

## THE ACTIVITIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE BLACK SEA: ITS POLICIES, STRENGTHS-WEAKNESSES AND RIVALRY WITH RUSSIA<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Black Sea is a region of opportunities and challenges. The attractiveness of these opportunities pushes many international actors including the EU to involve in the politics of the region despite the challenges existing in the region. After the end of Cold War, it became possible for the EU to establish relations with the countries in the region. The eastern enlargement covering the post-Soviet countries in the Central and Eastern Europe led to an increase in the importance of the Black Sea region in the EU's neighbourhood. By the way, the EU has been involving into the region through various kinds of mechanisms. As the level of involvement of the EU to the region increases, the competition between the EU and Russia aiming to design their shared neighbourhoods in line with their own objectives has also intensified. This study aims to examine the EU's way of handling of its relations with the Black Sea region. In this scope, firstly, the EU mechanisms targeting the region will be elaborated. Secondly, the strengths and weaknesses of the EU policies in the Black Sea region will be discussed. Finally, the balance between the EU and Russia in the Black Sea will be considered.

**Keywords:** European Union, Black Sea, European Neighbourhood Policy, Eastern Partnership, Russia

## AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ'NİN KARADENİZ'DEKİ FAALİYETLERİ: POLİTİKALARI, GÜÇLÜ-ZAYIF YÖNLERİ VE RUSYA İLE REKABETİ

### Öz

Karadeniz fırsatlar ve meydan okumaları bünyesinde barındıran bir bölgedir. Bölgenin sunduğu fırsatların cazibesi, birçok uluslararası aktörü, Avrupa Birliği (AB) de dâhil olmak üzere, bölgedeki meydan okumalara aldırış etmeden bölgeye müdahil olmaya yöneltmektedir. Soğuk Savaşın bitmesinin ardından AB'nin bölge ülkeleriyle ilişki kurması mümkün hale gelmiştir. Merkezi ve Doğu Avrupa'da yer alan eski Sovyet ülkelerinin doğu genişlemesiyle AB üyesi haline gelmesiyle Karadeniz bölgesinin AB'nin komşuluk alanlarındaki önemi de artmıştır. Bundan dolayı AB bölgeye farklı mekanizmalar yoluyla müdahil olmaktadır. AB'nin bölgeye dâhil olma düzeyinde meydana gelen artışa bağlı olarak Rusya ile arasında bölgeyi kendi hedeflerine uygun olarak dönüştürmek noktasındaki rekabette de artış gözlenmiştir. Bu çalışmada AB'nin Karadeniz bölgesiyle ilişkilerini nasıl ele aldığı incelenmesi hedeflenmektedir. Bu bağlamda, ilk olarak, AB'nin bölgeye yönelik politika araçları açıklanacaktır. İkinci olarak, AB'nin Karadeniz'deki güçlü ve zayıf yönleri ele alınacaktır. Son olarak ise Karadeniz'de AB ve Rusya arasındaki denge analiz edilecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Avrupa Birliği, Karadeniz, Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası, Doğu Ortaklığı, Rusya

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## **1. Introduction**

The Black Sea region includes many opportunities and challenges for all internal and external actors having interests in the region. These opportunities and challenges constitute the main rationales behind the European Union's (EU) existence in the region since the EU has been involving into the region in order to benefit from the opportunities in the region to enhance the gains of European integration and to mitigate the challenges of the region before turning into threats against the zone security, stability and welfare in Europe.

The EU has been involving to the Black Sea region with a comprehensive approach extending beyond of the littoral states. Hence, the region has been frequently labelled as the wider Black Sea region in the formal EU documents. This article also approaches to the Black Sea region by embracing the wider approach of the EU to the region. The factors that have motivated the EU to involve in the Black Sea region can be grouped under five headings. Firstly, the EU would like to see the emergence of political systems basing on democracy, human rights and good governance in the countries of the region. It's not an objective specially identified for the Black Sea. This is the primary goal of the Union for the neighbouring countries. Secondly, the EU has been supporting the solution of the frozen conflicts in the region, such as Transnistria, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh, which pose a serious threat to the stability of the region. Thirdly, the EU has been pushing the countries of the region to fight against common enemies such as the organized crime, terrorism and illegal migration, which have the potential of damaging the security in Europe. Fourthly, the EU has been trying to achieve its energy security by improving its relations with the countries in the region. Lastly, the EU's performance in developing its relations with the countries of the region is a test case for the EU's standing as an international actor (Hatto, 2011: 24-26).

This study aims to examine the EU's involvement in the Black Sea region. In this scope, firstly, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) will be elaborated. Secondly, the weaknesses and strengths of the EU's policies and policy tools designed for the Black Sea region will be discussed. Finally, the balance between the EU and Russia in the Black Sea will be considered.

## **2. European Neighbourhood Policy and its Eastern Dimension**

### **2.1. European Neighbourhood Policy**

The EU has not achieved yet to come up with an answer to the geographical limits of the economic integration in Europe. However, before making a final decision about the widening limits of the integration, the EU wants to create a secure neighbourhood in order to keep the zone of space in Europe intact. In order to do this, the EU wants to transform its neighbourhood in line with its own model basing on economic and political liberalism. The need for a neighbourhood policy was firstly identified in the European Security Strategy in 2003. The document put forth that:

“The integration of acceding states increases our security, but also brings the EU closer to troubled areas. Our task is to promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the EU and on the border of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations.”

Successive rounds of enlargements not only changed the borders of the EU, but also forced the EU to create new forms of policies and policy tools to cooperate with the neighbouring countries. One of the factors that motivated the EU to take further steps to improve the ENP is the doubts about further enlargements. The EU’s rising concern for the ENP can be seen as a part of the EU’s desire to transform its neighbourhood to ensure the dominance of prosperity, peace, democracy, security and stability in these areas without effective transformative power of enlargement process. This situation was very briefly indicated by Romani Prodi, European Commission ex-president in 2002:

“The Union cannot expand indefinitely in order to promote its values and we must, therefore, develop a policy toward our neighbours.”

The Eastern Enlargement, covering twelve acceding states, finalised in 2007 and led the EU to think more systematically about its relations with the neighbours in the South and East (Lippert, 2008: 2). By the way, the further development of the ENP in the post-2007 context can be seen as a direct result of the EU’s urgent need for re-ordering its relations with new and old neighbourhoods. With the creation of the ENP, the diverse policy mechanisms and tools used in the previous era (MEDA, PHARE, TACIS programmes etc.) were abolished and a single policy framework became the legal basis of the EU’s relations with its neighbours.

Through the ENP, the EU aims to develop the bilateral relations between the EU and partner countries to enhance stability, security and welfare in the neighbouring regions especially by means of a transfer of European knowledge and principles. The partnership offered by the EU to its ENP partners has three main pillars, namely closer political ties, deep and comprehensive free trade and the possibility of visa liberalization (MacFarlane and Menon, 2014: 96). The ENP foresees cooperation between the EU and participating states in both traditional and easy-to-cooperate fields, such as education, environment and transport; and also in politically sensitive areas like border management and control, good governance, visas and energy (Andreev, 2008: 93).

In the design of the ENP, the EU heavily borrowed from the enlargement policy, which is undisputedly the most effective foreign policy tool of the EU. The most significant divergence between these two policies is the absence of an open commitment from the EU side for an EU membership, if the partner country achieves an expected level of transformation (Bordachev, 2001: 47). Yet, there is not a strict rule banning the EU membership of the ENP partners. Without providing a membership promise, the ENP has not closed the doors for such a probability. With

these kinds of policies, the EU can heal its enlargement fatigue by keeping the neighbouring countries in its own orbit. In the absence of membership carrot, the neighbouring countries and regions have been persuaded to share this EU ideal with some other mechanisms, such as financial aid, easy access to the EU market, visa abolition or facilitation and technical support.

Within the framework of the ENP, cooperation between the EU and partner countries has been managed on the basis of the action plans. A country's success is also judged on the basis of its compliance to the issues identified in its action plan. The ENP is conducted in line with 'more for more' principle. This means that a partner country should do more reforms to get more rewards from the EU. The main rewards provided by the EU within the framework of the ENP are market access, mobility of people and a greater share from the financial assistance allocated to the programme. The ENP is financed through European Neighbourhood Instrument and € 15.4 billion was allocated to the ENP to assist sixteen partner countries for the period of 2014-2020 (European External Actions Services webpage).

## **2.2. Eastern Partnership**

Eastern Partnership (EaP) was launched in May 2009 in the Prague Summit as the eastern dimension of the ENP. With the EaP, the EU aimed to establish closer relations with the six countries in the Eastern Europe and South Caucasus. The EaP bases on the European values of freedom, democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights. The willingness to accept and promote these values is expected from the participating partners of the programme.

The policy emerged as a result of the insistent demands coming from some EU member states, notably Poland and Sweden, to reinforce the ENP's eastern dimension (Christou, 2010: 417-418). Even while it was a candidate for the EU membership, Poland started to lobby for the establishment of an eastern dimension for the EU, which would be similar to the northern dimension promoted by Finland since the country sees its security possible only in a fully sovereign and European oriented neighbourhood (Meister and May, 2009: 1). However, the EaP was established only after Poland achieved to get the support of Sweden, in response to the French attempt for adding a Mediterranean dimension to the ENP (Łapczyński, 2009: 145). Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 also played a vital role in the emergence of the EaP (MacFarlane and Menon, 2014: 96). Division of the ENP between southern and eastern dimensions strengthened the EU in addressing the specific needs of the regions more efficiently. Exclusion of Russia and Turkey, which are the two major players in the Black Sea region, from the multilateral dimension of the EaP can be identified as one of the weaknesses of this policy.

The EaP was designed in a way to include both bilateral and multilateral cooperation with an emphasis over the former. While the former dimension aims to the adaptation of new generation association agreements, development of deep and comprehensive free trade areas, conclusion of mobility and security pacts and close

cooperation in the field of energy security; the latter aims to complement the bilateral relations by creating a forum of consultation in which the participating countries can come together on a regular basis to discuss the issues of common interest (Elsuwege, 2010: 205-206). It was built upon the principals of shared ownership, responsibility, differentiation and mutual accountability. (Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit, 2015).

Currently, the EaP will move to a new phase with the implementation of the agreed association agreements between the EU and partner countries. In this process, the EU should be more responsive to the developments in the partner countries and should award the progress in order to achieve the sustainability of the process and to create motivation for further reforms. The newly adopted result-oriented approach of the EU focusing on the twenty deliverables by 2010 can improve the performance of the EaP. By means of this initiative, the EU can mobilize its limited resources for the region in a more effective way. (European Commission, 2017).

### **3. The EU in the Black Sea in terms of its Strengths and Weaknesses**

The current shape of the Black Sea region emerged with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the region started to take the attention of external actors with the end of the Cold War. In addition to its economic and trade potential, the Black Sea region is also an energy corridor connecting Europe to the rich energy sources in the Caspian basin and beyond. The EU concluded partnership and cooperation agreements with all the post-Soviet littoral countries of the Black Sea during 1990s. By this way, some economic favours were given to these countries by the EU in return for economic and political reforms (Efe, 2013: 55). However, the EU had not developed specific policies and policy tools targeting the region till the beginning of 2000s. However, thanks to this early involvement in the region, the EU has become the main trade partner and foreign investor for many Black Sea countries.

The biggest EU enlargement finalised in 2007 with the membership of 12 new countries, the EU's external borders have changed radically. The biggest change occurred in the EU's eastern borders. The EU became a neighbour with the regions including economically poorer and politically less stable countries. As a result of this, the development of a policy framework targeting neighbouring regions and countries became obligatory.

In the current situation, by means of various policies and mechanisms under its domain, the EU has been paying effort to achieve the Europeanization of the Black Sea region. Firstly, there are EU member states, namely Bulgaria and Romania. Secondly, a process of accession has been operating for Turkey, which has been negotiating with the EU for membership since 2005. Thirdly, there is a strategic partnership between the EU and Russia. Lastly, there are ENP countries, namely Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. Briefly, all the countries in the Black Sea region have been cooperating with the EU through different mechanisms. The diversity of the EU policies targeting the region is

reflecting the variety of the actors in the Black Sea. The variety of the EU programmes and mechanisms designed for the Black Sea region can be seen as an evidence for the EU's intention of fully utilising the potential of the region.

As mentioned before, the EU is one of the many actors that have been taking part in the Black Sea region. In this part, the strengths and weaknesses of the EU in establishing relations with the countries in the Black Sea region will be identified separately. It is better not to see the list below as an exclusive one.

### **3.1. The EU's Strengths in the Black Sea**

Due to the geographical proximity, any type of instability in the Black Sea has the potential of threatening the zone of peace in Europe and the reverse enhances the security and stability in Europe. This constitutes one of the main rationales behind the EU's existence in the region. Through its policies, the EU aims to support and guide the countries of the region in their attempts for political, economic and social transformations. Despite the critiques related to the capacity of the EU as a foreign and security policy actor, the EU has the required capacity to achieve this objective especially thanks to the experiences gained through successive and challenging rounds of enlargements.

Black Sea countries are generally willing to cooperate with the EU and accept the European model as an ideal for their economic, political and social transformation. In addition, the countries of the region have also seen the EU as an alternative that will serve to the decrease of their unwanted dependence to Russia. Besides, despite the absence of a commitment for the EU membership in the ENP, many Black Sea countries have still had dreams about being an EU member in an undefined future. A combination of these factors creates legitimacy for the EU's existence in the region and empowers the EU in shaping the Black Sea region in line with its own vision.

There are many international organizations operating in the Black Sea, such as Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). None of the actors identified can handle all the challenges in the region with their current capacities dedicated to the region. Therefore, the EU should design its policies targeting the region in line with the activities of these organizations without causing a duplication of resources and any confrontation with these organizations. As an experienced negotiator, the EU has the capacity to form a harmony among the various initiatives targeting the region. By creating complementarities, the EU can further enhance the effectiveness of its policies. A good division of labour may serve to the interests of all the actors having similar objectives in the region by increasing the gains from the opportunities in the region.



### 3.2. The EU's Weaknesses in the Black Sea

Black Sea region is composed of countries that have highly diversified in terms of their size and power, their systems of governance, the sophistication of their economic and financial structures and human development indicators (Aydin and Triantaphyllou, 2010: 375). Additionally, there are several unresolved and mostly frozen conflicts between many countries in the region. By considering the different motivations of the countries in the region, it will be very difficult for the EU to design a general scheme that will make all the participating actors pleased by meeting their expectations in full. That is why the EU has been giving priority to a bilateral approach rather than a multilateral approach in its relations with the countries in the region through the EaP (Celac and Manoli, 2006: 201).

The EU initiatives targeting the Black Sea region have been formed with a top-down approach (Andreev, 2008: 104). This means that the expectations and needs of the countries in the region have not been considered in defining the content of the policies. Besides, there is not a balanced relationship between the rewards provided by the EU and the costs related to the anticipated reforms from the ENP countries (Boonstra and Shapovalova, 2010: 2). The EU has been always stressing its aspiration for the further and gradual development of the relations with the countries of the region. However, it has always refrained from making any commitments regarding the final point of the improved relations. Absence of a prospect of the EU accession makes achievement of the compliance with the conditions established through action plans harder and affecting the political willingness of the Black Sea countries adversely.

The EU has not achieved to build itself as a coherent actor in the field of foreign policy. Inconsistencies in its Black Sea policies can be understood as an extension of its weaknesses in the field of foreign policy. Foreign policy has been still a field in which EU member states are competing with each other to ensure the dominance of their own interests in the final outcome, rather than a field in which member states have agreed on a common idea. All the EU member states do not have the same level of concern for the Black Sea region. While some of them have been pushing the EU to develop closer ties with the countries of the region in order to maximize their deeply entrenched interests in the region; some others have been preventing the dedication of the EU's limited foreign policy sources to this region in order for their mobilization in some other neighbouring regions that will bring more gains for them.

By examining the EU's performance in case of the developments in Ukraine, it can be said that EU should enhance its capacity to react promptly and effectively to the developments and newly-emerging needs in the Black Sea region. Bearing in mind that with the current level of the EU integration in the field of foreign and security, it is not possible to be optimistic about the emergence of such a change in the EU's capacity to respond developments in the region effectively at least in the near future. In order to reach this objective, the EU should develop new policy

instruments or reconsider its existing policy tools in a way to create a capacity to respond immediately and effectively to the developments in the region.

The EU has very limited financial sources for the conduct of its foreign policy. After designing policies for its neighbourhood, the EU's willingness for applying these policies reduced significantly. As a result, the ENP has faced severe criticisms since 2011. The developments such as Arab Spring, Ukraine Crisis, clash with Russia, Syrian Civil War and refugee flows have affected the neighbouring countries deeply. In this setting, the ENP failed to fulfil its primary objective which is forming a secure and stable neighbourhood (Wesselink and Boschma, 2017: 17). That is, the EU did not give all the necessary funds for the EaP's proper functioning. Instead, countries of the South (Egypt, Tunisia, etc.) were favoured in the distribution of limited sources (Cioculescu, 2013: 12). Absence of enough funding is a severe problem for the success of the EU policies targeting the Black Sea.

The EU has been involving in the Black Sea by means of various mechanisms. In addition to the ENP and its regional variant EaP, there is also Black Sea Synergy created in 2008 by the EU for the development of the good relations among the countries of the region to solve the problems of the Black Sea region. The Black Sea Synergy made emphasis over the regional cooperation and thought by the EU as the complement of the EaP having a bilateral approach. However, there may be some overlaps among these many EU mechanisms and policies. Therefore, achieving a high level of coordination among these EU initiatives is necessary (Elsuwege, 2010: 208). Besides, building common goals and will among the Black Sea countries has been a difficult task. The Black Sea countries are stick more to their national interests rather than a common good (Manoli, 2010: 24).

#### **4. Rivalry with Russia for the Black Sea**

There were many reasons to be optimistic about the future path of the EU-Russia relations after the end of Cold War, even the Russian attitude towards the big EU enlargement covering the Central and Eastern European countries was positive in general. This is due to the fact that Russia saw the EU enlargement as a chance for the improvement of the conditions of the Russian-speaking minorities living in these countries (Bordachev, 2001: 50-51). However, Russia started to feel regret about this enlargement, once it realized that it lost its influence on the Eastern Europe with the transformation of these countries into EU member states in the early 2000s.

When the ENP was launched in 2004, Russia did not want to be a part of it as Russia wanted to construct its relationship with the EU on an equal footing and has pursued a policy of self-exclusion from any EU initiative that might suggest that it is in any way inferior (Christou, 2010: 424). Therefore, the relations between the EU and Russia were formed as a strategic partnership.

With the self-confidence stemming from the ownership of rich natural gas sources as well as its control over the world energy markets, Russia has redefined its role in



the international politics. Current state of affairs can be thought as a period in which Russia has been looking for the recognition of its new status by the other significant actors of the international politics including the EU. Rising level of conflict and competition in the relations between the EU and Russia can be evaluated as a part of this general trend. As a result, Russia with its current rising international and regional positioning turned into an actor that cannot be ignored by the EU aiming to take initiatives to enlarge its area of influence in the post-Soviet space. The EU and Russia are two actors aiming to reshape their common neighbourhood in line with their own priorities. The first signals of the Russian challenge to the EU's ambitions towards the East came in 2008 with the war in Georgia. Yet, the Ukrainian crisis and the annexation of Crimea showed Russian intention to block the EU's expansion in the region even by using mere force. When the EaP was formed in 2009, Russia reacted negatively. It found the initiative as an attempt of the EU to expand its sphere of influence into the areas traditionally regarded by Russia as its area of influence (Michalski, 2009: 10).

Russia is not fond of rising influence of any outside actors in the Black Sea region, especially in a time period when Russia has been seeking for ways to increase its diminished influence on the Black Sea after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Therefore, Russia has unrest about the rising influence of the EU in the region since such an increasing existence is reducing Russia's importance as a trade partner, main investor and security provider (Dura, 2009: 16). That is why Russia has been frequently emerging as a factor that is hampering smooth development of the relations between the countries of the region and the EU by using its capacity to influence foreign policies of the Black Sea countries (Kocamaz, 2007: 73). While the EU uses soft power instruments to transform the region, Russia has been relying on both soft and hard power mechanisms. That is, both parties have been utilizing different tools in order to promote their interests in the Black Sea (Averre, 2009: 1707).

In a response to Ukrainian attempts for concluding an association agreement with the EU, Russia annexed Crimea and destabilised the eastern part of Ukraine by directly involving in the conflicts between Ukrainian military forces and insurgents, which even led to the fall of a Malaysia Airlines plane over eastern Ukraine (Blockmans, 2014: 2). As a result, Ukraine refrained from signing an association agreement with the EU in 2013. Similarly, Armenia also selected to be a part of the customs union of the Eurasian Economic Community, despite its responsibilities towards the EU with the association agreement between the parties. This means that the countries in the Black Sea can give up establishing more deeper and firmer economic and political relations with the EU under the pressures coming from Russia. The EU has been implying sanctions against Russia after its annexation of Crimea. Yet, despite these sanctuary measures, it is not possible to claim that there is a unity among the EU member states in terms of attitudes towards Russia. The high level of

dependency of some EU countries to Russia in terms of meeting their energy needs has made harder for these countries to adopt a harsh attitude against Russia.

Russia, on the one hand, tries to limit the Europeanization or Westernization of the region; on the other hand it tries to shape the region in accordance with its own interests, especially by using energy weapon (Hatto, 2011: 27). In comparison to the model promoted by the EU, which has also many ambiguities, Russia couldn't have offered a fully-fledged model of development and integration yet. Russia has had a tendency to rely on political, economic and military mechanisms to maintain its influence (Dura, 2009: 16). By taking the EU itself as a model, Russia, Kazakhstan and Belorussia formed a customs union in 2010 which is expected to turn later into Euroasian Economic Union. Russia would like to see the countries in the Black Sea as the members of the customs union established by it, rather than establishing association relations with the EU. With its size and economic weight, Ukraine was seen as a decisive part of its zone of its influence by Russia, which is vital for its restoration of its lost superpower status. Therefore, it reacted firmly to prevent establishment of an association between the EU and Ukraine (Rywkın, 2014: 122, 124).

Association framework proposed by the EU has been forcing the countries of the Black Sea to make a choice between two alternative projects since it is impossible for these countries to be in association with the EU and to be a part of the customs union of Russia at the same time. Therefore, by signing an association agreement with the EU, these countries will lose the advantages of trading with Russia. It is difficult to make a decision for these countries because the public opinion is divided on these alternatives. For example, in case of Ukraine, while the western part of the country is an ardent supporter of the European alternative, the eastern part of the country wants to have closer relations with Russia (MacFarlane and Menon, 2014: 98). Briefly, if the EU designs its policies in the Black Sea in a way to alienate Russia, it should be prepared to face with an increasing competition with Russia (Nilsson, 2008: 37).

Briefly, the EU and Russia have a shared neighbourhood, which is also including the Black Sea region. Besides, these actors are for the domination of stability in this area, but they may differ in methods for achieving it. They can reach this goal more easily, if they achieve a certain level of harmony among their actions in the Black Sea (Arbatova, 2008: 13-14). Additionally, by establishing cooperative relations in the Black Sea, the EU and Russia may increase their powers in the international politics. For the success of its initiatives in the Black Sea, the EU should persuade Russia in that none of these initiatives have been directed against Russia. Improvement of the relations between Russia and the EU or a contribution to the improvement of the relations between Russia and other countries in the region that are also eager to establish close cooperation with the EU can be working formulas for achieving this objective. In addition, the EU should state officially that the EaP

has not operating at the expense of Russian interests in the region and encourage the countries in the programme to form good relations with Russia (Lapczyński, 2009: 155)

## **5. Conclusion**

The EU has been trying to design its policies targeting the Black Sea in a way to benefit from the opportunities of the region by eradicating the challenges or mitigating their effects. As indicated before, the Black Sea region can be defined as an area taking attention of the regional and international players having diverse and competing interests related to the region (Hatto, 2011: 27).

There are two main competing approaches towards the Black Sea, which have not yet learnt to exist together. One of them aims to bring states of the region closer to the Europe, the other one basing on the dominance of Russian power in the region is similar to the one prevailing in the Cold War. Both models have their own strengths and weaknesses. By elaborating on the strengths and weaknesses of the EU model briefly, it can be clearly argued that the weaknesses of the EU model still prevail over its strengths. Therefore, in the existence of two competing alternatives, the countries of the region may face a difficult dilemma between these two competing approaches as long as a way for the co-existence of these approaches can't be found.

While the EU argues that its involvement in the Black Sea is serving to the interest of Russia indirectly by ensuring the dominance of the stability and security in the region, Russia has a tendency to see this involvement as an action against its interests in the region (Elsuwege, 2010: 209). On the other hand, the current developments in the region, mainly Russian actions of involvement in Crimea and Ukraine, have been forcing the EU to re-define its position and role in the region. This process is also related with the EU's self-identification which can stay either limited to the European continent or turn into a global actor that has also a capacity to influence developments outside Europe.

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