

GEORGIA'S NATO MEMBERSHIP WITHIN CONTEXT OF THE BLACK SEA DIMENSION OF "THE NEW GREAT GAME"

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Özet

Gürcistan'ın NATO üyeliği NATO üyesi ülkeler ve Rusya Federasyonu arasında tartışma konusu olmuştur. Rusya'nın Gürcistan'ın NATO üyeliğini Hazar ve Karadeniz Bölgeleri'ndeki kritik enerji altyapısının kontrolünü ele geçirmeye yönelik bir hamle olarak algıladığı, buna mukabil NATO'nun ABD ve AB'nin enerji güvenliği açısından stratejik olan bu coğrafyada daha etkili olmaya çalıştığı savunulmaktadır. Bu çıkar ve algılama asimetrisinin bölgedeki güç dinamiklerini daha da karmaşık hale getirmesi beklenmektedir. Bu makalede, Gürcistan'ın NATO üyeliği ve Gürcistan ve Rusya arasında 2008 yazında yaşanan çatışmalar "yeni büyük oyunun" Karadeniz boyutu bağlamında analiz edilmiştir.

Gürcistan'ın üyelik süreci, NATO üye ülkeleri arasında Gürcistan'ın üyeliği ile ilgili yaşanan tartışmalar değerlendirilmiştir. Gürcistan ve Rusya arasında yaşanan çatışmaların jeopolitik sonuçları, çatışmaların Nabucco gibi boru hattı projeleri üzerindeki etkileri ve NATO ülkelerinin Rusya'nın bölgedeki askeri operasyonlarına tepkileri irdelenmiştir. Geniş Karadeniz Bölgesi'nin artan jeopolitik önemi ve Türkiye'nin izlediği bölgesel politikalar ele alınmıştır.

Gürcistan'ın NATO üyeliğinin Rusya ile NATO arasında tartışma konusu olmaya devam etmesi ve Geniş Karadeniz Bölgesi'nin jeostratejik ve jeoekonomik öneminin artması beklenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Karadeniz, Gürcistan, NATO, Rusya, Türk Dış Politikası, enerji güvenliği

Abstract

Georgia's NATO membership became a dispute between the NATO member countries and the Russian Federation. It is argued that Russia perceives Georgia's NATO membership as a move that aims to take the control of critical energy infrastructure in the Caspian and Black Sea regions while NATO tries to be more influential on this geography strategic for the energy security of the US and the EU. This asymmetry of perceptions and interests between Russia and NATO is expected to complicate power dynamics further in the region. In this paper, Georgia's NATO membership and the clashes between Georgia and Russia in the summer of 2008 were analyzed within context of the Black Sea dimension of "the new great game".

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The membership process of Georgia and debates among the NATO member countries about Georgia's membership were evaluated. Geopolitical consequences of the clashes between Georgia and Russia, the impact of clashes on the pipeline projects such as the Nabucco and reaction of the NATO countries to Russia's military operations in the region were investigated. Increasing geopolitical importance of the Wider Black Sea Region and Turkey's regional policies were examined.

It is anticipated that Georgia's NATO membership will continue to be a topic of discussion between Russia and NATO and the geostrategic and geo-economic importance of the wider Black Sea Region will increase.

Keywords: The Black Sea, Georgia, NATO, Russia, Turkish Foreign Policy, energy security

INTRODUCTION

After the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the international system transformed from a bipolar system into an unipolar system. Relationship patterns at the regional and global level changed. These changes had different impacts on the foreign policies of Turkey, the US, the European countries and Russia. The Black Sea region was one of the most affected regions, where balance of power changed and new geopolitical equilibriums emerged.¹ The Region emerged as one of the most geopolitically significant regions in the world because of its rich oil and natural gas reserves and its geographical location over energy export routes.

Regional and global actors competed to consolidate their control on the critical energy infrastructure in the region in line with Mackinder, who had argued that, "*Who controls the export routes, controls the oil and gas; who controls the oil and gas, controls the Heartland*".² The perception of the region transformed from "*peripheral*" to "*the linchpin between core Europe and the wider Middle East*".³

The end of the Cold War also changed the role and the function of the NATO in the international system. Many prominent scholars argued that NATO lost its "*raison d'être*". Nonetheless, the Alliance transformed itself from a collective defence organization into a collective security organization according to new threats and started the enlargement process. Twelve countries joined the Alliance since 1999. Threat perceptions of the NATO changed. NATO identified international terrorism, proliferation of nuclear weapons and drugs and human trafficking as the new threat elements.

¹ Gökhan Koçer, "Karadeniz'in Güvenliği: Uluslararası Yapılanmalar ve Türkiye", *Gazi Akademik Bakış*, C. 1, S. 1, 2007, s. 198.

² Sarah L. O'Hara, "Great Game or Grubby Game? The Struggle for Control of the Caspian", *Geopolitics*, V. 9, N. 1, 2004, s. 148.

³ Ronald D. Asmus, *Next Steps in Forging a Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, German Marshall Fund of the United States, Washington 2006, p. 17.

NATO increased its collaboration with many countries in the Black Sea, Caucasus and the Central Asia via programs such as Partnership for Peace (PFP). Georgia was one of the countries that joined the PFP. Invitation to Georgia to participate in the Membership Action Plan (MAP), which is a significant step towards full membership, was among the most controversial issues at the 2008 Bucharest Summit. In spite of the insistence of the US, Georgia was not invited because of the opposition of major European countries such as Germany and France. It is argued that Russia put pressure on these countries against the membership of Georgia by exploiting their energy dependence on Russia.

The clashes between Georgia and Russia in the summer 2008 complicated power dynamics further more in the region. It is argued that this conflict has triggered the most significant crisis between Russia and the western countries since the end of the Cold War⁴, modified the whole system of international relations and led to substantial geopolitical change.⁵

The US's insistence on Georgia's NATO membership was perceived by Russia as a geopolitical strategy that aims to diminish Russia's control of critical energy infrastructure in the Caspian and Black Sea regions. NATO members attempted to portray the enlargement in terms of common security, not an anti-Russian zero-sum game while Russians regarded this blatant nonsense.⁶ It is argued that asymmetry of perceptions and interests of the regional and global actors such as Russia, the US, the EU and NATO and the military conflict between Georgia and Russia indicate the start of the Black Sea dimension of the "new great game".

In this paper, Georgia's NATO membership and the clashes between Georgia and Russia will be analyzed within context of the Black Sea dimension of "the new great game". In the first section, the Wider Black Sea Region will be defined and its geostrategic and geoeconomic importance will be analyzed. In the second section, the membership process of Georgia and debates among the NATO member countries about Georgia's membership will be evaluated. In the third section, role of energy in the region and the geopolitical consequences of the clashes between Georgia and Russia will be investigated. In the fourth section, foreign policies of regional and global actors such as the US, EU, Turkey, Russia and NATO in the Wider Black Sea Region will be examined.

⁴ Roy Allison, "Russia Resurgent? Moscow's Campaign to 'Coerce Georgia to Peace", *International Affairs*, V. 84, N. 6, 2008, p. 1169.

⁵ Emmet McElhatton, "Georgia: A Bridge too Far?", *New Zealand International Review*, V. 34, N. 1, 2009, p. 2.

⁶ James Sherr, "Security in the Black Sea Region: Back to *Realpolitik*?", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, V. 8, N. 2, 2008, s. 145.

THE WIDER BLACK SEA REGION

The Black Sea littoral states are Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Romania and Bulgaria. Nonetheless historical, economic and political links require the inclusion of Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Greece to the regional analyses and leads to conceptualization of The Wider Black Sea Region as an analytical tool.

The Wider Black Sea Region is geostrategically significant particularly because of its geographic location between the Caspian Region, which have rich hydrocarbon reserves, and the EU, which imports more than 50 percent of its energy needs. Interruption of gas flows from Russia to the EU because of disputes between Russia and Ukraine in 2006 and 2009 made the energy security one of the top priorities of the EU, which multiplied the importance of the Region for the EU. The Region's importance was emphasized in the European Security Strategy Document. The Region is geostrategically significant also for the NATO. The Region's importance for the NATO grew especially after the NATO overtook the Operation Allied Force in 2003 in Afghanistan and was specifically mentioned in the 2004 Istanbul and 2006 Riga Summit Communiques.

The region's economic potential and its strategic location, which turn it into an energy and transportation corridor, made it the focus of interest of the regional and global actors. Political stability is a precondition to realize the region's potential and the oil and natural gas pipeline projects. In this connection, regional initiatives such as the BSEC played important roles at increasing economic interdependence and political stability. Nevertheless, frozen conflicts in Nogorno-Karabakh, Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia require contribution of global actors as well as the regional actors to constitute a sustainable and stable political environment.

The frozen conflicts in the region slow down the economic development and integration of the region because of their negative impact on the regional security. It is argued that "not so frozen conflicts" may escalate to a regional conflict, which can cause state break-downs and lead to great instability in the region. The military conflict between Georgia and Russia is an example of how the "not so frozen conflicts" can turn into a regional conflict with global implications.

The problem with the frozen conflicts is that there are no easy solutions to these problems. Historical, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity of the region make it harder to resolve regional issues peacefully. The regional countries do not share a common history, ethnicity, language, and religion. Brzezinski had argued that regional powers in the Eurasia will compete for the production and transportation of the oil and natural gas in the "Eurasian Balkans" and the lack of religious, cultural and historical coherence

renders conflict more likely.⁷ Along with the globalization process, national and international security issues intertwined and changed security perceptions, which further complicates security issues in the region and necessitates rethinking of the Black Sea Region security.⁸ In this connection, contribution of the regional actors such as Turkey and Russia, global actors such as the US and the EU and international organizations such as the NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) to the peace-making process is essential.

Interrelated issues of energy security, regional development and frozen conflicts make the Black Sea Region the focus of interest of regional and global actors. It is argued that the Western countries were behind the colored revolutions in the region, which brought the pro-Western parties into government. The independence referendums in 2006 in Transnistria and a similar referendum in South Ossetia are seen as Russia's counter-moves. The declaration of Kosovo's independence in 2008 in spite of the veto of Russia at the United Nations Security Council triggered Russia's decision to recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The military conflict between Georgia and Russia is seen as the peak point of the struggles and indicates the start of the Black Sea dimension of the new great game.

The developments in the Black Sea Region particularly in the last decade were certainly affected from the developments at the global level. Even if the US's preponderance continues in various dimensions, the international system is moving towards multipolarity. Russia, which is one of the main actors in the region, strengthened economically, politically and militarily in the 2000s especially by the help of high price of oil and natural gas. Russia is much more capable to pursue its "Near Abroad" policy in the former Soviet Union area at the end of the first decade of the 21st century than she is in the last decade of the 20th century.

The last decade witnessed fast changes in the region. Bulgaria and Romania became members of the EU and the NATO, which extended the EU's and the NATO's borders to the Black Sea. Colored Revolutions in Georgia in 2003 and in Ukraine in 2004 and referendums in Transnistria in 2006 and in South Ossetia in 2007 indicated that the region has already become a stage for global power politics.

⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, Basic Books, New York 1997.

⁸ Bilal Karabulut, "Küreselleşme Sürecinde Güvenlik Alanında Değişimler: Karadeniz'in Güvenliğini Yeniden Düşünmek", *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, C. 6, S. 23, 2009, s. 8.

Regional Initiatives

Since the end of the Cold War, various organizations were founded by the region countries to increase mutual interdependence, support economic, military and social development and provide political stability. The US, the EU, and Russia attempted to increase their influence in the region via these organizations such as the BSEC (Black Sea Economic Cooperation), the Community for Democratic Choice (CDC), GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEc).

In 1992, the BSEC was founded by the eleven littoral and non-littoral states of the Wider Black Sea Region (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine) to increase bilateral and multilateral cooperation, to support economic and social development in the region and to make the Black Sea a sea of peace, stability and prosperity. In June 1998, the Charter of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, which transformed the BSEC into an international organization with permanent institutions, was signed. Even if the primary aim of BSEC was to enhance economic cooperation, developments in the regional security matters led to the evolution of the organization in a way that is more security oriented. Especially after the 9/11 attacks, fight against international terrorism became one of the main topics of BSEC's agenda. The BSEC has initiated fruitful collaborative projects in different policy areas such as energy, environment, trade, and organized crime. The EU is also interested in these areas and the BSEC has consistently emphasized the importance of its relations with the EU. The Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR) contributed to military cooperation among the BSEC countries.

The regional organizations' effectiveness could not reach the desired levels since region countries attached more importance to their relations with international organizations such as the NATO and the EU.⁹ Romania and Bulgaria became members of the NATO and the EU. Ukraine and Georgia are candidates to both organizations. Other region countries also cooperate with the NATO and the EU via programs such as the PFP and European Neighborhood Policy (ENP).

GEORGIA'S NATO MEMBERSHIP

After the end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of Warsaw Treaty organization, the Russian forces withdrew from the former Soviet Union countries, which led to the restructuring of the regional security architecture of the Wider Black Sea Region. End of the

⁹ İlyas Kamalov, "Karadeniz Bölgesindeki Bazı Güncel Sorunlar", *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, C. 6, S. 21, 2009, s. 20.

Cold War had also many consequences for the NATO and started debates about the role and the function of the Alliance in the international system. The Alliance transformed itself from a collective defense alliance into a collective security alliance. The member countries agreed on the enlargement process, which had important reflections to the Black Sea countries. At the NATO Washington summit in 1999, "open door policy" to enlargement was accepted and the MAP was created. The MAP provided the framework for the NATO to enhance its relations with the candidate countries. NATO's New Strategic Concept was also unveiled at the Washington Summit. The Concept had important implications for the Black Sea Region since it emphasized the ability of potential member countries to participate in the peace-making operations.¹⁰

NATO's first round of expansion started in 1997 when the Alliance extended membership offers to Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. It is argued that even if the new members could not reach the military standards put forward in the Study on NATO Enlargement, the enlargement process continued especially because of the US's political support. The membership offers were extended to seven Central and East European states in 2002. The third phase of the enlargement process was concluded when Albania and Croatia were extended membership offers in 2007. In all rounds of expansion, the most significant point was the US's strong support for the candidate countries.

NATO's enlargement process raised questions about the perception of the Europe in terms of its geographical borders. Are the countries across the Black Sea such as Georgia part of Europe? Even if the military contribution countries such as Georgia may provide to the NATO is limited, what kind of a relationship should be constructed to strengthen ties with the region countries given their geostrategic location? What is the role of the PFP in the enlargement process? Answers to these questions vary from country to country. These issues became political issues even in the domestic politics of these countries. For example, in Georgia, the government declared its intention to become part of the Europe politically, economically and militarily. The Shaakashvili government stated that they see the PFP as a step towards full membership. Nonetheless, there are questions in the European capitals about whether Georgia can become a "security producer" country rather than a "security consumer" country.

The EU's enlargement process has also important consequences for the Black Sea Region security. After Bulgaria and Romania became members in 2007, the EU's borders also reached the Black Sea. The NATO's and EU's enlargement processes are defined as dual enlargement processes since

¹⁰ Graeme P. Herd - Fotios Moustakis, "Black Sea Geopolitics: A Litmus Test for the European Security Order?", *Mediterranean Politics*, V. 5, N. 3, 2000, p. 120.

they targeted more or less the same countries. NATO's programs such as the PFP and the EU's Neighborhood Policy also target similar geographies. In this connection, collaboration of the two organizations may contribute to the integration of the former Soviet Union countries to the international system. The Black Sea Region is significant in this sense. The Black Sea has become the eastern border of the EU after the memberships of Bulgaria and Romania, which also joined the NATO. Other Black Sea Region countries such as Georgia and Azerbaijan participate in NATO's PFP and cooperate with the EU under the auspices of the Neighborhood Policy.

There are differences between the EU's and the US's approaches to the region. The EU follows a relatively more cautious approach with respect to Russia. It is argued that the EU's energy dependence on Russia is a determining factor in this approach. NATO's lack of decisiveness at giving Georgia and Ukraine a membership prospect and a MAP in 2008 was the consequence of opposition of the major European countries such France and Germany.

Bulgaria and Romania became NATO members in 2004, which extended NATO's border to the Black Sea. NATO started military cooperation with the Black Sea region countries as well with the Caucasian and the Central Asian countries through programs such as PFP. With the help of the PFP, NATO could strengthen its ties with non-member countries in the Black Sea Region such as Ukraine and Georgia. The PFP provided mechanisms to increase cooperation in the defense area with the countries, membership of whom became a dispute between the Russian Federation and the NATO. The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), which was constituted in 1997, provided another framework to develop NATO's relations with the region countries.

Along with other former Soviet Union countries, Georgia joined NATO's North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1992. Georgia's relationship with NATO developed further after she joined NATO's PFP program in 1994. The US was the strongest supporter of Georgia's integration with NATO. Military relationship between Georgia and the US intensified continuously within the NATO framework. Turkey also supported Georgia to develop her military capabilities and to approach NATO military standards.

Georgia's and Ukraine's memberships became a dispute between the NATO and the Russian Federation. The geostrategic location of the region between the energy rich Caspian Region and the energy dependent Europe plus the EU's strategy to decrease its energy dependence on Russia and the US's policies to increase its influence on the Caspian region complicated

power dynamics more in the region. Russia admonished Georgia along with Ukraine not to join NATO.¹¹

At the Bucharest summit in 2008, the NATO allies, even if they declared their determination to make Georgia and Ukraine NATO members, did not invite them to participate in the MAP to them. Georgia's military conflict with Russia in the summer 2008 started debates about the negative impact of NATO's decision not to give MAP to Georgia and Ukraine on Russia's policies. Some argue that Russia was encouraged from indecisiveness of NATO to provide a membership prospect to Georgia and Ukraine.

It is argued that Georgia's membership surfaced the inter-alliance cleavages among members with regards the enlargement process, which is also seen as a proxy for more strategic decisions about NATO's future. Debates among the "Old Europe", the Anglo-Saxons and the new members about the new shape of the New Strategic Concept, which will be drafted in 2010, seem to reflect these differences.

The US pressed other NATO countries to include Georgia in the MAP, nonetheless particularly France and Germany opposed. Some argue that Russia's pressure on these countries was successful because of these countries' energy dependence on Russia while there are also views that Georgia is far from meeting the NATO standards. It is argued that even if Georgia has made significant progress militarily, she has not met the criteria set for candidate countries in the Study on NATO Enlargement and she was not successful at transforming its military structure.

Georgia's military modernization was supposed to be implemented in three phases. Phase one would begin with assessment of capabilities and would be completed by the end of 2008, phase two would be dissemination of the information gathered from phase one and would be completed by 2010, and phase three would be developing short, middle and long-term military structure along with the assessment of total cost and feasibility and was expected to last at least a decade. Nonetheless, the clashes between Georgia and Russia in 2008 decreased the possibility that the reform process be implemented as planned.

Since the end of the Cold War and independence, the Georgian army took part in the European, NATO and the US military endeavors such as the NATO Kosovo Protection Force. She also deployed 2,000 troops in Iraq. Georgia sees these troop deployments as a route to membership. Nonetheless, according to military experts, despite Georgia's modernization efforts, the military conflict between Georgia and Russia showed that Georgia has a long way to go in her modernization efforts. It is argued that Georgia should

¹¹ Sophia Kishkovsky, "Georgia Is Warned by Russia Against Plans to Join NATO", The New York Times, June 7, 2008, p. 8.

continue its modernization efforts in areas such as air defense, air transport, and C4ISR.

Georgia's membership turned into a strategic issue after the clashes between Russia and Georgia in the summer of 2008. On 19 August 2008, the NATO-Georgia Commission to assess the damage and to assist Georgia in reconstruction efforts was formed by the North Atlantic Council. From this point on, it is argued that the decision on Georgia's membership may depend on political factors rather than the membership standards determined in the 1995 NATO Study on Enlargement.

THE WIDER BLACK SEA REGION, ENERGY SECURITY AND THE MILITARY CONFLICT BETWEEN RUSSIA AND GEORGIA

Energy is the fundamental ingredient of many vital services such as communication, production, transportation and electricity and is a critical infrastructure for economic and social development. Fossil fuels (oil, gas and coal) are estimated to provide more than eighty percent of world energy needs in the next two decades and because of this became strategic materials for the international system.

'Energy security' is defined as a situation in which individuals and businesses "have access to sufficient energy resources at reasonable prices for the foreseeable future free from serious risk of major disruption of service".¹² At the international level, to ensure energy security, energy consumer states try to diversify their energy resource types, the source countries and the routes of supply. Harks argues that energy producers are increasingly exploiting energy as a currency of power in the international system.¹³

Energy security became a widely used concept especially after the oil crisis in 1974. The International Energy Agency (IEA) was established to reduce the developed countries' vulnerabilities to energy disruptions. Energy security became a priority for many countries and for international organizations such as NATO and EU especially in the 2000s. Energy security was mentioned indirectly in NATO Strategic Concept in 1999. It was stated that the security interests of NATO members could be affected by the disruption of the flow of vital resources. In 2006 Riga summit, energy security was stated explicitly and the Alliance's support for "coordinated, international effort to assess the risks to energy infrastructure and to promote energy infrastructure security" was mentioned. It was argued that the Alliance

¹² Barry Barton et al., *Energy Security: Managing Risk in a Dynamic Legal and Regulatory Environment*, Oxford University Press, New York 2004, p.5.

¹³ Enno Harks, "Energy Security: The Challenge of the Twenty-first Century", in V. Perthes and S. Mair (eds.), *European Foreign and Security Policy: Challenges and Opportunities for the German EU Presidency*, Research Paper 10, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin, October 2006.

should play a greater role in energy security. The US Senator Richard Lugar proposed that the Article Five should be interpreted in a way that an energy embargo against one member should be considered an attack against the Alliance. Lugar also argued that NATO should take its relationship with the energy exporters of Caucasus and Central Asia to a strategic level.¹⁴

Energy is a strategic factor in the Wider Black Sea Region's political and economic dynamics. Some of the BSEC member countries are energy producers while others are energy consumers and transit countries in a complimentary way. Azerbaijan and Russia are energy producers while Georgia, Turkey, Ukraine are transit countries. Russia is a major player in the region dynamics since she controls most of the critical energy infrastructure in the region. The energy rich Caucasus and the Central Asian countries depend at a great extent on Russia to export their oil and natural gas reserves. Baku-Tiflis-Ceyhan oil pipeline that connects the Caspian Region to the Europe via Georgia and Turkey has a historical significance since it is the first pipeline that bypassed Russia and broken down Russia's monopoly at the transportation dimension.¹⁵

The US and the EU prefers the transportation of the hydrocarbon reserves of the region over the routes bypassing the Russian territories to lower the EU's dependence on Russia. The Nabucco Pipeline, which is planned to carry natural gas of the Caucasus, the Central Asia and the Middle East to the EU via Turkey, is supported by the western countries since it would lower energy dependence on Russia. Russia, as a counter-step, developed the South Stream Project, which would carry the Russian, the Caspian Region and the Central Asian natural gas via Russia and the Black Sea to the EU bypassing Turkey and in this way would sustain Russia's control on the energy infrastructure.

Political stability is a precondition to realize the oil and gas pipeline projects. Political instability and military conflict in the region, for example in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, could easily endanger the security of the Baku-Tiflis-Ceyhan (BTC) and Baku-Tiflis-Erzurum (BTE) oil and natural gas pipelines and the railroad from Baku to Batumi that carries Kazakh and Turkmen crude oil.

The clashes between the Russian Federation and Georgia in the summer 2008 showed the fragility of stability in the region and changed the geopolitical landscape fundamentally. The clashes between the two countries had reflections and implications beyond the region at the global level. It is argued that the developments are indications of return to Realpolitik in

¹⁴ Richard Lugar, "Energy and NATO: Senator Lugar's Keynote Speech to the German Marshall Fund Conference on 27 November 2006, Riga", 2006, (5 March 2009), <http://Lugar.Senate.gov/energy/press/speech/riga.html>.

¹⁵ Zeyno Baran - Robert A. Smith, "The Energy Dimension in American Policy towards the Black Sea Region", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, V. 7, N. 2, 2007, p. 266.

the region and even at the global level after the end of the Cold War. Russia's military operations stunned the western world and reminded Russia's military and political weight particularly in the region. Blank argues that Russia tries to discourage international financiers to support the Baku-Tiflis-Ceyhan, Baku-Tiflis-Erzurum and Nabucco pipelines on the grounds that Georgia may collapse into turmoil and in this way to monopolize energy routes from the Caspian and the Central Asia to the Europe.¹⁶ The clashes came after the NATO's 2008 Bucharest summit, where discussions among the member countries about the membership of Georgia ended up with no results. Georgia and Ukraine were not given the MAP. According to Sireci and Coletta, the military conflict between Georgia and Russia threatened NATO enlargement as a means for stabilization.¹⁷

In the next section, major actors' perceptions of the Wider Black Sea Region, their attitude towards Georgia's membership, their energy policies and their stance towards the military conflict between Georgia and Russia will be analyzed.

FOREIGN POLICIES OF REGIONAL AND GLOBAL ACTORS IN THE WIDER BLACK SEA REGION

Russia

High energy prices in the 2000s helped Russia to turn its energy wealth into economic wealth, which Russia successfully used to enhance its foreign policy capabilities.¹⁸ She was able to be more influential in the former Soviet Union area, which she determined as the zone of Russian special interests in her "Near Abroad" policy. Integration with the former Soviet Union countries was defined as a vital interest to be pursued by 'all legitimate means', including 'divide and influence policies' in the newly independent states.¹⁹ Russia demanded the United Nations and other international organizations to "grant Russia special powers as guarantor of peace and stability" in these regions in 1993. In 1994, Boris Yeltsin stated that "*ideological confrontation is being replaced by a struggle for spheres of influence in geopolitics and 'forces abroad' wanted to keep Russia in a state of 'controllable paralysis'*", which were perceived as the end of the era of romanticism between Russia and the West."²⁰

¹⁶ Stephen Blank, "What Comes After the Russo-Georgian War? What's at Stake in the CIS", *American Foreign Policy Interests*, N. 30, 2008, p. 379.

¹⁷ Jonathan Sireci - Damon Coletta, "Enduring without an Enemy: NATO's Realist Foundation", *Perspectives*, V. 17, N. 1, 2009, s. 70.

¹⁸ Andrew Monaghan, "Russia's Energy Diplomacy: A Political Idea Lacking a Strategy?", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, V. 7, N. 2, 2007, p. 276.

¹⁹ James Sherr, *ibid.*, p. 145.

²⁰ James Sherr, *ibid.*

Russia took a more challenging position towards the Western countries in the 2000s. According to Trenin, Russia's new foreign policy paradigm assumes that as a big country, Russia is essentially friendless and great powers want a weak Russia that they could exploit. In this connection, Russia thinks that she has to reassert its status as a great power.²¹

To reassert its great power status, the Wider Black Sea Region came out as one of the most strategic regions for Russia. Russia, in line with her "Near Abroad" policy, tried to increase her influence on the Wider Black Sea Region. It is argued that she used the economic dependence of the region countries, particularly at the energy dimension to increase her influence. According to the official Energy Strategy of Russia to 2020, Russia's energy sector is 'an instrument for the conduct of internal and external policy' and that 'the role of the country in world energy markets, to a large extent, determines its geopolitical influence'.²² It is argued that "*Putin was determined that centres of power – the security services, the armed forces, the defence-industrial complex, the energy sector – should become instruments of national power rather than laws unto themselves.*"²³

The Wider Black Sea Region is strategic for Russia because of many factors such as the Sevastopol Port, the South Stream Project and the control of the critical energy infrastructure. The Sevastopol Port, where the Russian Black Sea Fleet is based, makes the Black Sea indispensable for Russia. Russia's South Stream Natural Gas Project, which competes with the Nabucco Project and which would sustain Russia's control on the natural gas pipelines in the region and increase the EU's dependence on Russia, is planned to pass through the Black Sea. To hold the control of the strategic energy infrastructure in the region, which enhances the EU's dependence on Russia, is a priority of the Russian foreign policy. The military conflict between Georgia and Russia demonstrated the geostrategic importance and the sensitivity of the region for Russia.

It is argued that the Russian Federation used energy prices to affect internal politics in the region countries, particularly in Ukraine and in Georgia. In 2006 and 2009, debates between Russia and Ukraine led to the cut of the gas supply to the Europe, which led to a political crisis between Russia, Ukraine and the EU. The EU reshaped its energy security and the NATO made energy security one of its top priorities. Russia did not ratify the Energy Charter Treaty and did not agree to its draft Transit Protocol, which increased the EU's concerns about Russia's sincerity about opening up the Russian pipeline network for the transportation of the Caucasus and the Central Asian energy to the EU via Russia.

²¹ Dimitri Trenin, "Russia Leaves the West", *Foreign Affairs*, V. 85, N. 4, 2006, pp. 87-96.

²² James Sherr, *ibid*, p. 147.

²³ James Sherr, *ibid*, p.146.

Russia aims to maintain its control on the transportation of the hydrocarbons of the Caspian Region and the Central Asia to increase its leverage on the EU via energy dependence. She also wants to benefit from the cheap Caspian Region and the Central Asia oil and natural gas since she has to invest heavily in her internal infrastructure to extract oil and natural gas from her territory such as Siberia. It is argued that she is also determined to derail projects that bypass Russia such as the Nabucco and South Caspian Gas Pipeline Projects.

Russia attempts to diversify its export routes after the disputes between Russia and Ukraine in 2006 and in 2009 that led to the suspension of the Russian gas deliveries to Europe. Russia developed the South Stream Project, according to which the Russian natural gas would be transported to Europe by a pipeline that carries the natural gas under the Black Sea to Bulgaria and to Europe. She also developed the North Stream Project according to which the Russian gas would be exported from Russia to Germany bypassing the transit countries.

Russia is a very influential actor in the region without the cooperation of whom the regional conflicts cannot be solved. The Rose and Orange Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, the new regional initiatives such as the Organization for Democracy and Democratic Development (ODED) and the Community of Democratic Choice (CDC) started by Georgia and Ukraine, which called for political reforms in the region were perceived by the Moscow as the West's steps to decrease her influence in the region under the pretext of democratization. After the colored revolutions, relations between Russia and Georgia deteriorated to such an extent that Russia imposed a trade and transport blockade after Georgia arrested four Russian army officers.

Even if some common ground and interests were found between the West and Russia after 9/11 and the establishment of NATO-Russia Council, the Rose and the Orange revolutions intensified the mutual suspicion between the Russia and the West. These revolutions were perceived by the Russian authorities as an attempt by the West to increase its influence in the former Soviet Union zone.²⁴ Russia saw these revolutions as a betrayal to developing relations between the West and Russia. It is argued that if the West does not integrate Russia to the security arrangements, Russia may gradually incline towards taking a more challenging position at issues ranging from nuclear non-proliferation to energy security.

²⁴ Andrey Makarychev, "Russia, NATO, and the "Color Revolutions", *Russian Politics and Law*, V. 47, N. 5, 2009, pp. 40-51.

The United States

The US's national interests in the region are based upon different dimensions such as terrorism, energy, and international security. After the 9/11, the region became significant for the US in terms of fight with the terrorism. The US does not want instability in the region that could turn the region into a safe haven for international terrorism. The geopolitical significance of the Wider Black Sea for the US increased after the US's invasion of Iraq and military operations in Afghanistan because of her logistical needs and over-flight rights in the area.

The region is strategic for the US because of various factors. Nonetheless, it is argued that energy security lies at the centre of the US interests in the region. The US' main objective in the region is to transport the Caucasus and the Central Asian oil and natural gas to the Europe via reliable routes.²⁵ The Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey-Europe route is seen as the best alternative since the Iran route in the south is unlikely because of political disputes between the US and Iran. Oil and natural gas pipelines over Russian territory are also not preferred since the main objective of the US policy is to decrease dependence on Russia. The American government criticized Russia and argued that Russia used her control over critical energy infrastructure as a political tool to intimidate and blackmail the region countries.²⁶

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the US tried to develop her relations with the oil and natural gas producing countries in the Caucasus and the Central Asia and with the transit countries such as Georgia and Turkey to decrease her dependence on the Middle Eastern oil and natural gas and to decrease the EU's dependence on Russia. Especially after the cut of natural gas to Europe from Russia because of problems between Russia and Ukraine in 2006 and 2009 and after the clashes between Georgia and Russia in 2008, the US and the NATO made the energy security one of their top priorities. The EU also took steps to increase energy security and gave support to the Nabucco Project.

It is argued that since energy policy in the Black Sea Region is only as strong as the weakest country²⁷, the U.S. strongly supports stability in the region.²⁸ The US wants to prevent frozen conflicts to escalate into regional conflicts with global consequences. The political stability is crucial to create a suitable environment for economic development and integration, which may further increase political stability. The US military, by the help of the

²⁵ Lincoln A. Mitchell, "More Than Location: Crafting a US Policy for the Black Sea Region", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, V. 8, N. 2, 2008, p. 132.

²⁶ The White House, "Transcript of the Vice-President's Remarks at the 2006 Vilnius Conference", 4 May 2006, (17 February 2008), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/05/20060504-1.html>.

²⁷ Lincoln A. Mitchell, *ibid.*

²⁸ Lincoln A. Mitchell, *ibid.*

Turkish military, has been training Georgian army through programs such as the Training and Equip Program with the aim of fight with terrorism and the protection of pipelines. The US military also helped the Azerbaijan and the Kazakhstan military through programs such as the Caspian Guard to improve their air, ground and maritime border defense.

After the clashes between Russia and Georgia and inability of NATO allies to help Georgia, the Black Sea's geostrategic importance was once more understood. The clashes between Russia and Georgia and the U.S.'s, the E.U.'s and the NATO's limited response were indicators of Russia's increasing weight in the region. In this context, The U.S. wants to limit Russia's influence in the region so that Russia's policies do not undermine the US's and the EU's national security interests. The US pressed other NATO allies for the participation of Georgia and Ukraine in the MAP at the Bucharest Summit in 2008, which would give these countries a membership prospect. It is argued that Russia put pressure on Germany and France against the memberships of Georgia and Ukraine by using her leverage in energy and was successful at a great extent.

The US and Russia have many common interests in some dimensions. Nonetheless they also have conflicting interests in other dimensions such as control over critical energy infrastructure, Georgia, Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Transnistria. It is argued that the US cannot pursue foreign policy in the Black Sea region without taking Russia into account.

The European Union

Energy security, human trafficking and illegal immigration are the main issues that enhance the geostrategic importance of the Black Sea Region for the EU. The EU wants to increase its cooperation with the region countries since eighty percent of the illegal immigrants that enter the EU pass through the Black Sea Region. The EU developed her relations with the region countries at different levels. Among the Wider Black Sea Region countries; Greece, Bulgaria and Romania are members of the EU; Turkey has begun accession negotiations with the EU; Serbia and Albania are candidate countries; Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine participate in the ENP; and Russia cooperates with the EU within the framework of the Four Common Spaces policy. After the membership of Bulgaria and Romania, the EU's borders reached the Black Sea. The EU started the Black Sea Synergy initiative in 2007, which reflects the importance of the region for the EU. The EU is the major economic partner of the Black Sea countries and the EU's Black

Sea Synergy initiative can be functional to accelerate trade liberalization and economic integration.²⁹

The EU's attitude towards the region is shaped by the issues related with identity and the imagined geographical limits of the EU as well as interests. Many questions arise with regards to the EU's relationship with the region countries. Is there a limit of the enlargement process? What is the role of the ENP in the organization's relations with the region countries? Which countries belong to Europe geographically, culturally and politically? Where do the EU-Russia relations and the Four Common Spaces with Russia stand in all these issues? All these questions create discussions in the EU.

The Wider Black Sea Region is strategic for the EU especially with respect to energy security. According to projections, the EU's energy dependency will increase to around 90 per cent in oil, around 85 percent in natural gas by 2030, which takes the region's geopolitical and geoeconomic importance for the EU to a different level. The EU tries to diversify energy resources and routes to increase its energy security and to decrease its dependence on Russia. Especially after the suspension of Russian natural gas deliveries to Ukraine in 2006 and in 2009 and after the clashes between Russia and Georgia in the summer of 2008, energy security became a priority for the EU.

Energy security in the European context involves *"the security of supply, the security of demand, the reliability of contractual arrangements on energy, the physical security of critical installations and their personnel, the interplay between national and supranational energy policies, and the quality of overall relations with Russia."*³⁰ According to Hadfield, *"the supply of energy is a political and security issue, which must be addressed at the supranational level and must become a principle of the EU's foreign and security policy"*.³¹

Cut of natural gas supplies from Russia to Europe in 2006 and 2009 and the clashes between Russia and Georgia in 2008 intensified the European countries' concerns about energy security. The EU countries decided to develop a common energy policy. Energy policy is not solely an economic policy and has political and security dimensions. Many dynamics such as the problems between Russia and Ukraine, the struggle between Iran and

²⁹ Burcu Gültekin-Punsmann - Krassimir Y. Nikolov, "European Union Approaches to Fostering Synergies of Cooperation and Integration Around the Black Sea", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, V. 8, N. 2, 2008, p.126.

³⁰ Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, "Energy Security and Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP): The Wider Black Sea Area Context", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, V. 7, N. 2, 2007, p. 289.

³¹ Amelia Hadfield, "EU Foreign Energy Policy: In the Pipeline?", *FORNET CFSP Forum* 4, N. 1, 2006, (5 June 2009), <http://www.fornet.info>.

the Western powers, increasing dependence on Russia, US's energy policies in the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Central Asia, growing competition from Asia, US's ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the frozen conflicts in the Greater Black Sea Region, and China's oil and natural gas pipeline projects from the Caspian Region affect the energy policy. Because of this, the EU should have a global perspective. It is argued that the energy policy can be a test of whether the EU can pursue a supranational policy using the CFSP framework.

The problem of the EU with regards to the energy policy is that the EU members cannot pursue a common energy policy. Some member countries, taking only their national interests into account, pursue energy policies that may be harmful to the Union's interests as a whole. For example, even if the main objective of the EU's energy policy is to decrease its energy dependence on Russia; some countries such as Germany and Hungary signed bilateral energy agreements with Russia, which damaged the coherence of a European CFSP. Hungary's agreement with Russia is especially significant with regards to the Black Sea Region politics. Hungary, which participated in the Nabucco Project that will transport the natural gas from the Caspian Region and the Middle East to Europe bypassing the Russian territories, announced that she will invest in the rival project that would carry natural gas from Russia to Hungary via Bulgaria and Romania. The Hungarian government defended its position by arguing that the Nabucco Project was delayed. Greece was also criticized for signing agreement with Russia to build the Burgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline, which would transport oil coming from Novorossisk to Europe. This project is also not in harmony with the energy policy of the EU since it would increase Europe's dependence on Russia.

The EU member countries' lack of coordinated action in the energy policy is seen as an indication of the EU's internal division in foreign security issues in general. Marsh and MACKENSTEIN argue that:

*"EU is far from a single entity that dictates the actions of its member states. The member states have hitherto ensured that the EU does not have recourse to all the external relations tools traditionally held by a state, most notably military force. Perhaps more significantly, EU external relations are marked by a constant battle for competencies, both between the member states and the different EC institutions and between the different EC institutions themselves."*³²

³² Steve Marsh - Hans Mackenstien, *The International Relations of the European Union*, Pearson Longman, Harlow, 2005, p. 248.

Turkey

Turkey's foreign policy in the Black Sea region is closely related with her regional policies in the Caucasus and the Central Asia. After the end of the Cold War, Turkey tried to develop her relations with the Caucasian and Central Asian countries, with whom she has historical, cultural, ethnic and religious ties. Apart from these ties, Turkey has common interests with these countries in terms of energy policies. Some of these countries are rich in natural gas and oil and want to decrease their dependence on Russia on exporting these resources to the international markets. The route from the Caspian Region over Turkey to Europe is seen as the best alternative for the region countries since the Iran and Russia alternatives are not preferred. Turkey wants to be an energy hub that connects the Caucasus and the Central Asia to the international markets. In this way, alongside the revenue that would come from the transportation of hydrocarbon reserves and the energy supply security it would provide to Turkey, it is expected that Turkey's geostrategic and geoeconomic importance will increase. The Wider Black Sea Region is strategic for Turkey to achieve these objectives.

Turkey has been very active in the Black Sea Region after the end of the Cold. She was one of the leading countries at the establishment of the BSEC. It also led the initiative to establish the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR), which increased collaboration among the littoral states' navies.

One of the most strategic issues in the Black Sea Region for Turkey is the status of the Straits and the Montreux Convention. Turkey does not want the revision of the Montreux Convention and strictly supports the continuation of the Montreux regime. Russia and Turkey, even if they have divergent interests in some issues such as the pipeline projects, have found common ground about the Montreux Convention and the status of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits. Russia and Turkey both opposed to any revision in the Montreux Convention, which restricts the number, type and length of stay of the warships of non-littoral states in the Black Sea.

Turkey and Russia have also found common ground and opposed the extension of NATO's Operation Active Endeavour from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea³³ and offered that BLACKSEAFOR undertake the tasks. In December 2006, Russia joined Operation Black Sea Harmony, which was established to track suspicious vessels in the Black Sea.

Turkey-Russia relationship has developed extensively particularly at the economic dimension in the last decade. While Russia's energy exports to Turkey increased, the number of construction firms in Russia and the number of Russian tourists in Turkey increased. Russia-Turkey relations moved

³³ Alejandro Sanchez Cornejo Nieto, "A Drop in the Ocean: Bulgaria's NATO Membership and Black Sea Geopolitics", *European Security*, V. 17, N. 4, 2008, p. 525.

into a different dimension after bilateral energy agreements signed by the two countries in 2010 including the agreement on the construction of a nuclear plant in Turkey.

CONCLUSION

The Wider Black Sea Region's geostrategic and geoeconomic importance has been increasing each and every year since energy security has become a strategic topic in international affairs and since the Wider Black Sea Region is home to countries with rich natural gas and oil reserves such as Azerbaijan and Russia and transit countries such as Georgia, Turkey, Ukraine and Bulgaria.

Turkey's regional policy in the Wider Black Sea Region is closely related with her regional policies in the Caucasus and the Central Asia. Turkey wants to be an energy hub in the region that transports the oil and natural gas of the Caucasus, the Central Asia and the Middle East to international markets. Aware of the importance of political stability in the region, Turkey led many initiatives such as the BSEC and the BLACKSEAFOR to increase economic, political and military collaboration among the region countries.

Russia tries to maintain her control over the critical energy infrastructure in the region she defines as her "Near Abroad". The EU and NATO try to increase their influence, stabilize the region economically and politically so that it becomes an energy corridor in a way that increases the western countries' energy security. Both the EU's and NATO's borders reached the Black Sea after the enlargement processes and each organization developed their relations with other Black Sea Countries via programs and policies such as the PFP and the European Neighborhood Policy.

Georgia's membership became a dispute among the US, The EU, NATO and Russia since Georgia is one of the most strategic countries for the control of the critical energy infrastructure in the region. The military conflict between Georgia and Russia further complicated power politics in the region, had global consequences and indicated the start of the Black Sea dimension of the "new great game".

The next decade is critical for the future of the region. The region can become the southeastern frontier of Europe or northwestern frontier of the Middle East. Even if the countries in the Wider Black Sea Region have many common interests in some dimensions, they also have conflicting interests in other dimensions. For the Wider Black Sea Region, the best option seems to be increasing cooperation among the energy producers, energy consumers, transit countries, international institutions and the energy companies.

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