

COUNTRIES OF THE BLACK SEA REGION AND EUROPEAN SECURITY

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The sociopolitical development of the post-Soviet countries of the Black Sea Region is marked by a special kind of intrigue. The initiators of Gorbachev's democratization were totally unprepared for its outcome. No one could have imagined it would end in the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of newly independent states on its territory, whereby states expounding authoritarian regimes with the low political culture characteristic of many post-colonial communities. Democratic reform was not a particularly high priority for these states. It was more important to reinforce state independence, create solid power structures, acquire a cushy spot on the international arena, and so on. Based on Poland's experience during the Pilsudskiy era, on Kemalist Turkey, on Antonescu's rule in Rumania, etc., the most expedient form of government for the leaders of these countries to achieve their goals appeared to be the authoritarian regime.

But Russia, with its aim to reintegrate the former Soviet republics into something akin to the former Union, began to clearly dominate in this new semi-closed community of authoritarian post-Soviet states, formally united by the abbreviation CIS. And authoritarian rulers of weaker states usually prefer to reinforce their essentially clannish and oligarchic power by steering their countries in the same direction as their stronger neighbor than by upholding their own national interests and independence. In so doing, foreign forces capable of resisting such trends essentially condoned Moscow's striving to establish its exclusive zone of responsibility in this region, since they probably had little faith in the ability of the post-Soviet states to undergo an internal and democratically-oriented transformation and were concerned only with preventing large-scale conflicts there. Even the U.S.'s penetration into the Caucasus and Central Asia under the banner of the antiterrorist campaign has not really changed the overall picture.

But the international situation in the Black Sea Region has been undergoing rapid changes recently. First, due to NATO's enlargement to the East (at the expense of Rumania and Bulgaria), which essentially led to this region's incorporation into the sphere of the alliance's responsibility. Second, the situation in the Middle East required that the Western countries pay greater attention to the countries surrounding them. Third, but first in terms of significance, the revolutionary democratic changes in Georgia and Ukraine brought the entire imperial line of Russia's foreign policy in the region to the brink of collapse. If the new wave of transformations in this part of the continent is successfully carried out, European democracy will continue moving toward the East and the region will find itself to be a kind of bastion on the avenues of approach to the Asian system of authoritarianism.

From this angle, the tasks of organizing the Black Sea community of states take on a new look. These countries are historically and geographically linked, but due to civilizational and socioeconomic conditions they are still rather heterogeneous. As a fundamental element of domestic development in each of these countries, the European idea can help to overcome their historical isolation and form prerequisites for efficient regional consolidation. It is worth noting that the new democratic authorities in Georgia and Ukraine claim that the European factor dominates in their foreign policy, and adherence to European values are an intrinsic part of their domestic policy.

Until recently, the difficulties involved in ensuring the region's stable integration on a domestic basis appeared high insurmountable. Differences in these countries' paths of historical development and their expected fates, the large-scale conflicts inflicting them, the clash of interests and goals among the different states, and the influence of external geopolitical forces are all factors greatly hindering regional unification.

Under present-day conditions, when these states are dealing with economic and social modernization problems, the formation of new cooperation systems is logically justified and meets their strategic

goals. The consolidation of regional interests is conducive to forming an axis of economic integration which, in all likelihood, will also be a stimulating factor in creating a corresponding geopolitical structure. Ideally, a regional system of cooperation and stability could emerge on this basis in the form of a fundamental element in the basic structural design of European security. In this event, we could talk about regional integration in the context of a broad understanding of Europe as a priority consolidating idea. But this requires thorough and comprehensive coordination of political and economic interests among the different states.

The oft noted strategic significance (transit and resource) of this territory is associated with the possibilities of developing the Caspian's oil and natural gas deposits, as well as their transportation to the world markets, and is drawing the attention of Western countries interested in diversifying their energy policy. But until recently the largely established European vision of the Black Sea Region defined it as a periphery zone of Greater Europe. In the conceptual and practical respect, this vision gave rise to the ideology and policy of a "European neighborhood" with respect to the post-Soviet states of the region, as well as restraint toward the potential new members in the EU: Turkey, Bulgaria, and Rumania.

Nevertheless, the economic and transit problems involved in developing this area are having a perceptible impact on distributing the influence potential among the West, U.S., and Russia. A change in the geopolitical balance of power in the region is capable of generating new configurations of interstate relations in the near future, the contours of which can only be designated provisionally. And this will largely depend on the ability of the new East European democracies to go beyond the boundaries of established relations in the format of the semi-closed CIS community.

Enlargement of the EU and NATO to the East requires that the European world more precisely define its foreign policy and identify its security priorities in the regions becoming its immediate neighbors, that is, the Black Sea Region and the Middle East. The traditional policy for the East—to support democratic values in the states of post-communist Europe—also fundamentally extends to the Black Sea states. On the other hand, the just as traditional model of motivation in the *Realpolitik* format is also important for the West, which is related to the advancement of its own interests in the region's countries, regardless of the nature of their regimes.

In both systems, European policy is being forced to take a closer look at where the new challenges to international security and stability are coming from. These include international terrorism (which has already raised its head in Spain and Turkey), illegal migration (which insistently brings up questions of reinforcing the eastern borders of the European world), local conflicts (Abkhazia, Karabakh, Pridnestrovie, and Kurdistan), which now subside, now flare up again, and so on. The Europeans cannot help but also take heed of the stabilization problems in Iraq, the possible (admittedly not especially anticipated) conflicts in Ukrainian-Russian relations (along the lines of Tuzla-2003), and so on. Socioeconomic weakness and the insufficient level of the liberal and democratic reforms in neighboring countries are arousing particularly concern in the West. These factors form the breeding ground for conflict potential and promote political destabilization on a wider scale.

The situation that developed after 11 September, 2001, in particular around Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the events in Georgia, dramatically changed the geopolitical environment in the region. The role of the U.S. as an important country with immense dominance in regional processes has become more precisely designated in the region. It is of exclusive significance for the United States, not only from the viewpoint of strategic supplies of oil, natural gas, and other resources, but also as a springboard for its own further advancement toward the promising markets of Asia. The U.S. has certain regional advantages over the Russian Federation due to the high level of Washington's economic influence on the political situation in the South Caucasian countries. Nor does anyone doubt that one of the White House's long-term goals (in keeping with its strategic policy on promoting democracy) is widespread and legitimate ousting of anti-democratic forces and reducing their political, economic, and military influence.

With respect to the special features of the Russian Federation's domestic political and socioeconomic development, official Moscow is forming its own foreign policy, without using democratic rhetoric to substantiate it. Russian "pragmatism" is built on the understanding of its own national interests: ensuring the integrity of the state, upholding its dominating position and influence in its part of the world, and deterring forces capable of undermining this influence. By taking advantage the favorable foreign

political situation (high prices for energy resources and dependence of the European countries on them, partnership with the U.S. in the fight against international terrorism, and so on), Russia is striving to increase its influence on the world processes by manifesting a high level of activity in international affairs. Its main priorities in this area are forming new relations with the U.S., NATO, and the EU, combating the emerging threats and challenges, and integrating into the European and world economy. If these efforts are successful, the role of the Russian Federation will increase in European policy and its influence on regional processes will automatically grow.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that in the present-day world, it is clearly not enough for a state with high foreign policy ambitions to build its foreign policy exclusively on upholding its own national interests. In order to reinforce its influence abroad, it is important not only to put itself on show, but also to make its goals attractive to other countries. At one time, Moscow built its international influence on the ideology of world socialism and support of anti-colonial movements declaring adherence to socialism. But socialism in the Soviet interpretation (as a paradigm of international relations) failed. On the other hand, the inability of the Moscow leadership of the Gorbachev and Yeltsin eras to create an efficacious liberal and democratic model which would guarantee Russia membership in the club of developed countries of the West upholding a single value system prompted Russia to isolate itself. The Russian Federation attempted to explain this phenomenon by means of ideological ideologems, such as revitalized "Eurasianism" or "Slavic unity." But these efforts essentially boiled down to poorly concealed Russian nationalism. This ideology could only be attractive to some of the population of neighboring states, the pro-Russian forces in Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, and Kazakhstan, for example, but could not win over states entirely, since they had their own understanding of their national interests. There were only two alternatives for post-Soviet countries striving to distance themselves from Russian nationalism, either similar self-isolation within national boundaries for the purpose of preserving self-identity, or intensive incorporation into the community of European-style liberal democratic countries, which required a corresponding adjustment of the national idea.

For Moscow itself, the geopolitical paradigm, with its invariable attributions in the form of balance of power, deterrence, expansion, opposition, and so on, proved more important. In this conceptual system, Russia traditionally looks at domination in the Black Sea Region as an exclusively important factor of its national security making it possible to ensure reliable defense of the country's southern borders. In so doing, it is using traditional mechanisms of geopolitics to ensure its interests: military presence, encouraging internal conflicts, supporting political forces loyal to it, and so on. And recently, economic expansion to the countries of the region in the spirit of the ideology of a so-called "liberal empire" is acquiring special significance, which is characteristic of the post-colonial practice of international relations.

The activity of the U.S. in its contacts with Georgia and Uzbekistan revealed a possible weakening in Russia's influence in the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. Since Moscow's attempts to create a system of CIS collective security were not very productive, it is trying to intensify the military and antiterrorist components of the Collective Security Treaty (CST), which several countries of the Commonwealth joined, and draw up a more concise program of opposition to the new threats. At the same time, Russia is striving to take control over the energy resources and their transportation, as well as create prerequisites for establishing control over the economy of the region's countries. In so doing, it is trying to strengthen relations with the key European states in order to neutralize U.S. policy in the region. Nevertheless, while realizing its interests here, the Russian Federation is not capable of taking complete responsibility for its fate as a whole. Resolving regional problems primarily presumes creating sociopolitical and economic prerequisites for the dynamic and stable development of the countries located in this territory, and not only military and political presence and diplomatic activity. On the whole, the Russian Federation is not interested in the formation of powerful regional cooperation and security substructures which are not dependent on it.

The military action and measures undertaken by the U.S. to ensure stability in Iraq are also having a direct influence on the security of the Black Sea Region. This is due to its geographical proximity to these events, as well as to the interests of the great nations in the Middle East. Geographical proximity harbors the threat of a direct or indirect destructive impact on the economy, politics, and humanitarian sphere of neighboring countries. The lack of unanimity among the European states regarding support of the U.S.'s actions in Iraq has given rise to a certain amount of tension among them, which has also had an

effect on the foreign political orientation of the Black Sea countries at the regional level. For example, despite its close relations with Russia, which entered the bloc with the leading European states, France and Germany, against the war on Iraq, Georgia has unequivocally expressed its support of the U.S., and Ukraine even sent a large military contingent to Iraq. Rumania and Bulgaria actively joined the antiterrorist coalition, orienting themselves as before toward their Euro-Atlantic opportunities. This, however, did nothing to change their relatively defective position, which hinders their prospects of joining the EU. Although it assumed a cautious wait-and-see stance due to the Kurdish problem, Turkey was nevertheless one of the targets of the Islamic terrorists. The consequences of the deterioration in relations between Ankara and Washington, albeit indirect, were also felt by the Turkic-speaking post-Soviet countries, which, although they are Turkey's strategic partners, still supported the U.S. For example, in Azerbaijan, this support gave rise to another wave of domestic political tension.

The United States largely reinforced its foothold in Central Asia, which is traditionally in the sphere of Russia's special political and economic interests, thus creating the potential for possible tension between the two nuclear powers in the future. The Russian Federation is not at all interested in having states on its southern borders which are not orientated toward its interests, and so will look for ways to strengthen its influence. On the other hand, the U.S. apparently has not entirely realized the need to assume greater responsibility for the situation in the Black Sea Region, thus leaving several of its countries in a forced "vacuum of security." The geopolitical choice between U.S. or Russian policy is more precisely designated for these countries, which will definitely have an impact on domestic political stability due to the presence of political forces with polar orientations.

Present-day relations between Moscow and Tbilisi leave much to be desired. Russia does not like the fact that Georgia and the U.S. signed an agreement on cooperation in the military sphere. This disrupts the balance of power in the Southern Caucasus, where Tbilisi is becoming a partner and conductor of Washington's policy. The strengthening of Georgian-Turkish contacts with respect to military training programs can be added to the negative aspects. In this respect, it can be presumed that Russia's intractability regarding Abkhazia was dictated by geopolitical considerations. An analysis of the course and results of the recent presidential election in Abkhazia creates the impression that the Russian Federation essentially already considers this autonomous republic, which officially belongs to Georgia, to be its own territory. For example, it offers Abkhazians citizenship, it is retaining its military presence there, and it is manipulating the election results to suit itself, ignoring the generally accepted standards of international law.

Based on the urgent problems of regional and European security in this area, an imperative goal in it should not be Russia's interests, but a balanced consideration of the extent to which the countries of this region are dangerous (or could be) to the European world, as well as the extent to which they are capable of meeting the new challenges, and in which questions they need Europe's assistance.

Negative trends and processes are currently being manifested in this space, which are hindering its economic development and creating certain threats in the sphere of international and regional security. Its states are encountering conflict situations (Abkhazia, Nagorny Karabakh, Pridnestrovie, Chechnia, and so on), which are promoting illegal arms trade, intensifying migration flows, and cultivating crime-inducing factors and international terrorism.

The fight against the latter in the regional context is related to the formation of an environment which feeds and supports terrorist activity in any of its manifestations and has both a crime-inducing and more profound dimensions. These include the sociopolitical problems in several of the countries: economic inadequacy, pauperization of the population, and ethnic and confessional confrontation. What is more, the problems generated by the regional conflicts have not been overcome, which creates favorable ground for attempts to resolve issues by force, and consequently for asymmetrical responses in the form of terrorist acts.

So it can be said that the Caspian-Black Sea Region is a conflict-prone environment. In the west, it borders on the Balkans, where ethnic and socioeconomic problems are still rampant, and in the south, on the Middle East, where there is an explosive situation relating to the U.S.'s military operations in Iraq, and possibly in the near future in Iran. In the north, Russia is putting greater pressure on Georgia, which the Russian Federation is accusing of protecting Chechen terrorists. What is more, it should be kept in mind that the region we are looking at is surrounded by old and new nuclear countries striving to obtain nuclear weapons

and the means of their delivery. On the whole, we can say that the threatening situation of a “vacuum of security” is being preserved. In order to resolve these problems, the countries of the region should coordinate their efforts (with support of all the interested countries and international security structures).

An essentially important feature of this region’s states is also the fact that their national interests and priorities, although they do not always coincide, at least do not contradict each other. These countries themselves (regardless of their orientation toward different geopolitical projects) are intensely interested in preserving stability and security in the region, in its progressive development, and in the continuous operation of transportation communications. A broad range of opportunities is opening up for coordinating its national interests and priorities. We can most likely expect the appearance of new cooperation forms and models and the creation of alternatives of regional structures of stability and security.

At one time, Turkey initiated the creation of a regional organization called the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, which was another alternative to its striving to enter the EU. Due to the intensification of crisis phenomena in the neighboring post-socialist states, Ankara placed its hopes on its own geopolitical stance and the country’s growing economy, striving to put these advantages into effect by creating a stable structure which could become a permanent regional center of gravitation. The creation of an autonomous system of economic cooperation was supposed to strengthen Turkey’s position in the talks with the EU, on the one hand, and help to form a system of regional interests in which Ankara would have far from the last role, on the other. In this event, it would have the opportunity to move away from its place on the edge of the European Community and acquire greater geopolitical clout. Its interest in Russian gas (both via Ukraine and through the Blue Flow pipeline) and Caspian oil (the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline) is motivating Turkey to preserve the idea of forming a Black Sea cooperation system. On the whole, however, (from Turkey’s viewpoint) regional substructures are a component of a universal European integration model.

Based on Turkey’s experience, Ukraine is coming to understand that its path to European integration will be rather difficult and take quite a lot of time. But keeping in mind the inefficient experience of resolving economic and political problems within the CIS, it can be said that official Kiev is searching for parallel forms of economic cooperation. By making its foreign policy more pragmatic, as well as diversifying its foreign economic relations, Ukraine is beginning to focus its attention on economic and political advancement to the southeast as well. This primarily relates to the Black Sea-Caspian Region, which it views as part of Greater Europe.

As for Bulgaria and Rumania, after joining NATO, their next main priority in their further development is to join the EU. They are known for focusing on specific programs and striving to resolve cooperation questions in the Black Sea Region along with structures ensuring European integration processes. Reforms have been going on in both countries for more than ten years now, but neither of them have managed to resolve their difficult economic problems. The European and Euro-Atlantic priorities of Rumania and Bulgaria are much higher than their regional interests, although the leading circles of both countries understand that they are of interest to NATO and the EU precisely because they are part of the Black Sea Region. And this region is viewed as a kind of springboard for Europe’s further enlargement to the East. The active participation of both states in NATO’s antiterrorist campaigns in the East was primarily taken into account during consideration of their membership in the alliance.

Azerbaijan is most interested in delivering its energy resources to the West, which will be significantly promoted by completion of the strategic Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline. We will also note that this problem can still be resolved by transporting energy resources via the Odessa-Brody-Gdansk route. Due to strategic support from kindred Turkey, Azerbaijan has the prospect of efficiently participating in Black Sea cooperation. In questions of Black Sea security, Baku is on the same page as Ankara and inclined to make use of international organizations for finding a constructive solution to the conflict with Erevan.

Georgia is declaring itself a country with a pro-European orientation. In the face of difficult-to-resolve disputes with Russia and its internal conflict in Abkhazia, it is striving to defend its national interests by joining NATO and developing such regional cooperation systems as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and GUUAM. Since Georgia is a key link in the Caspian transportation and energy supply route to Europe, official Tbilisi is very interested in stability and security in the region. But whereas today Georgia is only a “consumer” of stability on the part of regional international structures,

in the foreseeable future (if the economic and political situation in the country stabilizes), it could become a "donor" of security.

Armenia is still a country with internal instability and an inefficient economy. What is more, it has taken on the burden of rendering military and financial-economic assistance to the self-proclaimed Nagorny Karabakh Republic. By ignoring the decision of international security institutions regarding settlement of the conflict with Baku, Erevan found itself relatively isolated from the region's countries. In this respect, these countries are not assisting Armenia's economic development, which is preventing the creation of a full-fledged cooperation and security system in the region. Although it should be noted that Erevan is interested in withdrawing from its isolation and participating intensively in regional cooperation. It appears obvious that Armenia's incorporation into the world economic system based on participation in large-scale international economic and transportation projects is an extremely necessary condition for its socioeconomic survival.

International cooperation and security organizations are showing a natural interest in the region both due to its immense economic and resource potential, and to its strategic importance for ensuring stability and security throughout the Eurasian geopolitical space. Cooperation between the South Caucasian countries and the larger, European-oriented regional states is pulling them more toward Europe, as well as promoting modernization of their political and sociopolitical systems. The South Caucasian countries are also in favor of using general peacekeeping potential under the aegis of international security structures for settling local conflicts and are ready to cooperate in resolving other security issues. In their search for ways to resolve their own problems, these countries are turning to stable, socially and economically developed Europe in the hope that its powerful potential can be actively used in their political and socioeconomic development. Such Black Sea countries as Turkey, Bulgaria, and Rumania are on the verge of joining the EU. Ukraine and Georgia are also heading in the same direction. Russia would also like to find acceptable forms of partnership relationships with the European Union and NATO. All the Black Sea countries are gradually joining the European integration process, the outcome of which could be a more consolidated Europe.

Resolution of this question depends on the extent to which Europe itself recognizes the importance of finding effective solutions to the problems of the Black Sea Region and on the role it is willing to assume in this event. It is obvious that a stable and secure region which is part of the European world and the states of which have democratic regimes and a developed socioeconomic system aimed at raising the prosperity of their own populations, will have a significant impact on raising both the geo-economic and the geopolitical status of a consolidated Europe.

The European security Strategy is aimed at democratic states achieving stability, primarily those in the close vicinity of the European Union. In correspondence with the Strategy adopted by the EU, the best means for ensuring world order are building a high-quality powerful leadership, supporting social and political reforms, resolving problems relating to corruption and abuse of power, and protecting the population's civilian rights. The harshness of the formulations regarding countries which violate international regulations draws attention to itself. The document states that such countries should recognize that they will have to "pay the price of good relations with the EU" for violating democratic regulations.

At the first stage of implementing the "neighborhood" strategy (2004-2007), the main focus will be on transborder and regional cooperation. In this respect, the following is necessary: promoting an economic and social upswing in border regions, which is the key element in strengthening stability on both sides of the border; developing activity aimed at resolving common problems in such spheres as environmental protection and fighting organized crime; ensuring the efficient operation and security of borders; and assisting contacts among people, particularly in resolving problems of visa regimes capable of creating new dividing lines along the borders of enlarged Europe.

Taking into account these circumstances, the European Union will most likely have a more favorable attitude toward local regional cooperation structures in its "near abroad." Realistically, its neighbors can count on the EU's support in carrying out their economic projects and in developing corresponding large-scale programs, that is, similar to those being implemented within the Barcelona process with respect to the Mediterranean countries.

NATO's enlargement (as opposed to the EU's enlargement) is more of a political process. The change in the international situation has stimulated the transformation of the alliance from a regional defense

structure into an organization of states engaged in resolving questions of building and maintaining a new global security system. In this way, most of the post-communist countries of the region could defend their democratic reforms and find their place in the overall structural design of European security. In turn, NATO should take a more active interest in resolving the region's problems, since this organization's new strategy envisages a broad range of activity beyond the boundaries of its traditional competence, particularly in the East. For this, the alliance supports democratic processes precisely in those countries of the region which give greater hope of the success of such reforms.

The shift in NATO's southern flank to the Black Sea Region is becoming all the more perceptible. NATO's enlargement by means of Rumania and Bulgaria, and the possible (albeit in partial) realization of Ukraine and Georgia's desire to join the alliance, along with the presence in it of "old" members (Turkey and Greece), is making the Black Sea (in almost its entirety) a zone of Euro-Atlantic responsibility. These steps toward Euro-Atlantic integration are making it possible to create conditions in which the European security organizations and regional states can efficiently cooperate in a range of issues.

Certain radical groups (Islamic or ethnic) are carrying out terrorist acts against several countries. The terrorist acts in Madrid, Istanbul, and Georgia show that such attacks are possible in any country (taking into account the Iraqi factor or to attract the attention of the mass media). Bearing in mind the active participation of the Russian Black Sea fleet marines in combat action in Chechnia, an increase in the threat of terrorist acts against the Russian Federation as a whole is possible, as well as against its naval fleet based in the Crimea (in Sevastopol). In the regional context, this fight is related in part to the formation of an environment that feeds terrorist activity in any of its manifestations and has both a crime-inducing and more profound dimensions: sociopolitical problems in several of the region's countries, economic inadequacy, poverty, ethnic confrontation, and so on.

As for the conflicts in Georgia (Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia), between Armenia and Azerbaijan, in Pridnestrovie, they are not only threatening the countries participating in them, but also the security of the region as a whole, are hindering regional cooperation and the implementation of large-scale projects, and are causing a deterioration in the overall investment climate in this area. What is more, conflicts and the low standard of living are creating a favorable environment for an increase in organized crime, the drug business, and so on.

The illegal migration aroused by these conflicts, as well as the drop in standard of living and deterioration in the environment, could give rise to new threats to regional security: they could increase ethnic tension, undermine social order, and influence both regional stability and that of neighboring European countries.

Unregulated protection of transportation energy corridors which pass close to conflict zones is posing a threat to the stable delivery of energy resources to European and other markets. Rivalry and domestic instability in the region are having a negative impact on its countries and on European states, particularly after the implementation of new oil and gas supply projects (Baku-Ceyhan, Odessa-Gdansk, and others).

The situation has been complicated to a significant extent by the absence of a precise international mechanism for guaranteeing peace and stability. We will emphasize that in the event of incursions on sovereign territory or border violations, each country of the region will remain essentially on its own to deal with the problems that arise. This is caused both by the ad hoc orientations of the world's leading countries, which often "do not notice" territorial disputes, as well as by the lack of efficient international protection mechanisms for dealing with such collisions.

This situation should be improved by creating an efficient regional security system which would include real and potential NATO and EU members, as well as countries which for certain reasons cannot (or do not want to) participate in the work of these structures.

A corresponding regional security structure could be created by reforming GUUAM. Admittedly, this organization has still not acquired the significance endowed in it by its member-states when it was created. But in the foreseeable future, GUUAM's framework (partnership of Ukraine and Georgia, taking into account the latest revolutionary events occurring in both countries) might become stronger, which will invest a certain amount of optimism in this organization's future.

What is more, the situation will be improved by forming (probably on the basis of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization) a permanent forum on regional security and cooperation issues, in

which state and other actors could establish contacts, identify and correlate each other's viewpoints on several problems, and discuss non-military security questions in political, economic, ecological, social, and cultural spheres. This forum could help to define the priority areas of cooperation of the Black Sea countries. The region's states should concentrate cooperation in spheres where European and/or other international interests are present.

The creation of an efficient regional security structure will help to overcome potential interregional demarcation lines separating it from Europe, which is acting as a guarantor of security. The main function of this structure is to coordinate efforts aimed at preventing new threats and challenges to regional security and creating efficient inter-national institutions for ensuring the development of coordinated regional policy on these urgent problems.