

## **The Black Sea Economic Co-Operation after Ten Years: What Went Wrong?**

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Established on the initiative of the Turkish president Turgut Özal on 25 June 1992, the Black Sea Economic Co-operation Organization (BSEC) consists of eleven states which may be geographically grouped under three headings: the Black Sea states (Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Ukraine and Georgia); the Balkan states (Albania, Greece and Moldova); the Caucasian states (Azerbaijan and Armenia). The BSEC states represent a population of some 400 million and a vast geographical space containing rich natural resources.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the activities performed by the BSEC centre on economic co-operation as proclaimed by the Summit Declaration of BSEC in İstanbul on 25 June 1992. The declaration announced that the member states would enhance “the mutually advantageous economic co-operation arising from their geographic proximity and from the reform process and structural adjustments.”<sup>2</sup> The parties have also committed themselves to combining their efforts for more effective protection of the environment in the Black Sea basin. The same document states that member states were

"Conscious of the importance of the environmental problems of the Black Sea for the well-being of their peoples and recognizing that it is vital to ensure the environmental sustainability of their economic development".

The same document made a passing reference to the significance of **human rights** and **democracy** as the spirit of the new age unleashed by the demise of the Cold War. Members, it said, have

"Noted that the signing of the declaration signalled the beginning of a new partnership between them inspired by the values of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights."

Finally, the Summit Declaration underlined the significance of regional peace and security:

"The Heads of State and Government acknowledged that the region is already faced by serious conflicts and that there is the danger of new tensions arising. They therefore emphasized the need for the peaceful settlement of all disputes by the means and in accordance with the principles set out in the CSCE documents to which they all subscribe. They further reaffirmed their determination in resisting aggression, violence, terrorism and lawlessness and their resolve to help establish and restore peace and justice."

The BSEC was transformed into a regional economic organization with an international legal identity when member states adopted a Charter in Yalta on June 5, 1998 which was ratified by the respective parliaments by May 1, 1999. This was a clear indication of the member states' long term commitment to the success of the organization.<sup>3</sup>

When one looks into the relevant documents which set the goals of the BSEC, it becomes clear that the member states have committed themselves to improving economic and technological co-operation, to encouraging social interaction and free circulation of private enterprise. The parties have also decided to establish friendly and peaceful relations based on the principles proclaimed in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and on other documents adopted by the European Conference on Security and Co-operation. The linchpin of their objectives is "to turn the Black Sea basin into a haven of peace, stability and prosperity."<sup>4</sup> No doubt, the willingness of member states to proceed with further economic co-operation in spite of many odds, many of which, as we shall see, are "hard nuts to crack", is praiseworthy. The BSEC experience shows that, states which share common frontiers or are part of the same geographical basin may consider mutual or multilateral controversies and disputes as cause for action, rather than as excuse for keeping relations at a minimum. No one can deny the positive synergy spread by the BSEC in the Black Sea basin, the Balkans and the Caucasus, although the extent to which the feeling that they are part of the same grouping has aided the cause of peace and security in the region is difficult to ascertain.

Having said all that, however, one cannot fail to observe that, even a cursory look at the BSEC experience so far indicates that it has failed to achieve most of its original goals. Danopoulos observes that the BSEC is "badly funded and beset by disagreements."<sup>5</sup> Another

analysis expresses a pessimistic view about the prospects of greater political co-operation among members of the BSEC: “the conclusion must be that a more intensive and integrated co-operation is not possible at a political level in the BSEC in the foreseeable future”.<sup>6</sup> Such observations are not at all surprising granting, first and foremost, that the members have refrained from committing themselves to *specific and detailed* obligations in order to bring about an ever-deepening economic integration involving a multiplicity of actors, besides governments, of the type established by the EU.<sup>7</sup> Instead they have acted in an unusually cautious fashion to sketch out general commitments, while opting for *framework agreements* marked by a hesitant language that offers ample leeway for avoiding strict obligations. Similarly, the infra-structural projects are scheduled to be planned and implemented only at the inter-governmental level. The parties have even shied away from establishing partnership on the basis of a treaty or convention, and instead opted for *non-binding declarations*<sup>8</sup>.

Perhaps not surprisingly, contrary to initial expectations, the BSEC began to lose momentum in the second half of the 1990s. The intra-regional trade, for instance, has remained below the level that had been initially considered to be achievable.<sup>9</sup> Lack of sufficient trust among members, often reproduced via past grievances as we shall see, has apparently aborted the possibility of extensive co-operation through, *inter alia*, joint projects and an expanding trade within the BSEC. The strains of transition from centrally-planned economies into free market economies and integration into the world economic system, experienced by a majority of member states, are equally problematical. Lack of coordination and common understanding among decision-makers and businessmen on account of inadequate information and/or misinformation have similarly played some role. The economic and financial problems faced by most of the member states need also to be accounted for the low level of intra-regional trade.<sup>10</sup> Indeed most of the member states have found it difficult to overcome financial shortages. They have also mostly failed to complete the legal and institutional basics essential for international co-operation based on free market economy, free enterprise, greater privatisation and the opening of markets to international competition.

There are perhaps more *specific* factors that need to be addressed here, to enable us to make a deeper analysis of present currents and think over the likelihood of better performance by the BSEC. It seems that the main impediment to the healthy evolution of the BSEC has been the reluctance of member states to consider it as a dynamic and active organization based in solid

foundations. Instead, they have tended to see the BSEC as a second-rate partnership designed to satisfy certain conjectural needs.<sup>11</sup> That explains why the member states have consistently alleged that the BSEC is not viewed as an alternative to other organizations such as the EU and NATO. What is more, most of them have come to see the BSEC as a trump card that might prove beneficial for acquiring membership of other organizations.<sup>12</sup> While Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania are part of the enlargement process in the EU, Russia became the eighth member of G-7, later to be called G-8, an international club of world's richest seven nations.<sup>13</sup> It is apparent from the language of the founding declarations and other statements that the BSEC is not in any meaningful way intended to transform the orientation of member states' foreign policies. It is time and again emphasised that the BSEC represents no more than a complementary process of gradual integration among member states, and **not** an alternative path of its own. Hence, the boring repetition of the promise of commitment to existing international organizations: that the member states' commitment to the European Union, to other international organizations, regional initiatives and to the existing relations with third states will not be affected as a result of the process unleashed by the BSEC.<sup>14</sup>

This point may be elaborated by looking at the specific policy objectives of the Balkan members of the BSEC. Bulgaria, Romania and Albania have consistently played down the significance of the BSEC out of fear of infuriating the Western world. A major characteristic of the foreign policy strategy pursued by the BSEC's Balkan members is their westward-orientation with special emphasis to their projected membership of the EU and NATO. The EU represents the economic and monetary union of (certain) European nations, while NATO is the major military alliance within the Western world, which comprises a majority of European states. The EU and NATO are together considered as the guarantor of their economic, financial, political and military safety and well-being.<sup>15</sup> Bulgaria, Romania and Albania have strived hard to conduct peaceful and cordial relations with their neighbours, *inter alia*, to promote their cause for membership in these two institutions. For its part, Bulgaria relies on Greece to champion its cause before the EU institutions, while looking upon Turkey to lobby for its accession to NATO.<sup>16</sup> Romania, for its part, was one of the earliest among the former Warsaw Pact members to join in NATO's Partnership for Peace programs in 1994.<sup>17</sup> It had by then signed an association agreement with the EU in 1992. Bulgaria and Romania are likely to gain full admission to the EU by 2007. Since it permits them to present themselves as peace-loving and cooperative states,

both of these states have been using their membership of the BSEC, *inter alia*, as a leverage to enhance their prestige and credibility in European organizations.

Russia seems to have a somewhat different focus. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, it has been seeking to restore special economic ties with the Slavic members of the ex-Soviet republics, like Ukraine and Belarus. At least in theory, the BSEC may, in part, be considered as an extension of the former economic partnership between the ex-Soviet Union and the ex-communist states in the Balkans. Indeed Russia, Ukraine, Georgia Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Moldova, Azerbaijan and Armenia were all either part of the Soviet Union or a member of the Warsaw Pact, which was a security alliance, and COMECON, (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) an economic pact. Their economies naturally complemented one another through similar economic policies, the allocation of the factors of production and the interdependency of their markets.<sup>18</sup> This suggests that, not only the Balkan members of the BSEC, but Russia too seeks to use the BSEC as a platform to achieve other, perhaps hierarchically superior objectives.

A crucial strategic mistake made by the founding BSEC members is that, unlike the EU which has undergone slow, cautious and gradual integration, the BSEC acted impatiently by instantly opening itself up to states outside the Black Sea basin. In Davutoğlu's view, the membership of the Caucasian and Balkan states with no links to the Black Sea has undermined the possibility of the formation of greater cohesion among member states, while the BSEC was burdened with the inner contradictions and problems of these mostly unstable nations.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, the Franco-German axis which has been the strongest locomotive of European integration does not have any parallels in the BSEC, since Turkey and Russia, as the largest and oldest states, have shown themselves not to be ready for such a role. Unless both of them come to see the Black Sea as the realm of common economic interests, Russian-Turkish rivalry will no doubt prejudice the opportunities offered by the BSEC.<sup>20</sup>

This disappointing panorama is emphatically pointed out in a working programme prepared by Turkey during its chairmanship of the BSEC on 1 May – 1 November 2001. This document singles out a number of factors which account for the absence of tangible advances in the field of economic and other forms of co-operation:

"During the past 10 years, BSEC member states have faced serious economic challenges individually. In fact, most of them have gone through the process of transition to democracy and liberal economy, have dealt with serious issues such as

internal conflicts relating to ethnic and cultural differences, immigration problems, lack of sufficient funds. Some members have given priority to EU membership or to participating in other regional co-operation frameworks such as the Stability Pact, SECI, Royaumont Process etc."<sup>21</sup>

This study now proceeds with an exposition of various disputes and other issues of contention among some members of the BSEC which explain a great deal about the absence of sufficient mutual trust which has been a major hindrance to genuine economic integration within the BSEC. Quite a few of these unresolved disputes have the potential of threatening peace and security in the Black Sea basin, the Balkans, and the Caucasus. In the Caucasus, it is the **Russian aggression in Azerbaijan and Georgia**, and **Armenia's prolonged occupation of one fifth of the Azerbaijani territory** that come to mind first. Likewise, **Turkey's enduring disputes with Greece** in respect of Cyprus and the delimitation of the Aegean sea may any time escalate into a whole-scale war, as the Kardak crisis in 1996 dramatically showed. **Albanian-Greek dispute regarding the position of the Greek (Orthodox) minority in Albania**, and the **Romanian-Russian rivalry over Moldova** similarly contain the seeds of conflict.

## **MAJOR INTERNATIONAL DISPUTES AMONG MEMBERS OF THE BSEC**

### **THE RUSSIAN FACTOR**

We may begin by drawing attention to the apparently destructive role played by Russia in the Caucasus region since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. After a brief respite following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia began to display an aggressive posture in the Caucasus (as well as in Central Asia) as if to force the nations of the region into accepting the Russian hegemony again. To achieve this goal, Russia has imposed harsh military pressures and devised policies to destabilise many of its neighbours. It has not hesitated to manipulate the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as an instrument of Russian expansionism, imperialism and aggression. As is generally observed, the Russian army enjoys considerable degree of autonomy from the government in the formulation and execution of policies vis-à-vis the "near abroad" (Central Asia, Caucasus, and other regions bordering Russia all of which were formerly ruled by the Soviet Union). As a result, Armenia has practically "lost its independence", while Georgia, Moldova, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine have fallen prey to Russian quest for hegemony.<sup>22</sup> No doubt, the Russian aggression targeting some of the CIS countries is designed to keep them under Russian control, restore its previous influence on them, establish

control over their resources, dominate their markets, prevent them from choosing an independent course of action vis-à-vis the outside world, and to impair their chance of linking their economies with the world economic system.<sup>23</sup>

Russia's expansionist drive does not only target the territories of the former Soviet Union, but also those who aspire to fill the vacuum generated by the demise of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc. In an attempt to establish a "post-Byzantine space", Russia has chosen to adopt an "iron fist" approach in the Balkans too. The Russian tendency for domination and coercion in its relations with countries such as Bulgaria and Romania may be best expressed by the term *lebenstraum* (living space) which is woefully reminiscent of the Nazi Germany's attitude towards countries in central and eastern Europe before and during the Second World War.

We may hereby begin with an exposition of the Russian quest for hegemony in **Azerbaijan**. After Azerbaijan acquired independence in the early 1990s, Russia immediately disclosed its intention to debilitate Azerbaijan's ability to remain outside the Russian control and thus pursue an independent course of action. Azerbaijan was the first ex-Soviet republic which, under the premiership of the democratically elected Ebulfez Elçibey (1992-93), asked the Russian troops to leave the Azeri territory. For its part, Russia retaliated by providing vital assistance to the rebelling troops that toppled the Elçibey government in June 1993. Azerbaijan was soon to be brought to its knees by being coerced to join the CIS in September 1993. Evidently, Russia has all along employed a variety of strategies to obtain Azerbaijan's docility. Russia has sought to extract a number of vital concessions from Azerbaijan such as obtaining military bases near the borders of Azerbaijan, presenting itself as the sole mediator in the Azeri-Armenian conflict which has allowed its troops to pose as "peacekeepers", and acquiring special privileges in the extraction of Azerbaijani oil reserves and the delivery of Azerbaijani oil through the pipelines passing across the Russian territory.<sup>24</sup> In spite of its promises, Russia declined to guarantee the withdrawal of Armenian troops from the occupied parts of Azerbaijan. What is more, Armenia captured two more provinces of Azerbaijan with Russian assistance in October 1993.<sup>25</sup> (The international legal dimension of the problem is examined below) Azerbaijan still remains under the sway of Russia, although not even an inch of Azeri territory has so far been recovered.

Russia's role of a semi-protectorate in **Armenia** likewise deserves particular attention. It is common knowledge that, without Russia's direct and indirect assistance to the Armenian forces in their long-drawn out war with Azerbaijan from 1988 to 1993, it would have been almost impossible for Armenia to gain definitive military victory over its archrival, Azerbaijan. Not surprisingly, as a result of this alliance, Armenia practically fell into the military, economic and political hegemony of Russia. Armenian industry cannot sustain itself without obtaining oil and raw materials from Russia. Moreover, Armenia's borders are currently guarded by Russian troops. Besides, a deal has been struck between Russia and Armenia whereby Armenia accepted to put its military bases in the service of Russian troops for 25 years. Armenia's unilateral dependence on Russia has turned it literally into a Russian "satellite".<sup>26</sup>

Likewise, Russia's aggressive impulses and policies have been extremely destructive for the unity and peace in **Georgia**. From the early 1990s, Georgia has had to confront armed ethnic separatist movements vying either for independence or, at least, for greater autonomy. It is known that, when the Soviet Union was on the verge of collapse, the Soviet leadership started backing the nationalist demands of minorities within the aspiring republics in order to punish them. This was the case with the Abkhazians and Ossetians in Georgia, and the Crimeans in **Ukraine**. Their grievances and desire for greater self-rule, stirred up by the Soviet Union and, then, by Russia, soon escalated into full-scale wars with devastating consequences.<sup>27</sup> The Azeri government, too, has long alleged that Russia has been encouraging separatism among Lezghins of north Azerbaijan and the Talyshis in the south. The same too holds true for Georgia *par excellence*. Indeed, as mentioned above, Abkhazians in the north and South-Osetians in the south have enjoyed Russian military support in their quest for separate political existence. At one time during the conflict, South-Osetia was guarded literally by Russian troops. Over 300,000 refugees from Sukhumi who had been victimised by Russian bombardment, are yet to return to their original homeland. Russia has also instigated power struggles among various political factions in Georgia. Military conflicts and political instability have exhausted the material sources of the country, forcing nearly one million Georgians to seek livelihood abroad. Perhaps not surprisingly, out of desperation, Georgia accepted to join the CIS in October 1993 and, some years later, the stationing of Russian troops in Vaznani, Akhalkalaki and Batumi.<sup>28</sup> Georgia was later to permit Russia to deploy its naval forces on the Black Sea coast of Abkhazia in Georgia. Russian interference into the civil war in Georgia is also linked to its desire to control the flow of



Azerbaijani oil which, in its view, should follow the northern route, and not the Georgian route.<sup>29</sup> It is alleged that Russia has not hesitated to engage in plots to remove leaders of the former Soviet republics who oppose Russian designs. This was, it is claimed, the case when, in late August 1995, a car bomb nearly killed Georgia's leader Edward Shevardnadze five days after he had announced his preference for the Baku-Ceyhan oil route.<sup>30</sup>

No doubt, Russia's aggressive policies, particularly in the Caucasus violate the following rules and principles of international law:

- a) Prohibition of the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state; (UN Charter, Article 2, prg.4)
- b) The principle of the sovereign equality of states; (UN Charter, Article 2, prg.1)
- c) Prohibition of intervention into the domestic affairs of other states; (UN Charter, Article 2, prg.7)
- d) The right of peoples to self-determination; (UN Charter, Article 1, prg.2 ; Article 1 of the two human rights covenants of 1966)
- e) Prohibition of armed reprisals, the organization of "irregular forces or armed bands, including mercenaries, for incursion into the territory of another State", the support for terrorism, the use of economic and political coercion in order to obtain unfair advantages<sup>31</sup>; (1970 Declaration on Friendly Relations)

Russia, among other means, seeks to offset its isolation and regain its former prestige via multilateral partnerships, such as the BSEC. Its active role in the BSEC also allows it to ensure that the ex-Soviet republics, such as Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan continue to remain within the Russian sphere of influence. The Balkan dimension of the BSEC likewise constitutes a pole of attraction for Russia, as it believes that it has a special mission in the area fostered by historical, ethnic, religious and cultural ties between Russians and the peoples in the Balkans.<sup>32</sup> However there is hardly any evidence to suggest that Russian influence in the Balkans is greeted with enthusiasm by the states of the region. On the contrary, with the marked exception of the rump Yugoslavia, the Balkan states are willing to join NATO not only as a precaution against possible encroachments to their borders by neighbouring states, but also believe that this will "provide a shield against future threats from a rebounding Russia".<sup>33</sup>

One potential source of conflict which concerns Russia (incidentally involving Ukraine too) concerns **Romanian-Russian rivalry over Moldova**. Annexed to Ukraine by the Soviet

Union in 1944 and situated north of Romania, Moldova gained independence in 1991. One of the long-term goals of Romania is to establish union with Moldova where sixty percent of the population is ethnically Romanian. Besides, Romania argues, Moldova was historically a province of Romania under the name of Bessarabia. A part of the population in Moldova is Russian who are fiercely opposed to the possibility of a fusion between Romania and Moldova. Not unexpectedly, thanks to the presence of its “peacekeeping” troops, Russia has at times provided military assistance to the anti-Romanian forces in Moldova.<sup>34</sup>

### **ARMENIAN FACTOR**

Russian aggression in the Caucasus (and elsewhere) is matched only by the **Armenian seizure of territory from Azerbaijan** in the protracted war of 1988-1993. Not only was Azerbaijan forced to abandon the autonomous region of Nagorno-Karabagh, an enclave populated mostly by Armenians, but it had to relinquish its control over six other surrounding regions (Kelbajar, Aghdam, Fizuli, Zangilan, Gubadli, Jabrayil) of Azerbaijan. As a result of the illegal occupation of Azerbaijan by Armenian forces, some 20 percent of the Azerbaijani territory has fallen into the hands of Armenia. Nearly a million people have since sought refuge in the rest of Azerbaijan, thus becoming “internally displaced people”. The “Nagorno-Karabagh Republic”, controlling the occupied territories jointly with Armenia, has since been established.<sup>35</sup> The UN Security Council has since adopted four resolutions which demanded the immediate withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories. However the Armenian side has completely disregarded Resolutions No. 822, 853, 874, and 884. The seizure of territory from Azerbaijan cannot be considered simply as the struggle of an “oppressed minority” for self-determination which eventually resulted in independence. The heavy involvement of Armenia in this war turns the whole conflict into an “**armed attack**” against the territorial integrity and political independence of Azerbaijan within the meaning of Article 51 of the UN Charter. Such action is the most serious violation of international peace and security, and requires the implementation of the collective enforcement mechanism by the UN Security Council. However, no such resolution has to this day been adopted by the Security Council. Under international law, there is no reason why Azerbaijan should concede independence for Nagorno-Karabagh. The Armenians living in this region are, at most, entitled to demand minority rights which may include cultural, educational and religious autonomy.

Some Armenians have expressed the rather bizarre view that since “Azerbaijan lost the war, it has to accept its results”.<sup>36</sup> This assertion is no doubt an anachronism as “the age of conquest” has long gone. As mentioned before, the use of force in international relations is prohibited under Article 2/4 of the UN Charter. Armed attack against the territorial integrity and/or political independence of states is the gravest threat to international peace and security. Such actions are liable of punishment through the collective enforcement mechanism of the UN Security Council under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. If that weren’t the case, powerful states could easily override small or weak ones, whereby current frontiers would be perpetually under fire in a chaotic world. Since the formulation in 1932 of the *Stimson doctrine*, propounded as an immediate reaction to the invasion of Manchuria by Japan, which has been accepted as the proper formulation of customary international law, states which come to existence as the result of illegal territorial changes are not recognized by members of international society in that capacity.<sup>37</sup> This doctrine has been reaffirmed by the UN Charter as well as the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law, albeit under different formulations. The principle that the territorial integrity and political independence of states is inviolable (Article 2, prg. 4 of the UN Charter), is especially crucial in the Caucasus “where more than 50 ethnic groups live together.”<sup>38</sup>

### **TURKISH-GREEK DISPUTES**

The long history of enduring disputes between Turkey and Greece in respect of Cyprus, the delimitation of the Aegean and the air space above it, the plight of Turkish (Muslim) minority in Greece and a number of other apparently intractable problems has created a dangerous stalemate which is not susceptible of definition simply in *legal* terms. This explains why, although most members of NATO have reduced their military spending since the Cold War ended, Turkey and Greece have increased their military spending in anticipation of a possible military confrontation.<sup>39</sup>

The Kardak crisis (or the “Imia” crisis, as the Greeks call it) amply showed that, due largely to the lack of trust between Turkey and Greece, even a dispute over small barren rocks might turn into an all-out war. As a Greek scholar observes,

“Behind the heightened state of tension in the Aegean between Greece and Turkey during winter 1995-96 over a ‘pile of rocks’ lie complex history and lingering disputes in a number of political, strategic, legal and geographic areas.”<sup>40</sup>

This largely explains why Turkey, alongside Azerbaijan, abstained when votes for possible Greek membership of the BSEC were cast.<sup>41</sup> It is likely that, as long as hostilities between Turkey and Greece remain unresolved, the BSEC will continue to be shorn of a great deal of its inner dynamism.

### **ALBANIAN-GREEK CONTROVERSY**

A major point of contention between Albania and Greece has been Albania’s alleged mistreatment of Greek minority in southern Albania. Greece has been championing the grievances of all Orthodox Christians of Albania, constituting about 12 percent of the total population, whom it considers as Greek, and urging the Albanian government to stop abusing them and observe their human rights generally and minority rights particularly. Albania has on occasion blamed Greece for exploiting the minority issue for its own expansionist impulses.<sup>42</sup> While blaming Greece for expansionism, Albania itself is accused by Greece for fostering irredentist aims in the Balkans by seeking to oversee “greater Albania” that includes the Albanians of Kosovo and Macedonia. It seems that mutual suspicions of irredentism are likely to remain major obstacles to greater co-operation in the Balkans.<sup>43</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

No doubt, the BSEC represents a bold step that conforms with the age of globalisation. Rising international trade and regional economic integration are among the principal means by which peoples and systems get to know one another. They also boost the wealth of nations. The intra-regional trade within the BSEC has no doubt increased since it was founded in 1992. It is also encouraging to witness the diversification in the substance of co-operation from banking to transport, and from energy to environmental protection in the Black Sea.

Having said that, however, this study is bound to conclude that the fruits of a decade’s experimentation within the BSEC are too few to permit optimism about the prospects of its success in the short or medium-term. The precious factors of political will, economic stability and mutual trust, which are *sine qua non* for deepening economic co-operation between disparate states, strike one with their conspicuous absence in the context of the BSEC. Plenty of unresolved border and territorial disputes, numerous ethnic problems, hostile military posturing

and religious rivalry among some member states, serious economic and financial problems suffered by most of the BSEC member states, rising crime rate in many member states, serious human rights violations and the mass movement of refugees within and across frontiers, and environmental degradation all seem to work to the detriment of peace, security and meaningful co-operation in the areas that bring the BSEC member states together. The fact that member states display divergent levels of development, technological advancement and standards of living, is similarly a serious handicap which is unlikely to disappear easily.<sup>44</sup> Unlike the EU, the existence of a common faith that gives member states and their peoples the feeling of a shared identity is out of question for the BSEC. Most of the citizens of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Albania are Muslims, whereas the religious denomination most common to the rest of the BSEC member states is Christianity.

These drawbacks could only be offset by sensible policies. First, the BSEC needs to rest on dynamic and solid foundations, and should strive to set its own agenda. To that end, it needs to avoid sensational moves, and focus on long-term structural engagements. Secondly, state-to-state activities must be complemented by greater interaction between other actors, such as the non-governmental organizations. This horizontal dimension, in addition to the vertical one, may in the long-term keep the momentum for an expansion of economic relations among members of the BSEC.<sup>45</sup> A formal document claims that “the BSEC turned its back to a troubled, often volatile past and began marching towards a promising future.”<sup>46</sup> Although such words are easier said than done, they are an expression of hope which one is tempted to share.

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<sup>1</sup> The region contains 40 percent of world natural resources, 15 percent of petroleum, 31 percent of coal, while members produce 12,5 percent of total electricity output.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/af/Bsec7.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/af/bsec10.htm>

<sup>4</sup>Şükrü Elekdag, “Karadeniz Ekonomik İşbirliği”, (Black Sea Economic Co-operation), Sabahattin Şen (ed.), *Yeni Dünya Düzeni ve Türkiye*, (The New World Order and Turkey), third edition, (İstanbul, Bağlam Yayınları, 1994), 203-216, pp.207-208.

<sup>5</sup> Constantine P. Danopoulos, “Toward Co-operation in Post-Cold War Southeastern Europe”, *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Spring 2001, 101-118, p.117.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.greekembassy.org/wgreece/greece/313.html>

<sup>7</sup> The architect of the BSEC, Turkey's late president Turgut Özal, in a speech which he gave in September 1990 on the subject of the Turkish view of the "Black Sea economic zone", envisaged the free movement of the factors of production among member states, which pointed to his ambitious plan for a free trade zone. The new organization, in his plan, would consist only of the Black Sea states. However, by contrast to Özal's enthusiasm, the rest of the member states opted for a looser economic partnership and easier access for aspiring states. The process leading to the foundation of the BSEC is well accounted by Şükrü Elekdağ who was a first-hand witness of events. (*op.cit.*)

<sup>8</sup> Most of the decisions in the BSEC are taken by consensus. Unless otherwise stated, these decisions do not create binding obligations. (Apostolos Christakoudis, "Black Sea Economic Co-operation (BSEC): Objectives, Opportunities, Development", *Études Balkaniques*, No.3, 2000, 3-17, p.11.)

<sup>9</sup> This is not however to deny that the figures record tangible increases in trade among members of the BSEC since 1992. In spite of this, except for trade with Russia, the intra-regional trade still constitutes only a fraction of the members' trade with the rest of the world.

<sup>10</sup> Nurver Nureş, "Karadeniz Ekonomik İşbirliği: Sorunlar ve Fırsatlar", (Black Sea Economic Co-operation: Problems and Opportunities), *Çağdaş Türk Diplomasisi: 200 Yıllık Süreç*, Sempozyum, (A Symposium entitled "Contemporary Turkish Diplomacy: The Last Two Hundred Years"), Ankara, October 15-17, 1997, (Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999), 587-596, pp.589-591.

<sup>11</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik* (Strategic Depth), (İstanbul, Küre Yayınları, 2001), p.277.

<sup>12</sup> All the Balkan states in the BSEC consider their membership "as a transitional stage of adaptation to the European standards". (Apostolos, *op.cit.*, p.10) Bulgaria fears that "a closer involvement with BSEC could harm her future relations with the EC (EU) and slow down the process of Euro-integration. Romania has similar fears and doubts". (*Ibid.*, p.5) Likewise, Turkey has consistently asserted that the BSEC is not an alternative to pan-European co-operation.

<sup>13</sup> Davutoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.278.

<sup>14</sup> Elekdağ, *op.cit.*, p.208.

<sup>15</sup> On Bulgaria see Birgül Demirtaş-Coşkun, "Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Dönemde Bulgaristan'ın Dış Politikası (1989-2000)", (Bulgaria's Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Period) Ömer E. Lütem & Birgül Demirtaş-Coşkun (eds.), *Balkan Diplomasisi*, (Balkan Diplomacy) (Ankara, ASAM Yayınları, 2001), 227-249; on Albania see Birgül Demirtaş-Coşkun, "Arnavutluk'un Dış Politikası ve Balkanlar'da Arnavut Sorunu", (Albania's Foreign Policy and the Albanian Problem in the Balkans), in *ibid.*, Ömer E. Lütem & Birgül Demirtaş-Coşkun (eds.), *Balkan Diplomasisi*, (Balkan Diplomacy) , 67-101.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.235. Bulgaria applied for NATO membership in 1997, signed an association agreement with the EU in 1992, and started accession negotiations with the latter in 2000.

<sup>17</sup> For its part, Turkey supports Bulgaria's and Romania's membership of NATO, on grounds that this will increase NATO's role and effectiveness in South Eastern Europe. (*Ibid.*, p.237).

<sup>18</sup> Duncan M. Perry, "Bulgaria: Security Concerns and Foreign Policy Considerations", F. Stephen Larrabee (ed.), *The Volatile Powder Keg*, (Washington, RAND publication, 1994), 51-64, p.51.

<sup>19</sup> Davutoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.278.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.277-278.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/af/bsec10.htm>

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<sup>22</sup> Hikmet Hadjizade, "Russia in the Transcaucasus or Democracy in a State of Emergency", *Caspian Crossroads*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Fall 1996, p.2 at <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/usazerb/222.htm>

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Hadjizade, *op.cit.*

<sup>25</sup> On the Azeri-Armenian war, see Svante E. Cornell, "Undeclared War: The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Reconsidered", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.20, No.14, Summer 1997, 1-23; Khachig Tololyan, "National Self-Determination and the Limits of Sovereignty: Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Secession of Nagorno-Karabagh", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol.1, No.1, Spring 1995, 86-110; Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Azerbaijan: Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabagh*, (New York, Human Rights Watch), 1994.

<sup>26</sup> Hadjizade, *op.cit.*

<sup>27</sup> Mirza Abdul, "The Karabakh Knot: Mediators Try to Balance Justice and a Violent Force", *Caspian Crossroads*, Volume 3, No. 4, Spring 1998 at <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/usazerb/342.htm>

<sup>28</sup> Georgian President Shevardnadze extended this authorization in 2002 whereby Russian soldiers was to act as "peacekeepers" in the Abkhaz conflict zone. (Liz Fuller, "Who Can Unite the Abkhaz Gordian Knot?", *Eurasia Insight*, April 19, 2002)

<sup>29</sup> Manos Karagiannis, "The Turkish-Georgian Relationship and the Transportation of Azerbaijani Oil", *Caspian Crossroads*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Summer/Fall 1998, p. 3 at <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/usazerb/413.htm>

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>31</sup> The General Assembly Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, 1970, No. 2625 (XXV), October 24, 1970, *Yearbook of the UN*, 1970, 788-792.

<sup>32</sup> Russia's Balkan policies in the 1990s are recounted in, C. Cem Oğuz, "Rusya'nın Balkan Politikası ve Balkanlar'daki Gelişmelerin Rus Siyasetine Etkileri (1991-2000)", (Russia's Balkan Policy and the Influence over Russian Politics of Developments in the Balkans), in Lütem & Demirtaş-Coşkun, *op.cit.*, 265-278.

<sup>33</sup> Danopoulos, *op.cit.*, p.110.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel N. Nelson, "Post-Communist Romania's Search for Security", in Larrabee, *op.cit.*, 65-87, pp.81-83.

<sup>35</sup> Of course, it is not properly a state under international law, since states established as a result of military occupation are universally accepted, at least in theory, as illegal.

<sup>36</sup> Abdul, *op.cit.*

<sup>37</sup> D. J. Harris, *Cases and Materials on International Law*, third edition, (London, Sweet & Maxwell, 1983), p.172.

<sup>38</sup> Abdul, *op.cit.*

<sup>39</sup> S. Victor Papacosma, "More Than Rocks: The Aegean's Discordant Legacy", *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Fall 1996, 75-96, p.95. Turkish-Greek disputes have been too often studied by scholars of international law and relations. The following works may suffice to show that Turkish-Greek problems are too numerous, complicated and politicised to be resolved through "magic" formulations in the short or medium-term: Fotios Moustakis and Michael Sheehan, "Democratic Peace and the European Security

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Community: The Paradox of Greece and Turkey”, *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Winter 2002, 69-85; Semih Vaner (ed.), *Türk-Yunan Uyuşmazlığı* (Turkish-Greek Discord), (İstanbul, Metis yayınları, 1989); Baskın Oran, *Türk-Yunan İlişkilerinde Batı Trakya Sorunu*, (The Problem of Western Thrace in Turkish-Greek Relations), (Ankara, Mülkiyeliler Birliği, 1986); *Ege’de Deniz Sorunları Semineri* (ed. unknown), (The Seminar on the Maritime Disputes over the Aegean (Ankara, AÜSBF yayını, 1986).

<sup>40</sup> Papacosma, *ibid.*, p.75.

<sup>41</sup> Apostolos, *op.cit.*, p.11.

<sup>42</sup> Birgül, *op.cit.*, pp.90-91.

<sup>43</sup> On the Greek perception of its Balkan neighbours, see Van Coufoudakis, “Greek Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: Issues and Challenges”, *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Summer 1996, 26-41.

<sup>44</sup> Apostolos, *op.cit.*, pp.3-9.

<sup>45</sup> Davutoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.280.

<sup>46</sup> [http://www.bsec.gov.tr/agenda\\_.htm](http://www.bsec.gov.tr/agenda_.htm)