

Turkey and the Second Olympic Ring
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Since negotiations have opened about Turkey's EU membership, tensions have been growing on both sides. The next few years might well be focused on these difficulties which could lead to a serious crisis (with scenarios ranging from "serious clash" to "minor derailing" or "shelving" (2)). In the meantime, burning issues in which both the European Union and Turkey have a major role to play and which require a swift joint reply might stagnate, or the solutions proposed might fall quite short of what may be proposed if the European Union and Turkey could fully develop the whole potential of their cooperation.

Hence the proposal to set up a Three-Sea Alliance as from 2010. This project does not question the EU enlargement process. It is not an "alternative" to accession. The negotiation process linked to the enlargement is not covered by the proposal and should continue as planned. The Alliance is not designed as a "special partnership" substituting for Turkey's accession according to set rules, to be respected by all parties. The Alliance can be compared to an "accelerator" and a "safety net", which would equip the region of the three seas and the European Union with the necessary means to meet the new issues arising in terms of security – an evolving concept (3). The Alliance intends to generate "success stories" that would contribute to building bridges between all public opinion groups.

The project of establishing an Alliance is based on a triple observation. Firstly, the EU enlargement process is both too fast (hence the rise of the extreme right) and too slow (to meet the 21st-century's challenges). Secondly, the type of governance it gives rise to, particularly through the neighbourhood policy – which is too much like the relationship between a "Soft Empire" and its vassals – is not suited to needs and requires a different decision-making process. Thirdly, in order to make progress, public authorities, companies committed to their social and environmental responsibilities and civil society representatives should all sit down round a table to go over the issues at stake.

The time has come to propose a "global, integrated solution" for three sets of urgent issues: (i) finding new answers to questions about the constitutional crisis and the EU enlargement, (ii) anticipating burning challenges in terms of water and energy resources, (iii) setting peace interventions in the Middle East within a new, global framework, acting as a lever for economic development and security for all.

The European Union should be the co-founder of an Alliance inspired by precedents such as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the Helsinki process, in cooperation with countries which border the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. This Alliance would be a "second Olympic ring", in which the European Union would be intertwined with countries and areas under Russian, Turkish, Sunnite, Shiite or European influence. The Alliance would have its headquarters in Istanbul, with a High Commission (3 men-3 women), a Senate and a Council of Ministers. A specific Court of Justice would be established in Strasbourg. The Alliance would have mediators in the field of armed conflict, water management, human rights and associations' rights. It would also have a force for military intervention and pledge assistance to its members. The borders of the Alliance and hence of the second Olympic ring would result in the Middle East being included into the Alliance, in whole or in part. The Alliance would be established as from 2010 and act as a "fast track" enabling the introduction of tools for a new dynamic focused on four baskets.

The Three-Sea Alliance is a mechanism that, except for the neighbourhood policy which it would act as a substitute for, does not “replace” the processes engineered in terms of enlargement and free trade area.

This alliance would also act as a lever for strengthening the European Union, since it would connect the Union as such (and not its Member States) with its neighbours. The European Union sitting on behalf of the EU Member States would establish special consultation mechanisms with all Member States (since the fields covered would lead to joint policies about the single market, energy or external trade, for example) and enhanced cooperation (with a minimum of 8 States) with the EU Member States that border the Three Seas.

Expanding the Community model beyond Europe’s borders

The Alliance would bring together the European Union and (i) States which are not meant to join the Union, such as Russia or Iran, (ii) States which are meant to become EU members, such as Croatia or Turkey, and (iii) States outside the Union which may wish to get involved in EU mechanisms – such as the single market – without being a direct part of the Union (a situation we already know with the associative links with Norway, Iceland and Switzerland in particular). Joining the Alliance would not be “automatic” for all the States that border the Three Seas, but each State or Authority (such as the Palestinian Authority) that subscribes to the rules of the Alliance and becomes a member must receive protection from the Alliance – including in a military form.

The four baskets

First basket: energy and water – A partnership for peace and development

The seeds for today’s and tomorrow’s armed conflicts lie in the field of natural resources, primarily energy and water. In the conflict between Israel and Palestine, where the issue of water control also features prominently, as well as in the case of Iran in the energy field, the very proposal of setting up the Alliance might open up new vistas. We should draw inspiration from the founding fathers of the ECSC and take up a similar approach with the countries that border the Three Seas, in other words tackling energy and water issues as potential sources of conflict.

Second basket: the Integrated Economic Region

A distinction should be clearly established in people’s minds and in actual fact between the “great single market” and the “European Union”, which must not necessarily cover the same area. From this point of view, the stand taken by the ERT marks an interesting development (3). *“ERT proposes that the EU’s neighbourhood policy – in itself not seeking further enlargement – should aim at moving towards an “Integrated Economic Region” (IER) with a step-by-step approach to implementation, allowing individual countries to move at their own speed (...) encouraging the neighbouring countries to gradually integrate into the Single Market, offering them the opportunity to eventually join it as participants if and when they are fit to do so.(...) A stepping stone towards the creation of the IER would hence be the establishment of a free trade area with all IER Countries”.*

Third basket: human rights

The proposal is inspired by the Helsinki process and the mechanisms of the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The construction of a common project, source of dignity, pride and peace, rooted in our common history and addressing today's challenges, should thus be started in order to "re-enchant" tomorrow's world.

Fourth basket: youth

As Nick Mabey noted (4), "*the critical political fault line in the future will not be between insiders and outsiders in the labour market, or between labour and capital, but between generations. Future trends place higher costs on the young and give benefits to older citizens. Tightening environmental constraints will need to be managed by a younger generation which has not benefited from the era of cheap fuel, and who will bear the direct legacy costs of climate change, water shortages, environmental disasters and biodiversity loss*". Nick Mabey underlines that this must be accompanied by a "*fair burden sharing of public investment between generations to avoid that the most productive of the younger generation will leave for lower-tax countries or a rejection by younger workers of higher public investment in securing Europe's long term future*".

Conclusions

We are used to dealing with a long list of thorny issues which the EU would tackle individually. In fact, several of these can be grouped under three sets of issues that cover respectively: (i) our neighbourhood relations and the enlargement, the EU's absorption capacity, (ii) strategic resources – water, energy, raw materials – as well as security and environmental issues, (iii) our relations with the Middle East. For each set of issues, it is clear that if nothing changes, we are heading for disaster. The Three-Sea Alliance would act as a substitute for the EU neighbourhood policy, offer a way out of the crisis in the conflict between Israel and its neighbours and propose a new form of relationship with Russia. The Alliance would also create a bigger single market and a large, free, sustainable trade area as well as setting up an "incubator for success stories" to reassure public opinion in the EU Member States faced with the Union's enlargement plans. This would open a new path to dialogue between civilizations and new peace-keeping mechanisms.

- (1) *Plan B – Citizens facing up to the European Union*. Boual, Grosjean, Rabier, Spoel, Van Ermen. Editions Labor, 2006.
- (2) *Turkey and the EU-Four Scenarios : from Train Crash to Full Steam Ahead*, By Kirsty Hugues, Friends of Europe. September 2006.
- (3) *ERT's vision of a bigger single market. The position of the European Round Table of Industrialists on the EU's Neighbourhood policy*.
- (4) "Europe in the World: Elements of a New Economic Narrative" by Nick Mabey www.e3g.org