

Blue Black Sea

Blue Black Sea:
New Dimensions of History, Security, Politics
Strategy, Energy and Economy

Edited by

Giray Saynur Bozkurt

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

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New Dimensions of History, Security, Politics, Strategy, Energy and Economy,
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PREFACE

This volume is a collection of papers that were originally presented during international congresses entitled “Blue Black Sea: New Dimensions of Security, Politics, Strategy, Energy, History and Economy” held at the International Relations Department of Sakarya University on 14–17 October 2008 and 10–13 October 2010. The papers were later revised and updated by the authors in 2012 to be included here.

The book presents the opinions of experts and researchers from the Black Sea states with respect to the political, economic, social, and cultural relations in the region, and explains various dimensions of the present relations and problem areas from both theoretical and conceptual perspectives. While some articles in the book study existing and newly emerging institutions, others examine areas of disagreement and suggest peaceful resolutions for conflicts. Offering the reader a comprehensive approach that covers a wide range of affairs, we hope that this book will fill an important gap in international relations studies. While the added word “Blue” in the title indicates our shared aspirations for a clean and peaceful future, overall this book is intended to provide valuable academic assessments and share them with the wider world community, thus disseminating findings about the regional and global policies being pursued in the Black Sea region today.

Given that all regional issues impact globally, it is surely true that any steps towards peace achieved at the regional level are also highly significant for the world overall. To be able to attain a peaceful world order, we need to address each other’s requirements and dissatisfactions with an attitude of understanding. To pursue further research projects that examine related problems in an unbiased way, and to find sound and acceptable solutions for ongoing issues, is absolutely necessary. In this sense, I hope that this book will also serve the cause of world peace.

—Associate Professor Dr. Giray Saynur BOZKURT

INTRODUCTION

We are living through an extraordinary period and the Black Sea region has not been exempted from this. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, two decades ago, the Black Sea region has gradually passed out of the sphere of influence of the Russian state.

With the end of the Cold War, the USSR collapsed and left the United States as the only superpower. Though the Russian Federation, successor to the USSR, is still a great regional power that is trying to regain its former global status, it so far has insufficient weight to counterbalance US power. Meanwhile, this geopolitical power gap creates new opportunities for other regional and global actors. The fifteen former Soviet republics have been faced with radical movements linked to ethnic and religious fanaticism. While the whole world has been affected by these events, they have struck most firmly at Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Black Sea regions.

Today we can observe that further changes are brewing, and that important developments are taking place in the Black Sea region. The coastal states of Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, and Georgia, and the wider Black Sea regional states of Moldavia, Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, are increasingly siding with the Western world and turning away from the Russian Federation. The importance of this development becomes more obvious when we remember that until recently these states were either members of the former Warsaw Pact or acting under the influence of the Soviet Union.

The term "Greater Black Sea Region" encompasses the countries situated in the corridor that links Asia to Europe as well as those situated in the transportation zone of the Caspian energy sources to the west (Albania, Serbia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan), in addition to the standard coastal countries of the Black Sea. Both the energy resources in the region and the energy transport lines used for these energy resources to the West have increased the importance of the Black Sea. In addition, the so-called Colour Revolutions have started a new power struggle around the Baltic, Black, and Caspian Seas. The United States and Russia, as well as other global and regional powers and coastal states and institutions, are competing for influence over the strategically prominent Black Sea region.

The strategic rapprochement with the Western world is likely to produce a new Black Sea, one which will be part of the Euro–Atlantic zone, the European Union, and NATO. Such a geopolitical shift in search of identity will have significant repercussions for the future of the states involved, and also means that the Black Sea region will come into closer contact with two major powers in world politics in addition to Russia—namely the United States and the European Union. The full implications of this rapprochement are not yet in sight.

On the other hand, the security of the Black Sea is not just a matter for the region; it has global impacts, and directly affects the political and economic security of the global powers—particularly the United States, which encourages and supports new democracies in the region. Their success, stability, and prosperity are all essential to the security and peace of the whole region, and thus also of the world.

The papers in this book are organized under five sections: *History*, *Security*, *International Relations*, *Strategy*, *Energy*, and *Economy*.

The *History* section comprises three papers, “A Glance at the History of the Black Sea Region” by Mehmet Bilgin, “The Black Sea and the Balkans under Ottoman Rule” by Nihat Çelik, and “The Preconditions of Ethnic–Political Conflicts in Georgia” by Zurab Davitashvili. Bilgin summarizes the history of the Black Sea region from 8 BC up to the present, while Çelik focuses on the Ottoman period, from the fourteenth to the twentieth centuries, and examines the importance of the Balkans and the Black Sea for the Ottoman Empire. Çelik then probes the Ottoman–Russian rivalry in the region, and comments on the formation of national states (Romania and Bulgaria) on the western coast of the Black Sea. Meanwhile, Zurab Davitashvili reflects on the Georgian perspective, evaluating the deep historical backgrounds of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian problems.

The *Security* section comprises nine papers. Elhan Mehtiyev makes two valuable contributions: “The Security Policy of the Caucasus Nations in the New Security Environment” and “Background to the Hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan: From the Prague Process to the Madrid Principles.” In his first contribution it is emphasized that the Black Sea area is becoming an indispensable part of the newly emerged European security architecture and has to face the global changes connected to the process of integration into Euro–Atlantic security and economic structures. As part of the wider Black Sea region, the Caucasus has direct access to Central Asia and Middle East. Now bordering NATO and the European Union, it has attracted attention to fact that the security policy of the Caucasus nations has now to be established. In his second contribution,

concerning the Azerbaijani–Armenian conflict, he addresses one of the major security issues in the Caucasus and concludes that military action has not offered any solution.

In “The Georgia–Russia Conflict as an Example of Interdependence in World Politics,” Natalija Nechayeva Yuriychuk examines the evolution of Georgian–Russian relations based on the ever-changing interests of both sides.

In “The Roles of the Ukraine and the EU in settling the Russian–Georgian Conflict in the Caucasus,” Grigoriy Perepelytsia gives details of the initial events in that conflict and describes the valuable contributions provided by Ukraine and EU in pursuit of resolution.

Giray Saynur Bozkurt’s article “The Security Policies of Turkey and Russia towards Abkhazia and the Internal Georgian Conflict” points out that the unresolved conflicts of the South Caucasus form a serious obstacle in the establishment of a regional security system. In her work, the development of the problems of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are analyzed in light of their historical background, stressing the lack of progress towards the resolution of the conflicts. In this context, the relations of the two regional powers (Turkey and Russia) with Georgia and their policies towards ethnic conflicts in the region are evaluated.

Black Sea regional security after 9/11 is addressed by Yevgeniya Gaber, who stresses the increasing importance of the Black Sea region after the notorious events of 9/11 and analyzes the regional security strategies of the United States, the main “outside actor,” and Turkey, which has recently positioned itself as a regional power. She tries to show how cooperation between these two forces can contribute to the creation of a more stable and secure Black Sea.

In his paper entitled “Turkey’s Security Strategies in the Extended Black Sea Region after September 11, 2001,” Mujib Alam examines the challenges which Turkey faces, such as terrorism, human and narco-trafficking, and illegal trade, most of which emanate from the Middle East. He also explores the nature of these security threats and their effects on Turkey’s Black Sea security policy.

The article “The US Military Bases in Romania and Bulgaria and their Possible Implications for Regional Security” has been composed by Saffet Akkaya for this volume. Focusing on the US military bases in Romania and Bulgaria, he adumbrates the US approach to the Black Sea region from a broader security perspective and in consideration of a possible vital role for the United States and accordingly NATO in the region.

“Security in the Black Sea Region from a Neorealist Perspective,” by Ashhan Anlar, uses neorealist theory to examine how the state of security

has changed in the Black Sea region, attempting to explore changes in the characteristics of the structure of the Black Sea region and focusing mainly on the ordering principle, which is one of the three defining principles of neorealist theory. The paper attempts to define an ordering principle for the region and to assess its effect on security.

In the *International Relations & Strategy* section, nine articles are presented. In his “The Black Sea Region: Challenges and Opportunities,” Mohammad Hassan Khani indicates the value of regional cooperation in the international system, regarding this as a good way to achieve peace, security, and economic prosperity across the globe, and attempting to see if this approach is also working for the Black Sea region.

In the article “Regional Cooperation Efforts in the Black Sea Region: Black Sea Synergy,” written by Çiğdem Üstün, it is explained that conditions in this long-neglected region have dramatically changed since the end of the Cold War. The increasing energy demands of Europe have amplified the importance of the region, and the EU, United States, and the regional actors have developed several new policies towards the area. The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), which can be seen as the most successful regional cooperation initiative, and the perspectives of the BSEC member states, form the centre of attention of this work. The paper also attempts to answer the question “What kind of a process is needed for better regional cooperation in this specific area?”

In his “U.S. Interests in Wider Black Sea Region,” Sergei Konopylov asserts that the Black Sea Region has begun to play an important part in world politics in the last two decades. He also analyzes US interests and foreign policy in this part of the world during the last three US presidential terms.

The survey “US Policies towards the Black Sea Region,” which was undertaken by İdris Bal, assesses the importance of the Black Sea region, the position of United States in the post–Cold War era, and the potential benefits that can be gained from this region. He also analyzes the US goals and new policies towards this region.

“The EU’s Black Sea Policy” is examined in the article contributed by Ertan Efeğil and Neziha Musaoğlu. Here it is indicated that, primarily for security reasons, the EU has developed new policies in order to create a more peaceful international environment based on mutual cooperation, sympathy, peace, and stability. In this respect, the EU could not fail to deal with the Black Sea region, with its oil and gas, frozen conflicts, and economic and commercial potentials. Thus the EU has adopted a new approach called Black Sea Synergy, which frames the EU’s approach to the Black Sea region.

In an interesting article entitled “Relations between Russia and Turkey under the New Conditions in the Black Sea and Caucasus Region,” Alexander Sotnichenko draws attention to the years of hostility and mutual distrust between Russia and Turkey. He then emphasizes their growing common interests in a multi-polar world, alongside Eurasian co-operation and international problems like international terrorism. By means of cooperation and political partnership, good opportunities may emerge for both Turkey and Russia, and an analysis is given of the possible ways this might unfold in several different regions of Eurasia, with particular attention to the Black Sea regional partnership.

In “Black Sea Regional Policies of Russia and USA after September 11,” written by Giray Saynur Bozkurt, the growing significance of the Black Sea region is underlined, alongside an understanding of the altered aspects of security. She also evaluates the threat perceptions and new dimensions in the Black Sea policies of the United States and Russia following the attacks of September 11.

In “International Organizational Initiatives in the Black Sea Region,” Alaeddin Yalçinkaya claims that some international organizations which are supposed to function to create peaceful and steady international conditions, are actually manipulating the international system according to the interests of “Great Powers.” The discrepancy between the intended and declared goals of the organizations creates mistrust amongst their members, and their continuity and legitimacy becomes debatable. On the other hand, if developed cautiously, manipulation according to self-interest could be reduced and these kind of organizations could really be put to good use. From these perspectives, the Black Sea regional international organizations—especially Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the sub-organization Black Sea–Caspian Energy Community (BSCEC)—are evaluated.

Meanwhile, studying “The Role of the Mediators in Settling Conflicts in the Black Sea Region,” Hanna Shelest shows the potential of the Black Sea region to become an area of prosperity and stability. The lack of implementation of many economic, transport, political, and energy projects, however, mostly due to existing conflicts and security problems, poses great challenges. Although this potential draws the attention of many international actors, the policies of these mediators are very diverse, being shaped by their self-interest.

Eight articles comprise the *Energy* subdivision of this book. In the first, “The Geopolitics of Energy in the Black Sea Context,” Nicolae Iordan-Constantinescu explains how energy, politics, and power are linked to each other as a force in international security. This is because there is a

constant increase in the energy demand of the world and neither science, technology, nor industry are able to generate enough alternatives—as a result of which the limited fossil fuels still remain the major resource. In this sense, despite the fact that the oil and gas reserves of the Caucasus and Caspian region are much smaller than the resources in the Middle East, they hold geopolitical importance. Thus the energy policies developed by the consumer states in the West envision a diversification of the import of resources so that their energy dependence on Russia and Middle East can be controlled.

In the article “Energy Politics in the Black Sea Region: The Superpowers’ Race for Fuel,” Jatinder Khanna describes the geopolitical significance of the Black Sea region and then examines the interests of the United States, Russia, and China, this region having become a playground for these major powers.

Sercan Salgın, in his study “Energy as a Foreign Policy in the Wider Black Sea Region,” seeks to identify to what extent the Caspian and Black Sea states have effectively used energy as a foreign policy tool to promote their interests in regional and global affairs. The author examines three important actors in the region, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, for which energy policies form part of their foreign policy agenda. The constraints faced by these states while playing their energy cards are also mentioned.

The article “The Role of Azerbaijan in EU Energy Security,” prepared by Agshin Umudov, presents information on the energy policy of the European Union and sets out the importance of Caspian basin energy resources within this policy. The utmost importance of Azerbaijan is stressed, both as a supplier of its own energy resources and as a crucial energy transmission corridor between Central Asia and Europe. As well as this, the prospects for further cooperation between EU and regional states is discussed.

The essay by Güner Özkan entitled “The Nexus between the Energy Pipeline Contest and Security in the Black Sea Region: Russia versus the Rest” illustrates that if the regional states of the wider Black Sea region can exercise strong control over energy resources and pipelines, they will reap economic, strategic, geopolitical, and security benefits and become much more powerful. In this respect an examination is provided of the fierce competition between Russia, one of the major energy exporters, on one side, and the rest of the energy-dependent states in Europe and the transporting countries in the Black Sea region, on the other.

“Policies around the BTC Pipeline” written by Halil Erdemir, delves into how the growing significance of energy security has contributed to the

formation of strategic alliances and policies of states involved, in and around the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline. In this work, in order to reflect adequately the complexity of the BTC policies in the post–Cold War environment, the concept of security is assessed beyond the understanding of military security alone.

In her essay entitled “Gazprom: A Leading Actor in the Post-Soviet Gas Policy-Making Process in the Black Sea Region,” Evrim Eken exposes the factors and forces that drive Gazprom, currently the biggest natural gas company in the world, to be an influential actor in the region and globally. She then analyzes Gazprom’s influence over the natural gas policy pursued by Russia in the Black Sea region.

The final article in this section, prepared by İdris Demir, is “Domestic Supply of Natural Gas and Oil in Relation to Total Energy Demand in Turkey: How Can Its Energy Needs be Secured?” Here it is demonstrated that Turkey as a growing country is in need of more energy as there is a gap between its insufficient domestic energy resources and its energy consumption. Being in need of external energy resources, Turkey has to adopt wise energy policies so that sustainable economic growth can be maintained. The constraints of Turkey and the steps to be taken in this respect are discussed in the article.

The *Economy* subdivision of the book consists of three articles. “Enhancing Security and Stability in the Black Sea Region through Economic Cooperation,” by Aliosha Nedelchev, talks about the bridges that facilitate trade and cooperation, signifying the consequence of BSEC, founded primarily as a regional economic organization, which now also serves to strengthen security and stability in the region by its unique method of “security through economic cooperation.”

In “Analyses of the Banking Sector in Black Sea Region Countries and Turkey,” Birgül Şakar examines the economic situation and financial system in Turkey in the last decade. She compares the Turkish banking sector with those of Bulgaria, Rumania, Russia, and the EU, in terms of efficiency and financial effectiveness.

“A Handicap to Regional Economic Cooperation: Poverty (The Example of Turkey)” is a co-production by Oğuz Kaymakçı, Ömer Canbeyoğlu, and Deniz Emre Türkgeç. Here it is alleged that Turkey, despite being an advanced country in terms of corporate identity and economy, still suffers from low income levels and absolute poverty. Thus, the example of Turkey is studied in order to show how poverty prevents the development of the country and leads to social problems by engendering a vicious circle which negatively affects regional collaborations. Finally, it is suggested

that most of the Black Sea countries are faced with similar economic problems.

PART I:
HISTORY

CHAPTER ONE

A GLANCE AT THE HISTORY OF THE BLACK SEA REGION

MEHMET BILGIN

Introduction

The Black Sea region is the heartland of Eurasia, not only in terms of contemporary politics,¹ but also in terms of historical phenomena. Geographically, the northern coasts of the Black Sea are lined by vast steppes and plains, while its southern coasts are carved out of the Anatolian plateau; to the east, it is enveloped by the mountains of Caucasia and, to the west, it is enclosed by the mountainous Balkan Peninsula. The Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, which connect the Black Sea to the oceans via the Mediterranean Sea, are the most important crossing points. Although many river and canal transport systems have been operative in the region for the last two centuries, the Bosphorus is still the most important passage for people who want to enter or leave the Black Sea.

The Black Sea has been a very significant linkage point between the East and the West since ancient times.² Ancient Greeks³ from the Aegean Sea first reached Propontis (Marmara Sea), and then travelled on to the Black Sea. They established commercial colonies along the Black Sea coast. In the centuries that followed, these commercial colonies were considered gateways to Asia.⁴

The Greeks were neither the first nor the last colonists in the region.⁵ The Black Sea's gateways to Asia had been used by many other powers in history, including the Argonauts, the Roman Empire, states established in Anatolia, the Byzantine Empire, the Seljukids, and the Ottoman Empire, as well as some states that did not have any port on the Black Sea, such as Genoa and Venice.

Historical Background

In ancient times, when Greek colonists attempted to penetrate the Black Sea coasts, the north of this region was occupied by the Scythians,⁶ who were related to the Germanic tribes that had migrated westwards from Middle Asia. From the eighth century BC, the Scythians lived on the steppes of the northern Black Sea region, where the Cimmerians also resided. The relationship of the Greek colonists with the Scythians was friendlier than their relationship with the Cimmerians.⁷ The Scythians banished the Cimmerians from the region and chased them relentlessly as far as the hinterland of Anatolia and the Middle East.⁸ With its culture and art, Scythia was a positive influence both on the colonies and on neighboring communities in the region.⁹

In the ancient era, the rise of the Persian Empire in the east was a challenge to Greek power. While the southern coast of the Black Sea was controlled by the Persian Empire, its northern and western coasts were dominated by the Scythians. It would seem that from this time, the Balkans and the Caucasus became the stage for power struggles between Persia, expanding in the east, and Greece, the rising power to the west.

Later in history, the Scythians descended from the hills of the Caucasus, across the plateaux of north-east Anatolia in two branches: one steered towards the hinterland of Anatolia; the other headed towards the Middle East. Later, Scythians came to Anatolia from the Balkans through Thrace, and then turned towards the western cities of Anatolia. When Darius, the legendary emperor of Persia, decided to attack the Scythians in 514 BC, his army advanced towards the north of the Balkans by crossing a bridge they built over the Bosphorus straits.¹⁰ Rather than face the gigantic army of Persia, however, mounted troops of Scythians withdrew to the interior of the northern steppes. Darius lost track of the Scythians and had to withdraw.

It is evident that events in the history of this part of the world are a repetitive (and cruel) power game played by western and eastern powers. There were also successive power struggles between the peoples that settled along the northern coasts of the Black Sea from Central Asia,¹¹ including Sarmatians,¹² Huns,¹³ Avars, Bulgarians,¹⁴ Caspians,¹⁵ Pecheneks,¹⁶ Kumanos,¹⁷ and other tribes.¹⁸ Tribes that spread to the southern coasts came mainly through the Caucasus in the east or the Balkans in the west.¹⁹

The powers that rose up on the northern and southern coasts of the Black Sea influenced one other, either through invasion or through commercial relations during peaceful periods. These reciprocal relations had multiple dimensions, including culture and trade, and this interaction

has left a legacy in the region. Arrows, bows, clothes, and so forth were objects of trade. Mutual influence was also evident in the arts, governmental activities, and religious beliefs.²⁰ Descendants of these tribes can be found today in the Balkans, Caucasus, and on the southern coasts of the Black Sea.²¹ The last power to come from Central Asia and play an active role on the northern Black Sea coast were the Mongols.²² It would be remiss, however, not to mention the tribes in this area that came from the northwest and the north, such as the Gots and their descendants, the Russians.²³

As the last rising power on the steppes of northern Asia, Russians settled on the northern coasts of the Black Sea and later descended towards the Caucasus and spread to Georgia, Azerbaijan, northern Iran, and northeast regions of Turkey to the south. In the same period, they reached the Bosphorus area from the Balkans.²⁴

Instead of expanding towards the northern Black Sea coasts, the imperial powers that were dominant over the southern parts of the Black Sea—such as the Persians, Byzantines, and Ottomans—preferred to extend their sovereignty to the already existing cities of the Black Sea, which at the time were considered gateways between this region and Central Asia. Transportation of goods such as slaves, fur, and wheat from the North, and textile products and gemstones from Central Asia, was maintained through these trading centres in the coastal areas.

Historically, northern parts of the Black Sea had been a route of migration for local tribes. Tribal societies that had previously been dominant powers in this region either had to abandon their territory or mingled into the new tribal society. In either case, power-holders who had settled on the migratory route along the northern Black Sea coasts had to leave the scene to the newcomers. The situation in the south, however, was different. In this region, while tribes moving westwards from Asia were hindered by the rising power of Iran on one hand, and Byzantium on the other, they were securely positioned in Anatolia alongside the population it gained through tribes that migrated from the Balkans.

Meanwhile, southern and northern parts of the Black Sea were zones of diffusion and collision of major faiths. For example, religious organizations, rituals, and symbols of the Tengri Han belief system—a monotheistic religion, rooted in Central Asia—influenced the entire northern, central, and eastern areas of Europe.²⁵ Religions such as Judaism, Islam, and Christianity reached Anatolia from the Middle East. From there, they influenced the northern Black Sea region and Central Asia, as well as the whole of Europe. With the help of the Caspian Empire,²⁶ Judaism²⁷ spread through all of eastern and central Europe.²⁸

Later, Orthodox Christianity spread within Slavic and Russian regions through the Byzantine Empire, while the Caspian Empire caused the Sassanid dynasty to lose much of its power, limiting the spread of Islam in Iran and Central Asia. Moreover, Byzantium fought against Muslim Arabs for centuries and delayed them from reaching the Anatolian hinterland. Muslim Arabs later tried to enter Anatolia from the north of the Black Sea, where they had to fight against Caucasians²⁹ and were eventually forced to retreat.

Throughout history, the Black Sea region has witnessed many significant political, cultural, and religious clashes and transformations. Driven by religious motivations, Byzantium attacked not only Muslims but also peoples of other beliefs, including local creeds of Christianity. While Byzantium was engaged in extinguishing all beliefs other than Orthodox Christianity in Anatolia, a minority of Armenians were able to save their own beliefs with the support they received from their neighbors. Thanks to the Muslim Seljukids who moved into Anatolia, the biggest regional threat against the Armenians was removed. What is more, the Seljukids took the Armenians under their protection. Even the Gregorian Armenians were able to return to Istanbul once Fatih Sultan Mehmet had conquered the city.

After the collapse of the Seljukids with the invasion of Mongols, the Ottoman Empire emerged as a new power in Anatolia and the Balkans. Once Fatih Sultan Mehmet captured Istanbul, he abolished the kingdom of Commenian Byzantium in Trebizond. After this, Fatih came to Kefe, removed the Genoese and Venetians from the region, and turned the Black Sea into a “Turkish lake.” In the following century, the Black Sea area became a land of peace for the people who lived in it. This peaceful situation in the Black Sea region lasted until the 1550s, when Don Kazakhs descended on the region and attacked the coastal cities.³⁰ The Kazakhs were merely the vanguards of the Russian Tsar. After only a few attacks, the Russians settled permanently on the northern coasts of the Black Sea, under the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji, signed in 1774.

Having summarized the history and background of the Black Sea area, we can now shed light upon more recent developments. In this respect, it is interesting to note both the Russian Tsardom ruling in the north and the weakening Ottoman Empire in the south. After settling on the northern coast of the Black Sea, taking the place of the Crimean Khanate, the Russian Tsardom started to make incursions into the Balkans on one hand, and the Caucasus region on the other, with the intention of spreading southwards through these paths. In this mission, the Russian Tsardom used

not only its army and fleet, but also other driving forces such as religion and race (Orthodox Christianity and Slavism).³¹

In addition to its military power, the Russian Tsardom exploited ethnic elements of the region to bring down the Islamic resistance.³² The Ottomans, who were left alone in the Balkans, were not powerful enough to stop Russia. Meanwhile, Western interference, which peaked with the 1854–1855 Crimean War,³³ had no other purpose than to slow down or control the expansion of Russia.

After the Russian Tsardom collapsed, Bolshevik Russia rose as a new regional power. Once it gained control of the whole government, Bolshevik Russia reoccupied, one by one, all the territories that had been severed from Tsarist Russia. At the end of World War I, during the Crimean War, the western powers (England, France, and Greece) sent their troops to Odessa to interfere with the intention of stopping the Bolshevik Russian expansion; however, their efforts were to no avail. Upon defeat, they shipped their troops and Russian supporters to Istanbul. Bolshevik Russia then established its sovereignty in the Balkan and Caucasus regions, which were once under the rule of the Tsardom.

It was as though history was repeating itself when Bolshevik Russia collapsed at the end of the 1980s. This time, Bolshevik Russia retreated from Central Asia, the Balkans, northern parts of the Black Sea region, and some regions in the Caucasus. However, there was no indication that it had completely abandoned all these areas. Aware that the emerging balance of power would be crucial, Russia made good use of the time and opportunities created by subsequent events.

When the Russian Tsardom tried to attack towards the south, it was held back by the Ottomans. In those days, in order to keep control of the situation, the West acted in alliance either with the Ottomans or with Russia.³⁴ At the beginning of World War I, Britain signed an agreement with the Russian Tsar to destroy the Ottomans. The nationalist movement that had risen against the invasion of Anatolia, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, stood against the imperialist Western powers, which were led by England and Bolshevik Russia. After World War II, Turkey allied with the United States and joined NATO, a move which made Turkey a key country in the West's defence against the Soviet Union.

The Cold War period was characterized by several treaties. The United States, which had attained the leadership of the West after World War II, expanded its influence in the region after the collapse of Bolshevik Russia.³⁵ This time, the United States emerged as the new global power in a unipolar world order and forced an economically ruined Soviet Union out of some of the former Soviet republics. Moscow had to accept this

withdrawal due to its poor economic condition. Nevertheless, Russia insisted as far as it could that it retain its military presence in some of the republics; in particular, the Caucasus was the foremost region that Russia resisted leaving. The Russian army did not regard retreating from areas that were mostly flat as a defeat, but knew that it would take decades to re-advance in the mountainous regions, such as the Caucasus, and fought fiercely in these regions, as is evident in the cases of the Caucasian Sheikh Shamil and the Chechens. Russia was also aware that by losing control of this region, it would also lose the floor in international circles to speak about the Caucasian and Middle Eastern energy sources and transfer routes.

The Balkans and Caucasus have been regions of refugees for more than a century as a result of either mass conversion or forced migration. The Caucasian Mountains provided shelter for many groups until the nineteenth century. The mountains' natural protection also enabled tribes to live without interfering with one other. If it were not for the protective isolation of the mountains, these small communities would not survive to present day, and would have been assimilated by larger communities or powers in the past: the Caucasian Mountains have been dubbed *Diller Dağı*, meaning "Mountains of Refuge." There is a similar situation in the Balkans.

Present and future events and developments in the region may be best understood by considering the fact that the western and eastern mountainous regions in the Black Sea area have been a shelter for many communities,³⁶ and by taking the historical background of these communities into account. Today, certain global powers have defined the Balkans and Caucasus as districts of dispute and are exploiting clashes and conflicts between ethnic groups in the region, treating these groups as pawns in a power game against each other. Meanwhile, in the regions where ethnic differentiation is not distinct, micro-nationalist movements have arisen and instead of being regarded as cultural richness, differences are being constructed negatively, exaggerated, and presented as reasons for conflict. In pursuit of their own interests, foreign powers, especially from the West, have used their funds to cement these ethnic differences.

Foreign funds have been used to make ethnic divergence—from music to skin tone—more distinct, and to solidify these differences by provoking racist perceptions. These acts by powerful states gave rise to dramatic events in the region. The fact that they continue to finance similar policies in areas of potential conflict shows the great powers to be culpable for their part in inducing the terrible massacres committed by the fighting ethnic groups.

The United States and the Russian President, Vladimir Putin—who was appointed to elevate Russia's situation against the United States—have so far acted in accordance with the notion that the Black Sea is a strategic area for all regional economies.³⁷ While the United States, having assured control over Iraq, was expected to press on to the Caucasus and continue taking further steps towards the control of energy sources and transfer routes in the region, it was indubitable that Russia was going to develop new policies against the potential US siege.

By granting NATO membership to the Eastern European countries that had joined the EU, the United States became the biggest power on the Black Sea coasts. It is evident that the United States desires to make its presence in the region permanent. In light of this, it is certain that Putin was aware that Russians would not be able to prevent the United States from moving its powerful fleets (e.g., the Sixth Fleet) into the Black Sea merely by upholding the treaties regulating passage from the Turkish straits. Despite the fact that the situation and the future of the Russian fleet in the Black Sea is uncertain, Russia still has the advantage because of Washington's foreign policy mistakes, which are rooted in its fixation with being the sole global power. One of these mistakes made by the United States was not foreseeing that Russia would recover so quickly; in particular, the abnormal increase in oil prices worked in favour of Russia while it weakened the EU economy.

In order to test Putin's possible reactions, the United States provoked Georgia to attack South Ossetia. Russia did not merely throw this advance back, but also threatened Europe with cutting off their natural gas supply and sent its warships to the ocean as a strong message. By sending its own warship into the Black Sea, the US response was more a check regarding Turkey's attitude to the Montreux Treaty, which regulates passage across the Turkish straits. As a result of these events, the two parties have determined their positions ahead of any repetition of these events. Those who paid the price for all the painful consequences have been, and will be, the people who live in the area. Washington's ostentatious support of Saakashvili, but not of Georgia itself, is a good clue to what may happen in the future.

Meanwhile, Turkey, being the next-door neighbour, considered Georgia's position as a convenient buffer between itself and Russia, and has always been supportive of the pursuit and maintenance of political stability in Georgia. Ankara also aided Tbilisi to restructure its military. Turkey continued this support to Saakashvili, even though some provocative Georgian nationalist policies also emerged, including Christianization campaigns against Muslims in the Adjarian region, and Georgianization

campaigns in Turkish regions of Georgia (the homeland of the *Tarakamas*). However, recent events showed, yet again, that without being underpinned by the development of a good relationship with Russia, policies intended to stabilize the region would not give healthy results.

Conclusion

Having its own ambitions for the region, the United States does not want an overly powerful Turkey in the region, thinking it unnecessary since the end of the Cold War. Claiming itself to be the only global power, the United States desires a Turkey that is a part of the Great Middle East Initiative; is attached to the European Union; is economically dependent upon imports and integrated into international capitalism as a good market; has an economy that runs solely with hot money flows and has an increasing current account deficit; is suffering under heavy debts; is cornered by the threat of claims of the so-called Armenian genocide; and has its influence weakened by being forced out of Cyprus and threatened by being divided. Ultimately, the United States desires a Turkey that is forced to carry out any duty given to it by the West.

Even though there are claims that the Turkish government does not object to the US Great Middle East Initiative and Turkey is currently one of the actors in this initiative, opponents of the initiative, notably the army, are still influential. The United States and European powers still pursue their goals to shift Turkey into the position desired by them, trying every possible means including intimidation and the use of force. Foreign policy experts are watching policies applied in this direction with great interest. But we are still not in a position to answer the question, “Is Russia’s attitude to recent events adequate to show that the desire for a weak Turkey in the region is a wrong policy for the West?”

Notes

¹ Osman Metin Öztürk and Yalçın Sarıkaya, *Uluslararası Mücadelenin Yeni Odağı Karadeniz* (Ankara: Platin Yayınları, 2005).

² Ekrem Memiş, *Eskiçağ Tarihinde Doğu-Batı Mücadelesi* (Konya: Selçuk Üniversitesi Yayını, 1993). In the ancient world, the East was represented by the Persian Empire and the West by Greek civilization. This situation eventually evolved into the form of the liberal West and the Socialist Republics and the USSR.

³ Greeks claim cultural possession of Black Sea on the basis of myths, which can be summarized as involving the conversion of Pont Axenos (Inhospitable Sea) into Pont Euxinus (Hospitable Sea). The reality of the influence of Greek culture

over the people of the Black Sea region is open to question, and every new finding can cause a re-evaluation of the known facts about this issue. It is certain that by the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment, Greek culture was seen as a primary influence on Western culture; it seems to be the case, unfortunately, that this longstanding influence has led Western authors to overly privilege the Greek account.

⁴ For the northern arm of Silk Road, the earliest mercantile connection between Asia and Europe, see Boris Stavisky, “İpek Yolu ve İnsanlık Tarihindeki Önemi,” trans. Mehmet Tezcan, in *Türkler Vol. 3*, ed. Hasan Celal Güzel, Kemal Çiçek, and Salim Koca (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2002), 222–242. See also Anna A. Ierusalimskaya, “İpek Yolunda Kafkaslar,” in *Türkler Vol. 3*, 243–250.

⁵ Marianna Koromila, *The Greeks and The Black Sea From The Bronze Age to the Early 20th Century*, new ed. (Athens: The Panorama Cultural Society, 2002).

⁶ For the Scythians, see B. N. Grakov, *İskitler*, trans. D. Ahsen Batur (İstanbul: Selenge Yayınları, 2006); İlhami Durmuş, *İskitler (Sakalar)* (Ankara, Türk Kültürü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1993); Ekrem Memiş, *İskitlilerin Tarihi* (Konya, Çizgi Kitabevi, 2005).

⁷ The Ancient Greeks developed relations with the Scythians in every area. As a result, a new hybrid population arose whose spoken language was a mixture of Greek and Scythian. Hippocrates, the famous physician, lived with the Scythians for a long time and his records contain interesting information about them, while the well-known Greek doctor Demosthenes’ grandmother was a Scythian. These facts illustrate that the relationship between the two nations was extremely close.

⁸ M. Taner Tarhan, “Eski Anadolu Tarihinde Kimmerler,” *I. Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı*, İstanbul 23–26 May 1983 (İstanbul: Eski Eserler ve Müzeler Müdürlüğü), 109–120; Kadriye Tansuğ, “Kimmerlerin Anadolu’ya Girişleri ve M.Ö. 7. Yüzyılda Asur Devletinin Anadolu ile Münasebetleri,” *AÜDTCF Dergisi*, 5/7, no. 4: 535–550.

⁹ Anıl Yılmaz, “İskit Sanatı,” in *Türkler Vol. 3*, 26–32.

¹⁰ Grakov, *İskitler*, 61–63; Durmuş, *İskitler*, 71; Memiş, *İskitlilerin Tarihi*, 40–53.

¹¹ Karoly Czegledy, *Bozkır Kavimlerinin Doğu’dan Batı’ya Göçleri*, trans. Ahsen Batur (İstanbul: Özne Yayınları, 1998).

¹² İlhami Durmuş, *Sarmatlar* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2007).

¹³ L.N. Gumilev, *Hunlar*, 3rd ed., trans. D. Ahsen Batur (İstanbul: Selenge Yayınları, 2003).

¹⁴ Geza Feher, *Bulgar Türkleri Tarihi*, 2nd ed. (Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1985).

¹⁵ M. I. Artamonov, *Hazar Tarihi Türkler, Yahudiler, Ruslar*, trans. Ahsen Batur (İstanbul: Selenge Yayınları 2004).

¹⁶ Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Peçenek Tarihi* (İstanbul: Devlet Basımevi, 1937).

¹⁷ Istvan Vasary, *Kumanlar ve Tatarlar Osmanlı Öncesi Balkanlar’da Doğulu Askerler (1185–1365)*, trans. Ali Cevat Akkoyunlu (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2008).

¹⁸ Akdes Nimet Kurat, *IV–XVIII. Yüzyıllarda Karadenizin Kuzeyindeki Türk Kavimleri ve Devletleri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1972).

¹⁹ One of the sources concerning the movement of Turkish tribes from the Balkans to the northern Black Sea is “De Administrando Imperio,” written by Byzantian