The European Union's Strategy for the Black Sea Region:

A Precarious Balancing Act

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Abstract: In this article, we discuss three factors that are contributing to the development and the evolution of the EU's policy toward the Black Sea region. Initially, we review the current interior situation of the EU. We argue in that section that the EU finds itself in the middle of an identity crisis revealed by the negative French and Netherlands votes to the constitutional project in 2005. Subsequently, we analyze the relations that have developed between the EU and the Russian Federation. The EU's relations with Moscow constitute a key element in Brussels' Common Foreign and Security Policy and, particularly, in Brussels' concept of the Wider Black Sea Area. The article ends with a look at the transatlantic relations. We argue that currently the EU and the U.S. find themselves in different historical situations and are preoccupied by quite different issues. This makes a common and coherent policy toward the Black Sea region very difficult.

The geopolitical importance of the Black Sea region is today quite evident[1]. Although situated at the periphery of the European Union's (EU) core countries (France and Germany), the Black Sea region has direct link with three particularly sensitive regional areas: The southern part of the Russia Federation destabilized by the war in Chechnya; the Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan) marred by continued 'frozen conflicts' with no resolution in sight; the Middle East where high tensions are constantly a preoccupation, especially in the backdrop of the Iraq conflict on the brink of a full-fledge civil war. Also, the Iran nuclear program issue continues to be on the agenda in the Greater Middle East, along with the supply of energy resources around de Caspian Sea and in countries of Central Asia.

In order to help implementing a "Euro-Atlantic' policy in the Black Sea region, the geographic and strategic concept Wider Black Sea Area has been opportunistically crafted by Euro-Atlantic states, whose inspiration came from the Greater Middle East model. In the case of NATO, the Istanbul Summit communiqué of June 2004 not only stressed the general importance of the Black Sea region for Euro-Atlantic security, it also underlined the Alliance's specific responsibility to help build upon existing forms and models of regional cooperation.

Considering its successive enlargement, its regional ambitions and its considerable resources and means to put policies into action, the EU's vocation is to be directly and durably involved in the Black Sea region[2]. Brussels has undoubtedly sufficient means to achieve its objectives in that compacted and multifaceted region.

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[1] KING (Charles), The New Near East, *Survival,* N 2, 2001, p.49-67.

[2] ADAMS (Terry) (ed.), *Europe's Black Sea Dimension,* Brussels, CEPS, 2002; AYADIN (Mustafa), *Europe's next shore: the Black Sea region after EU enlargement,* Paris, ISS, Occasional Paper, N53, June 2004.

However, the EU is having problems in its efforts to come up with a clear and coherent policy that reflects the needs of a majority of its members[3].

The elaboration of a consistent and comprehensive foreign policy is weakened by the Union's institutional set-up and its bottom up pillar structure which potentially impedes the formulation of coherent external policies and realistic negotiating positions. For example, in the context of EU-Russia relations in the early 1990s, and particularly in the case of the Russian exclave oblast of Kaliningrad, the EU faced difficulties in coming forward with a uniform position. While the European Parliament pushed for a pro-active policy and was ready to grant Kaliningrad with a special status within the framework of the EU-Russia "Partnership and Cooperation Agreement" (PCA), the Commission demonstrated a more cautious approach, arguing that the Russian government might perceive the special treatment of its exclave as an illegitimate intervention in its internal affairs[4].

The EU's foreign policy suffers from a lack of coherence and effectiveness because of a rotational presidency, a lack of political continuity, and changes in the various identified priorities and policy directions that accompany a system unable to formulate clear foresight and policy direction. Moreover, there are inherent conflicts of interest and a 'North-South' division among EU members regarding policy initiatives in the Baltic Sea and Black Sea regions. It is not surprising, then, that under the Finnish and Swedish presidencies, in 1999 and 2001 respectively, the Kaliningrad issue was high on the agenda, both in the context of the regional policy of the Northern Dimension[5] and EU-Russian relations more generally.

The EU's 'capability' to act in a coherent and effective way has only slightly improved. True, the EU increasingly shows the qualities of an international actor. This has been especially evident in the case of Kaliningrad – an issue that has only gained such prominence because of EU enlargement. But in reality the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) can be characterised as a multilateral forum for cooperation and the coordination of individual members' foreign policies[6]. For instance, in the case of Germany, the engagement in this 'forum' has become the backbone of its foreign

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[3] GRABBE (Heather), Towards a More Ambitious EU Policy for the Black Sea Region, in R. Asmus (ed.), *A New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region,* Washington D. C., GMF of the United States, 2004, p. 106-115.

[4] For a thorough overview of this problem see Oldberg (Ingmar), Kaliningrad: Russian exclave, European enclave, *Scientific Report of the Swedish Defence Research Agency,* Stockholm, 2001.

[5] According to the EU, the Northern Dimension addresses the specific challenges and opportunities arising in those regions [North-west Russia, the Baltic Sea region and Arctic Sea region] and aims to strengthen dialogue and cooperation between the EU and its member states, the northern countries associated with the EU under the EEA (Norway and Iceland) and the Russian Federation. See http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/north_dim/index.htm

[6] It is in fact controversial whether the CFSP qualifies as an instance of multilateralism. Yet, the CFSP is definitely a multilateral form of coordinating national foreign policies. See Ruggie (John G.), *Multilateralism Matters: the theory and praxis of an institutional form,* New York: Columbia University Press, 2003; Keohane (Robert O.), Multilateralism: an agenda for research, *International Journal,* vol. XLV, 1990, p. 731.

policy, especially following its unification and with respect to German-Russian relations. It is through multilateral channels that successive German governments since Helmut Kohl can assert their interest and influence vis-à-vis Russia. The same could be said about France's foreign policy strategy.

As a result, the international status of the European Union is not yet clearly determined. Due to the long and complicated process of Europe's unification, the EU has a mixed status, composed of elements of international organization, federal state and multilateral agreements. Although the EU does not formally have the status of a legal person, it was declared to be an international organization. It has multiple attributes of a state: currency, citizenship, organizational framework and even military forces. But decision procedures concerning the CFSP are similar to that of multilateral agreements.

The ambiguous international status of the EU and the multilateral basis of its 'foreign policy' are major factors explaining why the concept of the Wider Black Sea Area, although welcomed, can hardly qualify as a blueprint or consistent strategy over the long haul. A consensus is constantly hard to achieve in the EU's political institutions, and the lack of an agreement on a wide-ranging strategy toward the Black Sea is another example. In reality, the EU is confronted with the following paradox: Deeply involved in the Black Sea region in terms of geopolitical interests, the 'idea' of the EU is losing ground conceptually since an important number of countries in 2005 voted against the adoption of a constitution for the European Union (EU). As a result, the EU is undoubtedly an indispensable actor in the Wider Black Sea Area, but it is not currently the main driving force. NATO and the U.S. have taken the lead in the integration of the Black Sea region. An example of that leadership occurred in March 2005 when Georgia signed an agreement with NATO to provide transit to Afghanistan across Georgian territory. Japp de Hoop Scheffer stressed on the occasion that by taking this step the Georgian authorities have once again confirmed their intention for closer integration in the European structures.

In the current situation, the EU must design a realistic and pragmatic policy toward the Black Sea area. The EU must design its policy toward the Black Sea area by taking into account at least three vital factors. First, the EU must pay attention to its interior situation. After the 'no' vote in France and the Netherlands on the constitutional treaty, the EU is going through an unparalleled crisis that leaves much uncertainty as to future enlargements. Second, the EU's 'Strategic Partnership' with Russia must be better defined. That partnership is not considered fundamental by the EU in its many attempts to construct security around the Black Sea area, while the 'Russia issue', however, is often presented as a determining factor for the regional security stabilization. This is a contradictory position that cannot be prolonged any further. Third, the unsteady evolution in the transatlantic relations further complicates the EU's policies in its vicinity. The war in Iraq and the fight against 'international terrorism' have deeply transformed transatlantic relations, which has impacted in turn the priorities of the United States, members of the EU and the United Nations (UN), in terms of Black Sea regional conflicts.

This article initially reviews the current interior situation of the EU. It subsequently analyzes the relations that have developed between the EU and the Russian Federation. The article ends with a look at the transatlantic relations. These three vital factors – interior situation, relations with Russia, and transatlantic relation – will influence the EU's present and future policy toward the Black Sea region.

The EU at a Turning Point

The EU finds itself in the middle of an identity crisis revealed by the negative French and Netherlands votes to the constitutional project in 2005. The results of that vote are open to a variety of interpretations. However, it can be explained either in terms of French and Dutch domestic politics, or by a lack of clarity as to the Union's procedural mechanism, or, and perhaps mostly, by a profound misunderstanding of European enlargement process in the first place. Not really wished by the citizens of the EU, the enlargement process, throughout the EU constitution referendum campaign, was interpreted by EU citizens more as a process of political and power dilution than an attempt at strengthening and consolidating the European project in one working document. This left a cloud of ambiguity with regards to borders of the EU and member states. When would the enlargement be over, voters asked themselves? Moreover, the issue of Turkey's accession became a highly sensitive topic during the referendum on both the EU and national agendas. Member states were dealing with these issues at a time when their economic performance was less than respectable and European citizens began suffering from the effects of job 'outsourcing' and economic competition from new members of the East. That accentuated the impression among EU citizens of an unlimited enlargement process decided by political-administrative elites in complete disregard of European public opinions[7].

But the adoption of a constitution is not the only real problem. The EU is confronting extremely divisive issues, and the most important is a philosophical split over Europe's future. European Union leaders claim that country members, European political forces and parties agree upon shared basic functional principles. The truth after the French referendum is that all members do not share these proclaimed principles.

EU members can be divided into two categories, basically: On one side, there are those in favour of more social and economic liberalization (the British, Dutch and Scandinavians); on the other, there are those clinging staunchly to policies of a traditional welfare state (the French, Germans and Belgians). The division is deeply embedded in the EU's processes and bureaucratic apparatus.

Referendums on the constitution also illustrated the ordinary Europeans' unfamiliarity with the EU as an emerging political entity. Compounding this problem is the seemingly obstinate loyalty of Europeans to their nation-states. For leaders and policymakers it was unpersuasive to argue for a defence of European interests, such as the common market, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) or the European regulatory framework.

Europeans will have to ask themselves if somewhere, something has gone wrong in the relationship between Europe and its citizens. It may have been an irrational vote, but it responded to something very deep: a fear of the future. The political elites who were in the 'yes' camp somehow failed to explain what the constitution actually implied or would mean. These elites should propose the establishment of institutions that receive broad popular support and should provide for a fair and functional distribution of power among different levels of authority.

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[7] DEMESMAY (Claire) et FOUGIER (Eddy), La France qui fonde: l'adhésion de la Turquie en débat, *Le débat*, N 133, janvier-février 2005, p. 126-137

Although the construction of European Union is still on the agenda, the French and Dutch "no" votes to the EU constitution entail a postponement of European enlargement and construction processes and further compels Europeans to raise key questions on the significance and the objectives of the EU development, especially in regard to neighboring countries. The EU is forced to think again and urgently about its foreign policy. It has to fulfill its commitments toward would-be member states, while at the same time it must demonstrate the viability of its internal functioning. The EU's neighboring countries, in particular those located in the Black Sea region – Turkey, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, and to a lesser degree, Azerbaijan –, are waiting for legitimate and sincere political signals supplemented with concrete decisions concerning the nature of a possible partnership with Brussels. Some of these countries have quite openly and repeatedly expressed their desire to become EU members. Turkey, Ukraine and Georgia are well-known examples of countries that are seeking EU membership. However, the first problem for the EU is to satisfy this desire by adopting a reasonable strategy, that is, a strategy that takes into account the EU's current reduced means and political realities. The second problem is that Brussels must explain to these Black Sea countries the high level of uncertainty that stands on the way in the short and mid-term (human rights, rule of law, free and fair elections, etc.). The third problem lies in the necessity of overcoming both fatigue and lassitude generated by the 2004 enlargement, while pursuing a political overture to those countries whishing to joint the EU[8].

In spite of these problems and difficulties, the EU cannot realistically afford to ignore the Black Sea area considering that January 1, 2007 marked the accession, 17 years after the fall of Communism, of Romania and Bulgaria, two Black Sea littoral states. It means that the EU borders have now reached the Black Sea area and that the countries of the region must necessarily be integrated into the EU's external relations. Compared to the 2004 enlargement, the integration of Romania and Bulgaria poses problems of a different nature[9]. The EU has an obligation now to design a more ambitious policy toward the Black Sea, the more so since Romania and Bulgaria have resolutely and fully opted to be on the European side by giving a Euro-Atlantic orientation to their economic and security policy[10]. Also, these new acceding countries will have an impact on the Moldova 'frozen conflict[11].' The EU will progressively have to be considered as a major actor in conflicts involving the security of ex-Communist European countries, especially if we consider that Bulgaria and Romania – Turkey,

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[8] ASMUS (Ronald) (ed.), *Developing a New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region*: Istanbul Paper # 2, GMF of the United Stated and TESEV, June 2004, p.5.

[9] EMERSON (Michael), Vade Mecum for the Next Enlargement of the European Union. *Ceps Policy Brief*, N 61, December 2004.

[10] MAIOR (George Cristian) amd MATEI (Mihaela), The Black Sea Region in the Enlarged Europe: Changing Patterns, Changing Politics, *Mediterranean Quarterly*, N 1, 2005, p. 33-51.

[11] LYNCH (Dov), Shared Neighbourhood or New Frontline? The Crossroads in Moldova, *Russie. Cei. Visions*, N 2, April 2005; VAHL (Marius), The Europeanisation of the Transnistrian Conflict, *Ceps Policy Brief*, N 73, May 2005.

Ukraine and Russia as well – are members of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) created on 25 June 1992. The BSEC covers a geography encompassing the territories of the Black Sea littoral states, the Balkans and the Caucasus. As an organization, the EU has enough solidity and potency to address these security challenges.

On the other hand, however, two issues have profound possible geopolitical consequences: The possible membership of Turkey and Ukraine and the right attitude to adopt toward these two countries. In the near future, the EU leadership will not be able to dissociate these two issues, especially if the concept Wider Black Sea Area concretely begins to make headway in Brussels' agenda.

Also, in the future it is unlikely that EU members will be able to effectively deal with Turkey and Ukraine membership issues and at the same time turn a blind eye to their domestic situation. Domestic politics of EU member states and EU enlargement projects will naturally influence one another; they cannot be addressed as separate problems. What is at stake in deciding the EU political strategy toward the Black Sea area is the position members will take concerning Ankara and Kiev's future status. This political position will indicate what form the association will take between Brussels, Ankara and Kiev – accession or special partnership status – and the timetable that will be adopted to this end. At the same time, these two countries will certainly adapt to the new context of uncertainty within the EU, as well as to other countries of the Black Sea region. Therefore, Ankara and Kiev's determination to accede to the EU institutions will also depend considerably on their willingness to support the EU during the current delicate transitional post-referendum period.

Recently, the EU launched the European Neighborhood Policy – previously it offered a wide array of partnership and cooperation agreements to bordering states – with the clear objective of bringing support and stability to Black Sea countries but without officially offering EU candidacy status. This Neighborhood Policy provides individual initiatives and development plans for all countries with the overall aim of bringing their national standards closer to those of the EU. Concretely, this bilateral approach combines both grants of technical assistance for grass roots projects and Structural Fund Programs for transborder cooperation. Switching from a bilateral approach to a more global approach toward the Black Sea region is now one of the main challenges facing the EU[12].

The engagement of the south Caucasian states – Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia – in the Neighborhood Policy in 2004 has been a positive step for the continued development of a more inclusive and global policy in the Wider Black Sea Area and to cement closer economic and political ties – but short of full membership. This enlargement of the EU intervention zone can be explained by the aspiration to gain influence and leverages over the Caspian energy routes at the expense of Russia's strategic interests in the region. Moscow's political and security strategy toward its southwest neighbors will be an important factor in the implementation and success of the concept Wider Black Sea Area

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[12] CELAC (Sergiu), The New Security Environment in the Black Sea Region, in O. Pavliuk (ed.), *The Black Sea Region, Cooperation and Security Building,* London, M. E. Sharpe, 2004, p. 284-285.

The EU-Russia Relations and the Black Sea Region

EU-Russian cooperation dynamics demonstrate that their relations are based on the balance of interests, which means that they mutually benefit from this interaction. The European Union greatly contributes to Russia's efforts to modernize and it perceives such progress as an important factor for regional and European stability.

In the case of the Black Sea area, observers of EU politics could not fail to notice, however, that the Euro-Atlantic policy toward that part of the world has been designed with the constant 'Russian factor' in mind. Russia has been presented as the 'factor of uncertainty' in the Black Sea region[13]. A strong consensus exist among international relations analysts as to Russia's lost of influence in the region. However, most of them agree on the necessity to let Russia take part in discussions relating to the Black Sea region and to engage the Kremlin in the design and construction of regional security structures. The EU's relations with Moscow constitute a key element in Brussels' Common Foreign and Security Policy, although security issues remain somewhat secondary when compared with economic issues existing between Brussels and Moscow. The reason for the priority accorded to economic issues rather than security issues lies in the fact that the EU lacks credibility in the security domain, as well as Moscow's intense focus on NATO's 'turns and twist' in the area of security since the collapse of Communist regimes. Officially, the EU and Russia have consented on the creation of a 'strategic partnership.' However, in reality their relations still fall short of confidence and maturity, sometimes even bordering on open discord and crisis[14] – as in the case of energy security.

Opposed to NATO enlargement in 1999 and 2004, Russia has been less critical of EU 2004 enlargement, though. The spatial proximity of these two entities has led to tensions since December 2003 on the occasion of the 'Rose Revolution' in Georgia. Moscow rejects participation in Neighborhood Policies on the ground that it sees no reason to be among a group of states which includes countries such as Morocco, Libya or Ukraine. Moscow's political leadership still sees Russia in possession of all the attributes of an 'imperial' state in the post-Soviet space and beyond. Acceding to a political and economic union such as the EU would only diminish Russia's status in the international state system.

Relations between the European Union (EU) and Russia are based on three pillars: the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) of 1994, the Common Strategy of the European Union towards Russia (CSR), which was first adopted in 1995 and revised at the Cologne summit in the summer of 1999, and the Northern Dimension initiative. The PCA outlines the general principles and detailed provisions that govern the relationship between the EU and the Russia Federation.

Of much interest for the Black Sea region is the fact that the EU-Russia dialogue has led to a regional initiative called the 'Northern Dimension,' which was agreed upon at the Luxembourg meeting of the European Council in 1997 on the Finnish government's initiative.

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[13] HERD (Graeme) and MOUSTAKIS (Fotios), *Black Sea Geopolitics: Dilemmas, Obstacles &Prospects,* CSRC, G84, July 2000.

[14] GOMART (Thomas), Les trois enjeux du partenariat entre l'Union européenne et la Russie, *Politique étrangère,* N 2, 2004, p. 387-399.

The Northern Dimension" is an ambitious regional program in which the EU and Russia cooperate effectively to enhance regional stability and security in the Baltic region. The Northern Dimension has been implemented within the framework of the Europe Agreements with the Baltic States, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia and the European Economic Area regulations. Major areas of cooperation under the Northern Dimension include: The environment, nuclear safety, energy cooperation, Kaliningrad, infrastructure, business cooperation, justice and home affairs, social development, among others. However, a great deal of attention has been particularly paid to the environment, nuclear safety and cooperation and security in the sphere of energy. The Northern Dimension operates through the EU's financial instruments available for Russia and the northern region: PHARE, TACIS and INTERREG.

The Northern Dimension aims to use these financing instruments for various types of projects that provide added value. For example, the environment and nuclear safety are expected to be the core priorities of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership Support Fund, which was launch in 2001[15].

The implementation of the program has been noted as being necessary in the Declaration of the Council of the Baltic/European-Arctic Region on March 5, 1999. However, more recently the agreement has been discussed and approached from different sides – donor states (most of them EU members) and the Russian Federation. It should include such spheres of cooperation as know-how exchange, vocational training, staff development and the provision of materials and technology transfer.

The North and Baltic Sea region could be considered as one of the most dangerous points for the inner stability and security of the EU member states. There are some 300 nuclear reactors along the coast of the Kola Peninsula, which amounts to 20% of all reactors in the world. However, this region lacks an appropriate level of waste management and has only a few repositories and storage facilities of nuclear waste. That is one of the contributing factors that the EU remains highly concerned about in its Northern region. It continues to engage in discussions with Russia to tackle this pressing problem.

Russia has already expressed its willingness to take part in this dialog in the name of the stability on the European continent. In recent years the EU and Russia have worked together to formulate and fund wastewater projects for the North-West Russia, especially to address and reduce pollution in the Baltic Sea. For example, the St-Petersburg South West Wastewater Treatment Plant, which was financed by the EU (TACIS program), individual member states, the Nordic Investment Bank, the European Investment Bank and the Nordic Environment Finance Cooperation (NFCO), is operational since September 2005[16].

At the moment, a similar initiative, such as a 'Southern Black Sea Dimension' of sort, is not envisaged for the Black Sea region[17].

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[15] See *The Northern Dimension*. Available from:
http://europa.eu.int/comm./external_relations/north_dim/index.htm.

[16] See *Joint Statement of the EU-Russian Summit*, May 17, 2001. Available from:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/russia/summit17_05_01/statement.htm.

[17] MARIN (Anais), La Dimension septentrionale : une autre forme de la PESC en Europe du Nord, *in* D. Lynch, *EU-Russian security dimensions*, Paris, ISS, Occasional Paper, N 43, July 2003, p. 42-60

Fundamentally, Russia's policy toward the EU is based on two principles: First, an openly declared refusal to consider accession to the EU, or any type of constraining integration; second, Russia's determination to maintain in any circumstances a 'state-to-state' dialogue on an equal basis. Technically, the two parties have structured their relations around four "common spaces" – common economic space, common space of freedom, security and justice, common space of cooperation in the field of external security, common space on research, education and culture[18]. They have been implemented since the Moscow Summit in May 2005.

The "common sphere of cooperation in the field of external security" is particularly sensitive to Russia since it involves neighbors of the Russian Federation, or, to use Russian terminology, its 'near abroad.' Frictions between the EU and Russia following the double enlargement of May 2004 and January 2007 have been transformed into tensions on the occasion of the 'colored revolutions' in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan.

These more or less 'velvet' revolutions, which look like another 'fall of the Berlin wall' from Moscow's point of view, did not occur in these countries for no reasons. Serbia in October 2000, Georgia in November 2003, Ukrainian in December 2004, and Kyrgyzstan in March 2005, have in common that a revolution took place in regimes that were not 'authentic' dictatorships. We might even say that dictatorship did not exist at all.

The presence of foreign NGOs is certainly not the only necessary conditions for a 'velvet' revolution to occur. But 'conspiracy theories' cannot explain this wave of revolutions of a new type. It is rather the emergence of collective action politics at the civil society level that helps to form counter powers and rapidly destabilize the regimes' pillars.

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For instance, the world witnessed a strange exit for the democratic apprentice that was Askar Akayev, president of Kyrgyzstan in March 2005. It is because Akayev made of his country something different than a real dictatorship similar to those of the majority of his Central Asia neighbors that the "Tulip revolution" broke his tenacity to rule. Because even if this revolution does not deserve to be called "tulip", since the opposition used strong means, the overthrow of the government would not have been possible without some islands of freedom Akayev gave to the Kyrgyz, notably in the first part of the 1990s. This 'illiberalism' à la Kyrgyzstan was dictated by the need to somewhat please the West in order to pocket millions of dollars supposedly for developing the country.

Whatever the level of organization of these revolutions, encouraged by U.S. organizations (Freedom house, National Democratic Institute, Eurasia Foundation, etc.), they are possible only if the rulers accept to embrace some degree of democracy and public values, especially in the run-up to new elections. Using the legal frameworks put in place by regimes' leaders, revolutionaries and supporters of change have demonstrated the ability to lock up or politically neutralize hated corrupted officials and overthrow their half-democratic regimes. Some socio-economic and organizational ingredients are needed to put an end to political careers of old soviet apparatchiks: a united opposition, oppositional media that express a large measure of public discontent in order for the population to unveil

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[18] See http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/russia/summit_11_04/m04_268.htm

and go public in outright confrontation with the oppressing leadership, youngsters, trained in techniques of non-violent action and political change, quickly mobilizing and taking to the streets.

But how could one have imagined a revolution in Turkmenistan where Saparmurad Niazov, before he passed away in December 2006, was a lifelong president without any sort of opposition? None of these conditions as above-mentioned are present in this country which is considered one of the most inaccessible in the world. In the eventuality of any form of disorder within the country, the brutal police that the Turkmenbashi ("father of all Turkmen") had built up to control all corners of the Turkmen territory and all aspects of society and daily living will be immediately ordered to repress without mercy rebellious Turkmenistani. Also, no foreign NGOs are allowed to operate in this gas-rich state.

The situation is nearly identical in Uzbekistan. Three months after the Rose Revolution in Georgia, in April 2004, the Open Society Institute (OSI), a non-governmental organization created by the famous 'philanthropist' George Soros and which has maintained an active presence in Uzbekistan for many years, was denied the right to be formerly registered by the Uzbek ministry of Justice. The Uzbek government officially argued that the OSI presents a negative image of the government's activities and even "discredits" its various policies. Uzbek officials claimed that the OSI provided educational establishments with seditious pedagogical ideas and materials. They also accused the OSI of lacking transparency in the allowance of financial funds to institution of higher education.

Autocrats of the Central Asia region believe that Western NGOs and their affiliates serve as vehicle for transmitting Western ideas and education methods to their youth. That explains, they pretend, the occurrence of 'colored' revolutions between 2003 and 2005.

It is in this context that in the post-Soviet space, EU-Russia relations are, for the most part, interpreted as a zero-sum game. However, this is more often than not an erroneous interpretation, especially if we consider that the EU and Russia are usually more spectators than actors in the Caucasus and the northern section of the Black Sea. Busy with its own internal problems, some almost intractable, like desindustrialisation or demographic decline, Russia is practically helpless in stopping what Ukraine and Georgia governments do on their territories. These two ex-Soviet republics are themselves plagued by enormous social problems, which hinder them from capitalizing on historical opportunities to take control of their own national destiny and developing a regional integration strategy at the same time. For its part, the EU, as opposed to the United States, left the impression of not wanting to support oppositional political forces to Kutchma's regime during the Ukrainian crisis of December 2004 for fear of provoking a reaction from Moscow[19]. One thing is certain, the 'Orange Revolution' contributed to a profound change in EU-Russia relations, and, consequently, their respective policies toward the Black Sea[20].

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[19] MOTYL (Alexander), Ukraine II: EU Hypocrisy Must End, *International Herald Tribune*, 26 November 2004.

[20] MOTYL (Alexander), Ukraine II: EU Hypocrisy Must End, *International Herald Tribune*, 26 November 2004; SHERR (James), La révolution orange: un défi pour l'Ukraine, la Russie et l'Europe, *Politique étrangère*, N1, 2005, p. 9-20.

Apart from events in the Ukraine, the EU-Russia dialogue is also difficult to establish in part because of divergent security conceptions which condition their views on their common neighborhood. This is notably apparent in their perceptions of the Black Sea and in the political tensions that continue to linger in the Georgian breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moscow's conception of security is strongly linked with the notion of territorial security – the conflict in Chechnya being an example of a perceived threat to Russia's territorial integrity –, while Brussels reasons that the EU's security policy must put the emphasis on foreign threats to its own sovereignty and territorial integrity. When the EU talks about security, it is actually talking about security outside its borders. Consequently, EU's security policy often leads to a paradox. On the one hand, it tries to convince non-state members, like Ukraine and Georgia, to take part in humanitarian and peacekeeping operations. On the other hand, it constantly skirts the issue of EU's contribution to conflict resolution in these two highly unstable countries. To this feature of EU's security policy we could add that Brussels' strategic and security policy is still on the design table and in the meantime EU security analysts are doing some soul-searching, although it is already insisting on a prudent use of force in settling violent conflicts at the international level.

For its part, Russia's view on security remains in a conceptual framework anchored in the logic of classical territorial security. The armed forces' mission is to secure the territorial integrity of the country, whatever the cost. The neighboring countries – or the 'near abroad' – are seen as a protecting shield and a buffer zone against possible foreign aggressors. However, today Russia's territorial integrity is more under the threats of some domestic political actors – with some potential but limited links with foreign states or organizations – than foreign dangerous states or illicit subversive groups. Another major difference characterizes the EU and Russia's security policy: The latter has been in a state of war for the last thirteen years. The deadliest armed conflict on the European continent is the one opposing the Russian Federal Security forces and the Chechen militarized groups. Located between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, Chechnya is the main source of regional instability whose effects can be felt far beyond the border of the Russian Federation.

In summary, the construction of a regional security network around the Black Sea cannot strictly focus on the resolution of 'frozen' and unresolved conflicts (Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transdniestria) and cannot elude the issue of the on-going Chechen war and its political and economic fallout. As long as the Chechen problem continues to bring its daily succession of Russian forces' destruction of Chechen infrastructures, hostage-takings and indiscriminate killings and summary executions of civilian Chechens, it will thwart any plan for real cooperation between Euro-Atlantic countries and Russia on the security in the Black Sea area[21].

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[21] HILL (Fiona) (ed.), A Spreading Danger, Timer for a New Policy towards Chechnya, *Ceps Policy Brief*, N 68, April 2005.

Transatlantic relations as a key factor

It is very difficult to conceive the elaboration of a Euro-Atlantic strategy for the Black Sea, which could combine the U.S., the EU and NATO resources, without taking into account the state of relations between transatlantic countries[22].

The EU's relative lack of interest in the Wider Black Sea Area can be explained, among various other factors, by its constant attention on the Balkan region in the last decade and the two waves of accession in 2004 and 2007. For the most active promoters of the Wider Black Sea Area the EU should pursue a well-defined and comprehensive strategy in that convulsive part of the world for three fundamental reasons[23]. First, the European continent, which extends to South Caucasus so the promoters of the Wider Black Sea Area believe, in is need of a political and economic stabilization. This could be achieved by utilizing the Euro-Atlantic institutional structures. Second, a more active presence around the Black Sea could serve as a rampart against potential threats coming from the Greater Middle East. Signs of this are already tangible, as the U.S., which makes of 85% of NATO's budget, has begun reconstructing Georgian airbases and stationing intelligence and military personnel for potential use in its own and NATO's activities in the Middle East and Central Asia. Third, a strengthening of Euro-Atlantic capabilities in the Black Sea area could assist in gaining easier access to huge energy resources located further east in the Caspian Sea area and beyond. These wide-ranging strategic objectives are sometimes supplemented with a moral discourse destined to win over the support of skeptic Europeans as to the EU's enlargements. According to this moral discourse, Western European nations have a historical and moral mission to make up for past wrongdoings and socio-economic damages that have been inflicted upon the Black Sea countries by former Communist regimes in the post-WWII period[24]. Highly ideological, this approach usually serves more as flimsy window dressing in defending military and economic interests[25].

Simply stated, it is clear that discussions about political and security issues in the Black Sea region have to integrate into their premises the global strategic and security interests of the United States[26]. To a great extent, NATO's objectives are more generally determined by Washington's global foreign policy. Euro-Atlantic structures come second in the U.S. elaboration process of its foreign policy. Since the beginning of U.S. military operations against Iraq in March 2003, transatlantic relations are going through profound mutations. Relations with the post-Soviet space are dividing Europeans and Americans, among other diverging viewpoints. Euro-Atlantic partners disagree about how to deal with Russia's 'near abroad.' Understandably, U.S. military

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[22] ASMUS (Ronald) and JACKSON (Bruce), The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom, *Policy Review*, N 125,2004.

[23] CELAC (Sergiu), Five Reasons Why the West Should Become More Involved in the Black Sea Region, *in* R. Asmus (ed.), *A New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region, op. cit.*, p. 138-146.

[24] ASMUS (Ronald) and JACKSON (Bruce), The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom, op. *cit.*

[25] BRAN (Mirel), L'activisme américain autour de la mer noire, *Le Monde,* 4 April 2005.

[26] CALLEO (David), The Broken West, *Survival,* N 3, 2004, p. 32.

presence in Russia's surrounding countries, in particular in the South Caucasus, has the potential to cause various annoyances in EU-Russia relations.

Moscow, and especially Russian army's generals, sees Euro-Atlantic cooperation through the lens of NATO's strategy and current plans. Euro-Atlantic structures are seen as an extension of NATO's military command and NATO itself is often seen as an instrument of US foreign policy. More fundamentally, the September 11 terrorist attack in the U.S. had a major impact, in terms of strategy and security, on U.S. foreign policy. Since then, Washington has decided to divert its attention from Euro-Atlantic cooperation to more pressing issues, such as terrorism, rogue states, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)[27]. With this redirected U.S. foreign policy, the EU and, particularly, NATO play the role of occasional contributors to the fight against terrorism. The EU and NATO are used as strategic and logistical levers in Washington's mission to eradicate from the face of the world terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda, Hezbollah or Al Acqsa Martyr's Brigade.

Difficulties in the elaboration of a Euro-Atlantic security strategy lie in the fact that the two partners find themselves in different historical situations and are preoccupied by quite different issues. The EU is a regional power engaged in a deep and long process of political, economic and military construction and consolidation. The U.S. is a global superpower tangled up in the web of current world security issues. As for the Black Sea region, Brussels' and Washington's interests differ on basically three aspects. First, for the United States, the Black Sea is only one region among many others where it is involved and where Washington's support is openly solicited. For the EU, the Black Sea is an inevitable part of its neighborhood and the theater of wide-ranging changes, which include preventing and resolving violent ethnic conflicts. Second, the implementation of the Wider Black Sea Area concept is strategically connected with the concept of the Greater Middle East, which is at this crucial juncture at the heart of White House's preoccupations. In other words, Washington considers the Black Sea region as a bridge connecting the Middle East with Europe. Third, the U.S., contrary to the EU and following the example of Russia in Chechnya, is at the moment fighting a war in Iraq. It is also fighting a 'Global War on Terror' that has no temporal and spatial boundaries.

Euro-Atlantic strategy for the creation of a security zone in the Black Sea region will largely depend on the evolution of the US/UK-led military campaign in Iraq and the 'war on international terrorism.' For countries of the Black Sea area, their political stance on these two global issues will determine their political and security dialogue and cooperation with the United States, Russia and the EU.

Conclusion

In this article, we discussed three factors – EU internal politics, EU-Russia partnership and transatlantic relations – that are contributing to the development and the evolution of the EU's policy toward the Black Sea region. However, two other processes are likely to affect how the EU and transatlantic states approach their future relations with Black Sea states, and particularly the most ardent promoters of integration into Euro-Atlantic structures: Yushchenko's Ukraine's and Saakashvili's Georgia.

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[27] DAALDER (Ivo), The End of Atlanticism, *Survival,* N 2, 2003, p. 154. ·

One process involves the GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) organization's definition of its status and objectives. GUAM was created as a geopolitical entity essentially to compete with Russia in the Black Sea area. The problem is that GUAM members have somewhat different preferences. On the one hand, Ukraine, Georgia and, to a lesser extent, Moldova seek to integrate into 'Euro-Atlantic' institutions (NATO, European Union). On the other hand, not one single country seriously thinks that Azerbaijan is a potential NATO member country, despite cooperation agreements between Baku and Brussels. Moreover, if 'colored revolutions' triumphed in Ukraine and in Georgia, Ilham Aliev for his part was successful in preventing such an occurrence from happening in Azerbaijan. Considering the existence of various national political situations, one possible scenario is that the West could make use of GUAM's leverages in its battle with Russia and Iran for political control over Southern Caucasus and the Black Sea area.

The precariousness of the GUAM organization doubtless explains the recent establishment of the Community of the Democratic Choice (CDC), an interstate structure. This organization comprises nine countries from the Balkan, Baltic, and Black Sea regions. The fate of this second process, to a great extent, will depend on the developing relations with the EU and NATO. At the moment, the West seems favorably disposed to CDC's actions and plans, but nevertheless it behaves with considerable sense and circumspection.

Despite many impediments, internal and external, the EU's involvement in the Black Sea region is likely to be reinforced with the passage of time. However, to a great extent, the EU's strategy depends on its internal political situation. The Black Sea region will serve as a litmus midterm test for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy and the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). This latter developmental instrument, which will become operational in 2007 under the new EU budget, is supposed to provide financial assistance to EU neighbors, and in the case of the Black Sea region, to the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC).

The EU's relations with states of the Black Sea Area will face two immediate challenges. The first challenge is the dominance in the EU neighborhood policies of a bilateral approach with states of the Black Sea region. Although complementary regional polices have been developed with all EU's neighboring regions (examples are the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the Stability and Association Process, the Northern Dimension), the Black Sea region remains the exception.

It is noteworthy that the EU actively participates in regional organizations and initiatives, such as the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, the Central European Initiative, Barents and Baltic Councils and others. But here again, there are no such organizations or initiatives that have specifically been created for the needs of the Black Sea region.

This begs the question as to why the EU has not yet propose the creation of an organization for the Black Sea region that is similar to the 'Northern Dimension.' True, there are regional sectoral programs and initiatives, including the Black Sea PETrA (Pan-European Transport Area) programs on transport, the TRACECA

(Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia), the DANBLAS (Danube-Black Sea Environmental Task Force) initiative and the INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe) program and multilateral agreement. But these initiatives do not correspond to a truly integrated and coordinated foreign policy. Simply speaking, a low level of support inside the EU is the main contributing reason for the absence of a 'Black Sea dimension.'

The second challenge will be to convince EU skeptics that a deeper involvement in the Black Sea region can bring about added value and be useful in achieving Brussels' security and economic objectives. For many EU members, Black Sea regional organizations are only 'talking shops' and have no particular relevance to the EU.

One positive sign comes from new EU member states and their Eastern neighbors. Countries like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland and the two members, Romania and Bulgaria, are increasingly joining forces in what is referred to in EU circles as the 'Baltic-Black Sea axis'. Also, the 'New Group of Georgia's Friends' was founded by four new EU members – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland – in early February 2005. These countries, through the 'New Friends' initiative, want to share with Georgia the wealth of experience they acquired in their process of accession to the EU and NATO. As a complement, they also want to promote the Wider Black Sea Area. Moreover, they also want to promote the Wider Black Sea Area as a region and a concept in achieving different security and developmental objectives.