

## Политика Болгарии в Черноморском регионе с 2007 по 2023 годы

София Т. Цветанова

Российский университет дружбы народов им. П. Лумумбы, Москва, Россия,

[1032225912@pfur.ru](mailto:1032225912@pfur.ru)

**Аннотация:** В данной статье рассматривается черноморский вектор политики Болгарии после вступления страны в Европейский союз. Расширение ЕС на Восток в 2007 году изменило восприятие Черноморского региона как ключевого стратегического пространства, включая отношение самого Союза. Принятие Болгарии и Румынии в ЕС придало Черному морю статус «европейского моря», превратив его в восточную границу Союза. Это изменение подчеркнуло значимость региона в контексте европейской политики и безопасности. В статье анализируются основные направления внешней политики Болгарии в Черноморье, включая укрепление трансграничного сотрудничества, интеграцию в евроатлантические структуры и обеспечение морской и энергетической безопасности. Цель исследования заключается в определении роли и места Болгарии в регионе. Работа основана на анализе официальных документов и научных публикаций. В заключении делается вывод о возрастающей значимости Черноморского региона для Республики Болгария ввиду ее обязательств по защите внешних границ НАТО и ЕС, а также потенциала добычи энергетических ресурсов на континентальном шельфе. Официальная София рассматривает Черноморье в европейском и евроатлантическом контексте, стремясь углублять сотрудничество в области экономики, торговли и безопасности.

**Ключевые слова:** Черноморский регион, Болгария, политика, Европейский союз, Российская Федерация, геостратегические интересы, геополитика

**Для цитирования:** Цветанова С.Т. Политика Болгарии в Черноморском регионе с 2007 по 2023 годы. *Проблемы постсоветского пространства*. 2025;12(1):73–82. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24975/2313-8920-2025-12-1-73-82>

Поступила 21.01.2025

Принята в печать 23.02.2025

Опубликована 30.03.2025

## The Bulgarian Policy in the Black Sea region from 2007 to 2023

Sofiya T. Tsvetanova

*Peoples' Friendship University of Russia named after Patrice Lumumba, Moscow, Russia,*

[1032225912@pfur.ru](mailto:1032225912@pfur.ru)

**Abstract:** This article reviews the Black Sea policy vector of Bulgaria after its admission to the European Union. EU enlargement to the East in 2007 changed the views of the Black Sea region as a key strategic point, including the attitude of the Union itself. The accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU gave the Black Sea a status of «European sea», making it the eastern border of the Union. This change underlined the importance of the region in the context of European policy and security. The article analyzes the main areas of foreign policy of Bulgaria in Black Sea, including strengthening cross-border cooperation, integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures and ensuring maritime and energy security. The aim of the study is to determine the role and place of Bulgaria in the region. This paper is based on the analysis of official documents and scientific publications. The conclusion reached was that the Black Sea region is of increasing importance for the Republic of Bulgaria due to its obligations to protect the external borders of NATO and the EU, as well as the potential of energy resources extraction on the continental shelf. Officially Sofia considers the Black Sea in the context of European and Euro-Atlantic interest, seeking to deepen the cooperation in the fields of economy, trade and security.

**Key words:** Black Sea region, Bulgaria, politics, European Union, Russian Federation, geostrategic interests, geopolitics

**For citation:** Tsvetanova S.T. The Bulgarian Policy in the Black Sea region from 2007 to 2023. *Post-Soviet Issues*. 2025;12(1):73–82. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24975/2313-8920-2025-12-1-73-82>

*Received 21.01.2025*

*Revised 23.02.2025*

*Published 30.03.2025*

### INTRODUCTION

The Black Sea region is a geopolitical crossroads: between Europe and Asia, between Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Islam, between the West and the East. As a result of Bulgaria's membership in the European Union, the EU's coastal borders extend from the French Atlantic to the Bulgarian Black Sea. The political tensions in the region are due to intertwining interests of the main players - Russia, USA, Turkey, EU and NATO [1]. From the six

countries bordering the Black Sea, two are members of the European Union (Bulgaria and Romania), two are EU candidate countries (Georgia and Turkey) and three of which are NATO member states (Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania) while some of the rests are considering NATO membership.

Crucial aspects for the Republic of Bulgaria are the strengthening of NATO and the EU's role in ensuring security in the Black Sea

region, while additionally promoting the integration of countries in the region into European and Euro-Atlantic structures [2]. Bulgaria actively participates in the implementation of common security and defence policies of the European Union, acting within the framework of the Single European Security and Defence System under the auspices of NATO.

### PARTICIPATION OF BULGARIA IN INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

On 11 April 2007, following the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union, a document of the European Commission «Black Sea Synergy» was adopted, in which three key objectives were defined: development of relations with the Republic of Turkey, the countries of post-Soviet space and the Russian Federation<sup>1</sup>.

In the same year, under the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) programme, the European Union launched the Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme for the period 2007-2013<sup>2</sup>. Afterwards this initiative was further continued in the form of two additional programs «Black Sea Basin 2014-2020»<sup>3</sup> and «Black Sea Basin 2021-2027»<sup>4</sup>. Through which have been implemented 119 projects covering eight countries in the region: Armenia, Bulgaria, Greece, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine. Key priorities for the programs were and continue

to be the cross-border partnerships with goals to promote economic and social development, environmental protection, cultural and educational initiatives aimed at creating a common cultural environment in the Black Sea region.

Bulgaria actively participates in the execution of international projects in the Black Sea region. For example, in 2011, the country, in conjunction with Greece, Romania, Ukraine, Moldova and Italy (as an associate partner), participated in the project «Black Sea Regional Cooperation Network», which was aimed at supporting cross-border cooperation for economic and social development through the joint use of common resources<sup>5</sup>.

In 2013, Bulgaria, AGORA (Burgas) Platform, Greece and Ukraine initiated the project «Black Sea Areal for Culture and Art». Funding was provided under the 2007-2013 Joint Operational Programme of the Black Sea Basin. The strategy focused on cultural cooperation and the establishment of a Black Sea Cultural Centre in cities such as Comotini, Burgas and Odessa. As a result, this strengthened the transnational cultural environment for education and cultural exchange between EU member countries and candidates from the Black Sea region<sup>6</sup>.

Key factor for the Republic of Bulgaria in the Black Sea region was to manage a balance between the strategic foreign policy priorities of the country and the alliance commitments

<sup>1</sup> Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament black sea synergy - A new regional cooperation initiative URL: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/BG/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52007DC0160> (accessed: 18.11.2024)

<sup>2</sup> Joint Operational Programme «Black Sea Basin 2007-2013». Republic of Bulgaria. Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works. Official website. URL: <https://www.mrrb.bg/bg/infrastruktura-i-programi/period-2007-2013/chernomorski-basejn/> (accessed: 18.11.2024)

<sup>3</sup> Black Sea Basin 2014-2020. Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin. URL: <https://www.blacksea-cbc.net/eni-cbc-bsb-2014-2020> (accessed: 18.11.2024)

<sup>4</sup> Interreg Next Black Sea Basin 2021-2027. Republic of Bulgaria. Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works. Official website. URL: <https://www.mrrb.bg/bg/infrastruktura-i-programi/programi-za-teritorialno-sutrudnichestvo-2021-2027/interreg-next-chernomorski-basejn-2021-2027/> (accessed: 18.11.2024)

<sup>5</sup> The BlasNet project «Black Sea Network for Regional Cooperation» URL: <https://www.rapiv.org/bg/product/18--proekt-blasnet-ernomorska-mreja-za-regionalno-sytrudniestvo/> (accessed: 18.11.2024)

<sup>6</sup> Black Sea Areal for Culture and Art. Platform AGORA. Active Communities for Development Alternatives. URL: <https://www.agora-bg.org/bg/project/basaca.html> (accessed: 18.11.2024)

towards NATO and the EU [3]. In 2008, the Government adopted a project approved on the Concept for improvement of maritime security in the Black Sea region «Synergy of partnership efforts»<sup>7</sup> aimed at enhancement maritime security in the Black Sea region. Within the framework of this project, it was decided to appoint an ambassador tasked with special missions in regards to issues located in the Black Sea region and a national coordinator for regional cooperation<sup>8</sup>. These actions were aimed at further developing interaction and expanding links between remote geographical regions with a view to ensuring stability, sustainable development and efficient resource mobilization.

In 2009, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria Ivailo Kalfin noted that the state, in collaboration with Germany, and in close coordination with Greece and Romania, supported the project «Black Sea Synergy»<sup>9</sup>. This initiative provided a platform for further discussions in the EU on regional policy perspectives. The main focus was to reinforce the EU's role in the Black Sea region and fulfilling the special responsibilities of Bulgaria as an external border of the EU and NATO. The functional expansion of the Burgas Maritime Transport Monitoring and Information Exchange Centre among member countries were also discussed.

## BULGARIAN POLICY IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

One of the key mechanisms for the study of Sofia's policy in the Black Sea region is the analysis of official documents defining the foreign policy and defence course of the country – the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria and the National Defence Strategy.

The 2011<sup>10</sup> National Security Strategy identified terrorism and extremism as the main threats to the country's security. The Black Sea region has been reviewed in a broad European and Euro-Atlantic context, which underlines the desire of Bulgaria to develop cooperation in the fields of economy, trade and security. Special attention is paid to the country's obligations to protect the external borders of NATO and the EU. Bulgaria's goal to actively participate in the improvement of bilateral and multilateral relations aimed at ensuring stability and security in the region.

The 2011<sup>11</sup> National Defence Strategy complements provisioning of the Security Strategies by clarifying the number of risks and opportunities for the region. Thus, the document noted that current conflicts and terrorist organizations are destabilizing factors. It is also stressed that the importance of the Black Sea region for international security,

<sup>7</sup> Draft Decision on Approval of the Concept for Strengthening Maritime Security in the Black Sea Region "Synergy of Partners' Efforts". Republic of Bulgaria. Council of Ministers. Public Consultations Portal. URL: <https://new.strategy.bg/bg/pris/legal-information/protokolni-reseniia/47634> (accessed: 18.11.2024)

<sup>8</sup> On the appointment of an ambassador for special assignments on the problems of the Black Sea region and on the appointment of a special coordinator – national coordinator for the regional cooperation council. Republic of Bulgaria. Council of Ministers. Public consultation portal. URL: <https://new.strategy.bg/bg/pris/legal-information/reseniia/36263> (accessed: 18.11.2024)

<sup>9</sup> Kalfin I. State and prospects for the development of Southeast Europe. Analysis Edition - International Politics and Security. URL: [https://www.expert-bdd.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=846:-----&catid=14&Itemid=39](https://www.expert-bdd.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=846:-----&catid=14&Itemid=39) (accessed: 18.11.2024)

<sup>9</sup> Kalfin I. State and prospects for the development of Southeast Europe. Analysis Edition - International Politics and Security. URL: [https://www.expert-bdd.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=846:-----&catid=14&Itemid=39](https://www.expert-bdd.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=846:-----&catid=14&Itemid=39) (accessed: 18.11.2024)

<sup>10</sup> National Security Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria. Republic of Bulgaria. Council of Ministers. Public Consultations Portal. 08.03.2011. URL: <https://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?Id=671> (accessed: 18.11.2024)

<sup>11</sup> National Defence Strategy. Republic of Bulgaria. Council of Ministers. Public Consultations Portal. 14.04.2011. URL: <https://www.strategy.bg/strategicdocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=697> (accessed: 18.11.2024)

including the interests of Bulgaria, increases due to its strategic role as a link between Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

The coup d'état in Ukraine and the addition of Crimea to the Russian Federation in 2014 changed the geopolitical situation of the Black Sea region. This in turn, caused the Western countries to impose sanctions on Russia in order to change its foreign policy. The West's sanctions policy further expanded after the launch of a special military operation (SOP) in February 2022. Since then, sanctions have become systemic for Russia. The West's support for Ukraine, both militarily and economically, cause it to become a party to the conflict [4]. Therefore, the countries of the Black Sea region have been involved in the deepening crisis between Russia and the EU, Russia and NATO, as well as Russia and the US, which is reflected in official documents [5].

In 2016, Turkey and Romania supported the strengthening of NATO on the Black Sea [6]. President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated during a meeting with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg that «the Black Sea has almost become a Russian lake». «If we do not act now, history will not forgive us»<sup>12</sup>. NATO Deputy Secretary-General Alexander Verbow also expressed support for the increased presence of NATO in the Black Sea region.

In Bulgaria during this period there was no consensus between President Rozen Plevneliev, Defence Minister Nikolai Nenchev and Prime Minister Boyko Borisov on what actions are to be taken by the country. As a result, on 17 June 2016 the parliament adopted a

declaration through which was announced that the Republic of Bulgaria will not participate in the creation of new military formations and military operations in the South-East Europe and Black Sea region<sup>13</sup>. This statement noted that Bulgaria supports all efforts to normalize and stabilize the situation in the Black Sea region while also being ready to participate actively in the formation and implementation of common positions and policies in regard to security and defence as an integral part of the union's rights and obligations within the EU and NATO. The state is opposed to any form of military confrontation in the region including the placement of weapons and armed forces on its territory.

Following the NATO summit in Warsaw on 8–9 July 2016, it was decided to deploy four multinational battalions in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia [7]. Bulgaria received this decision as a cause which would lead to an increase in tensions on its eastern borders, indicating that the Russian side will not let these actions go unpunished. Moreover, the Parliament has declared the negative consequences of the summit's decisions for the country, as the delegation took on commitments which put Bulgaria at a disadvantage<sup>14</sup>. In this regard, the parliament rejected the proposition of Defence Minister Nikolai Nencheva to send a Bulgarian battalion in Romania and placing 5,000 US soldiers in the country. The representatives of the people recalled that Bulgaria is a republic with parliamentary rule, having demanded the resignation of the minister of defence. The people's representatives in addition condemned the actions of the Bulgarian

<sup>12</sup> Bulgaria Refused to Join NATO Black Sea fleet URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/16/06/2016/5762b5f89a79473154678cc9> (accessed: 09.12.2024)

<sup>13</sup> Declaration of non-participation of the Republic of Bulgaria in new military formations and military actions in Southeastern Europe and the Black Sea region. 17.06.2016. National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria. URL: <https://www.parliament.bg/bills/43/654-03-6.pdf> (accessed: 09.12.2024)

<sup>14</sup> Declaration of the National Assembly on the NATO Summit in Warsaw. National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria. URL: <https://www.parliament.bg/bills/43/654-03-9.pdf> (accessed: 09.12.2024)

President Rossen Plevneliev, who acted at that time, arguing that his militaristic position and desire to strengthen NATO's presence in the Black Sea region were detrimental to national interests of the country.

In 2016, the Republic of Bulgaria updated its National Defence Strategy<sup>15</sup>. This document emphasizes the growing role of the Black Sea region for the security of the international community, including Bulgaria. The strategic dialogue and partnership between the US, NATO and the EU with Russia is of particular importance in the fight against terrorism, as well as in matters of proliferation and arms control. The text further indicates that the uncertainty in maritime matters and the absence of agreements on demarcation between the Black Sea States pose a serious security threat. Therefore, Energy security remains an important element while the potential for energy production on the continental shelf of the Black Sea is seen as an additional strategic priority, reinforcing Bulgaria's commitment to protect NATO and EU borders. These provisions demonstrate the desire of Sofia to use geopolitical and resource advantages in order to strengthen its role in the region.

However, since 2018 Bulgaria has changed its foreign policy rhetoric. For example, the 2018 Updated National Security Strategy<sup>16</sup> demonstrates the transformation of the country's intentions in the Black Sea region. From developing regional cooperation to expanding the role of NATO and the EU in ensuring security in the area while promoting the Processes of countries in the Black Sea region in European and Euro-Atlantic structures. The

2018 strategy focuses on frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space, as well as changes in the geopolitical and military balance caused by the crisis in Ukraine and the accession of Crimea to the Russian Federation. The document emphasizes that the expansion of NATO's presence in the Black Sea region symbolizes the solidarity of the allies and their determination to protect the territory of the Alliance from potential threats. Bulgaria is actively participating in the implementation of the EU's common security policy, integrated into the Single European Security and Defence System within the framework of NATO.

The country considers the changes to the strategic military balance of power inside the Black Sea region after 2014 as a threat to its security [8]. In this regard, the state supports the reinforcement of NATO's military presence in Black Sea. In 2020, the Bulgaria-US Defence Road Map for 2020-2030<sup>17</sup> was signed, one of whose priorities is to deepen the cooperation in the Black Sea region with a view to effectively containing and countering external threats and challenges.

On 25 November 2020, the report «NATO 2030: Unity in a New Era» was published<sup>18</sup>. The paper analyses current aspects of the Alliance's activities and threats to it while also providing recommendations for its member states. The report notes that in 2030 NATO should remain the basis of collective security for its members and a guarantor of stability in the Euro-Atlantic region. The current threats and priorities of the Alliance are also mentioned. First and foremost, it refers to Russia's

<sup>15</sup> National Defense Strategy. Republic of Bulgaria. Council of Ministers. Public Consultations Portal. URL: <https://www.strategy.bg/strategicdocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=1002> (accessed: 18.11.2024)

<sup>16</sup> Updated National Security Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2018. Republic of Bulgaria. Council of Ministers. Public Consultations Portal. URL: <https://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?Id=671> (accessed: 18.11.2024)

<sup>17</sup> Bulgaria and the USA sign Roadmap 2020-2030 in the area of defence URL: <https://bntnews.bg/news/balgariya-i-sasht-podpisaha-patna-karta-v-oblastta-na-otbranata-2020-2030-1077317news.html> (accessed: 18.11.2024)

<sup>18</sup> NATO 2030: United for a New Era. NATO, 25.11.2020. URL: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf) (дата обращения: 09.12.2024)



policy. In this context, the improvement of operational compatibility for the armed forces of NATO member states, conduct of military exercises, bolstering cooperation in the spheres of cyberspace and outer space. As well as development of initiatives such as the «Extended Forward Presence» in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Joint High Readiness Task Force, NATO BMD, program «4 to 30» and more<sup>19</sup>.

In May 2021, the Parliament of Bulgaria issued a declaration on the development of defence and security policy, and the contribution of Bulgaria to the realization of NATO's vision until 2030<sup>20</sup>. In the document, the parliament called on the Bulgarian government as well as all state and local authorities to focus their efforts on overcoming the dependence on the Russian Federation in the fields of defence and energy. This Declaration also furthers Bulgaria's active participation in multinational forces inside Eastern Europe and the deployment of military contingents on its territory with the goal to enhance the country's defence capacity while building up solidarity within NATO and the EU.

In January 2022, the Bulgarian Ministry of Defence presented its position on fulfilling the country's commitments under the plans for a «Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP)» on the Eastern flank of NATO<sup>21</sup>. The statement acknowledges that Bulgaria considers its membership in NATO as the main guarantor of the

country's security, sovereignty and territorial integrity. In the framework of the initiative (EFP) in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, measures have been taken in order to create conditions for a more visible NATO presence in the Black Sea region, additionally enhancing the capability and interoperability of Allies through joint exercises [9].

Bulgaria's stance is defined by the NATO position. In the same year, at the NATO summit<sup>22</sup> in Madrid, decisions were taken to significantly strengthen the deterrent and defensive capacity of the Eastern flank of the Alliance, as well as to adopt a New Strategic Concept which emphasizes collective defence. According to the details of the paper, regions of the Western Balkans and the Black Sea were highlighted as key points of importance for NATO. The New Strategic Concept identified two major threats to the Alliance - Russia and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Analyzing the reports on the implementation of Bulgaria's state budget from 2007 to 2022, there is a tendency to increase the military budget after 2018, with the largest amount being allocated in 2019 - 6,513.5 mln. Lev or 5.5% of GDP (for comparison - the smallest military budget for the period 2007-2022 was allocated in 2012 - 2 802.3 mln. Lev or 3.6% of GDP)<sup>23</sup>. As per the studied data of «Military balance»<sup>24</sup> it appears that in 2020 Bulgaria increased its army from 31,300 active units

<sup>19</sup> Aleshin A.A. NATO 2030 Report: What to Expect From the Alliance in the Coming Decade? URL: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf) (accessed: 09.12.2024)

<sup>20</sup> Declaration of the 45th National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria on the development of defense and security policy and Bulgaria's contribution to the realization of NATO Vision 2030. URL: [https://www.parliament.bg/pub/plenary\\_documents/154-03-2\\_Proekt\\_na\\_deklaratsiya.pdf](https://www.parliament.bg/pub/plenary_documents/154-03-2_Proekt_na_deklaratsiya.pdf) (accessed: 09.12.2024)

<sup>21</sup> Answer to a question from the Member of Parliament, Associate Professor Atanas Slavov, to the Minister of Defense. Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Bulgaria. URL: <https://www.parliament.bg/pub/PK/46390247-154-06-162.pdf> (accessed: 09.12.2024)

<sup>22</sup> Multilateral relations. NATO. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria. URL: <https://www.mfa.bg/bg/3083> (accessed: 09.12.2024)

<sup>23</sup> Budget archive. Republic of Bulgaria. Ministry of Finance. Official website. URL: <https://www.minfin.bg/bg/1558> (accessed: 09.12.2024)

<sup>24</sup> The Military Balance. URL: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tmib20> (дата обращения: 09.12.2024)

to 36,950. Furthermore the country's fleet was increased from 3,450 to 4,450 units.

As stated in the American magazine «The National Interest» with references to the information and analytical agency Epicenter<sup>25</sup>, the rapprochement of Bulgaria and Russia has reached such a high point that the USA had to threaten sanctions against Sofia for its participation in the project «Turkish Stream». At this stage, Bulgaria is pursuing a policy aimed at achieving energy independence from the Russian Federation, although the President of Bulgaria has a different view. Rumen Radev argues that the Russian-Bulgarian relationship is of strategic importance for the country. According to the head of state, it is not only beneficial for Sofia to receive Russian gas directly through the pipeline laid on the bottom of the Black Sea while having access to the territory of Bulgaria, but it would also actively develop relations with Russia in regards to tourism, trade, agriculture and IT<sup>26</sup>. Rumen Radev has consistently opposed the political isolation of Russia [10].

However, the Republic of Bulgaria is considering the use of hydrogen sulphide in the Black Sea region for the production of energy<sup>27</sup>. In 2023, a bill related to the generation of electricity through wind power plants located on the maritime areas of the country was introduced<sup>28</sup>. In 2024, Bulgaria expressed a desire to participate in the project «Green Energy Corridor», which involves the creation

of an undersea cable layout for the transmission of energy from renewable sources in the Caspian region via the Black Sea towards Europe<sup>29</sup>. The program is based on an intergovernmental agreement signed between Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania and Hungary [11]. Bulgaria's Minister of Energy, Vladimir Malinov, participated in the meeting regarding the Agreement on a Strategic Partnership for the Development and Transfer of Green Energy. The summit was held in Baku within the framework of the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The proposed design involves the construction of an underwater high-voltage power grid to connect Georgia and Europe. After completion a 1,155 km long cable will connect Romania, allowing South-East Europe and Romania to take advantage of increased export opportunities and trade electricity at hourly market prices.

## CONCLUSION

B Summing up the details, it could be noted that the geopolitical position of Bulgaria is shaping unique challenges and opportunities. The priority of the Black Sea region in the foreign policy of Bulgaria is demonstrated by the dedicated human resources capacity in key institutions of the MFA for conducting political dialogue. In 2023, the Directorate of «Eastern Europe and Central Asia» has 17 employees (for comparison – in the Directorate covering another region

<sup>25</sup> The National Interest: Not NATO and the USA, but Russia controls the situation in Ukraine. Epicenter: News, Analyses, Interviews, Comments. URL: <https://epicenter.bg/article/The-National-Interest--Ne-NATO-i-SASht-a-Rusiya-vladee-situatsiyata-v-Ukrayna/247623/11/33> (accessed: 09.12.2024)

<sup>26</sup> Rumen Radev: Bulgaria is interested in Russian gas directly, via the Black Sea. URL: <https://clubz.bg/64896-rumen-radev-balgarriya-ima-interes-ot-ruski-gaz-pryako-prez-chno-more> (accessed: 18.11.2024)

<sup>27</sup> The Black Sea energy project will begin operations, if there is funding. URL: <https://www.bloombergtv.bg/a/16-biznes-start/126783-proektat-za-energiva-ot-chno-more-shte-zaraboti-do-dve-godini-ako-ima-finansirane> (accessed: 18.11.2024)

<sup>28</sup> Draft law on renewable energy in marine areas. National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria. 04.12.2023. URL: <https://www.parliament.bg/bg/bills/ID/165251> (accessed: 18.11.2024)

<sup>29</sup> We expect green energy along the bottom of the Black Sea through a 1100-meter cable. Navigation Maritime Bulgare. URL: <https://www.maritime.bg/115916/> (accessed: 18.11.2024)



declared a priority – the Balkans – 25 employees)<sup>30</sup>. As for the diplomatic missions abroad, their relatively high staffing additionally highlights the importance of the Black Sea Route compared to other regions<sup>31</sup>. The state seeks to strengthen its position in the Black Sea region, building upon strategic engagement with the EU and NATO while maintaining balanced relations with the key regional players.

Since 2018, against the backdrop changes in geopolitical environment, Sofia actively advocated for the further establishment of NATO's military-political presence in the region, which is supported by an increase in the military budget and army. At the same time, Bulgaria is striving for energy independence

by participating in international renewable energy projects.

Bulgaria plays an important role in the processes which are taking place in the region, particularly in the fields of security and energy. Thus, the country's competitive advantage is characterized by a combination of good relations with the EU, Turkey, the US and Russia, as this would allow it to play a significant role in ensuring stability and security in the Black Sea region. The effectiveness of Bulgaria's foreign policy will depend on its ability to adapt to new challenges, including changing military balance, climate change and the development of digital technologies.

## ЛИТЕРАТУРА:

1. Саченко В. Н. Модели региональной интеграции в Черноморском регионе на современном этапе: проблемы институализации. *Гуманитарные и юридические исследования*. 2015;4:21.
2. Арбатова Н. К., Кокеев А. М. Стратегическая автономия ЕС и перспективы сотрудничества с Россией. ИМЭМО РАН. Москва: Весь Мир; 2020. 368 с.
3. Морозова Н. М., Яковлева Е.С. Особенности современного баланса сил в Черноморском регионе: военно-политический и экономический потенциал. *Парадигмы истории и общественного развития*. 2020;19:74.
4. Жильцов С. С. Политика России в условиях глобальной неопределенности: вызовы и возможности. *Проблемы постсоветского пространства*. 2023;10(1):8–16.
5. Айвазян Д. С. Актуальные тенденции взаимодействия прибрежных черноморских государств. *Современная Европа*. 2021;7:40.
6. Белобров Ю. Я. «Тень» НАТО над Черноморьем. *Вестник Дипломатической академии МИД России. Россия и мир*. 2020;1:101.
7. Уткин С. Варшавский саммит НАТО. *Европейская безопасность: события, оценки, прогнозы*. 2016;42(58):7.
8. Шумицкая Е.В. Болгария и Румыния: 10 лет в ЕС. Москва: ИМЭМО РАН; 2018. 96 с.
9. Трунов Ф. О. Эволюция сил передового развертывания НАТО к середине 2022 г. *Россия и современный мир*. 2022;4(117):114.
10. Подчасов Н. А. Отношения между Софией и Москвой на фоне внутриполитических процессов в Болгарии.

<sup>30</sup> Budget archive. Republic of Bulgaria. Ministry of Finance. Official website. URL: <https://www.minfin.bg/bg/1558> (accessed: 09.12.2024)

<sup>31</sup> Aleksieva N. Bulgaria in the Black Sea Region – Regional Cooperation and Significance. *International Relations: Journal of Diplomacy, Politics and Economics*. URL: <https://spisaniemo.bg/българия-в-черноморския-регион-реги/> (accessed: 18.11.2024)

Научно-аналитический вестник  
Института Европы РАН. 2023;5(35):20.

11. Алиев Р.А. Влияние концепции  
устойчивого развития на трансформацию

энергетической политики стран  
Каспийского региона. Вестник МГИМО-  
Университета. 2023;16(3):27.

## REFERENCES:

1. Sadchenko V. N. Models of Regional Integration in the Black Sea Region at the Present Stage: Problems of Institutionalization. *Humanities and law research*. 2015;4:21. (In Russ.)

2. Arbatova N. K., Kokeev A.M., eds. Strategic Autonomy of the EU and Prospects for Cooperation with Russia. IMEMO RAS. Moscow. Ves' Mir; 2020. 368 p. (In Russ.)

3. Morozova N. M., Yakovleva E. S. Features of the modern balance of power in the Black Sea region: military-political and economic potential. *Paradigms of history and social development*. 2020;19:74. (In Russ.)

4. Zhiltsov S. S. Russian policy in the face of global uncertainty: challenges and opportunities. *Post-Soviet Issues*. 2023;10(1):8-16. (In Russ.)

5. Ayvazyan D. Current Trends in the Interaction Between the Black Sea Littoral States. *Contemporary Europe*. 2021;7:40. (In Russ.)

6. Belobrov Y. NATO's "Shadow" Over the Black Sea. *The Herald of the Diplomatic*

*Academy of the MFA of Russia. Russia and the World*. 2020;1:101. (In Russ.)

7. Utkin S. Warsaw NATO Summit. *European Security: Events, Assessments, Forecasts*. 2016;42(58):7. (In Russ.)

8. Shumitskaya E.V. Bulgaria and Romania: 10 years in the EU. Moscow. IMEMO; 2018. 96 p. (In Russ.)

9. Trunov F.O. Evolution of NATO Forward Deployment Forces by mid 2022. *Russia and the World in the 21st Century*. 2022;4(117):114. (In Russ.)

10. Podchasov N.A. Relations between Sofia and Moscow against the background of domestic political processes in Bulgaria. *Nauchno-analiticheskij vestnik IE RAN*. 2023;5(35):20. (In Russ.)

11. Aliev R.A. The Role of the Sustainable Development Concept in Shaping Energy Policy Transformations in the Caspian Region Countries. *MGIMO Review of International Relations*. 2023;16(3):27. (In Russ.)

## ИНФОРМАЦИЯ ОБ АВТОРЕ / INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### София Т. Цветанова

Российский университет дружбы народов  
имени Патриса Лумумбы, Москва, Россия;  
117198, г. Москва, ул. Миклухо-Маклая, 6;  
[1032225912@pfur.ru](mailto:1032225912@pfur.ru)

### Sofiya T. Tsvetanova

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia named after Patrice Lumumba, Moscow, Russia;  
bld. 6, Mikluho-Maklaya str., Moscow,  
117198, Russia;  
[1032225912@pfur.ru](mailto:1032225912@pfur.ru)