
Introduction

The 2nd International Black Sea Symposium (IBSS) assembled analysts and researchers from the wider region, representatives from the academic/university community, policy-makers and key stakeholders (for further information see the list of participants). In light of the developments in the Black Sea region in 2008/2009 as well as the launching of the Eastern Partnership in the beginning of May 2009, the Symposium analysed the state of play and the way forward in the Black Sea region. To this end, the speakers of the Symposium were asked to outline and assess a number of key issues such as: energy security, conflict management, regional cooperation, the role of the regional and extra-regional actors, etc.

Overall, the 2nd International Black Sea Symposium was structured around eleven sessions which addressed the following themes:

I. Icebreaking, Introduction to the Symposium
II. The State of Play – Key Issues and Concerns;
III. Addressing the Protracted Conflicts;
IV. The Role of Stakeholders – United States, Russia, Turkey;
V. The Prospects for Integration into Euro-Atlantic Structures;
VI. The Energy Security Equation;
VII. The European Union and its Eastern Policies;
VIII. EU-Russia Relations – Quo Vadis?;
IX. Democracy, Good Governance, Institution Building;
X. Potential/Prospects for Regional Cooperation;
XI. Closing Session (for further details see the Programme)
Apart from the sessions, four Structured Dialogue Workshops, under the guidance of Professor Benjamin J. Broome, constituted a crucial part of the IBSS as they provided a forum for further thinking, discussions and mutual understanding among the participants (for further information see Annex I).

The welcoming address of the Symposium was delivered by Dr. Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, Director General of the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), who welcomed participants and speakers and briefly explained the structure, the context and the rationale of the 2nd International Black Sea Symposium. In his address, Dr. Triantaphyllou pointed out that the composition of the group is both fascinating and challenging at the same time as it contains academics, analysts, and practitioners from all over the world who will have the opportunity to discuss thoroughly the key issues at stake. Lastly, Dr. Triantaphyllou personally expressed his gratitude to the partners and sponsors – international, regional, national and local – for their strong support of the event.

Following Dimitrios Triantaphyllou’s welcoming address, Benjamin Broome, facilitator of the Structured Dialogue Workshops, also welcomed the participants and made a very brief introduction related to the work to be conducted in the Workshops, explaining the methodology and the key objectives of the four Working Groups.

In turn, representing the local authorities, the mayor of the island, Mr. Giorgos Roussos, welcomed the participants and expressed his wishes for a pleasant stay on the island.

Ms. Athina Christodoulou, speaking on the behalf of the Society for International Relations and Cultural Exchange of Kalymnos, referred to the work of the Society and pointed out various partnerships and cooperation programmes that are already in place among the Society and institutes from the Black Sea region. In this regard, specific reference was made to the close relationship with the University of Tbilisi in Georgia.

Finally, Ambassador Tedo Japaridze, ICBSS Alternate Director General and former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, gave an address which referred to the various interconnections of the region based on its common history and shared values and suggested that the Symposium serves as a platform of dialogue and understanding among young professionals that will shape the future of the region.

Session I: Icebreaking, Introduction to the Symposium
Panellists:
Benjamin J. BROOME, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ; Orysia LUTSEVYCH, Open Ukraine Foundation, Kyiv; Dimitrios TRIANTAPHYLLOU, ICBSS, Athens.

Following a brief welcome and clarification of the importance of the Black Sea region and the Symposium itself, the activities began with an icebreaking session for the participants.

The session was meant as a way for everyone to meet and get to know each other better. Everyone received an A6 sized paper sheet with a blank yellow post-it note on it. Everyone was asked to write his/her name on the yellow post-it and something personal that no one in the room would know about on the back of the A6 sheet. The team removed the yellow post-its and made sure that everything was retraceable. The A6 papers were then mixed and redistributed among the attendants, and each person had to find whoever wrote the note they had received. Once the author was found he/she was interviewed and introduced to the plenary.
In Session II, the first observation was that the world seems to be moving towards the establishment of a new balance of power marked by a change in approach. The election of President Obama, the financial crisis, the situation in Gaza, the India-Pakistan dilemma, and the Iranian enigma were mentioned as only some of the key factors, which have an increasing impact on the structure of the international system. Overall, it was argued that new debates are emerging in international relations and new concepts are being introduced. Keywords such as the “Post-American world”, non-polarity, and multi-polarity were brought into the debate, which touched on issues including good governance, democracy, and hegemony, among others. The point was raised that, since globalisation has expanded the degree of input of non-Western scholars, the debate is not solely shaped by the Western perspective.

At the regional level, it was stressed that new issues have emerged in the Black Sea. The first to be mentioned was the challenge of Russia’s power status for the new Obama administration and the strengthening of its role in its “Near Abroad”. Indeed, as of late, there has been a power shift in the Black Sea region, with implications that remain to be seen. Secondly, it was suggested that Turkey’s role and pro-active diplomacy along with the unstable status quo have led to competition between Russia and Turkey for regional hegemony. The third issue mentioned in the Session was the challenge of energy security and the debate for energy diversification within the European Union as the energy challenge shapes to a large extent the relations among the European Union, its Eastern neighbours, Russia and the United States. Fourthly, the phenomenon of weak states and the need for good governance were discussed. The key question was whether the states of this turbulent region are in a position to deliver on their promises for democratic reforms or not. Related to this, the issue of the EU’s leadership was raised since the EU plays a progressively more important role in the region, not only after its enlargement to Bulgaria and Romania, but also with its recently launched policies towards the region – the Black Sea Synergy (BSS) and the Eastern Partnership (EaP). If the EU is capable and willing to be recognised as a regional leader depends on a series of factors which involve, among others, the fate of the Lisbon Treaty and the state of EU-Russia relations. Another critical issue is related to the withdrawal of the Russian Black Sea fleet once the lease on Sevastopol expires in 2017, with unclear implications for the economy and the future of the Crimea.

Regarding the regional schemes, it was said that the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) has survived the August 2008 Georgian-Russian war and so far has managed to operate as a confidence-building measure for all stakeholders.

However, the region faces a number of paradoxes that derive from the different perceptions and conflicting interests of the interested parties. More precisely, the region has become a frontier for the West – in terms of energy security, migration and conflicts – creating certain tensions. At the same time, the dividing lines do not hamper the incentives for regional cooperation.

In addition, although the Black Sea region is one of the fastest-growing regions in the world, it still faces great economic disparities. The increasing prosperity of some states in the region has not resulted in the decrease of military threats, given that it has led to an increase in arms sales. Moreover, the issue
of energy security is both a unifying and a dividing factor; energy in terms of resources can operate as a common ground for regional cooperation, whereas pipeline wars have led to divisions.

Another paradox derives from institutionalisation. While regional cooperation is a goal for all regional stakeholders, the institutionalisation of these efforts seems to be quite a challenging issue. Last but not least is the paradox of the coexistence of globalisation and nationalism in the Black Sea region.

During the session, it was also assessed that the concept of a Black Sea region has been constructed based on three strategic shifts. The first was the end of the Cold War, which launched the processes of national independence and democratisation. This was a defining moment for the Black Sea region and fed the conflicts. It should be mentioned that throughout this process, the West was a strategic winner, given that the European model was applied for the creation of new state institutions. Secondly, the post-Cold War era brought the re-opening of the Silk Road, which contributed to the expansion of new commercial and strategic supply routes through the region. Thirdly, transatlantic relations were redefined. Regarding the relations between Turkey and the US in particular, it was argued that both the Kurdish issue and the war in Iraq alienated Turkey from the United States and the Obama administration will need some time in order to rebuild the relationship between the two countries.

Furthermore, it was suggested that Russia is wary of the process of democratisation in its “Near Abroad” and potentially could offer three models to its neighbourhood: the “integral nation-state” model, the “democratic federation”/modern model and the model of “imperial integrity”. On the other side, the European Union offers a competing model through its policies (the European Neighbourhood Policy [ENP], EaP, BSS). However, the EU has limited influence, given that it has no common foreign policy, limited military capabilities or other classical policy or institutional means to place itself in a more powerful position. It seems that it is in a position only to implement a developmental strategy, and must accommodate Russia’s opposition to its actions.

Throughout the discussions that followed, the main issues addressed were related to the role, policy options and limitations of the EU, Russia and the US. Key challenges identified in this context are NATO’s eastward enlargement, the Western democratisation/modernisation model, and the implications for EU-Russia relations.

Another issue that drew attention was Turkey’s position in the West. It was claimed that Turkey’s alignment with the West cannot be easily rejected, because Turkey’s importance in the East and the wider Black Sea region derives from its relations with the West, namely the EU and the US.

The last point was related to the eternal debate on idealism, political realism and constructivism and their application. It was concluded that states always act according to their national interests, be it Turkey, Russia, or the United States, but that their choices reflect a certain ideology.

Session III: Addressing the Protracted Conflicts
Panellists:
Oksana ANTONENKO, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London; Tedo JAPARIDZE, ICBSS, Athens; Carlo MASALA, University of the Armed Forces, Munich

In this session, the main focus of attention was the “five day war” between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 and its implications for the relations between the main actors in the region.
To begin with, there was an analysis of the Russia/Georgia crisis taking into consideration how the people in the conflict zones perceived the situation as part of their everyday lives. While the August War transformed the way people from the outside viewed the Caucasus and the main issues of concern therein (shift from energy security to protracted conflicts), nothing significant changed in the perception of the local populations. Abkhazians remained secure in their autonomy and at the same time skeptical of the increasing Russian aggression, while South Ossetians had already stopped regarding themselves as part of Georgia a long time ago.

In continuation, a number of existing myths which were discarded during the August War were highlighted. First of all, it became evident that a military solution to the conflicts in the Caucasus region would not be possible simply because of the presence of a large number of military forces. In addition, it became clear that an imposed solution to the conflicts without taking into account the aspirations of the local populations and without starting negotiations with all the involved parties would not be possible. Another discarded myth was that of the all-powerful international community applying pressure and forcing resolution of issues on the weak and disorganised “de facto” states. In fact, it was argued, a paradox exists in the region of “de facto” states having more developed state structures than the “official” ones. Finally, the myth of the conflict management structures in the region operating in an efficient and fruitful way was also exposed.

Following this rationale and trying to identify the main issues when looking to future steps that need to be taken, it was suggested that it would be in the interest of all involved parties if the idea of changing the existing status was abandoned. A renewed negotiation process ought to be developed in order to allow for the local populations to reach a modus vivendi. In addition, it was maintained that the “de facto” entities need to be included in the equation - the main concern being in what way these could be engaged internationally.

Juxtaposed to the bottom-up rationale developed above was a top-down/systemic approach used in interpreting the protracted conflicts in the region in the light of the events of August 2008. Beginning with the notion that conflicts were all about power struggle and competing national interests, it was argued that these conflicts would not attract the attention of the international community in the future for a number of reasons.

Firstly, there has been an evident change in the structure of the international system with a move towards international relations of the pre-modern world where great powers cooperated and/or competed for national supremacy. In this structure, the triptych state-security-power is central. The weakening of international institutions for various reasons further enhanced this change, with the great powers acting unilaterally and outside the international community in order to solve issues of national interest.

In this context, the results of the Russia/Georgia conflict led the major powers to lose any interest in regulating the protracted conflicts. Despite the fact that the actions of the Russian army could not pose a real threat to European countries and the US, the latter decided that Russian concerns would have to be taken seriously. As the major player of the Euro-Asian space, Russia was placed at the centre of attention, probably leading to a weakened interest of the international community in resolving conflicts without the full support of Russia.
Finally, the European “powers” and the US accepted the fact that for Russia the “strategic buffer” was of the utmost importance. In this respect, aspiring states in the region that would challenge the state sovereignty of Russia could not possibly be considered for engagement by the international community.

During the Q&A session that followed, a number of issues were highlighted. Among these, the notion of security as a zero-sum game was stressed and the relative success of Russia in making a strong statement in the region and preventing the accession of Georgia and Ukraine to NATO through the August conflict was brought forward. In addition, the idea of the “mighty” great powers imposing their will on the “weaker” small states was challenged with the idea that the latter, as it was argued, have relative leverage either through geographical position (Georgia) or natural resources (Azerbaijan).

Session IV: The Role of Stakeholders – United States, Russia, Turkey
Panellists:
Nadia ARBATOVA, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow; Zeyno BARAN, Centre for Eurasian Policy; Hudson Institute, Washington, D.C.; Mitat CELIKPALA, TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Ankara; F. Stephen LARRABEE, RAND Corporation, Washington, D.C.

The speakers respectively presented the priorities of the US, Russia and Turkey in the region. In this session, Russia’s regional position and its relations with its neighbours after the August war was the first issue discussed and evaluated. The financial crisis brought the need for cooperation, whereas the Caucasus war deteriorated Russia’s relations with its neighbours and challenged the identity of Russia as a model for economic and political development. Russia’s actions during the August crisis were interpreted as an attempt to change the status quo. However, others do not subscribe to this argument and claim that Russia’s reaction aimed at maintaining the status quo which was threatened. Additionally, there was an argument that it was NATO’s enlargement that undermined stability in the Black Sea region and among the stakeholders.

It was also stated that Russia’s reaction in the August war was as legitimate as the declaration of independence of Kosovo, but it was counter-productive. The Caucasus crisis increased the fears within the CIS of Russia’s unpredictability. In Transnistria, Russia is clearly part of the problem, whereas in Nagorno Karabakh, Russia’s position is weakening and the parties are increasingly relying on the US.

Concerning Russia-EU relations, the questions of how to deal with Russia and whether to apply the strategy of containment or engagement were the leading discussions of the panel. Despite the fact that the Eastern Partnership was launched before the August crisis, it does constitute a response to Russia and to the inefficiency of other regional policies and cooperation schemes. It was argued that the EU is trying to establish its “sphere of influence” in an attempt to deprive Russia of its influence over its six neighbours (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Moldova). In addition, the energy implications in EU-Russia relations were assessed. The point made was that neither the EU nor Russia can stabilise the post-Soviet space without the other and therefore it should be taken for granted that each others’ interests cannot be ignored. In this regard, it was proposed that Russia should become a key partner in the Eastern Partnership.

It was further stated that the confrontation between Russia on the one hand and Ukraine and Georgia on the other hand is seen as a victory for Russia. However, it was suggested that one should also
question whether this issue is high on the Russian agenda. Without a real partnership among these countries, there will always be turbulence in the region. Concerning the crisis in Georgia, for the first time after the end of bipolarity, Russia and the US came to the verge of a military confrontation in the Black Sea. In the aftermath of President Obama’s visit to Moscow, interesting developments have occurred, but the main problem – NATO’s enlargement - will not go away. It was pointed out that if the Obama administration takes a lead and encourages negotiations between NATO and Russia, it would remove all problems deriving from NATO’s enlargement. This is also in the interest of the US, given the strategic importance of the region.

As for Russia-Turkey relations, both actors are perceived as pragmatist international players. Regarding their policies towards the Black Sea region, it was argued that both countries have traditionally seen the Black Sea as their own lake and in this regard, especially after the Cold War, have been rather sceptical about the US role in the region. There was a time when they were both moving towards unilateral action in the region, but nowadays they are interested in accommodating each others’ interests. Ankara proposed the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform to constrain Russia’s assertiveness. However, there is a difference between the two countries’ approaches. Russia appears to be opposing the West, whereas Turkey is leaning towards the West due to its relations with the EU.

Elaborating more on the Turkish case, the question of whether or not Turkey is designing a different foreign policy on the basis of neo-Ottomanist/neo-imperialist claims was raised. It was pointed out that after the August war, Turkey started to address global problems and to put more emphasis on the policy of “zero-sum problems with neighbours”. Before the war, both Russia and Turkey seemed to favour the status quo. After the war, Turkey seems to have started implementing a more independent policy. The initiative for a Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform and the signing of a road map with Armenia have given the impression of a more constructive and pro-active role in the region. Additionally, Turkey has started to assume an active role wherever its interests coincide with those of the West, as witnessed by its mediation efforts between Pakistan and Afghanistan, Syria and Israel, and the US and Iran.

More specifically, it has become evident that Turkey is a key actor in the Black Sea region and that policy-makers act with this in mind. Turkey’s self-perception has improved tremendously, which has rendered its foreign policy more ambitious and active in promoting regional stability and security. Turkey’s neighbourhood, as stated, is being expanded and increasingly more countries and regions fall within its immediate interests.

Turkey’s priorities were portrayed as two-fold: conflict resolution and the energy challenge. Whether or not Turkey has the capabilities to address these issues is open to consideration. The key feature is the promotion of inclusive cooperation initiatives, such as the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform. This initiative is characterised as having potential, since it includes all regional stakeholders and it accommodates the interests of both regional powers, Turkey and Russia.

In contrast, a number of indicators were mentioned to counter the argument of Turkey’s capacity to assume the role of a regional power. After the war, it was claimed that Turkey started to assume an indifferent attitude towards Georgia, which contradicts with the role of problem-solver that Turkish policy-makers are eager to promote. Moreover, the normalisation of Armenian-Turkish relations, which started with the so-called “soccer diplomacy”, seems to have been stalled since the end of April 2009, and Turkey seems to have returned to its traditional position. This shows that the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh is beyond Turkey’s capabilities to resolve. Turkey and Russia may have common interests,
such as trade and energy interdependence, but their strategies differ. The credibility of Turkey as a regional power depends on a complexity of factors, including the conflicts, the success of the Turkish initiatives, as well as the establishment of cooperation with both Russia and the West.

The region is also of increasing concern for the United States, in terms of its energy resources, democratic reforms and revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia, and its direct borders with the European Union after the recent EU enlargement. The US strategy towards the Black Sea region is based on three broad focal points: democratic and market reform, energy and commerce, and security. However, it was said that among the impediments to a broader US regional strategy are the region’s diversity, historical animosities and ethnic conflicts, lack of strong regional institutions, and Western ambivalence over whether the countries of the region are part of Europe.

NATO's impact on the Black Sea region's stability and security is contingent on the transformation of Georgia and Ukraine, and on its continued enlargement. It was stressed that there are important differences between the Black Sea region and Central and Eastern Europe, such as the position of Russia, the qualifications of the applicants, the importance of identity issues, and NATO’s role. In short, taking Russian sensitivities into consideration, the strategic context for NATO enlargement is quite different from the one that existed in the mid 1990s.

Furthermore, the challenges for the Obama administration were discussed. The first outstanding issue mentioned was how to manage the aspirations of Georgia and Ukraine for NATO membership, and thus the implications of Article V and NATO’s credibility. It was argued that the door to membership should remain open for Georgia and Ukraine. Georgia should be supported not only in military terms, but attention should be given also to its democratic reform. As for Ukrainian membership, the discussion supported a measured approach towards its NATO accession, taking into consideration that there is a lack of consensus within the political elite and that in 2010 Ukraine may be led by an opponent of the country's membership in NATO.

The second challenge has to do with Turkish-US relations. The Bush administration and the war in Iraq deteriorated bilateral relations, but it was argued that the Obama visit to Turkey signals a good start and reflects the importance that the new administration attaches to Turkey as an ally in the Middle East. The US should continue to support the Turkish struggle against the PKK and Turkish efforts to normalise relations with Armenia.

As stated, the third challenge of the new US administration is to engage a Russia that wants to create “spheres of influence”. It was mentioned that there is some progress in strategic arms control and a compromise on missile defence seems to be possible. Yet, it was also pointed out that much depends on the developments in Iran. It was added that the European allies, especially Germany, are unlikely to support a confrontational course with Russia. It was also argued that the United States has little to lose by trying to engage Russia, because if Russia proves uncooperative and/or remains intransigent, the US can always revert to a policy of neo-containment. Moreover, as noted, it is more likely to gain European support for a tougher policy if the US shows that it made an effort to engage Moscow.

In the discussion that followed on EU-Russian relations, NATO’s enlargement and Russia’s potential involvement in the Eastern Partnership came to the fore. Another issue that was touched upon was Turkey’s support for Georgia’s NATO membership and its implications for Russian-Turkish relations. Given the importance of the latter after the August war, Turkey is not in a position to implement a firm strategy of support to Georgia’s NATO membership or to apply what Turkey’s Foreign Minister
Davutoglu calls “Strategic Depth” for now. It was stated that Turkey can create its “spheres of influence” through the establishment of trade relations with its neighbours, but it does not have the power or the leverage – given the domestic and external problems it faces – to implement an active foreign policy in practice.

Session V: The Prospects for Integration into Euro-Atlantic Structures

Panellists:
Mustafa AYDIN, TEPAV; TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Ankara; Christoph SCHWEGMANN, Division of Political Affairs and Security Policy (PASP), NATO Headquarters, Brussels; James SHERR, Russia and Eurasia Programme, Chatham House, London

In the beginning of the session the following key issues were listed as fundamental concerns for the future of the region: the protracted conflicts, organised crime, security of energy transport routes, the continuation of the “wider Europe” project, the future direction of Russia and the question of “how the Trans-Atlantic actors should become involved in dealing with regional risks”.

The first remark was related to the current institutional architecture, and the point made was that it can serve as a platform of cooperation, since all states involved are in some form partners to the Euro-Atlantic institutions and therefore need to act together. However, it was pointed out that what is missing is a coherent NATO Black Sea policy, while different structures within NATO are dealing with the region.

It was further explained that the region is not receiving clear signals from the European Union either, since confusing parallel programmes, such as the Black Sea Synergy, the Eastern Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy, are in place. In addition, the budget lines are not clear and the EU therefore tends to compete with itself especially when it comes to foreign policy issues.

In this regard, speakers pointed out that the different strategies and sometimes conflicting visions of the various players, both regional and extra-regional, have complicated the picture. With a particular reference to the EU, the concept of “inclusiveness” was mentioned as the Union for several reasons is still perceived as an outsider to the region by the various actors in the Black Sea.

Another matter addressed was the “ownership” of the integration process that is considered by many as a key feature of the geopolitical standpoint of the area. Some argued that extra-regional structures should be extended to the region or, preferably, that various regional institutions and states should formulate an “integration strategy”. Nevertheless, it was also argued that integration had limits. NATO and the EU owed their effectiveness to the fact that they combined common interests, shared values and collective capacity. States that had no wish or means to meet these criteria had no claim to be included.

Regarding NATO, after a quick introduction to the background and the philosophy of the alliance, it was remarked that the Alliance never speaks of “expansion” but only of its “enlargement”. NATO post-Cold War enlargement was a demand-driven process and NATO was a very gradual convert. Not until 1997 did a clear commitment and strategy of enlargement emerge. Overall, NATO’s “open door policy” (not extension policy) was a response to the requests of the new democracies in Central Europe and not part of an expansion strategy. Furthermore, it was in the past accompanied by deepening the partnership with Russia.
Concerning Russia, there was discussion of the NATO-Russia Council, whose activities were suspended in 2008 after the August war between Russia and Georgia. However, after the Strasbourg/Kehl Summit of April 2009 and the Corfu NATO-Russia Ministerial of June 2009, it was decided that cooperation should be resumed in all fields of common interest (such as Afghanistan, terrorism, etc). Overall, a key observation of the discussions was that NATO is not an enemy of Russia and its policy is not aimed at weakening Russia. It was argued that the negative image it has of being hostile does not reflect reality as Russia and NATO have a positive record of cooperation in many fields. Thus, establishing further channels of communication with Russia would be a positive step since the potential for a good partnership exists. It was pointed out that the main obstacle to a functioning partnership between NATO and Russia is a lack of trust.

In respect to the allies in the region, some participants asserted that the US is a proactive player, willing if necessary to override Russian objections to the region’s Euro-Atlantic integration, whereas the EU has been more risk averse and reluctant to think geopolitically. There were now several weighty factors diminishing NATO and EU appetite for further enlargement: the Russia-Georgia war of 2008, the global financial crisis and the still considerable burdens imposed by the last round of enlargement.

Some drew a contrast between the EU as a post-modern entity and Russia, as a traditional Great Power with a pre-WW1 and Westphalian view of international relations. It was argued that Russia’s capacity to miscalculate posed as many dangers as its ostensible strategy, producing “lose-lose” outcomes for itself and its neighbours. These dangers were now magnified by the diminution of Western influence in the region in the wake of the Russia-Georgia war. As a case in point, NATO now risked losing the considerable influence it had acquired in Ukraine’s extensive programme of defence reform. From 2000-2008, Ukraine, with backing from NATO, had committed itself to the development of armed forces that would be small, professional, well trained, well equipped, and affordable. But the loss of credible NATO membership prospects is now reviving interest in a larger, more traditional conscript-based force that risks being ill-trained, ill-equipped and not fundable. More significantly, principles that were regarded as all but sacrosanct before 2008 -territorial integrity and respect for national borders- were eroding and, in more than one state, being called into question. In sum, the integrity of both the Helsinki system and the post-Cold War order (the Paris Charter and Budapest undertakings) is increasingly at risk. Yet the response of NATO and the EU has been remarkably reticent to date.

A comment was made towards the end of the session that whilst NATO will not, as a matter of principle, concede to Russia a right of veto on further NATO enlargement, Russia has in practice acquired the ability to thwart the process. Some argued that if NATO wanted to develop a credible strategy vis-à-vis Russia it would have to take its own mistakes into account, e.g. Kosovo.

Some contested the view that the EU’s policies and presence in the region conformed entirely to the postmodern paradigm. Furthermore, it was also argued that it is important to define its agenda, prioritise its objectives, and deploy to this end the appropriate policy means.

The position of Iran in the region was also discussed, and it was stated that Iran could have a more prominent role as its current activity does not reflect its real power and potential. It was mentioned that Iran’s influence seems to be limited by the US sanctions, its economic situation, and its concentration on the Middle East, while a focus on the Black Sea region would overstretch its capacities. In this context, the BSEC-Iran dialogue was mentioned briefly as well.

NATO’s position towards Russia was mentioned again during the discussions and it was said that in
the 1990s, no NATO member state regarded Russia as a threat or saw NATO enlargement as a threat to Russia. Hence: i) Before the Russia-Georgia war, NATO had no contingency plans in case of the employment of Russian armed force against neighbours and, ii) its entire scheme of post-Cold War defence reform de-emphasised territorial defence focusing instead on the provision of new capabilities for “unconventional” threats inside Europe and expeditionary commitments “out of area”.

In reference to the current situation in the Black Sea region, the different relations of each nation in the area with NATO were mapped out. For Ukraine and Georgia both had submitted official applications to the Membership Action Plan (MAP) process. Yet so far NATO has not consented. However, it was said that the Bucharest decision of April 2008 on Georgia and Ukraine remains valid, but that the two countries need more time for their democratic and economic reforms. For some allies, Russia’s objections are the key inhibition; for others, it is the fact that membership criteria have not been met and that the necessary level of domestic reform and political stability has not been achieved. Nevertheless, both Ukraine and Georgia have gone well beyond the PfP framework in institutionalising cooperation with NATO: the NATO-Ukraine Distinctive Partnership of 1997 and Intensive Dialogue launched in 2005; the NATO-Georgia Intensive Dialogue launched in 2008.

Session VI: The Energy Security Equation
Panellists:

From the beginning of the session it was pointed out that energy and energy security in the Black Sea region are highly controversial and politicised issues that are always at the centre of discussions on geopolitics and are therefore influenced by regional and extra-regional actors. The principal actors in the region were named as Russia, Turkey, Georgia and Ukraine.

It was remarked in particular that if Georgia remains unstable, then its role as a transit state will be undermined, since continued instability will deter investment. It was argued that this has been Russia’s strategy and main objective so far, and that it is sending signals to neighbouring countries (e.g. Azerbaijan). The key observation was that the energy playing field in the region is based on the various pipelines, whether existing, under construction or planned, especially those transporting natural gas. Therefore, one can detect a hidden battle between Russia and the West over pipeline construction. A typical example is the Nabucco project, where it was suggested that all that is needed is political will in order to proceed with the project.

Concerning Ukraine, the main issue at stake is control of the infrastructure, and in this regard many believe that different ownership might be a possible way out. Once again it was pointed out that what is needed is political will, especially from the EU’s side, as the EU has so far been rather hesitant and reluctant to act in a coherent manner.

In this context, Turkey was mentioned as another pivotal country in the energy playing field. It was argued that from the early 1990s, Turkey’s position in the gas pipeline network was crucial in terms of political influence and energy interdependence. With the passage of time, Turkey also started feeling
closer to Russia. Interestingly, both Russia and Turkey, in different ways, started to believe that the West needs them more than they need the West. Currently, the issue at stake is the construction of the Nabucco pipeline. It was suggested that Turkey has overplayed its role and there is a lot of criticism. The Nabucco gas pipeline is considered to be a test case in many ways. The current lack of political will provides the opportunity to many countries to hide behind Turkey’s position. Lastly, it was said that it is important to promote direct links and connect the Caspian region with EU member states.

Regarding the energy policies of the US, it was said that every US administration in the recent past believed that it could handle Russia well but eventually itself back at the starting point as Russia has been playing a very competitive game. Overall, during the Clinton/Bush era the engagement of Russia did not work, and the decision to promote diversification failed to a certain degree.

It was agreed that every country has its own interests, but the challenge is to be both competitive and cooperative. Thinking only competitively often does not make any sense in commercial terms, with South Stream as a typical example. On the other hand, it was suggested that the Nabucco Project is commercially viable and beneficial, and it can be constructed step by step. Yet, what is still under negotiation are the transit issues, e.g. what price Turkey will pay for the gas as a key transit state. Overall, the keyword in the current situation, especially after the 2008/09 gas cut-off, is “diversification”, as countries need to develop alternatives.

Additionally, it was pointed out that Iran is not in the picture since it does not have the capacity to export gas, whereas Gazprom is extremely aggressive and its decisions always take the various geopolitical parameters into account.

During the last part of the session, the importance of the Caspian region was stressed because, compared to the OPEC countries and Russia, it is one of the few regions with vast resources that is relatively open to investments. Furthermore, it was pointed out that commercial viability depends not only on oil/gas prices, but on the efficiency of the production cycle as a whole. It was also noted that predictions of investment always change based on price fluctuations.

In the ensuing Q&A Session, the issue of security was raised. More precisely, one group argued that a breakthrough in Nagorno-Karabakh and rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia must go together. However, there was another side arguing that these two issues should be decoupled as was the case of Cyprus. Specific reference was also made to the situation in Georgia and it was stressed that it is very worrying as Russia has been sending threatening signals since last August and flexing its muscles. Therefore, Georgia will most probably remain a source of tension in US-Russia relations. The session concluded with a discussion of the role of the global and extra-regional powers. It was said that there is a need to find a new paradigm of power-sharing in the region, a model that was described by one of the speakers as being both competitive and cooperative.
The session began with a brief historical account of the European Union and its evolution since the 1950s, with a particular emphasis on its “foreign policy”. This account was divided roughly into two eras. The first was from its inception until the end of the Cold War, during which time the EU was a political project that had the primary objective to recover from World War II. The second was the post-Cold War era, when the objectives and the means to achieve foreign policy objectives multiplied.

More precisely, it was stated that after the end of the Cold War, there was a debate concerning the EU’s role and position in the world and how a common foreign policy could be formulated. The first phase of these discussions took place in the early 1990s when factors that had been taken for granted were now very unclear. For example, Eastern European countries were not at all certain to join the EU, there was instability in the Balkans and the world was changing in ways that no one could predict. In the second phase of these discussions – from 1995 to 2005/2007 – the dominant issue on the agenda was the enlargement of both the EU and NATO, with the accession of the Central and Eastern European countries. At the same time, the EU member states made the first attempt to develop an idea about the Union’s future (e.g. EU constitution) as well as a clear vision about the EU’s external relations in the form of a common foreign policy and the instruments that would be needed to implement this.

From 2002-2003 the main development concerning the EU’s external relations was the ENP. A key paradox regarding the ENP had to do with the fact that it was created to deal with the new neighbours without a clear consensus within the Union itself on how to approach them. Therefore, because of this lack of agreement, the Eastern neighbourhood was treated like any other, e.g. the Mediterranean.

In continuation, the speakers elaborated on the current situation. An Action Plan for the implementation of the ENP has been agreed upon, which includes issues such as visa facilitation and the extension of existing instruments (e.g. Erasmus) to neighbouring countries. However, there is still uncertainty within the EU because of competing visions on further enlargement. This uncertainty has a second dimension in the open ended question of what sort of foreign policy the EU should pursue regarding the countries of the Black Sea area, especially concerning the relationship with Russia. This issue was clearly reflected in two recent communications of the Commission (Black Sea Synergy: A New Regional Cooperation Initiative, 11 April 2007 and Eastern Partnership, 3 December 2008).

Despite the presence of these uncertainties surrounding the EU’s foreign policy towards the Black Sea region, it was argued that there is indeed a common base in the sense that all member states want this region to come closer to the EU. In this regard, the biggest challenge is to find a way to manage the growing expectations both within the EU and in the countries of the region with regards to this process, and to find a way to efficiently assist the neighbouring countries in their further development both financially and through the transfer of know how.

Furthermore, there was a discussion on some of the key developments in the wider Black Sea area that pose challenges to the stability and democratisation of the countries and subsequently to their relationship with the EU.
Firstly, the issue of competitiveness was raised, in particular regarding the influence of Russia in the region. This was discussed both in terms of aggressive tactics such as energy cut-offs and embargos and more strikingly in terms of soft power through, for example, the Russian Orthodox Church as well as the Russian media, which portray the EU as weak and disintegrating. In this way, the ENP has been systematically undermined. Secondly, it was stressed that the states of the region were driven by their own national sovereignty strategies and had no clear-cut or genuine intention to approach the EU. Finally, the issue of the Black Sea as a crisis-prone region was addressed. The existence of weak states and the instability in general has created lasting tensions among the regional actors and crises posing major difficulties in the way the ENP is perceived and implemented. At this point, it was suggested that there is already a dominant perception of the ENP as incremental, bureaucratic, and slow. The major challenge is for the ENP to affect the structural patterns in the countries of the region and to create dependencies.

During the Q&A session, a number of issues were discussed. Among these, the willingness of Russia to invest more resources and adopt a more hands-on approach than the EU towards the region was highlighted. In addition, it was mentioned that within the EU mechanisms the wider Black Sea area failed to win the “race of importance” vis-à-vis Africa, the Gulf countries, and other regions of the world. Finally, the issue of soft power was again mentioned, especially regarding the fact that the cultural links between the countries of the region and Russia cannot and should not be negated or ignored.

Session VIII: EU-Russia Relations – Quo Vadis?
Panellists:
Fraser CAMERON, EU-Russia Centre, Brussels; Arkady MOSHES, Finnish Institute of Foreign Affairs, Helsinki

This session dealt with the fluctuating relationship between the EU and Russia focusing on the dual nature of this relationship. Specifically, it was argued that it is a relationship with both positive and negative aspects, currently described by many as “business as usual”, and that it is largely defined by the following key characteristics:

i. energy interdependence;
ii. trade and the economic interdependence in general;
iii. the institutional framework of bureaucratic cooperation

The third characteristic was described as mitigating potential tensions, as bureaucrats working on technical issues tend to favour continuation of the “business as usual” approach, thereby countering inflammatory rhetoric from politicians.

As stated, the relationship has both positive and negative trends. In terms of positive trends, Kaliningrad and the re-admission agreement for the visa issues were mentioned as prominent “success stories”. Yet, it was argued that overall the negative trends seem to prevail:

i. Energy: it is a tricky issue as the EU has no access to the upstream market and Russia is clearly against diversification.
ii. Neighbourhood: the mentality is drastically different for each side since in Russia everything is considered to be part of a “zero-sum” game.

iii. Bilateral relations: Russia has bad bilateral relations with many “old” and “new” member states.

iv. Value-gap issue: legal commitments are violated by Russia, and it was argued that a typical example is Russia’s policy vis-à-vis the OSCE.

Overall, it was said that much confidence has been lost and that although the bureaucratic side drives the process, there is in fact little progress on the ground.

Aside from Russia, the EU is also a problematic partner. By and large, the EU is at a loss when it comes to dealing with Russia for the following reasons:

i. the EU tries to adopt a rather weak “win-win” policy when Russia is clearly pursuing a zero-sum policy.

ii. Russia in many cases has strong, clear-cut argumentation whereas the EU is struggling to adopt a common position based on the lowest common denominator.

iii. the EU incorrectly expects impartiality from Russia and does not take the priorities of political actors into account.

iv. the launching of the EaP has complicated the picture. It seems that the EU is trying to combine it with the Strategic Partnership with Russia, but it is quite obvious that the EU has neither the appropriate policies nor the institutional mechanisms to deal with Russia’s neighbourhood.

The interesting result of the abovementioned factors is that for Russia, the freezing of the EU-Russia relationship is a success. Although Russia’s economy is much smaller than the EU’s, in the diplomatic field it has achieved impressive results so far. One important point mentioned was that Russia prefers to talk with countries on an individual basis. In general, Russia is more self-confident and has been defining the agenda to date.

What the EU should do is to promote a policy that is value-, principle- and rule-based and that takes advantage of its soft power and its resources.

The second part of the session had a broader focus by including the role of the US. The initial observation was that the world is in transition as everyone is affected by the global economic crisis, which will also have major foreign policy implications. It was stated that the US remains the “indispensable nation” but sooner or later it will have to reduce its commitments and it is in this context that it seems keen to press “the reset button” and engage Russia – especially in arms control. At the same time, the EU is struggling to deal with internal problems (Single Market – Lisbon Treaty) and to assert itself as a global actor by using its normative power (International Criminal Court, Kyoto). Regarding its stance towards Russia, there is a difficulty in finding a common voice/position. Concerning Russia, it was argued that Russia is back on the world stage as an energy superpower, but it still faces huge domestic problems. A promising sign is that it seems more willing to work with the EU and the US than before the economic crisis.

A key point was that the relationship between the EU and the US is the most important political, economic, trade and cultural relationship in the world. At the same time, the EU-Russia trade relationship is far more important than the respective US-Russia relationship as 65% of Russian trade is with the EU (cf. 5% with the US). Indeed, the EU interacts with Russia in many areas, plus it is highly
dependent on Russian energy. On the other hand, the US and Russia have established limited channels of communication. Moscow still yearns for the superpower era and it will be difficult to overcome the Bush legacy, although the Obama-Medvedev meeting in London in April 2009 was quite promising.

Regarding Russian priorities and interests, the top priority is to overcome the current crisis, modernise Russia and, if possible, to diversify the economy. In terms of foreign policy, Russia wants to be recognised as a great power, thus rejecting US hegemony while maintaining at the same time good relations with China/India. In its near abroad, Russia has the objective to increase its influence over its neighbours, especially Ukraine, and enhance its presence in Central Asia. To this end, Russia uses energy as a foreign policy tool and a kind of a political weapon.

Concerning EU priorities and interests, the financial crisis tops the agenda, as it has already created recession fears and might also result in rising nationalism and a new divide between the East and the West. It was also stated that other key priorities are the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, climate change, and energy security.

On the other hand, it was argued that the US has Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Iran as top priorities, whereas the emphasis with Russia is on the arms control agenda. The big question is China and whether it will become a strategic partner or a rival. The growing economic interdependence is recognised by both sides but the future of their relationship is still unclear.

Regarding Russia and its position in the world there are different views. Some in the US and the EU view Russia as a quasi-fascist state as the Kremlin controls society even more than under communism or the Czars. It was suggested that there is no democracy, no free media, no civil society and no rule of law. Yet it was also stated that Russia cannot be expected to be a Western-style democracy after centuries of autocratic rule, and that there are also some positive signs as citizens are free to travel, use the internet, and start small businesses, and overall the middle class shows signs of growth. In terms of its financial situation, the positive trends mentioned were that Putin rescued Russia from economic collapse, the growth rates were steady (approx. 7%), the wages and pensions were paid on time, the Rouble was strong, and a $385bn stabilisation fund was created in order to withstand the credit crunch while many Western investors were making good profits. However, it was stressed that there is also a negative side, as the economy remains undiversified. After the recent crisis, the stock market collapsed and unemployment, inflation and the public debt started rising.

In terms of security, the situation seems rather complex. The Western world accuses Russia of being uncooperative on Kosovo and of adopting a rather aggressive stance towards Ukraine, Georgia, Poland and the Baltic states. Many in the West also argue that Russia is ready to use force (South Ossetia), left the CFE treaty, does not support the OSCE, and views NATO as threat rather than a partner. On the other hand, Russia sees NATO's enlargement as breaking a promise, the missile defence in Poland and the Czech Republic as a threat, the recognition of Kosovo as illegal, and US unilateralism/hegemony as unacceptable. Russia accuses the US of breaking with the ABM Treaty and of ignoring its role in the world.

Overall, it was stated that the real problem is the perception of the role of Russia in the common neighbourhood, especially when it comes to Ukraine (Crimea), Moldova (Transnistria) and the Caucasus. The EU and US maintain that each state should be able to decide its own foreign policy and alliance membership. The Baltic states in particular are feeling threatened by Russia's foreign policy.
An argument raised during the session was that the EU needs to be more self-confident as its economy is bigger than Russia’s and its military spending six times higher. Furthermore, Russia wants access to the single market and thus needs EU help to modernise its economy. The EU is the largest consumer of Russian energy and it needs to move to a win-win paradigm.

Lastly, a number of key questions were raised, such as: where is Russia heading internally?; how will it be affected by the global crisis?; how effective is the energy weapon?; how should the EU respond?; what will be the reactions of the Obama administration?; and what are the prospects for a pan-European security pact? A concluding argument of the presentations was that there are limited prospects for EU-Russia-US cooperation, and in this power-triangle the EU needs to be more self-confident. Whoever best survives the global financial crisis will be in a good position to increase their influence on the world stage.

Session IX: Democracy, Good Governance, Institution Building
Panellists:
Alina INAYEH, The Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, Bucharest; Aleksander ISKANDARYAN, Caucasus Institute, Yerevan; Orysia LUTSEVYCH, Open Ukraine Foundation, Kyiv

The introductory remarks centred on the European Neighbourhood Policy and the existing gap of expectations between what the neighbouring states of the EU want and what the EU is in a position to offer them at this stage. For further analysis, the speakers suggested that participants look up Mr. Steinmeier’s (Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany) speech of 10 June in Moscow.1

It was stated that in earlier years (2001-2003), there was indeed a greater interest in the Black Sea/South Caucasus region, and the expectation was that all countries would democratise in the same manner as the central European countries. However, today democracy is not very high on the agenda anymore and is perceived as old-fashioned or naïve by many, as the coloured revolutions of Ukraine and Georgia did not bring the expected results.

The connection between economic development and democratic development was also presented. It was explained that conflicts in the region led to improvised government, and that no economic development would be possible without the democratic evolution of these governments. It was also pointed out that economic interests often transcend democratic interests, e.g. in German-Russian relations.

Furthermore, it was emphasized that both the EU and the US have lost their confidence in the democratisation of the region. The deterioration of the situation was exemplified by a comparison of NGO laws in the region – compared to seven years ago, NGO laws are more restrictive (than ever before).

It was mentioned that the hope that Central and Eastern European countries would serve as an example for democratisation failed due to the deeper impact of the communist era in the Black Sea region. Moreover, it was accepted that legitimate democracies produce working democracies and that the concept of a minimal democracy does function in the initial stage of a state, though it will not be enough when the system evolves further. As the country becomes more sophisticated the system would need to be more sophisticated as well.

One speaker stated that, currently, the space to manoeuvre in the countries is much tighter and thus democracy needs to be promoted from the outside. In this context, a number of parameters were accepted, such as the fact that democracy will not be brought about through revolutions, and that middle class and business people constitute a crucial part of society. Furthermore, it was stressed that the groups that work for democracy in these states have make themselves indispensable to the government through their expertise. It was pointed out that the possibilities for democratic development are still there, although international interest is lacking.

In the next step, state building in the South Caucasus during the last 20 years was analysed. The first remark was that this process led to ethnic consolidations, while at the same time all the states developed vertical structures, which for Central Asia were even described as feudal.

It was also stated that within the states in the South Caucasus “checks and balances” were hard to create, due to lack of democratic tradition, absence of the concept of “nationhood” in the past (the South Caucasus lost its independence 200 years ago), and the fact that dramatic changes took place within a short period of time.

In this context, the political systems of the three Caucasian states were described – more or less – as follows:

i. The Armenian system was labelled as “economic politicalism”, where few are in power and the opposition hardly holds any power. It was stated that as the government loses legitimacy, it becomes harder to rig elections.

ii. Azerbaijan was described as being clan-structured and very traditional, with no room for the opposition.

iii. In reference to Georgia, the contradiction between centralisation and federalisation of regions was discussed.

Towards the end of the session some optimism was expressed, due to the presence of an evolving middle class that will demand democratic reform. It was further stated that a strong state means a democratic state.

In response to the question of whether external factors are important for democracy, it was remarked that democracy cannot be imported and that democracy assistance did not function for years, whereas a lessons-learned approach could have been more beneficial for the countries concerned.

Lastly, it was accepted that Russia is an influential factor in the region, which does not mean that democracy is not possible, but could cause a delay in necessary reforms.
This session focused on an overall evaluation of regional cooperation in the Black Sea region, the identification of its negative and positive aspects, and an assessment of the way ahead.

Firstly, the negative aspects of regional cooperation in the Black Sea were described. The region bears the burden of identity issues, which means an “all inclusive” regional cooperation does not seem to be feasible. It was argued that the region is over-institutionalised, but not many institutions really operate in practice. Instead, the focus should be on sub-regional projects, which were proven to be success stories in the past (i.e. the Black Sea Ring Highway).

In addition, it was pointed out that it is meaningless to condemn or praise Russia for its role. Russia is a factor that has always been present and will continue to do so. The challenge is to find a way to involve Russia in regional initiatives. In contrast, the US has a negative impact, being criticised for drawing dividing lines between allies and enemies. For example, the US supported the establishment of the SECI Centre in Romania while excluding Russia and Ukraine, as well as the Symposium of Black and Caspian Sea military intelligence, which was based on the idea that countries do not cooperate in order to pursue common interests, but in order to contain common threats, such as proliferation of WMD. The Black Sea Border Coordination and Information Center (BSBCIC) in Bulgaria is not operational, while the FBI Black Sea Program is absolutely unknown. There was concern expressed related to the US role - every initiative that is backed by the US is considered to be against Russia’s security (i.e. GUAM). This gives the overall impression that cooperation is against someone’s interests. Another point made was that Ukraine has never proven that it can add value to regional cooperation.

On the other side of the coin, there are a few important positive aspects. A frequent observation is that the BSEC has not managed to affect the daily life of its citizens. One should note, however, that today there are more regional organisations in the Black Sea region than ever before, and that this is a good sign for regional cooperation. There is more regional interaction and more people-to-people exchanges take place at the level of NGOs, think tanks, universities, and business communities. The region is developing, becoming more “globalised”, and moving away from being a peripheral area. Regional projects exist, such as the Motorways of the Sea, the Black Sea Ring Highway and the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB).

It was also emphasised that regional policies exist, and that multilateralism has been enhanced due to the EU strategy towards the region. Another positive sign highlighted is the fact that external observers have started to refer to the region’s strengths and opportunities. According to the EU, for example, FDI inflows are promising, there is potential in agriculture, tourism and fisheries, and the region holds a comparative advantage in terms of low labour costs and good quality of services. It was added that there is substantial GDP growth, new technologies and modern tools in education and training are being introduced, and the region is being increasingly supported by international actors and partnerships.

Furthermore, an attempt was made to answer key questions concerning the region. First and foremost, it is always argued that the Black Sea has no identity. Regions, however, are not only identity-
based and as Charles King argues in his seminal work on the Black Sea, regions are the outcome of their own time, so the definition of a region may have to do with problem-solving.

Secondly, the Black Sea is neither an economic region nor a security one. Actually, it was claimed that the Black Sea is a trade block. There is a slow but steady pace of economic transactions – Turkey and Russia have become investment and trade partners, and Greece, Turkey, Russia and Bulgaria enhance their partnerships year after year. The BSTDB has produced reports showing increasing cooperation with the EU, as well as the gradual adoption of EU and WTO standards by Black Sea countries.

Another point of criticism is the inefficiency of regional organisations. It was agreed that the majority do not perform well. However, it should be noted that their mere existence builds a sense of regional ownership. In any case, organisations never perform as expected, whether it is NATO or the UN. The proposal was made to focus on the ones that have shown some potential - the BSEC, for example, was urged to give more power to the Council, to dissolve or reform the Committee of Senior Officials, and to give more importance to the BSTDB.

Last but not least, there is a question of how to address the geopolitical puzzle. The Black Sea is not considered to be a region in geopolitical terms, given its divisions. Thus, it was suggested to promote and fund initiatives within the BSEC framework, which are flexible and locally based and have Russian approval as well.

Furthermore, it was argued that at the global level, there are forces, such as the current global financial crisis, that push countries together to build more infrastructure projects, given that the economies of the Black Sea region are interconnected and interrelated with the EU’s economy. In addition, new global issues have begun to be addressed at a regional level, such as the food crisis, which the Black Sea area is particularly able to tackle, given its potential in agriculture. Thirdly, the emergence of a trade route between Europe and Asia has rendered the region a hub.

At the regional level, it was claimed that there is potential in the cross-border programmes and in the EU-Russia-Turkey cooperation which is not based on a zero-sum game. It was also noted that we have passed to a second phase with regards to protracted conflicts. As stated, there is some kind of understanding today in relation to Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The status of the conflicts is clearer and the EU and Russia are not external actors. They are part of the Black Sea region, as such they increase the interregional flows.

At the domestic level, for the first time, we see bottom-up processes being generated from the civil society. A middle class and new political elites are emerging, states are becoming more efficient, and the region has witnessed substantial growth, despite the slow pace of the democratisation process.

In the Q and A sessions, regional initiatives were discussed and participants noted some important factors that had been ignored. The role of GUAM was questioned, given that there is a duplication of efforts between the BSEC and GUAM - some member states are the same and there is no coordination between the two organisations.

Moreover, the role of Iran was analysed. It was pointed out up that Iran is a sectoral dialogue partner of the BSEC, despite the fact that the international community is not yet ready to integrate it fully.

Another point of discussion was the Highway, which will connect European and Asian routes and will directly affect the lives of average people in the Black Sea region. A positive step forward was the acceptance on behalf of Moldova of the Highway Path to Transnistria.
There was a long discussion as to the role and the potential of the BSEC: how to address the global financial crisis, how to avoid duplication of efforts and enhance cooperation with other regional organisations – such as the Regional Cooperation Council, the Ionian Initiative and the Danube Commission – how to deal with the work load, and the fact that Senior Officials and Ministers are not occupied exclusively with the BSEC. There was also discussion on how to build horizontal communication among national Ministries beyond the Ministries for Foreign Affairs.

Last but not least, the need for good governance was stressed, as well as the need for multilateral action to solve global problems, such as illegal migration and climate change.

**Session XI: Closing session**

In the closing session there was a brief presentation by Benjamin Broome on the objectives and the methodology of the workshops which were held in the evening sessions of the Symposium. Following this, brief presentations of selected project proposals that were sketched out during the workshops were made by the participants. Finally, there was a detailed presentation of the new IBSS webportal and the opportunities it provides for further networking between the participants of the Symposium.

After the conclusion of the presentations, certificates of attendance were handed out to each of the Symposium participants by Dimitrios Triantaphyllou.

The closing session ended with Dimitrios Triantaphyllou thanking the local authorities of the Island of Kalymnos for their hospitality, the sponsors of the Symposium for their invaluable assistance in the realisation of this event, and last but not least the participants and speakers that took part in the Symposium and with their energy and their desire to interact made the event a very fruitful experience.
Annex I

Structured Dialogue Workshops

The rationale of the Workshops was to create a space for understanding and cooperation through *(dia)* talking or reasoning (*logos*) together and to allow individuals and groups with differences, disagreements, and conflicting goals to engage in *respectful exchange*. The general objective was to open *channels of communication* and create *possibilities for working together*.

The specific objectives of the workshops were to:
- identify and analyse issues that affect relations among parties in the region.
- propose a set of projects, programmes, policies, and procedures to improve relations in the region.
- provide an opportunity to form regional project teams.
- overall, learn more about the perspectives of others in the region.

The design of the Workshops aimed to provide the participants with the opportunity to:
- contribute their ideas and perceptions
- listen to the contributions of others
- produce results that reflect the variety of perceptions in the group
- become involved in joint projects, wherever possible.

In this context, the participants were asked to address/reflect on a guiding question: “What are the challenges to security, stability, and prosperity in the Black Sea Region?”

To this end the participants were asked to write their ideas on A4 paper (one idea per paper). Afterwards, their ideas were posted on the wall, through ordered turn-taking and then the participants were asked to clarify their ideas for the group. Lastly, the group selected and ranked the ideas of “higher relative importance”. The outcome of this process was very impressive as a number of projects were put in place. More precisely, it was decided to form groups that will deal exclusively with the following key themes divided into ten categories:

**List of Projects**

1. Regional conflicts
   - Establishing training for young journalists across the region by mutual (electronic) publication
   - Common peace building workshops (Cyprus style)
   - International monitoring presence in conflict regions
   - Carrying out Mr. Broome’s Workshop with representatives of conflict zones
   - Create platform/dialogue for Black Sea region (BSR) officials/academics/NGOs on issues of particular relevance
   - Establish website involving all BSR states
• Info sharing
• Local/regional news
• Search for partners
  - Peacebuilding trainings involving civil society of countries in conflict
  - Youth collaboration project
  - Formation of intraregional NGOs

2. Governance issues
  - Design national programmes by which young people educated abroad come back to their countries of origin and work within public institutions
  - MA on regional issues and cooperation e.g. University of Athens (MA in SEE Studies)
  - Exchange of good practices
  - M.A. Programme on Supporting Human Rights
  - Training for governmental, etc. officials on good governance
  - School for young politicians
  - Develop twinning projects for building institutional capacity
  - Provide free internet so young people stay connected
  - Joint research projects
  - Create networks of professionals (journalists, teachers, researchers) in each country and across the region
  - Develop cooperation between Ministries and civil society organizations in each sector
  - Policy roundtables

3. External influences:
  - EU policies in the BSR
  - Dialogue between Russia, EU, NATO
  - EU/US joint strong policy in the BSR
  - Pressure on EU member states to fully use possibilities provided by the current visa regime.
  - European Commission’s proposal on coordination of all eastern regional policies

4. Internal Issues
  - Student exchange programmes
  - To educate youth on the basis of European values which would shape the common vision of states’ strategy, their European choice

5. Intra-Regional
  - Workshops, summer schools, etc. (on Kalymnos): for young leaders from the Black Sea countries (also in smaller configurations)
  - Projects which enhance civil society from the region to collaborate across the region

6. Identity Issues
  - Founding of a BS University
- Breaking the stereotypes via the mass media, joint committees, official declarations
- Set up regional youth orchestra, with concert tours across the region
- Cross border projects, initiatives on culture:
  - Civic cooperation for pupils to acquire civic perspective on the nation, instead of an ethnic nationalist perspective
  - Summer schools, MA on the region’s different musical traditions
  - Students’ exchange programmes in the BS region

7. Natural resource concerns:
- Common EU energy policies
- Energy renewability projects

8. Practical cooperation:
- Promote Black Sea region countries scientific, educational cooperation/contacts through participation in conferences, workshops etc. – IBSS participants could exchange information about forthcoming events

9. Economic Issues:
- Microfinance loans with emphasis on women’s enterprises?
- Market reforms to create liberal, transparent, and predictable economic environment

10. Civil society
- Set up youth debate teams and undertake diplomatic simulations with teams from across the region
- Databases on civic society
- Student exchange programmes
- Discussions on what civil society means starting at schools

This report is a brief summary of the main points expressed during the 2nd International Black Sea Symposium and by no means spells out the ICBSS’ institutional policy nor does it necessarily represent the consensus of the 2nd International Black Sea Symposium partners or co-sponsors.

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