

UA: UKRAINE ANALYTICA

Issue 1 (19), 2020

ENERGY TURKEY RELATIONS
COOPERATION
CONFLICTS NATO BULGARIA
JAPAN BSEC NAVY
BLACK SEA
STRATEGIES WARGAMING
CRIMEA SECURITY ROMANIA REGION POLICY
USA GEORGIA RUSSIA

- BLACK SEA SECURITY
- REGIONAL POLICIES
- COOPERATION VS CONFRONTATION

The Black Sea

Editors

Dr. Hanna Shelest
Dr. Mykola Kapitonenko

Publisher:

Published by NGO "Promotion of Intercultural Cooperation" (Ukraine), Centre of International Studies (Ukraine), with the financial support of the Representation of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Ukraine, the Black Sea Trust.

UA: Ukraine Analytica is the first Ukrainian analytical journal in English on International Relations, Politics and Economics. The journal is aimed for experts, diplomats, academics, students interested in the international relations and Ukraine in particular.

Contacts:

website: <http://ukraine-analytica.org/>
e-mail: Ukraine_analytica@ukr.net
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ukraineanalytica>
Twitter: https://twitter.com/UA_Analytica

The views and opinions expressed in articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of UA: Ukraine Analytica, its editors, Board of Advisers or donors.

ISSN 2518-7481

500 copies

BOARD OF ADVISERS

Dr. Dimitar Bechev (Bulgaria, Director of the European Policy Institute)

Dr. Iulian Chifu (Romania, Director of the Conflict Analysis and Early Warning Center)

Amb., Dr. Sergiy Korsunsky (Ukraine, Director of the Diplomatic Academy under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine)

Dr. Igor Koval (Ukraine, Rector of Odessa National University by I.I. Mechnikov)

Amb., Dr. Sergey Minasyan (Armenia, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Armenia to Romania)

Marcel Röthig (Germany, Director of the Representation of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Ukraine)

James Nixey (United Kingdom, Head of the Russia and Eurasia Programme at Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs)

Dr. Róbert Ondrejcsák (Slovakia, State Secretary, Ministry of Defence)

Amb., Dr. Oleg Shamshur (Ukraine, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to France)

Dr. Stephan De Spiegeleire (The Netherlands, Director Defence Transformation at The Hague Center for Strategic Studies)

Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze (Ukraine, Head of the Parliamentary Committee on European Integration)

Dr. Dimitris Triantaphyllou (Greece, Director of the Center for International and European Studies, Kadir Has University (Turkey))

Dr. Asle Toje (Norway, Research Director at the Norwegian Nobel Institute)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE BLACK SEA: PERSPECTIVE FROM REGIONAL PLAYERS	3
<i>Yar Batoh</i>	
WARGAMING OF THE BLACK SEA SECURITY: EXPLORATORY STUDY INTO THE STRATEGIES FOR THE REGION	10
<i>Natalia Wojtowicz</i>	
BLACK SEA SECURITY DEADLOCKS: NATO-RUSSIA CONFRONTATION	18
<i>Maryna Vorotnyuk</i>	
NAVAL WARFARE SCENARIOS FOR 2020	24
<i>Andrii Klymenko</i>	
ENERGY CRACKS OF THE BLACK SEA SECURITY.	29
<i>Mykhailo Gonchar, Vitalii Martyniuk, Igor Stukalenko</i>	
BLACK SEA POLICY OF UKRAINE	37
<i>Hanna Shelest, Yevgeniya Gaber, Artem Fylypenko</i>	
TURKEY'S BLACK SEA POLICY: BETWEEN "RUSSIAN LAKE" AND "NATO'S BACKYARD"	43
<i>Yevgeniya Gaber</i>	
BLACK SEA INSECURITIES AND ANKARA'S DILEMMAS	53
<i>Dimitrios Triantaphyllou</i>	
GEORGIA AND THE BLACK SEA SECURITY: OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER COOPERATION.	61
<i>Tengiz Pkhaladze</i>	
US ROLE IN THE BLACK SEA REGION	66
<i>Volodymyr Dubovyk</i>	
THE BLACK SEA AREA IN JAPAN'S EXPANDING STRATEGIC HORIZONS.	72
<i>Violetta Udovik</i>	

BLACK SEA SECURITY DEADLOCKS: NATO-RUSSIA CONFRONTATION

Maryna Vorotnyuk

Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism"

NATO's eastern flank in the Black Sea is a fractured security space that requires a special tailored approach. It is the Black Sea where Russia has chosen to test NATO's resolve by the open use of force. The article argues that the transactionalist mode that Russia offers as a strategic basis for interaction with the West is not meeting the latter's goals and interests. Recognised limitations of NATO's "Tailored Forward Presence" in the Black Sea as compared to its "Enhanced Forward Presence", diverging interests and policies of the allies, and Russia's readiness to capitalise on these internal divisions are the critical problems interfering with NATO's posture in the Black Sea.

The analyses of the security complex in the Black Sea typically feature the terms "volatile", "fragmented", or "fractured". The security constellations in the region are complex, with many overlapping and divergent interests in play, as well as dormant and active conflicts. Notwithstanding the fact that after 2004 NATO became a full-fledged Black Sea actor with two new allies, Bulgaria and Romania, in addition to Turkey, present here, the Black Sea remained a strategically overlooked blind spot.

The year 2014 was a watershed for NATO's activities in the region as strategic realities have dramatically changed after Russia annexed Crimea and proved that it is ready to resort to the use of force to change the internationally recognised borders. An important dimension was added to the Black Sea security conundrum when Russia detained Ukrainian ships in the Sea of Azov in November 2018, after an extended

blockade of the navigation through the Kerch Strait. Thus, the Azov theatre became an additional arena where Russia asserts its unilateral domination.

The Black Sea Dimension of Russia-West Confrontation

It is the Black Sea where Russia has chosen to test NATO's resolve in the eastern flank by the open use of force. A comparison of NATO's and Russia's conventional forces uncovers a significant asymmetry in favour of the former. In the Black Sea area, however, Russia has achieved certain comparative advantages.

The Kremlin has pursued a strategy of denial in the region, which meant that the states of the region were denied their moves towards Western institutions, while the West was denied the opportunity to set the agenda in the Black Sea.¹ Thus, Russia is inclined to

1 N. K. Gvosdev, *Russia's Southern Strategy*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2019, p. 5
<https://www.fpri.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/bssp4-gvosdev.pdf> access: 12 March 2020.

exercise security in the region unilaterally by keeping its neighbours in insecurity and having a veto on their defence upgrades.

There is a general recognition that Russia's ambitions to single-handedly rule in the region initially did not match its political, economic, and military clout. The Russian strategy to exercise unilateralism in the Black Sea region was successful though, in the face of even weaker positions of its former satellites in the region, the respectful self-withdrawal of Turkey from what it believed to be a Russia-dominated space, and the general disinterest of the West.

Russia's approach is based on the desire to compartmentalise the agenda with the West into separate dossiers. This would allow trading over concessions and reducing all interactions to profit-seeking transactions. The Russian strategy seemingly rests on the assumption that the more "dossiers" it keeps open with the West, the greater leverage it has. Multiplying the conflicts and hotspots, it claims the right to be a part of the solution to those conflicts and gets bargaining advantages.

It stands to logic to suppose that the Russian strategy is to make the West prone to the transactional mode of interaction. Transactionalism is an approach based on short-term gains as opposed to long-term calculus and tends to neglect any references to values and norms, preferring ad hoc issue-specific transactions without long-term commitments. As exemplified by Russia's desire to speak directly to powers within Europe, trying to sideline European institutions, the transactional approach towards security is offered by Russia as the only viable one in the era of their competition. It is camouflaged as a prudent approach in a situation where Russia is still recognised as

an indispensable partner for many security issues (some of which it helped to conceive).

The West's transactional approach to the Black Sea security cannot succeed because whatever reconciliatory moves are deemed pacifying and reassuring, they are not reciprocating what Russia is and what Russia wants. Transactionalism threatens NATO's core principles and values. Not only does it jeopardise the security of NATO's partners, but it also makes the Alliance extremely vulnerable.

The logic that NATO's attempt to be cautious with Russia prevents a major confrontation may have a serious flaw. The asymmetry of engagement can embolden the Kremlin and invite it to even more assertive actions, which eventually makes the conflict even more plausible. Russia has used military force because it has found the absence of sufficient deterrence and no costs associated with these actions.



The West's transactional approach to the Black Sea security cannot succeed because whatever reconciliatory moves are deemed pacifying and reassuring, they are not reciprocating what Russia is and what Russia wants

A considerable number of papers analyse the strategic advantages that Russia gained after the occupation of Crimea. A common reference is that by building an A2/AD "bubble" (Anti-Access/Area-Denial) over Crimea, the Russian military got control over the complete northern part of the region.² Due to this, NATO reportedly is effectively

2 B. Hodges, S. Gvineria, *New Iron Curtain*, CEPA, August 2019 [<https://www.cepa.org/the-new-iron-curatin> access: 18 March 2020].

constrained from military involvement and NATO's partners in the region are indefensible. At the same time, there is an opinion that A2/AD is not an unchallengeable system since alongside the evolution of the A2/AD systems, the systems that challenge them evolve too. Rather, it can be also portrayed as a form of psychological warfare where Russia hopes to benefit from the common belief that this system is invincible.³

The Black Sea has proved to be a crucial outpost for the Russian power projection to the wider Mediterranean, where Russia resorted to a massive operation together with the Assad regime, causing suffering and losses among civilians. Some would claim that the war in Syria has considerably weakened the credibility of NATO. They would generally support the idea of creating an internationally controlled security zone in northern Syria to protect displaced civilians, as suggested by Germany's defence minister, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, in October 2019.⁴ The Syrian front, the argument goes, is an additional dossier Russia tries to instrumentalise vis-à-vis the West.

Besides military intimidation and probing, Russia might use its energy infrastructure as a pretext for maintaining greater control over the maritime routes in the Black Sea allegedly for its protection.⁵ It also employs all kinds of other hybrid techniques to complement the military intimidation. There is a general understanding that disinformation warfare or export of corruption that Russia extensively uses in

its power toolkit to incapacitate its targets can be of no less harm to the societies in question. The development of an adequate strategy that takes into account the array of Russian coercive influences is the only option to insulate the Alliance from their detrimental effects.

NATO's Response in the Black Sea

At the 2016 Summit in Wales, the allies took the decision to develop a "Tailored Forward Presence" in the Black Sea region. As a result, NATO's reinforcement strategy in the region concentrated on an air-policing mission in Romania and Bulgaria, multinational brigade in Craiova (Romania), and a maritime component, a rotational presence of allied ships in the Black Sea. NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, the broader NATO Response Force, additional high readiness forces of the allies, and NATO's heavier follow-on forces, if necessary, will reinforce the forward presence forces. Tailored measures include more multinational land training, combined joint enhanced training, more maritime activity, and increased coordination to enhance NATO presence in three domains.⁶

However, there is a recognised gap between NATO's "Enhanced Forward Presence" (devised for Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland) and "Tailored Forward Presence" in the Black Sea. As a CEPA report notes, the fact that Western responses are compartmentalised, with a separate focus on the Nordic-Baltic theatre and the Black Sea,

3 S. J. Flanagan, I. A. Chindea, *Russia, NATO, and Black Sea Security Strategy: Regional Perspectives from a 2019 Workshop*, RAND Corporation, 2019, p. 7 [https://www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF405.html access: 12 March 2020].

4 J. Dempsey, *Europe and NATO's Shame over Syria and Turkey*, Carnegie Europe, 03 March 2020 [https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/81191 access: 14 March 2020].

5 B. Hodges, J. Bugajski, P. B. Doran, *Strengthening NATO's Eastern Flank: A Strategy for Baltic-Black Sea Coherence*, CEPA, November 2019, p. 22 [https://1f3d3593-8810-425c-bc7f-8988c808b72b.filesusr.com/ugd/644196_8754c3428d9d4da0adb29bef6df2f5b4.pdf access: 12 March 2020].

6 *Boosting NATO's Presence in the East and Southeast*, NATO, 21 January 2019 [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_136388.htm access: 13 March 2020].

is a problem. This makes NATO's deterrence posture uneven while a cross-regional deterrence strategy is wanted.⁷ All in all, NATO's force structure and the command and control system in the Black Sea are not adequate to meet the existing threats.⁸

It is the limitations of the Montreux Convention (1936) that define the scope and mode of the presence of the ships of non-littoral states in the Black Sea. It limits the tonnage and number of days (21 in peacetime) that ships (submarines and aircraft carriers are banned entirely) of non-littoral states can spend in the Black Sea. This obviously puts serious constraints on how NATO can respond to the Russian aggressive posture, especially with Turkey's willingness to modify the convention being highly improbable.

The recipes to buttress NATO's deterrence strategy in the region usually include expansion of NATO exercises in the region, deployment of advanced air and coastal defence systems in Romania and Bulgaria, and help to Ukraine and Georgia to strengthen their defence capabilities.⁹ Also, the argument goes, NATO needs to create its own A2/AD "bubble" to cover the western part of the Black Sea, with capabilities including maritime systems, ground-based systems in Romania, more solid air and naval engagement.¹⁰

Three Allies in the Black Sea – Three Diverging Policies in Place

The lack of coherence and cohesion in NATO is well documented. Individual allies seemingly have differing readings

of NATO's desirable level of ambition. Concerns have been in place for some time about the long-term US commitment to NATO or the French inclination to reassess NATO's relevancy in general. Also, a sense of urgency in dealing with the region varies from state to state; many governments are occupied with other priorities to the south of the continent.

The Black Sea is an embodiment of this dilemma in miniature: Three littoral allies – Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania – have divergent threat perceptions and policies in place. Romania has been a staunch advocate of enhanced NATO's military presence, which paradoxically resonated much better with Russia-alert Ukraine or Georgia, rather than with Bulgaria or Turkey. The latter often tolerated or turned a blind eye to Russian actions in the region, and undermined some steps aimed at NATO's military enhancement. Turkey, which has a long-standing strategic tradition to oppose the involvement of any external power, be it the US or any other NATO ally, has been against strong NATO naval presence in the Black Sea. Bulgaria has also proved to be an opposing voice for the creation of the Black Sea Fleet. The idea of becoming a hub for the transportation of Russian hydrocarbons has tempted both Ankara and Sofia to conduct policies with controversial repercussions.

There is a generally accepted assessment that Turkish Black Sea strategy is not an independent coherent policy but rather a derivative of Ankara's policies with regard to Syria, Russia, and the United States, which means that oftentimes its approach to the

7 Hodges, Bugajski, Doran, n5, p. 23.

8 J. Bugajski, P. B. Doran, *Black Sea Defended: NATO Responses to Russia's Black Sea Offensive*, "CEPA Strategic Report" 2, p. 7 [https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/644196_41e1047ce39e422d926ce6985604de31.pdf access: 13 March 2020].

9 Flanagan, Chindea, n3, p. 2.

10 Hodges, Bugajski, Doran, n5, pp. 9–10.

region is erratic and reactive.¹¹ There was no considerable strategic shift in the way Turkey treats Russia's presence in the region after the occupation of Crimea. If there is any serious apprehension in the Turkish establishment about Russia eroding an unwritten accord to maintain the balance of powers in this theatre, then apart from some cosmetic readjustment of its naval priorities, it does not manifest itself through any other measures.



NATO's eastern flank in the Black Sea is a fractured security space that requires a special tailored approach

Undoubtedly, Turkey will never formally recognise the changed status quo and will always refer to this as an unacceptable breach of international law. At the same time, this does not preclude the preservation of the Russian-Turkish condominium in the Black Sea. Ankara has not displayed any readiness to try to counterbalance Russian expansion with a more solid Western posture in the region and continued to insist on regional security ownership, which means that it is up to regional powers to co-manage the situation here. For instance, the Turkish government has never considered joining anti-Russian sanctions imposed after the annexation of Crimea. Moreover, it even advocates that its policy on Russia is beneficial for the relations between Russia and the West, resorting to the oft-

abused concept of the civilisational bridge. Turkey's position of de-facto tolerating Russian actions in the region elevates it to the position of the most influential Russian "enabler" in the region.

Despite the assurances of solidarity that NATO expressed to Turkey after the latter lost 33 of its soldiers in an operation of Russia-backed Syrian forces in Idlib at the end of February 2020, the rift is there and seems to be constantly deepening.¹² NATO's discomfort with Turkey buying the Russian S-400 defence systems did not dissuade Ankara from this strategic shift. Notwithstanding the exposure and the vulnerability such a purchase entails for NATO, as well as facing the risk to have the deliveries of US F-35s cancelled, Turkish plans remained unchanged.

Concerning Bulgaria and Romania, they found themselves unprepared for the Russian expansionist actions; their armed forces are underequipped and underfinanced, and territorial defence capabilities neglected.¹³ But the Romanian position proved to be consistent irrespective of the composition of the government, whereas Bulgarian officials even belonging to the same government were often voicing contradictory statements.

Bulgaria has always tended to display certain duality in its foreign policy, oscillating between the commitments within the Alliance and the desire to maintain close relations with Russia. It was due to the rejection by Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov that the Romanian idea of creating a Black Sea Fleet – a joint fleet of Romania,

11 Flanagan, Chindea, n3, p. 5.

12 *Nato Expresses 'Full Solidarity' with Turkey over Syria Airstrikes*, "Guardian", 28 February 2020 [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/28/nato-turkey-syria-airstrikes-russia-un-jens-stoltenberg> access: 18 March 2020].

13 J. Bugajski, P. B. Doran, n8, p. 4.

Bulgaria, and Turkey – never materialised.¹⁴ This obstructionist stance is often explained as a derivative of the country's dependence on Russia in terms of energy, business, and tourism.

Romania is a highly motivated NATO member in terms of military expenditures (fulfilling the commitment of 2 per cent of national GDP for defence) and participation in missions and operations, which, as some experts would claim, has shown some resistance to Russian malign influence and proved to be comparatively "Russia-proof".¹⁵ It advocated for the creation of the Bucharest Nine as a grouping of the Alliance's eastern flank countries sharing the same destiny of being exposed to Russia geographically. As a US strategic partner in the region and a NATO promoter, Romania has secured the image of a "Westerniser" and stabiliser in the region.¹⁶

NATO's eastern flank in the Black Sea is a fractured security space that requires a special tailored approach. Naturally, the apprehensions exist as to which strategy could be the one that guarantees the allies' security, represents their values, and

keeps the existing hotspots from major conflagration. The importance of devising and implementing a coherent common strategy for NATO in the region, trying to bridge the gap among the sometimes diverging interests of allies as well as all other littoral states, is commonly supported by experts. Although this idea is unassailable in logic, the result has proved to be hard to attain so far.

Maryna Vorotnyuk, PhD, is a researcher affiliated with the Center for European Neighborhood Studies of Central European University (Budapest). She is a Board Member of the Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism" and works on security developments in the Black Sea region, as well as Ukrainian and Turkish foreign policies. Dr. Vorotnyuk worked as a visiting lecturer at the Department of Political Sciences of Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia (2015–2017). From 2006 until 2015, she was affiliated with the National Institute for Strategic Studies in Ukraine. She was also a research fellow of the Center for International Studies of I. I. Mechnikov Odessa National University (2006–2013).

14 Y. Bozhilov, *The Brief Life of the Idea for the Creation of NATO Black Sea Fleet*, "New Europe", 08 January 2017 [<https://www.neweurope.eu/article/brief-life-idea-creation-nato-black-sea-fleet/>; access: 18 March 2020].

15 V. Socor, *Romania Sees Need to Overhaul Its Policy Toward Moldova (Part One)*, "Eurasia Daily Monitor", 16(98), 10 July 2019 [<https://jamestown.org/program/romania-sees-need-to-overhaul-its-policy-toward-moldova-part-one/>; access: 12 March 2020].

16 J. Joja, *Black Sea Strategic Volatility: Players and Patterns*, "Black Sea Strategy Papers", Foreign Policy Research Institute, October 2019, p. 9 [<https://www.fpri.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/jojabssp2.pdf>; access: 13 March 2020].

UA: UKRAINE
ANALYTICA

Issue 1 (19), 2020

ISSN 2518-7481