The Black Sea Economic Cooperation: what contribution to regional security?¹

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The Black Sea region has been extensively referred to as a bridge, indicating its link with Europe to the West and Asia to the East. As a crossroad of geography, cultures and religions, the Black Sea region presents opportunities for both cooperation and conflict among the region's states. Developments in this area cannot be viewed in isolation, but always in the context of events taking place in Europe and in Central Asia. The Black Sea region is a connecting point with Europe and Central Asia owing to institutional and geopolitical links. This unique geopolitical context suggests that the Black Sea states constitute an interesting paradigm of cooperation and conflict in the international system.

In the early 1990s, the newly emergent states in the Black Sea area arrived at the fundamental understanding that an institutionalisation of their relations at a regional level would do much to promote their security. Eleven countries in the Black Sea region responded to a Turkish initiative to form the BSEC. In Istanbul, at a summit conference, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine signed on 25 June 1992 the Summit Declaration on Black Sea Economic Cooperation, thereby launching a new subregional scheme. Today the organisation, apart from its 11 members, also numbers nine observer states – Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Austria, Italy, Germany and France. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Iran and Uzbekistan are in line for full membership.

The BSEC was not a marriage born of mutual empathy, but an arranged marriage reflecting a confluence of the individual states' common needs, problems and objectives that signalled a new era for the region. It was the first time that 11 countries stretching from the Caspian to the Adriatic adhered to the same institutional framework. As diverse as their individual motivations might have been, the prime objective for joining BSEC was their

greater integration into the European and world economies. With its international secretariat in Istanbul, the BSEC provided an agency for opening communication links among neighbouring, newly established states and for upgrading their international stature, particularly *vis-à-vis* the EU. The architects of the BSEC identified economic development as the main pillar of regional security and promoted three objectives: cooperation rather than conflict, regionalism as a step towards global integration, and avoidance of new divisions in Europe.

The BSEC's agenda has mainly restricted itself to functional and economic issues, where consensus is more readily arrived at, and has generally placed hard security issues beyond its scope. It is, however, explicitly mentioned in BSEC's founding documents that the search for security and stability in the region is the main goal and aspiration of the initiative. Principles laid down in the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris, and the OSCE are basic to the BSEC. Its subregional dimension emerges from its functioning within the framework of the OSCE² and, one might also argue, from its dependence on the evolution of the EU.

The BSEC was officially transformed from an initiative into a 'regional economic organisation' on 5 June 1998, when a charter was signed that made it into a formal organisation.³ The BSEC is neither an economic community along the lines of the EU nor a security alliance like NATO. In addition, its capacity for authoritative decisions over economic and political issues is restricted. It envisages neither the creation of a preferential trading area nor the introduction of a common external tariff. Discussions on the establishment of a free trade area, which led to an initial agreement, were soon dismissed as premature.⁴ In turn, any advanced subregional military cooperation still remains out of reach for some BSEC states, since some, like Azerbaijan and Armenia, are still locked in a military confrontation with one another. Although one might argue that it is a nascent 'security community', in the sense that force is rejected in its statutory documents as a way of settling disputes among its members, ongoing military conflicts, even if frozen, indicate something quite different.

If the BSEC provides neither a regional security umbrella nor a constituted 'economic bloc', then what is its *raison d'être*? Essentially, the BSEC is a subregional group that functions as a 'diplomatic community', bringing to the same table the policy-making elites of its 11 member-states. For a decade, elites from the governmental, parliamentary and business sectors, as well as from local administrations, have been regularly meeting to discuss, negotiate and coordinate action around common priority issues. Regional institutions have not only brought together local elites, but have also opened links between them and third party international organisations and actors. Defining security in a comprehensive way, the BSEC has become engaged in disseminating security concerns in fields such as environment, energy and economy.⁵

How has the utility of regional cooperation through the BSEC come about in this new era in terms of security provision? How can we place the BSEC within the broader institutional framework consisting of actors such as the UN, NATO, the OSCE and the EU? What should one reasonably expect from the BSEC? Has it the ability to bring about a positive change in regional security? The foundations of the BSEC's security role lie in its statutory documents and agreements as well as the declarations adopted by its members. Its future development and potential remain hostage to the political will of its members and to the level of recognition accorded it by the international community.

Security mechanisms of the BSEC

Declarations and treaties adopted by the BSEC during its ten years of existence are important tools in identifying and assessing mechanisms for dealing with security issues within the BSEC framework. The BSEC was initiated at a time when the region was already facing serious conflicts and the prospect of new tensions emerging was high. How do the statutory and other documents of the organisation refer to the security situation and the conflict management in the region?

Although the BSEC was established 'to ensure that the Black Sea becomes a sea of peace, stability and prosperity, striving to promote friendly and good-neighbourly relations',⁶ the founding declaration, adopted on 25 June 1992, did not include specific security measures to accomplish this main goal. Promotion of economic cooperation received the most attention as the vehicle for attaining prosperity and long-term stability. The Bosphorus Statement, also signed on 25 June 1992 in Istanbul, restated the commitment of the heads of state and government 'to act in a spirit of friendship and good neighbourliness and enhance mutual respect and benefit, cooperation and dialogue in the relations between them'. The Bosphorus Statement deals with the settlement of disputes, emphasising 'the need for the peaceful settlement of all disputes by the means and in accordance with the principles set out in the CSCE documents'.⁷ The signatories committed themselves to resisting aggression, violence, terrorism and lawlessness in order to restore peace and justice while relying, as a basis of their common understanding, on the general principles of the UN Charter and Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The BSEC defines security in a comprehensive way, referring not only to its military dimension, but also to political, economic and social factors. Consequently, in order to achieve the overall goal of stability, the Istanbul Declaration includes actions which constitute a framework for BSEC cooperation in the fields of trade and investment, environment, agriculture, transport, communications, energy, tourism, information, science and technology.⁸

The first specific reference to security concerns, though of a non-traditional nature, appeared in the Bucharest Summit Declaration of 30 June 1995, which stated that the members ‘will take coordinated actions by the conclusion of the bilateral agreements, aimed at the struggle with organised crime, drugs sales, illegal transportation of weapons and radioactive materials, acts of terrorism and illegal crossing of borders’.⁹ In subsequent declarations, BSEC members steadily expressed their political will to enlarge their partnership from a strictly economic relationship to one undertaking measures in soft security and even more explicit security issues, such as terrorism.¹⁰ That the BSEC was not initially established with the objective of forming a multilateral forum for cooperation on military, defence, peace-keeping or conflict management issues is also reflected in its institutionalisation, which foresees regular meetings of the heads of governments and meetings of the foreign affairs ministers, but not meetings of defence ministers or military staff.

BSEC states are striving to build confidence, familiarity and understanding of each other’s positions on international affairs through a system of informal and formal meetings among the leaders, ministers and senior officials of the member-states. All decisions within the organisation are based on consensus, and divisive issues are put aside in order not to hamper the appearance of unity or to impede cooperation in areas where it is feasible. In other words, ‘consensus building’ has been a byword for establishing the lowest common denominator among member-states. The BSEC’s basic principle necessitates that actions taken in the name of the organisation must either contribute to or be neutral towards – and not detract from – the stated and unstated interests of the individual member-states.

Calls for a regional security framework

There have been numerous proposals for a regional security framework. None of the calls, however, has led to formal discussions or to any tangible outcome. In 1996, the Assembly of the Western European Union (WEU) issued a call for security to be incorporated into the existing subregional cooperation structures, including the BSEC. The proposal projected that, in the long term, structures for political and security dialogue would need to be set up in order to ensure systematic headway in developing the stability essential for consolidating economic progress.¹¹ Although the EU has been a distant voice in Black Sea affairs, it has supported engagement in soft security issues, but has been less encouraging on the inclusion of hard security. The European Commission, in its 1997 report to the Council, suggested that cooperative efforts could constructively focus on the promotion of political dialogue, the strengthening of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as well as on the reduction of drug trafficking, smuggling and illegal immigration throughout the region.¹² From within the region, stronger calls

have been heard, particularly from Georgia and Ukraine. In June 1994, the Ukrainian president, Leonid Kravchuk, proposed seven security measures:

- agreement among the Black Sea basin states on the limitation of large-scale naval exercises in the Black Sea;
- agreement among the Black Sea countries on banning manoeuvres or exercises in the Straits zones and adjacent areas of the Black Sea;
- agreement on advance notifications about the purpose of movement and routes of any formations of assault craft, missile ships and gunboats consisting of more than three craft;
- a memorandum of the BSEC countries on refraining from joint military exercises and manoeuvres in the Black Sea with those states not party to the BSEC, and informing other Black Sea basin countries about the entry of foreign naval ships into territorial waters;
- a declaration on the inviolability and intangibility of the sea frontiers of the coastal countries and on relationships among their naval forces and border-guard detachments;
- a memorandum of the Black Sea countries on the inadmissibility of the use of naval forces, in direct or other form, against each other;
- a declaration of the Black Sea basin countries on the refusal to provide their territories for any aggressive or subversive acts carried out against other Black Sea countries.¹³

Within the same framework, President Eduard Shevardnadze of Georgia has regularly argued in favour of a 'Peaceful Caucasus Initiative' that would involve the BSEC. At the 1992 Istanbul Summit he had suggested the establishment of a Council of Defence and Foreign Ministers to tackle subregional crises, a proposal that found little support.¹⁴ On 17 November 1999, on the eve of the OSCE's Istanbul Summit, he once more proposed an enhanced BSEC and called for greater balance between the interrelated economic, political and security issues facing the BSEC member-states:

Perhaps the time is ripe for BSEC to strike an appropriate balance between economic cooperation and cooperation on regional security, and determine its place within the family of the other regional alliances and intergovernmental organisation in the new European architecture of the 21st century. These issues are increasingly relevant and BSEC's ultimate success depends on them ... you will perhaps concur that an increasing threat to the regional stability prompts us to think in this direction as well.¹⁵

At the same time, four leaders in the region – Heydar Aliiev (Azerbaijan), Robert Kocharian (Armenia), Eduard Shevardnadze (Georgia) and Suleyman Demirel (Turkey) – supported the development of some kind of stability or security pact for the Caucasus. Following up on this proposal, the Centre for European Policy Studies in Brussels drafted a Stability Pact for the

Caucasus. Elaborated by Michael Emerson, it proposed that, in order to upgrade its effectiveness, the BSEC could enlarge its activities in the field of politics and security, be renamed the Black Sea–Caucasus Cooperation (BSC), and sponsor meetings of a wider political forum, the Black Sea–Caucasus–Caspian Political Forum (BSCC). Thus, the BSC members would be joined by the Caspian states and also by the United States to discuss the broader political concerns of the region.¹⁶ The inclusion of the United States in the BSEC framework, although welcomed by most of the countries in the region, has generated strong opposition as well.¹⁷

Neither of the other ‘leading’ countries in the BSEC (Russia and Greece) has, however, been actively asking for an active security role for the organisation. These states have clearly refrained from creating a regional security complex in the area, preferring in practice either bilateralism (as in the case of Russia) or broader multilateralism (as in the case of Greece). Concurrently, a main concern for an active BSEC security role stems from the suspicion with which several BSEC states view an enhanced role for Russia (or Turkey) within the organisation. Instead, these states prefer frameworks where an EU or American presence is guaranteed. Most of them presume that the BSEC’s future depends upon whether the EU, the United States and international organisations such as the OSCE will become engaged in BSEC affairs, thereby increasing its credibility and effectiveness while relaxing the concern held by many of its members that the BSEC might evolve into an organisation not recognised by the EU or NATO.

Dealing with soft security politics in a zone of hard security concerns

Traditional security issues have by no means lost their relevance. In fact, following the end of the Cold War, they have increased in importance in the region. There are ongoing or frozen conflicts involving Transdniestria, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Chechnya. The Black Sea region also harbours the potential for other conflicts generated by long-standing animosities, territorial disputes, military rivalries, ethnic tensions, the presence of foreign military forces, minority issues and mutual suspicion. Moreover, the region is vulnerable to the security threats associated with organised crime, drug trafficking and corruption, which grow out of the endemic economic hardship, social inequality and civil unrest in the area.¹⁸

The internal weakness of most BSEC countries in transition and their vulnerability to outside pressures, as well as their inadequate or absent integration into new security frameworks, have intensified the overall climate of regional insecurity. These states are at different stages of the political and economic transition towards democratic societies and market economies; they face concurrently an often antagonistic external environment. The main domestic barrier to the peaceful and effective settlement of disputes lies in ineffective state institutions and leaderships that are either unwilling or

unable to impose the rule of law. Moreover, a number of states have incomplete control over their territory or population.

In the post-Cold War era, there is growing recognition of the need for conflict prevention and conflict management mechanisms to cope with the challenges posed by economic and soft security concerns. Subregional groupings like the BSEC that emerged in Eurasia during the 1990s, although dedicated to mainly economic and developmental goals, have assumed implicit security and conflict prevention dimensions. They have sought to establish a normative and legal framework that governs interstate relations and establishes regional policy priorities, both of which establish the basis for the relaxation of security concerns.

The BSEC has a political and security dimension derived from the institutionalisation of economic relations, which has both a normative and a political dimension.¹⁹ Subregional organisations might lack the ability to mediate interstate conflicts, but they have the competence to respond to 'soft' security challenges. Alyson Bailes's 'security spectrum', which distinguishes between 'existential' and 'soft' security levels, is a useful analytical tool for understanding the levels of the BSEC's security engagement.²⁰ The organisation acts as a 'diplomatic community' with three dimensions: intergovernmental, interparliamentary (Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC), and business (the BSEC Business Council). It contributes to regional identity building by increasing solidarity, opening up lines of communication, and increasing mutual knowledge (the 'existential' level). Policy elites from the levels of government, parliament, business and local authorities meet regularly. Biannual meetings take place at the level of foreign ministers and frequently at that of experts within working groups. Parliamentarians regularly meet at biannual general assemblies and committee meetings on economic, political and social affairs. The BSEC has also granted observer status to other European assemblies – the Assembly of the OSCE, the Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament – which helps fulfil the goal of involving international organisations more closely in the region. Although the actual power of the interparliamentary dimension in influencing the decisions taken by the BSEC Council is limited, interparliamentary diplomacy has a role to play in the regional task of building democratic institutions. It was the Assembly of the BSEC, for example, that placed issues such as trafficking in people, migration, organised crime and social rights on the regional agenda.

The BSEC has thus kept open channels of dialogue that could be important for emergency situations, fostered the accumulation of shared knowledge, and contributed to confidence building among its members.²¹ It aims to undertake projects and identify issues which provide the opportunity for increasing confidence and reduce the risk of conflict. However, BSEC interventions are always in non-military issues. Interventions in the fields of energy, transport and communications, trade and banking have produced

the realisation of concrete projects and the concluding of agreements, action plans and memoranda of understanding. Improving economic conditions in participating countries, establishing an integrated infrastructure network, and supporting measures for the protection of the environment are the main areas where the BSEC tries to engender cooperation.²²

The BSEC has taken concerted action in the non-traditional but explicit security issues of organised crime, terrorism, drugs and illegal migration, which pose a common threat for all the member-states. Specific initiatives, including a police liaison centre and a task force on money laundering, are currently under discussion. Initiatives on cooperation in emergency situations, crisis management and soft security (organised crime, trafficking, terrorism) all point to the BSEC's interest in addressing the elements of the soft security agenda and in carving out a security competence.

Combating organised crime and terrorism was the main concern of the BSEC interior ministers beginning in 1996.²³ At the Yerevan meeting in October 1996, the interior ministers produced a joint statement that marked the launching of interaction between law-enforcement agencies in combating organised crime, terrorism, trafficking of drugs, illicit trade and illegal migration. At the next meeting, held in Istanbul in October 1997, the ministers agreed to establish a joint front and common institutions of cooperation in the sphere of combating crime,²⁴ followed by a subsequent agreement in October 1998.²⁵ In the aftermath of September 11 2001, and in response to the urgent need for implementation of the BSEC Agreement on Cooperation in Combating Crime, in Particular its Organised Forms, an additional protocol was agreed upon that envisaged the establishment of a central network of liaison officers on combating crime. This protocol was designed to provide for a speedy regional response in urgent cases and to inform members of transnational crime trends in the region. The agreement covers acts of terrorism, corruption, smuggling, trafficking in people and weapons, economic crime, ecological crime, high-tech crime, trade in human organs, kidnapping, maritime crime, and illegal trafficking in vehicles.

The BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future, adopted by the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Moscow in April 2001, established a set of short- and long-term security priorities for BSEC. The agenda governs the organisation's activities in the security realm and makes explicit reference to soft security measures within the framework of multilateral economic cooperation. The BSEC agreed to develop policies for three categories of the soft security agenda:

- *National anti-corruption*: the member-states agreed to build on existing programmes and create new ones, and to develop the legislation, institutions and practices needed to combat corruption.
- *Ethics infrastructure*: the member-states acknowledged the need for a more explicit political commitment, a stronger legal framework, better

accountability measures, and a workable code of conduct.

- *International action*: the member states agreed to joint international action by drawing on the advice and assistance of Transparency International.²⁶

Cooperation in emergency situations became another field of successful engagement with the April 1998 signing of an 'Agreement on Collaboration in Emergency Assistance and Emergency Response to Natural and Man-Made Disasters'. The agreement covers cases of extraordinary natural or technological disasters which require a collective response and are beyond the ability of individual states to cope with alone. While this category of agreement is not specifically related to security, it does generate the externality of increasing confidence building within the region.

A central concern of the BSEC is to promote collaboration with international organisations, on the premise that further institutionalisation of regional affairs increases stability, makes interstate behaviour more predictable, and binds national policies around broader, common political objectives. The BSEC and its Parliamentary Assembly have acted as channels through which regional and international institutions, particularly the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe, have been engaged in the area. Outside the BSEC framework, the Agreement on the Establishment of the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group, signed on 2 April 2001, made an important first step towards the institutionalisation of naval cooperation among all littoral states on the Black Sea. The agreement is intended to be an on-call force – christened BlackSeaFor – composed of naval units from the participating states (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine).²⁷ The purpose of BlackSeaFor is to foster cooperation in search and rescue operations, mine clearing operations and environmental activities, and to organise goodwill visits among the Black Sea navies. Although all six signatory states of the BlackSeaFor participate in the BSEC, most of the members preferred none the less to pursue that initiative outside the BSEC framework.

The relationship between the BSEC and security initially seems tenuous. It is increasingly evident that the BSEC, like any other subregional group in Europe, has an implicit security function. Since the BSEC's geographic delineation includes areas with interstate and civil conflicts, the only way for it to survive is a 'desecuritisation' of relations within the group, by building cooperation around seemingly unrelated areas, and by undertaking confidence-building measures which will have the cumulative effect of helping its members stabilise the regional environment.²⁸

Constraints on the BSEC's security role

The difficulties attending the BSEC's aspiration to play a role in the peaceful settlement of disputes in the region is underscored by the European

Commission's acknowledgement that the ability of the BSEC to bring together representatives of all Black Sea states is itself a notable achievement.²⁹ In fact, neither the states of the region nor the international community have requested the BSEC to undertake an active role in arms control issues or direct involvement in conflict management crises. It would be hard for such a heterogeneous group of neighbouring states with no formal competence for conflict management, no shared military resources, and no large economic sticks or carrots to undertake such a role.³⁰

The primarily economy-oriented mandate and relevant competencies of the BSEC have conditioned its security potential. As a regional economic organisation, it has developed no mechanisms or competencies in the 'hard' security field. In general, one of the most significant shortcomings of the BSEC has been the lack of implementation mechanisms in all areas of its competence. Security expertise, adequate resources and international experience are three other features that the BSEC lacks. At the same time, outstanding territorial and maritime jurisdictional disputes have been the chief obstacle to formal multilateral security cooperation. The divergent regional interests of the individual BSEC states have resulted in the absence of a clear sense of regional interest and a common perception of threat.

Since the region's actual geographic delimitation is not clear, the scope and the area of intervention are also unclear. The large number and the diversity of BSEC member-states, although enriching the organisation in terms of its plurality and resources, generate problems on drafting common 'region-wide' policies. Fishing rights are a case on point. There have been several cases of 'hot incidents' regarding fishing zones in the Black Sea, but the signing of a multilateral agreement has been delayed, because there is no consensus yet as to whether such an agreement should engage only the Black Sea coastal countries or all BSEC members.

The BSEC is both too small and too large to assume hard security roles. It is too small in the sense that it cannot call on the resources of the western powers or extend a credible defence guarantee to its members; it is too large in that its diverse membership hinders effective coordination. Subregional organisations, in general, do not have the military or economic leverage to meet the necessary conditions for an effective security organisation.³¹

The BSEC's role has been likewise undermined by the low degree of member-state commitment to cooperation within the institution. Its weak political voice results from the fact that all of the member-states prefer other foreign and security fora to the BSEC for meeting their security objectives.³² Some BSEC members therefore place greater priority on pursuing their foreign policy objectives in the region by other means.³³ At least one of the major players, Russia, displays a lack of interest in using multilateral institutions in the area. It has not revealed any enthusiasm for building a Caucasian or Black Sea regional community. However, states from the region formed other smaller groups, such as GUUAM, in an effort to counter-

balance Russian influence and in response to their particular security concerns. Historically rooted animosities and distrust have undermined close security cooperation and weakened the commitment to a common front against new security challenges, including terrorism and organised crime.³⁴

The fear of being dominated by larger neighbours, such as Russia or Turkey, has been another undermining factor. BSEC members are reluctant to establish a strong regional security framework in which large countries from within the region – often seen as a part of the region's security problem – might prevail. States have chosen to place their security concerns within broader security fora like the OSCE, where the weight of larger states, particularly of Russia, can be balanced by the presence of other powers.

Finally, there is no functional interface between the BSEC and other organisations with security and political functions such as the OSCE, the EU, and NATO. Consequently, even where the BSEC could play a constructive role in regional projects such as civil society building, limitations have been placed on its potential role. The BSEC has also failed to function as the conduit for member-state cooperation with other organisations and international financial institutions. Bulgaria and Romania, for example, have cooperated on soft security issues and undertaken common actions as part of their pre-accession strategies for NATO, but that collaboration does not extend to the BSEC. None the less, the failure of close collaboration between international organisations and the BSEC should not be laid at the latter's door. The BSEC has been eager to integrate the region with the rest of Europe and to become a partner in the EU processes. Towards that goal, the BSEC has proposed the institutionalisation of its affairs with the EU through a Platform of Cooperation, while the BSEC Assembly has unilaterally provided the European Parliament with observer status. The EU response to these initiatives has varied between the vague and the negative. Notwithstanding BSEC deficiencies, the EU's reluctance to engage the BSEC might be rooted in insufficient knowledge in EU policy-making elites of BSEC's actual role and functions; or perhaps, as a locally initiated project, the BSEC lacks the international recognition that it would attract if it were an initiative sponsored by Brussels or Washington.

Further engagement: why and how?

The relative strategic equilibrium of the Cold War has been replaced by a relative strategic vacuum. The subsequent instability of the Black Sea–Eurasia region matters profoundly to the world for several reasons.³⁵ First, regional instability permits the operation and growth of terrorist movements that have not only local but also global ramifications. Second, and relatedly, the surge of illicit narcotics trade throughout the region also provides a major source of funding for these groups. Third, the Caspian Sea is

an emerging oil-producing region that requires unimpeded access to western (and Asian) markets. Finally, regional conflicts have the potential of developing into major power confrontations that cannot but affect the security of Europe and beyond.

Regional cooperation plays a large role in ameliorating security conditions, particularly now that one witnesses a higher salience of non-traditional security threats – environmental, economic and societal – which have regional dimensions and implications.³⁶ How can subregional institutions like the BSEC assume an operational security role? First, they must cultivate cooperative attitudes, integrate regional economic and political regimes into the global system, and increase dialogue among peoples of different cultures and religions. Importantly, a subregional organisation such as the BSEC, which functions as a political, economic and cultural bridge between Europe and Central Asia, should receive additional external support for its activities. Subregionalism best serves stability by closing the political, economic and social gaps between western and Eurasian states that pose a barrier to greater cohesion and solidarity.

The BSEC's operation as a 'diplomatic community' generates two indirect, positive effects for interstate relations in the region. First, the overall security environment is improved because the BSEC keeps open the channels of dialogue; and second, it recasts challenges and threats as a common concern in the interest of enhancing a sense of regionalism. The international community long ago recognised that subregional initiatives contribute to promoting regional security and stability through political dialogue and shared economic development.³⁷ Though weak in military power, subregional organisations can become relatively strong in diplomatic power or in economic activities.³⁸

Most subregional economic initiatives in Eurasia, which support sustainable models of development and growth, promote self-confidence and encourage greater self-reliance in matters of security. What appears as economic subregionalism is, in fact, driven by political, military or cultural considerations.³⁹ It thus addresses domestic sources of insecurity resulting from economic inequality, poverty and economic exclusion, while soothing the unease with which countries of different cultural backgrounds face each other. Major threats to security and stability are increasingly understood by regional elites as originating from within the region itself and reflect the destabilising effects of poor economic and political performance.

What constructive forms of interaction can be developed between the BSEC and other, larger organisations? To date, the BSEC approach has not dealt directly with local conflicts; if anything, it has dealt with them by putting them aside. Direct involvement of the BSEC in high security issues, such as the demilitarisation or denuclearisation of the region, cannot be expected or encouraged in the short or medium term. Subregional groups within the OSCE contribute to the overall institutional structure of the secu-

curity space covered by the OSCE.⁴⁰ They are devoted to security in this broader sense, but are not specifically or directly engaged in the military aspects. Instead, these subregional institutions concentrate on policies that promote regional and domestic stability and address the non-military aspects of security: financial and technical support for the transition to the market and democracy, economic development, a stable energy supply, environmental cooperation and the networking of civil societies. Subregional groups thus consolidate the OSCE model of security building by offering a means for the dissemination and adoption of the norms and standards of the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the EU. Subregional institutions cannot, however, compensate for the denial of the benefits attending EU and NATO membership.⁴¹

An important undertaking of the BSEC is reducing intra-regional tensions by creating and sponsoring a process of community building. By encouraging the involvement of actors other than state ones (NGOs, business people, local authorities), subregional institutions cultivate a bottom-up approach to conflict prevention and management and adhere to a 'pre-emptive' diplomacy. The BSEC should be assisted in its attempts to sustain the evolution of democratic civil societies in the region, control unwanted migratory flows, ameliorate the sources of conflict attending the soft security agenda (trafficking, organised crime, terrorism), and foster cooperation on economic development and environmental cooperation. Constructive engagement of subregional institutions like the BSEC in these fields produces appreciable value added and facilitates crisis prevention, conflict containment and post-settlement reconstruction.⁴² The main instrument of the BSEC for crisis prevention is diplomatic (and potentially economic), and thus its dialogue channels could assist 'proximity talks' as a mode of interaction.⁴³ A division of labour between the BSEC and other institutions, particularly the UN, the OSCE and NATO's PfP, for the purposes of the regional verification of agreements and monitoring of conflicts could also be established.⁴⁴ At the same time, the BSEC's diplomatic power might be deployed to contain conflict through its influence within the framework of UN debates and actions. The links of communication and confidence already existing among policy-making elites in the area could be used to forestall conflict situations and prevent the outbreak of hostilities or other forms of disruptive behaviour. The deepening of institutional ties between the BSEC and the EU, NATO, the OSCE and specialised UN agencies could assist in the formulation of clear economic objectives for the region towards the supplementary goal of conflict prevention and management. The BSEC process of region building could also lead to the redefinition of the identity, interests and capacities of its member-states, which would, in turn, help create conditions for a system of institutionalised negotiation or conflict resolution that would enhance regional security and stability.

The area where the BSEC can make a positive contribution is in post-conflict rehabilitation of conflict zones. The area covered by BSEC states is

still characterised by ongoing or frozen conflicts, but the BSEC's agenda is not so ambitious as to include resolution of these conflicts. The BSEC acknowledges the comparative advantage of other organisations long practised in the art of crisis management, particularly the OSCE and the UN. The BSEC could prove an effective mediator and manager in the post-settlement period when there is the need for financial assistance to reconstruct destroyed housing stock and economic infrastructure, as well as re-establishing normalised flows of goods, services and people. The BSEC is well equipped to sponsor rehabilitation programmes for those areas.⁴⁵

The BSEC's effectiveness is as contingent upon the support of the international community as it is upon the efforts and will of its members. As part of the Eurasian security architecture, the BSEC cannot be seen as a viable alternative to any larger European organisation. Its potential for contributing to regional security is located in its ability to bring together diverse groups of states in a cooperative framework and to tackle specific elements of the soft security agenda. At the same time, within the context of NATO and EU enlargement, it sustains cooperation between NATO/EU members, those seeking NATO/EU membership, and those states remaining aloof or excluded from the enlargement processes.

The long-term political aim of BSEC members is an institutionalisation of relations with the EU. That shared political goal very often becomes the only common ground of discussions held within the BSEC framework. EU support for subregional actors such as the BSEC is crucial, because it sends an important political signal to states within the region, testifying to the legitimacy of the subregional group and reassuring them that subregional cooperation is a step towards further integration with the world and European structures. The EU presence in the region, and especially the development of modes of practical BSEC–EU interaction, acquires a strong security dimension for the accompanying stabilising effects.

A subregional organisation cannot fulfil its role if certain internal and external conditions are not present. The recognition of its role by the states from within the region as well as by external powers is decisive for the realisation of the BSEC's security potential. Intra-BSEC solidarity depends heavily on the unifying effect of common threat perception, which, though weak, has mainly evolved around issues of soft security. It has now become increasingly obvious that the fight against organised crime in all its forms is a priority security concern for all countries in the region and beyond. The determination of the Black Sea Eurasian countries to cooperate on common policies meeting the soft security agenda has increased over time.

Regarding the internal requirements for a successful and effective BSEC, the most important objectives are strengthening institutional functions and enhancing the legitimacy of its member-states. Conflicts and insecurity surface in areas of 'weak' or 'failed' states where the vacuum of state authority permits the deployment of destabilising actors. Weak states and frag-

mented societies constitute the main factors of instability; well-functioning states remain the main actors for the provision of security. In the absence of the latter, a necessary condition for interstate cooperation on security matters is seriously impaired.

The future of the BSEC as a security actor is hostage to a number of developments largely outside its immediate control.⁴⁶ First, an enhanced role for the BSEC is contingent upon successful economic cooperation. Without economic growth, the political stability necessary for sustained cooperation in security affairs is unlikely to materialise. Second, the political instability in the Eurasian region and the ongoing conflicts create conditions conducive to the emergence of criminal groups and the growth of organised crime. Either development, left unchecked, would impede the development of market economies in the region, weaken the evolution of a democratic civil society, and debilitate state institutions. Third, the readiness of the international organisations (and the great powers) to integrate the BSEC into their plans of action for the region will be decisive for the organisation's future. In the absence of external legitimisation, the BSEC will be less likely to foster security cooperation in the Black Sea region, a key security zone along the borders of Europe.

Conclusion

Eurasian security has come to the forefront after several years of neglect owing to the Balkan conflicts, which monopolised international interest and great power resources for much of the 1990s. Eurasia suffers from pervasive misrule and accompanying economic difficulties, and thus a security approach for the region should have a broad, comprehensive perspective. Subregional organisations have their own multidimensional security potential to be exploited by the international community in its search for appropriate instruments to address the security challenges originating in Eurasia. The BSEC, a formal economic institution, has already served security in the region by keeping communication channels open and bringing policy-making elites to the same negotiating table. It has established regional regimes in the domains of economy, infrastructure and the environment. Region building, *per se*, has a security dimension, because it increases societal stability, contributes to the process of confidence building, makes state preferences more transparent, and facilitates the exchange of information by policy-making elites. Security and peace are promoted through the BSEC approach, which combines the two basic tasks of confidence building among peoples and strengthening cooperation between governments. The BSEC's geographic delimitation straddles Europe and Asia. It forms one nexus linking together their security. A constructive mode of collaboration by the international community with the BSEC would have long-term stabilising effects, and it would indicate to the states of the area that cooperative atti-

tudes, first of all towards their immediate neighbours, have added value for security. In an era when globalisation has not only changed the economic and social domains, but also altered the preconditions of security and made territorial state borders very porous, the constructive reliance upon subregional institutions like the BSEC, which provide stability mechanisms spanning sovereign jurisdictions, should be encouraged and supported by the broader international community.

Notes

- 1 The views expressed are the author's own and should not be regarded as a statement of the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC.
- 2 Subregional integration is defined as 'the construction of institutional structures to combine the interests of a group of countries within a wider region'. William Wallace, 'Regionalism in Europe: Model or Exception', in Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell (eds), *Regionalism in World Politics, Regional Organization and International Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 202.
- 3 For the 'Charter of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation' and all founding documents, see *BSEC Statutory Documents* (Istanbul: BSEC PERMIS, 2001).
- 4 The 'Declaration of Intention on the Creation of a Zone of Free Trade of BSEC' was approved by the Istanbul Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 7 February 1997.
- 5 This approach to the problem of security reflects the approach found in Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, second edn (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 1991).
- 6 Article 8, 'Summit Declaration of the BSEC', Istanbul, 25 June 1992, in BSEC, *BSEC Handbook of Documents, I*, (Istanbul: BSEC PERMIS, 1995), p. 4.
- 7 'Bosphorus Statement', adopted on 25 June 1992, in BSEC, *Handbook I*, pp. 9–10.
- 8 Article 8, p. 4.
- 9 'Bucharest Statement' adopted on 30 June 1995, in BSEC, *Handbook I*, p. 17.
- 10 See 'Moscow Declaration' adopted on 25 October 1996 by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, in BSEC, *BSEC Handbook of Documents, II* (Istanbul: BSEC PERMIS, 1996), p. 7.
- 11 Assembly of the WEU, *Parliamentary Cooperation in the Black Sea Area*, Rapporteur Sir John Hunt, Doc. 1544 (Paris: WEU, 4 November 1996), p. 9.
- 12 Commission of the European Communities, *Regional Cooperation in the Black Sea Area: State of Play, Perspectives for EU Action Encouraging its Further Development*, COM(97), 597 final (Brussels: EC, 1997), pp. 8–9.
- 13 Assembly of the WEU, *Parliamentary Cooperation*, p. 11.
- 14 Plamen Pantev, 'Security Cooperation in the Black Sea Basin', in Tunç Aybak (ed.), *Politics of the Black Sea: Dynamics of Cooperation and Conflict* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001), pp. 123–4.
- 15 Remarks by Eduard Shevardnadze, president of Georgia, at the Informal Summit of the BSEC, 17 November 1999.
- 16 Michael Emerson, *A Stability Pact for the Caucasus* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2000), p. 12.

- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 Louise I. Shelley, 'Organised Crime and Corruption: Security Threats', in David W. P. Lewis and Gilles Lepage (eds), *What Security for Which Europe? Case Studies from the Baltic to the Black Sea*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), pp. 149–68.
- 19 Pantev, 'Security Cooperation', p. 121. Also Ercan Özer, 'The Black Sea Economic Cooperation and Regional Security', *Perceptions*, 2:3 (1997), pp. 76–106.
- 20 Alyson J. K. Bailes, 'The Role of Subregional Cooperation in Post-Cold War Europe: Integration, Security, and Democracy', in Andrew Cottey (ed.), *Subregional Cooperation in the New Europe: Building Security, Prosperity and Solidarity from the Barents to the Black Sea* (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 170–1.
- 21 Nicolae Micu, 'Black Sea Economic Co-operation (BSEC) as a Confidence-Building Measure', *Perceptions*, 1:4 (1996–97), www.gov.tr/grupa/percept/i4/14-5.htm.
- 22 Another important institution is the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank, which has been functioning since 1998 and is based in Thessaloniki, Greece. Apart from promoting economic cooperation, the bank functions as an agent of structural reform and facilitator of integration.
- 23 E. N. Borisenko, A. P. Kononenko and I. V. Semenenko, *Black Sea Economic Cooperation: From Regional Initiative to International Organisation* (Istanbul: UZMAN, 1998), pp. 139–42.
- 24 'Joint Statement' adopted at the Meeting of the Ministers of Internal Affairs of the BSEC Participating States; and 'Joint Declaration' adopted at the Second Meeting of the Ministers of Internal Affairs of the BSEC Participating States, in BSEC, *BSEC Handbook of Documents, III* (Istanbul: BSEC PERMIS, 1998), pp. 139–42, 148–9.
- 25 'Agreement Among the Governments of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Participating States on Cooperation in Combating Crime, in Particular in its Organised Forms' (Kerkyra, 2 October 1998).
- 26 BSEC, *BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future: Towards a More Consolidated, Effective and Viable Partnership* (Istanbul: BSEC PERMIS, ICBSS, October 2001).
- 27 'Agreement on the Establishment of the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group', www.blackseafor.org.
- 28 Bailes, 'Role of Subregional Cooperation', p. 165.
- 29 Commission of the European Communities, *Regional Cooperation*, p. 4.
- 30 Bailes, 'Role of Subregional Cooperation', p. 167.
- 31 Ian Bremmer and Alyson J. K. Bailes, 'Subregionalism in the Newly Independent States', *International Affairs*, 74:1 (1998), pp. 131–47, esp. p. 133.
- 32 Pantev, 'Security Cooperation', p. 120.
- 33 Commission of the European Communities, *Regional Cooperation*, p. 4.
- 34 See the conference report of the Black Sea Strategy Group, *Coping with New Security Threats in the Black Sea Region* (Kiev: EastWest Institute, 2002), p. 3.
- 35 For the significance of the Black Sea region, see Yannis Valinakis, 'The Black Sea Region: Challenges and Opportunities for Europe', *Chaillot Paper 36* (Paris: Institute for Security Studies of WEU, 1999).
- 36 For the regionalising logic of the new security – economic, environmental, societal – threats, see Barry Buzan, 'The Logic of Regional Security in the Post-Cold War World', in Björn Hettne, András Inotai and Osvaldo Sunkel (eds), *The New Regionalism and the Future of Security and Development*, 4 (New York: St Martin's Press in association with UNU/WIDER, 2000), pp. 26–50.

- 37 Assembly of the WEU, *Parliamentary Cooperation*, p. 4.
- 38 Muthiah Alagappa, 'Regionalism and Conflict Management: A Framework for Analysis', *Review of International Studies*, 21:4 (1995), pp. 359–87, esp. p. 378.
- 39 Buzan, 'Logic of regional security', p. 21.
- 40 'Charter for European Security' (Istanbul: OSCE, November 1999), para. 13. For the OSCE's role in this context, see chapter 8 by P. Terrence Hopmann in this volume.
- 41 K. Mottola, 'Security in-between Regionalism and Subregionalism in the OSCE security model', paper presented at the 3rd Pan-European International Relations Conference and Joint Meeting with the International Studies Association, Vienna, 16–19 September 1998, p. 9; and Bremmer and Bailes, 'Subregionalism'.
- 42 Bailes, 'Role of Subregional Cooperation', p. 167.
- 43 Bremmer and Bailes, 'Subregionalism', p. 145.
- 44 Pantev, 'Security Cooperation', p. 123.
- 45 Michael Emerson and Marius Vahl, *Europe's Black Sea Dimension: Model European Regionalism, Prêt à Porter* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2001), p. 12.
- 46 George Pirinski, 'BSEC: A New Agenda '21?', *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 1:3 (2001), pp. 174–8, esp. p. 178.