

TÜRKIYE'S POLICY TOWARDS THE BLACK SEA REGION IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE RUSSIAN FULL-SCALE INVASION OF UKRAINE: IS CHANGE POSSIBLE?

Author:

Dr. Yevgeniya Gaber

Türkiye's policy towards the Black Sea region is traditionally based on several key principles: ensuring the strict implementation of the 1936 Montreux Convention; preventing the expansion of the naval presence of non-Black Sea NATO member countries in the Black Sea; balancing Russia's naval-military power by strengthening Türkiye's own capabilities and cooperating with other regional countries; implementing the "regional ownership" approach, which limits the involvement of extra-regional players in the regional issues.

On one hand, Ankara's position prevents any initiatives aimed at expanding NATO's naval presence in the region, limiting Ukraine's ability to resist Russian aggression. On the other hand, Türkiye's strategic interests require deterring Russia, as the strengthening of Moscow's positions in the Black Sea and regional conflicts poses a threat to its national security. Türkiye's consistent support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and the closure of the Straits for both Russian and NATO warships immediately after the start of the full-scale invasion indicates Ankara's desire to prevent the transformation of the Black Sea into a "Russian lake" and, at the same time, avoid direct confrontation at sea between Russia and NATO.

It is expected that this position will remain unchanged, and Türkiye's support to Ukraine will involve formats that do not entail the direct presence of NATO ships in the Black Sea (except for the navies of Romania and Bulgaria). Adjustment of this position is possible, though unlikely, only in case of a dramatic shift in the balance of power in favor of Russia, such as the occupation of the southern regions of Ukraine by Russia. Therefore, the Ukrainian side should focus on finding cooperation formats that do not require reconsideration of the Montreux Convention, adhere to the principle of "regional ownership", and take into account Ankara's desire to play a leadership role in regional initiatives.

Historical roots of Türkiye's Black Sea policy

The strategic thinking of Türkiye's military-political elites regarding the Black Sea has been shaped by several historical factors. On one hand, the legacy of the Russo-Ottoman wars for dominance in the Black Sea has not gone unnoticed. Throughout the 18th-20th centuries, the Ottoman Empire fought more than ten wars with Russia. Most of them ended with significant losses for Istanbul, giving rise to the myth of the "great and invincible Russia". Hence, the idea that Russia's interests in the region must be taken into account, and cooperation (or at least continuing dialogue) with Moscow is seen as an important element of regional security. In addition to Türkiye's interest in developing trade and economic relations with Russia, Türkiye does not support steps to intensify the international isolation of Russia or sanctions against Russia due to fears of uncontrolled escalation, marginalization of Russian political elites, and Moscow's nuclear saber-rattling.

The successes of the Ukrainian armed forces, particularly attacks on the Russian fleet and degrading of its naval capabilities, have partially debunked the myth of the Russian invincibility and revealed the vulnerabilities of its navy and missile defense capabilities. A 2023 public opinion [research](#) shows that only 20% of the Turkish population were convinced that Russia was "weaker than they thought" as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian war, however 44% noted that Russia was "significantly or somewhat stronger" than they had believed before the full-scale invasion, and 29% thought that "Russia was and remains strong".

From Ankara's perspective, the involvement of Russia and Türkiye in various regional conflicts, where they support opposing sides (Georgia, Ukraine, South Caucasus, Syria, Libya), makes contacts with Moscow a must for de-escalation and risk management. Although such coordination mechanisms between Ankara and Moscow serve rather as an instrument for crisis management than showcase trust or strategic partnership between Türkiye and Russia, they create additional interdependencies and can be used as a leverage over Ankara's foreign policy-making.

On the other hand, Türkiye's deep-rooted mistrust to the West, which dates back to the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres and has only deepened since then over the Cyprus issue, the 2003 Iraq War, U.S. support for PYD/YPG in Syria, 2016 coup attempt, and problems in relations with the EU, shapes Türkiye's threat perceptions and makes it more vulnerable to external threats. The spread of anti-Western and Eurasian sentiments in Türkiye's society, fueled by the Kremlin, significantly complicates Türkiye's cooperation with NATO partners due to this lack of trust and accumulated problems in relations. This is particularly evident in the Black Sea, which Ankara views as its own "soft underbelly" and a traditional zone of shared Russian-Turkish influence.

According to a September 2022 [survey](#), 42.7% of respondents considered the United States the main threat to Türkiye, while only 30.5% named Russia as a threat. At the same time, 52% supported Türkiye's "neutrality" in the Russian-Ukrainian war, and 50.9% defined Turkish-

Russian relations as "cooperation" or "strategic partnership". An [ECFR study](#) in February 2023 noted that when asked about their perceptions of Russia, 14% of Turkish citizens considered it an "ally that shares our interests and values", 55% saw Russia as a "necessary partner with which we must strategically cooperate", 18% as a "rival with which we need to compete", and 8% perceived Russia as an "adversary with which we are in conflict". For comparison, the respective numbers for the United States were 14% (an ally with common interests), 51% (a necessary partner), 18% (a rival), and 11% (an adversary).

Although public opinion about a "powerful Russia" and the West as a threat to Türkiye's national security largely reflect the information policy of the Turkish media, these sentiments are often shared similarly by experts and decision-makers. As a result, the historical lack of trust to both Russia and the West has shaped Türkiye's modern policy towards the Black Sea, with the strategy of "delicate balancing act" being its key element.

Therefore, Ankara's main goals in the region remain unchanged: to avoid escalation and to maintain a balance of power that could potentially lead to the Black Sea turning into either a "Russian lake" or a "backyard of the United States". Ankara's multilateral diplomacy based on the "regional ownership" approach is called to serve these goals. On one hand, it allows limiting the influence of external players in the region, and on the other hand, it enables the accomplishment of ambitious goals for regional leadership.

Examples of such policies include the creation of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), strict adherence to the provisions of the Montreux Convention without any amendments since 1936, intermediary services between Ukraine and Russia after the onset of full-scale invasion, the Black Sea Grain Initiative (the so-called "grain deal"), and so on.

The general overview of the current situation

Türkiye's modern position regarding the Black Sea is defined by historical pragmatism (balancing policy and "regional ownership" as core principles); traditions of Turkish diplomacy (neutrality and mediation, willingness to negotiate with all parties to avoid open confrontation); prioritizing national interests over alliance commitments (though without necessarily violating the latter); pragmatism (a significant role of economic interests in shaping policies); a broad consensus among all political parties and military leadership on the importance of adhering to the Montreux Convention and keeping its clauses unchanged.

The Montreux Convention as a pillar of Türkiye's statehood

The Montreux Convention, signed in 1936, is one of the few multilateral agreements that have remained unchanged since its signing. Besides granting Türkiye the right to control and regulate the passage of civilian and military vessels through the Straits, it is also considered in Türkiye as a cornerstone of Turkish statehood and sovereignty.

For example, during the celebrations of the centennial of the Republic of Türkiye in 2023, it was repeatedly [emphasized](#) that the republic was founded on two fundamental documents: the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 and the Montreux Convention in 1936. Therefore, any attempts to revise its provisions (even if only to update restrictions given the technical characteristics of the modern ships) or question its relevance in new geopolitical realities are viewed as encroachments on Türkiye's sovereignty and its special status in the region.

Moreover, there are concerns that any changes to the Montreux Convention would open a dangerous "Pandora's box", changing the status quo in the Black Sea basin and expanding the presence of external players at the expense of Türkiye's own interests. Therefore, members of various political parties, military, and the expert community equally share a [view](#) that "the Convention establishes a reasonable and effective balance of interests not only for Türkiye but also for other Black Sea states and third countries".

The Threat of Russia

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has become a major regional challenge for Türkiye. Not only has it brought active warfare closer to Türkiye's borders but it has also disrupted the long-established balance in the Black Sea. Russia's military footprint in the region has seen a tremendous increase since 2014, largely due to the constant enhancement of its military buildup in the temporarily occupied Crimea, Syria, and the Eastern Mediterranean. Later, Russia's control extended to include a large part of the Black Sea basin and the blockade of the Sea of Azov, in a brutal violation of international maritime law.

Ankara responded by [closing the Straits](#) for Russian warships in February 2022. Additionally, Türkiye has [stepped up](#) development of its naval capabilities and invested in the advancement of its [home-grown technologies](#). The national maritime strategy, known as the "Blue Homeland" ("Mavi Vatan"), envisions increasing the number of warships, submarines, enhancing early warning systems, strengthening capabilities in anti-aircraft defense, surface warfare, patrolling, and defending military-naval bases and ports – primarily in the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas, and to a lesser extent in the Black Sea. Despite maintaining its importance for Türkiye as a trade and economic partner and a counterbalance to the US, Russia is still considered a threat to Türkiye's national security.

Delicate balancing act in relations with the West

The aggressive actions of Russia have intensified expert discussions on the need to review the traditional NATO policy and develop a new strategy for the Black Sea. However, most of these discussions focus on finding solutions that would maintain the limitations of the Montreux Convention and focus on boosting defense of the three NATO member countries in the region. For example, a joint project of three leading think-tanks in Türkiye, Bulgaria, and Romania, which included meetings with representatives of the MFA, MoD, and subject matter experts, summarized its findings in a [report](#) "NATO's Role in Addressing Security Threats and Challenges in the Black Sea: Time for a Comprehensive Strategic Approach for the Region?" The final recommendations emphasized that "Bulgaria, Romania, and Türkiye, as NATO Black Sea countries, should work more actively together in analyzing the situation and finding common approaches to enhance regional security".

In his [op-ed](#), one of the report's co-authors, former permrep of Türkiye to NATO and Deputy Secretary-General of NATO Ambassador Tacan İldem, elaborated on Türkiye's stance in the Black Sea: "While Türkiye made meaningful contributions to NATO's regional posture, it also wanted the Allied presence to represent solidarity and unity among Allies. Türkiye did and continue to believe that while relying on contributions from regional and non-regional Allies, NATO's presence in the region, at sea, on land and in the air – [...] should refrain from provocations that may lead to escalation of tension unnecessarily with a spill-over of any conflict to the Black Sea". He also notes that Türkiye advocates for "acting in accordance with international law, especially the Montreux Convention", and emphasizes that there is no need to respond to the militarization of the Black Sea and the increase in NATO presence in response to Russia's deployment ("tit-for-tat militarization") – "provided that ironclad solidarity is demonstrated" in defending the interests of its members.

As Center for Applied Türkiye Studies experts [put it](#), "Türkiye's policy in the Black Sea region is the result of not only a complex relationship with Russia but also of a difficult relationship with the West. In particular, US policy in the Middle East has a major impact on how Ankara positions itself in the Black Sea region". In this regard, the unresolved F-35 issue hindering Turkish air defense, the U.S. support for Syrian Kurds from PYD/YPG, which are considered a terrorist organization in Türkiye, and other problems accumulated in relations with the West often push Ankara towards closer cooperation with Russia.

It should be noted that Türkiye is also aspiring to emerge as a pivotal power in the new "post-Western" multipolar world order. Within this framework, the Black Sea holds paramount importance. Historically, Türkiye has exerted significant influence in this region and now, it is here that Ankara has the highest potential to become a regional powerhouse.

Overall, Türkiye's role in the Black Sea is aptly summarized by Hudson Institute's Luke Coffey and Can Kasapoğlu. In their [report](#) "A New Black Sea Strategy for a New Black Sea Reality" they call it a "chimera" that combines often incompatible elements and it is "a product of different policy vectors, following different political-military directions, and eventually forming a complex strategic outlook".

Coffey & Kasapoğlu define "four pillars" of Türkiye's Black Sea policy: (1) primacy of the Montreux regime in Black Sea political-military affairs; (2) importance of maintaining the "diplomatic edge" in the region, based on a policy of balancing, transactional relations with Russia (a combination of cooperation and rivalry), and Ankara's leading role in multilateral regional initiatives; (3) Türkiye's NATO nation status (considering NATO military bases on Türkiye's territory and its defense-industrial potential, the authors note that "purely from a military point of view, Türkiye is more or less NATO in the Black Sea"); (4) Türkiye's growing defense ties with Ukraine, creating opportunities for Türkiye to develop defense cooperation with the West but outside NATO ("a Western but non-NATO defense collaboration"), which "envisages joint production and a more generous transfer of technology than offered by Euro-Atlantic countries". This vision reveals additional opportunities for Kyiv.

The Importance of Cooperation with Ukraine

Deepening strategic relations with Ukraine is crucial for Türkiye for several reasons, primarily because they establish a natural geopolitical counterbalance and are able to deter Russia without further expanding NATO's engagement in the Black Sea. Essentially, this means that a militarily and politically strong Ukraine means strong Türkiye as it allows to weaken Russia without increasing the presence of the U.S. navy and other non-riparian states. Furthermore, cooperation with Ukraine does not violate any "taboos" in Turkish traditional strategic thinking. It resonates well with the "regional ownership" approach and does not pose threats to the Montreux Convention or Türkiye-led multilateral regional formats.

Joint Ukrainian-Turkish enterprises in defense industry, historical ties with the Crimean Tatars, and a broader geopolitical context in the aftermath of the Russian invasions of Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014) have added value to the growing ties between Ankara and Kyiv. Türkiye has consistently supported NATO's "open-door" policy, including membership of Ukraine and Georgia. While a decision on the future of these countries in the Alliance will be a result of multiple factors, strategically, Ukraine and Georgia's membership in NATO serve Türkiye's best interests as it helps deter Russia and strengthen Ankara's own stance in the Black Sea.

At the same time, it is important for Ukraine and Türkiye to stop Russian malign activities in the Black Sea. These include Russia's strategy of using allegedly "commercial" vessels to [transport weapons through the Straits](#), [trade of stolen Ukrainian grain](#) from temporarily occupied Crimea via Türkiye's ports (in violation of several packages of sanctions and

Türkiye's ministerial directives), and the operation of Russia's "shadow" fleet to circumvent sanctions and oil price caps. Other illicit activities involve piracy, assaults on commercial vessels, and obstructing free transit of commercial and military vessels.

In fact, as [Yörük Işık](#), a geopolitical analyst and observer of maritime traffic in the Bosphorus noted, Russia is essentially allowed to conduct any military and commercial activities in its interests without limitations, simultaneously interfering with the economic activities of other countries and hindering the freedom of navigation. Türkiye may and sometimes has a direct obligation to respond to these violations of international law by Russia within its jurisdiction. It is, however, Ukraine's responsibility to provide Türkiye with the timely and comprehensive evidence of the Russian crimes on sea.

Building scenarios of changes in Türkiye's Black Sea policy (horizon up to 10 years)

Basic scenario: long war of attrition

Two years into the full-scale Russian invasion, Türkiye's position remains unchanged. The Straits are closed for the passage of military vessels of "both warring parties", as well as for military vessels of other countries, except those based in the Black Sea.

During a [press conference](#) in December 2023, Türkiye's Minister of National Defense, Yaşar Güler, confirmed that Ankara has no plans to change its longstanding policy regarding the Black Sea region. He reiterated that "countries with coastlines along the Black Sea should take care of the Black Sea, and regional issues should be resolved by these countries. If necessary, we will seek assistance from our allies. But there is no need for that now".

Guler's statement indicates that Ankara does not support an increased NATO presence in the Black Sea even when the Russia-Ukraine war is over. Guler also reiterated support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine and announced that Türkiye, Romania, and Bulgaria would work together to clear the Black Sea of drifting mines. The trilateral document was signed in Istanbul on January 11, 2024. [According](#) to the Turkish minister, under this agreement, "Türkiye's minehunters will patrol continuously up to the point where the maritime borders of Romania end".

It is noteworthy that the demining operation in the Black Sea will be carried out as a trilateral regional initiative led by Türkiye, but not as a NATO operation in the Black Sea. In Türkiye's view, Türkiye is "the NATO" in the Black Sea; hence no need to duplicate formats. Any additional NATO-led initiatives, according to Ankara, would only trigger escalation with Russia, violate the principle of "regional ownership", and undermine Türkiye's leadership in the region.

This position was also voiced by Türkiye's Navy Commander Ercüment Tatlıoğlu, who [stated](#) in November 2023 that Türkiye "does not want the U.S. and NATO in the Black Sea" in order to avoid turning the Black Sea "into the Middle East". He said, "We declare that we do not want NATO or America in the Black Sea. Our goal is to respect the Montreux. We do not want any country or NATO to enter the Black Sea".

Türkiye's [public denial](#) of passage into the Black Sea for two UK minehunters, earlier granted to Ukraine, demonstrates the sensitivity of this issue for Türkiye's society. The Directorate of Communications' Center for Countering Disinformation under the Turkish Presidency [stated](#) that "Türkiye immediately classified Russia's military operation against Ukraine as "war" and, in accordance with Article 19 of the Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits, closed the Straits to warships of the belligerent parties (Russia and Ukraine)".

While the Ukrainian Navy did not formally request passage through the Straits, one can assume that several factors shaped Ankara's decision to openly state its stance. These include Türkiye's unwavering commitment to the Montreux Convention, concerns about setting a precedent for the transit of military vessels through the Straits during the war, worries of Russian operations of influence in Türkiye, highly manipulative on this issue, and a chance to enhance Ankara's diplomatic standing vis-à-vis Russia and Western allies on other matters pertinent to the Black Sea security.

Therefore, if there is no change in the current dynamics of the Russian war in Ukraine, there is no reason to expect change in Türkiye's stance on the closure of Straits or amendments to the Montreux Convention. A number of Turkish experts suggest that Ankara might be more receptive to unconventional solutions, such as utilizing the Rhine-Main-Danube-Black Sea route or relocating ships to Romania for later use in the Black Sea as "Romanian" vessels. However, even then, securing Türkiye's agreement could prove difficult without additional security assurances and significant incentives from Western allies.

As per Article 30 of the 1948 Convention on the Regime of Navigation on the Danube, naval vessels of Danubian States are prohibited from navigating the Danube beyond the borders of the countries whose flags they fly, unless an agreement has been reached between the concerned Danubian States. In this case, the stances of Hungary and Serbia would require further consideration.

Negative Scenario: Ukraine loses the war, Russia occupies the southern regions, cutting off Ukraine's access to the Black Sea

Traditionally, Türkiye's response to Russia's aggression or increased threats within the region has been to "pivot to the West," solidifying collaboration with NATO allies. The defensive shield provided by the Alliance ensures not only Türkiye's security but also its military superiority over Russia in the Black Sea region. For instance, in May 2016, amidst escalating tension between Türkiye and Russia in Syria, Erdogan [warned](#) that the "Black Sea has effectively become a Russian lake," advocating for an augmented NATO presence in the Black Sea (particularly, the Bulgarian-Romanian-Turkish fleet). When the diplomatic ties between Türkiye and the U.S. deteriorated, and as relations with Russia showed signs of improvement after the 2016 coup attempt, Ankara reciprocated by dispatching several warships to the Russian base in Novorossiysk and later conducting joint military drills with Russia, a move seen as a delicate balancing act. Thus, it can be anticipated that if Russia were to make significant territorial advances in southern Ukraine, potentially cornering Türkiye between Russian A2AD bubbles in the north - in Crimea and the Black Sea - and the south - in Syria and the Mediterranean, Ankara might show greater "allegiance" towards the presence of NATO forces in the Black Sea basin.

However, even under such circumstances, the focus would primarily be on enhancing cooperation between the navies of Türkiye, Romania, and Bulgaria. The non-Black Sea NATO countries' vessels could potentially get engaged in the region as short-term port calls in the Black Sea as a political gesture to Moscow, asserting that the Black Sea is not turning into "Russian lake". Under such a scenario, the most likely course of action would be forming a Bulgarian-Romanian-Turkish group to patrol the Black Sea and expanding NATO's naval presence in the Mediterranean.

Furthermore, one of Türkiye's leading experts in maritime security, Serhat Güvenç, [suggests](#) that Russia's victory would embolden those Turkish politicians who regard Russia as a great power and a counterweight to the West's global dominance, thereby offering avenues to amplify Türkiye's influence on the global stage. However, in such a scenario, military factions would perceive Russia as an exponentially greater threat, especially if it secured access to the Ukrainian coast of the Black Sea. Consequently, Güvenç believes this situation would incite considerable discord between certain powerful factions within the nation's political and military leadership paving the way to internal frictions.

Positive Scenario: Ukraine prevails or significantly improves its positions in the war on land and at sea

Strengthening Ukraine's positions along with the controlled, gradual diminishing of Russia's power would become an optimal scenario for Türkiye. The country's strength in the Black Sea region is significantly ramped up by the successes of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Degrading capacities of the Russian navy (so far, Ukraine has managed to destroy 20% of the Russian Black Sea fleet), without the involvement of NATO forces and the threat of major escalation from Russia, is in Türkiye's best interests. Alper Coşkun, a former ambassador and currently an expert at the Carnegie Foundation, [noted](#) that "Türkiye sees Russia as a potential partner in balancing against Western influence. Thus, it hopes that Russia will come out of the war in a relatively good state to contribute to Türkiye's strategic autonomy within the context of NATO. Russia's defeat would deprive Türkiye of this opportunity".

Despite the fact that Türkiye consistently supports the territorial integrity of Ukraine, including Crimea, the prospects of Russia's weakness causing a sudden shift in the power balance, coupled with the potential threat of NATO reinforcement in the Black Sea, raise concerns in Ankara. Therefore, it should be expected that Türkiye would maintain its current policy of a cautious balancing. This policy is based on a calibrated support to Ukraine enough to steadily weaken, but not to decisively defeat, Russia both on land and at sea.

Wild cards, or "Black Swans" in the Black Sea

The introduction of new variables (i.e., *shifts in Türkiye's power dynamics*) wouldn't dramatically alter the existing situation, given that all political factions equally acknowledge the importance of the Montreux Convention.

The *construction of the man-made Istanbul Canal*, envisioned to go in parallel to the Bosphorus Strait, is presently confronted with substantial hurdles regarding finance and actual execution. It's unrealistic to expect its completion within the next five to ten years. Even if this initiative sees the light of day, most of the experts argue that the Montreux Convention should be applied to it as well. The country's political leadership has so far given mixed messages on this issue. Undoubtedly, an alternate route to the Straits, an artificial waterway, would provide Ankara a chance to interpret the Montreux Convention's clauses at its own discretion, turning it from a legal framework to a subject of political decisions and diplomatic negotiations.

In the case of a *dramatic shift in the balance of power* – victory of Russia in Ukraine or, to the contrary, its decisive defeat (a subsequent disintegration, coup attempt, civil war, etc.), Türkiye will likely seek closer ties with NATO to protect itself from emerging threats, while concurrently striving to prevent the militarization and “internationalization” of the Black Sea.

If *Russia instigates provocations or maritime incidents occur* (damage or destruction of a Turkish vessel due to a drifting mine, missile assaults by Russia, etc.), Türkiye is likely to opt for a de-escalation strategy. The probability of the Straits' opening before the war is over appears highly unlikely; instead, Ankara's reactions to Russian provocations are likely to be asymmetrical in character and extended in time.

Conclusions

Türkiye's strategy towards the Black Sea is based on longstanding traditions of maintaining the status quo in the region, and a soft balancing between Russia and NATO to deter the former and curb the influence of the latter. The central pillars of the Turkish Black Sea policy are Ankara's unwavering adherence to the Montreux Convention and regional ownership. Türkiye remains steadfastly committed to the Montreux Convention, despite the critical developments both in military technologies and geopolitical realities since its signing in 1936.

These principles are widely accepted across different political parties and military establishment, as they empower Türkiye to control the Straits and retain the "final say" in the Black Sea security matters. Essentially, Türkiye has its vested interests in the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity, including Crimea, the de-occupation of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, and a substantial degrade of the Russian Black Sea fleet and A2AD capabilities.

However, there are competing perspectives and interests within both political and military circles. These range from Euro-Atlanticists to Eurasianists and pro-Russian lobbies, who champion the strengthening of Türkiye's ties with Moscow as a counter to "Western dominance". The latter have bolstered their covert influence and public visibility since 2016.

Regardless of the potential scenarios considered, a sea change in Ankara's Black Sea policy is highly unlikely. The basic and positive scenarios do not demand drastic alterations in Türkiye's Black Sea policy as they pose no threat to its national interests. A slight modification of the current stance may only be feasible in the case of the negative (and the least likely) scenario of Russia occupying southern regions of Ukraine. Even under such circumstances, Ankara's response would most likely involve enhancing defense and naval cooperation with other littoral states (Ukraine, Bulgaria and Romania), consulting with NATO allies, and boosting NATO's presence in the Mediterranean rather than the Black Sea.

When exploring avenues of collaboration with Türkiye in the Black Sea, it is essential to consider the embedded doctrines in Turkish strategic thinking, along with the wider geopolitical context of Türkiye's relationships with Russia, the U.S., and other NATO allies. Identifying the issues on which Ankara's stance will remain firm and those where Türkiye can demonstrate flexibility would allow to focus on the areas holding the most promise for cooperation.

Türkiye's special status as a “[referee and goalkeeper of the Straits](#)” is cemented in the 1936 Montreux Convention – a fundamental treaty, which has been a steadfast element of Türkiye's Black Sea policy for almost a century now. Hence, the pursuit of unconventional creative solutions that would allow bypassing the limitations of the Montreux Convention without violating its provisions will remain a primary objective of Ukrainian diplomacy in the future.

** This publication is an English translation of the original article published in Ukrainian.*

© Centre for International Security

Author:

Dr. Yevgeniya Gaber,
Non-resident Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council, and Professor of National Security Studies at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies

The opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, the U.S. government, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Centre for International Security

Borodina Inzhenera Street, 5-A, Kyiv, 02092, Ukraine

Phone: +380999833140

E-mail: cntr.bezpeky@gmail.com

<https://intsecurity.org/>

