

Ukraine, Trans-Atlantic Relations and Black Sea Security

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Since 1991 Ukraine has used three frameworks for integration into the Black Sea region. Turkey launched the initiative to establish the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Council (BSECC) which has played a leading role in the organisation. Unlike other Ukrainian-led initiatives, Russia is a member of the BSECC and therefore Ukraine has not sought to turn the organisation into an anti-Russian buffer.¹ Two other vehicles for integration are the Baltic-Black Sea alliance *Miedzymorze* and GUAM (Georgia-Ukraine-Azerbaijan-Moldova)², both of which have aimed to establish an anti-Russian and pro-US and pro-NATO regional security bloc. *Miedzymorze* was popular among anti-Russian, Polish political parties who were followers of Polish General Jozef Pilsudski³ in the inter-war period and 1980s. These political forces viewed *Miedzymorze* as a vehicle to re-establish the Polish-Lithuania Commonwealth of countries lying between Russia and Germany.⁴ *Miedzymorze* was especially popular under President Leonid Kravchuk in the first half of the 1990s growing out of his close alliance with national democrats.

Miedzymorze evolved into the GUAM regional group in the second half of the 1990s and was established in 1995 and expanded in 1999 with the addition of

¹ See the special issue of *Natsionalna Bezpeka i Oborona* (nos. 4-5, 2011) on the Black Sea region. <http://www.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/journal.php?y=2011&cat=160> and <http://www.razumkov.org.ua/eng/journal.php?y=2011&cat=160>

² GUAM was GUUAM from 1999-2005 when Uzbekistan was a member of the regional organization.

³ See article by Polish author Tomasz Shepanskiy, 'Mizhmoria – Shchyt Proty Moskby,' *Rozbudova Derzhava*, no.1 (August 1995), pp.26-29.

⁴ See Taras Kuzio, 'The Polish Opposition and the Ukrainian Question', *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, vol.12, no.2 (Winter 1987), pp.26-58 and Stephen R. Burant and Voytek Zubek, 'Eastern Europe's Old Memories and New Realities: Resurrecting the Polish-Lithuanian Union,' vol.7, no.2 (Spring 1993), pp.370-393.

Uzbekistan. GUAM/GUUAM received wholehearted support from the Bill Clinton (1992-2000) and George W. Bush (2000-2008) administrations and from NATO when it was supported by Presidents Leonid Kuchma and Viktor Yushchenko. The election of Viktor Yanukovych in February 2010 changed Ukrainian foreign and security policy in a fundamental manner by making it more sensitive to Russian concerns and therefore pro-Russian. Of Ukraine's four presidents since the country became an independent state, Yanukovych is the first to express no support for *Miedzymorze* or GUAM, a policy that emerges from being the first Ukrainian president to not support NATO membership. Nevertheless, prior to the election of Yanukovych the GUAM regional organization had already become moribund for two reasons. The first factor was the August 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia and the second was weak Ukrainian leadership by Presidents Kuchma and Yanukovych between 2000-2009 when their presidencies were mired with domestic scandals, inter-elite rivalry and opposition movements. Weak Ukrainian presidents and regional rivalry in Ukraine between the eastern and western regions of the country also prevented the formation of a coherent foreign and security policy and regional leadership.⁵

Miedzymorze

Miedzymorze had a short life as a political initiative formulated by national democratic parties who aligned with Kravchuk in 1991 when he was elected

⁵ Oleksandr Pavliuk, 'Maybutne rol I mistse Ukrayiny v Evropi neabyiak zalezhyt vid toho, chy smozhe vona staty vplyvoviu rehionalnoiu derzhavoiu,' *Den*, 22 April 1997.

president.⁶ The initiative by the Ukrainian Republican Party to establish a *Miedzymorze* League of Political Parties in July 1994 came just as their sponsor, Kravchuk, lost the presidential elections.⁷ The League brought together national democratic parties in Ukraine such as the Democratic Party, Ukrainian Republican Party (URP), Social Democratic Party (SDPU) and the Green Party as well as the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (KUN). Two of these parties, KUN and the URP, joined Viktor Yushchenko's Our Ukraine bloc in the 2002 and 2006 elections. The Green Party and Democratic Parties were taken over by oligarchs; the Greens entering parliament in 1998 but then falling into obscurity. The SDPU joined the Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko (BYuT). Poland contributed three parties, one of which was closely aligned to Pilsudski's ideas – Confederation of Polish Independence (KPN). Belarus contributed the Belarusian Peoples Front and United Democratic Party of Belarus. Estonia contributed the Pro-Patria Party and Lithuania and Latvia two political parties each.

Miedzymorze's overtly anti-Russian profile was at odds with developments in Ukraine and Eastern Europe. In 1994 the election of Kuchma and Alyaksandr Lukashenka in Ukraine and Belarus respectfully changed the foreign policies of both countries, especially in Belarus.⁸ In 1996 Lukashenka and President Borys Yeltsin launched negotiations a new union of Slavic states with Russia to re-build

⁶ The objectives of *Miedzymorze* are analysed in Serhiy Frechaniuk, 'Balto-Chornomorska Vertykal,' *Toloka*, no.1, 1994, Do Istorii Stvorennia Chornomorsko-Baltiyskoho Soiuzu,' *Rozbudova Derzhava*, no.9 (September 1994), pp.36-38, *Molod Ukrainy*, 27 June 1995, 'Baltiysko-Chornomorska Vis – Naskilky tse Realno?', *Vechirnyi Kyiv*, 4 August 1994.

⁷ *Mizhmoria. Biuleten Ligy partiy krayin Balto-Chornomorsko-Adriatychnoho region*, no.1 (August 1994), Kyiv.

⁸ The initiatives of *Miedzymorze* after the League are detailed in *Samostiyna Ukraina*, April 1996.

the USSR, a union that Lukashenka believed he could lead. The Russian-Belarusian union set Minsk on a course of turning its back on the West with which it has had very bad relations ever since. As the authoritarian regime became more entrenched in Belarus the national democratic opposition became increasingly marginalised. In the late 1990s Poland and the three Baltic states focused increasingly upon integration into NATO and the EU, rather than *Miedzymorze*, and joined these two international organisations in 2002-2004. Ukrainian leaders in *Miedzymorze* believed Poland and the Baltic states would attract outsiders such as Ukraine within the integration process into NATO and the EU but this did not take place.⁹ Euro-Atlantic integration of the post-communist world has divided central-eastern Europe, most of which joined NATO and the EU by 2004, and the former USSR/CIS where NATO and the EU have never been offered membership prospects.

Black

GUAM

The regional organisation GUAM was established in 1997 and expanded in 1999 during NATO's fiftieth anniversary summit. In 1999 Uzbekistan joined GUAM but suspended its membership three years later and eventually withdrew in 2005. In 2006 GUAM was transformed into the Organisation for Democratic

⁹ 'Baltic-Black Sea Alliance is the Way to European Community,' *Chas/Time*, no.5 (21 January 1995).

and Economic Development (ODED) at its Kyiv summit. GUAM has never fulfilled its potential as a regional organisation.

The rise of GUAM was a product of an evolving division of the CIS into two distinct groups of countries. The Russophile group (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan Tajikistan) supported close integration with Russia and were members of the CIS Collective Security Treaty.¹⁰ The GUAM group of 4-5 countries distrusted Russian policies towards the CIS, opposed the transformation of the CIS into a supra-national organisation, and supported the CIS remaining an economic and trade structure. GUAM states did not join the CIS Collective Security Treaty preferring to focus on cooperation and integration with the US and NATO. Ukraine and Georgia contributed the third largest military forces to the US-led invasion of Iraq, Ukraine between 2003-2005 and Georgia since 2006.

An important factor that united GUAM members was Russian-backed separatism. Russia recognised Ukraine's borders in a 1997 treaty that was ratified by both houses of the Russian parliament in 1998-1999. It took another four years for Russia and Ukraine to delimit their border. Demarcation began in 2010 following an agreement signed during President Dimitri Medvedev's May 2010 visit to Ukraine, agreeing to demarcation after the 'Kharkiv Accords' had extended the Black Sea Fleet base.

Territorial disputes were not completely resolved by the 1997 inter-state

¹⁰ Turkmenistan became a neutral state while Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan fluctuated between pro-Russian and pro-Western positions.

agreement and in 2003, a territorial dispute broke out between Kyiv and Moscow over Tuzla Island lying to the east of the Crimea in the approaches to the Sea of Azov. Russia successfully used the threat to Tuzla to pressure Ukraine to agree to the Sea of Azov being designated a common sea.

If a similar threat were to emerge during Yanukovych's presidency it would be unclear whether he would react in the same manner as Kuchma did in sending security forces to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity. Yanukovych and the Party of Regions have always downplayed the existence of a Russian threat to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The extension of the time period for the Black Sea Fleet base is a reflection of Yanukovych and the Party of Regions more benign and naïve view of Russia. Yanukovych is the first Ukrainian president to not view Russia or the Black Sea Fleet as threats to Ukraine's territorial integrity and sources of instability in the Crimea.¹¹

Under Yanukovych border issues with Russia have become less contentious following an improvement in relations and both country's began demarcating their border in 2010. After Yanukovych dropped Ukraine's objective of seeking NATO membership Russia is less likely to support separatism in the Crimea in the same manner as Moscow supported separatism in South Ossetia. Russian covert activities in the form of subversion, intelligence operations and support for

¹¹ See T.Kuzio, 'Russia Plans to Strengthen the Black Sea Fleet,' *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 7, no. 218 (7 December 7, 2010) and 'Poor Ukrainian-Russian Ties Reflect Yanukovych-Putin Relationship,' *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol.8, no.180 (30 September 2011).

separatists are likely to continue but at a reduced level than during Yushchenko's presidency.

Disagreement with Russia over lighthouses used by the Black Sea Fleet that are illegally occupied in or near Sevastopol was one many contentious issues in Ukrainian-Russian relations under Yushchenko. In August 2008, President Yushchenko issued two decrees that curtailed the movement of Black Sea Fleet vessels from the base without Ukrainian permission. The decrees were in response to intervention by the Black Sea Fleet in Russia's invasion of Georgia. Yushchenko also ordered the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) to step up its activities against Crimean separatists and Russian intelligence activities. Two Russian diplomats were expelled in mid-2009 from the Crimea and Odessa for espionage and Russian nationalist politicians were also placed on a black list and prevented from entering Ukraine.¹²

Ukraine also had problems with neighbouring Romania that refused to recognise Ukrainian jurisdiction over Chernivtsi *oblast* (formerly Northern Bukovina) and the Serpents (Zmeiny) Island lying to the west of the Crimea where there are reportedly oil deposits. With the admission of Romania into NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007 Ukraine's territorial disputes with Romania are unlikely to again become acute. In February 2009 Romania won its case at

¹² See T. Kuzio, 'Ukrainian-Russian Diplomatic War Intensifies', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol.6, no. 158 (17 August 2009), 'Ukraine Tightens the Screw in Sevastopol', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, volume 6, no. 141 (23 July, 2009), 'SBU Challenges the FSB in Crimea', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, volume 6, no. 134 (14 July, 2009), 'Russia's Ideological Crusade Against Ukraine', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol.6, no. 113 (12 June 2009) and 'The Ukrainian-Russian Cultural Conflict', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol.6, no. 87 (6 May 2009).

the International Court of Justice over the maritime waters surrounding Serpents Island. There are reports in the Ukrainian media that Romania and Russia are illegally distributing passports to Ukrainian citizens of Romanian and Russian ethnicity which infringes Ukrainian legislation that prohibits dual citizenship.

In three GUAM states – Azerbaijan, Moldova and Georgia – so-called ‘frozen conflicts’ had grown out of Russian-backed covert operations to support secessionist movements in the late Soviet era that remained frozen in favour of Russia. In two of the GUAM members – Moldova and Georgia – Russian troops continued to be illegally based despite agreements reached in OSCE forums for their withdrawal. The Nagorno Karabakh region had been annexed by neighbouring Armenia. While Russia has therefore aggressively campaigned against the independence of Kosovo it has at the same time supported separatism in the former USSR. Russia’s response to Georgia’s desire to join NATO was to increase its support for the two separatist enclaves of Abkhazia and South Ossetia most of whose inhabitants were already been illegally given Russian citizenship prior to the 2008 Russo-Georgian war.

Russian support for separatism was publicly evident in 2008 when Moscow invaded Georgia in support of South Ossetian separatists and following its military victory diplomatically recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states. The Party of Regions, then led by Yanukovch as leader of the opposition, proposed resolutions in the Ukrainian and Crimean parliaments in support of the independence of these two enclaves which was adopted by the Crimean parliament.

GUAM member Ukraine does not have a ‘frozen conflict’ but does have a Russian naval base and the Crimea continues to be the focus of Russian-inspired separatism.¹³ Under the terms of the 1997 Black Sea Fleet agreement the Russian Black Sea Fleet was to be withdrawn by 2017. The April 2010 ‘Kharkiv Accords’ extended the Sevastopol base until 2042 with the possibility of an additional five years to 2047. The ‘Accords’ violated the constitution and parliamentary regulations when 2 committees voted against it while a third was evenly divided in favour and against and led to a riot in parliament. Ukraine received a virtual thirty percent ‘discount’ on imported Russian gas.¹⁴ The ‘discount’ was never a real discount on the price of Russian gas price as it was based on the 2009 gas contract that Yanukovych has condemned and for which Tymoshenko was imprisoned.

GUAM states have always prioritised integration and cooperation with NATO and the EU over political and security cooperation with Russia and the CIS. GUAM members have been active within NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP), through individual security cooperation relationships with the US and UK, and have supported NATO enlargement.

A strategic area of cooperation within GUAM has been in the energy sector as GUAM members have declared the need to reduce reliance on Russian energy and locate alternative sources of oil and gas. Since 2007 Georgia is supplied by

¹³ See T.Kuzio, *The Crimea: Europe’s Next Flashpoint?* (Washington DC: The Jamestown Foundation, November 2010).

¹⁴ See Edward Chow, ‘Bad deal all around’ and ‘Neighborly corporate raid’, *Kyiv Post*, 22 April and 7 May 2010.

Azerbaijani gas through the South Caucasus Gas Pipeline, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum. Efforts to build an Azerbaijani-Georgian supply of oil to Ukraine and Europe through the Odesa-Brody pipeline failed due to low EU interest and lobbying by pro-Russian energy oligarchs. Ukraine's plans for alternative energy pipelines have not been implemented because of the persistence of corruption in this sector of the economy and prevalence of non-transparent ties to Russia.

Pro-Western President Yushchenko did not increase transparency in Ukraine's energy sector or ensure energy policy serve the national interest. The 2006 gas contract, signed following the first of two major gas crises with Russia during his presidency, maintained the RosUkrEnergo gas intermediary in Ukraine's gas relationship with Russia. The 2006 contract, 'hints of a personal interest in the agreements' as Yushchenko, 'not only knew of the real owners behind RosUkrEnergo¹⁵ but may have received important benefits from them,' Balmaceda believes¹⁶ The Ukrainian delegation did not follow instructions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or government (Prime Minister Yekhanurov was excluded from the negotiation) but from gas oligarch Dmitri Firtash and state gas company Naftohaz Ukrainy Deputy Chairman Oleh Voronin.

Ukrainian Centre for Economic and Political Studies expert Valeriy Chaly, who was Deputy Foreign Minister under Yushchenko, described the 2006 gas contract as Ukrainian diplomacy's 'pearl harbour.' The gas price remained

¹⁵ RosUkrEnergo was established by Presidents Vladimir Putin and Kuchma at a July 2004 Yalta meeting to replace Eural-Trans Gas established in 2002.

¹⁶ Margarita M.Balmaceda, *Energy Dependency, Politics and Corruption in the Former Soviet Union* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2008), p.128.

unstable, transit fees were set for five years, a non-transparent pricing mechanism was put in place which did not foresee an increase to market prices, and the right to re-export gas was taken from Naftohaz Ukrainy and given to RosUkrEnergo. Re-export of gas is a lucrative business and RosUkrEnergo diverted potential profits away from Ukraine's state gas company that was saddled with supplying the unprofitable and subsidised housing market. The profitable distribution of gas to Ukrainian industry was given to a newly established company UkrHazEnergo, which was a joint venture between Gazprom and RosUkrEnergo.

In winter 2008-2009 Ukraine's second gas crisis with Russia lasted seventeen days during a bitterly cold winter. Although Europeans welcomed the gas contract concluded between Prime Ministers Tymoshenko and Putin the negotiations were not transparent and it has therefore remained unclear why Tymoshenko agreed to some of its terms. On the positive side the contract removed RosUkrEnergo and thus for the first time Ukraine-Russia traded gas on a bilateral level without the use of opaque intermediaries. The contract also agreed to introduce the principle, for the first time, of gradually increasing gas prices to market levels – although unexplainably transit fees were slated to not grow to market levels.

On the negative side, 'The (2009) deal imposed a very high base price for gas of \$450 per thousand cubic meters; a strict payment regime, which following any default could force Ukraine to pay for gas in advance; very high take-or-pay clauses that forced Ukraine to pay for gas it could not possibly use; and no ship-or-pay obligations on Gazprom (hence Gazprom, without penalty, could reduce

shipments to Ukraine).¹⁷ These aspects of the 2009 gas crisis led to criminal charges launched against Tymoshenko and her imprisonment in October 2011 for seven years on charges of ‘abuse of office.’ The charges are based on a 1962 Soviet criminal article that continues to remain in the Ukrainian criminal code. Tymoshenko’s imprisonment led to a crisis in Ukraine’s relations with the EU and suspension of negotiations towards an Association Agreement (within which there is a Visa Free Regime and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement).

The 2008 Russo-Georgian war put into doubt Ukraine’s ambitious plans for alternative oil pipelines from Azerbaijan through Georgia to Ukraine’s port of Odesa. In the 1990s Ukraine has built a pipeline from Odesa to Brody that connects to the former Soviet *druzhiba* (friendship) pipeline running across its territory. The aim was to take this further north into Poland, thereby reducing the dependency of Ukraine, Poland and Moldova on imported Russian oil. At GUAM’s June 2008 summit in Kyiv the organization laid out ambitious plans to utilise the Odessa-Brody pipeline with Azerbaijani hydrocarbons being pumped through Georgia, under the Black Sea and into central-eastern Europe. Progress on the route has been sluggish and will be jeopardized by Russia’s occupation of two Georgian territories.

GUAM has greater internal coherence than the CIS which has transformed into an organisation that signs multiple documents that are never implemented. There are far greater national interests that unite GUAM members than within the CIS. Belarus and Armenia, for example, have no interest in each other’s

¹⁷ Alan Riley, ‘Corruption in Kyiv and an E.U. Trade Pact’, *The New York Times*, 4 October 2011.

security threats and each craves a bilateral security relationship with Russia. Belarus never sends its troops to CIS security exercises in Central Asia. The crucial dividing line between the CIS and GUAM lies in their outlooks. The Russophile CIS group is united on the basis of a joint past, rather than any future while GUAM countries, on the other hand, look to a common future within NATO and, in some cases, the EU.

GUAM members remain diverse in their foreign and security policy strategies. As a neutral state Moldova seeks EU, but not NATO, membership. Ukraine and Georgia viewed NATO membership as a stepping stone to membership in the EU. Azerbaijan supports a strong cooperative relationship with the US and NATO but does not seek NATO membership. Ukraine and Georgia entered NATO's Intensified Dialogue in 2005-2006, the precursor to entering the Membership Action Programme (MAP) process. The final communiqué at NATO's April 2008 Bucharest summit, 'welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO. Both nations have made valuable contributions to Alliance operations'. The communiqué continues in its support for both countries entrance into the MAP process prior to which there will be a period of 'intensive engagement,' 'We welcome the democratic reforms in Ukraine and Georgia and look forward to free and fair parliamentary elections in Georgia in May. MAP is the next step for Ukraine and Georgia on their direct

way to membership. Today we make clear that we support these countries' applications for MAP.'¹⁸

Ukraine missed opportunities to enter MAP during Yushchenko's presidency. Yanukovych opposed entering a MAP when he was Prime Minister in 2006-2007 and since 2010 as President. Since Yanukovych's election Ukraine has adopted a similar foreign policy to Moldova of no to NATO and yes to EU membership. The crisis in Kyiv's relations with Brussels since autumn 2011 have closed Ukraine's path to the EU until the Ukrainian authorities end repression of the opposition.

The EU has devoted far less attention to the Trans-Caucasus than NATO and the US. In 2006 the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was expanded to include the Trans-Caucasus with Action Plans signed for individual countries the following year. Nevertheless, the EU has not offered any comparable policies to post-conflict Trans-Caucasus as the EU has undertaken through Stabilisation and Accession Agreements to the former Yugoslav states.

Azerbaijan's relationship to the Trans-Atlantic community is neither that of Georgia, which seeks NATO membership, nor that of Armenia, which has been reluctant to develop its cooperation with NATO. Azerbaijan is also a supporter of the country joining the EU that makes it different to Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Azerbaijan has focused on establishing a close security relationship with the US through NATO and the Global War on Terror. The authoritarian nature of the Azerbaijani regime and lack of political and economic reforms have narrowed

¹⁸ www.nato.org

areas of cooperation between Baku and NATO and the EU. Georgia is the only country in the Trans-Caucasus that has undertaken wide-embracing reforms and together with Moldova are the two leading reformers in the Eastern Partnership.

Ukraine's Relations with Georgia

Georgia's November 2003 Rose Revolution and election of pro-Western President Mikhail Saakashvili in January 2004 had a positive effect on relations with Ukraine. Saakashvili and Ukrainian President Yushchenko became close and important allies, even holidaying together. The Yushchenko-Saakashvili relationship was a political alliance arising from the 2003 Rose and 2004 Orange revolutions, a common desire to join NATO, support for alternative sources of energy and membership of the GUAM regional group and Community of Democratic Choice (CDC).

In December 2005, Yushchenko urged all states bordering the Baltic, Black and Caspian seas to join GUAM at a forum of the CDC in Kyiv. Yushchenko sought to entice potential future members by suggesting that GUAM members step up the work of the organisation, in particular in the implementation of regional economic and energy projects. Yushchenko's failure to provide real leadership at home undermined Ukraine's ability to pursue geopolitical leadership in the Black Sea region.

The CDC was an initiative that was first put forward by Ukraine and Georgia

in August 2005, and expanded to include Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Slovenia, Macedonia, Romania, Bulgaria and Poland. The general secretaries of the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) also attended the founding forum. Invitations to participate in the Kyiv forum were sent to 22 countries, including Russia, although Moscow refused to send senior officials. Russian officials dismissed attempts to invigorate GUAM and claimed the establishment of the CDC was meant to demonstrate Georgia and Ukraine's allegiance with the US.

Saakashvili and Yushchenko pursued similar objectives in integrating their countries into Euro-Atlantic structures and they shared common grievances with Russian policies directed towards them and the CIS. Georgia looked upon Yushchenko's Ukraine not only as a major counterweight to Russia in the CIS but also as an intermediary in the pursuit of EU and NATO membership. Georgia's trans-Atlantic integration efforts were viewed to be dependent upon Ukraine. NATO sees Ukrainian and Georgian membership as a package that can be dealt with only together as this round of NATO enlargement will be into an area that Russia sees as lying within its sphere of influence.

At the same time, both countries are very different. Domestic support for NATO membership within Georgia is 70 per cent and therefore much higher than that in Ukraine where it stands at only approximately 25 per cent. Despite some notable setbacks, Georgia also remains more politically stable and has a better record of reforms and fighting corruption.

The 2008 Russo-Georgian war undermined the GUAM regional group and its weakness was demonstrated by Russia's subsequent recognition of South Ossetian and Abkhazian independence. During the war the only GUAM member who supported Georgia was Ukraine; Moldova and Azerbaijan remained silent. The second nail in the coffin for GUAM was Yanukovich's 2010 election. Yanukovich has supported wholeheartedly Russia's position on Georgia through backing the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia to condemning Ukraine's arms export to Georgia (Georgia is not under an international embargo and therefore arms exports to that country are not illegal). Yanukovich is disinterested in GUAM and has never supported NATO membership. Georgia and Ukraine coordinated their approaches to Iraq where in 2005 Georgia replaced Ukraine as the largest non-NATO contingent.

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Council (BSECC) and Turkey

The BSECC was established in 1992 and brings together all the countries bordering the Black Sea – Turkey, three CIS states (Russia, Moldova, Ukraine), three Trans-Caucasian countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), two of whom are CIS members, and NATO and EU members Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Romania.¹⁹ In the 1990s Russia was less influential within the BSECC because of

¹⁹ See Daniel A. Connelly, 'Black Sea Economic Cooperation,' *RFERL Research Report*, vol.3, no.26 (1 July 1994) and *Interests of Ukraine and Turkey in the Black Sea Region: A Comparative Analysis. Occasional Report* May 2000, Center for Peace, Conversion and Foreign Policy of Ukraine.

Moscow's strained ties with Turkey permitting Ukraine to play a more active role in the organisation. Since the mid-1990s, greater pragmatism in Russian policies, increasing attention on domestic Turkish problems, and the international isolation of former Ukrainian President Kuchma reduced Turkish interest in Ukraine. Turkey has historically seen Ukraine as a strategic partner but their relations have been superseded by burgeoning relations between Turkey and Russia as Islamicist political forces have become more popular in Turkey. The rise of Islamicist parties in Turkey in the last decade re-oriented Turkish foreign policy making it less pro-Western. This in turn, has facilitated an improvement in Ankara's relations with Russia and led to a downgrading of the importance of Turkish-Ukrainian relations.

The Turkey's relations with Ukraine have never been a priority for either side although relations have remained cordial. Turkish sensitivities over Yanukovich's election rest on his pro-Russian policies, the Party of Regions alliance with Russian nationalists in the Crimea and Yanukovich's support for separatism in Georgia. It will not have gone unnoticed in Turkey (which is very sensitive about Kurdish separatism) that the Party of Regions initiated resolutions in the Ukrainian and Crimean parliaments to recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Turkey has also become wary of the greater degree of Russian intelligence activity through espionage, separatism and subversion in the Crimea and southern Ukraine. Turkey has been a long time ally of the Crimean Tatars and any threat of Crimean separatism would immediately affect the country as Turkey is home to over a million Tatars.

Turkey is concerned about the 'Kharkiv Accords' that *de facto* transform Sevastopol into a permanent Russian naval base changing the geopolitical balance in the sensitive Black Sea region. Turkey would be opposed to a Russian military build up in the Black Sea.²⁰ Turkey was one of the first countries to support Ukraine's bid for NATO membership during the 2002 visit to Ukraine by then Turkish minister of foreign affairs Ismail Cem. Turkey and Ukraine also see eye to eye on EU membership as both countries believe their aspirations to become members are not taken seriously by Brussels. Like Georgia, Turkey has though undertaken a greater number of reforms than Ukraine.

In the years immediately following the demise of the Soviet Union, Ukraine and Turkey had a very close geopolitical outlook in the Black Sea and CIS region as a consequence of their common hostility to what they perceived to be Russian expansionism and intervention in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Moldova. Turkish relations with Russia cooled following Russia's support for the independence of two Georgian territories, as Turkey remains sensitive to Kurdish separatism. In addition, Ukraine and Turkey shared similar views on the return to Crimea of the Tatar community deported to Central Asia in 1944, and Ankara backed Ukraine in its Black Sea Fleet dispute with Russia.

The Turkish security establishment views Ukraine as an invaluable partner with which it shares a common outlook on the region. The fact that Ukraine has preserved its independence and sovereignty, while remaining outside Russia's

²⁰ See T.Kuzio, 'Russia Plans to Strengthen the Black Sea Fleet,' *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 7, no. 218 (7 December 7, 2010).

sphere of influence, is also important to Turkey. Turkey and Ukraine have supported the territorial integrity of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Moldova in bilateral terms, through international forums, and via Turkish diplomatic support for the GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) regional group. Turkey and GUAM jointly opposed Russia's attempts to revise its flank limits upwards in the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty, something which would increase Russian military deployments near their borders.

In 1994 Ukraine and Turkey signed an inter-governmental Agreement on Co-operation in the Field of Military Training, Technologies and Science. The Agreement provided for the joint training and education of servicemen, exchanges of information, and joint scientific research in the military sphere. Turkey's support for Ukraine's NATO membership represents a natural continuation of their joint co-operation through NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP). Turkey and Ukraine have also taken part in joint peacekeeping exercises organised by NATO and Turkish military units have taken part in NATO exercises at the Yavoriv training ground near Lviv. Both countries have also regularly taken part in the annual "Sea Breeze" PfP exercises organised by the US in the Black Sea.

Conclusion

Ukraine's ambitions to become an active geopolitical actor in the Black Sea region have failed to materialize. This is due to five factors. First, domestic instability in the last decade has dominated the attention of two Ukrainian

presidents and inhibited their ability to be active in foreign policy. Second, regional divisions that have been exaggerated by political parties have prevented the formulation of a united foreign policy and coherent and implementable national interests. Third, President Yushchenko's ambitions to be leader of GUAM and CDC proved to be impossible due to weak political will, constant conflicts with his political allies, and low public support. Fourth, the election of Yanukovich fundamentally changed Ukraine's foreign policy by removing the goal of NATO membership and undertaking domestic anti-democratic policies that led to a crisis in EU-Ukraine relations. Kyiv's interest in the Black Sea region, GUAM and CDC evaporated. Finally, persistent high level corruption in the energy sector has de-railed plans to implement policies that would reduce reliance on Russian supplies.