İSTANBUL AREL UNIVERSITY | UNIVERSITY OF RUSE "ANGEL KANCHEV" | UNIVERSITATEA DE FILOSOFIE ŞI ŞTIINŢE SOCIAL-POLITICE | FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCES INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT | AREL USAM

International Security Congress-2024

CHANGING STRATEGIC SECURITY LANDSCAPE IN THE BLACK SEA AND THE BALKANS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

📅 **30-31 MAY 2024**
Face to Face

📍 İstanbul Arel University Kemal Gözükara Campus

PROCEEDINGS

BOOK of PROGRAMME & ABSTRACTS

For Congress Webpage

PROCEEDINGS
CHANGING STRATEGIC SECURITY LANDSCAPE IN THE BLACK SEA
AND THE BALKANS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES
(30-31 MAY 2024)
Book of Programme & Abstracts

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AIM AND SCOPE

In the last few years, radical changes have occurred in the strategic security environment of the Black Sea region and the Balkans. Russia's interventions in the region and invasion of Ukraine not only reshaped the security situation in the Black Sea region but also increased concerns in the Balkans. These developments have changed these regions' importance and key regional players' roles for European and global security. While the Black Sea was rarely considered among the world's most important strategic spaces, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has shifted the Black Sea region from the periphery to the center of the Euro-Atlantic security processes. The war also indicated that the Black Sea region should be considered not separately but as closely connected to the Balkans and as a part of the whole European security system.

As the current situation shows, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has negatively affected the already fragile stability in the Western Balkans. The region faces new troubles. Bosnia and Herzegovina is confronted with calls for secession in the autonomous Serb-dominated entity, Republika Srpska. There exist grievances of the Croat population living in the Federation as well. Meanwhile, efforts to resolve Serbia-Kosovo dispute have come to a standstill, tensions brew anew between the two sides which make minority communities on both sides of the border vulnerable to a possible renewed conflict. Moreover, regional instability is also deteriorating as a result of the increasing disagreements between Türkiye and Greece in the Aegean and in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Against this backdrop, İstanbul Arel University has held a face-to-face international congress on 30-31 May 2024. The Congress's main theme is "Changing Strategic Security Landscape in the Black Sea and the Balkans: Challenges and Opportunities". The Congress aims to analyze the current challenges, risks, threats, and opportunities in the Black Sea region and the Balkans, explore future dynamics, and evaluate possible scenarios. The two-day congress is planned to examine the emerging strategic security landscape in the Black Sea region and the Balkans, explore the military and non-military threat perceptions of the states and peoples, discuss policies of global and regional actors and their roles in providing security, and assess the role of international/regional institutions to meet new challenges and threats.

DAY 1: 1st Session
30 May 2024
10:00 am – 12:30 pm (İstanbul Time)

Opening Session – Introduction (10:00 am-10:30 am - İstanbul Time)
Opening Speech by Professor Dr. A. Ercan Gegez, Rector of İstanbul Arel University
Welcome Speech by Professor Dr Harun Demirkaya, Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences
Moderator: Assoc. Prof. Dr Ali Bilgin Varlık
Session-I: Emerging Strategic Security Landscape in the Black Sea Region and the Balkans

- Impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on regional stability

- Energy crisis in Europe and Refugees

- Future scenarios

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I	2.	Yaşar Sarı	Impact of the War in Ukraine on the Security of the Black Sea: A Comparative Analysis of International Relations Theories
I	3.	Gökhan Ak	Applicability of the Concept of the "Responsibility to Protect" 'From What': The Case of Russian War on Ukraine
I	4.	Shahindah Hesam & Ahmad Tanveer	Redefining Global Security: Towards a New World Order - For Peaceful and Sustainable Security in the Balkans and Black Sea
I	5.	Iulian Chifu	Russian War of Aggression and Perspectives of the Wider Black Sea Region: Future Studies and Alternative Scenarios
I	6.	Zoltán György Bács	Some Aspects of the On-Going Conflicts in the Balkan and Black Sea Region

Lunch Break (12:30 pm -13:45 pm İstanbul Time)

DAY 1: 2nd Session
30 May 2024
13:45 pm – 16:00 pm (İstanbul Time)

Moderator: Prof. Dr Aşkın İnci Sökmen Alaca

Session-II: Military Threat Perceptions of the States in the Black Sea Region and the Balkans

- Spread of war

- Possible regional points of conflict: (The future of B-H, Kosovo dispute, Albanian-Macedonian

relations in Northern Macedonia.)

- Terrorism

- Nuclear threats, chemicals, bioweapons

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Moderator: Asst. Prof. Dr Selma Şekercioğlu Bozacıoğlu

Session-III: Non-Military Threats Perceptions

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- Criminal threats

- Mass migration, energy insecurity, food shortages, and environmental pollution.

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III	18.	Rahmat Hajimineh & Ebrahim Rezaei Rad	The Consequences of the Trans-Caspian Pipeline on the Energy Security of Iran and Türkiye

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31 May 2024
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Moderator: Assoc. Prof. Dr Fatma Aslı Kelkitli

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31 May 2024
14:15 pm – 16:15 pm (İstanbul Time)

Moderator: Prof. Dr C. Uğur Özgöker

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DAY 1: 1st Session
30 May 2024
10:30 am – 12:30 pm (İstanbul Time)

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Moderator: Assoc. Prof. Dr Ali Bilgin Varlık

Session-I: Emerging Strategic Security Landscape in the Black Sea Region and the Balkans

- **Impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on regional stability**
- **Energy crisis in Europe and Refugees**
- **Future scenarios**

Navigating Strategic Security Landscape in the Black Sea: A Multi-Theoretical Analysis and Prospective Scenarios

Assad Mehmood Khan[1]

Abstract

Water bodies have historically served as channels for economic exchange and geopolitical maneuvering among nations. Among these, the Black Sea stands out for its strategic significance, geographical proximity to vital resources, and major markets. As global powers vie for influence, understanding the dynamics of this region becomes crucial. This study seeks to address the overarching question: How do the competing interests of global powers shape the geopolitical landscape of the Black Sea region? To delve into this inquiry, a multifaceted research methodology is employed. Drawing from Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism, and Game Theory, this research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the forces at play. Data analysis utilizes various Game Theory models, including Stag Hunt and Prisoners' Dilemma, to illuminate the strategies employed by different actors in the region. By applying Nash Equilibrium and Dominant Strategy analysis, this study forecasts potential future scenarios, shedding light on the trajectories of the Black Sea's geopolitical landscape. Findings suggest a complex interplay of interests, with revisionist powers such as Russia and emerging powers like China asserting their influence. Western powers, led by the United States, seek to maintain a balance of power in the region. Smaller states around the Black Sea face dilemmas in navigating between these competing forces, highlighting the precarious nature of their geopolitical position. The implications of these findings are profound as the Black Sea region is poised to remain a focal point of global geopolitical competition, with significant ramifications for regional stability and international relations. Understanding the dynamics of this region is essential for policymakers and analysts alike in shaping future strategies and mitigating potential conflicts. Thus, this study underscores the importance of considering diverse theoretical perspectives and employing rigorous analytical frameworks to understand the complexities of the Black Sea region's geopolitics. By elucidating the competing interests and potential trajectories, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics shaping the future of this critical geopolitical theater.

Keywords: Black Sea, geopolitics, prospective scenarios, strategic security landscape

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Impact of the War in Ukraine on the Security of the Black Sea:
A Comparative Analysis of International Relations Theories

Yaşar Sarı[1]

Abstract

Understanding security dynamics in international relations is crucial for deciphering state behavior and fostering cooperation. The Black Sea, with its strategic location and intricate security challenges, presents an intriguing case study to evaluate major theoretical frameworks—realism, liberalism, and constructivism. This paper aims to assess how these theories elucidate security dilemmas in the region, analyze their theoretical relevance, and scrutinize state-specific security policies. Through a comparative analysis of primary and secondary sources, alongside case studies such as the War in Ukraine and NATO activities, this study seeks to offer insights into the complex security landscape of the Black Sea. While recognizing the limitations of individual theories, this research advocates for a combined approach to better understand the multifaceted nature of security dynamics in this critical region.

This study adopts a comparative analytical approach, drawing on primary and secondary sources to assess security issues in the Black Sea region through the lens of realism, liberalism, and constructivism. Case studies of specific events, such as the War in Ukraine, NATO expansion, and energy security, will be analyzed to illustrate the applicability of each theoretical framework. Qualitative data analysis techniques will also be employed to identify patterns and trends in state-specific security policies.

The findings of this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of security challenges in the Black Sea region and the theoretical frameworks used to analyze them. By examining power dynamics, security regimes, perceptions, and identities of Black Sea states, this research aims to shed light on their security dilemmas within the regional and international context. The comparative analysis of security issues will highlight the strengths and limitations of each theoretical perspective, offering insights into the complex interplay of factors shaping security dynamics in the region.

In conclusion, this paper emphasizes the importance of testing major schools of international relations on security issues in the Black Sea region. By evaluating the applicability of realism, liberalism, and constructivism to the region's security challenges, this study seeks to advance our understanding of the multifaceted nature of security dynamics in the Black Sea.
Keywords: Black Sea, regional security, War in Ukraine, NATO, IR theories, securitization, regional dynamics

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Applicability of the Concept of the "Responsibility to Protect" 'From What': The Case of Russian War on Ukraine

Gökhan Ak[1]

Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to examine the legal and military-political applicability of the concept of "responsibility to protect" within the context of the Russian attacks on Ukraine. International relations and politics have come a long way in the last 10 years. The fact that global powers remain silent to each other when their own interests conflict as well as overlap has begun to question both the existence of international organizations and the virtues of the international community. Worse still, all these reckless military interventions, even leading to war, have painfully revealed the invalidity of the principles of international law and the void of sanction power. Russia has reduced the war it launched against the Ukrainian state in February 2022 to two main reasons: (1) To stop the actions of Ukraine, which is committing crimes against humanity, amounting to so-called genocide, against the Russian minority living in this country, especially the people of Donbas, (2) To protect the Russian minority from Ukraine's years of alleged oppression, humiliation, various human rights violations and even genocide. The principle of responsibility to protect was adopted by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in 2001. According to the responsibility to protect, any state is primarily responsible for protecting its own people or the people of another country from crimes against humanity, war crimes, ethnic cleansing. If a state cannot or does not want to fulfil this responsibility, the international community can take measures, including the use of 'collective force', through the United Nations Security Council. Responsibilities for prevention, reaction, reconstruction and post-crisis justice are also included in the responsibility to protect. However, the principle of responsibility to protect is thought to be no different from humanitarian intervention in reality, other than rhetoric. Because it is thought that the principles of the responsibility to protect and the sovereign equality of all states regulated in Article 2/1 of the United Nations Charter and the principles of non-interference regulated in Article 2/7 are ignored and violated. Therefore, two possible findings of this research are as follows: (1) Neither the concept of the responsibility to protect nor the concept of humanitarian intervention is legitimate and compatible with international law; (2) These two concepts seem to be the most pragmatic examples of the dilution, perforation and rendering dysfunctional of international law in the context of national interests. This study mainly adopts the qualitative method of research, and hence will exploit document analysis, content analysis and hermeneutic as scientific research methods.

Keywords: Russia, Ukraine, war, concept of the responsibility to protect

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Redefining Global Security: Towards a New World Order-For Peaceful and Sustainable Security in the Balkans and Black Sea

Shahindah Hesam[1] & Ahmad Tanveer[2]

Abstract

The evolving dynamics of the global security landscape in the 21st century have accentuated the need for a paradigm shift towards a new world order that accurately reflects contemporary realities. This paper explores the widening schism between the Global North and Global South, highlighting the diminishing prospects for bridging this gap and the declining relevance of established institutions like the United Nations, perceived to be ensnared in colonial ideologies propagated by the West.

The recent conflict in Gaza serves as a stark reminder of the West's faltering moral compass, necessitating the establishment of an alternative global order anchored around emerging powers such as BRICS. Key to this recalibration is the resolution of longstanding conflicts by regional powers like India, China, Türkiye and Pakistan, while Africa contends with enduring legacies of neocolonialism.

Strategically positioned capitals in Türkiye and Middle Eastern countries emerge as potential hubs for alternative models of cosmopolitanism, challenging the traditional dominance of Western metropolises. China's technological advancement plays a pivotal role in facilitating the technological boom essential for this new global order.

However, achieving this vision requires a fundamental recalibration of economic relations with the West, transitioning towards a more equitable framework founded on reciprocal benefits and reduced geopolitical dependencies. The pervasive dominance of Northern Big Tech conglomerates stifles innovation in the Global South, necessitating concerted efforts to dismantle their hegemony and nurture an environment conducive to indigenous innovation.

In the realm of military affairs, the proliferation of nuclear weapons among emerging powers reshapes traditional power dynamics, constraining the interventionist capabilities of the West. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine, compounded by NATO involvement, underscores the Global North's reluctance to address Russia's concerns and engage in constructive dialogue, necessitating proactive efforts to navigate the intricate geopolitical landscape of the Black Sea and the Balkans region. Decoupling from the hegemonic influence of the Global North is imperative for the Global South to realize its full potential and mitigate artificially induced conflicts aimed at perpetuating Northern control. The establishment of new institutions and the promotion of enhanced interaction among Global South countries can cultivate greater trust and solidarity, fortifying collective resilience against external pressures.

This paper advocates for a more inclusive and equitable global order, emphasizing the critical importance of bold and collaborative initiatives to address the multifaceted challenges of the modern world. By focusing on the Black Sea and Balkans region, it underscores the potential for regional cooperation to unlock latent opportunities and foster sustainable development.
Keywords: Global security dynamics, new world order, geopolitical dependencies, regional cooperation

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Russian War of Aggression and Perspectives of the Wider Black Sea Region: Future Studies and Alternative Scenarios

Iulian Chifu[1]

Abstract

Russia's full scale, high intensity, long term war of aggression in Ukraine has an important impact on the Wider Black Sea Region. The impact and the trends of evolution have been assessed in time in numerous prospective study framework several times in the last years, specifically after the annexation of Crimea and the Russian aggression in the Eastern regions of Ukraine in 2014. But since at this level the only major change was that of the borders of a sovereign state, by force, in Europe, the afterwards evolutions have altered even more the level of security in the region.

So that the impact of the war in 2022 and the evolutions during 2023-2024 have introduced new characteristics in the dramatically changed security landscape by bringing back the war as an instrument of foreign policy in the Wider Black Sea Region, altering the framework of the rules-based order and introducing a new level of stress for the citizens of the littoral countries. In that framework, the methodology of prospective studies introduced a new level of hike in the security expectations and a rise in the risk of a large scale, high intensity, long term war extended in the very region, against the states forming this regional security complex.

So, we assessed the critical indicators that imply these probable evolutions, the tipping points, relative certainties and critical uncertainties of those probable evolutions, as well as the worse cases, best cases and most probable scenarios of evolution of this war. The methodology used is the one related to prospective studies discussing continuity, discontinuity and black swan scenarios on the short (6 month to one year), mid (3 to 5 years) and long term (10 to 15 years) long periods.

Our thesis is that uncertainty and perspective of large-scale confrontation between Russia and the West are expanding the level of threats in the Wider Black Sea Region and that an intervention rather sooner than later is required in order to break the spiral of escalation towards a full-scale war in our very region, with possible breaking points and a global contagion of this war. Moreover, dichotomy of democracy versus autocracy and the lack of communication is hindering the parties to understand and comprehend one another and is a ground for mistakes of assessments of the other based on beliefs and misunderstandings that would prevent us from coping with the fundamental causes and ways out from the spiral of violence.

Keywords: Prospective studies, critical uncertainties, relative certainties, tipping points

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Some Aspects of the On-Going Conflicts in the Balkan and Black Sea Region

Zoltán György Bács[1]

Abstract

The Balkan and the Black Sea region has always been the most sensitive zone due to its geographic situation on the edge of the collision of interests of great and growing powers. Therefore, any change in the always fragile balance of forces, new friction of historic interests of any country or a group of countries inevitably lead to discussions about the possible or impossible revision of the international legal document regulating the situation in the region.

During the last almost forty years the geopolitical situation in the region has been in permanent changes but the international rules remained untouched. On one hand it has been the guarantee of the status quo but on the other hand it boosted up the accumulation of tensions between country-specific and alliance-specific interests. Actually, we eyewitness a newly emerging old threat what has been the source of the major conflict in Europe and its peripheries for centuries. Due to the shift of the focus of the tension from Central Europe to the Balkan and the Black Sea it seems to be more than appropriate to start elaborating a new concept aimed to strengthen the guarantees of the security of these two regions by reducing the presence of the armed and naval forces.

Beside the reduction of armed and naval forces aimed prospectively to the demilitarization of the region, there are other crucial problems sharpened by the on-going Russian-Ukrainian war. There are countries supporting terrorist acts perpetrated by non-state actors and terrorist groups and organizations cooperating with international crime syndicates undermining the safety or at least trying to destabilize the countries opposing to the unjust intentions of countries interested in exporting their friendship and brotherhood by bayonets. The convergence of terrorism and international crime for example in the trafficking of humans, weapons and narcotics is a clear threat to all the countries in the Balkan and in the Black Sea region.

The importance of the present paper is nothing but the presentation of how different factors are interconnected and what kind of effect they exercise on each other in wide-scale conflicts.

The main points of the paper are:
1. Deep-root collisions of interests in the region vs. current interests
2. Expectations and real chances of the strategic demilitarization of the region
3. Convergence of international crime groups and interests of terrorists

Methodology used during the research is a comparative and root-case analysis based on retrospective network analysis.

The outcome of the paper is to show and prove that conflicts have to be considered as complex, multi-level phenomena and it needs a comprehensive wide-range, scientific approach.

Keywords: Balance of forces, guarantees, convergence, dynamism

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DAY 1: 2nd Session
30 May 2024
13:45 pm – 16:00 pm (İstanbul Time)

Moderator: Prof. Dr. Aşkın İnci Sökmen Alaca

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Session-II: Military Threat Perceptions of the States in the Black Sea Region and the Balkans

- Spread of war
- Possible regional points of conflict: (The future of B-H, Kosovo dispute, Albanian-Macedonian relations in Northern Macedonia.)
- Terrorism
- Nuclear threats, chemicals, bioweapons

Bulgaria's Threat Perceptions in the Black Sea After Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

Idlir Lika[1]

Abstract

As one of the two Black Sea littoral states that is both a NATO and EU member, Bulgaria is at the center of any regional and broader attempts to build a sustainable security architecture in the region. During the post-communist period, the country has been highly susceptible to Russian influence due to historical factors and in part due to the pervasive problems of corruption, state capture and political instability that it has faced. Starting from 2014, though, Russia's annexation of Crimea and later its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 upended the balance of power in the Black Sea region, raised the specter of Russian threat to the country and, as a result, arguably dealt a serious blow to Russia's traditional channels of influence in Bulgaria. This paper will empirically present a Bulgarian national perspective on security considerations in the Black Sea region. It will shed light on the following set of questions: How does Bulgaria conceptualize the threats in and around the Black Sea and how have its security interests evolved in the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine? What form(s) of regional security architecture does Sofia prioritize and how much is it trying to elevate the importance of Black Sea security for the U.S. and NATO? Last but not least, given U.S. resource and attention constraints due to the strategic imperative of pivoting to Asia and the deteriorating security situation in the Middle East, how do Bulgarian elites view the prospect of Türkiye assuming (as part of a general NATO strategy) a larger leading role in the security of the Black Sea region?

I argue that Bulgarian elites perceive the current situation in the Black Sea as very threatening for their country's security. Their most immediate priority is convincing the U.S. and NATO to devote much more attention and resources to building a new sustainable security order in the region. While they recognize that such a task is quite challenging given the U.S. strategic imperatives in East Asia and now in the Middle East, Bulgarian elites at the same time are uneasy with the prospect that Türkiye assumes a larger leading role in the security of the region. Such a perspective is also largely shared by the other Black Sea littoral state that is both a NATO and EU member, Romania. I conclude by claiming that these two rather contradictory stances – trying to elevate the importance of Black Sea security for the U.S. / NATO and being uneasy with Türkiye assuming a larger leading role in regional security – is not sustainable in the long run.

Keywords: Bulgaria; Black Sea security; Russia's invasion of Ukraine; Türkiye

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North Macedonia Security Threats in the Third Decade of XXI. Century: Institutional and Political Framework as a Key Determinant of Instability

Mitko Arnaudov[1]

Abstract

North Macedonia in the post-Yugoslav frame was the only republic that has declared independence without any military clashes, as a consequence of the independence declaration. Such circumstances have, on the European level, promoted this state as a so-called oasis of peace in the Balkans, bearing in mind the war challenges in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and on the territory of Kosovo. North Macedonia, on contrary, has faced with armed clashes on its territory at the beginning of the XXI. century. These were clashes in the northern and western parts of the state between Macedonian security forces and self-declared Albanian armed groups. The realistic purpose, from the side of Albanian paramilitary groups, for the armed attacks against military and police forces of North Macedonia was never confirmed, bearing in mind just finished war on Kosovo territory, but also the position of Macedonian Albanians, as a dominant ethnic minority which, in that moment has had active role in political and social life within that state. There are many studies and researches that have different positions, stating that the goal of the armed attacks by Albanian armed groups was separation of Macedonian territory for the purpose of creating Great Albanian state, while, from the other side, including the official version of the leaders of that paramilitary groups, was the position that human rights for Albanian society in North Macedonia was the purpose of the battles. But, in this paper our goal is not to find out the purpose of the armed clashes in North Macedonia during the 2001, but to determine what are the main security risks and threats for North Macedonia, whether and to what extend ongoing challenges and threats are ethnically motivated, how much relations between Macedonians and Albanians within North Macedonia are misused as a political instrument and, as an essential question - what is the key determinator of the stability of North Macedonia in the upcoming period. Methodological concretization will be used as an analytical tool in the process of triple analyses, on the political, social and ethnic level, which should lead us to the answers. Triple analyses will be used as an empirical tool, while, from the stands of structural realists, we will try to find out the answer about the security issues which are facing small states in international relations, respectively whether they are exporters of instability, do they have capacities to lead sovereign security policy and what are key determinants of their security mosaic. The ultimate, essential goal of the research would be to show up that North Macedonia does not have ethnic security challenges and threats, that its security mosaic essentially is not endangered from "imported" threats and, finally, that its stability and sustainability depends on internal threats which have raised as a consequence of challenges within the institutional and political framework.
Keywords: North Macedonia, security threats, institutional and political challenges, sustainability

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International Aspects of the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution

Valeria Gornyachka[1] & Slav Anastasov[2]

Abstract

International environmental relations, as a subject of international environmental law, arose as a result of the irrational use of natural components, in which the need for a protective mechanism prevails when using natural resources.

The Black Sea is a large water basin, almost completely isolated from the world ocean. It is included in the category of the so-called semi-enclosed seas, whose legal regime is regulated by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982). The unique physical and chemical characteristics of the Black Sea ecosystem remained relatively stable until the second half of the twentieth century.

The first sign of the significant deterioration of the state of the ecosystem was the sharp change in the composition of industrial fish species caught in the 1970s and 1980s. After that, there was an intense bloom of plankton, reduced water transparency and mass extinction of small animal species.

In 1992, the Convention for the Protection of the Black Sea from Pollution was signed, which represents a legal and diplomatic platform for joint actions between the parties to it. In 1993, it was signed in Odessa, the so-called Odessa Declaration, which defines between the parties to it the general policy of the parties to the Convention. In October 1996, the Strategic Action Plan for the Black Sea was signed.

The convention recommends the adoption of internal regulations for determining liability for pollution damage, which should be coordinated and in accordance with international law.

On the initiative of Türkiye and with the financial support of the Global Environment Facility, the program for ecological management and protection of the Black Sea was launched.

The present scientific work aims to follow the actions of the states to protect the Black Sea from pollution from an international legal aspect, as well as to make a comment on the main and most important international legal acts affecting the problem.

The cooperation of the countries for the removal of pollution, the conduct of scientific research, programs with the participation of international organizations, the exchange of data and information related to the protection of the marine environment is monitored.

Only with the help of the population from the entire outflow basin is it possible to ensure a sustainable future for the Black Sea. People must realize their role as polluters and consciously join efforts to limit pollution and restore the environment.

Keywords: Eco-system, convention, country, Black Sea

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The Security Problems in the Black Sea Countries According to the Fragile States Index 2023

Krasimir Koev[1]

Abstract

The Fragile State Index (FSI) is an instrument published annually by The Fund for Peace and Foreign Policy Journal. It evaluates the pressure on concrete countries stemming from existing problems in the area of economics, politics, ecology, security and others. The concept "failed/fragile state" is not an official term in the international law. It indicates that a concrete country is undergoing a period of instability in some spheres of the public life and is in danger of potential problems in its governance. In many cases, the governments of the fragile states have lost the ability to provide basic public services or to protect their citizens from violence, either internally or externally.

The current paper uses data from the FSI 2023 in order to interpret some security problems in the countries from the Black Sea region, reflected in the following dimensions of the index: Security Apparatus; Human Rights and Rule of Law; Refugees and IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons); External Intervention. The indicated dimensions are directly related to security risks which in the current geopolitical situation have a negative impact on all spheres of the public life.

The countries in the Black Sea region were chosen as the subject of the study because, due to the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, the security of the region is the most affected and has a direct impact on global security.

The theoretical part of the work substantiates the adequacy and applicability of the FSI tool for interpreting security risks and threats. In the empirical part, the quantitative values of the above-mentioned 4 dimensions of the index are presented for each of the countries in the Black Sea region: Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Türkiye and Ukraine, and the data are analyzed from the point of view of their impact on the security of individual countries, as well as for the region as a whole.

The secondary data analysis shows a direct interdependence between the index value and the level of uncertainty in a given country caused by external factors, i.e. the more autocratic and restrictive the security apparatus or the problems with respecting the human rights, the greater the global security risks posed by the situation in that country.

The following conclusions are drawn in the paper:

The most fragile countries don't allow a prospective democratic development.
In the most fragile countries, there is a growing erosion of the public confidence in the democratic institutions as well as an increase in the social and political polarization.
The fragility must be addressed everywhere with strategies for social and political cohesion and inclusiveness.
Keywords: Black Sea region, security, Fragile State Index, security risks

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From Three Pillars to Three Variables: Quo Vadis, Black Sea Region's Military Security?

Leonid Polyakov[1]

Abstract

The key question with regard to the direction of Black Sea Region's (BSR) military security evolution is how the standing of the recent three pillars Türkiye, Russia and the USA/NATO will transform, and how the main military actors in the region may look like in the near, middle- term and longer-term future. The paper intends to highlight the key challenges, which need to be effectively mitigated, and the promising trends in military security architecture of the BSR, which need to be reinforced for achieving a better result in building the stable peace and security in the future.

Türkiye's balancing approach towards relations with Russia and Ukraine has an important distinction. In the military domain Türkiye cooperates with Ukraine only and not with Russia. By progressively increasing its own military potential and, in parallel, pragmatically performing the roles of mediator and transit actor, Türkiye is strengthening its credibility as a major regional power. The question remains in what form it will happen as a result of the current balancing act of progressive and conservative trends. Ukraine is determined to restore its internationally recognized borders, and it is supported in this intention by Türkiye, the USA/NATO and the EU, though with certain reservations. Three options at the end of the war will be assessed: 1) Russia maintains control of Crimea; 2) Ukraine (not member of NATO) restores control of Crimea; 3) Ukraine restores control of Crimea and joins NATO. Options will be assessed on the premise that the main challenge of current military security environment in the BSR is control over Crimea. Over-cautious position of the USA during the war would likely precipitate the decline of the U.S. role in the BSR. NATO would maintain its standing but its particular components would be rearranged among the European actors and Türkiye. The EU has the evident potential for strengthening its role in the military security sphere.

Keywords: Black Sea, military, Crimea

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Use of Drones in the Protection of State Leaders

Todor Kodzheykov[1]

Abstract

The report is related to the current problems in the development of modern technologies in the field of unmanned vehicles and the threats they pose to the life and health of senior state leaders. The main problems with countering drone attacks are analyzed and recommendations are given for the organizational construction and technological improvement of defense tactics and techniques.
Keywords: UAVs, drones, heads of state, security, tactics, technology, terrorism

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DAY 2: 3rd Session
31 May 2024
9:30 am – 11:30 am (İstanbul Time)

Moderator: Assist. Prof. Dr Selma Şekercioğlu Bozacıoğlu

Session-III: Non-Military Threats Perceptions

- Hybrid threats including cyber threats
- Criminal threats
- Mass migration, energy insecurity, food shortages, and environmental pollution.

How Conflicts Affect Women: Human Trafficking in Balkans and Black Sea

Elif Üçerli[1]

Abstract

Human trafficking is an organized national or transnational crime based on the forced exploitation of people's labor, sexuality and bodies. It can be described as 21st century modern slavery. Human trafficking became an internationally defined crime through the 2003 UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), trafficking crimes include sexual exploitation, forced labor, use in crime, begging, forced marriage, removal of organs and trafficking in children. Physical and sexual abuse, blackmail, emotional manipulation and the removal of official documents are also used by traffickers to control their victims.

In the 1900s and 2000s, human trafficking took place mainly in the post-Soviet area, but today it occurs mainly in areas of civil war and conflict. The number of victims of trafficking has also increased over the years. According to International Labor Organization (ILO) reports, the number of victims of human trafficking was 40.3 million in 2016 and this number will increase to 50 million in 2021. It's also estimated that the annual income of human traffickers is $150 million and growing every year. However, due to its illegality, it's important to determine the exact number of victims and profits.

The victims of human trafficking are of all genders and ages, but predominantly women and girls. There are two main reasons for this situation, both related to gender inequality. Firstly, sexual exploitation is a huge sector and women are valuable objects for traffickers. Second, in situations of conflict and civil war, women and children tend to migrate to safer areas and encounter traffickers while men take up arms. UNODC reports confirm this disparity. In 2006, 79% of victims were women and girls. In ten years, this rate hasn't changed much and became %72. It is important to note that the rate of girls has increased by %50 in 10 years. Most of them are forced to work in foreign countries under the threat of violence. Traffickers confiscate their identity cards, money and phones, so victims can't escape easily.

Today, the Balkans and the Black Sea are two main trafficking regions. As unregistered migration routes from the Middle East and Asia to Europe pass through the Balkans and the Black Sea, these regions are very available for human trafficking. Especially after the civil wars in Ukraine and Russia.
This study will examine how wars and internal conflicts affect women asymmetrically through cases of human trafficking in the Balkans and the Black Sea region. The study will focus on the 2010s, when migration due to conflict increased, and will use international reports as well as cases and trials reported in the media as sources. Finally, it will analyze the measures taken by states and NGOs and discuss what can be done to prevent human trafficking.
Keywords: Human trafficking, woman, sexual exploitation, Balkans, Black Sea

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God and Money: Radicalization and Financial Motivation in Terrorist Attacks: The Case of Crocus City Hall Moscow

Iulian Chifu[1] & Iulia-Mihaela Drăgan[2]

Abstract

Terrorist attacks are back in Europe and in the Wider Black Sea Region after the war of aggression in Ukraine, the evolutions in Gaza and the forced recruitment and discrimination against Islamic Russian citizens and autonomous republics in Northern Caucasus. With the same occasion, a full debate has been relaunched related to the role of radicalization and jihadism versus the impact and financial motivation in the 21-st century new wave of terrorist attacks.

In that sense, the research aims to answer three research questions: 1. How strong is the financial motivation in the radicalization process? 2. What might be societal vulnerability factors in Central Asia, Northern Caucasus and the Volga regions that can be used by ISIS in the recruitment process? 3. What evolutions are used to enforce the ideological narrative of ISIS in order to attract recruits and justify carrying out terrorist attacks?

The methodology used aims to investigate the societal evolutions and roots that would challenge the balance between the impact of financial motivation in the recruitment in terrorist organizations versus radicalization processes and this complementarity, and is achieved based on an encyclopedic and comparative study of this evolution and criteria leading to recruitment based on terrorism mercenaries. We are looking at the radicalization of people joining ISIS, but also at the vulnerabilities of the target recruitment areas, as well as the elements of demonization of Russia. Data reflecting previously existing trends linked to radicalized individuals and their motivations for committing terrorist attacks against Russia will be used in a comparative manner.

The intended purpose is to highlight the main warning signals that indicate vulnerabilities to the radicalization process as well as from a financial motivation. This is a topical theme for the Wider Black Sea Region states in order to prevent terrorist activities as well as increasing awareness regarding evolving trends of recruitment and the formation of a real pool of mercenary terrorists that may transit the region and affect Europe.

Our study case is ISIS, ISIS-K and the Crocus City Hall terrorist attack near Moscow. ISIS still represents a strong threat globally given its relative revival in the Middle East and the new spheres of influence acquired in Africa and Asia. A special reference to ISIS-K and itsnewly achieved attacks in Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, as well as its announced expansion in Russia and the world is provided. The Crocus City Hall terror attack on March 22, 2024, which left over 150 dead and 140 injured, brings into sharp focus warning signs linked to the identity of the four suspects arrested, their affiliation with ISIS-K, their recruitment and training in the Wider Black Sea Region itself.

Keywords: Radicalization, ISIS-K, financial motivations, mercenary terrorism

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A Geo-digital Approach to Immune Trade Routes amid the Black Sea Tension

Ana Yousefian[1]

Abstract

The importance of the Black Sea has heightened since the war erupted between Russia and Ukraine. Since then, the geopolitical and geo economic importance of the region around the Black and Caspian seas have increased. Therefore, the so – called economic corridors have become a trending debate high on the agenda of policy makers in order to evade disruptions in energy and commodity transfer. The Chinese Belt & Road initiative alongside other attempts like India-Middle East –Europe Economic Corridor or the Middle Corridor will shape a new competitive sphere which may trigger future conflicts in the region. Considering the new global order which is neither a bipolar one as it was during the Cold War nor unipolar in the decades after, a multi polar economic order will bring with itself both challenges and opportunities. The emergence of several big non-western economic powers at the same time is the main cause of the fundamental change in the weight of the world economy, which started from the borders of Europe in the past 30-40 years and is now located on the borders of Iran and Türkiye. Emerging economies are key players in the current context of economic order and connection is the most determining factor to lead trade and transaction. As Parag Khanna put in his book "Connectography" we are witnessing the revival of ancient and medieval trade networks that once flourished in Africa linking Arab, Persian, Indian, Chinese, and Southeast Asian civilizations. Today, trade in goods and services and finance is the fastest growing in emerging markets. Over the past decade, between the four fastest-growing regions—China and Africa, South America and the Middle East, India and Africa, Southeast Asia, and South America—the volume of trade has increased from 500% to 1,800%. This shows the great potentials of growing shared benefits and interests among the regions and sub regions of Asia. Taking into account the recent developments both in terms of trade and connections the research question is how it is possible to avoid future conflicts and build a regional security complex, boosting interdependence. It is hypothesized that with the help of institutions that foment interconnectedness both geographically, digitally and by setting norms, economic security and benefits might be achievable for the countries of the region. The theories applied to support the idea of the paper are the regional security complex and interdependence.

Keywords: Black Sea, trade routes, interconnectedness, geo-digital

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War and Energy: Assessing the Impact of the Russo-Ukraine War on the Global Energy Supply Chain (with Special Reference to Western Europe's Energy Security)

Rifat Ullah Rifat[1]

Abstract

The Russo-Ukraine War has emerged as one of the most critical events of the 21st century, with far-reaching consequences for regional stability and emerging geostrategic realignments, besides exacerbating global energy security concerns. The primarily geopolitical conflict has manifested in multiple spheres, including economics, hinting at serious repercussions. The research paper investigates the complexities of the impact of the war on the global energy supply chain, with particular reference to the energy security of Western Europe, using the Input-Process-Output (IPO) model as a theoretical framework. Besides applying one theory each from International Relations (Regional Complex Security Theory) and economics (Supply Chain Management Theory), the study validates the findings by examining these from the cardinals of the existing international laws and regulations concerning energy security.

The research adopts a mixed approach, uniting qualitative methodology by employing Western Europe as a case study using thematic and content analysis. In contrast, quantitative data analysis complements the findings to view the conflict comprehensively. However, the energy supply disruptions faced across the globe have the most profound impact on the Western European region, which has historically been heavily dependent on Russian gas and oil, making it a most suitable case study. On the other hand, the statistical data acquired through quantitative analysis concerning energy prices, supply shortages, impact on inflation, and corresponding effects on other fields helps quantify the impact of the war. A mixed methodology helps gauge the impact and future trajectories demanding energy policy shifts in response to mitigate the risks.

The hybrid analysis technique to pitch the SWOT analysis technique against the PESTEL offers an all-inclusive overview of the problem, thus offering guidelines for orchestrating concrete policy options. The findings suggest that the Russo-Ukraine War has caused unprecedented supply chain disruptions and compelled energy consumers to accelerate their diversification drives. The energy diversification initiatives undertaken by Western Europe are multifaceted, involving a wide array of activities: enhanced investments in renewable energy, tapping of alternative sources and routes, and collective purchase and storage mechanisms.

The study contributes to the academic discourse by underscoring the interconnectedness between geopolitical conflict and economics through the relationship between the energy supply chain and energy security. Ultimately, the research, while identifying the shortfalls in the policy framework of Western Europe, proffers policy recommendations to mitigate risks in order to ensure an uninterrupted energy supply.

Keywords: Russo-Ukraine War, global energy supply chain, energy security, Regional Complex Security Theory, Supply Chain Management Theory, Western Europe, SWOT & PESTEL analysis techniques

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The Russo-Ukraine War: Navigating the Future of Europe's Energy Security Using Scenario Building Technique

Rifat Ullah Rifat[1]

Abstract

The Russo-Ukraine War has significantly exposed the vulnerabilities of Europe's energy security due to its historically heavy reliance on Russian energy imports. The unprecedented energy disruptions have challenged the existing frameworks, demanding a strategic reassessment and corresponding recalibration of policy responses. The study adopts a mixed method approach, with Western Europe as a case study to scrutinize the issue qualitatively and quantitatively, supplementing each other.

The Input-Process-Output (IPO) model, integrating Regional Security Complex Theory and Supply Chain Management Theory alongside relevant international laws and regulations concerning energy security, has been used as a theoretical framework. The output of this model identifies key forces and drivers of change. Then, the most significant ones from both categories were selected using the impact and uncertainty matrix. By employing the author's modified version of the scenario-building technique, these key forces and drivers (two each) have been deployed to orchestrate plausible scenarios hinting at future alignments, thus setting the base for offering viable strategic choices, policy options, and considerations.

The study's findings signify the necessity of thoroughly reevaluating Europe's stance towards the conflict, identifying looming threats, strategic adaptability regarding the diversification of energy resources and routes, and creating a collaborative European Union framework to articulate collective responses to mitigate the risks. Finally, the results are presented in four major probable future scenarios, each displaying unique challenges and strategic choices.

Concluding with policy consideration for all stakeholders, the study offers detailed policy guidelines to deal with each scenario aiming at the transition to a sustainable energy system. In a nutshell, while advancing the discourse on Western Europe's energy security amid the Russo-Ukraine War, the study offers a nuanced analysis and detailed strategic roadmap for the future of energy.

Keywords: Russo-Ukraine War, Europe's energy security, modified scenario building technique, Regional Complex Security Theory, Supply Chain Management Theory, policy considerations, strategic choices

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The Consequences of the Trans-Caspian Pipeline on the Energy Security of Iran and Türkiye

Rahmat Hajimineh[1] & Ebrahim Rezaei Rad[2]

Abstract

Energy has become the most important issue in today's world, and its importance is undeniable. Based on this, energy transmission lines have a critical position, whose impact is focused on the economy and has political and military dimensions. For this reason, energy transfer projects such as pipelines go beyond economic needs, and in most cases, politics and diplomacy become much more important than other roles. Due to being landlocked, Turkmenistan has tried to have plans to export natural gas to other parts of the world in the years after its independence from the former Soviet Union. Trans-Caspian pipeline is one of the plans. The Trans-Caspian pipeline is 300 kilometers long, starting from the Turkmenbashi gas field in Turkmenistan and reaching the Sangchal terminal in Azerbaijan. This article uses the theoretical framework of energy security and the combined method. The main question is, what are the consequences of the Trans-Caspian pipeline on the energy security of Iran and Türkiye? The hypothesis of the research indicates that if the Trans-Caspian pipeline is implemented, this issue can weaken Iran's energy security by reducing its transit role, supply security, and environmental problem on the one hand and strengthening Türkiye's transit and pivotal role in exporting natural gas to Europe on the other hand. The research findings indicate that implementing the Trans-Caspian pipeline requires Turkmenistan to Iran for gas export to Azerbaijan will significantly reduce. Also, this issue can weaken projects such as gas swaps between Turkmenistan, Iran, and Azerbaijan. It will also cause environmental problems in the Caspian Sea. Environmental pollution in the Caspian Sea due to its closeness and lack of access to open waters can lead to destructive environmental consequences. On the other hand, it strengthens Türkiye's transit role as an energy hub. Europe's need for a new gas source after the Ukraine war, which can be provided by the Trans-Caspian pipeline. Connecting it to the southern gas corridor will increase transit efficiency. Gas sources after the war in Ukraine can serve as an additional driver for the Trans-Caspian pipeline, and its connection to the southern gas corridor will increase the transit efficiency of this matter. Also, this issue can strengthen the cooperation between Iran and Türkiye in the gas field to increase the volume of transit through the southern gas corridor. Also, projects like this can reduce Europe's dependence on Russian gas and create new routes. Plans will strengthen Türkiye and Iran's energy position, which is a significant issue. Considering the war in Ukraine and the emergence of the energy debate and its effects on all dimensions, including political and economic, it is natural that the issue of pipelines is very important. In addition, since the Trans-Caspian pipeline is less operational, this article needs to investigate the effects of the implementation of this pipeline on the energy security of Iran and Türkiye.

The abstract should include in summary: The main thesis of the paper, the importance of the subject, the content of the paper (main and sub-discussion points, the methodology used, and the outcome).
Keywords: Trans-Caspian pipeline, energy security, Iran, Türkiye

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DAY 2: 4th Session
31 May 2024
12:30 pm – 14:00 pm (İstanbul Time)

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Moderator: Assoc. Prof. Dr Fatma Aslı Kelkitli

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Session-IV: Policies of Global Actors and Their Roles in Providing Security
- USA policies and their roles
- Chinese policies and their roles
- Russian policies and their roles
- EU policies and their roles

The Great Geostrategic Game in the Black Sea: Eurasia's Challenges in the Confrontation between Moscow and the West: Approaches and Solutions

Fatemeh Alamolhoda[1]

Abstract

Scholars have established a relationship between structure and power relations in the conflicts of land and sea powers, and believe that control and domination of the Black Sea and the Baltics by any power, especially land powers, can lead to world domination. Therefore, we are witnessing more confrontation in this region than ever before, between Russia, the West and even countries such as Iran and Türkiye. The Black Sea is one of the most important geoeconomical regions in terms of energy and grain exchanges and could even play a central role in global trade in the coming years, which will more than double in the next two decades, according to the estimates. Therefore, major regional and trans-regional countries are seeking to increase their influence and presence in this region. But it should be noted that the main platform for developing trade in the Black Sea is the establishment of complete security in it. Although Russia has replaced European countries with NATO and the United States as its geopolitical rivals, the geostrategic importance of the Black Sea has not changed since 1853. Crimea as a military source, Türkiye as a mainstay and the Turkish Strait as operational throughput are significant. The ultimate goal of military access and presence in the Eastern Mediterranean is to act as a balancing factor in the face of the expansion and development of the United States and NATO to the east and their presence in the Aegean and the central Mediterranean.

The geopolitical approach and attention to the security and economic importance of maritime areas in Russia's foreign policy seems to be a fundamental point of view that should not be neglected in any way. Since 1696, hydro politics has gained a special place in Russian foreign policy and has become a driving force in regional and international relations. In this article, we examine the question of what challenges does the Eurasian region encounter in the face of Russia and the West? What solutions can be offered to solve conflicts? And what approaches will further lead to convergence between countries? Mackinder's idea reflects geographical themes of Russian history، which itself represents the truth of the concept of continental Eurasia. Hence, the Mackinder geopolitical theory is used to analyze the initial data.

Estimates show that NATO allies are not at all interested in the Black Sea becoming a Russian "lake" with its Chinese ally. Therefore, the situation of the Black Sea requires a new geostrategic approach towards the internal and external countries of the region. In other words, these states, instead of just thinking about NATO membership, should pursue smaller initiatives to secure their political and economic interests. Indeed, some experts believe that rather than joining NATO, which Moscow is particularly sensitive to, these countries should increase their national flexibility, develop closer bilateral and multilateral relations, and reconstruct the region in a discursive manner.

Keywords: Russia, Black Sea, Eurasia, geostrategy, geopolitics

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Great Power Competition and Militarization in the Balkans: Exploring Risks and Strengthening Conflict Prevention

Oktay Bingöl[1]

Abstract

The Balkans, due to the characteristics of its geographical location among the great powers and its national, ethnic, and religious diversity, have been the scene of complex interactions and conflicts throughout history. As Winston Churchill once said the region makes more history than it can consume, the wars in the Balkans continuously broke out since the 18th century, and the First World War was triggered there too.

While the region experienced a relatively calm period between the two world wars, militarization increased from the 1930s onwards, and relations between actors became tense due to the influence of the policies of opposing alliances in the years leading up to the war, and the interstate conflicts had continued throughout World War II.

The borders drawn by the victors of the wars fought in the Balkans from the 19th century to the post-World War II period led to national and ethnic problems and fostered hostilities. The tensions and hostilities were suppressed by the dominance of the Warsaw Pact, NATO, and Yugoslavia during the Cold War years, and the conflicts were frozen for a while. With the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, the Balkans became active. In the years following the end of the Cold War, both peaceful transformations and conflicts with serious consequences took place in the region. In the early 2000s, the region entered a relatively stable period, thanks to the NATO and EU memberships of the countries in the region.

However, Russia's influence in its immediate surroundings since the early 2000s has interacted negatively with the expansionist moves of NATO and the EU, initiating great power competition and the struggle for influence of regional powers. While the problems that arose at the end of the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the Balkans have not been fully resolved, regional dynamics have become complicated with Russia's intervention in Georgia in 2008 and the subsequent search for influence by NATO, the EU and Russia in Ukraine. Russia's annexation of Crimea and occupation of part of Ukrainian territory in 2014 escalated tensions in the Balkans. The USA, NATO, the EU, and regional countries have increased their military measures against Russia's moves. Militarization has reached high levels with the deployment of US and NATO military units and military systems in the region, military exercises, deterrence actions, bilateral defense cooperation agreements, the establishment of new military bases, and the increase in defense expenditures and armament. This environment has worsened with the war that started with Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

In this paper, it is argued that such an environment negatively affects effective communication and mutual trust, triggers the security dilemma and self-help behavior, and increases the risk of multi-actor regional conflict, as has emerged in the long history of the Balkans. To prevent this, relatively neutral international/regional organizations such as the UN, OSCE, and BSEC should take the initiative, identify the risks and strengthen the conflict prevention mechanism. In the study, a qualitative methodology including a literature review of the militarization-conflict nexus, a comparison of the dynamics of the previous wars in the regions, and a historical analysis is used.

Keywords: The Balkans, Russia-Ukraine War, militarization, conflict prevention

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Main Guidelines of the Policy of the European Union in the Black Sea Region

Kremena Rayanova[1]

Abstract

The Black Sea is a traditional "crossroads of civilizations" where Orthodox, Islamic and Western cultures intersect. The Black Sea region is a strategically important area due to its geographical position on the borders of Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East, rich in natural resources and with significant economic potential. The position and growing role in the field of energy transit increases the geopolitical importance of this area as a link between Europe and the Caspian region, while at the same time contributing to the growth of security problems.

In recent decades, the Black Sea region has gradually occupied an increasingly important place in the foreign policy of the European Union. The EU's interests in this area are diverse and they come down to a number of areas: economy, energy transit, security, environmental and climate issues, fisheries issues, social and cultural initiatives.

Among the initiatives that go beyond these programs, the financial support from the European Commission for a number of projects related to the marine and coastal ecology of the Black Sea stands out. In 2009, a Strategic Action Plan for environmental protection and restoration of the Black Sea was developed. At the same time, the EU is implementing a program to coordinate the actions of local authorities with the participation of civil society organizations in the Black Sea region.

The following objectives of the EU Black Sea policy are defined: stimulation of democratic and economic reforms; supporting stability and promoting the development of the region; implementation of projects in areas of common interest for the countries of the region and the EU; responding to problems through coordinated action; creating a favorable climate for conflict resolution.

Security in the Black Sea region is undoubtedly one of the main tasks of the European Union, since its borders extend directly to the shores of the Black Sea. At the moment, however, the EU still does not pay as much attention to this problem as to issues of an economic nature and the transit of energy resources. However, in the long term, it is the strengthening of the EU's position from an economic point of view that can have a positive impact both on solving the security problems at the external borders of the European Union, and on the general reduction of the potential for conflict in the Black Sea region and the general reduction of the conflict potential of the Black Sea region.

It is obvious that it is the interests of the European Union in the Black Sea that can give impetus to the development of cooperation in the organization. At the same time, one must be careful about excessively strengthening the influence of the EU in the region by crowding out other global players.

Keywords: Black Sea region, European Union, security, environmental and climate issues

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Navigating Great Power Competition: Assessing the EU's Gateway Program in the Western Balkans vis-à-vis China's Belt and Road Initiative

Rahman Nurdun[1]

Abstract

The Balkan region has historically been a focal point of geopolitical interests, with China maintaining longstanding ties, particularly with Serbia, dating back to the Cold War era. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has recently made significant strides in the Western Balkans, notably in Serbia, raising concerns among leading European Union (EU) countries, which perceive the Balkans as their strategic backyard. In response, the EU has initiated the Gateway Program as a countermeasure to China's ambitious moves in the region. This study aims to evaluate the potential of the EU's Gateway Program in rebalancing China's BRI amidst the complexities of today's international environment and shifting dynamics.

The historical relationship between China and the Balkan countries, particularly Serbia, has been marked by cooperation in various sectors, including infrastructure, trade, and diplomacy. China's BRI, with its emphasis on connectivity and infrastructure development, has found fertile ground in the Western Balkans, drawing the attention of EU member states wary of China's expanding influence in their immediate neighborhood. This has led to the EU's launch of the Gateway Program, which seeks to offer alternative infrastructure investments and strengthen ties with the Western Balkans.

Against the backdrop of a changing global landscape and evolving power dynamics, the competition between the EU's Gateway Program and China's BRI in the Western Balkans has significant implications. The EU's program aims to leverage its economic clout, regulatory frameworks, and normative power to provide sustainable development alternatives to those offered by China. By focusing on enhancing connectivity, promoting good governance, and fostering economic integration, the EU seeks to position itself as a credible partner capable of addressing the region's long-term needs while upholding European values and standards.

However, the effectiveness of the EU's Gateway Program in countering China's BRI in the Western Balkans is subject to several challenges and uncertainties. These include the EU's internal cohesion, financial resources, and ability to deliver tangible benefits in a timely manner. Moreover, geopolitical considerations, regional dynamics, and the agency of Balkan states themselves will influence the outcome of this competition. In conclusion, while the EU's Gateway Program represents a concerted effort to assert its influence and counterbalance China's BRI in the Western Balkans, its success will depend on its ability to navigate the complexities of contemporary international relations, address the region's specific needs, and offer a compelling alternative to China's initiatives. As such, this study aims to provide insights into the evolving dynamics of great power competition in the Balkans and contribute to a deeper understanding of the implications for regional stability and European integration efforts.

Keywords: China, EU, the BRI, Gateway

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Current Global Geopolitical Shifts and Ramifications in the Western Balkans: Shaping Our Euro-Atlantic Future Through Malign Foreign Influence

Besfort Rrecaj[1]

Abstract

Western Balkans has not seen a long lasting settled peaceful environment from the dissolution of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia with many outstanding issues threatening the regional peace and security. Particularly the relationship between Kosovo and Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina and Serbia remains the most volatile points. On top of that, the region lags behind democratic and economic reforms which hinder its future. Within the circumstances the region remains very vulnerable to foreign influence and deteriorating international shift has direct and indirect effect in the region. The Western Balkan countries envision themselves as becoming part of the European Union in the near future nevertheless lagging reforms, and particularly Russia's influence mainly through Serbia and Republika Srpska as part of the Bosnia & Herzegovina might prolong the process. This presentation will work on this current situation and will address challenges and opportunities of regional security and cooperation within the context of a wider global perspective.

Keywords: Regional security, Western Balkans, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina

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DAY 2: 5th Session
31 May 2024
14:15 pm – 16:15 pm (İstanbul Time)

Moderator: Prof. Dr Celil Uğur Özgöker

Session – V: Foreign Policies of Regional Countries and Their Role in Providing Security

- Policies of regional countries
- Bilateral and multilateral attempts
- Other subjects related to the main theme

The Russo-Ukrainian War: Solidarity and Unity of the States in the Black Sea Region

Victor Korendovych[1]

Abstract

Quite often, the media and politicians associate the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian war with February 24, 2022. In fact, this war began with the occupation of Crimea and part of Donbas in 2014. The world community perceived the war during the first eight years as a hybrid one that did not pose a threat to European security. The large-scale open aggression of the last two years really changed the security situation in Europe and beyond.

Ukraine persevered in the fight against the overwhelming enemy. The cohesion of Ukrainian society and the determination of its Armed Forces did not allow the aggressor to destroy the state. The long queues of volunteers at the recruiting points during the first month of the war changed the perception of the world community about Ukraine and its potential. This was largely facilitated by the broad solidarity, material and military assistance of the EU, NATO, the G7 countries, and other states. This allowed the Ukrainian Defense Forces to liberate half of the occupied territories in 2022.

The operations of the Defense Forces in the summer of 2023 on the ground were less successful. But Ukraine prevailed at sea and destroyed a fourth of all warships of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. The fleet was forced to leave the northwestern part of the Black Sea. Ukraine has largely restored shipping in the Odesa-Bosphorus corridor. However, the world is already tired of the war and wants more than just local successes. Some countries, which do not realize the true goals of Russia, are trying to persuade Ukraine to start peace negotiations. Ukrainian society does not accept such an idea. The cessation of hostilities can only strengthen the enemy, who keeps the intention to destroy you. After restoring its military potential, Russia will repeat the aggression.

What is the limit of the West's solidarity with Ukraine's struggle for its independence? Today, Ukrainians have no reason to claim the Western states lack unity but point out the existence of such challenge. Ten years of war did not affect the unity and cohesion of Ukrainian society. Such determination allows Western countries to continue providing aid to Ukraine.

What lessons can be learned by the Black Sea and the Balkan states from Russo-Ukrainian war?

1. Russia's efforts to occupy and destroy Ukraine are far-reaching and it will use all means to spread its efforts on other states of Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region.
2. The only way to establish peace in the region is to stop Russia in Ukraine and to force it to leave all occupied territories.
3. International solidarity to support Ukraine is crucial to establish peace in the Black Sea and the Balkans.
4. Ability of Ukrainian Defense Forces to fight the aggressor and unity of Ukrainian society are key elements to enforce international solidarity and unity to support Ukraine.
Keywords: Region security, international solidarity

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The Role of the Black Sea Grain Initiative in Ensuring the Presence of Ukraine in the Global Export of Agricultural Goods

Ivan Us[1]

Abstract

Russia's start of a full-scale war against Ukraine, among other things, has led to increased risks to global food security. After all, Ukraine has traditionally supplied a significant amount of food products, primarily cereals and sunflower oil, to foreign markets. Since Ukraine was limited in its use of the north, east and south directions for the supply of its food products, fears about the rise in world prices increased. The greatest influence was the impossibility of using the southern direction - the Black Sea. This problem was solved with the appearance of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. In the conditions of a full-scale war, the Black Sea Grain Initiative contributed to an increase in export revenues to the budget of Ukraine, which contributed to its foreign trade resilience.

The significance of the Black Sea Grain Initiative for the world determines the importance of this subject. The material will include the study of: the period from the beginning of the full-scale war to the beginning of the implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative; the period of implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative and its results; the period after the implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. The research used an analytical method, as well as a graphical method to highlight certain results.

Keywords: Full scale war, export, foreign trade resilience, shipping, international agreements, agricultural, products

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Domestic Legal Measures for Increasing Security in the Black Sea Region

Lyuboslav Lyubenov[1] & Vanya Panteleeva[2]

Abstract

This report examines some, but not all, possible internal legal measures to protect the national security of the Republic of Bulgaria, and hence the security in the Black Sea. It is about non-military criminal law measures to intercept and limit possible criminal activity in the Black Sea border areas and in the interior of the country. These measures are normative, operational and scientific-expert. Their introduction and use have a supranational importance, because the successful criminal law fight against acts that are actually related to the Black Sea as an occasion and/or place of implementation contributes to the strengthening of security in the entire Black Sea basin. For example, with the criminalization and prosecution of acts such as maritime smuggling and illegal crossing through the Black Sea border, the protection of the country and its citizens, as well as the Black Sea area itself, from criminal encroachments is achieved. The report traces the current state of the relationship between Bulgarian criminal law and security in the Black Sea region, from which point of view important conclusions and valuable recommendations are made. In the motto of the publication, the belief is raised that the achievement of internal security and fair justice in each of the Black Sea countries will lead by itself to an increase in security in the Black Sea region.

As for the current results of the application of the above-mentioned measures in the Republic of Bulgaria, it must be said that the country is working hard and striving for high results. In the criminal code, there is no separate section for such crimes - they are placed as separate manifestations among the other groups of crimes according to the object of unlawful interference, i.e. on a general basis. Therefore, the public dangerous acts in question are included as main or additional in numerous chapters and sections of the criminal law. However, the executive acts of crimes related to the Black Sea as an object or subject of aggression are clearly and in detail described by the legislator. From the objective and subjective side, the composition of these crimes has been qualitatively studied in legal theory as well. This facilitates both their qualification in legal practice and their investigation. The fight against criminal acts affecting security in the Black Sea is finally guaranteed with the help of the criminal process existing in the country.

Keywords: National security, Black Sea, domestic legal measures

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New Corridors from Asia to Europe: The Key Role of the Black Sea

Mandana Tishehyar[1]

Abstract

The world has quickly passed the transition period from a unipolar world to a multipolar order and a post-polar era is taking shape. In this modern era, new regions have emerged and they have two basic characteristics: they are less dependent on geography and have passed the classical definition of regionalism. On the other hand, the subjects of shaping each region have become more diverse and flexible. In this way, common interests among nations in different lands, with the formation of a new discourse in the framework of a networked world, can provide new opportunities for the inter-continental cooperation. In this situation, the new corridors build new routes and pass through new lands and bring new experiences to the people of these lands.

In this research, an attempt is made to show, within the framework of the neo-regionalism theory, how the change in the strategic security landscape in the Black Sea in recent years, especially after the beginning of the war between Russia and Ukraine, provides new opportunities for the unity of Asian nations with the people of Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The role that transit states play in this connectivity will be another topic discussed in this article. The author will also try to show how this new economic cooperation can help the formation of new regions. The discourse of networking convergence in the form of shaping the new regions can also strengthen the cultural and social connectivity between the communities of this massive area.

Keywords: Black Sea, corridors, Asia, Europe, post-polar world, networked world, neo-regionalism, connectivity Summit, Samarkand Summit, Extraordinary Summit, security, globalization.

Interpretation of the Recent Past in State Identity and Foreign Policy: A Comparison of Albania and Serbia

Önder Canveren[1]

Abstract

State identity provides a constructivist view on international relations by incorporating recent history as critical components of foreign policy analysis. Under the shadow of history, state identity can (re)shape not only the change and continuity of nation-states' positions and roles in foreign policy, but also their national interests and legitimate foreign policy practices. Political elites in the formation process can politicize recent past as a source of references, and state identity in foreign policy can be generated by either distancing from or embracing one's own past: negative vs. positive interpretation of one's own history. Therefore, while studying foreign policy by state identity, it is crucial to evaluate the perspective (negative vs. positive) taken by political elites in interpreting the history, as well as how their interpretation influences their foreign policy attitudes and behaviors. Especially during the post-conflict and post-communist transitions, newly established nation-states use their recent past as a reference point when forming their position and roles in foreign policy. The Western Balkan appears to be a region where recent past (communism and conflicts) plays a constitutive role in the formation of state identity. This study compares and contrasts Albania and Serbia in terms of commemorating their "own" past and significant historical narratives of events that first influence their new state identity and then their foreign policy preferences. For this reason, the speeches addressed by the leaders (president, prime minister or minister of foreign affairs) of both countries in the United Nations General Assembly Sessions over the last five years (2023-2019) were analyzed in an interpretative manner. The comparative analysis yields divergent results: Albania's modern state identity is formed by othering its own recent past. This othering of own past results in a structural change in foreign policy from isolation to Western-orientalism. By embracing a 'negative' interpretation of its own past (the memory of the Cold War, the Western Balkans, and the Enver Hoxha regime), Albania has established a stronger universalism and multilateralism-based approach to foreign policy, prioritizing Euro-Atlantic integration and liberal tradition. In contrast, Serbia embraces its Yugoslav past. This possessiveness results in continuation of traditional foreign policy. Serbia's narrative of a 'positive' interpretation of its recent past prioritizes equality and respect, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-intervention in domestic affairs; military neutrality; partnership diversification and third worldism; and skepticism and a balanced approach to big power politics as continuity of traditions in their foreign policy as the legacy of Yugoslavia.

Keywords: State identity, foreign policy, memory politics, Albania, Serbia

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Changing Geopolitics of Central Asia: Challenges and Prospects

Guli Ismatullaevna Yuldasheva[1]

Abstract

The goal of the paper is to analyze the state, challenges and opportunities of the ongoing complex process of integration between the Central Asian (CA) states in the context of the aggravated geopolitical situation. Current assessments of this process are still somewhat partial concentrating more on this or that aspect of the problem through the prism of the inner CA peculiarities and problems. In contrast to such an approach this article examines CA integration as the logical outcome of the increasingly globalizing world and the growth of objective demands in managing the indivisible security context, building single regional economy based on common transport outlets like international North-South and Trans-Caspian Transport Corridors, energy networks, and coordinating foreign policy steps. The novelty of the research consists of the fact that the author investigates new challenges and risks, arising opportunities for consolidating regional partnership in the context of the aggravated Middle East and the Ukraine conflicts, in the period after the Moscow Crocus events that have undoubtedly caused some changes in the foreign political and economic preferences, ways and speed of the Central Asian integration. To achieve these objectives methods of systemic and strategic analysis, comparative and problem approaches have been used.

The analysis shows that the current Ukrainian and Palestine-Israel crisis, the post-Crocus events have served as an impetus of the accelerated tempos of the already latently ongoing integrational tendencies in Central Asia. The complicated socio-economic situation in the region due to the potential growth of illegal migration to the Middle East hot spots and the repatriation of the labor migrants from Russia once again prioritize the tasks of speeding up the construction of the planned transport corridors, achieving deeper and more efficient cooperation and coordination between the CA countries to survive and develop in these circumstances, participate in the processes of building new global order as a specific single unity and a real subject of the newly arising IR system. The process is facilitated both by the commonality of arising challenges and threats, commonality of their foreign political preferences, such as trends towards consolidating economic links with China and Russia, deepening comprehensive ties with the Organization of Turkic States and the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, rapprochement with the European Union states, etc. Still, steady development of the CA region logically presupposes solution of the Palestinian-Israeli and the Russian-Ukrainian conflicts, of the Iranian-Western discrepancies, and, hence, some conciliatory gestures towards Russia, China, Iran, as well as Afghanistan without which the CA countries cannot realize some vitally important projects of regional and global character.

Much depends therefore on the outcomes of the coordinated fruitful international efforts in the stated areas that themselves stimulate activation of the Central Asian countries.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Central Asia, integration

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