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Devise A Regional Security Strategy For Pro-Western States On The Black Sea Littoral Adopting A Comprehensive Approach

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Key Judgements

- **The Black Sea littoral is of strategic importance to regional and international players.** It is the eastern border of the EU, the western border of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and where NATO meets Russia's 'near abroad'. Regional security (and prosperity) will depend on the influence, relations between and the commitment of these major players although the littoral states and regionally inspired agreements will play a role.
- Security guarantees could be offered to the region by the **US, Russia, NATO, the EU or perhaps even Turkey for its neighbours.** These agreements could also cover economic and political elements to further cement relations and need not be exclusive, building on the many existing bodies in the littoral. However, the development of proper democratically accountable governments in the region needs to remain a priority.
- There is **tension within the region concerning the policy towards Russia** - Turkey and Bulgaria favour engagement whilst Romania and Georgia support containment policies. Ukraine's position is unclear due to the political situation. **Frozen or un-resolved conflicts** complicate the situation as they allow interference from interested parties and the development of transnational crime. Greater effort needs to be devoted to resolving them.
- **Turkey** believes it can act **as a regional power** and is attempting to develop this position through initiatives such as the Caucasus Co-operation and Stability Pact. But its importance to the west is mainly for access to the Middle East, Caucasus and Central Asia and the resolution of conflicts in the wider region could reduce Turkey's importance, although this is highly unlikely in the near term.
- International issues such as **terrorism, energy security and transnational crime** also pose threats, as will **water shortages** in key regions.
- The EU and Turkey are the best facilitators for regional security; they should be encouraged to work together (Turkish experience and EU funding and values) to address the frozen conflicts with Russia and strengthen the region economically and politically, thus generating security.

Discussion

1. The pro-western states on the Black Sea littoral are Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Georgia and Turkey. Bulgaria and Romania are members of both the EU and NATO, Georgia and the Ukraine both wish to join NATO and the EU while Turkey is a member of NATO and has been invited to join the EU. With the exception of Turkey, the other countries are post-soviet and immature democracies and all of them were part of the Ottoman Empire. There are a large number of regional agreements, which are almost all single issue driven and single country's pet projects.

2. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Greece also play a role as they are the suppliers and corridors for trade and energy, which the region and Europe depends. For completeness, Moldavia also has an interest in the littoral.

3. The US has a significant interest in the littoral partly to counter-balance Russia but also to resolve issues in the wider Middle East and to ensure access to the energy rich Caucasus and Central Asia for its allies. The EU also has a mixture of economic and political interests, not related to Romanian and Bulgarian membership, which could definitely be strengthened by an effective common security and foreign policy and the regional countries' wish to join. NATO has traditionally been the regional security organisation but its influence may be waning. Russia has traditionally regarded the Black Sea (as well as the Caucasus and Central Asia) as part of its "near abroad" sphere of influence and has indicated that it wishes to prevent NATO's expansion further into the region.

4. The Comprehensive Approach involves using all elements of national power in a coherent, co-operative and mutually reinforcing manner. Therefore a strategy would include economic, diplomatic and political elements as well as national security/military contributions. This paper will examine the role of the three major bodies – Russia, the US and EU from these perspectives, together with the role of Turkey and regional agreements.

Russia

5. Russia is currently using its elements of national power to achieve a number of key strategic goals and maintain its influence over the 'near abroad'. Firstly it wants to maintain control of as much of the hydro-carbon energy and its delivery in the Black Sea littoral, Caucasus and Central Asia to ensure an income stream and dependency in the West (which it sees as essential to regaining its position on the world stage). Secondly it wants to prevent NATO expansion in the region in order to 'protect' Russian interests. Russia has supported a number of regional conflicts or crisis to cause instability in the wider region and it has used the 'protection of Russian Citizens and their interests' in order to increase its sphere of influence. The recent conflict with Georgia has left Russia much stronger in the region, with the repercussions being felt in Ukraine.

6. Russia does not want conflict with the EU, which is a critical trading partner and is not regarded as a direct threat to its security. However it is concerned by the spread of 'democracy' which the west sees as a challenge to the Russian autocratic system. Russia also prefers to work with countries on a bilateral basis to reduce their negotiating situation. Russia's new wealth will allow it to make sizable investments in the region, though its international isolation will make this harder to achieve. The Winter Olympics in 2014 could be useful as they will draw international attention to the region.

US

7. By pushing for NATO (and EU) expansion in the Black Sea littoral, the US has not recognised (or worse is ignoring) Russia's historical interests in the region. It has actively sought to reduce Russian influence and importance in the region through

political and military action. US activity has been driven by the construct of the National Security Strategy pillars of ending tyranny and working with democracies. The conflict in Georgia is systematic of this with the 'good' Georgians fighting the 'evil' Russians. The US also wants to ensure access to the energy rich Caucasus and Central Asia for its allies, preferably reducing their dependence on Russia for energy.

8. However, this position has created some tensions and splits. Not all EU member states are happy with US pressure for Turkey to join the EU whilst Turkey is not happy with the US (and Romania and Bulgaria) for strongly promoting NATO enlargement. There is also tension within the region concerning the policy towards Russia - Turkey and Bulgaria favour engagement whilst Romania and Georgia support containment policies.

EU

9. The Black Sea is currently the edge of the EU and will become the edge of the Schengen region in 2010. The EU sees that Ukraine and Georgia, as well as Turkey, could become members if both sides agree in due course. This would create an economic and political structure that would allow security to be reinforced. But the internal EU system has not allowed a strong common position to be developed, as demonstrated by the response and reaction to the Georgian situation, even though the European Commission is working more closely in the region. The EU's view of Turkey is confusing and detrimental to its work in the region.

Turkey

10. Turkey sees itself as a key regional power, drawing on its Ottoman Empire legacy, and sees the Black Sea as its own sphere of influence. It has suggested that the frozen conflicts can be resolved within a regional framework and without the involvement of the wider international community, such as the EU and US. To that end Turkey has proposed a number of regional organisations, most recently the Caucasus Cooperation and Stability Pact. Turkey strongly believes that the new post-soviet countries in the littoral do not know how to work with Russia and their (and US) attitudes to Russia are 'dangerous'. It firmly believes that Russia cannot be isolated but needs to be a full partner as Russian involvement and agreement is critical. The Turkish relationship with the US has noticeably cooled in the last few years and it no longer sees NATO as a key organisation – it continues to see no role for NATO in the Black Sea itself. Turkey's relationship with the EU is difficult but may improve when a solution for Cyprus is found, although it is far from a foregone conclusion that Turkey will join the EU – it probably will not.

11. Turkey's position as a link between Europe on one hand and the Caucasus, Central Asia and Middle East on the other, is key for energy. Turkey allows hydrocarbons to by-pass the Russian network (and influence) to reach Europe. However, over time if conflicts and frictions with Iran, Syria and Iraq are resolved then Turkey becomes less important – however this looks very unlikely to occur in the near future.

Conclusions

12. Russia does not regard the Black Sea as a separate entity but as part of its wider 'near abroad' and a key strategic interest. The US policy in the region has tried to reduce Russia's influence and importance. The EU is only just developing a strategy for the region and lacks a coherent approach due to differences in opinion between its members. Turkey believes it can fabricate a solution to the region's problems as a key interlocutor with all parties, including Russia.

13. Russia needs to be engaged and her interests as a major power, supplier of energy and regional influence acknowledged – this means that NATO will currently not be able to further enlarge into the region. Security in the region could be guaranteed without the need for explicit agreements if economic and political ties are established and reinforced, with perhaps the EU providing this role and funding for major infrastructure investment or even Turkey taking a greater role in the Caucasuses with Russian support.

14. Turkey, Russia and the EU should engage in regional talks to develop the region's economic potential as an initial step, with the US maintaining a watching brief. Excluding the US would be an important signal that would in one sense recognise that this is perhaps a European issue and not an international one, allowing the involved parties to explore local solutions. However, this may prove difficult as the EU would need to agree a strong position and countries such as Georgia would need to be weaned of US dependency.

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