

SYNERGING



ENERGIES

BLACK SEA SECURITY

ANALYTICAL MAGAZINE

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**INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS
about the Black Sea Region**

**Black Sea Region:
VIEWS FROM DIFFERENT COASTS**

**REVIEW OF FOREIGN SOURCES
on the Black Sea Region**

*Announcement of the Book
"Warfare Energy Forms-XXI:
Poly-Hybrersion of Russia"*

*Announcement of the Book
"Donbas in Flames"*

INTERNATIONAL ROUND TABLE

EU GLOBAL STRATEGY: PLACE, ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION OF UKRAINE



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INTERNATIONAL ROUND TABLE

**ГЛОБАЛЬНА СТРАТЕГІЯ ЄС:
МІСЦЕ, РОЛЬ І ВКЛАД УКРАЇНИ**

**EU GLOBAL STRATEGY:
PLACE, ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION OF UKRAINE**

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung |
Center for Global Studies «Strategy XXI»
Slovak Foreign Policy Association
Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research

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Kyiv, 24 April, 2017



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Dear readers,

It is the first issue of the “Black Sea Security” magazine in your hands. It is the first issue, which was prepared and issued not in Sevastopol but “on the mainland”, and the 29th issue since the time of establishing the edition. The Centre for Global Studies “Strategy XXI” resumes publishing the “Black Sea Security” magazine, which was founded in 2005. The founder was the Centre for assistance to the geopolitical problems and Euro-Atlantic cooperation of the Black Sea region “NOMOS”. For 8 years, till 2015, the magazine had published articles of Ukrainian and foreign experts from Estonia, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey, France, the Great Britain and Russia. It was the only edition in the Black Sea region, which systematically monitored and analysed security environment not only in the Black Sea area, but also in the Caspian Region, the South Caucasus, the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

We, the editorial staff, believe that it was natural and symbolic that publications, dedicated to regional security issues in the Black Sea region, were issued in the heart of the Black Sea area - the Ukrainian city of Sevastopol. It was so till 2014. But an event, which had been predicted by the experts of “NOMOS” with a high level of probability, occurred in 2014. Taking advantage of weaknesses of the Ukrainian state, caused by the internal political crisis, public resistance to the pro-Russian kleptocracy of Yanukovych and the “Trojan horse” - the power of the Black Sea fleet, which was stationed on the Ukrainian sovereign territory on its voluntary consent, contrary to all norms of the international law, Putin’s Russia occupied the peninsula and declared it “a part of the Russian Federation”.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine, occupation of Crimea and Sevastopol brought changes into functioning of the Centre «NOMOS». By unanimous decision of the founders, it was terminated because no one thought it possible to re-register the Centre under the occupation law. Publication of the magazine was stopped as well. It was regarded as a temporary measure.

Now it is time to resume publication of the magazine, what we are doing. Two members of the editorial board of the magazine, Dmytro Shtyblikov and Oleksiy Bessarabov, are in the captivity of the Russian FSB in Crimea, accused on trumped charges. But they stay with us, remain members of the renewed editorial board. The first article of this 29th issue of the magazine, written by my colleague Pavlo Lakiychuk from Sevastopol, is devoted to them.

It is necessary to remind that the Centre “NOMOS” was known in Ukraine and also abroad, and was a partner of the Centre “Strategy XXI”. The Centre studied the foreign policy of the Black Sea countries, international and regional cooperation, national security and defense, energy policy, international and regional security, Euro-Atlantic cooperation and problems of countering terrorism. The Centre “NOMOS” prepared analytical researches and published them in the “Black Sea Security”, which was a platform for professional discussions. The partners of the Centre were the International Renaissance Foundation, the Foreign Policy Research Institute at the Diplomatic Academy of Ukraine, the National Institute for Strategic Studies, the Centre for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies, the Razumkov Centre, the Institute for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation, the Harvard Black Sea Security Program (USA), the Centre for Eastern Studies (Poland), the Institute for Eastern Studies (Poland), the Research Centre of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, the Slovak Association of Gas and Oil, the Japanese Association for Black Sea Studies, the International Movement “Caspian Partnership for the Future” (Azerbaijan). The Centre was a member of the NATO-Ukraine Civic League, the NATO-Ukraine Network for Civil Society, the Network of Euro-Atlantic clubs, the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership, the Coalition of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, and a number of civil society councils.

Since 2006, “NOMOS” was co-organizer of the traditional annual conference on the Black Sea - Caspian security and regional cooperation. In June 2006, the conference was titled “Black Sea-Caspian dimension of the European security”, in May 2007 - “Through the ENP to new transit capacities of the Caspian-Black Sea-Baltic area”, in April 2008 - “The results of the NATO Bucharest Summit and Black Sea dimension of the European security.” The last event, co-organized by “NOMOS”, was the international expert discussion “Ukraine, Visegrad Group and NATO: Towards joint use of existing mechanisms and tools to improve regional security”, which was held in Sevastopol on November 6, 2013, just about four months before the beginning of the Russian invasion to Crimea.

Experts of the Centre were traditional participants of several international conferences and forums, round tables and workshops such as “Sevastopol Forum - 2006”, “Democratic Control Consortium”, NATO - Ukraine Forum (Wroclaw, 2007), Europe - Ukraine Forum (Poland), a chain of meetings within the Crimean political dialogue, the annual conference



Foto 1. Conference in Sevastopol, November 6, 2013.

“Energy security in the Central Europe and the EU” (Bratislava), the annual World Economic Forum in Krynica (Poland), energy and gas forums within the Visegrad group and the Central Europe formats. Security problems of the Black Sea region have always been in the focus of the Centre for Global Studies «Strategy XXI». Therefore, restoring the production of the magazine, the editorial board decided that its current issue would be dedicated to analytical points of view from different countries of the region on the Black Sea security after 2014, i.e., in the context of the Russian occupation of Crimea, an attempt of transformation of the Black Sea into a “Russian Lake», Russia’s armed intervention in eastern Ukraine. So we asked our colleagues, well-known experts from different countries of the region, to prepare basic analyses. We are grateful that the longstanding authors of the «Black Sea Security» from Georgia and Armenia agreed, and the new authors from Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova joined.

Of course, we could not ignore the emergence of the EU Global Strategy, adopted in 2016, and the NATO Warsaw Summit decisions. We offer you a digest of foreign and international assessments and approaches to security issues of the Black Sea region after Russia’s violation of the Helsinki international order.

Finally, we invite analysts, experts and scientists to debate on the pages of the magazine, express their opinions and assessments of the current situation in the

Black Sea region, Crimea, and the Middle East.

But what is the most important, we appeal to all colleagues - experts and journalists, our old partners in Europe, USA, and Canada, to defend political prisoners of the Kremlin. “If you are an analyst and a journalist, you are a potential enemy of Russia, and your place sooner or later is in the captivity of the FSB” - such message is sent by the Kremlin to all dissidents in the occupied Crimea, based on the case of Shtyblikov - Bessarabov. Therefore, our civil position and our joint action is the freedom of prisoners of the Kremlin!

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2016, November 9th or Pre-war Memories about Colleagues and Friends

In this article the author describes the real stories of his colleagues and friends, Ukrainian experts, who decided to stay in Crimea after its occupation by the Russian Federation.

In a pre-war period, this date was associated for me only with the "second day" of Shtyblikov's Birthday. Dmytro Shtyblikov, my colleague from the "NOMOS" Centre, Director on international programs of the Centre, Assistant Editor of "Black Sea Security" magazine. On November 9, 2016 the FSB of the RF published an announcement that "a subversive terrorist group of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, involved in preparation of subversive acts on the military objects in Crimea was detained in Sevastopol". Dmytro Shtyblikov, Oleksii Bessarabov and Volodymyr Dudka formed such a group. My purpose in writing this article therefore is to tell you more about my friends and former colleagues from the pre-war Sevastopol life.

Dima Shtyblikov was born on November 8, 1970 near Chita. Later his parents moved to Crimea. He lived with his mother in Yevpatoria, studied with his future wife Olena in the 8th School. After school, he chose a military career, graduated from the Kyiv High Military Command School. After collapse of the USSR, he was appointed in the newly formed 32nd Army Corps in Crimea. His military career passed on the peninsula. In 2004, he discharged for medical reasons. Dmytro was severely injured as a conscript had not properly fired from the grenade launcher, so Dima had to discharge a weapon and a projectile exploded. He became a handicapped person with injured head, a splinter under his heart and a mutilated hand. However, a Caplan Jew had excellent brains! Analytic was his talent.

Before the occupation of Crimea by Russia, he worked in the "NOMOS" Centre as a military expert, then became a director of the international programs. He



Foto 2. Volodymyr Dudka, Oleksii Bessarabov,
Dmytro Shtyblikov (from left to right)

was an active contributor to Ukrainian, Russian and Western media, worked under the scientific study on the international law aspects of counter-terrorism, took part in conferences in Ukraine, Russia and South Caucasus states.

Together with Dmytro and other colleagues, we set the "NOMOS" Centre on its feet, it was a unique non-governmental think tank with a long official name – Sevastopol Centre for Assistance to the Geopolitical Problems and Euro-Atlantic Cooperation of the Black Sea Region Studies. In fact, a phrase "assistance to Euro-Atlantic cooperation" in the name of the Centre had itself supposed for its experts a special case-file in the Russian Black Sea Fleet headquarters even in pre-war period, so after the occupation of the peninsula it was a label of "NATO's abode". With Dmytro as an assistant editor we published the first issues of «Black Sea Security», looked for authors, wrote articles, edited, imposed... During round table discussions and conferences, Dima didn't give a break to manipulators and duffers – neither Russian, nor Armenian, Azerbaijanian or any else. For these reasons, he was



Foto 3. Dmytro Shtyblykov in the family circle:
with his daughter Tetyana – a future architect, his
brother Oleksii and a nephew
(Source - Facebook)

respected by colleagues and partners not only in Ukraine, but also overseas. He was invited to forums in Moscow, Tbilisi, Yerevan, and Istanbul.

As far back as in 2008, Dmytro predicted results of the Russian policy in the Black Sea region. His article in “Black Sea Security” No. 10 of 2008 had eloquent title “Russian-Georgian Conflict. Will Ukraine be the next?” He clearly understood what was going on in spring 2014, and made his conscious choice. Instead of the further career of expert in the free country, “on land” as they say in Crimea, he chose family care in occupation. But what about work? Any work is honorable for a decent man, - he said. If there is no other work, then I will be a yard-keeper or a coal-heaver...I don't know how he survived these three horrible years, but I know for sure he remained decent and honest man.

I remember Lesha Bessarabov as a cadet of Nakhimov Sevastopol Naval Institute. He graduated in 1999 and served in Odessa in the Western region, then in Sevastopol – in the headquarters of the Marine Forces of Ukraine. In Odessa, he began to publish his articles in the “Sudokhodstvo” journal. Journalism was his hobby, which later became a profession. Having picked

up a stomach ulcer, he was released from the Armed Forces for health reasons in 2008. Oleksii obtained bachelors degree in the Institute of Journalism of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. We invited him to work in “NOMOS” but he agreed to become deputy editor of the “Black Sea Security.” Publication of the magazine was to him. In addition, Bessarabov as a creative person, was a correspondent of the Kyiv authoritative media “Glavred”. Oleksii Striletsky - that was his creative pseudo, rendered topical materials and picture stories.

He is a native habitant of Sevastopol, whose family roots stretched somewhere from Novgorod, had grown up in the independent Ukraine and loved it as his motherland. After occupation, he had no choice as he had family and old mother in Crimea...As many others, who had stayed on the peninsula as on the native Ukrainian land.

“Being a talented journalist and systematic analyst, Oleksii loved and knew perfectly his native city Sevastopol. My wife and me felt it while visiting the city. Thanks to Oleksii, Sevastopol showed us not only its tourist face, but also its real face – a friendly, warm, sunny and joyful one”, – mentioned the well-known Ukrainian journalist Volodymyr Kravchenko, a columnist of the weekly “Dzerkalo Tyzhnya. Ukraine”.

Dmytro Shtyblykov and Oleksii Bessarabov were arrested by the Russian FSB and accused of preparing sabotage and terrorist acts. The paradox and irony - the authors of numerous publications and analytical materials aimed at consolidating the international community in the fight against terrorism, were accused of terrorism by the regime that, in the words of Alexander Litvinenko, undermined Russia.

I should mention here another person, third ‘Crimean terrorist and saboteur’ - Volodymyr Dudka. He has never been an employee of the “NOMOS” or contributor to the “Black Sea Security”, but he was a critical and meticulous reader. He was also my friend, so without his story this article will be incomplete.

Volodymyr Mykhailovich Dudka is from Sumy. He graduated from Kaliningrad High Marine School several years earlier than me, served in the Black Sea Fleet in Myrnyi on Donuzlav. After the division of the USSR Black Sea Fleet, he went on service to the Marine Forces of Ukraine, was a captain of the “Simferopol”. Then, when his own ship was put on “an eternal anchor” at the plant, V. Dudka served in the Navy headquarters



Foto 4. Volodymyr with his granddaughter
(Source - the family archive)

in the operational shift at the command post. After retirement in 2009, worked as an engineer for safety in mobile units of the Ukrainian Emergency Ministry, accomplished demining of the Inkerman galleries and places of fighting of the World War II period on Meckenziev Mountains in Crimea. After annexation, the demining program was closed by the occupational authority. He didn't move to his motherland in Sumy as in Sevastopol he was closely tied to his only son's family, whom he brought up alone. All his free time he devoted to his grandchild...

The detention and arrest on false charges of the well-known in expert circles analysts from the "NOMOS" Centre cannot be interpreted in any other way as

Kremlin's revenge for their analytical and journalistic activity in Sevastopol and Crimea before occupation. In addition, after the FSB had disgraced itself with fake news about "August saboteurs" – Panov, Zahtiy, Suleymanov, – the Crimean FSB service had been tasked to find something more "elegant". Executors were found quickly from among the traitors and collaborators of the SBU. The motive was to avoid an assignment to distant regions of the RF and to show their irreplaceability exactly in Crimea. Therefore, for the legend of "subversive and terrorist group" Dmytro Shtyblykov and Oleksii Bessarabov aptly suited - both former officers, both worked "for NATO" in "NATO's abode", called "NOMOS", and published "anti-Russian" "Black Sea Security" magazine. Volodymyr Dudka, engaged in the demining works in the past, organically complemented a group, as two terrorists, spies and saboteurs – is not enough. In such a way, the Crimean KGB men fabricated one more wave of "Ukrainian saboteurs" for the sake of their Moscow chiefs.

However, the phoniness of the false FSB story with the "Crimean terrorist saboteurs" has been clear for any unbiased observer. I personally, as any Ukrainian, do not believe in the generosity of NKVD-KGB-FSB system and the justice of Russian Themis. We have seen this in the cases of Sentsov, Kolchenko, Semena, Sushchenko and many other Kremlin's prisoners from Crimean Tatars. Only an international publicity will accelerate freedom for Dmytro Shtyblykov, Oleksii Bessarabov and Volodymyr Dudka.

International organizations about the Black Sea region

NATO Warsaw Summit Communiqué

Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016

* * *

10. Russia's destabilizing actions and policies include: the ongoing illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, which we do not and will not recognize and which we call on Russia to reverse; the violation of sovereign borders by force; the deliberate destabilization of eastern Ukraine; large-scale snap exercises contrary to the spirit of the Vienna Document, and provocative military activities near NATO borders, including in the Baltic and Black Sea regions and the Eastern Mediterranean; its irresponsible and aggressive nuclear rhetoric, military concept and underlying posture; and its repeated violations of NATO Allied airspace. In addition, Russia's military intervention, significant military presence and support for the regime in Syria, and its use of its military presence in the Black Sea to project power into the Eastern Mediterranean have posed further risks and challenges for the security of Allies and others...

17. Russia bears full responsibility for the serious deterioration of the human rights situation on the Crimean peninsula, in particular the discrimination against the Crimean Tatars and other members of local communities. We demand that the Russian de facto authorities take the necessary measures to ensure the safety, rights, and freedoms of everyone living on the peninsula. International monitoring structures must be allowed to carry out their essential work in view of the protection of human rights. We condemn Russia's ongoing and wide-ranging military build-up in Crimea, and are concerned by Russia's efforts and stated plans for further military build-up in the Black Sea region...

23. We face evolving challenges in the Baltic and Black Sea regions, the North Atlantic, as well as in the Mediterranean, which are of strategic importance to the Alliance and to our partners. Russia continues to strengthen its military posture, increase its military activities, deploy new high-end capabilities, and challenge regional security. These developments have resulted in increased unpredictability that could be mitigated through reciprocal transparency and risk reduction measures. Recognising the indivisibility of

Allied security, we will continue to closely monitor the situation in these regions. Our response will be tailored to specific circumstances in each region. We will also work with interested partners to enhance our situational awareness and to develop common approaches to evolving challenges...

In the Black Sea region, the security situation has also deteriorated in recent years. We will continue to address the implications for NATO of developments in the region and take them into account in the Alliance's approaches and policies. We will continue to support, as appropriate, regional efforts by the Black Sea littoral states aimed at ensuring security and stability. We will also strengthen our dialogue and cooperation with Georgia and Ukraine in this regard.

* * *

"Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe"

A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy

Approved by the European Council in June 2016

* * *

We need a stronger Europe. This is what our citizens deserve, this is what the wider world expects. We live in times of existential crisis, within and beyond the European Union. Our Union is under threat. Our European project, which has brought unprecedented peace, prosperity and democracy, is being questioned. To the east, the European security order has been violated, while terrorism and violence plague North Africa and the Middle East, as well as Europe itself. Economic growth is yet to outpace demography in parts of Africa, security tensions in Asia are mounting, while climate change causes further disruption. Yet these are also times of extraordinary opportunity. Global growth, mobility, and technological progress – alongside our deepening partnerships – enable us to thrive, and allow ever more people to escape poverty and live longer and freer lives. We will navigate this difficult, more connected, contested and complex world guided by our shared interests, principles and priorities. Grounded in the values enshrined in the Treaties and building on our many strengths and historic achievements, we will stand united in building a stronger Union, playing its collective role in the world.

* * *

2. The Principles Guiding our External Action

An appropriate level of ambition and strategic autonomy is important for Europe's ability to promote peace and security within and beyond its borders. We will therefore enhance our efforts on defence, cyber, counterterrorism, energy and strategic communications. Member States must translate their commitments to mutual assistance and solidarity enshrined in the Treaties into action. The EU will step up its contribution to Europe's collective security, working closely with its partners, beginning with NATO.

* * *

3. The Priorities of our External Action

3.1 The Security of Our Union

The EU Global Strategy starts at home. Over the decades, our Union has enabled citizens to enjoy unprecedented security, democracy and prosperity. We will build on these achievements in the years ahead. Yet today terrorism, hybrid threats, climate change, economic volatility and energy insecurity endanger our people and territory. The politics of fear challenges European values and the European way of life. To preserve and develop what we achieved so far, a step change is essential. To guarantee our security, promote our prosperity and safeguard our democracies, we will strengthen ourselves on security and defence in full compliance with human rights and the rule of law.

3.2. State and Societal Resilience to our East and South

Our Neighbours

State and societal resilience is our strategic priority in the neighbourhood. Many people within the scope of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) both to the east and to the south wish to build closer relations with the Union... Resilience is a strategic priority across the EU's east and south both in countries that want stronger ties with the EU and in those – within and beyond the ENP – that have no wish to do so.

3.3. An Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises

The EU will therefore engage further in the resolution of protracted conflicts in the Eastern Partnership countries. None of these conflicts plays out at a single level of governance... The EU will therefore pursue a multi-level approach to conflicts acting at the local, national, regional and global levels. Finally, none of these conflicts can be solved by the EU alone. We will pursue a multi-lateral approach engaging all

those players present in a conflict and necessary for its resolution. We will partner more systematically on the ground with regional and international organisations, bilateral donors and civil society. Greater cooperation will also be sought at the regional and international levels. Sustainable peace can only be achieved through comprehensive agreements rooted in broad, deep and durable regional and international partnerships.

3.4. Cooperative Regional Orders

The European Security Order The sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of states, the inviolability of borders and the peaceful settlement of disputes are key elements of the European security order. These principles apply to all states, both within and beyond the EU's borders. However, peace and stability in Europe are no longer a given. Russia's violation of international law and the destabilisation of Ukraine, on top of protracted conflicts in the wider Black Sea region, have challenged the European security order at its core. The EU will stand united in upholding international law, democracy, human rights, cooperation and each country's right to choose its future freely.

Managing the relationship with Russia represents a key strategic challenge. A consistent and united approach must remain the cornerstone of EU policy towards Russia. Substantial changes in relations between the EU and Russia are premised upon full respect for international law and the principles underpinning the European security order, including the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter. We will not recognise Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea nor accept the destabilisation of eastern Ukraine. We will strengthen the EU, enhance the resilience of our eastern neighbours, and uphold their right to determine freely their approach towards the EU. At the same time, the EU and Russia are interdependent. We will therefore engage Russia to discuss disagreements and cooperate if and when our interests overlap.

* * *

EU Council conclusions on implementing the EU Global Strategy in the area of Security and Defence

14 November 2016

* * *

Taking forward CSDP Partnerships:

18. Stressing the importance of taking forward the cooperation with partner organisations and partner countries, the Council invites the High Representative to present options for a more strategic approach to CSDP

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ABOUT THE BLACK SEA REGION

partnership cooperation with partner countries which share EU values and are able and willing to contribute to CSDP missions and operations, in full respect of the EU's institutional framework and its decision-making autonomy. This strategic approach should also include possibilities to strengthen the resilience of partners to our East and South, including in Africa, also taking into account the importance of security under the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

* * *

NATO PA calls governments to meet commitments of defence spending

NATO PA Annual Session Declaration

Istanbul, 21 November 2016

* * *

NATO's Parliamentary Assembly calls for a strengthening of the Alliance's defences - including by increased investment to boost military capabilities - in response to uncertain security environment created by "revisionist and military restoration of Russia" and threats of terrorism and instability from the Middle East...

In the Resolution lawmakers calls the Allies to continue to demonstrate the political will and unity seen in Warsaw to uphold their Article 5 commitments, as well as remain united against the use of force to alter borders anywhere, and stand in support with partners facing Russia's aggression and territorial integrity challenges such as Ukraine, Georgia, and the Republic of Moldova.

Condemning Russia's military, economic and information aggression against Ukraine, lawmakers are deeply concerned about Russia's deployment of significant A2/AD (anti-access/area-denial) capabilities around the Baltic States, the Black Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Arctic.

* * *

Report, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

16th Winter Meeting, OSCE PA

Vienna, Austria, 23-24 February 2017

* * *

Margareta Cederfelt, Rapporteur of the First Committee

Rapporteur condemned Russia's actions in Ukraine including its annexation of Crimea, noting that the Ukraine crisis can only be solved through constructive

and inclusive dialogue. Finally, Cederfelt discussed the role of the OSCE in protracted conflicts, stressing that the most recent violations of the line of contact in territories around Nagorno-Karabakh represented the most serious escalation of the conflict since 1994. She emphasized that the OSCE should utilize its full toolbox – including the Parliamentary Assembly – to stabilize the situation and work towards a comprehensive peace agreement. Cederfelt underlined that parliamentarians have a key role to play in reaching a long-term settlement in the Transdniestrian settlement process as well as in the peace process concerning territorial disputes in Georgia.

* * *

Christian Istrate, Chair of the Forum for Security Co-operation, Permanent Representative of Romania to the OSCE

Amb. Istrate briefed the parliamentarians about the priorities of the Forum for Security Co-operation. The Romanian Chairmanship, he said, will focus on the crisis in and around Ukraine, protracted conflicts in the greater Black Sea region, the CFE Treaty, the Vienna Document, and transnational threats such as cybersecurity. He noted that it is pursuing a two-dimensional approach to security – both geographic and thematic. He talked about his intention to organize two security dialogues focusing on two regions of direct interest: the Balkans and the Black Sea.

* * *

Dmytro SHTYBLYKOV

Director of international programs

Analytical Center "NOMOS"

(Sevastopol)

Russia's Military Threats or Whom the RF Can Fight Against

(Published in the magazine "Black Sea Security #4 (26) 2012)

In this article the author analyses security environment in Eurasia, Russia's official security documents and military potential, and makes conclusions on possible escalations of conflicts around Russia and challenges of new ones.

Si vis pacem, para bellum

In 1961, before XXII Meeting of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, an excellent artist Mark Bernes appeared for the first time with the song "Do the Russians want war" (author of music – Eduard Kolmanovsky, text writer – Eugeniy Eutushenko). The song is excellent too and for millions of Soviet people, which remembered about recent War, it was filled with sense and corresponded to their wishes and hopes.

However, today you might find in Internet such lines: do the Russians want war? Let you ask it by Tishiny (Silence). Black humour of these lines is explained by the meaning of Tishina – it is a title of assault rifle with grenade launcher complex [1,2].

It could be estimated as a kind of curious and malicious jokes, but the reality says about other...

At the beginning of 2012, Russian Levada-Centre conducted a survey among Russians, which gave following figures about view of population: 55 per cent of Russians believe in a military threat for Russia from other countries. Let's compare figures:

2010 – 47 per cent

2011 – 53 per cent

2012 – 55 per cent

Very interesting figures were also indicated with regard to those, who wanted their sons or other nearest

relatives to serve in the army:

1998 – 13 per cent

2012 – 37 per cent [3]

The very basic analysis of given statistics makes evident clear militarization of consciousness of Russian citizens. It is clear that this dynamic of growing consciousness militarization makes rather unhappy nearest neighbours of the Russian Federation. Given declared by Kremlin goal to transform Russia to a regional leader, preserve / return Soviet zones of influence and similar issues, the general picture becomes very dark. Moreover, international experience shows examples, when economic crises, intensified by internal and external political factors, tend to develop into military confrontation, in particular wars.

It is logical to ask, what kind of war Russia is preparing for and who might become a target for warfare? Who might be an enemy for Russia, given its military and economic potential?

This question is not just an empty concern for nearest neighbours of Russia, because in fact any kind of war, conducted by Russia against doesn't matter whom will have direct impact on neighbours (given at least energy dependency) or even will be "conducted" on their territories.

Russia strengthens military rhetoric in recent time and makes it happen more often. Top military persons frighten with possibility of military conflict, which might touch Russian interests and says often about external enemy threat. In November 2011, the chief of General Staff Nikolay Makarov mentioned suddenly about the threat to involve Russia even into nuclear war. [4]

The newspaper "Kommersant" informed on November 18, 2011 that "chief of Russian General Staff – first deputy of the minister of defense general of the army

Nikolay Makarov during his report at the Civil Chamber promised a large-scale war to Russia and have not excluded a possibility of nuclear weapon deployment. In his report, general Makarov said, that after collapse of the Soviet Union, the threat of new local conflicts around Russian borders has grown once again”.

“under certain conditions, I do not exclude, that local and regional military conflicts could develop into large-scale war, including nuclear weapons deployment”, according to general, was written in the newspaper.

Further, “Kommersant” mentioned factors, which might involve Russia into a warfare. On the western flank, one of the most possible reasons for military confrontation, considered by Russia, is the anti-Russian policy of Baltic states and Georgia, which might become a reason for crisis in Russia-NATO relations.

Unstable situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan creates preconditions for military conflicts in Central Asia region. They can from their own become a reason to involve Russian army troops for meeting obligations within the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

The General Staff also does not exclude a situation, when growing nuclear potential in Iran and Northern Korea will be counteracted by the USA with military means and under such variant, according to the newspaper, one might consider Russian support in these matters.

One more precondition for conflict could become contradictions in Arctic.

However, the chief of the General Staff pointed out that Russia's military-industrial complex is not ready to a possible war: several examples of military equipment, produced domestically, are inferior in their characteristics, compared with foreign analogues, thus placing Russian army in not advantageous situation beforehand. [5]

Former minister of defense of the RF Anatoliy Serdiukov has also contributed, condemning that “new centers of force appeared, which pretend to become regional leaders and sources of military and political tensions for Russia”. This military top-official also indicated on a possible “escalation of tensions around our borders” and pointed out growing risks of Russia's involvement into different military conflicts.

Russian experts support partially anticipations of country's leaders and military top-men, emphasizing that current military and political situation in the world is far from an ideal. However, they call not to

overestimate dangers, because in most cases threats are rather hypothetical or insignificant. It should be noted, that military top-men are interested in creating an illusion of new dangers, because they need to prove expenses, planned for defense matters from the state budget. It becomes evident, that the RF will spend in nearest years on development of military forces over 23 trillion of rubles, while cutting other budget lines. [6]

Here are also considerations on military threats for Russia of a leading expert of the Centre for military strategic studies by the General Staff of the RF Romanchenko Yu.G., published back in 2001:

“Currently and in the nearest overseen perspective the most important will become contradictions, linked to environmental depletion, growing ethnical and demographic tensions, worthening of ecological situation in certain regions and in the world generally.

According to evaluations, next 10-15 years can become the most difficult times in the history of human civilization because of global demographic crises and created through them ecological crises.

The military and political sense of globalization is NATO enlargement. A serious threat for Russia's security, even by the absence of aggressive intentions (emphasized by the author) have currently placement of large troops with personal and military equipment close to Russian and its allies borders.

As a result, a balance of forces in Europe and at Russia's borders is being changed significantly: if in recent times the Soviet Union had more military capacities than each and every neighbouring country and NATO in general, now NATO have fourfold more conventional weapons than Russia. A potential military threat to Russia from the North Atlantic Alliance is being created also because of advantage of its offensive capacities over defensive capacities our country has. NATO enlargement through new members would even more increase this misbalance.

Potential military threat to Russia might be also linked to growing strength of military forces in Asia's countries.

Japan has significant military potential. Even currently its military forces are nearly equal to number of troops, deployed by the RF in the Far East. The quality of Japan's military forces is much higher than Russia's.

Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey, to the lower level Iran, each on their own or together might in nearest 10-20 years become a threat to the RF's security. Iran and

Turkey together have military forces, which are equal to Russian, and together with Pakistan – 50 per cent more. They might support ethical or religious separatism in Northern Caucasus and in the Volga regions.

Also, military potentials of other Asia's countries continue to increase. Very big anticipation is caused by significant change of correlation between navy forces in advantage of neighbouring countries. Given current conditions, up to 2005 our fleet in Black Sea will be smaller than Turkish Navy twofold, in Baltic Sea smaller than Swedish also twofold, and Germany – fourfold. In the Far East, the difference between navies will be even bigger to the advantage of other countries". [7]

The chief of the General Staff Nikolay Makarov during his report at the Civil Chamber on November 17, 2011, pointed out on following threats to Russia's military security:

1. Efforts of the West to ensure energy security to the disadvantage of economic and political interests of Russia (the EU Energy Charter Treaty, creation of so called energy NATO).
2. Break of strategic balance in forces (deployment of elements of the global antimissile defense, development of intercontinental ballistic missiles with conventional weapons).
3. Preservation of USA global leadership, enlargement of military presence and zones of responsibility of the USA and NATO (eastern NATO enlargement, bases reconfiguration of NATO allied military forces, creation of the operation command US military forces in African zone).
4. Military and technical, technological advantages of leading western countries (development of perspective high-precision guided weapons, miniaturization of robotized combat and intelligence systems, unmanned flying vehicles).
5. Existent territorial claims to the Russian Federation and its allies:
 - territorial claims of Norway;
 - territorial claims of Finland;
 - territorial claims of Estonia;
 - territorial claims of Germany and Lithuania;
 - territorial claims of Poland to Belarus;
 - territorial claims of Japan.
6. Military enforcement actions bypassing principles

and norms of international law (military operations in Yugoslavia and Iraq).

7. Possibility of creation and escalation of armed conflicts on South-Western and Central-Asian strategic directions.
8. Start of "competition" for development of undersea resources and communication routes in Arctic (growing ice-breaking fleet, creation of military bases).
9. Strengthening of the EU military potential (creation of European rapid reaction forces).
10. Deployment of weapons in the outer space and development of anti-satellites weapons (destroyed by missiles Chinese and American satellites).
11. Growing drug-traffic though Russia (the RF is a part of so called northern road for drugs from Asia to Europe with the turnover of 15 bln USD per year).
12. USA efforts to control nuclear complex of Russia (accusation that dangerous nuclear objects on Russian territory are attackable). [8]

To understood, what kind of war and against whom Russia is preparing for, let us use an official document – updated Russian military doctrine, approved by the Decree No. 146 of the president Dmitriy Medvedev from February 5, 2010. In the chapter "II. Military dangers and threats to the Russian Federation", it mentioned following issues:

"8. Main external military dangers:

- a) aspiration to empower military potential of the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) with global functions, which might be used bypassing norms of international law, to bring closer to borders of the RF military infrastructure of NATO member-states, including by block enlargement;
- b) efforts to destabilize situation in certain states and regions and undermine strategic stability;
- c) deployment (extension) of military contingents from foreign countries (group of states) on territories of neighbouring countries to the RF and its allies as well as neighbouring water areas;
- d) creation and deployment of strategic anti-missile defense systems, which undermine strategic stability and break correlation of forces in nuclear missile sector, as well as militarization of outer space and deployment of strategic non-nuclear high-precision weapons;
- e) territorial claims to the Russian Federation and its

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SYNERGING



allies, intervention into its internal affairs;

f) proliferation of mass-destruction weapons, missiles and missile technologies, growing number of states with nuclear weapon;

g) break of international agreements by several states, infringement of previously signed international agreements on limiting and reducing weapons;

h) deployment of military forces on territories of neighbouring to Russia countries in violation of the UNO Statute and other norms of international law;

i) existence (appearance) of seats and escalation of armed conflicts on territories of countries, neighbouring to Russia and its allies;

j) extension of international terrorism;

k) appearance of seats of tensions between nations (religious), activities of international armed groups in areas near to borders of the RF and its allies, existence of territorial disputes, increase of separatism and violent (religious) extremism in certain regions of the world.

9. Main internal military dangers:

a) efforts to change through violent measures constitutional order of the RF;

b) derogation of sovereignty, violence against unity and territorial integrity of the RF;

c) disorganization of state authorities functioning, important state, military objects and information infrastructure of the RF.

10. Main military threats:

a) sharp aggravation of military and political situation (international relations) and creation of conditions for deployment of military forces;

b) disturbance of functioning of Russian state and military management systems, its strategic nuclear forces, nuclear attack warning system, control over outer space, objects with nuclear ammunition, nuclear, chemical and other potentially dangerous objects;

c) creation of and training of illegal armed groupings, their activities on the territory of the RF and territories of its allies;

d) demonstration of military power during military

trainings on territories of countries, neighbouring to the RF or its allies with provocative goals;

e) growing level of activities by military forces of certain countries (group of countries) with partial or full-scale mobilization, change of state authorities and military management working mode to war time conditions". [9]

Therefore, estimation of military threats in military doctrine, statements of official Kremlin and Russian expert community is almost the same. However, one should take into consideration, that military threats are not obligatory developing to armed conflicts – solution to many of such problems, especially under current circumstances, is a subject to diplomacy efforts, both official and national.

With other words, taking NATO as a main military threat to Russia's security (four paragraphs in p.8, chapter II "Military dangers and threats to the Russian Federation"), Russia is not able to warfare against the Alliance because of huge difference in military and economic potential and will try to solve problems through diplomatic matters. The same could be said about threats from the East (China, Japan).

Ex altera parte, in March 2012 president of the RF Dmitry Medvedev said that Russia do not close the door in negotiations about Euro-anti-missile defense system, warned however, that "it is time to prepare for changes in situation". Up to 2017-2018 we should be well-equipped and ready to drive back any possible attack. I have ordered respective information to the ministry of defense" – said the president of Russia during full-scale meeting of the ministry of defense board. There, minister of defense pointed out, that under given conditions, military forces should be prepared to ensure military security of the state even under the worst scenario. Anatoliy Serdiukov added that in December 2012 his ministry will report to the president defense plan for the RF up to 2016. [10]

Anyway, who are the actual military targets for Russia today?

According to experts, military doctrine of the RF and some other documents, Kremlin believes in growing competition during next period for access to natural resources and target markets. Claimants to development of raw resources on the Middle and Near East, Caspian and Arctic regions activates their efforts to secure own control (including by military means) over right to explore and transport those natural resources.

At the same time, the possibility of a Western war

against Russia remains at the low level. It is confirmed by the level of combat capacities and directions of further developments in military forces of European states, by contents of their task force and combat trainings as well as absence of aspiration among majority of population and political elites for warfare on European continent. Because of the change in tasks, which were set up before military forces of the USA and NATO in Iraq and Afghanistan, most of efforts were redirected on counter-terroristic activities. Preparation and conduction of large-scale military operations were practically excluded from task force and combat training programs.

Nevertheless, according to the president of Academy for geopolitical problems colonel general Leonid Ivashov, today Russia faces main threats from NATO member states, because they started more often to solve economic problems by argumentum baculinum. According to expert, the world is losing rapidly its stable system of international security and it will in the end involve Russia into many military conflicts. [11]

Most probable, this opinion about biggest threat for Russia's military security from the West appeared because of NATO ability to organize in short period massive missile and aviation attacks on critical infrastructure, using precision ammunition and exactly this is an advantage, they have comparing to current status of Russian military forces and "offensive potential over defensive potential of Russia".

Moreover, the most critical for ensuring military security of Russia the southern-western direction is. It is determined by huge complex of unresolved political, national and ethnic problems, activities of international terroristic organizations, which under certain conditions might lead to armed conflicts.

Given this highly explosive background, Russia tries to prevent involvement of NATO and the USA into this region, considering it as its own historically fixed geopolitical territory. From their own, both the USA and the EU want to play a decisive role in solving crisis situations in the region.

Today, given lower possibility of a direct military confrontation between Russia and NATO, the biggest threat provides eventual involvement of Russia into an armed conflict, which firstly appears on the territory of one post-soviet state.

Republic of Moldova faces new activation of pro-Romanian political forces promoting to rejoin by means of force Transnistria Moldovan Republic (TMR), which might provoke new armed confrontation.

It should be noted, that a peacekeeping contingent is located in Transnistria with headquarters in Tiraspol. Among peacekeepers are representatives of Russia, Ukraine and Moldova.

Russia and Moldova still do not have agreement about stationing of troops, which remained on the territory after collapse of the Soviet Union. There is one of the biggest in Europe depot with armaments near to Kolbasna settlement, belonging to former 14th army of Soviet military forces. Just to move ammunition from this deposit, one would need over 2500 wagons. Together with ammunition, there were around 100 tanks, 50 infantry fighting vehicles, 100 armored troop carriers, 200 air-missile systems, anti-tank guided weapons, multiple launch rocket system Grad/ M1964, artillery systems, mortars, intelligence machines, around 35000 cars, car chassis, 1500 units of engineer technic, 130 wagons of engineer equipment, 1300 tons of engineer ammunition, 30000 automatic rifles, machine guns and pistols. Russia was obliged to move weapons and entire personal from the territory of TMR until 2001 according to the decision of the OSCE Istanbul meeting (1999).

Currently operative group in Transnistria consists from two Russian separate mechanized infantry battalions (peacekeeping functions), maintenance and guard battalion, helicopter unit, several supporting troops. Number of personal – around 1000 men. [12]

However, as it become evident to Russian mass media, in particular, “Independent Newspaper/Nezavisimaya Gazeta” (July 31, 2012), from an very close to the president of Transnistria source, Tiraspol proposed to Russia stationing of a military base in unrecognized republic and access to the military airfield of the former 14th army. In exchange, regional authorities want to receive from the RF financial support, which they are going to use for creation of powerful security system.

Before this news, perspective of a military base of the RF in Transnistria in exchange for financial support from Russia was a topic in discussion between the president of TMR Eugen Shevchuk and vice-primer-minister of the RF, special envoy of the president of Russia to Transnistria Dmitry Rogozin.

Those negotiations between Tiraspol and Moscow were confirmed to “IN/NZ” by the head of foreign relation committee of Transnistria Supreme council Dmytro Soiin. “I heard about this initiative. It is timely, given active position of Romania in the region. Băsescu is an charismatic leader, with often non-standard expressions and decisions, including problematics of Moldova.

Recently he said, that Transnistria received the right to join the EU together with Moldova. If remaining in office, he will continue the line on its gradual takeover”. [13]

Given the above and the fact, that Romania is NATO member, conflict between Moldova and TMR and its further escalation could involve Russia, Ukraine and some Western countries. However, it should be acknowledged that current leadership of Moldova want to solve the conflict with TMR by peaceful means and the EU make also in recent time more active steps in this direction with tangible results.

Next and mostly discussed topic in Russian expert community is Georgia. Experts do not exclude that 2008 events could be back once again in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Although it is emphasized that because of change of political forces in power in Georgia, this possibility is significantly lower, experts expect from Georgian leadership at any time different surprises. Therefore, even today they do not exclude an opportunity to return under own jurisdiction by military means Abkhazia and South Ossetia. [14]

Unfortunately, Russian mass media do not use more deep analysis with regard to Georgia's approaches towards resolution of Abkhazian and Ossetian issues. From one part, it is an evidence of Tbilisi not ready to eat humble pie and agree with loss of occupied territories as well as further efforts to create conditions for returning them under its control. However, as a main direction of efforts to achieve this goal the strategy of “involving through cooperation” has been declared with the aim to return Republic of Abkhazia and Republic of South Ossetia under its control by exclusively peaceful means. Hereby Tbilisi understands that the only guarantee to secure, that Russia will not use means of force to keep control over these territories is to fix on international level agreements about support from the USA, NATO and the EU Member States.

Surprisingly, but Yugoslavia's precedent should be considered as a precondition for such approach, from our point of view. And namely it was deployment of NATO forces on the territory of former Yugoslavia. It is conditioned by a model of activities, undertaken by NATO, which could be used and was used on post-Soviet space. Moreover, from the psychological point of view, population in Eurasia countries on Yugoslavia example and in post-Soviet countries on example of Georgia is trained to the thought about acceptance of military force deployment to solve this or that internal contradictions.

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For legal argumentation of involvement with means of force into internal affairs of states, during Yugoslavia's events and Russian-Georgian armed conflict (so called five-days war) very actively the concept of "humanitarian intervention" and "limited sovereignty" was used. Direct deployment of military forces is being linked more and more to collective efforts "to force to peace".

It is clear, that peacebuilding in contradiction to existing law norms is a threat to security of a state and its territorial integrity. Therefore, one might assume, that governmental policy will be determined by so called "Yugoslavian syndrome" – the desire to ensure absence of precondition for attack and pressure by political or military means, using the right on "humanitarian intervention". Given the above, although having changes of the political power in Tbilisi, Georgia will not give up its efforts to solve in the shortest period of time the issue of integration into Euro Atlantic structures (first of all NATO). In this context, Tbilisi shows signals to support Washington in protecting American interests in Transcaucasia.

While, according to experts, current military potential of Georgia is even lower, than in August 2008, Russia within the agreement on friendship and cooperation has taken responsibility to provide Abkhazia with military support and deployed on the territory of this country two military bases with the number of Russian soldiers around 1000 men. Moreover, Russia spends billions of rubles for ensuring security of Abkhazia, including financial support to build up Abkhazian border and Russian military bases on the territory of this country. [15]

Next serious source for threats to military security in the region is Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This region is highly militarized, conflicting parties – Azerbaijan and Armenia have so radically different positions, that reality of a new war is very tangible. Self-declared Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR), using active political and military support of Armenia, keeps control over 13 per cent of territories of former Azerbaijan Soviet Socialistic Republic. The line between armed forces of Azerbaijan, NKR and Armenia is often marked with breaks of cease fire agreements. Azeri political elites continue to point out as one of its main arguments the goal to return under own control lost territories, including by means of force.

If Azeri political leadership will decide to start military operation to return under its control Nagorno-Karabakh, it is highly possible that Russia will be involved into this confrontation. Eventual support of Azerbaijan by

Turkey could make even deeper Russian involvement, linked with Armenia by obligations within CSTO, with possible large-scale military conflict in Transcaucasia.

In Armenia, in Gyumri city the Russian 102nd military base with 5000 soldiers is stationed. In August 2010, period of its stationing has been prolonged for 49 years and geographical responsibility area has been enlarged. Today, Russian soldiers, according to agreements, should protect Armenia from external enemies, however, these obligations do not refer to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. According to experts' opinion, given start of combat activities, Russian army will go to protect Armenian border, thus making available significant part of national armed forces for deployment in Nagorno-Karabakh. Moreover, Armenia is the only "right" ally of Russia in Caucasus, which has no direct border with it. It means, that for provision of military support to Armenia in case of conflict escalation, this support might be provided only through the territory of Georgia, involving also this country into the conflict.

According to deputy director of Institute for political and military analysis Oleksand Khramchychin, Russia does not want to be involved into combat activities around Nagorno-Karabakh, because it might tie itself into a knot. According to expert, Russia succeeded in Transcaucasia with its flexible policy of cooperation with both Azerbaijan and Armenia. According to its evaluation, if conflict will appear only between these two countries, Russia will not openly support Armenia and start participating only if third countries become involved, for instance Turkey. [16]

Potentially conflictable remains the situation around Iran. Deployment of military force by the USA and their allies against Tegeran to counteract nuclear proliferation will inevitably escalate tensions in the entire region, including Transcaucasia and Caspian maritime area.

Russia can consider as a potential threat for its security also situation in Syria, especially given the fact, that on its territory the only Russian military base in the far abroad has been located. Officially this military object in Tartus is entitled as the logistical point. However, according to experts, it has for Russia a strategic importance because it makes possible to provide with all necessary means military ships in Middle East region, in Atlantic, near to coastal line of Africa and in Persian Gulf.

According to Leonid Ivashov, it is dangerous also for Russia, to get involved into the conflict in Syria, because it might very easily change to a conflict

between Russia and NATO. The expert also pointed out that Russia today has no financial means and forces, to have influence on this region. As a maximum support, Russia can send to Syrian coast big landing and patrol ships of the Black Sea fleet. [17]

In this situation, Iran remains the only ally of Russia. Damascus also think to find support by Russia and China, which are against external involvement into domestic Syrian conflict.

According to Russian expert community, eventual change of political authorities in Damascus will lead to chain reaction in other countries of the region- Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. Hereby, results of “coloured” revolutions in number of countries can provide ground to assume, that these social disturbances will strengthen influence and even bring to power Islamic structures, which are close from ideological point of view to all-Muslims association of extremist groups “Muslim Brotherhood”. However, given the above, Russia today has no financial means and forces, to have influence on this region. Only diplomatic means remain a tool to find a solution to the situation, which appeared.

If speaking about Central Asia region, a real threat provides infiltration of armed militants from Afghanistan into countries of Central Asia. Reduction of Allies military forces on the territory of this country might lead to escalation of armed conflict between Afghan authorities and Taliban, which aim to return control over the entire territory of the country. With further strengthening of positions, they will spread expansion of extremists into Central Asia, which inevitable will escalate the situation in North Caucasus.

However, significantly more serious problems might appear in this region from other reasons. Situation in Central Asia might get worse because of growing internal instability in countries of Commonwealth of Independent States, in particular in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Moreover, protests might happen even in comparatively welfare Kazakhstan.

Several variants of developments might happen in this region.

After reduction of Allies forces in Afghanistan, Taliban will try to take under control the entire country. Inevitable change of generations in Islamic movement of Taliban and low living standards of Afghan population can redirect militants of Islamic movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) on activation in Central Asia states, which in turn might lead to joined efforts of extremists from IMU with supporters of Tajik opposition and anti-Rakhmon forces from the territory of Uzbekistan. As a

minimum, it might cause armed confrontation in these republics with armed opposition. Hereby, Afghanistan will become a “rear” for international terrorism and extremism in the region.

Another variant is considered with regard to possible Karimov’s leave of the office as the president of Uzbekistan. Moreover, in 2014, republic has next presidential election. Most probably it will lead to sharper competition among political groups to gain power with respective provocation of armed attacks by IMU militants (with support of fit for combat Uzbek Islamist groups from northern Afghan provinces) in Uzbek part of Fergana vale, Bukhara and Skandera regions with the aim to gain power.

And finally, restart of internal armed conflict is possible in Kirghizia with the threat of territorial disintegration and simultaneous sharpening of disputes among clans and nations. As shown by events of June 2010, mass protests can become a precondition for destabilization of situation. One can not exclude also, that Islamic extremists in Osh and Batken regions in the south of the country might use for political campaigns some resources of organized criminal groups. It is also possible, that IMU militants from northern Afghan provinces can try to gain power in Kirghizia’s part of Fergana vale.

One should note, that armed forces of mentioned republics, Russian allies in CSTO, are not able to provide resistance against irregular militants’ formations during long period. According to Russian military experts, national armed forces have low level of task force and combat training, weapons and armaments are in bad conditions. Given international obligations of Russia with regard to CSTO allies, it might become necessary to engage Russian armed forces into resolution of armed conflicts outside its national borders.

Therefore, all the above confirms, that from the western direction – the most possible threat to military security of Russia might be eventual escalation of conflict in TMR, what in fact is rather impossible. In the south west and Central Asia, the most realistic threat to military security of Russia have unstable situation in Caucasus, first of all because of NKR as well as active actions of extremist groups in Central Asia area.

In the East, it is rather impossible, that someone would wage a war against Russia. Main external sources of potential threats to Russia’s security remain territorial claims to Russia from Japan and China, as well as situation on Korean peninsula.

Return of “northern territories” remain a constant

issue among main directions of foreign policy by any new cabinet of ministers of Japan. Moreover, Japan does not hide its aim to become a regional leader, including due to shifting limits for deployment of national armed forces outside national territories. We have to remember, that according to leading expert of the Centre for military strategic studies Romanchenko Yu.G., "Japan's military forces are nearly equal to number of troops, deployed by the RF in the Far East. The quality of Japan's military forces is much higher than Russia's". [18]

Given the above, official Tokyo despite territorial claims to Russia, in the middle-term perspective has however no intentions (and actual possibilities) to solve this matter by military force. Until now Japan has still not recovered after negative consequences of 2011 powerful earthquakes, which caused significant damages to transport and energy infrastructure of the country.

Korean peninsula remains one of instability centers in the East with potential possibility of armed conflict, as proven by events in December 2010, when artillery shutting of Enpkhendo island has taken place. Northern Korea can start military operation against Southern Korea as the very last measure to keep existing regime. It is possible, that the USA can conduct a preventive attack on the territory of the Northern Korea in order to force Pyongyang giving up its nuclear and missile programs and accept American conditions on normalizing situation on the Korean peninsula. Aggravation of situation on the peninsula could become a threat to Russia's security, first of all because of unpredictable development of humanitarian catastrophe scale, which might occur in case of military conflict or tightening of international sanctions regime against Pyongyang. Existing common line on the border with the Northern Korea would require significant efforts to strengthen boundary regime in very short period of time in order to avoid transfer on Russian territory of uncontrolled refugees' flows.

It should be noted that China as one of key "players" in the region (with aims on worldwide leadership in the future), despite ally's obligations with regard to KPDR, will try to avoid armed confrontation with the USA under any possible scenario and evade to participate at combat operations.

At the same time, Russian experts consider indirect signs of China's preparation to the war against Russia. In the border areas with Russia, they are building very actively broad concrete highways – each six-eight strips, which are an excessiveness during peace time

but during war time it might be used for transportation of military goods, as they are able to sustain movements of heavy vehicles and equipment.

It is not a secret, that China has been increasing its military budget every year. Currently China's budget for defense purposes is around 80 billion of US dollars. Army and navy of China's People Republic are equipped with armaments, which inclined to "plagiarism" Chinese will bring up to global standards very soon. Moreover, Chinese have implicit advantage in terms of human resources. In case of a war, China's People liberation army according to the lowest estimations, could mobilize over 200 million of soldiers. According to experts' forecasts, start of large-scale offensive operation along the entire land border and landing in the north of Russia will end with quite fast victory of China and annexation of Russian territories up to Ural Mountains.

The Eastern military district, which is responsible for this direction, has practically no capacity to withstand such powerful military machine – it has neither forces nor reserves. Earlier Russia had on the border with China fortified zones, but up to day all of them are liquidated. Massive reduction of the army and officers' component have left the Far East and Eastern Siberia without protection against external enemy.

According to deputy director of Institute for political and military analysis Oleksand Khranchychin, confrontation between both countries will ultimately lead to large-scale war with deployment of nuclear weapons and not end with a little border conflict as it was in 60th. According to the expert, such war is quite possible in 10-15 years. And even availability of nuclear weapons in Russia is not considered as a panacea against Chinese invasion. China has also nuclear arsenal, and if up to day Russia has an advantage in delivery capacities for intercontinental missiles, China compensates this advantage by significant number of middle-range missiles. Russia does not have such missiles, because according to provisions of Soviet-American Agreement on liquidation of middle and short range missiles, have destroyed them. [19]

However, Russian experts neglect the fact, that China during recent decades conducts active non-confrontation and de-ideologized external policy, aiming to gain dominant positions on external raw materials and target markets. Its particular provision is application of "soft power" concept with exclusively peaceful instruments to increase China's political power. Given the above, main task is rather not an active countering of existing challenges, but avoiding by preventive measures their

escalation or appearance of new threats.

Moreover, if territorial claims to Russia are rather virtual (officially China has never claimed with regard to Russian territories, despite the fact that Russian military experts affirm, that school maps describe Eastern Siberia as a part of China), currently a possibility of disputes between China, Japan and some countries from Southern-Eastern Asia states Association is still actual with regard to disputed islands in East China sea and South China sea. A clear evidence gives situation of October 30, 2012, when dispute about Sencacu (Diaoyudaoite) islands worsened relations between China and Japan. [20]

It might be asserted that in the nearest perspective the situation in this region will be determined by strategic contest among Peking and Washington, where the latest keeps initiative, increases pressure on China via demonstration of power through joint military navy trainings with allies and obtusion to participate in territorial disputes and the course on obtaining access to military infrastructure objects in Southeast Asia countries.

Therefore, it can be evident, that China does not consider the RF as the military contestant. Moreover, China is a strategic partner of Russia, where cooperation is fixed among others within Shanghai Organization on Cooperation. However, in the long run, one cannot exclude appearance of a crisis situation between Moscow and Peking.

Despite the fact that Arctic is noted by M.Makarov as a separate area, where Russia is facing military threats, one should point out quite low possibility of the military conflict similar to western direction. We have to remember, that the general believes that "growing ice-breaking fleet and creation of military bases for armed forces" are component of potential threat.

Today, states around Northern Pole have activated efforts in order to fix in shortest period by legal means the right to expand national territories on account of continental shelf and islands of Arctic Ocean. And Russia is not at the last place in this run. Together with autonomous steps, interested states try to solve the issue of dominance in areas around Northern Pole both through international organization and non-governmental subjects. Therefore, Russia declared that constant military presence in Arctic and possibility to protect state interests by military means is considered as a part of general policy on ensuring national security. However, all the above does not let to predict a military conflict in this region in middle term perspective.

Thus, having analyzed main military threats to Russia, we may conclude that currently a large-scale military aggression against Russia is rather impossible in the short-term period.

Within Central Asia region the threat of local conflict aggravation, including armed conflicts among some states, based on unregulated border disputes, problems with common water resources' utilization, as well as more active behaviour of Islamic extremists remains.

A real level of Russia' military security is determined by the level of instability in military and political situation on the Northern Caucasus and Transcaucasia. In this region, the possibility of a rapid aggravation of disputes among nations remains quite high, which might lead to local conflicts with Russia's participation:

- Military operation of Azerbaijan against Armenia to renew control over Nagorno Karabakh;
- Activities of extremist groupings to spread by means of force ideas of Islamic fundamentalism to Russia's regions with mainly Muslim population;
- Use of military forces by the USA and their allies against Iran to counter proliferation of nuclear weapons will ultimately lead to escalation of tensions in Transcaucasia and Caspian maritime area.

The above is confirmed by Russian efforts to increase military potential on Caucasus. From one part, it is quite understandable because of complicated situation in northern Caucasus republics of the RF – in fact continuing civil war. Once non-involvement of Russia's armed forces groups into counter terroristic operations on Northern Caucasus was considered as one of merits of acting president V.Putin. Today, following titles appear in Russian mass media: "The situation on North Caucasus is so complicated that Ministry of Defense considers once again plans to involve the army into counter terroristic operations, which are regularly conducted in the region by special services and Ministry of internal affairs' forces. It was written by Nezavisimaya Gazeta according to its own sources in the defense ministry. Even if the final decision to involve the army into efforts to fight bandits' formations is still not adopted, "if attacks against military men on Caucasus continue to happen, defense ministry will join operations against bandits underground and drive them back", according the newspaper. Plans of army's involvement into counter-terroristic operations are based on increased casualties, incurred in the region

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by law-and-order forces, including army's troops. During the very last week of August on Northern Caucasus 15 soldiers and officers were killed and 11 injured, together from both ministry of interior affairs and ministry of defense. Those casualties incurred at the beginning of 2000th, when the army conducted on Northern Caucasus active combat operations.

The possibility of army's involvement into the fight against bandits' formations is confirmed also by published yesterday (06.09.2012 – author's note) on Kremlin web-site Order of the president of the RF "to include minister of defense and chief of General Staff into National antiterrorist committee". [21]

Today we observe both increase of military potential on Northern Caucasus and demonstration of power – in September Russia conducts in the region strategic command and staff training "Caucasus – 2012". It is evident that this direction in Kremlin is being considered as the most dangerous in terms of military threats. However, Russia has no intention to conduct a war against the USA or NATO in this direction.

Moreover, given statements of Russian officials, Russia is not able today in military and economic terms to conduct a war neither against NATO member states, nor China and Japan. A clear conclusion – RF armed forces today is able to solve in the whole scale combat tasks only on post-Soviet space against armed forces of respective states.

Does it mean, that militaristic mood of Russian citizens is directed against nearest neighbours? We would wish to hope, that it is not true! Military and political leadership of Russia is rather using more active the issue of external enemy and possible military conflict for justification of any measures, directed on maintenance of stability in country, consolidation of population and redirection of public attention from acute social problems. At the same time, Russian military men want to create illusion of danger, because they need to justify expenses, which will be spent by the state in the nearest period for defense purposes, while cutting other budget lines. However, is the Kremlin leadership capable to stamp a militaristic fire out, stimulated today so actively?

As the conclusion, I want to quote other "rehash" of the poem, written by Yevgeny Yevtushenko and published on the web-site of "anonymous satire" [22], without elements of black humor, however, much closer to the truth of today:

Do the Russians want a war?

Don't ask it by silence,

Don't ask it by those soldiers,

Which lie in memorials.

You should ask about by zinc coffin,

In which young sons come back

From neighbouring lands to old mothers

For shedding tears.

You should ask by those brave boys,

Which are sitting in Kremlin

Sewing stars to their shoulder boards,

And waving with "peaceful" cudgel.

You should ask by Poland and Lithuania –

They "dream" about Russia.

You should ask by Prague spring –

Do the Russians want a war?

Ask by Hungarians, how once

Russian soldiers on tanks

Promenading via Budapest

Having taught Hungarians how to stay "peaceful"

You will receive the answer from an old Finn

Advanced in years and with grey hair

How "peaceful" Russian troops

Moved through the winter and the snow.

Belarussians also have something to say,

Those, whose predecessors are from Lithuanians

What a terrible price was paid

For brotherhood, "donated" by Muscovites

At times, when Suvorov's horde

Burned to ashes their villages and towns...

Ask, ask by Kuropaty,

where unsubdued were exterminated.

Ask by Ukraine – a "brother's" nation

Assured in love of Slavic neighbor

From clenching hands of "older" brother

Why looked it for security by NATO?

Ask by western Slavic nations all,

How Ivan trained them to stay peaceful...

Peace-minded soldier Ivan

Bombed Kabul, Afghanistan.

In their kishlaks and towns

Not peace but disaster came.

Ask by widows, Chechnya children

Do the Russians want a war?

Who is the Russian "peacekeeper"?

You gain the answer from proud highlander.

Georgian, with constant smile on lips
Will keep silence and wipe tears
Because of this peace-loving neighbour
His land is still on fire and flame

DO THE RUSSIANS WANT A WAR?
And from China to Lithuania,
Will you find a single neighbour,
Which will clearly say – “NO”?

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Security in the Caspian – Black Sea Region after 2014: Views from Armenia

In this article the authors analyze the situation in the Caspian – Black Sea region and changes provoked by Russia’s aggression against Ukraine with regard to views on them from Armenia.

With the start of Vladimir Putin’s third presidential term in May 2012, followed the most massive civil protests in the post-Soviet period of Russia, neo-Imperial policy of Moscow [1] towards the post-Soviet States has emerged, crystallized out, and received completed forms. This was also reflected in the guideline papers adopted in the first months of his term, in particular - in the «Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation» signed by the Russian President on February 12, 2013. [2] It was emphasized that «Russia considers as a priority the task of establishing the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), designed not only to maximize the use of mutually beneficial economic ties in the CIS space but also to become a model of integration, defining the future of the Commonwealth, open to other States». [3]

This period coincided with the end of the negotiations of a number of countries-participants of the Eastern Partnership, including Armenia, on the Association Agreements with the EU, the signing/initialing of which were scheduled for the Vilnius EaP summit on November 28-29, 2013. At the start of the Eastern Partnership programme, official Moscow did not see any problems or threats to its interests, as evidenced by the statement of the Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on May 13, 2010 on “premature alarmist sentiments”; by that the Minister said that integration proposals of Brussels to the countries participating in the Eastern Partnership “in principle, could harm our joint integration progress within the CIS, EAEU, Customs Union, could impact on the dynamics of our relations with the countries-participants of the Program”. [4]

But the situation has changed since mid-2013: when nearly four years of negotiations with Brussels were

nearing successful completion, Moscow reacted to the process with hostility and started a systematic and brutal pressure on the leadership of post-Soviet countries, challenging not only their security, but also the entire system of international relations established after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and with annexation of Crimea – of the international order established after the World War II, when Russian policy became largely associated with German policy of 1938 [5], when it annexed the Sudeten region of Czechoslovakia and angeschlossen independent Austria. [6]

Of course, the problem could not be restricted to only the framework of the Ukrainian-Russian relations, but it also reflected on the whole space of the EU Eastern Partnership, former Soviet Union space and became one of the most important issues on the agenda of international relations.

The Armenian diplomacy has entered this “Crimean” and then “post-Crimean” period with the experience of August 2008, when Georgia was subjected to aggression by Russia, on the one hand, and on another – it was already devoid of significant political resource, which in 2008 enabled not to allow Russia to take hostile steps against Georgia from the territory of Armenia even having the military base in Gyumri, as well as enabled to maintain a balance – not to harm neighborly relations with Georgia and not to provoke Russia into hostile action against Yerevan.

Before the start of the political crisis in Ukraine, Armenia became the first victim of Russia’s neo-Imperial policy, and it was thus obvious that the main strategic target was Ukraine [7]. Russia has switched to the language of threats from the spring of 2013. These threats were aired both by close to the Kremlin experts [8] and by the official representatives of the Russian Embassy in Yerevan [9]. The Eastern Partnership did not touch, and currently does not touch, the security sphere of post-Soviet countries that appear

to be one of the most important flaws that are able to predetermine the obstacles, up to having insuperable character, for its implementation [10]. And because of becoming threatening circumstances, the government of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan personally, announced on September, 3, 2013 a surprised [11] even to his closest associates decision to turn on a dime foreign policy of Armenia [12]: an intention to refuse from initiating the Association Agreement with the EU and to join the Russia-initiated Eurasian Economic Union. [13]

With the beginning of the protests on the Maidan in Kyiv, the authorities of Armenia, formed after the events of 1st March 2008, reacted very cautiously, but the Euromaidan and especially the attempts of its brutal crackdown, transformed into mass shootings of peaceful demonstrators by state security forces and criminal elements, organized by state power, called in the politically active part of society [14], of the media [15] and some politicians [16] direct associations with post-election events in Yerevan in 2008. Moreover, special attention was given to the same role of Russia in promoting local authorities in the forcible suppression of the protest movement in Armenia and then in Ukraine [17]. On December, 2, 2013, during his official visit to Yerevan, Vladimir Putin made a statement concerning the events in Kyiv, saying: «The events in Ukraine look more not like revolution, but like a pogrom. In my opinion, this has little to do with the relations between Ukraine and the European Union». [18]

In the background of the same as of the authorities suspicious and silent reaction of the titular opposition, the social networks had a widespread discussion among the politically active part of the society about the events in Ukraine. In particular, the initiative named «Armenian Committee of Solidarity with Maidan» was created [19]; the first statement of which was made on March 3, 2014 and published by several Armenian and Ukrainian media, and expressed unconditional support and solidarity with Ukraine fighting for European future. In addition, the Committee carried out actions of solidarity with Ukraine at the Ukrainian Embassy in Yerevan [20], as well as a protest at the Russian Embassy. [21]

The situation has changed dramatically with the onset of deterioration of Russia's relations with the West. On the one hand, Armenia has faced formidable obstacles to the continuation of the previous course, on the other hand, Russia started to use tough tools, taking Armenia on the hard "trailer". This is evidenced by the number of steps of the official Yerevan which are directly contrary

to the interests of its foreign and security policy. First of all, we are talking about Armenia voting at the UN General Assembly on resolution A/RES/68/262 [22], in support of the territorial integrity of Ukraine and recognizing illegal the so-called referendum in Crimea, which put Armenia with 11 other countries in line with the most odious regimes on the political map of the world. This led to a temporary recall of the Ambassador of Ukraine to Armenia for consultations to Kyiv and cooling in relations [23]. It should be emphasized that Armenia has not officially recognized either the legitimacy of the annexation of Crimea by Russia or the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

With the development of events around Ukraine, dramatic transformation in the Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) conflict and negotiation process on a peaceful settlement has also happened.

In summer 2014 the most significant - since 1994 - escalation happened on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh (NK), in which the parties suffered unprecedented losses in killed and wounded. The CSTO military Alliance, where Armenia is a member state, first, announced that NK is not in its sphere of competence, and second, did not make any condemning statements about this escalation. It should be noted that this period coincided with the hot phase of the war in the Donbas, where the participation of Russian troops has become a proven fact and a challenge for the international community; this was responded by sectoral sanctions against Russia, covering vital sectors of its economy. This was followed by statements of top Armenian officials about the dissatisfaction with the sale of offensive weapons to Azerbaijan worth billions of dollars, which has begun on a large scale yet since 2010. [24]

Initiated by Azerbaijan, with the connivance of Russia, April four-day war in NK (from April, 2 to 5, 2016) showed how fragile was the security in the South Caucasus region. The subsequent logic of events showed that on the background of the consent of Ankara, and unambiguous tactical coincidence of interests between Moscow and Baku, unleashed war aimed to drastically change the status quo in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict [25]. Azerbaijan had to begin an offensive to capture several districts, after which Moscow would have had to declare that the Armenian side is not able to protect NK, it is necessary to bring Russian peacekeepers, which is the main goal of the «Lavrov plan» [26]. It appears that this was the April legend, which failed due to the heroism of the troops stationed at the front of the line of contact.

Moreover, it can be argued with high probability that Moscow planned the deployment of peacekeepers in the zone of the Karabakh conflict under the aegis of the CSTO. This explains the failure to appoint the representative of Armenia to the post of the CSTO Secretary General on rotational basis, an arrangement on which was made between all member countries in December 2015. By that, Moscow itself orchestrated it, but distancing itself from it, preferring to do it by the hands of Minsk and Astana, «explaining» in the first case, in Moscow, by the absence of A. Lukashenko, and in the second case, at the CSTO summit in Yerevan, by the absence of N. Nazarbayev. It is obvious that in this case the tenure of the representative of Armenia as the CSTO Secretary General would be unacceptable for Baku, and Kazakh-Belarusian factor is just a cover story for realization of intentions of Moscow. Established exclusive relations between Lukashenko and Aliyev [27], as well as Nazarbayev's intentions to propose again his mediation in the NK settlement on the background of Russia's aspirations to disrupt the activity of the Minsk Group of the OSCE – all these factors together are able in the short term «to cement» to a certain extent the CSTO that is bursting at the seam [28]. In the case of such a turn of events that seems highly likely, of course, the main beneficiary would become Russia, and the loser would be Armenia, the West and Iran which are seeking with Armenia and Georgia to ensure the functioning of energy transit corridor «the Persian Gulf-Black sea», able to compete with Russian supplies of hydrocarbons.

Three days after the St. Petersburg CSTO summit [29], on December, 29, 2016 Azerbaijan attempted sabotage penetration not on the line of contact in NK, but directly on the border with Armenia on the positions near Chinari village of Tavush region [30], which has become a cause for the unprecedented after April 2016 the burst of tension. Military actions on the territory of the CSTO member initiated by the country outside the Block could not be left without a statement from the leadership of the Bloc without losing face. And the Secretary General of the CSTO Nikolai Bordyuzha issued a comment on the same day [31], which caused strong dissatisfaction in Baku. Three days later, on January, 1, Bordyuzha, who had held the position of the Secretary General of the Organization for years, suddenly left his post «due to expiration of term of office», about what were not generally talked even at an informal level [32].

Russia has never been interested in a comprehensive settlement of the NK conflict and will never be interested in this. Azerbaijan has again brought the option of a

phased settlement of the NK conflict. However, this option slipped out of existence [33], first of all, after the annexation of Crimea by Russia, when it became understood that institutions of international guarantees on the example of the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 do not work, when not only Russia, but the US and Britain failed to fulfil their obligations towards Ukraine, and second, after the April military actions in NK. Moreover, Azerbaijan's President says openly about this [34]: «Those who have power ignore these treaties. That is, the world has entered a new period, we must know this ... That is, international law is merely a tool for powerful States to force the weaker States what to do».

The growth of this perception in the political elites of regional actors caused primarily by weakening attention of the United States and Europe in the region in view of the known policy changes – the change of Administration in Washington and the institutional crisis in the EU. The main characteristic of the current period is the unpredictability amid rising populism in liberal democracies. In Washington the methodology in the approaches to multi-scale problems was largely changed, at least in political rhetoric: if for the last 20-25 years they had been guided by the principle «if the problem has no solution - do not solve it», now it is guided by «in any case to produce a solution, even it is a bad one». And the Brussels and European capitals are completely disoriented after the actual failure of the Eastern Partnership policy in 2010-2013 redaction, and the words of the former commander of NATO forces in Europe, General Philip Breedlove [35], in 2014 - «Right now, there is no NATO policy on what to do in those nations that find themselves outside of the alliance and not in the Russian Federation» - not only have not lost their relevance, but also become the most important characteristic of the current period. It can be stated that the current security architecture has lost its functionality and the ability to respond adequately to the challenges, and only Washington has the potential to be the new architector. However, at the moment the regional policy of the United States is under a big question and in the fog of uncertainty: Washington's view of the region is formed by refraction through the triangle of Moscow-Ankara-Tehran.

This trilateral format held its first «run-in» in Syria, reaching limited success in purely military terms in the resolution of crisis in Syria, a political settlement of which is not seen in the short term because of apparent clashes or at least the diversity of interests within the triangle. Besides, the individual components of this triangle have their own problems with the international

community – with a tendency to their deepening.

The unprecedented crisis in relations between Moscow and Ankara (November 2015 - May 2016), the murder of the Russian Ambassador did not diminish the energy of their leaders in their desire to cooperate in the implementation of their largely overlapping interests, including in the South Caucasus region. Of course, political transformation in the country, initiated by Erdogan, distances Turkey from its Western allies and form a natural drift in the Moscow direction. For Armenia, on the background of its unsettled relations with Ankara [36], it is a challenge, especially because Ankara supports the efforts of Moscow and Baku to transfer the settlement process of the NK conflict from the format of the OSCE Minsk Group to the level of bilateral agreements Ankara-Moscow, which is a remake of the 1920-21 events, as a result of which Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan lost their independence.

The events surrounding Aleppo suggests that Ankara could agree on the role of «second violin» in the Caucasus, being satisfied with only smooth operation of the Georgian transit of Azerbaijani energy resources (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan), not interfering in the Russian regional strategy of the full return of the South Caucasus under its control. Potentially Washington and Tehran can resist this. But in the current state of affairs, the United States are likely to «look through their fingers», and Iran is unlikely to be able to stop it alone, if Moscow decides to «return» hardly to the region. It seems symptomatic that recent deterioration in the East of Ukraine around the town Avdiivka occurred after a telephone conversation between Trump and Putin.

Therefore, if Moscow has serious reasons not to aggravate confrontation with the West and avoid once again jeopardizing the emerging favorable trends in Washington after D. Trump came into the White House, then it has sufficient potential to ignite in the region such conflict that the United States and Europe themselves will have to turn to Moscow with an appeal to stop the catastrophe. A lot will depend on what reasons will outweigh in the process of political decision making in Moscow, and a positive factor, as well as an indicator for subsequent developments, becomes Washington's reaction to Russia's actions in Ukraine, in particular, the fact that US representatives in the OSCE and the UN not only subjected Moscow to harsh criticism [37], but has announced the intention to maintain the sanctions [38]. In the same line is a tough statement [39] of the British Minister of Defence about the necessity of containment of Moscow and Russian misinformation; and also the statement of

NATO Secretary General in Bulgaria on the decision of the Alliance [40] to strengthen its presence in the Black sea basin and «very good call» [41], according to the White House, between the Presidents of Ukraine and the United States; during this call Washington supported the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, even in case of the deal with Russia a fixed position will remain.

Official Yerevan clearly understands the threats, and as a consequence – the desire to diversify its foreign and security policy. In this vein, we can consider the visit of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in Yerevan in December 2016 and the signing of the Armenian-Iranian Declaration, and the visit of the Minister of Defense of Armenia Vigen Sargsyan [42] in Tehran during which he held series of meetings with senior officials of the country. At the same time, a new factor of tension in the region and in the zone of the NK conflict has been added because of the tough policies of the new Administration of the White House against Iran. [43]

It should be emphasized that despite the broad context of Iran's relations with the West, Tehran has traditionally played an important stabilizing role in the South Caucasus region being a major actor which opposes the presence of non-regional forces in the region, even peacekeeping ones or under the guise of peacekeeping, as Russia implies; Iran sees this as a direct threat to its security on the Northern border. Another troubling factor in regional developments is the fact that the South Caucasus as a whole and the zone of the NK conflict in particular, are becoming one of the important fields in the confrontation between Iran and Israel. The Advisor on International Affairs to the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ali Akbar Velayati, stated during a meeting with the Head of the Defense Ministry of Armenia: «Certain outside powers, as Israel, have been trying to penetrate the region and to interfere in regional processes. We must be vigilant and not let others provoke clashes in our region». [44]

Having got rid of the burden of the sanctions as the result of the negotiated agreement with the Six world powers about nuclear program, Iran does not hide the desire to use transit potential of the region for access to the Black sea coast, opening the way to the most promising European market; and the interests of Iran and the European capitals are the same in this matter, what cannot be said about Ankara and Moscow, which see this as a threat because of growing opportunities of a serious competitor not only with energy, but also with a serious production potential.

China's interest is also the same in this context that correlates with the interests of Tehran, Yerevan, and Tbilisi. Chinese companies are investing considerable sums in the construction of the Georgian port of Anaklia on the Black sea, and Beijing also expressed its willingness to invest in the construction of the railway Iran-Armenia. The Ambassador of China in Armenia made a statement about the interest of Chinese companies. [45]

The implementation of these projects, as well as the expansion of the gas pipeline Iran-Armenia, are able to undermine Russia's position in the region, and Moscow understands this. Using the period of uncertainty, Moscow has sought to strengthen guarantees of keeping its leverages, and this explains the intention of Gazprom to reduce gas price for Armenia in 2016, to change the terms of transit through Georgia and to conclude a new agreement providing for payments for gas instead of deduction of 10% of the volume of supplied gas. At that, Georgian society is concerned that the new contract with Gazprom involves the country's leadership in "traditional" corruption scheme. And given the developments around the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, reasonable fears grow in Tbilisi that Moscow may demand from Georgia transit corridor for redeployment of troops for "peacekeeping operation". Moreover, it will be redeployed the troops stationed in the Southern military district of the Russian Federation,

which includes also units and formations deployed in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Crimea, as well as the 102nd military base in Armenia, and in this case Tbilisi can stand in front of a dilemma of existential nature, and even in front of the fact of occupation.

And Russia has the bargaining with Azerbaijan over its plan to change the status quo in the NK conflict in favor of Azerbaijan without a final solution. At the same time, Baku does not exclude [46] the membership in the CSTO and the EAEU in case of "sufficient motivation" [47] under which we should understand the exchange for a number of territories around NK [48].

Thus, using the combination of the above factors, Moscow in the recent period has increased its chances to return fully to the region. The period of uncertainty increases the risks of events of force majeure nature, able to cause on a regional scale the effect of "black swans." But having abstracted from them, it seems that in case of the "linear" course of events based on the current dynamics and direction, Russia has both the capacity and intention (see the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation) to turn again the South Caucasus into "the Transcaucasus", into its imperial frontier area, into a buffer.

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Military and Geostrategic Balance Between NATO and Russia in the Wide Black Sea Area and Perspectives of the Providing Security in the Region

In the research, there are analyzed main aspects, related to the importance of the geopolitical location of the Black Sea region, militarization of the region – especially after Crimea crisis, military potential of Russia and NATO member states from the Black Sea region and new strategy of NATO and USA for the Black Sea Area based on the current realities.

Introduction. Geopolitical and Geostrategic Importance of the Black Sea Region

After the collapse of the USSR, new geopolitical realities have been created in the global politics and especially on the post-Soviet space. Against the background of such a positive event as disintegration of the last totalitarian empire - the USSR, in the beginning of 1990s several political and inter-ethnic conflicts emerged in the post-Soviet space, firstly in the Black Sea region. Imperialistic ambitions of Russia have increased tensions in the area.

The Wider Black Sea region has become a new strategic frontier for Europe, Russia and the United States in terms of energy security, frozen and festering conflicts, trade links, migration and other key policy areas. In the 21st century, prospects for the Black Sea will be shaped by the interaction between major external actors, the ambitions of states and peoples in the region and the region's role as a crossroad of civilizations.

There are three groups of basic interests represented in the Black Sea region today. First, the interests of the West, divided quite explicitly between the U.S and the position of the major continental European countries. Both, Washington and the EU powers pursue strategies to change and transform the region around the Black Sea, motivated by different – only partially coinciding – policy agendas. Second, the interests of post-Soviet

Russia and Turkey, as leading geopolitical players from the region. Third, the interests of the smaller Black Sea countries (Ukraine included, albeit its size does not correspond to the “small country” definition). Those smaller countries are quite diverse and challenged by different policy agendas.

Militarization of the Black Sea Region after Annexation of Crimea

From 2000 to 2015, defense expenditures in the Black Sea region on average composed 2.5 - 2.4% of GDP, though in 2007 the maximum of 3.1% was achieved. While in the first half of 2000s, defense expenditures had been reduced, in 2004 the minimum (2.3% of GDP) was achieved. The second half of the decade from 2005 to 2008 is characterized by an increase in the expenditures. After 2008, despite the Russian-Georgian war, the economic crisis put an end to the raising of militarization in the region. So, defense expenditures in the Black Sea from 2008 to 2009 were sharply (by 10%) reduced. From financial point of view, from about \$40 to \$36 billion. As a percentage of GDP, the expenditures were stabilized at the level of about 3%. The most noticeable changes were observed from 2008 to 2010. In 2010, the countries of the Black Sea region spent on the armed forces 2.6% of GDP, which in terms of finances was equal to approximately \$34 billion and has been the lowest index since 2005. However, since 2010 the negative consequences of the economic crisis had begun to step back. In the Black Sea region, a considerable and constant increase of the defense expenditures was observed again, in terms of money by 10% - from \$34 billion in 2010 up to \$38 billion in 2013 [1].

Crimean crisis has brought NATO members to reconsider their strategies to defense spending, which were decreased before due to economic crisis. In

June 2014, the U.S Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel applied to NATO allies to increase their military expenditures and to invest no less than 2% of GDP into the defense sector [2]. In response to Ukrainian crisis, Romania, Poland, Lithuania and Latvia had already declared the plans to increase their defense budgets.

Military Potential of Russia and NATO Member States in the Black Sea Region

Military Potential of Russia

To outline the new security environment in the Black Sea area, it is necessary to analyze the military potentials of Russia and NATO member states. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, military expenditures of Russia from 2003 to 2014 increased to 108% [3].

Russian military contingent in the Black Sea/Caspian region is represented by the Southern Military District, formed in 2010 on the base of the North Caucasus Military District, the Black Sea Fleet, the Caspian Flotilla and the 4th Air and Air Defence Forces Command. The headquarters of the District is deployed in Rostov. The military bases located in Armenia, on the occupied territories – Abkhazia, Tskhinvali District (former the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast) and Crimea (Sevastopol) since March 2014 – belonged to the District.

After the occupation of the territory of Ukraine, a number of Russian military forces deployed in the District, has been changed, but the Russian sources do not mention the exact number of the troops. It is considered that the troops of the Southern District possess better military equipment and are better trained than those of other military districts, i.e. the Western, Central and Eastern one.

Due to the desire of Russia to increase the sphere of its geopolitical and geostrategic influence in the Black Sea region, the military contingent of Russia was significantly strengthened within the period of 2013-2016. Four new divisions with nine brigades, twenty-two regiments, including two missile brigades, equipped with complexes “Iskandar missile-M” were created there.

In service of the troops of the Southern District are approximately 400 tanks (equally T-72 and T-90), about one thousand combat vehicles and anti-aircraft systems S-300, “Buck”, “Strela-10” etc.

Air forces of the Southern Military District possess

100 Su-24 front-line bombers, more than 80 Su-25 jet aircrafts, about 100 fighters (MiG-29, Su-27, Su-30). There is a very powerful group of army aviation with more than 100 combat helicopters, 12 Mi-26 heavy transport helicopters and more than 60 Mi-8/17¹ multipurpose helicopters.

The Black Sea Fleet composes of six submarines, guided missile cruiser “Moskva”, six small missile boats, five rocket launchers, seven large landing ships [4].

At the same time, there are two frigates in the Caspian Flotilla, with the special rocket complex, three combatant small crafts and six landing boats.

Approximately 90% of the Russian fleet’s tonnage is stationed in the ports of Crimea: in Sevastopol - 80% and in Feodosia - 9%. There is about 13 thousand military personnel, which is mostly deployed in Crimea and at the other military bases, in Temryuk (Azov Sea), Novorossiysk and Ochamchire (Abkhazia).

Military Capabilities of NATO Member States from the Black Sea Region

Turkey. Turkish armed forces are considered by their number as the second largest operational military force in NATO, after the U.S. armed forces, with an estimated strength of 639 551 military, civilian and paramilitary personnel in 2015 [5]. Turkey is one of five NATO member states, being a part of the nuclear sharing policy of the Alliance together with Belgium, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. A total of 90 B61 nuclear bombs are hosted at the Incirlik Air Base, 40 of which are allocated for use by the Turkish air forces in case of a nuclear conflict, though their use requires the approval of NATO [6].

Bulgaria. As of 2014, Bulgaria’s total military personnel was 37 100, of which 30 400 (80.1%) - an active military personnel and 8 100 (11.9%) - civilian personnel. Land Forces are the largest branch of the Bulgarian armed forces, with at least 18 000 persons serving there. In a percentage ratio, 53% of a whole army personnel serve in the land forces, 25% - in the air forces, 13% - in the navy and 9% - in the joint forces command [7].

After the Ukrainian events, a decision about establishment of the Command Centre for NATO Response Force was adopted on February 5, 2015 at the meeting of NATO’s Defense Ministers.

Romania. 84 000 military personnel is involved in service in the armed forces of Romania. Out of the 90 000 military and civilian personnel, 60 000 are the active troops, while 30 000 comprise the active

1 <http://rusplt.ru/policy/yujnyiy-okrug-protivniki-na-kavkaze-rossii-ne-strashnyi.html>

territorial reserves [8]. As of 2010, an estimate of the personal of the land forces was 43 000, air forces – 9 700, naval forces – 7 150, and joint forces – 13 500. According to the White Paper of 2011, these forces had to be gradually decreased over the 2011–2014 period to reach a total of about 65 000 active troops and active reserve, but after deterioration of situation in Crimea in May 2014, the Prime Minister of Romania Victor Ponta stated that by the end of the year Romania would increase its defense expenditure by 0.2%. In January 2015, the newly elected President Klaus Werner Iohannis promised that by 2017 Bucharest would increase its defense expenditures to 2% of GDP and would support it at the indicated level till 2027 [9].

New NATO's Strategy after Crisis in Ukraine

After the Cold war, particularly since 1997, when the charter about Ukraine-NATO special partnership was signed within the framework of the Partnership for Peace Program, the international Ukrainian-American Naval Exercises Sea Breeze was held annually, in which constantly took part both the countries of the Black Sea region and NATO member states. Military aggression of Russia against Georgia and Ukraine forced NATO and the U.S to reconsider the issues related to the military presence in the Black Sea region. Main aspects of the NATO's new strategy were considered during the Alliance's summits in Wales and Warsaw.

Particularly, NATO's Wales Summit held in Newport, Wales, 4-5 September 2014 has become one of the most important events after the occupation of Crimea. The Summit-2014 has been described by Admiral James Stavridis as the most important event since the fall of the Berlin Wall (11).

The following declarations and agreements were made at the Summit:

Wales Summit Declaration;
Joint Expeditionary Force agreement;
Armed Forces Declaration;
Joint Statement of the NATO-Ukraine Commission;
Declaration on Afghanistan.

It is important to mention the main parts of the Wales Summit Declaration, where for the first time after the Cold War, Russia had been recognized as an aggressor: "We, the Heads of State and Government of the member countries of the North Atlantic Alliance, have gathered in Wales at a pivotal moment in Euro-Atlantic security. Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine have fundamentally challenged our vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace. Growing instability in our southern neighborhood, from the

Middle East to North Africa, as well as transnational and multidimensional threats, are also challenging our security. These can all have long-term consequences for peace and security in the Euro-Atlantic region and stability across the globe [10].

Increasing military capabilities of NATO were mentioned at Articles 7 and 8 of Declaration: "7. The assurance measures include continuous air, land, and maritime presence and meaningful military activity in the eastern part of the Alliance, both on a rotational basis. They will provide the fundamental baseline requirement for assurance and deterrence, and are flexible and scalable in response to the evolving security situation... [12] 8. For this purpose, adaptation measures include the components required to ensure that the Alliance can fully address the security challenges it might face. We will significantly enhance the responsiveness of our NATO Response Force (NRF) by developing force packages that are able to move rapidly and respond to potential challenges and threats. As part of it, we will establish a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), a new Allied joint force that will be able to deploy within a few days to respond to challenges that arise, particularly at the periphery of NATO's territory..." [13]

In addition, the important decisions were adopted during the Warsaw Summit held in 2016. In the final declaration, it was mentioned about new security environment in the Euro-Atlantic area. Particularly: "There is an arc of insecurity and instability along NATO's periphery and beyond. The Alliance faces a range of security challenges and threats that originate both from the east and from the south; from state and non-state actors; from military forces and from terrorist, cyber, or hybrid attacks. Russia's aggressive actions, including provocative military activities in the periphery of NATO territory and its demonstrated willingness to attain political goals by the threat and use of force, are a source of regional instability, fundamentally challenge the Alliance, have damaged Euro-Atlantic security, and threaten our long-standing goal of a Europe whole, free, and at peace." [14].

Consequences of NATO's Policy in the Black Sea Region after Occupation of Crimea

Due to increased tensions, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg declared a possibility to increase military capabilities of the Alliance in the Black Sea region. NATO states have declared their readiness to strengthen their contingents in the Baltic Region and Eastern Europe.

Great Britain, Germany and the U.S. have declared their plans to send battalions of their military

personnel to prevent the possible Russian “invasion” in the Eastern Europe and the Baltic Region. As it was mentioned in The Telegraph, 500-1000 military men could be sent in Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Estonia to show Russia that any interference under “Ukrainian scenario” would get a response from NATO. The discussion concerned the forces of the special operations armed with anti-aircraft missiles, helicopters and attack aircraft [15]. During the NATO Defense Ministers meeting in Brussels, the Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg announced strengthening of the Alliance’s military capabilities in the Black Sea region, including “naval forces, facilities of reconnaissance and opportunity for the transfer of reinforcements, as well as the plans of the restraining “hybrid threats” in Eastern Europe by “small forces”.

“NATO has already strengthened its maritime presence in the Black Sea, including naval forces and observation from the aircraft-radars of AWACS located in Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey. We constantly control situation in the Black Sea, increase our military opportunities and an opportunity of conducting reconnaissance and transfer of reinforcements to this region”, - said the Secretary General. According to him, they implement the most important strengthening of collective defense after the end of the Cold War [16].

Deployment of the American Military Objects in the Black Sea Region

Due to increased tensions, a number of the NATO Response Forces has been increased for three times up to 40 000 military servicemen [17]. In its turn, under the Obama Administration, the White House declared intention to release about \$4 billion to prevent the “Russian aggression”. To resist the Russian aggression and support the European allies, budget includes \$4.4 billion for the political, economic and public diplomacy, military support and decreasing the Russian opportunities to implement aggression against NATO allies and partner states in Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia [18].

Even before the Ukrainian crisis within the framework Naval Concept Sea Power 21 realization in the period of 2005-2010, the U.S. substantially strengthened its military presence in the Western Black Sea area by deployment of military bases in Romania and Bulgaria. Romania in December 2005 and Bulgaria in April 2006 have signed defense collaboration agreements with the U.S, providing deployment of American military bases on the territory of these countries as the intermediate strong points on the

way from Europe to Afghanistan and Iraq (during the deployment of the U.S Forces at those states).

Romanian military objects near Constanta city (an airfield and training range) in fact became the base of the U.S and NATO. F-15 and F-16 fighters and A-10 attack aircraft of the USAF (United States Air Force) were deployed on the airfield. According to some data, there were deployed about 2 500 U.S soldiers [19]. Also, American contingent actively used ranges in Chinku and Smardan. The military contingent contains the subdivisions of marines, aviation, technical subdivision as components of the NATO’s Forces Southern Europe.

According to the agreement, the U.S could use an air force base in Sarafovo, Bulgaria and the Port of Burgas on the Black Sea coast. Also, American military bases were placed in Novo Selo Region, at Bezmer Air Base (both objects are located not far from the Turkish boundary) and airfield in the Graf Ignatievo (near Plovdiv). The units of the armed forces of the United States and Bulgaria are stationed on these objects. The deployment of weapon of mass destruction on the U.S bases in Romania and Bulgaria is excluded. Before the Crimean crisis, the U.S troops had already been placed on a constant basis in Turkey (Incirlik Air Base) and Greece (Iraklion Air Base).

In 2010, Washington began to implement the program of military exercises of the Black Sea Rotational Forces (BSRF), in which about 250 marines participated, “task of whom became the maintenance of the positive relations with the friendly nations, strengthening the stability in the region, and improvement of interaction for providing the operational reaction to the crises in the Black Sea, the Balkan and Caucasus regions”. Besides BSRF, the U.S to conduct the transit operations, stationed 500 soldiers in Romania on Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base. In Ukraine, the Western countries took measures to support Kyiv during the crisis on Donbas. In April 2015, the U.S. sent to the west of Ukraine 290 military advisers (Exercise Fearless Guardian) for the six-month period [20].

Canada sent to Ukraine 200 military servicemen till March 2017 [21]. Great Britain sent to Nikolayev city on the south of Ukraine 35 advisers to consult Ukrainian militaries. Besides, Washington took a decision to deliver to Ukraine 1200 items of equipment, including 250 M1-A2 tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles and armored howitzers for their deployment in the front-line region [22]. Some of these items can be stationed in Romania or Bulgaria. The U.S. and other NATO members have been represented in the Black Sea on the semi-permanent

basis since March 2014, and occasionally carried out the international naval exercises, such as Sea Breeze (September 2015). In Georgia, there are no permanent American troops, though the joint Georgian-American military maneuvers were conducted - in May 2015 600 American soldiers participated in the exercises "Noble Partner" [23].

Conclusions and Recommendations

In line with the military presence providing further enlargement of democracy, the Western democratic values and security in the Black Sea area, NATO and western democratic societies should provide: Maximum support in implementation of democratic reforms and promoting integration to the western democratic society for those states, whose foreign policy and national security priorities aimed at establishment of the closer relations with the West. Those states should get a consensus concerning admission of Georgia and Ukraine to NATO and their further integration to the European structures; Transformation of NATO and the EU to organizations with more global functions. To enlarge the democracy, it is necessary to provide security in the different regions of the world. In this regard, it should be mentioned about the role of NATO and the EU in this process. Both organizations are not only political, military, security (in case of NATO) and economic (in case of the EU) organizations, but international regional communities of democratic states tied by common values as the rule of law and respect to fundamental human rights. Furthermore, taking into consideration the limited resources of the UN and difficulties with decision-making process within the United Nations related to peace and security, it is essential for NATO and the EU to increase their role, functions and geographical area of actions; Providing information campaign in the partner countries of the Black Sea region to increase public awareness about NATO and the EU, their positive role in the providing economic prosperity, peace and security;

In line with the establishment of the new military objects by the U.S and NATO on the territories of NATO member states and partners in the Black Sea region, the Alliance should take into consideration the strengthening of its presence at the marine space of the Black Sea by the implementation of the security and antiterrorist operations like "Active Endeavor" program in the Mediterranean. In this regard, the main principles of the Montreux Convention should be taken into consideration.

The convention was adopted in 1936 and limits passing of military ships of the non- Black Sea countries through the Bosphorus and Dardanelle channels in the peace period. Limits to the class of ships and general tonnage from the moment of their approach into the marine area is 15 000 tons. Furthermore, limits are indicated for a one-time presence in the Black Sea: 30 000 tons for all non-Black Sea region's countries, while the maximum tonnage cannot exceed 45 000 tons. Also, there is three weeks' limit for the stay in the marine area. In many cases, states which have an entrance right to the Black Sea, can pass their submarines and large ships through the straits without the limitation of tonnage respecting specified conditions, which are determined by the convention" [24].

NATO member states respectively should create the convenient base for cooperation with Turkey as a member of the Alliance concerning passage of military ships through the channels located in its inshore waters.

Increasing a military presence in the Black Sea region will create the convenient base for secured implementation of economic and energy projects here, further socio-economic development of the region and conflict resolving in a peaceful way in long-term perspective.

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Russia's Realpolitik and the Black Sea Security Dilemma

An emboldened and opportunistic Russia has unilaterally changed the security architecture in the Black Sea region. With its aggression in Georgia, support for separatists in Donbas, and the annexation of Crimea Moscow has demonstrated that it considers Western influence as a threat to its own security. It has attempted to match the soft power of the EU and NATO with hard power. Russia has demonstrated that it views international relations through realist lenses. Its actions have led to an old-fashioned security dilemma in the Black Sea. To best understand Russia, we must also turn to the realist school of thought and to history. This article attempts to do just that by offering an analysis of post-Cold War Russia from a realist perspective and identifying how after liberal 1990s we are faced with realpolitik once again.

At the turn of the century people and policy-makers alike were generally optimistic about the future developments in international relations. The Soviet Union had faded away peacefully in the 1990s, the Kremlin appeared approachable and willing to cooperate with the West, even with its former foe – NATO. For Europe, it was a peaceful and tranquil time for economic growth, innovation, and integration. The Cold War and the bleak realities of *realpolitik* appeared to be a thing of the past and some were even hopeful enough to propose that people were witnessing the end of history.

However, the situation has severely deteriorated in the past 10 years or so. While many countries in Europe have achieved their long-time goal of becoming NATO and EU members, especially those from the former Soviet sphere of influence, others have been severely *punished* for such aspirations. If at the beginning of the 21st century there appeared to be no geographical boundaries for the EU enlargement, today there are,

most noticeably in the Black Sea region.

An opportunistic and expansionist Russia has taken it upon itself to restore its former sphere of influence. Understandably, this was rather difficult to foresee following the end of the Cold War. A weak and indebted Kremlin needed new markets and allies and could find such only in the West. However, soaring gas prices in the 2000s and an opportunistic new president made the country more proactive, difficult to cooperate with, and uninterested in westernizing itself. Moreover, the relevant financial stability allowed Moscow to patiently plan its way of becoming a Great Power on the world stage and a regional hegemon.

It is clear that in Moscow's understanding of the international system, the only way to do politics is by engaging with strong states, while smaller and weaker ones are mere relative gains and can be coerced into doing one's bidding. This is the key difference in how the EU and Russia see the wider Black Sea region. The EU sees it as its *neighbourhood* where, along with its current members, lie opportunities for cooperation; Russia, per contra, sees it as its front porch and is not allowing any *trespassers*.

What is more, the international system is predominantly formed in a way in which states perceive and interpret one another's actions. In this uncertain realm misperception can be very detrimental to a state. That is why actors tend to be somewhat sceptical and pessimistic. Thus, their plans and strategies are based on worst case scenarios.

Therefore, in order to properly understand how Russia sees international politics it is necessary to do so through the prism of realism. This is required as evidently this is the way in which Moscow views and understands global developments. Consequently, it is important to devote some basic remarks on how realism perceives the international realm.

The realist school was the dominant one throughout the

twentieth century and can be dated as far back as to the writings of Thucydides in the 4th century BC Greece. One of realism's primary claims is that the international system is anarchic. It is to be emphasized, however, that this does not necessarily mean that the international arena is chaotic or driven by disorder. Rather, realist scholars employ the concept as an ordering principle, which supposes that the international scene is made up of independent political units, states, which have no central authority above them [1]. Alexander Wendt suggested that "anarchy is what states make of it" [2]. Apparently, they tend to make a security dilemma of it. This, of course, is to a certain extent logical in an uncertain and dangerous international arena where no amount of institutions can completely ameliorate the threat of war and violence.

Furthermore, this lack of superior authority makes states the main actors in the system and also means that international institutions have limited power over states or, as Mearsheimer puts it forward, they hold a false promise. For example, in both the cases of Ukraine and Georgia the efficiency or promise, if you will, of organizations such as the UN, NATO, or the EU can be questioned. This bleak reality forces states to occasionally embark in a *security dilemma*.

The term was first introduced to us by John Herz in *Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma* [3]. The scholar suggests that the dilemma stems from the dualistic character of human social life, which is fear and dependence. Herz derives his assumption from the theory that individuals overcome their personal insecurity by forming groups, which leads to the idea of collective security. However, as groups act in similar fashion, mistrust and insecurity begin to fester. These issues force groups to build-up their military capabilities in the pursuit of security. This very pursuit, however, can easily be seen as a preparation for hostile actions by other groups.

When we discuss the security dilemma in the Black Sea we need to understand the Russia's interests in the region are not a historical precedent. The Black Sea has historically been of great importance for the Kremlin dating back to as early as the 18th century. The treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774 not only ended a 6-year war between the Russian and Ottoman Empires but also provided Moscow with direct access to the Black Sea. Additionally, Tsarist Russia was granted rule of the Crimean Khanate. Regardless of regional resentment over Moscow's rule the peninsula was annexed in 1783 and Russia established itself as the dominant sea power. Furthermore, the decline of the Ottoman Empire fueled

Russian ambitions for control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles. If they were to come under the rule of the Kremlin, the Black Sea would more or less become internal for the Empire. This goal was the driving force behind the Russian – Turkish war of 1877 – 1878 and the Tsar's decision to enter the World War I. Tensions continued to rise between Turkey and Russia after the Second World War with Moscow placing pressure on Ankara to renegotiate the 1936 Montreux Convention and share control over the Bosphorus. In the 1946 Turkish Straits crisis, the Soviet Union drastically increased its military presence and demanded that Turkey accept Soviet military basis on its own soil. This, in turn, forced Turkey to seek support from the United States which subsequently led to NATO membership of Turkey and Greece in 1952.

This fragile equilibrium continued until the end of the Cold War. After the dissolution of the USSR the Black Sea diminished in strategic importance for the West. However, that was not the case for Russia. At the time of the USSR's collapse there were 100 000 Russian personnel, 60.000 service members, and 835 vessels stationed in Crimea [4]. Sevastopol remained key to Russian interests in the Black Sea. Moreover, the Kremlin to date continues to consider as a mistake Khrushchev's decision to offer Crimea as a *gift* to Ukraine in 1954 and in this manner it is trying to excuse itself for the international treaties it once signed and has now defiled.

However, with the turn of the century prospects for cooperation in the Black Sea between Russia, the other littoral states, and the West did not seem all that impossible. Neither NATO nor the EU gave much strategic importance to the region; but Moscow did. Albeit the Kremlin did not have a hold over the countries in its former sphere of influence, it was not willing to allow "western trespassers". Russia perceived the EU and NATO enlargement as a challenge not only to its capabilities, but also to its security. All the countries in the region were aspiring to the EU membership with others also striving to become part of the Alliance. The peoples of Georgia and Ukraine carried out their coloured revolutions in order to state their pro-Western aspirations. While the Russian aggression in Georgia and Ukraine caught both the EU and NATO off-guard, in retrospect it should have been anticipated. The Kremlin is the product of a well thought and executed strategy.

What the Russian Federation has come to be today is the product of a consistent policy adopted in the mid-90s when a group of political strategists, which

consisted of Gleb Pavlovsky, Modest Kolerov, Sergey Markov, Vyacheslav Nikonov, and Vladislav Surkov, who launched the project “successor” [5]. The goal was to recruit a new leader to succeed Boris Yeltsin. The aforementioned strategists not only helped Vladimir Putin climb to power, but also made him the dominant political figure in Russia, capable of reshaping the country’s domestic rules and policies, and its international strategy [6]. The goal appears to be very straightforward – re-establish control over the country’s economy and society without losing the international respectability that comes from being a democracy. Thus, by establishing a type of sovereign democracy, President Putin has been able not only to simulate political pluralism, but also fake Russia’s embracement of globalization, as well as to selectively implement legislations to serve political priorities [7]. This has permitted Mr. Putin to hide his aspirations in plain sight of the West.

In this manner, not only the EU has failed to aid in the molding of a democratic and liberal post-communist Russia, but the post-Soviet state has had a huge impact on the Union. The Kremlin has been signing long-term bilateral agreements with member states and has, thus, undermined core principles of the Union. It was only in December 2014 that Brussels managed to make a united stand on such policies with the cancelation of the South Stream [8]. In the Caucasus and Central Asia, however, Moscow’s efforts have effectively shut the EU out of an area, in which it wanted to promote political reform, resolve conflicts, and forge energy partnerships. [9]

Thus, the Russian policy towards Europe has been that of *divide et impera*. Moscow has sought to bilateralise not only its deals, but also its disputes with member states, thus putting a strain on the EU’s solidarity and producing windows of opportunity to increase Russian power and influence in the region. It would be a stretch, for now, to suggest that this is a diabolical master plan by Moscow to destroy the EU, but it is quite clearly the result of Russia’s perception of how international relations work. The Federation appears to regard international politics as a series of *tete-a-tetes* between great powers. The strategy is to mount charm offensives to seduce political and economic leaders of bigger member states, while at the same time coerce weaker neighbours with political and economic pressure. In the words of Konstantin Kosachev in an interview for the European Council on Foreign Relations: “*We are sick and tired of dealing with Brussels bureaucrats. In Germany, Italy, France, we can achieve much more. The EU is not an institution that contributes our relationship, but an institution that slows down*

progress”.[10]

In this line of thought it is not difficult to see the difference of Russia’s approaches to stronger and weaker European states. The Kremlin has not shied away from enhancing its political relationships by recruiting big businesses to serve as a lobbyist for the greater Russian cause in the EU states. Russia’s state-controlled companies have built partnerships with companies such as Gasunie in the Netherlands; GDF and Total in France; ENI in Italy; and BASF and E.ON in Germany.

What is more, since President Putin’s coming to power, Russia has been doing something very typical for great powers, who want to become regional hegemons. Russian foreign policy has often been constrained by outside powers’ interest in the ex-Soviet states as well Russia’s own desire to have generally co-operative relations with all Great Powers while exerting a hegemonic influence within the Commonwealth of Independent States. The paradox that has emerged, however, is that the more the Kremlin is seeking regional hegemony through military means, the more difficult it becomes for Moscow to be seen as a responsible actor in the international system. [11]

However, just because there is a paradox in a foreign policy, it does not mean it is unsuccessful or strategically mistaken. On the contrary, Russia’s annexation of Crimea may have strained relations with the West to their highest levels in nearly 30 years, but as Stephen Walt puts it: “Anyone who says Russia is losing in Ukraine doesn’t understand how this game is played” [12]. The realist scholar suggests that the West sees itself as a winner because the sanctions are working and Russia is losing international prestige. However, this is the case if the country is playing in accordance to contemporary guidelines, *per se*. Per the rules of Great Power Politics, Russia has decisively won – Ukraine is unlikely to become an EU member-state any time soon; NATO will certainly re-think the possibility of enlarging to other ex-Soviet countries; and Russia has quite possibly managed to become a regional hegemon. Moscow’s aggression in Georgia and Ukraine can be seen as a trade-off scenario for Russia: financial losses vs. security and relative gains.

The annexation of Crimea has also left Bulgaria in a peculiar situation. While the country is both the EU and NATO member, during the Cold War it was Moscow’s closest ally and most Bulgarians have traditionally held a very positive outlook of Russia. Moreover, in terms of energy Bulgaria is almost entirely dependent on Moscow. Thus, while the country has supported the

financial sanctions and President Plevneliev voiced his concerns on several occasions about the threats emanating from the Kremlin, Bulgaria still appears to be the weakest link in the Western alliances. These issues have put Bulgaria in a security dilemma of its own, as the country appears to be less worried about possible Russian aggression and more about angering policy-makers in the Kremlin with closer defense cooperation with other NATO members. [13]

At the summit in Warsaw in 2016, the Alliance recognized the strategic importance of the Black Sea and the need to enhance cooperation among members and partners [14]. Romania took leadership in the region by proposing the formation of a Black Sea joint maritime group with Bulgaria and Turkey, which would be under NATO command. In Sofia, this initiative was publicly supported by the Defense Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and then the President. It is difficult to assess if this initiative would have become a reality because of Turkey's strong say on the matter. However, it was Bulgaria that was first to disrupt the plan. Then the Prime Minister Boyko Borissov took a position on *wishing away* the security dilemma in the Black Sea. With NATO leaders adopting a declaration on transatlantic security at the summit with a focus on the region, Mr. Borissov proposed in Sofia that the Black Sea be demilitarized and "*excluded from the zones of conflicts*" [15]. This statement came in a time of escalating tensions in Crimea, Donbas, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria. What is more, the Prime Minister's proposal was not even addressed to anyone in particular and it is difficult to comprehend how states in the region, especially Russia, would demilitarize.

Additionally, while Bulgaria continues to implement the EU and NATO policies, there have been some calls for the lifting of the sanctions, including from the new President, Gen. Rumen Radev. It is not only very unlikely that the country will take some form of leadership to resolve current security issues in the region, but could also fail to properly cooperate with its partners when push comes to shove. Moreover, debates in Bulgaria are predominantly focused on the migration crisis as well as the difficulties and related threats they pose domestically, such as radicalization and organized crime. This focus on internal issues and the unwillingness to objectively evaluate security tensions in the region that can backfire the country. Bulgaria needs to enhance its cooperation with its NATO and the EU neighbours and improve its dialogue with its partners in the region. Wishful thinking has never been a solution to any dilemma, let alone the security one.

The Black Sea security dilemma involves several actors: NATO, the EU, aspiring members, and especially Russia. The Kremlin, evidently, has not only a realist outlook on international relations but also such an approach; and it is difficult to counter it with other approaches. Tensions in the region are likely to remain high for the foreseeable future, as Moscow's aggressive approach has changed the security architecture unilaterally. As stated, Russia acted in a manner it saw most fitting: matching Western soft power with brute force. However, this brute force has been accompanied with the efficient use of hybrid methods and strategic communication. This has allowed Moscow to exert military power while at the same time playing the role of a victim.

Russia's behavior, as stated, is not a historical precedent or a new phenomenon, rather it is a textbook realism. The Kremlin perceived the increasing role of the EU and NATO along its borders as a threat and that is a reason for a state to take reciprocal measures in the zero-sum game that security is. With the accession of the Baltic States, Russia's border with the West was reduced to a mere couple of hundred kilometers away from its capital. With Georgia's NATO membership, the Kremlin's strong position in the Black Sea, which is its only means of accessing the Mediterranean, would have been severely diminished. And with Ukraine's turn to the West, Moscow would have lost its dominant role not only in the wider Black Sea region but would also lose one of its most important ports where much of its navy is stationed. Russia could not afford this to happen as it saw it as a threat to its interests and security.

With the invasion in Georgia, the annexation of Crimea, and its support to separatists in the Donbas, Russia demonstrated that it was willing and capable of defying international order and law. Furthermore, it manifested its ambitions for regional hegemony by coercing weaker states; viewing them as nothing more than mere relative gains and disrespecting their peoples' will to establish closer ties with Western organizations.

Russia's aspirations and methods should serve as a weary lesson on what we can expect from the Kremlin. Moscow will not leave increased western influence unchecked and unmatched. It views security and power as a zero-sum game and will act in a matter it deems accordingly. With its indecisive measures in the 1990s both NATO and the EU have either created or left opportunities for Russia to exert power and influence in the Black Sea region.

Nevertheless, Russia's dominant position in the region

must not be confronted directly but rather matched and accompanied with transparent dialogue. While Moscow is the aggressor, peace in the wider Black Sea region and Eastern Europe are impossible without cooperation with the Kremlin. Russia clearly views NATO and the EU enlargement as a threat and is trying to secure itself by establishing buffer zones. It is unclear what the near future holds for the Black Sea region. What is clear, however, that Russia will not back down. It is highly improbable that there will also be de-escalations with

regards to the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Georgia. Rather, Russia will continue to exert influence in its former sphere of influence and even try to increase it, thus challenging that of NATO and the EU. If the West, however, is able to properly understand and engage Russia this will allow them to have control over the dilemma and prevent future escalation of tensions and conflict.

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Romania's perspective on a changed regional security environment

Of the eastern flank countries, Romania is geographically the closest to the Crimean Peninsula (annexed by Putin) and to the Eastern Ukraine, (destabilized by Russia). It is no surprise, then, that for most experts the greatest threat to security would be the emergence of Russia in the north of the Danube Delta, in the Odessa region, as a neighbor on NATO's and EU's border. Romania alone cannot cope with this threat, so everything depends on the temperature of the relationship with Washington and on maintaining the NATO and US commitments to the wider Black Sea region.

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Historical Background of the Diplomatic Relations Between Romania and Russian Federation

The diplomatic relation with the Russian Federation has been dominated by a very difficult historical inheritance: the Romanian treasury, stored in Moscow in 1916-1917 and never fully recovered; the moral satisfaction obtained by condemning the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1939); the territorial dispute on a large part of the Republic of Moldova (Bessarabia) but

also on the Northern Bukovina, historical provinces that were annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940. The dissolution of the USSR transferred the dispute to Ukraine and Moldova. Although the dispute was never formally endorsed by Romania in the new context, Bucharest still has encouraged all sorts of organizations to act aggressively on the subject of "historic territories" kidnapped by Stalin. Only a few small, but very vocal, organizations, are still contesting the contemporary Romania's eastern frontiers, proposing a revisionist agenda. At the same time, the moment the USSR fell, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova were recognized by Romania within their 1991 borders, this way confirming the frontiers drawn by Stalin.

The issue of Romania's treasury was in a way solved by a letter signed jointly by the foreign ministers, in the context of the basic political treaty concluded between Romania and Russia on 4 July, 2003. In fact, the problem was relegated to historians and archivists, which formed a committee to discuss the controversial issues in the bilateral relations. The committee has met three times so far, last time in Sinaia (Romania) in March 2016. The pact between Hitler and Stalin from August 1939 was mentioned in the letter of the foreign ministers, alongside the anti-Soviet campaign of Marshal Ion Antonescu's. Strangely, the text of the letter does not establish a causal link between the two events.

In the successive Basescu's presidential terms, the relationship with Russia remained tense and marked by expulsions of diplomats. Bucharest and Moscow were gripped by the fever of expelling each other's diplomats, having reached a peak of tension in their bilateral relations. The highest number of expulsions (May 2009, August 2010), of an unprecedented aggression, occurred precisely during the period of

political opening for the Kremlin, during President Medvedev's term. The bilateral relations thawed only when a new government, led by Victor Ponta, was sworn in 2012. The gradual improving relations with Moscow was among the foreign policy priorities of Bucharest. That was the year when Putin was back in the Kremlin for a third term. Right away, the level and intensity of bilateral contacts increased. Paradoxically, while Russia's relations with the US and EU states cooled, and Western ambassadors were physically harassed on the streets of Moscow, the government in Bucharest was working on relaunching the bilateral relationship.

Before the presidential elections in November 2014, Prime Minister Ponta, considered at the time, the candidate with the best chance in winning, wanted to organize a visit to Moscow. It was scheduled for summer 2014. In preparation for Ponta's visit to Moscow, Foreign Minister Titus Corlatean went in July 2013 on an unusually long visit to Russia's capital (three days) which the hosts described as 'historic'. At the time, Minister Sergei Lavrov announced the dawn of a new era in bilateral relations. At the last moment, however, the occupation and annexation of Crimea, as well as international sanctions, forced the government in Bucharest to step back and follow the policy drawn by its allies, NATO and the EU. After the stuttering in the last few months, the Romanian diplomacy aligned itself with its allies whose redlines were do not recognize the annexation of Crimea and maintain sanctions imposed on Moscow until Russia returns Crimea and pulls out from Donbas [1].

In the last few years, after the crisis broke out, Romania has scarcely featured in President's Putin public speeches, or in those of his foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov. In fact, Moscow does not see Romania as an autonomous international actor for Russia to negotiate with. References to it have been mostly in relation to the US BMD facility, taken under the NATO umbrella at the 2016 Warsaw Summit. According to the Kremlin, Romania became a legitimate target for Russia because it is hosting elements of the NATO system at the Deveselu base, something that might put in danger the whole strategic balance. As Russian-American relations resettle, even if the US gives up on installing the last pillar in Poland, it is highly unlikely, although not impossible, for Washington to abandon the already functional structure in Deveselu.

Deveselu is a potential bargaining resource for the US in relation to Russia, which enhances Romania's strategic value, even if for the fact that it is hosting the

base on its territory. Deveselu is a guarantee that the revisiting of Russian-American relations would not leave Romania out of this process, and Bucharest has a certain leverage, albeit the only one, in Washington through the Pentagon. Nobody in Bucharest seems to take into consideration the scenario of a US retrenchment from the region, especially since the missile shield installations in Deveselu as well as the military facilities at Mihail Kogălniceanu air base, near Constanta, are considered a long term investment.

The Warsaw Summit Seen from a Romanian Perspective

In November 2015, Romania and Poland co-hosted in Bucharest a major CEE summit. The output was a some sort of Eastern Flank statement of purpose in advance to the next year NATO gathering in Warsaw. The big message that the Bucharest summit sent to the rest of the Alliance was one that the readjustment of the Alliance to the post-Crimea security environment should go well beyond the Wales package. Upfront, the expectation was that if the last Wales summit was one about reassurance, then Warsaw would be about deterrence. In particular, NATO's defense posture should be ready to make a step forward. The consensus on the Eastern Flank highlighted the need for a "robust, credible and sustainable Allied military presence" in the New Europe.

Before the summer of 2016, when it became obvious that the Baltic region of the Northern Flank will be the focus of the allied enhancement, Bucharest, through the voice of President Iohannis, began to demand "a balanced approach" from the Baltic to the Black Sea, in the sense that "it should not exist measures considerably more important in one side while exposing the weakness of the other side". The theme of a "balanced consolidation" of the Eastern Flank, that should take into consideration both the Baltic and the Black Seas dimensions, became the strategic mantra of Romanian diplomacy before Warsaw. For four months, between February and May, the public statements of the Romanian officials indicated that the main project of Bucharest for the Warsaw summit is the establishment of a common naval military fleet reuniting the NATO littoral Black Sea members – Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey. However the project failed as the prime minister of Bulgaria Boiko Borisov rejected categorically Bucharest's proposal: "it is not acceptable to set up the fleet in the way it was proposed at the meeting with both the Romanian Prime Minister and the Romanian President - we are against it."

The whole episode drastically changed the chances regarding a favorable decision for expanding NATO's presence in the Black Sea, a subject of major interest to Romania because of its geographical proximity.

These statements and efforts are in themselves highly indicative about the changed perception of the Romanian elites after Crimea. One particular episode happened before Warsaw suggests how far Bucharest came in its reading of the Black Sea trends. Before 2015, Romanian officials were very sceptical about what the military jargon calls anti-access-area denial (A2/AD) capabilities and reluctant to acknowledge the very existence of the issue publicly. But last year Romania officially joined the club of the other NATO Eastern Flank allies concerned about the emerging of the A2/AD bubbles in their proximity. In his June 2016 speech delivered at the CEPA conference in Bucharest, the Romanian Defense Minister Mihnea Motoc made it very clear that the developments in the Black Sea after Crimea as transforming Romania in a "frontline state": "As the Black Sea is potentially turning into a fault line between Russia and the West, Romania's security needs have to be conceived as being those of a frontline State." It is in this context that the Russian deployment of A2/AD measures "are a real game-changer, essentially altering the very fabric of the security environment" by jeopardizing the freedom of navigation in the region. From Romania's perspective, there was a clear common denominator between the Black and the Baltic Seas, both becoming access-denial ecosystems. In the words of the Minister of Defense, Romania has "another Kaliningrad and very likely a Kaliningrad+ in our vicinity". This very specific reading of the new operational realities made Romania to plead in Warsaw not only for an equal level of security across the whole Eastern Flank, but for a credible reassurance via a "robust defense and deterrence posture at the shores of the Black Sea". In general, it can be concluded that the access-denial environment in the Black Sea has become a major variable shaping the perception of Romania's national security establishment. This diagnosis is embraced in the pages of the last year Military Strategy of Romania where it is emphasized that although a Russian military aggression in Europe is a low probability, yet the existing capacity for such an aggression, bolstered by the A2/AD build-up in the Black Sea, constitutes the main threat to Romania's national security and that of other states in the regional ecosystem. This was the very rationale for increasing NATO presence in the Black Sea through measures of counterbalancing the growing A2/AD bubble. Even the president referred in one of his

major foreign policy speeches that the instability in the Black Sea ecosystem is driven by the Russian efforts of "imposing access-denial zones". In conclusion the Russian ability to establish zones of exclusion and interdiction, that could also affect the larger regional commons such as freedom of navigation, is perceived as the biggest threat. According to the experts, the A2/AD systems from Crimea could impede NATO's ability to project power and reinforce its allies, in both air and sea domains, creating a bubble whose reach will gradually expand over Turkey and Romania.

The outcome of the last year Warsaw summit highlights the emergence of a new reality. The center of gravity of the NATO summit was the Northern part of the Eastern Flank. Four multinational battalions – led by Germany, United Kingdom, Canada and United States as framework nations – are going to be deployed in the Baltic States and Poland. Under the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) designed by the Obama Administration (and endorsed by the Trump Administration), 1,000 American troops will be stationed in Poland. In addition, Poland will host also the HQ elements of the new U.S. armored brigade (around 4,000 troops) with units to be rotated on the Eastern Flank, including in Romania. Overall the emphasis was on battle groups and deterrence. NATO displayed a lot more understanding to correct the "original sin" of the 1990s, when the first enlargement of the Alliance left the East vulnerable.

In contrast, the Southern picture is, alarmingly, much more modest. While in the North, the Alliance sends a message of solidarity, the Black Sea region expresses fragmentation and seems a space whose time has not yet come. Some commitments were elicited from Bulgaria and Poland to participate in populating a multinational brigade under the command of Romania, which made President Iohannis conclude that we are facing a "sensational" achievement. But, in general, the point should have been to incentivize the commitment and the presence of Old Europe, not just to fill the regional void with the Southern neighbor, the same one who has undermined the famous maritime initiative. Is this the snapshot of a "balanced" architecture between North (tangible deterrence measures) and South (where the emphasis remains on trainings and exercises)? And what message does this posturing send to Moscow regarding a region which after 2008 became the operational theatre of its revisionist impulses? One thing is very clear. The outcome was very far from an adequate "robust defense and deterrence posture at the shores of the Black Sea" as Romania wanted before Warsaw. Far from it. As to the initiative that

consumed all the time and creativity of Bucharest, that of developing an incremental naval framework in the Black Sea, the conclusion is clear: “there is no common position between allies yet”. In other words, there was no common threat perception.

Today Bucharest still hopes to bring the allies on the same page through the development of an “operational concept to make the Black Sea safer.” But for Europe, 2017 is a sensitive electoral year with some potential black swan events at the horizon. For example, we might see a massive realignment in favor of those who want “detente” and “rapprochement” by any means. It is not at all inconceivable to see the emergence of a critical mass of allies that will plead that the has come to end confrontation with Moscow. There are countries and political leaders that believe that the Alliance has gone too far in terms of reassurance and deterrence measures. This trend was visible even during the Warsaw summit when President Hollande wanted to clarify upfront that for France, Russia is not an enemy or a threat, but a “partner”. For some of the Eastern allies, the French were the most obstructionist towards the “whole reinforcement process, trying to dilute all aspects of it.”

It remains to be seen what 2017 will bring for Romania’s project that aimed for “more NATO” in the Black Sea and if that will meet the expectations to deliver “the kind of forward presence across all operational domains we need”, as Romanian officials wanted in Warsaw. In the end, a discussion about effective countering of the regional access-denial bubble is ultimately about real capabilities, a networked posture of air-maritime-land capabilities able to deter or neutralize them. To counterbalance Russia in the Black Sea, it takes more than just joint exercises. The effort should go well beyond to include a common doctrine for integrated air and sea operations as well as the gradual development of their own A2/AD umbrellas that should defend the most exposed territories of Romania and Turkey.

The Perspective of the New Government

In the past few years the political relationship with Russia remained almost on an automatic pilot. It has been reduced to identifying the graves of Romanian soldiers who fought in WWII, according to the agreement on the legal status of military graves, signed on November, 8, 2005. The political dialog was limited to the level of Foreign Ministry General Director, the latest meeting dating back to May 2015 while the latest meeting of the Romanian-Russian Intergovernmental Committee took place in April 2013 in Bucharest.

The Social Democratic Party (SDP) and its junior partner in the ruling coalition, the Liberal-Democratic Alliance, don’t not have any plans to go further than that. Its governing platform mentions that stability in the East is fundamental, in order for Romania to prevent ‘becoming a state with a direct border with Russia’. As for the bilateral relations, the platform speaks of a ‘pragmatic and predictable’ relation to Russia, whose intensity depends on Russia’s attitude in solving the Ukrainian conflict and in ‘restoring the strategic balance in the eastern Neighborhood’, ‘compliance with the international commitments’ by Russia, as ‘an absolutely necessary condition for enhancing dialogue’. In terms of enhancing economic relations, an obsession for most Romanian governments after December 1989, that would be achieved by complying with the “regime of sanctions imposed by the EU, which must continue until a solution is reached in the crisis in Ukraine”. As for the Crimean Peninsula, Bucharest assures Kiev, that Romania would not recognize its illegal annexation by Russia.

In his expert committee hearing in the Parliament, the new foreign minister, Teodor Melescanu, referred to the re-militarization of Crimea as a ‘game changer’ which modified dramatically the strategic balance in the Black Sea area. Overall the governing platform confirms the attention that Bucharest attaches to the wider Black Sea area since 2005. The ripple effects of the Russian aggression against Ukraine – “changing state borders, the specific manifestations of hybrid war, the existence of frozen conflicts in the wider Black Sea area” – have generated a zone of instability on the Eastern Flank of the NATO and the EU. It is in this context that the Romanian government aims to incentivize more regional engagement from the NATO and the EU. Particularly, “Black Sea should remain in NATO’s attention, as an area of strategic importance and relevance to the presence of the organization in a region with a complex security equation.”

In the context of Eastern neighborhood, Moldova is assured by the consistent support of Romania in the attempt of getting closer to the West. Bucharest remains firmly a supporter of the “open doors” in both NATO and the EU. In the European Union, Romania aims at “supporting and streamlining the Eastern Partnership, an important tool for projecting democratic stability, stability and security in its Eastern neighborhood”. In NATO, Romania will actively support measures designed for enhancing “the defense capacity building of Eastern partners with a focus on Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia.”

Conclusion

The consolidation of an Euro-Atlantic pivot on the Eastern Flank as a response to the Crimea power grab and the Russian aggression in the Eastern Ukraine is a necessary step in the right direction. Both Wales and Warsaw summits should be perceived as a return to normalcy. It was a long overdue process for a military alliance that expanded its security guarantees in the 1990s, but without its defensive infrastructure following through. Arguably, the whole idea made sense in a time when a unipolar West could project its expeditionary power to secure its vulnerable flanks. But today that world no longer exists. The assumptions that reflected a unipolar mindset can no longer be taken for granted. Militarily, NATO's operational environment has changed. Power and technology are more evenly spread. Over the years, Russia has built on the unique comparative advantages that the U.S. used to have, especially in the area of precision guided munitions (PGMs), and now Moscow has developed the capability to impede and even keep at bay NATO's ability to reinforce its most exposed allies. Increasingly, the anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) systems deployed in Kaliningrad and Crimea can not only deny access into the Baltic and Black Seas, but also put in jeopardy the reinforcement of the Eastern allies. It is in this context that much more has to be done along the whole Eastern Flank in order to achieve a real deterrent effect.

One dimension is about the specific capabilities that will be deployed together with the new enhanced forward forces: "We have to expect that Moscow will closely observe the capability that will accompany NATO's enhanced forward presence. Battalions are not significant elements when they are juxtaposed against Russia's Western military district which has tens of thousands of troops that are rapidly mobilisable, rapidly deployable and equipped for high-intensity combat. If these battalion level elements are going to be an effective deterrent they are going to have some level of survivability, some ability to impose pain and costs to

the aggressor and confidence that NATO will be able to reinforce them very rapidly in a highly contested A2/AD battlefield environment", said Ian Brzezinski, a former US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Europe and NATO Policy in early 2000s. [2]

The second dimension is about a demonstrated ability to operate effectively in an access-denial environment both in the Baltic and Black seas: "the Alliance needs to have in place a real and exercised capability to break through those A2/AD capabilities in the event of a conflict. Once we have that and we should be working in that direction, we can seriously talking about complicating Russian military planning and having a viable, credible deterrence posture in the region." [3] For this to happen, NATO allies, especially the frontline ones, should change their acquisition patterns and invest in those capabilities that have the potential to counter the Russian A2/ADs: "this means investing more in air and missile defense, precision strike, and anti-submarine warfare capabilities." [4]

While the whole attention is focused on the Nordic part of the Eastern Flank, the wider Black Sea area could rapidly become a sample of regional A2/AD probing. Over the past few years the Russian fleet in the Black Sea has been significantly bolstered. And from an access-denial perspective the Russian deployments in Crimea have created a new Kaliningrad "of the South". If in its contested near seas, China is building "a great wall of sand", Russia is thoroughly developing a virtual A2/AD archipelago along NATO's Eastern Frontier with an expansive Southern leg in Syria affecting Eastern Mediterranean. The access-denial variable is starting to establish itself as a common denominator that should bring together Baltic and Black Seas' ecosystems and provide the ingredients that could advance a comprehensive NATO strategy to counterbalance the new developments.

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Security in the Caspian – Black Sea Region after 2014: views from Moldova

Russia's annexation of Crimea and its policy have changed the Black Sea region in the way of worsening problems of security and dramatic militarization of the entire Caspian-Black Sea area. Previsions of strengthening of the Russian pressure and fears of repetition of the events that took place in Ukraine and other countries of the region created preconditions for enhancing their defense capabilities. This radically changes the context of interaction in the region in the new conditions. Security problems in the Caspian-Black Sea Region attract more and more attention from the international community that requires not only understanding but also developing effective measures to stabilize the situation.

Russia's annexation of Crimea and its policy have changed the Black Sea region for ever, as many people suggest, and led to worsening security problems that provoked dramatic militarization of the entire Caspian-Black Sea area. Forecasts for strengthening Russian pressure and fears of a repetition of the actions that took place in Ukraine and other countries of the region created conditions for developing their defense capabilities. This radically changes the context of interaction in the region between states, which seek to develop and strengthen their defense capacities and actualize regional security strategies in accordance with the new conditions.

In fact, we can speak about the sharp collapse of the recently shaped prospects of further development of multilateral regional cooperation in the Black Sea area, however, the general problems, which were typical for the entire Caspian-Black Sea region, stay unresolved and reinforce security problematic. It is about ethnic conflicts, territorial claims, separatism, energy security, interests of the so-called foreign players that do not coincide with each other. Amid all, the militarization of

the region is under way that cannot but cause concern on future developments and consequences, which are the result the Russian Federation's actions.

Republic of Moldova, as a country of the Black Sea region, cannot remain aloof from the events like Ukraine and Georgia, which made their choice of the foreign policy vector in favour of the European integration. These three Eastern Partnership countries make consistent steps in this direction. In particular, they signed Association Agreements with the EU that is pretty convincing ascertaining of commitment to their foreign policy choices. It should be noted that this determination of their actions was developed after the demonstration by Russia its aggression policy, that is its actions actually prompted these countries to strengthen their aspirations for the EU. At the same time, among the Eastern Partnership countries, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus remain uninvolved in the process of the European integration.

Moldova's understanding of the importance of changes, taking place in the Black Sea region, a part of which it is, cannot but draw its attention to the policy of the Caspian states and third countries, which are increasingly enhance demonstration of their interests to the Caspian-Black Sea region. In this regard, the view from the Republic of Moldova is particularly interesting in terms of perception of the situation prevailing in the region, and the policy that has our country, based on changes in interaction between countries of the Black Sea basin.

Militarization of the Black Sea Region

Events in the Black Sea region, as some Western experts suggest, are conditioned by the course of history. [1] Heritage of the Cold War remains relevant, especially concerning the Black Sea issue, to which Russia and the West have not managed to reach an agreement. Apparently, at that time none of them supposed that Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova can ever

express willingness to join the Western institutions. However, problems within the Black Sea region have increased. The war in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, generated much more disagreements on possible options to settle the situation.

The current situation is becoming increasingly tense. Russia and Ukraine are rapidly increasing their military power in the region. NATO decided to expand its naval presence in the Black Sea and deploy additional forces in Romania. Turkey, along with other actors in the region, is also trying to maintain its privileged position here. Moreover, extension of Russian military role in Syria reinforces the importance of the Black Sea naval routes. The situation is increasingly becoming destabilized and difficult to predict.

It is impossible to ignore the fact that in 2014 the Republic of Moldova was the first country, invited to the NATO Summit in Wales. In July 2016, the last Warsaw NATO Summit adopted the final declaration, to which the separate paragraph on the need to assist the Republic of Moldova to strengthen its defense capabilities was included. [2] Special attention in the new conditions, appeared in the Black Sea region, is paid to security issues, strengthening the defense potential and militarization. This is confirmed by the recent decision, made by the North Atlantic Council at the Defense Ministers level on February 16, 2017, to strengthen NATO presence in the Black Sea region and enhance cooperation, which will be based on the deployment of the Alliance multinational rapid response brigade in Romania. NATO plans to expand training, raise awareness about the situation and coordination of forces at sea. [3]

Thus, we can state the fact of placing military infrastructure all along the eastern borders of the Alliance member countries, including deployment of the NATO high readiness forces in the Baltic states, Poland and Romania. In this context Prut-Dniester region is under scrutiny. The issue of reintegration of Transnistria to the Republic of Moldova and withdrawing of the operational group of the Russian forces in the Transnistrian region to eliminate the Russian military presence in the area becomes more and more actual.

This suggests the extension of containment of aggressive actions of Russia and strengthening defense potentials of the countries of the Black Sea region through the NATO efforts [4]. There is a sequence of actions on mechanisms aimed at preventing the strengthening of military tensions in the Black Sea basin. Stabilizing the military situation in Ukraine seems to be important. In

this context, it should also make the OSCE activities enhanced as the Organization is a major forum for dialogue and restoring confidence in the region.

In addition, interests of the Caspian Sea states are divided, there were two groups of states, which have different attitudes to the military cooperation with other countries. Iran and Russia oppose the military presence of third countries in the Caspian region, because they view the Caspian region as a sphere of their geopolitical interests at the junction of several important regions. In turn, Turkmenistan does not regard the Caspian oil and gas resources as a priority, but Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan focus mainly on the economic benefits from production of raw materials [5]. The problem of the legal status of the Caspian Sea is particularly important in this context. In January 2017 the meeting of the working group on that issue took place in Baku. The main difficulties to determine the legal status of the Caspian Sea relate to recognition it a lake or a sea, differentiation of which is regulated by various provisions of the international law. [6] Clarification of these issues and their legalization would significantly reduce threats and risks to security in the region.

The desire of the states of the region to strengthen their security forces them to increase defense and military potential. The militarization of the Black Sea region is supported by international agencies. NATO stepped up its actions aimed at strengthening its presence in the region to control the situation, emerged in the Black Sea region. This will create conditions for restraining further spread of the Russian pressure on the countries of the Black Sea basin. Therefore, an important adjustment seems to be multilateral cooperation between the countries of the entire Black Sea-Caspian region, based on the prevailing conditions in its modern development.

Energy Security

Most of the Black Sea countries have repeatedly felt the vulnerability of energy security, mainly because of their dependence on Russian gas. Political pressure and blackmail have been widely used by Russia in this sphere that has undermined the confidence of countries in the region and negatively affected the image of the Russian Federation. Understanding the complexity of worsening situation, the EU has developed a range of measures on regulation of the energy policy, increasing efficiency, and mitigating effects of so-called monopolistic practices and achievement of objectives of energy supplies in the long term perspective. This

implies, in particular, development by these states an consecutive action plan, aimed at overcoming serious difficulties in addressing the priorities in this sphere, and problems, associated with aging of electricity production means, the low level of cross-border energy interconnections and pipelines. These States have to modernize national systems of production, transport, distribution and use of energy and step up international cooperation in this sphere [7]. Of course, this requires financial resources and time, but new opportunities in the energy sector will open, the key issue of energy security - dependence on Russian energy - will be resolved, and national power generation systems in the Black Sea region will be adapted to the current conditions of the energy sphere development. Thus, there are real practical opportunities to develop new tenets of the energy policy at the regional level.

It is important to note that the “Baku Caspian Energy Forum 2017” with the support of the Caspian Energy Club was held on April 12, 2017 in Azerbaijan. The event will be attended by heads of the state structures of Azerbaijan and the Black Sea and Baltic regions, representatives of diplomatic and international missions, as well as heads of major international companies. The agenda includes issues relating to: energy integration of the Caspian-Black Sea and Baltic regions into the global energy markets; role of governments in energy, transport and infrastructure projects; consideration of the Southern Corridor and resource potential of the Caspian Sea etc. [8] In fact, the forum will focus on the discussion of the most actual problems in the energy sector.

Energy integration of the Black Sea countries to the international markets is of particular importance, especially for the energy security of the region. This forced the EU to intensify its efforts in this direction. The “Southern Gas Corridor” is a strategic initiative of transporting gas from the Caspian region to the European markets. In this context, the EU intensifies efforts, aimed at opening markets of South Eastern Europe to the Southern Gas Corridor. The most important task is to provide each member state in the region with an access to at least three different sources of gas. The EU has managed to make progress in the implementation of the key projects within the Southern Gas Corridor. Among them, special attention is given to developing the “Shah Deniz” gas field in Azerbaijan; expansion of the South Caucasus pipeline; construction of the Trans-Anatolian pipeline. The completion of these projects, in accordance with the previewed objectives, allows to start implementation of gas supplies to Turkey as early as 2019 and to the EU by 2020. This corridor is a

priority for the EU projects that involves transportation of Azerbaijani gas from the Caspian region via Greece and Turkey to Europe. [9]

It is expected to invite new countries to the new EU project in the future. It is planned that the Gas Interconnector Greece - Bulgaria will be built by the end of 2019. Gas will go through this pipeline to Bulgaria, which is not a direct participant of the Southern Gas Corridor project. Taking into account that Bulgaria has a pipeline connection with Romania, we can talk about new perspectives of this project, about actual multilateral cooperation involving other countries of the region in the context of implementation of the project “Southern Gas Corridor”.

New Format of Interaction

The need of new innovative and nonstandard formats of cooperation is becoming increasingly apparent. Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova need support from Poland, Romania and Turkey, and their strengthened cooperation. Some steps in this direction have already been made. First of all, mechanisms of regular consultations, made at the level of the Foreign Ministers of Poland, Romania and Turkey, affecting the Black Sea region and associated with the expansion of NATO, frozen conflicts and the state of the system of conventional weapons in Europe in the future were established. However, there are some differences of the sides in this form of interaction. Thus, Poland and Romania were against the Russian aggression in Ukraine, while Turkey did not support the EU sanctions imposed on Russia. Nevertheless, Turkey strengthened largely cooperation with Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova after the annexation of Crimea. In 2014 Turkey signed the free trade agreement with Moldova. These actions significantly contribute to deepening cooperation with Turkey in the Black Sea region. At the same time, the crisis in the relations between Turkey and the EU should not be forgotten. As for Romania and Poland, they are enough consistent supporters of approaching of Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova to the EU. [10] This allows us to formulate opinion on the possibility of cooperation in a multilateral format in the Black Sea region and strengthening cooperation between the EU and the Eastern Partnership.

In addition, deepening regional economic cooperation is deemed necessary even within the existing structures, including the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. This includes the development of trade and economic relations, transport infrastructure, health, information

technologies, culture and tourism. [11]

Realizing the ongoing reconsideration and changing of dynamics of the transport communications in the Caspian-Black Sea region in the whole, Moldova supports establishment of an efficient transport infrastructure and opening of new transport corridors. It will promote economic development, increase investment, reflowing of cargo routes, that is seen very important because the period of 2015 - 2016 could be called a turning point in development of trade and economic relations. The Russian Federation does not allow transit of Ukrainian goods through its territory. As a result, a significant decrease in trade between Ukraine and the countries of the Caspian Sea (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan) occurred. In 2015 the turnover decreased by 46% compared to 2014. The only exception is Iran, which remains the main buyer of Ukrainian products. Considering this, problematic of creation of new transport corridors was actualized.

Moldova cannot ignore the project "New Silk Road". It is assumed that the Trans-Caspian transport corridor will connect Europe and Asia because the route runs through the territory of Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus and further through Poland and the Western Europe. Despite existing opinion that there are a number of obstacles that make the large-scale entry of Ukraine in this project unlikely, it is clear that Ukraine can become a part of it and it will substantially increase its economic potential and the role of the region.

In general, the railway transportation from China to the Western Europe will significantly shorten terms of supplying Chinese products due to development of the European transport corridors. As for the arguments that Ukraine, unlike Bulgaria and Romania, is not an EU member, and therefore a procedure of crossing the borders is significantly complicated. In addition, the nontransparent and long mechanism of customs cargo is characteristic for Ukraine that, on the background of the high cost of docking ships and the lack of quality auto-routes to the EU, make it less attractive in comparison with other EU countries. [12] Ukraine should consider all these issues and take appropriate measures that enhance significantly perception of the country as a potential project partner. It should be emphasized again that Ukraine does not claim a large-scale role in the project, but it may well become an integral part of it, and this is a very promising direction.

It is important to note that realization of this project is of particular importance for Russia. This opens new opportunities in the region for it, including investment

in railway infrastructure, development of transport communications, economic benefits, new jobs and so on.

In turn, Poland opposed the Trans-Eurasian railway corridor, although its geographical position is quite profitable in terms of linking China and Europe. In particular, Polish Defense Minister A. Macierewicz admitted the New Silk Road project and China's expansion into Europe as "attack on geopolitical subjectivity of Poland" and called it a "new socialist empire, uniting Germany, Russia and China". [13] In fact, this project is a deal of the Western Europe with Russia and China to exclude the US influence from the Eurasian area, but this scenario is not convenient for Poland. If the US influence is maintained in Eurasia, Poland gets the US support, which is more advantageous for it than an obvious prospect of placing Germany and Russia to the forefront in the implementation of the project. Therefore, the conclusion is that, even in the security sphere there is a tendency to develop measures aimed at easing the Russian power politics, but corresponding to development of transport communications and infrastructure, increased trade and economic turnover, joint efforts of the EU, Russia and China to oppose the US influence in the region is under way. This creates preconditions for development of effective forms of cooperation between countries in the context of the New Silk Road project at both regional and international levels.

Recommendations

Security problems in the Caspian-Black Sea region attract more and more attention of the international community, which requires not only understanding, but also developing effective measures to stabilize the situation. In this regard the timely recommendations seem to be the following:

- In the conditions of deteriorating security issues in the Black Sea region it is necessary to be extremely cautious to the fact of militarization of the region. The dual nature of this issue can adversely affect the regional security, especially considering actual conflicts, separatism and other destructive phenomenon. With this in mind, a constructive dialogue between the Black Sea states and development of a new regional security strategy are demanded.
- Involvement of the international organizations into monitoring and coordinating activities in the Black Sea region becomes significant. NATO, the EU, OSCE can prevent increasing security threats and develop

multilateral cooperation between the Black Sea states. For this purpose, in particular, OSCE should intensify efforts to stabilize the situation in the Black Sea basin and, above all, in Ukraine.

- It is necessary to solve the problems associated with the legal regulation of the status of the Caspian Sea and reach agreements on the Black Sea. This will appeal to the international law in case of any disputes.

- Introduction of innovative formats of interaction between Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova, based on the support of these countries by Poland, Romania and Turkey in the security sphere, expansion of cooperation in the Black Sea region and approximation to the EU seem to be necessary.

- The Black Sea countries are recommended to focus on modernization of cross-border interconnections and their national energy systems that will enhance energy efficiency, prevent energy dependence of the region on Russia and create new conditions for the implementation of energy policy at the regional level.

- The Republic of Moldova should intensify efforts to reintegrate Transnistria and develop effective peaceful measures to reach its goals, including withdrawal of the Russian troops from Transnistria.

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Turkey's Black Sea Policy: A Balancing Act or Russian Roulette?

The Black Sea was an Ottoman lake from the Middle Ages to the 18th century. The Russian Empire emerged as a rival in the Black Sea after the annexation of Crimea in 1783, and the destruction of the Crimean Khanate, the independent state of the Crimean Tatars. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the new Republic of Turkey, with the Montreux Convention (1937) regained the control of the Straits, hence improved its position in the Black Sea. During the Cold War, the Black Sea was divided between the Warsaw Pact countries and NATO, represented by Turkey. In fact, Turkey became a NATO member as a result of Stalin's harassment of Turkey for the control of the Straits. In the post-Cold War era, Black Sea, for the first time in history, had a chance to develop a regional identity.

The Black Sea was an Ottoman lake from the Middle Ages to the 18th century. The Russian Empire emerged as a rival in the Black Sea after the annexation of Crimea in 1783, and the destruction of the Crimean Khanate, the independent state of Crimean Tatars. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the new Republic of Turkey, with the Montreux Convention (1937) regained the control of the Straits, hence improved its position in the Black Sea. During the Cold War, the Black Sea was divided between the Warsaw Pact countries and NATO, represented by Turkey. In fact, Turkey became a NATO member as a result of Stalin's harassment of Turkey for the control of the Straits. In the post-Cold War era, Black Sea, for the first time in history, had a chance to develop a regional identity.

I argue that despite Turkey's regional power status, there is no sufficient interest for the Black Sea in Turkish foreign policy. Even though Turkey ignores the

Russian advances in the Black Sea, focusing on trade relations with Russia, Turkey's Black Sea and other interests are increasingly threatened by Russia. Turkey needs to pay more attention to its north and develop a geopolitical and visionary foreign policy rather than ideological and short-term pragmatist. In this paper, the post-Cold War Turkish Black Sea policy are traced from the late 1980s until today. Firstly, in the 1990s, Turkey initiated the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), to aid transition into market economy in the region and to increase regional trade. It also led regional security frameworks to foster multilateralism, and to overcome Cold-War rivalries. In the 2000s, Turkey greatly transformed as the 'Muslim Democrat' Justice and Development Party (AKP) formed a majoritarian government, and army's tutelage on politics ended. This was reflected on an independent foreign policy, balancing Western and Russian interests in the Black Sea, and increasing economic relations between a growing Turkish economy and resource-rich Russia. In the 2010s, Turkish foreign policy seems to be largely affected by the Eurasianist ideology, economic concerns, and the concerns of domestic policy. After the coup attempt, strengthening western criticism of President R. Tayyip Erdogan, who felt threatened with the turbulent political events of the recent few years, distanced Turkey from its Western allies, and pushed towards Russia. This, however, can be a temporary move until Erdogan consolidated his power with transition to the 'presidential system', but involves serious risks for Turkey's security.

Turkish Black Sea Policy in the 1990s: Search for Regionalism

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Turkey liberalized politically and Turkish economy integrated more into the global economy. The Kemalist foreign policy that

aimed to maintain the status quo and fixed positions in foreign relations was challenged by the center-right government of Turgut Özal and succeeding governments. Özal attempted to develop trade links with the Soviet Union even in the 1980s [1]. In the 1990s, Turkey adopted a proactive policy, primarily towards the Turkic republics of Central Asia, emphasizing cultural, linguistic, and historical ties [2]. Turkey was rightly criticized in this period for the attempts to play in patronizing ‘big brother.’ [3]

The end of Cold War was a revolutionary event for the Black Sea as well, as the region finally had the chance of becoming a proper region, and the Black Sea countries could for the first time had a chance to advance trade relations, communications, transportation, cultural links and so on that will foster a regional identity. Turkey, very early on, developed two major initiatives to increase security and multilateralism in the Black Sea. These were the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the Black Sea Naval Co-Operation Task Group (Blackseafor). GUAM (Georgia-Ukraine-Azerbaijan-Moldova), and Black Sea Forum for Partnership and Dialogue were other initiatives of regionalism supported by Turkey. Turkey invited Russia to its own regional initiatives to encourage normalization in post-Cold War relations. Turkey hoped that increased trade relations, evolving towards a customs union would secure peace and stability, and Turkey could become a regional leader, by contributing the former communist countries to transit into the capitalist economy. [4]

These regional organizations or frameworks were intentionally organized very loose, mostly focusing on economic cooperation, because the Black Sea countries had several political conflicts [5]. In time, it became clear that these initiatives could not fulfil the conflict resolution and peacekeeping needs of the region, hence a ‘security vacuum’ emerged in the Black Sea [6]. The collapse of the Soviet Union brought the thawing of several frozen conflicts in the region such as Nagorno-Karabakh, Transdniestria in Moldova, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia. Moreover, Russia did not support multilateralism in the Black Sea, and looked for an opportunity to reestablish its regional hegemony. Therefore, it interfered in and exacerbated several frozen conflicts. Russia also opposed the entrance of the EU to the Black Sea through the EU Enlargement and Eastern Partnership Program, as well as developing close relations with Georgia and Ukraine, who expressed wishes to become part of the Western institutions in order to escape the Russian hegemony [7]. The EU expansion into the Black Sea, admittedly, relegated Black Sea regionalism into secondary status.

The U.S developed a new unilateral security vision after the end of the Cold War, in which it wanted to be closely involved in both the Mediterranean and the Black Sea along with seeking NATO expansion. [8]

Overall, in the 1990s, Turkey lacked the political and economic capacity to follow through its proactive foreign policy projections, or to lead the former Soviet countries in their transition to market economy and democracy.

Turkish Black Sea Policy in the 2000s: Seeking to Balance West and Russia

In the 2000s, Turkey was governed by the AKP, and this became the era when military tutelage on civil government ended as part of the EU accession reforms. Taking advantage of the relative global economic prosperity, Turkish economy expanded to a level, that Turkey became 16th largest economy in the world. Foreign direct investment multiplied, inflation decreased to single digit after decades of high inflation. Turkish construction, consumer electronics, automotive, real estate, tourism and financial sectors boomed. GDP increased and the middle class expanded. Turkey was then in the position to support economically an active foreign policy, and in search of new markets as well as energy sources.

The AKP government challenged the previously fixed positions and reactive policy of Kemalist military-bureaucratic elite and pro-Western foreign policy of Turkey. They proclaimed that Turkey would follow an independent foreign policy. Turkey reached out all of its neighbors previously it had problems with and achieved breakthroughs in the Cyprus conflict, the policy towards Armenia, and the Kurdish issue. Turkey also achieved the EU candidacy status by undertaking large reforms. Turkey increasingly employed soft power tools, assumed various mediation roles in international diplomacy, and tried to develop bilateral and trade relations with all the countries in the world. [9]

Next foreign policy transformation was the development of Middle Eastern and Eurasian orientations for the first time. Davutoğlu, the architect of the Turkish foreign policy in this era, brought in the identity issue of Turkey to the foreign policy agenda. He argued that Turkey will be a stronger state if it is true to its “civilizational self” (civilization thought in terms of its Ottoman and Islamic past). The practical application of this theoretical point is that as a country located between Europe, and Asia, Turkey aimed to develop

strong relations with, on the one hand, the Western, and on the other hand, the Middle Eastern, and Eurasian states (Dalacoura, 2017, p.2.) Turkey attempted to practice soft power by projecting itself as a country demonstrating ‘alliance of civilizations’ as opposed to the ‘clash of civilizations’. [11]

American pressure to utilize Turkish territory in Iraq invasion, and Turkey’s rejection of it, as well as the EU’s rejection of Turkey’s candidacy, despite Turkey’s constructive Cyprus policy or internal reforms led Turkey to seek new alliances beyond the West. While maintaining its position in NATO and its status as an EU candidate, Turkey established new partnerships with Middle Eastern and Eurasian states. For instance, Turkey began to participate actively in Islamic Cooperation Organization, and during the Arab Spring, it was engaged with the Arab states, presenting itself as a model that brings together Islam and democracy. With respect to Eurasia, Turkey became a dialogue partner in Shanghai Cooperation Organization, developed pragmatist relations with the Central Asian states, which worked better than the emotional appeal of the 1990s [12]. Turkey also increased economic relations with Iran, Russia, and China.

In the Black Sea region, while Turkey’s bilateral relations with Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan flourished, Turkish foreign policy was not very proactive in general. Even Crimean Tatars, Chechens and Circassians, the Turkic and Muslim brothers in the north were not mentioned as much as Bosnians, and Palestinians in the foreign policy discourse. Turkish foreign policy in the Black Sea was influenced more by the traditional concern to maintain maritime security, sovereignty on the Straits and Turkey’s growing energy needs.

To maintain Montreux Convention, Turkey aimed to limit the entrance of outside powers to the Black Sea. However, after September 11, 2001, the Black Sea gained a strategic importance as a region adjacent to the Middle East and Afghanistan. The US policy towards the region included missile defense shield in Eastern Europe, and NATO enlargement to the region by including Romania and Bulgaria, and offering Ukraine and Georgia prospects for future membership. In 2007, an economically stronger Russia underlined that it did not perceive favorably the Western attempts for hegemony in its “near abroad.” The first attempt of Russia to challenge the post-Soviet European security framework has been the Georgian War (2008). During the Georgian War, Turkey followed a delicate balancing policy between Russia and the U.S. While

Turkey supported the territorial integrity of Georgia, it did not permit the American warships, except those carrying humanitarian aid to Georgia, cross the Straits. This, again, showed how much Turkey cared about the preservation of the Montreux regime. Turkey’s act was, in general, approved by Russia, and Turkey supported Russia’s position of excluding the U.S in the post-Georgian War peace talks, hence from the Black Sea region.

Another issue that brought Turkish and Russian interests together in the Black Sea is the enormous increase in Turkish-Russian economic relations to the degree that Russia became the second trading partner for Turkey. Turkey became dependent on Russia in terms of energy. The Russian Federation became the biggest market for Turkish international contracting services [13]. The tourist arrivals from Russia skyrocketed. In return, half of the Turkish energy imports were from Russia. Vladimir Putin and Tayyip Erdogan during their many high level ‘strategic talks’ agreed that their economic relations will not be affected from their conflicting interests in other areas, such as strategic, geopolitical, historical, ethnic, religious, and political, i.e. decided to “compartmentalize” their relations. Despite economic cooperation on the surface, in fact, subtle competition between Russia and Turkey in the energy field continued. While Russia aims to be the main source and transit route of oil and natural gas, Turkey aims to develop alternative routes from Central Asia and Caucasus to Europe, and to become the hub instead of just a transit country. In 2006, with the US support, Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan were able to establish Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, excluding Russia. A further extension of this pipeline through NABUCCO project to Europe halted due to Russian prevention of Turkmenistan to be a source-country. [14]

Turkish Black Sea Policy in the 2010s: Eurasianism, Trade, and Domestic Policy

In the 2010s, Turkey’s not only Black Sea policy, but general foreign policy was quiescent in the face of Russian advances in the Black Sea, the Middle East and in other areas.

First of all, Russia occupied Crimea, and initiated a hybrid war in Eastern Ukraine. Turkey lost enormous ground strategically especially with the occupation of Crimea in the Black Sea. Nuclear warheads are located in the peninsula [15]. The Russian fleet is planned to grow to the level of Turkey’s fleet by 2020, and even

the Iskander missiles which are asserted to be already located in Crimea are in a position to threaten Turkish Black Sea coast [16]. Russian jets continue violating the Turkish airspace in the Black Sea in addition to Middle East to test the Turkish capabilities [17]. It is possible that Russia can open Montreux for renegotiation.

After occupying Crimea, Russia has been treating Crimean Tatars, the closest kin of Turks, in an abysmal way. The *Meclis* (read Mejlis), the democratic parliament of Crimean Tatars, was banned. The legendary Crimean Tatar leader and human rights activist Mustafa Cemilev (Jemilev) and *Meclis* leaders were prohibited to enter Crimea. Many Crimean Tatars were kidnapped, murdered, tortured, and prosecuted unjustly. Islamic books were prohibited, and Crimean Tatar media was shut down. People are scared of speaking Crimean Tatar on the street [18]. The Crimean Tatar diaspora has been worried of Russia's treatment of its co-ethnics, and has demanded Turkey to join the sanctions against Russia.

While Davutoglu was the prime minister, Turkey was quick in defending the territorial integrity of Ukraine and opposing the Russian "annexation" of Crimea. Davutoglu immediately visited Ukrainian government after the Euromaidan Revolution [19]. Turkey also protested the human rights violations of Crimean Tatars and sent an unofficial monitoring mission to Crimea [20]. But, Turkey's reaction to the Russian annexation of Crimea, and support of its Crimean Tatar kins was subdued as Turkey did not join the economic sanctions against Russia.

Secondly, Russia interfered decisively in Syrian War, and harmed primarily the Turkish interests. Russia weakened American and Turkish trained Free Syria Army instead of ISIS in Syria, and supported Asad and PYD/YPG, which Turkey opposed. Russia has not recognized PKK, Kurdish separatists in southeastern Turkey as a terrorist organization [21]. The escalation of the jet crisis by Russia, almost complete break up of relations and applying economic sanctions to Turkey demonstrated that Russia is distrustful of Turkey despite decades of cooperation [22]. Russia also showed that it could easily drop 'compartmentalization'.

Thirdly, in the 2010s, Russia began to oppose Turkish interests everywhere. Russia supported the fascist and radical political parties in Europe, which opposed Turkey's membership and Muslims. Russia encroached Turkey with the missiles in Caspian Sea, Armenia, Syria, and Cyprus. While Turkish interests lied in peace and stability in the Black Sea region, Russia continued to reinvigorate the frozen conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh,

Moldova, and finally created a new frozen conflict in Ukraine.

Then, why would Erdogan declare Russia a strategic partner? After all, Russia and Turkey belong to collective security organizations (CSTO-NATO), established against each other, and Turkey and Russia have almost no military cooperation. Since Davutoglu, who had a strong historical consciousness of Russian-Turkey relations has also stepped down now, and as a response to worsening of relations with the West, AKP leaders seem to ponder the Eurasianist option. Turkish Eurasianism has been propagated by some opinion leaders for some time in Turkey, supported by the Russian lobby and the propaganda machine in Turkey. Turkish Eurasianists are a red-brown alliance of Turkish ultra-nationalists, and Kemalist Left who are anti-American and who believe that a Turkish-Russian alliance would balance the Western power. However, the problem with the 'Eurasianist' option is the enormous number of conflicting interests between Turkey and Russia, and unequal balance of power between the two countries [23]. Therefore, any 'Eurasianist Union' between Turkey and Russia will be on Russian terms. Indeed, according to Russian "Eurasianism," Russia will be hegemonic over Eurasian countries [24]. For instance, it is not clear, how the newly proposed pipeline 'Turkish Stream' and Turkey's first nuclear power plant at Akkuyu, which will be built and owned by Russia, would really serve Turkish strategic interests, as it would possibly make Turkey more dependent on Russia.

The other significant factor in Turkish-Russian rapprochement is the strong lobby of construction, tourism, and agricultural sectors. Specifically, construction sector has strong ties with the ruling party [25]. Turkish economic growth slowed down in the 2010s, and therefore Turkish-Russian trade relations loomed larger.

It is still too early to make a conclusive statement, but it is possible to detect a trend of alignment towards Russia, especially after the 2016 coup attempt. Unlike the Western leaders, Russia was the first country who pronounced its clear support to the Turkish government during the coup attempt. The Western leaders do not always hide that they would like Erdogan to step down, and they do not approve the referendum for transformation into the presidential system, which could prolong Erdogan's rule more than a decade. AKP is also distrustful of U.S, who hosts Fethullah Gülen, and European countries, who did not extradite Gulenists. The Western countries contest AKP's interpretation of

the coup attempt, and criticize the purging of army and bureaucracy. Consequently, the Turkish foreign policy currently is largely affected by Turkish domestic policy.

Conclusion and Policy Proposals:

The post-Cold War Turkish Black Sea policy focused on seeking regionalism, and multilateralism initially. Later in the 2000s, with the emerging great power politics in the Black Sea, Turkey sought to balance the Russian and Western powers in the Black Sea, and Black Sea regionalism was weakened. Despite transformation in Turkish foreign policy-making in the post-Cold War era, one area of continuity is the significant role of ideology in determining policy. Turkish Eurasianist orientation, imagining a Turkish-Russian alliance ignores geopolitical conflict of interests between Turkey and Russia. It is time to do foreign policy based on geopolitics, instead of ideology, whether Kemalism,

neo-Ottomanism or Eurasianism. Turkey must develop a multidimensional foreign policy, equally paying attention to Europe, the Middle East, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. It is time to bring ‘the northern dimension’ in Turkish foreign policy. Turkey should not more take the Black Sea for granted, for its own security and maintaining the security of its ethnic, and religious kin, particularly Crimean Tatars.

There is a trend in Turkish foreign policy to confuse the trade relations with strategic alliance. It is time to exchange short-term pragmatism with visionary politics. ‘Wider Black Sea’ regionalism including Eastern Europe and the Baltic must be developed as a visionary strategic concept against Eurasianism, which is just a neo-hegemonic project of Russia. Turkey must revive regionalism in the Black Sea as a long-term goal that could eventually mitigate great power confrontation there.

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Notes

Review of foreign sources on the Black Sea Region

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Analysts, experts of research centres from different regions pay more often attention lately to the issue of security in the Black Sea region against the background of events that occur in the Black Sea littoral countries and Black Sea basin. Here individual positions of some of them are presented.

BLACK SEA RISING: RUSSIA'S STRATEGY IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Janusz Bugajski and Peter B. Doran, Center for European Policy Analysis

http://cepa.org/files/?id_plik=2096

In this strategic context, Russia's supremacy in the Black Sea becomes critical for restoring its east European and Eurasian dominion, as well as projecting power toward the Mediterranean and Middle East. Its offensives in and around the Black Sea are part of a larger anti-NATO strategy in which naval forces play a significant and growing role. Russia is using the Black Sea as a more advantageous method of revisionism than extensive land conquests. Control of ports and sea lanes delivers several benefits:

- prevents NATO from projecting sufficient security for its Black Sea members;
- deters the intervention of littoral states on behalf of vulnerable neighbors;
- threatens to choke the trade and energy routes of states not in compliance with Russia's national ambitions;
- gives Moscow an enhanced ability to exploit fossil fuels in maritime locations.

The Black Sea strategy could also disrupt or challenge energy supplies through pipeline connections between the Caspian Basin and Europe and set back EU attempts to pursue energy diversity. This would further curtail U.S. and European connections with Central Asia and undermine prospects for future natural gas deliveries from Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan to Europe.

A neglect of the Black Sea security flank by the West and Moscow's successful capture or neutralization of the eastern and northern littoral have increasingly exposed Romania and Bulgaria to Moscow's pressure.

BLACK SEA DEFENDED: NATO RESPONSES TO RUSSIA'S BLACK SEA OFFENSIVE

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https://cepa.ecms.pl/files/?id_plik=2684

Russia's military and political assertiveness in the Black Sea region is generating uncertainty and insecurity among all littoral states. Moscow's offensives will have serious repercussions for the future of NATO by testing the alliance's political unity, strategic vision, U.S. leadership, force deployments, mission operations, institutional willpower and military capabilities.

A key factor encouraging Moscow's threatening posture is an ineffective Black Sea security structure, with an inadequate NATO presence along its eastern flank.

Although NATO's 2016 Warsaw Summit, held July 8-9, decided to increase the alliance's presence in the Black Sea, allies have yet to develop effective plans for the southern portion of their eastern flank that will ensure sufficient deterrence, in comparison with those for the northern sector involving Poland and the three Baltic states. While security along the whole front has been declared as indivisible, strengthening only one part of the eastern sector would increase risks to the entire Baltic–Black Sea flank.

Russia's maritime power projection capabilities can prevent NATO expeditionary forces from assisting frontline members in case of attack or offering help to other neighboring states menaced by Moscow or other aggressors. It also poses a direct threat to U.S. bases, such as the one near the Romanian port of Constanta. In addition, the Black Sea has become more significant militarily because of uncertain relations between Russia and Turkey, ongoing crises in the Middle East and Russia's escalating involvement in Syria's civil war.

Russia continues to relentlessly pursue its militarization program in the Black Sea, in which the Crimean peninsula, annexed by force, serves as a platform for escalation. Although state funds are shrinking, Moscow continues to prioritize militarization and expansion, and plans to develop a fleet that will surpass that of Turkey in coming years,

and prove larger and more effective than the combined forces of all littoral states.

NATO countries across Europe's eastern flank face common security challenges and must develop a common security agenda. NATO has not envisaged the same level of defense measures in the Black Sea region, and the onus has been on the capabilities of littoral states supported by allies from outside the region. The Black Sea countries have thus far been unsuccessful in uniting their efforts to build joint defenses. The main impediment to regional cooperation is their diverse histories, neighborhood relations, individual interests, budgetary limitations and bilateral relations with Russia.

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BLACK SEA IMPERATIVES: ENSURING NATO SECURITY AND AMERICAN INTERESTS FOR THE INCOMING U.S. ADMINISTRATION

Janusz Bugajski and Peter B. Doran, Center for European Policy Analysis

https://cepa.ecms.pl/files/?id_plik=3088

The Black Sea region, a critical front line for Western security, is increasingly subject to turmoil and threat. A stable NATO eastern flank enables the United States to project and defend its interests in several neighboring regions — from Central Europe to the Middle East. Conversely, an unstable Black Sea region weakens the alliance and undermines the pursuit of Western interests.

Moscow's revived attempts to control the Black Sea not only undermines the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, but also directly challenges the security of Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey.

Moscow's long-term goal is to roll back NATO so that the Black Sea becomes a predominantly Russian domain or one divided between Russia and Turkey, but where Ankara acquiesces to Kremlin empire-building.

Since the end of the Cold War, the Black Sea region has been a testing ground for Russia's application of its "shadow war" against Western interests and to suborn the littoral states. In Moscow's non-military strategy, various "soft spots" are exploited for penetration, including intelligence services, police forces and military structures. The Kremlin capitalizes on a susceptible information space, corruptible officialdom and inadequate national defenses. It probes and encourages ethnic, religious and territorial

grievances and benefits from political instability, social unrest and state failure. Moscow's pressure points also include economic instruments such as trade restrictions, ownership of key infrastructure and energy cut-offs.

Russia is building up weapons systems in the Black Sea region for purposes of power projection and political intimidation. When fully developed, these systems—including missiles, naval aviation jets and long-range bombers — could isolate the Black Sea basin and NATO allies therein from the rest of the alliance.

The Black Sea forms a zone of vulnerability for the eastern flank of the alliance. NATO cannot allow an ambitious adversary to threaten any of its littoral member states (Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey), or the alliance may lose its credibility as a security organization. The West also has a keen economic interest in diversifying energy sources and upholding routes from the Caspian Basin, in which the Black Sea forms a network for energy deliveries and pipelines to Europe outside of Russia's control.

NATO has not developed an effective Black Sea security architecture that could deter Russia's advances. The Black Sea has not been a priority for Washington while Turkey—the region's long-standing NATO ally—has been cautious in involving the littoral states in maritime security arrangement.

Turkey's strategic partnership with Russia has played a decisive role in Ankara's refusal to involve NATO more substantially in the Black Sea. As a condition of the current Putin-Erdoğan rapprochement, the Kremlin is likely to demand that Turkey does not commit itself to any NATOed Black Sea security structure.

The Warsaw Summit underscored NATO's responsibility to ensure the security of its members in the Black Sea and declared that NATO would develop a "tailored forward presence."

Russia's policy is testing the maritime dimensions of NATO's collective defense, deterrence and crisis management. Under Putin, Moscow's primary ambition has been to reverse the changes of the post-Cold War era. Its strategic behavior has been calibrated to this end: containing, undermining and reversing NATO influence throughout Europe's east. Even where Russia cannot pressure or entice its neighbors to comply with its concepts like Eurasian integration, the Kremlin attempts to neutralize nearby capitals by preventing them from integrating into Western institutions. The Black Sea has become a key front in this effort. As a result of the 2014 invasion of Crimea, and subsequent Donbas campaign, Moscow can now apply hard- and softpower pressure along the

northern coast of the Black Sea. This has a knock-on effect for NATO members Romania and Bulgaria, since it widens the potential vectors by which Russia can apply strategic pressure on both states. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Russia's actions in the Black Sea are not occurring in a vacuum. In the coming decade, maritime domains around the globe will rise in strategic importance due to an increase in the number of new naval powers, the resurgence of geopolitical competition and the ever-growing globalization of trade. Russia's actions in the Black Sea therefore hold lessons for other maritime powers in their power projection and strategic aspirations. Russia's position can mirror, for example, that of China vis-à-vis the maritime energy claims of U.S. Pacific allies such as the Philippines and Thailand. There are also parallels between Russia's essentially maritime challenge to U.S. extended deterrence in the Black Sea area and the growing military assertiveness of China in advancing proprietary claims in the South China Sea. Such behavior is worth studying as a form of maritime revisionism that is likely to be an increasingly common pattern in the 21st century.

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THE EMPTY SHELL OF BLACK SEA REGIONALISM

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<http://www.harvard-bssp.org/static/files/446/DIMITRIOS%20TRIANANTAPHYLLOU.pdf>

At a time when Russia has become more assertive to the point of challenging the mainstay of the international order, it helped establish since 1945, and Turkey seeks to maintain the status quo in the realm of maritime security, the European Union struggles to define its foreign policy objectives and priorities towards the Eastern Neighborhood, and thereby show its gravitas. Consequently, the Black Sea region finds itself more divided, unsteady, and uncertain about its future as regional actors such as Ukraine and Georgia have cast aside their balancing acts towards a turn to the EU and NATO with negative territorial implications. Thus, the fluidity of the international order raises doubts as to whether regionalism is a realistic prospect in this region or it needs to be replaced by another model of regional governance. Region's hegemons – Russia and, to a lesser extent, Turkey – have become more active in trying to project their dominance, notwithstanding the fact that the

reasons might have more to do with regime legitimacy or redefined foreign policy choices.

The changing nature of the Black Sea regional framework reflects the limits of the European integration project, which has always been perceived as the optimal model of regionalism to be replicated elsewhere, in particular, around its borders. The proximity of the European Union to the Black Sea region, and the osmosis between the two in terms of the multiple identities of some countries, as they belong both to the Union and the Black Sea region, have a powerful effect on Black Sea regionalism. The EU has failed to convince both Russia and Turkey that it is a regional stakeholder in its own right. The continued insistence of Turkey of decoupling its membership perspective from its “Turkey First” approach in the Black Sea region has weakened the Union's hand in prioritizing regional cooperation. Although regionalism still commands a high place in the EU's foreign policy, in practice its reach in the Black Sea region is very limited.

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THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF BLACK SEA SECURITY

F. Stephen Larrabee and Stephen J. Flanagan, RAND Corporation

<http://www.rand.org/blog/2016/07/the-growing-importance-of-black-sea-security.html>

Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea has shifted the military balance in the Black Sea more strongly in its favor and significantly expanded Russia's strategic footprint. In addition to obtaining full control of Sevastopol, the finest natural harbor in the Black Sea, Russia also gained control of three other former Ukrainian naval bases in Crimea.

The Black Sea region is rife with potential flashpoints that threaten regional security. The situation in Ukraine is particularly worrisome. While the threat of Russian military intervention has receded for the moment, the danger of a conflict between Russia and Ukraine persists.

Tensions between Turkey and Russia represent another volatile threat to regional security. Bilateral relations remain strained due to Russia's military intervention in Syria, backing of the Assad regime and political and military support for Kurdish separatists.

Turkey is not alone in feeling greater attention needs to be paid to Black Sea security issues. NATO allies on the western shore of the Black Sea, Romania and Bulgaria, have also expressed growing concerns about Moscow's efforts to increase its political and economic influence in their countries. Both governments have welcomed the increased U.S. military presence and exercises in the region, along with the completion of the first operational land-based NATO missile defense site in Romania.

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BULGARIA'S BLACK SEA DILEMMA

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<http://cepa.org/Bulgaria-Black-Sea-dilemma>

For a country whose entire eastern border is exposed to the risks of increased Russian militarization of the Black Sea, Bulgaria seems less worried about protecting itself from potential Russian aggression than about angering Moscow by joining defense efforts with other NATO members. As NATO places renewed emphasis on deterrence and defense cooperation, Sofia is evidently afraid that enhanced naval cooperation in the Black Sea could be perceived as part of an "anti-Russian front." That has obstructed Romania's proposal for the formation of a Black Sea joint maritime group under NATO command. The problem is that Bulgaria's powerful prime minister, Boyko Borissov, wants the problem with Black Sea security to simply disappear. As NATO leaders adopted their July 9 declaration on transatlantic security in Warsaw, pledging to enhance their military presence in Eastern Europe and deepen engagement with its Black Sea partners, Borissov proposed in Sofia that the Black Sea be declared a demilitarized zone and "excluded from the zones of conflicts."

Borissov is afraid that Moscow might retaliate if Sofia joins forces with Bucharest and Ankara to construct a more effective naval defense to counter potential Russian aggression.

This perfectly serves Russia's interests, because, as Borissov said, "no one is going to shred their warships, I don't have illusions that Russia will take out its fleet, but if possible we should stop a further military buildup on all sides." This means that Russia will get to keep its already expanded fleet in Crimea while NATO will be prevented from increasing its presence in the Black Sea, which borders three

member states.

The three countries even managed to convince NATO to put Black Sea security higher on the agenda of the Warsaw summit, by displaying for a while an unusual unity—similar to that of the Baltic states and Poland—regarding the security of the Baltic Sea. The result is that the summit acknowledged the growing security risks for its Black Sea members and agreed to decide on concrete measures in October.

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A NEW BALANCE OF POWER IN THE BLACK SEA?

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<https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13393-a-new-balance-of-power-in-the-black-sea?.html>

Despite alarming statements from littoral member states, NATO has over the last two years failed to create a sufficient security architecture in the Black Sea basin. After the latest NATO summit in Warsaw, the alliance is expected to move from reassurance to actual deterrence or defense measures vis-a-vis Russia to reinforce NATO's eastern flank, which also encompasses the Black Sea region. The allies decided to deploy a Romanian-led NATO multinational framework brigade based in Romania and NATO will further discuss air and maritime options for enhancing its collective presence in the Black Sea region in the post-summit ministerial meetings.

The final communique of the summit shows that NATO prioritizes reinforcement of the northern sector of the eastern flank (the Baltic Sea region) rather than its south-eastern part (the Black Sea region). Measures proposed for the latter are more limited in scope and capability than those envisaged for the Baltic Sea.

The imbalance in the measures proposed on the respective eastern frontier sections can be explained by the lack of a coordinated effort from Black Sea littoral NATO member states to bring attention to the security of the basin. Poland and the Baltic States have made persistent diplomatic efforts to bring NATO forces to the region, which were eventually backed by the rest of the Visegrad Group, though the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary did not ask for an enhanced collective presence on their territories and do not perceive Russia as a major security threat. The three Black Sea littoral NATO member states were unable to develop a joint stance on addressing

the region's security needs. In this regard, Romania was the most active and proposed several initiatives Bulgaria shares Romania's security concerns but is reluctant to antagonize Moscow by pointing out Russia as a major security threat in the basin and anxious of further militarization of the Sea.

Before the summit, Turkey expressed concerns about Russia's increasingly offensive posture in the Black Sea, yet Ankara did not endorse any of Romania's propositions. Ankara has traditionally been reluctant to establish collective NATO defense mechanisms in the region.

The decisions taken at NATO's Warsaw Summit are important steps, but will not entail a significant change in the existing imbalance of power vis-a-vis Russia in the Black Sea region. NATO's proposed collective activities in the region do not match Russia's growing military posture, neither do they correlate with the level of deterrence and defense measures envisaged for the Baltic Sea region. In addition, NATO failed to formulate a tangible proposal for its riparian partner states such as Georgia, which has long sought to upgrade its partnership with the alliance.

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BLACK SEA SECURITY IN NATO SPOTLIGHT **Shota Gvineria, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies**

<http://gfsis.org/files/library/opinion-papers/72-expert-opinion-eng.pdf>

The democratic development of the countries in the region, as well as their close military cooperation with NATO member states is fundamentally contradictory to Russia's interests. The development of alternative projects for the transport of oil and gas to Europe via the region is no less unacceptable for Russia. Accordingly, in order to increase its influence over the countries in the region and obstruct their rapprochement with the West, Russia generates and maintains control over the conflicts in the region.

The three littoral NATO member states (Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria) and two significant strategic partners of the Alliance (Ukraine, Georgia) expressly agree that Russia constitutes a challenge for the security of the region and individual countries. However, it should be stressed that, in many cases, even in the case of common interests, the Black Sea states favor a different approach in terms of overcoming existing challenges and applying containment tactics.

The events developing in the Black Sea region over recent years have shown that the ongoing regional developments directly influence Euro-Atlantic security. Due to its geopolitical location, the Black Sea region fosters the merging of the threats emanating from the South with the Russian threat and this accumulation effect further exacerbates regional security.

It is also clear that the current status quo in the Black Sea region is, first and foremost, in Russia's interest, as it is more or less in control of the security environment in the entire region and can further escalate at any moment. Prior to the Warsaw Summit, NATO did not hold a proactive strategic vision in terms of its role in shaping the security environment in the Black Sea.

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A NATO STRATEGY FOR SECURITY IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

Steven Horrell, Brent Scowcroft Center On International Security

http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/NATO_Strategy_Black_Sea_Region_web_1004.pdf

As an organization, NATO is inherently interested in the sovereignty and defense of NATO members in the Black Sea region. This is the foundational *raison d'être* of the Alliance and must be considered in development of a transatlantic strategy for the region. NATO and the wider transatlantic community have an interest in deterring or quickly resolving sovereignty challenges in the region that impinge on non-NATO countries' sovereign rights and abilities to align themselves with NATO and the West.

In order to ensure that the Black Sea region contributes to the overall goal of a Europe free, whole, and at peace, the transatlantic community should consider three strategic end states in developing a security strategy for the Black Sea region.

- Effective deterrence and credible collective defense
- Stability and security in non-NATO regional partner nations
- Regional economic security, such that no state has the leverage to use energy economics to coerce other states.

The transatlantic strategy for the Black Sea region should center on NATO, especially as the Alliance contributes to security in this troubled region. However, diplomatic and economic efforts must be undertaken in concert with member nations' efforts and with other international entities.

As economic and energy security are not specifically within NATO's purview as a defensive alliance, NATO member nations, the European Union (EU), and other entities would bear greater responsibility for actions in this arena.

The most direct NATO contribution to security in the Black Sea region, however, remains a strong defensive posture.

The Black Sea region is a complex geopolitical environment, with its water and airspace providing a venue for potential friction between Russia and the West. NATO must ensure that efforts to shore up the Alliance's Eastern Flank maintain focus on the Black Sea region along with other areas. The most recent reflection of the region's importance came from the NATO Warsaw Summit, which not only re-emphasized collective defense and deterrence, while reaffirming concrete steps such as the Readiness Action Plan and the defense investment pledge, but included numerous highlights of NATO's commitment to Black Sea security

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NATO AND RUSSIA IN THE BLACK SEA: A NEW CONFRONTATION?

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<https://www.csis.org/analysis/geostrategic-importance-black-sea-region-brief-history>

For Russia, the geostrategic factors of the Black Sea region have not changed since 1853, with NATO and the United States replacing individual European states as Russia's main geopolitical competitors: Crimea is the military source, Turkey is the pivot, and the Turkish Straits are the strategic throughput; and the end goal is access to and military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean as a counterbalance to U.S. and NATO expansion eastward and its presence in the Aegean and Central Mediterranean.

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/nato-and-russia-black-sea-new-confrontation>

NATO has long described the Black Sea region as "important for Euro-Atlantic security," but it was not until the July 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw that NATO leaders pledged to increase alliance presence in the region through the creation of the Tailored Forward Presence (TFP). The February 15–16 NATO

Defense Ministerial Meeting approved a maritime coordination function between NATO Standing Naval Forces and NATO allies in the Black Sea region to enhance cooperation and bolster NATO's presence in the Black Sea region "on land, at sea and in the air."

The announcement was designed to "demonstrate transatlantic unity" and "send a clear message to any potential aggressor," and it closely aligns with the U.S. decision to send an additional 500 forces to the Romanian Mihail Kogalniceanu (MK) forward operating base. These announcements reinforced the timing of NATO's Black Sea exercise, Sea Shield 2017, which involved eight ships from Romania, two from Turkey, and one each from Canada, Bulgaria, Spain, and the United States.

Known as NATO's Tailored Forward Presence, NATO's presence in the Black Sea region encompasses the three domains of air, land, and sea. The land component is based in Craiova, Romania (Romania's sixth-largest city), and involves a brigade-size multinational NATO force. The maritime component would consist of allied visits to Romanian and Bulgarian ports, enhanced training, conventional exercises of a limited scale, and situational awareness. The air component structure was first expected to be equally symbolic, but the United Kingdom recently announced it would deploy four Typhoon aircrafts to Mihail Kogalniceanu in 2017, which was symbolic in its own right as the United Kingdom renews its commitment to NATO following the UK referendum to leave the European Union.

Unlike the Baltic states, which have argued for greater NATO military presence, the Black Sea littoral states (with the exception of Romania) have generally favored a lighter NATO footprint in their region, which is why NATO has struggled to find a common and credible vision for this strategic region. Because NATO has primarily focused militarily on the Baltic Sea region, some analysts see the Black Sea as an increasing vulnerability to the alliance.

NATO has a real but narrow path to respond to a "deteriorated security situation" (NATO Warsaw Summit Declaration) in the Black Sea region. The objective must be, in the most cost effective and militarily efficient way, to demonstrate NATO cohesion and deter Russia from pushing further in the region while simultaneously limiting the risks of military escalation. A balanced NATO presence in the Black Sea that doesn't dramatically alter the balance of forces in the region will help convince the Kremlin that further military steps would be counterproductive and preserve room for dialogue.

* * *

PUTIN'S DREAM OF THE BLACK SEA AS A RUSSIAN LAKE

Stephen Blank

<http://www.newsweek.com/putin-dream-black-sea-russian-lake-476321>

This article first appeared on the Atlantic Council site.

By invading Ukraine and annexing Crimea, Russian President Vladimir Putin has transformed the security situation in the Black Sea.

Upon capturing those territories, Moscow lost no time in seizing Ukrainian energy facilities in the Black Sea and accelerating its ongoing military modernization there.

As a result, Moscow has built a combined arms force of land, sea, air and electronic forces that NATO leaders admit is fully capable of denying access to NATO forces seeking to enter the Black Sea during a conflict.

Thus, as Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has noted, Russia is well on its way to converting the Black Sea into a Russian lake, an outcome that endangers the security of all the states along the sea's edges. Centuries of historical experience suggests that these threats will continue, along with increased efforts to intimidate these littoral states.

Romania, for example, is particularly concerned about threats to its energy platforms in the Black Sea, as well as about freedom of navigation there and control of the mouth of the Danube. Ukraine's remaining port, Odessa, is at constant risk. Turkey is now surrounded to the north, south and east by Russian troops in Crimea, other areas in Ukraine, Syria and the Caucasus.

Since Romania and Bulgaria import Russian energy, and Turkey imports at least 60 percent of its gas from Russia, their vulnerabilities—along with Ukraine's susceptibility to new and old threats—are quite visible.

Consequently, the governments of Romania, Ukraine and Turkey are all undertaking major reforms to enhance their defense capabilities and are endeavoring to formulate structures of regional cooperation beyond NATO.

Ukraine and Turkey have announced intentions to increase their capacity to provide for their own defense by building new warships and improving the effectiveness of their defense establishments. They have also embarked upon talks to engage in joint defense production, primarily in turbojet aircraft

engines, radars, military communications technologies and navigation systems.

A candid assessment however, would admit that these plans, though eminently sensible, face serious obstacles. Regional cooperation ventures in Eastern Europe have never succeeded in the past, largely because of differences among the local states and the opposition of great powers, and a number of stumbling blocks exist now.

In addition, Putin has already stated that because Romania and Poland are hosting elements of U.S. ballistic missile defense defenses, they will become Russian targets. While such statements are habitual tactics, they reflect Moscow's determination to threaten its neighbors and are made with the belief that Russia really does have the potential to intimidate these governments.

When NATO meets in Warsaw on July 8 and 9, it should not downgrade the Black Sea, as it has been considering. Recent events show that Russia regards it as its *Mare Nostrum* ("our sea") and will block any effort to provide for the legitimate defense of NATO members there, not to mention Georgia on the Eastern shore.

NATO might be tempted to make the Baltic a clear focus and priority, but this response, while understandable, is a myopic one. History shows that Russian domination of the Black Sea inevitably leads to pressures throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Syria is merely the latest example.

Much more can and should be done to prevent Russian intimidation of the Black Sea littoral states and the collapse of the vital project of European integration in this area.

Europe and the United States have the resources to support those peoples who wish to remain free from Russian imperialism. The question is, however, do they have the will and the vision to match their resources?

* * *

NATO SHOULD STAND UP BLACK SEA COMMAND BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

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<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/nato-should-stand-up-black-sea-command-before-it-s-too-late>

The Alliance must focus on a range of actions to

address Russia's rapidly escalating offensive posture in the Black Sea and protect its allies—including reinforcing air, naval, and ground assets; improving space capabilities; cyber security; reconnaissance; intelligence; and creating credible deterrence strategies.

In 2015, Russia's formerly decrepit Black Sea Fleet was reinforced by thirty ships, including three Varshavianka-class diesel electric submarines, and vessels capable of launching Kaliber-class long-range cruise missiles—the same missiles fired into Syria from the Caspian and the Mediterranean seas. Russia's missile attacks and air deployment and operations in Syria have demonstrated how exposed Turkey—the principal NATO ally in the Black Sea region—has become.

NATO possesses economic and technological superiority over Russia. That does not translate into a regional military superiority that is sufficient to deter Russia. NATO lacks an adequate policy, force structure, coordination, and command and control system in the Black Sea region.

The Black Sea is a sensitive, vital, and somewhat neglected region that Russia has attempted to dominate since the last quarter of the eighteenth century, when Catherine the Great and Grigory Potemkin controlled its northern shores and occupied Crimea.

Today, NATO can prevent Russia from dominating the Black Sea, but it must take the necessary steps of building a joint command structure and deploying critical deterrence assets and capabilities. It also has to develop a clear strategy to contain and deter Russia. Only then can NATO protect its allies and keep the Black Sea a sea of tranquility.

* * *

“THE ROLE OF THE BLACK SEA IN RUSSIA’S STRATEGIC CALCULUS”

By Byron Chong, European Maritime Security Topic Week, April 2, 2017

<http://cimsec.org/role-black-sea-russias-strategic-calculus/31805>

As one of his last acts of 2015, on December 31st, Russian President Vladimir Putin formally approved his country's new national security strategy. The content of the updated document reflected the sharp deterioration

in Russia's relationship with the West after the Ukraine crisis – it accused the U.S. and its allies of trying to dominate global affairs and described NATO expansion as a major security threat [1]. When this document is analyzed together with Russia's Military Doctrine issued the previous year, on December 25th, 2014, they provide valuable insight into understanding the Kremlin's strategic concerns and long-term objectives. Both documents describe a country threatened by NATO's encroachment towards its borders and its loss of influence over the ex-Soviet states on its periphery. They focus on the need to restore lost prestige and leadership over its neighbors, and halt the Alliance's eastward expansion. [2]

For Russia to achieve these long-term objectives, its supremacy in the Black Sea is a critically enabling factor. The unique geography of the region confers several geopolitical advantages to Russia in its confrontation with the West. As such, the Kremlin has sought measures to strengthen its hold over the region. Firstly, it has sought to weaken NATO's ties to the regional states, working to drive wedges into these relationships, and using military force when necessary to stop the Alliance's expansion. Secondly, it has been expanding its military capabilities in order to challenge NATO's presence in the region and ultimately dominate the Black Sea.

Significance of the Black Sea

The Black Sea holds a special significance in Russia's strategic calculus for several reasons. Firstly, it is an important crossroads and strategic intersection for the entire region. Access to the Black Sea is vital for all littoral and neighboring states, and greatly enhances the projection of power into several adjacent regions. Indeed, dominating the Black Sea would allow Russia to project power toward the Eastern Mediterranean, the northern Middle East, the South Caucasus, and to the rest of mainland Europe [3]. Russian military operations in Syria for instance, were supported by the naval presence it maintained in the Eastern Mediterranean – some of which were elements of its Black Sea Fleet. [4]

Secondly, the region is an important transit corridor for goods and energy. Control over regional ports and sea lanes would give Russia the power to choke trade and energy routes and blackmail states into compliance. Moscow could also utilize its power and influence in the Black Sea to challenge and disrupt energy supplies via pipeline from the Caspian Basin to Europe. Such a move would weaken prospects for future energy deliveries from states like Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, and more importantly, undermine

the European Union's efforts to seek energy diversity outside Russia's orbit.[5]

Thirdly, the Black Sea region can be considered as NATO's 'soft underbelly' or the vulnerable spot in its eastern flank. The region is rich in cultural and ethnic diversity, and due to geographical proximity, share close historical ties with Russia [6]. Historical grievances and ethnic tensions could be harnessed by Moscow as a means to interfere in its neighbors' affairs and pressure regional governments into aligning itself with Russia. By 'turning' regional NATO members, Moscow could severely weaken the Alliance's internal cohesion and undermine its credibility. [7]

Russia And The Littoral States

Despite the strategic importance of the Black Sea, Russia had initially lacked the political, economic, and military power to effectively assert itself over the region. This began to change in the early 2000s after major shifts in the regional political environment [8]. In Georgia (2003-2004 Rose Revolution) and Ukraine (2004-2005 Orange Revolution), leaders who had been more susceptible to Russian influence were ousted and replaced with pro-Western governments [9]. At around this time in 2004, Bulgaria and Romania successfully gained NATO membership – a move that Russia found itself unable to prevent. Of the six Black Sea littoral states, three – Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey – were now members of NATO, and the other two –Ukraine and Georgia – were working in close partnership with the Alliance [10]. Alarmed by this turn of events, Russia sought to halt NATO's expansion in the Black Sea by ensuring that Ukraine and Georgia would never ascend into its ranks. At the same time, it pursued policies to strengthen its own influence amongst the remaining states and weaken their relationship with NATO. [11]

The invasion of Georgia in August 2008 demonstrated Russia's determination to contain NATO in the Black Sea. At the Bucharest Summit earlier that year, the Alliance had been seriously considering Georgia's application for membership, which greatly concerned the Kremlin [12]. Thus, when Georgia sought to reclaim its two separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia that summer, Russia saw its opportunity. Its military moved swiftly to support the separatists and pushed back the Georgian forces. After its victory, Moscow agreed to a ceasefire. The invasion had prevented Georgia's reincorporation, thereby keeping it in a weakened and divided state [13]. More importantly, Russia kept a sizable military presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, constituting a constant threat to Georgia's stability and territorial integrity, effectively

halting its progress towards NATO membership. [14]

Russia's policy toward Ukraine has been similarly aggressive. In 2006 and 2009, Russia used its energy exports as an instrument of intimidation and influence, temporarily ceasing the supply of natural gas to Europe through Ukraine and increasing its energy prices [15]. Bilateral relations improved when the pro-Russian leader Viktor Yanukovich became Ukraine's president in 2010. This however, would not last. In February 2014, facing mass demonstrations calling for his removal, Viktor Yanukovich fled the country. The new government was vehemently anti-Russian and had clear preference for Western institutions like NATO and the EU [16]. While this was disturbing news by itself, what really concerned Moscow was the status of its naval base at Sevastopol in Crimea. Officially owned by the Ukraine, the base was on lease to the Russians and home to its Black Sea Fleet. Sevastopol was of great strategic importance, being Russia's only warm water naval base and an important hub to project its naval power abroad [17]. Hence, in order to ensure unrestricted access to Sevastopol, Russia moved in its forces and annexed Crimea in March 2014 [18]. Concurrently, it supplied arms and support to pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine allowing them to escalate their war against the new government in Kiev [19]. In pushing the country toward civil war, Russia had sufficiently destabilized Ukraine and prevented it from becoming a Western stronghold on its own doorstep.

Compared to Georgia and Ukraine, Russia's policy towards the other littoral states has been relatively restrained. Given their status as NATO members, Moscow has been careful not to test the limits of the Alliance's security guarantees. Instead, it has resorted to other means to exert its influence. In Turkey's case, Russia has exploited the Erdogan government's drift towards authoritarianism [20]. Unlike most of the West which has criticized the Erdogan government for its alleged human rights abuses, the Russian leadership has remained supportive, which has earned praise and gratitude from Erdogan himself [21]. Besides trying to decouple Turkey's links to NATO, maintaining cordial relations with Ankara carries another strategic purpose for Moscow. Turkey controls the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits – the vital passage between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Should Ankara one day decide to close the straits, it could bottle up the Black Sea Fleet and severely limit Russia's ability to project power further abroad. [22]

In the case of Bulgaria and Romania, Moscow has sought to subvert and weaken anti-Russian opposition

within their governments. To that end, it has been alleged that the Kremlin has forged powerful ties to local business interests and provides support for pro-Russian political leaders and parties within both countries [23]. This approach has been broadly successful in Bulgaria, as reflected in the growing support within the local political sphere to end the EU sanctions against Russia [24]. Romania however, presents a bigger challenge. Although it has pursued dialogue with Russia, it has also pushed for greater NATO presence in the region. It has taken on a leadership role in the Bucharest Format – a multilateral grouping of nine NATO members created to follow up on NATO commitments [25]. The country also currently hosts elements of the U.S. anti-missile shield, which has led the Kremlin to declare it “a clear threat.” [26]

Strengthening the Military in the Black Sea

The second effort undertaken by Russia has been to build up its military capabilities in the Black Sea. To that end, the Kremlin has embarked on a long-term rearmament program designed to establish an anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) zone or ‘bubble’ over the region [27]. The concept focuses on deploying capabilities that firstly, prevent forces from entering an area i.e. anti-access; and secondly, limits an opponent’s freedom of action and maneuver within the operational area, i.e. area-denial [28]. Within an operational A2/AD bubble, long-range assets could be deployed to strike ground targets, interdict maritime traffic, and impose no-fly zones [29]. During a conflict, such a strategy greatly increases the risk of casualties for any hostile force entering the A2/AD bubble. NATO decision-making could be undermined by the raised costs of reinforcing allies in the region, hampering their ability to exert collective defense and weakening the credibility of their deterrence [30]. Moreover, NATO’s inaction would greatly enhance Russia’s prestige, demonstrating its ability to challenge the West.

Within the Black Sea, Crimea will be the main platform for conducting A2/AD operations. Advanced defense systems have been deployed to the peninsula, such as the anti-ship *Bastion-P* missile system equipped with the P-800 *Oniks* cruise missiles, along with the anti-aircraft S-300v4 and S-400 *Triumf* missile systems [31]. Upgrade program are underway to refurbish Soviet-era bunkers, reanimate early warning radar systems, and install high-tech electronic warfare equipment [32]. Along with Russia’s other missile systems in Armenia, Krasnodar, and Latakia, its A2/AD capabilities extend over major parts of the region – covering much of the Black Sea, and parts of Georgia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

The Black Sea Fleet is also undergoing a major modernization program. Moscow plans to spend \$2.4 billion by 2020 to outfit the fleet with next-generation warships, submarines, and air-defense systems. Up to eighteen new units are being commissioned and many will be equipped with the versatile *Kalibr-NK* missile system [33]. They will be joined by new air assets such as the Su-30M naval aviation fighter and other ground/air attack fighters and helicopters. These capabilities are meant to transform the Black Sea Fleet into a force capable of denying NATO access to the Black Sea and projecting power outward to threaten NATO interests in the Mediterranean and Middle East. [34]

Russia’s A2/AD capabilities will also be strengthened by the deployment of the *Tupolev* Tu-22M3 to the region. The long-range bomber can carry Kh-15 or Kh-22 missiles designed to destroy air defense systems [35]. The bomber force will be protected by Russian fighters like the *Sukhoi* Su-24 which can secured a vast majority of the Black Sea airspace and greatly expand Russia’s strategic aviation patrol routes in the region [36]. In deploying these different capabilities together, Russia would be able to form a multi-layered, interconnecting defense network that can threaten or interdict any force within the A2/AD bubble.

Enduring Challenges

Despite the aggressive measures taken by Russia, its dominance over the Black Sea continues to face enduring challenges. Turkey for instance, controls Russia’s access between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, but its full cooperation cannot always be taken as a guarantee. Fundamental disagreements exist over the conflict in Syria, with Russia supporting the Assad regime and Turkey opposing it [37]. The rise in tensions after the downing of a Russian fighter jet by the Turkish Air Force in November 2015 similarly demonstrates the precariousness of their relationship [38]. In the event of a crisis, Moscow’s priority must be to ensure that Turkey at the very least remains neutral, allowing Russia to continue resupplying its forces in the Mediterranean. Should the passage be closed by an openly hostile Turkey, Russia would find its forces in the Mediterranean in great danger. With the second most powerful military force in the region, Turkey possesses the offensive capabilities to threaten Russia’s isolated forces [39]. A defeat would deal a major blow to Russia’s prestige and status as a military power. Moscow therefore, must continue to engage Ankara, strengthening bilateral ties while seeking ways to find some compromise over their differences.

Romania presents another troublesome neighbor for

Russia. Although its military capabilities are no match for the larger power, its eagerness to encourage NATO presence in the Black Sea is in direct contradiction to Moscow's long-term objectives. Both states share a number of unresolved disputes, such as over the theft of Romanian treasures during WWII and over Russia's refusal to denounce the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact [40]. This may have in part, contributed to the Romanian leadership's pursuit of Alliance membership and general distrust of Russian intentions. To neutralize Romania, Russia may promote pan-nationalist ideas such as the 'Greater Romania' concept. This would encourage regional disputes between Romania and its neighbors Ukraine and Moldova. Russia could also fan the flames by orchestrating demonstrations, infiltrating saboteurs, and supporting separatist activities [41]. Russia could also hinder Romania's exploration of natural resources in the Black Sea either through harassment or through legal means by claiming the territorial waters around recently annexed Crimea [42]. These measures could intimidate Romania into aligning itself closer with Russia or at least distract it from seeking closer ties with NATO.

Russia's pursuit of an A2/AD bubble in the Black Sea is also fraught with challenges. The massive rearmament programs come with a substantial price tag. Russia's state revenues, however, have been severely depleted by the collapse of global oil prices and ongoing economic sanctions [43]. In addition, Russia's shipbuilding industry now faces a shortage of ship engines after Ukraine stopped sales over the annexation of Crimea

[44]. These issues throw into question how much of Russia's modernization plans will actually be realized. The A2/AD strategy had been seen as a cost-effective measure to counter NATO's overwhelming sea power. If Russia fails to achieve the full potential of its plans, it may seriously undermine the effectiveness and deterrence value of the A2/AD bubble.

Conclusion

As this paper has described, Russia has pursued highly aggressive policies in order to secure its dominance over the Black Sea region. What Moscow must bear in mind however, is that control over the region is not an end in itself, but the means to achieve a greater objective – to keep out NATO interference. In this regard, Russia's measures have somewhat backfired. Concerned over Russia's rising belligerence, NATO at the recent Warsaw Summit pledged to increase Allied military presence in the region. Besides strengthening Allied capabilities in the air, land, and sea, there will be increased allied visits to Romanian and Bulgarian ports, and enhanced inter-Alliance training and exercises.⁴⁵ While it can be argued that these are merely symbolic measures, they could signal the beginning of a gradual NATO build-up around the Black Sea. Perhaps Russia's greatest challenge now is to find a way dominate the region without causing anxiety amongst the littoral states, as that in turn, may trigger an increased NATO presence. After all, it would be a supreme irony if Russia's efforts to shut out NATO instead became the contributing factor for a growing Allied presence.

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“Warfare Energy Forms-XXI: Poly-Hybression of Russia”

Centre for Global Studies “Strategy XXI” has finished preparation for publishing of the book “Warfare Energy Forms-XXI: Poly-Hybression of Russia”. The research has been conducted within Antares Project – searching for non-military forms of new generation warfare.

The Project started in 2014 with the review “Hybrid War in Eastern Europe. Non-military dimension. Energy Component”. In 2015, a special report and the brochure “Energy Component of New Generation Warfare” were prepared, and in 2016 – “Putin’s Hybression. Non-Military Aspects of New Generation Warfare”. A forerunner to this study was a project, implemented by Strategy XXI in 2010 “Energy Resources and Infrastructure for their Delivery: potential for non-core utilization in Europe” under NATO Liaison Office in Ukraine.

Within the Project, we propose to use energy centric approach to explain warfare phenomenon, its forms through the prism of potentials’ clash. The study includes also research on utilization of energy sources and energy infrastructure as instruments for conducting hidden war (crypto-war).

The book makes possible to reproduce a picture of occurring phenomenon – new generation warfare as hybrid kind of Russian aggression against Ukraine, described in the study “Putin’s Hybression”. Other dimension of multi-frontal crypto-war of Russia against the West is poly-hybression as a multiple variation of modern Russian neo-imperial expansion with deployment of non-military and military instruments to achieve a global goal – “Great Eurasia”.

The study is prepared under support of the International Renaissance Foundation. This audience is wide expert and scientists’ circles, which are dealing with interpretation of new generation warfare issues and research about modern Russia, as well as development of mechanisms to counter hybressive behaviour.

Epigraph to the book was the statement of Edmund Bjork “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing”.

Notes

Donbas in Flames. Guide to the Conflict Zone. – Lviv, 2017.

Security Environment Research Center “Prometheus” presents a practical guide for those wishing to study the war in the Donbas. The book is rather concise (100 pages) and rich with original photos, maps, infographics, tables, and reference lists.

The guidebook explains the origin and meaning of the term “Donbas”, its geospatial area and geographical specifics. Even before the war the region attracted researchers, public figures and ordinary Internet users both from Ukraine and other countries. What was known about the Donbas and how did this perception change after 2014? The book explains this in great detail. To understand the nature of any war it is essential to analyze its preconditions. The standoff in the East of Ukraine has no deep historic roots; the sides of the conflict are not sharply divided by their ethnicity or religion. This is what differentiates the situation in the Donbas from that we could see in the Northern Ireland, Nagorno-Karabakh or Bosnia. Unfortunately, some reporters apply the pattern of an ethno-political conflict to the Donbas when covering the events in the region. The guide touches upon the issues of history and economy of the Donbas, outlines a sociological portrait of a local Donbas resident and describes his mindset. Despite some claims, since the independence year of 1991 not only the voice of the Donbas has been “heard” by Kyiv, but it had a greater influence on Ukraine’s national agenda compared to other regions. Thus, the war was instigated primarily by external rather than internal causes. Refer to the guidebook to discover more details.

A separate chapter of the guidebook briefly describes the propagation of the military conflict. It is aimed to go over the development of the military action that had taken place before the contact line stabilized. During the summer of 2014 the Armed Forces of Ukraine achieved significant success, however, the situation shifted with the direct invasion of battalion tactical groups of the Russian Federation. At that time, as well as in the winter of 2014-2015, Russian military servicemen virtually openly fought along with the militants.

The chapter about life during wartime will prepare the readers to what they can see in the Anti-Terrorist Operation zone now. Practical recommendations as to the transportation in the Donbas are also given special attention; they can be useful for those planning a business trip to the war zone.

The last two chapters of the guidebook give a clear answer to the question why this conflict is unofficially referred to as “The Russo-Ukrainian War”. Russian mass media have essentially become a sizable factor of the military standoff. They bear the responsibility for fueling anti-Ukrainian psychosis in Russia and, at the same time, for deceiving the world community.

In the essence a modern Russian information product has acquired all features of military propaganda. Still, the microphone is not the Kremlin’s only weapon. For those looking for proofs of the Russian aggression the guidebook provides the information about Russian military servicemen identified in the Donbas and also about Russian weaponry and military equipment that have never been supplied to the Ukrainian Army. Compiling editors of the guidebook obtained this information from the international volunteer community InformNapalm. The keynotes of the book are conveniently supplied with QR codes referring to in-depth materials on the topic available on different websites. The guide also offers handy appendixes on the international legal assessment of Russia’s role in the Donbas, the analysis of the war lexicon, and the list of the decommunized toponyms in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts.

The information published in “Donbas in Flames. Guide to the Conflict Zone” will hardly become a discovery for those who have been professionally researching this topic for a long time. However, the general public both in and outside Ukraine is not so well-informed. Oftentimes people with limited and superficial understanding of the situation in the Donbas comment on it (and even make major decisions!). These people – journalists, diplomats, international observers – are the primary target audience of this book. For the maximum reach the book is available in Ukrainian, Russian, English, German and French and can be freely downloaded in PDF format on Security Environment Research Center “Prometheus” website (<https://prometheus.ngo/works/donbas-v-ogni/>). Printed copies of the guidebook are distributed free of charge thanks to the financial support of The Canada Fund for Local Initiatives.



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