Who is Behind the Push to Create a New Hotbed of Tensions?

On 6 February, the article entitled “The Black Sea should be a US and NATO priority” by Luke Coffey, the Director of the Douglas and Sarah Allison Center for Foreign Policy at the Heritage Foundation was published on the website of a U.S. think tank, the Middle East Institute.

The author thinks that “the Black Sea is an important region for NATO, and has not received the attention it deserves” thus far. And “with U.S. leadership, the Black Sea can receive the appropriate focus”. Hence, the United States should call for “the creation of a NATO Black Sea Strategy”. In addition, it ought to “encourage NATO to establish a Black Sea Maritime Patrol” (non-Black Sea NATO littoral states will then have to commit “to a regular and rotational maritime presence in the Black Sea”).

In the author’s opinion, since the economic and political importance of the region is growing, Washington should have taken these steps years ago but “it is not too late”. Luke Coffey points out that “the Black Sea sits at an important crossroads between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East”, and 3 out of 6 Black Sea countries (i.e. Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania) are in NATO. The two other nations (Ukraine and Georgia) are participants of NATO’s Partnership for Peace program. All five aforementioned countries “collectively contribute one-third of all the European forces serving in” NATO’s mission in Afghanistan.

Another key argument put forth by the author is that “one of America’s greatest geopolitical adversaries, Russia, depends on the Black Sea region for energy, trade, security, and economic reasons”. In fact, “for Russia, its domination of the Black Sea region has always been considered a matter of national survival”.

Unfortunately, it is not just a matter of proposals by authors. On 14 February of this year, Ministers of Defense of Ukraine and Romania met to discuss the issue of jointly countering threats facing the Black Sea. Clearly, they were referring to Russia’s actions.

This article speaks to the fact that ideas espousing U.S. dominance all over the world, promoted by American neconservatives, are very much alive today.

Unfortunately, all of this is happening at a time when “the threats and risks to humanity have never been at such an all-time high since the post war period”.

According to Russia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, we are “witnessing barbarisation of international relations which degrades the human habitat”. This is why it is so important today, as never before, for people to willingly “join forces” in order to cope with the growing number of global challenges and threats.

There are more and more dangers facing the Mediterranean region, which encompasses the Black Sea.

It is well-known that the West was essentially responsible for destroying Libya during the so-called Arab Spring, and was tempted to do the same in Tunisia and a number of other countries in the region. The bloody conflict in Syria has resulted in a large number of casualties and a lot of destruction, forcing numerous people to abandon their homes. There are more and more different crises and disputes in the region of the Mediterranean Sea that stem, in large part, from actions taken by Western countries.

Instead of devising ways to try and resolve these conflicts, some hotheads, first and foremost the United States, are only thinking of means of adding fuel to the fire in order to preserve the West’s eroding influence.
The aforementioned article was published by USA’s Middle East Institute, and a number of its analysts gained repute as objective analysts and highly competent academics. I know some of them personally, which is why it is all the more vexing that such inflammatory rhetoric, meant only to further inflame tensions and assert U.S. dominance, is coming from an institution that became famous because of its projects aimed at resolving conflicts by political means. Such an open anti-Russia campaign can only make the already problematic situation taking shape in and around the Black Sea even worse.

And many years ago such “activists” were simply labelled war hawks.

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