region that have started to cooperate with NATO through participating in various programs, one of which is Partnership for Peace. This program has contributed to developing dynamics of cooperation with NATO and Euro Atlantic integration much different from the previous one. I think it is very important for us to realize that NATO's power is in its unique ability to properly adapt to new realities by clearly understanding the need for change and properly transiting towards this desirable change. Thus, NATO was able to develop very good partnerships, serve as a very interesting institution internationally.

NATO is one of the most important contributors towards democratic transitions. Take the case of Armenia. NATO does not support Armenia simply on security matters, but they provide a lot of trainings, a lot of knowledge sharing, and they support transitions in many cases. Armenia is also benefiting from participating in various NATO PFP events, peacekeeping opportunities, thus developing also its military capabilities.

This is true for all the other cooperating countries, where these kinds of institutions are really able to serve as a channel of cooperation, knowledge sharing and partnership. Another very interesting institution in the region, which brings us together under one umbrella, is BSEC (Black Sea Economic Corporation area). BSEC is indeed a good institution, but for any institution to be really active and strong, there is always a need for at least 1 or 2 'engines', like the US in NATO. In the EU it's always France and Germany and some other times, countries which take initiative. For BSEC unfortunately

such great countries as Russia, Ukraine, and Turkey could serve as 'engines', but there are some serious challenges.

For instance, until there isn't some positive development in the Armenian-Turkish relations, until reconciliation ideas and recognition of historical events are cast away, until proper diplomatic relations are not established and the border with Turkey is closed Turkey will not be able to become a trustworthy 'engine' in the region, which might explain why BSEC lacks it. Russia's relations with Georgia are a huge impediment for it to be trusted by smaller countries. Ukraine could be considered one country that does not have conflicts with neighbors, but it seems that internal conflicts and the economic situation in the country are too critical to be ignored.

At the beginning of this century until 2005 I would say that the Black Sea identity was much discussed among our political leaders, because the countries in the Black Sea region had different pasts, and the new transformations were asking for shaping new common identities. Thus, the Black Sea regional identity was topping the political agenda. However, some of these countries later identified themselves with the EU more. Some became full-fledged members, and some others developed more or less intensive relations with the EU. Discussions on the Black Sea regional identity receded.

If in the past for many of these countries Moscow was the center of geopolitical processes, now it is Brussels, which pushes for reforms, resolution of pending conflicts and integration. It is clear that until we all learn to cooperate and take integration in this small region seriously; we will not be able to create more common good.

I wish that within these 2 days you will learn enough to discuss such visionary ideas leading to cooperation and integration. Now as a good leader I am passing the floor to the young and hope that you will prove me that I was right in my decision.

Key-note Addresses: “Empowering the Black Sea Region, an Influential Crossroad Between East and West”

Dr. Zefi Dimadama

Ms. Alexia Timotheou

*International Center for Black
Sea Studies (ICBSS)*

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Firstly, I would like to congratulate you for the organisation of the youth Conference, and thank especially Mr. Tevan Poghosyan, the President of the Armenian Atlantic Association, for his invitation, as well as the youth branch Armenian Youth Atlantic Association for granting me the honour to address to young professionals and students from the Black Sea region, as a key-note speaker.

The wider Black Sea area, politically complex and of geostrategic importance, with energy resources of high economic potential has been moving to the top of the international agenda. As a matter of fact, the European Union reached the borders of the Black Sea through its 2007 enlargement to Bulgaria and Romania whereas the US, NATO, Japan, China and India among others, are increasingly focusing on the region that connects –in many ways– Europe, Asia and the Middle East. So, the area is a crossroad of political, economic and societal cultures, playing the role of an economic, geo-political and trade hub, and serving as a crucial corridor connecting Asia with Europe.

On the other hand, the Black Sea region is characterised by extreme regional discrepancies and a number of problems and challenges such as **energy security, environmental degradation and poor governance and democratic institutions.**

I would like to refer a little bit further to these 3 sectors:

Environmental protection and sustainable development

The severe environmental threats of the Black Sea area can be categorised into three basic types:

a) Water resources and management

- The untreated sewage ending into the Black Sea constitutes a serious threat for local populations and their local economies, resulting to public health problems and substantial damage to ecosystems and the tourist industry.
- The intensive agriculture of the past decades and the overuse of fertilizers and pesticides led to the over-fertilisation of the sea, mainly through rivers. This over-fertilisation, along with waste discharges from agricultural, domestic and industrial sources, is responsible for the phenomenon of “eutrophication”, which is to be blamed for the vast alterations in the Black Sea ecosystems and the area’s balance disorder.
- Over-fishing leads to the exhaustion of certain species and the drastic decline of catches, creating serious economic damage in the fishing industry.
- The inadequate management of solid waste originating either from the coastal cities, or from the ships sailing the sea, creating sources of pollution and degrading the aesthetics of the area (coastal zone, rural landscape, tourist developed areas).

b) Coastal areas, forests and inland ecosystems

- The Black Sea region is not only threatened by the degradation of the marine environment, but the failure of forests preservation as well. The rich ecosystems of forests are deteriorated by illegal logging and fires, destroying valuable natural habitats.
- The large number of towns around the Black Sea is indicative of the high pressure on the coastlines generated by human settlements. Additionally, transport, infrastructures and tourism have contributed to erosion and the damage of ecosystems. The uncontrolled economic growth of the region as well as the population increase in the urban and rural coastal areas will obviously continue to be a threat to natural environment.

c) Natural and technical risks

- Oil pollution threatens Black Sea's coastal and marine ecosystems. This kind of pollution can be a result of accidental discharge from tankers carrying oil across the sea or from wasteful use or disposal on land.
- The former Soviet countries of the Black Sea region are characterised by the ongoing production and use of nuclear energy, with power plants still not meeting the high safety standards set by the EU.
- Attached to the legacy of using oil, gas or nuclear energy, they do not rely on renewable energy resources and they do not promote ecological security, in order to ensure long-term safety for the Black Sea environment and its populations.

Energy and energy security

As far as the energy sector is concerned, the Black Sea region has long been associated with the production and transit of hydrocarbons. Some of the major functional or planned pipeline routes and sea lines from the production areas to the European markets pass around or across the Black Sea.

However, change is on the way. Based on solid scientific evidence, the world is becoming increasingly aware of the fact that climate change is a real and present danger, and that human activities related to energy production and consumption are mainly responsible for this. Along with climate change, more energy security issues need to be addressed. Oil industry installations are major sources of solid, liquid and gaseous waste to air, soil and water. On the other hand, oil spills from accidents during the transportation phase can cause serious environmental damage. In addition, the Black Sea countries have a tradition in nuclear energy production. However, this tradition is not always accompanied with the necessary safety standards for nuclear power plants, constituting a constant threat. Moreover, the storage and transport of radioactive waste from nuclear power production and uranium mining is also accountable for environmental pressures.

The past few decades saw remarkable technological advances and further breakthrough is expected leading to more economical and environment-friendly uses of energy, and to much improved energy efficiency. Clean energy from renewable sources tend to become competitive in terms of cost effectiveness and to make commercial sense.

Considering that energy is still the least regulated sector of the world trade, it is likely that public and international pressure may cause a shift toward more transparent energy policies worldwide. In particular, this will provide incentives for balancing the respective interests of all major actors on the energy scene, meaning security of supply for consumers, security of demand for producers, and security of steady revenue for transit countries.

Good governance and democratic institutions

The Black Sea countries also share common challenges regarding governance. Still influenced by their Soviet legacy, they are characterised by weakness of successfully designing and implementing public policies. They have weak public institutions, while public administration is dominated by top-down procedures, big degree of corruption and limited participation of different stakeholders in governance.

Young people's role

In this context, young people have to work together to tackle these challenges. You have to undertake the role of future leaders who will raise awareness, share information, build capacities and work together to initiate responses and actions.

Young experts have the right and the obligation to ask pressure to their governments requesting the protection of the Black Sea and the promotion of a more sustainable form of development. In this respect the following actions could be a starting point for youth:

- Start a constructive dialogue with governments to voice their opinions regarding decisions affecting their lives and influence these decisions
- Employment and involvement of young experts in environmental protection organizations and in key-places in public and local governments
- Governments should use adequate and qualified manpower in order to carry out systematic data quality control and cross-country comparability

Young experts should step forward sharing innovative ideas and sustainable solutions, mainly based on energy efficiency practices and renewable energy sources use, in order to promote ecological integrity, social equity and economic development.

The role of young educated people will be a catalyst for establishing a democratic institutional environment for the Black Sea countries. Young experts can work towards the achievement of “good governance”, the modernisation of procedures and the establishment of a noticeably more democratic framework. Youth can play an active role and participate in the efforts towards:

- Transparency and openness of public state to citizens, leaving aside secrecy and corruption
- E-governance strategies in the framework of reforming public administration and giving access to public information to all interested citizens and actors
- Strong citizens’ participation in policy-making decisions and governance
- Effective system of control for protection of citizens from maladministration and corruption
- Decentralization of structures and services and strengthening of local governments

ICBSS’ role

The International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) is an independent research and training institution focusing on the wider Black Sea area. It was founded in 1998 as a non-profit organisation. It constitutes a related body of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and serves as its acknowledged think-tank. The last 14 years since the inception of the ICBSS, the Centre has a series of achievements to demonstrate, within its institutional role and beyond. The ICBSS has been striving to promote multilateral cooperation among the Black Sea countries and foster relations with the EU and multiple international partners. As an institutional body responsibly informs policy makers and sets the foundation for policy shaping. As a research centre follows the path of applied research, in order to transfer knowledge in a variety of research fields: environmental governance, energy, sustainable development, science, technology and innovation. This dual character of ICBSS has designated the Centre as a dynamic focal point in the wider Black Sea area, capable of bringing closer the scientific and academic community with policy makers and create long-term synergies and networks.

The ICBSS also actively supports constructive dialogue and cooperation among regional players and youth of the Black Sea countries. In this framework, the Centre or-

ganises a series of events with other prominent research institutions, academies of sciences, universities and of course the business and industry sector. Indicatively:

1. The **annual ICBSS International Black Sea Symposium**, which has successfully reached its sixth year in 2013, aiming at multilateral and transnational cooperation and dialogue in the wider Black Sea region. It addresses to a multi-disciplinary audience: policy-makers, academics, journalists, diplomats, Members of Parliament, entrepreneurs, civil society leaders and researchers primarily from the countries of the wider Black Sea area, EU member states, the United States and Central Asia.

2. The **Summer School** which is now in its second year and aims at organizing specialized courses to PhD candidates

Amidst the current crucial financial, political and social developments and in the context of an ever more pressing need for multilateral and transnational cooperation and dialogue in the wider Black Sea area, the active engagement and involvement of young experts, who will become the future leaders, seems imperative. In this context, the ICBSS takes the initiative to recommend the establishment of a “**Black Sea Forum of Young Leadership**”, through which, young men and women with expertise in various fields will have the chance to:

- address common challenges and identify potentials for development and close cooperation
- foster dialogue and cooperation through knowledge and good practices transfer among the Black Sea countries
- transfer their policy recommendations to high level decision-makers of the Black Sea countries through the ICBSS, which has this potential

Now, more than ever, it is important to organise a sufficient pool of young people with deep knowledge of institutional, diplomatic, or even cultural familiarity with the region, which is especially significant given the diverse nature of the BSEC member states. Towards this direction, the ICBSS has already started to expand its existing pool of contacts through the establishment of a **Network of Experts**. The goal of this network is to create a core of young experts and professionals focusing on the Black

Sea region. Certainly, this project needs support and organizations such as the BSEC or the German Marshall Fund of the United States can and should actively support it.

Concluding, no matter how hard governments strive to accomplish their goals, good and successful governance necessarily entails the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes. The investment in human resources and the intensification of interaction will be critical. You, today's students and professionals and tomorrow's decision-makers and leaders have the fundamental right to contribute through your perspectives to a more stable, prosperous and safe future in the Black Sea region.

Thank you for your attention.

Enhancing Regionalism in the Black Sea Area: Obstacles and Ideas to Overcome Them

Perchuhy Kazhoyan
Armenia

The Black Sea region has always been the crossroad for East and West, but it has also been a region of confrontations for centuries. The Cold War era brought with it a struggle for dominance over this region. NATO members were in charge of the south and south-east area while Warsaw Pact members controlled the rest.

The fall of the Soviet Union shaped new circumstances; created armed conflicts; and renewed historical tensions. It also created new opportunities: new sovereign states were born, an array of outside influences were introduced along with the introduction of various outside stakeholders and competition amongst the new and old stakeholders. The idea of regionalism also started to slowly develop within the region, with attempts of regional cooperation amongst the now sovereign states.

Nowadays the EU, NATO, and the United States have all expressed their interest in the Black Sea region, and have formed policies to incorporate the enhancement of bilateral relations with the countries of the region, as well as to support the attempts at regionalism. The Black Sea region has slowly evolved into a region of geopolitical significance, offering a new and attractive economic area, abundance in energy resources, and other intriguing opportunities for development. Hence, in the recent years the EU and NATO have been playing a more assertive role in supporting regionalization of the Black Sea Region, and these attempts have involved not only the traditional ways of enhancing the relations of the regional stakeholders – via negotiations and actions carried out on the governmental level, but they have also started to involve civil society actors and youth organizations.

Despite all this however, region-building has not accelerated much due to a number of factors including uneven economic and political development of the regional stakeholders; intense nationalism and hostilities between and within several states; and

competing interests of outside actors. This is true for the immediate post-cold war era as well as for the more recent years.

Several of the inconsistencies in the attempt to develop and increase regionalization include the disparities within and among the states of the region. These disparities should be tackled not only in a top-down manner but also in a bottom up manner, including intercultural dialogue through youth and other interested civil society actors. Next, some states of the region are making great military expenditures which has heightened existing tensions and steered political action away from region-building. Another obstacle for region-building is the fact that energy issues are prone to becoming victims of power politics. Regarding external actors such as the EU, which clearly supports regional initiatives, there is also a paradox concerning its policy toward individual countries. The message that the EU is sending creates mixed incentives for regional actors and as events have shown, development of bilateral relations between the Black Sea region states and the EU is preferred over regional dialogues with the EU. Another paradox worth mentioning is the apparent overlap of organizations in the already complex region, which seem to spur up added competition between the states and create further divisions rather than encourage regional cooperation. Finally there is a conflict between globalization and entrenched nationalism in the Black Sea area, which in and of itself, is one of the world's most multipolar regions.

The political transformations and the active democratization of the region in the past two decades have been impressive; however, much is yet to be done in terms of proper functioning democratic institutions and rule of law. Some governments in the region have on many occasions shown signs of authoritarianism, restrictive economic policies, abuse of energy production resources, and shortcomings in the protection of human rights. This is something that should be acknowledged by all the stakeholders of the region and dealt with by regional and international stakeholders supporting civil society movements looking to implement democratic reforms.

The idea of regionalism assumes that cooperation between states ensures added benefits as opposed to independent action. Regional cooperation, if undertaken correctly and without hidden animosity, should take into account the similarities as well as the differences of the states and mold them into a tool used for the regions prosperity. The

Black Sea region has attempted embracing regionalism through NATO and its open-door policy, and through EU enlargement and its neighborhood policies. The region has also created its own organizations (BSEC, GUAM, the CDC and the Black Sea Forum) coupled with EU-related programs (TRACECA, DABLAS, INOGATE, ENP, EaP, and BSS).

At first glance this seems welcomed - and to some extent is, but upon closer examination it shows that there is obvious overlap between these programs and organizations, which creates regional rivalry and somewhat tense bilateral relations. Moreover, the insufficient institutional capacity of some of the aforementioned organizations and programs for undertaking major projects of regional importance cannot be overlooked either. Some of the states participate in more than one of these initiatives causing policy confusion and waste of resources. This leaves room for reassessing the needs of the region and asking oneself whether or not a new joint strategic concept should be developed amongst the states of the Black Sea Region.

Many if not all the states of the region prioritize their national institution building processes, giving a smaller and much more secondary role to region building. One goal that the regional states must set before them is to accept the fact that national priorities are sometimes best reinforced by regional interests. What the region is missing is every regional state's commitment to being a 'team player' and serving the collective good. Naturally it cannot be done overnight, there is a need to install a collective mindset onto the nations of the region as a long term goal. Whereas a short term goal for the fulfillment of this plan must be diminishing conflicts and issues within and between the regional states.

Regarding the regional stakeholders' interactions with the international organizations, it must be stressed that parallel to strengthening bilateral relations with them, the states must strive towards strengthening regional representation. The states of the Black Sea region must not escalate regional disputes and intensify historical animosities for the sake of upgrading their bilateral relations with organizations or superpowers. This frustrates bilateral relations and institution building in the short term while making the ultimate goal of a capable regional coalition unattainable in the long term. Each state must strive to upgrade their relations and use their favorable

geopolitical position as a region – as a whole, which would ensure even more promising and fruitful relations for the future.

These concerns and needs underline the necessity of increasing awareness within the region and throughout all layers of society – with an increased emphasis on youth, regarding the importance of multilateral regional cooperation. Since this calls for the introduction of a novelty for the region – a new approach aimed at serving the common good, the first stage of its implementation would be best done by youth actors and through increased intercultural dialogue. The latter stages would include the creation and implementation of mutually beneficial long term projects, by setting mutually agreed upon goals and objectives.

Thus, regional policies are vital and should be prioritized to the full extent possible. Prioritization should focus on policy sectors having a truly regional character and potential, which call for high levels of inter-state dialogue and cooperation, and more importantly local and non-state dialogue.

Conclusion

In recent years the states of the Black Sea region have shown progress in regional cooperation through several regional initiatives; however, attempts at policy coordination have been minor due to various internal and external issues and have yet to deliver substantive results. This paper argues that regional cooperation is necessary for peace, security, stability, economic prosperity and social development.

Regional cooperation however is not an end in and of itself but rather a long term goal. The long process of reaching that goal is not easy and has many complications. The region itself is complicated by hostile relations, resistance to political reform, stagnant economies and ethnic strife thus making it necessary that the process for achieving regional cooperation includes enhanced dialogue between states, resolution of conflict within and between each regional state, and an alignment of policies between each state that tailors and maximizes the area of cooperation to each country's capabilities. This also entails an innovative strategy of intercultural dialogue between the youth of each regional state.

Naturally, the Black Sea region is intricate and highly diversified, and the states of the region have always faced difficulty in achieving regional integration and setting aligned goals. However, this should not be an obstacle but rather an incentive to create an innovative and pragmatic strategy that can produce mutually beneficial action.

Black Sea Region as a Space for Partnership and Cooperation: A Youth Perspective

Rima Khalatyan
Armenia

The Black Sea Region runs anticlockwise around the Black Sea from Greece, Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria, through Russia and The Ukraine, onto Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the east, and Turkey in the south. Though Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Greece are not littoral states, history, proximity and close ties make them natural regional actors. Within the European Union, the region is no more than a thin coastal strip some 20–60 km wide that runs down almost the entire length of Romania and Bulgaria, eventually culminating in a series of low-lying mountains on the border with Turkey. Altogether, the Black Sea Region covers just 0.3% of the EU territory but it is nevertheless sufficiently distinct in character to be in a category of its own.¹ Black Sea region was always in the center of interest and attention of all countries during the history of humanity. It was and is important region for the security and stability of Europe and Asia. There are large amount of actors and clashing interests within this region. In addition to the numerous other issues in the region, ethnic conflicts, ongoing state building processes, the presence of vast natural resources, and strategic transport and energy corridors mean that the region is an extremely important and sensitive area.

In the 21st century the changing global and regional balances created new political and security dilemmas for the Black Sea Region. The global and regional powers increasingly supported competing political and security agendas which, although they occasionally contradicted each other, were clearly interlinked.² Transport, energy security, including the main transport and energy corridors and environmental protection are amongst the main areas of cooperation identified in the Black Sea region. But today it is somehow hard to organize meetings in this region. The flights are expensive and regional cooperation or contacts between peoples in the Black Sea region are

1) Nature 2000 in the Black Sea Region, Kerstin Sundseth and Sylvia Barova, <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/docs/biogeos/Black%20Sea.pdf>

2) Security in the Black Sea Region, Policy Report II, http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/bst/en/media/xcms_bst_dms_30921_30922_2.pdf

arguably not as intense as in the Soviet period. Young people used to visit this region usually in summertime for their vacation, but not always to have working meetings, or workshops and it's a pity. In this sense I believe that the good level of cooperation and interaction on a regional basis should be supplemented by a more active involvement of youth. They can support and develop the existing multilateral forms of cooperation in the Black Sea region.

The Black Sea regional constellation has substantially changed in the past years and will continue to evolve. In these conditions, the Youth's new regional cooperation initiatives would usefully complement its existing wide-ranging bilateral and sectorial activities. The youth cooperation and partnership in the Black Sea region opens a window on fresh perspectives and opportunities. This requires a more coherent, longer-term effort which would help to fully seize the opportunities, to bring increased stability and prosperity to the region. Greater youth engagement in Black Sea regional cooperation will contribute to this objective.

In every society youth play's a great role in development of the country and I think that it is very important for the young people, who are potential future decision makers, to participate in different kinds of projects to get acquainted with each other. Even if only one person from each country will become a decision maker in the future it will help to build fruitful dialogue between our countries.

I strongly believe that opportunity of working hand in hand with young people will deepen our knowledge of each country and also will help to acquire a new look on the things, meet new people and try to make a change together, while sharing our experiences.

The Black Sea – Caspian region is an intersection of important transport corridors as well as an area with vast deposits of still untapped natural resources, which predetermines its geopolitical and geo-economic significance both for the great powers and the adjacent regional powers. But their usually contradictory interests often deepen the existing ethnic and religious contradictions between the local peoples and states, turning them into almost unsolvable cases of international law. Perhaps the key to solution of these problems lies with the youths in the different countries who have grown in troublesome times but hopefully have not inherited the animosity that took over the region at the end of the XX century.

The youth perspective for turning the region of a space for cooperation and partnership can be viewed from many perspectives, but in my opinion geopolitics describes some of the most important characteristics of the area. In the Black Sea – Caspian region criss-cross two important international routes with strategic significance – East-West, or the modified Silk Road, which connects Japan and China with Southern and Eastern Europe and North Africa; as well as North-South, which starts from the Scandinavian Peninsula, passes through the Western territories of the Russian Federation and reaches the Indian Ocean. These geographical characteristics of the region understandably define the utmost interest of the great and regional powers towards the stability of this crossroad region and its incorporation in the world's economic tendencies and challenges. However, each one of these global and regional players perceives the solution of this geopolitical, geostrategic and geo-economic riddle in its own, specific way.

On the one hand, this fact explains the variety of projects that every one of the international players tries to realize in the territory, situated between Central Asia and the Balkans; and on the other it is the main reason for the too ambiguous nature of the Black Sea – Caspian geopolitical area in terms of international relations and especially international security. As a result it should be noted that the region is subjected to the impact of a very complicated aggregation of inner and outer influences, which define

the simultaneous manifestation of positive (constructive) and negative (destructive) elements in the realization of the area's economic and political potential.

Due to the fact that the geographical position of the region brings not only advantages but also threats for the national security of all local states, national governments should always be especially careful in the making and implementing their foreign policy. The whole spectre of interstate problems in the Black Sea – Caspian area seems complicated but in spite of that there could be distinguished three main vectors of priorities that could lead to an advance towards the solution of the Post-Soviet conflicts. First, this is the political will to overcome the consequences of the interstate conflicts in the Caucasus and to continue the constructive tendencies towards the restoration of the failing states and semi-autonomous provinces in the region. Second, the decisiveness to put a lot of effort to solve the existing ethno-religious conflicts, and not simply froze them, which always makes harder the peace-building and leads to the infiltration of radical religious influences that are conductors of interests of various terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda. And third, common utilization of the advantageous geographical position of the region between Europe, Asia and Africa by means of profitable transport, economic and energy projects within the Black Sea – Caspian area, the geopolitical dimensions of which by far outreach its geographical territory.

It can be summarized that Black Sea – Caspian region could reveal its full constructive potential only by means of cooperation between local governments, building mutual trust and common counteraction against conventional and unconventional security threats. All countries in the region should carefully observe the expanding influence of the Commonwealth of Unrecognized States. After the successful outcome for Abkhazia and South Ossetia of the war between the Russian Federation and Georgia in August 2008, the other two members of the organization – the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic and Nagorno-Karabakh Republic ostensibly raised their activity. Despite being small in the matter of territory and population, the four self-proclaimed states already proved that they can influence in a very negative matter all peace-keeping efforts of the international community in the Black Sea – Caspian region. Counteractions against this tendency should be a priority for the small and medium-sized countries in the area, especially in the view of the fact that the conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia was solved by means of hard power and war.

A possible way for the successful overcome of the rising ethnic conflicts on the territory of the Caucasus could be the increased usage of soft power. It is high time local statesmen understood that joint problem solving may not satisfy the utmost desires of the different political elites but is the only means that can bring lasting peace and cooperation in the region. Something more – it is applicable for the solution of both conventional and unconventional security threats especially in areas such as the Caucasus, marked by continuous ethnic conflicts and religious controversies. Such political environment offers favourable conditions for a constant terrorist activity, capable to join forces with the transnational organized crime. Only mutual trust and cooperation can quench the influence of terrorists, guerilla fighting groups and criminals. Trust-building, however, is going to be a serious challenge for the countries in the Black Sea – Caucasian region and here exactly the young people from the different countries could play an important role.

Born during the final days of the Soviet Union or even after the dissolution of the latter, they have lived long enough to see the consequences of the continuous warfare but luckily have not inherited the hatred that led to the devastation of the region at the end of the XX century. Perhaps namely the youth perspective can offer a solution to the prolonged conflicts in the region because the efforts of the international community, albeit well-intentioned, remain often unfamiliar with the core reasons for the mutual animosity and distrust. Young people from all countries in the region can make real effort in building homogeneous civil society, increase the level of trust beyond state borders and further popularize the Euro-Atlantic values in the Black Sea region. Solution of the old problems requires new perspective and only young people can offer such.

The beginning of the second decade of the XXI century gives a new chance to overcome the mistakes made in the previous century. Building mutual trust and cooperation in the Caucasus is going to be a long process but the most important thing is to start this process. Youth energy and vision are likely to lay the beginnings of what may turn out to be the so long expected defrosting of the frozen conflicts in the Caucasus.

Alexander Zibzibadze
Georgia

The Black Sea region was always an interesting place throughout the history of the world to be with, because there have been always a lot of very important and interesting processes going on here. Historically it was a place of birth for a lot of countries, traditions and cultures affiliated with them, which are one of the oldest in our civilization. Many of those counties do not exist now on the world map and a lot of them lost their power and don't have play that significant role they used to someday, but the region is still a very important one for the world.

In order to return to the thought expressed in the first paragraph that many of the countries, which existed or still exist in the Black Sea region used their power and significance as actors in world politics, it will be very interesting to analyze why that happened to them. It will not be a mistake to connect that reason to the geographical importance of the region, which created a great interest of the big world powers to control those countries.

The important geographical location of our region is linked to the fact, that it is situated on the border of two major continents of the world history- Europe and Asia. And for the empires, which existed in the world it was a very high priority to control this region, which meant the country would control the trade between two continents, will have an easy excess to the Mediterranean Sea region and the gulf of Persia through Iran. This is why such countries, as the Persian Empire, Mongol Empire, Arabic Caliphates, Russian Empire, Ottoman Empire, British Empire and others always did everything they could in order to gain the control and sphere of influence over the region. But it all was in the past, which is very important, but let us leave it to the historians to discuss and debate the past.

The reason which made me write this essay is much more interesting for policy makers what are the problems and security issues of the region nowadays and what are the ways to increase the cooperation between the counties which are represented in it.

Nowadays the Black Sea region still has a very important geographical reason and still attracts the interest of the major world powers.

There are several countries, represented in the region which are members of the NATO and/or the European Union- Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Greece and countries like Georgia and Moldova, which strive to become the members of the alliances. The second “block” is represented with Russia and the countries which are neutral and more pro-Russia. Even though it is a fact, that the Cold War is over and the cooperation began between Russia and NATO, there are still a lot of controversial issues, which are far from being solved, such as NATO’s Missile Defense Shield; regional conflicts of Abkhazia, Samachablo (South Ossetia), Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria; Europe’s energy security problem; Iranian nuclear program, etc.

All those issues make it very hard to create a strong cooperation and strive for the common prosper future for the countries of the region, which has a potential for that. While the EU and the US try to increase their influence over the region, Russia is trying to counteract it by remaining as a major actor in the region, by blocking all externally driven energy projects, such as Nabucco and other projects and through preventing increasing of the NATO presence in the region.

The US and the EU have various goals in the region. US are working on promoting democracy and the market economy, and have prioritized energy issues and free trade expansion. But the Georgian-Russian war has really damaged American presence in the region. At the same time EU policy makers work in the region through the Eastern partnership cooperation and it is also important to mention, that the Union kept key role as the mediator during the conflict.

At the same time, the countries of the region have very different approaches for achieving their national security. The region is basically split into two different camps, which has raised the tension and it is very important to create a region-wide security initiative, to solve all the difficulties among the countries of the region.

Because of all the problems, which are caused by the regional tensions, national resources and geographical rivalries I have mentioned above, the Black Sea region has

become a strategic, but a very sensitive place. Especially it is very important to mention, that there is an absence of the joint structures, which can adequately respond to those issues, a lot of security threats have risen, ranging from interstate conflicts and ending with trafficking.

This environment really demands a more cooperative approach, which is though very hard to approach. Such policies and ideas, which are emphasizing competition between countries of the region, should be discarded and the countries of the region should start the cooperation with the issues, for which the consensus can be made. It will be very important if international organizations, such as EU, OSCE, UN and other would provide the countries of the region the environment, which will create a base for increasing a regional trust between them. At the same time is crucial to solve the regional conflicts, by including all sides involved and letting the monitoring of the military expenditures of the conflict zones.

At the same time energy recourses of the regions should be treated as a cooperative, rather than competitive venture for the countries of the region to increase the wealth of the region in general. At the same time the programs of the EU should be more inclusive, providing the assistance and cooperation to all the countries in the similar way and by including Russia in a broader network of security cooperation.

To conclude the say I would like to say, that because of all the problems it is very hard to say that the Black Sea region is an example for the international cooperation and participation, but it is very important that the regions is increasingly becoming a priority for the international agenda. This fact is rather a challenge for the countries of the region to hold their independence, but from another perspective it is a very good chance to increase their wealth and to solve those issues, which stand in front of them. This interest creates a need to respond to the common problems jointly, which in my opinion is a great chance to establish a platform for the strengthen the cooperation between the countries.

Recently, the Black Sea region has come to the forefront of the international relations scene and the Euro-Atlantic agenda for different reasons. Literally the whole region took a step closer to the inner rings of a concentric Europe. Youth participation signifies the understanding that what is required for the solution of long standing problems nourished in the area and for the support to developmental policies is to apply region-wide policies. Youth participation is very important at all those developments in three distinct dimensions – institutional development, security and regional cooperation. It will analyse the state of play in the Black Sea region along three lines, try to set an agenda for the foreseeable future and explore ways in which the European Union can assist democratisation and prosperity in the area. Regional cooperation is the key instrument for the Black Sea countries to fulfill their reform agenda in all basic dimensions of institution building, security and economic development. The most visible example of a regional cooperation structure in the Black Sea area is youth. Youth participation aims at increasing the level of dialogue and cooperation in the wider Black Sea region, as a means of their capacity to influence regional and national policies. Our vision, as civil society is that, historically, the Black Sea has been rather a cooperation medium than a barrier. Naturally it has allowed for communication and exchange (either cultural or economic). Youth interests in the region are very similar, in terms of origin, path and challenges they are facing. There are numerous lessons learnt and expertise which are worth sharing each other. Youth have the vocation to act jointly to bring positive social change for both their countries and for the region as a whole. Similar historical context and problems have lead them to be particularly interested and able to share experience and expertise and to contribute with resources to supporting economic, social and political reform in neighbor countries in the wider Black Sea region. The vision of young generation is that civil society in the Black Sea area has the vocation to act jointly to bring positive social change for both their countries and for the region as a whole. There are enough examples of successful initiatives, expertise and human capital to guarantee that youth participation in regional cooperation will yield a good return. Youth investment in civil society initiatives is in fact an investment in the peaceful, democratic and prosperous future of the wider Black Sea

region. Allowing for an educated and active youth to cooperate and move freely across borders, ensuring a competent and motivated leadership for the future; Working to empower citizens and to involve them in decision-making at local and national level.

Democracy and youth participation are elements on which depend very much the sustainability and the relevance of all future developments in the region. Future generation participation is a cornerstone of civil society development.

There is a real need to enforce youth policies in the Black Sea region and to provide more support to youth civil society organizations as one of the most effective ways to foster future regional cooperation. Investing in youth should be seen as the most effective way of investing in peaceful, prosperous and democratic future for the Black Sea region. Youth policy is a cross-cutting policy. It is not enough to speak about sustainable development, regional conflicts, and environmental changes without including the young people, as all these issues affect first of all the young people. Young people should be included in the decision-making process, not only at governmental level, but also at regional and international level.

Youth create a statement on their beliefs about different issues, debate, and explore the future. Looking to the future, youth is power which can create platform for future Black Sea Region, that's why is so important their participation and activity in such events.

“...sub-regional groups have the potential to contribute to security in a wide variety of ways: developing cooperation amongst diverse groups of states and thereby helping to manage political tensions resulting from the processes of Euro-Atlantic integration: building confidence between states with historically inherited disputes and fears; and contributing to the management of a wide range of non-military security problems”

Andrew Cottey

During the Bucharest NATO summit, for the first time in NATO's history, a large group of at least 9-10 countries (mostly Central and Eastern European) emerged within NATO as a very powerful and influential group. In Bucharest, it acted in a cohesive, purposeful manner and finally managed to promote a decision, the communiqué, which was very much in favor of Georgia and Ukraine. The new Central and Eastern European members of NATO were a strong, influential and successful group, a bridge for partnership and cooperation around the geopolitical and geostrategic areas, such as the Black Sea. Despite this success, the energy and unresolved frozen conflicts still represent two major chapters which require a partnership and cooperation policy.

The wider Black Sea Region is a predestined transit corridor for energy supplies (oil and gas) from the Caspian basin and part of the greater Middle East to Europe, bypassing Russian control. In order to increase the cooperation towards the Black Sea, NATO could display solidarity against the aggressor in two ways: politically and with respect to energy. First, NATO is the only existing mechanism for trans-Atlantic consultation and decision-making. Therefore, energy and cyber security of NATO member countries are rather matters of consultation on possible measures within a NATO context. Second, NATO does administer its own network of energy pipelines in Europe. Those pipelines could be used in the event that a member country or group of countries is

targeted with supply cutoffs or the threat thereof. In emergencies, those pipelines can be used to allocate supplies to a threatened country, to enable the threatened country (or group of countries) to continue to function economically without having to give in to threats or to energy blackmail for political reasons.

The unresolved frozen conflicts around the Black Sea represent a source of instability which can be improved through partnership and cooperation. I will shortly describe the problems and identify possible solutions.

The massive handover of Russian citizenship, acquisition of property locally by Russian state and non-state entities, appointment of individuals designated by Russian power structures in the leadership bodies of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the opening of railroad and other types of communications directly from Russia to Abkhazia and South Ossetia without reference of the sovereign Georgian government. Moving the border de-facto on the ground in the Abkhazia and South Ossetia's sector of the Georgia-Russia border, moving the border south-ward with Russian control on both sides of this recognized border, unauthorized weapons' deliveries. These are the components of the "clipping annexation".

In Karabakh, there is a complete deadlock in negotiations. Russia uses the Karabakh issue to discourage Azerbaijan from joining Georgia and Ukraine in seeking a MAP with NATO. One major reason why Azerbaijan does not do this out of concern for an impact such a move would have on the Russian position in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Karabakh.

In Moldova, during the Voronin presidency, he affirmed that a settle of the Transnistrian conflict could be lie with the Russian leadership. To his credit, Voronin has made proposals that do not offer any major national interest concessions to Russia. The proposals themselves remain consistent with Moldovan sovereignty and national interests. However, in the hope of inducing the Kremlin to accept the Moldovan proposal for the political settlement in Transnistria, Moldova has made many concessions on other fronts to Russia.

NATO offers the most attractive package of cooperation on security and defense matters. This offer goes far beyond military matters. It includes scientific cooperation, environmental cooperation, political dialogue, management of water resources and seismic risks. NATO also works at state level, which is recommended for the entire area of the Black Sea. They have efficient, sophisticated, smart, intelligent programs to foster and support reform. They focus on defense reform and the security sector, this reform is an essential part of democratic formation. They want to build a network of non-NATO institutions willing to work in partnership, harmonise and coordinate their actions, to provide better education and training opportunities for civilians and military people from countries around the Black Sea.

The Black Sea is a region, a zone of responsibility, where many forms of cooperation could be developed. However, this potential is not fully exploited. There are many reasons for that: from the different approaches of the six coastal countries on security and stability in the region to the historical legacy and difficult process of reform towards democracy and market economy.

There are some organizations with interests that are coming with visions of a Black Sea region that are unequal and differently focused. Community of Democratic Choice (CDC), GUAM and Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership (a Romanian initiative) are good examples, but suffer a lack of visibility. The Forum is not meant to create new regional institutions, but rather to turn into a regular consultative process among countries of the extended Black Sea region (defined as including the South Caucasus to the Caspian Sea) and between this group of countries and international organizations such as the European Union.

Regional security partnership is the security arrangement of an international region that originates from inter-governmental consensus to cooperate on security threats, and, the enhancement of stability and peace in the region, by making use of different types of agreements, instruments and mechanisms such as formal security treaties, international organizations, joint action agreements, trade and other economic agreements, multilateral dialogue processes, peace and stability pacts including confidence-building measures, measures of preventive diplomacy, and measures dealing with the domestic environment.

Briefly, the security arrangement of the region is an arrangement of co-management, and all the countries contribute as partners within a composite framework of institutions and practices. As long as a security partnership develops, the security cultures and policies of the countries of the region will come closer to one another, and a security community can emerge.

My opinion regarding the future of this region is centred on a cooperation on the Baltic – Black Sea Axis, which represents a way to stable and balanced economic development in the area. Today, the Baltic and Black Sea regions are the most dynamic and promising regions in Europe (field of energy, transport, communications, ecology, as well to combat new threats to stability and security such as terrorism, illegal migration, illegal drugs, and arms trafficking). In this way, harmonizing the activities of the regional and sub-regional structures, consolidating the efforts of the Baltic and Black Sea countries to create a future security system in Europe, and facilitating the establishment of mutually beneficial economic and humanitarian cooperation among the region's states represent the primary tasks for the region's countries.

There are a much wider gamut of threats and security concerns which have recently occurred both in the Black Sea and South Caucasus Sea regions: political instability, unsettled conflicts, organized crime, Islamic fundamentalism and energy security. The Black Sea area is one of multiple cultural identities (a “clash of civilizations” pot to use Samuel Huntington’s depiction) and of different strategic interests (European, Euro-Atlantic, Eurasian). It is not surprising that the European Union (EU) has paid a special attention to this region launching in 2008 the Black Sea Synergy. This initiative which brings together the states surrounding the Black Sea (but not limited) aims at establishing a circle of political and economic cooperation, stability, security having the Black Sea Basin as a symbolic core. The Black Sea Synergy augmented other projects and frameworks Brussels had envisaged for the area: the European Neighbourhood Policy (2008) and the Eastern Partnership (2009). I am among the ones sharing the view that the Euro-Atlantic community seeks to achieve regional stability and security in its Eastern vicinity by including the neighbouring states into a network that shares the same European political, economic and socio-cultural values. By creating solid economic ties with the countries part of this region, and through a significant transfer of Western ideas, standards and norms, the EU/NATO seeks to embrace the Black Sea area into a broader security community.

Thus, I argue one of the most salient regional challenge is related to security and stability, which will chiefly influence the future strategic setting of the Black Sea Basin. Among international players and states there is a complex political struggle over *spheres of influence*, energy transit and supply routes. Moreover, the region does not only have a key geopolitical position which is hard to ignore (being situated at the crossroads of Eurasia, in the proximity of conflict areas such as Central Asia and the Middle East), but also represents an important asset in terms of international economic competition.

The problem of energy is also paramount¹, as demonstrated by the EU/US attempts to offset Russia's dominance in terms of energy monopolistic provision in the region. Thus, the Euro-Atlantic community tries to build a new system of pipes for oil and natural gases corridors from the Caspian Sea and Central Asia, bypassing Russia. This is not surprising taking into account that both the EU and Russia have often expressed their interest in the region (the main Russian energy route, South Stream, is planned to transit the Black Sea Basin, the construction of which commenced recently, in December 2012). For instance, the energy transit routes from the Caspian Sea and the need for alternatives to Russian energy monopoly have made Georgia a relevant asset for the EU. Georgia has a wide opening to the Black Sea with its two main ports, Batumi and Sukhumi. As such, the country occupies a key position in the so-called southern energy corridor. In many ways Georgia has been regarded by the U.S. and EU as a hub meant to connect the Caspian Sea to international oil and gas markets, thus bypassing Russia.

The EU, US, Russia and Turkey are the most important actors in the Black Sea Basin, all of them exercising structural and normative power to shape the region. In this regard, apart from the bilateral and multilateral frameworks mentioned above, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Project (BSEC) was established in 1992 in order to contribute to NATO's collective effort in developing the new co-operative security architecture in the wider Europe. The role of is to ensure that the Black Sea countries would enhance stability in the region by a common understanding of peace, stability, democracy and the spirit of conciliation. Taking into account the persistence of the *frozen conflicts* - Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabach - is still among the toughest regional challenges, the task for the Euro-Atlantic security community seems even more difficult.

Romania and Bulgaria's 2007 EU and NATO membership, together with the launching of accession negotiations with Turkey have changed considerably the geopolitics in the Black Sea. These new geostrategic developments in the eastern neighbourhood brought a troubled region closer to EU borders marked by several factors (historical legacies, security complexes, economic complementarities, cultural elements) and

1) NATO increasingly considers energy security a major security concern.

highlighted the importance of further developing the ties between the Euro-Atlantic community and the neighbouring states by better accommodating their needs and by a greater engagement.

The Black Sea region could also represent a litmus test for the international community in its efforts to ensure security and stability at the EU's doorstep (especially its Eastern proximity). A global challenge I am very interested touching upon during the March conference in Yerevan is the potential impact of the current economic crisis on the international "actorness" of important global players such as the EU, the USA and Russia vis-à-vis this vital area. Hence, having this as a background, the main questions to which I seek to find answer by attending the "*Black sea region as a space for partnership and cooperation: A youth perspective conference*" are the following:

1. Does the present economic debacle represent an acute threat to the power of attraction and credibility of these international players?
2. Are the EU political, economical and democratic values waning in the face of this global economic downturn which in many ways caused a reshuffle of the international relations system?
3. Could we speak about a clash between spheres of influence in the Black Sea region (most particularly between the Euro-Atlantic interests and the ones belonging to the Russian Federation)?
4. Is the *regional integration-security spectrum* which stood behind the EU project since its inception also the basis and the foremost goal of the Black Sea and Eastern Neighbourhood initiatives?
5. If the security-regional integration nexus is the foremost goal, can the international community finally find a viable solution of the dead-end caused by the *dormant* conflicts which have fraught the South Caucasus Republics and Moldova since the disintegration of the Soviet Union?

I very much welcome the idea of establishing a forum of discussion between current and next generations of stakeholders from the Black Sea Region countries. As far as I am concerned, I do believe that at the time being there is a sharp need of a “network of regional leaders” that share same unequivocal values and norms and follow a common set of economic principles which could assure consultation, collaboration and consensus between national, regional and international policy-makers. By prioritizing and redirecting the resources towards vital policy areas and projects and through political momentum attention could be redirected to such a crucial area as the Black Sea region which has been recently shadowed by other events (e.g. the Arab Spring and most recently the Syrian debacle). In this sense, a strong network of young leaders, concerted actions, the diffusion of normative frameworks are prerequisites for peace and stability, and ultimately for regional integration and economic prosperity.

Now the Black Sea area recently attracts more and more attention of the international organizations. This greater awareness of the significance of the Black Sea area for the Euro-Atlantic security is due to variety of factors. First of those I think connected with NATO and EU enlarge the region turns into Eastern frontier for both organizations, bridging them with Central Asia and wider Middle East - in geographic, political and economic terms. Geographic position of the Black Sea region determines its importance also as an energy supply and transportation route.

I want to emphasize that the Black Sea region has security challenges such as pertaining to energy, terrorism, environmental degradation, illegal trafficking. It has strategic value for the partners in the fight against international terrorism. The last ones are the main threats to mankind.

The success of the democratic agendas of the countries in the region needs, alongside the political will of the leaderships, an outside support and assistance. The Black Sea region is still marked by lingering security problems such as frozen conflicts and illegal trafficking that could have implications for the whole Euro-Atlantic security. That's way I concentrate my attention on these issues which demonstrate the complexity of problems, trends and challenges the region is confronted with. In my opinion, their solution and their management require concerted action of the international community, a common strategy that will encompass the variety of relevant tools to tackle the multiple problems. In view of the need of cooperation and partnership youth can serve as a great force in achievement generally useful purposes among the Black Sea region countries.

Rhetorical question appears. What is the key to lasting stability and security in the region. In priority I think it is the engagement of the major international players, who are in a position to make a real difference. NATO and EU as two the most powerful organizations on Euro Atlantic region should remain the premier provider of security and stability for the Euro-Atlantic region, which includes the Black Sea.

We should to define a common vision of democratic and sustainable development of Black Sea region countries. We can provide new ideas and proposals, futher mobilizing governmental and nongovernmental effords and resources to reach the common aims. Youth should empower through provision of higher level of education, create regional communities for promotion of democracy and fundamental rights and freedoms. On my opinion one of the most factors for reformation in the Black Sea area is conjunction with European and Euro-Atlantic developments.

As we know the Black Sea area presents a special value and importance. The region has strategic value stems from its unexplored potential as a regional hub between East and West, and a secure crossroads of strategic routes from Europe to Central Asia and the broader Middle East.

The fact that in the region one could find solutions to some of the essential questions posed to the

Euro-Atlantic community, like the fight against terrorism, energy supply, institutional consolidation and the enlargement of the democratic community, prompts the area even more on the European and Euro-Atlantic agenda. I think it is obvious that the Black Sea region can benefit from the reviving interest of the EU in the broader context of reviewing the European Neighborhood Policy. The region should be thus approached not as the periphery of Europe anymore, but as a part of the European and Euro-Atlantic mainstream at the beginning of the 21st century. Consolidating a Black Sea area of predictable, democratic and developed countries, that enjoy self-sustainable security and economic growth, would make the region and Europe safer. Though I would like to underline that the key to stability in the region is broader regional dialogue, which in turn would favor economic development and enable the region to move from marginality to the very centre of the new European space.

I believe the main thing we should do is to enhance regional identity through defining common challenges, interests, and needs of regional countries, as well as, common solutions to common problems. In my opinion, the Black Sea region stability and highlight the value of democratic transformations and European aspirations of Black Sea countries should be underlined intensively.

We as a new generation of political leaders and representatives of nongovernmental organizations have to facilitate a broad regional and dialogue with governmental organizations and have agreed targets. We shall generate new fresh ideas on conflict

prevention and crisis management, providing new opportunities to develop a multilateral context within which regional countries can cooperate.

I think, a greater engagement on the part of the international community would contribute to overcoming existing apprehensions towards broad international initiatives in the Black Sea region and would strengthen the efforts to address nowadays security challenges. We are also in favor of intensifying the cooperation among the Black Sea region states and especially among the NATO member ones. I'm sure that clear Euro-Atlantic perspective for the region is one of the solid elements that will strengthen the positions of the democratic leadership and contribute to the progress and irreversibility of the reforms.

Black Sea: A Historical Neighborhood

Baran Gunes

Turkey

The Black Sea Region has always had an important role in the world since the earliest ages of the history. The changing boundaries throughout the history, sometimes conflicts, wars and gridlocks, and sometimes partnerships and cooperation have been the constantly-changing fate of the region. In the current century, the region has been able to breathe more easily when impacts of the cold war following the World War II, but desired level of welfare and international cooperation has not been achieved yet.

To understand the Black Sea Region, it is required to analyze internal dynamics of the countries in the region and relations of these countries with each other and other balancing countries. It is no doubt that it is also necessary to examine their relations with international and supranational institutions.

First of all, when we look at Bulgaria and Romania in the region which are a part of the western world, we will observe that these two countries are now absolutely a part of the western world in the post-Soviet era, have turned their faces completely to the west and are producing western-oriented policies. These two countries that are both a part of Europe and the Black Sea Region have to act coordinately with other riparian countries as well. Therefore, Bulgaria and Romania's membership to the NATO, the UN and the EU actually makes each of them a powerful equilibrant in the region.

When we look at Turkey, we see a highly complicated and unusual situation. Being such a geographical area on which both the west and the east have impact and by which both the west and the east are affected at the same time makes it the hardest geographical region to produce proper policies. Developing foreign and security policies which are not distant to the west because of its membership to the NATO and UN, Turkey is able to establish close relationships with eastern countries due to its Islamic identity and various ethnical and sectarian structures it involves.

When we take only Turkey into account, we need to talk about two important conventions shaping the future and fate of the region. Firstly, the Montreux Convention is a convention regulating cruising of especially the riparian countries in the Black Sea Region. The said convention signed in Montreux, Switzerland in 1936 was signed between the riparian countries as well as England, France, Greece and Japan, and two years later by Italy. According to this convention, any country's entry to and exit from the Black Sea by sea depends on peace of the region and current political-psychological status of Turkey. In the recent days, a Russia-registered ship was kept waiting for 12 hours, which indicates that even riparian countries can be treated differently due to any political split.

Another important convention is no doubt the convention signed in the summit in İstanbul in 1992 regarding establishment of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. The convention which does not require having a coast on the Black Sea is primarily a significant convention in terms of developing good relationships. The idea of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation was born at the late 1980s when the change process in the Eastern Europe Countries and the Soviet Union gained speed.

The former Soviet made investments in defense and aerospace industry; however investments in human, especially in consumer goods were omitted. Turkey, on the other hand, had food and consumer goods that the former Soviet Union deeply needed and might have difficulties to market in the Western countries. Turkey needed those raw material and energy resources at its doorstep while the former Soviet Union needed food and consumer goods. All these new circumstances were applicable for other countries in the Black Sea Basin.

All the developments mentioned formed an appropriate environment for economic cooperation and regional integration attempt between Turkey and other countries having a coast on the Black Sea. The BSEC idea was brought forward in such an environment.

The BSEC is an outcome of the political and economic restructuring process for worldwide globalization and international integration at regional level. The BSEC idea which found its position and timing in the Eastern Europe, in an environment of transition to

free market economy in economic terms and pluralistic democracy in political terms is a regional economic cooperation initiative led by Turkey.

At the beginning, it was stated that the aim of the BSEC was to gradually establish a “free trade zone” between the countries having a coast on the Black Sea, but then in the meeting held, it was described as an initiative required to be evaluated within the framework of “economic cooperation”.

Russia’s having one of the longest coasts, but currently having a different political positioning from other riparian countries puts the Black Sea region in a different position strategically and geopolitically. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the cold war period had caused rough years for the region. Even when the cold war ended, many political crises erupted in the region and innocent people were got damaged again. Even in our recent history, the Russia-Georgia war and soon after Russia’s unilaterally recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and the South Ossetia increased the tension in the region. After then, since Russia could not receive a significant support from the world countries and especially the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in this respect, it caused Russia to act more moderately.

In the new world order, a unique, region-specific security definition and policy should be made and prepared now and young generations of the region should not see each other as a threat. An Armenian young person should be able to find a common ground with a Turkish young person and they should have hope that the dialogue process will be initiated. The past of the history is full of pain, sorrow, blood and tear. To start a new period, problems of the region should be handled with a different approach without too much politicizing them. The states should settle their past, but such settlement should not be turned into a policy for lynching any state settling its past.

It is obvious that the existing policies deepen the political gridlock and put such deadlock into people’s minds. Young generations should come together more and touch on emotional bonds underlying the problems and show their desire for permanent peace. Above all, the neighboring countries should improve their neighbor relations and bring a new perspective to young generations. Otherwise, the region will remain enslaved by

wars and conflicts ongoing for many centuries and this will make the greatest effect on young generations living in the region again.

The region has also environmental issues. There is no remarkable measure taken against pollution in the Black Sea. Emphasis should be put on the environmental problems especially for future and health of the youth of the region. It goes without saying that inorganic wastes are polluting and reducing the oxygen level of the Black Sea and consequently, destroying the sea life and the ecosystem. This would ultimately result in impoverishment of countries, removal of scarce sources of living and new crises between countries in long term.

When talking about the environment issue, it is not possible to ignore the Black Sea Environmental Cooperation Convention signed in Romania, Bucharest in 1992. We can thus observe that the countries of the region attach importance to protect the Black Sea and leave a healthy environment to future generations.

In addition to all these, one of the most important issues is to ensure a cultural and social interaction between riparian countries and countries which are non-riparian, but have impact on the region. Particularly, exchange programs should be applied between the young people of the region and also encouraged. Cultural activities should be organized and the youth of the region should be made understood in fact how close each other's cultures are and how much they have in common. Therefore, more effective solution offers can be produced for problems that seem to be big but are understood to be so minor when looked from a greater geography.

In conclusion, the Black Sea has been the cradle of various civilizations since the ancient times and maintained its position where people from different nations, different professions, cultures and religions socialize each other. However, it has never been an easy process and peacetimes have been followed by long conflicts and wars. Even in this case, the Black Sea has been known for its advanced business relations and connections. This will be maintained in future by young generations living in riparian and non-riparian countries. Young generations should improve international relations, increase cultural exchange and more importantly, build a permanent peace in the region. Improving dialogue among the countries would pave the way for the region to gain a

more powerful structure. Because the solution lays in more dialogue, more cooperation and more tolerance. The solution lays in the youth.

Beginning Stages of Cooperation in Black Sea: Importance of Solidarity Over the Region

Selim Han Yeniacun
Turkey

During the Cold War, the Black Sea was a platform in which the two blocks were conflicting each other. After the Cold War, it became an area of multi-party conflict and co-operation. In the recent years, Russia followed immediately their “Near Abroad” policy which she gave up after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. According to that security space and unbalanced power diversity of the Black Sea region, Many states started to be interested in the Black Sea policies. Energy politics and commerce facilities are vital issues for border-holders. Also the European Union and Caucasian states directly interact with these subjects for their common interests. The Black Sea region has a specific position on the East-West location. That location includes huge energy reserve potential and energy transportation potential. With that important features, Black Sea region draws a picture of a post-Cold War area which brings conflicts and opaque diplomatic relations among rival states. However in the process of globalism and corporatism we must improve our relations with sub-national and supra-national organizations

The Black Sea region has serious problems. Firstly; Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Chechnya problems are based on ethnical tendencies, and some identity demands are shaping currently demonstrating problems. Secondly; Western and democratic regimes are dominated by conservative reservations and external non-military interventions. It badly affects the stabilization and the escalation of democracy over the region countries. Thirdly; drugs, human and arms trafficking are other problems that must be controlled collectively. Otherwise these can be huge problems to all regional countries. These problems can increase or solve for border-sharing countries.

After 2010, NATO started to integrate rapidly with the non-Western bloc. The “open door” policy and new partnerships will design the new picture of the world due to that policy. The Black Sea and its specific issues can only be solved with new cooperation

policies. The Black Sea region serves us different opportunities; Cultural, economical-ly and politically solidarity among the Black Sea countries will bring a strong alliance, peaceful region and development in cultural mutuality. That is why all states want to see the restoration and revival, in a modern guise, of the ancient Silk Road that had brought much prosperity to our region in the past. To this end, we shall make every effort to help build up the physical and institutional infrastructure of our road and rail transport systems as well as our oil and gas networks, so as to serve better the needs of our nations and the international trading community.

None of the Black Sea Countries, must not be excluding themselves from the energy supply lines and transportation networks due to stable conflicts and unfriendly policies. Russo-Georgian war in 2008 has showed us the importance of peace and stability in the region. In order to develop energy transportation networks and commercial activities, all member states need stability in the region. If our legitimize governments could not solve the hard problems; at that point I accept some crises can not be easy for democratic selected authorities. Furthermore our whole civil communities and our future decision makers must apply intervention to the locked problems.

Recommendations

At the concluding session of the conference the participants elaborated recommendations on concrete action necessary to improve and strengthen the level of cooperation in the Black Sea Region. The recommendations reflect the youth perspectives on the current issues, and are addressed to decision makers, national NGOs and youth in general from the Black Sea region at large.

The participants came up with the following recommendations:

- Promoting the establishment of a youth council within BSEC;
- Enhancing cooperation and signing of free trade agreements;
- Simplifying visa regimes in the region;
- Creating an investigation council dealing with regional crimes;
- Working towards establishment of bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relations among all BSR countries;
- Fighting against youth unemployment in all BSR countries;
- Establishing at least one NGO in each BSR country which will specifically target youth dimension. It will compile evidence on youth in the countries to be used towards effective policy making. Besides, the NGO will provide internships, exchange programs and scholarships.
- Strengthening the regional identity, which would enable international organizations to consider the Black Sea Region as a separate holistic area;
- Including a special course on the Black Sea Region in school curriculums.

This publication is a collection of speeches, articles and recommendations contributed by the "The Black Sea Region: Bringing Future Decision Makers Together in the Changing World" international youth conference participants. The Conference took place on 14-15 March, 2013 in Yerevan, Armenia.

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