

# **Threats to the National and European Security in the Black Sea Region: Comparison of the Black Sea Synergy and Reality**

*Presentation on the General Assembly of the CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission  
(BBSRC) held in Odessa, 11 June 2009*

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On 1 January 2007, two Black Sea littoral states, Bulgaria and Romania, joined the European Union. More than ever before, the prosperity, stability and security of “the neighbours around the Black Sea are of immediate concern to the EU.”<sup>1</sup> The Black Sea region has a unique potential to become an area of prosperity and stability, but many economic, transport, political, energy projects can’t be implemented because of the existed conflicts on the territory of its members, as well as because of other threats and risks that present in the region.

Instability that has appeared as a result of these conflicts (South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh) gives a basis for the development of the criminal activity, terrorism and illegal migration. Political stability in the region can’t be guaranteed while these conflicts are not settled. Moreover they negatively influence the social-economic development and trade links in the region. These problems are challenges not only to the states where conflicts exist, but also threat the European security and security of the neighbourhood states.

Nowadays the national security of the states isn’t characterized only by the military security issues. Because for a long time the conflicts in GUAM states were “frozen” they didn’t have a direct military threat to the neighbours. But their pendency resulted in a scope of problems and threats to the national and regional security and in case of the possible full-fledge military actions or terrorist attacks could lead to the classical security threats.

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<sup>1</sup> Communication From The Commission To The Council And The European Parliament. Black Sea Synergy - A New Regional Cooperation Initiative/ Commission Of The European Communities Brussels, 11.04.2007

It's necessary to point out that main risks and threats to the national and European security in the Black Sea region come not only as a result of the conflicts. Main risks in the region considered issues of economic, energy security and security of the national sovereignty. General unstable situation, protracted transformation period, competition for the spheres of influence led to the lack of cooperation in the region. At the official level there are enough proclamations, communications, agreements on cooperation in the Black Sea region: within regional organizations, on bilateral level or with third parties as the EU. But de facto most of the projects are still on the paper or their implementation is retarded by the inability to overcome risks that exist in the area.

Main threats to the national and regional security in the Black Sea region:

1. "Frozen conflicts"
2. Increase in the amount of the refugees and temporary displaced people in the conflicting regions. This can destabilize the economic, demographic, social and political situation in the states and neighbouring regions.
3. Intervention of the Russian Federation in the internal affairs of the GUAM states and support to the separatists regions and movements.
4. Possible "transfer" of the conflict scenario to the Ukrainian territory. First of all this concern the Autonomous Republic of Crimea where the increase of the ethnic contradictions is possible, in addition to incitement of the Crimea separation from Ukraine and shift under the jurisdiction of Russian Federation. Similar actions were already implemented in Transnistria, South Ossetia and Abkhazia.
5. Transborder organized crime. First of all considering the Ukrainian-Moldovan border. This problem for many times was a top topic of negotiations on bilateral and multilateral level including the USA and the European Union. Moreover some functions of the EUBAM are directed to solved this problem.
6. Impossibility to implement a Black Sea Ring Highway project. The BSEC project for many years couldn't be implemented because some parts of the road pass the territory of the self-proclaimed territories where the security of roots

can't be guaranteed. This is a threat to the national and regional security because their transit potential can't be used and lead to the economic losses. The same point is about realization of TRACECA project. But not only conflicts influence realization of these projects. Bad infrastructure, low coordination of work of the custom services of the littoral states as well as visa regimes affect the situation.

7. Impossibility to guarantee the security of the energy resources transportation from the Caspian region. Azerbaijan and Georgia connect the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea creating a suitable route for gas and oil transit from Central Asia and Caspian region to Europe. In the conditions of the present energy policy of the Russian Federation it's crucial important for the economy and security of Ukraine, as well as European Union to diversify its energy sources. Furthermore economy of the Black Sea and European Union states depends on the security of the energy transportation routes. But realization of the new pipeline projects as well as security of the already existed is impossible without settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetian and Abkhazian conflicts (if to take into account the possibility of terrorist attacks, damage of pipelines cause by military actions, as happened in Georgia in August 2008, possibility to block the energy transportation, as in situation with Ukraine in winter 2006, etc).<sup>2</sup> The same situation is witnessed in Turkey. Security of the pipelines due to the Kurds terrorist attacks is a crucial issue.

8. Increase of the level of the terrorism threat.
9. Break-off of the trade links, transport connections.
10. Illegal migration, smuggling, difficulties in cargo transportation, etc.
11. Drugs trafficking and trafficking in human beings
12. For the states where conflicts exist – threat to the territorial integrity.
13. Armenian-Turkish historical tensions, that doesn't allow to open borders and to increase bilateral cooperation, especially cross-border and to use a transit potential of such a route.

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<sup>2</sup> Дацюк А. В. Політика України з урегулювання збройних етнополітичних конфліктів: досвід та перспективи// Стратегічна панорама. – 2006. - № 1

14. Ethnic tensions in the border regions where is big concentration of ethnic minorities, some of them with religious difference.
15. Threats to the safety and security of navigation
16. Environmental risks, not least because of the low environmental standards and old sewage systems, etc.
17. Illicit arms trade

The influence on the regional security can be divided into two part – Security of the Black Sea region and the European security. Since recently the European Union has started to interest in the region affairs, understanding that many of the threats and risks existed here directly or indirectly influence its own stability and security.

In October 2008 the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France Bernard Kouchner said that for ten years the EU had not paid enough attention to the Caucasian states<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless only in 2007 the first official document considering the Black Sea region appeared – Black Sea Synergy, which was just a first sign of the EU understanding that the instability in the Black Sea region can influence the whole European security.

At the same time it's necessary to mention that in the Black Sea Synergy itself threats and risks for the future cooperation development are not separated in the subsection and only can be found as a small comments in the text.

In the Black Sea Synergy some of the risks and threats to the Black Sea cooperation and development are named, some of them even with small propositions on how to address them. But most of them can be found in such formulation: “The Commission should continue to actively *support regional transport cooperation* with a view to *improving the efficiency, safety and security of transport operations.*”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Глава МИД Франции: ЕС уделял недостаточно внимания кавказскому конфликту  
<http://korrespondent.net/world/629518> [28.10.2008]

<sup>4</sup> Communication From The Commission To The Council And The European Parliament. Black Sea Synergy - A New Regional Cooperation Initiative/ Commission Of The European Communities Brussels, 11.04.2007

The position of the European Union is that enhancing of the regional cooperation is not directed to deal with long-lasting conflicts in the region, but will facilitate in generating more mutual confidence, which will contribute to the existing obstacles removal.

August events in Georgia and January 2009 gas crisis in Russian – Ukrainian relations demonstrated that the European Union was not ready to those threats that are in the region. De facto the Black Sea Synergy doesn't identify any threats and risks for the further development. It just suggest spheres for cooperation based on the past experience of interaction with the separate states or groups of states. This risks ignoring leads to the inability to understand why such cooperation projects are hindered. Black Sea Synergy is manifest but even not a Business Proposal to the region. For successful realization of any project you should identify how much are you ready to invest in it, how long it will take, whom do you need for its realization, but also what risks are involved and what should be done for their minimization. The EU has already decided with whom to cooperate, how much to invest but haven't considered risks and actions for their minimization.

Tackling most of the problems that the Black Sea region faces today is in the hands of the central governments. Nevertheless lobbying of such initiatives as well as further real implementation to minimize risks and oppose threats to the future development of the Black Sea area are in the hands of the local authorities of the respected states. Moreover such risks as environmental, illegal migration, cross-border organized crime, safety of navigation, security of the pipelines, security and safety of the transport infrastructure can be minimized or even resolved on the regional level, using own opportunities and existed financial instruments.