

# From the BSU to the BSEC

## Evaluating Interwar Geopolitical Fantasies

*Ostap Kushnir*

This study charts the political, cultural and economic foundations of two inter-governmental bodies intended to emerge in the Black Sea region: the first, the Black Sea Union (BSU) was an idea developed by Ukrainian geopolitical specialist Yuriy Lypa before World War II. The second is the current Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) launched in 1992. By comparing these bodies, this research pursues three key goals: first, it traces the succession of ideas between the eras of the BSU and the BSEC and shows the existence of a specifically interwar mode of geopolitical thinking. Second, it highlights and explains the differences between the BSU's geopolitical objectives and their actual implementation in the BSEC. Finally, this work assesses current Ukrainian policies and perspectives in the Black Sea region.

*Keywords: Yuriy Lypa, Black Sea Union, Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Eastern Europe, interwar geopolitics*

### Introduction

When considering Ukraine's membership of different international organisations, political scientists often underestimate the role of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). It is difficult to find mention of this organisation in the documents defining Ukraine's strategic objectives and the public speeches of state authorities. This may seem strange since Ukraine entered the BSEC in 1992, a year after gaining its independence, making the BSEC one of the first organisations to be joined by the new state. Moreover, Ukraine has since shown itself to be an important – if not the decisive – actor in the Black Sea region,



Scan this article  
onto your  
mobile device

and the BSEC could provide a means for the country to boost its political clout with the assistance of its allies.

The Black Sea region has been growing in significance since the end of the Cold War. This is primarily because the eastern borders of NATO and the EU have stretched along the Black Sea shores since Romania and Bulgaria entered NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007; Turkey meanwhile had been a NATO member since 1952. The region's good governance, stability and prosperity are therefore of crucial interest to Western states. Secondly, many pipelines that transport oil and gas from the Caspian fields to Europe run through the Black Sea states. While some may claim that the EU's dependence on Caspian resources remains comparatively low, smooth-running oil and gas supplies have always been important to the economic sustainability of Western states.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, the Black Sea region creates a buffer zone between prosperous European states and the unstable Middle East region. As such, it is a key player in the fight against terrorism, separatism, aggressive nationalism, drug and weapon smuggling, illegal migration and other security challenges. Finally, the majority of Black Sea countries are seen as developing states with huge market potential, growing consumption demands and a cheap labour force; all this makes them attractive for international business.

*Ostap  
Kushnir*

As of 2010, the BSEC had twelve member states. Their combined population was around 350 million people, with 190 million living in the immediate Black Sea region.<sup>2</sup> However, the core idea of the BSEC as an inter-governmental entity is not brand new. One political scientist who advocated for it obstinately in the second quarter of the 20th century was the Ukrainian geopolitician Yuriy Lypa (1900-1944). He outlined the idea clearly in his books *The Destination of Ukraine* (1938) and *The Black Sea Doctrine* (1942), claiming that all states in the Black Sea region should unite in the Black Sea Union (BSU). He also offered economic, political, military and cultural justifications to prove the viability of his concept.

Lypa had an impressive background and education. His father, Ivan Lypa served as the minister of religion and the minister of health in the 1917-1921 Ukrainian governments (Tsentralna Rada and Dyrektoria), and the young geopolitician therefore had the chance to connect with the brightest Ukrainian intellectuals of his time. Between 1918 and 1920, he also studied law at Kamieniec-Podolski University in Ukraine. In 1922, he moved to Poland and enrolled at Poznań Medical University from

which he graduated in 1928.<sup>3</sup> Some sources suggest that around 1930, he was awarded a scholarship and spent several months studying in Great Britain.<sup>4</sup> All this makes Lypa's geopolitical views worth addressing in this research. This is especially true when we consider that the BSU he proposed shares many features with the current BSEC.

Put briefly, this study considers the prospects for inter-governmental organisations in the Black Sea region. To this end, it has three aims: 1) to describe and assess the BSEC's geopolitical position in the modern globalised world, 2) to trace the connection between the BSU and the BSEC by revealing and comparing key objectives common to these entities and 3) to evaluate the BSU concept critically from a historical standpoint. It is important to stress the difficulties inherent in comparing an existing inter-governmental body such as the BSEC with the BSU, which was halted as a half-finished idea between the wars. The grounds for the BSEC's existence and operations have been substantiated by many politicians and economists while the BSU concept was posited and cherished by just one man. The BSEC, being rooted in reality, has embraced the Black Sea region's diversity and contradictions while the BSU was tied to naive expectations and misguided simplifications. Finally, the BSU concept had numerous gaps and shortcomings, but the BSEC was built to be a coherent and functional entity.

### Distinguishing Features of the BSEC and the BSU

In 1990, (then) Turkish president Turgut Özal announced plans to create an inter-governmental entity in the Black Sea region. His preliminary name for this body was the Black Sea Area of Prosperity and Cooperation. It was supposed to embrace four states: the USSR, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey. Two years later, on 25 June 1992, eleven countries (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine, the majority emerging after the USSR's dissolution) signed a declaration that launched official international cooperation in the Black Sea region. This declaration is better known today as the Bosphorus Statement. It contained several objectives, which were, however, formulated vaguely. In particular, the presidents of the member states agreed to:

1. strive for peace, stability and development in the region, realise concrete schemes of cooperative action, peacefully settle all dis-

putes according to the principles set out by the Commission on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) (now the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)),

2. resist aggression, violence, terrorism and lawlessness so as to help establish and restore peace and justice,
3. transform the Black Sea into a region of peace, freedom, stability and prosperity and
4. facilitate the processes and structures of European integration.<sup>5</sup>

*From BSU  
to BSEC*

Before the Bosphorus Statement, other early drafts had maintained that the organisation should become a kind of customs union ensuring the free movement of goods, services and capital regardless of borders. To make this possible, the member states agreed to invest in improvements in transport, communication and security infrastructure in the region. These investments were to be managed by individual member states with no rigorous central coordination.<sup>6</sup>

With the adoption of the Yalta Charter on 05 June 1998, the group became a full-fledged regional economic entity and acquired its official name – the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

Since the start of the 21st century, BSEC member states have boasted significant economic growth which is among the most dynamic in the world. According to the data provided by Tarlopov, the total market capacity of the region was US\$1.6 trillion in 2009 with trade capacity of US\$300 billion.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the region's financial potential has ultimately been less impressive from a global perspective: the above-mentioned US\$300 billion represented only 4.5% of the world's trade capacity.<sup>8</sup>

Along with the twelve member states (Serbia joined in April 2004), the BSEC now includes seventeen observers and seventeen sectoral dialogue partners. The member states differ in terms of their size, population, economic development, political systems and military power. These differences produce significant asymmetries. For instance, 83% of the BSEC's GDP is generated by three states – the Russian Federation, Turkey and Greece. In turn, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova are responsible for just 1% of the GDP in total. The asymmetries also contribute to the rivalry between the larger member states which are vying for BSEC leadership; Russia and Turkey are evidently keen to increase their power and gain political control over the other states.<sup>9</sup> The rivalry becomes even more challenging when we take into account that

several BSEC member states are also full members of other international organisations such as the EU, CIS, GUAM, CEFTA, OIC, ECO, D-8, G-20 and EEC.<sup>10</sup> In sum, asymmetries, diversity and conflicts of interests are what characterises the BSEC today; they are also clearly what hampers the relations among its member states.

On 26 June 2012, the BSEC set new priorities during its most recent summit in Istanbul. This time, the leaders of the member states undertook to:

1. contribute to enhancing peace, stability, security, dialogue and prosperity in the region,
2. substantially increase intra-BSEC trade and investments and further promote public-private partnerships,
3. incorporate environmental approaches into economic and social development programmes,
4. enhance coordination and interaction among BSEC-related bodies and affiliates,
5. increase gender equality and women's participation in economic and political processes,
6. deepen cooperation in the spheres of culture, tourism and youth policy and
7. establish a strategic relationship between the BSEC and the EU.<sup>11</sup>

If we compare the 2012 priorities with those adopted twenty years ago, we can find virtually no significant changes. To be sure, several new issues appeared on the 2012 list which had not been in focus in 1992. These were, in particular, gender, the environment, tourism, exchanges among youth, good governance and public-private partnerships. Nevertheless, the stress remained on improving the business climate and EU cooperation as the indisputable priorities. To achieve the 2012 priorities, a roadmap was sketched out. This was the 'The BSEC Economic Agenda – Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership.'

However, the parallels between the 1992 and 2012 agenda also prompted another more cynical conclusion: the declared ambitions of BSEC member states has always been high on rhetoric but low on achievement. Their joint efforts had borne little fruit in twenty years. At any rate, no customs union had been created, and there is little chance of one coming into being in the near future.

In contrast, the idea of the BSU originated with Lypa on the eve of WWII. At the time, his proposal seemed both defiant and opportunistic. There

existed no clear vision regarding the shape of the postwar world or the place the Eastern European states would have within it. Lypa, however, looked to the future enthusiastically; he wrote that the states located on the Black Sea shores should create a genuine union and so transform the sea into an internal lake.<sup>12</sup> Membership of that union was to be granted to Ukraine, Turkey, the Caucasus republics (Kuban, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan), Bulgaria and Romania. Lypa also strongly believed that the USSR (or “Russia,” as he continued to call it) was doomed to dissolve after the war and that this would bring independence to all of its Black Sea republics. After that dissolution, Russia would be expelled from the region and, most likely, erased from the world map.

To illustrate the uniqueness and self-sufficiency of the Black Sea region, Lypa used a fascinating analogy: this region was, he said, like a fortress. The Black Sea lay at the centre of the fortress. Its eastern walls were the Caucasian states stretching all the way to the Caspian Sea and Volga River. On the other side, its western walls ran along the Carpathian mountain range and the borders of the Balkan states. This fortress also had three gates: the Danube, the Caspian Sea and the Bosphorus. Turkey was said to be the fortress’s base while Ukraine was its vault.<sup>13</sup> The solidity of the fortress, according to Lypa’s calculations, was to be ensured through the mutually beneficial cooperation of Ukraine, Bulgaria and Turkey.

In his books, Lypa described the BSU as a political, cultural and economic union. The majority of ties with its eastern and western neighbours should be suspended, he argued; the only reasonable and profitable way for the BSU to develop was by promoting North-to-South cooperation. The economic system of the union would be closed and nationalistic. Lypa claimed that all strategic industries should be owned and supported by the region’s nation states with no foreign investment allowed (unless it came from other BSU members). He was also certain that the Black Sea region should be forged from within; any assistance from abroad or cooperation with third countries would be a security threat. To ensure that closed national economies were sufficient, Lypa advocated for the creation of a customs union: ‘A customs union of Black Sea states will firmly and durably unite several dozen Black Sea peoples into one national household. Now is the time for large national households.’<sup>14</sup>

Addressing the union’s political objectives, Lypa claimed that a strong BSU would ensure that its member states were protected from external threats. He pointed here especially to the pressures on the region from

Russia, Britain, France and Italy and their territorial claims. As may be recalled, Britain had deployed significant numbers of troops in the Cyprus-Haifa-Suez triangle during the interwar period; France had occupied Syria and much of the Middle East; Italy had built its strongest naval base on the Dodecanese islands near the Turkish mainland while Russia was aggressively re-routing the flow of people and goods from Ukraine to its land in the north-east. As well as protecting against these external threats, political unification would make it possible to solve the problem of internal instability. Since the early 20th century, tensions had regularly played out in the relations between the Bulgarians and the Turks, the Armenians and the Turks, the Bulgarians and the Romanians, the Georgians and the Kubanians, the Azeris and the Armenians, to name some of these conflicts. Common authority at inter-state level would contribute to greater peace in the region. Moreover, the political union of the Black Sea states would change the way that they were positioned in the world. According to Lypa, at the beginning of the 1940s, none of the Western or Eastern powers gave much credit to these states, which were seen traditionally as colonial annexes with no defined national objectives.<sup>15</sup> Creating the BSU could, thus, send a strong message to the international community about the maturity of the Black Sea region.

In sum, Lypa advocated for the following objectives for the BSU:

1. political and economic unification and the subsequent transformation of the Black Sea into an internal lake,
2. nationalisation of strategic industries and the adopting of economic nationalism by every state in the union,
3. organised resistance to pressures and territorial claims from third countries,
4. recovery from colonial dependencies and joint development of a regional economy,
5. creation of a customs union to ensure free trade within the BSU and
6. peaceful settlement of internal conflicts.

It may be observed that these objectives hardly fit with the interwar realities; in fact, they revealed Lypa's unrealistic expectations rather than reflecting the true balance of power in the 1940s. In drawing up his objectives, the geopolitician had a tendency to overestimate political, economic and social conditions in line with his own viewpoints and to underestimate or ignore anything contradictory. For instance, he accepted

the assumption that the USSR would lose its territorial integrity as an indisputable truth; he also never doubted that the newly formed post-Soviet states would forge a bloc notwithstanding any possible disagreements among them. In light of these and other ideas, we might conclude that Lypa was a pseudo-scientist generating theoretical abstractions. This might be true were it not for the fact that several of his findings appear pragmatic and rational; moreover, some even came into being as BSEC objectives at the beginning of 21st century. These and other observations mean that Lypa's idea warrants a more profound examination.

*From BSU  
to BSEC*

## Comparing the Economic Objectives of the BSU and the BSEC

Looking closely at the 'BSEC Economic Agenda - Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership' roadmap, we find a genuine effort to set out guidelines for action along with objectives for strengthening the BSEC and strategic organisational goals. The latter – of which there are seventeen in total – are in line with the recent Istanbul Summit Declaration and reflect the current economic interests of Black Sea states. The following targets may be seen as most important:

1. intensified intra-regional trade and investments,
2. cooperation in customs and border-crossing administration,
3. creation of an efficient transport network,
4. development of sustainable energy and the Black Sea energy market,
5. environmental protection and conservation ,
6. food security and safety,
7. support for sustainable development of the SME sector,
8. tourism development and cultural heritage protection,
9. cooperation in banking and finance and
10. combating of organised crime, illicit trade in drugs and weapons, terrorism, corruption and money laundering.<sup>16</sup>

These goals also determine the steps that the BSEC should, and probably will, take for its further development. Comparing them to the BSU objectives can provide a sufficient assessment of the depth of Lypa's geopolitical thought. This approach, moreover, can highlight the sequence of key ideas.

In considering the economic self-sufficiency of the BSU, Lypa calculated that the union would be able to satisfy its own demand for raw materials



solely by drawing solely on the resources (mineral deposits, soil, rivers and populations) available in Black Sea states. In fact, the majority of his calculations hold true in the region today and can be used to illustrate why the BSEC's operation is reasonable. According to the Ukrainian geopolitician, hard coal could be extracted from the Donbass (1940s reserves were estimated at 5 billion tonnes), crude oil could be pumped from the valleys (reserves around this time were approx. 6,400 million tonnes) and manganese, copper and iron could be excavated in central Ukraine and southern Turkey. Rivers could also ensure hydroelectricity production; their potential was estimated at 8,760,000 hp. This would meet the union's energy demands. In turn, he noted that crops, fruit and vegetables could easily be cultivated in the black-coloured soil; the quantity of food produced would be enough to feed the whole population of the Black Sea region.<sup>17</sup>

Like today's BSEC members, Lypa also maintained the Black Sea region's capacity to support the rapid transport of goods, people and services between its member states. Lypa claimed that such transportation should occur mainly via Black Sea routes and river systems. In the 1940s, the region featured more than fifty river ports equipped to moor and handle large vessels – this was without even considering its sea ports.<sup>18</sup> Current BSEC leaders add that land routes have significant potential and should be used simultaneously with sea routes. Several provisions of the BSEC roadmap, thus, stress the need to complete the Black Sea Ring Highway.<sup>19</sup> The latter is set to be some 7250 kilometres long, extending to the Black Sea shores with numerous branches and running deep into the territories of the member states. At this juncture, however, only Turkey has managed to complete its part of the highway.

When it comes to the matters of reduced customs tariffs and open borders, BSEC leaders have always stressed the importance and administrative aspects of these goals. Lypa, on the other hand, paid them minimal attention. Understanding open borders as an obvious and immanent part of the BSU, he claimed that these borders would emerge automatically as the BSU came into being. As such, he did not focus much on the restrictions imposed by sovereignty or under international agreements with third countries. Indeed, such restrictions simply did not exist from his perspective.

Regarding cultural issues in the region, we may note the shared sensitivity but very different perceptions of Lypa and current BSEC members.

It is evident from the current BSEC roadmap that the organisation's goals in the cultural sphere are today very business-oriented. They include, for instance, promoting the Black Sea region as one of the world's leading tourist destinations, launching research on common heritage and preserving cultural diversity. No other cultural cooperation can be launched successfully within the BSEC due to the differences in religion, behaviour, traditions, history and geopolitical identifications among the member states; this is, at any rate, how the BSEC leaders see the situation. Lypa, in contrast, was never concerned with such differences, but instead advocated for cultural cohesion, aiming to encourage a deeper socialisation of those living in the region. Writing on cultural issues, he stressed the common maritime outlook, historic success of joint actions and the existing threats which undermined national identities. The people of the Black Sea area, he argued, were characterised by their blind love of adventure, endeavours and discoveries.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, he appealed broadly to the idea of cultural justice. Black Sea regional culture had been oppressed for a long time, he claimed. As such, after the BSU was created, nothing should stop it from dramatically expanding and gaining global influence.<sup>21</sup>

Turning to the issue of energy security, we can make out only minor similarities between the BSU and the BSEC. Again, this can be explained by Lypa's overestimation of the region's cohesion. In contrast, today's BSEC member states, especially those exporting oil and gas, perceive one another as rivals. This rivalry is intensified by irresolvable ethnic and political conflicts such as the ones over Nagorno-Karabakh and South Ossetia. Russia remains the biggest and most influential player in the region, and smaller states like Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Turkey and Romania struggle to achieve any profits from exports. This contributes to a hidden geopolitical war inside the BSEC with no possibilities for intervention by inter-governmental institutions to decrease tensions. Instead, smaller states are attempting to ensure their interests and self-sufficiency by constructing pipelines that bypass Russia. One such pipeline which already exists and transports Caspian gas to European markets, is the South Caucasus or Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum link. A second (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan) route transports crude oil from the Caspian to the Mediterranean seas, bypassing not only Russian, but also Armenian and Iranian territories.<sup>22</sup> A third line, the White Stream or Supsa-Constanța, which should run through Ukraine is in the process of construction.

The Kremlin has responded in turn with its own plans for the Blue Stream or Izobilnoye-Beregovaya-Durusu-Ankara pipeline and the South Stream, which will connect Anapa with Pleven through Varna; the latter pipeline is expected to be in use by 2015, a year before the White Stream is ready.<sup>23</sup> Looking at Lypa's interpretation of energy issues, what is most striking is his comparative optimism and ignorance of regional tensions. The Ukrainian analyst gladly noted the abundance of mineral deposits in the Caucasus, which was for him an additional argument for the economic self-sufficiency of the BSU. Oil deposits near Grozny and Baku, he estimated, were very substantial and he held them to be rich in octane. The only pre-war pipelines that he mentioned were Armavir-Rostov, Armavir-Tuapse, and Baku-Batumi running through Dagestan and Kuban.<sup>24</sup> No new pipeline routes were sketched out. Lypa also noted that the oil near Baku was a major reason for interventions by third countries in the internal policies of Azerbaijan.<sup>25</sup> Still, he said nothing precise about the mechanisms for exporting resources abroad – to Europe, for instance. In fact, Lypa's work simply did not focus on international trade.

Regarding the sustainable development of the SME sector, BSEC authorities today call for the promoting of favourable conditions for local businesses and foreign investment. They also propose facilitating networking and exchanges of experiences and know-how, organising training for young entrepreneurs and other relevant steps.<sup>26</sup> Lypa supported virtually the same goals with the notable exception of promoting foreign investment. Such investment, he argued, would not contribute to the development of national industry but only lead to the enrichment of investors and some local administrators; plus there was the growing security threat to consider. In his writing about the SME sector, the geopolitician also advocated for the revival of "natural" forms of Black Sea entrepreneurship. National and international policies on small and medium-sized companies, he argued, should support the emergence of *zadrugas* (family businesses), *artiles* (small businesses with a narrow niche that were usually composed of several *zadrugas*) and cooperatives (medium-sized companies consisting of several *artiles*).<sup>27</sup> As such, not only transparent business relations, but also interpersonal solidarity and family-type collectivism were of crucial importance to Lypa's SME sector models.

No clear environmental and gender issues are discussed in Lypa's works since these matters were not of significant concern in the 1940s. His only mention of women's social role related to the preservation and transfer of national traditions. Lypa argued that women might become good politicians, social activists or even soldiers, but they were not born to take on these roles. On the other hand, he noted that women and men usually enjoyed equal rights in societies in the Black Sea region and that particularly in Ukraine, these societies were historically matriarchal; women had a prominent social role because they kept their families strong.<sup>28</sup> Though some may claim today that such statements are sexist, they reflect gender equality as it was understood in the second quarter of the 20th century.

*From BSU  
to BSEC*

Unlike current BSEC leaders, Lypa was not particularly interested in the issue of food security. He considered the Black Sea region to be sufficiently fertile to feed all its inhabitants; just the agricultural facilities in Ukraine, he claimed, were sufficient to satisfy internal demands for food.<sup>29</sup> To increase land fertility, the geopolitician advised launching policies to attract private industrial investors. This would not only lead to more efficient production, but also strengthen the economic reliability and military capacities of BSU member states.<sup>30</sup> He did not, however, describe any precise mechanisms to achieve these ends: it was not clear how to redirect private investment into agriculture or how to draw economic and military benefits from food overproduction.

Finally, Lypa was silent on the issues of banking cooperation and organised crime. On the first count, this was because the banking sector was exceedingly weak in the Black Sea region in the interwar period. On the second, organised crime was not perceived as a substantial threat.

All in all, Lypa did not provide any substantial economic calculations, programmes or roadmaps in his books; instead, he appealed to existing economic opportunities and the natural resources of the Black Sea region, holding that these might potentially bring the states located there a new global status. These opportunities remain valid even at the beginning of the 21st century. Abundant natural resources, fertile soil, the vast size of the population, convenient communication and transport systems and an entrepreneurial spirit – all these things may contribute significantly to living standards in BSEC member states. Nevertheless, Lypa argued that for economic opportunities to take flesh, political unification and

practical inter-governmental management were of absolute importance. This is something that BSEC leaders are still not fully inclined to accept; they are only prepared to consider select issues of a political nature at an inter-state level. As it turns out, some of these issues were also noted by Lypa as BSU objectives.

### **Political Foundations of the BSU: Measuring Lypa's Romanticism**

If we are to believe Lypa, Ukraine, Turkey and Bulgaria were all destined to create the political body of the BSU. The three states had experienced deep interconnection throughout history; they also shared the same outlook and treated one another with respect. The minor tensions which existed between them in the 1940s would be resolved promptly and peacefully in the name of future prosperity, he said. Turning to the political leader of the Ukraine-Turkey-Bulgaria triumvirate, Lypa claimed that only Ukraine could succeed with this responsibility. In his view, Ukrainians were less inclined to adopt arbitrary political decisions than Bulgarians and Turks; they favoured a rational approach to governance. As proof, Lypa pointed out that Ukrainian administrative geniuses and intellectuals enjoyed high regard among the rulers of neighbouring states. For example, he claimed that the descendants of the Rozumovskyi, Suvorov, Kochubei and Paskevych noble lines were known in medieval and modern Europe as the brightest administrators within the Russian states.<sup>31</sup>

On the roles of the BSU member states, Lypa argued that Turkey would become the Union's stronghold in the Middle East, Ukraine would emerge as a liberator of the Caucasus (leading to the unifying of fragmented republics) and Bulgaria would secure the Union's Balkan interests.<sup>32</sup> As a Christian state, Bulgaria would also assist Ukraine in counterbalancing any eventual political fluctuations in Turkey. Under a single leadership, the three states were meant to pacify the territories at the BSU's border with each of one taking care of its own neighbourhood. This would help the union to withstand external pressures from the Russian, British, French, German and Italian sides. The military units of Bulgaria and Turkey would be capable of achieving these objectives with some rearmament and training.<sup>33</sup>

Focusing particularly on Turkey and Ukraine – set to become two major powers of the union – Lypa noted that these states had support-

ed one another frequently and constructively throughout history. We may recall here the Turkish assistance to the Cossack Hetmans in their wars against the Poles and Muscovites; the Turkish support for the Cossacks after the destruction of Zaporozhian Sich in 1774; the Cossack participation in Ottoman military campaigns; Turkey's recognition of the Ukrainian People's Republic in 1919 (it was in fact the first state to recognise UPR); Turkish agreements with the Ukrainian Soviet Republic and other examples.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Lypa claimed that these two states were naturally predisposed to cooperate with one another: Turkey's biggest mineral resource deposits and most developed industrial districts were located in the north of the country while the Ukrainian equivalents were mainly in the south. The Black Sea was the only barrier between the Turkish and Ukrainian industrial areas.

Additionally, Turkey and Ukraine also shared ancient traditions of profitable sea trade. This reached its historical zenith in 1649 when a trade convention was signed between the Zaporozhian Cossacks and the Ottoman Empire granting Cossack vessels the right to free movement on the Black Sea. This document consisted of 13 articles and entitled the Cossacks to trade tax-free on Turkish territory for the next 100 years.<sup>35</sup> In fact, this was first customs union in the Black Sea region and its positive example, described by Lypa, can be seen as the blueprint for the BSU.

People living on the Anatolian peninsula had always needed access to northern markets and vice versa. This is clear from the very existence of a medieval trading route between the Varangians and the Greeks which connected the Baltic and Mediterranean seas. In Lypa's time, Turkey was interested in exporting wool and cattle to the north and importing Ukrainian cotton, steel and machinery.<sup>36</sup> The geopolitician advocated strongly for the preservation of the North-to-South connection in the Black Sea region over the course of history. He claimed that this would not only enrich all states situated there, but strengthen the role of the region at a global level.

Lypa also argued that Kyiv should become the capital of the BSU. There were several factors which predisposed the city to this role. First, Kyiv had a symbolic place in the Black Sea region, having accumulated cultural heritage and shaped political traditions for centuries. Secondly, it lay at the heart of the North-to-South trading routes. Thirdly, it was known as a centre of Christianity and was thus better placed to unite Christians living in the region than Istanbul, which had already become a pillar of the Muslim cultural world.<sup>37</sup>

If we compare Lypa's political visions with the current state of the Black Sea region, it is clear that the Ukrainian scholar was partly right. Demir notes that Ukrainian markets are currently filled with the products of Turkish light industries while Turkey remains one of the biggest importers of Ukrainian steel and scrap metals.<sup>38</sup> The same is true of inter-state investment: Turkish entrepreneurs are willing to develop Ukrainian industries, focusing especially coal extraction near the Black Sea shores; at the same time, Ukrainians are investing in Turkish recreational facilities. The quantity of Black Sea trade is also growing though it remains significantly imbalanced with a clear predominance of raw materials and products with little value added.<sup>39</sup> Finally, Ukraine can rely on Turkish support when it comes to the issues of oil and gas supplies. Turkey is interested in its northern neighbour as a reliable transit partner. and it is eager to develop joint energy projects.

Even so, there are a number of issues which do not correspond to the patterns forecast by Lypa . One is the fact that Turkey plays a more important role in the Black Sea region than Ukraine does, with the BSEC's "capital" being located in Istanbul, and not in Kyiv. Turkey is the initiator and coordinator of the Black Sea For programme, which addresses common security, rescue and search activities in the Black Sea and also trains the military to help civilian vessels in need. Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Russia and Georgia are all participating states. Black Sea Harmony is another Turkish initiative in which Russia and Ukraine have some involvement. The main programme objective is the interception of suspicious vessels to prevent terrorist activity at sea and secure the straits. Russia is a crucial partner here, making it a second active player in the region. In contrast, Ukraine can hardly be said to be interested in southward expansion. It possesses no clear strategy regarding Black Sea policies and is bandwagoning between powers in the East and the West, and not those in the North and the South where it claims to be neutral.<sup>40</sup>

Returning to the matter of the Russian (eventually Soviet) presence in the Black Sea region, Lypa maintained that this should be minimised or even terminated. In his view, Russia's interests and the arrogant ways that they were promoted undermined natural trading patterns in the region. The geopolitician wrote that Russia had never been comfortable on the Black Sea shores: its exports and trade there were very weak and risky due to its inability to control all the players there. In 1896, 92.5% of vessels moored in Russia's Black Sea ports belonged to foreign countries;

by 1911, the situation had improved slightly for Russia with foreign vessels constituting 86.1% of moored ships. Lypa attributed the imbalance to the Kremlin's disastrous policy on tariffs and trade; transporting goods from one Black Sea port to another was, he noted, as costly as sending them from the port to Great Britain. It was similarly more expensive to transport coal from the Donets Basin to the Black Sea ports than to send it to the Baltic ports ten times further away.<sup>41</sup>

*From BSU  
to BSEC*

According to Lypa, Russia's aggressive behaviour towards the Caucasus contributed to the instability and insecurity in the region. The geopolitician wrote that such brazen attempts to conquer and administer the mountainous republics had undermined the ordinary lives of their native peoples and triggered significant turmoil. The same turmoil could be observed in the Ukrainian lands where public dissent had been brewing since 1918. Expelling Russia from the Black Sea region and restoring ancient lifestyles would significantly decrease tensions in the region. To achieve this goal, an independent Ukraine should gain control over all Soviet shores in the Black and Azov seas, Lypa argued.<sup>42</sup> This control over the seas would significantly jeopardise Russian positions on land. Nevertheless, it must be conceded that neither Ukraine nor any other state in the Black Sea region was in a position to achieve these objectives in 1940s, just as they do not they have much chance of accomplishing them today – if indeed they ever will.

Assessing Lypa's views on Russia means running into significant degrees of subjectivity and romanticism. The position of Russia, a 20th-century superpower could not be disregarded as easily as Lypa wished to do; its regional policies, which he labelled 'disastrous,' had after all managed to ensure the Kremlin's interests in these lands over centuries. Moreover, Lypa never wrote about positive aspects of Russian's presence on the Black Sea shores such as the region's dramatic industrialisation and the increase in living standards. As of today, Russia, like Turkey, remains a key player in the region. Nothing threatens its dominance; moreover, it has incentives to acquire even more power. Finally, if there emerges any threat which could weaken Russian presence in the region, this would undermine existing economic ties and the political status quo. The consequences could be devastating.

In describing the Black Sea region, Lypa constantly stressed its colonial status as perceived by the interwar superpowers. To fight off the colonialist assaults of third countries, he advocated for an end to



external dependencies along with the development of a closed economy. Cutting ties with the external world, however, had several significant drawbacks. These would become clear with time. Lypa did not take into consideration the shift that Western states had made from “hard” to “soft” power in their foreign policies, or the distinct pro-European orientation of several Black Sea states, especially Bulgaria, Turkey and Romania. The majority of the threats he saw as critical had ceased to exist after the Second World War and could be ruled out in later years. For instance, Turkey currently experiences no pressures from Britain, Italy and France at its borders; the Balkan and Central European states are no longer threatened by either the Russians or the Germans; a sovereign Ukraine also has means to oppose Russian influences. The truth is also that the Black Sea states are more willing to cooperate with “Western bullies” than they are willing to develop a self-sufficient inter-governmental body in the Black Sea region. Again taking Turkey as an example, the rates of its exports to Germany and imports from South Korea are several times higher than those for its trade with Ukraine, its neighbour on the natural North-to-South axis.<sup>43</sup> It is also worth highlighting that Turkey has already joined a customs union with the EU.

The Black Sea region is of strategic importance for a united Europe today. No longer perceived as a colonial space, this area of 190 million citizens is instead seen as a huge market for the sale of goods and provision of services. On this basis, the region appears to be a player in European and Asian trade relations. In addition, it is rich in mineral resources, which are vital for the sustainability of Western economies. All this results in significant European engagement in promoting the economic predictability of the region, decreasing financial risks, combating organised crime and terrorism, advancing good governance and developing oil and gas transport systems.<sup>44</sup> When Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007, Brussels officials gained a legitimate foothold for their representation in the region, allowing them to promote EU strategic interests more efficiently. To facilitate BSEC-EU cooperation, the special Black Sea Synergy programme was launched along with the European Neighbourhood Policy. These developments point to a significant deviation from Lypa’s theory: the BSEC does not function as an independent entity; instead it is used by its member states as a means to cooperate with the EU. BSEC membership may also serve to accelerate the EU accession tracks of Turkey, Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine.<sup>45</sup>

Coming back to the cultivating of closed national economies, it can hardly be agreed that this is the best option for state development. Indeed,

it may even be considered a disastrous strategy from the point of view of the underdeveloped states of 1940s. The evidence can be found in the present-day Black Sea region: Moldova and Georgia are two states with comparatively closed economies. On the one hand, this served to soften the severe impact of the 2008 world crisis and to preserve the growth of their GDP uninterrupted. On the other hand, these states are some of the poorest in Europe with no significant economic growth beyond their cities.<sup>46</sup> This demonstrates that a closed economy never bears much fruit and would have been counterproductive to the BSU.

To summarise, several of Lypa's expectations made his political theorising unrealistic. For a start, he overestimated the solidarity of the nations located in the Black Sea region. Not all of them were willing to establish genuine relations with one another and, most likely, not all of them would recognise Ukraine as a political leader. Secondly, he did not properly consider the post-war changes in Europe or the shift within Western states to liberalism and "soft" power. Thirdly, he underestimated the positions and policies of Russia, which was firmly entrenched in the Black Sea region. As such, Lypa's idea of the BSU as a political union was not feasible. The current BSEC, with its poor functionality and narrow economic outlook, is the best proof of this claim.

## Conclusions

It may be observed that despite their numerous similarities on a conceptual level, the BSU and the BSEC in fact had different objectives. In describing the BSU, Lypa was sure that:

1. the Black Sea states had no option other than besides forming a political bloc to achieve prosperity,
2. that bloc would emerge notwithstanding any external oppression or internal disagreements,
3. it would become culturally and ideologically homogeneous and
4. it was the only way for the colonised Black Sea states to ensure their independence and strengthen global role.

As an existing body, the BSEC demonstrates that Lypa's aims were not entirely valid for the region. This can be deduced from the following:

1. Black Sea states pursue different interests and are not inclined to pool their sovereign powers,
2. these states clearly lack coherence and common understandings in their relations with one another,
3. their cooperation is largely limited to the economic sphere and

4. some Black Sea states put little stock in a strong BSEC and instead use it as a tool to pursue alternative goals (for instance, accelerating EU accession).

CEJISS  
4/2014

The current balance of power in the region can also scarcely be defined as in line with Lypa's predictions. Ukraine, which he argued would become a political leader, remains too weak and indifferent to unify the Black Sea states. Turkey and Bulgaria, supposed to become the major powers in the region along with Ukraine, remain sceptical about the creation of a triumvirate; the North-to-South axis is dysfunctional. In contrast, Russia continues to actively promote its interests disregarding Lypa's claim that it should be ousted from the Black Sea shores. Finally, there has been no significant advance in the BSEC objectives since 1993: little changed between the time of the Bosphorus Statement and the latest Istanbul Summit Declaration. In other words, Lypa's ideas of political unification, deepening interdependence and the creation of a genuine bloc in the Black Sea region remain largely wishful thinking.

Ironically, it is the supposed Western bullies whom the geopolitician considered a critical threat which have started to set up the most constructive policies in the region. In this regard, we can point to the EU's Black Sea Synergy programme, which aims to stimulate economic reforms, facilitate trade and further democratisation. The majority of the BSEC states are currently far more interested in cooperating with the EU than among themselves. Moreover, Bulgaria and Romania have already joined the EU, thereby clearly demonstrating their strategic orientation; their activities within the BSEC are now restricted by the European *acquis communautaire*. Finally, Western states no longer perceive the Black Sea region as a colony. Instead, they regard it as a massive market for the sale of their goods and services.

The general romanticism in Lypa's geopolitical thinking has been eloquently summed up by Dnistrianskyi: 'In the context of his time ... he overestimated the value of anthropological factors in social and political processes [and he overstated] the uniqueness of Ukrainian cultural and historic traditions. His interpretation of ancient Ukrainian history is not purified through this mythologising.'<sup>47</sup> If, however, we indulge the evident miscalculations, then we will also note the strengths in Lypa's objectives. Updated and adjusted, these aims continue to be the impetus for the operation of the BSEC today:

1. the Black Sea states all agree to deepen intra-regional trade and investments,

2. they are working towards establishing a customs union and facilitating migration,
3. they plan to construct and maintain an efficient transport network including sea lanes and land routes,
4. they aim to increase food security and safety by developing the region's agricultural potential and
5. they agree to exchange and trade natural resources with one another, thereby satisfying regional demands for oil, gas and coal

*From BSU  
to BSEC*

To conclude, despite the critical shortcomings in Lypa's political theory, it is of significant historic value and highly innovative. It might even be said that the geopolitician was one of the spiritual founding fathers of the BSEC. Entirely on his own, he worked out a sophisticated strategy for the dozens of Black Sea states on the eve of Second World War, and he published it under very harsh conditions. It is likely that strategy would have been significantly improved if Lypa had lived for a longer time and continued his work after the war. He was, however, murdered by the NKVD in 1944.<sup>48</sup>



OSTAP KUSHNIR is affiliated with Lazarski University and may be reached at: [o.kushnir@lazarski.edu.pl](mailto:o.kushnir@lazarski.edu.pl).

## Notes

1. Viktoria Koshelenko (2011), *Problemy Obezpecheniya Energeticheskoy Bezopasnosti V Chernomorskom Regione* ('Energy Security Problems in the Black Sea Region,') in *Problemy i Perpektivy Razvitiya Sotrudnichestva Mezhdru Stranami Yugo-Vostochnoy Evropy v Ramkach Chernomorskogo Ekonomicheskogo Sotrudnichestva i GUAM*, vol. 1, p. 360.
2. Natalia Reznikova and Maria Vidiakina (2009), *OCHES: Vid Novogo Regionalizmu Do Novyh Mozhlyvostey Globalnoyi Vzayemodiyi* ('BSEC: from New Regionalism to New Opportunities of Global Cooperation,') in *Problemy i Perpektivy Razvitiya Sotrudnichestva Mezhdru Stranami Yugo-Vostochnoy Evropy v Ramkach Chernomorskogo Ekonomicheskogo Sotrudnichestva i GUAM*, vol. 1, p. 143.
3. Ostap Kushnir (2013), 'Interwar Views on Managing Eastern European Space,' *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*, vol. 7, issue 4, p. 68.
4. Mykhaylo Slaboshpytskyj (2006), *Yasnozbroynyi* ('Armed with Light'), *From*

- the Biography of a White Monk*, p. 49.
5. BSEC (1992), 'The Bosphorus Statement,' available at: <<http://www.bsec-organization.org/documents/declaration/summit/Reports/Bosphorus%201992.pdf>> (accessed 10 May 2013).
  6. Konstantyn Balabanov (2009), 'Osoblyvosti Rozvytku Integratsiynyh Prot-sesiv Na Subregionalnomu Rivni ('Peculiarities in the Development of Integration Processes on a Subregional Level,') in *Problemy i Perpektivy Razvitiya Sotrudnichestva Mezhdru Stranami Yugo-Vostochnoy Evropy v Ramkakh Chernomorskogo Ekonomicheskogo Sotrudnichestva i GUAM*, vol. 1, p. 25; Reznikova and Vidiakina (2009), p. 141.
  7. Igor Tarlopov (2009), 'Perspektyvy Ta Shlahy Rozvytku Ukrayiny U Skla-di OCHES ('Perspectives and Means of Developing Ukraine in the BSEC,') in *Problemy i Perpektivy Razvitiya Sotrudnichestva Mezhdru Stranami Yu-go-Vostochnoy Evropy v Ramkakh Chernomorskogo Ekonomicheskogo Sotrud-nichestva i GUAM*, vol. 1, p. 151.
  8. Evgeniy Belichenko (2009), 'Nekotorye Aspekty Protsessa Konvergentsiyi Ekonomiki YE-ES I Stran OCHES ('Several Aspects of the Convergence Pro-cess for EU-BSEC Economies,') in *Problemy i Perpektivy Razvitiya Sotrudnich-estva Mezhdru Stranami Yugo-Vostochnoy Evropy v Ramkakh Chernomorskogo Ekonomicheskogo Sotrudnichestva i GUAM*, vol. 1, p. 202.
  9. Tarlopov (2009), p. 151.
  10. These acronyms refer respectively to the European Union, the Common-wealth of Independent States, the GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, the Central European Free Trade Agreement, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the European Cooperation Organi-zation, the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation D-8, the Group of 20 and the European Economic Community.
  11. BSEC (2012), 'Istanbul Summit Declaration on the Occasion of the Twenti-eth Anniversary of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Coopera-tion,' available at: <<http://www.bsec-organization.org/documents/declaration/summit/Reports/ISTANBUL%20SUMMIT%20DECLARATION%2026June.pdf>> (accessed 13 May 2013).
  12. Yuriy Lypa (1942), *Chornomorska Doktryna (The Black Sea Doctrine)*, War-saw: Ukrainian Black Sea Institute, vol. 13, p. 92.
  13. Ibid, p. 9. See also Kushnir (2013), p. 71.
  14. Kushmir (2013), p. 71; Lypa (1942), p. 90.
  15. Lypa (1942), p. 75.
  16. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey (2012), 'The BSEC Econom-ic Agenda – Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership,' available at: <[http://www.mfa.gov.tr/the-bsec-economic-agenda---towards-an-enhanced-bsec-partnership\\_-26-june-2012\\_-istanbul.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/the-bsec-economic-agenda---towards-an-enhanced-bsec-partnership_-26-june-2012_-istanbul.en.mfa)> (accessed 12 May 2013).
  17. Yuriy Lypa and Lew Bykowski (1941), *Chornomorskyi Prostir (The Black Sea Space)*, Warsaw: Ukrainian Black Sea Institute, vol. 6, pp. 9-10; Kushnir (2013), p.73.
  18. Lypa and Bykowski (1941), pp. 9-10.
  19. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey (2012).
  20. Lypa (1942), p. 146; Kushnir (2013), p. 76.

21. Lypa (1942), p. 90.
22. Koshelenko (2011), p. 361.
23. Andreas Umland (2013), 'German-Russian Business Cooperation: What Consequences for Eastern Europe?' *Discussion Club Valdai*, available at: <[http://valdaiclub.com/europe/63860/print\\_edition/](http://valdaiclub.com/europe/63860/print_edition/)> (accessed 29 October 2013)
24. Lypa (1942), p. 106.
25. Ibid, p. 107.
26. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey (2012).
27. Ibid, p. 80; Kushnir (2013), p. Page number is missing.
28. Yuriy Lypa (1997), *Pryznachennia Ukrayiny (The Destination of Ukraine)*, Kyiv: Olzhych Foundation, p. 159.
29. Lypa (1942), p. 28.
30. Ibid, p. 77.
31. Ibid, p. 12; Kushnir (2013), p. 84.
32. Lypa (1942), pp. 39, 41.
33. Lypa and Bykowski (1941), p. 23.
34. Lypa (1942), pp. 39, 44; Gökhan Demir (2009), Predposylki Razvitiya Vneshneekonomicheskikh Sviazey Ukrainy I Turtsyi Na Sovremennom Etapie ('Premises for the Current Stage of Development of External Economic Relations between Ukraine and Turkey,') in *Problemy i Perpektivy Razvitiya Sotrudnichestva Mezhdru Stranami Yugo-Vostochnoy Evropy v Ramkakh Chernomorskogo Ekonomicheskogo Sotrudnichestva i GUAM*, vol. 1, p. 55.
35. Ibid, p. 55.
36. Lypa (1942), pp. 39, 43.
37. Kushnir (2013), p.74.
38. Demir (2009), p. 55.
39. Olena Kovalenko (2011), OCHES: Ekonomichniy Stan Ta Intensyvnyy Torgovogo Spivrobitnytstva ('BSEC: Economic Conditions and Intensity of Trade Cooperation,') in *Problemy i Perpektivy Razvitiya Sotrudnichestva Mezhdru Stranami Yugo-Vostochnoy Evropy v Ramkakh Chernomorskogo Ekonomicheskogo Sotrudnichestva i GUAM*, vol. 1, p. 332.
40. Koshelenko (2011), p. 364.
41. Lypa (1942), p. 39, pp. 122-123.
42. Ibid, p. 128.
43. European Commission (2013), 'Turkey: Trade Picture,' available at: <<http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/turkey/>> (accessed 22 May 2013).
44. Reznikova and Vidiakina (2009), pp. 143-144 Koshelenko (2011), p. 363.
45. Maria Bobyleva (2009), Posylennia Vzeyemodiyi Mizh Krayinamy OCHES Ta Ukrayinoyu V Konteksti Yevropeyskogo Spivrobitnytstva ('Accelerating Interactions between the BSEC Member-States and Ukraine in the Context of European Cooperation,') in *Problemy i Perpektivy Razvitiya Sotrudnichestva Mezhdru Stranami Yugo-Vostochnoy Evropy v Ramkakh Chernomorskogo Ekonomicheskogo Sotrudnichestva i GUAM*, vol. 1, p. 208. See also Belichenko (2009), p. 204.
46. Kovalenko (2011), p. 330.

Ostap  
Kushnir

47. Myroslav Dnistrianskyi (2000), Pratsi S. Rudnytskogo I Yu. Lypy V Konteksti Yevropeyskoyi Polityko-Geografichnoyi Dumky ('The Works of S. Rudnytski and Yu. Lypa in the Context of European Political and Geopolitical Thought'), *History of Ukrainian Geography: The All Ukrainian Scientific and Theoretical Journal*, vol. 2, p, 77.
48. The Narodnyi komisariat vnutrishnikh sprav (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) was a law enforcement agency of the Soviet Union.