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Energy Security in the Black Sea

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ENERGY SECURITY IN THE BLACK SEA

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Introduction

The broader Black Sea region, including the Black Sea itself, is a vibrant transit corridor that connects several sub-regions of Europe and Asia, from Eastern Europe to the Caucasus, and from the Balkans to the Middle East. This connectivity increases its strategic importance on the global stage and offers significant opportunities for developing various projects for transportation routes and energy production and trade, encompassing the transport of electricity, oil, and gas, along with an increasing focus on clean, renewable energy resources.

The region is also particularly rich in natural energy reserves. Russian, the Caspian, and even the Middle Eastern/Eastern Mediterranean oil and gas resources are part of this equation. Currently, offshore gas reserves in the Black Sea, which have been underscored by recent announcements from Romania and Türkiye regarding significant gas discovery deposits, indicate new aspects of energy security in the Black Sea. While the latest total natural gas reserves in the Black Sea declared by Turkish authorities are 785 bcm, Bulgaria and Romania hold an estimated 200-300 bcm in the Black Sea.[1] These findings not only position these countries as players in the energy sector but also have the potential to transform the region's energy landscape. Concurrently, Bulgaria is



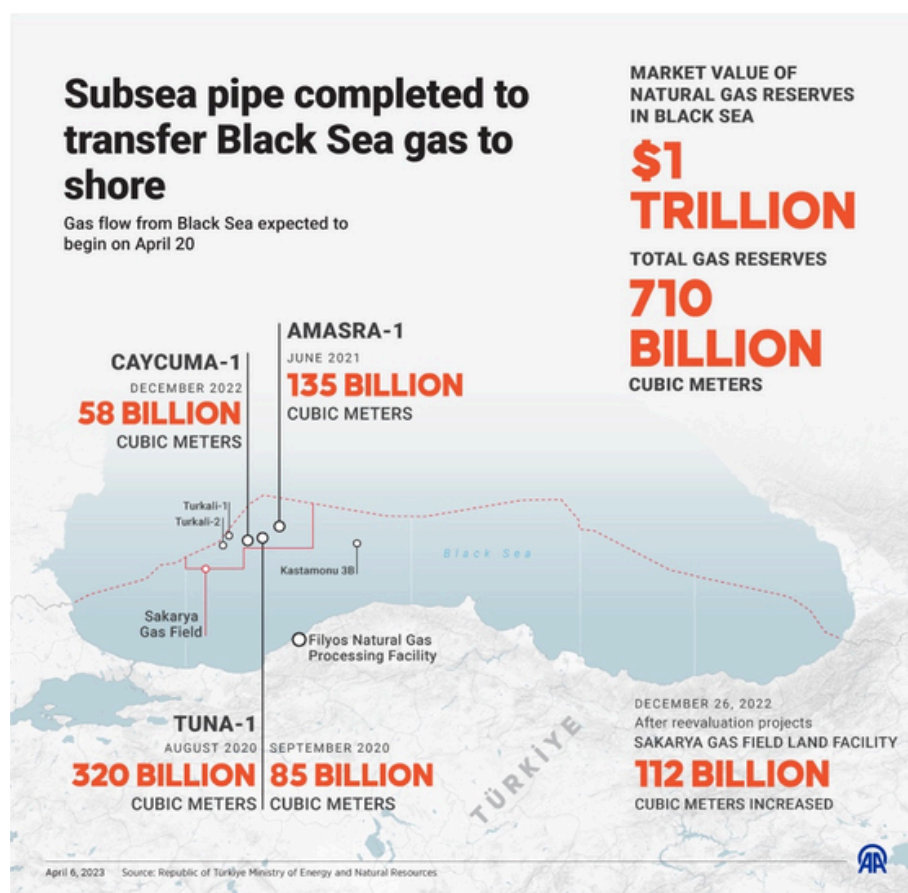
actively engaged in exploration efforts within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to identify additional gas reserves, which could further bolster the energy infrastructure and security of the Black Sea region.

The Black Sea region's inherent value and significant potential are currently jeopardized by various risks, resulting in a complex security landscape. Since the Russia-Georgia War of 2008, the security situation has continued to decline. A pivotal moment came in March 2014 with Russia's occupation and annexation of Crimea. This action not only contravened international law but also fundamentally shifted the balance of power in the Black Sea, escalating tensions among the coastal states and impacting other global stakeholders. The annexation has compromised maritime security by increasing the presence of military assets in the region, restricting navigation, and heightening concerns about the possibility of conflicts.

[1] Hümeýra Ayaz, "The latest total natural gas reserves in the Black Sea declared by Turkish authorities are 785 bcm," *Energy Terminal*, 18 May 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/energy/natural-gas/-new-black-sea-gas-discovery-bolsters-turkiyes-geopolitical-role/49290>

The ongoing conflict arising from Russia's war against Ukraine, which began in 2022, has significantly intensified security challenges for the littoral states. This conflict not only undermines the stability and security of the region but also threatens current and prospective energy projects that are crucial for fostering economic cooperation and energy independence among Black Sea nations. These developments present complex challenges, compelling regional actors and global powers to reassess their strategies and interests in the Black Sea. As a result, the region has emerged as a critical flashpoint in international relations, necessitating careful management and dialogue to address its multifaceted risks. The interplay of strategic opportunities and emerging threats underscores the pressing need for a cooperative security framework capable of tackling these challenges while maximizing the region's potential.

Current Energy Landscape and Challenges



Source: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/subsea-pipe-completed-to-transfer-black-sea-gas-to-shore/2865469>

Energy security is predominantly assessed through supply security, a multifaceted concept encompassing key elements such as availability, accessibility, affordability, and sustainability. Each dimension determines a nation's capacity to secure a stable and reliable energy supply. In this context, the Black Sea region emerges as a critical corridor for the transportation of energy resources from Russia and the Caspian Sea to international markets. This significance is primarily due to the strategic positioning of energy-rich regional countries such as Russia and Azerbaijan, which have become pivotal players in producing, transporting, and exporting hydrocarbon resources. These resources include oil, natural gas, and coal, all vital to meeting global energy demands.

However, the landscape of energy security in this region is complicated by persistent disputes, political rivalries, and power struggles that can significantly impact the stability and reliability of energy supply chains.[2] The geopolitical dynamics surrounding the Black Sea and its neighboring territories are significant, as they impact the effectiveness of transit routes for transporting energy supplies to various markets. The embargo imposed on Russia, along with disruptions in maritime trade routes and rising military tensions in the region, has made trade increasingly challenging. These factors are driving investors and logistics companies away, particularly due to the resulting increases in insurance costs. Given the essential infrastructural investments and logistical considerations involved in energy transport, the broader implications of regional stability are crucial for long-term energy planning and security strategies. Therefore, the importance of the Black Sea region goes beyond its geography; it has become a key focal point for energy policy, international relations, and economic strategy among regional countries and outside interests, such as EU member states and the US, as they seek stable energy security amid ongoing political and security challenges.

Over the past few decades, the Black Sea region has become a crucial energy transmission and transportation corridor. Since the early 1990s, the Russian Federation has skillfully leveraged the strategic importance of the Black Sea to export its vast energy resources to international markets, with

a strong emphasis on European markets. Key infrastructure, such as existing pipelines, played a significant role in this process. Several pipelines, such as Yamal and the Brotherhood pipelines, have transported Russian natural gas to Europe via Ukraine for decades, and others, Blue Stream and Turkish Stream, connect to Türkiye through underwater pipelines across the Black Sea. These pipelines have supplied energy and solidified the region's status as an essential transit zone for energy resources.[3]

Rivalling the Russian gas and oil to Europe in the Black Sea region has been Azerbaijani and Kazakh oil and potential Turkmen gas. The most prominent projects in this direction are the Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP), the largest component of the Southern Gas Corridor, and the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), the European leg of the corridor. The 1850-kilometer-long TANAP connects with TAP on the banks of the Meriç River on the Turkish-Greek border and transports Azerbaijani natural gas to European markets. With a total capacity of 16 billion cubic meters, TANAP transports 6 billion cubic meters of this capacity to Turkey, while the remaining 10 billion cubic meters are transported to the European market via TAP.

With the realization of all those projects, Türkiye, over the past two decades, has strategically pursued a policy to position itself as a prominent energy hub, which has significantly reshaped the energy geopolitics of the Black Sea region. This transformation, together with direct Russia-Turkey pipelines, has

[2] For a detailed and comprehensive analysis see George Scutaru, Tacan İldem and Yordan Bozhilov, *The Strategic Importance of the Black Sea: regional Cooperation for Energy and Defense*, <https://edam.org.tr/en/foreign-policy-and-security/the-strategic-importance-of-the-black-sea-regional-cooperation-for-energy-and-defense>.

[3] See Emre Erşen and Mitat Çelikpala, "Turkey and the Changing Energy Geopolitics of Eurasia", *Energy Policy*, No.128, 2019, p.584-592.

been facilitated by establishing alternative pipelines that transport Azerbaijani gas and oil, primarily sourced from the Caspian Sea, directly to European markets. As a result, Türkiye's role as a critical transit country for energy supplies and its contribution to diversifying Europe's energy sources have been enhanced. Türkiye has emerged as a pivotal player in the global energy landscape by reducing dependence on traditional northern routes, effectively transforming the region into a vital corridor for energy transport. This shift underscores the importance of Türkiye in regional and global energy security, as it navigates the complex geopolitical dynamics at play.

The movement of oil tankers navigating through the Black Sea and the Turkish Straits underscores the region's significance as an energy transit hub. These vessels transport large quantities of Russian oil to global markets, highlighting the Black Sea's crucial role in the international energy landscape. The Bosphorus Strait, a key chokepoint in global oil trade, sees 38 percent of Russia's maritime crude oil exports pass through after tankers are loaded at the Novorossiysk port. Approximately 3 million barrels of crude oil per day and 20 million tons of petroleum products per year transit through the Turkish Straits. This constitutes about 3 percent of the world's annual oil trade. Consequently, the Black Sea has become essential for regional economies and global energy security.[4]

Evaluation of Energy Security in the Black Sea

Energy security in the Black Sea region can be explored through several key aspects:

Transportation: The movement of energy resources, such as oil and natural gas, across the Black Sea is vital for ensuring energy security. Transportation networks, including pipelines and shipping routes, face geopolitical tensions, environmental risks, and the need for secure maritime operations.

Understanding the presence of pipelines in the region and the threats they face is crucial for comprehending the security dynamics of energy transportation. Currently, the pipelines transporting natural gas from Russia to various European markets via Ukraine are inactive. This situation stems directly from Russian policies aimed at bypassing Ukraine, alongside the sanctions imposed on Russia, which have significantly disrupted energy trade and supply routes.

In contrast, the Blue Stream and TurkStream pipelines facilitate the transport of natural gas under the Black Sea, delivering it directly from Russia to Türkiye. Notably, TurkStream offers a more secure route for Russia to supply gas to the European market while avoiding Ukraine. This route is expected to serve as a viable alternative for Russia during and after the ongoing conflict.

[4] See "Canal Istanbul to alleviate oil traffic via Bosphorus", <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/energy/oil-downstreeam/canal-istanbul-to-alleviate-oil-traffic-via-bosphorus/20854#:~:text=An%20estimated%203%20million%20barrels,the%20world's%20annual%20oil%20trade>. Ayrıca "Türk Boğazlarından 20 yılda 2 milyona yakın gemi geçti", <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/turk-bogazlarindan-20-yilda-2-milyona-yakin-gemi-gecti/3371431>

In the aftermath of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, both gas pipelines are reportedly functioning at their maximum capacity. Despite the array of sanctions placed on Russia, natural gas continues to flow into international markets. This gas often arrives mixed with supplies from other sources, including liquefied natural gas (LNG) that is delivered to Türkiye. Since 2022, Türkiye has positioned itself as a crucial and strategic hub for Russian oil and gas intended for international distribution, particularly to European nations. This arrangement capitalizes on a notable loophole in the Western sanctions framework, specifically related to the wholesale of "blended" fuels. As long as these fuels are properly labeled as non-Russian, the blending allows Russia to maintain access to the global market while circumventing the restrictions intended to limit its energy exports. This practice underscores the complexities of international energy dynamics in the current geopolitical climate.[5]

Additionally, the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP), along with the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) oil pipelines, linking Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey, are also operating at their maximum capacity. These pipelines are crucial in transporting Azerbaijani oil and gas to Türkiye and onward to European markets, diversifying energy sources, and reducing reliance on Russian supplies. Together, these pipelines illustrate the complex landscape of oil and natural gas transportation amidst geopolitical tensions.

The pressure exerted on Russia by Western sanctions, along with Russia's

strategies to develop alternative pipelines, continues to pose a disruption potential to the energy supply. Additionally, Russia's willingness to use its energy resources as a tool for geopolitical leverage has heightened tensions with neighboring countries (such as Moldova) and complicated the security dynamics of energy projects in the Black Sea.

Russia's aggression towards Ukraine has emerged as a significant threat to maritime transportation in the Black Sea. In response, Ankara has implemented the Montreux Straits Convention, effectively closing the straits to military vessels from both conflicting parties. This action, combined with appeals to non-littoral states to refrain from military movements toward the Black Sea, has contributed to a degree of balance in the region. Nonetheless, despite these measures, Moscow's stance has imposed considerable strain on maritime traffic within the Black Sea. This ongoing tension affects both civilian and commercial shipping operations, raising concerns about the safety and security of vessels navigating these crucial waters. While Ukraine's operations against Russian military ships have established a new equilibrium by forcing those warships to retreat to safer ports in the east, such as Novorossiysk, the persistent tensions present increasingly serious implications for trade and regional stability. This situation underscores the necessity for vigilant monitoring and proactive diplomatic initiatives.

As an example, in August 2023, a significant maritime incident occurred when Russian forces unlawfully

[5] See Onur İşçi, Mustafa Aydın and Mitat Çelikpala, A precarious Interdependence between Russia and Turkey: Economic Cooperation, Energy Ties and Sanctions, Global Academy, No.2024/2, July 2024, <https://www.globacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/July-Report-2024.pdf>

intercepted the Şükrü Okan, a commercial vessel owned by a Turkish shipowner.[6] At the time of the interception, the Şükrü Okan was on its way to the Ukrainian port city of Izmail, which plays a crucial role in the shipment of goods from Ukraine. This incident unfolded within Bulgaria's EEZ, where the actions taken by Russian forces raised serious concerns regarding the safety and security of critical transport infrastructure in the Black Sea. The interception of the vessel not only posed a threat to maritime safety but also highlighted the Kremlin's attempts to exert its influence over naval activities in this strategically important area.

Russia aimed to undermine international maritime law and regulations by conducting such operations to reassert its dominance and control over navigation routes. This incident reflects broader geopolitical tensions and poses challenges for regional security, particularly concerning the stability of energy supply chains that rely on safe passage through these waters.

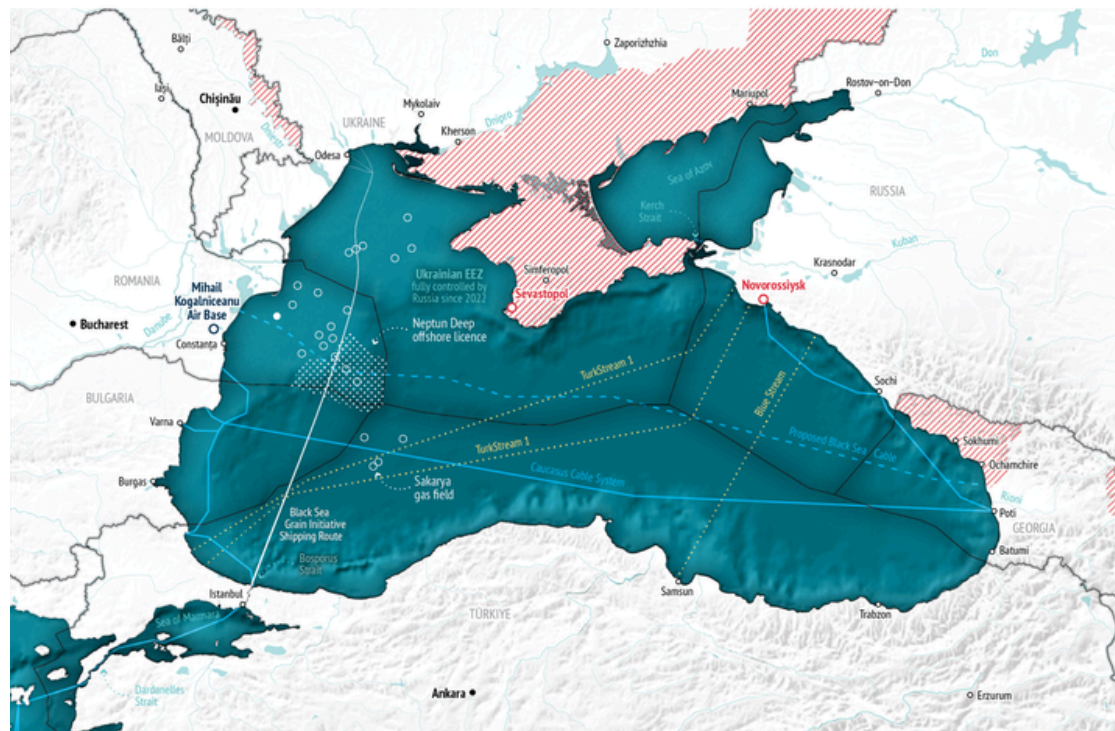
Such actions not only jeopardize freedom of navigation but also introduce uncertainties that may deter international investors and energy companies from engaging in regional projects. Furthermore, they can lead to significant disruptions in ongoing energy projects and extraction activities, resulting in security and financial strains. The rise in military activities near critical infrastructure raises broader concerns about potential disruptions that could impact energy supplies and impede efforts toward achieving energy independence.

Recent developments in this area have also raised concerns regarding maritime security. One major issue is the deployment of naval mines in and near the war zones, which poses a significant threat to vessels operating in the area. Additionally, there have been reports of interference with GPS signals for ships navigating the Black Sea, particularly attributed to Russian activities. This disruption can lead to severe navigational challenges and safety risks for commercial and civilian vessels. Furthermore, false flag operations, especially those involving naval drones, have added another layer of complexity to the situation. Such tactics endanger lives and create confusion and mistrust among nations. These interconnected threats highlight the urgent need for increased vigilance and cooperation to ensure the safety of maritime navigation in this strategically important region.

Production: The region holds significant potential for energy production, with various countries, especially Türkiye and Romania, exploring offshore oil and gas reserves. The current agenda concerning energy in the Black Sea region has increasingly focused on exploring and discovering new natural gas reserves, vital for meeting national and European energy needs. Significant offshore natural gas deposits have been uncovered in various offshore locations, particularly in Türkiye (Sakarya), as well as in Romania's Neptun Deep and Midia, and Bulgaria's Han Asparuh blocks. These discoveries, strategically located at the intersection of the EEZs of Turkey, Romania, and Bulgaria, not only hold the promise of fulfilling domestic energy requirements but also could

[6] John C. Tramazzo and Ian Santicola, "Russia's Interdiction of Neutral Merchant Vessels and The Law of The Sea", Lieber Institute, 11 Sep. 2023, <https://lieber.westpoint.edu/russias-interdiction-neutral-merchant-vessels-law-sea/>

open pathways for export to the European market, which is keen on diversifying its energy sources and reducing dependence on Russian gas.[7]



A complex seascape

Key infrastructure and flows in the Black Sea



Source: Ondrej Ditrych, Four swans of the Black Sea: Security scenarios for contested region, EUISS, <https://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/briefs/four-swans-black-sea>

In recent developments, Turkey and Romania have made further announcements regarding discovering additional gas reserves in their respective zones and have significantly increased their production efforts. If proven, these resources could reshape energy dynamics in the region, making these countries crucial players in the European energy landscape.

However, exploration and potential production of these resources are fraught with challenges. The geographic proximity of these offshore fields to Ukraine's maritime boundary complicates matters, particularly considering Russia's assertive claims over maritime extensions associated with occupied territories. Over the past several months, Russia has unilaterally classified significant sections of the Romanian and Bulgarian EEZs as "dangerous for navigation." This designation stems from ongoing military activities in these waters, which Russia claims pose a threat to maritime safety. As a result, this declaration has had severe repercussions, effectively pausing various economic endeavors, including crucial gas exploration efforts, in these regions. The implications of this action are notable, as it not only impacts the energy sector but also raises concerns about regional stability and international maritime law. Thus, ongoing military activities and geopolitical tensions in the region pose substantial risks to investment, exploration, and operational stability.

[7] George Scutaru, *Black Sea's offshore energy potential and its strategic role at a regional and continental level*, New Strategy Center, Bucharest, 2024, <https://newstrategycenter.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Studiu-Kas-Black-Sea-final-version.pdf>

Analyzing production capabilities involves assessing the technological advancements, investment decisions, and partnerships necessary to tap into these resources effectively while considering environmental implications. This latter aspect necessitates evaluation of advancements in renewable energy sources within the region, particularly highlighting the Black Sea and the surrounding areas as a promising hub for electricity generation through wind and solar technologies.

When analyzing energy generation in the region, it is essential to recognize the critical role of renewable energy sources and the development of new technologies. The effective integration of hydrogen-based solutions, alongside wind and solar energy, is vital for increasing energy diversity, promoting technological innovations throughout the region, and enhancing the overall interconnectivity of electricity generation systems.

A landmark initiative that underscores this effort is the formation of the Black Sea Renewable Energy Coalition, which held its inaugural meeting in Sofia on June 13, 2023, with the participation of national institutions and NGOs from Türkiye, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, and Georgia, together with the EU institutions.[8] In addition, in August 2023, Turkey marked a significant milestone by launching its first Renewable Energy Resource Zone (YEKA) in the Marmara region dedicated to offshore wind energy. The goal is to expand these areas to include

the Black Sea. As part of this comprehensive framework, 1.3 GW of potential fixed-based wind installations have been identified in the Black Sea region. Moreover, floating installations have significant potential, with estimates suggesting an additional 13.9 GW capacity could be developed. These initiatives aim to enhance Turkey's energy independence and contribute significantly to the Black Sea region's sustainable energy targets and environmental goals.[9]

In addition to harnessing wind and solar power, the potential for hydrogen production as a clean energy source is a crucial aspect of the region's energy landscape. This creates opportunities for domestic energy security and the possibility of exporting energy to neighboring countries and beyond, effectively establishing the area as a key player in the European renewable energy market.

Türkiye has made remarkable progress in renewable energy, achieving its solar capacity target of 19.6 GW ahead of schedule in 2024, and renewable energy sources accounted for 59% of the national electricity mix that same year. Ankara aims for a 50% share of renewable energy by 2030. Romania is advancing its renewable energy goals by raising its target for 2030 to achieve a 38.3% share of renewables in gross final energy consumption. Authorities plan to support the development of 10 GW of onshore wind and solar capacity by that year. Bulgaria's renewable energy sector is experiencing significant growth, particularly in solar

[8] See Black Sea Renewable Energy Coalition, <https://bsrec.eu/>

[9] Four locations identified for the development of offshore wind energy projects. A vast area covering 1,111 square kilometers has been designated off the coast of Bandırma and a 410 square kilometer site has been earmarked off Karabiga, both in the Marmara Sea. The government has also allocated 299 square kilometers in the Aegean Sea near Bozcaada Island and 75.6 square kilometers off Gelibolu in the Marmara Sea. See AA, "Deniz üstü RES için aday YEKA'ların büyüklükleri belirlendi," <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/deniz-ustu-res-icin-aday-yekalarin-buyuklukleri-belirlendi/2964090>

power. Sophia aims for 27% of its domestic energy production to come from renewable sources by 2030. Moldova has set an ambitious goal to increase its share of renewables in the national electricity mix to 30% by 2030, up from 10.5% in 2023. Despite the ongoing war, even Ukraine remains committed to developing renewable energy. By early 2025, the country is expected to have a total installed renewable energy capacity of approximately 7 GW (excluding occupied territories). Solar power is projected to contribute about 75% of the “green” energy produced, with around 1,400 solar generation facilities in operation. Ukraine aims to raise the share of renewable energy to 27.1% by 2030, setting a target of 24 GW of renewable energy generation capacity. Georgia is actively expanding its renewable energy sector and diversifying beyond its traditional reliance on hydropower. The country aims to double its installed capacity to over 10 GW by 2031, with renewables such as wind and solar expected to account for 18% of the energy mix.[10]

It is essential for the energy and security policies of the countries involved—especially those that are current members of the EU or are seeking membership—to integrate these developments. By incorporating innovative renewable energy strategies into their policy frameworks, these nations can enhance their energy independence, contribute to sustainability goals, and foster economic growth by using and even developing new technologies and industries. This approach will bolster regional energy resilience and support

broader EU objectives concerning climate change and energy transition.

Critical Infrastructure Security: The safety and integrity of energy infrastructure, such as pipelines, storage facilities, routes, and grids, are paramount for maintaining energy stability in the region. The vulnerability of such infrastructure to hybrid threats, cyber threats, physical attacks, and natural disasters, as well as the measures that can be implemented to mitigate these risks.

The blockade of Ukrainian ports, the occupation of strategic sites like Snake Island, off the coast of Odessa, Ukraine, by Russia, and the aggressive interception of commercial vessels have significantly strained regional security and endangered critical energy infrastructure. These actions underscore the vulnerability of both current and future energy projects, which depend on secure maritime routes and stable geopolitical conditions.[11]

Developing new and alternative energy projects has become a significant endeavor, prompted by various threats and uncertainties affecting the region and adjacent maritime areas. For example, no undersea electricity cables are nearby, highlighting a gap in the energy infrastructure that could be crucial for regional stability and energy security. However, stakeholders—governments, energy companies, and environmental organizations—actively pursue various initiatives to bridge this gap. A prominent example of such efforts is the Black Sea Submarine Cable, intended to create a high-

[10] See “Pioneering the Future of Energy in the Black Sea Region”, <https://bsenergyweek.com/#main>.

[11] Antonia Colibasanu, Leonardo Dinu, Jakub Godzimirski and George Scutaru, “How the Snake Island matters in the context of the 2022 war in Ukraine?”, <https://www.newstrategycenter.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/NSC-NUPI-How-the-Snake-Island-matters-in-the-context-of-the-2022-war-in-Ukraine.pdf>

voltage link between Azerbaijan and Europe via Romania as a part of the EU's Global Gateway initiative. Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania, and Hungary signed their initial agreement on the project in 2022. Set for completion in 2029, this 1,195 km cable will export renewable energy from the Caucasus to the EU.[12] This ambitious project would begin in Azerbaijan, drawing on its diverse energy resources, and would transit through Georgia, where it would benefit from improved energy connectivity. The cable would ultimately extend to Romania and Hungary, enhancing the energy infrastructure in these countries and facilitating the integration of renewable energy sources into the power grid. This initiative addresses current energy demands and promotes regional cooperation and sustainability in energy production and consumption.

With the advancement of numerous energy initiatives, including constructing Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminals and establishing offshore wind power plants in the Black Sea, the region is poised for a substantial increase in critical energy infrastructure elements. As these projects progress, the area's complexity and interdependence of energy systems will grow significantly. This expansion will necessitate heightened attention to the security and resilience of these infrastructures, making it an urgent priority for governments and stakeholders. Ensuring robust protection measures will be crucial to safeguard investments and maintain the stability and reliability of energy supply in a region that is becoming increasingly vital for energy production and distribution.

Conclusions

The Black Sea region, encompassing its land and maritime territories, is rapidly ascending in significance within the reconfigured landscape of European and global security. The strategic importance of this area is underscored by its substantial production capabilities and its role as a vital energy transit route. Energy security stands out as a critical component in this context, as the region plays a pivotal role in meeting the energy demands of Europe and beyond. However, a formidable challenge plaguing the region—impacting overall security and energy security—is the absence of a coherent and unified vision among its diverse stakeholders.

Regional actors' myriad interests and perspectives, particularly those of the littoral states, hinder the formation of a consolidated approach to effectively tackle the Black Sea's multifaceted needs. This fragmentation often compels regional powers to navigate the influence of larger nations, notably Russia, whose security policy usually conveys hegemonic aspirations and is perceived as a looming threat by many neighboring countries.

The presence of NATO members such as Turkey, Romania, and Bulgaria, juxtaposed with the efforts of other regional actors striving to fortify connections with Western security alliances—especially NATO—highlights the burgeoning competitive dynamics in the region. This rivalry is further exacerbated by ongoing interstate and intrastate conflicts, lingering political tensions, and active military

[12] Thijs Van de Graaf, "Corridors of Power: the Black Sea Cable between Azerbaijan and Europe", <https://big-europe.eu/publications/2024-10-30-corridors-of-power-the-black-sea-cable-between-azerbaijan-and-europe/>

confrontations that collectively contribute to a volatile environment characterized by conflicting security paradigms.

As global energy consumption continues to rise, the Black Sea region is poised to maintain its crucial role in energy production and transportation. However, this demands urgent attention to stabilizing, protecting, and effectively managing critical energy infrastructure, which is increasingly spread throughout the region. Achieving robust cooperation among the various stakeholders will hinge on establishing a well-balanced network of interrelationships that transcends individual national interests.

Additionally, the unfolding events in the Middle East, particularly the escalating tensions related to the Iran-Israel conflict and their broader global repercussions, coupled with the ongoing strife within the Black Sea region, notably the ramifications of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, are essential considerations for reinforcing regional energy security. These developments impact the local security dynamics and present opportunities for enhanced collaboration among nations to address shared challenges and interests.

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He published articles on Turkish foreign policy, Turkish-Russian relations, Eurasianism, and Turkish geopolitics in academic journals, including Energy Policy, Middle Eastern Studies, International Journal of Turkish Studies, and Journal of Southeast European and the Black Sea Studies.



The Black Sea region has long been a focal point of geopolitical competition, shaped by historical rivalries, strategic interests, and evolving security dynamics. In recent years, the region has witnessed growing instability due to escalating tensions, hybrid threats, and the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. These developments have not only disrupted regional security but have also posed broader challenges to the European and transatlantic security order. Given NATO's strategic interest in the region, a comprehensive reassessment of security frameworks is necessary to address emerging threats and enhance regional stability.

SecureBlackSea seeks to examine and propose a future security architecture for the wider Black Sea region, aligning with NATO's evolving strategic priorities. Through an in-depth analysis of existing security structures, regional conflicts, and cooperation mechanisms, it aims to provide evidence-based insights into key threats and potential policy responses. A particular focus will be placed on the intersection of conventional military threats, hybrid warfare, economic security, and geopolitical rivalries, recognizing the complex and multi-dimensional nature of regional security challenges.

The project activities include expert workshops, field research, and data-driven assessments. It will evaluate the effectiveness of existing regional security frameworks and NATO's role in shaping stability in the region. In collaboration with policymakers, security experts, and academic institutions, the project team will facilitate policy dialogues and strategic foresight discussions to identify pathways for strengthening regional security cooperation. These efforts will result in the development of comprehensive policy recommendations aimed at enhancing institutional resilience and fostering a more cooperative security environment.

The expected outcomes of this initiative include a thorough assessment of regional security threats, a set of actionable policy recommendations, and strengthened dialogue between NATO and regional stakeholders. By producing analytical reports and policy briefs, the project will contribute to an informed security discourse and provide practical solutions for mitigating risks in the region. By fostering collaboration between academic and policy communities, it will support long-term strategic planning and resilience-building efforts.

SecureBlackSea aspires to provide a timely and in-depth examination of the evolving security landscape in the Black Sea region. It will offer insights that can guide NATO's strategic engagement in the region. Thus, it aims to contribute to a more stable, secure, and cooperative Black Sea security environment in the face of emerging geopolitical complexities.

