



INSTITUTE FOR REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Security, Development and Regional Cooperation in the Black Sea Area

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Executive summary

The Black Sea region has shaped up as a distinct geographic and political reality after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Communist system in Eastern Europe. It is a natural corridor between Central Asia and Europe, the Middle East and the West. The region has been an arena of intense change along three main dimensions. The first dimension reflects the *process of nation building* among the former republics of the Soviet Union. The second dimension of change is *the wave of democratization* which opened up at the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and spread to the former communist East in the 1990s. The third dimension of change is the *extension of the Euro-Atlantic realm of security and development* to the East of Europe and deeper into Eurasia.

In the period following 2003, major new developments took place in the region. Bulgaria and Romania – among most other post-communist countries of Europe, made their accession into NATO and the EU. Both major Western institutions asserted presence at the Black Sea shores. Democratic revolutions in Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004) positioned those two countries on the path to European-style democracy. In Russia, the government of Vladimir Putin substituted friendly relations with the West with a much more demanding agenda of Russia's revival as a big international power, opposing most, if not all targets of Western policy in CEE and in the post-Soviet space.

The Black Sea Young Reformers conference will take a look 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 those 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.

Institutional development

Two forms for governing elites developed throughout the post-communist world. The democratisation and achievement of constitutional government in each country of the region depends much on a compromise between the agendas of these two elites. On the one hand, there is the elite of the old Communist Party apparatus which took advantage of its privileged position in the very start of post-communist transition and successfully penetrated the weak institutions of the newly formed states. This elite group often contributes to slowing down the region's advance to democracy. On the other hand, there is the community of civic activists and democratic reformers who developed out of the former dissident movements and was widely supported by intellectuals, urban middle class and movements for national emancipation from former imperial rule. They have the legitimacy of an agent of transformation, but control much scarcer resources of economic and political power. The two forces have differing agendas, and it is the compromise between them that successful transition depends upon and towards which the region needs to work.

The basis of a flexible strategy for nation building, modernization and democratization should focus at this stage of post-Soviet societal development to the following priorities: **first**, a *strong constitutional government*, based on wide citizens' representation, rule of law and empowering of active civil society as a partner in the process of reform; **second**, an active strategy of *modern institution building* – both within representative institutions and in the public administrative system. **Third**, modernization would require *selective empowering and involvement of key social groups* of entrepreneurs, experts and intellectuals, youth communities and civic activists in supporting reformist strategies of the government. **Fourth**, modernization needs adequate *economic strategy*. **Fifth**, transparency of institutional norms, procedures and practices should stand as a target for a *permanent anti-corruption campaigning* in society and in the institutions of government.

Security

Three major factors shape up the security agenda of the Black Sea region. **First**, this is a *border region*. The border between the Euro-Atlantic security system and the security infrastructure of the Russian Federation (which extends well beyond the borders of Russia) is particularly important in the context of two major issues: How far will the EU and NATO go in offering membership to former communist and ex-Soviet societies, bordering Russia? How successful will Moscow be in attracting former Soviet periphery back into its strategic domain? The Black Sea is also a border between Europe and the Middle East with all relevance to issues like religious extremism, terrorism and energy corridors utilization. The **second** factor in the regional security agenda reflects the issues of *inter-communal – inter-ethnic strife* and the conflicts generated on its basis throughout the territories of the former Soviet Union. Ethnic conflict is the most favorable environment for strategies to impede or hamper efficient nation building, to subdue a non-obedient nation or to simply keep a high level of instability and tension in a problematic region. The **third** major factor of insecurity is the environment of *institutional weakness and fragility* throughout the post-communist space, which generates very high levels of corruption and organized crime in all societies in transition.

Security around the Black Sea has several key aspects. The August 2008 Russian–Georgian war has dangerously lowered the threshold of **military security** in the region. However,

despite all fluctuations of relationships between Russia and the West, there is no practical danger of a mass-scale military hostility. Military actions are possible only in the context of inter-ethnic and inter-state disputes, like those in Nagorno Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. As a rising power factor in the region, Russia might consider military options more often in promoting its strategic agenda within and outside the Federation. The developments in the triangle Baku – Yerevan – Ankara have raised the risks of military hostilities in the Karabakh dispute, with a growing need for efficient international mediation. **Maritime security** is another aspect. The balance of naval forces however points to an almost complete hegemony of the Turkish navy in the Black Sea. An issue in naval security might arise from the need to re-base Russian Black Sea naval forces from Ukraine's Sevastopol elsewhere until 2017. **Energy security** is crucial for all countries, in particular for societies in a state of nation building. The Black Sea is a strategic corridor, which links Europe to the Middle Eastern and Caspian – Central Asian sources of hydrocarbons. Inevitably, there is a clash of interests between major international actors that wish to open this corridor for free international energy trade, and Russian authorities, which aim at closing it – corking it in favor of Moscow's commercial and strategic monopoly in the region and wider in Europe. The growing volumes of energy transfers through the Black Sea region open the issues of **environmental security**. Long-term security in the region is subject to raising mutual trust between East and West – arising also from different strategic cultures - and to adopting a common security framework for the Black Sea area.

Regional cooperation

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 the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). The BSEC establishment (under Turkey's initiative) reflected the growing interest and influence of Turkey in the region, which was matched by post-Soviet Russia's ambition to keep its decisive influence and control over the post-Soviet space, the Black Sea region included. At the same time, the smaller BSEC members have gone through a fundamental crisis of transition in the post-1990 years, characterised by weak institutional potential for cooperation, resulting in weak pragmatic achievements in this field. This uneven record of the BSEC as an instrument of regional cooperation defines it as an important actor in coordination and negotiation at the level of political summits – heads of states and high ranking executives, but a weak agent of practical projects' implementation. Additionally, the efforts to emancipate from Russian political and economic pressure have brought a number of ex-Soviet states into cooperative initiatives as GUAM, CDC (Community of Democratic Choice), and Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (initiated by Bucharest). Black Sea countries also cooperate on energy projects.

There is growing added value in utilizing the strategic and the economic potential of the Black Sea region as a corridor between Europe and Eurasia in commercial and security terms. There are three basic prerequisites for Black Sea regional cooperation success: first, institutional capacity at national and regional partnership level; second, refusal of all major players to opt for 'zero-sum games' in their own favor and adoption of mutual benefit strategies for cooperation; third, open dynamics for partnership with the EU and with all other neighboring regions – the Caspian, Central Asia and the Middle East.

The European Union and the Black Sea

The European Union has been the model for development for all Black Sea countries, regardless of their level of democratisation and strategic preferences. The EU's involvement in the Black Sea region has been rapidly growing over the last years, with the launch of initiatives such as the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership. Nevertheless, the EU's engagement in the Black Sea region may seem somewhat uneven and might look inconclusive compared to the assertive behavior of the other players. Yet the EU is capable of transforming at much deeper level than the eye can see. Along the three thematic areas of the Black Sea Young Reformers conference, mentioned above, the EU can do the following.

Institutional development. Europe cannot offer immediate path to EU membership for the Black Sea post-Soviet countries, and the most of them are not ready yet to accept such an offer. Yet the EU is interested in having strong, affluent and successful nations as its neighbors to the East, so the first type of efforts that have to be made refer to the European assistance for institutional development in the nation building process. The tools of assistance might be selective and they might vary in comparison to the EU prerequisites for institutional performance before accession. Europe could offer the following major types of instruments for assistance:

- Know-how and projects' support in developing modern institutional framework of constitutional government, aimed at achieving in time a full-scale representative democratic system based on European experience and public values;
- Technologies of creating and reproducing administrative systems of transparency, formal roles, norms and procedures of public administrative management;
- Open access to European markets (not only for trade but also labor markets) and assistance for industrial technologies' development;
- Powerful selective programs for development of education, professional training, civil society development, cooperation with Europe in the fields of science, higher education, arts and culture;
- Visa waivers and open access to training, scholars' exchange and institutional partnership with EU countries political, business and civic institutions.

Security. Europe is not an 'immediate' power in the field of military security. Yet common challenges like terrorist threats, dangerous arms proliferation, demographic imbalances and their long term effects bring Russia, Europe and the broader West into positions of common interest, which are more substantive than short-term and mid-term considerations of power shifts in the buffer zone between Europe and Russia. Europe has so far readily assisted the process of *peace negotiations and peace keeping* in the post-Soviet space in different institutional formats. This cooperation has to be extended and institutionally strengthened to the capacity to make a difference in finalizing conflict resolution where possible, and stimulating the process of negotiations where necessary. Europe – even if expressed in multiple national faces – has a predictable and open interest in *energy security*. Energy monopoly contradicts the principle of diversification, which underlies European vision of energy sector development. At the same time, Europe is highly interested in guaranteeing long term partnership with energy suppliers like Russia and the other ex-Soviet countries in the Caspian and Central Asia. European energy projects – in partnership with Moscow and the other suppliers in the East – provide stable framework for developing the Black Sea region as a strategic corridor for transferring energy resource to the European markets.

European projects seek to avoid twinning rivalry as in the case of the Nabucco and South Stream gas pipelines. In terms of *soft security*, organized crime networks represent a major threat not only to their own societies, but also to the European security in general. Even if EU membership is a long term goal for the most of the ex-Soviet countries, European assistance might make real difference if local political elites in those societies initiate and support that kind of European assistance package. The EU holds some of the best standards and practices of *environmental security* throughout the global world. It is a key priority of Black Sea region security to adopt those standards and principles in order to reduce the present state of pollution within the Black Sea and its shores, as well as to guarantee safety of energy products transfers through the Black Sea corridor from the East to the European markets.

Regional cooperation. The Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern partnership are laudable attempts by the EU to indirectly spur regional cooperation in the Black Sea region. Yet at present the EU could exert only selective influence in the process and will rely very much upon the initiatives of both littoral countries – EU members Bulgaria and Romania. Europe is interested in pluralism in the mechanisms of regional cooperation. Some possible steps of Brussels in mid-term perspective might include:

- Guiding BSEC into concretizing its activities – starting the implementation of specific projects, which are lacking so far – and thus boosting its effectiveness;
- Establishing institutional forms of cooperation in particular fields of common interest between the EU and the Black Sea countries: energy, trade, shipping, transport, ecology, etc.;
- Building an institutional model for a regular and uniform political cooperation between the EU and the countries of the area. Such institutionalization would lead not only to exchange of ideas and opinions but also to formulation of common interests.

Introduction

1. Dimensions of Change in the Black Sea Region

In policy terms the Black Sea region has shaped up after the end of the Soviet system, and under the influence of three major dimensions of change. The **first dimension** reflects the *process of nation building* among the former republics of the Soviet Union. Nation building is an integral part of modern development, which started in the West of Europe in the 18th – 19th centuries and spread up throughout the world in the next 200 years. The de-colonization process that took part in the second half of the 20th century extended nation building far beyond the Western world. The Soviet Union had in a way prolonged in time the unity of the classical Russian Empire, and postponed the process of nation building within the communities under its rule. The disintegration of the USSR reopened the historical opportunity of national emancipation, and most constituent republics, as well as smaller entities on former Soviet territories, took advantage of it. Nation building is not simply strategy driven – it's a historical process, which gears up to the point of no alternative in the context of modernization.

The **second dimension** of change shaping the region of the Black Sea is *the wave of democratization* which opened up at the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and spread to the

former communist East in the 1990s. In order to be successfully practiced, democracy presumes particular prerequisites of modern development, which however were unevenly present in former communist Eastern Europe and the USSR. It was relatively easier for the countries of Central Europe, which harbored the traditions of civil society and urban industrial development well until the 1940s, to adopt the institutional framework and the procedures of democratic government during the post-communist transition process. Moving to the East and South of Europe, democratization faced a more complicated environment of weaker traditions in representative government and insufficient modern development. Reaching to the post-Soviet space, democratization faced the reality of initial nation building, fragility of institutions, ethnic diversity and tensions, as well as the post-imperial practices of opposing national independence. Therefore, democratization achieved different levels of success throughout the post-communist East, yet one basic achievement of the process is hardly deniable: starting from Berlin and Prague, and ending up in Tbilisi, Yerevan and Baku, European style democracy and European model of societal – economic, political and social development has been accepted as the most appropriate, the most desirable target to aim at by the nations and countries under post-communist transition. Even in Russia, whose elites often claim a separate path of civilization, the European example is a valuable option for millions of people.

Here we come to the **third dimension** of change, which produced the Black Sea as a region – the *extension of Euro-Atlantic realm of security and development* to the East of Europe and deeper into Eurasia. That kind of strategic advancement is usually achieved in history as a result of conquest. The Euro-Atlantic advancement to the East in the last two decades is a unique result of a voluntary process, in which newly independent post-communist countries make their choice in favor of belonging to the European Union as a realm of development, and to NATO as a security system. NATO would have died away on the ruins of the Berlin Wall shortly after 1989, if nations of Central and Eastern Europe had not chosen to apply for membership, and in this way fundamentally transform the nature of the Alliance – from a military-political entity, opposing the Soviet block in the Cold War, to a security system for all of Europe. We are aware that Russia opposes this process and harbors deep suspicion towards NATO and EU enlargement to the East. Nevertheless, most European nations believe that in the future Russia will become a valuable constituent part of the Euro-Atlantic community.

2. The Contemporary Context and Major Factors in the Region

Independence, democratization and peaceful expansion of Europe to the East have opened the space for trade, partnership and cooperation. Caspian energy and common security are only two main targets of mutual interest between the East and West in Europe. The Black Sea is the strategic corridor, connecting and integrating this common space of development and security. The openness of the region and the dynamics of regional cooperation could support commercial and strategic partnership with Europe and the West. Dividing the region into competing strategic camps could block it and cork it up against the opportunities of security and development, offered by the Euro-Atlantic institutional infrastructure. The state of play in the region – both among major factors of international power and among the nations around the Black Sea – is of growing importance for Europe's security and well-being.

After the year 2003 new major developments took place in the region. Bulgaria and Romania – among most other post-communist countries of Europe, made their accession into NATO and the EU. Both major Western institutions shifted their borders to the Black Sea shores (NATO may be considered a Black Sea factor since Turkey's accession in the 1950s). Democratic revolutions in Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004) positioned those countries on the path to European-style democracy (with all positive or unfavorable transformations that took place on that path in Tbilisi and Kyiv afterwards). In Russia, the government of Mr. Putin replaced friendly relations with the West with a much more demanding agenda of Russia's revival as a big international power, opposing most, if not all targets of Western policy in CEE and in the post-Soviet space.

As a result of all those developments we can define the present day *status quo* and the agenda for the observable short term future of the Black Sea region in the following terms:

- As a result of Bulgaria's and Romania's accession, and as a consequence of its growing influence and attractiveness, the EU is and will be an important factor in shaping the strategic environment of the Black Sea – in terms of economy, security, regional cooperation and developmental assistance to the countries throughout the region. NATO will also be a powerful factor in the region with its capacity to offer the benefits of the entire Euro-Atlantic security system to all Black Sea nations.

- Russia will further restore its influence and strategic positions throughout the post-Soviet space, the Black Sea post-Soviet countries included. It is early to assess whether Russia will fully restore its international standing of a world power, or it will rather be the most powerful regional factor in the Black Sea – Caspian – Central Asia dimension. In both cases, however, Russia will have an open choice among three options: **first**, a full scale partner and ally of Europe and the West; **second**, a competitor and strategic rival of the Western world, searching to restore and extend back to its old imperial realms in the East of Europe; and, **third**, Russia might choose to fluctuate between the first two options to its own favor and benefit.

- In the observable future Turkey will also occupy the undefined space between NATO member and EU applicant, between a full-fledged member of the Western community of nations and a classical 19th century-style regional power with growing appetites for influence and hegemony in the regions adjacent to its territory and in the naval security of the Black Sea. There is an extending field of common interest between Moscow and Ankara to defend their status of regional superpowers against outer presence or infiltration. Unlike the case of Russia, this aspiration of Turkey clashes internally with its strategy for EU accession, which presumes shared sovereignty with Brussels.

- The post-Soviet countries of the Black Sea will be directly influenced by the strategies of Europe, Russia and Turkey in their choices within the nation building projects. Their domestic capacities to develop strong institutional systems, sustainable economies and integrated national communities across ethnic division lines represent the background precondition for success. The correlation between internal nation building impetus and strategic balance of international factors in the region will finally determine the status of the post-Soviet states along three basic options: **first**, the choice to integrate into the European mainstream with full EU membership in a longer term perspective; **second**, independent, more or less sustainable nation states in a buffer zone between the realms of Europe and Russia; **third**, semi-independent state structures, included into the strategic mainstream of a renewed Russian (proto)empire.

3. Defining the Goals of the Young Reformers Forum

The purpose of the Black Sea Young Reformers project is to develop and define the preconditions and the options of accommodating the interests of all Black Sea nations and the EU in a “win – win” strategy of partnership and cooperation. We do not know yet how far this partnership will go, yet we have the courage to aim for the best to all our nations, to the entire community of Europe to the East and West. We would like, **first**, to provide a forum to the young leaders of the Black Sea to define the best options for their countries’ development, the most realistic options, and the most dangerous impediments to their success. **Second**, in the course of our common work, we’ll also try to identify what particular schemes of EU assistance could most decisively support the Black Sea nations in their strategies for the future. **Last but not least**, throughout the entire program we’ll present to the young leaders’ group the realities of EU institutional functioning, we’ll introduce them to some key EU *functionaries* and to the opportunities to use this institutional infrastructure in favor of the Black Sea countries stability, development and cooperation. The ability of our young Fellows to successfully advocate their countries’ interest in Brussels would be a key measure of our project’s success.

We’d like to focus on three main topics of crucial importance for the success of the Black Sea countries – institution building and development, national and regional security, and regional cooperation. Those topics will be discussed from two different perspectives – **first**, as a definition of the present day state of play in the region, and, **second**, as a strategic assessment of EU instruments to contribute to positive changes in the mid-term.

II. The Black Sea Region: State of Play

1. Modernization and Institutional Development: Character and Role of Elites

Two options for governing elites developed throughout the post-communist world. The **first** one is the elite of the old Communist Party apparatus and the remains of the old regime security services. This elite group has taken advantage from its privileged position in the very start of post-communist transition and has transformed the lion’s share of national wealth into private property in an environment of institutional weakness, wide spaces of lawlessness, lack of transparency and legitimacy of those economic transfers. Based on their new semi-legitimate corporate assets, the ex-regime networks have successfully penetrated and subdued the newly established national representative institutions and the public administrative service, laying the foundations of post-communist oligarchic regimes. Thus the political system of post-communism involves both opposed processes – institutional democratization and oligarchic control over state and society.

The **second** major elite group governing post-communist societies is the community of civic activists and democratic reformers who developed out of the former dissident movements and was widely supported by intellectuals, urban middle class and movements for national emancipation from former imperial rule. This elite group holds the legitimacy of an agent of transformation, but controls much scarcer resources of economic and political power in comparison with the networks of oligarchy. The political projects of the two elite groups are based on completely adverse principles. Oligarchy best functions in an environment of reduced institutional efficiency, corruption networks and lawlessness that presumes wide

penetration of organized crime into the institutions of government. Democratic transformation requires rule of law, modern institutions of power, transparency and accountability of government, empowered and active civil society.

No matter how opposed both options are, all post-communist countries are governed by a specific balance between both elite groups and their political projects – the oligarchy and the modern reformist democrats. Successful transitions in Central Europe reflect a balance in favor of democracy and reform (at least in the initial period of post-communist change), while the Balkans and the post-Soviet space share much more tense transition path, dominated more by oligarchic control rather than strategies of modern democracy.

A realistic strategy for societal transformation of the Black Sea countries should consider flexible opportunities for strategic compromise and political partnership at civic and at institutional level in order to make steps forward to efficient modernization and prosperity. The records of the latest democratic upheavals in the region – like the ‘Rose’ and the ‘Orange’ revolutions – provide us with lots of evidence for achievements as well as lost opportunities to extend the social and political base of modern democratic reform.

2. Democratization and Modernization in the Nation-Building Context: Specific Tasks and Challenges Ahead

Sizable parts of national oligarchies might evolve in their thinking so as to realize the need for a more organized and efficient strategy for national modernization to serve their changing corporate interests. They would be hostile to full scale democratization in a short-term perspective, but supportive to a more efficient constitutional government, empowered to defend the interests of the corporate sector and to place the national economy in a more favorable position at the international markets. Democratization was the key strategy of transition for Central Europe after the demise of communism, based on developed economic and societal infrastructure of modernity. Countries in a state of modern nation building, with large sectors of traditional society, dominated by patriarchal culture and power pyramids should embark on a more careful and balanced strategy of combining modern development with the unfolding of democracy. Modern development strengthens the power base of democracy, while democratic representation and accountability gear up the potential of modern development. Modernization is a painful process and a reformist strategy must make sure not to alienate large sections of society from the ultimate goal of democratic society.

The basis of a flexible strategy for nation building, modernization and democratization should focus at this stage of post-Soviet societal development to the following priorities. **First**, a *strong constitutional government*, based on wide citizens’ representation, rule of law and empowering of active civil society as a partner in the process of reform.

Second, an active strategy of *modern institution building* – both within representative institutions and in the public administrative system. There is a principle culture gap between governing of traditional society and government in the modern world. Traditional hierarchies of patrimony put seniors in power positions to govern in favor of the family, the clan or the tribe. Modern power hierarchies select executives to govern the nation. Those executives represent roles, not personalities. Those roles have limits. The right of a senior – or a

‘patriarch’ – to unlimited control over the hierarchy he presides upon is called ‘corruption’ in a modern power hierarchy, where limited authority within hierarchy of roles takes care of the division and balance of powers. Modern institution building involves a sizable evolution of elite mentality from a ‘patriarchal’ to a ‘role’-type power execution. Independent authority of courts, civil society and division of powers is crucial to the success of modern institutionalism.

Third, modernization would require *selective empowering and involvement of key social groups* of entrepreneurs, experts and intellectuals, youth communities and civic activists in supporting reformist strategies of the government. Modernization has been a ‘natural’ – bottom-up process only in North-West Europe and North America 200 years ago. Since then, modernization takes place mostly as a ‘top-down’ strategy of societal change, performed by integrated and modern-minded elites, leading traditional social strata to modern life styles. *Young leaders are the key nucleus* in this fundamental process of societal transformation. Partnership and involvement of civil society into the decision making process is a key prerequisite for public mobilization along the priorities of modernizing reform.

Fourth, modernization needs adequate *economic strategy*. Modern democracy rests upon markets, yet the market is not simply an ‘invisible hand’ as it was perceived in a simplistic manner in the beginning of the transition process. Post-communist societies have painfully comprehended the difference between market economy and ‘law of the jungle’. Rule of law, law and order, clear legislative framework of economic activities are crucial prerequisites of empowering markets to produce the wealth of nations. Markets should also be amended by adequate policy priorities and strategies of economic growth and development, subject to national interest, regional specifics and global dynamics.

Fifth, *transparency of institutional norms, procedures and practices* should stand as a target for a permanent anti-corruption campaigning in society and in the institutions of government. Corruption makes obsolete the border between modern roles in government and traditional personalities on the top of governing hierarchies. Modernization needs to keep this border firm and explicit. Relationships between government and business are crucial to the success of modern reform. Advocacy and lobbying should be subject of careful legislative and executive definition.

Successful institutional modernization will serve as a powerful key to full-fledged democracy in the countries of transition. We need to define and carefully follow the stages of this complicated reform within the general strategy of nation building and integration in the global community of nations.

Successful nation-building depends upon institutional stability and a normative system of modern ‘formal rationality’ (Max Weber). Successful and stable nations, developed out of the former Soviet republics, represent the background for a dynamic regional development, providing mutual benefit for all major players in the Black Sea region. Creative balance of national and regional elites is necessary to implement a strategy of efficient economic and institutional modernization. This strategy aims at open and transparent rules of market activities, efficient anti-corruption control within and over the institutions, determined and powerful effort against organized crime and systemic partnership with an active and organized civil society.

3. Security in the Black Sea Region

Three major factors shape up the security agenda of the Black Sea region. **First**, this is a *border region*. The border between the Euro-Atlantic security system and the security infrastructure of the Russian Federation (which extends well beyond the borders of Russia) is particularly important in the context of two major issues: How far will the EU and NATO go in offering membership to former communist and ex-Soviet societies, bordering Russia? How successful will Moscow be in attracting former Soviet periphery back into its strategic domain? This issue might lose its present importance in case of a successful partnership between Russia, Europe and NATO in favor of a common security strategy and security system, yet that option might become relevant in a longer-term perspective. In the mid-term we are much more likely to deal with preserved tension and competition between the security infrastructures of Russia and the West, which will reflect as instability and fragility of the post-Soviet space. The Black Sea is also a border between Europe and the Middle East with all relevance to issues like religious extremism, terrorism and energy corridors utilization.

The **second** factor in regional security agenda reflects the issues of *inter-communal – inter-ethnic strife* and the conflicts generated on its basis throughout the territories of the former Soviet Union. The disintegration of an imperial realm unavoidably causes a chain reaction of communal emancipation claims, ending up in the emergence of newly created nation states. If unrestricted, the process may prove endless like an opening of a ‘Matryoshka’ doll, with all negative effects of instability and long-term conflicts. Ethnic conflict is the most favorable environment for strategies to impede or hamper efficient nation building, to subdue a non-obedient nation or to simply keep a high level of instability and tension in a problematic region.

The **third** major factor of insecurity around the Black Sea is the environment of *institutional weakness and fragility* throughout the post-communist space, which generates very high levels of corruption and organized crime in all societies in transition. In all governmental systems dominated by oligarchic control over the economy and institutions it is hard to measure the borderline between legitimate and corrupt or criminal interaction. The weakness of legal systems makes this borderline completely hardly discernible. Institution building and modernization are the keys to address the challenges of corruption and organized crime, yet short-term action is also needed in order to limit the scope of both those vices of transition.

The August 2008 Russian – Georgian war has dangerously lowered the threshold of **military security** in the region. Despite all fluctuations of relationships between Russia and the West, there is no practical danger of a mass-scale military hostility within the borders of the Black Sea region. Military actions are possible only in the context of inter-ethnic and inter-state disputes, like those in Nagorno Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. As a rising power factor in the region, Russia might consider military options more often in promoting its strategic agenda within and outside the Federation. The recognition of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Moscow makes it less likely for the military disputes to resume, while the case of both splinter regions will remain a long-term precedent in the system of international relations and will produce high level of tensions in that part of the South Caucasus. The developments in the triangle Baku – Yerevan – Ankara have raised the risks of military hostilities in the Karabakh dispute, with a growing need for efficient international mediation.

Maritime security is another major issue in the Black Sea region. There are two cooperative naval initiatives among the countries of the region – BLACKSEAFOR and Black Sea Harmony. The balance of naval forces however points to an almost complete hegemony of the Turkish navy in the region (the two above mentioned initiatives have been initiated by Turkey, too). Russia and Turkey insist on the provisions of the 1936 Montreux Convention, which presumes no presence of outer naval force in the Black Sea for longer than 3 weeks. After the accession of Bulgaria and Romania into NATO, an effort has been made to extend the NATO's Mediterranean 'Active Endeavor' operation to the Black Sea, yet Ankara would not allow that to happen, based on the Montreux provisions. This position hampers the opportunity of Bulgaria and Romania to take full advantage of the NATO collective security system, especially given the naval weakness of both countries. Another issue in naval security might arise from the need to re-base Russian Black Sea naval forces from Ukraine's Sevastopol elsewhere until 2017. The importance of this issue might decrease in a case of improving bilateral relations between both countries with the changes of government in Kyiv.

Every modern energy system rests upon the concept of diversity – diversity of sources and types of energy. The **energy security** issue is crucial for all countries, in particular for societies in a state of nation building. The Black Sea is a strategic corridor, which links Europe to the Middle Eastern and Caspian – Central Asian sources of hydrocarbons. Inevitably, there is a clash of interests between major international actors that wish to open this corridor for free international energy trade, and Russian authorities, which aim at closing it – corking it in favor of Moscow's commercial and strategic monopoly in the region and wider in Europe. Energy is the strategic tool of Russia to regain partly its influence in Eastern Europe, and the resources of Caspian – Central Asia are important for Europe's aim for energy portfolio diversification. There is no way to accommodate the interests of Russia and the countries in the Black Sea region – among other European states – unless trading with energy is subjected to a common principle and common rule, favorable for all partners. The European Energy Charter provided the background for such an agreement, yet it was, regrettably, not accepted by Russia. There will be no reversal in the ability of former Soviet republics to independently offer their resources to the international markets, and the resources of Iraq – Iran will also be unblocked one day. That makes any claim for energy monopoly irresistible in time, yet patient and principled conversation is needed in order to accommodate different interests, including those of the Russian Federation.

The growing volumes of energy transfers through the Black Sea region open the issues of **environmental security**. The growing traffic of oil tankers through the Straits has been a major problem for the Turkish government for decades, and the problem was partially relaxed with the opening of the BTC oil pipeline. Yet pipeline transfers are not necessarily safer than shipping. The new project for an oil pipeline Burgas – Alexandroupolis presumes downloading of tankers on buys in the open bay of Burgas, where weather changes are usually unpredictable. Any major spill out – or even leakage of oil, will pollute wide beach areas and will jeopardize the tourist business, upon which most local communities make their living. Another major issue of regional environment is the pollution caused by major river systems flowing into the Black Sea. In Europe this issue is considered together with the ecology of the entire Danube River region. Ukraine and Russia should be involved in debating and resolving this common problem of the region.

The security agenda of the Black Sea is shaped by two major groups of factors. The first group stems out of the realities of post-Soviet communal and institutional instability within a process of national emancipation and societal transformation. The second group reflects the

division line between the Euro-Atlantic security system and Russia's security infrastructure. This division line cuts across all major issues of military security, yet it also defines the dramatic choice between pro-Western or pro-Russian model of social and political development. Long-term security in the region is subject to raising mutual trust between East and West – arising also from different strategic cultures - and to adopting a common security framework for the Black Sea area.

4. Realities and Paradigms of Regional Cooperation in the Black Sea

In a way, the institutional efforts of regional cooperation preceded and influenced the formation of the Black Sea region as a separate geographic and political reality. In 1992 the BSEC (Black Sea Economic Cooperation) was established after an initiative of the Turkish government and all littoral countries joined, together with Greece, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The BSEC establishment reflected the growing interest and influence of Turkey in the region, which was matched by post-Soviet Russia's ambition to keep its decisive influence and control over the post-Soviet space, the Black Sea region included. Those circumstances defined the power balance within the newly created BSEC organization: it is informally, yet efficiently dominated by the interests and the strategies of both major regional powers – Russia and Turkey. This status quo has also been supported by the general weakness of the post-communist states around the Black Sea – some of them (Bulgaria, Romania) in a state of painful transition, others (post-Soviet republics) in a position of initial nation building with all controversies and setbacks of the process.

The growing sphere of common interest between Russia and Turkey in the 1990s and the 2000s supported the development of the BSEC, yet the poor state of institutional development of the other member countries and their status as weak states hampered and jeopardized the practical implementation of cooperative initiatives in the region. For some of the member countries (Bulgaria, Romania) BSEC was an important opportunity, yet coming after priority number one – accession to NATO and the EU. This uneven record of the BSEC as an instrument of regional cooperation defines it as an important actor in coordination and negotiation at the level of *political summits* – heads of states and high ranking executives, but a weak agent of *practical projects' implementation*. The growing opportunities of extended partnership between the BSEC and the EU, the development of alternative schemes of regional partnership (GUAM, Black Sea Forum) – are factors pressing upon the BSEC to adopt a more pragmatic attitude towards regional cooperation. The upcoming 20th anniversary of the BSEC will signal whether the organization holds the capacity to evolve and remain a powerful agent of partnership around the Black Sea, or it will be complemented by other successful initiatives in that direction.

The efforts to emancipate from Russian political and economic pressure have brought a number of ex-Soviet states into cooperative initiatives as GUAM, CDC (Community of Democratic Choice), and Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (initiated by Bucharest). The 'Orange' and 'Rose' revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia gave an impetus to those alternative partnership formats, aiming to bypass Russian domination. Some of those initiatives have developed with the assistance of other post-communist countries from the Baltics, Romania and Poland, trying to support and extend the democratic process from Central Europe and the Balkans to the post-Soviet space. This was a legitimate attempt of new democracies trying to help their neighbors and partners in accordance with their own national interest – to extend the space of democracy and European style cooperation beyond their

eastern borders. Unfortunately, Russia viewed those attempts as a violation of its 'natural sphere of interest' and national security, which deepened the dividing lines throughout the Black Sea region between pro-Western and European strategies of national development and pro-Eurasian, alternative formats of economic development, political and security partnership between Russia and its ex-Soviet constituent republics. Regrettably, both options have become mutually exclusive, rather than complementary, and this is the choice of Russia.

Serious efforts of regional cooperation were made by countries in the region and other international factors in the field of energy projects – mainly in transferring energy resources from the Caspian to Europe and the Mediterranean. The first successful project in this line was the Russian – Turkish Blue Stream project for gas transfer, cutting through the Black Sea. The BTC (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan) oil pipeline has become the first major project in bypassing the traditional routes of energy flows via Russia and Ukraine to Europe. Two other projects are at the phase of planning – the 'Nabucco' gas pipeline (a European consortium, aimed at transferring Azeri and Central Asian gas to Austria via the territory of Turkey and the Balkans), and South Stream project of Russia's Gazprom (opting for another Black Sea short cut to Bulgaria, Greece and Italy).

Cooperation in the field of energy in the Black Sea is dominated by the rigid zero-sum game approach of the Russian Federation, whose statesmen view energy not simply as a commodity, but mostly as a strategic tool of power projection and extending influence. Instead of developing a system of complementary energy projects supporting diversification and market principles of commerce with hydrocarbons, the approach of Russia enforces a strategy of twinning in mutually exclusive projects – Nabucco **or** South Stream, BTC **against** Burgas – Alexandroupolis, etc. The aspiration for an energy monopoly of Russia *vis-à-vis* Central Europe and the Black Sea region produces political discord and tension, jeopardizing alternative opportunities for cooperation with mutual benefits which would serve better the interests of all actors - the Russian Federation, the Black Sea countries and the EU member states.

Last but not least, in assessing the current state of regional cooperation in the Black Sea we have to outline the contribution of a number of NGO networks and professional – business associations, developing partnerships in the fields of municipal networking and cooperation, environmental initiatives and practical issues of transport, shipping, energy conservation, etc. It is important for the region to utilize more efficiently the civil society capacity for cooperative work and partnership initiatives. The new formats of political and business partnership should consider funding and integrating the NGO sector into the process of regional cooperation in the Black Sea.

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. There is growing added value in utilizing the strategic and the economic potential of the Black Sea region as a corridor between Europe and Eurasia in commercial and security terms. There are three basic prerequisites for Black Sea regional cooperation success: first, institutional capacity at national and regional partnership level; second, refusal of all major players to opt for 'zero-sum games' in their own favor and adoption of mutual benefit strategies for cooperation; third, open dynamics for partnership with the EU and with all other neighboring regions – the Caspian, Central Asia and the Middle East.

III. Europe and the Black Sea: Strategic Instruments for EU Assistance to the Reform Agenda of the Region

The EU is not simply a neighbor and a participant (after Bulgaria's and Romania's accession) in the regional process of the Black Sea. Provided its specific character and model, the EU plays a much bigger role than its formal engagements suggest. Europe of the last 60 years represents a unique experience in two major dimensions: **first**, in overcoming historical traumas and controversies in favor of peace, mutual dependence and integration among the European nations. **Second**, the EU constructed the world's most successful ever model of developmental assistance for countries in process of modernization. This model represents 'transformation through integration,' and it has contributed the lion's share for the successful transformation of all major Mediterranean European countries – Greece, Portugal, Spain and Italy – from backward and poor societies, governed mostly by dictatorships, to modern, affluent and democratic nations. For the last three decades, all those societies were changed beyond recognition. The same process takes place today, in different circumstances, with all new members from CEE, undergoing reform processes after communism. Modernization with the EU – and within the EU – is much painless than usual. The results of EU developmental strategy demonstrate not simply successful modernization at national level, but also integration into the postmodern community of 21 century Europe. Those are the main reasons why Europe does not enforce its model of development to other nations – the other nations decisively (and voluntarily) opt for participation in the European success story.

EU engagement in the Black Sea region has been somewhat uneven and might look inconclusive compared to the assertive behavior of the other players in the region. The EU may be slow to act but it may engage and transform at much deeper level than the eye can see. The initial broad ENP strategy in 2003 (the "Wider Europe" Communication COM (2003) 104 final) was followed by the Black Sea Synergy in 2007 ((COM 2007) 160 final)) and then by the parallel Eastern Partnership initiative launched officially in 2009 (see Eastern Partnership {SEC(2008) 2974}). This is indicative of the focusing of efforts of Brussels and the interested member states, and the Black Sea region should be ready to capitalize on these policy instruments.

1. Modernization and Institutional Development

Europe cannot offer immediate path to EU membership for the Black Sea post-Soviet countries, and the most of them are not ready yet to accept such an offer. Yet the EU is interested in assisting modern democratic reform in those countries, at least because peaceful and friendly Eastern neighborhood is a high ranking strategic priority for Europe. At the same time, the EU is an open project, which does not exclude, but frames the long-term opportunity for the post-Soviet countries to opt for membership. Unlike the Southern (Mediterranean) EU neighborhood, the EU documents presume a path to accession for the Eastern neighborhood countries.

One major challenge for the EU in assisting the post-Soviet societies is to develop strategic tools of developmental support outside of the established instruments of negotiation of membership and accession. EU transforms through integration. In the Eastern neighborhood the EU should start efficiently assisting the transformation process before and irrespective of potential further accession – this path of assistance is presumed both by the 'enlargement

fatigue' in Brussels and by the strategic considerations of Russia for being 'encircled' by 'European invasion'. Instruments like the Eastern Partnership Program launched at the Prague Summit of May 2009 might be a good start for Europe's developmental assistance process in the post-Soviet space. All Europe's efforts should be carefully negotiated and communicated in order to avoid adverse practices and reactions - what Europe builds, Russia might seek to dismantle if it considers it adverse to its interests. .

The EU is interested in having strong, affluent and successful nations as its neighbors to the East, so the first type of efforts that have to be made refer to the European assistance for institutional development in the nation building process. The tools of assistance might be selective and they might vary in comparison to the EU prerequisites for institutional performance before accession. The EU strategy should consider the initial stage of the nation building process in the Black Sea area, the large representation of strongly entrenched oligarchic interests in the power structures, the communal fragility of young nations, shaping up on post-imperial debris of inter-ethnic controversies. Modern national development has its own logic, separate from the logic of European post-modern development. At present and in a mid-term perspective, the European assistance model cannot avoid clashing with a potential Russian strategy of jeopardizing independent nation-building in favor of a regression to neo-imperial community under the aegis of Moscow. Nation building however is not simply a strategy – it is a historical process of transformation that could be hampered and delayed, but not reversed.

Europe could offer the following major types of instruments for assistance:

- Know-how and projects' support in developing modern institutional framework of constitutional government, aimed at achieving in time a full-scale representative democratic system based on European experience and public values;
- Technologies of creating and reproducing administrative systems of transparency, formal roles, norms and procedures of public administrative management;
- Open access to European markets (not only for trade but also labor markets) and assistance for industrial technologies' development;
- Powerful selective programs for development of education, professional training, civil society development, cooperation with Europe in the fields of science, higher education, arts and culture;
- Visa waivers and open access to training, scholars' exchange and institutional partnership with EU countries political, business and civic institutions;

'Eastern Partnership' is the first comprehensive EU program for developmental assistance to the post-Soviet space after two decades of cumulative efforts made through project schemes like *TACIS*. There was a particular misunderstanding of the role of the 'Eastern Partnership' as simply an instrument for regional cooperation. Unlike the 'Black Sea Synergy' however, the 'Eastern Partnership' is aimed mostly at creating developmental prerequisites for successful cooperation. This is why countries like Russia and Turkey (and also Bulgaria and Romania) have not been considered as targets. More than that, Russia and Turkey are considered as potential donors for programs like 'Eastern Partnership', capable of reconstructing the countries of the region to the level of efficient partnership within the Black Sea and with Europe.

The 'Eastern Partnership' has already created high expectations among the states in the region, and it is very important to the EU to live up to these expectations. The EU's ongoing

institutional transformation of foreign policy instruments and players under the Lisbon Treaty must not distract or delay its policies in the Black Sea region. On the contrary, this should streamline the EU's efforts in the region, as it was the EU's original intention. The starting establishment of the European External Action service (the "EU diplomatic corps") should take into account the Black Sea as a priority in terms of strategy, job descriptions and staffing with committed and qualified people. This will send a message, underlining the significance of the region to the EU and the seriousness of its intentions.

The EU should also continue its operational – flexible, but also beneficial – both in practical and symbolic terms – initiatives such as the "circular migration and mobility partnerships." The economic crisis might have endangered such ideas with a tacit protectionism, but this raises the stakes for advocating such approaches at the policy level even more.

Last, but not least, the non-EU Black Sea countries should be active themselves and seek partnership with the EU members that are their current and potential allies – predominantly the new member states of the EU and the states of the northern-eastern rim of the EU.

The 'Eastern Partnership' has already allocated targeted funding laid out in the "Vademecum on Financing" (16 December 2010). The funding substantiates the political strategies in three key dimensions: Comprehensive Institution Building, Regional Development Programs (i.e. intra-state regions) and the Black Sea, regional *per se* dimension through its Multilateral Dimension. State and local administration, civil society and small and mid-size businesses may benefit from the assistance.

For this purpose however, the Eastern Partnerships states must develop an effective absorption capacity for the EU funding in order to make use of it. In that respect, they can look at the lessons learned from the EU members from Central and Eastern Europe and their positive and negative experience,

2. Security in the Black Sea Region

Europe is not an 'immediate' power in the field of military security. The Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU presumes autonomous role for Europe's armed forces, yet this is a long-term process in the making. In mid-term perspective European military infrastructure is fully integrated into NATO. Yet even at the time when the military security system of Europe will be functional, it will be part of the integral Euro-Atlantic security system. This is an important definition of reality vis-à-vis the proposal of a common European security system, made by the President of the Russian Federation Dmitriy Medvedev. Medvedev's proposal could be reduced to the formula 'Russia plus Europe minus the US', which is an essential part of Moscow's geo-strategic vision since the mid-20th century. The Black Sea security environment is largely dependent upon the ability of **Russia and the West to transform strategic rivalry to strategic partnership** and develop common strategic interest in the field of security. Common challenges like terrorist threats, dangerous arms proliferation, demographic imbalances and their long term effects bring Russia, Europe and the broader West into positions of common interest, which are more substantive than short-term and mid-term considerations of power shifts in the buffer zone between Europe and

Russia. Integrating Russia into the common Euro-Atlantic security space is the best possible option to guarantee European security, the Black Sea region included.

Europe has made significant contributions so far to the process of **peace negotiations and peace keeping** in the post-Soviet space in different institutional formats (OSCE, CE, EC initiatives and member-states contributions), building up a reputation of independent and decent mediator. This contribution has to be extended and institutionally strengthened to the capacity to make a difference in finalizing conflict resolution where possible, and stimulating the process of negotiations where necessary. ‘Frozen conflicts’ must be considered for resolution before being reduced back to ‘hot conflicts’ as in the case of South Ossetia in August 2008.

The ‘Eastern Partnership’ offers a new promise on conflict resolution through the specific “EU-style” multilateral approach based on respecting international law. The Prague Summit declaration of May 7, 2009 states that “The Eastern Partnership should further promote stability and multilateral confidence building. Conflicts impede cooperation activities. Therefore the participants of the Prague summit emphasize the need for their earliest peaceful settlement on the basis of principles and norms of international law and the decisions and documents approved in this framework.”

Europe – even if expressed in multiple national faces – has a predictable and open interest in **energy security**. Energy monopoly contradicts the principle of diversification, which underlies European vision of energy sector development. At the same time, Europe is highly interested in guaranteeing long term partnership with energy suppliers like Russia and the other ex-Soviet countries in the Caspian and Central Asia. European energy projects – in partnership with Moscow and the other suppliers in the East – provide stable framework for developing the Black Sea region as a strategic corridor for transferring energy resource to the European markets. European projects seek to avoid twinning rivalry as in the case of the Nabucco and South Stream gas pipelines.

Organized crime networks, based on oligarchic partnership with corrupt sections and executives of national institutions within the countries of transition, represent a major threat not only to their own societies, but also to the European security in general. Organized crime supports drugs and weapons smuggling, it exercises human trafficking – of ‘white slaves’ (prostitutes), newborn babies, etc. Institutional fragility and the oligarchies’ grip upon weak state structures promote instability, impoverishment and distinctive erosion of civil rights and liberties in addition to the reduced governmental capacity to serve citizens’ needs. European institutions have the potential to assist the countries in transition throughout the region to enforce law and order as part of the systemic effort to support efficient institutional development and nation building in those societies. Internal order, justice system reform and anti-corruption institutional restructuring represent an important part of EU prerequisites for accession. Even if EU membership is a long term goal for the most of the ex-Soviet countries, European assistance might make real difference if local political elites in those societies initiate and support that kind of European assistance package.

The EU holds some of the best standards and practices of environmental security throughout the global world. It is a key priority of Black Sea region security to adopt those standards and principles in order to reduce the present state of pollution within the Black Sea and its shores, as well as to guarantee safety of energy products transfers through the Black Sea corridor

from the East to the European markets. European environmental technologies should be adopted in particular when high levels of hazard persist in the implementation of projects like Burgas – Alexandroupolis. European standards of strict controls over GMO (genetically modified organisms) access to the markets, European norms for food protection, etc., should be adopted by the countries of the region in favor of public health and successful economic and social development. The Environmental Partnership of the Black Sea Strategy launched in mid-March 2010 has to be filled with substantive action. The Black Sea may capitalize also on the emerging “Danube strategy” of the EU, which was already extended to a “Danube-Black Sea basin” strategy – in terms above all of environmental protection and additional transportation dimensions.

3. European Strategies for Regional Cooperation

The EU came up to the necessity of structured instruments for cooperation in the Black Sea after the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007. Limited bilateral relations and assistance initiatives characterized Europe’s attitudes towards the region – in particular towards the ex-Soviet space throughout the 1990s and the first half of 2000s. That was understandable in the context of the CEE countries transition and integration challenges. In April 2007 the EU issued a communication named ‘Black Sea Synergy’, which proved the first comprehensive document to address the agenda of Black Sea region cooperation. The ‘Black Sea Synergy’ has limited targets and plays predominantly introductory role for the EU strategic interest towards the region. One important aspect of the ‘Synergy’ is the acceptance of the BSEC as the major institutional tool for cooperation between the EU and the Black Sea countries, which is very symptomatic for the initial cautious attitude of Brussels towards the region.

Establishing the BSEC as the organizational infrastructure for the EU involvement into the regional cooperation process also discloses the active advocacy work performed by Ankara and Moscow in Brussels in favor of EU recognition for the status quo both regional powers benefit from. The EU could be present in the BSEC decision making only through the membership of Bulgaria and Romania, and – later on – possibly through an associate status or a status of an observer.

The limited scope for EU activities through BSEC has brought about the initiation of the Swedish-Polish project for EU policies towards the Eastern neighborhood, which took the shape of the ‘Eastern Partnership’ initiative. ‘Eastern Partnership’ is not so much a regional cooperation tool, but rather a developmental assistance program. Its priorities differ from those of the ‘Synergy’ not only in scope, but also in focus. ‘Eastern Partnership’ bypasses the policy limitations imposed by the Ankara – Moscow tandem and tries to directly address reform and development issues of post-Soviet societies. At the same time, ‘Eastern Partnership’ does not exclude participation of Russia and Turkey, but rather views them as potential donors to the program than recipients.

At present the EU could exert only selective influence in the process of Black Sea regional cooperation and will rely very much upon the initiatives of both littoral countries – EU members Bulgaria and Romania. Europe is interested in pluralism in the mechanisms of regional cooperation. Some possible steps of Brussels in mid-term perspective might include:

- Guiding BSEC into concretizing its activities – starting the implementation of specific projects, which are lacking so far – and thus boosting its effectiveness;
- Establishing institutional forms of cooperation in particular fields of common interest between the EU and the Black Sea countries: energy, trade, shipping, transport, ecology, etc.;
- Building an institutional model for a regular and uniform political cooperation between the EU and the countries of the area. Such institutionalization would lead not only to exchange of ideas and opinions but also to formulation of common interests.

IV. Conclusion

The Black Sea region develops as an important strategic corridor between Europe and Central Asia/Middle East. The countries of the region undergo fundamental processes of change, involving post-communist and post-authoritarian democratization, societal and institutional modernization, and modern nation-building. All three components of change are substantively influenced by the neighborhood with the EU – the most successful example of regional cooperation and developmental assistance in modern history. The countries around the Black Sea experience diverse challenges and pursue autonomous strategies for national development and regional partnership, yet all of them aim at success in achieving stability and development, domestic and regional security, and mutually beneficial results in regional cooperation.

Europe could not offer immediate perspectives for integration and accession to all countries in the region, yet EU member states consider the Black Sea countries as an important part of the European neighborhood and the common European space of development, security and partnership. Europe could mobilize its valuable experience in **first**, *working out strategies for developmental assistance*, **second**, *devising flexible partnerships in security* and **third**, *developing strategies for cooperative integration of the region* into the broader network of Euro-Atlantic cooperation. The EU recognizes the importance of all division lines and the departure of interests inherited from the past of the Black Sea region. European strategies should rely upon patient and careful resolution of regional challenges and dilemmas in favor of achieving trust and dynamic unity of interests in a longer-term perspective.

In the short term, the Black Sea region, and specifically the Young Reformers, may capitalize on the upcoming EU rotating presidencies of Hungary and Poland in 2011. The interests and historic links of the countries holding the presidencies (especially Poland) might be used to prioritize the Black Sea issues on the EU agenda again through targeted policy and advocacy efforts.