



The Black Sea - the Geopolitical Springboard of the Region

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Abstract

Security and stability are essential for stable development, successful integration into global political and economic systems, and sustainable economic growth in the Black Sea region and Black Sea countries, including Georgia. During the Cold War, the Black Sea was "divided" into the Republic of Turkey (as a member of NATO) on one hand, and the countries of the former Soviet Union on the other. After the end of the Cold War, the strategic balance in the Black Sea region has undoubtedly changed - the role and geopolitical-economic importance of the Black Sea has noticeably increased. The Black Sea coastal states, including Georgia and Ukraine, have been given a new geopolitical role, new opportunities and new challenges..

Keywords: Black Sea, geopolitics, security, transit hub

Introduction

The Black Sea region has always been a place of intense socio-economic relations, and it has increasingly transformed into a center of attraction for the growing political and economic interaction of various parties. Unfortunately, the political interest in creating dividing lines and zones of influence has a negative impact on the political and economic situation of the region, as well as on the overall picture of society-to-society relations.

The aggression carried out by Russia against Georgia and Ukraine dramatically changed the political and security balance in the Black Sea region and in the long term posed a serious threat to the stability and insurance of Europe. Therefore, NATO's involvement in the process of strengthening the security of the Black Sea is extremely important.

Despite the fact that the safety of the Black Sea region is becoming more and more relevant and it is one of the important challenges for global security, this issue is little studied from an academic point of view, and the interests and policies of the states towards this region are often not clear and consistent.

Main Part

From a geographical point of view, the Black Sea is the only contact point for Georgia with the Euro-Atlantic space, in which integration is Georgia's unwavering, declared foreign ask. In addition, the security of the Black Sea region has a particularly sensitive impact on Georgia's trade, transit and economic opportunities. After Georgia expressed its desire to join the Silk Road project and become a kind of „transit hub", the safety of the Black Sea became an even greater priority for the country. However, the security issue of the Black Sea region is extremely important for Georgia. Especially in the context of NATO integration and deepening of relations with the Alliance.

Recently, the role of Georgia in the security of the Black Sea has been quite relevant. Here, the question arises - what role should Georgia play in the security of the Black Sea, when the country, among other things, wants to become a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization? - If there is a unified NATO proactive strategy, Georgia should have a decisive role, although it should work more actively for it.

First of all, the most important thing is how active Georgia will be in strengthening the security of the Black Sea. Strengthening the surety of the region should be primarily in the interest of the local states, and they should offer their partners a way out of the most difficult situation the region is currently in (Chitaladze, A. 2017).

It is also noteworthy that Georgia and Ukraine do not stand together in this matter and these two countries do not speak the same language. We support each other with "words" that we are partners, although no one can name any specific actions that Ukraine and Georgia have jointly implemented for the security of the Black Sea.

The second main shortcoming, in the context of expressing the role of Georgia, is the suspension of the construction of the port of Anaklia, which raises questions in the partnership. This project should not be considered only from an economic point of view, but was a test of how ready Georgia is

to play its role in strengthening the security of the Black Sea. Unfortunately, Georgia failed this test and could not choose the right path. Probably, because of the Russian factor, we refused very important opportunities.

The recent state of war opens up a new window of opportunity. After the Karabakh war, the West actually saw the danger of losing the region, as Russia further strengthened its influence in the region, and Georgia remained the only hope to protect Western interests and values (Margvelashvili, Z. 2019).

Russia's interest in establishing control over the Black Sea is important in several directions, including:

- Access to "overseas" or "innersea" conflicts and spaces

The importance of the Black Sea has increased along with Russia's military actions in the Middle East and Africa. The Kremlin uses the sea to support its own activities, which includes using ports in the Black Sea (including Crimea) to supply Russian forces involved in conflicts beyond the sea.

- Confrontation with NATO

The presence and strengthening of NATO members at sea is against Russia's interests. Currently, three NATO countries are represented on the Black Sea, including Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey. The first two are less capable of counterbalancing Russia's influence, the only one that has more or less this ability is Turkey, although it, despite being a member of NATO, has often been inclined to take an agreed position with Russia, rather than contribute to the strengthening of NATO's forces at sea.

- The Black Sea as part of the Russian space

Russia's actions clearly show its desire to control the Black Sea on its own. If we recall the Cold War period, only Turkey was a member of NATO, the rest were either Warsaw Pact countries (Romania, Bulgaria), or the Soviet Union. Practically, the largest part was controlled by Russia. Today's goal to regain control of the sea has not changed (Stronski, P. 2021).

In the political arena of the modern period, relations between states and their effective development are important and noteworthy. In particular, several factors affect everything mentioned in a complex way - geographical area, historical development, neighboring countries and etc. But attention should also be focused on the leading subjects of the state's policy and their attitude. Yes, the leader is the most important actor in relations between states, of course, along with other factors as well.

The geopolitical springboard of the Black Sea unites the most complex and tense regions, it is the crossroads of European and Asian cultures, where the area of redistribution of influence arose. A political leader is a figure on whose correct diplomacy a lot depends, and it was the mistakes made by them in the past that led this part of Eurasia to a hot conflict zone today. In

many cases, an idea can be created that the geopolitical situation of the Black Sea is dominated by a single, subjective influence, for which all those internationally recognized values, which have become the constitutionally recognized value of the individual state since the second half of the twentieth century, are equal to zero.

Thus, today, the stability of the geopolitical situation of the Black Sea, together with all the above-mentioned issues, is important to be developed by the political elite and leaders of the respective country:

- Correct political course;
- Internal political stability of the country;
- Effective foreign policy.

These are the three main directions, the effective development of which depends on the proper integration of our country, the European progress, which is a guarantee of peace and security. Directing these three main directions is the prerogative of the political leader and it depends on his wisdom and ability to properly implement it.

Conclusion

For effective action in the face of challenges and new opportunities, the Black Sea region needs a comprehensive approach and close cooperation between NATO and the EU in political, military and economic directions. Such a strategy should take into account the achievements of the Black Sea countries on the path of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, and also ensure greater involvement in the conflict resolution process, while building regional partnership capacities and supporting regional and global projects.

Based on the above, it is possible to make a logical conclusion that, over time, the Black Sea region will become more and more dynamic and more important in terms of regional and international security and further economic growth and development in the region.

Georgia should continue to contribute to the security and stability of the Black Sea region, in accordance with a balanced and pragmatic approach. Despite the above, in today's interdependent world, it would be more and more difficult for a small and vulnerable country like Georgia to protect its legitimate interests without strong partners and allies. Accordingly, the path of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, along with peaceful de-occupation and conflict resolution, with the active involvement of the international community, has no alternative for Georgia. Therefore, full membership in NATO and the European Union will be the most appropriate response to the country's political and economic challenges.

For the security of the Black Sea, it is necessary to create a common command of the Black Sea. NATO's current defense and rapid response strategy cannot respond to the security challenges of the Black Sea, which is

why it is necessary to create a new joint command in relation to the Black Sea.

Due to the fact that today most of the military activities in Europe are carried out in the Black Sea region, I think that it is necessary to create a joint command of the Black Sea, which will combine land, sea and air components.

It is clear that, in addition to the Black Sea countries, other countries also participate in the said command. Forces, capabilities and bases should be redistributed on the perimeter of the Black Sea in order to control the Black Sea water area.

Unfortunately, in the 21st century we have to contend with a country with a 19th century mentality, and delaying action gives a hand to a potential adversary, so immediate action is needed. More NATO in the Black Sea is a guarantee for the security of the Black Sea.

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