NATO Defence College Occasional Papers Nos 10 & 11 - 'The Role of the Wider Black Sea Area in a Future European Security Space - Vols 1 and 2': December 2005
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These are a collection of essays that arose out of the 14th Partnership for Peace International Research Seminar held in June 2005 sponsored by the NATO Studies Centre.

Volume 1 reviews the concept of the Wider Black Sea and addresses regional cooperation issues and unresolved conflicts. As a historical record of calendar events it is a useful reference and highlights the continuing importance of the legal limits set by the 1936 Montreux Convention.
Unfortunately, it is not a complete reference as it fails to provide the underlying reasons or influences that caused certain states to withdraw from some post-Cold War Cooperation agreements. Principally these were Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan who withdrew from the Collective Security Treaty in 1999, and in 2002 Uzbekistan also withdrew from the GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova) formed at the 1996 CFE Treaty Conference to counter Russian attempts to control the former Soviet area. In looking at the integration of the Black Sea area into Euro-Atlantic structures the essay offers some sound recommendations and sees the EU and NATO playing leading roles. It does offer a warning that too many regional constructs and external actors could have a negative effect due to differing agendas and objectives.
The last paper in Volume 1 is in effect an updated summary of a previously reviewed NDC Occasional Paper No 23 (Oct 05) (BR11) on the Transdniestria conflict and the positions of the external actors involved. The summary offers a less than enthusiastic overview of the prospects for the region.
It is interesting to note that the role of the OSCE is completely marginalised or ignored in all the essays including the statement in the final essay that Russia has 'given up on the OSCE and is looking for alternative channels of communication and influence'. Given that the OSCE for years has been considered a pillar of international law in humanitarian and security fields, this is a remarkable and swift diminution of its influence.

Volume 2 looks at the influence of the EU and Russia concerning the Black Sea's role and key position in Euro-Asian geopolitics with particular respect to security issues. However, the essays look at the wider involvement and recognise that the main external actors are the US and Russia; the Black Sea states that recognise they have an important role in the region; and NATO and the EU as having security influence and facilitating international cooperation respectively.
The perspectives tend to reflect the nationality of the authors and national positions clearly influence some of the statements made by the Ukrainian, Bulgarian and Georgian authors.
In this respect the positions considered tend to be superficial statements with little in the way of deeper and balanced argument. The essays highlight the main problem areas and associated issues but there is relatively little offered in the way of identifying opportunities and

much of the comment is about the negative postures and inadequate initiatives of the main players, principally Russia.
The essays in this volume make quite clear that a plethora of regional, area, security and economic organisations and structures have developed, spawning many linkages and initiatives that do not necessarily have common objectives and in some cases are contradictory. It is clear that the Black Sea states do not want to be seen as the "Western East" but it is equally unclear as to what position they do desire and if there is any measure of agreement amongst themselves in this context.