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Turkey, as the key NATO ally in the Black Sea, has been trying to play a balancing role, and has sought to compartmentalise its relations in the region. Turkey has maintained ties with Russia during the war while supplying Ukraine militarily. Ankara has also sought to maintain the Black Sea as a Russian–Turkish condominium, and to limit access by powerful external powers – notably the US. Thus, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has sought to avoid burning bridges with Moscow for political and economic reasons, to strictly follow the Montreux Convention to restrict Black Sea naval access, and to avoid taking any decisions that may cause long-term damage in Turkish–Russian relations.

## GEORGIA AND THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Georgia remains committed to joining NATO as the best way to deter further Russian aggression and to develop an effective national deterrence. While NATO membership would not solve Georgia’s territorial disputes, it would provide effective deterrence against Russian policies of borderisation, continuing attempts to intimidate Georgia and the threats of escalation. It has, however, been more than a decade since the Bucharest Summit of 2008, and Georgia’s membership prospects remain frozen.<sup>39</sup> Although the war in Ukraine has forced the West to rethink its policies, Georgia’s NATO membership remains a distant prospect given scepticism from countries such as France and Germany. With the regional security dynamic changing quickly, Georgia’s security thinking must go beyond NATO to identify ways to develop security ties within a Black Sea security framework.

Despite statements by senior Georgian politicians, stressing the importance of partnerships between the Black Sea littoral states, there is a lack of shared vision among key players.<sup>40</sup> Some of the existing cooperation formats – primarily designed to boost economic and trade links – such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (including Russia), the Black Sea

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39. NATO, ‘Bucharest Summit Declaration’, 3 April 2008, <[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_8443.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm)>, accessed 20 September 2022.

40. Michael Peel and Henry Foy, ‘Georgia’s President Aims to Deepen Nato Ties on Black Sea Security’, *Financial Times*, 24 January 2019; see also *Agenda.ge*, ‘Georgian Defence Minister Raises Black Sea Regional Challenges at Atlantic-Black Sea Security Forum’, 12 July 2022, <<https://agenda.ge/en/news/2022/2660>>, accessed 2 November 2022.





















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