

Part III

**Foreign Policy of the Transatlantic
Partners on Current Crises:
Divergent or Coordinated Policies?**

Chapter Eight

Turkey and its Transatlantic Partners in the Wider Black Sea Region: The Turkish Perspective

Enes Bayraktar

The wider Black Sea region is comprised of six coastal states: Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Russia, and Georgia, and covers the economically, culturally, and politically adjacent regions related to these six countries. In 2004, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) organization was the first to use the term “wider Black Sea” in its program, in order to justify the membership of non-coastal states to BSEC. The organization currently consists of 12 member states: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine. Since 2007, the EU has accepted this terminology to define the region, with the exception of Serbia and Albania. However, based on its military and security strategy, NATO’s definition covers a much broader geography, including the region spanning from the Caucasus to eastern and southern Europe.¹ This study uses the “wider Black Sea region” in its broadest sense, the same definition used by NATO strategists.

Regardless of how it is defined, the wider Black Sea region constitutes one of the most important strategic areas for European energy, trade, and military security. However, since the end of the Cold War, the transatlantic partners have neglected this region in their strategic planning because they believed that with the fall of communism the Russian threat has been eliminated indefinitely. In 2010, the heads of state and government at the NATO summit in Lisbon adopted a new strategic concept for the defense and security of the members of the NATO. In this document, NATO strategists evaluated the “threat of a conventional attack against NATO territory” as very low and concluded that “Euro-Atlantic territory is at peace.”² Merely four years after this conclusion Russia had invaded eastern

¹ Vladova, Galya. “A Region at A Crossroads: New Realities and Policies for the Black Sea Region.” *Drc Summer School*, Summer 2013, pp. 80-81.

² North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). “Active Engagement, Modern Defense, Strategic Concept for the Defense and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic

Ukraine, annexed Crimea, and began to intimidate NATO members and partners in the region through diverse hybrid war techniques.

Today, as a result of developments in Ukraine, and Russia's actions in the wider Black Sea and Eastern Europe, many EU and NATO member countries (e.g., Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria) have felt threatened by a rising Russian influence. So, "for the first time since the Cold War, it is no longer impossible to imagine the possibility of Moscow extending its control along the northern coast of the Black Sea. This would position Russia to exert greater pressure on NATO members Romania and Bulgaria, the Danube region, and, among other targets, the maritime energy fields of Romania's exclusive economic zone (EEZ)."³ Consequently, Russia's actions in the last decade, spanning from the invasion of South Ossetia in Georgia in 2008 to Ukraine in 2014, constitute the most serious challenge to the post-Cold War order in Europe. The latest NATO Summit held in Warsaw on July 8-9, 2016 confirms this evolution. In the declaration that was published during the Summit, the North Atlantic Council lists—in addition to terrorism and instability in the Middle East—Russia's activities among the most unprecedented range of security challenges facing NATO today. In the same document, NATO declared that it is taking further steps to contain and balance Russia in Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region.⁴

However, considering the transatlantic partners' inadequate handling of the Georgian and Ukrainian crises and the rising Russian influence in the Black Sea, Eastern, and Southern Europe in the last decade, it is difficult to claim that NATO can achieve this goal under the current policies. There are many reasons for the above-mentioned failures, yet the most striking reason seems to be the transatlantic partners' disarray when confronting and attempting to balance Russia. Unsurprisingly, Russia is well aware of the frictions and fissures among the transatlantic alliance and is deploying a number of policies to weaken NATO's deterrence. As the bipolar Cold War order ceased to exist, transatlantic partners are now

Treaty Organization, Adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon." http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120214_strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf.

³ Bugajski, Janusz and Doran, Peter B. "Black Sea Rising: Russia's Strategy in Southeast Europe." *Center for European Policy Analysis Strategic Report*, No. 1 (February 2016).

⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). "The Warsaw Declaration on Transatlantic Security, Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016." http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133168.htm.

facing multiple challenges and threats (e.g., terrorism, migration, and other rising powers). Therefore, Russia is not their only concern, and it is difficult to bring together a coherent policy on Russia when taking into consideration the concerns of all transatlantic partners.

In this regard, with NATO's second-largest army, Turkey is one of the most significant countries in the Black Sea region to counter Russian aggression. Turkey defended NATO's southern flank during the Cold War against the Soviet Union and has balanced Russia in the Black Sea region in the post-Cold War era. However, due to increasingly divergent interests in the post-Arab Spring era, Turkish transatlantic relations have become extremely volatile. The weak response to the failed coup attempt in Turkey by the Fethullahist Terrorist Organization (FETÖ) and their support for YPG (People's Protection Units) in Syria, which is run by a designated terrorist organization (PKK) complicate these relations further. Thus, converging interests between transatlantic partners and Turkey is extremely difficult but at the same time important if transatlantic partners are seriously attempting to balance Russia in the wider Black Sea region.

This chapter analyzes policies in the wider Black Sea region in light of the Ukrainian crises. To understand the recent changes in the balance of power in the region, we must first analyze the post-Cold War era and understand these developments in a historical context. Therefore, this chapter first looks at the policies of NATO and the EU towards the former Warsaw pact countries in the post-Cold War era. This era is looked at in two periods: EU and NATO expansion, and Russian reaction to these expansions. The last section analyzes Turkey's and the West's reaction to Russian policies in the wider Black Sea region after 2007. The chapter concludes with concrete policy advice for policymakers to ensure solid cooperation between Turkey and its transatlantic partners in the wider Black Sea region.

Missed Opportunities in the Wider Black Sea

Following the end of the Cold War, the international system had turned into a unipolar structure with the United States as its sole hegemon. There was a sense of euphoria and optimism among western liberal intellectuals. There was no longer a viable alternative to the capitalist liberal economic system, and the U.S. military and financial might led scholars such as

Francis Fukuyama to suggest that we had reached “The End of History.”⁵ The expectation was that democracy and liberal values would ultimately conquer the globe. However, considering the rise and fall of many powers and civilizations throughout history and looking at the three decades after the end of the Cold War, this outlook turned out to be naïve and impetuous. Today, the triumph of a global liberal order or a unipolar international system led by U.S. seems anything but certain.

On the contrary, the West’s economic and military dominance over the world has been increasingly challenged by emerging actors such as China, Brazil, and India. Not only is this true in the areas mentioned above, but it is also the case in ideological terms. There is increasing resistance against the expansion of liberal values in the world. Thus, the assumption of a rapid enlargement of liberal values has not materialized. Liberal values did expand, but this is mainly the case in Eastern and Southern Europe. Even after three decades of transition and many initiatives, the process is still not completed and countries vital for wider Black Sea security (e.g., Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Belarus, and Serbia), have not integrated into western institutions like NATO and the European Union.

In the meantime, Russia, a former rival of the West, was bogged down with economic problems, political instability, and a bloody insurgency in Chechnya and the Caucasus region. Consequently, in the first two decades after the end of the Cold War, Russia developed a counter-policy towards these developments in its surrounding region. Starting with Russian military intervention in South Ossetia in 2008, Russia began employing a much more aggressive strategy to reverse or at least stop the integration of its immediate neighborhood into Western institutions. In this regard, the first two decades of the post-Cold War era represent a missed opportunity for the transatlantic partners to integrate the former Warsaw Pact countries into its institutions; it seems that EU officials and NATO strategists thought that they have infinite time to achieve their goals. However, the developments after 2008 proved that the window of opportunity was closing in the first two decades following the end of the Cold War. Many

⁵ “The triumph of the West, of the Western idea, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism [...]. What we may be witnessing in not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: That is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government [...] But there are powerful reasons for believing that it is the ideal that will govern the material world in the long run [...]” Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History? The National Interest* (Summer 1989), pp. 1-6.

reasons, including the shift of focus to the War on Terror since 9/11, economic problems, enlargement fatigue in the EU, and resistance of oligarchs and corrupt political elites supported by Russia have prevented a successful transition for those countries. Yet, one should acknowledge that the transatlantic partners were not fully ready for the immense task of transforming these countries, and more importantly, they were not aware that the window of opportunity was rapidly closing.

As mentioned above, NATO and the EU played an important role in the transition of former communist Warsaw Pact countries into democracies and free market systems. Emboldened with the end of Cold War, the U.S., NATO, and the EU began slowly expanding their influence into former Russian areas of influence (i.e., the Caucasus, Eastern- and Southern Europe). Both institutions expanded their membership to those countries and deployed initiatives to facilitate necessary changes in the former Warsaw Pact countries.

With a certain degree of coordination, the transatlantic partners began deploying three strategies to transform former-Warsaw Pact countries and integrate them into Western institutions.⁶ Firstly, both the EU and the U.S. supported many NGOs, media, and think tanks to promote democracy and human rights in those countries. Billions of dollars were invested through official and non-official mechanisms to achieve this goal. Secondly, starting with the end of Cold War, NATO had expanded in three phases. In 1999, with the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland; in 2004, with Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia; and in 2009 with Croatia and Albania becoming NATO members. Furthermore, during the Bucharest Summit held in 2008, NATO countries agreed that Georgia and Ukraine could become NATO members in the future. However, as the result of mounting Russian pressure, Ukraine stopped pursuing membership in 2010. Montenegro became the 29th NATO member country after all 28 allies ratified the Accession Protocol in May 2017. According to the NATO official website, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are future aspiring members.⁷ Thirdly, EU expansion into Central and Eastern Europe. In 2004, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia,

⁶ Meersheimer, John. "Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault." *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141769/john-j-mearnsheimer/why-the-ukraine-crisis-is-the-west-s-fault>.

⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). "Member Countries." http://www.nato.int/cps/is/natohq/topics_52044.htm.

the Czech Republic, and Southern Cyprus joined; in 2009 Slovenia and Bulgaria; and in 2013 Croatia became members of the European Union.

The EU developed a number of initiatives targeting non-member countries, in an effort to increase cooperation in the wider Black Sea region. In 2008, the EU launched the Black Sea Synergy (BSS) initiative, which includes Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine. The main goal of BSS is to increase cooperation and address the region as a whole, rather than focusing on bilateral relations. Yet, the main foreign policy strategy of the EU vis-a-vis the former Soviet Union countries is the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative, covering Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. The main aim of this initiative is to prepare these countries for a possible EU membership through intense cooperation.⁸

Yet “the existence of groupings of countries that require different types of EU approach has resulted in the implementation of a complexity of policy instruments, the signing of a huge number of multilateral agreements and the launching of wide-ranging bilateral and sectoral activities in the region.”⁹ Considering these problems, Russian resistance, and the number of countries involved in these policies, it is no wonder that there is a huge issue of coordination and coherence in the overall strategy of transatlantic partners vis-a-vis the wider Black Sea region.

Furthermore, “the focus on bilateral mechanisms and the application of a differentiated approach towards Russia, Turkey and the ENP partner countries are considered main challenges in future” involvement in the wider Black Sea region. Realizing these shortcomings, the EU Parliament passed a resolution in January 2011, calling for the European Commission to develop an EU Black Sea strategy.¹⁰ However this has yet to materialize.

Russia’s Reaction and the Changing Balance of Power in the Black Sea Region

As mentioned above, Russia was disgruntled about the expansion of the EU and NATO to former Warsaw Pact countries in the wider Black Sea

⁸ Vladova, Galya. “A Region at a Crossroads: New Realities and Policies for the Black Sea Region.” *Drc Summer School*, Summer 2013, pp. 87-88.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

region, which it considered its area of influence. However, Russia was preoccupied with enormous domestic economic and political problems in addition to an insurgency in the Caucasus. Still, Russia showed clear opposition to NATO interventions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, and tried to maintain its influence in the former Warsaw Pact countries through bilateral agreements and initiatives. NATO and the EU tried to address Russia's concerns and strengthen dialogue and cooperation by launching a series of initiatives with Russia.¹¹ The recent developments in the region demonstrate that the EU and NATO were not successful.

In fact, Russia has gradually become more aggressive in its opposition to the transatlantic partners' policies in the wider Black Sea region. Putin's uninterrupted reign since 1999 and increasing oil and gas revenues are the main factors in the resurrection of Russian opposition to the West, and relations have deteriorated as a result. Russia considered NATO's missile defense system in Eastern Europe and the orange revolutions in Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004) as part of a broader strategy to contain and encircle Russia with an ultimate goal of regime change. Russia's interpretation explains the military interventions into Georgia and Ukraine.

In a speech during the Munich security conference in 2007, Putin made it clear that Russia considered these developments a clear violation of the security guarantees given to the Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War. Furthermore, when Putin declared that the "unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible in today's world,"¹² he was signaling that Russia would challenge the post-Cold War *status quo* in Europe and else-

¹¹ Russia's entrance to the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1991 and the Partnership for Peace program in 1994, the establishment of the NATO-Russia Founding Act in 1997 and the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) in 2002. The EU also adopted a similar approach and signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Russia in 1997 and the Strategic Partnership agreement in 2003, defining the following policy areas: The economy and the environment, freedom, security and justice, external security, research and education, and culture.

¹² "I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernization of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are those declarations today? No one even remembers them. But I will allow myself to remind this audience what was said. I would like to quote the speech of NATO General Secretary Mr. Woerner in Brussels on 17 May 1990. He said at the time that: the fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee. Where are these guarantees?" <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR2007021200555.html>

where. The real turning-point in relations between Russia and the West came during the Bucharest Summit (in April 2008), when NATO declared that despite Russian objections, Ukraine and Georgia would receive NATO membership after fulfilling membership conditions.¹³ After only five months (in August 2008), Russia intervened in Georgia, citing Georgian intervention in South Ossetia. That same month, Russia recognized the independence of the two breakaway regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Breaking international law with the military intervention and the recognition of independence, Putin made it quite clear he no longer plays by the rules of the post-Cold War era. Thus, it was no surprise that when the pro-Russian president of Ukraine (Yanukovich) was ousted by an orange revolution-style uprising, Russia's response was to first invade Crimea and eastern Ukraine and then to annex Crimea, going against all international agreements and laws.

Taking into account Russia's actions and policies in the last decade in the wider Black Sea region, Russia's strategic goal is to establish a Eurasian pole of power under Russian control that would counter Western influence in the region. Russia seeks to achieve this goal through three interrelated policies: Firstly, it pressures its neighbors to integrate into the Eurasian Economic Union and Collective Security Treaty Organization that are under Russian control; secondly, it tries to neutralize countries like Ukraine and Georgia by pressuring them not to become part of NATO or EU through direct and indirect interventions; and thirdly, Russia aims to influence the countries that are already part of the EU or NATO through energy dependency, cracks in the NATO Alliance, or pro-Russian elites in those countries so that they do not oppose Russian objectives in the region.¹⁴ Furthermore, Russia is also actively supporting far right movements and employing fake news and cyber attacks as an effective tool to cause chaos and instability in western countries.

To achieve its goals, Russia is employing conventional methods such as military interventions and occupations in Ukraine and Georgia, but also non-conventional methods such as hybrid war techniques. In this

¹³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). "NATO Welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic Aspirations for Membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO." http://www.nato.int/cps/in/natohq/official_texts_8443.htm.

¹⁴ Bugajski, Janusz and Doran, Peter B. "Black Sea Imperatives: Ensuring NATO Security And American Interests For The Incoming U.S. Administration" Strategic Report No.3, November 2016. https://Cepa.Ecms.Pl/Files/?Id_Plik=3088, p.3.

regard, the frozen conflicts in the wider Black Sea, (the Nagorno Karabagh conflict in Azerbaijan, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia in Georgia, Transnistria in Moldova, and recently in the Donbas region in Ukraine), have been used by Russia as an effective tool to pressure these countries not to integrate with Western institutions.

However, with the Russian invasion of Crimea and the establishment of Russian control in Abkhazia:

- Russia has increased its coastal control of the Black Sea considerably when it annexed Crimea and the occupied Abkhazia and Donbas region in Ukraine;
- Russia has also invested in its sea fleet and increased its troops and strategic weapons stationed in Crimea;
- Russia has also considerably increased its *de facto* exclusive offshore economic zone in the Black Sea;
- Russia took control of the strategically important military port of Sivastapol confiscating Ukrainian Navy vessels stationed there.

As a result of these changes, the balance of power has shifted in favor of Russia in the Black Sea region. Consequently, in September 2016, the Russian chief of staff declared that Russia had achieved military superiority over the Black Sea as result of recent developments. In his statement, General Valeriy Gerasimov claimed that the country's Black Sea fleet is now stronger than the Turkish navy, and even openly declared that Russia is now capable of targeting the Bosphorus straits.¹⁵ In return, at a meeting of Balkan nations in Istanbul, the Turkish President issued a stark warning when he told NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, "you are absent from the Black Sea [...] the Black Sea has almost become a Russian lake, if we don't take action, history will not forgive us."¹⁶

It is no coincidence that the Russian chief of staff only mentioned the Turkish navy, as it is the only navy in the Black sea that could effectively resist a Russian attack. Other navies stationed in the Black Sea, such as those from Romania and Bulgaria are no match for the Russian navy. Therefore, NATO is trying to increase its presence in the Black Sea by deploying naval task forces to visit Bulgaria and Romania and holding reg-

¹⁵ Kucera, Joshua. "Russia Claims 'Mastery' Over Turkey in Black Sea." *Eurasianet*, September 25, 2016. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/80636>.

¹⁶ "Almost a 'Russian lake': Erdogan Calls for Greater NATO Presence in Black Sea." *Russia Today*, May 11, 2016. <https://www.rt.com/news/342670-nato-black-sea-russia/>.

Figure 1: Russian military presence in the Crimean Peninsula and the Black Sea before and after the Annexation of Crimea

| | | |
|--|----------------------------|---|
| January 2014 (before the annexation) | Soldiers | 12.5 |
| | Armored Vehicles | 116 |
| | Artillery Pieces | 24 |
| | Fighter Jets | 22 |
| | Helicopters | 37 |
| | Warships | 26 |
| | Submarines | 2 |
| May 2016 (about two years after the annexation) | Soldiers | 23.9 |
| | Armored Vehicles and Tanks | 613 |
| | Artillery Pieces | 162 |
| | Fighters Jets | 101 |
| | Helicopters | 56 |
| | Warships | 34 from Ukrainian sources 49 from Russian sources |
| | Submarines | 4 |
| | Missile launchers | 16 missile system 3K60 BAL, K-300 Bastion, S-300 PMU 8 missile systems S-400 Triumph |

Source: Costea, Catalin Alin. "The Russian Federation and the Implementation of the A2/AD System in the Black Sea: Risks and Threats to Romania." *The Market for Ideas*, January-February 2017. <http://www.the-marketforideas.com/the-russian-federation-and-the-implementation-of-the-a2-ad-system-in-the-black-sea-risks-and-threats-to-romania-a122/>.

ular military exercises. Yet, NATO's presence is limited because of the Montreux convention, which limits both the tonnage and duration of non-coastal state warships in the Black Sea.

To sum up, Russia has built an effective A2/AD (anti-access/area denial) capacity in the Black Sea region that can threaten vital sea lanes such as mouth of Danube river and the Turkish straits, along with the strategic energy transportation routes between Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Europe.

Transatlantic Partners in Disarray, and the Impact on the Wider Black Sea Region

Among the transatlantic partners, Turkey occupies a unique geographic location, which puts it in close relation to many strategic regions; the Middle East, North Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean, Caucasus, and the Balkans. Among these, the wider Black Sea region is significant for Turkey's grand strategy for a number of reasons. Firstly, for centuries, Russian expansion towards the south was a major threat to the Ottoman Empire and Turkey's territorial integrity. Balancing and countering Russia has always been a vital national security issue. It is worth noting that the Soviet territorial claims towards Turkey pushed it into becoming a member of NATO immediately following World War II (WWII). Secondly, Turkey has a common history and culture, but most importantly, it has deeply engrained economic relations with countries of the wider Black Sea region.

Thus, Turkey welcomed the end of Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which eliminated the Soviet threat and at the same time opened up a vast geography to Turkish influence, closed during the Cold War era. Therefore, one of Turkey's first initiatives (following the end of Cold War) was to call for the establishment of BSEC, founded as a regional economic organization in 1992.¹⁷ Although it was not successful in terms of economic cooperation, BSEC offered a unique platform for countries of the wider Black Sea region.

Regarding the transatlantic partners' initiatives and policies in the region as outlined in previous sections, Turkey followed two goals. Firstly, Turkey established military superiority in the Black Sea region in the post-Cold War era. Secondly, Turkey aimed to create a peaceful region to increase economic cooperation and integration. Following this strategy, Turkey supported the membership of the wider Black Sea countries into NATO and the EU, while at the same time reducing unnecessary tensions with Russia. In this regard, Turkey was not supportive of NATO naval presence in the Black Sea.

The recent developments in the region and the shift in the balance of power in favor of Russia have become a real challenge to the post-Cold War order in Europe. However, the response of transatlantic partners to these developments was weak and inadequate. The main problem is not

¹⁷ The Black Sea Economic Cooperation, "BSEC." <http://www.bsec-organization.org/Information/Pages/bsec.aspx>.

Russia's dominance, but rather the transatlantic partners' incoherent approach that prevents them from formulating and employing an effective strategy to balance Russia's influence.

In this regard, we should also mention the recent EU-U.S. (i.e., Merkel-Trump) tensions within the NATO Alliance, significantly decreasing NATO's deterrence against Russia. German chancellor Angela Merkel statement, "the times when we could fully count on others are over to a certain extent. I have experienced this in the last few days [...] We Europeans must really take our destiny into our own hands," thus indicating a fundamental shift in the transatlantic alliance.

In addition, Turkey has fundamental policy differences on vital issues with the EU and the U.S. For one, due to cultural and religious differences between Turkey and Europe, the EU has not successfully integrated Turkey into EU after decades of negotiations. Furthermore, certain European countries (e.g., Germany, Belgium, and Austria) are acting as safe havens for terrorist organizations such as the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), DHKP-C (Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front), and FETÖ, by allowing them to carry on their fundraising and recruitment activities under the umbrella of NGO pursuits. Turkey also has differences with the U.S. The Obama administration's decision to include the YPG (a segment of PKK), against its fight against ISIS in Syria creates a vital national security threat to Turkey. The Trump administration's decision to continue with this policy complicates relations even further. To make matters worse, certain transatlantic partners do not only cooperate or provide safe havens for these terrorist organizations, they also impose an embargo on Turkey by not selling it strategic weapons systems or components for Turkey's fight against terrorism.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Considering the gravity of the threat stemming from the Russian resurrection, the transatlantic partners are facing an existential threat to the post-Cold War order in Europe. Certain analysts are warning that "if left to run its course, the practical outcome of the Russian strategy would result in the restoration of the Yalta-Potsdam post-World War II order, in which Moscow dominated Eurasia and half of Europe."¹⁸ In this regard, one

¹⁸ Bugajski, Janusz and Doran, Peter B. "Black Sea Rising: Russia's Strategy in Southeast Europe." *Center for European Policy Analysis Strategic Report*, no. 1 (February 2016), p.4.

should also note that similarly to WWII, Russia and the West seem to be fighting against a common enemy: International terrorism. It is clear that Russia is misusing the transatlantic partners' focus on fighting terrorism after 9/11 to further its own agenda, as it is currently doing in Syria. In this context, it is worth citing a recent statement of Russian President Putin, in which he tries to downplay the Russian threat and draw attention to terrorism as a common enemy. During his visit to France, Putin told the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, "What is the major security problem today? Terrorism. There are bombings in Europe, in Paris, in Russia, in Belgium. There is a war in the Middle East. This is the main concern. But no, let us keep speculating on the threat from Russia [...] Therefore, we should not build up tensions or invent fictional threats from Russia, some hybrid warfare, etc. You made these things up yourselves and now scare yourselves with them and even use them to plan your prospective policies."¹⁹

We should remember that the last time the Soviet Union and the West fought against a common enemy, the Soviet Union took control of half of the Europe. The occupation of South Ossetia, Crimea, and Southeastern Europe should be a wake-up call for the transatlantic partners. It is essential that the West develops a coherent and concrete strategy to counter Russian ambitions in the wider Black Sea region.

As a start, it is essential to realize that the current situation in the wider Black Sea region is not the result of Russia's power, but rather a consequence of the disunity and disagreement within the transatlantic alliance. Russia is profiting from these disparities to further its own agenda. Therefore, it is essential to solve current tensions between the EU and the U.S., Turkey and the EU, and Turkey and the U.S. More concretely, to balance Russia, NATO needs to increase its naval presence in the Black Sea region. Considering the Montreux convention limitations regarding the duration and tonnage for non-littoral states' navy presence, NATO should follow a two-track strategy in the Black Sea. Firstly, it should continue to deploy its naval forces to the Black Sea despite the limitations and hold regular military drills with littoral NATO countries such as Turkey, Romania, and Bulgaria. Secondly, in the long-run NATO should realize that the best way to counter Russia is to strengthen the military capabilities of coastal NATO countries.

¹⁹ "Stop inventing fictional threats from Russia." Putin told *Le Figaro*, *Russia Today*. May 30, 2017. <https://www.rt.com/news/390225-putin-russia-fictional-threats/>.

