

A Report of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies Conference

Black Sea Regional Security Cooperation

Sponsors: George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies and the Black Sea Security Program, Harvard University
December 6-8, 2004, Munich, Germany
Prepared by the Conference Center in close collaboration with the College of International and Security Studies

Black Sea Regional Security Initiatives

The Black Sea Regional Security Conference initiates an effort to create a regional sense of commonality by bringing together military and political leaders responsible for security issues from the Black Sea states and Caucasus countries. Building solid foundations for cooperation and stability will spur the region to develop democratically and economically. Since the end of the Cold War, nations in the Black Sea region have experienced radical changes. Although former Soviet republics gained independence, they lacked economic and political resources vital to building healthy states. Unresolved ethnic conflicts still haunt the region; they feed on instability, unhealthy competition for fossil fuels, and transnational issues to create a new set of problems for nations still struggling to fill unaccustomed roles in the international community. Regional leaders confront threats compounded by 9/11—terrorist networks, radical religious extremism, organized crime, human trafficking, illegal migration, money laundering, internal government corruption, narcotics and weapons trafficking—problems that perplex veteran leaders in the US and Europe.

The Marshall Center and the Black Sea Security Program at Harvard University invited 60 participants representing the Ministries of Defense, other government ministries and think tanks in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, and the US to attend. Thirteen participants had taken part in previous Marshall Center security studies programs. In addition to nurturing closer Euro-Atlantic ties, conference participants discussed and debated regional issues and established a network of colleagues who share a common understanding of defense and security issues. These new links will improve their ability to cooperate on resolving regional problems.

The conference featured a mix of moderated plenary sessions, each focusing on a specific issue, and workshop sessions, where participants discussed joint approaches to regional problems.

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Marshall Center, the US Department of Defense, the German Ministry of Defense, or the US and German Governments. This report is cleared for public release; distribution is unlimited.

Regional Cooperation: Turkey and Black Sea Issues

Turkey's foreign policy, enticed by the possibility of EU membership, has undergone a change in the past decade. Tugged between two poles, the EU and Baghdad, Turkey's relations with the US have changed as well. Two snapshots illustrate the contrast: In the 1990s, Turkey's relations with its neighbors were less than perfect. Interactions with Greece, Iran, and Syria were problematic. Turkey directed its predominant foreign policy interest to Washington and the EU had limited influence in Ankara. In contrast, today Turkey's relations with its neighbors, with the exception of Armenia, are good and Turkey's policies, in harmony with the EU, diverge from the US, particularly on issues concerning the Middle East.

Turkey's new government that emerged from the November 2002 elections energized a new foreign policy focus. The EU's willingness to consider Turkish membership opened the floodgates of change in Ankara. A new atmosphere of cooperation spurred internal changes and reassessment of foreign policy goals. Encouraged by the incentive of EU membership, Turkey was ready to tackle problematic issues with its neighbors by opening negotiations.

Simultaneously, a number of events catalyzed new foreign policy initiatives. Turkey's humanitarian response to an earthquake in Greece improved the atmosphere between the two nations. On the Cyprus issue, Turkey demonstrated willingness to negotiate and consider Kofi Annan's proposals. In the Black Sea basin, Turkey pioneered the Black Sea Cooperation Initiative, which fostered cooperation between Turkey, Bulgaria and other states in the region and NATO. Iran and Syria, encouraged by the EU, opened new trade possibilities for Turkey in the Middle East. Finally, the US war in Iraq, with its repercussions for Turkey's Kurdish population, pushed Turkey toward closer ties with the EU and exacerbated opposition to US policies.

Will these changes be permanent? As long as the possibility of joining the EU remains, Turkey will continue to align its policies and support with the EU. Turkey will continue to cooperate with the US, but whether it returns to its categorical support of the 1990s is still to be determined.



GEORGE C. MARSHALL
EUROPEAN CENTER FOR SECURITY STUDIES

Contemporary Black Sea Transnational Issues

In the Balkans and Caucasus, the incentive to resolve problems cooperatively has increased. Terrorism, military activities such as those in Chechnya, and the increased prominence of the region in a post-9/11 world encouraged new approaches to old problems. Romania's and Bulgaria's accession to NATO membership boosted the organization's influence in the region. The fledgling Black Sea Forum, while still limited in its impact, has laid groundwork for cooperation and confidence building.

The region presents a complicated political picture. Although differences and problems from the Cold War linger, nations increasingly cooperate to resolve transnational issues. Europe has greater influence, particularly in the western part of the region. While closer ties to Europe and integration into the Atlantic community mean peace and prosperity, this new orientation will change the region's political systems. Democracy is spreading eastward: states with strong ties to Europe advocate for their neighbors further east. Indeed, this is the only region in the world where democracy seems to be successfully establishing a foothold.

If the states can develop a common approach, they will be more successful in bringing disparate elements under control. The region's governments face common social and economic issues, which include smuggling, corruption, trafficking, sustainable development, and developing energy projects. Corruption and uncontrolled territories exacerbate problems.

Russia remains an important player and must be included in regional initiatives. Russia must redirect its current policies that hinder the region's economic development in order to weaken the elements of criminality rooted in sluggish economies that cannot provide citizens with a decent standard of living.

International Political Institutions and Regional Security

To protect the region and play a larger role internationally, Black Sea states must coalesce into a group that shares common interests. This will enable international organizations active in the region to function more effectively.

NATO's expansion to the region prompted the EU to develop new interest in the former Soviet states. The region, for centuries a part of the Russian empire, still retains many ties among themselves and with Russia. Compared to Central Europe, the Black Sea basin has followed a very different path of development.

In the past 15 years, democracy has taken root and citizens have become more willing to fight for their rights. Governments in the region must work to resolve long-standing conflicts. Active involvement by Russia, the EU, NATO and the United States could help frame a basis for solutions.

The end of the Cold War transformed NATO's role in European security. Between 1949 and 1991, NATO members fought against a common threat. They agreed on what capabilities NATO required and how it operated. With the disintegration of the USSR, allies increasingly disagreed on the nature of the new threat and how to effectively confront it. The Alliance's decision to build expeditionary forces able to respond to crises beyond NATO territory rather than to

threats within its territory expanded its focus. After 9/11 and the invocation of Article 5, NATO stepped forward to fill additional regional and functional roles as well. Through Partnership for Peace (PfP), NATO provided a forum to help newly independent states interested in NATO membership.

Security cooperation across the Black Sea region is still embryonic, but NATO's presence there increased with Romania's and Bulgaria's membership;

since 2000, Georgia has become more involved with the alliance. Can this foothold be used to build bridges to the

Can NATO's foothold be used to build bridges to the Caspian and beyond?

Caspian and beyond? The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR) are first steps, but how can the security sectors of the various states encourage further progress? Coordination between NATO and the EU and between security and economic development will encourage states to cooperatively build democratic values and stable governments.

Counter-proliferation and Its Challenges

Given the region's nuclear potential, instability could have dangerous consequences. Preventing proliferation is a priority and demands that regional law enforcement, customs, border guards, and the BLACKSEAFOR actively cooperate.

Ukraine has renounced its nuclear capability; it pursues a course of non-proliferation, complies with international procedures, and has established expert oversight of dual-purpose technologies. However, although Chernobyl has been shut down, five nuclear power plants still operate and Ukraine continues to use nuclear energy.

The region must also be concerned about WMD. Middle Eastern terrorists may be tempted by the oil and natural gas resources, tanker traffic on the Black Sea, and new pipelines. Ukraine's intelligence service has shed its police functions and redirected its focus to intelligence and counterintelligence. With the turbulence of the November 2004 elections in the past, Ukraine should be able to monitor regional risks and threats more accurately.

Crisis Management Cooperation in Regional Security: BSEC's Contribution to Regional Security and Stability

The Black Sea region need not exist in a state of perpetual conflict. The area has a long tradition of communication; future development can build upon cultural interactions. Recent international interest should reinforce closer cooperation. History demonstrates that most conflicts are not resolved by military means; rather, conflicts are settled by a mix of political, economic and social measures that intertwine national, regional and international cooperation.

In 1992, 11 states established BSEC to encourage development and diversification of economic interaction. Through a network of regional institutions, BSEC aims to improve communications and secure peace and stability. A network of institutional structures enabled BSEC to take on new tasks that not only encourage cooperation, but also give members a role in Europe's institutional

architecture. BSEC has fostered political and economic cooperation, encouraged greater dialogue, and improved stability.

Although initially BSEC did not envision a peacekeeping or crisis management role, in June 2002, in a statement looking forward to the future, BSEC representatives encouraged its Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs “to consider ways and means of enhancing the contribution of the BSEC to strengthening security and stability in the region.” BSEC is actively working to combat organized crime and to provide assistance in natural disasters. The EU can reinforce BSEC’s efforts by focusing more attention on the organization, including it in more ministerial meetings, and fostering closer business ties.

Despite considerable political support, a chronically small \$1.2 million annual operating budget has prevented BSEC from contributing substantially to the region’s revitalization. Many member countries can’t afford to send representatives to meetings. The Soviet heritage lingers and states flounder as efforts to develop economies fail to produce desired results. On the more positive side, Romanian and Bulgarian membership in NATO and Greece’s effort to focus EU attention on the Black Sea should garner much-needed outside attention. Further, as BSEC succeeds in developing regional cooperation on non-controversial issues (such as disaster relief), confidence in the organization should increase. If the EU targets assistance toward regional rather than bilateral programs, this will reinforce cooperation. As this happens, BSEC should be well positioned to act as a bridge between the EU and Eurasia.

Border and Maritime Security Issues

The disintegration of the USSR and development of breakaway “states” allow illegal activities to propagate across porous borders no longer secured by traditional military and police forces. Nations must focus on long-suppressed problems and address the underlying causes in order to prevent the emergence of new, ever more serious threats. In many cases, international law has become murky and the international community has largely ignored problems. Drug trafficking or terrorist activity result; nations must respond consistently, proactively and with adequate resources.

All of these undefined borders and the phenomenon of “statelets” are rooted in problems that have long been allowed to fester. Breakaway regions represent an erosion of authority and create an environment in which drug smuggling and other problems related to terrorism thrive. NATO, already overstretched, should not be burdened with a peacekeeping role in the Black Sea region. Regional initiatives that include civilian peacekeeping operations, such as police, border guards, customs, and unarmed civilian observers, should be able to respond effectively.

NATO’s Vision on Maritime Security Issues in the Region

The common interests that link NATO and non-NATO states on the Mediterranean and Black Seas offer the potential to strengthen ties between the two groups. The geostrategic significance of the region makes a tempting target for terrorists. To address the threats, many of the regional militaries must undergo a significant transformation.

Maritime problems will require cooperative action. Since 9/11, NATO forces have searched and boarded vessels in the Eastern

Maritime problems will require cooperative action.

Mediterranean. Under Turkish leadership, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria and Georgia have established BLACKSEAFOR. While its primary tasks are to perform search and rescue operations, clear mines and protect the Black Sea environment, its success also builds ties and improves regional cooperation.

Under Turkey’s initiative, Black Sea Harmony forces patrol approaches to the Istanbul Straits and trail suspicious ships. Although this effort is still in its early stages, it offers another opportunity for regional cooperation.

The Portents of Partnership for Peace in Black Sea Regional Security

NATO created the PfP program in 1994 to improve the ability of non-NATO countries to act jointly with NATO forces. PfP’s success in implementing interoperability provided much of the impetus that drove NATO’s transformation. Russia’s leaders initially believed the program was an attempt to lure former Soviet allies away from Russian influence and to prepare them for NATO membership. However, Russia soon realized participating in PfP could provide leverage to influence NATO from within. Although NATO-Russia relations have grappled with some difficulties (particularly the crises in the Balkans and Kosovo), on the whole, a spirit of cooperation is developing. The relations between the US, Germany, France and Russia were strained by US/international intervention in Iraq. These partnerships must be re-energized as the alliance determines how best to help resolve the crisis.

If NATO members continue a cooperative approach to settling problems, the entire Black Sea region would be more secure. A Russian contribution to successful NATO peace-keeping efforts in the Balkans (for example an effort that results in refugees returning to their homes or a decrease in drug trafficking) could reinforce the NATO-Russia relationship and provide a model for future missions in the Caucasus.

South Eastern Europe Initiative (SEEI) as a Model of Regional Cooperation under NATO Auspices

NATO’s outreach efforts include policies designed to bring new nations closer to the alliance.

Could an existing model of regional cooperation, such as the Balkan peacekeeping mission, be transplanted to the Black Sea region? NATO’s outreach efforts include policies designed to bring new nations closer to the alliance. Romanian and Bulgarian membership in NATO demonstrates how well PfP has succeeded both politically and militarily. This accomplishment strengthened ties between NATO and the Black Sea states.

In 1999 after the intervention in Kosovo, NATO launched SEEI as a series of programs designed to promote regional cooperation and security. SEEI reinforces PfP mechanisms and builds on an established network of regional cooperation, although it stops short of full NATO membership. SEEI relies on member nations to initiate

and lead programs with NATO acting as a support. SEEI helped the Balkans to focus on military reforms that would improve the states' ability to cooperate with NATO.

SEEI could provide a model for future cooperative efforts in other regions, particularly for the states bordering the Black Sea. To enable them to qualify for membership, NATO's integration strategy should recognize the needs of individual countries and offer a bold vision that encourages states to make adjustments that will reflect NATO's expectations. The momentum behind NATO's most recent enlargement originated in aspirant countries, not NATO. Hungary and Poland were well into the reform process before NATO offered assistance. The Black Sea region could benefit from allied mentoring while they progress through the reform process. NATO will support the Black Sea states' integration plans and help them improve cooperation and develop more democratic forms of government. The Black Sea Group already has the framework in place for improved cooperation and regional stability.

The *Sine Qua Non* of Future Regional Cooperation

Black Sea states must place security problems on the international agenda and seize every opportunity to make their voices heard in Brussels. Fostering a shared understanding of security concerns will encourage common action against threats; interdependence will decrease the potential for conflict. The region—with its geostrategic position at the crossroads of three continents—has catapulted to a level of importance similar to that of Central Europe during the Cold War. It offers NATO, the EU, and Russia a unique opportunity to pool efforts and bring the Black Sea states into closer contact with Europe.

The nascent steps toward increased cooperation have already been taken. A security dialogue on non-controversial topics, such as civil-military relations, would be beneficial now that both US and Russia are involved. The dialogue could generate cooperation on other, more difficult issues such as drug trafficking and WMD. Successes and concrete achievements will reinforce common efforts to resolve security matters and divert attention from unresolved internal disputes. Numerous obstacles remain to be addressed. Among these are competition for oil transportation routes; uncoordinated membership in security and defense organizations; bilateral security disputes;

historical animosities and mutual suspicions; and conflicting security agendas. However, the aspirations for Euro-Atlantic partnership create an incentive to work together.

The organizational infrastructure exists. BSEC could expand to include military issues. Security organizations, such as BLACKSEAFOR, Black Sea Harmony and others, need to identify a common vision and strategic focus. Bridges to NATO and PfP will help manage assistance and explore the common challenges to security.

Conclusion

This conference provided a forum through which representatives of the Black Sea states developed new contacts, discussed developments with international experts and debated among themselves on how to define common interests and identity. Personal relationships, established at conferences such as this, will encourage frank discussions on issues at the core of the region's conflicts. Cooperation will improve as avenues for exchanging ideas and views become more firmly established. Progress toward resolving long-standing disagreements will fuel regional development and improve NATO's and the EU's ability to work with the region.

Note: This report's full version, with case studies of the region's frozen conflicts and working group reports, is posted on www.marshallcenter.org.



For further information on this event or other activities contact:

**Conference Center
George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies
www.marshallcenter.org**

Gernackerstrasse 2
82467 Garmisch-Partenkirchen
Germany

PH: 49-8821-750-2689
FAX: 49-8821-750-2841

ECMC-CC
UNIT 24502
APO, AE 09053
USA

DSN: 440-2689
DSN FAX: 440-2841

