

UKRAINE'S MILITARY ROLE IN THE BLACK SEA REGION



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Executive Summary

Only Ukraine's civilian and military leadership can determine the best course of action that would meet Ukraine's appropriate role to play in securing the Black Sea region (BSR). By analyzing Ukraine's precarious security environment and assessing the current security situation in the Black Sea, this paper first sought to identify a prototype for Ukraine's role in the BSR. However, the result of this search was a clear realization of Ukraine's unique situation. Ukraine is a nation with divisionary demographics, external pressures on internal politics, mixed ideas over economic opportunities and priorities existing in a neighborhood of states with competing influences and capabilities.

Considerations: For the purposes of this study, we narrowed the scope of the BSR to the littoral nations with a Black Sea coastline. Since these nations enjoy relatively unlimited access to the maritime shipping lanes of the Black Sea, limiting the BSR to these littoral states allowed our research to focus on the nations that most directly impact the maritime security of the BSR. In determining Ukraine's potential role in the region, we considered various characteristics of Ukraine's geography, economy and defense forces. Concerning issues of defense, we analyzed Ukraine's defense spending, current and projected defense capabilities, and advantages within Ukraine's domestic defense industry. However, Ukraine's economic capacity limits its potential roles in BSR securitization.

Objectives: The goals of securitization should be to enhance Ukraine's state capacity, inhibit military dominance in the BSR, and counter threats to regional stability. To avoid economic and security marginalization in an increasingly dynamic environment, Ukraine should assume a more active role in BSR securitization through a multilateral approach that would promote increased cooperation among littoral states in the region.

Recommendations: It is difficult for Ukraine to meet the objectives set forth by the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense with the defense budget merely representing roughly 1 % of Ukraine's GDP. Ukraine needs to increase its military budget to develop the levels and types of military capabilities required to play a greater security role in the BSR. Therefore, greater defense spending is requisite to enhance Ukraine's peacekeeping capabilities and rapid reaction forces. Additionally, Ukraine should shift its funding to prioritize enhancing littoral maritime capabilities, specifically for patrolling its near-shore and safeguarding its ports and infrastructure. Finally, Ukraine should demonstrate its current military capacity and willingness to apply military capabilities to regional security cooperation by increasing its participation in joint, multinational exercises.

Assessment of Ukraine's Security Environment

The Black Sea Region (BSR) is in a period of transition and development. States' borders are fluid, economies are developing and governments are transitioning from Soviet relics to democratic regimes. Throughout this period uncertainties are high, the political equilibrium is fragile and the status quo is negotiable. As states compete to accrue and exert power in the region, Ukrainian ambitions and designs on their own role in the Black Sea are largely unknown. This paper discusses Ukraine's current military posture as well as Ukraine's potential to influence the BSR security environment.

Defining the Black Sea Region

Daniel Hamilton and Gerhard Mangott argue that the BSR is the "next frontier in transatlantic strategic thinking in terms of energy security, trade, migration and other key policy areas."¹ Encompassing the BSR is a heterogeneous group of littoral states with deeply vested interests and competing foreign policy objectives. Figure 1 below shows an accurate depiction of the

littoral nations of the BSR with access to a coastline. Ukraine and Russia outline the Northern side, Romania and Bulgaria set the region's Western borders, Georgia occupies the East, and Turkey is the Southern gatekeeper to the Black Sea. As the BSR is only as stable as its littoral states are secure, maintaining regional stability is a top security priority for BSR states.

FIGURE 1: The Black Sea Region's Littoral States



Source: http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Booklets/Ssp/black_sea.html

States lacking the military capacity to secure their borders and maintain sovereignty degenerate into the satellite of competing powers, upsetting the regional balance of power. Once regional stability is upset, alliance uncertainties multiply, peripheral disputes intensify and regional cooperation halts. Thus, since challenges to states' sovereignty are the greatest peril to stability, the littoral states of the BSR share a common interest in asserting their foreign policies in the area in cooperation with international and regional institutions.

Ukraine

Ukraine's posture in the BSR is unique, as no other country serves as a model with comparable security arrangements, geography, and capabilities. First, Ukraine is the geopolitical bridge between the Atlantic Alliance and its Eastern equivalent, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Although Ukraine remains a geographical no man's land between these collective security arrangements, both sides seek to assert their influence over Ukraine. Moreover, both Russia and the West play on the sympathies of Ukraine's split demographics to further consolidate their influence. Second, Ukraine's recent government transition to democracy impacts BSR politics. Russian leaders perceive democratic transitions in BSR states as a threat to Russia's foreign policy interests and use economic actors such as Gazprom to achieve regional control. At the same time, Ukraine greatly benefits as the transit route between Russia's energy products and the European market. Therefore, Ukraine should consider domestic and regional concerns as it weighs potential foreign policies in the BSR.

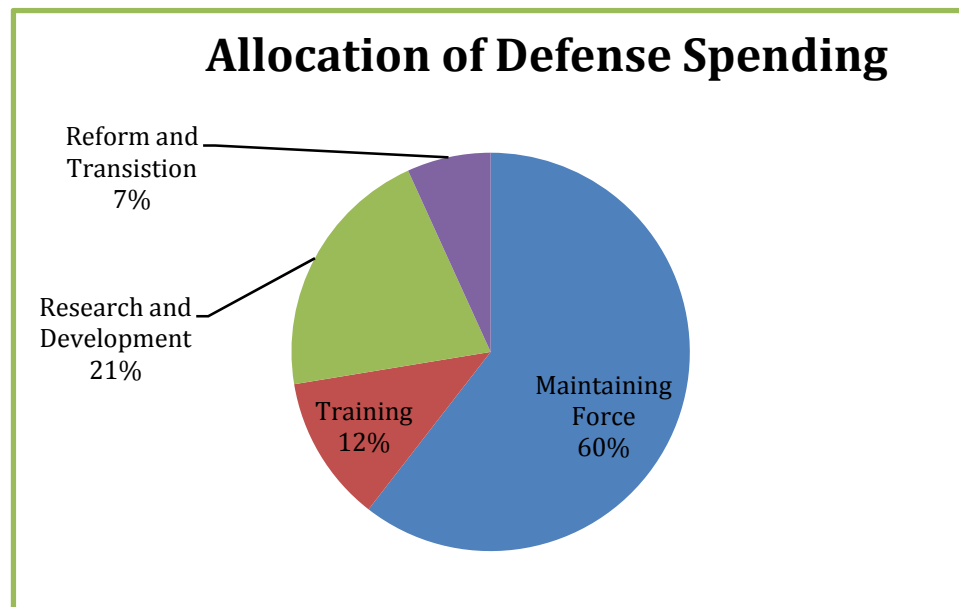
There are three influential actors currently affecting the security environment in the BSR: Russia, Turkey and NATO. Both competing and mutual security interests and concerns drive these actors. Historically, Russia and Turkey competed directly for supremacy in the region. This competition manifested in armed conflict over maritime control for access to ports, secure shipping lanes and the defense of the integrity of territorial waters. Despite Turkey's decades-long NATO membership, NATO only recently became a third sphere of influence in the BSR since Bulgaria and Romania became members of the Atlantic Alliance in 2004. *As it is destructive for any one actor to have unrivaled control in the BSR, Ukraine should selectively engage*

in security operations to build military capacity, avoid marginalization and inhibit political domination in the BSR. Ukraine should help maintain regional balance to prevent the domination of a singular state. This balance will promote peace and security in the BSR.

Until recently, the Ukrainian military suffered through a state of steady decline in overall capabilities since the break-up of the Soviet Union. The priorities of the Ukrainian military are shown in Figure 2 below. The Ukrainian Navy, currently headquartered in Sevastopol, consists of approximately 15,000 sailors and officers.² According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense, "the Navy of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is aimed to defend sovereignty and state interests of Ukraine in the sea, neutralizing naval groups of the enemy in its operational zone alone and in accordance with other military services of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, assistance to the Army of Ukraine in its sea directions." The tasks of the Ukrainian Navy include:

- creation and maintaining of the combat powers on the level, sufficient to detain sea aggression;
- neutralization of the enemy naval forces;
- destruction of enemy transportation;
- support in landing of amphibious forces and fight against enemy amphibious forces;
- maintaining of beneficial operational regime in the operational zone;
- defense of its bases, sea communications;
- protection of submarine space within the territorial sea;
- protection of merchant fleet, sea oil and gas industry and other state activity in the sea;
- assistance to the Army in their conduct of operations (military actions) at sea directions;
- participation in peacekeeping operations.³

FIGURE 2: Projection for Ukraine's Development of Armed Forces, 2006-2011



Source of information: BBC Monitoring Kieve Unit. http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/?_session=85b3aacc-fb2c-11df-861d-00008a0c5a50.1.1.890470.0.0.0&_state=6wchp=dGLbVzW-zSkVV6_md5=40416el33316b87bafecdd85c52d2b74

Ukraine recently began rebuilding naval power in the Black Sea. In 2009, the Ternopyl took part in Operation Allied Endeavor in which it conducted NATO-led maritime security operations in the Mediterranean Sea.⁴ In 2010, Russia and Ukraine agreed to

resume joint naval exercises. However, Ukraine's land forces remain the largest benefactors of defense spending. Stunted spending on the Ukrainian Navy is a distinct disadvantage to the Black Sea's maritime security.

Ukraine benefits from key advantages in defense force modernization. Antonov is a Ukrainian company operating as a domestic supplier of aerospace technology. During the Soviet Era, the aircraft firm was responsible for the majority of the Soviet Union's heavy-lift capabilities including the An-124 and the world's largest cargo plane, the An-225. Ukraine's legacy of providing sophisticated missile technology to the Soviet Union enables the nation to continue developing its guidance systems applicable to both civilian satellite launches and defense purposes. The Ukrainian defense industry successfully developed, tested and fielded a domestic main battle tank, the T-84. Ukraine is also developing advanced communication systems for use onboard surface ships and submarines. These military achievements were only possible through investments in research and development, enabling the continuation and advancement of Ukraine's military establishment left behind by the Soviet Union.

During the presidency of Viktor Yushenko, Ukraine openly pursued integration into western institutions, with particular fixation on NATO membership. This push for integration induced dramatic increases in the level of modernization and standardization of Ukraine's military, as well as an increase in NATO-led, multi-national security operations. From these security operations, Poland particularly emerged over the past decade as a strong ally in Ukrainian military development. In addition to deployments to Kosovo, Ukrainian soldiers served in Iraq under the command of Polish forces and played a critical role in combating insurgents while demonstrating their effectiveness at multi-national contingency deployments.

In 2009, the policy pendulum swung back to toward Moscow with the election of Viktor Yanukovich. While Yanukovich's election does not preclude Ukrainian cooperation with NATO, President Yanukovich considers that the current level of Ukrainian—NATO cooperation will sufficiently address Ukraine's concerns while preserving Ukraine's flexibility to pursue its own security interests. Ukraine's status as a NATO Partner for Peace is vital to strengthening ties to Europe and the United States without provoking unnecessary discord with the Russian Federation. Ukraine is continuing efforts to maintain such an appropriate level of partnership with NATO through joint exercises with other littoral states and anti-terrorism, maritime exercise in the Mediterranean and Black Seas.

Remaining unbiased is neither tantamount to regional disengagement nor to a disinclination to cooperation with the competing powers. Rather, striking delicate neutrality between states and institutions requires that Ukraine buttress its sovereign right to make foreign policy decisions to selectively engage with powers free from foreign pressures. Ukraine can enhance its capacity to avoid unwanted influences by developing the military institutions that attract investment and cooperation with foreign nations. Namely, Ukraine should pursue civilian control of a voluntary professional military corps, technical capability modernization, and military interoperability with other states. Through these initiatives, Ukraine will bolster its strategic significance in the BSR as a beacon of sovereignty and stability to other nations.

Russia

The Russian Federation possesses the largest military capabilities of any of the Black Sea littoral nations. Russia's Black Sea Fleet, stationed in Sevastopol currently possesses over forty warships, a total of 167 vessels and approximately 24,000 sailors assigned to several different harbors within the peninsula.⁵ The facilities used by the fleet can accommodate nearly four hundred vessels. The current flagship of the fleet is the guided-missile cruiser—theMoskva.

The Russian Black Sea Fleet's precedence in the region dates to the end of the 18th Century. As an armed naval flotilla, the Black Sea Fleet commands a significant respect among the maritime services of Russia and the former Soviet Republics. For over two hundred years, the Black Sea Fleet secured the southern coasts and protected the regional interests of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, Sevastopol remains the Black Sea

Fleet's homeport. Over the past two decades, the fleet conducted numerous joint exercises with Turkey and the maritime security forces of the BSR's other littoral nations such as BlackSeaFOR and Black Sea Harmony.⁶ The Black Sea Fleet currently has two key tasks: "to control the Black Sea and ensure the safety of Russia's southern borders, and deploy to the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean as needed. If it is to be able to fulfill the former task, the fleet needs combat-ready missile boats, corvettes, small submarines as well as aircraft and coastal forces, including marines. The latter task can be assigned only to long-range sea and ocean-faring groups, such as frigates accompanied by support ships".⁷ In addition to maritime security operations in the Black Sea, the fleet in Sevastopol is critical to maintain a Russian naval presence in the Mediterranean, where NATO is currently conducting anti-terrorism and anti-piracy operations.

During the 2008 conflict in Georgia, Russia deployed the missile cruiser *Mirage* off the Georgian coast. This deployment was a clear display of Russia maritime strength, demonstrated by the fleet potential to project naval power against other BSR littoral states. Ukraine responded to the *Mirage*'s deployment with new requirements for Russian naval vessels to obtain permission before entering or leaving Ukrainian territorial waters. Following the hostilities in Georgia however, the Russian flotilla returned to Sevastopol unchallenged.

The Black Sea Fleet will add several new frigates to its flotilla beginning in 2013.⁸ By 2020, the fleet intends to add fifteen new combat ships and diesel-electric submarines based on a new initiative announced by the Russian Navy in 2010.⁹ Despite the plans to upgrade the fleet, the need to modernize and replace the aging fleet remains the biggest challenge for Russian domination of the Black Sea. The cost of modernization greatly impacts these efforts. Instead of scrapping older ships in favor of new vessels, the Russian Navy favors to reduce costs by equipping the current fleet with upgraded weapons and communication systems. According to reports, "The renewal of the Black Sea Fleet will be financed under the state rearmament program for 2010-2020, which is still being drafted. Officers of the Russian Defense Ministry say that its bottom-line funding, 13 trillion rubles (\$419 billion), will not cover the modernization of the Navy, particularly such large groups as the Northern and Pacific Fleets, which require larger groups of more powerful and expensive warships than either the Black Sea or the Baltic Fleets".¹⁰ In addition to fleet modernization investments, a substantial amount of upgrades are required to the existing infrastructure in Sevastopol. The port currently needs repairs, as do other infrastructures required to fuel and service the ships.

Ukraine simplified the Black Sea Fleet's mission to continue maritime security operations with an agreement to extend Sevastopol leasing arrangement with the Russian Navy.¹¹ In addition to the naval facilities, Russia may station over 160 combat aircraft at airfields on the peninsula. This agreement marks a new level of cooperation between the two nations, providing Ukraine access to Russian gas supplies and incentivizing the Russian Defense Ministry to make long-term improvements to the port in Sevastopol. In return, Russia assists Ukrainian efforts to complete the *Slava* class guided-missile cruiser— the *Ukraina*— that has been under construction for over 25 years.

The Russian-Georgia conflict in August of 2008 clearly demonstrated that Russia maintains the offensive capabilities necessary to conduct cross-border ground operations against neighboring nations. If the result of the 2008 conflict is an accurate measure of Russian capabilities and intentions, Russia's operational capability outstands its suffering economy. There are an estimated 1,700 Russian soldiers stationed in Abkhazia.¹² Russia's recognition of Abkhazia enabled Russia to extend its influence south along the eastern coast of the Black Sea. Agreements between Russia and the breakaway republic could lead to stationing several thousand more Russian troops in the region. In 2009, the Russian Ministry of Defense ruled out future joint operations with Georgia in light of the 2008 conflict.

Turkey

Turkey is among the most economically and politically stable nations in the BSR. Turkey is a powerful balance to an ever-encroaching Russia in the BSR. Turkey encourages cooperation and stability in the region through its vigilant defense of the straits leading into the sea, joint military exercises on the sea, and participation in regional agreements designed to bring stability through economic measures.¹³ Turkey often partners with Russia, offering the country the same opportunities as other nations to contribute to BSR securitization. Integrating all members of the BSR and fostering a non-threatening environment to facilitate collaboration strategically ensures Turkey's cooperation and potency in the BSR community.

Turkey's security interests include not only the neighboring BSR nations, but also its Middle Eastern neighbors to the south, its relationship with NATO and its role as a balancing force between Russia and the West. Because of its strong economic position, NATO membership and EU partnership, Turkey holds a unique position of leadership within the region. Despite its ties to the Western security arrangements, Turkey encourages regional cooperation agreements aimed at keeping the BSR littoral states independently responsible for their security. As Turkey controls the only entrance into the Black Sea and is powerful enough to remain out of the sphere of Russian influence, it is to Turkey's strategic advantage to keep the BSR politically neutral.

Turkey benefits from complete control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits leading into the Black Sea. The 1930 Montreux Convention guarantees Turkish the control of the Straits.¹⁴ The convention allows Turkey to limit the military presence of nations in the BSR. Turkey's ability to regulate foreign military presence in the Black Sea was tested as recently as the Russian-Georgian war of 2008, when the US attempted to send humanitarian supplies through the Straits. Turkey denied the US access to the Black Sea through the Straits, emphasizing the Turkish government's long held position that the BSR should be free from influence of powers foreign to the region.¹⁵

Turkey's self-assumed role as guarantor of Black Sea security may position Turkey to use its regional influence as a springboard to enhance its global influence. Turkey has a vested interest in warding off foreign powers pushing for Black Sea access to ensure Turkish influence over the Straits in the event of a BSR crisis. Turkey argues that it's NATO membership alone renders NATO military assets in the Black Sea superfluous. Furthermore, the process of amending the Montreux Convention to allow NATO and the US access to the Black Sea is prohibitively complicated.¹⁶ As a corollary, Turkey cooperates with NATO outside of the Black Sea region.

In order to encourage regional stability, Turkey uses naval communication programs. In 2001, six Black Sea countries formed the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group comprised of Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria and Georgia.¹⁷ All states act together to promote collaboration on search and rescue operations, cleaning sea mines, environmental protection and organizing goodwill visits between nations. All nations gather annually to discuss operations to improve communication.

After September 11th, the world focused on combating terrorism. The Black Sea Region was no exception. In an attempt to protect the Black Sea from terrorist threats, Turkey initiated a regional maritime security effort in 2004. Through this agreement, ships identify and track potentially illegal activity throughout the Black Sea.¹⁸ Despite Turkey's invitation to all littoral states to join Black Sea Harmony and protect the region from new and emerging threats, only Russian and Ukraine signed the security arrangement.

An important feature of the aforementioned operations is neutrality. No agreement or operation is designed to threaten another state; instead, the goal is to expand cooperation to benefit BSR states. Turkey remains committed to maintaining "the good levels of cooperation between the littorals in the Black Sea."¹⁹ Because of this commitment to neutrality, the littoral states generally do not perceive Turkey as a threat and are more willing to participate in regional cooperatives. It is important to note that Turkey remains a model for the rest of the littoral states in terms of becoming a NATO member by not

allowing its military actions to be defined by other NATO members. Turkey remains an independent state and will continue to pursue actions that are in its best interest. Encouraging security and stability among the littoral states is crucial to Turkey's status as a leader in the region.

The Turkish military has undergone modernization since the break-up of the Soviet Union. The four military branches are the Turkish Armed Forces, Turkish Land Forces, Turkish Naval Forces, and the Turkish Air Force.²⁰ After 1994, military forces were reduced to less than 400,000 troops.²¹ Turkish forces' new strategy "emphasizes the ability to perform a variety of missions, move forces rapidly from one region to another, and mount firepower sufficient to meet any foreseeable threat".²² Turkey also partnered with the United States and Germany to purchase more modern technical equipment such as tanks, F-16s, and submarines.²³ The Turkish military has been active in international operations, leading NATO security forces in Afghanistan and partnering with NATO and the UN on naval operations.²⁴

While Turkey's military is reducing its size and increasing efficiency by partnering with international organizations, it is also concerned with regional conflicts that do not affect the BSR. Turkey's concerns with Cyprus and the southern Kurdish region remain.²⁵ Concerning Cyprus, lasting contention between Turkey and the international community remain over the sovereignty of the Turkish occupied territory on the island. Kurdish rebels in the south represent a political and a military threat. The Kurdish rebel threat is even more pertinent as Turkish military forces contemplate moving operations into northern Iraq.²⁶ Regardless of the size of the threat, the Turkish military engaged outside the BSR and may prioritize these threats over BSR securitization.

NATO

NATO's principal strategic political interest in the Black Sea Region is to preserve the integrity of the Atlantic Charter. Of the littoral Black Sea states Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey are signatories of the Atlantic Charter. Under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Charter, the political and military security of these littoral states factors into the calculation of all NATO member states' security individually and the Alliance's security collectively. Subsequently, a security threat to any one of these states constitutes an existential threat to the Alliance. Therefore, NATO's political strategic interest in the Black Sea is to offset security threats to Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey that would otherwise test member states' "collective security" commitments and the Alliance's solidarity.

Defining security threats is a contentious business for states and even more so for organizations such as NATO. Anne Aldis and Graeme Herd distinguish between "narrow" and "wider" security assessments. A "narrow" security assessment only considers "hard" military threats to state survival. A "wider" security assessment extends security objectives to ensure state sovereignty and territorial integrity, taking into consideration "soft" threats that include "corruption; criminal groups; private militias; insecure borders; smuggling and trafficking in weapons, drugs, contraband and people; illegal migration; proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons of mass destruction (WMD); environmental scarcity (for example, access to fresh water or cropland), and, of course, terrorism".²⁷ BSR is prone to both hard and soft threats.

Leonid Polyakov contends that hard and soft threats run along a continuum and are not mutually exclusive in class or territory.²⁸ Soft threats may escalate into hard threats just as threats to one state may spill over into another state. For example, the social unrest in Georgia hastened Russian invasion, creating a Ukrainian "security dilemma" by increasingly disposing Ukraine to Russian pressure. Thus, NATO's immediate concern with "hard" threats against Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey make it a permanent political influence in the Black Sea Region. Yet, assessing and offsetting "soft" threats to NATO members' relatively insecure neighbors are major preoccupations of NATO's military assets in the region.

Sergei Glebov maintains that Ukraine factors into the “soft” threat calculations of the West given its proximity to the West’s “value space” demarcated by NATO member states.²⁹ Yet, since Ukraine is not a NATO member, the construct for NATO-Ukrainian cooperation is the “Charter on A Distinctive Partnership” originally signed in 1995 by both parties and renewed in 1997. This Charter created the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) that produced an Annual National Programme (ANP) in 2009 to guide the application of military investments in the region according to NATO and Ukrainian priorities.³⁰ The fact that only one of the ANP’s five chapters concerns “security issues” and that this chapter is separate from the chapter on “defense and military issues” quite blatantly puts the Ukraine on the map for a “wider” NATO assessment of soft security threats. NATO operates through the Ukraine Defense Documentation Office (NUDDO), the NATO-Ukraine Joint Working Group on Defence Reform (JWGDR), NATO-Ukraine Joint Working Group on Civil and Democratic Control of the Intelligence Sector towards the security aims of these chapters. The remaining three chapters on “political and economic issues,” “resources” and “legal issues” are more broadly designed to buttress Ukrainian security against the soft threats to its sovereignty and territorial integrity.³¹

Many of NATO’s military operations with the Ukraine exist under the auspices of NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) initiatives to develop Ukraine’s nascent military institutions. First, Ukraine cooperates with NATO’s Planning and Review Process (PARP) designed to promote interoperability between NATO and PfP states by participating in simulation exercises at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) in Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels, Germany. Additionally, Ukraine participates in the Partnership Coordination Cell in at NATO Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium that focuses on training countries for “peacekeeping, humanitarian operations and search and rescue”. Third, the YavorivPfP Training Center in Ukraine hosts NATO PfP simulations for Joint Assistance Exercises intended to prepare the PfP states for emergency situations that may pose major threats to the region such as hazardous chemical outbreaks. Finally, Ukraine participates in the NATO Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that allows NATO to operate within Ukraine primarily for commercial transit facilities to its endeavors in Iraq.³²

The United States of America

The United States’ interests in the BSR assumed a more significant role since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. During the Cold War, the US viewed the BSR as a battleground for proxy wars against the Soviet Union. This idea lingered until the events of September 11th shifted terrorism into global consciousness. At that time, the BSR became increasingly important to the US and joined what the US terms the “Greater Middle East”.³³

The BSR holds special significance to the US for three reasons.³⁴ First, the BSR connects Europe to China, the current challenger to US hegemony.³⁵ Second, the Black Sea serves as a bridge to the Middle East, a region that is of special note to the US since September 11, 2001. Third, the Black Sea connects continental Europe with its main energy supplier, Russia. This serves to mitigate Middle Eastern energy cartels’ power in determining global energy prices.³⁶

To serve its interests in the region, the US facilitates NATO cooperation with non-NATO states such as Ukraine via offering training in security affairs.³⁷ According to Deborah Sanders, since the Orange Revolution of 2004, Ukraine has taken steps to become “highly skilled, rapidly deployable, [capable of using] advances in technology and communications, and [toward possessing] the versatility to operate across the full spectrum of military operations from high intensity to peacekeeping.”³⁸

To support Ukraine’s military development efforts, the United States participates in bilateral exercises, such as the US-Ukraine Bilateral Defense Consultations. These bi-annual conversations cover general defense topics.³⁹ According to Army Lt. Col. Gary D. Espinas of the US Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, facilitating interactions between the US and Ukraine “...underscores the importance of having a professional military that is interoperable with NATO and capable of meeting their country’s needs...Ukraine is [also] a key partner of the United States and a key player in regional security”.⁴⁰

The US National Guard and the Ukrainian military participate in the exchange of personnel for tactical trainings in emergency management and anti-terrorism. In the past, Ukrainian forces joined the Guard in California for disaster response exercises. Likewise, members of the California Guard traveled to Ukraine for joint anti-terrorism trainings.⁴¹ Such exercises serve a dual purpose to develop Ukraine's stand-alone capabilities as well as enhance Ukraine interoperability with NATO troops.

Additionally, the US reinforces ties with NATO member states Romania and Bulgaria by facilitating joint training between Romanian, Bulgarian, and US troops in exercises relevant to the US mission in that region.⁴² In pursuit of this goal, the US Army Europe Task Force-East currently hosts training opportunities in Bulgaria via the US European Command's Theater Security Cooperation Program.⁴³ Under this program, the Army Corps of Engineers is currently constructing the Novo Selo Training Area scheduled for completion in 2012.⁴⁴ This facility will offer trainings in preparation for future possible NATO joint operations, as well as to reinforce relationships with non-NATO allies in the region.⁴⁵

In Romania, the US military also seeks to create ties with partner nations by constructing training facilities and lending its expertise in intelligence training. The US Marines Corps also collaborate with Romania via the Black Sea Rotational Force.⁴⁶ This 100-member marine-air-ground task force seeks to create lasting ties to the BSR, Caucasus and Balkan states through enhancing force development in NATO and non-NATO partnering nations.⁴⁷

Finally, the US intelligence community also collaborates with its Romanian counterparts via "information sharing, mutual support [both financial and procurement], visits, and joint training."⁴⁸ US agencies such as the National Security Agency (NSA), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Secret Service communicate with Romania in bilateral and multilateral formats resulting from, "common preoccupations, needs and perceptions, as well as shared threats."⁴⁹ In addition to providing information and support, the FBI opened an organized crime-focused office in Bucharest in 2001.⁵⁰

Recommendations for Ukraine's Role In BSR Securitization

To cope with BSR security threats, Ukraine should strategically engage in security operations to build military capacity, avoid marginalization and inhibit political domination in the BSR. Ukraine should strategically participate with institutions through exercises that enhance Ukrainian security capabilities and sovereignty without upsetting the political interests of the competing regional powers. Certain aspects separate strategic engagement from haphazard interaction with various institutions and regional powers. First, Ukraine must be purposeful about what the intended gains of engagement are. Second, they must be prudent about with whom and when they engage, constantly reassessing the means of engagement and matching these means to their desired end. Finally, they must take inventory of their resource sufficiencies and deficiencies applicable to their cause. Thus strategic engagement requires that Ukraine define its role in the region, measure its actual and potential capacity as a player in the region, and interact with other institutions to make up the difference between actual and potential capabilities.

Ukraine's Political Role

The sovereign states surrounding the Black Sea have diverse political realities. Aydin, et. al argue that "democracy in the [Black Sea] region is still influenced by the heritage of Communism," and that the littoral states have little experience implementing the essential ingredients of democracy, such as "organizing effective party structures and formulating appropriate electoral platforms, and [building] consensus".⁵¹ While this struggle between East and West may characterize the region as a whole, effective regional cooperation necessitates knowledge of each state's unique identity and its position on the political spectrum between Communism and democracy.

While the citizens of Ukraine are diverse in religion, language, and customs, the country is relatively peaceful and ethno-political conflict is rare.⁵² However, the country is somewhat politically divided in terms of its relationship with Russia. Ukraine's geographic location serves to separate Russia from the European Union (EU) and provides a reference point for the country's political division. While Ukrainians in the west identify with Western Europe and its institutions, the Ukrainians in the east maintain close relations with Russia and claim Russian as their first language. This cultural and linguistic divide manifests in difficulty reaching consensus on foreign policy and domestic issues.⁵³

Western development models have long influenced Turkey in its move from Islamic society toward secularization.⁵⁴ Turkey's success in efforts to transform its institutions based on European standards is unique for the region. In recent years, Turkey has edited over one-third of its constitution and implemented over two hundred new laws on issues such as "modernization of the penal code, the protection of freedom of expression, religious pluralism, and human rights".⁵⁵ Additionally, the government implemented reforms aimed at inclusion of the Kurdish population into mainstream Turkish society under the "More freedom for All" campaign.⁵⁶ The campaign's most notable provision allows freedom in operation of Kurdish radio and television news networks. Even with these improvements, much internal debate still exists over the role of the nation and the move toward secularism, and its securitization.⁵⁷

Bulgaria and Romania are emerging from their communist pasts through state-building, democratic reforms, and European Union membership.⁵⁸ Each state has had a mixed record since joining the EU. In Bulgaria, the rise of populist movements has created a politically volatile environment, as witnessed in the protests and street marches during the summer of 2009.⁵⁹ In recent years, citizens have been more actively protesting perceived corruption and inefficiency in the Bulgarian government. Surprisingly, the Bulgarian political arena's unsettled environment has not improved since the country gained EU membership.⁶⁰

Romania's political results vary similar to Bulgaria. Shortly after joining the EU, conflict between the country's Prime Minister and President inhibited democratic reforms and shifted the country's focus to infighting between its two heads of state.⁶¹ This conflict led to division within Romania's ruling party. According to the European Commission, the Romanian presidential election of December 2009 demonstrates Romania's mixed record on democratic reforms. While the peaceful election demonstrates the country's move toward the democratic norm of openness and transparency, inflammatory campaign tactics employed by both major parties represent deficiencies in the current political culture.⁶²

Since its war with Russia during the summer of 2008, Georgia has been reluctant to voice its Western sentiments.⁶³ Since President Saakashvili took office in 2004, the country has been working toward four specific goals: democratization, institutionalizing a market economy, state building, and nation building.⁶⁴ Georgia barely rebounded from the government's forceful reprimand of a protest march on Tbilisi when the country went to war with Russia in the summer of 2008. Georgia currently exists in a state of flux: reluctant to demonstrate its adherence to EU democratic norms, yet clearly seeking to escape from Russia's influence. This leaves Georgia facing a precarious political climate as well as slow economic growth and low foreign investment.⁶⁵

Yet, since the fall of the Soviet Union, various attempts to increase regional cooperation in the BSR have slowly progressed. This slow progression has been attributed to several factors, including "the low level of interest of Black Sea countries for regional affairs, prickly bilateral relations between some of them, and Russia's policies in the region".⁶⁶ In more recent years however, key events in the wider region including the 'color revolutions' in Ukraine and Georgia, EU and NATO's 2004 expansion, and the landmark European Neighbourhood Policy of 2006 establish the pressing need for regional political cooperation among Black Sea littoral states.⁶⁷

Regional cooperation between the BSR states complements cooperation with the EU. The littoral states' location at the crossroads between East and West necessitates maintaining stable relations Russia while partnering with the EU. The BSR states should focus on building consensus separate from Eastern and Western powers.

Regional initiatives have existed in the BSR since the creation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation initiative (BSEC) in 1992. In June 2010, The Commission on the Black Sea published an 2020 vision for progress in the BSR declaring that a "civil society initiative comprising a number of current and former policy-makers, scholars and practitioners both from within the region and from outside".⁶⁸ The Commission offers specific recommendations for increasing regional political dialogue in the Black Sea Economic Cooperative initiative (BSEC).

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation initiative is approaching its twentieth anniversary in 2012. The Commission on the Black Sea views this approaching anniversary as an inspiration for increasing awareness and as an impetus for increased dialogue between the BSR states and to reform the BSEC to be a "more relevant organization with greater clout".⁶⁹

The Council makes several recommendations for the BSEC, including "setting specific targets and deadlines for the development of a system of legally binding commitments and implementation mechanisms".⁷⁰ These benchmark goals should address areas of shared concern between BSEC members. By working towards regional coordination with other BSEC members, states benefit from synergies otherwise precluded by a unilateral policymaking approach.⁷¹

The Council also recommends that the BSEC "[agree] on substantial augmentation of [its] budget, based on proportional contributions, in order to enable BSEC to co-finance major projects of regional interest".⁷² Specifically, the Commission recommends that the BSEC act in concert with the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank to fashion action-specific funds similar to the Hellenic Development Fund.⁷³

Ukraine's Economic Role

Ukraine's economy has experienced much volatility since declaring independence from the Soviet Union. First, due to heavy economic reliance on providing agricultural goods to the Soviet Union, its economy collapsed with that of the USSR in 1991. However, Ukraine's glimmer of economic hope is in steel production. Through Ukraine's first decade of independence, steel grew to be its top export. In 2007, Ukraine's real GDP exceeded 7%, predominantly merging from elevated international steel prices. The price increase was driven by international states, such as Russia, other CIS markets and Asia with high domestic demands for this good. When the global financial crisis distressed these regions, the Ukrainian economy suffered from the external loss in steel exports.

Second, given the volatile markets on which Ukraine's economy is based, it continues to rely on Russia as its main energy provider. As an example, Ukraine ensured low gas prices in a deal to extend the Russian Black Sea Fleet lease at Sevastopol.⁷⁴ Russian oil and natural gas account for an alarming 75%.⁷⁵ This heavy external reliance leaves Ukraine's economy vulnerable to outside shocks. In 2006, Russia doubled the price of gas. The Ukrainian government refused to pay the increased amount. As a corollary, the Russian government turned off the flow of gas throughout the year. The periodic gas cut-offs led to a sharp decline in Ukraine's GDP. Ukraine continues to demonstrate its political and economic reliance on Russia to keep its economy stable, as any attempt to break from Russia would negatively impact the Ukrainian people.

Ukraine's economy is also affected by its massive debt. In 2008 the International Monetary Fund (IMF) granted Ukraine a \$16.4 billion loan to bolster its finances in the midst of the global economic crisis.⁷⁶ As a condition for the IMF loan, Ukraine committed to progressively depreciate its currency, recapitalize its banking sector, and pursue more rigorous fiscal and

monetary policies.⁷⁷ Volatility and uncertainty within and outside Ukraine's borders continue to hamper its efforts for economic recovery. The IMF loan has had little impact for the Ukrainian economy as real GDP continued to fall 20.3% in 2009. The country's economic raises concerns over whether Ukraine will pay back its loans. As a result, many international banks stopped making loans in Ukraine and even stopped giving depositors their money back. Ukraine currently has more than enough reserves to service its sovereign debt of about \$18 billion. However, total foreign debt of Ukraine's corporations (mainly banks) is five times larger than the sovereign debt. If banks collapse, the state will not have enough cash to take over the obligations of the banking sector.

Given this negative economic situation, Ukraine's government will find financing military growth difficult. However, there are significant areas where Ukraine can simultaneously gain economic as well as military advantages within Ukraine's thriving industrial military complex. GlobalSecurity.org points out that "the military-industrial complex of Ukraine is the most advanced and developed branch of the state's sector of economy."⁷⁸ Ukraine has advantages in the aerospace, shipbuilding, and arms industries. Through its advantage in steel production as well, Ukraine is uniquely poised to not only be a leader in military industrial production, but also a technological weapons leader. Before the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia placed a large portion of its military industrial complex within Ukraine. Since 1991, Ukraine seeks to decrease negative Russian industrial influences while focusing on building a self-reliable military industrial complex.

Largely, this plan has been successful and is worth further pursuit. In 2009, Ukraine signed an arms deal with Iraq worth US\$2.4 Billion.⁷⁹ This deal places Ukraine in the top 5 of arms dealers in the world.⁸⁰ In 2008, though, Ukraine experienced a decline in arms trading. Given its significant capabilities, Ukraine should continue to pursue the policy of greater arms trading. This will help the Ukrainian economy become less reliant on the agricultural and commodities sectors while encouraging its own military benefits from the investments in arms research and development.

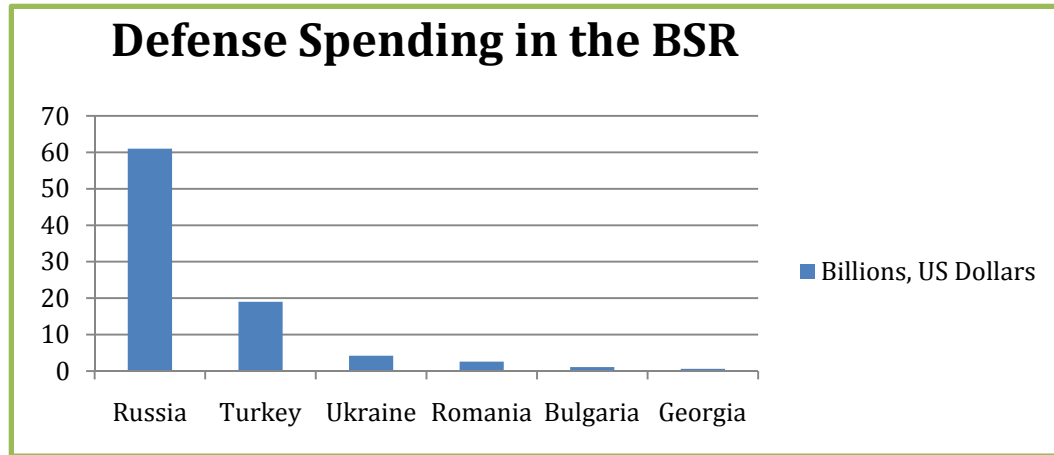
Ukraine's Military Role

There are three main areas of integration with other Black Sea nations; economic, political, and military. Ukraine is currently involved in economic agreements and political organizations designed to increase communication between littoral states. However, these agreements in themselves do not equip Ukraine with the tools to become a major actor in BSR securitization. Ukraine risks marginalization by avoiding both Russian and NATO influence. Currently, Ukraine's state capacity can only secure its own territory and interests with Russian, NATO or Turkish aid.

Ukraine faces significant obstacles to engagement in the BSR. While the ideal situation would be for Ukraine to build its military capacity, financial constraints hinder long term strategies that focus on growth. Currently, Ukraine spends less than 3 percent of GDP on its military while the other major actors, Turkey and Russia, spend significantly more.⁸¹ Figure 3 below shows Ukraine's military spending compared to the rest of the littoral nations. While Ukraine does not spend much on the military, the government has committed to building a specialized military through its partnership with NATO. The Ukraine-NATO military cooperation plan for 2009-2010 included the following goals:

- "transition to capabilities-based defense planning system;
- enhancement of operational capabilities of the Ukrainian Armed Forces;
- professionalization of Ukrainian Armed Forces."⁸²

FIGURE 3: Defense Spending in the Black Sea Region



Source of Data: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

Also, allowing Russia to continue its large presence in Sevastopol demonstrates that Russia is still the largest actor in the region. If Ukraine wishes to balance this force outside of the NATO umbrella encompassing Turkey, Romania, and Bulgaria, it needs to exert its military presence at a level comparable to Russia. Ukraine does not need to directly counter the Black Sea Fleet, but should demonstrate that the presence of the fleet does not dictate Ukrainian military policy. Ukraine can even demonstrate military power peacefully through major cooperation on initiatives designed to counter illegal activities such as Black Sea For and Black Sea Harmony. Working through these areas of cooperation, Ukraine can reassure its regional neighbors that it is a strong actor, maintaining stability in the area.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Ukraine was left with a fragmented military system.⁸³ The nation has worked diligently to overcome difficulties of the Soviet era and is now in a position to strengthen the military structures that exist, expand its military exports, and become more than just a regional actor by partnering with NATO and Russia outside the BSR. In order to achieve the goal of becoming a stable guarantor of security for regional allies, Ukraine needs to invest more in its military structure. It faces considerable risks in pursuing this strategy, however being able to ensure security and stability without joining NATO or other regional security organizations should be worth it to a nation that sits in the middle of three competing powers; Russia, Turkey, and NATO.

The benefits of becoming a regional military actor are abundant. Ukraine relies heavily on Russia for a steady supply of energy, and at a significantly discounted price. When Russia decides to turn off the gas supply, the Ukrainian people suffer. With new gas pipes leading to Europe being built south of the Black Sea, the rest of Europe will have less interest in protecting Ukraine should such an event happen. Since as any political disturbance could leave Ukraine vulnerable to Russian aggression, Russia's heavy military presence is also a source of contention for the nation. Ukraine needs to build up a military presence to not only protect itself should Russia decide to act aggressively, but also to demonstrate to area nations that Ukraine is an important ally so that an alternative energy agreement might be considered.

If Ukraine decides to build its military capacity, however, it faces diplomatic consequences mainly from Russia. In order to best protect itself, Ukraine should make military investments in peaceful areas, such as Black Sea security cooperation. It can also partner with Russian troops as well as NATO forces to train and increase cooperation to decrease the risk of confrontation. The risks of investment in the military are minimal and do not outweigh the benefits to building and improving

capacity. In fact, through successive administrations, nationalism and a strong Ukrainian state is an idea around which most Ukrainians might eventually rally.

As compared to other regions of the world, the BSR is a relatively stable environment in terms of maritime-related security threats. Yet, all nations in the BSR, including Ukraine, should consider existing vulnerabilities and continue to address security challenges impacting economic stability and prosperity. At the end of the Cold War era, nations in the BSR enjoyed largely peaceful relations with neighbors due to the emergence of former Warsaw Pact nations and former Soviet republics as strong, independent states. While most security experts view the overall risk of high-intensity, conventional conflict between any combinations of littoral nations as low, the conflict between Russia and Georgia in August of 2008 demonstrates that the region is not immune to the risk of interstate conflict. Thus, if Ukraine is to be a legitimate peacekeeping actor in the BSR it must develop the tools to facilitate multilateral security operations with other nations in the region. As demonstrated in Figure 4 on the following page, there are many other forces willing to offer security, however these forces can often be biased in their assistance. It is essential that Ukraine remain flexible. In addition to maintaining peacekeeping forces, Ukraine must enhance its ability to counter asymmetric threats against both civilian and military targets.

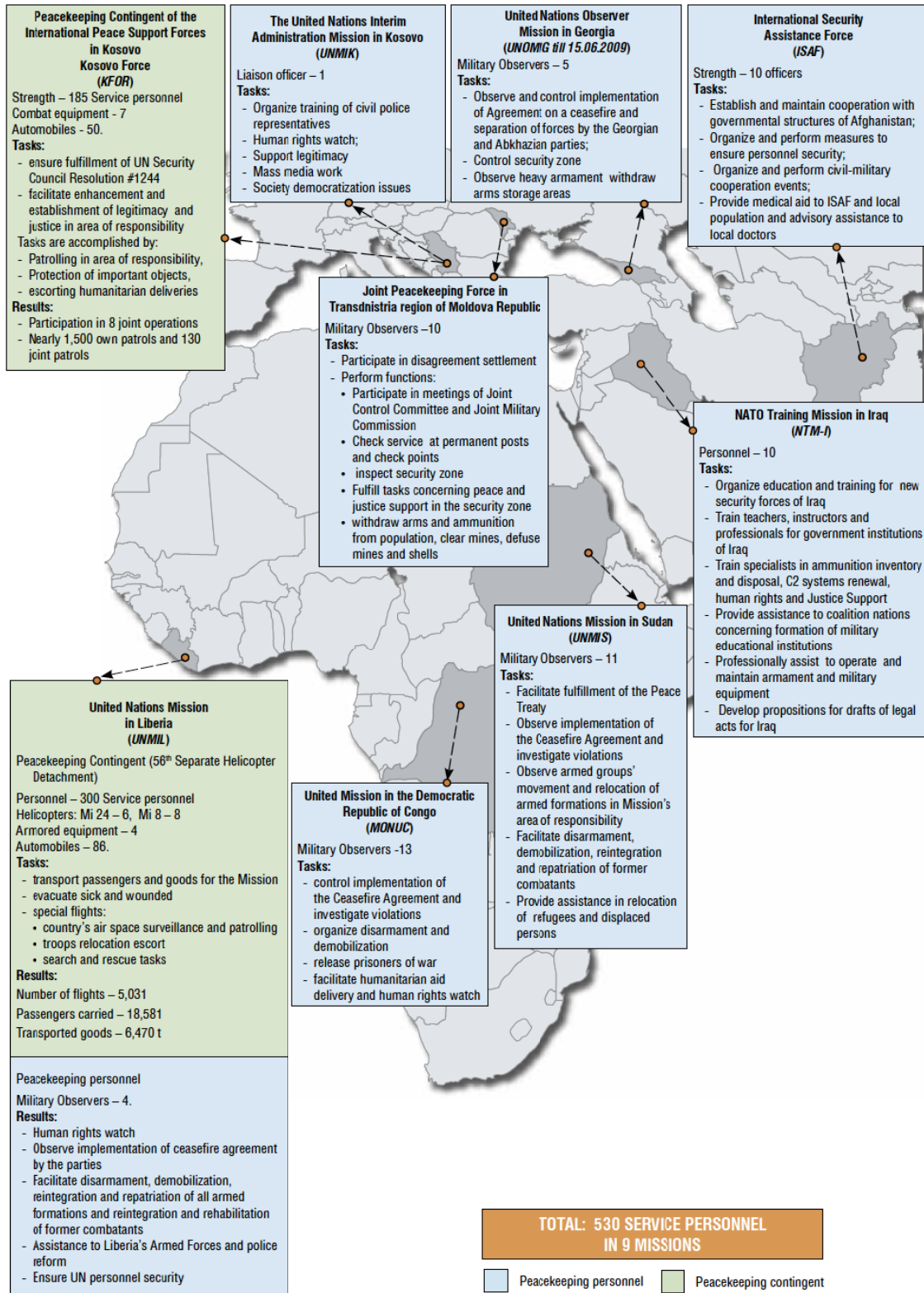
FIGURE 4: Distribution of Armed Forces in the Black Sea Region



Unlike many nations in the greater Middle East and Central Asia where religious extremism fuels violence against the government, separatist movements in the Caucasus region represent the greatest threat to governance, security and economic prosperity. Such separatist movements could seek to attack critical infrastructure such as ports, public transportation and energy infrastructure. The goal of such attacks is to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the government to

provide security or the most basic utilities to the population (in the case of power generation and water treatment facilities). Separatist groups often seek to provoke a heavy-handed response from their own domestic security forces such as curfews, travel restrictions, detentions and searches or seizures that violate the privacy of ordinary citizens. The ultimate goal is to draw international support and possibly intervention by other nations. South Ossetia's separatist strategies provide a clear example of a successful movement to establish sovereignty from Georgia. Regardless of the impetus behind an organization's actions, the impact of such attacks on governments, economic activity and the civilian populace can be extremely detrimental to long term stability and prosperity. While Ukraine may not be directly threatened, the risk of small-scale conflicts spreading violence across borders could severely impair the availability of regional security cooperation to counter other threats.

FIGURE 5: Current Level of Ukrainian Participation in Multinational Peacekeeping Operations



Ukraine. "White Book 2009." Ministry of Defense of Ukraine. No. 2 (116): 2010. <http://www.mil.gov.us/files/white_book/Book_WP_2009_eng.pdf>.

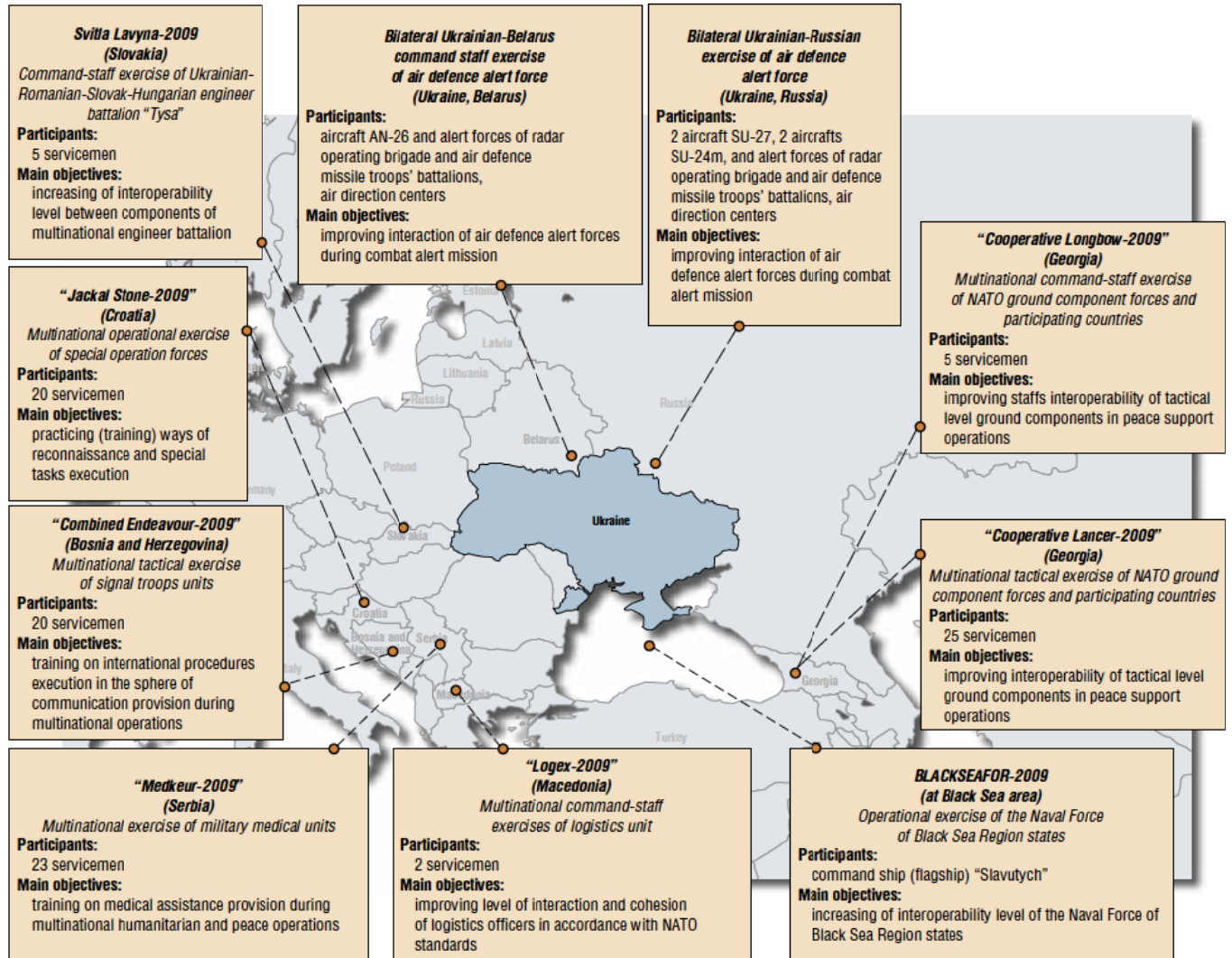
Armed Forces of

Maintaining security in today's complex environment requires a significant investment in training for peacekeeping operations as well the capability to rapidly deploy those forces. While 2009 may be the "Year of the Land Forces", air and naval forces cannot be ignored.⁸⁴ Ukraine must develop a rapid reaction force capable of deployment throughout the Black Sea to conduct humanitarian assistance operations and to prevent violence from escalating. Heavy-lift cargo aircraft to deploy both personnel and equipment is a critical requirement. Defense planners must determine how many troops (and for what duration) will be required to handle specific types of contingency operations while balancing realistic expectations of what Ukraine can achieve in the near term. Figure 5 on the previous page illustrates the low levels Ukrainian participation in peacekeeping operations around the world.

Ukraine must simultaneously increase its ability to conduct routine security operations and to protect critical economic infrastructure in the region. As an increasing amount of energy sources in the Caspian Region are discovered and exploited, the need to safeguard these assets from terrorist attacks becomes vital to Ukraine's economic viability. While the relatively homogenous Ukrainian population provides a less than ideal environment for an extremist group to find safe haven or recruit, today's sophisticated terrorist cells possess a global reach. No nation should consider itself invulnerable to this threat. Ukrainian security forces must dedicate the assets necessary to conduct security operations such as near-shore patrols of port facilities and routine surveillance of refineries. Emphasis must be placed on enhancing the Ukraine's maritime capabilities to ensure security of off-shore platforms and shipping lanes. Routine search operations targeting container ships and smaller vessels alike are essential to combat the illicit drug trade and human trafficking. To the extent that organized crime is complicit in these activities, additional pressure by internal security forces is required to disrupt the logistical and financial architecture of these organizations.

To facilitate this sophisticated security initiative, resources should be dedicated to training exercises. Cooperation with international security partners is paramount. In addition to advocating for increased regional cooperation on security issues, Ukraine should continue to appeal for assistance from outside nations to enhance its own domestic capabilities. The United States' Joint Multi-National Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany provides an example of the type of sophisticated training facilities required to prepare units for deployment. Ukraine must seek opportunities for joint, multi-national training exercises at home and abroad. As noted in Figure 6 on the following page, Ukraine hosted five multinational exercises in 2009, less than a hundred personnel deployed as a part of multinational exercises outside of Ukraine, further highlighting Ukraine's failure to demonstrate a willingness to cooperate in security exercises beyond its own borders.⁸⁵ Ukraine should further enhance its own domestic training facilities to better train and equip units preparing to deploy to peacekeeping and other contingency operations.⁸⁶

FIGURE 6: Training Exercises Beyond Ukraine's Borders



Armed Forces of Ukraine. "White Book 2009." Ministry of Defense of Ukraine. No. 2 (116): 2010. <http://www.mil.gov.ua/files/white_book/Book_WP_2009_eng.pdf>.

Conclusions

The Black Sea Region faces considerable threats moving forward in the 21st century. Ukraine must evaluate its security needs to develop standards suitable for transforming into an active security partner in the region. Reliant on Russian gas, yet independently one of the largest arms traders in the world, Ukraine is powerful. However, as regional states and international security organizations such as NATO seek to exert increasing influence in the BSR, non-NATO states such as Ukraine could be marginalized. Let there be no mistake, Ukraine is threatened by its geopolitical position between Russia and NATO as well as by its proximity to Turkey. The BSR needs a viable and capable partner in Ukraine to prevent any further assertions of dominance by any one littoral nation. Ukrainians democratically elected a government committed to abandoning a bid for NATO while strengthening Ukrainian political, economic and military influence. Without permanent security arrangements such as NATO, Ukraine must develop the state capacity to provide for its own security before it can be a significant actor in the BSR. Ukraine's military has the potential to assume a leadership role in Black Sea securitization by increasing military investments and engaging in multilateral operations to enhance Ukraine's military visibility and interoperability. If Ukraine adopts these recommendations, it may become a modicum for other BSR littoral states to develop the foreign policy tools to become a contributing actor in BSR securitization.

End Notes

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