GA1 Black Sea

In anticipation of a research report we give you a small summary of the issue at hand.

The Black Sea region has seen a tumultuous year, and even years. Ukraine has been embroiled in a civil war and the Crimea peninsula has been annexed by Russia. In 2008 there was a short war between Georgia and Russia, which resulted in South Ossetia and Abkhazia to declare themselves independent from Georgia. On the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan a conflict that had been dormant for decades flared up in 2020, killing more than a 1000 people and first attempts at ceasefire were resisted by involved parties. Armenia also has an historic conflict with Turkey over the Armenian genocide by Ottoman forces (disputed by Turkey) early in the 20th century. A bit further from the Black Sea itself, the Iraqi and Syrian civil wars have sent floods of refugees through Turkey and surrounding countries.

The Black Sea is an important access point for all these conflicts. Any country other than those bordering the Black Sea need to use the Bosporus Strait in Turkey to send ships to the region. In 1938 the Montreux Convention was signed by Turkey, which dictates which warships get to gain access to the Black Sea and for how long. This meant that NATO could not maintain a permanent and dominating naval presence in the Black Sea. Now Turkey is planning on building the Istanbul canal, which would give NATO (and other military forces) more access to the Black Sea and disrupt the difficult balance that currently exists.

Solving any of these issues is complicated enough for any committee, but combined it becomes even harder. One of the general problems though, is that there is a military buildup that has been going on for years. Many involved countries are spending heavily on their armies and navies. This makes any possible escalation even more dangerous, as it has to potentially become a full blown war. The committee should try to de-escalate as many conflicts as possible.