

Perceptions of the Black Sea Region Security Amid the Russian Invasion of Ukraine: View from Ukraine

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Black Sea Geopolitics after the Russia–Ukraine War: Perspectives from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine

Introduction by the Special Editor Bidzina Lebanidze (Institute of Slavic Languages and Caucasus Studies, University of Jena)

Russia's invasion of Ukraine turned the European security order upside down. Many European countries are in the process of rethinking their security arrangements to better adapt to the deteriorated geopolitical environment. Most affected by Russia's aggressive policies are, however, the so-called new Eastern European states located in the wider Black Sea region and considered part of its Near Abroad by Russia. This special issue explores the perceptions of political elites and foreign policy communities towards Russia's recent geopolitical assertiveness in Ukraine and the countries of the South Caucasus—which build an important part of the Black Sea's political and economic ecosystem.

The contributions of this special issue provide an interesting comparative perspective of how local foreign policy communities in the South Caucasus and Black Sea countries view geopolitical and security challenges in the Black Sea area emanating from the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Maksym Khylyko and Hanna Shelest provide a view of Black Sea security from Ukraine and explore the potential for cooperation between Ukraine and the South Caucasus states. Armen Grigoryan explores the impact of the Russia–Ukraine war on Armenia and analyses Armenian perceptions about shifting geopolitical circumstances in the South Caucasus and the Black Sea area. Anar Valiyev, Ahmad Alili and Fidan Namazova discuss the implications of the Russian invasion of Ukraine for Azerbaijan's balancing foreign policy and Baku's "silent diplomacy" in the Black Sea region and beyond. Finally, Bidzina Lebanidze and Salome Kandelaki unpack the Georgian views of the changing Black Sea security dynamics after the Russia–Ukraine war and discuss its implications for Georgia's foreign and domestic policy.

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Perceptions of the Black Sea Region Security Amid the Russian Invasion of Ukraine: View from Ukraine

Maksym Khylyko and Hanna Shelest (both Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism")

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Abstract

The article presents an analysis of Ukrainian strategic documents and the results of expert interviews and expert surveys regarding Ukrainian perceptions and visions of Black Sea security, and current challenges and opportunities for cooperation between Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine. Despite certain differences in policy priorities, Baku, Tbilisi, and Kyiv could contribute to strengthening security in the wider Black Sea region by enhancing mutual practical cooperation in the defence sector, resistance to hybrid threats, and joint energy projects. An increase in NATO presence in the Black Sea is considered necessary for strengthening regional security, as well as greater cooperation with the UK, the US, Turkey and Romania.

Introduction

Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, the

Black Sea region had not been listed among the priorities of the West, including NATO and the EU. This is clearly visible from the respective foreign and secu-

rity doctrines and concepts, including NATO Strategic Concepts (Shelest, 2020) and A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy. Similar to Ukraine, it has prioritised economic and social development, soft security issues over military cooperation and hard security threats. Even the littoral countries did not pay due attention to Black Sea security, except for Turkey, which, at the same time, was often hyper focused on its own national interests. Russia's militarisation of Crimea transformed the peninsula into a strategically important Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) hub that, along with strengthening the Russian Black Sea Fleet, dramatically shifted the balance of power in the Black Sea in favour of Moscow.

Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine in 2022 became a trigger reshaping the entire security architecture in the Black Sea region and the whole of Europe. However, Ukraine, in terms of security, appeared more prepared than other littoral states due to the previous years of the conflict. Nevertheless, it faced a necessity to reconsider priorities, partnerships, and future visions of the Black Sea region. The awareness of the significance of Ukraine and other Central and Eastern European actors in providing regional security considerably increased due to their proven willingness and ability to resist assertive Russian revisionism.

The article is part of the research project "Black Sea Cooperation for Stronger Security: Georgia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan", implemented in 2022 by three independent and nonpartisan think tanks: the Georgian Institute of Politics (Georgia), the Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism" (Ukraine), and the Caucasus Policy Analysis Centre (Azerbaijan). Within the project, qualitative analyses of the interviews with Ukrainian diplomats and experts as well as quantitative analyses of the expert survey were conducted to explore the perceptions of diplomatic and expert communities regarding changing security environments in the wider Black Sea region. The 45-minute semi-structured face-to-face interviews took place in May 2022 via the Zoom media platform, with five experts in the Black Sea region, including two acting Ambassadors, two foreign policy and security experts and a researcher from the academic field (Appendix 1). The expert survey took place on 16–31 May 2022 via Google Form (Appendix 2), involving 15 well-known independent and nonpartisan Ukrainian foreign policy and security experts professionally dealing with the Black Sea region issues. The authors have analysed the current to-level strategic documents of Ukraine regarding the Black Sea vision and regional security issues, including the National Security Strategy, Foreign Policy Strategy and Military Strategy of Ukraine. The main goal of the article is to study Ukraine's governmental and expert perceptions of the main challenges

for Black Sea security and possible ways of cooperation between Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan after the Russian invasion of February 2022.

An increase in NATO presence in the Black Sea is considered necessary for strengthening regional security by the majority of Ukrainian experts surveyed and interviewed within this study. Experts also believe that, despite certain differences in policy priorities, opportunities, and levels of interaction with other regional actors, Baku, Tbilisi, and Kyiv could contribute to strengthening security in the wider Black Sea region by enhancing mutual practical cooperation in the defence sector, resistance to hybrid threats, and joint energy projects. Along with multilateral and bilateral cooperation, especially with the US, the UK, Romania, and Turkey, Ukrainian experts also stress the need to develop Ukraine's own defence capabilities, including the naval forces and coastal defence infrastructure. This corresponds with the national strategic concepts.

Perceptions about Security Challenges and Opportunities in Ukraine

The Black Sea region has taken a firm place in the foreign policy and security priorities of Ukraine since 2014. If, before the annexation of Crimea, the region had primarily been seen through the prism of work in regional organisations, such as BSEC and GUAM, so was the perception of threats and challenges that laid within the soft security domain—social-political, environmental challenges, trafficking and organised crime, illegal migration and frozen conflicts at most. Such a choice was determined by the perception that no direct threats to Ukraine's national security in the Black Sea existed. Thus, opportunities were also seen predominantly in the spheres of trade and maritime cooperation, tourism development, blue economy perspectives, and transport facilitation.

Russian aggression of 2014 prioritised hard security challenges and threats and brought to the fore the necessity of security cooperation with like-minded countries (Romania and Turkey) and organisations (NATO). The *National Security Strategy of Ukraine* (2015) did not pay significant attention to the Black Sea region, just acknowledging the threats of occupied Crimea and its militarisation. In 2018, *Strategy of the Naval Forces of Ukraine 2035* was developed that envisaged both threats (including Russian Federation activities), partners (focus on NATO members states) and priorities for development (where two first stages were totally concentrated at the Black Sea area as defending a coast and the ability to project power to the exclusive economic zone waters).

The *National Security Strategy of Ukraine* (2020) already gave broader consideration to the region. Among others, it emphasised that Russia used the Black Sea-

Caspian region and occupied Crimea as a bridge to the Balkans, the Mediterranean and the MENA. Increased militarisation of occupied Crimea was named as a challenge, as well as a threat from the Russian Federation to the freedom of navigation. Additionally, it was stated that aiming to protect its national interests and regional security, Ukraine will develop relations with Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, and Moldova and practical cooperation with NATO member states to guarantee Black Sea security.

The *Military Strategy of Ukraine* (2021) names a number of threats at the regional level as those to pay attention to, including possible destabilisation in the Black Sea region, militarisation of Crimea, Russian occupation of parts of Georgia and Ukraine, obstruction of the freedom of navigation in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, etc.

In 2021, for the first time in the history of Ukraine, the *Foreign Policy Strategy of Ukraine* was adopted, where the Black Sea region and cooperation with individual states took a visible place. Ensuring security and development in the Black Sea-Baltic region is named among the top priorities of foreign policy. The Russian military projection in the Azov-Black Sea region is named among the main threats. To ensure the international security environment, among other foreign policy activities are named a maximum use of regional formats such as BSEC, consolidation of the Black Sea states positions to counter threats that Russia produces in the region, including militarisation of Crimea, development together with NATO and Georgia of the initiatives to increase Alliance presence in the Black Sea, and promotion of joint initiatives to guarantee freedom of navigation. NATO chapters of the Strategy also include a significant focus on Black Sea threats and opportunities for joint actions, including a necessity to develop the Alliance Black Sea Strategy. Strategic cooperation with Turkey, Georgia, and Romania is also considered an important element to ensure security in the Black Sea region. Very often, such cooperation is considered through the prism of the NATO perspective of Ukraine or the NATO membership of these neighbouring states.

In February 2022, Russia's full-scale invasion proved those estimations that have been done before regarding regional security. Blockade of the Black Sea ports, disturbance to commercial navigation, attacks from the sea, militarisation of Crimea, and inadequate presence of the NATO allies have continued to be inescapable parts of the situation in the Black Sea region.

The last few years' discourse among the political elites in Ukraine (Foreign Policy of Ukraine. Annual Scorecards, 2019, 2021, 2022), as well as expert interviews within this project, proved that the Russian aggression, occupation of Crimea, and militarisation of the Black

Sea region—hard security issues—were considered the main threats and challenges. At the same time, information and energy security challenges also occupied their significant place, with information and cyber moving to the hard security domain (Shelest, 2022). The ineffectiveness of the international security system was also mentioned among the main security challenges (Bodnar, 2022; Korsunsky, 2022).

The expert survey conducted within this project demonstrated that most Ukrainian respondents consider strengthening cooperation with NATO (over 80%) and future NATO membership (over 90%) crucial to strengthening security in the Black Sea region. Over 50% think that enhancing mutual military and defence cooperation and joint energy projects between Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan can strengthen regional security (Figure 7 on p. 11; Figure 9 on p. 12). In the same vein are the answers to the questions on what balance of military power in the Black Sea could best contribute to stability and security in the region, with 80% of the experts focusing on NATO dominance (Figure 3 on p. 10). It should be considered that the survey was conducted a few months into the war when the Ukrainian expert community and public opinion became less divisive regarding possible NATO membership and neutrality options insisted on by the Russian Federation.

The role of individual states is defined according to their support for Ukraine and ability to influence the situation in a victory direction. Thus, respondents named the Baltic states, the United Kingdom, Poland, and the United States (in descending order) as having an effective role in the Russia-Ukraine War and containment of Russia's assertive regional policies (Figure 1 on p. 9). The UK, the US, and NATO have a strong potential to strengthen security in the wider Black Sea region. Such views correspond to the answers of the experts' interviews conducted within the project (Figure 2 on p. 10).

Noticeably, the Ukrainian experts did not see a serious potential of the regional states, with NATO member states Turkey and Romania receiving the highest scores as actors that can contribute. However, there is a belief in Ukraine itself as the country that can influence Black Sea security; meaning, in experts' opinion, that not only can Ukraine defend itself but also positively influence future security in the Black Sea. The Turkish role is disputable; respondents to the expert interviews mentioned Turkey as an ally of Ukraine in the current circumstances but also as a country with an ambivalent position on processes in the Black Sea region that tries to balance Russia and Ukraine and declines to take sides. Additionally, according to the interviews, Ukrainian experts do not see any reasonable opportunities for joint reactions of Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Georgia (as three countries together) in

response to the challenges posed to the region by Russian aggression.

Future of Black Sea Security and a New Security Order in Wider Europe after Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

Russia's invasion of Ukraine not only reshaped the security situation in the wider Black Sea region but also dramatically changed the world powers' perception of the region, its importance for global security and the roles of key regional players. Previously, the Black Sea was "rarely considered among the world's most important strategic spaces ... although an astounding ten wars have taken place on or near the Black Sea littoral since the end of the Cold War, more than any other maritime space in the world" (Hess, 2022). Key EU and European NATO member state governments "have shown limited interest in Black Sea security," lacked a coherent Western strategy on the region and even had no certainty "whether the Black Sea region is an integral part of Europe" (Flanagan, S.J. *et al.*, 2020: 149). However, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has shifted the Black Sea region from the periphery to the centre of the Euro-Atlantic security processes, as Dr. Yevgeniya Gaber (2022) points out in her interview within our study. The war also indicated that the Black Sea region should be considered not separately but as a part of the whole European security system, says Amb. Vasyl Bodnar (2022).

The return of large-scale war to Europe forced many countries to soberly reevaluate their security and defence sectors and become more aware of their vulnerability. The future geopolitical landscape will be shaped by a vision of Russia as a threat that should be contained, as Dr. Volodymyr Dubovyk (2022) notices. In this regard, the value of collective defence within NATO will become more evident for European countries, which will tend to be more engaged in Alliance activities.

Another important change will be the rise of the role of the Central and Eastern European actors in the future security architecture of the region, first of Ukraine, Poland, Baltic states, and Slovakia, which proved their ability and willingness to actively stand against the Russian threat, while the "old Europe" showed the lack of proactiveness in the security realm, especially during the early stages of war (Gaber, 2022). Given the combat experience of its army, Ukraine can become one of the guarantors of security in the Black Sea region according to Ukrainian diplomats and experts (Dubovyk, 2022; Korsunsky, 2022; Ryzhenko, 2022), who have emphasized that "today Ukraine is defending NATO" (Bodnar, 2022) and that Ukraine has proved to be not a recipient but a provider of regional security (Gaber, 2022).

In the context of restoring security in the Black Sea region, particular attention should be given to the issue

of Crimea, which is "a key point for Russian domination" in the region (Lytyvnenko, 2020). The Crimean Peninsula extends deep into the Black Sea, making it "a strategic pivot point within the region", and Russia's military deployments on it "have transformed Crimea into the hub of an Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) bubble that spans across much of the Black Sea and its coastlines" (Brzezinski, 2021). Therefore, any stable pattern of security order in the Black Sea region is impossible without restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity.

The Ukrainian diplomats interviewed and experts surveyed within this study believe that all the previous formats of cooperation in the Black Sea region, such as Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Black Sea Harmony, BLACKSEAFOR and others, proved ineffective due to Russia's destructive role. Therefore, trying to restore these formats or invent new ones with Russian participation would be useless. Ukrainian experts believe that no common security mechanism in the Black Sea could be effective as long as the Russian navy controls the sea (Dubovyk, 2022) and until Russia becomes "a normal, an equal partner" (Korsunsky, 2022). Instead, they consider that NATO should play a key role in restoring regional security.

Sixty-seven percent of Ukrainian experts surveyed also consider that further destructive actions by Russia in the Black Sea region can be prevented by admitting to NATO those countries that seek membership. Another 27% of experts believe it is necessary to focus mainly on strengthening the capabilities of the current NATO members in the region—Turkey, Romania, and Bulgaria. None of the experts sees a way out of accepting the Russia-imposed status quo or expanding cooperation with Moscow (Figure 5 on p. 11).

Considering the possible role of the nonregional players, almost all Ukrainian diplomats and experts named the US and the UK as important contributors to security in the Black Sea. For China and India, experts do not have much hope for their participation in strengthening security in the Black Sea. Despite China's interest in stability in the region as a part of its Belt and Road route, the maximum that Ukraine can expect from Beijing is neutrality, formal support for Ukrainian territorial integrity and "not helping Russia in its invasion" (Gaber, 2022).

Speaking about the role of the UN, Ukrainian diplomats note that it "should be transformed into a more effective organisation with a more adequate system of adapting decisions, bringing peace and preventing wars" (Bodnar, 2022). Amb. Korsunsky (2022) considers that the United Nations should adopt a special Code to envisage the measures of international response to any unjust aggression, including a package of sanctions, so that every actor clearly under-

stands what the consequences of the possible aggression would be.

Eighty percent of Ukrainian experts surveyed believe that the Montreux Convention (primarily clauses regarding granting access to the Black Sea of non-Black Sea states' navy ships) currently works more in the interests of only Turkey, and another 20% consider it to work in Russia's interests by restricting access to NATO ships, while none of the experts believes the convention equally meets the security interests of NATO or all interested parties (Figure 4 on p. 10). This position is in line with the views of Western diplomats and experts who also consider that under the guise of the Montreux convention, Turkey blocks NATO Black Sea initiatives aiming "to minimise Allied presence in its backyard" (Townsend, 2021).

Considering the options for Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine to contribute to strengthening security in the wider Black Sea region, the vast majority (86.7%) of Ukrainian experts believe that all three countries should primarily focus on strengthening their cooperation with NATO. Significantly fewer experts (53.3%) put hopes on enhancing the military and defence cooperation of these three countries with each other and on elaborating their joint energy projects of regional importance. A total of 46.7% of Ukrainian experts surveyed also named cooperation of the three countries in resistance to hybrid threats a possible option (Figure 7 on p. 11).

Experts favouring Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine's relations with NATO over joint security and defence cooperation among these three countries are explained by two major factors. The first is the unsuccessful experience of their participation along with Moldova in the GUAM—Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development, which failed to become a real catalyst for closer cooperation, despite numerous attempts to fill it with real substance and activity. The second factor is differences in policy priorities, opportunities and level of interaction of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine with other regional actors, including Russia and Turkey. "I do not see the solid ground for common activities ... All three countries have their way of defending themselves and establishing cooperation mechanisms for their defence," says Amb. Bodnar (2002). Unlike Ukraine, which after a full-scale Russian invasion, has no other choice than to fight for its own existence, the current level of Russia's threats to Azerbaijan and Georgia leaves them more options (Dubovyk, 2022). Azerbaijan builds an alliance with Turkey, and Georgia tries to balance civil society's support for Ukraine and the government's attempt to preserve economic cooperation with Russia (Bodnar, 2022).

Given the existing differences, experts believe it would be more effective to focus on deepening practi-

cal cooperation in various fields between Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine than to establish any new institutional format for interaction (Gaber, 2022).

Sixty-seven percent of Ukrainian experts surveyed consider joining NATO the best option to ensure Ukraine's security from the negative consequences of Russia's assertiveness in the region. The other 20% prefer to build new military alliances, and only 6% propose relying on possible bilateral alliances with the US, the UK, Turkey and/or Poland (Figure 6 on p. 11).

When speaking about NATO, diplomats and experts emphasise the mutual benefit of Ukraine's possible membership. In repelling Russia's full-scale invasion, Ukraine "proved to be a major player and security contributor" in the region (Gaber, 2022). Therefore, not only does Ukraine need NATO for its security, but "NATO also needs us for their security because we have the practical experience in fighting Russians" (Bodnar, 2022).

Given that accession to NATO will take time, Ukrainian diplomats and experts assume that Kyiv may also consider establishing some regional security infrastructure with neighbouring countries, including Poland, Romania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, the Baltic states, and perhaps Turkey, as well as security mechanisms together with the US and the UK—not as an alternative to NATO membership but as a complement on the path to the Alliance (Korsunsky, 2022; Gaber, 2022). At the same time, Volodymyr Dubovyk (2022) warns that security mechanisms of such structures must be clearly articulated; otherwise, they might repeat the fate of the Budapest Memorandum.

Therefore, Ukraine and its NATO partners will have to build their strategy to strengthen security in the Black Sea, taking into account the constraints of the Montreux Convention, that is, without the possibility of a permanent presence of non-Black Sea NATO members' navy. The way out is strengthening cooperation between Black Sea NATO members and their partners in the region. In this regard, Ukrainian experts consider promising the development of cooperation between Kyiv, Ankara, and Bucharest and strengthening their navies and coastal infrastructure. At the same time, experts noticed that on the issue of enhancing NATO's military presence in the Black Sea, Romania's position "resonated much better with Russia-alert Ukraine or Georgia" rather than with such Allies as Bulgaria or Turkey (Vorotnyuk, 2020).

Along with international cooperation, Ukrainian experts also stress the necessity to develop Ukraine's own defence capabilities: "Secure environment must be based, first of all, on our own Ukrainian military force: modern, well-equipped and well-trained," notices Amb. Sergiy Korsunsky (2022). In this context, Ukraine's candidacy for EU membership is of vital importance, as the postwar restoration of the economy will need

EU assistance, and the level of economic development will directly affect Ukraine's capabilities to invest in security and defence. Volodymyr Dubovyk (2022) also notices that special attention should be given to preserving democracy under the conditions of the potential significant militarisation of the country.

Conclusions

Ukraine's view over the Black Sea region and security challenges in this area have not changed dramatically after February 2022, as the previous eight years of war prepared it both at the strategic and operational levels. The National Security Strategy, Military and Foreign Policy Strategies adopted recently clearly identify threats, where the Russian Federation actions are prime, as well as partners with the Black Sea states—Romania and Turkey, in addition to NATO, to deal with security challenges. At the same time, two other strategic partners, Georgia and Azerbaijan, have strong places in the strategies but have fewer options for the increased security dialogue.

Expert interviews and surveys demonstrated a transformational shift in perceptions of who can be the main partners influencing Black Sea security, with the US and the UK taking primary roles. NATO membership of Ukraine and other littoral states is also considered an important factor in future security architecture. Nevertheless, considering the different foreign and domestic policy priorities and difficulties, most Ukrainian experts do not see a wide perspective of trilateral Azerbaijan–Georgian–Ukraine relations. However, there are still spheres, including issues of energy security and territorial integrity of the states, that unite them.

Considering the above, there are certain actions that need to be pursued as well as political choices to be made both by Ukraine and its international partners. As maritime security is seen as of primary importance, Ukraine needs to improve its coastal defence infrastructure and continue the development of the naval forces in close cooperation with NATO and EU partners. Ensuring freedom of navigation, coastal defence, and prevention of port blockades are top priorities. Such military infrastructure should, on the one hand, be able to serve as a component of NATO collective security and, on the other hand, ensure sufficient capabilities to provide Ukraine's basic security needs independently. Ukraine should enhance maritime cooperation with Turkey and Romania to counter the existing challenges in the maritime domain, including Black Sea patrolling, monitoring and reconnaissance, and demining, ensuring the safety of navigation and critical infrastructure protection. Moreover, as an EU candidate state,

Ukraine should consider participation in EU initiatives in the field of security and defence, as well as EU military-technical cooperation, which indirectly will have an impact on its capabilities in the region.

The security of the Black Sea region is one of the key factors defining European and Euroatlantic security; thus, more attention should be given by international actors, including NATO and the EU. Restoring the territorial integrity of Ukraine and establishing a necessary balance of powers in the Black Sea that would prevent the existence of exclusive A2/AD zones, guaranteeing the security of all littoral states, and restoring the freedom of navigation and maritime trade may have an impact on improved economic cooperation.

Among the factors limiting the effectiveness of military and economic cooperation of the Black Sea countries interested in the security and stability of the region is their different status in interaction with NATO and the EU. Successful addressing of the Black Sea security issues requires a significant and closely coordinated build-up of the integrated coastal defence infrastructure and naval and other forces interactions of Romania and Ukraine in partnership with Bulgaria and Georgia, which could be done much more effectively if Ukraine and Georgia join NATO and the EU. Azerbaijan and Moldova should be invited to such cooperation where it is possible and mutually beneficial. Additionally, repairing relations between the US and Turkey is of great importance for Black Sea security, and closer cooperation between the EU and Turkey is much needed. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine should reconsider the possibility of joint actions and initiatives within the UN, OSCE and Council of Europe in questions of restoring the territorial integrity of the states and militarisation of the Black Sea region to accumulate the efforts.

In parallel with their partnership with other countries and international organisations in security, economic and other realms—Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine should also focus on practical mutually beneficial cooperation with each other in multilateral or bilateral formats where their interests coincide. In particular, this applies to countering hybrid threats and developing energy projects and trade. As all three countries have a high level of cooperation with Turkey, it would be logical to involve Ankara in such a partnership where possible and beneficial. At the same time, three countries should review and reconsider cooperation within the GUAM format to be adequate to the EU candidate status of Ukraine and Moldova, as well as to search for new mechanisms of cooperation that may not be influenced by war.

See p. 8–12 for information about the authors, references, and appendices.

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Appendix 1: List of the Diplomats and Experts Interviewed on 20–31 May 2022 within the Research Project “Black Sea Cooperation for Stronger Security: Georgia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan”

- 1. Amb. Vasyl Bodnar, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to the Republic of Turkey.
- 2. Amb., Dr., Sergiy Korsunsky, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to Japan, previously Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to Turkey.
- 3. Capt. (ret.) Andriy Ryzhenko, Captain (Navy, retired), expert of the Centre for Defence Strategies think tank, previously Deputy Chief of Staff of the Ukrainian Naval Forces.
- 4. Dr. Yevgeniya Gaber, Senior Fellow at the Centre in Modern Turkish Studies of the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University, previously Foreign Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister of Ukraine.
- 5. Dr. Volodymyr Dubovyk, Director of the Center for International Studies at Odesa Mechnikov National University, Fulbright Scholar.

Appendix 2: Results of the Expert Survey (N=15)

Figure 1: How Would you Assess the Role of the Following Actors in the Russia–Ukraine War and in Containment of Russia’s Assertive Regional Policies? (Standardised on a Scale of 0–100 [Very Effective])

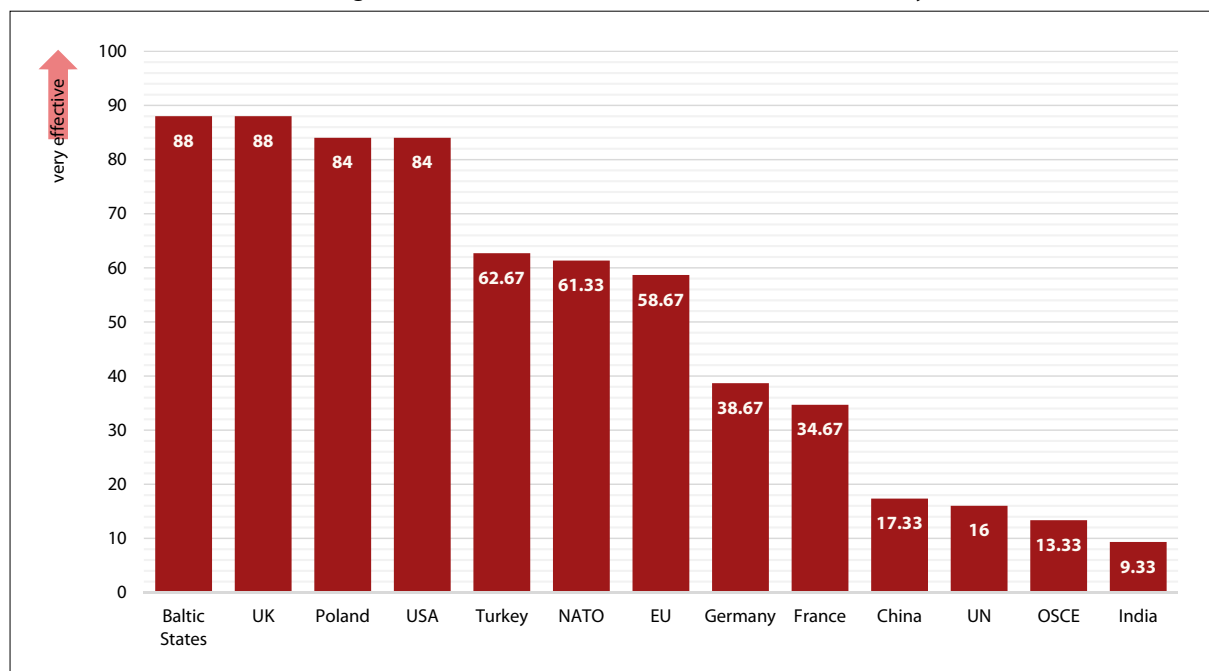


Figure 2: How Would You Assess the Possible Positive Role of the Following Actors in Strengthening Security in the Wider Black Sea Region? (Standardised on a Scale of 0–100 [Very Effective]; 3SI = Three Seas Initiative)

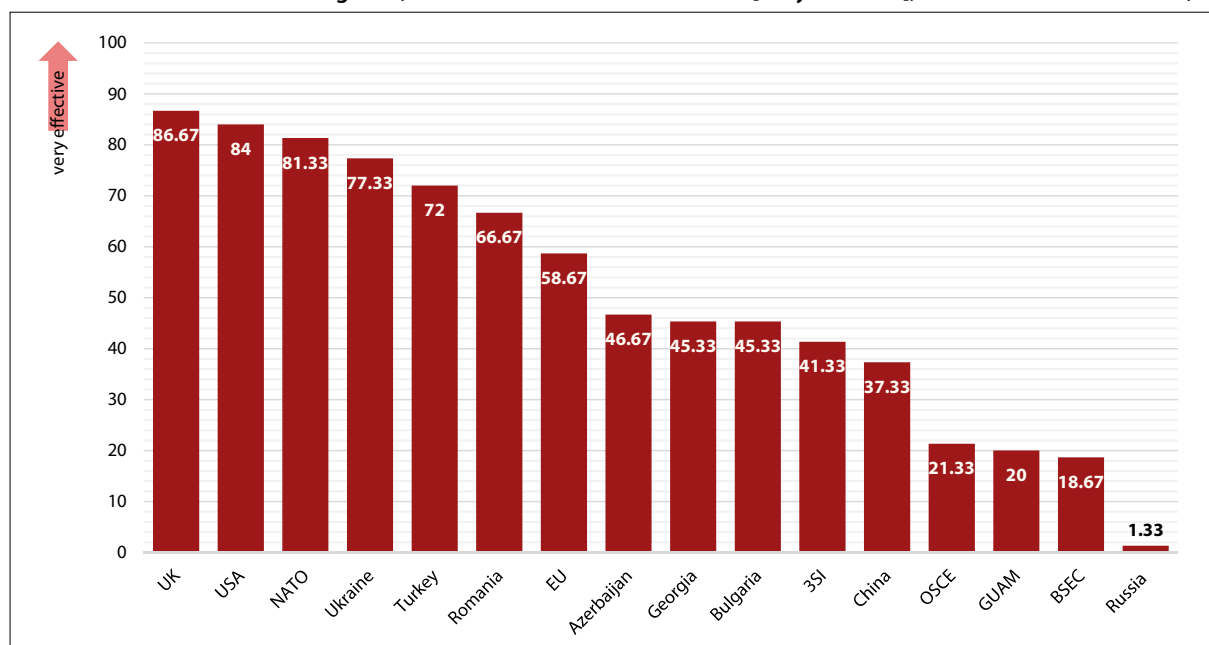


Figure 3: What Balance of Military Power in the Black Sea Could Best Contribute to Stability and Security in the Region?

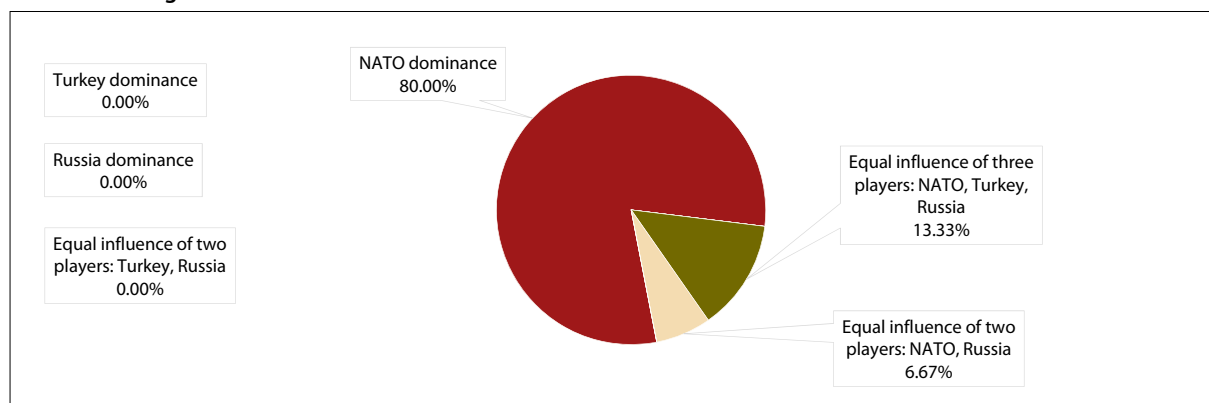


Figure 4: How Does the Montreux Convention Affect the Security of the Black Sea Region Nowadays?

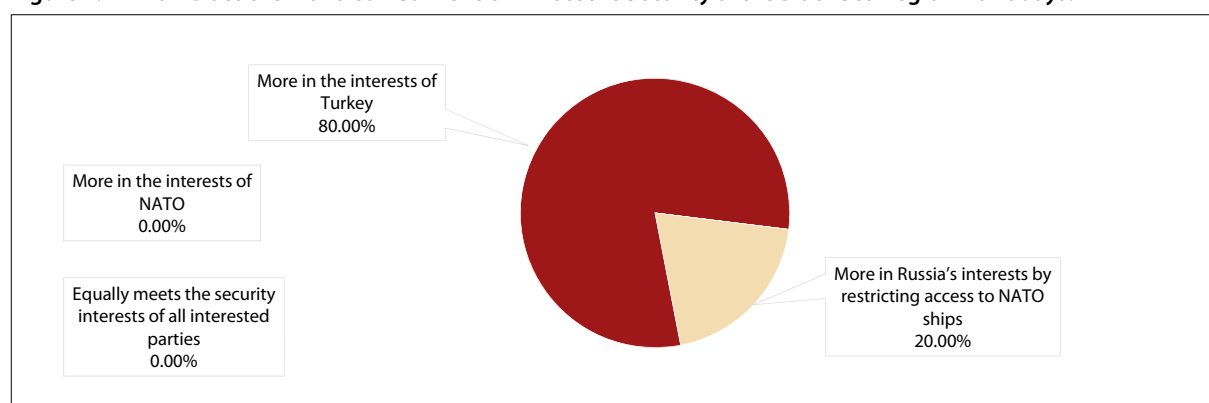


Figure 5: How Can NATO Allies Prevent Further Destructive Actions by Russia that are Destroying Security in the Black Sea Region?

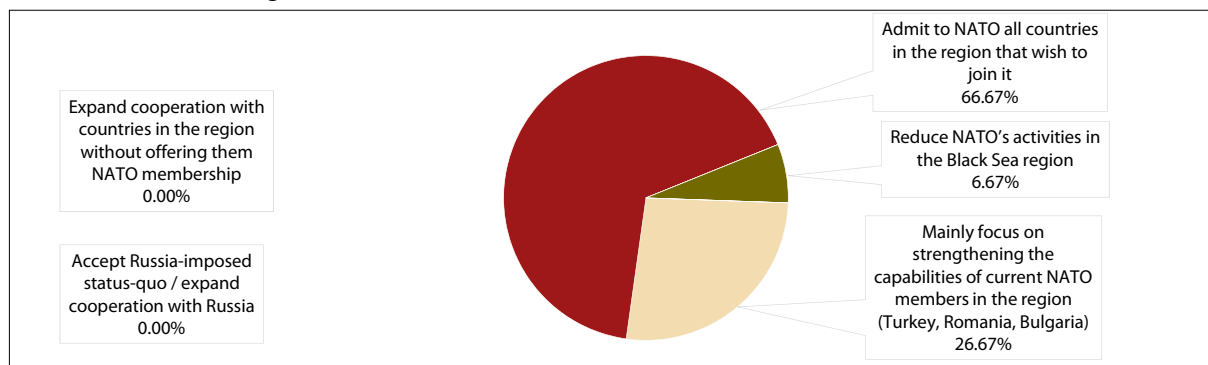


Figure 6: In Your Opinion, What Is the Best Policy Option for Your Country to Insulate and Protect Itself from the Negative Consequences of Russian Assertiveness in the Eastern Partnership Region?

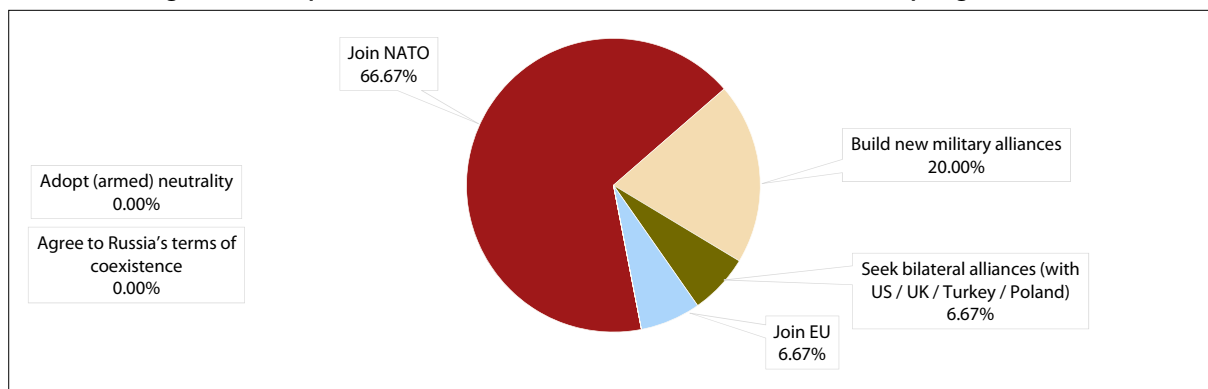


Figure 7: What Could Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine Contribute to Strengthening Security in the Wider Black Sea region? (Respondents Could Choose More Than One Option; Results Are Represented in %)

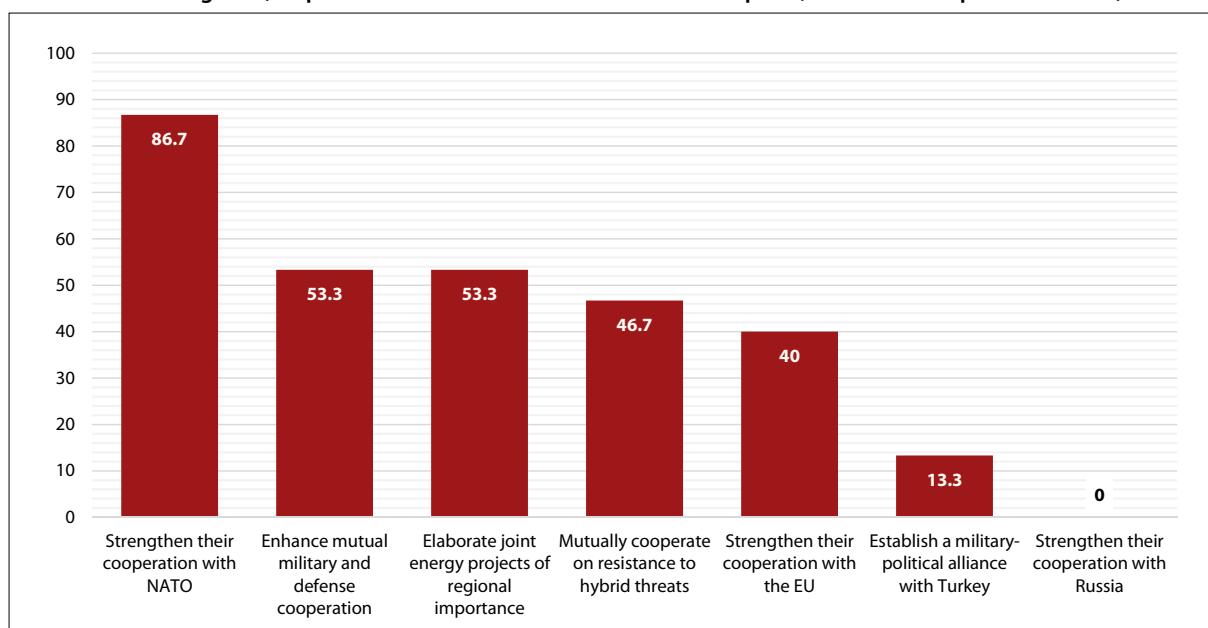
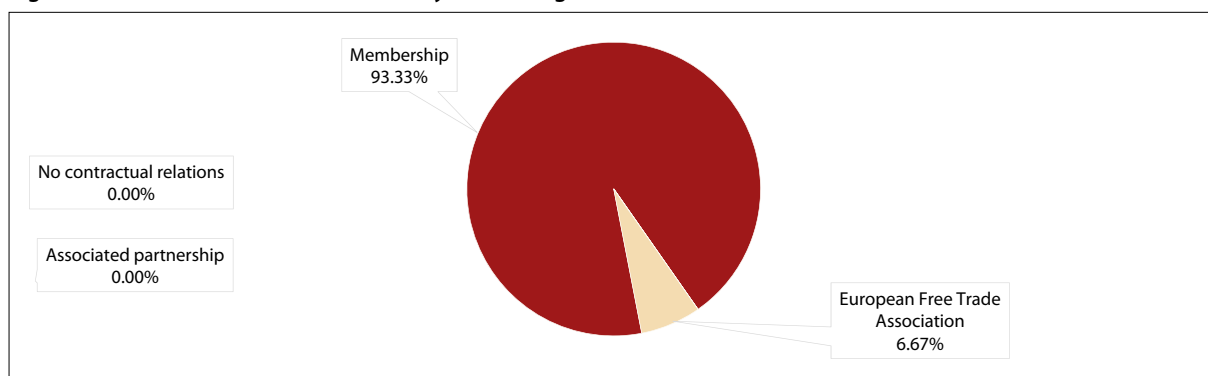
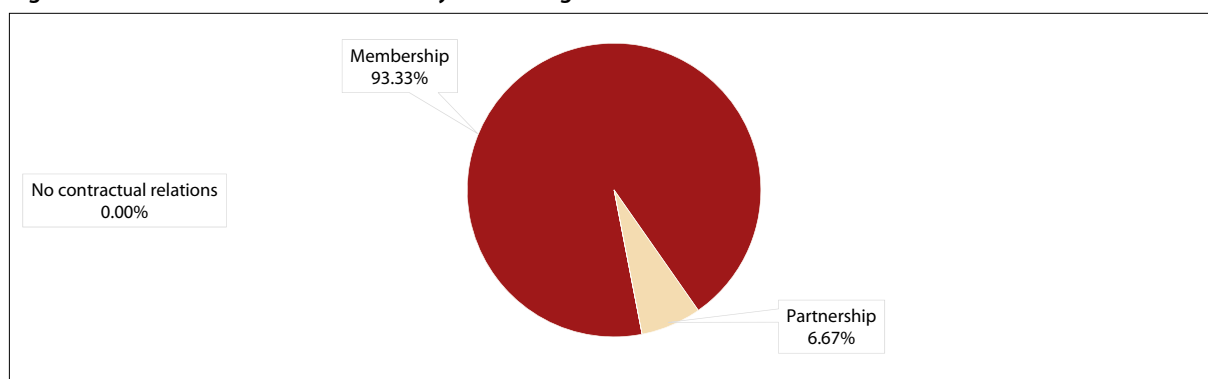


Figure 8: How Do You See Your Country's Final Stage of Relations with the EU?**Figure 9: How Do You See Your Country's Final Stage of Relations with NATO?**

Black Sea Geopolitics after the Russia–Ukraine war: The View from Armenia

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Abstract

This article reviews the impact of the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the changing regional security situation on Armenia with a reference to Armenia's own security predicament, which has been persistent since the disastrous 44-day war in 2020. In that context, this article explores the perceptions of Armenia's political elite and experts on the regional situation based on public statements and published articles and interviews.

Introduction

For landlocked Armenia, access to the Black Sea via Georgian ports has been vital, as they provide ferry connections to Bulgarian and Romanian ports and, before the large-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February,

ports in Ukraine. Furthermore, a ferry link from Poti to Russia's Port Kavkaz has been in use periodically, supplementing and sometimes substituting overland automobile cargo traffic between Armenia and Russia. As the recent rounds of Armenian–Turkish consultations