I. ARTICLES

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NATO REGIONAL APPROACHES TO MISSILE DEFENSE - IN THE CONTEXT OF BLACK SEA SECURITY

Abstract:
In modern times, the security of the Black Sea region is given great attention in international politics. This is an important area of interest for the Euro-Atlantic Alliance, as evidenced by the European Parliament's Strategy for the Black Sea, adopted in 2011. NATO's close attention at the 2016 Warsaw Summit and the Parliamentary Assembly in Bucharest in 2017 shows its interest in this issue, as well as at the 2019 Washington Ministerial meeting, which approved a package of security actions The Black Sea. After the annexation of Crimea by Russia, we can safely say that the region is included in the sphere of interests of global players. The Black Sea is simultaneously a confrontation line between global powers, where the interests of Russia and NATO, Russia and the European Union, on the one hand, and Turkey, Russia, and the United States, on the other, diverge. The article discusses the importance and role of the Black Sea in the context of global security. The policy of modernization and development of missile defense systems and strategic strike weapons in the Black Sea region is also being discussed. The main approaches and characteristics of NATO's regional security policy in the Black Sea are discussed.

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Introduction

It should be noted that in modern times, NATO plays a significant role in strategic strike weapons, as well as in the field of missile defense. It is noteworthy that NATO has new policies and approaches to Black Sea security. Since the Alliance openly named Russia and China as a threat, the issue of protecting regional security in the Black Sea and modernizing and developing missile systems has become more urgent. Following the annexation of Crimea by Russia, the Black Sea Basin has become even more strategically important to the EU and NATO, both politically and militarily, in the region, given Russia's growing position and growing militarization in the Black Sea Basin. The importance of the Black Sea for NATO and the European Union was especially emphasized at the 2016 NATO Warsaw Summit and the 2017 NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Bucharest, as well as in the 'Black Sea Strategy' adopted by the European Parliament in 2011.

The Black Sea region is very important for NATO, both for the European allies and for the United States, i.e. as the main bridge for energy carriers between East and West and as a barrier against various dangers and challenges. Security controls in this region are driven by the various interests of the Black Sea littoral states. The interests and priorities of some countries align with the strategic interests of the North Atlantic Alliance, while some states oppose NATO activation in the region.

We can say that given that the region's three coastal states are members of NATO, Russia perceives Russia's significant military advantage and its aggressive policies in the region as a worrying threat to the Black Sea region and a challenge to Euro-Atlantic security as a whole. Besides, the Black Sea region is an advanced scene where NATO and Russian military forces interact most closely. All of this is a source of constant tension. The situation is further aggravated by the fact that Russia has, in fact, completely covered the Black Sea region with anti-penetration and missile systems. The escalation of the situation is also evidenced by the recent escalation caused by the interaction of the US fighter jet and the Russian bomber, during which the Russian aviation

used electronic warfare to create significant problems for the American ship.

Based on the relevance and complexity of the topic, the methodological basis of the research is the analysis of historical, descriptive, and political research. The main goal of the study is to identify the problems of achieving security and stability in the Black Sea region, as well as the factors hindering the achievement of stability in the region.

Regional security of the Black Sea

The security environment in the wider Black Sea region – which brings together the six littoral states (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine) and a hinterland including the South Caucasus and Moldova – is rapidly changing. It combines protracted conflicts with a significant conventional military build-up that intensified after the events of 2014: Russia's takeover of Crimea. Transnational connections between conflicts across the region and between the Black Sea and the Middle East add further dimensions of insecurity. As a result, there is a blurring of the conditions of peace, crisis, and conflict in the region. This has led to an unpredictable and potentially high-risk environment in which military forces with advanced weapons, including nuclear-capable systems, are increasingly active close to each other[2].

In recent decades, the Black Sea region has become increasingly important as a place where the national interests of the leading regional powers (primarily Turkey, Russia, and Ukraine) meet, as well as the geopolitical and geo-economic interests of such major world players as the United States and the European Union. The reason for the attention to the Black Sea region on the part of external forces is, first of all, its transit significance: important transport routes connecting the countries of the West with hydrocarbon-rich Central Asia and the Caucasus pass here.

During the Cold War, the Black Sea was an arena of confrontation between global players. In 1968-1988, the United States sent ships to the Black Sea to defend its rights (following the Montreux Convention) to free movement in Soviet territorial waters and to demonstrate that all states enjoy the right to freedom of navigation and flight. In 1988, two

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[2] A. Kuimova, S. T. Wezeman, *Georgia and Black Sea Security*, "SIPRI Background Paper", December 2018, p. 1, <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/bp_1812_black_sea_georgia_0.pdf> (20.11.2020).

US Navy ships (cruiser USS Yorktown and the destroyer USS Caron) demanded unhindered passage of warships into the Soviet territorial waters of the Black Sea. A standoff ensued with the Soviet Black Sea Fleet, which controlled American ships crossing the territorial waters of the USSR, and Soviet naval ships deliberately collided with both US ships. It was the worst naval standoff in the region from World War II to the 2008 Russian-Georgian war.

In this regard, the Montreux Convention regulating the movement of vessels in the Black Sea should be taken into account. It is important to take into account the Montreux Convention, which limits the presence of NATO warships in the Black Sea. In mid-February, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg stated that the alliance was considering 'further strengthening' its presence on the Black Sea. Russian politicians described this as a 'provocation'. However, NATO's activities are restricted by the Montreux Convention. The 1936 agreement on the 'Regime of the Straits' gave Turkey back full sovereignty over the Bosphorus. Warships of states not bordering the Black Sea may not stay there longer than 21 days. The tonnage of the ships is also limited[3]. The changed reality after the end of the Cold War, the threat of terrorism and NATO expansion (Romania and Bulgaria joined the alliance) have put on the agenda the issue of revising the Montreux Convention, a proposal that is unacceptable for Turkey and Russia since it contradicts their interests. The Montreux Convention is the basis for a favorable security system for Russia and Turkey in the Black Sea region since it ensures their priority status and limits the participation of other players in the region. To better understand the current situation, we can look at the map of the Black Sea. The conflict regions are marked on the map with a stroke (Figure 1).

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[3] R. Goncharenko, *NATO steps up naval presence on the Black Sea*, <https://www.dw.com/en/nato-steps-up-naval-presence-on-the-black-sea/a-47732883> (22.11.2020).

Figure 1. Black Sea basin.

Since 2014, due to the political crisis in Ukraine and the aggravation of Russian-American relations, the United States and its NATO allies have sought to strengthen their military presence in the Black Sea sea zone: for example, the number of calls by warships of the alliance countries has significantly increased (the overwhelming majority of them belong to the American Navy) to the Black Sea. At the same time, the number of exercises with the participation of the Black Sea member states of NATO, Ukraine, and Georgia has increased, during which the formation of operational formations and groups of the naval forces of multinational composition and various purposes, as well as their deployment in destination areas, are being worked out.

In the context of continuing to expand its military activities in the alliance, the possibility of revising certain provisions of the Montreux Convention is being studied, in particular, the removal of restrictions on the displacement of military ships passing through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, as well as the extension of their stay. This would make it possible to increase the efficiency of the deployment of NATO military forces on the southeastern flank of the bloc and to ensure the build-up of the naval grouping in the Black Sea.

As a result of the unprecedented militarization carried out by the Russian Federation after the annexation of Crimea, the military balance in the Black Sea region has significantly changed in favor of Russia. Russia has strengthened both the Black Sea Fleet in Crimea and its air defense systems and various types of guided missile systems. This gave Russia access to almost the entire territory of all the Black Sea countries.

Russian military buildup and A2/AD in the Black Sea basin. Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) is military jargon to describe the situation when a state deploys weapons systems, often with long-range capabilities, to deny foreign forces freedom of movement in the theatre. Land-based surface-to-air missiles, surface-to-surface ballistic or cruise missiles, and anti-ship missiles are the capabilities most often used for building up A2/AD. Additional elements may be added to the system – for example, advanced aircraft, surface ships, and submarines, and their capabilities for air superiority and control of the seas. Enhanced communications and surveillance systems and cyber warfare capabilities also contribute to this comprehensive A2/AD network, which will try to disrupt the electromagnetic spectrum and deprive foreign forces of its use[4].

Of key importance for establishing control over the water and airspace is the deployment of the S- 400 Triumph surface-to-air and K-300P Bastion-P coastal defense missile systems (effective range of about 400 km), supported by the Monolit-B and other radars providing long-range surveillance, early warning, and target acquisition. Modernized air bases host an air force division and two regiments of naval aviation, which together have about 100 fixed-wing fighters and ground-attack aircraft, and have the capacity for accommodating reinforcements. The Black Sea fleet itself is strengthened primarily with six improved Kilo-class (Project 636.3) diesel submarines (this brigade is based in Novorossiysk), which has granted it new capabilities for projecting power onshore with the long-range Kalibr 3M54 cruise missiles[5].

Separately, it should be noted the significant place of Turkey on the military-political map of the region. With the second-largest army in NATO, Turkey has the most powerful fleet in the Black Sea. Official

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[4] P. Anastasov, *The Black Sea region: a critical intersection*, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2018/05/25/the-black-sea-region-a-critical-intersection/index.html> (22.11.2020).

[5] P. K. Baev, *New Perspectives on the Black Sea Theater in Russian Strategic Culture*, <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/security-insights/new-perspectives-black-sea-theater-russian-strategic-culture-0> (24.11.2020).

Ankara attaches great importance to modernizing and building up the combat capability of its Naval Forces. In particular, Turkey's immediate plans include the creation of a powerful submarine fleet that will be able to control the entire water area of the Black Sea. To achieve this goal, Turkey has allocated 2.19 billion euros to finance the program for the construction of six type-214 submarines. Today, the Turkish Navy has 14 submarines built according to the German project.

The armed conflict between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 stimulated the intensification of Turkish foreign policy in the Black Sea and Caucasus region: it was after it that Ankara put forward the Platform for Stability and Cooperation and intensified its efforts towards resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh problem and its relations with Armenia. Thus, the main political tasks of Turkey in the World Cup can be characterized as a desire to ensure political and military security in the region. Turkey is positioned as a key player and an independent power pole. Turkey enough tightly integrated into the structures of the Alliance.

The strengthening of Russia in the Black Sea, along with its militaristic and aggressive policy, poses a threat to small states in the region with insufficiently developed defense and naval capabilities. Ukraine lost 70% of its navy as a result of the occupation of Crimea. Georgia has only a few coastal (battleships), while the naval forces of NATO member countries Bulgaria and Romania are quite outdated and not very diverse, at the same time, their defenses are rather weak. The annexation of Crimea practically destroyed the Ukrainian fleet, most of the warships were captured by Russia, and some moved to the Odesa port. NATO provides significant assistance to Ukraine in developing its naval capabilities and assists Ukraine in strengthening its coastal defenses and the Black Sea Fleet, while Ukraine participates in various Alliance naval missions.

In the past years, Romania has pushed heavily for further integration of the Black Sea states opposite Russia. Romania's desire for coordination resulted in a few proposals of joint military operations, including the permanent establishment of a Black Sea fleet, consisting of naval contributions from Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey. Romania's military capabilities remain weak, as the country has a relatively modest defence budget and has been preoccupied with out-of-area missions such as the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. Romania's attempts to modernize have been met with delays and complications. Romania's plan of 85 acquisitions is lacking with only 15 completed and its forces are using equipment from the Warsaw pact era. Comparatively,

Bulgaria's capacities lack more so than that of Romania. Bulgaria's defence budget falls greatly behind Romania and its forces face aging capabilities with modernization efforts in the far future[6]. Given the naval capabilities of Romania and Bulgaria, they need NATO support and strengthening their defenses. What is vital for them in light of the threats from Russia. While Russia is developing and modernizing more and more strategic missile weapons. Romania and Bulgaria with the supports of NATO, are trying to strengthen their naval forces and intend to buy warships from the alliance.

Moldova's role in Black Sea security is quickly becoming crucial. With an escalating conflict in the Transnistria region, aggravated by Russian influence, Moldova remains in a hanging balance. Its efforts to build defence capabilities are marred by its fledgling independence movements, unstable political system, and a slow economy. As a NATO partner for peace, Moldova is a recipient of numerous capacity-building and defence reform initiatives[7].

At present, under the pretext of ensuring the security of Europe, the United States has begun to deploy missile defense systems in Romania and Turkey, thereby strengthening its military presence in the Black Sea basin. A concrete manifestation of this was the regular stay of U.S. warships in the Black Sea with calls at the ports of Georgia and Ukraine.

NATO missile defense in the Black Sea

The events of recent years in the Black Sea region have shown that the processes taking place in the region have a direct impact on Euro-Atlantic security. It is also noteworthy that in the Black Sea region, due to its geopolitical position, threats from the south merge with the Russian threat, and this accumulation effect further aggravates regional security.

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

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[6] A. Rogan, *Black Sea Security Brief*, <http://www.atahq.org/ata-policy-focus/black-sea-security-brief/> (24.11.2020).
[7] *Ibidem.*

convince the Kremlin that further military steps would be counterproductive and preserve room for dialogue[8].

The initiative in creating missile defense systems in the Euro-Atlantic space naturally belongs to the United States. They have colossal technological, financial, economic, and military organizational capabilities in the field of missile defense, incomparable with all other NATO members put together. The political and military task of creating systems for detecting and intercepting ballistic missiles of various ranges – missile defense (ABM) – has been an important part of the foreign policy and military-economic agenda of the U.S. leadership for several decades. It will remain an important component of U.S. military technological development and defense and security policy for the foreseeable future. Moreover, the importance of missile defense in these areas has been steadily increasing in recent decades.

NATO described the Black Sea region as 'important for Euro-Atlantic security', but it was not until the July 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw that NATO leaders pledged to increase alliance presence in the region through the creation of the Tailored Forward Presence (TFP)[9]. NATO actively participates in strengthening the security of the Black Sea region, the Alliance actively supports strengthening the military potential of its member states, including assisting partner states.

Following the decision taken by NATO leaders at the Warsaw Summit, the Alliance has deployed 4 military units up to a battalion in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Poland. This was followed by the deployment of anti-missile systems, which led to rather aggressive statements by Russia but did not take open aggressive steps.

The Black Sea region is also the location for one of NATO's major missile defense elements. Romania is home to the Aegis Ashore ballistic missile defense site in Deveselu, which became operational in August 2016 (3 SM3 Block IB, 24 missiles). While the site is designed to counter ballistic missile threats emanating from outside the Euro-Atlantic area (which unambiguously excludes Russia), it is an important U.S. contribution to NATO missile defense, which is perceived by Moscow as challenging its strategic interests. Because Russia recognizes that the Deveselu site will shape the U.S. military presence in the region for the long term, it has repeatedly stated the site was a legitimate target, which

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[8] *NATO and Russia in the Black Sea: A New Confrontation?,* <https://www.csis.org/analysis/nato-and-russia-black-sea-new-confrontation> (25.11.2020)
[9] *Ibidem.*

in turn fuels calls to protect the site, exactly the military build-up dynamic that Russia seeks to avoid[10].

All this points to a purposeful development of a Russian offensive capability centered on Crimea and the Russian Black Sea Fleet, which tends to alter the military balance in the region and beyond. At the same time, with characteristic vehemence, Russian policymakers and opinion shapers get incensed about purely defensive measures taken in response by the NATO countries. Witness to that is their disproportionately nervous reaction to the formal inauguration of the missile defense facility at Deveselu, Romania, on May 12, 2016. Contrary to the evidence, Russian propaganda depicted the event as threatening to their national security and went as far as to evoke the possibility of scrapping the INF Treaty of 1987, thus eliminating the last vestiges of arms control and opening the door to a renewed arms race[11]. The United States and Russia withdrew from the agreement, which further exacerbated the problem of global security.

In a form of psychological warfare, Russia is attempting to foster the perception that its A2/AD capabilities form an impenetrable or ironclad bubble to paralyze NATO decision-making in a crisis and to undermine alliance cohesion in the region. Several independent analyses have suggested that while Russia's air defense systems are formidable, they do have gaps and are vulnerable to advances in Western offensive capabilities[12].

Integrated Air and Missile Defense in the region remains an aspiration but is starting to see some improvements. Romania hosts the U.S. Navy Aegis Ashore land-based ballistic missile defense system at Deveselu, which is deployed to protect European cities from Iranian missiles and is already operational. Romania is increasing the capabilities of its growing F-16 fleet. It is also purchasing the Patriot surface-to-air missile system and expects to begin receiving them in 2021. Turkey's purchase of the Russian-made S-400 Air/Missile Defense System is a serious concern for the Alliance. It is not interoperable with NATO systems and the U.S. has declared that Turkey can no longer be a part of the F-35 program. However, Turkey continues hosting critical TPY-2

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[10] *Ibidem.*

[11] S. Celac, S. Cropsey, D. Dungaciu., *Why the Black Sea Matters*, "New Strategy Center – Hudson Institute Center for American Seapower", May 2017, p. 10.

[12] S. J. Flanagan, I. A. Chindea, *Russia, NATO, and Black Sea Security Strategy*, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1096677.pdf> (27.11.2020).

tracking radar capabilities for the ballistic missile defenses of the region[13].

In February 2019, Moscow announced the deployment of Tupolev Tu-22M3 Backfire bombers to the Gvardeyskoye airbase in Crimea allegedly to counter U.S. Navy Aegis Ashore missile defense installations in Poland and Romania. These strategic bombers are capable of carrying nuclear weapons. Aegis Ashore is based on radar and missile systems contained aboard American guided-missile destroyers and cruisers but configured as a ground installation. The sites in Romania and Poland can detect, track, target, and launch interceptors to counter a ballistic missile threat coming from the Middle East. The Aegis Ashore system was part of the Obama administration's European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) to missile defense designed to interdict small numbers of missiles from Iran and Syria; if modified, it could defend against Russian missile threats[14].

Since 2011, Russia has been developing hypersonic weapons to strengthen its defensive and offensive forces in the Black Sea. On October 7, 2020, Russia tested the Zircon supersonic anti-aircraft missile. Vladimir Putin was informed about this by Valery Gerasimov, the chief of the General Staff of Russia. According to official data, the Russian Navy will be in service from 2021. This can create a serious threat to military-strategic stability in the Black Sea region and the world.

The U.S. withdrawal from the Treaty on Open Skies is a serious threat to global security. The main reason given by the U.S. is the arbitrary interpretation and recurrent violation of the terms by Russia. Under the Open Skies Treaty, states can conduct reconnaissance flights over each other's territory following predetermined quotas. The parties are obliged to warn each other 72 hours after providing the exact coordinates of the flights, collect intelligence information on each other's territory and enter the data obtained into a single database. An 'open skies' have been created to monitor the implementation of existing disarmament treaties, which is the international legal regime for airspace. The Open Skies Agreement is the third international treaty that the United States has abandoned since the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of Iran and the Treaty on Intermediate-Range and Short-Range Missiles. What matters is whether the United States sticks to

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[13] B. Hodges, J. Bugajski, R. Wojcik, C. Schmiedl, *One Flank, One Threat, One Presence – A Strategy for NATO's Eastern Flank*, "Center for European Policy Analysis", May 2020, p. 43.
[14] *Ibidem*, p. 15.

New START. Agreement on the 'reduction of strategic nuclear weapons' for the next five years, which was signed in 2010 and expires in February 2021. Given this fact, the regional security of the Black Sea is in great danger. The new U.S. administration needs to pursue a correct policy of limiting strategic strike weapons. At the same time, NATO must ensure the security of the Alliance with anti-missile systems.

Conclusion

NATO and the EU need to intensify regional cooperation on new security challenges, including terrorism and hybrid threats, establish appropriate formats and improve coordination, which can play an important role in ensuring security in the Black Sea region. The U.S. and NATO need to develop effective strategies and policies to contain Russian ambitions in the Black Sea region.

In 2019, the United States withdrew from the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles, accusing Russia of secretly creating the 9M729 missile based on the 9M728, which fell under the INF Treaty. According to many military experts, in almost each of these cases, the main driving force that destroyed the agreements was the distrust of the parties to each other. That is why the Open Skies Treaty is important not only as a source of information about other countries but also as a tool for establishing more trusting relationships.

The lack of effective cooperation between the United States / NATO and the Russian Federation in the field of missile defense, and the development of confrontational relations in connection with it, in the event of real missile threats, may due to the lack of coordinated joint measures and effective mechanisms and principles of interaction to prevent a missile attack lead to disastrous consequences. All parties are hardly interested in this development of events. It is also necessary to formulate reliable and comprehensive measures that could contain potential Russian aggression in the Black Sea region.

The main goal of NATO and the European Union is to 'contain' Russia and ensure stability in the Euro-Atlantic region, and the key is to fully understand the threats and risks posed by NATO member states and Russia to strategic strike weapons in the Black Sea region. The violation and cancellation of the aforementioned arms control agreements pose an even greater threat to the regional security of the Black Sea.

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