

The Second Olympic Ring: the Three-Sea Alliance



The time has come to propose a “global, integrated solution” to 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, climate change and energy resources, (iii) our relationships with Russia, Turkey and the Middle East. The enlargement process is both too fast in relation to the psychology of peoples and too slow as regards urgent peace issues. (1)

The European Union would become the co-founder of an Alliance inspired by precedents and successes 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” (1), in which the European Union would be intertwined with countries and areas under Russian, Turkish, Sunnite, Shiite or European influence. With Romania and Bulgaria becoming EU members, the European Union has entered the Black Sea region, “an area marked by geostrategic tensions and unrest” (2). In this context, the Three-Sea Alliance – a second Olympic ring – is a “third way forward” and a “European response” to the Euro-Atlantic (American) and Euro-Asian (Russian) visions and the deadlocks in the Middle East. One issue is whether “Brussels should divest itself of the illusion that it can share common spaces with Russia” (3), or whether we

are able to propose a new framework. We must find a means of involving Russia in the EU policy in a lasting way: this is one of the objectives of the Three-Sea Alliance. The borders of the Alliance and hence of the second Olympic ring could also include the Middle East – in whole or in part – into the Alliance, which would change the conditions that lead to peace or war in the region. Today's belligerent parties can either be tomorrow's partners within the Alliance by complying with rules for non-belligerence among members, or, if one of the belligerents enters the Alliance, its borders will become those of the Alliance, which will put a stop right away to any aggression against it.

The Alliance, through its four baskets (energy & water, common market, human rights, youth), its rules, its mediators, its Court of Justice, can thus transform the agenda of the whole three-sea region including the Middle East.

As far as Turkey is concerned, the Alliance offers it to play a pivotal role in the new context which would be established by 2010, which is no substitute for the enlargement process of the Union. The Alliance would have its headquarters in Istanbul, with a High Commission (three men-three 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 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 eight States) with the EU Member States that border the Three Seas.

The Alliance would be established as from 2010 and have a 2020 objective. The Three-Sea Alliance is a mechanism which does not “replace” the process engineered in terms of the “EU enlargement negotiation”, except for the neighbourhood policy which it would act as a substitute for. It rather acts as a “fast track” enabling a quick introduction of tools for a “new dynamic” focused on four baskets.

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 (4). *“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. *“There is growing evidence that engaging citizens in democratic processes leads to both a more vibrant society and happier citizens. Promoting open and effective governance nationally and internationally, including the peaceful resolution of conflicts and elimination of systematic corruption, is important for all of us achieving greater well-being in the long term”*, notes the *Global Manifesto for a Happier Planet* (5).

Fourth basket: youth

As is stated by Nick Mabey (6), *“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.

The Three-Sea Alliance would become a pilot region of the world in terms of implementation of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, fundamental rights and the concept of human security (7). It 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 an “energy and water community” (referring to the steel and coal community).

The physical constraints linked to conditions of access to resources (energy, water, minerals) may lead – and already leads in some cases – to three types of conflict which are or will be the “hyper-conflict” of the future (8): war on “scarcities”, war of influence and war of borders. The Alliance is an alternative to the death forces in action and to the wars being prepared or taking place. On the contrary, with the Alliance based on the successes of the ECSC and the Helsinki process, it is possible to turn its back on war and set an objective that can positively mobilize public authorities, businesses and civil society in all countries: by 2020, each capital city of the Member States of the Alliance should be one of the spikes of the rising star of the new “core network” of the world, with multiple interconnected poles, its centre of gravity in Istanbul and a Brussels-Moscow-Jerusalem axis. We shall be this “future new core network of the world” if, on the basis of a rediscovery of our interdependencies and their inner riches, we can transform the new “physical” constraints linked to “sustainable development” into opportunities and establish a well-being society for all.

References:

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- (2) *Le bassin de la mer Noire. Une zone de tensions géostratégiques.* Natalie Nougayrède. *Le Monde*, 2.01.07.
- (3) *Ces pays que la Russie dispute à l'Europe.* Ivan Krastev. Center for Liberal Strategies. Sofia dans *Le Monde*, 25.12.06.
- (4) *ERT's vision of a bigger single market. The position of the European Round Table of Industrialists on the EU's Neighbourhood policy.*
- (5) New Economics Foundation (NEF): *Global Manifesto for a Happier Planet.*
- (6) *Europe in the World: Elements of a New Economic Narrative*, Nick Mabey www.e3g.org
- (7) *The role of human security in foreign policy: what lessons for the EU.* EPC 2006.
- (8) *Une brève histoire de l'avenir.* Jacques Attali. Fayard 2006.