Turkish Perceptions of the Mediterranean

— M. Fatih Tayfur —

* * * * * * * * * * *

8

EuroMeSCo Papers

EuroMeSCo Papers

- 8 -

Title
The Turkish Vision of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

Author
M. Fatih Tayfur
Middle East Technical University
Department of International Relations
06531 - Ankara

March 2000

This text was produced in the framework of the EuroMeSCo Working Group on Political and Security Co-operation in the Mediterranean region. The views expressed herein do not represent any official view of the European Commission, nor indeed of EuroMeSCo. They are the author's personal views.

EuroMeSCo papers are published with the support of the European Commission by the EuroMeSCo Secretariat at the IEEI
Largo de S. Sebastião, 8 • Paço do Lumiar • 1600-762 Lisboa. Portugal
Phone 351.2.757 27 01 • Fax 351.2.759 39 83
E-mail mednet@mail.telepac.pt • Homepage http://www.euromesco.net

Contents

1. Turkish Perceptions of the Mediterranean

The Turkish view of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) has been marked by a degree of indifference since the EU initiated it in Barcelona in 1995. There are several reasons for this and one of them has to do with perceptions of foreign policy.[1] After the Helsinki Summit of mid-December 1999 where Turkey was accorded the status of candidate for EU membership, the degree of Turkish indifference towards the EMP decreased, especially in the economic and social spheres. Nonetheless, the EMP cannot be considered part of the immediate foreign policy agenda of the Turkish government. The fact is that foreign policy is, to some extent, a function of the geo-strategic and geo-political location of a country. Unlike many other nations, Turkey has to deal with various critical global, regional and national issues simultaneously because of its location in a highly specific foreign policy and security environment. The anarchic external environment in which Turkey has been trying to survive includes the unstable or destabilised regions of the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean, the Balkans, Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. These are regions haunted by ethnic and territorial conflict and rivalries. Being located at the epicentre of this conflict-ridden Eurasian region, Turkey is either a party to conflict and issues or susceptible to spill over effects.

In short, Turkey is a country surrounded by obtrusive realities. The realist approach to international relations, based on the concept of an anarchic external environment in which the state's primary objective is to survive, can be used, grosso modo, to explain the main motives behind Turkish foreign and security policy. However, even if the Turkish foreign policy establishment tends to be more 'realistic' than 'utopian' in its approach, it would be misleading not to also take into consideration the idealistic nature of the establishment in evaluating the present course of Turkish foreign and security policy. A good example of a combined "realistic-idealistic" stance is that adopted with regard to the Organisation of Black Sea Economic Co-operation (BSEC) region, which increases hopes for a larger Turkish contribution to peace and stability in the broader European region.

Turkey has faced the challenge of two sub-regional co-operation projects in the post-Cold War period: one to the south, the EMP, and the other to the north, the BSEC. It is interesting to note, however, that whilst the Turks are very enthusiastic towards the BSEC they have generally remained indifferent towards the EMP, at least up until the Helsinki Summit. The aim of this paper is to explain the Turkish vision of the EMP and to compare it with its view of the BSEC. This will permit an understanding of why Turkey has been apparently indifferent towards the European Union's sub-regional co-operation project in the Mediterranean, at least in the period between September 1995 and mid-December 1999.

1.1. The Agenda of Turkish Foreign Policy in 1999 and the EMP

It can be argued that the Turkish foreign policy establishment was preoccupied with three key issues in 1999. These are the Caspian oil pipeline, the Cyprus problem, and relations with Greece and the European Union. Priority was given to one of the three in response to developments in the area concerned. In the case of the Caspian oil and gas pipeline, the decision regarding the main pipeline route favoured the Baku-Ceyhan route. An agreement to this effect was signed during the OSCE meeting in Istanbul in November 1999. The Turks are very sensitive about this issue because of the great potential political and economic benefits. It is also a key issue from the point of view of the EMP and of the Cyprus question because of the strategic importance of the Baku-Ceyhan route for the eastern Mediterranean.

The Cyprus issue entered a new phase after the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan, was captured in Kenya in possession of a Greek Cypriot passport. This development, which followed the S-300 missile crisis in 1998, has seriously affected the security perceptions of the Turkish foreign policy establishment and increased the importance of the eastern Mediterranean for it. The most serious developments, however, came in the context of Turco-Greek relations. The shelter provided to Ocalan in the Greek embassy in Kenya despite the proclamations made by the Greek prime minister that Greece had no relations with PKK, was a serious blow to the improvement of the essentially problematic relations between Greece and Turkey. The Turks, who have already experienced an all-out diplomatic war waged by Greece against Turkish interests in the European Union and other international forums, became convinced of the unfriendly attitude of the Greek government. The Greek role in the Ocalan affair, coupled with the initial incompetence of Italian policy towards Ocalan and the PKK, caused the Turkish foreign policy elite to reconsider the effectiveness of Euro-Mediterranean Co-operation and the Barcelona Process. After all, it was meant to emphasise the importance of and the need for co-operation among the Mediterranean countries against terrorism. Not surprisingly, these developments negatively influenced Turkish attitudes towards the EMP.

Events during the second half of the 1999 considerably changed the conflictive nature of Turco-Greek relations, however, creating a friendly and co-operative atmosphere. First, the appointment of Yorgos Papandreou as Foreign Minister and the earthquakes in both countries seemed to open a new chapter in bilateral relations, increasing hopes for the promotion of the EMP in the eastern Mediterranean. Second, the start of successful negotiations between Turkey and Greece for co-operation in the fields of tourism and trade, to combat drug-trafficking and organised crime, as well as in the areas of the environment and cultural relations further improved relations and have led to a new rapprochement. Third, and perhaps more importantly, the EU's decision to invite Turkey to become a candidate country and Greece's decision to withdraw its veto against Turkish membership at Helsinki in December 1999 steadily changed Turkish foreign policy towards the European Union, Greece and the EMP.

1.2. The Mediterranean Region in Turkish Foreign Policy

In the words of a Turkish diplomat "the Mediterranean has never been conceptualised as a totality in Turkish foreign policy."[2] In other words, there is no single comprehensive definition or conceptual appreciation of the Mediterranean region in Turkish foreign policy. There is no single desk or department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that deals solely with the Mediterranean region and Mediterranean issues. Instead, the Mediterranean region is under the aegis of different functional departments.

In general, the Turks perceive the Mediterranean region as being composed of the Middle East, Greece and Cyprus, the Balkans, and Europe. This means that "the Mediterranean" really means the "Eastern Mediterranean" in Turkish foreign and defence policy thinking. This is because the Eastern Mediterranean presents a variety of problems that are perceived as important threats to Turkish territorial integrity and the country's vital interests. The problems with Greece and Syria, the Cyprus problem, the Arab-Israeli conflict and its spillover effects in the region constitute the main preoccupations of the Turkish foreign policy establishment in the Mediterranean overall. On the other hand, members of the establishment do not consider the relatively stable western Mediterranean region where Turkey does not anticipate any serious threat a priority.

Moreover, Turkish policy-makers see the European Union as an ineffective actor and not an honest broker in the Mediterranean, which directly affects the Turkish vision of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. In particular, the decision of the European Union to start negotiations with Cyprus for full membership after the Luxembourg Summit in December 1997 strengthened the Turkish view that European interests clashed with vital Turkish interests, and that the European Union sided with Greece against Turkey in the Mediterranean. The Turks felt that the Europeans had deceived them. While it was not considered even as a member of the second-level group of prospective European Union members in Luxembourg (which included, inter alia, Bulgaria and Romania),

Cyprus – with all its problems – was promised that it could start negotiations for full membership. In this context, Turkey, an associate member of the Union since the early 1960s, almost lost faith in the Union's intentions. The Turks believed that the European Union had chosen Greece as its strategic partner in the eastern Mediterranean and was consequently prepared to sacrifice the friendship of Turkey, which had meant a lot to European security during the Cold War years. In the context of Turkish-EU relations even the most optimistic Turk thinks that Greece holds the European Union hostage. Accordingly, after the Luxembourg Summit the Turks suspended the political dialogue with the European Union to allow the Union to proceed as it saw fit. After being granted candidate status at the Helsinki Summit, however, the political dialogue was reinitiated and Turkish officials began to promote a policy of influencing EU decisions regarding Turkey 'from within'.

The Turkish view of the EMP has also been damaged by the status the European Union has accorded Turkey. The foreign policy establishment considers that the EMP is inappropriate because it diminishes the country's status within the European Union to that of a neighbouring country.[3] It argues that Turkey cannot be included along with Maghreb and Mashreq countries, which have no aspirations of any kind to membership in the European Union. It also argues that the European Union has financial responsibilities towards Turkey stemming from the Association and Customs Union Agreements and that no money has been forthcoming since 1980. Furthermore, the EU decision to transfer these funds to Turkey through the Mediterranean MEDA Programme rather than direct EU channels is considered typical of the exclusionary political behaviour of the European Union towards Turkey.[4] Furthermore, as far as security issues are concerned, Turks think that as a full NATO member and WEU associate member Turkey should not be considered in the same group with other Mediterranean countries.[5]

Clearly, all of the above did not help to promote the EMP cause in Turkey and considerably weakened the hand of pro-EU circles in the country. After Helsinki, however, the Turkish view of the EMP, particularly its economic chapter, changed substantially and Turkish officials promised a greater Turkish contribution in the economic sphere. On the other hand, there is still no substantial change in the Turkish vision of the EMP's political and security chapter. Officials emphasise that Turkey differs over political and security issues even after Helsinki.[6]

1.3. The Turkish Understanding of Regional Co-operation and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

In principle, Turkey sympathises with regional co-operation initiatives. Turkish foreign policymakers believe that regional co-operation is one of the most important means for promoting peace, stability and economic development and therefore express their willingness to actively contribute to such initiatives whenever possible.[7] The BSEC, the Economic Co-operation Organisation (ECO), which includes Turkey, the Central Asian Republics, Iran, Pakistan, and the Developing 8 (D-8), of which Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Indonesia and Malaise are members, are cited as examples of Turkey positive attitude towards regional co-operation. Indeed, in all these organisations Turkey played an active formative role.

Euro-Mediterranean co-operation is an ambitious and comprehensive EU regional project, which naturally includes Turkey. As noted above, however, mainstream Turkish attitudes are not very enthusiastic about the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership program. Turkish policymakers do not conceal their indifference towards the EMP. Indeed, "from the beginning, Turkey has been an affiliate to the program but as a reluctant partner."[8] It may seem strange, nonetheless, that a country leading various initiatives at regional co-operation in its region such as Turkey should fail to express enthusiasm for the EMP.

According to the Turks, the EU perception of the Mediterranean is the cornerstone of the EMP project, based on its long concern with the economically poor regions of its southern periphery. Migration from the South, for instance, especially from North Africa, has been of immediate concern for Europe, particularly for economic reasons. Economic underdevelopment coupled with

domestic and regional political problems in countries such as Algeria may lead to a less stable periphery for the Union, which can affect European peace and the wellbeing. The European Union thus created a Mediterranean project envisaging a system of economic and security co-operation in the region that could not otherwise not have been established by the regional states to meet this security challenge and contain its poverty-stricken Southern periphery. Turkey welcomes the initiative because it promotes economic development and aims to reduce internal and external political tensions in the region. But Turkey feels that the EMP is imperative for the security of the Union. Turkish diplomats argue that because of the EU emphasis, whilst Turkey is willing to co-operate on economic matters with other Mediterranean countries, in the end political and security considerations often dominate the discussions in official Euro-Mediterranean meetings.[9]

1.3.1. The Political Sphere

The main cause of Turkish indifference toward the EMP is the EU's political assessment of Turkey's status within the co-operation project and the utopian nature of proposed security co-operation measures. Turkey simply refuses to be considered part of the EMP periphery. Turkish foreign policymakers argue that Turkey and the European Union signed association and customs union agreements that envisage full membership. For this reason, the EMP cannot be seen as an alternative to the ultimate aim of Turkish integration within the European Union. Thus, while Turkey has no objection to participating in the EMP, it does not consider this essential for Turkish interests and or a foreign policy priority. The priority in Turkey's relations with the European Union, the establishment claims, has always been integration with the Union. It is inevitable that Turkey should look at the EMP somewhat askance, its argues, because the EMP not contribute to membership of the Union but rather places Turkey and the Union on opposite sides of the table. It concludes that 'there is no reason to stay out of the EMP and they see no problem in low-profile participation in it, supporting constructive projects'. In short, the establishment expects neither major gains nor losses from participating in the EMP project.[10] After Helsinki, however, the Turkish 'status problem' within the EMP seems to have entered into a new phase and been somewhat overcome, albeit not in the security field.

1.3.2. The Economic Sphere

Since the inception of the EMP, Turkey has supported the EU's goal of establishing a Mediterranean Free Trade Area by 2010. Turkish policymakers believe that the European Union intends to create an economic sphere of influence in the Mediterranean and that it is therefore trying to sign bilateral trade agreements with Mediterranean states. This is a policy that Turkey supports, they say. Before Helsinki, however, the main question for Turkey was again its status within the framework of Euro-Mediterranean relations. Where should Turkey sit, policymakers asked. Should it be on the European side of the table or on the Mediterranean side? In the view of the Turks, as an associate and Customs Union member in the European Union, Turkey should sit by the Europeans. It was argued that Turkey had already accepted EU trade agreements with third countries as a result of the Customs Union Agreement and signed 'identical' agreements with some Mediterranean countries accordingly: to date Turkey has signed such commercial agreements with Israel, Tunisia and Egypt and is negotiating one with Morocco. In addition, the Turks have viewed the EU policy of supporting 'South-South' economic relations as utopian on the grounds that there are almost no tradable goods among these countries. Moreover, there are serious bilateral political problems amongst these countries.

Another thorny issue between Turkey and the European Union within the framework of the EMP is the financing of MEDA projects.[11] For political reasons Turkey has received no money from EU Mediterranean funds. This has partly been a result of the Greek veto and in part because of EU demands that the grants must be spent in Southeast Turkey and on human rights projects. Turkey

rejected these conditions on the grounds that no conditionality should be attached to the allocation of MEDA funds. There is also a technical issue; the Turks have thus far not prepared any draft projects to be presented for MEDA funding. The solutions to these problems, however, seems to have emerged after Helsinki.

Indeed, the Turkish vision of the EMP as an economic project has changed considerably. The Turkish foreign policy establishment now argues that Turkey is going to be more active in the EMP, upgrading its participation in the meetings.[12] It says that Turkey now feels closer to Europe and, by extension, to the EMP. One indication of the increasing importance of the EMP in Turkish foreign policy is Foreign Minister Cem's attendance at the Mediterranean Forum in March 2000 and his subsequent visits to the Maghreb countries in the context of Mediterranean policy.

1.3.3. The Security Sphere

The Turkish view of the EMP in the security field is still rather pessimistic; it is seen as an extremely utopian initiative. Turkish policymakers see no future for the EMP in the field of hard security issues primarily because that the Arab-Israeli conflict has left such a mark on every single security issue in the Mediterranean region. According to Turkey there is little that can be done in this area because almost all the hard security problems in the region are in one way or another linked to the Middle East Peace Process.

Turkey does not view the Middle East through an EMP lens. Rather, it emphasises the importance of the Middle East Peace Process for the solution of the problems in the region. Thus, at the multilateral level it supports the initiatives of the Atlantic Alliance, while bilaterally it promotes the improvement of relations with countries of the region and has adopted initiatives that complement the peace process in the Middle East accordingly.

For the Turks, the Barcelona Process security project is faulty because Turkey is not an EU member state. Turkish policymakers argue that Turkey is already a member state in the NATO Mediterranean dialogue and the OSCE. By contrast, it only has 'associate' or 'candidate' status vis-à-vis the European Union even in the security field. Accordingly, Turkey emphasises the importance of NATO initiatives on Mediterranean security.[13] Turkey is powerful in NATO both in military and political terms and is able to shape its policies because it participates in the decision-making process of the organisation. By contrast, in the words of a Turkish diplomat, "...in the Mediterranean initiatives of the European Union, Turkey has a disadvantageous position because it does not take part in the decision-making process. The decisions will be taken by the European Union and dictated to Turkey".[14] Thus, Turkey argues that in accordance with its peripheral status in the EMP, it pursues a low-profile participation in EU initiatives and mainly opts for bilateral solutions to Mediterranean security issues. Turkey fully supports multilateral relations and initiatives for Mediterranean security when organised under the NATO umbrella. Even after Helsinki, the Turks remain unenthusiastic about the EU/EMP security project. In sum, the Turkish view of the EMP in the security field has not changed substantially. Officials from the security departments of the Turkish Foreign Office point out that Turkey could become more active in the economic but not in the security field [15]. As they say: "we do not have big expectations in the security field because even after Helsinki we still sit at the other side of the table from the European Union". They say that Turkey feels 'European' where security issues are concerned, but because "Turkey is not a full member in the European Union" and this creates problems "especially in the security issues. Accordingly, until Turkey becomes a full member in the Union we cannot be more active in the security field."

Turkish policymakers argue, furthermore, that Turkey is not particularly in need of EU initiatives in the Mediterranean because it already has good security co-operation established with Israel, Egypt and Jordan.[16] The recent Adana agreement with Syria, as well as improving relations with Iran have also improved the security environment in the region. Turkish policymakers emphasise that all these regional bilateral and multilateral initiatives complement the EU aim of creating a peaceful and secure environment in the Mediterranean.[17] They point out that the EMP is not the only mechanism through which relations are established among the Mediterranean countries. Finally,

Turkish policymakers believe that the EU Mediterranean initiative will not bring about significant security benefits for Turkey. Why then, they ask, "should Turkey contribute to this initiative from which it expects so little?"

In relation to "soft security" issues, as a country that has been suffering the consequences of terrorism for many decades, Turkey has supported strongly international co-operation against terrorism and illicit drug trafficking. Due to the Ocalan incident, however, the Turkish government is firmly convinced of the weakness of Euro-Mediterranean co-operation against terrorism. The tolerant and even protective attitudes of EU Mediterranean members such as Italy, and especially Greece, towards a PKK leader whose organisation has been declared terrorist one that abets the disintegration of Turkey, an ally, has been noted carefully by Turkish policymakers and public opinion.

Some members of the foreign policy establishment from different circles, however, think that the Barcelona Process and the EMP are unrealistic mainly because of the heterogeneity of the states in the region.[18] They contend that the internal problems of these countries and the intra-regional conflicts stemming therefrom do not augur well for the EMP as a co-operation model. At the same time, they argue that the establishment of a global co-operative model for the Mediterranean is very difficult to achieve because of the differing importance of hard and soft security issues in the Eastern and Western parts of the Mediterranean respectively.[19] Some even consider the Barcelona Process to be an imperialist project, designed only to promote the interests of the advanced countries in the region.[20]

Hence the Turks continue to feel that if the European Union does not want to give Turkey a more significant role and does not take into account its interests in the Eastern Mediterranean there is little reason for Turkey to participate in EU security policies and strategies in the region.[21] In this context, they argue, Turkey must develop its own policy in the Mediterranean by taking advantage of its membership in the Atlantic alliance, its strategic location and historical ties, as well as its experience in organising regional co-operation initiatives.

Among these initiatives, the BSEC initiative can constitute an interesting reference point for Euro-Mediterranean Co-operation in two respects. First, it is useful to compare two initiatives with similar objectives, both developing on the EU periphery. Second, it is of interest to see why Turkey, a reluctant partner in the EMP up until the Helsinki Summit, enthusiastically promotes the BSEC.

2. Black Sea Economic Co-operation

The Black Sea Economic Co-operation initiative[22] or, to give it its official title, the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation[23] is a regional initiative undertaken by Turkey. It was founded in Istanbul in June 1992 to promote regional economic co-operation and to enhance prosperity, stability and security in the region. The BSEC also aims towards the integration of the economies of its member states into the European and the world economy. Economic co-operation in the region is considered an effective means for conflict prevention and for encouraging the peaceful settlement of existing problems among the regional states. The principal areas of co-operation in the BSEC are listed as trade and economic development; banking and finance; communications; energy; transport; environmental protection; tourism; science and technology; combating organised crime, the illicit trafficking of drugs, weapons and radioactive materials; and all acts of terrorism and illegal migration. The states participating in the BSEC are Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, The Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine, which are all full members. The observer states are Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, Poland, The Slovak Republic, Austria, Italy, Germany, France and Energy Charter Conference.[24] In addition, Macedonia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Iran and Uzbekistan are in line for full membership while Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Cyprus, have applied to become observers. The European Commission does not have any official status in BSEC but it is being invited to relevant meetings on an ad hoc basis. Furthermore, with the Tblisi Ministerial resolution of 1 May 1999, the European Commission was invited to participate as an observer in the BSEC.[25]

Following its establishment in 1992, the BSEC underwent a process of institutionalisation in order to consolidate its international legal status. This process was completed on 1 May 1999 at the meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers of member states in Tblisi, Georgia, when the BSEC formally became an international organisation. Between 1992-1998, during the first six years of its existence, the Permanent International Secretariat (Istanbul), the Parliamentary Assembly (which has its Secretariat in Istanbul), the Business Council (Istanbul), the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (Thessaloniki), and the Centre for Statistical Data and Economic Information Exchange (Ankara) were established. During the BSEC Yalta Summit of June 1998, member states signed the Charter of the BSEC, which transformed existing intergovernmental mechanisms into a fully-fledged regional economic organisation. After ratification of the Charter by the parliaments of a minimum number of member states, the BSEC gained international legal status on 1 May 1999. It is expected that the BSEC will be given observer status in the United Nations General Assembly soon. At present, eighteen working groups have been carrying out projects in the fields of transportation, energy, trade, tourism, environment and agriculture.[26]

One of the long-term objectives of the BSEC is to gradually establish a free trade area. To this end, the BSEC is committed to trade liberalisation and the harmonisation of foreign trade regimes in accordance with WTO rules and practices. The BSEC also emphasises the importance of the private sector in the process and encourages co-operation among the business communities of the member states.[27] It is envisaged that the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank will become the main financial pillar of the BSEC in the near future.

Another BSEC objective is to further develop co-operation with the European Commission, the OSCE, the WTO, the UN, UNIDO, as well as other international organisations and regional initiatives. In this context, BSEC-EU relations are particularly importance. After the 4-5 June 1998 BSEC Council Summit in Yalta, the EU Presidency declared its full support for Black Sea Co-operation.[28] It announced its recognition and support for "...the work of the BSEC in promoting regional economic co-operation and thus, enhancing stability, security and prosperity in the region." Thus, "the BSEC has a positive contribution to make in the development of the region in several areas, including transport, power, telecommunications, and the environment." For this reason, the Presidency declared that "the European Union looks forward to build on its existing co-

operation with the BSEC and stands ready, where appropriate, to provide practical support through the relevant Community programmes." Accordingly, the European Union declared its willingness to contribute to regional co-operation in the Black Sea, primarily through the PHARE, TACIS, MEDA and INTERREG programmes.

The BSEC Presidency declared its enthusiasm regarding BSEC-EU co-operation in the aforementioned fields of transport, energy, telecommunication networks and trade, and also emphasised the importance of progressively creating a EURO-BSEC Economic Area.[29] In light of the Barcelona Declaration, which aims to create a free trade area among the participants of the EMP by the year 2010, the BSEC initiative views the Black Sea region as an integral part of the European economic integration process. Its members have declared their intention of establishing a Euro-Black Sea Free Trade Area through inter and intra-regional free trade agreements by 2010.[30] Politically, it is hoped that the BSEC will help to consolidate democratic institutions in all member countries and prepare the ground for integration into the United Europe of the twenty-first century, by accelerating economic and social progress.[31] It is within this framework that Turkey has supported the strengthening of BSEC-EU relations.[32]

In the politico-military sphere, Turkey proposed a challenging initiative for the BSEC region. At the meeting of the Second Chiefs of the Black Sea navies in Varna in April 1998 it proposed the creation of a Black Sea Naval Co-operation Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR), for the enhancement of peace and stability in the Black Sea. The Russia Federation, Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania and the Ukraine welcomed co-operation among the navies of the Black Sea littoral states as a means to develop a set of confidence and security building measures in the Black Sea. Subsequently, experts from these countries and from Turkey participated in a meeting in Ankara in October 1998 at which all participants showed their willingness to support the establishment of such a force. The participants agreed that its mission is to contribute to strengthening friendly relations and mutual confidence among Black Sea littoral states, as well as to improve peace and stability in the region by contributing to the enhancement of co-operation and inter-operability between their maritime forces. They also agreed that the BLACKSEAFOR should be a multinational force and that 'military exercises', 'search and rescue operations', 'humanitarian assistance' and 'port visits' would constitute possible areas of co-operation between participant states.[33]

Today the Turks believe that the BSEC has proved to be a successful organisation in which "the participating states have put aside their differences and have undertaken joint economic projects for their mutual benefit."[34] At the same time, the BSEC also demonstrated that Islamic and Christian states could co-operate smoothly in a regional organisation without religious or cultural friction. According to a senior Turkish foreign policy establishment member: "...since its inception the BSEC has asserted itself to be an important confidence building measure and, as such, an essential element of peace and stability in the region. The varying national interests, differing political assessments and diverse stages of development of the participating states have not prevented them from seeking common solutions to their problems through dialogue, economic co-operation, and creating an environment conducive to regional stability."[35]

3. The BSEC and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Two Tales of Two Seas or A Tale of Two Seas?

3.1. The Turkish View

As the basic characteristics and objectives of the BSEC do not differ greatly from those of the EMP it is worth considering how the Turks compare these sister initiatives and how and why the Turks distinguish the BSEC from the EMP. The Turkish definition of the BSEC as the "child of Turkey"[36] unquestionably underlies the Turkish view of this particular initiative. Turkey feels responsible for the initiative and sees itself as a benefactor. Accordingly, Turks are very enthusiastic about BSEC-related issues. By contrast, as mentioned above, until very recently Turkish foreign policymakers were largely indifferent towards Euro-Mediterranean Co-operation though it has similar objectives.

Clearly, the BSEC initiative may provide a guideline for a greater Turkish contribution to the EMP because the goals of both projects are very similar. First, both aim to increase the economic prosperity and the welfare of member countries through co-operation, interdependence and integration with the world economy. Second, both are erected upon the belief that regional co-operation is an effective confidence building measure and that, as a result, co-operation contributes to regional stability. Thus, one of the goals is to build a sense of common interest that will foster friendly relations and reduce the likelihood of armed conflict. Third, both aim to reduce organised crime, terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, arms smuggling, illegal immigration, racism, xenophobia and discrimination. A fourth common aim is to increase formal and informal channels for dialogue among individuals, groups and institutions, to as to produce a better understanding of common problems in the respective regions.

Furthermore, according to its founding document, the BSEC region is founded on universally shared values such as democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, prosperity through economic liberty and social justice and equal security for all participating states.[37] In this context, the charter "aims at ensuring that the Black Sea becomes a sea of peace, stability and prosperity, striving to promote friendly and good-neighbourly relations." The EMP also pursues these goals for the Mediterranean region. Moreover, like the EMP the Black Sea economic co-operation initiative basically provides soft security in the region and tries to contribute to hard-security issues through co-operation and dialogue. In order to contribute to the latter, the BSEC initiative also provides various levels of dialogue and platforms for interaction between the governments and their representatives, parliaments and parliamentarians, private sector representatives and businessmen, local administrations, non-governmental organisations, universities and academics. Furthermore, as is the case in the Mediterranean region, the BSEC region unites a number of states that are politically and economically distinct. Again, as is the case in the Mediterranean, there are continuing disputes, mistrust and rivalries among some member states so that the risk of tension and potential friction in the region is high. There are problems between Moldova and Russia over the Trans-Dniester region, between Russia and Ukraine over Crimea, between the Georgian government and Ossetia, Abkhazia and Adzharia, as well as between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabagh.[38] In addition to these political conflicts, as is the case in the Mediterranean there are differences in levels of economic development, while differences over forced and illegal migration, weapons of mass destruction and illegal arms trafficking are other factors leading to the escalation of tension in the Black Sea region.

Although Turkish foreign policymakers see the similarities between the two regions and sister initiatives, they also point out some important differences, which make the EMP less promising in their view.[39] First, the initiative for Mediterranean co-operation emerged from the European Union primarily because there was no strong desire amongst regional states for such co-operation. Indeed, they were unable to carry out such a co-operation programme by themselves. By contrast,

although the BSEC initiative and leadership came from Turkey there has always been a strong incentive for such co-operation among the countries of the region. Thus, successful BSEC co-operation has been the outcome of the willingness of member states to create it. Second, despite the socialist past of the many of the BSEC states and differences among them, their general level of political and economic development is higher and the differences among them are less pronounced than those among states in the EMP area. Third, in comparison to EMP members, BSEC states have had much stronger historical and cultural ties with Europe. Accordingly, they are anxious to co-operate with Europeans and to become part of a greater Europe. Fourth, the BSEC states, unlike many of their counterparts in the EMP area, took important steps to establish and consolidate parliamentary political systems early on. Finally, although there are bilateral political problems in the region, the BSEC states, unlike their counterparts in the Mediterranean, are determined not to let political problems damage the prospects for economic co-operation. In any case, political problems are not as tough as those in the Mediterranean.

3.2. Two Tales or One?

Do the Turks have "two tales of two seas" or "a tale of two seas"? The answer is simply that they have "both."[40] On the one hand, the Turkish policymakers argue that in the foreseeable future there will be "two tales of two seas" because the actors are different in both regions. In the Mediterranean, there is the European Union together with Middle Eastern and North African states, a conglomerate of states ranging from Lebanon to France and Morocco. They contend, however, that the populations that dominate the Black Sea are mainly European in origin and nature and that there are no big political and economic differences between BSEC states. The relatively heterogeneous and the homogeneous characteristics of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea states, respectively, are responsible for two different tales. On the other hand, Turkish policymakers also argue that these initiatives in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea will eventually become "a tale of the two seas." This is so primarily because the European Union does not want to be surrounded by economically and politically unstable regions and thus pays increasing attention to stability on its periphery in order to ensure the survival of the Union. Accordingly, the European Union supported a policy of "a tale of two seas" when it openly backed the BSEC process. The Turks also underline the importance of Turkish initiatives within the European Commission to support BSEC and, furthermore, to initiate an EU strategy for the Black Sea region.[41]

According to elements in the foreign policy establishment that sympathise with a global European approach towards the Mediterranean, EU initiatives in both Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean form part of a global approach designed to solidify the Europeanisation of this greater area.[42] They go on to argue that, being located at the heart of the Eurasian region, Turkey has already contributed to this process by establishing the BSEC initiative. Turkey should support and contribute to the process of economic co-operation in the Mediterranean as it does in the Black Sea, because future European prosperity is linked with an area stretching from the Balkans to Russia and the Ukraine, and southwards to the Caucuses, the Middle East and North Africa. As the country situated at the heart of the Eurasian region, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, Turkey will certainly benefit from this process of co-operation and increasing regional prosperity.

The apparently different answers to the question of the "number" of tales in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea clearly reflect the Turkish attitude towards these regions. Not surprisingly, those who narrate "two tales of two seas" belong to political and security departments while those who prefer one "tale of two seas" are from the economics departments of the Turkish Foreign Office. In short, the Turkish vision of co-operation in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea regions can be summarised as follows. In the economic sphere, Turks support co-operation and are willing to participate in and contribute to it, both in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea regions. In the political and the security sphere, while willing to take initiatives in the BSEC, they are not optimistic about the viability of EMP. Furthermore, they do not accept the role given to Turkey in the EMP by the European Union.

Conclusion

The Turkish vision of the EMP can be analysed in two ways. First, even after Helsinki the Turks do not see the EMP as a promising initiative in the political and security fields. Problems in the Middle East, they argue, are the main obstacles to EMP success. They emphasise the importance of the Middle East Peace Process and support the NATO Mediterranean security dialogue. It seems that Turkey is more sympathetic to US-led security initiatives in the Mediterranean, although it supports the EMP in the economic sphere and is willing to contribute to that process. Overall, the EMP is not a priority, nor does it constitute an alternative to full Turkish membership of the European Union. Until very recently, a more important reason for Turkish indifference towards the EMP, however, has been the role given to Turkey in the Mediterranean; despite the association and customs union agreements, the European Union considered Turkey a peripheral country inside the EMP. In fact, the European Union has long seen Turkey as a peripheral country, not only within the EMP but also for other purposes. Accordingly, Turkey had not been given hopes for full EU membership beyond the vague statements of principle made at the Helsinki Summit, when it was placed alongside 'second rate' enlargement countries. In response to the EU policy adopted at the Luxembourg Summit in 1997, Turkey suspended its political dialogue with the European Union, which in turn intensified the essentially indifferent Turkish attitude toward the EMP. This was only reversed after the December 1999 Helsinki Summit, with the re-initiation of the EU-Turkey political dialogue.

For its part, the European Union has long demanded more democracy and significant improvements in Turkey's human rights records as a pre-condition for full membership. By pointing out Turkey's defects in these fields, the European Union effectively emphasised that Turkey's political system had to match that of the member states of the European Union. Unlike the Southern European countries like Greece, Spain and Portugal, Turkey has been unable to consolidate a European-style democracy. The European Union has made it clear that as long as the necessary political transformations are not made, Turkey will not be considered for full membership and will thus remain on the periphery of the European Union.

Despite EU criticisms and the incremental steps taken by the new Turkish government towards more democracy, it can be argued that the Turkish attitude towards the EMP in the political and security fields will not change in the medium run. This is because Turkey is not a full member of the European Union and the Turkish foreign policy establishment therefore has no significant expectations with regard to the EMP. It sees NATO as the most effective institution to ensure Mediterranean security. In the economic sphere, however, Turkish-EU co-operation may increase in the near future in the context of the EMP, although this will also depend upon the attitudes of other Mediterranean littoral states.

The Turkish foreign policy establishment sees the BSEC in a different light. As a Turkish initiative, the BSEC is accorded primary importance and every possible initiative is taken to consolidate it as an effective international organisation. Turks argue that this is "realpolitik". In other words, while Turks see that their vital interests are tied up with the BSEC, they have few security-linked expectations regarding the EMP. It should be remembered, however, that the Barcelona Declaration is not just a declaration. It has given rise to a process for co-operation in the Mediterranean.

Notes

[1] For an earlier assessment of Turkish foreign policy and the Mediterranean region see: Kemal Kiriçi "A Mediterranean Pact of Stability: A Turkish Perspective" in: *Méditerranée Le Pacte a construire*, Paris: Publisud, 1997, pp. 109-125.
[2] Interviews with Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, January 1999.
[3] Interviews with Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, January 1999.
[4] S. Tashan "Avrupa Birliği'nin Akdeniz Politikası ve Türkiye" *D Politika Dergisi* inTurkish, Cilt,VII, Say, 3-4, 1997, p.28.
[5] Interviews with Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, January 1999.
[6] Interviews with Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, January 2000.
[7] Interviews with Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, January 1999.
[8] Interviews with Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, January 1999.
[9] Interviews with Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, January 1999.
[10] Interviews with Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, January 1999.
[11] Interviews with Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, January 1999.
[12] Interviews with Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, January 2000.
[13] Interviews with Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, January 1999.
[14] Interviews with Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, January 1999.
[15] Interviews with Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, January 1999.
[16] Ibid. See also: S. Tashan "Mediterranean Security and Western Security Institutions", *Foreign Policy* (The Quarterly of the Turkish Foreign Policy Institute), Vol.XX, 3-4, 1996, p. 31.
[17] Interviews with Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, January 1999.
[18] See, S. Tashan, "Mediterranean Security..." , p. 29, 31 and 33.
[19] See, S. Tashan, "Mediterranean Security..." , p. 31
[20] See: S.Tashan "Avrupa Birliinin Akdeniz ..." p. 28, and S.Tashan, "Mediterranean Security...", p.61.
[21] See: S.Tashan "The Peripheries: Adjusting to Change", *Foreign Policy* (The Quarterly of the Turkish Foreign Policy Institute), Vol. XXI, 1-2, 1997, p. 61.
[22] For detailed information on the BSEC see also: Oral Sander "Turkey and the Organisation for Black Sea Economic Co-operation " in: K.Karpat (ed.) *Turkish Foreign Policy: Recent Developments* Madison: Wisconsin, 1996, pp.6172; *Charter of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation,* Yalta 5 June 1998*; Karadeniz Ekonomik birlii Bilgi Notu*, T.C. Dileri Bakanl, 1999.
[23] The Black Sea Economic Co-operation became the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation in Tblisi/Georgia on 1 of May 1999. However, BSEC was kept as the acronym. In the text I use the old and the new names interchangeably.
[24] German, French and Energy Charter Conference's (ECC) applications for observer status were accepted at the ministerial meeting in Tblisi on 1 May 1999.
[25] "Platform for Co-operation between the BSEC and the EU", Attachment 3 to Annex V, *BSEC, Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs. Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations,* paragraph 11, Tblisi, 1 May 1999.
[26] For the activities of the working groups see: *Karadeniz Ekonomik birlii Bilgi Notu,* T.C. ileri Bakanl, 1999 and *BSEC, Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs. Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations Annex V,* pp. 6-7, Tblisi, 1 May 1999.
[27] See*: BSEC, Yalta Summit Declaration*, 5 June 1998, para. 18.
[28] *Black Sea Economic Council Summit, 4-5 June: EU Presidency Declaration*, London, 6 June 1998
[29] *BSEC, States Declaration of Intent for the Establishment of the Euro-Black Sea Free Trade Area*, Istanbul, 7 February 1997; and also see, "Platform for Co-operation Between the BSEC and the EU", Attachment 3 to the Annex V, *BSEC, Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs. Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations*, Tblisi, 1 May 1999.
[30] BSEC States *Declaration of Intent for the Establishment of the Euro-Black Sea Free Trade Area*, Istanbul, 7 February 1997.
[31] See, *BSEC, Yalta Summit Declaration*, 5 June 1998.

[32] For a detailed information on the Turkish perception of BSEC-EU relations, see Ercan Özer "The Black Sea Economic co-operation and the EU" *Perceptions* Vol.1, Number 3,1996, pp.72-86.
[33] For more information on the BLACKSEAFOR, see *Black Sea Naval co-operation Task Group,* Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, unclassified information bulletin, 5 January 1999.
[34] Ercan Özer "The Black Sea Economic Co-operation and Regional Security" *Perceptions*, Vol. II, Number 3, 1997, p.104.
[35] Ercan Özer "The Black Sea Economic Co-operation and Regional Security" *Perceptions*, Vol. II, Number 3, 1997, p.104.
[36] Interviews with Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, January 1999.
[37] *Charter of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation*
[38] For further information on the intra-regional problems in the Black Sea region, see Ercan Özer "The Black Sea Economic Co-operation and Regional Security" *Perceptions*, Vol. II, Number 3, 1997, pp. 84-85.
[39] Interviews with Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, January 1999.
[40] Interviews with Turkish Foreign Ministry officials, January 1999.
[41] Tanşuğ Bleda "The Mediterranean and the Black Sea" *Perceptions* Vol. I, Number 3, 1996, pp. 67-71.

1999. Having legitimised and internalised the idea of Europeanisation, it is not surprising to see that the Turks are determined to realise their political and economic "self-satisfaction" and "self-actualisation" within the institutional structure of the EU. And when it comes to Turkish-Greek relations, membership will equalise Turkey's external standing with that of Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean region *vis-à-vis* the EU.

Turkey has been undertaking reforms in order to adapt its domestic structures to those of EU member states. Although the success of these domestic reforms is very important for Turkey to become a member in the Union, it would appear that the major issues of Turkey's accession are not domestic reforms but the country's external standing, which is clearly illustrated by the persistent overt and covert pressures on the Turks by the EU (and Greece) to give up their established policy especially towards "Cyprus" and the Aegean Sea. For the Turks, however, the major questions are still pending: Who gets what from the (re)allocation of resources in the (both old and new) Greater Eastern Mediterranean region in period of post-Cold War large scale structural and historical change? Accordingly, the Turks have been emphasising that they are ready to revise their Cyprus and Aegean policy only after their membership in the EU becomes a clear option and their status with the Greeks is balanced in the EU, but not before. It seems to me that this is the major issue in "Turkey-Greece-EU relations" and in the "Turkey-Greece-Cyprus security complex" in the context of embracing historical change. It is deeply rooted in the "who-gets-what" question. Therefore, it must be gently dealt with and solved with through even-handed approach by the EU in order to avoid unexpected and undesirable consequences when the building blocks of the new system are in place in the Eastern Mediterranean.

EuroMeSCo Papers

1. Volker Perthes, *Germany and the EuroMediterranean Partnership: Gradually Becoming a Mediterranean State*, February 1998. (Available also in French)
2. May Chartouni-Dubarry, *Les processus de transition politique au Proche-Orient*, septembre 1998.
3. Alfred Tovias, *Israel and the Barcelona Process*, October 1998.
4. George Joffé, *Foreign Investment and the Rule of Law*, March 1999.
5. Azzam Mahjoub et Hafedh Zaafrane, *La zone de libre-échange euro-méditerranéenne*, mars 1999.
6. Gema Martin Muñoz, *Réforme politique et changements sociaux : l'exemple des pays du Maghreb*, avril 1999.
7. Roberto Aliboni, *Building Blocks for the Euro-Med Charter on Peace and Stability*, January 2000. (Available also in French)
8. M. Fatih Tayfur, *Turkish Perceptions of the Mediterranean*, March 2000.
9. George Joffé, *International Implications of Domestic Security*, April 2000.
10. Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, *La politique de visas dans l'espace euro-méditerranéen*, avril 2000.
11. Elvira Sánchez Mateos, *The Antipersonnel Landmines Issue in the Mediterranean*, April 2000.
12. May Chartouni-Dubarry, *Complementarity between the European Union and the United States in the Middle East Peace Process: Implications for the EMP*, April 2000. (Available also in French)
13. Álvaro de Vasconcelos, *Intégration et coopération sous-régionale en Méditerranée*, avril 2000.
14. Ayman Abdel Nour, *Syrian Views of an Association Agreement with the European Union*, December 2001.
15. Ulrike Julia Reinhardt, *Civil Society Co-operation in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: From Declarations to Practice*, May 2002.
16. IEEI/CIDOB/GERM, *European Defence – Perceptions and Realities*, Working Group III First Year Report, June 2002.
17. IAI/AEI, *Security and Common Ground in the Euro-Med Partnership*, Working Group I First Year Report, June 2002.
18. MEDAC/JCSS, *Sub-Regional Cooperation within the EMP*, Working Group IV First Year Report, July 2002.
19. Erwan Lannon, *Parlements et société civile dans la sécurité euro-méditerranéenne*, novembre 2002.
20. Bichara Khader, *Eastern Enlargement and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: A Win-Win Game?*, February 2003.
21. Emily Landau and Tamar Malz, *Culture and Security Policy in Israel*, March 2003.
22. Luis Martinez, *La sécurité en Algérie et en Lybie après le 11 septembre*, mai 2003.
23. Elvira Sánchez Mateos, *European Perceptions of Southern Countries' Security and Defence Issues – A Reflection on the European Press*, July 2003.
24. Niall Greene, *Corruption and the Challenge for Civil Society*, September 2003.
25. Ulrich Wurzel, *Why Investment in Civil Society is an Investment in Economic Development: The Case of the Southern Mediterranean*, October 2003.
26. Ludger Kühnhardt, *System-opening and Cooperative Transformation on the Greater Middle East. A New Trans-Atlantic Project and a Joint Euro-Atlantic-Arab Task*, November 2003.
27. Dorothée Schmid, *Linking Economic, Institutional and Political Reform: Conditionality within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership*, December 2003.