

A Geostrategic View of Semi-enclosed Boundary Seas: the Case of the EU¹

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The European Security Strategy (December 12, 2003) applies not only to land areas but also to semi-enclosed or closed large water bodies, which are the Baltic Sea in the Northeast, the Mediterranean Sea in the South, and the Black and Caspian Seas towards the East. All of them are located at the boundaries of the European Union and are used as gateways between the various continental and coastal powers of the “Eurasian coastline”², composed of seven of the fifteen biggest trading partners of the EU (China, Japan, South Korea, India, Taiwan, Singapore and Saudi Arabia). Working towards coherent and efficient strategies regarding these regional seas is thus essential to the stability and security of the region and of the EU as a whole.

Addressing issues and integrating policies at stake

The application of the new Integrated Maritime Policy much depends on the capacity of making synergies between a number of EU policies³ such as the Trans-European Networks (TEN) in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy supply infrastructure, the Structural Funds and European Regional Development Fund (EDR) about economic and social cohesion, the two EU-led common policies for agriculture and fisheries, the Marine and Maritime Research Strategy, and the Environment policy.

In this regard, these four sea areas are worth particular attention due to the strong socio-economic and environmental links and their importance in EU external policy. To tackle the key environmental issues in these regions⁴, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is a crucial dialogue and action based tool, particularly through fostering technology transfer and helping to build institutional capacity.

Broadening the scope of integrated coastal management

When launching its strategy to implement the EU Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Recommendation (2002), the Commission indicated that coastal areas are particularly in need of an integrated territorial approach, but, notwithstanding the continued need for ICZM on shore, further emphasis should be placed on the implementation of ICZM across the land-sea boundary and in a regional seas context⁵. The EU integrated maritime policy and its environmental pillar, the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, should give new impetus to the ICZM policy toward sustainable development, i.e. integrating environmental policies into sectoral policies. This consideration is particularly important while ICZM is nowadays a popular concept that is under implementation in many locations and riparian countries of the four seas (like in other parts of the world!). Moreover, in a region like the Baltic Sea, ICZM initiatives are increasingly becoming trans-boundary, thus enhancing the joint regional cooperation between the Baltic Sea regional users⁶. These numerous ICZM projects represent a regional potential capital provided they are given the opportunity and the means to network together.

Strengthening the role of regional seas conventions and their action plan

Three of the four seas (Baltic, Mediterranean, and Black Sea) are under a Regional Sea Convention and Action Plan along UNEP Regional Seas Programme to which the EU is contributing as a Party. Under the UNEP global strategic directions⁷, their major concerns and priorities are in agreement with a number of EU initiatives like Horizon 2020 in the Mediterranean:

- land-based sources of marine pollution with particular emphasis on responding to pollution resulting from municipal wastewater;
- ship-generated marine pollution, oil spill

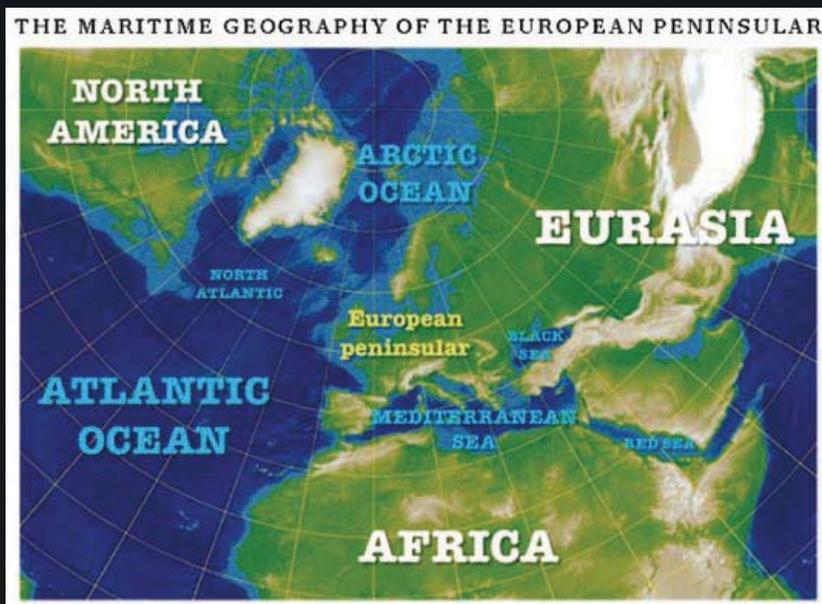


Figure 1

1. This article is an adapted short version of a paper prepared in the framework of an EU 7th Research Programme project EU4SEAS: EU's Strategy on Maritime and Environmental Issues in the Four Seas: multilateral approaches in the Baltic, Black, Caspian and Mediterranean seas. Y. Henocque and X. Lafon. 2011

2. James Rogers. 2009. From Suez to Shanghai: the European Union and Eurasian maritime security. Occasional Paper 77, European Union Institute for Security Studies.

3. European Communities. 1999. ESPD – European Spatial Development Perspective. Towards balanced and sustainable development of the territory of the European Union. European Commission, Committee on Spatial Development.

4. EEA, 2007. Europe's environment – The fourth assessment. European Environment Agency, Copenhagen

5. COM (2007). An evaluation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in Europe.

6. Our coast. 2010. ICZM focus in the Baltic Sea region. Newsletter 5, Our coast – ICZM in Europe

7. UNEP, 2007. Global strategic directions for the regional seas programmes 2008-2012: enhancing the role of the regional seas conventions and action plans. 9th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas, Conventions and Action Plans.



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preparedness and response, and construction of port reception facilities for ships' wastes, a major concern in the four seas;

- the impact of increasing urbanization and coastal development on marine coastal ecosystems, requiring capacity building in support of integrated coastal management;
- conservation and management of marine and coastal ecosystems, including protected areas. Although over-exploitation or depletion of living marine resources, including fisheries, is a major concern, this aspect is mainly in the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations' hands;
- monitoring, reporting and assessing the marine environment, to fill the need for more accurate and technical information.



Working with other regional organisations

Given the over-fishing in the three seas (UNCLOS⁸ does not apply to the Caspian Sea), it is essential to link the EU Common Fisheries Policy to their respective regional fisheries organisations.

Security and good governance

In the four seas, with a special emphasis on the Mediterranean, Black and Caspian seas, the European Parliament⁹ recommends that the EU can and should play a more active role in shaping their security environment through enhanced EU cooperation. Creating linkages between security and environment observation systems could be very beneficial to the development of appropriate strategies.

GEF Partnerships

The three seas, the Baltic, Mediterranean and Black seas, are considered as large marine ecosystems (LME). The GEF/LME approach makes it an important framework for consistent information for GEF/LME methodology of Trans-boundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA),

followed by Strategic Action Plan (SAP) development which generates the strategy for each LME.

Working with regions and macro-regions

On many occasions, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) emphasized the peripheral Regions' capacity as outposts and the important role they can play in contributing to the EU Neighbourhood Policy at the EU's borders¹⁰, which is the case of the four seas. Overall, the EU 2020 strategy, through possible macro-regions¹¹, will need to be built on a multi-scale or "nested" governance system.

Some strategic recommendations

These strategic recommendations concern the four European regional border seas mentioned above but their essence could well be considered in regard to other regional seas like the Sea of Japan, or on a larger scale, the South China Sea.

- Given their strategic importance at the boundaries of the EU, each of the four seas' strategy should be an integral part of the EU's broader foreign and security vision where security, good governance, energy, transport, environment, socio-economic and human development shall be considered as priority actions;
- The development of synergies between the various EU policies that come into play in each of the four seas' strategy should be systematically promoted, particularly the Trans-European Transport and Energy Networks, the Structural Funds, the Environment policies including the agriculture and fisheries related ones, and the Research and Development Framework Programme;
- Since the state of the four seas is highly dependent on the state of their coastal areas, there should be a clear operational link between the EU ICZM and its Integrated Maritime

Policy as an essential building block for further work on maritime spatial planning in the double context of the EU Marine Strategy framework directive and the GEF Partnerships' initiatives, including its Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) main components;

- As a component of the Integrated Maritime Policy and in close collaboration with the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) should be considered in each of the four seas' strategies on an equal footing with the other European basins, including provisions to encourage the riparian states outside the EU to comply as closely as possible with the principles of the CFP;
- The existing Baltic and Mediterranean Seas maritime corridors, as well as future ones for the Black Sea Region, should be closely integrated into the TEN-T priority axes, in particular with regard to the Motorways of the Sea (TEN-T 21), completing the interconnections between each region and other European regions, as in the case of the Baltic-Adriatic corridor;
- In the name of the European Strategy for Marine and Maritime Research, each regional sea should benefit from the establishment of a specific Marine and Maritime Research Forum used as a forum for dialogue and partnership involving existing networks and all key partners in the marine and maritime research and industrial sectors;
- Cross-border cooperation between regions should be enhanced using frameworks such as the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) and structured networks supported by, among others, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) for developing multi-level forms of governance.

8. United Nations Convention on the Law Of the Sea.

9. European Parliament. 2010. Report on an EU Strategy for the Black Sea. EP Committee on Foreign Affairs.

10. CPMR. 2010. 38th General Assembly of the CPMR. Final Declaration and Resolutions.

11. CPMR. 2010. Europe and its neighbourhood : towards macro-regions ? Political and operational perspectives. Macro-regions seminar, Brussels, 1 July 2010.