

# THE EUROPEAN UNION’S BLACK SEA REGION POLICY\*

## *AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ’NİN KARADENİZ BÖLGESİ POLİTİKASI*

## ПОЛИТИКА ЕВРОСОЮЗА К ЧЕРНОМОРСКОМУ РЕГИОНУ

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### ABSTRACT

After Romania and Bulgaria entrance in to the EU, the Black Sea region has become very important for the European Union. First of all, stability and security in the Black Sea region is important for the EU. This region is also a main concern for the European Union regarding of preventing the spread of organized crime and terrorism. On the other hand, this region is an important hub for energy and transport flows for the EU.

The EU is an important economic and trading partner for the Black Sea countries and makes many efforts to stimulate democratic and economic reforms and supports regional development of the whole region. In this context, “Black Sea Synergy” Programme as an EU initiative was launched in 2007, and finally in May 2009, the EU adopted the “Eastern Partnership” a plan to foster closer political and economic ties with these countries of the region.

#### **Key Words:**

European Union, Black Sea region, Black Sea Synergy, Eastern Partnership

### ÖZET

Bulgaristan ve Romanya’nın AB’ye girmesinden sonra, Karadeniz bölgesi Avrupa Birliği için çok önemli hale geldi. İlk olarak, Karadeniz Bölgesinde istikrar ve güvenlik AB için önemlidir. Bu bölge organize suçlar ve terörizmin yayılmasını önlemede Avrupa Birliği için bir endişe kaynağıdır. Öte yandan, bu bölge AB için enerji ve ulaşım için önemli bir terminaldir.

AB Karadeniz ülkelerinin önemli bir ekonomik ve ticari ortağıdır ve tüm bölgede bölgesel kalkınmayı desteklemekte ve demokratik ve ekonomik reformları teşvik etmek için çok çaba harcamaktadır. Bu kapsamda, 2007’de “Karadeniz Sinerjisi” Programı bir AB girişimi olarak başlatıldı ve sonuç olarak AB bölge ülkeleriyle yakın siyasi ve ekonomik bağları teşvik etmek için “Doğu Ortaklığı” planını benimsedi.

#### **Anahtar Kelimeler:**

Avrupa Birliği, Karadeniz Bölgesi, Karadeniz Sinerjisi, Doğu Ortaklığı

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## РЕЗЮМЕ

После вступления Болгарии и Румынии в ЕС, черноморский регион приобрёл особое значение для Европейского Союза. Впервые для ЕС безопасность и стабилизация в черноморском регионе стал важнейшим фактором. Этот регион для ЕС является источником опасения на пути предотвращения организованной преступности и распространения терроризма. С другой стороны, он для ЕС значительный терминал энергоносителей и транспортирований.

ЕС важный партнёр государств черноморского региона в сферах экономики и торговли, он поддерживает их на пути развития демократических и экономических реформ. В рамках этого проекта в 2007 году по инициативе ЕС началась программа “Черноморское синержи” и в итоге ЕС принял план “Восточное партнёрство” для поддержания близких политических и экономических связей со странами черноморского региона.

### **Ключевые слова:**

Европейский Союз, черноморский регион, черноморское синержи, восточное партнёрство

### **Introduction:**

The Black Sea region – defined as the land from Balkans to the Caucasus and from the Ukrainian steppe to Anatolia- is once again squarely within the field of view of European policy makers. Nowadays, the European Union and NATO border the Black Sea on the west (King,2009:2). This region includes Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Though Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Greece are not littoral states, history, proximity and close ties make them natural regional actors (European Commission, Black Sea Synergy Initiative, 2007). On the other hand, the Black Sea region is heterogeneous politically, economically and culturally and in shapes and sizes of its countries. It is said that the Black Sea is a region with little in common except the sea that divides it (Emerson,2008a:257).

According to King, for most of the last two centuries, the strategic position of the Black Sea zone has been shaped by the interaction of three factors: The shifting balances of power among European and Eurasian states and empires; the political ambitions of smaller states and peoples directly affected by the actions of these powers and the status of the region as a transit point for goods on global east-west and north-south trade routes. In many ways, these factors continue to define the issues and interests in the Black Sea region today(King,2009:5). Nowadays, the Black Sea has often been labelled a playground of geopolitical competition where Russia, the US and the EU are the main actors that struggle for leadership (Najslova 2010: 29).

Since 1990s, the European Union has greatly increased their involvement in the region. Having been almost exclusively focused on bilateral technical assistance in the 1990s, the Union’s policy acquired a more political dimension in this decade and a stronger regional dimension. Conflict resolution was not on the EU’s political agenda during the 1990s. However throughout this decade it become more visible both in conflict transformation and resolution(Fischer 2009: 344).

The EU's engagement in the Wider Black Sea region was initiated in the 1990s through the framework of the TACIS (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of the Independent States) Programme which was established to promote the transition to a market economy and to reinforce democracy and the rule of law in the partner states in the Eastern Europe, Black Sea Region, South Caucasus and Central Asia.

Parallel to TRACECA and a part of the TACIS framework, the International Oil and Gas Transport to Europe (INOGATE) Programme was initiated to foster and an international economic cooperation between the European Union, the littoral states of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea and their neighbouring countries.

The 2004 and 2007 waves of enlargement have brought the EU to the shores the Black Sea. After Bulgaria and Romania entrance in to the EU, Black Sea region for Europe become more important. It is situated at the crossroads of trade and energy transit ways from Central Asian and Caspian Sea to Europe (Nechayeva 2010: 211). Therefore, the prosperity, stability and security of EU's these neighbours around the Black Sea are important for the EU. Because, this region's security and stability increasingly impact to the EU. On the other hand, all countries of the Black Sea region want to be a member of the EU.

Nowadays, the EU having multiple formal relationship with the Black Sea region: many policies co-exist and address diverse priorities such as security, conflict resolution, economic cooperation, energy and democratization (Henderson and Weaver 2010: 1). In addition to the ENP, most important initiative of the EU towards the Black Sea region is "Black Sea Synergy". Furthermore, in spring 2009, the EU launched a new policy towards its Eastern neighbours.

### **Importance of the Black Sea Region for the EU and the EU's Interests in the Region:**

The Black Sea region is a distinct geographical area rich in natural resources and strategically located at the junction of Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East. The region is an expanding market with great development potential and an important hub for energy and transport flows. But, it is also a region with unresolved frozen conflicts, with many environmental problems and insufficient border controls thus encouraging illegal migration and organised crime. A dynamic regional response to the issues can greatly benefit the citizens of the countries concerned as well as contribute to the overall prosperity, stability and security in Europe (European Commission, Black Sea Synergy Initiative 2007).

As Arbatova notes, the heterogeneity of the Black Sea region in terms of security arrangements and membership in different international organizations, the presence of regional and external players with conflicting interests and troubled relations, the existence of so called frozen conflicts, and the growing importance of the Black Sea- Caspian region as an energy transport route mean that instability in this area can have significant ramifications not only for regional security, but for security of the EU (Arbatova 2008: 293).

According to Cornell, the EU's interests in the region can broadly be defined along four categories: These are promoting long-term stability and conflict management; promotion of democratic institutions and rule of law; securing a stable energy supply for Europe and combating organized crime and terrorism, including concerns over migration and border controls. On the other hand, the EU's enlargement has brought the unresolved

frozen conflicts closer proximity of the EU. Therefore, building regional stability is an important priority for the EU. Moreover, building the rule of law and democratic institutions in its neighborhood constitutes a major interest on the part of the EU (Cornell et al 2006: 6).

One of the key external relations priorities of the European Union is to promote prosperity, democracy, peace, stability and security in its near regions. These aspirations are more urgent for Wider Black Sea region not only because of the political, economic, administrative, ecological and social challenges with which the basin is faced but also in view of instability in the region of the EU's eastern flank (Shelest 2012).

As Cornell and Jonsson notes, the main focus of EU strategies to support democratization in Wider Black Sea region has been on achieving free and fair elections, while a secondary focus has been on the building of civil society. However, the focus on elections and civil society has often been excessive, and overshadowed the deeper and equally important question of building functioning state institutions (Cornell and Jonsson 2008: 239).

All post-Soviet states in the Black Sea region share governance problems, corruption and political instability. State weakness and political instability prevent sustainable development and foster regional fragmentation and undermine the development of the economic and trade potential of the region. This fragmentation and polarization keep complicating regional cooperation among the Black Sea littoral states (Fischer 2009: 337).

Eastern enlargement has increased EU interest and activity in the region. On January 1, 2007, with the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, the European Union officially entered the Black Sea. Until then EU institutions had been very reticent over expressing any interest in the Black Sea as a region of policy relevance (Emerson 2008a: 253). But, today regional cooperation and integration is seen by the EU as an important tool to foster stability and supportive environment for sustainable economic development and democratization (Fischer,2009:341).

The EU currently has three sets of strategies toward the Black Sea Region: EU membership (Bulgaria and Romania) and EU accession (Turkey); European Neighborhood Policy (all other Black Sea countries, except Russia) and 'Four Common Spaces' (economic and environmental issues; freedom, security and justice; research, education and external security) bilaterally agreed with Russia (Cornell et al 2006: 113).

All Black Sea littoral states are interested in cooperation with EU. But the Black Sea region contains several countries –Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine especially- that are disappointed at not being granted by the EU a "membership perspective". According to Emerson, lack of Europe's mega-incentive for a transformative Europeanization is a serious weakness for the European Neighborhood Policy. A Black Sea initiative could be seen as seeking to bolster the ENP and to compensate in some degree for the disappointment of the Black Sea states aspiring to membership (Emerson 2008a: 258).

The European Union has already made major efforts to stimulate democratic and economic reforms, to project stability and to support development in the Black Sea area through wide ranging cooperation programmes (European Commission, Black Sea Synergy Initiative 2007). In this framework, the EU has a Black Sea regional policy, through regional sectoral initiatives and programmes in key areas of regional cooperation in the region. Therefore, EU has taken part in initiating and funding a number of regional cooperation initiatives connected to the Black Sea region, especially in the field of

transport and energy(Cornell et al 2006: 112). The multilateral cooperation of the Black Sea countries with the EU is largely confined to sectoral initiatives (Astrov and Havlik 2008: 139) such as the INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe) programme and multilateral agreement, the TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia) and the Black Sea PETrA (Pan-European Transport Area) programmes on transport, and the DANBLAS (Danube-Black Sea Environmental Task Force) initiative, to mention the most important (Mecar et al 2011).

TRACECA was initiated in 1993 and constituted a visionary project aimed at building a network of roads, railroads and ferry connections, linking Europe and Central Asia through Turkey and the Caucasus. The Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Central Asia (TRACECA) programme provides technical assistance covering road, rail, aviation and maritime transport connections from Central Asia to Europe. Programme was originally a Community programme but since 1999 it is regulated by a multilateral agreement with intergovernmental structures (European Commission, Black Sea Synergy Initiative 2007). On the other hand, INOGATE, was launched by the EU in 1995, is another regional cooperation initiative which provides technical assistance and some investment support for the building of new pipelines in the region, aimed at integrating oil and gas pipeline systems in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, thus enhancing EU's supply security(Cornell et al 2006: 113).

Furthermore, throughout the 1990s, the EU concluded Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) with all post-Soviet littoral states of the Black Sea. PCAs are mixed agreements focused on the regulation of economic cooperation, trade and EU technical assistance to economic and political reform.

Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme 2007-2013 is a programme under the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) of the EU. It aims to contribute to a stronger and sustainable economic and social development of the countries of the Black Sea Basin ([www.blacksea-cbc.net](http://www.blacksea-cbc.net) 2012). Other important initiative is a "Baku Initiative". The Baku Initiative is a policy dialogue between the EU and the Black Sea and Caspian Basin, established in 2004. This initiative is an international initiative of the European Union. It is a policy dialogue on energy and transport cooperation between the European Union and the littoral states of the Black Sea, Caspian Sea, undertaken as part of the INOGATE energy and TRACECA transport programs.

### **European Neighborhood Policy:**

The European Union established its European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) in 2004. With the ENP, main objective of the EU is to help countries that do not accepted to the EU's enlargement process. The main aim of this policy is to support stability, security and economic developments in the countries neighboring the Union.

As Kempe notes, the concept of a European Neighborhood Policy emerged from the process of EU eastern enlargement and the awareness of the need to avoid a new dividing line that might burden the relations between the member states and other Central and Eastern European countries that would lie outside of the EU's new eastern borders. The European Neighbourhood Policy is targeted to creating security and stability beyond the EU's external borders and avoiding a new dividing line as a potential negative side effect of enlargement. The overall goal would be transition towards democracy, market based economy and European values. But, the ENP does not offer any kind of institutional ties.

The ENP includes “sharing everything but institutions”, which is the most important difference between the ENP and the option of membership (Kepme 2008: 4).

ENP offers a privileged relationship, built upon a mutual commitment to democracy and human rights, the rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development. The ENP goes beyond existing relationships to offer a deeper political relationship and economic integration and does not offer an accession perspective, implying that its potential as a carrot is clearly weakened (Cornell et al 2006: 24).

The EU prefers differentiation in the application of the ENP to its partner countries. Bilateralisation is perceived as beneficial in that it allows the EU and its partners to adapt their cooperation individually to the needs of different countries. It does, however, also state the importance of regionally fostering closer cooperation both between EU countries and among neighboring countries themselves (Cornell et al 2006: 113).

### **“Black Sea Synergy”:**

The Black Sea Synergy, adopted by the European Commission in May 2007 after the accession of Romania and Bulgaria, is the only EU initiative that explicitly addresses the Black Sea as a region. Unlike the ENP, its focus is on the development of cooperation within the Black Sea region and also between the region as a whole and the European Union (Fischer 2009: 341).

The EU has developed a programme, “Black Sea Synergy”, with a number of concrete initiatives looking at areas like transport, energy, the environment, maritime management, fisheries, migration, the fight against organised crime, the information society and cultural cooperation. The EU seeks to increase cooperation among the countries surrounding the Black Sea. Specifically it aims to: stimulate democratic and economic reforms; support stability and promote development; focus on practical projects in areas of common concern; respond to opportunities and challenges through coordinated actions in a regional framework; develop a climate more conducive to the solution of conflicts in the region. The EU has also established a new cross-border cooperation programme involving local authorities in the countries around the Black Sea, and supporting the activities of civil society organisations (Black Sea Synergy, <http://ec.europa.eu> 2010).

The Commission’s Black Sea Synergy paper thus announced the opening of a new Black Sea policy for the EU. It follows the path of a familiar logic of action in response to the EU’s territorial enlargement, namely to construct a certain regionalism around the EU’s newly extended periphery. This has been seen already in three cases: to the South in the Mediterranean with the Barcelona process, to the South-east with the Stability Pact for the Balkans, and to the North around the Baltic Sea under the name of the “Northern Dimension” (Emerson 2008b: 257).

The primary task of the Black Sea Synergy is the development of cooperation within the Black Sea region and also between the region as a whole and the European Union. EU’s support to Black Sea regional cooperation is aimed at producing tangible results in a number of priority areas. This includes the development and interconnection of transport, energy and communication infrastructure, responding to increasing trade, investment, traffic and information flows as well as rapidly evolving transit needs. It also promotes the dialogue between energy producers, consumers and transit countries aimed at ensuring fair access to energy resources and markets, enhancing energy security and environmental

sustainability (Joint Statement of Ministers of foreign affairs of the EU and of the Wider Black Sea Area,<http://ec.europa.eu>).

The emergence of democratic political systems in the Black Sea region is thought to help create supportive conditions for internal and external peace and, ultimately, to bring political stability and economic prosperity to the region and to Europe (Fischer 2009: 339). In this framework, Ferrero-Waldner said she hoped that the “Black Sea Synergy” Initiative would “contribute to creating a better climate for the solution of the “frozen conflicts” in the region (<http://www.euractiv.com> 2007).

The Black Sea Synergy benefits from the European Neighborhood Policy and other EU policies applied in the relationship with countries of the region (Joint Statement of Ministers of foreign affairs of the EU and of the Wider Black Sea Area, <http://ec.europa.eu>). On the other hand, it contributes to better coordinating specific environmental programmes, notably those focusing on task relating to water quality. It also invigorates the dialogue on Black Sea maritime policies and facilitate efforts to establish regional fisheries management cooperation in order to ensure sustainable use of Black Sea fishery resources. Black Sea regional cooperation also provides a framework for building capabilities to cooperate in combating climate change and in preventing and managing natural and man made disasters in the region (Joint Statement of Ministers of foreign affairs of the EU and of the Wider Black Sea Area,<http://ec.europa.eu>).

Increased EU engagement in Black Sea regional cooperation has the potential to bring benefit also in the field of trade, science and technology, research, culture and education as well as employment and social affairs (Joint Statement of Ministers of foreign affairs of the EU and of the Wider Black Sea Area,<http://ec.europa.eu>).

There are significant opportunities and challenges in the Black Sea area that require coordinated action at the regional level. These include key sectors such as energy, transport, environment, movement and security. Enhanced regional cooperation is not intended to deal directly with long-standing conflicts in the region, but it could generate more mutual confidence and could help remove some of the obstacles that stand in the way. Given the influence of cultures in the Black Sea area, growing regional cooperation could also have beneficial effects beyond the region itself (European Commission, Black Sea Synergy Initiative 2007).

The Black Sea initiative adds a multilateral regional dimension to the Eastern branch of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), which since 2004 had so far been entirely built around bilateral activity with Moldova, Ukraine and the three South Caucasus countries (Emerson 2008a: 254).

At the outset, Black Sea Synergy would focus on those issues and cooperation sectors which reflect common priorities. Consequently, Synergy formulates a number of short- and medium-term tasks related to these areas. Democracy, respect for human rights and good governance, managing movement and improving security, the “frozen” conflicts, energy, transport, environment, maritime policy, fisheries, trade, research and education networks, science and technology, employment and social affairs and regional development (European Commission, Black Sea Synergy Initiative 2007).

While Russia is formally outside the ENP, it has a bilateral programme with the EU for deepening four ‘common spaces’ in ways that bear some resemblance to the ENP action plans. The Black Sea Synergy would thus be bringing the EU closer together with both the ENP states and Russia. Moreover the EU has a relatively positive experience of

cooperation with Russia now in the Baltic Sea region with the Northern Dimension cooperation, and would like the same to develop in the Black Sea (Emerson 2008a: 254).

Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) -Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, The Russian Federation, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine met in Kyiv, on February 14, 2008. They discussed the perspectives for the development of a mutually beneficial cooperation between BSEC and the EU, respecting the interests of both sides. Ministers consider BSEC-EU interaction as an integral part of overall European economic, scientific and environmental cooperation. Their aim is to achieve proper synergies by coordinating the efforts with various integration and cooperation formats, international organizations and institutions, in particular financial ones, acting in the BSEC area (Declaration of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Member states of the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation on BSEC-EU enhanced relationship, [www.mid.ru](http://www.mid.ru) 2008).

Foreign ministers of the countries of the European Union and of the Wider Black Sea identified significant challenges and opportunities in the Wider Black Sea area which may require coordinated action at the regional level. They agreed that greater involvement by the European Union can increase the potential of Black Sea regional cooperation. They have also seen the Black Sea Synergy Initiative of the European Union as an important tool to achieve this goal. On the other hand, they agreed that the primary task of the Black Sea Synergy is the development of cooperation within the Black Sea region and also between the region as a whole and the European Union (Joint Statement of Ministers of foreign affairs of the EU and of the Wider Black Sea Area, <http://www.eeas.europa.eu> 2011).

Black Sea Synergy Initiative is complementary to the ENP, the enlargement policy for Turkey and the Strategic Partnership with the Russian Federation. EU supports to Black Sea regional cooperation is aimed at producing tangible results in a number of priority areas, notably environment; maritime policies and fisheries; energy; transport; communication; managing movement and improving security; research; science and education networks; employment and social affairs; migration; trade; democracy, respect for human rights; good governance; law enforcement and the fight against organised crime and settlement of the frozen conflicts (Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament Report on the First Year of Implementation of the Black Sea Synergy, <http://ec.europa.eu> 2008).

### **The European Union's Eastern Partnership Policy:**

The EU needs a particular "European" approach towards East European countries, including Russia. In this framework, the EU aims at expanding the area of common rules and standards to its East European neighborhood. As Duleba and Bilcik notes, this does not mean automatically, however, that all European countries in the end will be EU members (Duleba and Bilcik, <http://fes.sk> 2011).

The European Council of June 2008 invited the Commission to prepare a proposal for an "Eastern Partnership" (EaP), emphasising the need for a differentiated approach respecting the character of the ENP as a single and coherent policy framework. And Commission prepared a communication which set out proposals for an Eastern Partnership. On 7 May 2009, at its Prague Summit on, the EU adopted the Eastern Partnership initiative, a plan to foster closer political and economic ties with six former Soviet republics –Armania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine(EU eyes greater influence in Black Sea region" <http://www.euractiv.com> 2010).

The EaP brings a lasting political message of EU solidarity, alongside additional, tangible support for their democratic and market-oriented reforms. This serves the stability, security and prosperity of the EU, partners and indeed the entire continent. On the other hand, the EaP is based on mutual commitments to the rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights, protection of minorities the principles of the market economy and sustainable development (Communication From the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Eastern Partnership 2008).

The partners do not have identical objectives for their relationship with the EU, but they all share a common wish to deepen relations. In this context, Association Agreements (AAs) can provide a response to partners' aspiration for a closer relationship and create a strong political bond and promote further convergence by establishing a closer link to EU legislation and standards. The EaP adds a new multilateral framework to the EU's relations with its partners. It also supports progress in partners' bilateral relations with the EU, provides a forum to share information and experience of partners' steps towards transition, reform and modernisation and facilitates the development of common positions and joint activities. On the other hand, there is substantial complementarity between the EaP and the Black Sea Synergy and other regional and international initiatives (Communication From the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Eastern Partnership 2008).

Russia and the EU are also in disagreement regarding the Eastern Partnership, which Russia sees as an attempt to expand the EU's sphere of influence. But, EU views the Eastern Partnership as a tool to share its common values and standards with its Eastern neighbours since their implementation leads to their economic and social modernization and contributes to security and stability of the whole European continent (Duleba and Bilcik <http://fes.sk> 2011).

As Najslova notes, the Eastern Partnership is an opportunity for achieving progress in the EU's eastern neighborhood, or "wider Black Sea Region" (Najslova, 2010: 30). As a result, the European Union has a vital interest in seeing stability, better governance and economic development at its eastern borders. At the same time, countries in the Black Sea region all seek to intensify their relations with the EU. Therefore, the EU's policy towards the Black Sea region must be proactive and unequivocal: In this context, the EU gives strong support to these partners in their efforts to come closer to the EU, and gives all necessary assistance with the reforms this entails, through a specific Eastern dimension within the European Neighborhood Policy (Communication From the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Eastern Partnership 2008).

### **Importance Stability and Security in the Black Sea Region for the EU and "Frozen Conflicts":**

There is a political poison in the region stemming from the frozen conflicts, which involve every country of the region. Frozen Conflicts presence and activation in the region effect negatively stability of the European continent. Relations between Russia, Ukraine and Moldova are troubled by the Transdnistria conflict, between Russia and Georgia by Abhazia and South Ossetia conflict, and between Azerbaijan and Armenia by the Nagorno Karabakh conflict (Emerson 2008a: 258).

On the other hand, none of these Frozen Conflicts in Karabakh, Abhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria or Chechnya has not been resolved and continue to feed profitable criminal activities, terrorism and further migration. Therefore, political stability in the region cannot be guaranteed while these conflicts remain unresolved. The European Union

is seen as more profitable peacekeeper in the Black Sea region than the US, as at least, it will not bring so big oppression from the Russian side. Finally, peaceful settlement of the Black Sea states conflicts with advance role of the European Union will strengthen its hand in the world affairs (Shelest 2012).

The EU's enlargement to include Romania and Bulgaria will bring the Frozen Conflicts of the Wider Black Sea region in closer vicinity of the EU. These conflicts constitute a central security problem in the Wider Black Sea region in terms of direct threats to regional stability. They are, however, also closely connected to problems of transnational crime, state weakness and democratic development in the Black Sea states. The resolution of these conflicts is therefore key to the eventual achievement of security, stability and democracy in the region (Cornell et al, 2006: 60-61). But, the EU is reluctant to become involved in conflict resolution in the Black Sea region. Therefore, EU's involvement in attempted mediation efforts in the four "frozen conflicts" is low profile. But, the geographical approximation with EU enlargement and progress in the development of ESDP both created the conditions for the EU to take steps in this direction (Fischer 2009: 343).

The EU's ambitions lie primarily in the field of soft security rather than military security. Combating the ever-increasing flow of human and drug trafficking is a priority task for the EU in the Black Sea region (Cornell et al 2006: 60-61). Because, the Black Sea Region is evolving as one of the most important regions in Europe for the trafficking in human beings. On the other hand, the smuggling and trade in small arms and heavy weaponry is another feature of organized crime around the Black Sea.

On the other hand, since end of the Cold War, Russia has sought to maintain an influence over its near abroad, using the unresolved conflicts as tools exert leverage on states like Georgia and Moldova, in order to weaken them and restrain their ambitions of integrating with European and Transatlantic institutions (Cornell et al 2006: 66).

### **EU's Energy Diversification Policy and The Black Sea Region:**

After the US and China, the EU is the third biggest energy consumer in the world. The biggest partner of the EU on the energy import is Russia who supplies 50 percent of the EU's gas and 30 percent of its oil. Therefore, the EU has to diversify the energy resources. In this framework, energy, is a key area within the EU's Neighborhood Policy. Moreover, The EaP also aims to strengthen the energy security of the EU and of the partners with regard to long term energy supply and transit. In this framework, the Black Sea region is increasingly viewed as key to securing reliable oil and gas deliveries to European market. The Black Sea region a major transit route for oil and gas coming to Europe from Russia and Central Asia, is of strategic importance for EU energy supply security.

As above noted, the Black Sea region is a production and transmission area of strategic importance for EU energy supply security. This region offers significant potential for energy supply diversification and it is therefore an important component of the EU's external energy strategy. Energy supply diversification is in the interest of countries of the Black Sea region, as well as the EU. The EU is working closely with regional partners to enhance energy stability through the upgrading of existing and the construction of new energy infrastructure. In this context, the Commission is developing, in cooperation with its partners, a new trans-Caspian trans-Black Sea energy corridor. This corridor will include several technical options for additional gas exports from Central Asia through the Black Sea region to the EU (European Commission, Black Sea Synergy Initiative 2007).

As Mangott and Westphal notes, countries of this region share the EU's interest in diversifying energy supplies and reducing their dependency on Russia. For those countries, the EU is the strategic partner to modernize and reorganize their energy systems. On the other hand, the EU has an interest not only in linking the this region's energy export infrastructure to the EU, but also linking the region politically and economically to the EU through shared governance structures. International energy trade is related to issues of geography, distance and proximity, pipeline routes and other infrastructure. Since energy infrastructure constitutes a long lasting link between regions and countries (Mangott and Westphal 2008: 154).

The existence of mostly Western based multinational oil companies in the Caspian Basin, at the eastern end of the Black Sea region, indicates the increase Western interest in gaining access to Caspian oil and gas through the Black Sea. What happens in the Black Sea region affects EU's interests. While the possibility of transferring oil and gas from large-scale deposits to the Europe raises hopes for regional development and prosperity, at the same time, it gives substance to "the belief that whoever secures the major share of oil pipeline transit will gain enhanced influence not only throughout the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions but also on a global political scale. Especially, Turkey's energy corridor role between Caspian and Central Asian energy resources and the EU will make the Black Sea are a pivotal energy route for the EU (Shelest 2012).

Recent EU efforts to diversify energy supplies in particular to reduce the EU's dependence on Russia, which is not only major supplier of natural gas to Europe, but also controls a bulk of transit from Caspian energy-rich countries notably, Kazakstan and Turkmenistan- explain the rising the interest in the Black Sea region and the resulting rivalry between the EU and Russia (Astrov and Havlik 2008: 139). In this framework, the building of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC) has brought an important development to prospects of reinvigorating the transportation links linking Europe to Central Eurasia through the Wider Black Sea region (Cornell et al 2006: 91).

Given the Union's growing dependence on external energy suppliers, increasing concerns regarding supply security, its troubled relations with Russia and the resulting desire to diversify energy imports, the Black Sea has acquired considerable strategic importance for the EU's energy security (Fischer 2009: 339).

When, as a result of the January 2006 Ukrainian-Russian natural gas dispute, Europe's confidence in Russia's supply was shaken, the European Union renewed its search for non Russian sources of energy and non Russian export routes (Savietz 2009: 95). Diversifying its energy supply, particularly as concerns natural gas, is hence of paramount importance for Europe. As the main substantial source of natural gas not controlled by Russia that is available in Europe's neighborhood, the Caspian region is of vital importance. The oil and natural gas reserves in Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan are thus crucial to Europe's future energy supply and access to these significantly adds to the strategic importance of the Wider Black Sea Region (Cornell et al 2006: 7).

The EU can ensure its energy security only by diversifying its suppliers and supply routes through the Black Sea region, particularly Georgia and Turkey. But, Russia is a most important determining factor for the formulation of appropriate strategies towards the Black Sea littoral countries. Nabucco Project for instance, is being undermined by the combined effort of Russia's Gazprom and individual EU member states to support the alternative South Stream Project (Hamilton 2008: 325). Russia has two strategic objectives

in the Black Sea Region: to prevent EU access to central Asian gas, particularly Turkmen and Kazakh gas; and to build new pipelines which bypass Ukraine, undermine the economic and financial viability of EU pipeline plans such as Nabucco and monopolize gas supplies for southeast Europe (Mangott and Westphal 2008: 159).

On the other hand, Nabucco Project will stabilize European gas supplies and strengthen EU's relations with the Black Sea countries and the Central Asia. And direct connection to Turkmenistan gas would contribute to the alleviation of EU's energy dependence on Russia as well as bolster Turkish designs to serve as an energy hub for Europe and region (Kuchins and Petersen 2009: 72).

Consequently, the EU has become more pro-active in order to widen and deepen its energy dialogues with neighbouring countries and regions. But these energy dialogues underline the need for a coherent and coordinated external policy for energy in Europe (Umbach 2010: 1237).

### **Conclusion:**

The Black Sea region is an area rich in natural resources and it has great potential as a transit corridor between South Caucasus-Central Asia and Europe. Moreover, the EU is an important economic and trading partner for the Black Sea countries. Last EU enlargement have brought the countries of the Black Sea region closer to the EU. EU's main objective in its vicinity is to promote a ring of well-governed countries to the east of the European Union. In this framework, with the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) launched in 2004, the EU intends to provide stability and security in adjacent areas. The EU supports peace, democracy, security, stability, regional cooperation and sustainable prosperity in this region. In this framework, the Black Sea Synergy is another useful means to strengthen the democracy and respect for human rights and to foster civil society. It also aims at developing regional cooperation around the Black Sea. On the other hand, by encouraging cooperation between the countries surrounding the Black Sea, The Black Sea Synergy offers a forum for tackling common problems while encouraging political and economic reform. In 2009, a further initiative the Eastern Partnership (EaP) was launched. Main objective of Eastern Partnership is to bring the partner countries closer to the EU. EaP also promotes stability, security and economic and political cooperation in the Black Sea region.

Maintaining peace and security within the Black Sea is one of EU's key policy goals for the region. But, there are risks that the problems emanating from the Wider Black Sea region have potential to spill over in to the EU. The risks negatively affects the EU's economic and political stability. In order to feel secure within its new borders, The EU should form the concrete foreign policy toward the Black Sea region. Furthermore, the EU has to foster stability and democracy in this region and play more pro-active role in the settlement of these frozen conflicts.

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