

## The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (The BSECO) and Turkey

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**Abstract:** This article has been intended to emphasize that how Turkey has perceived the increasing regionalist tendency of foreign policy of the states in the world after the collapse of the Soviet Union through pioneering the establishment of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSECO) in 1992, and that how Turkey, which has designed her foreign policy preferences according to the needs of her Western allies during the Cold War period, succeeded to begin to determine her own foreign policy parallel to her own needs along with the establishment of the BSECO. After explaining the function of Turkey in the establishment process of the BSECO; on the one hand the political, social and economic problems in the past and at present among the states in the Black Sea region has been mentioned, and on the other unsuccessful cooperation attempts in the past among the Black Sea region states has been indicated. Besides, the establishment, structure and goals of the BSECO have been taken into consideration. Security, economic, social and cultural advantages that the BSECO has presented to the regional states and to the world has been explained. In the last part, some suggestions for the well-being of the BSECO have been presented.

**Key Words:** The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, the Black Sea region, regionalization, regional organizations, regional security.

### Introduction

The BSECO should be put into the category of not 'regionalization' but 'region-building' since 'regionalization' is a natural and passive process without a conscious or programmed human activity but region-building is an active process with a conscious human subject (see Saarikoski, 1995: 228-229) and should be regarded

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as the result of two main changes: (1) The new international political system, and (2) The neo-regionalist concept and the necessity of rethinking of the regional groupings. Since these two gave way to the establishment of the BSECO it would be ideal to explain those two roughly.

The new international political system prepared a suitable milieu for flourishing the BSECO ideal. As we all know the balance of the new international political system is largely based on the notions such as unity / globalism / interdependence / universalism in every field from economy to politics. In stead of dividing or categorising the countries having similar characteristics into one group against another group of countries for the sake of ideology or political purposes, the world has started to be regarded as one big region, containing small or medium size regions or other sub-regions.

In this process while the regional groupings, built according to the political and economic needs of the Cold War period, are gaining more importance, the need for setting up the new regional groupings has started to be felt more profoundly. "On December 4, 1996 more than 300 European regions with diverse territorial, administrative and political goals, representing the interests of more than 400 million residents, proceeding from their aspiration toward further regionalization within the institutional framework of their respective countries and taking into account the importance of the process of the integration and regionalization, adopted a Declaration of Regionalism in Europe" (Stoliarov, 1997: 119). So, this gave way to the activation of the bare ideas related to building new regional groupings. In this context, we should give a response to the question "Why the regionalization and the region-building are getting more and more important in the new international political system. The explanation will also ease to understand the responsibilities of the BSECO.

First of all, the regional groupings are regarded as the main confidence-building measure. Preliminary conclusions of a research project by the Institute for East West studies, which looked at six such organizations, indicate that "they continue to make a contribution to the stability and the security of Euro-Atlantic area and that there is a strong synergy between the sub-regional process and integration" (Bailes, 1997: 27-34). Taking the importance of global security for the planned single Europe into consideration, security in the Balkans and the Black Sea region will also bear importance since the mentioned regions have always been the most conflicting regions in history.

Secondly, the new Europe strongly needs economically stable countries which solved economic shortcomings largely and set up economic structures. According to the EU members the structure of the planned single Europe are strongly against

the membership of the countries which will certainly bring economic problems together with their underdeveloped economic vision (Schwok, 1997: 107-115). For this reason, the EU believes that regional groupings will help transition economies are better off by preparing their member countries for the specific economic and social rules of the EU with in a small group.

Thirdly, the new international political system needs political maturity so as not to have negative experiences lived before due to the political immaturity. Partly the new system gives support to the setting up the new regional groupings assuming that these groupings will remove negative political rivalries, political hatred and extreme nationalist aims. The superpowers of the new system also believe that the countries politically, economically and socially developed more will be good examples for the countries which lacked human rights, democratization, good-neighbourly relations during the Cold War period by playing a pioneering role in the region.

Fourthly, in the new international political system hard security issues such as inter state wars, nuclear rivalries, risky armament, military superiority etc. have been replaced by soft security issues such as drug smuggling, money laundering, sex trade, terrorism, extreme nationalism, environmentalism, pluralistic democracy, market economy etc. In encountering soft security issues, the Western European countries strongly support region-building process and building regional groupings arguing that by improving bilateral and multilateral social, economic and cultural relations, the regional groupings will solve those kinds of problems by themselves for a secure Europe (Lodgaard, 1993: 7-24).

Fifthly, for the planned integrated Europe, the region rather than the nation-state has gradually become the focal point of the international development. "The time of the roman strategy of 'divide et impera' seems to be replaced by 'the golden age of regional harmony'" (Bleda, 1991: 19). Based on this view, region-building is thought to be the preparatory process in which the regional groupings experience to co-operate almost in every field for a united Europe.

Depending on the explanations above; the new international political system and the West's supportive attitude towards building new regional groupings and regionalization both paved the way to the BSECO.

In this article we will discuss four main points; in the first part, the function of Turkey in the establishment process of the BSECO; in the second part, the BSEC with its structure, aims and outcomes, the importance of the Black Sea region and the obstacles which make the cooperation difficult; in the third part, the internal and external advantages the BSECO presents; and in the last part some suggestions for the well-being of the BSECO.

## 1. Turkey and the BSECO

The BSECO was initiated by Turkey just after the collapse of the Eastern Block, demise of the Soviet Union and appearance of the CIS. The sudden changes in international political system affected not only the world order but also the internal order of the countries in the region and near abroad. Turkey, a European, Balkan, Eastern Mediterranean, Black Sea, Middle East country, has been one of the countries influenced deeply by the changes.

Turkey, suddenly and unexpectedly found itself as the pioneering country for the newly independent Central Asian Republics. Following the bilateral and multilateral relations Turkey has begun to behave more freely in her foreign policy. Although it is beyond the purpose of this article to give details of Turkish foreign policy during the Cold War period, we will mention the basic features to grasp the new foreign policy pattern and the BSECO initiative of Turkey.

During the Cold War period, Turkey was an inevitable ally of the West particularly the U.S.A. Except for the slight changes in foreign policy strategies, Turkey instead of realising her own interest in foreign policy, directed her own foreign policy according to the needs of the United States and the NATO. In other words, she was sentenced to play the role designed by the Western Block.

However, just after the dismantlement of the Soviet Union, Turkey has become a decision-maker instead of realising the decision made by the others. During the Gulf Crisis and Yugoslavia matter, Turkey was quite effective in taking necessary precautions (Gulf Crisis) and in bringing the matter to the top priority of the UN agenda (Yugoslavia Matter). So, the BSECO might be determined as the third concrete example of assertive, reactive and activist Turkish new foreign policy pattern. Turkey, the founder of the BSECO, simply sends a direct message to the rest of the world that Turkey has become aware of her responsibility as a mediator country in the region and decided to act more liberally in her own foreign policy and also enhance her foreign policy menu.

The idea of designing a cooperation model in the Black Sea region was first put forth by the former Turkish diplomat Şükrü Elekdağ and materialised by the former president Turgut Özal in 1990. Following this attempt, Soviet Union, Bulgaria and Romania expressed their interests and negotiations started among the countries interested. The informal talks largely included technical matters such as tariff reduction and free movement of goods. From the end of 1990 by the mid-July 1991, four meetings were realised. Finally, the mentioned states prepared a document which drew an outline of the planned cooperation in the region. After the collapse

of the Eastern Block and demise of the Soviet Union, newly independent states; Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine participated in the agreement process and the Soviet Union was replaced by the Russian Federation.

The first agreement on the setting up the Black Sea Economic Cooperation in the region was reached by the foreign ministers and deputy foreign ministers of the participating states, in Istanbul on 3 February 1992. The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization project also attracted attention of the states such as Albania and Greece which are not Black Sea coastal states. They applied for full membership and were accepted as full members. Austria, Egypt, Israel, Italy, Poland, Slovak Republic, Tunis also joined the BSECO project as observes.

However, the legal process for the BSEC was started by the heads of states and government of 11 participating states on 25 June 1992 at a summit meeting in Istanbul. At the end of the meeting, they signed the Summit Declaration on the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and declared Bosphorus Statement on 26 June 1992.

## **2. The BSECO**

In order to understand the structure of the BSECO better we should explain the Black Sea region in which the mentioned organization was materialized. The Black Sea region represents a remarkable importance with its human potential, significant economic force, energy sources, and wide spectrum of complementary industries besides its geostrategic location. Although the possibilities are quite unlimited, the uses of these possibilities are full of barriers. While some of those barriers depend on the disputes emerged in history, some depend on the prevailing disputes at present. Through pointing out the disputes in the region in the past/in history, we will grasp the source of the problems and know the region better at present.

First of all, the Balkans, situated at the South Eastern corner of Europe and the Transcaucasus have always been an apple of discord among the big powers of Europe in history. The Balkan Peninsula is a kind of transit line which gives an easy access from Europe to Asia and visa versa. The region is at the crossroads where land, sea, air and river transportation routes meet one another. Following the rule of Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman and Habsburg empires in the region, the region become an area of rivalry between the USSR and the U.S.A. From the beginning to the present the region has been an important strategic and political factor in international relations.

Secondly, this region has faced many unsuccessful cooperation attempts in history. Due to the geostrategic importance of the Black Sea region, which is located

at the intersection of the Gulf, Eastern Mediterranean and Europe, several attempts were made for cooperation. However, only two of these resulted with success. The large Entente, initiated by Turkey under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1934, did not live long. The little Entente in the 1940s lasted even shorter than the first one. In addition to the mentioned attempts, others also failed and resulted in fragmentation of the region. The reason of this failure might be explained by a number of geographical, cultural, historical, and ethnic and religion causes which had brought about mistrust, enmities and territorial conflicts.

Thirdly, due to the lack of popular political participation, in most of the countries in the region, particularly in the Balkans, the administration was left to autocratic and fascist regimes. These regimes had found it convenient to appeal to the nationalistic fervour of the masses by following policies of aggrandizement at the expense of their regional neighbours often in alliance with extra regional big powers (Sander, 1993: 33).

Fourthly, religious confrontations have also been effective in the structure of the region. "The religious confrontations in the region are based on Islamic and Christian cultures. The confrontation is rooted deeply in the past epoch of Christianization of the Bulgarian Kingdom and Kiev Russia during the 9th to 10th centuries and in the conquest of Byzantium by the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century" (Pisarev, 1993: 124). This confrontation still prevails, increasing gradually, experienced in the Yugoslavia matter.

Furthermore, economic and political disputes are not new notions for the Black Sea region countries. Particularly the states in the Balkan Peninsula have always experienced drastic political confrontations caused by the statemen who used their rule to enhance their area of influence in stead of encouraging pluralist democracy and political maturity, they preferred autocratic regimes which enabled them to realise what they planned. These all caused social discontent and political weaknesses in the long-run (Hopken, 1997). In addition to the political disputes in the region, in history, economic instability has been remarkable in society too. The impact of political fragmentations on economic structures has been deeply felt. The economies of the countries in the Black Sea region have never been promising. Short-term, endless economic policies have not been sufficient to stabilize the economy. In some countries in the region, particularly in ex-Soviet republics, the cause of the economic weaknesses was the central planning economies which banned the formation of the liberal economic structures.

The mentioned negative disputes in the past lasted for years and were transformed to the newly independent states in the Black Sea region.

Besides the negative experiences rooted deeply in history, some new disputes were added to the political, social and economic structure of the region just after the demise of the Soviet Union and the foundation of the new independent states. The new prospect of the region represents the following negative features.

At present, the Balkans and the Transcaucasus face drastic nationalist conflicts in the Black Sea region. According to the national statistics of the Balkan countries; 20 million Romanians, 10 million Greeks, 8 million Serbs, 7 million Bulgarians, 5 million Albanians, 1 million Macedonians and 0.5 million Montenegrines live in the Balkans. In such a cosmopolitan population, the stability in the society has been rather fragile. After the collapse of the Eastern Block the nationalist movements increased immensely in the region. After 1990s nationalism has started to be used to fill political and ideological vacuum remained by communism. In the region, the politicians have appealed to nationalism as a means of reinforcing their legitimacy and some illegal groups have emerged to gain personal advantages from nationalism for their illegal performances. This faked nationalism also made the public aware of their regional identity, cultural features and historical values.

Secondly, ethnic and territorial Disputes in the region (5) cause severe problems at present. The region is rather chaotic in terms of ethnic population. At the moment ethnic Turks in Greece and Albania, Russian diaspora in ex-Soviet states, ethnic Armenians in Georgia, ethnic Georgians in Azerbaijan, ethnic Azeris in Georgia subject to be misused for political aims in the region (Yerasimos, 1995: 35-85). Territorial disputes largely caused by ethnic upheavals also destabilize the societies in the region too. These include; The territorial claim of Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh with Azerbaijan; The status quo of Trans-Dniester between Moldova and Russian Federation; The status of Crimea and the future of the Black Sea Fleet between the Russian Federation and Ukraine; Still lasting claims of the Russian Federation in Chechnya; The inter-ethnic and civil war between Ossetians and Abkhazians in Georgia; The disputes between Albanians and Serbs over Kosovo; Territorial conflicts among the successor states of the former Yugoslavia.

Thirdly, social discontent also causes chaos in the region. Forced and illegal migration, uncontrolled arms trafficking, organized crime, illicit drug trafficking, terrorism, illegal groups, caused by political and ideological vacuum and lawlessness all fuel the social instability.

Fourthly, economic deterioration and financial corrosion in the region are partly the results of the rapid transition from central planing economy to market economy and partly other problems in ex-Soviet/ex-Eastern Block states. Nowadays, the societies in the region face unfulfilled welfare aspirations, economic infrastructural

shotcomings, hyper inflation, low living standart, high unemployment rate, limited financial resources, shattered public finance and lack of convertible currencies - even national currencies.

Fifthly, political disputes are among the problems at present. Although the conflicts between Turkey and Greece over Cyprus and Agean Sea and Turkey and the Russian Federation over the Straits do not cause hot disputes, the mentioned conflicts are among the perceived risks and dangers in the region.

As a result, the region represents a kind of boiling cattle. Under these circumstances, the cooperation attempt/s in the Black Sea region is a must. For this reason, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, the BSECO, should be determined as a cooperation attempt organized on the right time and in the right place. In the following parts of the paper we will discuss the BSECO in long and depth.

The institutional structure of the BSECO is based on three main bodies: (1) Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, (2) Parliamentary Assembly of the BSECO, (3) The BSECO Business Council. We will point out the responsibilities of the three main bodies roughly so as to know how the BSECO works.

Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs-MMFA: The MMFA is responsible for making policy decisions, establishing sub-groups, enlarging observer status to various states. The chairmanship of the MMFA rotates among the member states in English alphabetic order every six months.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the BSECO-PABSEC: The PABSEC was initiated following the common Declaration signed by the heads of the Parliaments of Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Ukraine and Turkey on 26 February 1993. The PABSEC has three comissions: (1) Comission of Economy, Trade, Technology and Environmental issues, (2) Comission of Law and Political issues, (3) Comission of Culture, Education and Social issues. The main functions and aims of the PABSEC are (Cindoruk, 1995: 13-17): to prepare legal ground for the BSECO process; to provide political support to the BSECO via parliaments; to encourage the public to adopt the ideals of the BSECO by the help of the MPs; to give support to the development of confidence and good-neighbourly relations through co-ordination and co-operation in political, social, cultural and economic matters; to build peace and stability in the Black Sea region.

The BSECO Business Council: The BSECO Business Council, established in December 1992, is responsible for bringing potential business partners from within and outside the region and also for developing proposals, programmes in a variety of fields of co-operation (Özer, 1997, p.97). The BSECO Business Council also developes intensive economic relations with the third parties. European Bank for

Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the International Finance Corporation (IFC) are among the international economic organizations with which the BSECO Business Council has economic relations.

In addition to the mentioned three main bodies; Local Administrations such as the Mayors Conference of the Capitals of Black Sea Countries, the Black Sea Capitals' Governors and Mayors Round Table and International Black Sea Club, Non-Governmental Organizations such as the Conference of Architects of the Black Sea and the Association of the BSECO Bars of Lawyers, Academic Institutions such as the Black Sea University, the Black Sea Studies Certificate Programme, the International Center for Black Sea Studies all together help the BSEC work properly and the betterment of the BSECO.

The goals the BSECO is aimed to realise are clear in the Declaration on Black Sea Economic Co-operation. "According to the Declaration, the aim of the BSECO is to provide an environment for the free circulation of goods, services, capital and business entrepreneurs among its member states. Inter-governmental co-operation is envisaged in a number of fields including transport, communications, energy, agriculture, environment, tourism, the processing of minerals and raw materials and the exchange of economic and commercial information" (Turkish Daily News, 25 June 1992). In the Bosphorus Statement of June 1992, declared the day after the Declaration on Black Sea Economic Co-operation, one objective of the organization was pointed out clearly: "...to transform the Black Sea into a region of peace, freedom, stability and prosperity..." (Turkish Daily News, 26 June 1992).

Besides the aims mentioned above the BSECO has also some practical aims which were not indicated in the Declaration on BSECO and Bosphorus Statement related to economic, social and cultural issues. These include: The BSECO is aimed to diversify economic relations both among the member states and with the third countries and organizations in order to accelerate integration of the region states into world economy; To help the transition economies build the economic structures which are necessary in the market economies; To improve the involvement of non-governmental sectors and to foster the role of private sector in economic relations; To soften rigid integration and concentrate on less rigid, project-orientated co-operation arrangements; To lower inter-regional trade obstacles, liberalise foreign trade, attract foreign investment and realise customs union in the region; To build peace through intensive multi-lateral, good-neighbourly relations for the regional security; To continue economic, political, social and cultural relations according to the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, the Resolution of the CSCE fol-

low-up documents and the rules of international law; To respect for the human rights and basic freedoms; To help the member states which lack the democratic institutions, human rights and the rules of pluralist democracy; To encourage the member states to start particularly economic relations with the Western European countries.

As for the concrete outputs of the BSECO, we will only emphasize the projects which resulted and gave practical ends. For this reason, we will exclude the projects which are being worked on at present. Although the establishment of the BSECO is not old, the projects realised within the BSECO are quite a lot. During 7 years 22 projects were realised in different fields as a result of the common work (Akgönenç, 1994: 75-77; Özer, 1996: 95-99 and Smirnov, 1997: 80-83). These include: Center for Exchange of Statistical Data and Economic Information; BSECO Trade and Development Bank; Balkan Center for the Support of Small and Medium Size Enterprises; Black Sea Regional Energy Center; The Center for Scientific and Cultural Relations Between the Black Sea Countries; Black Sea Trading Company; Black Sea Corporation; Black Sea Corporation Association; Romanian Danube-Black Sea Foundation; International Black Sea Club; Black Sea Capitals Governors and Mayors Round-Table Meetings; A number of Working Groups in the fields of transportation, communications and energy; An impressive number of conferences on different issues related to the BSECO; The Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution; The Convention of Scientific, Cultural and Information Cooperation Between the Black Sea Region Countries; The Black Sea Chamber Orchestra; The Black Sea Television; The Program ‘The Black Sea: the zone of interaction of civilizations’ worked out by Russian; The Black Sea University; The Black Sea Studies Certificate Program established jointly by Columbia University in the U.S.A and Bosphorus University in Turkey; The Association of the BSECO Bars; International Center of Black Sea Research.

Considering the projects realised within the BSECO we should say that the BSECO proved it self to be an effective Cooperation Project which presented advantageous economic, cultural and political results for the countries in the region.

### **3. The Advantages the BSECO Presents**

In this last part we will mention the advantages the BSECO presents both for the region and the world in terms of security, economy, society and culture.

**Security:** It is evident that the notion “security” which was largely based on war-avoidance, state-based, military-orientated features during the Cold War left its place to multiple units/international organizations / international institutions and

non-military/soft diplomatic features. Ole Waever explains this transformation in security perception of the states with the following words “‘Security community’ proved to be a fertile organizing question in that it produced a rethinking of European politics in the complex field where the historic novelty of non-war meets a transformation of security from state monopoly to multiple units. This revealed amongst other things that the regional construction has gone through a complex process from an early phase where it was built on arguments related to war-avoidance over state-based desecuritization (neo-functionalist integration) to post-sovereign non-military re-securitization (the integration/fragmentation argument). Without war, security becomes much more complex, and the identities built on this kind of security pose challenges not only to security analysis but generally to international relations theory, unprepared as it still largely is for structured thinking about post-sovereign politics” (Waever, 1995: 48).

Within this neo-security perception which gives an additional importance to multiple units for safeguarding the global security, the share of the BSECO in building peace and confidence in one of the most conflicted regions is evident. “Geopolitically, the West’s interest is dictated by the intermediate position of the Black Sea between Europe and Asia and by its proximity to the Mediterranean and the Middle East. A presence in the region helps solve foreign policy problems in the Caucasus, the Caspian Sea region, Central Asia and provides access to Russia’s southern boundaries. This makes the Black Sea region an important factor for European security and stability, as relevant CSCE documents acknowledge” (Kovalsky, 1994: 115).

In fact, the BSECO is neither a security provider nor a security building measure. It might only be determined as a confidence-building measure. However, the BSECO, through intensifying good-neighbourly relations and multi-lateral agreements, motivating the member states for pluralist democracy, developing multi-level economic relations, supporting the setting up liberal political institutions, giving importance to the conventions of the CSCE and Helsinki Final Act realises the functions of the security institutions.

**Economy:** “...there are many attempts in which the regions try focusing on the European axis in their own ways...” (Bleda, 1996: 70).

Most of the BSECO members see the BSECO process as a mean of European integration as their final aim is to integrate themselves with the EU. However, EU membership is not easy for the newly-independent states which were obliged to apply the norms of the central planning economies and which lacked the structures

of the market economy. So, the BSECO is a kind of preparation ground for the integration with the world economy. Although it is rather difficult the BSECO members are getting used to adopting certain rules, standards and practices which are available in the EU. In addition to the European integration, the BSECO members have obtained the advantage of diversifying economic relations, increasing foreign trade, taking part in bilateral and multilateral economic contracts, starting economic relations with the third parties and international organizations most of which lacked before the BSECO membership.

Considering the fact that most of the countries in the Black Sea region are transition economies, we should say that the countries which adopted liberal economic structures and institutions have been quite practical for transition economies.

**Society and Culture:** Depending on the negative experiences in the region during history, particularly the former Soviet republics and ex-Eastern Block countries lack self-confidence and bear the feelings of enmity, unreliability, nationalist hatred and insecurity toward other nations in the region. The BSECO through developing multi-dimensional relations leads to mutual understanding and common action. So, this helps build psychologically stable societies.

In addition to this, the BSECO also removes the negative effects and difficulties caused by the efforts made for transformation from central planning economy to market economy through diversifying economic relations, increasing foreign trade and initiating economic relations with the third parties.

Furthermore, it is evident that the differences between Christian and Islamic cultures have always caused problems not only in the Black Sea region but in the world. The BSECO, having member states from different cultural and religious background paves the way to the removal of the strict dividing lines between Christianity and Islam and motivates the participant states to show respect for cultural and religious differences. The BSECO, having this feature, proves itself to be one of the multi-cultural regional grouping different from most of the available regional groupings in today's international system.

#### **4. Some Suggestions for the BSECO**

“...If the EU and EFTA are viewed as the economically and politically the most stable pillars in Europe, Russian Federation, the Baltic States and the Ukraine are the second pillar. Turkey, the Central Asian Republics of the former USSR and the Balkan States must then rank as the third pillar...” (Şen, 1993: 287).

In this context, the BSECO should be determined as one of the most important

economic and security element for the well-being of the third pillar. Taking other internal (for the countries in the Black Sea Region) and external (for the EU) responsibilities of the BSECO, the following points must be regarded as the suggestions for making the BSECO more effective.

First of all, the BSECO should continue as a regional grouping based on economic, cultural and social purposes but a way from political aims and military gains: The BSECO was initiated as a top-down region-building process by the highest political powers but continued as a bottom-up co-operation model by citizens and local authorities. For the long-lasting and promising BSECO, the bottom-up model in which the private sectors, local administrations, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions co-operate with each other and reach the conclusion by themselves should be given priority; At the moment there are still immense economic diversities which cause some problems among the BSECO members. While some of the member states feel deeply the structural and practical problems of the transition economies, the economies of some other countries present a better panorama. Considering the negative effects that the economic differences cause in the same region among member states, these should be decreased to a minimum level; Most of the member countries of the BSECO, particularly ex-Soviet republics, still lack democratic political institutions, norms of pluralist democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. In order to create equal advantages in terms of politics, the shortcomings in the political arena in some BSECO members should be removed; All member states should benefit the advantages the BSECO presents equally. It should be kept in mind that most of the revolutions and breaking-ups among countries were caused by inequalities; The BSECO members should also show willingness to fulfill their tasks within the BSECO Project; The West should also give support for the BSECO in those matters (Özer, 1996, 82-86): The West should integrate the BSECO with EU; The West should support the political reforms within the BSECO; The West should promote economic reforms which the BSECO is aimed to realise; The West should invest in the BSECO projects as much as possible; The financial assistance should be directed into the region through trade; The West should increase technical assistance in the region; The West should encourage cultural exchanges with the countries in the Black Sea region.

### **Conclusion**

Parallel to the developments in international political system after 1990s, both the content of regionalist concept and regional groupings have changed profoundly.

Along with those changes while the available regional organizations have gained more importance, the need for the establishment of some new regional organizations has been felt deeply. The BSECO has been one of the first examples of this initiative.

Turkish decision-makers, who have found themselves in the center of unexpected changes and chaotic situation, led the establishment of the BSECO regarding Turkey's security, political and economic considerations. Some Balkan and former Soviet/newly independent states have joined this organization. So many projects have been realized, and some security, economic, social and cultural expectations of the member states has been covered. However, due to the problems deeply rooted in past and the prevailing problems at present among the member states prevented the organization from realising its ideals fully.

In this article we tried to analyse the mentioned organization in a detailed way taking the fact into consideration that Turkey, realising the changes in international political order along with the collapse of the Soviet Union, was quite successful in adapting herself to those changes. Through pioneering the establishment of the BSECO, Turkish bureaucrats showed their willingness to direct the course of foreign policy preference from Western-oriented to region-oriented type. The BSECO should be regarded as the new form of region-building process, built in one of the most fragile regions in the world.

**Özet:** Bu makalede, dış politikasını bugüne kadar Batılı müttefiklerinin politikalarının uygulayıcısı olarak şekillendirmiş olan Türkiye'nin, Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılması ve Doğu Bloku'nun çökmesinden sonra bu durumdan etkilenen bir bölge ülkesi olarak kendi dış politikasını daha bağımsız bir şekilde belirleme ve bölgesinde öncülük etme yolunda attığı önemli adımlardan biri olan Karadeniz Ekonomik İşbirliği Örgütü'nün oluşumu dünyada bölgesellik yönünde değişen dış politika tercihlerinin Türkiye tarafından algılanma ve kendi dış politikasında uygulama biçimine bir örnek olması nedeniyle ele alınmıştır. Bu dönemde dünyada bölgesel gruplaşma eğilimlerine dikkat çekildikten sonra, Türkiye'nin bu örgütün kuruluş aşamasındaki katkıları incelenmiş; Karadeniz bölgesinde yer alan ülkeler arasında geçmişte ve bugün mevcut ekonomik, politik, idari, sosyal, etnik çatışmalara ve geçmişteki başarısız işbirliği çalışmalarına değinilmiş; sonrasında Örgütün kuruluşu, yapısı ve amaçları ele alınmıştır. Kısa geçmişine rağmen pek çok projesini sonuçlandırmış olan örgütün günümüzde bölge ülkeleri ve dünya için sağladığı güvenlik, ekonomik, sosyal ve kültürel alanlardaki avantajlar incelenmiş ve örgütün daha verimli kılınabilmesi için bazı önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Karadeniz Ekonomik İşbirliği Örgütü, Karadeniz Bölgesi, bölgeselleşme, bölgesel örgütler, bölgesel güvenlik.

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