

“Never Waste a Crisis”

Post 2019 Pandemic Regional Architecture of the Black Sea Region¹

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Abstract

After the Covid-19 global pandemic, the geopolitical significance of the Black Sea Region (BSR), with changing resources and distribution of power, has changed opening renewed scope of engagement to both internal and external actors. Since 2019 as the epidemiological crisis has been strengthening nation-states, showing the weakness of international organizations, and raising doubts about the extent to which international society is fulfilling its declared values and principles of human rights and ethics, it has spread new perspectives for countries around the Black Sea.

This article explores the strategic importance of the BSR for the six coastal states of Georgia, Ukraine, Russia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and their policies since 2019. It further explores the strategies that they are using *vis-à-vis* each other to assert their influence in the region. The article argues that the BSR, due to its strategic and transit location, being the subject of interest of several actors has been affected by an unequal distribution of the balance of power since 2019. Russia, Turkey, the United States of America (US), NATO and the European Union (EU) member states, being particularly active, continue playing significant roles in the region affecting its political milieu. The interplay of these policies is reflected in coexistence as well as confrontation among the BSR countries. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's power, standing out from other actors, with its aspirations within the region is increasing after the Covid-19 pandemic. Along with Russia, Turkey has also relative strength and a military advantage compared to other countries in the region. Pandemic has opened up additional opportunities for Russia's domestic and foreign engagement in its near abroad of the BSR, making it one of the principal architects of the post-crisis world order. “Never waste a good crisis” – these words attributed to Winston Churchill are relevant for the BSR today as never before reflecting Russia's policy that neither Russia nor other state has missed during the systemic crisis triggered by the coronavirus pandemic in terms of rethinking their regional and global policies.

Considering this constellation, the first part of this article discusses regional powers in the BSR Russia and Turkey and their strategies, the next part analyses engagement of Russia in Georgia and Ukraine, the following part brings to the forefront the strategies of Russia towards the BSR post Covid-19 pandemic, the forth part highlights policy proposals for the US to engage in the region considering the Russian primacy. This study examines the period from 2019 up to 2021. Within the project methodology, the research has reviewed the latest books, articles, and papers and devised policy proposals for further consideration. Limitations of the study were scarcity of sources published since 2019, as literature from 2019 onwards, with an emphasis on Covid-19 order, is virtually limited due to its recentness.

Keywords

Black Sea Region, Georgia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Russia, Turkey, US, NATO, EU, post-Covid 19 world order

¹ This article is a product of the White House Simulation project hosted for the first time in the Georgian academic environment at the International Black Sea University IBSU, with participation of the students from the Foreign Policy Analysis, Global Governance, and Research Methods courses lead by Assoc. Prof. Dr Nino Kereselidze, in the scope of her Visiting Scholar's term at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at the Harvard University. The simulation, providing policy recommendations to the President of the US regarding their engagement in the Black Sea region covered state-of-the-art resources from international universities allowing the authors to review the latest articles and apply them to their course-works, Bachelor's theses, and this publication. The authors are particularly grateful to Dr. c. Natia Gamkrelidze, Fellow from the Harvard, Malmö, and Linneus universities, for initiating this project right from Sweden. The authors would next like to express their gratitude for peer reviews from other participants of the project including Tinatin Pichkhadze, Mariam Nebieridze and Levan Dzindzibadze. They are further grateful to the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Prof. Dr Tamar Shioshvili, and the Program Coordinator Dr Baia Ivaneishvili for encouraging this collaborative publication. The authors are particularly deeply thankful to Mariam Mardaleishvili, USAID and State Audit Office Fellow and Analyst Assistant for supportive editorial checking.

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Introduction

This article analyzes the Black Sea region, its importance and the subsequent interplay of the five main actors Russia, Turkey, the US, the NATO, and EU since the Covid-19 pandemic. The article, dividing the main actors involved in the BSR into three categories, depending on their geopolitical status, regional interests and the instruments by which they pursue them, devises policy recommendations for the US President Joe Biden to pursue their transatlantic policy. The first category comprises the regional powers, claiming historical roots over the Black Sea: Russia and Turkey. The second category includes littoral states, such as Ukraine, Georgia, Bulgaria and Romania. The third category is composed of global players, with their interests in the Black Sea: the US, the NATO, and EU.

The Black Sea region, with its strategic transit function and military significance, has been an object of interest for many countries and organizations with a high degree of interest to gain influence in the region. According to most of the authors (Fiona Houston, Duncan W. Wood, and Derek M. Robinson 2010, Lincoln A. Mitchell 2008, Carol Weaver 2011, Catalin Mihai Gherman 2017, Stephen F. Larrabee 2009, Thrassy N. Marketos 2009, Boris Toucas 2017, Dimitrios Triantaphyllou 2009, Sergii Glebov 2009, Andrey Kortunov 2020, Alexandra Kuimova and Siemon T. Wezeman 2018, Fyodor Lukanov 2010, Oleksandr Pavliuk 2003, Ayça Ergun and Hamlet Isaxanlı 2011) several factors prevent the development of the region, such as ethnic and national identities, the failure of democratic processes, energy and pipelines, and the authority of the great powers. Cultural and historical differences, protracted conflicts and tensions between states, such as between Russia and Georgia, and Russia and Ukraine make the region volatile. From Russia's view, its former Soviet space should be left beyond any other influence, especially from the US, and NATO. This is evident when Russia is constantly trying to undermine arising regional cooperation not initiated by itself. As Andrey Makarychev and Alexander Sergunin (2017) have noted, another great power in the region, and member of NATO – Turkey has strong influence and resources in the region. Although Russia and Turkey have a history of imperial confrontation on the Black Sea, holding a common vision to distance themselves from the West, they now seem ready to put aside the past. Other external actors the US and NATO, contributing hugely to the development of the region, are gradually finding themselves with their level of interest decreased.

Regional powers in the BSR of Turkey and Russia and their strategies

The BSR distinguishes with the peculiar regional architecture, the main players and their geographic and political interests. The strategic importance of the BSR has made the region's development particularly attractive to both internal and external players as noted by Dimitrios Triantaphyllou (2009) and Alina Homorozean (2010). After collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia and Turkey, became the major actors in the BSR, initiating various regional cooperation organizations in the Black Sea, including Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC), Black Sea Naval Forces (Blackseafor), and Operation Black Sea Harmony (OBSh). While Turkey and Russia have different strategic interests, they follow the same mission, that of becoming a regional leader in the BSR. Their foreign policy agendas concerning the Black Sea at certain points overlap, with, both countries wishing to distance the US from the Black Sea for military operations against the Middle East and prevent the BSR littoral countries from becoming NATO members. They also compete for regional hegemony, especially in the South Caucasus and Caspian area seeing the BSR as a strategic corridor connecting Europe and Central Asian regions. Turkey's foreign policy ambition is to become a major energy hub for European security. As Mustafa Aydın (2009) notes, Turkey relies on its bridging role between demand and supply points and also aspires to become an EU member. Turkey is also a classical US partner and a strong member state of NATO. With this capacity, any comprehensive regional cooperation in the region obviously presupposes Turkey's presence.

Turkey's interests are not only geographically strategic, and economic, but cultural and ethnic too. The country's self-awareness has increased during the last decade. As a result, territories that had formerly been seen as lying beyond its orbit currently fall within its strategic responsibility area. Particularly after the Russia-Georgian war, Turkey has been pursuing stabilization of its volatile strategic neighborhood, as well as security of energy flows and alternative transportation routes such as Baku-Tbilisi-Ceiyán (Mitchell 2008). However, the Crimea annexation did not trigger a harsh reaction from Turkey, although this had direct repercussions on the Crimean Tatar community, supported by Turkey, mainly due to its interests in energy resources. For all these reasons, Turkey is working hard to improve the existing regional organizations and initiatives. Following Houston, Wood, and Robinson (2010), Turkey was the first to take a proactive attitude and set up the BSEC and Blackseafor, in an attempt to fill in strategic void. With this rising confidence, every Turkish initiative on the Caucasus was somehow hindered by Russia. Nowadays, these two regional players have started co-operating while competing for Europe's supply routes. As Alina Homorozean (2010) called it, Turkish-Russian relations now reached the level of "multidimensional strategic partnership", which is good for regional stability and security, yet much still has to be done for this rapprochement. One of the latest Turkish regional initiatives is the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform (CSCP), was established in order to make a fresh proposal by securing Russia's involvement, which could set the basis of an enduring regional security regime. For the last two decades, Turkey has also supported many important initiatives for the BSR's integration into the global economy.

For Russia, the key strategic value of the Black Sea relies in the possibility of controlling the energy resources of the Caspian Sea. As Fyodor Lukanov (2010) noted, consolidating its position of regional power, Russia follows a strategy of reassertion of its influence in the "near abroad". As the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin noted in 2003, "the Azov and Black Sea regions are Russia's strategic area of interest" (Stronski, 2021). Bearing this interest in mind, Russia is focused mainly on two goals: keeping con-

control first over its former traditional sphere of influence and second, on energy production and transit infrastructure of the key energy resources. Other interests include: preventing NATO engagement in Ukraine and Georgia and fighting separatist incentives widely. Whilst the existing Caspian region is a key strategic issue of the Russian foreign policy, the BSR has been somehow neglected, even though, historically Russia has considered the BSR a crucial component of its national security (Glebov, 2009). For economic reasons, Russia is seeking to provide new infrastructure for energy transit to Europe from the Caspian region, which aims to reduce the rationale for projects such as Nabucco, that would connect the region's resources to the European market through the Trans-Caspian pipeline and Turkey. This shows that, due to security of energy supply, Russia still balances cooperation with competition-based behavior towards other BSR states.

Recently, with Ukraine's and Georgia's Western trajectories, transit of the European gas through the BSR, considering North Caucasus secessionism, the BSR has become even more important to Russia. As Mitat Celikpala (2010) notes, fearing encirclement by the West, Russia increased its participation in regional initiatives to counteract NATO and EU. For the very same reasons, Russia keeps a significant regional military presence. Analysts including, Thrassy Marketos (2009), claim, however, that the Black Sea fleet is of a more symbolic presence adding that of prestige, than a real military concern. The extent of naval and military power lies much more in its ability to project power, as witnessed in Georgia and Ukraine, and its domination by virtue of land-power and territory.

The process of accelerated militarization of Crimea significantly affects the balance of forces in the Black Sea in favor of Russia. The unrestricted access to Sevastopol (Crimea) and Tartus (Syria) ports offers Russia the possibility to deploy forces to the north and south of Turkey, that is not particularly acceptable by the government in Ankara. However, the Turkish authorities did not express their concerns until 2015, when the collapse of a Russian aircraft that violated Turkey's airspace on the Syrian border, created tensions between the two countries. Shortly after the incident, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that the Black Sea became a "Russian lake" and called on NATO to strengthen its posture in the region (Ivan, 2012). Consequently relaunching Turkey's relations with Russia was bolstered by Western criticism of President Erdoğan's antidemocratic skirmishes following the *coup d'état*, disagreements with the EU over Syrian refugees, and the US refusal to extradite the Muslim cleric Fetullah Gülen (Gherman, 2017). At the military level, the relaunching of relations between the two countries culminated since 2017 with the signing of an agreement for arming Turkey's air defense missile systems. The recent developments in Turkey-Russia relations suggest that if Turkey-West disputes are perpetuated, Ankara can be attracted more easily in a closer partnership with Russia, even though this will diminish Turkey's influence in the region. The rapid development of Russia-Turkey relations, along with the deterioration of Turkey's relations with the US and EU, the risk of a new wave of refugees to Europe from Afghanistan following the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and Taliban's takeover, coupled with Covid-19 social insecurity are variables that will most certainly influence security developments in the BSR region.

Comparison of regional actors of Russia and Turkey

To compare material "power" of states in the BSR region in security and military terms requires measuring their relative material capabilities. During the Cold War period, security related balance in the BSR region favored the Soviet Union and its sphere of influence (Pavliuk 2003). In the west, east, and north of the Black Sea, the Soviet Union, Romania, and Bulgaria were parties to the Warsaw Pact, while NATO member Turkey defended the southern flank of the Western Alliance. Despite relative decrease compared to the Cold War years, Russian presence and its military capabilities in the BRS remain significant whereas about 60% of total capabilities belong to Russia while Ukraine and Turkey each possess less than one-third of Russian capabilities (Ozgur Ozdamar, 2010).

Another way to analyze the nature of the balance of power in the region is to study military spending trends. As increase in military spending might be an early indicator of military confrontation, an analysis of military sizes and expenditure of regional powers may be helpful for awareness and conflict prevention. With an important aspect of military balance, Russia and Turkey maintain the largest military capabilities in the region. Upfront before the Russia-Georgia war in August 2008, in 2007 Russia lead military expenditure in the region with US\$35 billion, followed by Turkey (US\$11 billion) and Greece (US\$9 billion). In 2009, Russia's army, with an enormous reserve capacity of 20 million, dominated the regional balance of power. This obviously explains why other smaller powers aim to balance the Russian effect in the region with the US-NATO presence. Russia and Turkey maintain the leading armed forces in the region in terms of military equipment type and quality. The second-largest personnel capacity is the Turkish armed forces with more than half a million active and 378,700 on reserves with a similar balance in navies, armies and air forces. Despite the Russia-Georgia conflict, NATO's Black Sea defense spending has been steadily declining from 2008 to 2019, even before the onset of the economic crisis, reaching its lowest level in 2019. Given these trends, NATO Black Sea countries have been more security consumers than security providers since 2000. By all accounts, military security on the Black Sea can be ensured by several powers: Russia, Turkey, and to some extent Ukraine and Greece. Perhaps this also explains why Turkey wants to involve Russia and Ukraine in all regional security initiatives.

With respect to regional cooperation formats, the Black Sea countries are also members of the BSEC, which was founded in 1992, aiming to develop economic, social and technological relations between 12 member countries Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine. Since the 2000s, the Black Sea region leaders have been meeting for other regional matters such as maritime, coast guard, illegal migration, and smuggling by sea. Another cooperative effort is GUAM – Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova circle, established in 1999, aiming to create a political,

economic and strategic alliance between member countries, was to strengthen the sovereignty and independence of the Black Sea countries. However, the GUAM turned out not to be a powerful and effective cooperation with the potential to become beneficial cooperation among regional actors.

Russia-Georgia and Russia-Ukraine regional relations

Russia's foreign policy is driven by the identity of a superpower, and the hegemonic tendencies around the BSR. Russia, disregarding the current world order, its main foreign policy objective is formation of the Eurasian power pole as one of the main centers of power in this multipolar world, ending NATO's monopoly on security in continental Europe and preventing NATO and EU enlargement. Russia's efforts to strengthen its position and the growing militarization of the Black Sea are obvious in the region. For example, Russia has major Black Sea Fleet bases in Sevastopol and Novorossiysk. Based on this military presence, the region is of great strategic importance for NATO and the EU. This was further confirmed at the 2016 NATO Warsaw Summit and the 2017 NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Bucharest, as well as in the 2011 Black Sea Strategy adopted by the European Parliament (Chitaladze, 2018). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, participation in the NATO-Russia Council or involvement in the Partnership for Peace (PFP) program with NATO showed some signs of warming relations between Russia and the West. The US and Russia have also worked together to stabilize issues such as counterterrorism and Afghanistan. There is a certain format of the "Special Partnership" with Russia, based on four common spaces as Russia desired to be treated separately from other Black Sea countries. However, despite some degree of partnership and cooperation, Russian military intervention in Georgia and Ukraine has changed the climate.

Considering its ambitions, Russia, trying to pressure the regional countries of Georgia and Ukraine, will prevent them from joining NATO. As Alexandra Kuimova and Siemon T. Wezeman (2018) observe, the manifestation of this hindrance was the August war against Georgia in 2008. After the war Georgia, with 20% of its occupied territories, perceiving Russia as an aggressive and major security threat, has tried to reconsider its defense politics. From the perspective of Georgia, the solution for defense is its membership in NATO and accession to the EU. Therefore, Georgia is actively participating and supporting NATO activities in the Black Sea region as it hopes this to be a prerequisite for stability. Post-pandemic situation has increased Russian actions in terms of hybrid towards Georgia. This has been reflected in numerous destabilizing outbreaks in Georgia, including the opposition to the water power plant construction in the mountainous bordering region with Russia, the rise in criminal activities, suppression of human rights expression, freedom of media, and increasing religious orthodox fundamentalism.

After August 2008 events in Georgia, developments in Ukraine have once again called into question the post-Cold War order, which meant the US dominance and hegemony around the world. Ukraine has had good relations with Russia until 2013 because it did not aspire to NATO integration. However, the situation escalated after Russia effectively went against Ukrainian President Yanukovich from concluding an association agreement, and the government also decided to suspend the process of signing it with the EU. Russia's with its military interests perceiving Ukraine as its backyard has taken positions in the Crimean Peninsula. Russia violated Ukraine's sovereignty and at first recognized the independence of the Peninsula and then annexed it. Sevastopol which is the main city of the Peninsula and the central naval base, is of strategic relevance as the second-largest territory in the Black Sea after the Bosphorus and Dardanelles. Moscow needs the Black Sea to get to and beyond the Mediterranean Sea to carry out economy and military operations outside its immediate neighbors as well (Stronski, 2021). As a result of the Crimean occupation, Ukraine lost 70% of its fleet. Eventually, Russia, strained relations with international organizations and individual countries limiting themselves with the economic sanctions. political isolation, and demonstration of mass protest.

Even today, the conflicting interests of powerful states and other actors, NATO and the EU, are at odds in the Black Sea region. After the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007, the European and Euro-Atlantic, as Oksana Antonenko (2009) noted, actors gained a potentially dominant position on the Black Sea region. Both Bulgaria and Romania have long been regarded most vulnerable to Russian influence, for a variety of historical reasons. President Rosen Plevneliev, from 2012 to 2017, being a harsh opponent of Russia openly favored a bigger NATO presence in the Black Sea region. More than 90% of gas in Bulgaria, home and industrial consumption is sourced from Russia without alternate supply. Only one nuclear power station, Kozloduy Nuclear Power Plant (NPP), produces 30% of the country's electricity, with two Russian nuclear reactors using Russian nuclear fuel. Moreover, Russia is Bulgaria's most important trading partner, ranking first among importers mostly due to the oil and gas industries (Ergun and Isaxanli 2011). Plevneliev's successor president Rumen Radev, in contrast preserved tight connections with Russia respecting its presence in the oil sector, in state security, media, and political parties, yet also maintained positive relations with the EU and NATO members. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea, given the growing Russian position and militarization of the Black Sea basin, the region is of even greater political and military importance to the EU and NATO.

As a result of the developments in the region, each of the actors involved began to grow at a rapid pace of militarization. Against the background of the post-Covid-19 pandemic world order, with the primacy of the state as the main actor in international relations, the signs of a new reality seem to be appearing on the Black Sea horizon of the EU's eastern neighbourhood.

Russia's post Covid-19 engagement in the BSR

The coronavirus pandemic, like other major global crises, yet with completely different amplitude, has created additional challenges to international society and foreign policies of nation states. Over recent years, Russia's leadership has insistently advanced its Westphalian picture of international relations, emphasizing the importance of sovereignty, and questioning the stability of Western solidarity and the effectiveness of multilateral diplomacy. The global pandemic has made a particularly severe blow to the US and the European countries adjusting the system of foreign policy priorities. Whilst proposals for curbing international commitments were popular in the US long before the Covid-19 pandemic, the pandemic will most likely be a catalyst for such sentiments affecting foreign policy practices (Kortunov, 2020). This development might manifest, in particular, in curtailing of bilateral and multilateral financial and economic aid programs for the global South and in the reduced military and political commitments to developing partner states such as the Black Sea countries. Such a power vacuum in the Middle East, Africa, South Asia and the post-Soviet space will likely create additional opportunities for Russia's foreign policy as well as the US to engage boldly in the BSR (Weaver, 2011). The balance of opportunities and threats depends on many variables, primarily on how Russia ultimately behaves within post-Covid-19 compared to other states, and particularly its international opponents in face of China. Any comparative advantage that Moscow has in fighting the virus, be it a relative scale of economic losses, will expand Moscow's range of opportunities in the post-virus regional engagement. During the Covid-19, the Russian political elites had differing opinions related to assisting foreign states. On the one hand, the pandemic certainly has increased isolationist attitudes and reduced public support for a forceful foreign policy. This has increased foreign policy threats and curtailed opportunities that the regional countries should take into consideration. Therefore this period turned out to be a big challenge for both the BSR and the whole world (Toucas, 2017). In the end, Russia's primacy in the Black Sea, is posing a further challenge to small countries.

Policy Proposals for the US to engage in the BSR region

The US distinguishes with strategic engagement and partnership relations with the BSR countries. This engagement needs to be strengthened considering the rising influence of other actors in the region. With the most valuable transit routes through the Black Sea, the region has a special value for Russia and Turkey. As most of the authors including Stephen J. Flanagan, Anika Binnendijk, Irina A. Chindea (2020), and Sharyl Cross (2015), agree, with several challenges to regional security in the Black Sea, including prolonged conflicts, political instability in the countries with an added economic and social implications of post pandemic, Russia will most likely try to intensify the pressure on the BSR countries through existing mechanisms and various political strategies. The US therefore needs to be more assertive about its involvement. With this increasing pressure in mind, it is desirable for the US Government to increase its unified, coherent vision of Black Sea security, reflected in a more serious engagement.

With important strategic vision of the Black Sea region expressed in various US strategic documents, even more detailed and active policies need to be developed. One of such most recent documents that scholarly community is suggesting is "Stronger Together: A Strategy to Revitalize Transatlantic Power" (Burns, 2020) drafted at Belfer Center within the Harvard Kennedy School of Governance emphasizing transatlantic challenges that the world faces affecting the Black Sea region and the actions of its actors across the region. The specific challenges are related to an aggressive Russia, a more self-confident China, and a revived authoritarianism (Ibid. 2). As the report states, against this background, it is necessary to create a new order that will fit into this complex system (Ibid. 5). This is possible through political, economic, military and technological changes. It is therefore desirable that the US develops and implements a variety of collaborative initiatives to enhance stability in the Black Sea region. In particular, to achieve the common goal of security in the Black Sea region, the US and transatlantic community must develop several key strategies: a) Effective containment policy and credible collective defense; b) Regional economic security diminishing resource control; and c) Stability and security in countries aspiring to NATO. The US is seeking more support for transatlantic engagement in the region to assist the Black Sea region with a variety of grant programs and projects, including security, economy, and social assistance to actors involved in the region. Yet, it is desirable that the US takes more active steps together with the EU for supporting security of the region. On soft power front, the US needs to offer important grant programs in education, culture, and business (U.S. Embassy, 2021). It would be desirable for the United States to make greater use of soft power for establishing more regional cooperation and unification, and strengthen the existing one.

Apart from the US, NATO should also strengthen its engagement in the regional countries. Since 2014, when the Russian-Turkish and Russian and NATO military forces collided in the region's naval space, the Black Sea revealed itself to be a tension point between Russia and NATO (Chitaladze, 2018). The US should therefore be keen to continue and further strengthen its participation in maritime and naval activities, particularly in the NATO-led naval exercises across the Black Sea. It is also noteworthy that NATO's open-door policy with the existing Georgia and Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic perspectives play a major role in stabilizing the Black Sea region (Cross, 2015). It is therefore noteworthy that the Alliance has an active dialogue with Georgia and Ukraine in the process of developing initiatives. NATO coherence policy is of particular importance for the stability of the Black Sea region, with the active involvement of NATO member states as well. Given all this, NATO should redevelop a strategic action plan that will enable it to expand its area of operation aimed at increasing and developing capabilities in the Black Sea region.

Discussion

Considerable political, economic, and social changes have taken place in the BSR since 2019 pandemic. This article splitting the main actors involved in the BSR into three categories, depending on their geographic status, regional interests the instruments for their perusal, has studied in-depth the roles of Russia and Turkey in the BSR. While participating in regional initiatives the countries often compete for sub-regional (Ukraine, Georgia, Romania, Bulgaria) or regional leadership (Turkey, Russia).

There is a clear overlap of both influence and interests of global actors in the wider region with the multiplicity of actors with increased regional integration and multilateral institutionalism. Yet, this article has drawn on a more detailed analysis of Russia's and Turkey's involvement in the BSR given their regional leadership. Russia continues to be a domineering actor in this region. Currently, BSR regional cooperation lacks sufficient leadership. Therefore, considering a view based on comparative advantages analysis in this article, the Black Sea cooperation framework should concentrate on three main pillars: good governance, economy (including energy and transport), and security. These could be supported by the existing institutional framework facilitated by the US increasing engagement.

After political and economic post-pandemic transition, instead of advancing a culture of cooperation given shared transnational healthcare considers, the Black Sea region seems unstable and insecure. The ambitions of the US and EU to integrate the region highlights the playground for great power politics with Russia's hybrid war policies. Under such circumstances, historical grievances and unresolved conflicts in the *de facto* states in the region are likely to spark into more volatile conflicts. Relations of Russia with Georgia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, and Turkey, and their interrelationships is affecting political climate in the region. Ensuring security in the BSR after Covid pandemic with added fragility has become more difficult.

Considering the Black Sea's role of a bridge between Europe and Asia, this article provided a short overview of the existing regional cooperation framework and its current implications. The utmost importance to promote social, human and economic development in the BSR is clear, as well as security for all countries and confidence between them, that would result in deeper cooperation around the issues that transcends national boundaries for building stronger bilateral and multilateral relations and effective regional goals.

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