

“Strategic challenges in the area between the Adriatic and the Black Sea”

Even if the world should have been a better place after “the end of history” predicted almost two decades ago, the latest evolutions depict rather the contrary. Crucially, the South-East Europe and the Black Sea area define an integrated region that presents specific vulnerabilities. The events in the past few years have affected significantly the security environment in the region, as the society feels a stronger will to return to parties that insist on a nationalistic agenda.

The complementary security area from the Caucasus Mountains to the Adriatic Sea suffered numerous convulsions after the fall of communism, many of them deepening the century-old traumas. If Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria and then Croatia integrated into NATO and EU and show openly their will to embrace the Western values, there is a considerable number of states in the former Yugoslav and Soviet space that face deficiencies in proving their attachment to these values. The high instability is not only characteristic to the Black Sea area, where the frozen conflicts render more difficult any democratic progress, but also in the Balkan space, where the ethnic and religious conflicts have not been decisively overcome.

The region has always been under the attention of the grand international actors, but the recent evolutions have proved that South-East Europe and the Black Sea area receive an ever growing interest from the world order contesters. This external contest for influence tends to determine the leaders in the region to profit from the newly arrived opportunities, but with the risk of significant deviation from the European values. The economic possibilities that the new actors promise seem remarkable even if the economic offer cannot be dissociated from the political one. As this approach is combined with the fact that the most international ranking consider that the biggest part of the states in the region face major issues regarding the rule of law, the instability tends to increase in the next period.

One of the key-domains for South-East Europe and Black Sea area complementarity is the energy security. The plans for diversification proposed in order to secure the energy supply for the region are also affected by the competition that the international actors show more openly. The systemic unpredictability, but also the regional specific vulnerability will only delay the emergence of solutions. This series of challenges have determined New Strategy Center and Institute for Development and International Relations to publish two common studies regarding the strategic situation of South East Europe and the Black Sea area.