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THE BLACK SEA SECURITY ARCHITECTURE IN TIMES OF COLLAPSE: THE CASE OF ANNEXED CRIMEA AND MILITARY CHALLENGES FOR THE US, NATO, EU, TURKEY, AND UKRAINE

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Once being annexed by Russia, Crimea with the rest of the Black Sea sub-region immediately broke through the front line of the global post-bipolar geopolitics. The author argues that there is an urgent need to re-estimate the traditional input of the key Black Sea actors. This initial reading suggests Russia, as well as NATO, the USA, the EU, and Turkey finding the new format of protecting their interests due to the new geopolitical challenges and changed military climate in the Black Sea basin.

Introduction

With the annexation of Crimea, followed by the hybrid war against Ukraine, the Black Sea security space since February-March 2014 has appeared on top of global concerns alongside Syria crisis and world terrorism. While states of the world are calculating the number of combat-ready vehicles of different types, the reality of today shows that in two and a half years after the annexation, security risks and military challenges threatening the whole Europe and the rest of the world should not be underestimated. We are witnessing the transformation of the Black Sea region from the backyard of the global politics

into the “Black swan” of the new global risks. All of them are connected to military competition, which is taking place now in the wider Black Sea area, including the Crimean peninsula and the Azov Sea.

“NATO Syndrome” and “Russian Impregnable Fortress”

The annexation of Crimea happened rapidly, but not so unexpectedly. Besides political and diplomatic battles over the Black Sea Fleet and territorial claims to Ukraine in 1990s, which have been discussed a lot¹, there was also a risk of military clash between Russia and Ukraine in Kerch strait


¹ More on this S. Glebov, Russian Black Sea Fleet and Ukraine’s Security Strategy: Agenda 2017, [in:] Luis Rodrigues & Sergiy Glebov (ed.), *Military Bases: Historical Perspectives, Contemporary Challenges*, IOS Press: Amsterdam 2009, pp. 181-187.

area back in 2003 during the crisis over Tuzla Island. Moreover, Ukraine could do nothing about those Black Sea Fleet battle ships departing from Sevastopol bays for a combat mission against Georgia in 2008 and safely coming back to Ukraine. A statement by the first Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk on 21 October 2015 about Russian navy ready to attack Odessa and combat shots by Ukrainian warships at Russian ships to stop it in 1992² leaves no doubts as to the potential readiness of Moscow to fight for Crimea even against the “ghost of NATO.”

The annexation of Crimea was partly justified by introducing NATO as a threat according to the Russian President Putin: “If we don’t do anything, Ukraine will be drawn into NATO sometime in the future... and NATO ships will dock in Sevastopol, the city of Russia’s naval glory... if NATO troops walk in, they will immediately deploy these forces there”³. Even more instructive was the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov in his speech for Educational Youth Forum in August 2015, where he confessed that because of NATO and “NATO-centrism” which, to Lavrov’s mind, “did not allow cooperating with Russia, the war in Ukraine became possible.”⁴

The acute Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation as of 25 December

2014 says that Russia suspects NATO of aggressive intentions and considers it among key external military risks.⁵ There are not only provocations with groups of Russian warplanes conducting large-scale manoeuvres in international airspace against NATO member-countries all over the Black, Baltic and North seas and the Atlantic Ocean, but also strategic plans of Kremlin to consider Crimea as the bridgehead against NATO.



We are witnessing the transformation of the Black Sea region from the backyard of the global politics into the “Black swan” of the new global risks

Thus, one of the drills, which took place on 26-27 October 2015 in the Crimean Opuk training area with ships and aircrafts of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, was practicing repelling an air attack against the Crimean peninsula and delivering a missile strike against simulated enemy’s ships as well as engaging in an artillery battle with a naval strike force. What made Reuters to conclude that “latest military exercises provide a vivid demonstration that Russia can, and will protect its new territory, despite the protests”⁶. The same Opuk training area

² Леонид Кравчук: “Не внутри украинца сидит война, а внутри россиянина, который пытается считать украинца младшим братом» - интервью Леонида Кравчука газете Сегодня. (Leonid Kravchuk: “The war is not inside Ukrainian, but inside Russian, who is tending to see Ukrainian as the elder brother” – Leonid Kravchuk’s interview to the Segodnia (Today) newspaper), “Segodnia”, 21 October 2015 [<http://www.segodnya.ua/politics/pnews/leonid-kravchuk-ne-vnutri-ukrainca-sidit-voyna-a-vnutri-rossiyanina-kotoryy-pytaetsya-schitat-ukrainca-mladshim-bratom-659799.html>], access: 03 October 2016]

³ Transcript: Vladimir Putin’s April 17 Q&A, “The Washington Post”, 17 April 2014 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-vladimir-putins-april-17-qanda/2014/04/17/ff77b4a2-c635-11e3-8b9a-8e0977a24aeb_story.html], access: 30 October 2016]

⁴ Minister Sergey Lavrov’s remarks and replies to questions at the Russian Terra Scientia Educational Youth Forum on Klyazma River, August 24, 2015, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2015 [http://en.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/1680936], access: 28 October 2016]

⁵ The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, December 25, 2014, Embassy of the Russian Federation in the UK, 2014 [<http://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>], access: 29 October 2015].

⁶ Russia holds military exercises in Crimea, “Reuters”, 29 October 2015 [<http://in.reuters.com/video/2015/10/29/russia-holds-military-exercises-in-crime?videoId=366122434>], access: 4 November 2015].

became the main firing field for Russian forces to simulate Crimea as a Russian fortress defending it from external enemies, like NATO. Yet in January 2015, the Russian Federation naval aviation started training and combat operations involving bombing and launching unguided rockets against ground targets on Opuk training ground.⁷ Next month, in February 2015, a special military exercise of the Black Sea Fleet and naval aviation to launch an anti-cruise missile training took place near Sevastopol to defend the main Black Sea Fleet navy base from air attack.⁸ According to the Russian Defence Ministry, in July 2015 the crews of Su-27 of the Russian Air Forces trained to intercept air targets in order to perform “the antimissile constant manoeuvring, detection and attacking the enemy with aircraft sighting system and electronic firing missiles” while “helicopters were training to detect and recognize various ground targets and low-flying aircraft and also progressed to destroy the slow flights with missiles and gun armament.”⁹ Along with aircraft exercises, a tactical training of Artillery Regiment was held.

The 2016 Russian military exercises in Crimea repeated the same tactical scenarios as in 2014-2015 involving the same Opuk training area. The most recent Caucasus-2016 exercises in September 2016 demonstrated a clear intention of the Russian Federation to deter any military attack in the area from the South Caucasus to Crimea. In general,

there is an impression that Russia has taken an unprecedented decision to strengthen the defence of the recently seized Crimean peninsula, also by sending missile submarines to the occupied Crimea.

Nuclearization of Crimea: Offensive Implications for the US, NATO, and the East

Current Russian politics towards the Black Sea is generating far-stretched global effects, thus an issue of nuclear safety and non-proliferation regime should be raised. Russia’s aggressive policy towards nuclear objects in Crimea leaves no place for underestimation of the threat of nuclear rivalry in the Black Sea region. Hence, Moscow’s attempt to nuclearize Crimea, particularly near Feodosia, is in focus. Such trend is just prolonging a strategy to create not just a conventional “Russian impregnable fortress” in Crimea, but a nuclear one. As Mikhail Ulyanov, the head of the Russian Foreign Ministry’s non-proliferation department, said in March 2015, “Russia can deploy nuclear weapons in Crimea as the peninsula is part of its territory.”¹⁰ Yet in November, 2014 NATO’s top commander U.S. General Philip Breedlove reported such suspicions, saying that Russian forces “capable of being nuclear” are being moved to the Crimean Peninsula, even though NATO didn’t know if nuclear weapons were actually in place.¹¹

⁷ Морская авиация ВМФ РФ приступила к учебно-боевым полетам в Крым (Black Sea Fleets’ Naval aviation started training and combat adshprey in Crimea), “РИА Новости”, 23 January 2015 [https://ria.ru/defense_safety/20150123/1043901595.html, access: 18 October 2016].

⁸ Источник: ЧФ России начал учения по отражению крылатых ракет (Source: the Black Sea Fleet started anti-cruise missile drills), “РИА Новости”, 19 February 2015 [https://ria.ru/defense_safety/20150219/1048523007.html, access: 31 October 2016].

⁹ Russia conducted military trainings in occupied Crimea. The crews of Su-27 trained to intercept the air targets, “112 TV Channel, Ukraine”, 16 July 2015 [http://112.international/politics/Russia-conducted-military-trainings-in-occupied-Crimea-191.html, access: 9 November 2015].

¹⁰ Deployment of Russian nuclear weapons in Crimea possible – Foreign Ministry, “TACC”, 11 March 2015 [http://tass.ru/en/russia/782071, access: 20 November 2015].

¹¹ Russian forces “capable of being nuclear” moving to Crimea, NATO chief says, “CBSnews.com”, 2 November 2014 [http://www.cbsnews.com/news/russian-forces-capable-of-being-nuclear-moving-to-crimea-nato-chief-says, access: 5 November 2015].

The EU representatives are also concerned. For instance, in an interview for RBC-Ukraine in June 2015 several Members of Parliaments of the EU countries named the issue of the Russian nuclear weapons in Crimea as the most challenging one for NATO and the USA.¹²

Even outside the discourse on Crimea, there is a strong signal for nuclear rivalry from the Russian side. Speaking at the opening of a weapons exhibition “Army 2015” in June, 2015, President Putin said: “This year the size of our nuclear forces will increase by over 40 new inter-continental ballistic missiles that will be able to overcome any, even the most technologically advanced, missile defence systems.”¹³ Putting Crimea into the game, BBC News defence and diplomatic correspondent Jonathan Marcus admits that “Russian President Vladimir Putin has placed a renewed emphasis upon his country’s nuclear arsenal” not accidentally: “This is in part a reflection of Russia’s continuing conventional military weakness... What most alarms the West is the renewed emphasis in Russian rhetoric on nuclear rather than conventional forces. Threats to deploy short-range nuclear weapons in Crimea have been accompanied by veiled warnings of nuclear targeting against NATO members who might host ballistic missile defences.”¹⁴ The same vision is shared by Michaela Dodge, a policy

analyst at The Heritage Foundation: “The deployment of nuclear platforms within striking distance of NATO forces including Iskander tactical ballistic missile systems to the Kaliningrad region, highlights the role of nuclear weapons in Russia’s national security strategy”.¹⁵ “Russia does think about NATO as one of its primary adversaries, threatens NATO allies with a nuclear attack, and states that nuclear weapons use can be de-escalatory under some circumstances,” Dodge said.¹⁶

As to the practical implementation of intentions “under some circumstances”, it was reported that “Russia plans to station state-of-the-art missiles in its westernmost Baltic exclave” and deploy long-range, nuclear-capable supersonic Tu-22M3 bombers to Crimea “as part of massive war games to showcase its resurgent military power amid bitter tensions with the West over Ukraine.”¹⁷ Developing further such thesis, a Russian expert Artem Kureev is confident that “sitting of long-range supersonic bombers in Crimea makes all military installations of Russia’s potential foes in the Black Sea region extremely vulnerable, and pre-empts the formation of a combined hostile fleet in the Black Sea.”¹⁸ As it was confirmed in March 2015 by the Russian Defence Minister, stationing of the Tu-22M3 and operational-tactical “Iskander-M” systems on the peninsula is

¹² Т. Шпайхер, Европейские парламентарии обеспокоены угрозами РФ разместить в Крыму ядерное оружие (European MPs worry towards RF’s threats to station nuclear arms in Crimea), «RBC-Ukraine», 9 June 2015 [<http://www.rbc.ua/rus/analytics/evropeyskie-parlamentarii-obespoenoeny-ugrozami-1433848437.html>, access: 20 November 2015].

¹³ T. Parfitt and D. Blair, Vladimir Putin accused of ‘nuclear sabre-rattling’ as he promises 40 new Russian missiles, “The Telegraph”, 16 June 2015 [<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/11678521/Vladimir-Putin-says-Russia-beefing-up-nuclear-arsenal-with-40-new-ballistic-missiles.html>, access: 9 November 2015].

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ N. Peterson, Russia Sends Nuclear-Capable Bombers to Crimea, “The Daily Signal”, 20 March 2015 [<http://dailysignal.com/2015/03/20/russia-sends-nuclear-capable-bombers-to-crimea/>, access: 10 November 2015].

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Russia to send new missiles to Baltic exclave on maneuvers, 17 March 2015 [<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-2998590/Russian-military-brings-forces-combat-readiness-drills.html>, access: 10 November 2015].

¹⁸ A. Kureev, Russia’s military overtures in Crimea provoke a NATO response, “RussiaDirect.org”, 28 July 2015 [<http://www.russia-direct.org/opinion/russias-military-overtures-crimea-provoke-nato-response>, access: 10 November 2015].

the next step to restore the Russian presence in the Black Sea region.¹⁹ Dmitry Litovkin, a Russian military expert, indicates that “the stationing of these systems in Crimea guarantees, if required, the destruction of US interceptor missiles based in Romania. A Tu-22M3 will not only be able to support the strike with cruise missiles X-22 and X-15, but also to eliminate the naval presence of the US in the Black Sea.”²⁰

At the same time, Artem Kureev explains NATO’s vulnerability vis-à-vis Tu-22M3s also by saying that “if Russian long-range bombers were to take off from Crimea, NATO commanders would not be able to figure out their destination until they started turning above the neutral waters of the Black Sea.”²¹ In general, as Artem Kureev continues, “...the decision to deploy Tu-22M3s in Crimea “will significantly reduce the capacity of the southern sector of the Euro ABM anti-missile defence shield and, undoubtedly, prompt similar countermeasures from NATO,” so Russia’s plan to deploy bombers in Crimea “may be seen as a warning sign to NATO and accelerate the renewed arms race between Moscow and the West...”²²

Thus, it is the right time to discuss all possible risks of Russia’s gaining control over Ukrainian nuclear objects in Crimea within the frame of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regulations and not only them. There is a need to investigate if Russia is serious about possible deployment of nuclear weapons in Crimea, which could ruin the existing balance of nuclear power as well as the whole regime of non-proliferation. So far, there are just official

statements from different sides, including EU concerns, but taking into account current Russian involvement into Syria and clash with NATO/EU/US strategies, as well as outspoken Russian plans towards further “nuclearization” of Crimea, things could become more dangerous.

NATO’s Response: the Warsaw Summit

Answering a question “what look may NATO’s counter measures towards Russian potential threat to the NATO Black Sea members-states have”, Artem Kureev predicts: “Accordingly, in order to protect its missile defence systems, NATO will likely be forced into the retaliatory step of placing more modern air defence systems and fighter aircraft in Romania, Bulgaria and other Black Sea countries”.²³ At the same time, the costs involved in deploying the new missile defence systems and locating additional aircraft will be many times more than those incurred by Russia. Is NATO ready to face such challenges?

The answer partly was articulated at the NATO Warsaw Summit. In order to keep the balance of power with Russia and to be ready to “hike their own outlays on protecting the airspace of the Black Sea members” properly, NATO had to change its strategy in the Black Sea region. Together with “retaliatory step of placing more modern air defence systems and fighter aircraft in Romania, Bulgaria and other Black Sea countries” that was on the agenda of the NATO Summit in Warsaw. Key NATO’s reflections on the changed

¹⁹ Russia to send new missiles to Baltic exclave on maneuvers, 17 March 2015 [<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-2998590/Russian-military-brings-forces-combat-readiness-drills.html>, access: 10 November 2015].

²⁰ D. Litovkin, Russia steps up its military presence in Crimea, “Russia & India Report”, 9 April 2015 [http://in.rbth.com/economics/2015/04/09/russia_steps_up_its_military_presence_in_crimea_42505, access: 9 November 2015].

²¹ A. Kureev, 2015

²² Ibid.

²³ A. Kureev, 2015

military environment in the Black Sea region can be found in the Warsaw Summit Communiqué.²⁴

In NATO's vision, Russia's "destabilizing actions and policies" among others include "the ongoing illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea", "the violation of sovereign borders by force", "large-scale snap exercises contrary to the spirit of the Vienna Document, and provocative military activities near NATO borders, including those in the Baltic and Black Sea regions and the Eastern Mediterranean", Russia's "irresponsible and aggressive nuclear rhetoric, military concept and underlying posture", and "its repeated violations of NATO Allied airspace."²⁵ Acknowledging that "Russia continues to strengthen its military posture, increase its military activities, deploy new high-end capabilities, and challenge regional security", NATO has warned and informed that it "will also develop tailored forward presence in the southeast part of the Alliance territory" while "options for a strengthened NATO air and maritime presence will be assessed."²⁶

One of such options was assessed without a delay. During the Warsaw NATO Summit, Allies declared Initial Operational Capability of NATO Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD), which has been seen as a capability to defend Alliance populations, territory, and forces across southern Europe against a potential ballistic missile attack, including the most dangerous Russian "Iskander" units. Since Aegis Ashore is the first operational land-based version of the Aegis Combat System, a sophisticated collection

of phased-array radars, fire control directors, computers and missiles, it is important that along with the Aegis Ashore site in Deveselu, Romania NATO also will be strengthened by a forward-based early-warning BMD radar at Kürecik, Turkey and an Aegis Ashore site at the Redzikowo military base in Poland.²⁷ Will it be fully enough to deter Russia and counterbalance its far-going military intentions in the Black Sea region? The answer must be negative, but such BMD strategy in the Black Sea area is already an alarming signal for Russia. According to Alexander Khramchikhin, director of the Institute of Political and Military Analysis, the key threat of the US missile defence system in Eastern Europe to Russia is the ability to convert instantly a missile defence base into an offensive one,²⁸ what should be taking uniquely into global consideration by all sides. At the same time, the future of the Black Sea security also depends on the on-going navy competition in the Black Sea.

Russian Naval Strategy and the Turkish Factor

If nuclear challenges from the Black Sea region directly fall into global discourse, the naval competition in the Black Sea still has a regional focus. The decision of 1997 to leave Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Crimea until 2017, the Five-Day war against Georgia in 2008, the so-called "Kharkiv agreements" of 2010 went hand in hand with Kremlin's strategy to strengthen Russia's military presence in the Black Sea. No doubt that the annexation of Crimea facilitated this

²⁴ 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. Press Release (2016) 100, NATO [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm, access: 31 October 2016].

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Warsaw Summit Communiqué, 2016

²⁸ N. Litovkin, Russia to open new naval base in Black Sea to counter NATO, "RBTH", 29 June 2016 [http://rbth.com/defence/2016/06/29/russia-to-open-new-naval-base-in-black-sea-to-counter-nato_607229, access: 15 October 2016].

process. It was reported that “in 2015, the Black Sea fleet added approximately 200 units of military equipment, including 40 ships, 30 aircraft (multi-role SU-30SM’s), and Crimea was delivered more than 100 units of modern armoured vehicles.”²⁹

Of all the vessels deserving special attention, there are Admiral Grigorovich class frigates and diesel-electric submarines of the 636 Varshavyanka projects both armed with Kalibr cruise missiles, the first one arrived to Sevastopol in June 2016. This was the first vessel for distant water operations, which the Black Sea Fleet received over the past 35 years.³⁰ The original plan was to provide the Black Sea Fleet with six Admiral Grigorovich class frigates. These frigates are equipped with Kalibr long range land attack cruise missiles (first used operationally last year from Russian Navy ships in the Caspian Sea to strike targets in Syria, and possessing ability to hit targets at a distance of up to 2,500 km³¹), supersonic Oniks anti-ship missiles, Shtil anti-aircraft missiles (a naval variant of the well-known Buk missile system) and a Kamov KA26 helicopter.³² The ship’s arrival is part of a planned \$2.43 billion expansion of the Black Sea Fleet, announced in 2014.³³ As Alexander Mercouris admits these class frigates are only the most visible reinforcement of the Black Sea Fleet. Of at least equal importance is the deployment of six advanced Varshavyanka diesel-electric submarines to the Black Sea Fleet,

which has taken place since 2014. Diesel-electric submarines are inherently quieter than nuclear powered submarines and are arguably more suited to the confined waters of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean”.³⁴ At the moment, there are three of them in the new Novorossiysk military base out of the planned six that “allows Russia to control potential threats in Europe and the Middle East.”³⁵

In order to estimate the perspectives of the Russian naval strategy to deter potential threats in the Black Sea one should also consider a wider interregional focus. In late February 2015, Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Cypriot counterpart Nicos Anastasiades signed an agreement about the presence of Russian vessels in Cyprus ports. As some experts argues the West should pay close attention to Russian initiatives to “sort out their way forward into the 21st century” and “build naval support capabilities in both the Eastern and Western Mediterranean... And whatever the cause of the seizure of Crimea and its inclusion in Russia, the impact on the Russian navy is clear... By ending the treaty and taking full control of Sevastopol, the Russians can now focus on the expansion of facilities in the area and preparing for a significant modernization effort.”³⁶ In general, as Pavel Koshkin admits, in focus of Russia’s Navy expansion is the Syrian port of Tartus, a key port for the Russian navy, and Egypt, which, according to Laird,

²⁹ S. Knyazev, “Russia’s Lake”: The Black Sea Fleet vs. the New Ukraine-Turkey Naval Coalition. Kiev and Ankara have become official military partners, “Global Research”, 20 May 2016 [<http://www.globalresearch.ca/russias-lake-the-black-sea-fleet-vs-the-new-ukraine-turkey-naval-coalition/5526310>, access: 30 September 2016].

³⁰ S. LaGrone, Russian Black Sea Fleet Gets First New Frigate since Cold War, “USNI News”, 9 June 2016 [<https://news.usni.org/2016/06/09/russian-first-new-frigate>, access 19 October 2016].

³¹ N. Litovkin, 2016

³² A. Mercouris, Russia Strengthens its Black Sea Fleet, “The Duran”, 12 June 2016 [<http://theduran.com/russia-strengthens-black-sea-fleet/>, access: 29 October 2016].

³³ S. LaGrone, 2016

³⁴ A. Mercouris, 2016


³⁵ N. Litovkin, 2016

³⁶ P. Koshkin, Does Russia pose a naval threat for the West in Mediterranean, “Russia Direct”, 4 March 2015. [<http://www.russia-direct.org/analysis/west-doesnt-see-russia-naval-threat-mediterranean-0>, access: 16 October 2016].

might become a headache for Washington because “the military has returned to power” there.³⁷

One should not also write off Montreux Convention, serving the interests of Russia and Turkey since 1936 (even though besides enjoyable rights for the Kremlin, it also imposes duties on Russia to respect international law and Convention itself). It may be supplementary to Russia’s naval strategy against Ukraine and Georgia, but when touching upon naval confrontation against other Black Sea littoral NATO-members, it turns into a regional and even global challenge involving NATO, USA, and the EU. In this respect, Montreux Convention even inside the Black Sea water area could give fewer benefits for Russia’s current domination in the Northeast part of the Black Sea in case additional battle ships are donated from the side of other NATO-countries to the flags of Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey.

Montreux Convention as the comfortable instrument for the Russian sub-regional conventional policy inside the Black Sea may almost totally lose its defensive effect once potential military conflict expands outside the Black Sea area. If Turkey — a NATO member — is involved, Russian Black Sea Fleet will be locked inside the sea without permission to pass through the Turkish straits. At the same time, it appears to be a military target for the NATO striking forces located in Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and with US 6th Fleet. With the latest decisions of the Warsaw NATO Summit and NATO BMD perspectives in the Black Sea region and in Poland, the



One should not also write off Montreux Convention, serving the interests of Russia and Turkey since 1936

Russian Black Sea Fleet, probably the most powerful in the basin by now, and Russian sea-side appear to be fragile at the end. Naturally, Russia has enough capacities like atomic submarines, for example, to respond from outside of the Black Sea, including the Mediterranean one, what makes potential sub-regional conflict as the interregional one; taking into account the nuclear factor, it may automatically turn into global. That is why naval competition in the Black Sea region has to be examined in global terms since 2014, even if from the sub-regional Black Sea point of view on conventional arms “the only existing threat to Russia is presented by Turkish forces.”³⁸

In this respect and despite the fact that Turkey’s NATO allies suspected that both Turkey and Russia previously opposed NATO’s presence in the Black Sea in order to share the sea between the two,³⁹ it is important to outline NATO-Turkish strategic perspective when talking about future military competition in the region. Thus, even without taking into account a coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016 and a current stage of “warmer” relations with Russia, the Turkish foreign policy seems to be returning back to the original Euro-Atlantic track to “tighten Turkish bonds with NATO”.⁴⁰ It was not accidental,


³⁷ P. Koshkin, Does Russia pose a naval threat for the West in Mediterranean, “Russia Direct”, 4 March 2015. [<http://www.russia-direct.org/analysis/west-doesnt-see-russia-naval-threat-mediterranean-0>, access: 16 October 2016].

³⁸ S. Knyazev, 2016

³⁹ Turkey, Russia oppose to NATO presence in Black Sea, “Sunday’s Zaman”, 2 March 2006 [http://www.todayszaman.com/international_turkey-russia-oppose-to-nato-presence-in-black-sea_30409.html, access: 15 November 2015].

⁴⁰ B. E. Bekdil and A. Mustafa, Russian Actions Tighten Turkish Bonds with NATO, Qatar, “DefenseNews”, 11 October 2015 [<http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/2015/10/11/russian-actions-turkish-bonds-with-nato-qatar/73665990/>, access: 16 November 2015].

when reacting to violations of Turkish sovereign airspace in October 2015 by Russian side, that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recalled Article V of the Washington Treaty saying that “an attack on Turkey means an attack on NATO.”⁴¹ Ankara, in the words of Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, clearly showed its readiness to respond to any threat no matter what side it was coming from.⁴² NATO backed Turkey vis-à-vis Russia. As NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg hastened to assure, NATO is ready to defend Turkey — including sending in troops “if needed”... “NATO is ready and able to defend all allies, including Turkey against any threats”.⁴³



Regional scenario is developing according to neorealism, which is based on the assumption about egoistic interests of states, and balance of power

The Black Sea Security Architecture in Collapse: Security Perspectives in the Military Field

Instead of an idealistic scenario of the 1990s to have the Black Sea basin demilitarized at all and “...to ensure that the Black Sea becomes a sea of peace, stability and prosperity, striving to promote friendly

and good-neighbourly relations...”,⁴⁴ we are witnessing a new regional arms race trend, which is triggering global confrontation. This is an alarming situation. Regional scenario is developing according to neorealism, which is based on the assumption about egoistic interests of states, and balance of power. Since early 2014, the balance of power among Russia, Turkey, NATO, EU, and USA has been ruined.

Attempt to prevent Russian domination in the Black Sea with the Romanian initiative “to establish a multinational framework brigade to help improve integrated training of Allied units under Headquarters Multinational Division Southeast” in order to “contribute to the Alliance’s strengthened deterrence and defence posture, situational awareness, and peacetime demonstration of NATO’s intent to operate without constraint”,⁴⁵ could prove insufficient. This is not only due to the Russian navy dominance over the rest of the Black Sea littoral states, but also because of passivity of the countries possibly involved into its implementation. The Romanian initiative has been addressed to Turkey, Bulgaria, and Ukraine by Romanian President Klaus Iohannis at the beginning of 2016. It offered to take part in a joint “common NATO” fleet to deter Russia in the Black Sea and so far did not get support from Bulgaria⁴⁶. The Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov announced in June 2016 that “our country

⁴¹ B. E. Bekdil and A. Mustafa, Russian Actions Tighten Turkish Bonds with NATO, Qatar, “DefenseNews”, 11 October 2015 [<http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/2015/10/11/russian-actions-turkish-bonds-with-nato-qatar/73665990/>, access: 16 November 2015].

⁴² NATO warns Russia after jet strays into Turkey, “Al Jazeera”, 6 October 2015 [<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/10/nato-warns-russia-jet-strays-turkey-151005155403930.html>, access: 16 November 2015].

⁴³ V. Richards, Nato ‘ready to send troops into Turkey’ following Russian violation of airspace, “Independent”, 12 October 2015 [<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/nato-is-ready-to-send-troops-into-turkey-a6685576.html>, access: 16 October 2016].

⁴⁴ Summit Declaration of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Istanbul, 25 June 1992, PABSEC, 2016 [<http://www.pabsec.org/Documents.asp?id=6>, access: 29 October 2016].

⁴⁵ Warsaw Summit Communiqué, 2016

⁴⁶ G. Gotev, Bulgaria refuses to join NATO Black Sea fleet against Russia, “EurActiv.com”, 16 June 2016 [<https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/bulgaria-refuses-to-join-nato-black-sea-fleet-against-russia/>, access: 13 October 2016].

will not become part of the Black Sea fleet being prepared against Russia”, but added that this didn’t prevent his country’s navy from conducting common exercises with Romania “every day”.⁴⁷

Without mentioning a U-turn in Russian-Turkish relations during the last year (Fall 2015 — Fall 2016), one should not forget about a Plan of Military Cooperation between the armed forces of Turkey and Ukraine until 2020 signed on 17 May 2016, which made Kyiv and Ankara “official military partners”. The document deals with general as well as rather specific problems and issues in the sphere of defence planning, advisory and consultative assistance, and cooperation between parties’ armed forces in general and individual sectors in particular. Experts say that this is not so much about Ukraine preparing to join the alliance as it is about NATO’s “supervision” of Ukraine’s armed forces through the medium of the Turkish military. US-led annual “Sea Breeze” military exercises as well as the Black Sea Harmony under the leadership of Turkey are still operational and could strengthen NATO’s presence and new military initiatives in the region, even though one should not overestimate such efforts for the actual deterrence of Russia.

The effectiveness of the sub-regional cooperative initiatives like BLACKSEAFOR is now under question with regard to Russia’s official postponement of its participation in such projects. That means Russia’s self-isolation and refusal to keep cooperative efforts in making Black Sea safer, and makes impossible further naval cooperation within regional security system in a peaceful way. At the same

time, without Russian participation any successful implementation of any naval operation with the common security interest will fail. All these challenges will inevitably involve all Black Sea littoral states into interregional confrontation and arms race, but also into a dialogue. The thing is that such dialogue could hardly be successful without the participation of both the USA and NATO, that turns talks on future security architecture in the Black Sea region from a sub-regional challenge into global affairs’ agenda.

Conclusions

When examining visible shortcomings of the Black Sea security architecture, the main accent should be made on the following:

1. More or less stable before 2014, the Black Sea security system has been rapidly moving from the multilateral cooperative military mechanisms to the bipolar balance of power format.
2. The main trend of such bipolarity — regional deterrence of Russia, which has strengthened its naval and other military capabilities in the Black Sea, including in the annexed Crimea, as compared to the rest of the five Black Sea littoral states, three of which are members of NATO.
3. Principal political and military confrontation in the Black Sea region touches upon not only non-NATO Black Sea littoral states — Ukraine and Georgia, but is also between Russia and NATO.
4. Russia-NATO tensions within emerging Black Sea sub-regional bipolarity risk to bring military threats out from the

⁴⁷ G. Gotev, Bulgaria refuses to join NATO Black Sea fleet against Russia, “EurActiv.com”, 16 June 2016 [<https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/bulgaria-refuses-to-join-nato-black-sea-fleet-against-russia/>, access: 13 October 2016].

⁴⁸ S. Knyazev, 2016

⁴⁹ Ibid.

sub-regional level to the global one due to hard-security capabilities and needs of protection from them on the global level of international system.

5. Due to specific nature of the crisis in the bilateral Russian-Turkish relations after the Su-24 incident in November, 2015 and despite a new period of friendship between Putin and Erdogan after its resolution in summer 2016, the future Turkey's role in the region vis-à-vis Russia and other security challenges in the Black Sea region could be just supplementary to NATO's strategy.
6. Following this, by strengthening its positions in Romania and Turkey with its new BMD, NATO is able only to preserve the new balance of regional power in order to escape a direct military clash with Russia in the sea, land and air.
7. Involving two non-NATO Black Sea littoral states — Georgia and Ukraine — into any joint NATO naval projects to deter Russia may appear counterproductive due to the risk of provoking Russian aggression against Kyiv and Tbilisi. Defending both of them from the side of NATO is also not realistic. It minimizes NATO involvement into confrontation with

Russia beyond the territorial waters of the Black Sea NATO member-countries.

8. In general, as to the success of the deterrence mechanisms from the side of NATO inside the Black Sea even without symbolic participation of Georgia and Ukraine, things are not that inspiring: Russia simply achieved its maximum in pursuing its own interests in the Black Sea region since the annexation of Crimea. At this point, after Georgia and Ukraine it is NATO, which appeared to be Russia's next potential target. In this case, future military climate in the Black Sea region is inevitably dependent on the supra-system relations between West and Russia.

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