



INTERNATIONAL
INSTITUTE FOR
PEACE



Multilateraler Dialog KAS



The New Black Sea: How the War in Ukraine is Reshaping the Region

Expert Conference

29 November 2022



diplomatische
akademie **wien**
Vienna School of International Studies
École des Hautes Études Internationales de Vienne

Context

The war in Ukraine has led to a profound transformation of both the European security system as well as the entire global order. One of the regions that has felt the impacts of the war most directly is the Black Sea.

The Black Sea spans countries with deep historical and cultural ties that have nevertheless failed to form a fully-fledged region, in part due to the diversity of its countries. The region includes members of both the EU (Bulgaria and Romania) and NATO (Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey) as well as the post-Soviet, Western-oriented states of Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia – all of which have had military conflicts with Russia. In addition, Armenia and Azerbaijan are deeply tied to the Black Sea region through their close economic and security relations with Russia and Turkey, respectively. Finally, Russia remains an important player in the area, although its presence in the Black Sea has decreased significantly after the collapse of the USSR – a reality that the Kremlin has been trying to alter by force in Ukraine since 2014.

The Western political community has often viewed the Black Sea region as an area of both opportunity and potential threat. Its energy resources and ability to function as a buffer zone between the West and the conflicts of the Middle East are cited as assets, along with the desire of several of its states to join the ‘free world.’ Consequently, Bulgaria and Romania joined NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007, while Georgia and Ukraine expressed similar aspirations in the 2000s. In light of this background, political elites in the West – especially in the US and the EU – aimed to support the creation of a region that would share their liberal democratic values and principles.

At the same time, the security gap between the West and Russia remained an issue of concern. The development of liberal democracies in the Black Sea region was viewed through a security lens in the West, while it became clear by the late 1990s that the initial steps toward democratization in Russia had faltered. In addition, military conflicts in Georgia, Transnistria in Moldova, and later Ukraine challenged the principles of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Furthermore, Russia’s desire to be seen as an equal power to the West, rather than another member of what the Kremlin perceived to be the US-led hegemonic order, led decision makers in both the West and Russia to perceive their respective interests in the Black Sea region in terms of competition rather than cooperation.

Another major actor in the Black Sea region is Turkey, which has sought to straddle the two camps. A NATO member since 1952, the country has taken a separate – and at times confrontational – course from its transatlantic allies. It formed a situational alliance with Russia in Syria and has been at odds with the US over its support for Kurdish forces. Concerning the war in Ukraine, Turkey has refrained from joining Western sanctions on Russia, although it has closed the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits to Russian warships. Furthermore, Ankara’s support for Azerbaijan in the second Karabakh war in 2020 further enhanced its influence in the South Caucasus. Baku won the war largely thanks to Ankara’s military support, with Turkish troops now deployed in Azerbaijan. Russia and Turkey have jointly monitored the ceasefire after the war in 2020.

Apart from the obvious danger of the ongoing war in Ukraine, other threats to the region loom large, including the spillover of fighting to Transnistria in neighboring Moldova, the proliferation and illicit trade in weapons, human trafficking, and disruptions to global food and energy supplies. In addition, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh and beyond is still very much on the agenda.

Finally, Western sanctions against Russia are hitting the country's economy hard. With the EU searching for replacements to Russian energy supplies, other countries in the Black Sea region – especially Azerbaijan – are becoming increasingly important partners.

This expert conference will gather academics and practitioners from the countries of the Black Sea region to discuss issues including ongoing military developments in Ukraine, the role of Turkey in the Black Sea region, developments in the South Caucasus, as well as the economic implications of the war, including for energy security.



Organisers

International Institute for Peace

Konrad Adenauer Foundation for Multilateral Dialogue

Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies

With the support of the City of Vienna
and the The Diplomatic Academy of Vienna

Venue

9:00-17:00 Sky Lounge (Oskar Morgenstern-Platz 1, 1090 Vienna)

19:00-21:00 Diplomatic Academy (Favoritenstraße 15A, 1040 Vienna)

Registration

<https://forms.gle/ZFd67kYm2hRkNA3NA>

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Tuesday, November 29

Venue: Sky Lounge, Oskar-Morgenstern-Platz 1, Vienna 1090

9:00-9:10

Welcoming words by organisers

9:10-9:45

Introduction and Assessment of the Current Stage of the War in Ukraine

The Ukrainian counteroffensive in mid-September has changed the dynamics of a war that had earlier looked likely to become a war of attrition. What is the condition of the war today? How is it likely to develop over the coming winter?

The discussion will include a short overview and analysis of ongoing developments on the battlefield in Ukraine by a military expert.

Expert: Walter Feichtinger

10:00-11:30

Workshop 1. Turkey: The Gatekeeper of the Black Sea

Turkey has taken on a precarious position trying to balance between Russia, Ukraine, and the West in the ongoing war. On one hand, as Ukraine's largest foreign investor, it has supplied Kyiv with Bayraktar drones and closed the Black Sea straits to Russian warships. On the other hand, Russia remains an important trade and investment partner for the Turkish economy – which is currently facing a serious crisis – as well as a major energy supplier for the country. Wheat from Ukraine and Russia also accounts for about 80% of Turkey's imports. At the same time, Ankara has tried to make the best of its position, acting as a mediator between Kyiv and Moscow (for example, it brokered the grain export deal together with the UN) and pursuing its own long-standing geopolitical goals in the Middle East (in exchange for Turkey's support of the NATO accession of Sweden and Finland, President Erdogan demanded that the two countries abandon their support for Kurdish forces in Syria). Turkey has refused to join Western sanctions against Russia, citing its concerns over potential Russian retaliation in Syria. Domestic politics – including the upcoming elections in 2023 – a weak economy, and the personal understanding between Erdogan and Putin have also played into Ankara's position on the war.

What are Turkey's goals in the region? How does it perceive its role in the Black Sea region? What kind of power is it: Western/Eastern, authoritarian/democratic,

neutral/pragmatic/opportunistic? How are domestic developments influencing its foreign policy? How have Ankara's relations with the EU and NATO evolved lately?

Experts: **Mustafa Aydin**
Daria Isachenko
Dimitrios Triantaphyllou

Moderation: **Stephanie Fenkart**

11:30-12:00 Coffee break

12:00-13:30

Workshop 2. South Caucasus and the wider Black Sea region

With Russia weakened as a consequence of its military campaign in Ukraine, the centrifugal forces drawing its neighbours in other directions are growing. This trend is particularly evident in the South Caucasus, including Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. The traditional geopolitical boundaries that have defined the South Caucasus in the post-Cold War era are now shifting as the region grows increasingly connected to the Eastern Mediterranean and the broader Middle East. This is evidenced by expanding trade and economic ties, changes in energy markets, and the potential for new infrastructure projects. As the EU strives to become independent from Russian energy supplies, its connectivity to Caspian energy supplies through the Black Sea and the South Caucasus has become increasingly critical. Further integration would also enable more strategic and commercial access for the EU to Central Asia, while balancing Russian, Iranian, and Chinese influence in the region. Strengthening the EU's ties to the Black Sea region and the South Caucasus would be beneficial in the medium-term for both EU economies as well as its security architecture. It would also draw attention to the region's unresolved conflicts, including those in Transnistria, Crimea, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh.

What are currently the strongest links between the Black Sea region and the South Caucasus? How are Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan positioning themselves on the war in Ukraine? What are the entry points for increased EU engagement in the Black Sea region and the South Caucasus? How are the region's unresolved conflicts impacted by the war in Ukraine? What influence does Turkey wield to positively influence the transformation of the region's unresolved conflicts?

Experts: **Alexander Iskandaryan**
Kornely Kakachia
Leila Alieva

Moderation: **Stephan Malerius**

13:30-15:00 Lunch

15:00-16:30

Workshop 3. Black Sea Economics: Impacts of the War in Ukraine

Ensuring adequate energy reserves for the coming winter as well as boosting energy security in the long term have been central concerns for many EU member states in recent months. Consequently, the EU is working to diversify its energy sources through new partnerships in the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Eastern Mediterranean. This diversification necessarily involves Turkey, given its energy transit links to suppliers such as Iran, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan. Outside of the EU, countries such as Moldova continue to suffer severe economic consequences as a result of the war in Ukraine, as Russia has banned almost all agricultural exports, and remain largely dependent on Russian energy, with EU investment aiming to increase the country's energy efficiency and security.

Is the EU prepared to phase out Russian oil and gas entirely? Could Turkey play an increased role as a transit hub for energy supplies to the EU? Does the gas deal between Azerbaijan and the EU correspond to Brussels' climate and governance principles? How will Ukraine itself cope this winter, given that its energy infrastructure (including pipelines and gas facilities) has already been significantly damaged? How can Moldova diversify its energy supplies and reduce its dependence on Russian gas?

Experts: **Denis Cenusă**
 Giovanni Sgaravatti
 Veronika Movchan

Moderation: **Vasily Astrov**

Public program

VENUE CHANGE: Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, Favoritenstraße 15A, 1040 Vienna

19:00-20:30

Panel Discussion. The New Black Sea: How the War in Ukraine is Reshaping the Region

This public panel event will discuss the broader implications of the war in Ukraine for the Black Sea region, including its effects on military and energy security, domestic political stability, and opportunities for the EU to engage in the region. The panel will also make conclusions based on the results of the workshops during the day.

Panelists: **Vasyl Filipchuk**
Leila Alieva
Richard Grievesson
Daria Isachenko

Moderation: **Hannes Swoboda**

20:30 Reception

List of speakers

Alexander Iskandaryan

Director of the Caucasus Institute, Yerevan

Benedikt Zanzinger

Policy Advisor, Konrad Adenauer Foundation for Multilateral Dialogue, Vienna

Daria Isachenko

Associate Researcher at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin

Denis Cenusa

Associated Expert at the Eastern European Studies Centre (Vilnius) and think tank "Expert-Grup" (Chisenau)

Dimitri Tryantaphillou

Professor of International Relations, Kadir Has University, Istanbul

Giovanni Sgaravatti

Research Analyst, Breugel

Hannes Swoboda

President of the International Institute for Peace (IIP) and of the Sir Peter Ustinov Institute for Prejudice Research and Prevention; former MEP

Kornely Kakachia

Director of the Georgian Institute of Politics and Professor of Political Science, Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University

Leila Alieva

Affiliate at Russian and East European Studies, Oxford School for Global and Area Studies, Oxford University

Marylia Hushcha

Researcher at the International Institute for Peace in Vienna, Austria

Mustafa Aydin

President, International Relations Council of Turkey

Richard Grievesson

Deputy Director, Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies

Stephanie Fenkart

Director of the International Institute for Peace in Vienna, Austria

Stephan Malerius

Head of Regional Programme Political Dialogue South Caucasus, Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Tbilisi

Vasily Astrov

Economist, Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (WIIW)

Vasyl Filipchuk

Senior Advisor, International Center for Policy Studies, Kyiv

Veronika Movchan

Academic Director, Head of the Center for Economic Studies, Kyiv

Walter Feichtinger

Brigadier, President of the Center for Strategic Analysis
