

**AN ISN-SPONSORED QUARTERLY ELECTRONIC PERIODICAL
INSTITUTE FOR SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, SOFIA**

**BLACK SEA REGIONAL PROFILE: THE SECURITY SITUATION AND THE
REGION-BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES**

(January - March 2005)

25

© Institute for Security and International Studies (ISIS), Sofia, 2005

ISSN 1311 – 3259

I. Introduction

The Black Sea region continues to be dependent on the security situation in the Southern Caucasus and the Caspian Sea area to its east. The Black Sea basin continues to be influenced by security developments and the North-South/East-West crossing of the important geo-economic and geostrategic corridors.

There is still no adequate concept for shaping the crossing of the North-South and the East-West corridors in a cooperative way while regulating the conflicting interests peacefully. The influence of the broader Middle East developments and the continuing democratization of the post-Soviet space add new elements of both uncertainty and hope. The ineffectiveness of Russia's policy to form relations that are beneficial for all actors of the former Soviet Union is a major setback. While Russia expects to be supported in its fight against separatism, it supports separatists in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The developments in Ukraine are already affecting elections in other CIS states, where Western-backed opposition candidates are opposing Russian-backed ones. As almost all CIS presidents are vulnerable to accusations of corruption and cronyism, we will in all probability witness more developments like the unrest in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Moldova and Kyrgyzstan (2005).

The Black Sea region is being identified more and more with the evolving interest of NATO and the EU in territories that have already or will soon join these international bodies. The crucial position of the Black Sea has made the area a political focal point of great significance, requiring further monitoring, analysis, and forecasting.

II. Profile of the Black Sea-Caspian Sea Area

1. Geopolitical, Geo-economic, and Geo-strategic Tendencies

1) Russia-EU. In mid-January, Russia and the EU agreed to construct a launching complex for the Russian 'Soyuz' launch vehicle at the EU Space Center in Kourou, French Guyana. The two sides signed a long-term contract for cooperation in the development, construction and utilization of booster rockets.

2) Russia-Japan. In mid-January, Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura visited Moscow and held talks with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov. The meeting was in preparation of the upcoming official visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Japan. The two ministers discussed approaches towards making their cooperation against armed extremism more effective.

3) EU-China. The issue of lifting the 15 year-old EU arms embargo against China continued to present a bone of contention. The US government is trying to prevent this from happening. By mid-2005, the rotating EU Presidency residing with Luxembourg had declared it would like to see the issue settled. The US is concerned about the possibility of a conflict between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan in which Taiwan, armed by Washington, might be forced to face off against advanced European arms technology. From the EU's point of view, China's growing role on the world stage necessitates a closer relationship between Brussels and Beijing. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, however, said in remarks on 21 March in Beijing said that the EU decision to lift its arms embargo "might actually serve to alter the military balance in a place where the United States, in particular, has very strong security interests".¹ In remarks to the press, Rice said that lifting the embargo at a time when there were continuing concerns about China's human-rights situation and the military balance in the region "would not be the right signal".² China still has unsettled issues with other states in the region.

On 22 March, EU sources announced that the European states had decided not to consider lifting of the arms embargo until 2006. On 23 March, Chinese authorities criticized the change in the EU position. On 24 March, it became clear that the US government had been considering measures of limiting EU access to the US arms market if the EU proceeded with lifting the embargo.

4) US-China. (1) At the end of January, the US National Intelligence Council published a report on global trends till 2020. China (as well as India) were identified as 'growing superpowers' that could challenge the US hegemony 15 years from now. (2) On 1 February, US and Chinese top-level military delegations met in Beijing and discussed

¹ Quoted at: <http://www.usembassy.org.uk/china148.html>

² Ibid.

potential areas of military-to-military cooperation. (3) On 21 March, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in Beijing that the two countries had a common interest in regional and global stability, including a secure Asia-Pacific region, combating political violence movements, and stopping the proliferation of WMD.

5) US-Russia. (1) Rice said on 1 February that the new US administration had not made a systematic review of its policy towards Russia. Rice said the US had productive relations with Russia on a number of issues – the so-called “war on terrorism”, the situation in Afghanistan, and Russia’s aspirations to join the WTO. Washington wants to deepen bilateral relations on the basis of common values, which required greater democratization of Russia, Rice said. On 15 February, US Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, told the Senate panel that there were legitimate concerns about the level of freedom in Russia, but he believed the Russian government would recognize a link between opening up its society and better relations with the West. Russia needed to understand that strengthening the state did not mean strengthening bureaucracy, Zoellick added.³ Before his meeting with President Vladimir Putin in Bratislava on 24 February, US President George Bush said that the framework for bilateral relations was already in place, and only needed to be reinvigorated. (2) The US-Russia summit on 24 February in Bratislava addressed concerns about Russian democracy. However, the focus was on cooperation in increasing nuclear security, the “war on terror”, man-portable air-defense systems and improvised explosive devices. Bush and Putin agreed that North Korea and Iran should not have nuclear weapons. The two leaders directed the co-chairs of the US-Russian Counterterrorism Working Group to update their action plan. They agreed to intensify their cooperation in energy and space activities. Bush said he would participate in the commemoration in Moscow of the 60th anniversary of the victory of the anti-Nazi coalition over Hitler’s Germany.

6) US-EU. President Bush visited Europe on 21-24 February. His National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley told reporters before the visit that EU leaders faced “the same challenges in supporting Iraq and Afghanistan; furthering Israeli-Palestinian peace, and advancing freedom and democracy throughout the world”.⁴ He said the US and Europe

³ US State Department Washington File: http://usembassy.ru/embassy/release.php?record_id=31

⁴ US State Department Washington File: <http://canberra.usembassy.gov/hyper/2005/0218/epf502.htm>

had the responsibility and the opportunity to “work to advance an agenda in response to the common challenges”.⁵ The US and the EU already have “a fairly coordinated approach on Iran”, according to Hadley.⁶

7) North-South Strategic Corridor. The US on 16 March cautioned India over building a pipeline to Iran, in an open intervention affecting the North-South Strategic Corridor. Washington opposes the deal on a gas pipeline that would run through Iran and Pakistan. Acknowledging New Delhi’s legitimate requirements of oil and gas, the US Secretary of State said during her visit in India that Washington had “concerns about gas pipeline cooperation between Iran and India”.⁷ The US efforts are aimed at pressing Tehran to give up its nuclear ambitions. India hopes the US would settle its problems with Tehran by the time India would discuss its oil and gas deal with Iran.

8) US-India. On 16 March, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met with Indian leaders in New Delhi. She said the US was interested in accelerating the pace of its strategic partnership with India.⁸ The two states’ Strategic Dialog was proceeding successfully and the two countries shared the interest of stabilizing the region, Rice told Indian media.⁹

9) US-Japan. On 18-19 March, Rice visited Tokyo. She said Japan’s partnership with the US has expanded from regional cooperation to a global alliance.¹⁰ She added Japan should have a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Japan has provided a significant assistance to Afghanistan and Iraq.¹¹ The two countries provide almost 40 per cent of worldwide development assistance.¹² Japan is expected to encourage China toward a positive influence and development in international politics, said Rice to Japanese media.¹³

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ US State Department press release: <http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/Archive/2005/Mar/16-543818.html>

⁸ US State Department summary of Condoleezza Rice’s interview with India Today, 16 March 2005, at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/Archive/2005/Mar/18-60491.html>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ US State Department abstract of Rice’s remarks, in Washington File, at: <http://canberra.usembassy.gov/hyper/2005/0321/epf1111.htm>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

10) US Military Strategy. On 18 March, US Under Secretary of Defense Douglas Feith disclosed to reporters elements of the US military strategy. Washington would “focus on preventive measures designed to keep security problems from developing into crises, and crises from erupting into wars.”¹⁴ That was why the US would conduct stability operations; pursue the Proliferation Security Initiative; position US forces in locations where they could be readily deployed when needed, and solidify security cooperation with other nations. The US was interested in working together with its allies not only in combat operations, but also in the development of strategy, he said.¹⁵

2. Terrorism, PCR (Post-Conflict Rehabilitation) in Iraq, Afghanistan, Other Security Threats and Sources of Conflict in the Black Sea-Caspian Sea Region

1) US Intelligence on Security Threats. CIA Director Porter Goss and Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Director Vice-Admiral Lowell Jacoby testified on 17 March before US Senate and underlined “the challenge of focusing the right resources on the right threats as a critical issue for US intelligence community”.¹⁶ The intelligence chiefs said the two greatest threats to US security were “international terrorism by Islamic extremists and the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons”.¹⁷ A particular concern was “the intent behind the accelerated military build-up by China and Iran’s apparent attempt to obtain nuclear weapons and pursue missile developments”.¹⁸ “Goss accused Iran of keeping high-level members of Al Qaeda within its borders, meddling in the affairs of Iraq to further its interests, and of being a state sponsor of terrorism through its support of Hezbollah,” according to the US State Department summary of his testimony.¹⁹

2) Terrorism: US-Russia. On 11 January Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov visited Washington and met with US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. This was their

¹⁴ US State Department summary of Feith’s remarks, at: <http://www.usembassy.org.uk/acda401.html>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ US State Department Washington File, summary of testimony by Goss and Jacoby, at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2005/Mar/21-830443.html>

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

18th meeting in four years. According to Rumsfeld, the two leaders shared “a continuing commitment to wage a global struggle against extremism and terrorism”.²⁰

3) PCR in Iraq

a. The Regional Situation around Iraq. (1) On 2 January, US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage visited Syria to discuss possible contributions in improving the regional situation of Iraq. The US expects Syria to implement measures for improving border security, on which issue Armitage said Syria had already made “real improvements”. Building friendly relations with the new Iraqi government was also discussed. (2) On 3 March, nearly two years after having occupied Iraq, the US warned Iran to stop interfering in Iraqi internal affairs. Iran was attempting to influence the shaping of the Iraqi transitional government, White House spokesman Scott McClellan claimed²¹

b. Occupation Forces in Iraq. (1) Ukraine. Former Ukrainian president Kuchma decided on 11 January to withdraw his country’s 1,650 soldiers from Iraq. This decision was confirmed by the new Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, and the withdrawal began on 15 March. The Ukrainian parliament supported the president’s decision. The last Ukrainian soldier should leave Iraq by the end of the year. (2) Armenia. On 18 January, 46 Armenian soldiers joined the US-led occupation forces in Iraq. The contingent was to be under Polish command for the next six months. There is a small Armenian Christian community of around 20,000 living in Iraq. (3) Increased Training of Iraqi Security Forces. After the Iraqi national elections of 30 January, the occupation forces increased the level of training and partnership with the Iraqi security forces. (4) Problems. Despite some problems with coalition forces, Iraqis are learning to defend themselves. (4) Iraqi Elections. Parliamentary elections were carried out on 30 January with almost 60 per cent voter turnout. The election was hailed as a major step forward in rebuilding Iraq as a democracy.

²⁰ US Department of Defense transcript of Rumsfeld’s remarks, at: <http://www.pentagon.mil/transcripts/2005/tr20050111-secdef1961.html>

²¹ US State Department summary of remarks by White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan, at: <http://canberra.usembassy.gov/hyper/2005/0303/epf403.htm>

4) PCR in Afghanistan. According to a US State Department press release, the NATO-led ISAF “helped authorities there to secure and destroy over three tons of weapons in early March, including several large caches as well as weapons surrendered by local factions. ISAF soldiers supported an Afghan Ministry of Interior operation to collect and remove illegal weapons and ammunition from Parwan province, according to NATO and ISAF press releases. A convoy of 19 truckloads of surrendered ammunition and weapons was escorted by French Foreign Legion soldiers who were part of the ISAF Kabul Multi-National Brigade (KMNB).”²² The Afghan Ministry of Interior Rapid Reaction Force largely contributed to the success of the operation. NATO assumed leadership of the mission on 11 August 2003.

5) Other Security Threats: Nuclear Proliferation and Iran’s Nuclear Program. An IAEA Conference on Nuclear Security was convened from 16-18 March in London, attended by representatives of 76 countries. According to US Under Secretary of Energy for Nuclear Security Ambassador Linton F. Brooks, nuclear weapons must be “kept out of the hands of terrorists”.²³ Any such effort “begins with every nation accepting its responsibilities as a sovereign state to exercise trade and border controls or regulation of nuclear materials and facilities in line with international nonproliferation regimes”, he added.²⁴ A major problem of this regime is that the NPT’s recognized right of peaceful nuclear cooperation makes no distinction between sensitive fuel cycle and other nuclear technologies. Brooks recalled an earlier statement by US President George Bush proposing “that supplier nations refrain from transferring enrichment and reprocessing technologies to states that did not already possess full-scale, functioning enrichment and reprocessing plants”.²⁵ The US State Department said that: “The ambassador urged all signatories to the NPT to complete the required Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA, build the infrastructure necessary to control exports and monitor borders for illicit trade in WMD, and work cooperatively to combat nuclear threats”.²⁶ He threatened “redress,

²² <http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2005/Mar/17-90299.html>

²³ US State Department press release summarizing Brooks’ comments at the IAEA meeting, at: http://www.usembassy.it/file2005_03/alia/a5032107.htm

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

including earlier intervention by the UN Security Council, from those who violate their treaty and international safeguards obligations”²⁷.

For almost three years, the US government has been accusing Iran of trying to develop a secret military nuclear program. Iran has always maintained that its nuclear activities are only for peaceful purposes of energy generation, and says it hopes to sell its lucrative oil resources on the world market while meeting domestic energy needs with cheaper nuclear power. The IAEA has not yet adopted a final position on the issue. The three EU heavyweights – the UK, France, and Germany, are exerting diplomatic pressure to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Russia has also stated its full support for preventing the emergence of a military nuclear power on its southern borders. Preventive strikes against suspected Iran nuclear facilities are not ruled out by the US and Israel. In mid-February, Iranian leader Ali Khamenei accused the EU of not negotiating seriously, because of US and Israeli pressure, in the latest of several attempts to precipitate a split between the US and the EU. However, on 13 March, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told ABC's *This Week* that “a "common front, a common approach" has developed that says "Iran must not develop a nuclear weapon, that Iran's international obligations must be upheld, and that means they cannot develop a nuclear weapon under cover of civilian nuclear power.”²⁸.

III. Conflicts and Post-Conflict Developments in the Black Sea Area

1. Chechnya. On 8 March, Chechen separatist president Aslan Maskhadov was killed by Russian Special Forces. According to Chechen authorities, the Special Forces were tasked with catching the leader, but his bodyguard shot him dead.

2. Transdniester. On 14 March, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office (CIO), Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, said at the end of his visit to Moldova that the OSCE remained committed to a peaceful political settlement of the Transdniester question.²⁹ Rupel said he hoped recent elections in Ukraine and Moldova would give an impetus to efforts of finding a settlement in Transdniester.³⁰ According to Rupel, the formula for the

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ <http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2005/Mar/14-917234.html>

²⁹ OSCE press release, at <http://www.osce.org/item/8981.html>

³⁰ Ibid.

solution of the issue should include two elements – first, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova, and second, a special status for Moldova’s Transdnier region.³¹

IV. National Perspectives: Specific Developments

1. Ukraine. On 4 February, the Ukrainian Parliament approved Yuliya Tymoshenko as the new Prime Minister with a unanimous vote of 373-0. Tymoshenko called Russia ‘Ukraine’s first and most important partner’. At the same time, she promised to elaborate a European integration strategy that would lead to the future EU membership of the country.

2. Georgia. On 3 February, Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania died of asphyxiation in an apparent household accident in Tbilisi. He was a dedicated fighter for democracy and a respected leader of his country.

3. Moldova Parliamentary elections were held on 6 March in Moldova. The Moldovan government invited international teams to observe the elections. The OSCE observers (about 500) said on 6 March the parliamentary elections generally complied with most international standards, though “campaign conditions and media access were not perfect”.³² Marianne Mikko, Head of the European Parliament Delegation, said: "Although there have been a lot of problems during the election campaign, the people of Moldova have shown that they want to be a part of a democratic Europe."³³ The pro-Western Moldovan Communist Party of President Vladimir Voronin won the absolute majority in the new parliament after taking 46 per cent of the votes. Thus, the Communists received 56 out of 101 seats in parliament. Parliament was scheduled to elect the new president of the country in the beginning of April. This could happen if a qualitative majority of three-fifths, or 61 MPs, supported the respective candidature. If the parliament should not manage to elect a president, new parliamentary elections would be called. Voronin accused Moscow of occupying the Transdnier region and insisted on the withdrawal of all Russian troops.

³¹ Ibid.

³² OSCE press release, at <http://www.osce.org/item/8963.html>

³³ Ibid.

V. Bilateral, Multilateral Relations in the Black Sea Region. CIS, GUUAM, and Other Regional Institutions

1. Bilateral Relations

a. Ukraine-Georgia. Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko and his Georgian counterpart Mikhail Saakashvili spent New Year's Day together. The two leaders decided to boost their bilateral economic and cultural relations.

b. Russia-Azerbaijan. On 16 February, the presidents of Russia and Azerbaijan, Vladimir Putin and Ilham Aliiev, met in Moscow. In a formal ceremony, they inaugurated the 'Year of Azerbaijan in Russia' featuring special cultural, scientific, and educational events. Economic relations between the two countries have improved in the last months, and the trade exchange doubled, reaching US\$800 million in 2004.

c. Georgia-Russia. On 10 March, the Georgian Parliament unanimously adopted a resolution that declared the Russian military bases in the Akhalkalaki region and in Batumi with their 3,000 soldiers to be illegal. It set a deadline for their withdrawal on 15 May. If no results were achieved by then, Georgia announced it would stop issuing visas for Russian servicemen and demand reimbursement from Russia for the use of the bases. Tbilisi will also assess the environmental damages caused by the bases. The movement of Russian troops and equipment will be hampered too.

The Russian Ministry of Defense called the resolution an 'ultimatum' that was counterproductive. However, Russia has failed to fulfill its pledges to close the bases since the OSCE summit in 1999.

d. Russia-Ukraine. (1) Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko visited Moscow on 25 January and briefly met with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The aim of the visit was to de-escalate the tense relations that had built up between the two countries during the presidential elections in Ukraine last year, when Putin openly supported Yushchenko's opponent in the race, Viktor Yanukovich. (2) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Kiev from 21-22 February and met with his Ukrainian counterpart Boris Tarasyuk. They declared that the two countries would develop 'strategic partnership'. (3) Russian President Vladimir Putin visited on 19-20 March Kiev and met with Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko. He also held talks with Ukrainian Prime Minister Yuliya

Tymoshenko. President Putin opened a branch of the Russian Foreign Trade Bank in Kiev.

2. CIS (1) From 1 January on, Russian citizens were able to travel to other CIS countries with international passports. (2) A meeting of the Deputy Foreign Ministers of the CIS countries was convened on 31 January in Moscow. The Ukrainian representative declared his country's opposition to the establishment of a Security Council and of a Council for Humanitarian Cooperation of the CIS. Delegates also called for a more effective economic cooperation within the CIS. (3) On 18 March, the foreign ministers of the CIS states met in Minsk in preparation of the CIS summit in the summer in Moscow. Before the Minsk meeting, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Boris Tarasyuk called the CIS an "unserious organization". Tarasyuk reminded the press on 28 February that Ukraine had not signed the founding documents of the CIS. On that same day, Ukraine's President Viktor Yushchenko and Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Nogaideli announced their intention to revive the union of Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova (GUUAM) in a way that would let it function effectively.

VI. State of the Black Sea Regional Cooperation and the Role of EU and NATO

1. Economic Aspects of the Black Sea Cooperation: National and Regional Perspectives

a. USTDA -Azerbaijan. On 18 January the US Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) awarded a US\$734,782 grant to provide technical assistance for the strategic and organizational restructuring of Azerbaijan's new Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies in Baku. According to the US TDA, the grant includes "advisory services related to technology transfer, restructuring and organizational management."³⁴

b. US-Russia. Russian Minister of Economic Development German Gref and US Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick met on 31 January in Zurich. They agreed they could reach a deal on Russian accession to the WTO in 2005. Zoellick promised to "work

³⁴ US Trade and Development Agency press release, at: http://www.tda.gov/USTDA/Press%20Release%20Archive/Press%20Releases/2005/January/Jan18_05Azerbaijan.htm

closely with our Russian partners to help work through the multilateral aspects with all 148 economies in the WTO to expedite Russia's accession".³⁵

2. Political and Security Aspects of the Black Sea Regional Cooperation and EU and NATO/PfP Activities

a. NATO

1) NATO-Azerbaijan. On 14 February NATO and Azerbaijan signed an agreement in Brussels for a NATO project to destroy hazardous unexploded ordnance in Azerbaijan. According to the NATO press release, "[t]he Partnership for Peace Trust Fund project aims to clear and destroy unexploded ordnance (UXO) located at the former military base at Sologlu and the nearby towns of Agstafa and Poylu."³⁶ Turkey, the lead nation, signed a Financial Management Agreement for the project, which was estimated to cost €1.4 million.

2) NATO-Ukraine. On 18 February, in response to a Ukrainian request for aid in eliminating stockpiles, the US State Department announced that a NATO/PfP Trust Fund project had been launched to help Kiev solve this problem.³⁷ "Stockpiles of excess munitions, small arms and light weapons, and man-portable air defense systems" would be destroyed with the help of NATO, the press release said. The US would be the lead nation on phase one of the project and would make an initial contribution of US\$1.6 million towards an approximately US\$27 million total cost. Other donors have already announced initial contributions, including the UK and Norway.³⁸

b. EU

1) EU-Russia. (1) On 24 January, the "Inside Russia and Eurasia On-line Intelligence Report of the European Press Agency" at <http://www.russia-eurasia.net/> announced that Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had suggested to establish an 'EU-Russia Council', founded in a similar way to the NATO-Russia Council. Russia is seeking more stability, and expects more understanding from the EU. (2) On 21 March, EC Commissioners Ferrero-Waldner and Mandelson visited Moscow. They accelerated the

³⁵ US State Department press release, at: http://www.usembassy.it/file2005_02/alia/a5020102.htm

³⁶ NATO press release at: <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2005/p05-016e.htm>

³⁷ <http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2005/Feb/22-592767.html>

³⁸ Ibid.

progress of the negotiations for a package of Road Maps that would create four “common spaces” in the fields of economy; external security; freedom, security and justice; and education, research, and culture.

2) EU-Ukraine. Newly elected Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko said on 25 January that his country would seek EU membership and sign an accession agreement by 2007. The intentions of the EU are to bring Ukraine closer to the EU, but not make it an EU member. Eventually, in a few years’ time, the situation will be re-considered. Brussels has elaborated a 10-point plan for Ukraine that would develop relations between the EU and Ukraine through the strategic framework of the Neighborhood Policy.

VII. Other States Influencing the Black Sea Region: US

***US-Ukraine.** (1) On 23 January, US Secretary of State Colin Powell visited Kiev and participated in the inauguration ceremony of Viktor Yushchenko. Powell said the US would do everything it could to help the new leadership meet the expectations of the Ukrainian people. Powell discussed economic and security issues with Yushchenko. (2) On 26 January, US Vice President Dick Cheney met with Yushchenko in Krakow. Cheney said the US supported “the aspirations of Ukraine to join the institutions that bind the free nations of the West”.³⁹ Yushchenko said the US, Russia, Poland, and EU were strategic partners of his country. (3) On 7 February, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State John Tefft said in Chicago that “Ukraine’s eventual membership in the EU and NATO would depend on its willingness to implement difficult political, economic and military reforms.”⁴⁰ According to him the US stands ready to help the Ukrainian government as it launches on this path. (4) On 4 April, Yushchenko will visit the White House and meet with Bush. The two leaders will discuss Yushchenko’s efforts to implement reforms and the future of bilateral cooperation on advancing freedom and democracy in Eastern Europe and the broader Middle East, and non-proliferation.

³⁹ US State Department, European Washington File, at: <http://www.usemb.se/wireless/400/eur400.pdf>

⁴⁰ US State Department summary of press release, at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/Archive/2005/Feb/15-919132.html>

VIII. Conclusions

Events during the last three months confirmed the Black Sea's proximity to Europe: the upcoming signing of the Accession Treaties to the EU by Bulgaria and Romania in late April; the commitment of both Ukraine and the Union to work together for improving the chances of Ukraine to step also on an accession road; the ambitious work by the Turkish government to start accession negotiations; the agreement of Georgia to be an active element of the EU Neighborhood Policy, and the comprehensive plan of settling on a long-term basis the EU-Russian relations. NATO is a welcome institution in the Black Sea as three countries are NATO members, two are candidates for membership and Russia entertains a special status with NATO in the NATO-Russia Council.

The persisting security threats in the Caspian Sea-South Caucasus area intermingle with the risks in the Black Sea basin, generated by systemic instabilities, frozen conflicts, unsolved issues, and global challenges as terrorism. The Black Sea area has turned into a geopolitical centre in the last few years. It is a decisive geo-strategic region. Further monitoring, analysis, forecasting and conceptualizing of the developments in the Black Sea area remain crucial for the efforts of diplomatic and intelligence agencies to be adequate in the processes of stabilization, change and reforms.

EDITORIAL STAFF:

Dr. Plamen Pantev, *Editor-in-Chief*
 Dr. Tatiana Houbenova-Delissivkova
 Mr. Valeri Ratchev, M. A.
 Mr. Ivan Tsvetkov, M. A.
 Dr. Todor Tagarev

CONTACT AND REFERENCES:

ISSN 1311 – 3259
 Address: ISIS, 1618 Sofia
 P. O. Box 231, Bulgaria
 Phone/Fax: ++(359-2-) 8551 828
 E-Mail Address: isis@mgu.bg
