Trapped between Two Visions: the Black Sea, Ukraine, and Regional Security

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Executive summary

The crisis in Ukraine has highlighted the ongoing competition of two competing regional projects and their commensurate approaches to 'security' in the Black Sea region. The European Union and Russia do not only differ in their nature as security actors, with the former being a supra-national entity and the latter a conventional state power. They also hold greatly diverging conceptualisations of security, with the EU seeing it as emerging from liberal integration processes, and the Russian Federation holding a much more conventional and realist geopolitical view. Such conventional balance-of-power views of security become more relevant as one moves towards the East of the continent, among the newer EU members and the former Soviet states, for whom the NATO alliance and the regional balance remain of utmost importance. This makes the outcome of the Ukraine crisis essential to the perception of the balance of power in Europe, which, considering the relative commitments and methods of both the EU and Russia, is liable to become the major dividing line for the continent's security. Policymakers must thus be prepared for an unwelcome return to a realist, power-political view – including a revalidation of NATO - in their attempts to understand the new dynamics and potential scenarios in the Balkans, Turkey, and the South Caucasus.

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Unrewarding Crossroads? The Black Sea Region amidst the European Union and Russia
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Two competing logics of security

Over the past year, events in Ukraine have eliminated some of the last certainties that governed the politics of Eurasia since the fall of the Soviet Union: the apparently inevitable trajectory of many post-Soviet states towards further integration with the European Union, a constant feature in much of the region since at least the end of the 1990s, is now in question. Whatever its outcome, the current crisis will have repercussions for all the countries surrounding the Black Sea, post-Soviet or not, and that may very well last decades. These include their strategic alignments, their political economies, the very nature of their statehood, but also going beyond bare material realities and their respective fundamental value-systems.

This chapter focuses on how the competing European and Russian regional projects will affect security in the Black Sea region: how will the clash of two very different powers impact the various existing and potential sources of friction around what remains a strategically situated body of water? Lying at the fault line between the EU/NATO and Russia/ Eurasia, the region remains significant for Europe's energy security, is riddled with separatist 'frozen conflicts', and remains important to Russia's continued naval power. The ongoing confrontation in Ukraine will thus shape a wide range of security issues in this particularly sensitive area of the Eurasian landmass possibly for decades to come, with policy implications for all actors involved.

One first consideration in any analysis of the EU-Russia confrontation must focus on the different conceptualizations of these two very disparate actors in regards to the very idea of 'security'[2]. Russia is undoubtedly considered a sovereign state in the classi-

cal, Westphalian sense of the word, with an uncontested claim to international agency. Europe's position as an independent 'security actor', on the other hand, is more problematic: its supranational quality, and the complexity of foreign and security policymaking requires an acknowledgment of its status as a non-state entity[3]. Its policies and concepts sit, sometimes uncomfortably, alongside those of its member states. It is important to note that in the realm of 'hard' security, Europe lacks an effective and comprehensive military or intelligence capability independent from its constituent members, a major drawback when compared to Russia's highly centralised and therefore far more responsive institutional makeup.

The very foundations of the European Union were based on security emanating from a distinctly liberal integration project, first centred around Germany and France and later expanded to include both Central and Eastern Europe following the end of the Cold War. Rather than being driven by the security requirements of a single state, the European scheme – and its idea of 'security' – relied on the combined liberal logics of functionalism and intergovernmentalism in its expansion. As such, by the end of the Cold War, it had a significant advantage as the only clear, viable, ready-made pathway to modernity for the many former

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[2] Derek Averre, „Competing Rationalities: Russia, the Eu and the Shared Neighbourhood", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 61, No. 10, 2009, pp. 1689-713.
[3] Ulrich Krotz, „Momentum and Impediments: Why Europe Won't Emerge as a Full Political Actor on the World Stage Soon", *Journal of Common Market Studies,* Vol. 47, No. 3, 2009, pp. 555-78; Kamil Zwolski, „The European Union as a Security Actor: Moving Beyond the Second Pillar", *Journal of Contemporary European Research,* Vol. 5, No. 1, 2009, pp. 82-96; Peter J. Burgess, „There Is No European Security, Only European Securities", *Cooperation and Conflict,* Vol. 44, No. 3, 2009, pp. 309-28.

communist states that broke away from the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. Despite imposing its project in a top-down, partly 'imperial' manner through the mechanisms of 'conditionality', its considerable soft power ensured a ready willingness by states beyond the former Iron Curtain to conform and move towards integration[4].

By contrast, while present-day Russia has selectively and often-times opportunistically adopted the language of liberalism - including democracy (albeit 'sovereign'), regional integration, humanitarian intervention, international law, multilateralism and free trade - it remains, at heart, a statist empire with a hard-realist, geopolitical view of 'security'. Beyond its leadership's ostensible adoption of a liberal, economistic narrative, its fundamental assumptions and practices remain those of a Mearsheimerian land-based power[5], with a keen sensitivity to the territorial realities in its direct environs and a hierarchical view of the former Soviet space, largely and quite literally perceived as an accident of history[6]. Russia's attempt to generate a regional form of 'soft power' by portraying itself as a conservative and sovereign alternative has largely failed in itself to sway any of the states involved in the EU's Eastern Partnership: most attempts to cajole these states back into Russia's geo-economic orbit through membership of the Eurasian Customs Union have involved the threat of a raft of direct coercive economic and political measures[7].

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[4] Jan Zielonka, „Europe as a Global Actor: Empire by Example?", *International Affairs,* Vol. 84, No. 3, 2008, pp. 471-84.
[5] John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics.* W. W. Norton, New York, 2001.
[6] BBC News, „Putin Deplores Collapse of USSR", *BBC* News, 25 April 2005. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/4480745.stm
[7] Eleonora Tafuro, „Fatal Attraction? Russia's Soft Power in Its Neighbourhood - Analysis", *Eurasia Review,* Vol. 3, 2014.

This picture of two radically different institutional characteristics and commensurate world-views is further complicated by the existence of a classical, hard-realist alliance in the West: the European Union's vision of 'security through integration' was largely entwined with the parallel existence of the NATO alliance before and after the end of the Cold War[8]. Before 1989, this alliance provided the military cover behind which the then European Economic Community was able to expand and integrate, through its balancing containment of the Soviet bloc. While the Alliance faced a major identity crisis and a partial loss of purpose from 1989 up until 9/11, for states like Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and the Baltics, it represented the ultimate security guarantee against the potential for Russian revanchism[9]. While formally separate, rapprochement and integration with the European Union became part of a wider process of 'Europeanisation', which included NATO membership, and therefore clashed dramatically with Russia's highly territorialised, geopolitical perspective on regional security. In the current and conflictual environment, being inside or outside of the alliance makes a great difference to the nations straddling the fault line between east and west, including the Black Sea region.

Liberal and realist rationales thus function, to differing degrees, on both sides of the EU-Russia divide. In the EU, the logic of security might be based on the 'soft' processes of economic integration, legal approximation and democratisation but the de-facto entwining of EU and NATO-led processes ensures that

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[8] Richard G. Whitman, „Nato, the EU and ESDP: An Emerging Division of Labour?", *Contemporary Security Policy,* Vol. 25, No. 3, 2004, pp. 430-51.
[9] Frank Schimmelfennig, *The EU, NATO and the Integration of Europe: Rules and Rhetoric*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, pp. 37-40.

'hard' balance-of-power politics nevertheless remains relevant, most certainly from the perspective of new and aspiring member states in the Black Sea region. For Russia, lip-service to liberal values serves as a rhetorical device justifying, and at times veiling, crude projections of economic and military power in a sheen of legitimacy. For all the liberal discourse on integration and legality emanating from both Brussels and Moscow, the balance of power, long disregarded by the EU itself, remains pertinent throughout the continent - more so as one moves eastward into the Western parts of the former Soviet Union and towards Moscow itself.

Ukraine as a source of credibility and perceived power

This makes the element of credibility particularly important to the outcome of the power-struggle between the Russia and the West. The perceived balance between the two will hinge, in no small part, on the quality of the commitment of either side to regional involvement and power-projection. The credibility of such commitments will be instrumental in shaping the perceived choices open to the disparate range of countries in Ukraine's immediate vicinity, first of all, those surrounding the Black Sea. Above all, the European Union will no longer be able to purport its narrative that a 'ring of well-governed states', sustained by its soft-power attractions, conditionality and economic aid, are all that is necessary in order for security to be maintained in its neighbourhood[10]. The insecurities of states like Ukraine and Georgia can no longer simply be addressed through the promotion of

[10] European Commission, *Wider Europe — Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with Our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*, European Commission, Brussels, 2003; European Union, *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*, European Union, Brussels, 2003.

good governance and democracy, while instead requiring a hard-nosed awareness of power-political realities in the region – something woefully absent in European policies in previous years[11].

The relative credibility of Western and Russian commitments to the states of the former Soviet Union, and, consequently, the perceived balance of power between the two, will hinge in no small part on the outcome of the crisis in Ukraine. At present, the divergent conceptualisations of the West and Russia have resulted in similarly divergent policies: for the European Union, a commitment to Ukraine is largely interpreted positively and in terms of financial assurances and aid to an economy apparently in free-fall. As was previously the case, any prospects of outright membership are being kept firmly off the table. By contrast, Russia is undermining its commitments through hybrid warfare and direct coercion. Essentially, the difference in values and interests between the two actors translates into an asymmetric confrontation, with the EU employing liberal policy means and the Kremlin maintaining a hard-realist approach which includes the use of covert and often overt, military force.

As things stand, there are many factors countering the European Union's goal of preventing a Ukrainian economic implosion with Brussels having pointedly failed to provide the billions of Euros needed for yet another bailout of a non-EU member state. With Ukraine's industrial areas in the east under separatist control, its long-term economic prosperity is under threat, and despite the IMF agreeing to a $17 billion aid package, reports of a further escalation in hostilities could put this in danger[12]. Moreover, eco-

[11] Margarita Antidze, „Interview: Georgia Feels Less Secure after Russian Move in Ukraine", *Reuters,* 15 April 2014. Available at:
http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/04/15/georgia-russia-idUKL6N0N64FY20140415

nomic aid will not be able to counter Russia's form of power-projection through its continued support for the secessionist forces that undermine a unified Ukraine, precluding a long-term vision associated with economic aid and conditionality. On this shorter time-scale, Russia's commitment, the credibility of its power and the attendant threat and use of force, would appear much more pertinent. The reason for this is simple: from Russia and Putin's perspective, Ukraine is an existential issue and, although important, Ukraine is not vital neither for the European Union nor for NATO.

Russia's loss of Ukraine to the EU would signify a major geopolitical shift for the former Soviet republics surrounding the Black Sea. From the crudely geopolitical perspective that prevails in many quarters of Russia's security establishment, such an eventuality would, amongst other things, shift the border between Russia and the West hundreds of kilometres eastwards, towards Moscow. More importantly, it would dent Russia's authority and credibility as a regional power with the capacity to affect outcomes in the 'near abroad', especially given the enormous material and ideational resources it has committed to its Ukrainian project. Thus, the Eurasian Economic Union without Ukraine would come to lack credibility as a regional economic entity to rival the European Union, let alone as a broader, longer-term civilizational-geopolitical scheme[13].

[12] Associated Press, „Russian Pressure Stifling Ukraine's Economy, but Western Help Scarce", *New Haven Register,* 16 October 2014. Available at: http://www.nhregister.com/general-news/20141016/russian-pressure-stifling-ukraines-economy-but-western-help-scarce
[13] Timothy Heritage, „Ukraine Holds Key to Putin's Dream of a New Union", *Reuters,* 29 November 2013. Available at:
http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/29/us-ukraine-eu-putin-idUS-BRE9AS0F320131129

More directly, a defeat would also most certainly represent a double setback, as any attempts to pressure Moldova into the Kremlin's orbit would be further complicated by its geographic separation from the Eurasian Union by an irreversibly pro-Western Ukraine. Considering the importance of 'great power status' to Russia's state identity, and the importance of the 'near abroad' to its geopolitical/geo-economic definition of 'great power status', these potential outcomes would most definitely signify an enormous setback[14].

The loss of Ukraine would also undoubtedly have a destabilising effect on the Russian body politic. In essence, Russia would be faced with two choices. It could decide to retrench, abandon its goal of regional hegemony and adapt to new realities by returning to its now long abandoned goal - briefly espoused by its most liberal post-Soviet foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, – of turning Russia into a 'normal' great power[15]. Alternatively, Russia could persist in its attempts to assertive its control in the 'near abroad' by shifting its attention to other strategically important areas in its neighbourhood. Either way, whether these choices would be made by Putin or perhaps by a more liberal or more likely a nationalist regime, remains open to question. With so much of Putin's social capital sunk into the notion of a Russian national (or neo-imperial) resurgence, and so much of that resurgence dependent on a success in Ukraine, the survival of his regime may very well fall into doubt in case of failure[16].

[14] Jeffrey Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*. Rowman and Littlefield, New York, 2009.
[15] Andrei Kozyrev, "Russia: A Chance for Survival", *Foreign Affairs,* Vol. 71, No. 2, 1992, p. 10.
[16] Tom Balmforth, „From the Fringes toward Mainstream: Russian Nationalist Broadsheet Basks in Ukraine Conflict", *RFE-RL,* 17 August 2014. Available at: http://www.rferl.org/content/feature/26534846.html

Russia's continued commitment to Ukraine thus runs deep - going beyond the obvious interest in Black Sea bases and defence industries – and makes any disengagement from the country highly unlikely. Moreover, the European Union is in itself ill equipped – and quite unwilling – to counter Moscow's determined projection of raw capabilities. Brussels simply does not have the institutional means to engage in such realist power-projection, and neither do EU member states, on their own, have the military capabilities to provide a response. It must acknowledge the death of the Eastern Partnership as a means towards security in its neighbourhood and a return towards balance-of-power politics. That, in turn, implies a revalidation of the NATO alliance – rather than the more cumbersome and ineffective CSDP – as the West's counter-point to Russia's ambitions in Ukraine, the rest of the Black Sea region, and beyond. Such a revalidation of NATO would not imply direct intervention into the former Soviet Union; only an irresponsible fringe in the Western policymaking community would seriously consider such an eventuality in light of Russia's 'escalation dominance' within the region – that is, its ability and willingness to respond militarily to any such intervention. It would, most likely, involve a return to the strategic containment of Russia behind a feasibly defensible 'red line' – NATO's Eastern boundary, something that is arguably already occurring. Again, this has much to do with the relative levels of commitment of the West and Russia on either side of this line. Russia has an existential commitment for power-projection onto Ukraine and other former Soviet Republics that stops at NATO's border. The opposite is true for the alliance: it stands and falls with its security assurances towards its members, particularly its easternmost states. At some point, Russia might want to test NATO's resolve - something the West would have to be prepared for – but, provided the Alliance sent

out forceful, yet carefully calibrated deterrent signals in response, it would probably not take these challenges too far. NATO's 'red line' is keenly apparent by states on either side of it as it arguably marks the westernmost boundary of any undeterrable military power-projection by Moscow.

NATO's thick red line, Russia's credibility and the Black Sea region

In the Black Sea region, new EU and NATO members namely Bulgaria and Romania, enjoy a treaty-based commitment to their security from their fellow union and alliance members; their strategic alignments would thus appear to be settled. There are, nevertheless, key vulnerabilities that may very well put these NATO and EU commitments to a test in any longer-term confrontation with Russia. First of all, both states – but especially Bulgaria – are dependent on energy supplies from the Russian Federation, mostly supplied through Ukrainian gas pipelines[17]. Moreover, any alternatives to the now-defunct South Stream pipeline to Russia remain a distant prospect[18]. Disruptions originating from the Russia-Ukraine confrontation would, moreover, prove particularly costly for both of their economies, especially in the absence of compensation or remediation from Brussels. Secondly, a serious deterioration of the situation in Ukraine

[17] Margarita Assenova, *Bulgaria and Romania: Pursuing Energy Security in a Changing Environment*, CEPA, Washington DC, 2013. Available at: http://cepa.org/content/bulgaria-and-romania-pursuing-energy-security-changing-environment
[18] "Eastern Europe Licks Its Wounds after Russia Cancels South Stream Gas Pipeline", *The Moscow Times,* 12 December 2014. Available at: http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/eastern-europe-licks-its-wounds-after-russia-cancels-south-stream-gas-pipeline/513251.html

could have spill-over effects – especially on Romania – in terms of possible westward refugee flows and a destabilisation of neighbouring Moldova (see below). Thirdly, while the Baltics would appear to be more vulnerable to some kind of Russian test of NATO determination – through, for instance, a large-scale cyber-attack or violations of their air space or territorial waters – such an eventuality might still manifest itself in these coastal states of the Black Sea.

Both the EU and NATO would thus have to devise an adequate response to allay fears that are quite similar across Eastern Europe. As in the Baltics, more than verbal assurances will be needed, from both the European Union and NATO, to address the security concerns and fears of both these states. A clear strategy to diversify energy sources, aid in compensation for economic losses, preparation for trans-border security issues and, especially, the forceful signalling of continued security for both allies, are a crucial 'red line' that the Kremlin could only cross at unacceptable risk. The EU's Energy Union, and the creation of NATO's Very High Readiness Task Force (VJTF) should be seen as welcomed, albeit insufficient, steps in that direction[19].

Turkey is better placed to weather the various potential Ukrainian scenarios. Ankara has so far displayed a deference towards Russian interests in the 'near abroad' and has not allowed its relationship with Moscow to suffer from differences surrounding, for instance, Syria or Crimea's Tatars[20]. Moscow's pressure on Azerbaijan – aimed at, for instance, preventing the emer-

[19] North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *NATO Response Force*, NATO, 2015. Available at:
http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49755.htm; European Commission, *Energy Union Package*, Brussels, 2015. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/energy-union/docs/energyunion_en.pdf

gence of a 'southern energy corridor' from Central Asia to Europe, or at forcing Baku's membership in the Eurasian Customs Union - would certainly test this deference, especially if the situation became complicated by an attempt by a weakened Moscow to cling onto its influence in the South Caucasus or an imposed resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in Armenia's favour (see below). A reassertion of Russian power in the South Caucasus would also deprive Turkey of its status as an alternative to Russian-controlled energy routes towards Central Asia. Whether the hitherto stable Turkey-Russian relationship could withstand these potential shocks remains open to question.

The fate of Ukraine will most directly influence the future of the smaller Soviet republics surrounding the Black Sea, amongst which Georgia and – to a lesser extent – Moldova have until now remained the most pro-Western. Moldova's vulnerabilities are exemplified by its continued energy dependence on Russia, its reliance on the former USSR as a market for both of its main exports – agricultural produce and migrant labour – the 'frozen conflict' in Transnistria and potential separatism in Gagauzia[21]. As was mentioned above, the loss of Ukraine by Russia would make it nearly impossible for Moscow to reposition Chisinau into its

[20] Ankara's high-level objective of regime change in Damascus goes directly against Russia's de-facto alliance with Assad; and the shared ethnicity of the now-embattled Crimean Tatars with Turkey's population has not led to a deterioration of relations between the two sides. See also: Dorian Jones, „Ukraine Crisis Puts Strain on Turkey-Russia Ties", *Eurasianet,* 7 May 2014. Available at:
http://www.eurasianet.org/node/68351
[21] Fiona Hill and Steven Pifer, *Putin's Russia Goes Rogue,* Brookings, Washington DC, 2014. Available at: http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/01/putin-russia-rogue-hill-pifer

orbit, a move that would prove to be geopolitically pointless for the Kremlin at that point. Conversely, the successful repositioning of Kyiv into the Eurasian orbit could see this small, poor and divided country easily overwhelmed, despite, for example, all of its recent attempts to diversify its energy supplies[22]. With the post-Soviet balance having firmly swung in Russia's favour, and with all of the above mentioned vulnerabilities, Moldova would come under intense pressure to realign itself with its former imperial master, except in the case of swift, radical and determined measures (i.e. highly unlikely direct intervention on the part of the European Union and NATO).

There are even fewer prospects of such swift, radical and determined measures in the South Caucasus, which would probably emerge as the most volatile of all the areas under review. Apart from its three frozen conflicts, it encompasses states with quite differing foreign and security policies. Georgia has of course maintained the most consistently Euro-Atlantic approach of all of the former Soviet republics since the Rose Revolution. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan still maintains a multi-vectoral policy perched between the two now confronting camps[23]. By contrast, its arch-rival Armenia remains firmly within the Russian orbit whilst maintaining a few crucial openings towards both the European Union and NATO as the last remnants of a foreign policy that once aspired to complementarity[24]. The choices open to these countries will depend largely on how the situation in Ukraine unfolds.

[22] Victoria Puiu, „Moldova Struggles to Escape Russian Gas", *Eurasianet,* 25 September 2014. Available at: http://www.eurasianet.org/node/70161
[23] Makili-Aliyev, *Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy: Between East and West...*, Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome, 2013.
[24] Richard Giragosian, *Armenia's Strategic U-Turn,* European Council on Foreign Relations, London, 2014.

Russia's repositioning of Ukraine into its sphere of influence would put Tbilisi before a complicated predicament: in effect, maintaining a pro-Western course in the face of an affirmation of Russian regional power and Western incapacity would become an increasingly hapless task. It is possible that, in the wake of its successes in Ukraine, the Kremlin would subsequently shift its attention to this bottleneck promising control over central Asian energy routes while simultaneously placing Azerbaijan at the mercy of Russia's goodwill. Georgia's European identity – seen by many as the source of its pro-Western policies – would be confronted with the realities of a regionally assertive Russia as well as the many vulnerabilities that remain between both Georgia and its separatist regions and within the remnants of Georgia itself – not least in the Armenian-populated region of Javakheti[25]. Any leadership would be faced with a choice between resisting in the face of hopeless odds or realigning itself with the now demonstrably re-established regional hegemon. A reinforcement of Russian authority in its neighbourhood would, moreover, put both Armenia and Azerbaijan at Russia's mercy particularly in regards to their dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh. This would, in effect, shift any authority from the Minsk Group to Russia. Despite Yerevan's explicit alliance with Moscow, a pro-Armenian resolution would be far from assured: with Eurasian Customs Union membership still to be bargained for, Baku would be in a far better position to extract concessions in return for more pro-Russian policies than Yerevan which has already played most of its cards in its dealings with Moscow[26].

[25] Sergi Kapanadze, *Georgia's Vulnerability to Russian Pressure Points*, European Council on Foreign Relations, London, 2014.
[26] Armen Grigoryan, „Armenia's Increasing Dependence on Russia", *Central Asia and Caucasus Analyst,* 7 May 2014. Available at: http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12972-armenias-increasing-dependence-on-russia.html

Russia's loss of Ukraine would have a varying demonstrative effect on these three states; much would in turn depend on Russia's decision on whether to retrench from, or salvage its status as a geopolitical empire. Russian retrenchment would imply a vindication of Georgia's pro-Western policies while conversely leaving Armenia strategically orphaned. Azerbaijan's multi-vectoral policy would, by contrast, make its adaptation to new strategic realities relatively straightforward. The de-stabilising potential of such an outcome is easy to see: the generated imbalance could reignite the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in full force as Azerbaijan becomes tempted to realise its often stated primary policy objective, namely the peaceful, or if necessary, forceful assertion of its sovereignty over the region[27]. There are, therefore, good reasons for Armenia to maintain its openings to both the European Union and NATO despite its currently pro-Russian orientation[28].

By contrast, a Russian attempt to restore control despite a Ukrainian loss would be by far the most de-stabilising outcome of all. Georgia would be encouraged to resist in the face of a discredited and weakened Russia using its various levers, possibly resulting in long-term instability. Similarly, Armenia – blockaded by both Turkey and Azerbaijan – would find itself in a dangerous predicament: with Yerevan's main overland supply lines to the outside world and its main ally possibly cut off, Baku might be tempted to once again exploit the occasion in order to retake

[27] Sara Rajabova, „Nagorno-Karabakh Main Priority of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy", *Azernews,* 8 July 2014. Available at:
http://www.azernews.az/azerbaijan/68691.html
[28] Kevork Oskanian, "Armenia's Foreign Policy: Between Dependence and Complementarity", *Opendemocracy.net,* 20 February 2015.
Available at: https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/kevork-oskanian/armenia%E2%80%99s-foreign-policy-between-dependence-and-complementarity

Nagorno-Karabakh. Much would depend on Russia's willingness and ability to uphold its CSTO commitments towards Yerevan and/or sanction Baku, as it would be least interested in losing the now so crucial source of leverage over the region.

The above possibilities and scenarios are, of course, based on ideal-type situations and assumptions. The real world of international security and politics is much more complicated and ambiguous and it is therefore useful to think of the various outcomes described above – of a Russian loss or win in Ukraine and of retrenchment or imperial desperation – as extremes on a variegated scale. Nevertheless, the thought exercise above gives an indication of the pressures faced by the various actors of the Black Sea region as they are confronted with the various possible outcomes of the unfolding crisis in Ukraine. Above all, its effects on the balance of power – real and perceived – will be essential in gauging its consequences for the various states of the region. However unwelcome, a return to a realist power-political view would thus appear to be of the essence in understanding the current and potential political realities in Europe.