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## PhD Title

**Towards a genealogy of regions in International Relations:  
an autopsy of the Black Sea (region)**

Ioannis K. Tsantoulis

University College London

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy



### **Declaration**

I, Ioannis K. Tsantoulis, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.



*To my father.*

## **Abstract**

This thesis aims to contribute to the development of the Region Building Approach (RBA) that has highlighted the discursively constructed nature of regions. More precisely, it critically examines the attempt to formulate a political and institutional vision for the Black Sea region in the post-9/11 era and in the context of the enlargements of the EU and NATO. This attempt, perceived as a failure by its key actors, provides an opportunity to investigate in detail how regions are “talked and written into existence”. To this end, the thesis examines i) the region builders involved and the context of their actions; ii) the practices of region building that both enabled and constrained the discursive construction of the Black Sea region; and iii) the spatial representations and security discourses that were integral to the region building process. Through a genealogical reading, the thesis identifies the elements that distinguish the Black Sea from other successful cases of region building, most notably the Baltic Sea region. This autopsy of failed region-building adds to the conceptual toolbox of RBA; a theoretical perspective with continued relevance in the contemporary European and global context.

**Keywords:** Black Sea region, region building, Region Building Approach (RBA), genealogy, discursive construction, practices, intertextuality, power/knowledge nexus, elite networks, spatial representations, security logics, Baltic Sea region.

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## Abbreviations

BLACKSEAFOR	Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group
BSCSIF	Black Sea-Caspian Sea International Fund
BSEC	Organisation for Black Sea Economic Cooperation
BSEN	Black Sea Elite Network
BSF	Black Sea Forum
BSS	Black Sea Synergy
BST-GMFUS	Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation – a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States
BTC	Baku Tbilisi Ceyhan Pipeline
CBS	Commission on the Black Sea
CBSS	Council of the Baltic Sea States
CDC	Community of Democratic Choice
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
DABLAS	The Danube Black Sea Task Force
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EC	European Commission
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ESS	European Security Strategy
EU	European Union
GWoT	Global War on Terror
HBSSSP	Harvard Black Sea Security Studies Program

ICBSS	International Centre for Black Sea Studies
INOGATE	Interstate Oil and Gas Transportation to Europe
IR	International Relations
GMF	German Marshall Fund
GRBA	Genealogical Region Building Approach
GUAM-ODED	Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development
OBSH	Operation Black Sea Harmony
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PETrA	Black Sea Pan-European Transport Area
PfP	Partnership for Peace
RBA	Region Building Approach
RSC	Regional Security Complex
RSCT	Regional Security Complex Theory
TAP	Trans Adriatic Pipeline
TRACECA	Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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“What then is truth?...truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense,” in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1954), 42.

# Introduction

“The meaning of a word derives from its use in language and discourse and not from any essence it contains within itself or in relation to the object to which it refers.”<sup>2</sup>

## 1. Introduction: regions and their uncharted territory

The elimination of the ideological bordering of the Cold War brought about the unforeseen fading of the international system’s political symbols and incited debates over the spatial re-organisation of power. To use the words of White, the world seemed “fluid and about to be remade.”<sup>3</sup> Significant changes both in the political viewpoint of the international system and in the theoretical setting of International Relations (IR) emerged engaging highly influential – albeit ambivalent – ideas such as “The End of History” and “The Clash of Civilisations” amid the appearance of the multifaceted “Fourth Great Debate” in IR.<sup>4</sup>

A noteworthy discussion that soon gained its own academic and policy momentum was over the significance of “regions” as both a new salient unit of analysis in IR and a new policy framework and tool. Challenging the dominant systemic-level orientations and the globalist explanations for politics, the

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<sup>2</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), para. 43.

<sup>3</sup> Theodore H. White, *In Search of History: A Personal Adventure* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 224.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996). The term “debate” remains ambivalent in the context of IR. Many argue that it does not reflect the evolution of the field and is inherently simplistic and misleading. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the end of the Cold War, along with the failure of the dominant theories to fully understand or explain it, triggered a series of discussions over the course and evolution of the discipline with a particular focus on its epistemological dimension.

regionalist scholarship referred to an emerging regional architecture of world politics or expressed the need to establish one. Although many perceived the focus on the regional level as a kind of passing fad reflecting the post-Cold War systemic confusion, the redefinition of the region as a conceptual framework acquired a significant position in the fragmented discipline of IR.<sup>5</sup> The “rise of region” was, however, expressed in the literature with a variety of terms (e.g. “regional integration,” “regionalism,” “regionalisation,” “region building,” etc.) and received different, if not opposing, connotations and interpretations both in scholarly and popular parlance.<sup>6</sup>

The immensely heterogeneous study of regions, based on divergent epistemological and ontological assumptions and readings, did not allow for the establishment of a generally followed understanding of regions.<sup>7</sup> The “rise of the region,” albeit academically promising, proved to be cumbersome and diverse. Yet, beyond the academic debates on the contested nature of regions, the word “region” itself acquired political significance. Indeed, one could notice in public discourse

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<sup>5</sup> Amitav Acharya, “The emerging regional architecture of world politics,” *World Politics* 59, no. 4 (2007): 629–652.

<sup>6</sup> The literature is vast but the most representative works are: Iver B. Neumann, “A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe,” *Review of International Studies* 20 (1994): 53–74; Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell eds., *Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); David A. Lake and Patrick M. Morgan (eds.), *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Peter J. Katzenstein, *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Raimo Väyrynen, “Regionalism: Old and New,” *International Studies Review* 5, no. 1 (March 2003): 25–51; Peter J. Katzenstein, “Regionalism in Comparative Perspective,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 31, no.2 (June 1996): 123–159; Derrick Frazier, “Regional powers and security: A framework for understanding order within regional security complexes,” *European Journal of International Relations* XX, no. X (2010): 4. It should be also noted that the prestigious journal “Review of International Studies” devoted a special issue to regions entitled “Globalising the Regional, Regionalising the Global” (Volume 35, Special Issue S1, February 2009).

<sup>7</sup> Ciută summarises the different understandings/approaches *vis-à-vis* regions with the following question(s): “are they [regions] geographically bound categories, or the product of historically and geographically grounded common identities, or on the contrary, are they “just” discursive constructions in which actors and analysts alike engage, either by their mere association with an area/region, or – quite often, it proves the case – intentionally?” Felix Ciută, “Regions, Areas and Exceptions: IR and the Hermeneutics of Context,” Paper for the 6th ECPR-SGIR Conference on International Relations, Turin, September 2007, 7.

references to a “Baltic Sea region” or an “Arctic region”, among other cases, and in most of these cases the debates that followed were multifaceted and politically heated. Even more importantly, writing about/for a region was prone to making strong “truth” claims.<sup>8</sup> The utterance of the word “region” became a political act. Talking, writing, *arguing* regions became a powerful narrative with profound implications; it acquired performative functions.

In this context, and following the linguistic turn, Iver Neumann argued emphatically in the early 1990s that “[r]egions are talked and written into existence.”<sup>9</sup> This laconic statement is of high analytical value and serves as both the starting and reference point of this thesis for primarily two reasons. First, it represents to some degree the introduction of the Region Building Approach (RBA) in the policy and academic debates *vis-à-vis* regions and second, and even more importantly, it captures RBA’s contribution to the understanding of regions.<sup>10</sup> What differentiated RBA from the existing regionalist approaches was the intention to understand region building discourse as politically constitutive. This is how most of the works associated with RBA managed to highlight the discursively constructed nature of regions as “imagined communities” and disputed the ontological status of regions as pre-existing entities.

By underlining the performative functions of language and discourse, most of the scholars operating under the umbrella of RBA managed to shed light on the

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<sup>8</sup> In reference to the concept of truth, as a source of problematisation for the thesis, it is important to highlight that “[n]ot only is power the ability to determine the “truth” but the “truth” itself is power.” See, Richard C.M. Mole, *The Baltic States – From the Soviet Union to the European Union: Identity, discourse and power in the post-communist transition of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania* (London: Routledge, 2012), 166.

<sup>9</sup> Iver Neumann, “A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe,” 59.

<sup>10</sup> For the most representative works of RBA, see: Neumann, “A Region Building Approach to Northern Europe;” Christopher S. Browning, “The Region-Building Approach Revisited: The Continued Othering of Russia in Discourses of Region-Building in the European North,” *Geopolitics* 8, no. 1 (2003): 45–71; Anssi Paasi, “The Institutionalization of Regions: A Theoretical Framework for Understanding the Emergence of Regions and the Constitution of Regional Identity,” *Fennia* 164, no.1 (1986): 105–146; Alexander B. Murphy, “Regions as Social Constructs: The Gap between Theory and Practice,” *Progress in Human Geography* 15, no. 1 (March 1991): 23–35; Anssi Paasi, “Place and Region: Regional Worlds and Words,” *Progress in Human Geography* 26, no.2 (April 2002): 802–811.

politics of representations. By critically accentuating the importance of representations, RBA provided a new understanding of regions and their genesis. According to Paasi:

“the region should not be regarded merely as a passive medium in which social action takes place. Neither should it be understood as an entity that operates autonomously above human beings. Regions are always part of this action and hence they are social constructs that are created in political, economic, cultural and administrative practices and discourses. Further, in these practices and discourses regions may become crucial instruments of power that manifest themselves in shaping the spaces of governance, economy and culture.”<sup>11</sup>

RBA’s indisputable contribution was that it managed to successfully problematise regions and within this context it highlighted significant aspects of the region building discourse such as “self and other,” “inclusion and exclusion,” “core and margin.” Specifically, one could notice in most of the works associated with RBA elements of theoretical innovation and empirical depth when discussing in particular representations of identity, space and security.

Yet, the case of the Black Sea (region), as the last and least successful – even an “anomaly” one might say – process of region building in a series of similar region building initiatives that took place in the post-Cold War era is particularly intriguing in this regard. Indeed, it poses the question(s): why although there was a series of coordinated and systematic efforts in the post-Cold War era by a plethora of (elite) actors to “talk and write the Black Sea region into existence”, to use Neumann’s words, this process failed? What does it mean for a region to “exist” in discursive construction and what happens when there are indeed coordinated efforts – as the case of the Black Sea indicates – to talk and write a region into

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<sup>11</sup> Anssi Paasi, “Europe as social process and discourse: considerations of place, boundaries and identity,” *European Urban and Regional Studies* 8 (2001): 16.

existence but these efforts are in the end futile? Are regions *simply* talked and written into existence? What was distinctive about the Black Sea as a region building project and how an examination of the process can contribute to the development of the RBA?

Reflecting on these questions, this thesis should be seen as an effort to both understand and learn from a policy failure. Influenced by RBA this thesis attempts to expand its scope, conceptual repertoire and methodological toolkit. In this regard, it does not represent an effort to criticise RBA for failing to acknowledge/recognise the possibility of failure of discursive formations. The contribution of the thesis is that by moving beyond the previous efforts of examining successful region building projects and by reflecting on the case of a failure not only it provides a better understanding of the current impasse in the Black Sea region, but it also contributes to the development of the RBA, thus seeking to provide a robust framework of analysis for similar projects in the future; either successful or failed ones.

As it will be discussed throughout the thesis, regions and region building in general should not be viewed as ephemeral phenomena of international politics that made their appearance amid the confusion of the post-Cold War era. On the contrary, they should be seen to be deeply embedded into processes of redesigning space, reformulating national interests, formulating security logics and overall thinking and acting in international politics; even when politicians and scholars alike avoid to use the exact terms “region” or “region building”. A key argument of the thesis is that spatial representations, security logics and overall a series of discursive constructions and elite practices that characterised the region building in the Black Sea, and not only, can also be found in other policy initiatives in the realm of international politics. This is why studying the failure of the Black Sea, as a once promising region building project, is a story that needs to be told and address broader audiences. This thesis represents an attempt to further develop and expand

RBA and even more importantly to re-position it in the ongoing debates pertaining to space, security and identity at large.

Therefore, adopting a post-structuralist understanding that highlights the importance of representations, the relationship of power and knowledge and operating within the RBA framework, this thesis attempts to utilise RBA's existing analytical tools and concepts in order to critically discuss the case of the Black Sea. In particular, it problematizes the resurrection and definition of the Black Sea as a region in the post-9/11 era and in light of the rounds of enlargement of both the EU and NATO.<sup>12</sup>

The Black Sea represents indeed a remarkable case for understanding the region building momentum, as this was an area heavily affected by the historical events of the late 1980s. The end of the Cold War resulted in a shift away from conflictual bipolarisation towards a hybrid situation. In this rapidly changing context, the Black Sea started to acquire new and often conflicting meanings among the various foreign policy elites as the region became the point of convergence for many powerful interests and divergent visions. In particular, it was portrayed in discourse to be at the epicentre of major transformative policies, including the latest phase of the EU's enlargement and its foreign policy formulation (ENP, BSS,

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<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that this was actually the second attempt to discursively construct and conceptualise the Black Sea region. The first attempt was made in the early 1990s by Turkey and was primarily based on Turgut Ozal's foreign policy vision of Neo-Ottomanism and was expressed by the establishment of the Organization for Black Sea Economic cooperation. This study does not focus on the first attempt, but nevertheless the logic and the main conceptual devices used throughout the thesis can be directly used when examining the first attempt to discursively construct the Black Sea region.



EaP),<sup>13</sup> the US strategy in combating international terrorism (GWoT),<sup>14</sup> NATO's new agenda and priorities,<sup>15</sup> Russia's economic and political revival and its stance towards its so-called "near abroad,"<sup>16</sup> and Turkey's resurgent foreign policy activism, termed by many as Neo-Ottomanism.<sup>17</sup>

Several Black Sea regional institutions were established and various policy projects of regional scope were presented with ambitious terms, while a significant number of publications on the nature and dynamics of the Black Sea, written by both regional and extra-regional scholars, started appearing in press and journals. Over time, foreign policy elites began to refer, in many different ways, to a previously uncharacterised geographic space as the "Black Sea Region".

The evolution of the Black Sea became the subject of a vivid debate among policy makers and other elites. The debates revolved primarily around issues related to space ("where it is"), security ("what it is and what it should become"), and the overarching rationale ("why build a region?") for a Black Sea region. In

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<sup>13</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, *Black Sea Synergy: A New Regional Cooperation Initiative*, COM(2007) 160 final, Brussels, 11 April 2007; European Commission, *Communication on the Report on the first year of implementation of the Black Sea Synergy*, COM(2008) 391 final, Brussels, 19 June 2008; European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, *Eastern Partnership*, Brussels, 3 December 2008; European Council, *Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit*, Prague, 7 May 2009. For a detailed list of the ENP documents, see [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/documents\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/documents_en.htm) (accessed 17 December 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Felix Ciută, "Parting the Black Sea (Region): Geopolitics, Institutionalisation and the Reconfiguration of European Security," *European Security* 16, no.1 (2007): 51–78.

<sup>15</sup> Stephen Larrabee, "NATO and Black Sea Security," in *The Wider Black Sea Region in the 21st Century: Strategic, Economic and Energy Perspectives*, ed. Daniel Hamilton and Gerhard Mangott (Washington, D.C.: Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2008), 277–293.

<sup>16</sup> Wynne Russell, *Russian Policy Towards the "Near Abroad: The Discourse of Hierarchy* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1995); Michael Rywkin, "Russia and the Near Abroad Under Putin," *American Foreign Policy Interests* 25, no. 1 (2003): 3–12.

<sup>17</sup> Neo-Ottomanism is a relatively vague term and in the literature one can find different interpretations of what it exactly entails and implies. It can be, nevertheless, broadly defined as a Turkish political ideology that encourages Turkey to adopt a more proactive foreign policy in its neighbouring areas, including the Black Sea region, and engage within countries and regions that were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire while domestically it indicates a revival of Ottoman cultural and traditions. For a comprehensive reading of neo-Ottomanism, read: M. Hakan Yavuz, "Turkish identity and foreign policy in flux: The rise of Neo-Ottomanism," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 7, no.12 (1998): 19–41; Nora Fisher Onar, "Neo Ottomanism, Historical Legacies and Turkish Foreign Policy," *EDAM Discussion Paper Series* (October 2009).

essence, a region building discourse started to emerge. Politicians, think-tankers and academics alike – inside and outside the Black Sea – started to discuss and problematize the idea of a Black Sea region. A Black Sea region was indeed talked and written in different fora by different voices. It is no exaggeration to argue that after the 9/11 attacks and in light of the forthcoming NATO enlargement there was a “region building euphoria.” Books were being published on the Black Sea region, conferences with high visibility were organised, institutions promoting the idea of a Black Sea region were being established or were becoming more active and politicians gradually started to talk of a “Black Sea region”. Yet, as it will be further discussed, more than a decade after this euphoria the region building momentum is gone and the process seems to have failed.

Yet, at this point the reference to “failure” should be clarified, given the high analytical value it holds in the thesis. As will be discussed at length throughout the text, “failure” is not defined according to a set of objective criteria and standards of what constitutes “successful” region-building. It is, instead, defined according to the objectives the region builders set themselves, and indeed is the verdict many of the actors involved have given themselves.

Reading the region building discourse of the Black Sea one can indeed discern a set of objectives outlined by the region builders in numerous ways (i.e. publications, conferences, speeches, etc.) at the initial stages of the region building process. Javier Solana, in the foreword of a book published by the German Marshall Fund (GMF) was expressing “the need to engage more in the wider Black Sea region” and in this context one could indicatively refer to how the Black Sea (region) had “to become a conduit of energy diversification, security and freedom between Europe and the Middle East and Central Asia”<sup>18</sup> or how, according to Socor, “effective state- and democracy-building and strategic interests... [were the] twin sides of a common set of U.S. and Euro-Atlantic interests in the Black Sea

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<sup>18</sup> Zeyno Baran and Robert A. Smith, “The Energy Dimension in American Policy towards the Black Sea Region,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 7, no. 2 (2007): 266 [emphasis added].

region”<sup>19</sup>. Jackson was suggesting that: “[t]he Black Sea region is an area of enormous democratic potential. The policy of the United States has to be to support new democracies, to dissuade or deter foreign powers from intervening in their development, and to ensure that the Euro-Atlantic institutions they seek remain open to them.”<sup>20</sup> Asmus, a region builder who played an important role in the initial stages of the process, was pointing out how “the recipe of democratic integration and collective security, offered through closer relations and eventual integration with NATO and the EU, could help transform and bring peace and stability to this region just like they did to Western Europe in the early post-World War II period and to Central and Eastern Europe after the end of the Cold War”<sup>21</sup>

Carefully examining the region building discourse one can identify a set of objectives such as democratisation, state and institution building, respect for human rights, good governance, integration into Euro-atlantic structures, energy security (of the West), environmental protection, economic growth and overall the creation of “a strategic whole [i.e. the Black Sea region] greater than the sum of its individual parts”<sup>22</sup> linked to and associated with the West. It was exactly these objectives that gave meaning to the idea of a region. This is essentially how region builders thought of the Black Sea and its future and this is how they attempted to operationalize it. Democratisation, good governance, energy security, integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, environmental protection, all served as proxies of/for region building. The idea of a Black Sea region acquired meaning and a kind of legitimacy exactly through these ambitious objectives. Yet, observing the situation as it stands now, one can notice a stagnation at many different levels (political, economic, institutional, cultural, etc.) and can further observe a region building

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<sup>19</sup> Vladimir Socor, “Advancing Euro-atlantic security and democracy in the Black Sea region,” Testimony before the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on European Affairs, March 8, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> Bruce Pitcairn Jackson, “The Future of Democracy in the Black Sea Region,” Testimony Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on European Affairs, March 8, 2005.

<sup>21</sup> Ron Asmus, “Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Black Sea,” in *Next Steps*, ed. Asmus, 16.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

stalemate/impasse. If in the past there were indeed efforts to talk and write the Black Sea region into existence, this is no longer the case. This might change in the future but it is evident that the region building momentum is clearly gone and this represents in itself a tell-tale sign of a failure.

Reflecting on the failure of these attempts one could refer in retrospect to a series of hindering factors to the success of region building such as the existence of a contested discourse, the presence of region builders inside and outside the region advocating different region building visions, and the existence of security dynamics sometimes binding and sometimes pulling the region apart, among others. These elements are indeed part of RBA, in particular in studies of the Baltic Sea region, yet its analytical framework does not include a way of discerning when and how such obstacles can be overcome by region-builders, and when they cannot. Since as RBA correctly points out, region building discourses are always contested and different region builders advocate different regional visions, this should not be viewed as a linear and straightforward process but as a complicated process of rediscovering identities and constituting meanings. Indeed, in the context of RBA the reasoning is that region building should be viewed as process where communities "...articulate visions, problematize and rearticulate self-conceptions, and address the question of who we are and where we belong."<sup>23</sup> In reference to the Baltic Sea, as a successful case of region building, Wæver further adds that "there are plenty of cultures and identities in the Baltic Region. Baltic culture and identity is that which we are now making – the product of intellectuals, conferences, and news reporting on conferences"<sup>24</sup>.

To address the case of the Black Sea the thesis operates within the RBA framework and addresses questions of "who" (region builders), "how" (practices), "where" (spatial representations), "what" (security representations), thus investigating the conditions of production, dissemination of and resistance to the

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<sup>23</sup> Wæver, "Culture and Identity in the Baltic Sea Region," 40.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

idea of a Black Sea region. A focus on the region builders, their practices and the politics of representations is indeed an efficient way to understand what distinguishes the Black Sea from other cases of region building and in particular the Baltic Sea which serves as a valuable point of reference throughout the thesis. The questions raised and addressed in relevant chapters of the thesis are:

- Whose (Black Sea) region? In other words, who are the region builders? Is it important to examine *who* talks and writes regions into existence and identify the context of their interactions?
- How was the Black Sea region talked and written into existence? What does the study of the practices of region building add to understanding the “failure” of the discursive construction of the Black Sea region?
- What kind of a (Black Sea) region was talked and written into existence?
- Why build a (Black Sea) region in the first place? Was the rationale and the underlying purpose for building a region evident?

The objective is to address the particular case of the Black Sea region and simultaneously to open up the debates within RBA. Taking into account the political relevance of regions this thesis addresses the spatial and political re-organisation of power in the world and attempts to fulfil the genealogical potential of RBA by both reflecting on questions related to region building and by raising new ones. Identifying the conditions of possibility that enabled the “dislocation”<sup>25</sup> of the region building discourse of the Black Sea is essential in order to make an autopsy of the Black Sea region and utilise the genealogical potential of RBA.

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<sup>25</sup> As Mole argues, “...discourses are never totalizing...[and] are not infinitely elastic. If a discourse is unable to explain, represent or integrate specific events, it is *dislocated*”. This is why the region building discourse in the Black Sea is approached as dislocated. See, Mole, *The Baltic States*, 15.

## 2. Theoretical framework: developing RBA, towards a genealogy

The theoretical framework of the thesis combines different post-positivist approaches such as discourse analysis, practices, and intertextuality among others, and it is particularly influenced by genealogy. Contrary to the assumption that regions are either pre-given as primarily a result of unifying cultural elements (i.e. “inside-out” approaches) or given as a product of systemic factors, states and physical geography (i.e. “outside-in” approaches), this study is based on the key principle of RBA that the process of region building is based on multiple practices in which the policy representations of a geographic space are produced, thus making regions manifestations/expressions of a “struggle over the meanings associated with space.”<sup>26</sup> Critically examining the process of region building and the concept of region itself, this thesis understands and defines regions as:

contested products of discourses initiated by region builders that through perpetual and deliberate practices of writing and communicating representations of space, security and culture attempt to transform fluid spaces into salient regions.

The objective is to identify the traces of what appears to be common knowledge – “true” knowledge – within the region building discourse. The literature on the Black Sea is characterised by certain connotations (e.g. spatial representations, security understandings) and a strong common vocabulary. To address the existence of common language in the region building discourse of the Black Sea, an analytical approach is adopted that goes beyond the text. The intention is essentially to question the constitution of knowledge(s) and discourses through power relations. Indeed, the ambition is to adopt a genealogical approach and examine what people “...tend to feel is without history”<sup>27</sup> and rely “on the idea of imploding that [the existing] order by showing how it came about and revealing

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<sup>26</sup> Paasi, “Place and region,” 805.

<sup>27</sup> Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 76.

the normal to be contingent,”<sup>28</sup> thus further showcasing the power relations operating in particular contexts.

In order to contribute to the development of RBA, the thesis uncovers the political dynamics and actors involved in the discursive construction of the Black Sea region. This does not imply, however, that the primary objective is to reveal deeper or hidden meanings of the process of region building, i.e. what the region builders “truly” had in mind when they initiated the process and what their beliefs were.<sup>29</sup> In terms of the assumptions and themes that characterised the region building discourse emphasis is given on the spatial and security representations of the Black Sea as these were the ones that dominated the region building discourse. The thesis, therefore, analyses the political constitutive nature of the region building discourse and reveals the different layers of understandings and interpretations of the Black Sea as a region.

An intertextual approach helps to shed light on the various textual interconnections and webs of meanings, and even more importantly it demonstrates the impact these connections had in the process of region building. Words and texts constituted certain webs of meaning that subsequently formulated a series of representations of space and security. In particular, intertextuality is used as a genealogical tool that foregrounds notions of relationality, interconnectedness, and interdependence. Special attention is paid to the dimensions of iterability and presupposition. The objective is to showcase how certain textual fragments were repeated to such an extent that they created a region building discourse, and also to highlight the omnipresent assumptions that texts made about the discourse’s

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<sup>28</sup> Xymena Kurowska and Benjamin C. Tallis, “Chiasmatic crossings: A reflexive revisit of a research encounter in European Security,” *Security Dialogue* 44, no. 1 (2013): 78.

<sup>29</sup> Hugh Gusterson, “Nuclear weapons testing: Scientific experiment as political ritual,” in *Naked Science: Anthropological inquiry into boundaries, power, and knowledge*, ed. Laura Nader (New York: Routledge, 1996), 131–147.

referent (i.e. the Black Sea region), readers, and context.<sup>30</sup> It is indeed important to operate with a view of region building that is sensitive to inter-textuality.

The focus on discourse would still be incomplete, however, if there was no reference to the region builders. The argument is that, through their writings and actions, elites did not merely describe the Black Sea in terms of its supposedly fixed and exogenously-given security status and spatial representations, but they also helped to constitute the Black Sea through their own imaginations.

Lastly, a focus on practices allows for a processual view of region building and a more critical reading of what appeared to be commonsensical. Practices, defined as “socially meaningful patterns of action, which, in being performed more or less competently, simultaneously embody, act out, and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world,”<sup>31</sup> help to expand the scope of study and to investigate the relationship between actors and their social environment; text and outcome. To conclude, this thesis draws heavily upon RBA thus addressing the region builders involved, their practices and representations of the region, while unfolding the underlying political motivations of the process.

### **3. Research methods: deontological challenges and methodological choices**

As far as the methods used are concerned, this study investigates the region building discourse using the so-called triangulation. This indicates that more than two methods are used in a study with a view to double (or triple) checking results in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings. Louis Cohen and Lawrence

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<sup>30</sup> On intertextuality, see: Julia Kristeva, “Word, Dialogue and Novel,” in *The Kristeva Reader*, trans. Alice Jardine, Thomas Gora, and Leon S. Roudiez, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 66; Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 5; Jeanine Parisier Plottel and Hanna Kurz Charney, *Introduction to Intertextuality: New Perspectives in Criticism* (New York: New York Literary Forum, 1978), xx; James E. Porter, “Intertextuality and the Discourse Community,” *Rhetoric Review* 5, no. 1 (Fall 1986): 35.

<sup>31</sup> Emmanuel Adler and Vincent Pulliot, “International Practices,” *International Theory* 3, no. 1 (2011): 4.



Manion define triangulation as an “attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint,”<sup>32</sup> whereas Helbert Altrichter et al. argue that triangulation “gives a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation.”<sup>33</sup> Combining multiple methods and diverse empirical materials, the objective is to overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases and the problems that come from single method, single-observer, and single-theory studies. Following this logic, the thesis “triangulates” its argument through: i) critical document analysis (official foreign policy documents, think tank publications, testimonies, academic literature,); ii) a retrospective “polymorphous engagement”, and iii) interviews with region-building elites.

Critical document analysis reflects the objective of identifying two – overlapping to a certain degree – categories of texts: practical (that of politicians and official stakeholders) and formal (the writings of strategists and policy analysts). Texts are not solely approached as bodies of work containing representations and logics, but also as a form of evidence that quite often carries valuable insights and hints of genealogical value on the role of region builders, the practices used and overall the context of region building.

“Polymorphous engagement”<sup>34</sup> serves a different function. According to Gusterson, “[p]olymorphous engagement means interacting with informants across a number of dispersed sites, not just in local communities, and sometimes in virtual form; and it means collecting data eclectically from a disparate array of sources in many different ways.”<sup>35</sup> Hence, the aim of polymorphous engagement is to identify and examine the context in which elite knowledge was produced, reproduced, and

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<sup>32</sup> Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion, and Keith R. B. Morrison, *Research methods in education* (London: Routledge, 2000), 254.

<sup>33</sup> Helbert Altrichter et al. *Teachers investigate their work: An introduction to action research across the professions* (London: Routledge, 2008), 147.

<sup>34</sup> Polymorphous engagement is a more accurate term compared to participant observation or ethnographic research –both methods used extensively in the field of social anthropology– as it captures my own *familiarity* with the process of region building.

<sup>35</sup> Hugh Gusterson, “Studying Up Revisited,” *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 20, no. 1 (2008): 116.

disseminated and region building took place. Having worked both for a think-tank that dealt exclusively with issues surrounding the debates of the Black Sea region for three-and-a-half years and for the Greek Ministry for Foreign Affairs for one year gave me the opportunity to participate in various ways and under different capacities in numerous meetings, workshops, and round-table discussions on the Black Sea region. Indicative of my past policy engagement is also my appointment as a member of the Commission on the Black Sea. For approximately four years, I had the opportunity to witness the key actors involved, their practices and the impact these had, even indirectly, on the process of region building. This engagement with the daily logics and practices allowed for an “experience-near” analysis of region building during my research.

Yet, what makes this thesis, in terms of methods, different from the majority of works addressing IR themes is that this has been a polymorphous engagement *in retrospective*. This kind of polymorphous engagement did facilitate the understanding of the region building practice “from within” and allowed for tangible scholarly and political criticality. The dynamics of interaction of my past engagement and my present interpretation of the region building sensitized me to different ways of seeing region building practices. Referring to the concept of “chiasmatic crossings,”<sup>36</sup> proposed by Kurowska and Tallis, that addresses the “chiasmatic knowledge production that seeks to cut across the entrenched division between the subject and object of inquiry, on the one hand, and the narrative and normative authority of the scholar, on the other”<sup>37</sup> there were indeed many times during my research that I came across a mutually constitutive relationship of my past experience and my present interpretation in the framing and understanding of the region building discourse.

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<sup>36</sup> To use the definition of Kurowska and Tallis: “chiasmus (from the Greek for “to shape like the letter X”) is the figure of speech in which two or more clauses are related to each other through a reversal of structures in order to make a larger point.” See Kurowska and Tallis, “Chiasmatic crossings,” 75.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

Regarding the interviews, a limited number of semi-structured elite interviews took place during the writing of the PhD in which the anonymity of the sources is preserved. Interviewees were selected mostly from think tanks, lobby groups, the European Commission and from a limited number of ministries of foreign affairs. In most of the cases, the objective was not so much to draw additional information but to ensure that the interpretation of certain texts, the analysis of region building practices and the references to the role of some elites throughout my thesis matched those of the region builders involved. Elite interviewing was also an efficient way to see how some of the region builders responded to my research approach *vis-à-vis* region building, thus also giving them the opportunity to possibly reflect in this context on their role related to the discursive construction of the Black Sea region.

Overall, from a methodological perspective the writing of the thesis turned out to be a challenging endeavour raising at the same time a series of deontological concerns. How, for instance, to use a statement of a “region builder” that was given in the past in a confidential spirit at a private meeting? How to critically examine the work of colleagues that shared with me their policy experience and network? It should be mentioned that I gathered all the information during a period of almost six years (2004-2010) in my capacity as a Research Fellow first at the Greek MFA and later at a think tank and as a member of the Commission on the Black Sea; not as a PhD candidate. Affiliations and their derivative institutional constraints do matter. I soon realised, while writing this thesis, that my PhD is basically the history of an idea – the idea of a Black Sea region – and an implicit history of my engagement with this idea; a direct analysis of my past and present “gaze” entailing a process of de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation. Being consciously aware of that represents an important step in addressing my ethical concerns.

It should be stated at this point that this thesis constitutes neither a critique of the actions of my former colleagues nor a personal testimony. It should be seen, in addition to its theoretical and empirical contribution, as a retrospective

reflection on region building as it happened on the ground; my reading of a foreign policy endeavour and the writing of a chronicle of a failed region foretold. I believe that it is this shifting of positions and gazes that allows for contextual reflexivity and criticality representing possibly a productive way forward for both the understanding and design of any future region building initiative.

#### **4. The structure of the thesis**

The structure of the thesis is divided into two parts – a theoretical and an empirical – and is designed in a way that addresses both the interlinked empirical questions of “who,” “how,” and “what” and the underlying theoretical question of “how does a discussion of the failure of the Black Sea as a region building project contribute to the development/upgrade of the RBA?”. To this end, the first chapter focuses on the academic study of regions with a particular attention to the existing region building approaches. The second chapter elaborates on the key axioms and principles of RBA, thus outlining the theoretical framework of the thesis with the objective to further develop RBA and utilise its genealogical potential. In particular, emphasis is given on RBA’s analysis of the particular case of the Baltic Sea region as the most thoroughly analysed region building case study. The third chapter critically reviews and systematises the key questions in the literature on the Black Sea and provides a brief account of the events and policy themes in the Black Sea. An analysis of the region building discourse helps to focus on the key themes and processes of region building and to structure the empirical chapters accordingly.

The subsequent four chapters are based on original empirical work but they are at the same time discussed in the context of the RBA and there are references to the works addressing the case of the Baltic Sea region. More precisely, the fourth chapter critically examines the role of elite networks (think tankers, high ranking officials, etc.) in the discursive construction of the Black Sea and a model – the

BSEN – is proposed that refers to both the elites involved and the overarching context of their actions and interactions.

The fifth chapter focuses on practices, with the objective to demonstrate both the daily patterns of actions and the impact these had on the process of region building. In particular, attention is paid to the “self-constituting politics”<sup>38</sup> of practices such as publishing, organising conferences, lobbying, funding, testifying, and institutionalising that served as region building tools. The objective is to further demonstrate how they were overall “linked with a wide array of discourses and representational practices.”<sup>39</sup> Hence, the discursive construction of the Black Sea region is not merely viewed as a detached commentary but as something engaged *in practice*.

The sixth chapter examines the paradoxes of the spatial representations (i.e. where is the Black Sea region) and scrutinizes the various positions granted to the Black Sea. The representations of the Black Sea region gave rise to significant contradictions and sparked a heated debate among the foreign policy elites. Ambivalent and politically loaded spatial, security, and cultural representations dominated the discourse of region building characterised by iterability and presupposition. Hence, this chapter explores how these representations were intrinsically connected to certain interests and contradictory visions.

Following the writing of the Black Sea space attention is paid to the performative functions of security within the region building discourse. What this thesis highlights is how the situated region builders disseminated conflicting understandings of security, thus resulting in the emergence of different representations of the region itself. In the discursive construction of the Black Sea region the problem was essentially circular: different security issues were

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<sup>38</sup> Gearoid Ó Tuathail and Simon Dalby, “Introduction: Rethinking Geopolitics: Towards a Critical Geopolitics,” in *Rethinking Geopolitics*, eds. Gearoid Ó Tuathail and Simon Dalby (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), 1.

<sup>39</sup> Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 147.

approached through different security paradigms and subsequently these paradigms generated different rationales for region building. These different rationales were based on and promoted disparate understandings of what the Black Sea region is or should become. Consequently, based on competitive security logics, the Black Sea acquired new framings and was considered, by and for the extra-regional actors, both a security asset and a security burden.<sup>40</sup> Security itself was not the problem. The problem was the rising schizophrenia of different security logics and representations that revealed different rationalities and a complex region/security nexus, analysed in detail in Chapter VII.

Lastly, the conclusions summarise and expand the main theoretical findings of the research, and there is a discussion/reflection on what the case of region building in the Black Sea can reveal in terms of the further development of RBA. The Black Sea region represents a remarkable case in empirical/policy terms as a failure but it also represents an intriguing case for the RBA as it signals the need for a genealogical expansion that could provide a better understanding of region building processes in general.

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<sup>40</sup> Ciută, "Region? Why Region? Security, Hermeneutics, and the Making of the Black Sea Region," *Geopolitics* 13, no. 1 (2008): 128–144.

# Chapter I

## Regions and their study: a critical reading

“At the moment only philosophical confusion reigns supreme in much writing about place, space and region.”<sup>41</sup>

### 1. Introduction

The study of regions has yielded analytical works of considerable complexity and has gained a significant intellectual currency in the context of IR. Various definitions, divergent theoretical clarifications, numerous categorisations, and empirical studies of different kinds have historically been a perpetual feature in social sciences, particularly in IR. In Rick Fawn’s words, “the study of regions in IR offers a thriving if immensely heterogeneous literature.”<sup>42</sup> Following the end of superpower competition, this (fruitful) diversity among the various approaches *vis-à-vis* regions became even more evident, primarily as an outcome of the “linguistic turn.” Regardless of the competing views on the nature and origins of regions, the regionalist scholarship that arose has since given a distinctly “regional flavour” to the post-Cold War literature.

In order to unfold the chronicle of the Black Sea region and better understand the actors and mechanics of the process, it is essential to adopt a more panoramic perspective; one not limited to the Black Sea. This denotes the need to understand this diverse regionalist scholarship and even more importantly to comprehend how

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<sup>41</sup> John Agnew, “Regions on the Mind Does Not Equal Regions of the Mind,” *Progress in Human Geography* 23, no. 1 (1999): 93.

<sup>42</sup> Rick Fawn, “‘Regions’ and their study: wherefrom, what for and whereto?” *Review of International Studies*, Special Issue 35, no. 1 (2009): 6.

this emerging thinking infiltrated the discussions over the nature and the evolution of the Black Sea as a regional entity.

To this end, this chapter addresses three interrelated questions, all relevant in providing a better understanding of region building. The first one – What is a region? – deals with the terminological and ontological issues that have dominated the regionalist debates and soon became an integral part of the Black Sea discourse reflecting divergent understandings and visions of/for the Black Sea. The second question – Why and how regions do matter? – discusses the importance of regions and their policy implications as a new salient level of analysis in IR. The third one – How does a region come into being? – showcases how different schools of thought approach – or, in some cases, ignore – the discursive construction of regions.

## **2. The ontologies and terminologies of regions**

The starting question “What is a region?” seems rather descriptive, if not banal. Yet, observing how differently it was addressed in the various regionalist debates and how this ambiguity penetrated the questions surrounding the ontology of the Black Sea makes a thorough investigation of the term region indispensable. “Region” emerged as a ubiquitous yet ambivalent concept in the post-Cold War literature, with no standard definition and many different, if not opposing, connotations and interpretations in both scholarly and policy parlance. This overproduction of concepts brought about ontological and epistemological problems in the sense that, even now, there is no consensus on *what* to study (ontological) and *how* to study it (epistemological). Scholars have proposed many attributes of “region”, each one representing a different period of time and a different school of thought. Most of the studies have relied on only one case and thus their definitions cannot be generalised. What makes, however, the following definitions similar is the fact that most of them approach regions as exogenously given, fixed objects that need to be examined. Regardless of the different



criteria/lenses chosen (e.g. geography, interdependence, shared social features, etc.), the underlying assumption and overarching logic has been that regions are “waiting out there” to be discovered and examined.

Starting in a chronological fashion, one of the first scholars to deal with regions was Alfred Hettner. As a prominent geographer of his time, he argued in the 1920s that a region has a unique character and is created by a combination of different aspects (cultural, physical, economical, biological, and social). The *Zusammensein* (gathering) of all these aspects results in the *Zusammenwirken* (collaboration), which is responsible for the uniqueness of a region.<sup>43</sup> Many decades later, in the 1960s, Bruce Russett – in a similar manner to Hettner but adopting a more policy-oriented approach compared to his geography-oriented thinking – used social and cultural homogeneity, political attitudes, economic interdependence, and geographical proximity as the main criteria for the definition of a region.<sup>44</sup> His contemporary Joseph Nye adopted a more simplified approach and defined a region using only two attributes, geography and interdependence.<sup>45</sup> In 1970, Louis J. Cantori and Steven L. Spiegel were the first to analyse regions comparatively and proposed the following definition:

A subordinate system consists of one state or two or more proximate and interacting states which have some common ethnic, linguistic, cultural, social, and historical bonds, and whose sense of identity is sometimes increased by the actions and attitudes of states external to the system.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Alfred Hettner, *Die Geographie, ihre Geschichte, ihr Wesen und ihre Methoden* (Breslau: Hirt Breslau, 1927).

<sup>44</sup> Bruce Russett “Delineating International Regions,” in *Quantitative International Politics: Insights and Evidence*, ed. David Singer (New York: Free Press, 1968), 317–352.

<sup>45</sup> “An international region can be defined broadly as a limited number of states linked by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence.” Interestingly, however, Nye implies something very important by arguing that “Regions are what politicians and people want them to be.” See Joseph S. Nye, “Introduction,” in *International Regionalism*, ed. Joseph S. Nye (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968), vi–vii.

<sup>46</sup> Louis Cantori and David Spiegel, *The International Politics of Regions: A Comparative Approach* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 6.

Their attempt to devise a comparative framework for the study of regions grew too cumbersome and there was no significant follow-up in the IR discipline as in the context of the Cold War priority was given to neorealist and neoliberal explanations of world politics. In 1973, William Thompson identified twenty-one features which are often used in the literature to describe regions, including elements such as geographical proximity, internal and external recognition as a distinctive area, number of members, and shared social features.<sup>47</sup> Although these geographical and interactive attributes helped scholars to narrow their understanding of a region, Thompson's definition also led to inconsistencies. For instance, even if most regions consist only of states, others may consist of sub-state regions belonging to different states which engage in cooperative behaviour towards each other and towards other states. Furthermore, some regions consist of members which are not geographically contiguous, but which share other similarities (e.g. Francophonie).

Including security in his approach in the early 1980s, Karl Deutsch highlighted interdependence over a broad range of dimensions. Even more importantly though, by including security, an intriguing coagulant that in the case of the Black Sea was both a source of legitimacy (security as a concern) and a root for suspicions (security as a field for antagonisms), the very perception and understanding of the region changed.<sup>48</sup> Paul Taylor argued that "a region is a part of the world with specific features and ... a part of a three-zone division of core regions, periphery-regions and semi-periphery regions."<sup>49</sup> However, by granting a core or a peripheral status to a region, Taylor was making a choice reflecting a particular understanding of the organisation of political space; one privileging

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<sup>47</sup> William R. Thompson, "The Regional Subsystem. A Conceptual Explication and a Propositional Inventory," *International Studies Quarterly* 17 (1973): 89–117.

<sup>48</sup> Karl W. Deutsch, "On nationalism, world regions, and the nature of the West," in *Mobilization, Center-Periphery Structures and Nation-Building: A Volume in Commemoration of Stein Rokkan*, ed. Per Torsvik (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1981), 51–93.

<sup>49</sup> Paul J. Taylor, "A theory and practice of regions: the case of Europe," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9, no.2 (1991): 183–195.

centre over margins and peripheries. Barry Buzan's definition stressed the "relations among a set of states whose fate is that they have been locked into geographical proximity with each other,"<sup>50</sup> thus highlighting the importance of geography. Pierre Bourdieu noted that the very etymology of the term 'region' (from Latin *regere*: to rule) suggests that regions refer to a particular and different dimension of political and spatial power.<sup>51</sup> Even more comprehensively, Andrew Hurrell argued that regions can be differentiated in terms of social, economic, political, and organisational cohesiveness.<sup>52</sup>

On the basis of the abovementioned definitions, it is clear that focusing on either interdependence or geography or any other aspect – be it cultural, political or economic – "the attempt to tackle region across the whole agenda of international relations, and to set up a detailed comparative framework, proved too complex and cumbersome to establish a generally followed understanding of region."<sup>53</sup>

In the case of the Black Sea the question of its definition was a product of such definitional diversity and revolved around four main distinct conceptualisations (i.e. RSC, geopolitical entity, product of culture and geography, discursive construction). All these ontological debates stemmed from the considerable difficulty of applying a single theoretical notion to any empirical case, or more generally of using empirical referents in order to develop conceptual categories such as "region".<sup>54</sup> Even more importantly, as it will be shown throughout the thesis, the various definitions, based on different understandings had performative functions and produced policy implications.

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<sup>50</sup> Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, 188.

<sup>51</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "Identity and Representation: Elements for a Critical Reflection on the Idea of a Region," in *Language and Social Power*, ed. Pierre Bourdieu (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1991), 221.

<sup>52</sup> Hurrell, "Regionalism in theoretical perspective", 38.

<sup>53</sup> Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, 189.

<sup>54</sup> For a comprehensive presentation of the various conceptualisations, see Ciută, "Region? Why Region," 120–147.

### 3. Regions and their effects

The significant core regionalist approaches that emerged in the post-Cold War era chose regions – or other similar concepts – as the preferable level of analysis and research focus. For certain theorists, regions were valuable organising entities in the sense that they provided scholars and analysts alike with an appropriate framework of analysis and testing of their assumptions;<sup>55</sup> for others they represented the international system but in a smaller scale; while for a third group, regions – or regionalism(s) of various kinds – provided a comprehensive understanding of international politics, and for politicians in particular the necessary incentive for the re-organisation of the political space in regional terms.

Understanding regions and their importance is a difficult endeavour as there are fundamental differences, in terms of ontology and epistemology, not only between the positivists, as expressed by the works of Peter Katzenstein, David Lake, Patrick Morgan, Louise Fawcett, Andrew Hurrell, and the post-positivists, as expressed by the works of Anssi Paasi, Alexander Murphy, Iver Neumann, and Christopher Browning among others, but also and equally importantly within these two camps.<sup>56</sup> In this chapter, when referring to the so-called core regionalist approaches, the focus is primarily on two categories. The first follows the positivist tradition and refers to security as the key coagulant, whereas the second refers to the various kinds of regionalism; a term which, however, does not encompass the range and diversity of all the approaches.

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<sup>55</sup> A typical example of how regions are used as tools of analysis and organising entities is to be found in RSCT where Buzan and Wæver admit that “the existence of an RSC is not in terms of the discursive ‘construction of regions.’ ... *Regional security complex* is an analytical concept defined and applied by us, but these regions (RSCs) are socially constructed in the sense that they are contingent on the *security practice* of the actors.” Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 48.

<sup>56</sup> To give an example, how to characterise the work of Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, as expressed in their book *Regions and Powers*, which combines conceptual tools and substantial insights from both camps?<sup>56</sup>

Within the first category, the most prominent one is the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), which emerged as a response to the centrifugal forces that had besieged IR since the onset of the “Third Great Debate”.<sup>57</sup> RSCT promised radical changes with the following key claims. First, that it could provide the appropriate level of analysis, as:

“for most of the states in the international system, the regional level is the crucial one for security analysis. For the global powers, the regional level is crucial in shaping both the options for, and consequences of, projecting their influences and rivalries into the rest of the system.”<sup>58</sup>

Second, it was claimed that RSCT could organise empirical studies in a more coherent manner, and third, that it could establish theory-based scenarios on the known possible forms of regional security complexes.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, RSCT was thought to be a framework that would evaluate the mutual relationship of regionalising and globalising trends.<sup>60</sup> More precisely, in RSCT the region refers to “the level where states or their units link together sufficiently closely that their securities cannot be considered separate from each other” and it is where “the extremes of national and global security interplay, and where most of the action occurs.”<sup>61</sup> The theory’s organizing category was RSC which contained elements of both structure (material and ideational) and process (the securitisation/security interaction) while being defined by anarchy, polarity, boundary, and the inter-subjective patterns of amity and enmity.<sup>62</sup> Overall, RSCT managed to bring some

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<sup>57</sup> The “Third Great Debate,” elsewhere termed as the inter-paradigm debate, was a debate among liberalism, realism, and radical international relations theories. See Ole Wæver, “The rise and fall of the Inter-paradigm debate,” in *International theory: positivism and beyond*, ed. Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 151.

<sup>58</sup> Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 47.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> It should be noted, however, that this dual framing poses both challenges and opportunities. Undoubtedly, the main threat stems from the excessive complexity that affects the logical coherence of the theory and its practical scientific utility. On the other hand, it is exactly this ontological complexity and broad epistemological scope that provided the space needed for both causal explanation and constitutive understanding of a widened range of phenomena within one

clarity to the debate about the “new” security thanks to its unique combination of a sectoral approach to the security agenda with a constructivist understanding of what defines “security”. Surprisingly, nonetheless, the authors did not explain how a region is discursively constructed.<sup>63</sup> Although RSCT represented an ambitious attempt to straddle neorealism (i.e. anarchy, polarity) and constructivism (i.e. securitization), it did not accomplish its mission as “[h]ardly anything can remain open to construction in a world of regional security where ‘the balance of power logic’ works naturally.”<sup>64</sup>

Lake and Morgan, on the other hand, applied neorealism more directly. Although they did use the conceptual language of RSCT, they argued that the important factor when talking about regions was the notion of shared “security externalities,” or as Kelly frames it, “the flows of threats (or friendships) that bind states, regardless of their location.”<sup>65</sup> The key concepts are “neighbourhood” and “spill over” effects that define “externalities” as “costs (negative externalities) and benefits (positive externalities) that do not accrue only to the actors that create them.”<sup>66</sup> In this approach, it was again security, or more precisely a “local externality which poses an actual or potential threat to the physical safety of individuals or governments in other states,”<sup>67</sup> that made regions important as analytical devices and organising entities. According to this approach, regions should not be perceived as simply “little international systems”<sup>68</sup> but rather as regional security complexes that are located around shared security externalities.

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over-arching, comprehensive framework. See Kevork Oskanian, “Of ‘Friends’ and ‘Enemies’: Expanding the Amity/enmity Variable within Regional Security Complex Theory,” draft paper presented at the ISA Conference, San Francisco, March 26, 2008.

<sup>63</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO & London: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 24–26.

<sup>64</sup> Felix Ciută, “Review of Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Region and Powers. The Structure of International Security*,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 83, no. 1 (2005): 168.

<sup>65</sup> Robert Kelly, “Security Theory in the New Regionalism,” *International Studies Review* 9, no.2 (2007): 208.

<sup>66</sup> David Lake and Patrick Morgan, *Regional Orders*, 49.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

By and large, Lake and Morgan did not subscribe to the regional level of analysis; for them, “regional” simply implied anything less than global. The main argument was that the patterns of amity and enmity, used in the context of RSCT, may indeed rise in a regional security complex, but they should be seen as products of overarching systemic conditions. Therefore, this approach could be seen as a version of neorealism imported into the study of regions. The main argument was that regions do matter but only in a systemic perspective (i.e. structure, polarity). Lake and Morgan’s approach has received criticism by many scholars because: i) it is strictly state-centric; ii) security externalities are solely a product of bilateral contacts and that implies that security does not have a regional scope, which in a sense contradicts the rest of their approach; and iii) their focus is on negative externalities, thus underestimating the possibility of positive security externalities.<sup>69</sup>

In the second category, and moving away from the security focus while being simultaneously engaged in a major break with traditional systemic IR thinking, many scholars not only focused on regions and regionalism(s) but also expressed a normative interest that favoured the formation of regions. In this sense, regions not only matter but even more importantly *should* matter in politics as new post-Westphalian policy frameworks/tools. The key motive was that IR scholarship should be developing regional policy frameworks that respond to the realities of the post-overlap developing countries. As Farrell points out, “regionalism [has] a strategic goal of region building, of establishing regional coherence and identity.”<sup>70</sup> Throughout their work, theorists working on regionalism defined it as “the urge for a regionalist order, either in a particular geographic area or as a type of world

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<sup>69</sup> Rodrigo Tavares, “Understanding Regional Peace and Security: A Framework for Analysis,” *UNU-CRIS Occasional Papers* 0, no. 17 (2005): 1–29.

<sup>70</sup> Mary Farrell, “The Global Politics of Regionalism: An Introduction,” in *Global Politics of Regionalism: Theory and Practice*, ed. Mary Farrell, Bjørn Hettne, and Luk Van Langenhove (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 8.

order,”<sup>71</sup> thus encompassing “contemporary flows of transnational co-operation and cross-border flows through comparative, historical, and multilevel perspectives.”<sup>72</sup> They posit that regionalism can mitigate two problems stemming from the retraction of the Cold War overlay: local disorder, and the possibility of new intervention from major and superpowers. Hettne explicitly refers to the “ideology of regionalism; that is, an urge for regionalist order,” while also referring to the replacement of the Westphalian state by regional organisations, viewing this process as the “second great transformation.”<sup>73</sup>

Regionalism was presented and understood as an overarching policy context that embraces a wide-ranging set of policy actions by different actors at different levels, thus highlighting a political commitment to arrange the world in regional terms. According to Andrew Russell, who in his work refers to concepts such as regional awareness, identity and regional cohesion, regionalism reflects the growth of societal integration and the undirected processes of economic and social interaction.<sup>74</sup> In contrast, Peter Katzenstein promoted a hegemonic version of regionalism. In his work, regions do matter but only when highlighting the “porosity/openness variable,” in the sense that regions should not be approached as closed political systems but rather as open to external influences, thus implying that regional conflict management – once again security as the key coagulant – occurs through external great power intrusion. In this sense, regions are perceived as subordinate and dysfunctional and it is not the process of integration but the overlay conditions that define the process of regionalism.<sup>75</sup> Lastly, Douglas Lemke

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<sup>71</sup> Björn Hettne, “The New Regionalism: Prologue,” in *The New Regionalism and the Future of Security and Development*, ed. Björn Hettne, Andras Inotai, and Osvaldo Sunkel (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), 16.

<sup>72</sup> Andrew Hurrell, “Explaining the Resurgence of Regionalism in World Politics,” *Review of International Studies* 21 (1995): 331–358.

<sup>73</sup> Björn Hettne, “Globalization and the New Regionalism: The Second Great Transformation,” in *Globalism and the New Regionalism*, ed. Björn Hettne, Andras Inotai, and Osvaldo Sunkel (New York: St. Martin’s Press), xix.

<sup>74</sup> Hurrell, “Explaining the Resurgence of Regionalism in World Politics,” 333–338.

<sup>75</sup> Peter Katzenstein, *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).



argues that regions represent “parallel smaller international systems”<sup>76</sup> and hence IR theories such as neorealism can be applied with only a few adjustments to the particular settings. The objective is to expand the geographical base of IR and thus also include non-great powers.<sup>77</sup> By choosing the regional level of analysis, Lemke argues that “if great powers do not interfere, the local hierarchies are hypothesized to behave according to the model. The multiple hierarchy model...assumes great power indifference.”<sup>78</sup>

As regionalism started gaining momentum in both academic and policy circles, it also started to expand and new by-products started to emerge demonstrating not only the elasticity of the term but also its abundance. New regionalism,<sup>79</sup> subregionalism,<sup>80</sup> interregionalism,<sup>81</sup> hegemonic regionalism, regionalisation,<sup>82</sup> all soon became part of the regionalist scholarship, either in IR or

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<sup>76</sup> Douglas Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 52.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 1–4.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>79</sup> According to the literature, the contemporary process labelled “new regionalism” is multi-dimensional in character embracing social, political, and cultural elements and involving diverse actors and levels of cooperation in ‘high’ and ‘low’ politics. More specifically, Bjorn Hettne and Frederik Söderbaum define it as “a comprehensive multifaceted and multidimensional process, implying the change of a particular region from relative heterogeneity to increased homogeneity with regard to a number of dimensions, the most important being culture, security, economic policies and political regimes.” See Hettne and Söderbaum, “The New Regionalism Approach”, 7. Luk Van Langenhove and Ana-Cristina Costea, “EU’s foreign policy identity: from ‘new regionalism’ to third generation regionalism?,” in *European Union Identity*, ed. Jessica Bain and Martin Holland (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2007), 86–104.

<sup>80</sup> Regarding sub-regionalism and its relevance to regionalism, the literature is rather limited and the connection between sub-regionalism and regionalism has not been empirically or theoretically thoroughly examined. A key difference is considered to be the level of integration in the two processes and the fact that in the case of sub-regionalism geographic proximity is a key feature and precondition. Interestingly, this term has been used quite often in the case of the Black Sea, stressing mainly the ties with Europe as both a centre of gravity and a source of legitimacy for the process of sub-regionalism.

<sup>81</sup> Inter-regionalism refers primarily to how cooperation is diffused between regions or more precisely regional institutions, e.g. BSEC and the Central European Initiative.

<sup>82</sup> Regionalisation, as a term used frequently in the realm of International Political Economy, deals with “the growth of economic interdependence within a given geographical area.” See, John Ravenhill, “Regionalism,” in *Global Political Economy*, 2nd ed., ed. John Ravenhill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 174. Also, it primarily refers to the policy actions and processes being driven from below, namely by non-state actors. With this distinction between regionalism and regionalisation, Ann Capling and Kim Richard Nossal argue that the latter has occurred under

in International Political Economy (IPE), and, always depending on the research focus and the questions raised, offered significant insight.

In this school of thought, regions did not represent a post-modern version of great power influence but rather frameworks of security management and cooperation promoting values such as multilateralism and global governance.<sup>83</sup> This post-sovereign version of regionalism encouraged the abolishment of borders and the transcending of regional hierarchies. Overall, the approach promoted by scholars such as Fawcett, Hurrell, Cottey, and Joenniemi, among others, constituted a radical departure from traditional or mainstream conceptions of (political) space as territory and the inherently static logic of state sovereignty. Regions mattered as they were seen as catalysts for cooperation at many different levels, the abolishment of borders and the reorganization of political space. Regions were not treated as organizing entities but rather as political vehicles of/for the transformation of international politics.

In a similar tone and using the framework of regionalism(s), Michael Emerson set out a typology of (Black Sea) regionalisms comprising nine different categories. More precisely he referred to a technical regionalism, where “objective criteria assign specific public policy functions to the territorial level that best encompasses their costs and benefits,”<sup>84</sup> a security regionalism, where security once again becomes the rationale of the region – its key coagulant –, an eclectic regionalism that is not broad but covers only specific regionalist projects, a dysfunctional regionalism, which demonstrates the political discrepancies, an institutional regionalism focusing on the institutional structures, a transformative regionalism associated with the Europeanisation of the region, a compensatory

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NAFTA, but not the former. For important IR discussion of the differences, see Hurrell, “Explaining the Resurgence of Regionalism in World Politics,” 331–358.

<sup>83</sup> Louise Fawcett, “The Evolving Architecture of Regionalism,” in *The United Nations and Regional Security: Europe and Beyond*, ed. Michael Pugh and Waheguru Sidhu (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 16.

<sup>84</sup> Michael Emerson, “The EU’s New Black Sea Policy: What kind of regionalism is this?” *CEPS Working Document No. 297* (Brussels: CEPS, 2008): 2.

regionalism reflecting that the EU “seeks to compensate outsiders immediately beyond its frontiers for the disadvantages of exclusion,”<sup>85</sup> and, last but certainly not least, a geo-political regionalism “relating to the objectives of leading powers to secure a sphere of influence.”<sup>86</sup> This categorisation, albeit replete with many overlapping categories and descriptive at many points, is interesting not because it attempted to capture the different dimensions of the process in the Black Sea but because it reflects the tendencies of scholars and region builders alike when dealing with the Black Sea. Even more importantly, it demonstrates the overall difficulties of applying theoretical and conceptual categories to an empirical setting. In the context of the Black Sea, the idea of region mattered in many different forms.

Taking into account the aforementioned approaches and interrelated terms, it is evident that regions matter in different ways. Either highlighting the contemporary flows of transnational co-operation, the growth of economic interdependence, the significance of geographic proximity, the spill-over of security threats, and/or reflecting a political commitment to arrange the world in regional terms, regions matter in both academic and policy parlances.

#### **4. Regions and their genesis**

Following the questions of what is a region and why does it matter, it is evident that one inevitably needs to raise the question of how a region comes into being; a question ignored in the “positivist”<sup>87</sup> approaches. Iver B. Neumann was the first to

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> The most representative works are: Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*; Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell eds., *Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); David A. Lake and Patrick M. Morgan (eds.), *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Peter J. Katzenstein, *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Raimo Väyrynen, “Regionalism: Old and New,” *International Studies Review* 5, no. 1 (2003): 25–51; Peter J. Katzenstein, “Regionalism in Comparative Perspective,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 31, no.2 (1996): 123–159; Derrick Frazier, “Regional powers and security: A framework for understanding order within regional security complexes,” *European Journal of International Relations* XX, no. X (2010): 4.

comprehensively address this question when he promoted a categorisation based on two approaches: “outside-in” and “inside-out.” “Outside-in” approaches, he argued, study regions from the point of view of the international system, and the origins of the region are to be found “outside,” thus favouring “the interests and interaction of the great powers relevant to the region.”<sup>88</sup> “Inside-out” approaches instead “try to amend the wooliness of regional borders by postulating a centre, a core area where the internal defining traits are *more* similar, and interaction more intense, than in the regional periphery;”<sup>89</sup> thus, the region’s origins are to be found “within”. This categorisation was succinct and clear and encompassed all the major approaches towards regions. For example, one could associate neorealism – strictly speaking not a regionalist approach – with the “outside-in” perspective in the sense that they both focus on systemic factors and external conditions, and the domestic-level theories with the ‘inside-out’ perspective. In short, this was a categorisation that attempted to encompass different ontological and conceptual approaches and perspectives *vis-à-vis* the emergence of regions.

When discussing the formation of regions, Bjorn Hettne provided a clear-cut temporal distinction referring to old and new regionalisms, his main argument being that the formation of regions was a product of particular contexts (e.g. the Cold War). In explaining how regions emerged in the post-Cold War era he argued: “[1] Whereas the old regionalism was formed in a bipolar Cold War context, the new is taking shape in a multipolar world order; [2] Whereas the old regionalism was created from outside and ‘from above’ [...] the new is a more spontaneous process from within and ‘from below’. [...] [3] Whereas the old regionalism was specific with regard to objectives, the new is a more comprehensive, multidimensional process.”<sup>90</sup> In fact, one could notice a significant degree of resemblance between the aforementioned inside/outside and old/new division.

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<sup>88</sup> Neuman, “A Region Building Approach”, 56.

<sup>89</sup> Neumann, “Regions in International Relations Theory,” 7.

<sup>90</sup> Hettne, “The New Regionalism,” 1–2.

Overall, this categorisation was useful but only provided an overview of the evolution of regionalist studies; its purpose was not to examine the very formation and origins of regions.

Last but not least, a similar if not identical trend to Neumann's approach has been referring to regionalist approaches as from above and from below. As previously seen, "from above" refers to the institutionalisation of a region and the role of official actors such as states, elite groups, and governmental institutions, while "from below" refers to a more informal approach emphasizing the roles played by individuals and social groups of various kinds.<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, Hettne did not address what leads to the formation of regional institutions and how/why elites and other individuals formulated a regionalist discourse. Although he did mention the role of elites, his analysis was limited to the stage of materialisation (e.g. policy measures, institutionalisation) and not to the stage of discursive construction.

Overall, these approaches to regions focused either on levels of analysis or on temporal distinctions (i.e. old vs. new regionalism), or sometimes even on both,<sup>92</sup> and did not make any reference to the discursive origins of regions. Only the concept of region-building (in analogy with nation-building), presented by Neumann, managed to signify "the ideas, dynamics and means that contribute to changing a geographical area into a politically-constructed community,"<sup>93</sup> and revealed, as Lehti argues, "a political process whereby images and truisms are created politically,"<sup>94</sup> thus seeing regions as born in discourse from "inside and

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Fabrizio Tassinari attempted in his work to synthesize the aforementioned categorisations and he created a bi-dimensional matrix that included/combined all the aforementioned approaches (i.e. top-down and bottom-up, inside-out and outside-in, 'new' and 'old' regionalisms). See Fabrizio Tassinari, *Mare Europaeum: Baltic Sea Region Security and Cooperation from post-Wall to post-Enlargement Europe* (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2004), 15–35.

<sup>93</sup> Sophie Boisseau du Rocher and Bertrand Fort, *Paths to Regionalisation: Comparing Experiences in East Asia and Europe* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2005), xi.

<sup>94</sup> Marko Lehti, "Competing or Complementary Images: The North and the Baltic World from the Historical Perspectives," in *Dynamic Aspects of the Northern Dimension*, ed. Hiski Haukkala (Turku: Turku University Press, 1999), 22.

outside.”<sup>95</sup> According to Metzger, region-building should be seen as a process that begins with the identification of common issues within a certain territorial environment and the drafting of strategies that can lead into recognised “regions” composed by a complex institutional framework and diverging actors.<sup>96</sup>

The table below illustrates the different theoretical approaches *vis-à-vis* regions. Yet, it should be noted that in most positivist approaches there were only a few references to regions as analytical categories and some kind of entities in international relations. In this sense, the proposed categorisation should be seen basically as an attempt to demonstrate the main logics and understandings of certain paradigms in reference to how a region comes into being and not a rigid framework of how IR theories understood regions.

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<sup>95</sup> Neumann, “A region-building approach”, 160–178.

<sup>96</sup> J. Metzger, “Raising the Regional Leviathan: A Relational-Materialist Conceptualization of Regions-in-Becoming as Publics-in-Stabilization,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no. 4 (2013): 1368.

**Table I: Regions and their origins**

Table I: Regions and their origins	
Approaches	Origins/Formation of Regions
<b>Positivist</b>	
Systemic Theories (Neorealism, Hegemonic Stability Theory, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ external political and economic pressures</li> <li>▪ politics of alliance formation.</li> <li>▪ broader (geo)political structures</li> <li>▪ external configurations of power</li> <li>▪ dynamics of power-political competition</li> <li>▪ constraining role of the international political system</li> </ul>
Liberal Theories (Liberal Intergovernmentalism, Neoliberal Institutionalism, Regime Theory, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ increasing interdependence</li> <li>▪ inter-state bargaining based on national preferences' formation</li> <li>▪ increasing flows of goods and services produce international policy externalities among nations which in turn reveal the need for policy coordination</li> <li>▪ institutions facilitate cooperation; acquire their own power and independent voice</li> </ul>
Integration Theories (Neofunctionalism)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ spill-over process; functional linkages (low to high politics)</li> <li>▪ role of ideas and values during the formation of interests</li> </ul>
Core Regionalist approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>RSCT</u>: RSC is an organising entity/category defined by anarchy, polarity, boundary and the inter-subjective patterns of amity and enmity.</li> <li>▪ <u>Regional Orders</u>: shared “security externalities”; ‘neighbourhood’ and ‘spill over’ effects that define ‘externalities’</li> </ul>
<b>Postpositivist/Reflectivist</b>	
Critical Regionalism  New Regionalism  Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ideology of regionalism; an urge for regionalist order</li> <li>▪ regions as frameworks of security management and cooperation</li> <li>▪ regionalism is there to promote values such as multilateralism and global governance</li> <li>▪ <u>Social Constructivism</u>: intersubjective structures - importance of shared knowledge, learning, ideational forces, and normative and institutional structures. Regions are socially constructed by historically contingent interactions.</li> </ul>

Poststructural	
Constructivism, Region Building Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ discursive constructions based on diverging social practices and discourses</li> <li>▪ power/knowledge nexus</li> <li>▪ hegemonic narratives and scripts</li> <li>▪ expressions of a perpetual struggle over the meanings associated with space</li> </ul>

## 5. Conclusions

Despite the recent explosion of research in this academic field, the ambition to understand the emergence and dynamics of regions in world politics remains only partly resolved. This is primarily explained by the limited focus on the process of discursive construction. In this regard, the main conclusions of the chapter are the following. First, the proliferation of regionalist studies –either in the form of academic works or think-tank publications– did have an impact on the formation of regions. This academic/scholarly interest on regions served indisputably as both a driving force and a source of legitimacy for policy actions related to region building. Second, at a theoretical level, previous attempts to categorise the study of regions included both positivist and critical strands, but, with the exception of RBA, there was no reference to the significance of discourse and the mechanics of the discursive construction. Compared to the field of geopolitics, for example, the regionalist focus in IR did not attribute any significance to the discursive origins of regions. Limited efforts originating from the field of Critical Geography were made by scholars such as Anssi Paasi and Alexander Murphy. The study of regions remains fragmented and incomplete and this thesis attempts to further develop RBA and its understanding of regions.



# Chapter II

## The theoretical framework: towards a genealogy

“...a genealogical posture entails a readiness to approach a field of practice historically, as an historically emergent and always contested product of multiple practices, multiple alien interpretations which struggle, clash, deconstruct, and displace one another.”<sup>97</sup>

### 1. Introduction

The theoretical framework of the thesis indicates the position of this study within the RBA scholarship. In particular, by examining both the definitional/ontological and the practical categories that circumscribed the case of the Black Sea region it offers a comprehensive understanding of the failure of region building. It draws its inspiration from the literature on the RBA and on nation-building – in particular the work of Benedict Anderson who introduced the concept of “imagined communities”<sup>98</sup> – and is informed by the writings of Edward Said on imagined geographies and on the power/knowledge nexus. In terms of structure, it is divided into three sections. The first section provides a structured presentation of RBA and

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<sup>97</sup> Richard Ashley, “The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics,” *Alternatives* 12, no. 14 (1987): 409–410.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 58; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

sheds light on its analytical and conceptual contribution to the analysis of regions. This is deemed necessary as this thesis operates within the RBA context and attempts essentially to expand and deepen RBA's scope by utilising its genealogical potential. To this end, attention is paid to the particular case of the Baltic Sea region as the most thoroughly analysed case of region building in the context of RBA. It should be mentioned though that the objective is not to examine the region building discourse in the Baltic Sea but instead to understand how RBA approached its success as a region building project. Following the analysis of RBA, the next section outlines in detail the theoretical framework of the thesis, thus demonstrating its relevance and potential contribution to the understanding of region building and regions in general. Attention is paid to how genealogy – a method exploring the construction of knowledge and discourse – can provide interesting insights on region building in the Black Sea. The concluding section discusses how the empirical application of the proposed framework on the Black Sea region is designed in a way to both signal and expand the contribution of RBA in the study of regions as discursive constructions.

## **2. RBA and its suspended genealogical step: a reflection**

In discussing RBA, it should be noted from the beginning that it does not represent an actual school of thought, albeit many scholars treat it as such. One could argue that this has been both a source of strength and weakness. On the one hand it is difficult to identify core assumptions and presuppositions beyond the commonly shared ontological assumption that regions should be treated as discursive constructions (i.e. “talked and written into existence”), but at the same time reading the works published one cannot but be impressed by the theoretical innovation, sophistication and diversity of RBA. Iver Neumann, one of the first to elaborate in a more systematic manner on the theoretical and conceptual aspects of RBA, argues that it should not be perceived as a theory. In his words, “[t]he region building

approach is not offered as an attempt to place the study of regions in international relations on a new footing. [...] Rather, it is a tool with which to dot the margin of the on-going debate.”<sup>99</sup>

RBA emerged in the early 1990s as a response to the mainstream regionalist approaches that, although rich in insights and diverse in assumptions, approached the region as a given, pre-existing entity.<sup>100</sup> As Murphy argues, “the regional framework is presented essentially as a backdrop for a discussion of regional change, with little consideration given to why the region came to be a socially significant spatial unit in the first place.”<sup>101</sup> Not only did RBA criticise this tendency in the literature to accept regions as ontologically unproblematic phenomena, but also argued that “regions are defined in terms of speech acts; they are talked and written into existence”<sup>102</sup> and “are created and recreated in the process of transformation.”<sup>103</sup> According to McSweeney, regions are:

“not out there, waiting to be discovered. What is ‘out there’ is identity discourse on the part of political leaders, intellectuals and countless others, who engage in the process of constructing, negotiating and affirming a response to the demand – at times urgent, mostly absent – for a collective image.”<sup>104</sup>

In the works associated with RBA, one can clearly discern an emphasis on the ontological status of regions and their genesis. Regions are essentially discursive constructions; they exist and come into being through social practice and discourse. This argument further implies that a focus on discourse and representations is essential if one wants to understand regions, their genesis, and their importance.

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<sup>99</sup> Iver B. Neumann, “Regions in International Relations Theory: the Case for a Region-Building Approach” (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 1992), 6.

<sup>100</sup> Neumann, “A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe,” 57.

<sup>101</sup> Murphy, “The Regions as social constructs,” 24.

<sup>102</sup> Paasi, “Resurgence of region,” 128.

<sup>103</sup> Neumann, “A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe,” 59.

<sup>104</sup> Bill McSweeney, “Identity and Security: Buzan and the Copenhagen School,” Review of: *People, States and Fear. An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* by Barry Buzan, *Review of International Studies* 22, no. 1 (1996): 90.

This is why in the literature one can find works addressing issues of identity, spatialities, history, institutions and, generally, how a series of ideational elements can be linked to the formation of regions. Yet, RBA attempted to go to the roots of things in order to better understand both the mechanics/processes and the actors involved in the discursive construction. In reference to the actors in particular, Neumann argues:

“The existence of regions is preceded by the existence of region builders, political actors who, as part of some political project, imagine a spatial and chronological identity for a region, and disseminate this imagined identity to others.”<sup>105</sup>

RBA criticised the predisposition in the literature to present region building as being as *natural* as possible, thus ignoring its historically contingent character. As Neumann, points out:

“All the authors concerned seem to assume that there exists a neutral and analytical ground, a spot above the regional fray to which the sovereign author can retreat. They never acknowledge the inevitable political dimension of their analytical endeavours.”<sup>106</sup>

This way RBA highlighted the lack of self-reflection in both academic and political discourse when discussing regions. More precisely, Paasi “aimed at problematising the dimensions and relations of region and identity...[by understanding] the rise of regional identity discourse as part of the process of the institutionalisation of a region.”<sup>107</sup> Neumann demonstrated how “the region-building approach is vindicated in holding that multiple alien interpretations of the region struggle, clash, deconstruct, and displace one another.”<sup>108</sup> Murphy referred

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<sup>105</sup> Neumann, “A Region-building Approach,” 58.

<sup>106</sup> Neumann, “Regions in International Relations Theory,” 5.

<sup>107</sup> Anssi Paasi, “The resurgence of the ‘Region’ and ‘Regional Identity:’ theoretical perspectives and empirical observations on regional dynamics in Europe,” *Review of International Studies* 35 (2009): 145.

<sup>108</sup> Neuman, “A Region Building Approach to Northern Europe,” 72.

to the importance of “why the region came to be a socially significant spatial unit in the first place, how the region is understood and viewed by its inhabitants, or how and why that understanding has changed over time,” further adding that regions should be seen as the results of social processes that reflect and shape particular ideas about how the world is or should be organized.<sup>109</sup>

By examining the particular case of Francophonie, Galsze pointed out how “the shared language, the shared values, and the common history have created a world-spanning geocultural region: ‘Francophonia’”<sup>110</sup> and accentuated the need for “a specific nodal point, an empty signifier, which allows different elements to associate in a relation of equivalence.”<sup>111</sup> Similarly, Paasi analysed “images of Europe, narratives on European identity, and how these images have implied different forms and conceptualizations of spatiality,”<sup>112</sup> thus reflecting on the discourses on Europe and how the concept of region is linked to identity. Furthermore, he understood regions “as processes that gain their boundaries, symbolisms and institutions in the process of *institutionalisation*,” adding that “[t]his process is based on a division of labour, which accentuates the power of regional elites in the institutionalisation processes.”<sup>113</sup> Massey, on the other hand, examined the “perpetual process” of producing space and associated meaning arguing that regions are simultaneously both outcomes and components of social action and mirror asymmetrical power relations.<sup>114</sup> Murphy accentuated in the context of RBA the normative dimension attached to region building suggesting that “regional settings are not treated simply as abstractions or as a priori spatial givens, but instead are seen as the results of social processes that reflect and shape

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<sup>109</sup> Murphy, “Regions as social constructs,” 24.

<sup>110</sup> Georg Glasze, “The Discursive Constitution of a World-Spanning Region and the Role of Empty Signifiers: The Case of Francophonia,” *Geopolitics* 12, no.4 (2007): 657.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 672.

<sup>112</sup> Anssi Paasi, “Europe as a Social Process and Discourse: Considerations of Place, Boundaries and Identity,” *European Urban and Regional Studies* 8, no. 1 (2001): 7.

<sup>113</sup> Anssi Paasi, “The resurgence of the ‘Region’ and ‘Regional Identity,’” 121.

<sup>114</sup> Doreen Massey, “Power-geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place,” in J. Bird ed. *Mapping the Futures: local cultures, global changes* (London: Routledge, 1993), 60–71.

particular ideas about how the world is or *should* be organized,”<sup>115</sup> thus calling for a “substantive engagement of humanist concerns with regional ideology and territoriality.”<sup>116</sup>

Taking into account that most of the works associated with RBA revolved around debates in Human Geography, Neumann’s and at later stage Browning’s contribution was that they introduced RBA in IR by referring in their works to the representational practices that defined the region building discourse in Europe’s North. The main contention was that particular representational practices “served to re-inscribe the very world they have sought to transform.”<sup>117</sup> Dalby followed the emphasis on discourse and representations in his work and by reading the GWoT suggested that there were efforts to map “the world into regions of neo-liberal prosperity”<sup>118</sup>, thus expressing “the desire on the part of American strategists and commentators to spread the benefits of neo-liberalism by force, if necessary, into regions mapped as dangerous.”<sup>119</sup> All these scholars managed indeed to highlight the performative role of language and discourse and elaborated on the politics of representations. This non-exhaustive list of references indicates the diversity of the works produced in RBA and how different scholars managed to cover different aspects pertaining to the discursive construction of regions and overall understand discourse as politically constitutive and not as a reflection of an existing political reality.<sup>120</sup> Nonetheless, a presentation of RBA would be incomplete without referring to the “crown jewel” of RBA’s study of region building: the Baltic Sea region.

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<sup>115</sup> Alexander B. Murphy, “Regions as social constructs: the gap between theory and practice,” *Progress in Human Geography* 15, no. 1 (1991): 24.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>117</sup> Browning, “The Region-Building Approach Revisited,” 48.

<sup>118</sup> Simon Dalby, “Regions, Strategies and Empire in the Global War on Terror,” *Geopolitics* 12, no.4 (2007): 603.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Michael J. Shapiro, *Language and Political Understanding. The Politics of Discursive Practice* (New Haven, 1981).

### 3. Region building in the Baltic Sea: an empirical and theoretical blueprint

In order to better understand both what happened in the particular case of the Black Sea and how RBA has examined region building discourse it would be helpful at this point to expand the scope of analysis and refer to perhaps the most thoroughly analysed case study of region building: the Baltic Sea region.<sup>121</sup> This is an almost inevitable choice as in hindsight one could indeed argue that the Baltic Sea region represents *par excellence* the constructivist “liberating moment” of the early 1990s.

A discussion of the Baltic Sea, and in particular how it has been viewed in the context of the RBA, can consolidate the theoretical and empirical background of the thesis in three ways. First, discussing the ways RBA scholars approached the Baltic Sea is an efficient way to show how RBA has served as a point of reference and source of influence for this thesis in particular. There is no doubt that the works addressing the Baltic Sea have offered an analytical roadmap for this thesis and this is why this thesis should be seen to both operate within and expand the RBA framework. Secondly, it demonstrates the main conceptual tools and criteria used at an empirical level. In other words, examining the region building discourse of the Baltic Sea helps to understand RBA as no longer an abstract approach limited to examining the ontological status of regions but as something more elaborate and concrete discussing context and issues of identity and security. Thirdly, the Baltic Sea was the blueprint – a success story – for region building for the Black Sea. In conferences, publications, and lobbying efforts, among other region building practices, the Baltic Sea was often portrayed as a role model and was believed to indicate the way ahead. In fact, in many occasions people that had dealt one way or another with the Baltic were asked to offer their invaluable (region building)

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<sup>121</sup> In the literature one can find references to other “regions” such as the Mediterranean, Central and Eastern Europe, South-eastern Europe, Caspian and most recently to the Eurasian region but judging from the publications and the numerous conferences there is no doubt that the emergence of RBA is directly associated with the Baltic Sea.

services for the Black Sea.<sup>122</sup> The Baltic Sea seemed in many cases to represent the future of the Black Sea. Therefore, in order to reflect on the failure of region building in the Black Sea and understand what is distinctive about the Black Sea region project it is important to first present how RBA approached, and contributed to a region building success. It should be mentioned, however, that this section does not seek to provide a comparative analysis of the processes of region building in the Baltic and the Black Sea. Instead it seeks to construct the theoretical background of the thesis and eventually contribute to the further development of RBA in general. The underlying question is: how does the RBA's presentation of the “successful” Baltic Sea region building help in understanding the “failure” in the Black Sea case?

Analysing how RBA viewed, examined *and* participated in the region building discourse in the Baltic Sea, this section is divided into six sections based on what was prioritised and why. The themes covered below are chosen in terms of their importance within RBA and they can be described as RBA's main points of reference. In particular, emphasis is given on presenting the arguments that RBA made about what makes region-building successful with the objective to demonstrate throughout the thesis how RBA can be upgraded to discuss cases of failure as well.

The first section highlights the competing voices and demonstrates how and why the idea of a Baltic Sea region was ambivalent and contested. Hence, the objective is to show how RBA “dealt” with the Baltic Sea's “discursive diversity”; a diversity later discussed in the context of region building in the Black Sea. The second section discusses the foundational stories thus focusing on the mythologies

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<sup>122</sup> Fabrizio Tassinari wrote his doctoral thesis on the Baltic Sea at the University of Copenhagen (2001-2004) and has been affiliated with the Danish Institute for International Studies and the German Marshall Fund of the United States among other institutes. Yet, he became known among people dealing with the Black Sea as the author of a policy brief titled “A Synergy for Black Sea Regional Cooperation: Guidelines for an EU Initiative” that was published at the Centre for European and Policy Studies and subsequently was invited to participate in Conferences on the Black Sea while he also became a member of the Commission on the Black Sea.



of the region and how in particular the use of historical metaphors and cultural referents was powerful exactly by giving a sense of purpose in an environment characterised by uncertainty and volatility. These references to identity, culture, images are again used as analytical points of reference when examining the Black Sea. The next sections refer to the representations of Europe (i.e. a gravitational force, and the Baltic Sea's rationale and future) and Russia (i.e. "othering plus uniting"). The section that follows is on how security was portrayed in the region building discourse in many different ways, primarily as both a challenge and an opportunity, whereas the last section briefly discusses how RBA discusses the region builders; i.e. the people – politicians, scholars, members of the civil society alike – that talked and wrote the Baltic Sea region into existence. Lastly, it should be noted at this point that the empirical analysis of the Black Sea in the thesis (Chapters III – VII) is driven by the empirical material and the region building discourse of the Black Sea and not by RBA's research priorities. Nevertheless, as mentioned before discussing how the RBA examined a successful case of region building can, even indirectly, shed light on cases of failure.

### *The idea of a Baltic Sea region as a site of contention*

There has been a tendency in the literature to approach the Black Sea as the "Bermuda Triangle of Western strategic studies"<sup>123</sup>; a unique, diverse and almost bizarre region. However, this uniqueness that has traditionally characterised the Black Sea can be seriously challenged if one examines more carefully the region building discourse of the Baltic Sea and face its inherent diversity. As Tassinari suggests in reference to the Baltic Sea "that which is perhaps most striking about the Baltic Sea area – and emblematic of Europe's 'multiperspectival' features – is its *utter diversity*...a mosaic in terms of cultural and societal aspects, and not least

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<sup>123</sup> Asmus, "Developing a New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region," 1.

economic structures.”<sup>124</sup> Or, as Westin observes, it is at a sort of crossroads of Christianity and a miniature “Tower of Babel” characterised by different cultures, languages. Yet a region that does serve as the meeting place of different societies with different needs.<sup>125</sup> Prodi once said that the Baltic Sea is “given different names depending upon the shores it washed up against”<sup>126</sup> and Tassinari pointed out that “the very term Baltic Sea translates as “Eastern Sea” in the Scandinavian languages, German and Finnish, and as “Western Sea” (Läänemeri) in Estonian”<sup>127</sup>. It would not be an exaggeration to argue that the idea of a “Baltic Sea Region” meant different things in different contexts. A clear and undisputed definition of “northernness” or of a Baltic Sea region simply did not and does not exist. To use a provocative statement by Jasper von Altenbockum:

“There is nothing, which doesn’t exist at the Baltic. A politician would however struggle if asked: is there a Baltic? Because he would have to say: Oh yes, there are Baltic programs, Baltic concepts, Baltic sub-regions, Baltic councils and Baltic conferences. [As] said: there is nothing which doesn’t exist at the Baltic Sea. Something for everyone and nothing for all.”<sup>128</sup>

At the same time, however, according to Etzioni, “[t]here is no region in Europe and few exist in the world where culture, tradition, language, ethnic origin, political structure, and religion—all 'background' and identitive elements—are as similar as they are in the Nordic region.”<sup>129</sup> In some cases, geography was included as a uniting element. As cited in Neumann’s article:

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<sup>124</sup> Tassinari, *Mare Europaeum*, 3 (emphasis added).

<sup>125</sup> Charles Westin, *Meeting place Baltic: On the Origin of Societies in the Baltic Region* (Uppsala: BUP, 1993).

<sup>126</sup> Romano Prodi, “Europe and the Mediterranean: Time for Action,” Speech at the Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve, November 26, 2002.

<sup>127</sup> Tassinari, *Mare Europaeum*, 140.

<sup>128</sup> Quoted in Mathias Albert, “From Territorial to Functional Space: Germany and the Baltic Sea Area,” *Copenhagen Peace Research Institute Working Papers* n. 39 (2000): 11.

<sup>129</sup> Amitai Etzioni, *Political Unification. A Comparative Study of Leaders and Forces* (New York, 1965), 220-1.

“The close ties between the peoples [of the Baltic Sea Region] are bound by the social standards, temperaments and social characteristics which in the last instance stem from the living conditions of the North: The landscape, the climate, the maritime environment and the settlement patterns. We have a stable temperament, we are not gregarious, rather a bit inaccessible, yet reliable. Our sense of social justice is well advanced...The common background of the Northern European countries covers a broad spectrum and has deep roots.”<sup>130</sup>

As Joenniemi and Wæver point out, “[a] deconstruction of the debate on the Baltic Sea region suggests that it is not only about one region, delineated and defined in the same way by the various parties. There are a variety of voices and projects that compete with each other, and sometimes conflict with each other”<sup>131</sup>. What they further note, however, is that these voices and projects “also seem to *reinforce* each other and the general trend towards *Baltization*. Thus, divergence is not only a source of weakness, but also a source of strength.”<sup>132</sup> In a similar tone, Wæver argues that region building in Europe’s north was “... about doing things together and differently; ...about sharing experiences and cultivating person-to-person contacts; ...about ‘talking about’ the region and establishing social practices; ...a self-reinforcing, all-inclusive and ‘never complete’ dynamic”.<sup>133</sup>

Overall, the examination of the region building discourse in Northern Europe through the lenses of RBA showcases that different interpretations of what the Baltic Sea region is and should become the region struggled, clashed,

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<sup>130</sup> Cited in Neumann, “A region-building approach to Northern Europe,” 68.

<sup>131</sup> Joenniemi, Pertti and Ole Wæver: “Why Regionalization?” In Pertti Joenniemi (ed.): *Neo-Nationalism or Regionality: Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region*. Washington, Taylor and Francis, 1993, 7.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Among others see, Ole Wæver, “The Baltic Sea: A Region after Post-Modernity?” in Pertti Joenniemi ed. *Neo-Nationalism or Regionality. The Restructuring of Political Space around the Baltic Rim*, (Stockholm: NordREFO, 1997), 5.

deconstructed, and displaced one another in a positive, reinforcing manner.<sup>134</sup> Yet, as it will be shown throughout the thesis, in the particular case of the Black Sea region, however, this divergence turned out to be a source of weakness. A legitimate question, however, would be: why is that the case? Does, or *should*, RBA provide a definite answer on whether diversity is a source of strength or a weakness and what can the particular cases of the Baltic and the Black Sea showcase in this regard?

### *Foundational stories and identity narratives*

Starting with the past of the Baltic Sea, or the North in general, as a region building mythology, the discursive construction of the Baltic Sea was characterised by a series of references to historical experiences, memories and images. There were references to cultural ties between the Nordic region and the Baltic already in the Middle Ages and the Kalmar Union (1389-1523) that incorporated a number of these areas into a single state. Referring to the past one could notice references to the Thirty Years War and how Poland was attached to a Swedish line of kings (the Wasa), the free movement of people and the presence of exiles and minorities among states in the region, and overall a melange of cultural, linguistic and even anthropological factors and that were portrayed and viewed as uniting forces.<sup>135</sup>

Within these mythologies, the idealisation of various historical epochs characterised by the establishment of the Pomor and Hanseatic trade routes, the Viking Age and the Kalmar Union were key components of the emerging region building discourse. Indeed, in the particular case of the Pomor trade route the Norwegian Foreign Ministry explicitly asked the historian, Einar Niemi, to edit a book examining and presenting the close ties and historical sympathies that flourished among people in Norway and Russia; a region building practice without

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<sup>134</sup> Neumann, "A region-building approach to Northern Europe," 72.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

a doubt.<sup>136</sup> These periods were portrayed as of regional peace and prosperity – a kind of historical “golden ages” – when the role of the state was limited while a unifying culture was flourishing. Overall, these foundational stories sought “to provide the Baltic and Barents regions with a certain naturalness and advocate a variegated, non-statist regional geography”<sup>137</sup>. Continuity with the past was presumed to provide legitimacy for the present.<sup>138</sup>

Despite the multiple narratives that legitimised and promoted region-building projects in the European north, the values entailed within each story were remarkably similar. Each narrative referred to a historical era when the familiar liberal democratic values of the West were the founding values of social interaction of the past as well.<sup>139</sup> This notion of “we-ness” in the Baltic that started to emerge in the early 1990s seems to stem, besides the references to heroic past, further from a sense of uniqueness – if not superiority – associated with “the tradition of strong welfare state, pacifism, social democracy among others; all embedded into commonalities of culture, languages, and religions”.<sup>140</sup> Indeed, the rationale for the Hanseatic League was one of promoting free trade based on the rule of law, democracy, binding contracts and a *laissez faire* attitude to trade.<sup>141</sup> As Martti Ahtisaari, the former president of Finland, argued “we need not look very far back

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<sup>136</sup> Christopher Browning, “The Region-Building Approach Revisited: The Continued Othering of Russia in Discourses of Region-Building in the European North” *Geopolitics* 8, no. 1 (2003): 52.

<sup>137</sup> Thomas Christiansen and Pertti Joenniemi, “Politics on the Edge: On the Restructuring of Borders in the North of Europe,” in Heikki Eskelinen, Ilkka Liikanen and Jukka Oksa eds., *Curtains of Iron and Gold: Reconstructing Borders and Scales of Interaction* (Aldershot: Ashgate 1999), 97–8.

<sup>138</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1

<sup>139</sup> Browning. “The Region-Building Approach Revisited,” 53.

<sup>140</sup> Ole Wæver, “Balts, Books and Brussels” *Copenhagen Peace Research Institute Working Papers* no. 11 (1994): 3.

<sup>141</sup> Ola Tunander, “Inventing the Barents Region: Overcoming the East–West Divide in the North,” in Olav Schram Stokke and Ola Tunander eds., *The Barents Region: Cooperation in Arctic Europe* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage 1994), 31.

through the window of time to find all around the Baltic thriving, multicultural Hanseatic cities that flourished thanks to trade and business”<sup>142</sup>.

The numerous references to Hansa in particular, as a form of alliance among trading cities of Europe’s North between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> century, carried important connotations of co-operation and “we-ness”. It was these close trade ties between numerous cities in the Baltic Sea area that facilitated social and cultural interactions for a period of time that lasted for more than three centuries. These historical references served as a significant source of legitimisation of the “new” Hansa that started gradually to emerge during the later 1980s.<sup>143</sup>

It was the re-birth of a vision of regional cooperation, social and cultural interaction that was detached from the power politics of the region. In the context of Hansa, security was a concern related to primarily economic issues such as, maritime security, trade security thus being a uniting element for the regional stakeholders/participants.<sup>144</sup> By advertising certain values, the region building discourses acquired persuasive power as they were framing essentially the boundaries of acceptable and preferred behaviour further seeking to socialise and integrate the easterners into those bounds.<sup>145</sup>

Nonetheless, Hansa was not the only point of historical reference in the region building discourse as there were many references as well to the power politics that characterised the relations of the countries (initially Denmark, Poland, and Lithuania followed at a later stage by Prussia, Russia, and Sweden). As Tassinari points out:

“The conceptualisations and elaborations of *Norden* are multiple and occasionally conflicting. Certainly, in addition to the narrative of

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<sup>142</sup> Martti Ahtisaari, speech delivered at the Karelian Summer Festival, Vaasa, 19 June 1999. Available at: <http://www.tpk.fi/puheet-1999/P990619.karen.html>.

<sup>143</sup> Joenniemi, Pertti and Ole Wæver: *Regionalisation around the Baltic Rim: Notions on Baltic Sea Politics*. Oslo, Report presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Parliamentary Conference on Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Area, 1992. 4

<sup>144</sup> Tassinari, *Mare Europaeum*, 111

<sup>145</sup> Browning. “The Region-Building Approach Revisited,” 54.

commonality and quasi-national identity to be referred to here, there is also the less 'romantic' aspect relating to the differences and incompatibilities among the Nordic countries."<sup>146</sup>

It is interesting to note how this *Dominium maris Baltici* was purposefully downplayed, if not marginalised, in the region building discourse of the post-Cold War era.<sup>147</sup> As Neumann suggested, what the Hansa and the modern period demonstrate is two different sets of regional dynamics; the former promoting a bottom-up and functional approach to region building, the latter highlighting patterns of enmity among state powers.<sup>148</sup> This classing of historical patterns of amity and enmity can indeed shed light on the complexity of the region building endeavour, as expressed through a *melange* of cultural, social, religious and ethnic traditions.<sup>149</sup> It should be noted, that within this discourse Russia too was portrayed as an active participant in the historic liberal free trade regimes and the period of the Soviet Union was viewed as somehow unnatural. Russia was portrayed in this new, post-Cold War era as ready to "...return to normality".<sup>150</sup>

There were also contemporary historical references to initiatives such as the Baltic League that grouped the three Baltic states in the aftermath of World War I and how the idea of a common Baltic and Nordic security framework emerged in 1919 based on a proposal by Estonia.<sup>151</sup> The Cold War was also portrayed as an era where there were attempts to regionalise environmental security as a result of the activism of the Nordic countries, which were among the earliest and most

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>147</sup> Gerner, Kristian and Klas-Göran Karlsson: *Baltic Empires* (Uppsala, Baltic University Programme, 1993).

<sup>148</sup> Neumann, "A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe," 62.

<sup>149</sup> Charles Westin, *Meeting place Baltic: On the Origin of Societies in the Baltic Region* (Uppsala: BUP, 1993); Marta Reuter, *Building a Thick or a Thin Community? Prospects for Development of a Regional Identity in the Baltic Sea Area*, paper unpublished 2003.

<sup>150</sup> René Nyberg, "The Dynamic Baltic Sea Region: What Belongs Together is Now Growing Together," speech delivered at Greifswald, 30 March 2000. Available at <<http://virtual.finland.fi/news/showarticle>>.

<sup>151</sup> Grazina Miniotaite, "Lithuania." in Hans Mouritzen ed.: *Bordering Russia: Theory and Prospects for Europe's Baltic Rim* (London, Aldershot, 1998), 183.

convinced advocates of establishing international dialogue on environmental issues.<sup>152</sup>

In this emerging environment the Barents and the Baltic Sea were re-imagined as uniting and capable of eradicating the East-West divide in favour of a new commonness. The emerging region was seen to offer a new path for the disentanglement of politics from Cold War “us–them” suppositions. The launching of ambitious projects and institutions of regional scope such as the CBSS and the Northern Dimension initiative had the objective to establish an egalitarian discourse that would grant Russia the status of an equal partner capable to act and claim its own subjectivity. The underlying idea of region building was to overcome the negative “Self vs. Other” perceptions that characterised the Cold War era and develop the conditions for an equal partnership through dialogue rather than negotiation or diktat.<sup>153</sup> Soon, one could gradually notice labels such as the Baltic Sea Region, the new Hanse, and *Mare Balticum* among others. A region of innovativeness and peacefulness was about to emerge in which previously divisive borders were reconceptualised as meeting places and frontiers were explored.<sup>154</sup> Joenniemi, referred to the paramount importance of societal and cultural factors further arguing that it was this “we-ness” that marginalised state-centric logics in

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<sup>152</sup> It should be noted, however, that from the early 1970s there was a pre-mature region building discourse manifested basically through the regionalisation of environmental security. In particular, one could refer to *Convention on Fishing and Conservation of the Living Resources in the Baltic Sea and Belts* (1973) and the *Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area* (1974).

<sup>153</sup> Browning. “The Region-Building Approach Revisited,” 47.

<sup>154</sup> To quote Finnish Secretary of State Jukka Valtasaari, “this cooperation has made the border between Finland and Russia an innovative meeting place – a frontier – instead of the dividing line that it used to be”. Jukka Valtasaari, Address at the Parliamentary Evening of the State Representation of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania in the German Reichstag, Berlin, 14 September 1999. Available at: <http://formin.finland.fi/english/>.



the discursive construction of the region.<sup>155</sup> It was this “bottom-up” commonality that transformed the Norden into “a community of asecurity” or “non-security”.<sup>156</sup>

### *The rise of the Baltic Sea region and the path to Europe*

This “we-ness” was at the same time attached to the rise of a new Europe. Located both geographically and conceptually in between the two camps, the Baltic had to rediscover and rebrand itself in the emerging world. According to Wæver, the new conditions suggested that “[d]istance now meant: away from the centre of the new dynamism. The future lay with integration, participation, involvement – not neutrality and non-engagement. The future was in Europe...”<sup>157</sup>. The need now was to bring the Baltic closer to Europe. Otherwise, it would inexorably be left at the periphery, at the margins.<sup>158</sup> This is how the idea of a Baltic Sea came into being and was portrayed as essential for the European future of the states and people of the region. Region builders soon realised that “that they did not become less European by turning East; on the contrary, they were seen as very useful to continental actors if they ‘handled’ Baltic challenges”<sup>159</sup>. The process of region building was seen as a vehicle towards European integration; an instrument. The Baltic Sea region was projected to be closely intertwined – if not embedded – with the idea of a new, expanded Europe.

A quote from the Finnish Minister for Nordic Cooperation, Jan-Erik Enestam and Chairman of the CBSS, is rather significant:

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<sup>155</sup> Joenniemi, Pertti: *A Deutchian Security Community? Nordic Peace Reframed* paper presented at the Conference “Norden at Crossroads”, Helsinki, October 2002; Joenniemi, Pertti: *Norden, Europe and Post-Security*, Copenhagen Peace Research Institute Working Paper no. 11, Copenhagen, 1998; Joenniemi, “Norden as a Post-Nationalist Construction,” 5.

<sup>156</sup> Pertti Joenniemi, “Can Europe be Told from the North? Tapping into the EU’s Northern Dimension,” Copenhagen, *Copenhagen Peace Research Institute Working Paper* no. 12, 2002.

<sup>157</sup> Wæver, “Balts, Books and Brussels,” 4.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>159</sup> Ole Wæver, “The Baltic Sea: A Region after Post-Modernity?” in Joenniemi ed. *Neo-Nationalism or Regionality*, 312.

“Regional and subregional cooperation *are not* alternative to larger cooperation arrangements but rather complementary to them. Thus, the Baltic Sea and Nordic–Baltic cooperation and security arrangements complement the wider European cooperation framework without replacing it”<sup>160</sup>.

Hence, the Baltic Sea provided the path to Europe and at the same time it was emerging as the uniting and defining element among the states and the societies in the area. As Mole argues, “[i]n stressing their European-ness, therefore, the constitutive elements of identity that Baltic statesmen continually stressed were: geography, culture, civilization, norms and values”<sup>161</sup>. Europe was emerging as the main point of reference for the new region building discourse and regionalism was entering the picture “as a policy aiming at transcending and softening the choice between centrality and periphery”<sup>162</sup>.

The presentation of the region building discourse of the Baltic Sea reveals a temporal dimension of the region building discourse based on references to the past as a source of unity, to the present as a *topos* of challenges and opportunities and to the future as the way ahead (i.e. what the Baltic Sea region *should* become). Yet, what is interesting to note is that these foundational stories – either backward or forward looking – acquired gravity and gave momentum to the efforts to discursively construct a region. Within its diversity the Baltic Sea region did emerge as a promising idea. Its elasticity became an advantage opening up new horizons and prospects.

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<sup>160</sup> Jan-Erik Enestam, *The Changing Security Environment of the Nordic and Baltic States*, Address by Jan-Erik Enestam, Minister for Nordic Cooperation and Neighbouring Areas.

<sup>161</sup> Mole, *The Baltic States*, 153.

<sup>162</sup> Pertti Joenniemi and Ole Wæver: “Why Regionalization?” in Pertti Joenniemi ed. *Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region* (Washington, Taylor and Francis, 1993), 4.

### *Russia as a “region building enigma”*

The new region building initiatives were also believed to provide an opportunity to “desacralize” Western myths of Russia as a locus of chaos and instability that have emplotted it as the constituting other of the West for centuries. By treating Russia as an equal partner in the Northern Dimension, region building was considered to provide the opportunity to integrate Russia into Europe. As Koch points out, the Baltic Sea region served as “a highly important context in the transformation of EU-Russia relations”<sup>163</sup>. The process of region building was viewed in the context of RBA to be placing the European north, including Russia or at least parts of it, on the postmodern road in which societal concerns replace state concerns and in which power is dispersed through processes of networking.<sup>164</sup>

Whilst no longer solely depicted as the defining “Other” of the Cold War and the enemy to be excluded, Russia was at the same time, however, represented as a locus of instability that needs to adopt the liberal values and norms of the West and overall of the new era. Nonetheless, the paradox was that it was Russia’s perceived difference that served as a constitutive/productive force of both the European identity and the logic of the region building project, i.e. coming closer to the idea of Europe. In reference to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as Mole points out “the ‘Soviet’ constitutive outside was sufficiently well defined and defended to stabilize the new national discourse”<sup>165</sup>. In this regard, Russia’s difference was to be appreciated as it was the “Russian challenge” that made it possible to construct Western self-identifications.<sup>166</sup> Hence, the existence of security issues was viewed in RBA as to empower region building.

This “othering” of Russia performed by the West was portrayed in the RBA literature as a significant aspect of the region building process. Russia appeared in

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<sup>163</sup> Katharina Koch, “Region-Building and Security: The Multiple Borders of the Baltic Sea Region After EU Enlargement,” *Geopolitics* (2015): 2.

<sup>164</sup> Browning, “The Region-Building Approach Revisited,” 51.

<sup>165</sup> Mole, *The Baltic States*, 82.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

many occasions as the “other”, the source of uncertainty and danger, i.e. a problem that needs to be solved. The EU, in particular, had the mission to facilitate the Russian transition and Russia at the same time must “learn” from the EU how to become “European”. The Baltic Sea region was therefore the *topos* in which the EU had to execute its civilizational mission *vis-à-vis* Russia.<sup>167</sup> The Baltic Sea region was no longer an all-inclusive European project. On the contrary, it was seen as a European dimension following a particular set of values, rules and criteria (e.g. the Schengen system).<sup>168</sup> The Baltic was discursively constructed as a sort of “future territory”, an “imagined community”, an experiment in post-modern territoriality whereby a region is being politically produced and disseminated as a necessity.

Nonetheless, as Browning points out in reference to the “othering” of Russia and the overarching security discourses these foundational stories were:

“...framed with too little care for the political implications entailed in such discourse...despite aims to move away from traditional geopolitics the foundational stories have been too easily linked in with the reproduction of traditional discourses of difference between East and West in civilizational terms.”<sup>169</sup>

This idea that the West has a civilising mission in Russia was not new but it rather tied in with historical constructions of Westernness that saw the West as possessing ultimate knowledge and having a mission to spread its “universally” endowed values to the rest of mankind.<sup>170</sup> Whilst historically the East was generally perceived as barbarian and backward (in opposition to the “civilised”, “ordered”

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<sup>167</sup> Browning, “The Region-Building Approach Revisited.”

<sup>168</sup> Tassinari, *Mare Europaeum*, 196.

<sup>169</sup> Browning, “The Region-Building Approach Revisited,” 65.

<sup>170</sup> This is not to say other societies may not also adhere to so-called ‘Western’ values irrespective of any contact with the West, only that there has been a tendency in Western history to assume non-Western societies to be devoid of morality and the rule of law. Moreover, this is certainly a characteristic of much Western discourse representing contemporary Russia, irrespective of the empirical validity or otherwise of such claims.

West) it was also characterised “as an area where everything still remained to be done”.<sup>171</sup>

In the region building discourse(s) one could also notice a hierarchical and patronising view of Russia, thus denying of its subjectivity approaching it as an object upon which the West could act. In this discourse, Russians were implicitly portrayed as the “needy” who want and need to “learn to be like us” whereas the West, and the EU in particular, was granted the role of a charitable teacher showing the Russians the way to the “promised land” of Western social justice and prosperity.<sup>172</sup> To conclude, the conflicting representations of Russia in the region building discourse are particularly interesting especially when considering why and how the process of region building was not particularly affected. This is particularly relevant and intriguing when discussing region building in the Black Sea and Russia’s position and role in it.

#### *Security and its region building functions: uniting and/or dividing?*

Security was a key concern in the context of the RBA and acquired a central position in the RBA literature as different scholars highlighted different aspects, functions and meanings of security within the region building discourse and approached security in different ways. Indeed, many scholars discussed security, as a positive region building force, and referred to how in the case of the Baltic Sea many region builders “associated soft security challenges with the foundational role of the grassroots dynamic in the regional cooperation”<sup>173</sup>. Despite the fact that security was officially not on the agenda, the Northern Dimension, the CBSS and

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<sup>171</sup> Marko Lehti, “Competing or Complementary Images: The North and the Baltic World from the Historical Perspective,” in Hiski Haukkala, “The Northern Dimension and the Baltic Sea Region in the Light of the New Regionalism,” in Hiski Haukkala ed., *Dynamic Aspects of the Northern Dimension* (Turku: Jean Monnet Unit, University of Turku 1999), 22.

<sup>172</sup> Geir Hønneland, “Identity Formation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 33, no. 3 (1998): 292.

<sup>173</sup> Per Stig Møller, “Setting the State for a New Action Plan,” *Baltinfo* n. 54, February 2003.

the BEAR were portrayed in the context of RBA as enlightened security policies for the European north.<sup>174</sup>

The first serious attempts to incorporate security in the body of RBA were made by Christopher Browning. The main argument was that: “[b]y removing issues of military security and state territorial sovereignty from discussion, the new region-building initiatives are seen to encourage the re-ordering of political space in non-territorial terms and, moreover, to facilitate the re-conceptualisation of national identities in terms of commonness rather than enmity.”<sup>175</sup> Basically, Browning was approaching region building in his work as an example of desecuritization.

In a paper published in 2004, again by Browning but in cooperation with Joenniemi this time, attention was paid to the so-called three discourses of security (i.e. realist, liberal, asecurty).<sup>176</sup> The main idea was that the idea of a region has been driven in the post-Cold War era “by a mixture of realist- and liberalist-based security discourses” further adding that “security has been a unifying theme, not a divisive one.”<sup>177</sup> Reflecting in particular on the relationship between security-speak and region-building and whether these two have been opposed or complementary in the case of the Nordic region, they arrived to the following conclusions:

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<sup>174</sup> Browning. “The Region-Building Approach Revisited,” 49.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>176</sup> According to Browning and Joenniemi, the realist security discourse refers to “questions of hard military security and the preservation of state territorial sovereignty...[and] the referent object of security is the state, while the threat is constituted by other states. Regional cooperation, on this basis, is driven by processes of othering and exclusion.” On the other hand, liberalist security discourses encompass “‘soft’ security issues like global warming, environmental problems, economic performance and issues of public health, migration and welfare more generally. Importantly, the soft security agenda shifts concern away from states as the referent object of security towards individuals and society at large. In other words, people ‘as such’ (e.g. Swedes and Estonians), and not simply Sweden or Estonia, become the point of concern...’[S]ecurity’ is an argument uniting *all* in the region. In contrast to realism’s ‘cooperation by othering’, this is ‘cooperation by inclusion’”. Lastly asecurty references to the pursuance of normal politics where the region exists “on its own terms without having to lean on the security argument.” For an extensive account on the security discourses, read Browning and Joenniemi, “Regionality Beyond Security?,” 236-241.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 234.

- “In essence, the regionalist formations have been produced and reproduced through discursive practices in which security has been one of the core arguments...[and it] appears very difficult for regional actors to think beyond security as an anchorage for region-building.”<sup>178</sup>
- The security discourses “have been more complementary than competitive.”<sup>179</sup>
- “[F]or the most part, and contrary to widespread belief, security has *not* been an important argument in driving Nordic cooperation.”<sup>180</sup>
- “To draw a line between region-building (with regionality unfolding on its own terms) and security-speak appears to be ontologically and epistemologically problematic.”<sup>181</sup>

All these observations seem to capture the complexity that surrounds security both in the context of region building and within RBA. More precisely, is security a force that can bring together states to form a region, or a force that can break them apart, thus dissolving the very idea of a region? In addition, is security an irrelevant force in the sense that regionality can emerge as a more powerful motivation and region building can exclude security concerns or regional actors struggle to think regions beyond security?

Overall, one could discern in the RBA literature a tendency to utilise the concepts of the Copenhagen School and view the new region building as an example of de-securitisation. By not explicitly “talking hard security” and rather concentrating on practical matters of pollution, crime and so forth, such initiatives were seen to positively contribute to regional security for the simple reason that they removed traditional questions of military security from the regional agenda. In particular, and drawing on the functionalist legacy of the EU, security and political integration was to be built through enhancing economic

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 245.

interdependencies.<sup>182</sup> By removing issues of military security and state territorial sovereignty from the debates, the new region-building initiatives were seen within RBA to encourage the re-ordering of political space in non-territorial terms and, moreover, to facilitate the re-conceptualisation of national identities in terms of commonness rather than enmity. As Browning and Joenniemi point out, it was “a region *beyond security*, an *asecurity community* based on the pursuance of normal politics, rather than a *security community* premised on extra-ordinary policies. In other words, Norden is there on its own terms without having to lean on the security argument.”<sup>183</sup> The result was a regionality based on the growth and development of regional networks outside the framework and independent of sovereign entities. As Jaeger puts it, “it is all about post-modern and post-sovereign politics of flexibility... in short, it is about social interaction *besides* representations of sovereignty”.<sup>184</sup>

Furthermore, Baltic regionalism was viewed at the same time as an *instrument* to demonstrate the willingness and readiness to access the Western security system. According to a Polish high ranking official, “we have a general interest in being there because we see regional cooperation as a school before joining the EU. We learn how to make our interests dovetail with those of others”. Lastly, there were cases where security was viewed within RBA as a force that was gradually losing its importance as the power of regionality to “impose” a region building vision above and beyond security. This thesis, and chapter VII in particular, draws on the findings and arguments of RBA on security and discusses the region-security nexus in the Black Sea.

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<sup>182</sup> Jukka Valtasaari, “The EU’s Northern Dimension, the Union’s Strategy towards Russia and our Views on the Forthcoming WTO Millennium Round,” speech delivered at a meeting of the European Economic and Social Committee, Section for External Relations, Vaasa, Finland, 9 October 1999.

<sup>183</sup> Browning and Joenniemi, “Regionality Beyond Security,” 241.

<sup>184</sup> Øyvind Jaeger, *Securitising Russia: Discursive Practices of the Baltic States*, Copenhagen Peace Research Institute working paper 10/1997 (Copenhagen: COPRI 1997), 7.



*Region builders: regional ownership and inclusiveness in the Baltic Sea*

Concerning the region builders, academics and politicians alike, both from inside and outside the region, were engaged in constructing and circulating visions of a European North that constructed subsequently a reality. Northernness was becoming part of 'Europe' as something not categorically fixed but rather vague and adventurous. It was viewed as a *tabula rasa*; a blank space that had to be filled in. This open process allowed various actors to link in and write their own stories and project their own readings of the present and visions of the future.<sup>185</sup> Indeed one could see in the Baltic Sea a plethora of actors that started networking and interacting at the regional level: "institutional actors got together, as did non-state actors: firms, universities, municipalities, and individual persons. They interacted in different ways and pursued different goals."<sup>186</sup>

As Tassinari points out "the region builders were indeed conceptualising something that was actually proceeding around them. They viewed grassroots and trans-local multiplicity as the core of the region, because that is where the construction of the region actually began"<sup>187</sup>. Yet, it is important to indicate at this stage – and this constitutes a significant difference with the case of the Black Sea – was that state authorities were welcome to participate and endorse the new regional project, but were not supposed to steer it.<sup>188</sup>As it will be shown, similar attempts were made in the Black Sea as well, but with different results.

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<sup>185</sup> Pertti Joenniemi, "Changing Politics along Finland's Borders: From Norden to the Northern Dimension," in Pirkkoliisa Ahponen and Pirjo Jukarainen eds, *Tearing Down the Curtain, Opening the Gates: Northern Boundaries in CHANGE* (SoPhi: University of Jyväskylä 2000), 128.

<sup>186</sup> Tassinari, *Mare Europaeum*, 3.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 122-123 (emphasis added).

<sup>188</sup> Ole Wæver, "Culture and Identity in the Baltic Sea Region" in Pertti Joenniemi ed. *Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region* (Washington: Taylor and Francis, 1993), 26.

#### 4. Towards a genealogy: an “autopsy” of region building

Referring even briefly to the case of the Baltic Sea it can be argued that the contribution of RBA – and this study highlights this aspect – derives exactly from highlighting both the discursive nature of regions and by giving the ability to a scholar to shed light on all those nuances (i.e. foundational stories, identity and cultural referents, representations of space and security, regional builders, etc.) that can capture the very essence of region building and its success. In discussing, however, the failure of the Black Sea as a region building project this study uses the conceptual and analytical toolkit provided by the RBA, but at the same time calls for a genealogical turn.

Utilising “the literature on nation-building and the genealogical writings of anti-foundationalists”<sup>189</sup> and paying attention to “the politically constitutive and politically motivated clash of definitions, which is not a singular occurrence, but rather a perpetual process”<sup>190</sup> this thesis focuses both on the agents and their practices that defined the discursive construction of the Black Sea region. The focus is on what kind of region builders formulated and articulated the narratives of region building and which practices they used to convey or impose their understandings and for what purposes. Is it important to reflect on who talks and writes regions into existence? Can an analysis of the region builders in the Black Sea and their practices shed light on cases of failure? In addition, can an elaboration of the security logics and the spatial representations that characterised the region building discourse of the Black Sea contribute to RBA’s understanding of failure? In answering these questions this study draws on discourse and the politics of representations, elites, networks, practices and intertextuality that all together shed light on under-examined aspects of region building, thus further improving RBA.

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<sup>189</sup> Neumann, “A region-building approach to Northern Europe,” 53.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 59.

The theoretical framework of the thesis adopts RBA's re-examination of the ontological status of regions and rests on the argument that regions are socially constructed and politically contested. In Murphy's words, "if we ask how a region is being transformed or is evolving without probing the genesis and significance of the spatial compartments that we are examining – we are, at least at one level, treating spatial units as untransmutable givens."<sup>191</sup> Therefore, the Black Sea region does not simply and objectively exist but on the contrary it is its very process of coming into being that should be examined. Hence, the argument of the theoretical framework of the thesis is that regions indeed do not rise in an ideational vacuum but the principal question in this approach should be extended to how, by whom, and what kind of a region is formulated.

The theoretical framework of the thesis is influenced by genealogy as a method of examining social phenomena. Adopting a genealogical approach is driven by the failure of the Black Sea to be talked and written into existence as a region, regardless of its discursive constructions. What does it mean for a discursive construction to fail? Yet, given the fact that a genealogy essentially presupposes the existence and the operation of a "truth regime," it should be mentioned from the beginning that this thesis does not adopt a genealogical approach *per se* because the case of the Black Sea region does not constitute a truth regime.

What does, however, genealogy mean? Genealogy was first introduced by Friedrich Nietzsche in his seminal work *On the Genealogy of Morality*, where, by deploying genealogy as a historical technique, he raised profoundly disquieting concerns on moral certainties by demonstrating that widespread social and philosophical beliefs cannot claim absolute truth.<sup>192</sup> After Nietzsche, many scholars adopted a genealogical perspective, including Freud in his work *Civilization and its Discontents*.<sup>193</sup> Yet, it was primarily Michel Foucault who attempted to develop

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>192</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals," in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967).

<sup>193</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (London: Penguin, 1962).

and apply genealogy as an innovative method of research in the field of sexuality and punishment.<sup>194</sup> It was subsequently applied in the field of IR in the 1980s by scholars such as Richard Ashley, James Der Derian, Michael Shapiro, and others, who attempted to shed light on under-examined questions and highlight the taken for granted assumptions of the dominant IR theories.<sup>195</sup> According to Ashley, genealogy:

“involves a shift away from an interest in uncovering the structures of history and toward an interest in understanding the movement and clashes of historical practices that would impose or resist structure. [...] [A] genealogical posture entails a readiness to approach a field of practice historically, as an historically emergent and always contested product of multiple practices, multiple alien interpretations which struggle, clash, deconstruct, and displace one another.”<sup>196</sup>

Or, to use the words of Nehamas, genealogy could be seen as “history, correctly practiced.”<sup>197</sup> Genealogy is indeed an “effective history”<sup>198</sup> in the sense that it:

“can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects etc., without having to make reference to a subject which

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<sup>194</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977); Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 3 volumes: *Introduction, The Uses of Pleasure*, and *Care of the Self*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1988–90).

<sup>195</sup> For some representative works, see: Richard Ashley, “The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 12 (1987): 403–434; James Der Derian, *On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Western Estrangement* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987); Michael J. Shapiro, *Language and Political Understanding. The Politics of Discursive Practice* (New Haven: [Who’s the publisher?], 1981).

<sup>196</sup> Richard Ashley, “The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics,” *Alternatives* 12, no.4 (1987): 409–410; also Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice. Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. David Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 137–164.

<sup>197</sup> Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 46

<sup>198</sup> Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 87–90.

is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history.”<sup>199</sup>

Its contribution stems from examining “what we tend to feel is without history,”<sup>200</sup> showcasing the power relations operating in particular events and historical developments. Genealogy questions the “devotion to truth and the precision of scientific methods which arose from the passion of scholars, their reciprocal hatred, their fanatical and ending discussions, and their spirit of competition – the personal conflicts that slowly forged the weapons of reason.”<sup>201</sup> It manages to show that “power produces knowledge...that power and knowledge directly imply one another,”<sup>202</sup> thus questioning the constitution of knowledges and discourses through power relations. To this end, this study pays attention to both the agents/region builders involved (Chapter IV) and the practices used (Chapter V). The adoption of this position derives basically from the empirical material examined. As it will be shown, the discursive construction of the Black Sea region was an elite-driven process of rather limited scope where the key actors were in a position to construct and adjust their practices to their objectives.

It is important to mention that genealogy does not reject the importance of discourse. On the contrary, a discursive formation – a truth regime to be more precise – constitutes the principal subject of inquiry. The contribution of genealogy is that it addresses the mechanics and actors that initiate and constitute discursive formations. Similarly, this thesis highlights the importance of discourse and focuses on the representations that characterised the region building discourse. Hence, discourse is a key pillar of the theoretical framework and it is approached and

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<sup>199</sup> Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1971-1977*, trans. C. Gordon, ed. C. Gordon, L. Marshall, J. Mepham, K. Soper (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980), 117.

<sup>200</sup> Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 76.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>202</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), 27.

defined in two ways.<sup>203</sup> The first one refers to discourse as a category that includes all utterances and statements that have meaning and impact, thus treating discourse as units/bodies of knowledge, whereas the second one, following a Foucauldian understanding, considers discourse “a relational totality which constitutes and organises social relations around a particular structure of meanings.”<sup>204</sup> Discourse is understood as a series of interpretations and representations that establish different regimes of truth. The discursive realm is seen as one in which interpretations prevail, power relations are established, and political outcomes are made possible.<sup>205</sup>

Region building as a discursive realm is also understood in this thesis to “articulate and intertwine material factors and ideas to such an extent that the two cannot be separated from one another.”<sup>206</sup> In this sense, the discourse on the Black Sea as expressed through academic and think-tank texts and official foreign policy documents and speeches is not treated as a source of information and data that describes a pre-existing social reality, but rather “as a medium through which reality [was] created and the material world [was] given meaning.”<sup>207</sup> As Pierre Bourdieu suggests, discourses have performative rather than reflective functions.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> On the relevance of discourse in IR, see: Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse analysis and the Bosnian war* (Routledge: London and New York, 2006); and Jennifer Milliken, “The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods,” *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 2 (1999): 225–254.

<sup>204</sup> Roxanne Lynn Dotty, “Immigration and National Identity: Constructing the Nation,” *Review of International Studies* 22, no. 3 (1996): 239.

<sup>205</sup> Columba Peoples and Nick Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies: an introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 65.

<sup>206</sup> Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 1, 15.

<sup>207</sup> Peter Wennersten, “The Politics of Inclusion. The Case of the Baltic States,” *Co-operation and Conflict* 34, no. 3 (1999): 274.

<sup>208</sup> Regionalist discourse is a performative discourse which aims to impose as legitimate a new definition of the frontiers and to get people to know and recognize the region that is thus delimited in opposition to the dominant definition, which is misrecognized as such and legitimate, and which does not acknowledge that new region. Pierre Bourdieu, *Language et pouvoir symbolique* (Paris: Fayard, 2001), 285.

To examine discourse means to reveal the conditions of possibility and to focus on contingencies rather than relations of cause and effect.<sup>209</sup> To use the words of Kuus, “[c]ausality works on this terrain not in terms of clearly identifiable causes but in terms of conditions of possibility.”<sup>210</sup> Studying the region building discourse implies a broader perspective that goes beyond the text and a narrow definition of the realm of politics and understands region building as a process based on texts and practices involving numerous actors at many different levels of policy action, from a publication to the establishment of an institution.<sup>211</sup>

In the context of region building discourse intertextuality is also used as a genealogical tool that helps to identify the traces of what appears to be common knowledge – “true” knowledge – while examining the performative role of the texts as the constituents of the representations of the Black Sea region.

Intertextuality, a term coined by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s, is based on the principal argument that a text should not be approached as the product of a single author but rather as a product of its relations to other texts and the structures that characterise the language itself. As Kristeva notes, “every text is from the outset under the jurisdiction of other discourses which impose a universe on it.”<sup>212</sup> In particular, “any text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the

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<sup>209</sup> For a more comprehensive account of the logic of discourse, see: Sayer, *Method in Social Science*, 103–16; Jutta Weldes and Diana Saco, “Making State Action Possible: The United States and the Discursive Construction of ‘The Cuban Problem,’ 1960–1994,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 25 (1996): 361–395;

<sup>210</sup> Merje Kuus, *Geopolitics and Expertise: knowledge and authority in European diplomacy* (West Sussex: Wiley and Sons, 2014), 205.

<sup>211</sup> Jutta Weldes, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson, and Raymond Duvall, “Introduction: Constructing Insecurity,” in *Cultures of Insecurity*, 18; Ole Wæver, “Identity, Communities and Foreign Policy: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory,” in *European Integration and National Identity: The Challenge of the Nordic States*, ed. L. Hansen and O. Wæver (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 20–49.

<sup>212</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press), 146.

absorption and transformation of another,”<sup>213</sup> thus implying that any text is basically a body of present and hidden citations, codes, and concepts.

Interest in intertextuality has gained prominence in the context of postmodernity and there are interesting definitions that reveal the elasticity of the concept and how it can help trace the various interconnections among the texts, as key sites of power and influence. Graham Allen talked about how “it foregrounds notions of relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence in modern cultural life,”<sup>214</sup> whereas Plottel and Charney argued that “[i]nterpretation is shaped by a complex of relationships between the text, the reader, reading, writing, printing, publishing and history: the history that is inscribed in the language of the text and in the history that is carried in the reader's reading. Such a history has been given a name: intertextuality.”<sup>215</sup>

One can identify in the literature two dimensions of intertextuality that allow a better reading of the works on the Black Sea: iterability and presupposition. Iterability denotes the “repeatability” of certain textual fragments and it includes explicit citations, references, quotations as well as (geopolitical) *clichés* (e.g. heartland, hub, frontier in the case of the Black Sea) and traditions. That is to say, every text is composed of bits and pieces of other texts, and all these interconnected texts create a discourse that subsequently grants meaning to these texts. Presupposition, as Porter argues, “refers to assumptions a text makes about its referent, its readers, and its context –to portions of the text which are read, but which are not explicitly ‘there.’”<sup>216</sup> Texts, as component parts of the discourse, act as product of their relations to other texts and constitute webs of meaning.

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<sup>213</sup> Julia Kristeva. “Word, Dialogue and Novel,” In *The Kristeva Reader*, trans. Alice Jardine, Thomas Gora, and Leon S. Roudiez, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 66.

<sup>214</sup> Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 5.

<sup>215</sup> Jeanine Parisier Plottel and Hanna Kurz Charney, Introduction to *Intertextuality: New Perspectives in Criticism* (New York: New York Literary Forum, 1978), xx.

<sup>216</sup> James E. Porter, “Intertextuality and the Discourse Community,” *Rhetoric Review* 5, no. 1 (Fall 1986): 35.



Returning to the spatial representations of the Black Sea, the underlying logic and assumptions, and even more broadly the context described, implied certain spatial characterisations. Hence, it is important to reveal the various textual interconnections and even more importantly to showcase the impact these connections had in the process of region building and identify the mechanics of discursive construction. This is why in the empirical chapters of this thesis there is purposefully a plethora of quotations that refer to the same metaphors, epithets, and concepts. Although one might find the listing of these quotations exhausting, the idea behind it is to identify webs of meanings and intertextual relations as the key parameters of discursive formations. Intertextuality represents an addition to the toolkit of RBA in showing how a region building discourse is formulated and in examining the conditions of success/failure of region building. Indeed, although intertextuality was used in this thesis in order to demonstrate how the iterability and presupposition of particular words and phrases can allow a better understanding of the conditions of failure, inter-textuality can be also used in discussing the conditions of success.

The advantage of the theoretical framework is that, by providing a more processual view of the process of region building, it offers a more comprehensive reading of region building. In terms of region builders (politicians, think-tank elites, foreign policy elites, etc.), this study pays attention both to the actors involved and the context of their actions/interactions. Indisputably, the discursive construction of the Black Sea region took place in a context of interaction and networking. Hence, the thesis proposes an elite/network model that showcases the interplay of different categories of actors, the settings of their actions, and how this process did not simply reflect “the biases, intellectual and political, of [its] originators,”<sup>217</sup> but how it was fundamentally shaped by a process of socialisation that facilitated the diffusion and dissemination of logics and scripts, constructed

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<sup>217</sup> John Agnew, “Regions on the mind does not equal regions of the mind,” *Progress in Human Geography* 23 (1999): 95.

standardised agents, and empowered particular actors to speak “seriously” on and about the Black Sea region. Even more importantly, as it will be shown in detail in Chapter V, this framework allows for the identification of different – often conflicting – region building voices. Ole Wæver investigated in his work how different actors vie with each other to impose definitions of regions such as Europe and the Baltic Sea Region crafted in their own image.<sup>218</sup> Yet, he did not examine region builders *per se* but highlighted in broader terms different national perspectives on what constitutes Europe. Neumann also briefly referred to the region builders involved in the process of region in Europe’s North and highlighted the importance of regional ownership. Yet, he did not utilise his finding in a theoretical manner showing wider implications in terms of region building. Overall, although in the context of RBA one could indeed notice a sophisticated analysis of how the idea of a region was contested through the existence of different region building voices and voices, most of the RBA scholars did underestimate, at least to some extent, the importance of “who talks and writes regions into existence”.

In addition to the region builders involved and the context of their actions, the framework of the thesis refers to the significance of practices. To some extent, RBA has under-examined daily patterns of region building action, thus underestimating what these might entail and imply. Region building is viewed as a solely discursive process whereby regions are talked and written into existence. However, this study demonstrates how practices such as publishing, organising a conference, lobbying, funding, among others – all under-examined in IR – had an impact on both the conceptualisation and dissemination of the idea of a Black Sea region. Discourse occurs within the field of practices that explain “how, on the ground, most political dynamics come to rest on the fixation of meanings”<sup>219</sup> and at

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<sup>218</sup> Ole Wæver, “Three Competing Europes: German, French, Russian,” *International Affairs* 66, no. 3 (1990): 477–493.

<sup>219</sup> Adler and Pulliot, “International Practices,” 3.

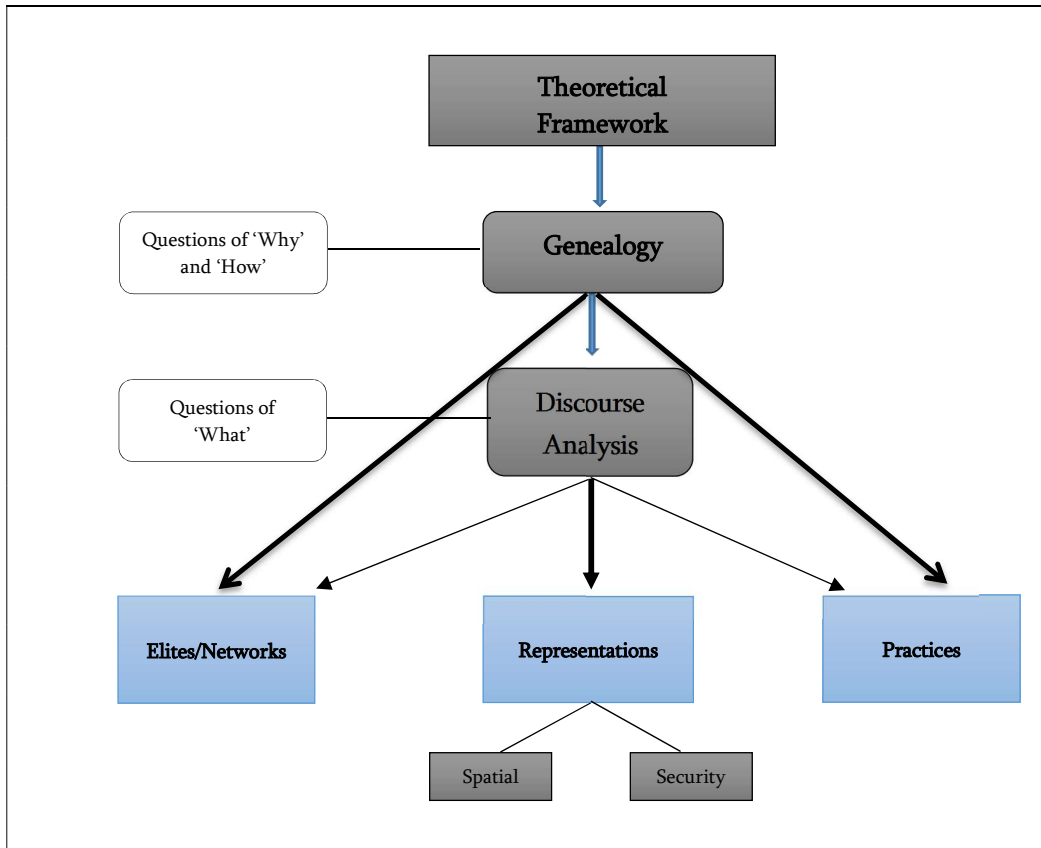
the same time practices carry their own meanings. Overall, referring to both actors and practices, discursive practices establish power relations. “Discursive representation...is always imbued with the power and authority of the namers and makers of reality – it is always knowledge *as* power.”<sup>220</sup> In other words, “discourse moves in, and as, the flows of power...Discourse can no longer be seen to be harmless.”<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994), 25–26.

<sup>221</sup> McHoul and Grace, *A Foucault Primer*, 23.

**Graph I: The theoretical framework**



Lastly, in terms of the discourse and the accompanying representations, this framework allows for a better understanding of meaning and how it was both being diffused and used. Borrowing concepts from intertextuality it demonstrates the various interconnections/intertexts that have constituted the intertextual web of meanings of the Black Sea as a region. Even more importantly, it showcases how representations are not necessarily logically coherent. In the majority of the works in RBA the underlying logic has been rather straightforward: representations lead to region formation. Yet, what this thesis demonstrates in Chapters VI and VII is that different representations of space and security subsequently lead to different readings and visions for the region. In terms of content this thesis highlights the profoundly problematic relationship between region and security.

## 5. Conclusions

Overall, the adopted approach follows the logic of RBA and attempts to accomplish its genealogical potential as founded by Nietzsche, pursued by Foucault, and extended into IR by scholars such as Ashley, Der Derian, George, and Shapiro among others. To recapitulate, the contribution of this chapter is based on the following assumptions. The first observation refers to the political dimension of the discursive construction of regions. This study examines how and why the Black Sea emerged as a regional entity in the first place. Second, this study following the RBA tradition approaches this discursive process as a dynamic, unpredictable interest-driven process whereby region builders, practices, texts, and representations actively constitute the region building process. In essence, it uncovers the political dynamics of the process. In particular, it identifies the different categories of elite actors that through a loosely coherent network attempted to conceptualise and disseminate the idea of the Black Sea region. Furthermore, by accentuating the significance of practices as daily patterns of region building action/enactment, it manages to elaborate on how region building took place on the ground and what implications and meanings transpired from the practices themselves. Lastly, in terms of the existing region building discourse it both examines the constitution of the narratives and it questions the coherence of the representations. All these focal points are interlinked and compose together the theoretical framework of the thesis.

To reiterate the theoretical standing of the thesis, while discourse analysis and RBA in particular raise primarily questions of “what,” the theoretical framework of the thesis extends the research scope by addressing questions of “who,” “how,” and “what.” Consequently, the framework proposed both expands and deepens the scope and understanding of regions as discursive formations, thus offering a genuine “problematization”<sup>222</sup> of region building and of failed regions in

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<sup>222</sup> According to Neal, problematization is an approach that “...seeks to describe the field of relations that emerged around a problem, including: the *network* of people who constituted it as a problem,

particular. Overall, within RBA the argument that regions – and any other kind of discursive formation – might also fail has not been adequately addressed exactly because most of the scholars operating under the auspices of RBA highlighted the nuances of a region building success. This is in principle a framework that with the necessary adjustments to the empirical material can shed light on other cases of region building and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the actors involved, the practices used, and the representations produced. Indeed, although a careful examination of how RBA viewed the case of the Baltic Sea can provide an analytical framework (i.e. criteria, concepts, key arguments, etc.) of examining region building, this examination needs to be also driven by the empirical material, i.e. the region building itself. To conclude, as it will be shown the theoretical framework of the thesis is influenced both by RBA and its genealogical potential and by the particularities observed in the region building process of the Black Sea region.

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worked towards addressing it, and had their comments heard, taken up, discussed, rejected or modified; the *kinds of language* and *ways of speaking* used, the concepts that emerged, the techniques and methods that were developed, and the jobs, roles and types of individual that were in effect constituted and ‘subjectivated’ through their relationship to that problem; and the knowledges recorded, developed and passed on in response to it”[emphasis added]. See, Andrew Neal, “Michel Foucault,” in *Critical Theorists and International Relations*, ed. Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams (London: Routledge, 2009), 167.

# Chapter III

## The narrative(s) of a “Black Sea Region”

“But just as historians, ethnographers, and other intellectuals were appropriating the sea for their distinct national programs, others were beginning to understand the Black Sea as a discrete Unit.”<sup>223</sup>

### 1. Introduction: the discursive power of the stories told and written

A reflection on the narratives of/on the Black Sea region raises the question: why do we talk about the Black Sea the way we do? This question sets out both the tone and the basic framework of critical analysis of the literature within which significant claims of the thesis are situated. More precisely the focus is on the loosely coherent set of policy themes surrounding the Black Sea both as a policy project and as a field of academic and policy oriented inquiry. The objectives are to critically examine the region building discourse (i.e. articles, reports, monographs, etc.) published on the Black Sea and to showcase how and why different stories about the Black Sea started to emerge in academic and policy parlance. While doing so, this review also places high priority on certain influential and highly visible works that set the region building agenda.

What is important to note from the very beginning, however, is the fact that the emerging narrative of/for a Black Sea region was characterised by selectivity.

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<sup>223</sup> King, *The Black Sea*, 219.

It is important to acknowledge firstly how a narrative in principle “ceaselessly substitutes meaning for the straightforward copy of the events recounted”<sup>224</sup> and secondly how the emerging narrative of/for the Black Sea was privileging certain events and policies against others, thus transforming the complex social reality of the Black Sea into something tangible, objective, real and, as it will be further elaborated, relatively simple to follow. Therefore, when presenting the main themes that characterised the literature, this thesis highlights the inevitably artificial prioritisation omnipresent in the politically loaded representations of the complex layers of reality of the Black Sea. This is an introductory comment of important value as it showcases the essentially discursive nature of regions and the choices attached to it.

In terms of structure, the chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section provides a background of the policies, institutions, and actors that characterised the emergence of the Black Sea region as a topic in the European security agenda. The second section provides a synopsis of the literature and discusses the main debates: i) the fragmented efforts of the past in treating the Black Sea as a single unit of analysis; ii) the contemporary debate over the question “Is the Black Sea a region?” and the definitional ambiguities that characterised the debates reflecting different political angles and perspectives; iii) the question of how the location of the Black Sea was discussed in the literature; iv) the binding theme of security, focusing on issues such as the frozen conflicts, energy security, human trafficking, among others; and v) the envisaged solutions to the security challenges.

## **2. The “region building background”: policies, institutions, and events**

The end of the Cold War was portrayed in the region building discourse as a watershed event that abruptly terminated the position of the Black Sea as one of

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<sup>224</sup> Hayden White, “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,” *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): 6.



the immediate zones of confrontation between the two main power blocks, the USA and the USSR, thus removing, to use the neorealist jargon, the old “overlay” patterns of great power influence. The subsequent tectonic shifts triggered the launching of a series of policy initiatives, the establishment of institutions, and an overall redrawing of the political map of wider Europe. The Black Sea seemed to be in flux.

This process of region building was presented as unravelling in primarily two stages. As Manoli points out, “[a] first wave of regionalist activity in the early 1990s focused on asserting the area’s post-Cold War international standing, while a second wave early in this decade [2000s] has been driven more by sectoral issues and external engagement.”<sup>225</sup> The first hesitant attempts of region building started in 1992, when Turkey took the initiative to institutionalize cooperation around the Black Sea by establishing the Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). BSEC’s boundaries surpassed from the onset the area of the littoral states and included states from the adjoining areas of the Balkans and Caucasus.<sup>226</sup> As Valinakis points out in reference to the creation of BSEC, “it should be seen in the context of the tendency in the early 1990s to forge greater interdependence among states in the western and eastern parts of the Old Continent and set up new regional cooperation schemes.”<sup>227</sup> It was with the establishment of BSEC that one could talk of an emerging Black Sea region for the first time, albeit in the official discourse the terminology was not clear.

Following the establishment of BSEC – the most inclusive of regional organisations in terms of membership and the most comprehensive in terms of its

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<sup>225</sup> Panagiota Manoli, “Reinvigorating Black Sea Cooperation: a policy discussion,” *Policy Report* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2010), 5.

<sup>226</sup> See Svante Cornell, Anna Jonsson, Niklas Nilsson, and Per Häggström, “The Wider Black Sea Region: An Emerging Hub in European Security,” *Silk Road Paper* (Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program – A Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center, December 2006), 15.

<sup>227</sup> Yannis Valinakis, “The Black Sea region: challenges and opportunities for Europe,” *Chaillot Paper 36* (Paris: Institute for Security Studies of WEU, 1999), 20.

remit – one could witness the launching of several other regional initiatives and multilateral sectoral projects, such as the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (BlackSeaFor), Black Sea Harmony, the Black Sea Forum, the Community of Democratic Choice (CDC), and the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution and last but definitely not least GUAM-ODED.<sup>228</sup> The latter was established as an alliance with an informal economic and strategic agenda and its objective was to promote some projects in the sphere of oil and gas production and transportation, as well as partnership and dialogue with NATO. Nonetheless, it was essentially a security project driven from its inception by Ukraine aiming at counterbalancing Russia's dominant position in the region. Although they had different priorities, all regional organisations and initiations in the Black Sea professed a belief in the value of regional cooperation as a basis of enhanced stability and prosperity.

Overall, regional cooperation in the Black Sea, as well as in other European “peripheries,”<sup>229</sup> was presented as the route for overcoming the economic and security vacuum left in the region with the winding up of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) and the Warsaw Pact. In this emerging political landscape, the wider process of regional cooperation was perceived from the beginning to represent a way of overcoming marginalisation and strengthening links with the West and provide an opportunity to demonstrate greater independence and self-sufficiency in security terms as well.

In this quest for policy change, local elites realised the need to recreate regional historical entities by formulating new narratives of liberalism. Influenced by the particular case of the Baltic they saw region building to represent a new

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<sup>228</sup> For an exhaustive list of the regional institutions and initiatives, see the Annex of the Report of the Commission on the Black Sea.

<sup>229</sup> The Council of the Baltic Sea States was formed in March 1992. The declared objective was to promote stability and political-economic development through regional cooperation. On subregionalism in Europe, see: Andrew Cottey ed., *Subregional Cooperation in the New Europe, building Security, Prosperity and Solidarity from the Barents to the Black Sea* (London; Macmillan Press-The EastWest Institute, 1999).

way of both doing and addressing politics. In this context, “[r]egional organisations were created to give a voice and a face to these aspirations,”<sup>230</sup> and thus “[r]egions were increasingly recognized as conscious and purposive agents; they were no longer to be seen as incidental aspects and passive reflections of ‘real’ politics, devoid of any life of their own.”<sup>231</sup>

Nevertheless, the enthusiasm of the early 1990s was followed by a period of apathy. During this phase – termed in the thesis as the “first wave of region building” – the Black Sea region came into being through institutional channels. Compared to the developments in the Baltic Sea region and Central and Eastern Europe, the Black Sea did not attract the attention of the West and most of the policy initiatives were low profile. The only Western reference to an emerging Black Sea region was perhaps in 1997 when “the European Commission issued a Communication that contained an assessment of the region’s potential and several pertinent observations such as the emergence of valid and promising synergies in the Black Sea region as well as the possibility to identify concrete fields for constructive interaction between the EU and the BSEC as a regional organisation.”<sup>232</sup> Based on that Communication, the EU Council included in its Conclusions (13 December 1997) a section on the Black Sea region highlighting its strategic importance for the EU, the role that the BSEC could play in that respect, and possible priority objectives for cooperation.<sup>233</sup> The BSEC Summit Meeting (Yalta, 5 June 1998) welcomed the relevant Conclusion of the EU Council and instructed the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CMFA) to prepare an adequate response.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Lili Di Puppo, “An elixir of youth for regional cooperation in the Black Sea basin,” *Caucas*, 2005.

<sup>231</sup> Valinakis, “The Black Sea region,” 34; Vol Palre Bernard, “Subregionalismus: Eine Zwischenebene in einer gesamt europäischen Ordnung,” *Europa Archiv* (October 1991): 558–566.

<sup>232</sup> Commission of the European Communities, “Regional co-operation in the Black Sea area: State of play, perspectives for EU action encouraging its further development,” COM (1997) 597 Final, Brussels, 14 November 1997.

<sup>233</sup> Presidency of the European Council, Conclusions, para. 67, Luxembourg, 12–13 December 1997.

<sup>234</sup> The exact wording of the paragraph is important as it reveals the spirit of cooperation expressed at the time. More precisely, “The BSEC will further develop its already established cooperation with

The first wave of region building took place in a context characterised by the persistence of unresolved conflicts (i.e. Transnistria/Moldova, Nagorno-Karabakh/Azerbaijan, Chechnya/Russia, Abkhazia/Georgia and South Ossetia/Georgia), limited financial resources, absence of civil society and private sector, dysfunctional domestic institutions, and an overarching atmosphere of suspicion and distrust among the states in the region. As it has been argued, “during the 1990s the Black Sea was perceived as being too far away and too messy for the West, while it was considered to be too close to and important for both Russia and Turkey.”<sup>235</sup> Even more importantly, the EU and NATO enlargements started entering the picture and countries such as Bulgaria and Romania saw a window of opportunity to join Euroatlantic structures. As Ciută points out, “[e]arly enthusiasm, expressed through the creation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) initiative in 1992, was followed by a lull which coincided with the increased momentum of EU and NATO enlargement, only to come back forcefully as soon as the eastern enlargement of either or both organisations was more or less in sight.”<sup>236</sup> Only this time the drive for a Black Sea region was surpassing the boundaries of BSEC and other regional initiatives including a series of policy priorities such as the GWoT, the EU, and NATO rounds of enlargement, as well as issues such as energy, migration, and organised crime, among others.

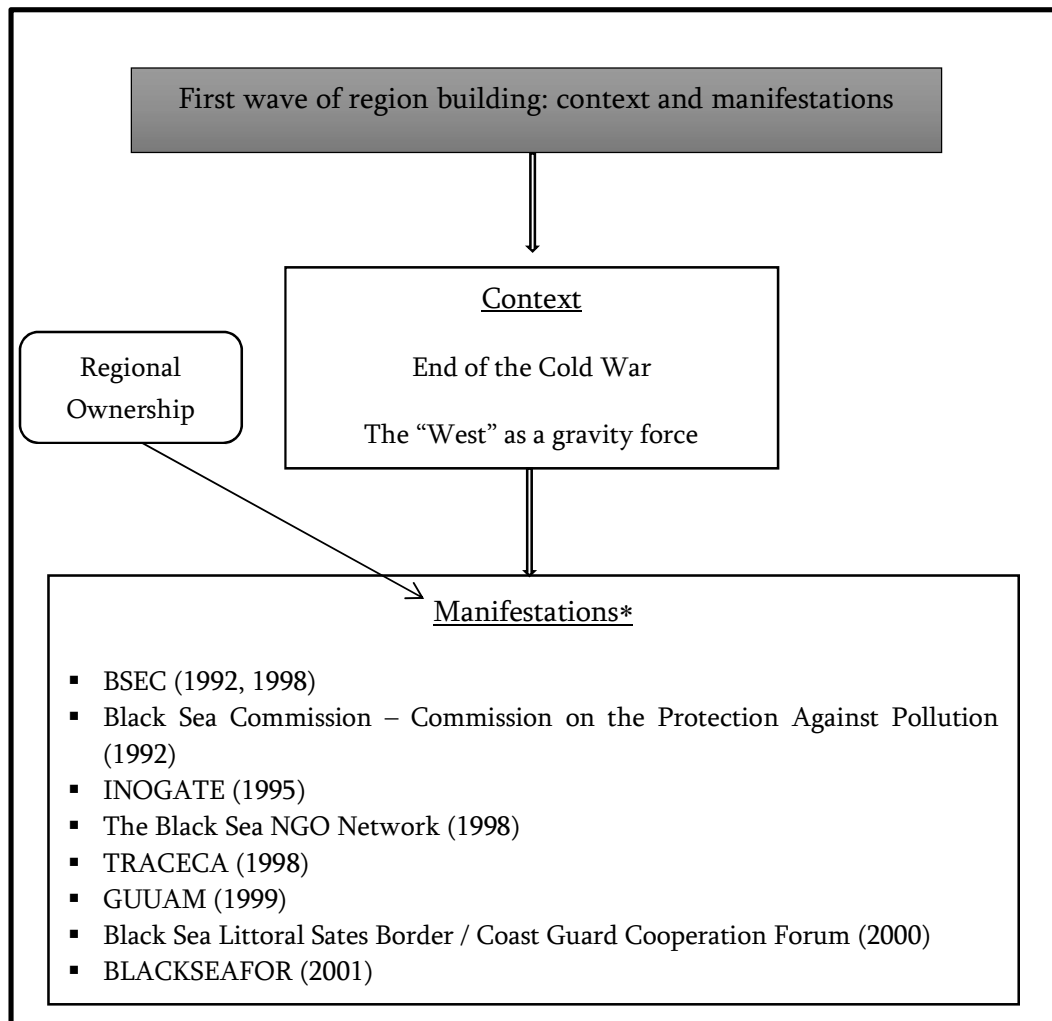
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the European Commission...on the basis of complementarity, comparative advantage and subsidiarity. In this cooperation, the BSEC–EU relationship is of a particular importance. We welcome the Conclusions of the EU Council of Ministers of last December as a first step in the elaboration of a comprehensive strategy of the EU towards the BSEC and its Participating States. We fully share the view that the BSEC–EU cooperation in the fields of transport, energy, telecommunication networks, trade, ecology, sustainable development, and justice and home affairs has a promising future. The ultimate aim is to progressively shape the EURO-BSEC economic area.” See, Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the BSEC Member States, Yalta Declaration of the Heads of State or Government of the Participating States of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Yalta, 5 June 1998.

<sup>235</sup> Tedo Japaridze, Panagiota Manoli, Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, and Yannis Tsantoulis, “The EU’s Ambivalent Relationship with the BSEC: Reflecting on the Past, Mapping out the Future,” *Policy Brief*20 (Athens: ICBSS, 2010), 13.

<sup>236</sup> Ciută, “Parting the Black Sea (Region),” 55.

**Graph II: the first wave of region building**



\*The list is not exclusive and priority was given to those institutions and policies that can be associated primarily with the process of region building in the Black Sea.

Hence, the launching of the GWoT and the increasing momentum of Euroatlantic integration revived region building and thus represent the beginning of a second wave of the process. This time, however, the idea of region building was based on a different logic and different priorities, and was additionally driven by new (extra-regional) actors. As Graham argues:

“[i]n the aftermath of 9/11, the US was forced to reassess its geostrategic interests in the region and to add a purely military

dimension to its strategy by deploying military units in Central Asia and enforcing NATO's role in the region following the 2002 NATO Prague Summit. Almost immediately, the region –especially the South Caucasus and some Central Asian countries– was considered to be a crucial corridor in winning the 'War on Terror'. Georgia and Azerbaijan, in particular, played a crucial role and were among the first to offer extensive assistance and cooperation to the US.”<sup>237</sup>

In this environment, the region building discourse revolved around the GWoT and Euroatlantic integration. A series of publications, conferences, and lobbying initiatives stressed the link between region building and the grand logic of Euroatlantic security. Following its accession to NATO, Romania attempted in 2006 to revive the institutionalist dimension of region building by launching the Black Sea Forum (BSF) for Dialogue and Partnership, with the objective to build on a common mind-set and create a vision for the region.<sup>238</sup> In general, the BSF outlined a security agenda linking national and regional security to democratisation, respect for human rights, and good governance, seeking to build upon existing regional cooperation initiatives in order to “consolidate regional commonalities” or define “a common vision of democratic and sustainable development.”<sup>239</sup>

Besides the BSF, there was a plethora of regional initiatives and institutions with overlapping agendas and priorities but most of them did not acquire political significance. The emergence of new fora gave birth to initiatives emphasizing issues of democratisation, good governance, security, and civil society. Aiming primarily at launching political dialogue, they lacked complex organizational elements. The

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<sup>237</sup> Bradley Graham, “Rumsfeld discusses tighter military ties with Azerbaijan,” *Washington Post*, December 4, 2003.

<sup>238</sup> Yannis Tsantoulis, “Geopolitics, (sub)regionalism, discourse and a troubled “power triangle” in the Black Sea,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 9, no.3 (2009): 246.

<sup>239</sup> “Joint Declaration of the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership,” Bucharest, 5 June 2006, available at <http://www.blackseforum.org/> accessed on 4 December 2006; “GMF Announces Creation of Black Sea Trust,” The German Marshall Fund of the United States Press Release, 5 June 2006.

BSF and the CDC were concerned with raising awareness on Black Sea issues and attracting political attention to the regional level.<sup>240</sup>

In addition, a number of multilateral programmes was initiated by international organisations. These sector-based programmes focused on problems linked to environmental protection, such as the Danube Black Sea Task Force (DABLAS), or issues related to transport and energy infrastructure, such as INOGATE or Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA). In 2007, the Black Sea became a focal point of a new EU regional policy (i.e. the Black Sea Synergy) and in 2008 the EU launched the Eastern Partnership, its second regional initiative in the area. Although both policies may be considered as means of enhancing the relevance of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), they did have different scopes of action. The Eastern Partnership represented a renewed process of Europeanisation for the Black Sea states that had no immediate membership prospects by bringing them closer to the EU through intense bilateral cooperation.<sup>241</sup>

In discourse, the region was portrayed to be important not only at the local level (the Black Sea riparian states) but also continentally and globally, mainly as a result of three converging dynamics: “i) the [then] recent enlargement of NATO and the 2007 enlargement of the EU, which...brought the two organisations firmly to the shores of the Black Sea; ii) the US-led ‘global war on terror,’ whose focal points make the Black Sea its somewhat clichéd ‘door-step;’”<sup>242</sup> and iii) energy security. The Black Sea was depicted to be situated at the point of convergence of the latest phase of the EU’s expansion and its foreign policy formulation (European Neighbourhood Policy, Black Sea Synergy, Eastern Partnership), the US strategy in combating international terrorism (2001-2008), Russia’s economic and political

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<sup>240</sup> Manoli, “Reinvigorating Black Sea Cooperation,” 11.

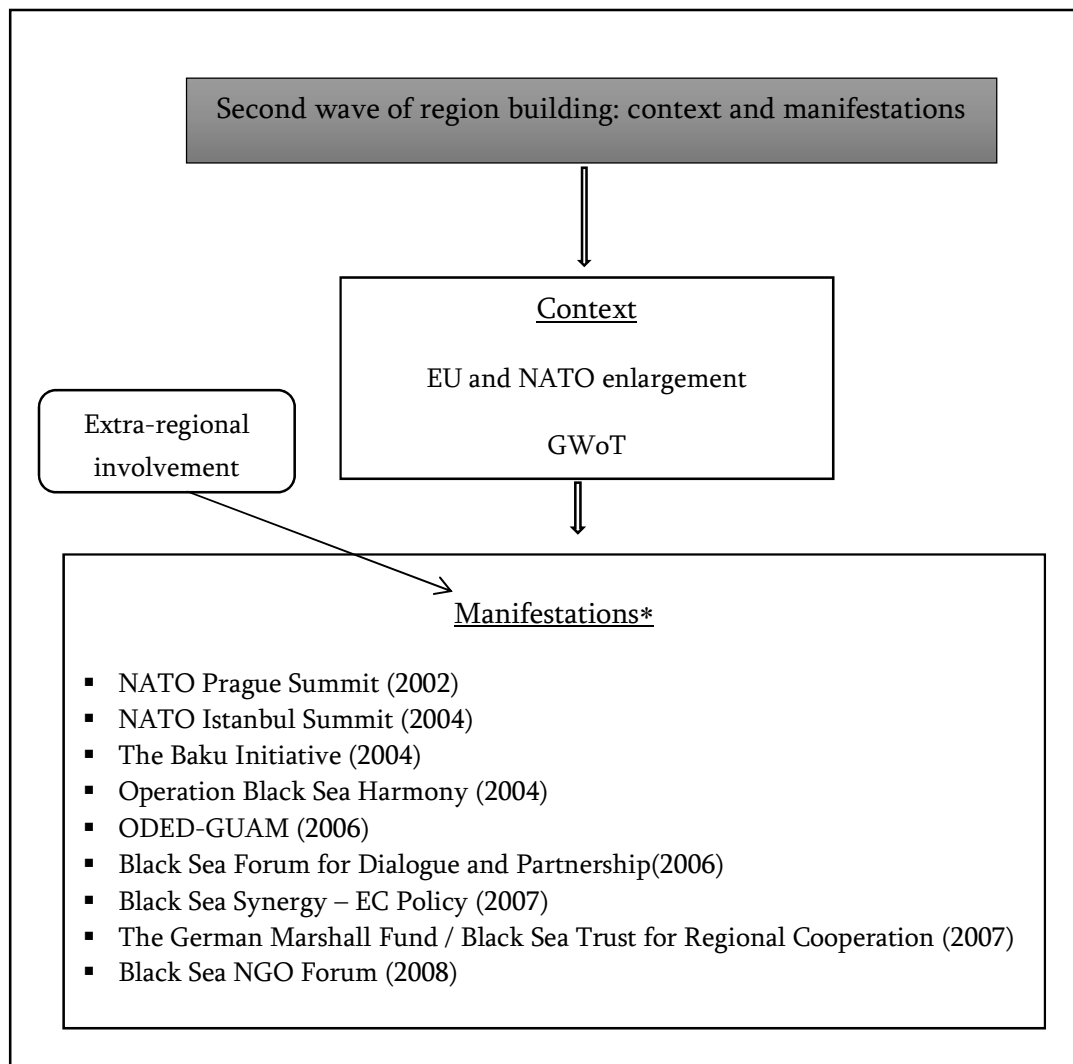
<sup>241</sup> On the relevance of the Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership for Black Sea regionalism, see Japaridze et al., “The EU’s Ambivalent Relationship with the BSEC;” Manoli, “Reinvigorating Black Sea Cooperation,” 11–12.

<sup>242</sup> Ciută, “Parting the Black Sea (Region),” 57.

revival, and Turkey's resurgent foreign policy activism. In contrast to the first wave of region building where the idea of a Black Sea region was representing the liberating momentum of the end of the Cold War and an effort to address common problems through regional institutions and policies the second wave of region building was both more ambitious, in terms of policy scope and policy objectives, and at the same time more ambivalent in terms of the region building manifestations. As already mentioned, although in the case of the Baltic this diversity of what the Baltic Sea region meant was a source of strength, in the case of the Black Sea, as it will be shown in the forthcoming chapters, was a site of contention.



**Graph III: the second wave of region building**



\*The list is not exclusive and priority was given to institutions and policies dealing solely with issues related, indirectly or directly, to the Black Sea area.

### **3. The narrative(s): the key questions raised**

Following the presentation of the main events, policies, and institutions as constituent parts of the region building discourse, this section highlights the main policy themes and questions that defined the discussions on the Black Sea. In other words, attention is paid to its history and how it was used to justify or a least make sense of the region building endeavour, as well as to the questions that dominated the discourse such as: Is there a Black Sea region? If yes, how can it be defined?

Where is it located, and what is its security status? What was discussed beyond security, space, and questions over its existence? Once again, the objective is to highlight the selectivity of the emerging narrative of a Black Sea, demonstrate its fragmentation, and give prominence to the impact on the process of region building. Hence, this chapter does not seek to tell the story of the Black Sea but rather to tell the emerging stories of the Black Sea as a region and how these different stories were based on different logics and promoted different visions for the Black Sea region.

### *Is there a history of the Black Sea?*

Prior to the analysis of the Black sea region, as a political idea and a discursive construction, it is important to examine its historical trajectory and in particular the depiction of its past. The Black Sea had been historically a largely neglected area within IR and there had been no reference to the Black Sea as a regional setting/entity in the broader socio-political context. In Hitchner's words:

“Anyone who studies the history of the Black Sea over the course of the last three millennia will, after some reflection, recognize that there is no straightforward, linear history of the sea and its region, but rather there are different histories reflecting the evolution, complexity and diversity of the human experience along the shores of the Black Sea.”<sup>243</sup>

In short, up until the end of the Cold War the “Black Sea region” did not exist. Research was divided out among the studies of the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus, and thus no regional dynamic was seriously taken into account

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<sup>243</sup> Bruce Hitchner, “The Sea friendly to strangers: history and the making of a Euro-atlantic strategy for the Black Sea,” in *A New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region*, ed. Ronald D. Asmus, Konstantin Dimitrov, and Joerg Forbrig (Washington D.C.: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2004), 28.

in academia or the think-tank world.<sup>244</sup> In a sense, the Black Sea region was the “Bermuda Triangle of Western strategic studies.”<sup>245</sup> For entire stretches of the Black Sea’s history, from the time the Ancient Greeks established colonies and developed trade routes in the region to the political revolutions and geopolitical upheavals of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, there have been no more than a few specialist monographs on the region, and those deal mostly with archaeology and ecology.

Twentieth century historians who have dealt specifically with the south-eastern part of Europe and the Mediterranean, such as Fernand Braudel, Leften Stavrianos, and Traian Stoianovich, treat the Black Sea as the “backyard” of either the Balkan Peninsula or the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>246</sup> In European historiography, the Black Sea was treated as either a trade centre or a place where kingdoms were established and had an impact on the balance of power within Europe.<sup>247</sup> In general, there was a tendency to adopt a more state/nation/empire-oriented approach to the politics of the Black Sea. Consequently, the Black Sea was treated either as an extension of the greater Russian zone of influence or as the backyard of the Ottoman Empire; always portrayed as the border line of Europe. Specialists in one main geographical domain only rarely crossed into another.<sup>248</sup>

Gheorghe Brătianu made the first attempt during World War I to produce a history of the Black Sea, but this was the exception rather than the rule as there

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<sup>244</sup> Adrian Georgiev, “The Black Sea Region – EU’s Black Sea Region policies and Bulgaria’s potential contribution,” *MA Thesis* (College of Europe: Bruges, 2005-2006), 10.

<sup>245</sup> This term was coined by Asmus in: Ron Asmus, “Developing a New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region,” *Istanbul Paper #2* (Washington, D.C.: The German Marshall Fund 2004), 1. It was then subsequently reproduced in several key publications, thus becoming an often cited term in the literature.

<sup>246</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the age of Phillip II* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1976), 110; Leften Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Traian Stoianovich, *Between East and West: The Balkan and Mediterranean Worlds* Vo. I-IV (New York: New Rochelle, 1992); Traian Stoianovich, *Balkan Worlds: The First and Last Europe* (Armonk, New York, and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1994).

<sup>247</sup> See, for example, Serge Bernstein and Pierre Milza, *Histoire de l’Europe: Histoire de l’Europe contemporaine* (Paris: Hatier, 1992).

<sup>248</sup> King, *The Black Sea*, 4.

was no follow up for decades.<sup>249</sup> Inspired by the technique and the work of Braudel on the Mediterranean, Brătianu attempted to produce a history of the Black Sea in a holistic fashion that would do justice to it as a proper unit of analysis and depicted the Black Sea as a land being at the crossroads of Europe and Asia possessing the attributes of a transition zone being simultaneously shaped by the dynamics of the North-South axis (Russia – Ottoman Empire). The focus was primarily on the significance of trade from ancient times until the fall of the Ottoman Empire and on the importance of the Black Sea in the establishment of European capitalism in its early stages. A noteworthy finding of his research was that institutional flexibility and administrative innovativeness, dominant in the empires of the region, made the Black Sea a laboratory for capitalist experimentation. Overall, Brătianu's historical account was the first attempt to demonstrate the significance of the Black Sea as a unit of analysis and its importance in both cultural and economic terms as a hub between Europe and Asia.<sup>250</sup>

Several decades afterwards, in 1995, Neal Ascherson attempted to identify the region's place in the history of Europe and Asia. In doing so, he undertook the important work of unravelling the significance of community, nationhood, and cultural independence in the region. Although his part-history/part-travelogue can hardly be seen as an academic work, it was still the first focused single narrative on the Black Sea in the post-Cold War period. It was also the first reference to the presence of a discourse, that of "Western civilisation" and "Eastern barbarism," a discourse that as it will be shown throughout this thesis

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<sup>249</sup> Gheorghe Brătianu chose to start his endeavor during the World War II and it was originally planned to be published as a two volume study of the Black Sea and the Eastern Question titled *La Mer Noire et la Question d'Orient*. However, the second volume dealing with the later period was lost and only the first one dealing with the period up to the conquest of Istanbul by the Ottomans survived. Gheorghe Brătianu, *La Mer Noire des Origines à la conquête ottomane* (Rome and Munich: Societas Academica Dacoromana, 1969).

<sup>250</sup> For a detailed presentation of Brătianu's work, see Eyüp Özveren, "The Black Sea World as a Unit of Analysis," in *Political Economy of the Black Sea: Dynamics of Conflict and Co-operation*, ed. Tunc Aybak (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 61–85.

acquired a dominant position in the discursive construction of the Black Sea. Ascherson's work, not primarily about geography, history, or politics, but rather about the peoples who, over the centuries, migrated to the shores of the Sea, focused in depth on issues such as culture and barbarism, nationalism and coexistence, repatriation and integration, all themes that resonated in the post-Cold War era with particular narratives of region building. Ranging historically from the ancient Greek world to the present, Ascherson explored in a compelling manner the ways in which communities, languages, religions, and trade routes were formed in the region.<sup>251</sup>

Unlike the states of "Central Europe," which in the post-Cold War era managed to create a narrative linking themselves with the West (what Milan Kundera captured as the "vital centre of the gravity" of Central Europe),<sup>252</sup> the Black Sea region remained at the margins of scholarship during the early 1990s. Whereas in the case of Central Europe it was the dissident intellectuals of the communist era (e.g. Václav Havel) that in the 1990s undertook the task of "the return to Europe" and managed to re-brand Eastern Europe as Central Europe in the West's eyes, in the Black Sea the perception of Europe and the West as a cultural and institutional centre of gravity was limited and ephemeral.

Even when the process of region building was hesitantly launched in the 1990s, during the first stage of region building the focus was on the Black Sea itself and not on its potential ties with Europe. Similarly, for Europe and the West in general the Black Sea seemed far away. The moral case, in the form of the return of the kidnaped Eastern Europe to its Central European identity, present in states

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<sup>251</sup> Neal Ascherson, *Black Sea: The Birthplace of Civilisation and Barbarism* (London: Vintage, 1996), 8.

<sup>252</sup> On identities, see: Iver Neumann, "European Identity, EU Expansion and the Integration/Exclusion Nexus", *Alternatives* 23, no.3 (1998): 79–116; Milan Kundera, "A Kidnapped West: The Tragedy of Central Europe" in *From Stalinism to Pluralism. A Documentary History of Eastern Europe since 1945*, ed. Gale Stokes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 217–224, originally published in French as "Un occident kidnappé, ou la tragedie de l'Europe centrale", *Le Debat* 27, November 1983.

such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, was evident in states such as Bulgaria and Romania but it was simply non-existent for the Black Sea as a whole. The Black Sea was not imagined as a European space. A striking similarity, however, between the Central European states, especially the so-called Visegrad group (Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland), and the Black Sea is that although in both cases regional cooperation was a declared objective encouraged by the EU, it did not flourish.

The apathy of the West *vis-à-vis* the Black Sea gradually began to change in the late 1990s when the Black Sea was deliberately put by specific foreign policy elites on the radar screen of the West. As King argues:

But just as historians, ethnographers, and other intellectuals were appropriating the sea for their distinct national programs, others were beginning to understand the Black Sea as a discrete Unit.<sup>253</sup>

What this section shows is basically the effort to discover the Black Sea's history, i.e. an effort to create historical meaning and provide additional justification for region building in the Black Sea. In this sense, the historiography of the Black Sea and the way it was used represented another region building tool. Although the history of the Black Sea as some kind of regional entity did not occupy significant position in the emerging policy debates, it was present in highly visible publications (i.e. GMF's edited volumes), and historians such as Charles King and Alfred Hitchner were asked in different fora to express their opinion over the idea of a (re)emerging Black Sea region.

### *Is there a Black Sea region?*

A question that soon surfaced in discussions among scholars and elites in the US, Europe, and the Black Sea was whether the Black Sea was a region at all. Indeed,

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<sup>253</sup> King, *The Black Sea*, 219.

many started asking this question based on different criteria and conceptualisations and quite often with suspicion and distrust that characterised, as it will be further elaborated, all the steps of the region-building process.<sup>254</sup> Charles King was among the first to clearly emphasize the importance of this question and its connotations.<sup>255</sup> His argument was that a region's existence was not a question of geography but rather one of mental and conceptual maps based on certain interests, thus positioning him within RBA. In his words: "regions exist where politicians and strategists say they exist."<sup>256</sup> Quite a few followed King into the debate, but the majority focused on the nature of the region rather than on its contested existence and the rationale/logic of any form of existence.

Overall, one could basically discern at least four main distinct conceptualisations of the Black Sea. First, to use the conceptual language of the regional security complex theory (RSCT), it was approached as a regional security complex (RSC). Namely, it was viewed as "a group of states whose primary security concerns link them closely enough for their national securities not to be realistically considered apart from one another."<sup>257</sup> This view revealed the importance of security threats as a key regional coagulant and the understanding of the region as an organising category rather than an ontological one. In Ciută's words: "'Region' and 'security' were thus combined in a manner that the former was constructed by emphasising the latter."<sup>258</sup> Second, the Black Sea was portrayed as a geopolitical

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<sup>254</sup> Ron Asmus recalls that, during a meeting at GMF's initial working group on the subject in Bucharest in autumn 2003, "one of the participants asked whether the Black Sea was even a meaningful historical or strategic concept or rather the product of the overly fertile imagination of several American strategists." See Ron Asmus ed., *Next Steps in forging a Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea* (Washington D.C.: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2006), 15.

<sup>255</sup> Charles King, "Is the Black Sea a Region?" in *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security-Building*, ed. Oleksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Klymush-Tsintsadze (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 13–26.

<sup>256</sup> Charles King, "The Wider Black Sea Region in the Twenty-First Century" in *The Wider Black Sea Region in the 21st Century: Strategic, Economic and Energy Perspectives*, ed. Daniel Hamilton and Gerhard Mangott (Washington, D.C.: Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2008), 3.

<sup>257</sup> Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner 1991), 190.

<sup>258</sup> Ciută, "Region? Why Region?" 128-129.

entity. This view highlighted its location in the grand scheme of global politics and its enduring significance among the “natural seats of power,”<sup>259</sup> based on the argument that the region simply is *where it is* and hence an obedience to the logic of geopolitics is essential. Third, it was presented as a product of a historically and geographically grounded common identity based on “the rediscovery of a web of connections that did in fact exist in the past and that may yet exist again.”<sup>260</sup> Lastly, a limited number of scholars highlighted the discursive dimension of the Black Sea region basically arguing that “whether or not ‘the region’ exists geographically in the first place is not a priority [because] it is the political will of the interested countries and their intellectual engagement that turn a geographical area into a region.”<sup>261</sup> Overall, these views stemmed from the “considerable difficulty of applying one or another theoretical category to any empirical setting, or more generally of using empirical referents in order to validate conceptual categories such as region” driven by political motives.<sup>262</sup>

### *What kind of a Black Sea region?*

With these considerations in mind, it is interesting to examine the differing definitions of the Black Sea. This part of the world has been referenced in the literature in a flexible way.<sup>263</sup> During the 1990s, and primarily in the context of BSEC as the main instrument/expression of region building at that time, one could discern an ambiguity. Reading the founding documents (Summit Declaration on Black Sea Economic Cooperation (1992), The Bosphorus Statement (1992), The

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<sup>259</sup> H. Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” *The Geographical Journal* 23 no.4 (April 1904): 435.

<sup>260</sup> Charles King, “Rediscovering the Black Sea: The Wider Southeast Europe in History, Politics, and Policy,” *Meeting Report* 228 (Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2001).

<sup>261</sup> Mustafa Aydin, “Regional Cooperation in the Black Sea Area and its Integration into Euro-Atlantic Structures,” *NATO Defense College Occasional Paper* 11, no.1 (2005): 30.

<sup>262</sup> For a comprehensive presentation of the various conceptualisations, see: Ciută, “Region? Why Region,” 120–147.

<sup>263</sup> Valinakis, “The Black Sea Region,” 6; John Roberts, “The Black Sea and European Energy Security,” *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 6, no. 2 (2006): 222.



Charter of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (1999)) one discerns an elasticity on the definition of the area. Either there were vague references to how “the Heads of State and Government looked forward to the transformation of the Black Sea into a region of peace, freedom, stability and prosperity,”<sup>264</sup> or the term was used solely in reference to BSEC, such as in the case of the 1999 Charter which states that the “BSEC Region means the territories of the Member States”<sup>265</sup>.

A term that gained prominence in the BSEC context was “Wider Black Sea Area.” It first appeared during the Greek Chairmanship of BSEC in 2004, and has since been used within the organisation’s framework.<sup>266</sup> It included Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine. Based on BSEC membership, this definition clearly had a strong institutional dimension since it reflected the composition of BSEC, but above all it represented an attempt to accommodate BSEC’s heterogeneous membership and highlight its comprehensive and inclusive nature. BSEC’s composition was thus yet another effort to extend the region beyond littoral territories and include adjacent areas linked by culture, politics, or economics. Furthermore, by stressing this particular notion, BSEC tried to avoid the creation of any divisions between the West/Euroatlantic context and the former Soviet space, especially Russia.<sup>267</sup>

Another definition that gained significant momentum in the debates was referring to a “Wider Black Sea Region.” This term was first promoted by the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMFUS) and was soon adopted by other think tanks and institutional bodies including the Center for Transatlantic

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<sup>264</sup> *The Bosphorus Statement*, Istanbul, 25 June 1992, 2.

<sup>265</sup> *Charter of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation*, Article 2, para. 7, p. 2, Yalta, 5 June 1999.

<sup>266</sup> For an extensive account of the official documents of BSEC, visit the official website: <http://www.bsec-organization.org/documents/Pages/default.aspx>. Also, for a good compilation of BSEC documents see Ioannis Stribis and Dimitris Karabellas (comp.), *The BSEC at Fifteen: Key Documents* (Athens: International Centre for Black Sea Studies, 2007).

<sup>267</sup> Manoli, “Reinvigorating Black Sea Cooperation,” 8.

Relations – SAIS of the John Hopkins University, the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, and the Silk Road Studies Program.<sup>268</sup> This definition was political rather than geographic as it was directly associated with forging a Western and Euroatlantic strategy towards the region. Compared to the previous two, it did not focus on member states but it basically highlighted the significance of the area as a strategic whole “greater than the sum of its individual parts” and its potential connections with the West.<sup>269</sup> Furthermore, there was no explicit reference to the states that composed the wider Black Sea region and the underlying idea was twofold: first, the region was not limited to the littoral states, and, second, there were several interlinkages with other regions and extra-regional actors, thus implying that what was happening in the Black Sea did not concern only the Black Sea but on the contrary the issues at stake were, to some extent, of global nature.

Lastly, another definition of the Black Sea region was provided by the European Commission in 2007, which stated that the Black Sea region “includes Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova in the west, Ukraine and Russia in the north, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the east and Turkey in the south,”<sup>270</sup> further pointing out that “though Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Greece are not littoral states, history, proximity and close ties make them natural regional actors.”<sup>271</sup> This was a definition that reflected the promotion of regional cooperation in various policy areas.<sup>272</sup> It was also a definition that had a significant impact on the debates in Europe over the present and future of the Black Sea and, as will be

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<sup>268</sup> See Cornell et al., “The Wider Black Sea Region,” and Asmus ed., *Next Steps*.

<sup>269</sup> Ron Asmus, “Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Black Sea,” in *Next Steps*, ed. Asmus, 15.

<sup>270</sup> See European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, *Black Sea Synergy: A New Regional Cooperation Initiative*, COM(2007) 160 final, Brussels, 11 April 2007. For further related documentation see: European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, *Report on the first year of implementation of the Black Sea Synergy*, COM(2008) 391 final, Brussels, 19 June 2008.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> For an overview of the policy areas of the Synergy see, Yannis Tsantoulis, “Black Sea Synergy and Eastern Partnership: Different Centres of Gravity, Complementarity or Confusing Signals,” *ICBSS Policy Brief 12* (Athens: ICBSS: 2009): 1–10.

shown, surfaced again and again in various European publications. Ludger Kühnhardt in a similar tone had pointed out that the Black Sea is a peripheral European region, a kind of a “European lake,”<sup>273</sup> with others adopting similar terms such the “EU’s new neighbourhood” and/or the “EU’s new eastern neighbours.”<sup>274</sup> Overall, this definition echoed for the time the emergence of Europe in the various discourses as the Black Sea’s pole of attraction.

These definitions, which in many cases were used interchangeably, dominated the Black Sea discourse and represented different approaches, rationales, and narratives. As Ronald Hatto and Odette Tomescu pointed out, the various definitions of the region were not restricted to geography but were instead directly “related to politics, economics, security, and culture.”<sup>275</sup>

#### **4. The narrative: common themes, different perspectives**

In addition to the different approaches of what constitutes the Black Sea as a region and how it can be defined, the region building discourse revolved around a cluster of issues which included “frozen conflicts,” energy security, democratisation, and enlargement, among others. The definitions of the Black Sea triggered debates about geography and location, security and solutions. This is to say that the different approaches of defining the region, as outlined above, were not just a matter of perception or taste. On the contrary, what appeared as “just” a geographical matter was politically significant. Deciding “where the Black Sea region lies” had significant implications. Where the Black Sea was presented to be located, namely on the frontiers, on the margins, a bridge or part of the centre, had an impact on its security understanding and it was this security understanding that

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<sup>273</sup> Ludger Kühnhardt, “The Lakes of Europe,” *ZEI Discussion Paper* 104 (Bonn: ZEI, 2002), 28–29.

<sup>274</sup> Dimitrios Triantaphyllou and Yannis Tsantoulis, “EU’s Policy towards its new eastern neighbours: A new *Ostpolitik* in the making or a *mélange* of different concepts and priorities?” *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen* 5 (2009): 6–18.

<sup>275</sup> Ronald Hatto and Odette Tomescu, “The EU and the Wider Black Sea Region: Challenges and Policy Options,” *Garnet Policy Brief* 5 (Paris: CERi, 2008): 1.

highlighted certain solutions. This section highlights the triptych *space – security – cooperation* and unpacks each category in order to demonstrate how geography was transformed into security concerns and thus into a particular way of reading regional politics, and how these in the end inflicted specific policy prescriptions/solutions.

### *Spatial representations: where you are matters*

The process of “writing space” – defined as the practice by which political actors spatialize international politics – in/of the Black Sea prompted assiduous inquiry reflecting the divergent security logics of the actors involved being intrinsically connected to certain interests and contradictory visions. Reading the literature on the Black Sea it becomes apparent that the dominant views, stemming from the legacy of traditional geopolitics, were based on certain understandings and meanings attached to its location, namely *the Black Sea is where it is and what it is* and one is forced to inevitably obey the geopolitical imperatives and their objective and undisputed laws. Geopolitical vocabulary and various spatial representations of the Black Sea permeated aggressively the literature on the Black Sea. A plethora of different geopolitical attributions and depictions became an integrated part of the discourse. In several publications, mostly by think tanks, the Black Sea was granted numerous divergent spatial identities. Its location and position was not objective but was on the contrary discursively constructed and granted with certain catchy epithets. Where the Black Sea was located, namely on the frontiers, on the margins, being a bridge, a hub, or part of the centre, had clear policy implications on the process of region building. Space and its representations occupied a significant part of the literature and portrayed the Black Sea, at least in spatial terms, as the epitome of multiplicity. This is why Chapter VI of the thesis is driven by the need not to study spaces within pre-given, common-sense places, but to foreground “the

politics of the geographical specification of politics.”<sup>276</sup> In theoretical terms and referring again to how RBA viewed the spatial representations of the Baltic Sea, what does the case of the Black Sea indicate in terms of the success or failure of region building?

*Security: omnipresent and diverse*

The closely intertwined and overlapping themes that dominated the security agenda were primarily the following: energy security, “frozen conflicts,” proximity to the Middle East and Central Asia, especially in the context of the Global War on Terror, environmental degradation, organised crime with a focus on illicit trafficking of people, drugs and arms, democracy and good governance, economic development, and NATO’s role in the region and its enlargement.

On the whole, security within the discursive construction of the Black Sea region has been both a unifying and a divisive theme, thus serving different functions. In reference to the spatial representations, the proliferation of notions such as margins, buffer zones, or bridges was part and parcel of an ongoing diffusion and fragmentation of security. Different security logics naturalised and legitimized the effects of the different spatial representations and assumptions. Furthermore, security was elastic acquiring different forms and meanings. In the case of the Black Sea region one could see a mix of traditionally defined security threats (i.e. “frozen conflicts”) and a series of modern risks (i.e. environmental degradation, welfare, etc.). As it will be shown in detail in Chapter VII in both cases the West was projected as a security provider.

Moreover, since the launching of the Global War on Terror, the Black Sea region was the terrain of two different security processes. High-pitch securitization portrayed a series of issues as security issues thus giving a sense of

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<sup>276</sup> Simon Dalby, “Critical Geopolitics: Discourse, Difference, and Dissent,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9, no.3 (1991): 274.

urgency to the idea of a region and making security a motivation force. At the same time, however, securitisation hindered the very idea of a region.<sup>277</sup> Furthermore, depending on the security logic the region was framed either as an asset or a burden for the West.<sup>278</sup> Security, as examined in depth in Chapter VII, actively intersected with region building and was a ubiquitous principle of formation “doing different kind of things” characterised by different logics and visions. In this context, how can a reading of the region building discourse of the Black Sea with an emphasis on the prevailing security logics contribute to the development of the RBA?

### *Regional cooperation: the bottom-up perspective*

Last but not least, there were also many references in the region building discourse to how to improve regional cooperation in the area. These references, expressed both in policy and academic discourse, avoided addressing existential questions such as whether there is a Black Sea region and what it means, and instead focused on sectors of cooperation on the ground. This was a more inward/regional looking perspective in a sense; the main point of reference was BSEC<sup>279</sup> and more precisely its structure, performance, and policy areas as well as how the organisation could

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<sup>277</sup> Christopher S. Browning and Pertti Joenniemi, “Regionality Beyond Security? The Baltic Sea Region after Enlargement,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 39, no.3 (2004): 233.

<sup>278</sup> Giuliano Amato and Judy Batt, *The Long-term Implications of EU Enlargement: The Nature of the New Border* (Florence: European University Institute in Florence, 1999); Heather Grabbe, “The Sharp Edges of Europe: Extending Schengen Eastwards,” *International Affairs* 76 (2000): 519–536; Przemyslaw Grudzinski and Peter van Ham, *A Critical Approach to European Security: Identity and Institutions* (London: Pinter, 1999), 150; R.B.J. Walker, “The Subject of Security,” in *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*, eds. Keith Krause and Michael Williams (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 71.

<sup>279</sup> The Heads of State and Government of eleven countries (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine) signed on 25 June 1992 in Istanbul the Summit Declaration and the Bosphorus Statement that established the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). With the entry into force of its Charter on 1 May 1999, BSEC acquired international legal identity and was transformed into a full-fledged regional economic organization and in April 2004 following the accession of Serbia and Montenegro, the Member States of BSEC increased to twelve. See, <http://www.bsec-organization.org/Information/Pages/bsec.aspx> (accessed on 25 October 2011) and also Stribis and Karabellas (comp.), *The BSEC at Fifteen*.

be improved.<sup>280</sup> Many examined the structure and performance of BSEC, but in most cases the focus was limited to low-politics and the various approaches were often of a technical nature.<sup>281</sup>

The debate on BSEC did not address large audiences and did not have long lasting effects on the policy agenda of the West and its priorities for the region. It should be noted, however, that the people discussing the idea of a Black Sea region in the context of the BSEC did not have the intention to draw the attention of the West. A sense of inclusiveness and regional ownership characterised the atmosphere of these meetings and the discussions (i.e. official documents, policy briefs, etc.) that followed. In discussions on BSEC or the region in general, there was either a focus on policy themes (trade, science and technology, marine environment, etc.), or on actors<sup>282</sup> (Russia's policies *vis-à-vis* the Black Sea, the role of BSEC, etc.). The accession of Bulgaria and Romania into the EU along with the launching of the BSS provided the incentive to various scholars who dealt exclusively with the region to discuss how to improve the BSEC-EU interaction, implement sectoral partnerships (e.g. transport, environment) following the example of the Northern Dimension, and bring the region closer to the EU model of governance.<sup>283</sup>

Besides BSEC, the establishment of the Black Sea Forum (BSF)<sup>284</sup> was an initiative that was received with different feelings by the various states in the

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<sup>280</sup> The author provides an interesting insight into its formation from the signing of the first documents establishing it in Istanbul in 1992 to its transformation into a fully-fledged international organization at the Yalta Summit in 1998. See, Evgeni Kutovoy, *Chernomorskoe Ekonomicheskoe Sotrudnichestvo: Vchera, Segodnia a Zavtra?* [*Black Sea Economic Cooperation: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow?*] (Krasnodar: Kuban State University, 2004).

<sup>281</sup> For an analysis of the structure and performance of BSEC, see Ioannis Stribis, *Decision-Making in the BSEC: A Creative Cartography of Governance*, Xenophon Paper 1 (Athens: ICBSS, 2006).

<sup>282</sup> Panagiota Manoli (ed.), *Unfolding the Black Sea Economic Cooperation: Views from the Region*, Xenophon Paper 2 (Athens: ICBSS, 2007).

<sup>283</sup> Ioannis Stribis, "Black Sea Sectoral Partnerships: A Tentative Model," *ICBSS Policy Brief* 14 (Athens: ICBSS, 2009).

<sup>284</sup> The BSF is an initiative of the Romanian government launched in June 2006; see "Joint Declaration of the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership", Bucharest, 5 June 2006, at <http://www.blackseforum.org/>.

region, ranging from enthusiasm to suspicion, and became part of the region building process. Compared to BSEC, BSF outlined a security agenda connecting “national and regional security to democratisation, respect for human rights and good governance” thus attempting to “build upon existing regional cooperation initiatives” in order to “consolidate regional commonalities” and shape “a common vision of democratic and sustainable development.”<sup>285</sup> More precisely, a key argument was that “the evolving security challenges in the region...require correlated and cooperative responses of the countries in the region.”<sup>286</sup> To summarise, many scholars, mostly from the region, focused on the region and the various regional institutions (including GU(U)AM, CDC) and policies at stake, but then gradually expanded its focus to examine the gravity pull of the EU and NATO.

## 5. Conclusions

In a challenge to the Cold War-era inter-subjective understandings, region builders approached the Black Sea in the post-Cold War period with different tools and analytical criteria for different purposes. Different regional formulations reflected essentially different readings of the region, albeit one could refer particularly to a core group of foreign policy elites, examined in Chapter IV, which through their work and region building practices managed to play an agenda-setting role. As Svante Cornell and others wrote in 2006:

“... it is only in the past few years that the idea of the Wider Black Sea region has gained acceptance. This is to a substantial degree a result of the work of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, which has

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<sup>285</sup> “Joint Declaration of the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership,” Bucharest, 5 June 2006, available at <http://www.blackseaforum.org/> accessed on 4 December 2006; “GMF Announces Creation of Black Sea Trust,” The German Marshall Fund of the United States Press Release, 5 June 2006, available at [http://www.gmfus.org/press/article.cfm?id\\_62&parent\\_type\\_R](http://www.gmfus.org/press/article.cfm?id_62&parent_type_R) accessed on 14 January 2012.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.



played an important role in gathering officials and scholars from the countries of the region as well as from Europe and America to a series of seminars on the Wider Black Sea region.”<sup>287</sup>

The undisputable diffusion of these conceptual categories into political praxis, as shown in detail in the forthcoming chapters, and the political implications of the geopolitical framings of the region were significant as they presupposed different logics of security. Indeed, reading the literature on the Black Sea and overall examining the region building discourse one realises how the themes of security and space/location were prevalent. At the same time, however, referring both to RBA and the works that attempted to discuss the particular case of the Black Sea one realises that an examination of who tried to talk and write the Black Sea region into existence and how is absent. This absence has theoretical implications as an in-depth discussion of both the region builders and their practices can shed light on region building in the Black Sea. In addition, an analysis of the themes of security and the spatial representations can further show how the case of the Black Sea can contribute to the ways RBA can in the future view security logics and spatial representations. Is securitisation (or desecuritisation) a process that facilitates or hinders the process of region building? Also, what happens where there are different security logics within the region building discourse? Is it, in the end, possible to think of a region beyond security or thinking in terms of security can in fact change the very idea of a region? Returning to the case of the Black Sea, the conceptual plasticity and richness that dominated the discourse produced political fragmentation. A Black Sea region had indeed started to emerge in discourse, but not in a coherent way.

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<sup>287</sup> Cornell et al., “The Wider Black Sea Region,” 16.

## Chapter IV

# Region builders: unravelling the BSEN

“The existence of regions is preceded by the existence of region builders, political actors who, as part of some political project, imagine a spatial and chronological identity for a region, and disseminate this imagined identity to others.”<sup>288</sup>

### 1. Introduction: questions, arguments, and objectives

Committed to the analytical approach adopted in the thesis and developing RBA’s genealogical potential the starting question of the chapter is: If regions, to use Neumann’s words: “are defined in term of speech acts; they are talked and written into existence,”<sup>289</sup> then a legitimate question is: “Whose “speech acts”<sup>290</sup>? Are regions essentially where politicians and people want them to be, as Nye argued in 1968?<sup>291</sup> In the particular case of the Black Sea region, can a comprehensive conceptualisation of the agents, and their interactions in the form of a network, provide a better understanding of the process of region building? Following

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<sup>288</sup> Neumann, “A Region-building Approach to Northern Europe,” 58.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>290</sup> Speech Act is a concept that has gained prominence in the realm of Security Studies and has been successfully transferred to other areas of research in IR, including regionalist studies. A helpful way to understand speech act is to follow Ole Wæver’s initial thoughts on security: “With the help of language theory, we can regard ‘security’ as a *speech act*. In this usage, security is not of interest as a sign that refers to something more real; the utterance *itself* is the act. By saying it something is done (as in betting, a promise, naming a ship)...[T]he *word* ‘security’ is the *act*... (emphasis added)”. See: Ole Wæver, “Securitization and Desecuritization,” in Ronnie D. Lipschutz ed. *On Security* (New York: Columbia University Press), 55.

<sup>291</sup> See, Joseph S. Nye “Introduction,” in Joseph S. Nye ed., *International Regionalism* (Boston, Little Brown, 1968), vi-vii.

Agnew's perspective, a brief answer is that "[r]egional schemes...reflect the biases, intellectual and political, of their originators,"<sup>292</sup> and region builders are differently empowered to perform region building.<sup>293</sup> Hence, what is important to note is the conditions of this empowerment and the underlying importance of the "cultural construction of agency."<sup>294</sup> Who performs region building – a think-tanker, an ambassador, a public intellectual – relies particularly on how his agency is represented as "legitimate" in context.

Hence, this chapter identifies the agents involved and the context of their actions/interactions that had an impact on the discursive construction of the Black Sea region. Attention is paid to significant, yet under-examined, factors such as the emergence of a loosely defined Black Sea Elite Network (BSEN). The objective is to highlight both the surrounding conditions of region building and the region builders that made the interlinking of conceptualisation, dissemination, and implementation (of the Black Sea as a region) futile. This chapter problematizes the discursive construction of the Black Sea region seeking:

“...to describe the field of relations that emerged around a problem, including: the *network* of people who constituted it as a problem, worked towards addressing it, and had their comments heard, taken up, discussed, rejected or modified.”<sup>295</sup>

The key questions are: who articulated particular understandings and visions of/for the Black Sea region, and under what conditions did these become informed and authoritative? Who formulated and communicated “scripts”<sup>296</sup> as persuasive

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<sup>292</sup> John Agnew, “Regions on the mind does not equal regions of the mind,” *Progress in Human Geography* 23, no.1 (1999): 95.

<sup>293</sup> Lene Hansen, “The Little Mermaid’s Silent Security Dilemma and the Absence of Gender in the Copenhagen School,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 29:2 (2000): 285–306

<sup>294</sup> John W. Meyer and Ronald L. Jepperson, “The ‘Actors’ of Modern Society: The Cultural Construction of Social Agency,” *Sociological Theory* 18, no. 1 (2000): 100–20.

<sup>295</sup> Andrew Neal, “Michel Foucault,” in Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams, eds. *Critical Theorists and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2009), 167 [emphasis added].

<sup>296</sup> Scripts can be defined as a set of representations and attributes deemed necessary to discursively construct a place. On the meaning of script, see: Gearoid Ó Tuathail, “Theorizing practical geopolitical reasoning: the case of the United States” response to the war in Bosnia,” *Political*

devices by deliberately endorsing specific spatial representations, constructing/prioritising security threats and solutions while promoting an explicit vision over its future? In a few words, who stressed the need for a “Black Sea region?” Moving beyond the empirical scope of the Black Sea region, what does this particular case study add to RBA’s analytical examination of region builders?

To address these interlinked questions, the structure is the following: i) the first part reflects on the concepts of “elite” and “network” respectively that frames region builders and examines the power/knowledge nexus in the case of the discursive construction of the Black Sea region; ii) the second part presents the constituent parts of the BSEN and highlights their interactions and different degrees of impact; and lastly, iii) the third part discusses the key attributes of the BSEN. In the conclusions there is a summary of the key findings and a discussion of the theoretical implications of the empirical findings.

## **2. The “confession” of a region builder**

An interesting way to start framing the complexities of the question of agency in the case of the Black Sea region is by hermeneutically reading a text by Mircea Geoană.<sup>297</sup> Geoană was Romania’s Ambassador to the United States from 1996 to 2000, subsequently serving as Foreign Minister of Romania from 2000 to 2004, and was a pivotal figure to the discursive construction of the Black Sea region. In 2004, Geoană wrote:

In the early and mid-1990s, I had the honor to represent Romania as Ambassador in Washington. I saw first-hand how the idea of NATO and EU enlargement emerged in the think tank community and was

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*Geography* 21 (2002): 619-620 and Gearoid Ó Tuathail and John Agnew, “Geopolitics and discourse: Practical geopolitical reasoning in American foreign policy,” *Political Geography* 2 (1992): 190-204.

<sup>297</sup> This reference to hermeneutics suggests an “attention to the significance of context”. Felix Ciută, “Security and the problem of context: a hermeneutical critique of securitisation theory,” *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 2 (2009): 305.

put on the foreign policy agenda by a small group of strategic thinkers working with political leaders. Representing Romania, I had the opportunity to work with individuals in governments, think tanks and NGO's who helped create the political coalition across the Atlantic committed to creating a new post-Cold War Europe whole and free.<sup>298</sup>

Two preliminary clarifications are essential. First, this is a quote taken from the preface of a book titled, *A New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region*, published by GMF in 2004 and this carries by itself significant undertones. Second, although there are no direct references to the Black Sea in the text, the connotations are clear. Geoană refers to the successive rounds of enlargements of NATO and the EU and even more importantly he briefly refers to the key actors involved in the process in order to show the way ahead for the “project” of region building in the Black Sea region.

A first observation is that of the direct collaboration and interaction between the policy and the think-tank world. In this case a high ranking state official, Foreign Minister of Romania at the time, fully endorses the initiative of the GMF to bring together “the best and the brightest thinkers for such a discussion by launching this project on *Developing a New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region*... trying to sketch out a new Euro-Atlantic strategy for the region.”<sup>299</sup> Using the conceptual language of critical geopolitics, one could refer to the interplay of “practical”<sup>300</sup> and “formal”<sup>301</sup> geopolitics – the discursive construction

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<sup>298</sup> Mircea Geoană, “Preface,” in Asmus et al eds. *A New Euro-atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region*, 7.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>300</sup> According to Ó Tuathail, practical geopolitics refer to “how foreign policy decision-makers make sense of international crises, how they construct stories to explain these crises, how they develop strategies for handling these crises as political challenges, and how they conceptualize “solutions” to these crises”. See, Gerald Ó Tuathail, “Theorising practical geopolitical reasoning: the case of the United States” response to the war in Bosnia,” *Political Geography* 21, no. 5 (2002): 603.

<sup>301</sup> Formal geopolitics denotes the “formalized theories and grand strategic visions of geopolitical intellectuals”. See, Gerald Ó Tuathail, “Understanding critical geopolitics: geopolitics and risk society,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 22, no. 2 (1999): 113.

of the region overall being itself a geopolitical act – characterised by the interaction of different sets of actors. Namely, a foreign policy decision maker endorsed a policy initiative – the discursive construction of the Black Sea region – made by geopolitical professionals.

Even more intriguingly, as it will be shown, this interaction between different categories of actors was never clear-cut/straightforward, thus also making the distinction between different categories of actions and geopolitics quite simplistic.<sup>302</sup> Foreign policy makers sought legitimisation by referring to the wisdom of think tanks and academics, whereas think-tanks and other (elite) entities involved in the production of knowledge, underpinned specific government policies and gave their eulogies. In the case of the Black Sea, think tanks such as the GMF and individuals such as Ron Asmus had an agenda setting role by launching a series of policy initiatives, thus resulting in this case to a certain extent to the gradual transformation of the traditional state actors from agenda-makers to agenda-takers.

Furthermore, the fact that Geoană contributed to this book is symptomatic of how the “project” of building the Black Sea region was a product of interaction of different categories of actors: a networked product.<sup>303</sup> People from the think-tank world talked to politicians and the mass media, politicians and high ranking state officials (e.g. diplomats) expressed their opinion in written form in think-tank publications, texts circulated and the idea of a Black Sea region spread; a body of knowledge started to emerge.

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<sup>302</sup> For a critique of the categorisation of the conceptual constructs (i.e. practical, formal, popular) in the literature of Critical Geopolitics, read: Felix Ciută and Ian Klinke, “Lost in conceptualization: Reading the “new Cold War” with critical geopolitics,” *Political Geography* 29 (2010): 327 – 328.

<sup>303</sup> Mathew Bryza, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, wrote a Chapter in a book published by the GMF titled “The policy of the US towards the Black Sea Region”. Also, in the same book, Javier Solana, High Representative for European and Foreign Security Policy, Secretary General of the Council of the European Union at the time, wrote the Preface of the book.

The quote also provides a more nuanced understanding that surpasses the traditional comprehension of agency and actorness in IR usually limited to states, individuals and international organisations. Geoană refers to both individuals (i.e. strategic thinkers) and collective bodies (i.e. think tanks, NGOs). This reading further suggests the presence of a network. Although Geoană does not use this term, he uses words such as “group”, “community” and “coalition” which imply something crucial: relations, interactions, ties and contagion of ideas and beliefs. Elite actors interacted, knowledge was diffused, power was exercised and a network – briefly defined as the building block of political interaction that both facilitated and constrained agency, as it will be shown, within the process of region building in the Black Sea – started gradually to emerge. To use Allen’s and Cochrane’s words: “[i]n today’s language, regions are a product of networked flows and relations fixed in a more or less provisional manner.”<sup>304</sup>

Yet, this reading of Geoană’s quote focuses overwhelmingly on the identity and performance of the region builders but marginalises the conditions and the broader context of their actions. This means that when addressing region building one needs to take into consideration the context. Hence, the endeavour should not be limited to examining who talks and writes regions into existence but also *where*, *when* and under *what* conditions. In this regard, this study does not understand region building simply as an elite driven process whereby a region is talked and written into existence, but rather as a process involving different kinds of actors, that occurs within a configuration of circumstances and conditions that might include different, if not conflicting, region building voices. Yet, different and conflicting voices in many cases were present in the particular case of the Baltic Sea and RBA has addressed this diversity. A question – and motivation at the same time – that characterises this chapter is, how a careful examination of the region builders in the Black Sea can contribute to how RBA views region builders? Is an

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<sup>304</sup> John Allen and Allan Cochrane, “Beyond the Territorial Fix: Regional Assemblages, Politics and Power,” *Regional Studies* 41, no. 9 (2007): 1162.

analysis of the context of their interactions important? Is it also important to identify them, refer to their capacities and their connection to the Black Sea (or any other region)?

### 3. Why an elite-network based approach?

The discursive construction of the Black Sea region was, as Ciută points out, "...an elite-driven 'project'"<sup>305</sup>. Speeches, publications, conferences, lobbying, all these practices were both tools and products of elite action. International politics has traditionally been the playing fields of the elites. As Kuus puts it, "[f]oreign policy is in substantial measure a realm of elite-level pronouncements..."<sup>306</sup> According to Dodds, "[w]hen we discuss something as important as the foreign policy of a state, we clearly need to draw attention to the narrative functions of a state's privileged story tellers,"<sup>307</sup> whereas Wæver argues in a similar tone that security –the discursive construction of the Black Sea itself being essentially a security project as it will be shown in Chapter VII– "is articulated only from a specific place, in an institutional voice, by elites"<sup>308</sup>.

Based on, but not limited to, significant conceptual constructs such as "organic intellectuals,"<sup>309</sup> "professionals of geopolitics,"<sup>310</sup> and "intellectuals of

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<sup>305</sup> Felix Ciută, "Parting the Black Sea (Region): Geopolitics, Institutionalisation and the Reconfiguration of European Security," *European Security* 16, no.1 (2007): 57.

<sup>306</sup> Kuus, "Professionals of Geopolitics," 2063.

<sup>307</sup> Klaus J. Dodds, "Geopolitics, Experts and the Making of Foreign Policy," *Area* 25, no. 1 (Mar., 1993): 71.

<sup>308</sup> Ole Wæver, "Securitization and Desecuritization," in Ronnie D. Lipschutz ed. *On Security* (New York: Columbia University Press), 57 [emphasis added].

<sup>309</sup> Gramsci adds the prefix organic in order to demonstrate how this kind of intellectuals grows organically within the dominant social group, the ruling class, in order to perform a vital function for this class: hegemony maintenance. It is according to Gramsci through this group, based on a certain educational system and cultural underpinnings, that the ruling class maintains its hegemony over the rest of society. This is why he approaches them not just as simple orator, or intellectuals living in academic ivory towers but rather, to use his words, as "permanent persuaders". Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971).

<sup>310</sup> According to Kuus, these are the professionals that "...command the institutional and cultural resources required to project particular geopolitical arguments as informed and authoritative." Merje Kuus, "Professionals of Geopolitics: Agency in International Politics," *Geography Compass* 2,



statecraft,”<sup>311</sup> this study chooses to refer to elites because the elite theory, with its long tradition and rich literature, provides significant insights and substantial tools in capturing the connotations and (policy) implications of this concept. The overarching argument that in a sense brings closer together all these concepts is that “to speak from a position of knowledge is to exercise authority over a given issue.”<sup>312</sup> The term “elite” denotes the ability to exercise political power directly or the ability to influence its use and formulate or deploy ideas and meanings in order to produce significant (political) change. It implies the capacity to effect change in politics, positive or negative, by using various means and often without any form of democratic control, free from direct and immediate accountability. In this case, it demonstrates a Foucauldian power/knowledge nexus, briefly defined as a view that mechanisms of power produce different types of knowledge which further reinforces exercises of power, omnipresent in the context of the BSEN.<sup>313</sup> In this case study, power/knowledge becomes even more relevant as according to Foucault, the very idea of knowledge or a truth *outside of networks* of power relations is invalid.<sup>314</sup>

Although Bigo does not refer to elites, his approach seems to fit well into the conceptualisation of elite in the thesis. In particular, Bigo argues:

“These (bureaucratic) pretenders are the products of the historical process of differentiation and dedifferentiation of various fields of

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no. 6 (2008): 2062; Merje Kuus, “Whose Regional Expertise?: Political Geographies of Knowledge in the European Bureaucracy,” *European Urban and Regional Studies* 18 (3):275-288; Merje Kuus, “Intellectuals and Geopolitics: The “Cultural Politicians” of Central Europe,” *Geoforum* 37(2):241-251.

<sup>311</sup> According to “O Tuathail and Agnew, “[t]he notion of intellectuals of statecraft refers to a whole community of state bureaucrats, leaders, foreign-policy experts and advisors throughout the world who comment upon, influence and conduct the activities of statecraft.” Geraróid Ó Tuathail and John Agnew, “Geopolitics and Discourse – practical geopolitical reasoning in American foreign policy,” *Political Geography* 11, no.2 (1992): 193.

<sup>312</sup> Lene Hansen, “Poststructuralism,” in John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens eds. *The Globalization of World Politics: An introduction to international relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 171

<sup>313</sup> Joseph Rouse, “Power/Knowledge”, in Gary Gutting ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 95-122.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

expertise which are no longer ‘contained’ (if they were ever) by the power (including the symbolic power) of the state and even less by the national political field.”<sup>315</sup>

The reference to the notion of “elite” characterises primarily actions and practices (manifestations of agency) rather than actors; it is an attribute. Elites do exist but what grants them the status of “elite” are their functions and capabilities. Furthermore, focusing on a categorisation of actors can be particularly misleading as different actors (e.g. a politician, think-tankers) often performed similar functions and also in some cases actors changed roles and actions according to the circumstances. Hence, the notion of “elite” that precedes the notion of a network denotes the capabilities resulting from the emergence and modification of ideas and identities, both inside and outside the realm of state authority, and calls “...attention to issues or even “create” issues by using language that names, interprets and dramaticizes them”<sup>316</sup>.

The decision to focus on network stems primarily from two distinct assumptions: i) the writing of the Black Sea region acquired meaning contextually under conditions of incessant interaction and networking embedded in an overarching discourse of building the Black Sea region –a region needs to be talked and written into existence– regardless of the different readings and visions; ii) the discursive construction of the BSR was a foreign policy project of limited scope involving a rather small number of people and institutions, thus making the whole endeavor of identifying a network plausible. The overarching argument is that modern actors – elites in this particular case – be it individuals and/or collective entities, are seen in the realm of international relations to be embedded in a network of relations.

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<sup>315</sup> Didier Bigo, “Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations: Power of Practices, Practices of Power,” *International Political Sociology* 5, (2011): 250.

<sup>316</sup> Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, “International norm dynamics and political change,” *International Organization* 52, no.4 (1998): 887–917.

Then again, two questions that need to be addressed and deserve special attention are: “What exactly is a network?” and “What is the difference between a network and a group of people?” The answer to these questions is that networks are the building blocks of political interaction that both facilitate and constrain agency. Based on common interests over a specific issue, different kinds of actors are connected with each other through a number of constant formal and/or informal, hierarchical and horizontal relations and through the exchange of information and resources they construct a network.<sup>317</sup> Focusing on interactions is essential as this is what differentiates a network from a group of people (e.g. musicians, academics) that can be defined either by common attributes, location, time, etc. but a specific set of ties among the members of the group does not exist.

The Elite/Network model is significantly influenced by the literatures on Epistemic Communities and Networks. Both have raised similar questions and both are characterised by ambitious attempts to understand agency in IR. Comprehensive definitions, significant classifications and analytical criteria are omnipresent in the literature. At the same time, however, there are significant gaps and inconsistencies. Even the terms “epistemic community” and “network” themselves remain ambiguous. To provide a terminological clarification, this study uses the term network instead of communities in order to highlight the interactions within and outside the so-called communities. In fact, within the literature on Epistemic Communities, there is a brief reference to networks. According to Haas, an epistemic community is “a *network* of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy relevant knowledge within that domain or issue area.”<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> Michael M. Atkinson and William D. Coleman, “Policy Networks, Policy Communities and the Problems of Governance,” *Governance* 5, no. 2 (1992): 154–80; Elke Krahnemann, “Security Governance and Networks”; Jörg Raab and Brinton Milward, “Dark Networks as Problems,” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 13, no. 4 (2003): 417.

<sup>318</sup> See, Peter Haas, “Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination,” *International Organization* 46, no.1 (1992):3 [emphasis added].

This study uses conceptual tools from both approaches in order to elaborate on the structure, the performance, and the key functions of the BSEN, while having always in mind the driving question of the chapter, namely how an identification of the agents and the outline of the context can shed light on region building?

The incorporation of the study of networks into the discipline of IR has been slow, uneven and diverse and in most of the cases it lacked ontological and epistemological precision. In the words of Hafner-Burton et. al, network concepts, principles and methods have not been “translate[d] well to the domain of International Relations”<sup>319</sup> further adding that “a transfer of the microprocesses of social network analysis to international relations is often problematic”<sup>320</sup>. Indisputably, the majority of research in IR, when referring to policy networks and communities in particular, has ignored issues of fundamental importance such as agency-structure and actorness. Network is a concept with significantly under-examined connotations and has been a metaphor rather than an analytical concept and an instrument of analysis in the field of IR. According to Dowding, network analysis began its life as a descriptive-analytic concept rather than a theoretical approach.<sup>321</sup>

Following Foucault’s work on the technology of the self that suggests that certain features of actorness derive from institutional structure, the argument in this study is that also certain actions and types of practices derived from the BSEN.<sup>322</sup> This means that to become a member of the BSEN one “had” to act and think according to certain norms and follow the trend or elaborate on ideas and strategies that were taken for granted; often without realising it. Operating under

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<sup>319</sup> Emilie M. Hafner-Burton, Miles Kahler and Alexander H. Montgomery, “Network Analysis for International Relations,” *International Organization* 63, no. 3 (2009): 577.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, 584.

<sup>321</sup> Keith Dowding, “Model or Metaphor? A Critical Review of the Policy Network Approach,” *Political Studies* 43, no. 7 (1995): 136–58.

<sup>322</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1979); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage, 1990).

the auspices of the BSEN was based on and required a particular attitude, a similar way of thinking along the lines of a Black Sea region.

Furthermore, according to Goddard: “who the ‘actors’ are within any network is defined empirically: depending upon the subject being researched, they may be individuals, coalitions, institutions, or states.”<sup>323</sup> When referring to the BSEN, this study examines the relations and interactions of the key elites involved, both individuals (i.e. President of Romania, Ministers for Foreign Affairs, US Diplomats, Think-Tankers, etc.) and collectives (GMF, State Department, etc.), in a context characterised by elite actions and practices influenced by norms, values, expectations, which according to a number of factors outlined in the chapter were both disputed and mobilised. The contribution of a network approach is that it permits an analysis of policy making that involves both state and non-state actors “linked through a mixture of hierarchical and non-hierarchical modes of cooperation”<sup>324</sup>.

#### **4. Power/Knowledge nexus and the birth of the BSEN**

As argued in Chapter III, the concept of a “Black Sea region” first came into being in the early and mid-1990s where there were some efforts by elite actors both in Turkey and in Romania to promote such a vision. In this context, the flagship initiative was the establishment of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. The discursive construction of the Black Sea, as enacted by primarily these regional actors and expressed through the establishment of the BSEC, however, soon lost its momentum. It re-emerged as a policy concept approximately around 2000 when a web of different “scripts into being” were woven together to bring about an agenda, a vocabulary and a set of ambitions for the Black Sea. Sergey Konoplyov, director of the Harvard Black Sea Security Studies Program at the John

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<sup>323</sup> Goddard, “Brokering Change,” 254.

<sup>324</sup> Elke Krahnemann, “Security Governance and Networks: New Theoretical Perspectives in Transatlantic Security,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 18, no. 1 (2005): 20.

F. Kennedy School of Governance, Harvard University, and Nancy Arkelyan Huntington, with a scholarly interest in the area, received a grant from the Carnegie Corporation in order to examine both the challenges and opportunities for the countries surrounding the Black Sea region. This geographic area started gradually to emerge in the eyes of western institutions as a mysterious space hiding opportunities and dangers.

One of the first ideas of the elite actors was to “advertise” the countries surrounding the Black Sea region to the official state institutions and sites of power by grouping them. The underlying logic was to adopt the same model used in Europe where certain countries were grouped, geographic spaces were re-written, identities were attributed and regions were talked and written into existence. According to Sergey Konoplyov: “the idea of a Black Sea region, the concept of a region itself was nothing but a political instrument, a tool; not an objective...Our aim was to ‘sell’ this idea to American officials and try to encourage regional security through cooperation and integration”<sup>325</sup>. This statement alone clearly showcases the different logics and incentives that characterised region building in the Black Sea compared to the case of the Baltic Sea where the idea of a Baltic Sea region was a grass-roots initiative of rediscovering the past, developing a sense of “we-ness” and paving the way forward for a common (European) future based on common norms and values. In other words, region building in the Baltic Sea was not a policy tool aiming to achieve more “important” objectives, but a tool in itself.

After 9/11 and the launch of the Global War on Terror, and prior to the enlargement rounds of NATO and the EU, it was primarily the GMF (and to a lesser degree other US-based institutions) that managed to raise the public and political profile of the Black Sea by launching influential publications, invigorating the discussions on the Black Sea at the governmental level and organising highly visible

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<sup>325</sup> To the question, why they did not refer to already existing regional initiatives Konoplyov’s response was that “BSEC did not have the mandate to deal with security issues and GU(U)AM was perceived to be too pro-American and too anti-Russian; hence not potentially useful as a policy tool”. Sergey Konoplyov, in discussion with the autor, Hebelyada, Turkey, June 28, 2012.

events, thus resulting in an agenda with clearly defined objectives, for the Black Sea.<sup>326</sup> As Bryza mentions, “[d]uring the past few years, thanks to the encouragement and intellectual energy of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, the Government of the United States has begun to conceive of a Black Sea policy.”<sup>327</sup>

The GMF tried actively to spread the idea of a stable and prosperous Black Sea region, as imagined and/or wished for by the West, while also promoting a Euroatlantic strategy expressed in various publications.<sup>328</sup> It is clear from the works of the GMF that the perpetuation of the master narrative of the Global War on Terror and the expansion and consolidation of Euro-Atlantic security permeated the debates on the Black Sea and became enduring characteristics of the region building discourse.

Besides the publication of monographs and special reports, the GMF was also very active in policy terms. Key people like Ron Asmus, Bruce Jackson, and Ian Lesser, lobbied for the idea of a Black Sea region both in Brussels and in national capitals. In this context, particular reference should be made to the ties the GMF developed with the Romanian government accompanied by the establishment of the Black Sea Trust in Bucharest and the cooperation in a number of areas.<sup>329</sup> Lying

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<sup>326</sup> Felix Ciută refers to the role of the GMF as a political vector in his publication “Region?”, 124–125. Some of the most representative publications that raised the profile of the region are: Asmus et al., *A New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region*; Asmus; Asmus, “Westernize the Black Sea Region,” *Project Syndicate Commentary* (2004), available at <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/1680/1>; Asmus, “Anchor the Black Sea Region in the West”; Asmus, “Developing a New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region”; Asmus and Jackson, “The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom” 17–26; Jackson, “The “Soft War” for Europe’s East; Vladimir Socor, “Advancing Euro-Atlantic Security and Democracy in the Black Sea Region,” Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on European Affairs, 8 March 2005; Bruce P. Jackson, “The Future of Democracy in the Black Sea Region,” Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on European Affairs, 8 March 2005.

<sup>327</sup> Matthew J. Bryza, “The Policy of the United States toward the Black Sea region,” 38.

<sup>328</sup> <http://www.gmfus.org/blacksea> (accessed on 14 October 2011).

<sup>329</sup> A tell-tale sign of the quality of the relations between the Romanian government and the GMF is the fact that both Craig Kennedy, president of the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), and Alina Inayeh, director of the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation (BST), were honoured by the Romanian government for their services to the Black Sea region on 8 March, 2013. See Press Release at: <http://www.gmfus.org/archives/kennedy-inayeh-honored-by->

outside formal policy networks the GMF, besides the impact it had on policy circles in Europe, further created a snowball effect that affected other significant think tanks in the US that published their own works on the Black Sea, including the Center for Transatlantic Relations - SAIS of the John Hopkins University, the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and the Silk Road Studies Program, the Woodrow Wilson Center, the Center for Black Sea-Caspian Studies, part of the American University's School of International Service, and the Institute for National Strategic Studies.<sup>330</sup> An interesting observation is that think tanks dealing with US foreign policy issues (e.g. Brookings Institution, Council on Foreign Relations) have been particularly influential due to their direct connections to the White House, State Department and Department of Defence, acting as a pool of resources for these official sites of power.<sup>331</sup>

The influence of the GMF and other US-based think tanks also stemmed from the power of the US, the *de facto* "rule-writer" of world politics in the post-Cold War period. As Ó Tuathail and Agnew argue, although they refer to individuals and not networks:

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[romanian-government-for-service-in-black-sea-region](#) (accessed at 28 March, 2013). Furthermore, Geoana's preface in the beginning of the Chapter is another indication of the close ties between the Romanian foreign policy elites and the GMF.

<sup>330</sup> See Svante Cornell, Anna Jonsson, Niklas Nilsson and Per Haggström, "The Wider Black Sea Region: An Emerging Hub in European Security," *Silk Road Paper* (Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program – A Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center, December 2006) and Ronald Asmus, ed. *Next Steps*, Judy Garber, "U.S. Perspectives on the Black Sea Region," "Trans-Atlantic Perspectives on the Wider Black Sea Region," Keynote Address at the Woodrow Wilson Center Conference, Washington, DC, June 10, 2008. Available for downloading at <http://merln.ndu.edu/archivepdf/EUR/State/105827.pdf>; Charles King, "Rediscovering the Black Sea: The Wider Southeast Europe in History, Politics, and Policy," *Meeting Report 228*, (Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2001); Eugene B. Rumer and Jeffrey Simon, "Toward a Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region," *Institute for National Strategic Studies Occasional Paper* 3, (2006): 2. For an overview of the activities of the Black Sea-Caspian Studies, see: <http://www.american.edu/sis/blacksea-caspian/index.cfm> (accessed 10 June 2012).

<sup>331</sup> To give one example from the field of foreign policy that demonstrates the interlinkages between the think tank world and the policy world, Phil Gordon served for many years as a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institute in Washington, DC before becoming Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs – a position within the American Department of State – in the Obama administration.



Those in power within the institutions of the hegemonic state become the deans of world politics, the administrators, regulators and geographers of international affairs. Their power is a power to constitute the terms of geopolitical world order, an ordering of international space which defines the central drama of international politics in particularistic ways. Thus...they can help create conditions whereby peripheral and semi-peripheral states actively adopt and use the geopolitical reasoning of the hegemon.<sup>332</sup>

The strategy and logics of a Euroatlantic strategy, as expressed in the writings of the GMF and in certain practices (e.g. lobbying, conferences, publications, testimonies, funding), were never formally adopted as such by the George W. Bush administration. There is no official policy document referring explicitly to a Black Sea strategy. Nevertheless, they did become the *de facto* guidelines of a policy formulation that brought the Black Sea region to the forefront of US foreign policy.<sup>333</sup> Influential high ranking officials and diplomats such as Daniel Friedman and Mathew Bryza put the Black Sea high on the US foreign policy agenda. According to Daniel Fata, US deputy assistant secretary of defense for Europe and NATO policy from September 2005 to September 2008 and later on Transatlantic Fellow of the GMF, it was primarily Donald Rumsfeld's, as Secretary of Defence from 2001 to 2006, interest in the region that drew the attention of the Pentagon.<sup>334</sup> It should be also noted that to a large extent, the foreign policy elites that were active in the context of the BSEN and in many instances were leading the debates were reiterating a set of shared understandings that derived from their connections with the US and the European foreign policy establishment.

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<sup>332</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathail and John Agnew, "Geopolitics and discourse: Practical geopolitical reasoning in American foreign policy," *Political Geography* 11, no.2 (1992): 195.

<sup>333</sup> For an extensive account see, Matthew J. Bryza, "The Policy of the United States Towards the Black Sea Region," in Ron Asmus ed. *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea* (Washington D.C.: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2006), 37-45.

<sup>334</sup> Daniel Fata, "Eastern European Geopolitics," presentation in the Harvard Black Sea Security Studies Program, April 2010, Boston, US.

In the context of the BSEN, initially characterized by the work of GMF and other US-based think tanks as a result of major shifts in US foreign policy orientation (i.e. the GWOT), European think tanks started also to gradually focus on the Black Sea region. These included the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) in Brussels, the Institute for Security Studies of EU in Paris (ISS), the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) in Rome, the Southeast European Association in Munich, and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) in Athens, among others. There were several key developments that triggered the interests of these think tanks in the emergence of a Black Sea region: the enlargement of the EU and to a certain degree of NATO, which brought the Black Sea closer to the EU, the activities of other US institutes, primarily the GMF, and in a more technical sense the launching of the Black Sea Synergy, a product influenced by CEPS' work.

Besides the aforementioned think tanks that promoted an EU-driven approach towards the Black Sea and managed in many cases to set the tone and the European policy agenda (e.g. the launching of the Black Sea Synergy), there were also think tanks and institutes with their own agenda who participated in the discursive construction of the Black Sea and in many cases both shaped and reflected the policy of a state or an organization towards the region. For example, the NATO Defence College (NDC) put the Black Sea on the official radar of NATO and gave various politicians and scholars the opportunity to express their opinion in papers that were published under the auspices of the NDC.<sup>335</sup> Almost all of these NATO-oriented publications echoed the works of the GMF and were particularly influenced by mainstream geopolitical thinking.

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<sup>335</sup> See, among others: Mustafa Aydin, "Regional Cooperation in the Black Sea Area and its Integration into Euro-Atlantic Structures," *NATO Defense College Occasional Paper* 11, no.1 (2005): 30; Federico Bordonaro, "Bulgaria, Romania and the Changing Structure of the Black Sea's Geopolitics," *Power and Interest News Report* (20 May 2005), available at <<http://www.nato.int/romania/blackseageopolitics.pdf>>; Alexander Goncharenko, "The Wider Black Sea Area: New Geopolitical Realities, Regional Security Structures and Democratic Control: A Ukrainian View," *NATO Defense College Occasional Paper* 11, no.2 (2005): 23–32; Mihail E. Ionescu, "Wider Black Sea Region Cooperation: A Historical Survey," *NATO Defense College Occasional Paper* 11, no. 1 (2005): 19–27.

The dissemination of the script(s) stemmed also from the presence of both collective and individual elites that served as hubs and brokers. The International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) in Athens is a typical example. Founded in 1998 as a non-profit organisation, it acted as both “an independent research and training institution focusing on the wider Black Sea region...and a related body of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)”<sup>336</sup> thus serving as its acknowledged think tank. In the beginning, it focused primarily on the role of BSEC and followed closely policy developments in the region. However, it began to gradually expand its research and activities. Although in some publications the focus was on the Black Sea itself, either in terms of the structure and performance of BSEC or in terms of policy themes and issues (e.g. frozen conflicts, energy), the ICBSS soon followed the trend established by the GMF and other US-based institutions by broadening its focus to encompass security issues and the role and policies of the Euro-Atlantic institutions *vis-à-vis* the region.

Apart from its publications that were often hosted by other institutions within or outside the BSEN,<sup>337</sup> the ICBSS served as a hub in three main ways. First, it acted as a link between the policy-oriented think tank world and academia dealing with the Black Sea; for some years either the Director General or the Director of Research acted as guest editors of the *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, published by Routledge, and were responsible for selecting articles to be published in the annual special issue.<sup>338</sup> Second, the ICBSS managed to create a sense of community and establish various connections among professionals dealing with the Black Sea through its International Symposium, an

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<sup>336</sup> This excerpt is taken from the official homepage of the centre. For further information, see: <http://www.icbss.org/index.php?cid=11> (accessed on 18 May 2012).

<sup>337</sup> In certain cases, the GMFUS and HBSSP hosted the works published by the ICBSS on their respective websites. This is another indication of how knowledge was diffused within the BSEN. In addition, most of the ICBSS publications were also hosted on the website of the International Crisis Group ([www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org)).

<sup>338</sup> The journal is officially associated with the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy, a think tank based in Athens, but the ICBSS was involved in the publication of a number of special issues dealing with the Black Sea. To access all issues and articles: [http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fbss20?open=11#vol\\_11](http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fbss20?open=11#vol_11).

annual event since 2008 bringing together approximately 60 interest parties, ranging from high ranking officials, think tankers, and young professionals to students with a proven interest in the Black Sea region. Third, the ICBSS influenced dialogue and policy formulation in Greece through its connections with both the BSEC bodies and the Hellenic Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The ICBSS did not have a concrete agenda or overall strategy for the Black Sea and its publications reflected different views and understandings on the region, and thus it was able to serve on many occasions as a platform for knowledge diffusion within the BSEN.<sup>339</sup>

The Commission on the Black Sea (CBS), a civil society initiative and a typical network(ed) product, was developed and launched in 2009 by the Bertelsmann Stiftung, the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation (a project of the GMF), the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV), and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS). CBS emerged as a key platform of elite action and interaction as it attempted to bring together foreign policy elites from all over the world, including both former and current policy makers as well as scholars and practitioners.<sup>340</sup> Overall, CBS was directly linked with several think tankers and key stakeholders (i.e. former politicians from the region, pundits, foreign policy experts, etc.) from both within and outside the region. The underlying objective was to encourage the production of new knowledge, if possible, while gaining significant visibility through access to mass media (e.g. Euractiv).<sup>341</sup> More precisely,

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<sup>339</sup> In my capacity as a Research Fellow at the ICBSS for three years (2007 – 2010) I had the opportunity to witness first-hand its role and impact of the formulation of the Greek Foreign Policy *vis-à-vis* the Black Sea region. Policy papers, articles, reports produced by the ICBSS were regularly sent to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. It is not exaggeration to argue, that regarding Greece's policy towards the region, ICBSS served as its *ad hoc* advisory body. This was a relationship confirmed in many ways, including among others the Ministry's funding, regular visits of officials, joint events between ICBSS and the Ministry, circulation of publications, etc.

<sup>340</sup> For a detailed list of the members of the Commission on the Black Sea, see the Annex of the Report (A 2020 Vision for the Black Sea Region) of the Commission.

<sup>341</sup> For a list of the various key stakeholders involved and other major developments, see: <http://www.euractiv.de/erweiterung-und-nachbarn/linkdossier/the-commission-on-the-black-sea-000123> (Accessed 25 October 2011).

the CBS published four Policy Reports and a Final Report entitled “A 2020 Vision for the Black Sea Region” in which it gave a set of eight recommendations.<sup>342</sup>

Furthermore, the CBS organised several meetings on issues related to the Black Sea. Based on the published report, the research conducted in the context of the CBS revolved around the following axes: i) economic development; ii) security; iii) regional cooperation; and iv) democracy and good governance.<sup>343</sup> In a sense, the CBS acted as a bridge between the think tank world and the policy-making world. Although it is difficult to assess the impact of the CBS it should be noted that it managed to bring the Black Sea to the attention of the mass media and highly visible websites such as the Euractiv.

In this context of constant interaction among different types of elites, the political authorities of Romania occupied a significant role during the process of region building and became engaged in all stages of conceptualisation, dissemination and implementation. In fact, the political elites of Romania had attempted in the mid-1990s to project a vision for the Black Sea, but this endeavour soon lost momentum as it became apparent that the Black Sea was not a priority for the West. However, in light of his country’s accession to NATO and the EU, Traian Băsescu deployed his own vision for the Black Sea as an emerging space encompassing the interests of the West, thus minimising the region’s duopoly (i.e. Russia, Turkey). Overall, Băsescu’s government set the discursive construction of the Black Sea region among its foreign policy priorities.

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<sup>342</sup>In short, the recommendations were the following: i) 2020 Vision – A Black Sea Dimension; ii) Enhance the profile of Black Sea regionalism; iii) Deal with the conflicts; iv) Focus on economic issues that meet common challenges and real needs; v) Promote and coordinate regional cooperation schemes at all levels; vi) Promote intercultural dialogue; vii) Promote the targeted training of professional groups; viii) Promote good governance, civil society and social dialogue. Commission on the Black Sea, *A 2020 Vision for the Black Sea Region* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, May 2010). Available for downloading at: [http://www.blackseacom.eu/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Paper/A%202020%20Vision%20for%20the%20Black%20Sea.pdf](http://www.blackseacom.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Paper/A%202020%20Vision%20for%20the%20Black%20Sea.pdf) (accessed on 26 July 2012), 13-14.

<sup>343</sup> The Commission on the Black Sea published four Policy Reports on the respective axes which also provided the main material for the Report titled *A 2020 Vision for the Black Sea Region*. To read the Reports, <http://www.blackseacom.eu/policy-reports/> (accessed 16 August 2012).

Following the launch of the Global War on Terror and in light of the country's accession to both the EU and NATO, Romania's foreign policy team decided to pursue again – the first attempt taking place soon after the end of the Cold War – an active policy towards the Black Sea. The objective was to discursively reconstruct the Black Sea in the eyes of the West and bring it closer to, if not making it part of, the Euroatlantic space.<sup>344</sup>

A policy instrument to fulfil these objectives was the Black Sea Forum for Partnership and Dialogue.<sup>345</sup> Overall, Romania's post-Cold War policy towards the Black Sea relied from the very beginning on the projection of the Black Sea lying at a civilisational and strategic crossroads with Romania itself situated at “the crossing point of geopolitical and strategic axes,”<sup>346</sup> thus offering “a necessary link between the North, Centre and South of Europe.”<sup>347</sup> These spatial representations and geopolitical reconstructions of both Romania and the Black Sea were used by the foreign policy elite of the country to pursue a vision, as expressed by Romanian President Traian Băsescu, of the formation of a “Washington-London-Bucharest geopolitical axis.”<sup>348</sup> As Ciută argues, the discursive construction of the Black Sea stemmed from a “struggle to (re)define Romania's identity through the

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<sup>344</sup> For an extensive account on Romania's policy towards the Black Sea region, see: Ciută, “Region? Why Region,”; Ovidiu Dranga, “Negotiating Security Cooperation in the Black Sea Region,” Speech at Harvard Black Sea Security Program's Regional Workshop, Batumi, September 2004, available at <http://www.harvard-bssp.org/publications/?id=162> (accessed 12 June 2012); *The National Security Strategy of Romania* (Bucharest: Romanian Presidency 2006), available at <http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/SSNR/SSNR.pdf>; Mircea Geoana, “Regional Security and Democratic Development in the Black Sea Region,” *Nixon Centre Program Brief* 10, no. 2 (3 Feb. 2003); Mircea Geoana, “Romania's Black Sea Agenda – and America's Interests,” *The National Interest* 31, no. 6 (11 Feb. 2004).

<sup>345</sup> Black Sea Forum, *Joint Declaration of the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership*, Bucharest, 5 June 2006, at <http://www.blackseforum.org/>.

<sup>346</sup> Emil Constantinescu, “The Security of Central Europe,” Address at the 14th NATO Workshop on Political-Military Decision-Making, Prague, 1997, available at <http://www.cedr.org/97Book>.

<sup>347</sup> *Romania's Membership to NATO: Key Elements of the National Strategy* (Bucharest: Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1999), 2.

<sup>348</sup> Traian Băsescu, “Inaugural Speech,” Bucharest, 21 Dec. 2004; Traian Băsescu, “Speech delivered on the Occasion of the Conference,” *Black Sea Area and Euro-Atlantic Security: Strategic Opportunities*, Bucharest, 20 April 2005, 3; Traian Băsescu, “The Black Sea Region – Advancing Freedom, Democracy and Regional Stability,” *Speech at the Council on Foreign Relations*, Washington DC, 10 March 2005.

(re)definition of its geographical location.”<sup>349</sup> As soon as Romania became a member of NATO in 2004, the political elite and primarily Bănescu himself, tried to shift the perceived geopolitical attributes of its identity to the Black Sea in what Ciută termed a “transfer of strategic identity”<sup>350</sup>.

For foreign policy makers in Greece and Bulgaria, the proximity to the Black Sea was perceived to be an advantage within the context of both the EU and NATO. Overall, one could discern the same concepts, words and foreign policy tools used in Romania’s attempt to discursively construct the Black Sea, albeit not to the same degree and with the same intensity due to different foreign policy priorities and understandings for both Greece and Bulgaria. The Black Sea was not perceived by the foreign policy elite in both countries to be as important as it was for the political elite in Romania. The main line of argumentation, among the foreign policy elites in Greece was that Greece could become a pivotal actor and exercise influence in the area by using its EU and NATO membership (i.e. what it attempted to do with the states of the South-eastern Europe), though it would have to walk a thin line with both Russia and Turkey in the region. The Black Sea was imagined to present both opportunities and dangers. Another argument was that Greece could emerge as a privileged partner in discussions with Russia due to their traditional friendly ties.<sup>351</sup> Hence the Greek discursive construction of the Black Sea, as expressed by an elite network that was primarily composed by high ranking state officials, think-tankers, and researchers, highlighted the potential contribution of Greece to raising awareness in Europe over the Black Sea’s significance.

Lastly, an actor that participated in this discursive construction is the European Commission, through its Directorate General RELEX (External

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<sup>349</sup> Ciută, “Why region,” 140.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 139-140.

<sup>351</sup> Yannis Valinakis, “Greece’s constructive role in issues of regional cooperation in the wider Black Sea region,” (in Greek: Ο εποικοδομητικός ρόλος της Ελλάδας στα ζητήματα περιφερειακής συνεργασίας στην ευρύτερη περιοχή της Μαύρης Θάλασσας) in Dimitrios Triantaphyllou and Panagiota Manoli eds., “The Black Sea: an emerging region” (in greek: Εύξεινος Πόντος – Μία αναδυόμενη περιοχή) *Special Issue – Review for International European Politics* (2008): 68.

Relations). What is important to notice though is that in foreign policy issues the EU, or in this case the DG RELEX, did serve as a platform for foreign policy interaction among its member states and its bureaucracy interacted constantly with national bureaucracies. Therefore, policy documents such as the Black Sea synergy were based on the lowest common denominator reflecting a sum of different and in some cases opposing voices.

DG RELEX did speak with a single voice, expressed primarily through the launching of the Black Sea Synergy, and articulated a vision for the Black Sea region that promoted a spirit of regional cooperation embedded in the idea of regional ownership and inclusiveness.<sup>352</sup> What is even more important in the framework of this study is that the people working at the DG RELEX were in continuous communication and consultation, with both governmental officials from the member states neighboring the Black Sea (i.e. Bulgaria, Romania, Greece) and people from the think tank world (e.g. Michael Emerson and Fabrizio Tassinari from CEPS, Dimitrios Triantaphyllou from ICBSS). Consequently, the work of the DG RELEX did not arise in a vacuum but it was a networked product.

As it can be seen from the graph below all these actors, sharing an interest on the Black Sea, were interconnected with each other thus forming a loosely defined network: the Black Sea Elite Network. In the graph below, the size of the circles suggests the degree of involvement to the writing of the Black Sea region whereas the presence of lines, and their respective thickness, suggests both the interconnections/ties among the different kind of actors involved and the importance of these interconnections. The circles within rectangles refer to those collective entities that served both as instruments/tools of other elites and as collective elites that had their own voice (i.e. BSEC, EC) whereas simple rectangles (the case of the BSF) imply that these served solely as instruments of region

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<sup>352</sup> For an overview of the Black Sea Synergy, see Yannis Tsantoulis, "Black Sea Synergy and Eastern Partnership: Different Centres of Gravity, Complementarity or Confusing Signals?" *ICBSS Policy Brief*12 (2009).

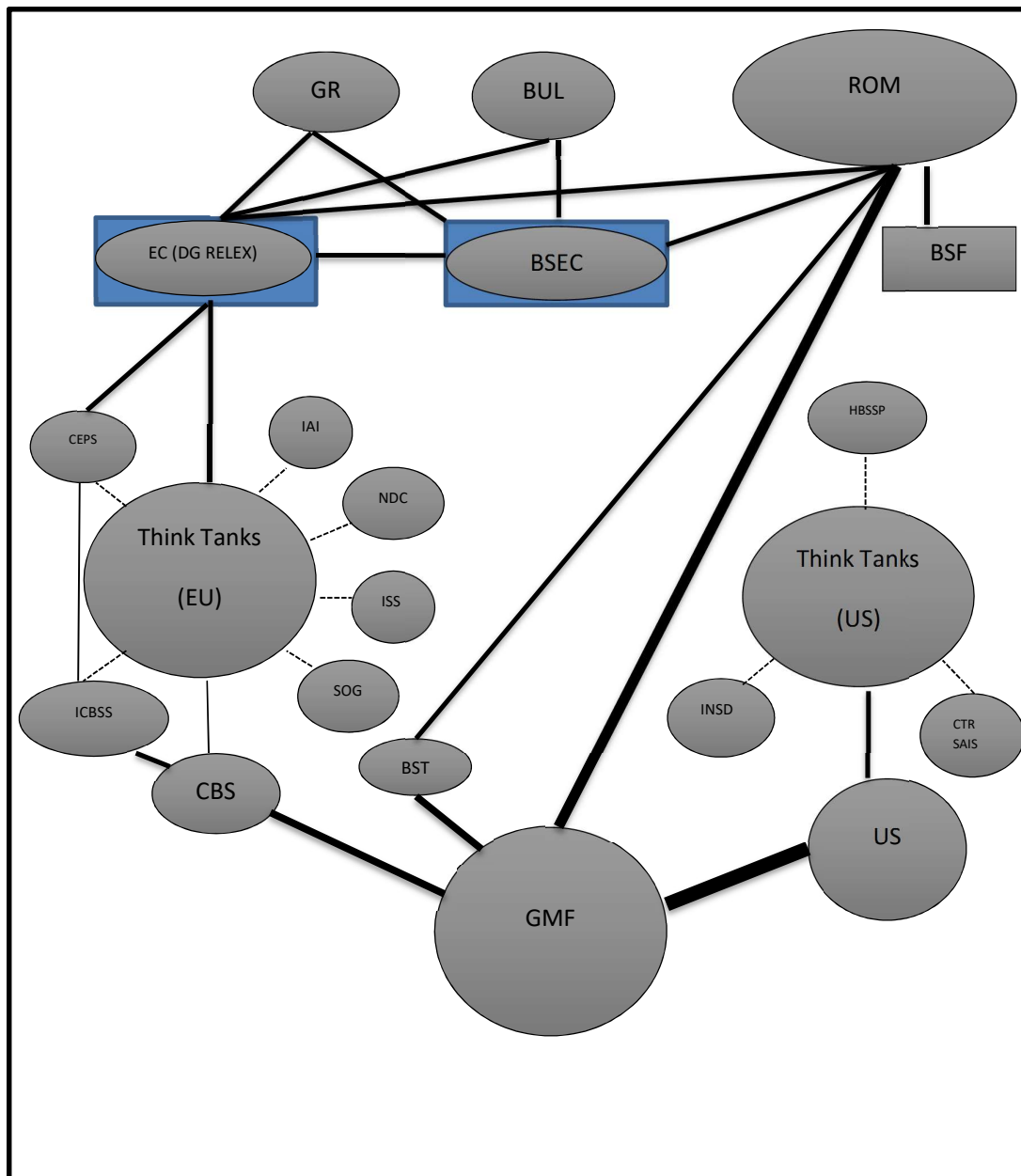


building. Lastly, the presence of dotted lines indicates that certain collective elites, and primarily think tanks (e.g. HBSSSP, ICBSS, etc.), served also as hubs facilitating the dissemination of the writing of the Black Sea region. This chart offers both a taxonomy of the main actors, be it the President of Romania or an active think-tanker or the DG RELEX as an institution, involved in the discursive construction of the Black Sea region and an understanding of how their interactions led to the formation of the BSEN. The basic premise of all network analyses, as represented in the graph below, is that in addition to the character, beliefs and interests of actors, the relations among a set of actors had a major impact on the outcomes produced by the network as a whole.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> Tanja A. Börzel, “Organising Babylon—On the Different Conceptions of Policy Networks,” *Public Administration* 76, no. 2 (1998): 258.

Graph IV: BSEN and the writing of the Black Sea Region<sup>354</sup>



<sup>354</sup> The list is not inclusive and one could also refer to other institutes, primarily from the think-tank world, and from countries of the region (i.e. Ukraine, Georgia, etc.). These are not included either because they did not have a strong impact on the process (limited funding, etc.) or because they interacted and worked together with other institutes mentioned in the graph.

## 5. Unravelling the Black Sea Elite Network

Based on the presentation of the BSEN this chapter moves further than a simple taxonomy of the constituent parts of the BSEN and attempts to shed light on its structure, features and performance, and examines how these factors were positioned in the context of region building. The first question raised, though, addresses the issue of its very ontology, namely how can the BSEN be defined? The definition proposed is:

a group of elites, that was “idea-based” and was constituted through a particular set of ties and social practices that reinforced rational, normalised conduct, and served as both a producer of representations and a disseminator of visions and political (re)orderings of/for the Black Sea region.

Yet, what were the key attributes that characterised its structure, functions and (poor) performance? Even more importantly, was there an implicit system of codes, meanings, imaginations, and symbols that privileged certain logics of region building? To address these questions, the chapter examines the structure, performance, and nature of the BSEN with the objective to understand how the process of the discursive construction was affected.

A first observation is that in terms of BSEN’s structure and topology there was no formal hierarchy. In fact, diversity prevailed over a limited centrality that was expressed primarily by GMF that did have a significant impact especially in the beginning of the process. That means that although the BSEN had GMF as its focal point, it lacked cohesion as a network. There were some hierarchies, in terms of access to official sites of power, resources and leverage, albeit these hierarchies among the different elites were not formal. There were centres (more connections and influence) and peripheries (fewer connections) and in the particular case of the BSEN, one could argue that it was primarily the GMF and the political elite of Romania that served as some kind of centre both constructing and disseminating a

vision for the Black Sea region. Furthermore, one could also discern geographies of power where knowledge and the scripts were produced in places such as Washington, Brussels, Berlin and Bucharest. Furthermore, the sets of ties and interactions among the existing elites were primarily informal and irregular, compared to the ties found within official institutions and other formal sites of power that often follow strict rules and protocols. Nevertheless, these ties were also solid and lasting as expressed by the organisation of several annual conferences, the launching of publications and the establishment of NGO's that were set up in order to promote an idea of a Black Sea region exactly because there were certain brokers and hubs that facilitated the interaction of the various elites and the circulation of texts and ideas.

Ties and interactions in the BSEN were also both interpersonal, i.e. direct human contact, and intertextual, i.e. through the dissemination of texts and the gradual formation of a vocabulary. Elite actors met with each other and interacted sharing common beliefs and ideas *vis-à-vis* the future of the Black Sea region. Yet the BSEN never acquired a single voice that could convince its elite audiences. In fact, different scripts began to emerge revealing in essence the presence of different "voices" over the existence, importance and future of the Black Sea region.

The BSEN was not defined only by its members' actions and ties but also by its ideational content. What did the BSEN try to articulate? What were the key ideas and understandings that formed its script(s)? In the case of the BSEN the idea of a Black Sea region, characterised by certain security representations (asset, burden), spatial representation (a bridge, a buffer, a pivot), and visions for the future (integration, institutionalisation), was in fact never politically harmonious. The main point is not whether the knowledge has been definitely proven or not, but rather whether it is socially recognised. According to Haas, expertise is socially constructed in that it is most powerful when epistemic communities are seen to

have integrity and to be free from political interference.<sup>355</sup> Although the concept of region, even the simple utterance of the word, had become an important foreign policy tool in the post-Cold War period, the idea of a region in the Black Sea was met with suspicion, if not resistance, by foreign policy elites in the region located primarily in the Russian Federation and Turkey that perceived this area to belong to their historically shaped zones of influence and interest. In the case of Russia, the concept of “near abroad” has significant geopolitical connotations. In fact, even the term region had – and still has – been a politically loaded term in Russian foreign policy discourse. According to Makarychev, “Russian attitudes toward regionalism are still heavily influenced by traditional state-centric – and mostly hard-security-driven – power politics calculations”, further adding that regionalism is “viewed as a policy of major international powers that are eager to form blocs and alliances to serve their geopolitical purposes.”<sup>356</sup>

The individuals and institutions examined in this chapter are those whose political and geographical imaginations have been crucial in laying the ground for some of the region building policies of the US and the EU towards the Black Sea. Interestingly, these foreign policy elites occupied a liminal position within the official foreign policy establishment; at the margins. While not paid members of the US or the EU administration, many of them had occupied in the past such positions (e.g. Ron Asmus, members of the Commission on the Black Sea) or were aspiring to occupy similar positions in the future. Hence, it should be noted that the foreign policy elites that acted under the auspices of the BSEN did not directly speak for the state. It was exactly this position that allowed them to appear as impartial commentators capable to “designate a world and ‘fill’ it with certain dramas, subjects, histories and dilemmas.”<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> Peter Haas, “When does power listen to truth? A constructivist approach to the policy process,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 11, no.4 (2004): 75–6.

<sup>356</sup> Andrey Makarychev, “Russia—EU: Competing Logics of Region Building,” *DGAP Analyse* 1 (2012): 6.

<sup>357</sup> O’Tuathail and Agnew, “Geopolitics and discourse” 409-10.

As it will be elaborated in the forthcoming Chapter, think tankers testified in Committees (e.g. Ron Asmus, Bruce Jackson, Vlad Soccor), lobby groups had direct access to official sites of power, publications and other non-published texts were in circulation, politicians and other practitioners were in regular contact with scholars alike. As Steven Larrabee said: “People like Ron Asmus and me had contacts to the State Department and extensive policy experience and we knew how to promote certain policy ideas and projects. Furthermore, the US political system, compared to the European, is more porous and allows for interaction among state practitioners and scholars.”<sup>358</sup>

Lastly, and referring to the case of region building in the Baltic Sea, that was repeatedly used by various region builders in the Black Sea as a blueprint, John Mikal Kvistad writes:

“The new opening for untraditional foreign policy after the fall of the Berlin Wall had consequences also in the Norwegian foreign ministry... the Barents project was conducted and promoted on a relatively independent basis in the early stages, detached from the ordinary hierarchical line of administration in the ministry.”<sup>359</sup>

In Neuman’s words: “this is the story of how... a small group took action to improvise the building of a new region.”<sup>360</sup> What distinguishes the region building in the Baltic from the region building in the Black Sea was that the “Baltic Sea region” project was soon endorsed by the local authorities and gained momentum at the level of the local authorities. Inclusiveness and regional ownership became the driving forces of region building as regional politicians and bureaucrats became heavily involved in the process. Regional audiences became regional builders. Talking to Stoltenberg, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway (1987-189,

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<sup>358</sup> Steven Larrabee, interview with the author, Hebelyada, Turkey, June 27, 2012.

<sup>359</sup> John Mikal Kvistad, “The Barents Spirit: A Bridge-Building Project in the Wake of the Cold War,” *Forsvarsstudie*, no. 2 (1995): 11.

<sup>360</sup> Iver B. Neumann, “Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy,” *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 31, (2002): 640.

1990-1993) and key figure in the discursive construction of the Baltic Sea, Neumann reports that, "...[i]t was the very idea that the motor of the cooperation should be tended to by the people in the North themselves, for the people in the North themselves..."<sup>361</sup>. Limited participation from the key stakeholders in the region resulted to a lack of regional ownership and inclusiveness that in the case of the Baltic Sea produced impressive results.

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<sup>361</sup> Thorvald Stoltenberg, interview by Iver B. Neumann, Oslo, 29 February 2000 and reproduced at Neumann, *Returning Practice*, 642-643.

<b>Table II: Black Sea Elite Network – key characteristics</b>	
Structure/Topology	No single authority, either individual or collective, above the elites – no formal hierarchy
Ties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Informal (e.g. politicians and think-tankers)</li> <li>▪ Thin (e.g. lobbying, consulting); allows for flexibility</li> <li>▪ Irregular</li> <li>▪ Both intertextual (i.e. how words, ideas and concepts were spread throughout texts) and interpersonal</li> </ul>
Positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inequalities: some elites were better positioned in terms of where they were located in the network</li> <li>▪ Centres (more connections and influence) and peripheries (less connections) (e.g. a scholar that works for GMF is in a better position to influence from a scholar that works in a less-known think-tank in a “less significant” country.</li> <li>▪ Hubs and Brokers that facilitated interaction and spreading of key ideas</li> <li>▪ “Gatekeepers” (e.g. BST)</li> <li>▪ Geographies of power: Washington, Brussels, Berlin, Bucharest</li> </ul>
Contagion	discourse and its textual representations spread by practices
Membership	rather exclusive, not random but rather based on professional, institutional, educational and to a certain degree national background
Actorness	Emergent and contingent; BSEN not a coherent and robust interest group but it did have magnifying powers
Network Cohesion	Limited; Diversity/Disparity prevailed over a limited centrality (GMF)
Ideational and Political Content	Textual representations were not culturally and politically harmonious; resistance to the idea of a BSR as talked and written into existence by the BSEN
Social and Political Recognition	<p>i) Lack of political trust from the targeted audiences</p> <p>ii) Lack of scientific status of the knowledge produced and of the scripts</p>



	iii) Lack of regional ownership; regional and local inclusiveness
Audiences	Foreign policy elites in the West (US, Brussels, Berlin) and to some extent in the region and primarily in Ukraine, Georgian, the Russian Federation and Turkey.

## 6. Conclusions

In terms of the region builders, the starting point is Neumann’s argument that “the existence of regions is preceded by the existence of region builders, political actors who, as part of some political project, imagine a spatial and chronological identity for a region, and disseminate this imagined identity to others.”<sup>362</sup> By examining the ways in which region builders represented the Black Sea as a particular kind of a place that needed to be approached in particular ways, this study elucidated the ways these clashing visions of region building came into being.

In the context of the RBA and the examination of the region builders in the Baltic Sea one can find indeed references to the actual people – region builders – that articulated region building visions. Neumann referred to how “A tightly knit epistemic community of ‘Nordic’ foreign policy intellectuals played a conspicuous role in producing the knowledge that was used to prop up these several ideas”<sup>363</sup>, Wæver mentioned the role of group of elites that managed to discursively construct Europe and navigate the European project, whereas Tassinari referred to “the regional vision forwarded by a small group of Scandinavian intellectuals”<sup>364</sup>. Overall, in terms of the region builders involved in the Baltic Sea there are references to a:

“a configuration that connects a variety of different actors, and is composed by a setting of multiple overlapping networks. ‘Balticism’ operates without constituting any distinct hierarchy; rather it

<sup>362</sup> Neumann, “A Region-building Approach to Northern Europe,” 58.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>364</sup> Tassinari, *Mare Europaeum*, 109.

challenges the old ones. Region formation around the Baltic – in the form of trans-regionalisation – brings together a number of views that are sometimes very different or even in conflict with each other, and links various levels such as the subnational, transnational and supranational.”<sup>365</sup>

Yet, what the particular case of the Black Sea revealed was that the discursive construction of the Black Sea region took place primarily *outside* the Black Sea thus indicating particular geographies of power. Indeed, one could discern that knowledge and the scripts were produced in places such as Washington, Brussels, Berlin and only to some extent in regional places like Bucharest. As already mentioned in detail in Chapter IV, it was primarily the GMF (and to a lesser degree other US-based institutions) that managed to raise the public and political profile of the Black Sea. This can be particularly interesting especially when compared to the case of the Baltic Sea where the presence of region builders outside the Baltic Sea was relatively limited, albeit existent.

The discursive construction of the Black Sea was an elite-driven project both at the level of the production (who talked and wrote the Black Sea region into existence?) and consumption (what was the audience?). In the Baltic Sea although the discursive construction was indeed an elite project, as soon as region building gained momentum it was actively endorsed by different kinds of stakeholders; both local and national, both at the state-level and the level of the civil society.

Furthermore, it is interesting to notice how there was no formal hierarchy, in terms of region builders and diversity prevailed over a limited centrality that was expressed primarily by GMF. Indeed, although the BSEN had GMF as its focal point, it lacked cohesion as a network. There were some hierarchies, in terms of access to official sites of power, resources and leverage, albeit these hierarchies

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<sup>365</sup> Joenniemi, Pertti and Ole Wæver: *Regionalisation around the Baltic Rim: Notions on Baltic Sea Politics*. Oslo, Report presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Parliamentary Conference on Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Area, 1992, 35.

among the different elites were not formal. Furthermore, the sets of ties and interactions among the existing elites were primarily informal and irregular, compared to the ties found within official institutions and other formal sites of power that often follow strict rules and protocols. In other cases of region building one could see a core or a point of reference (i.e. an institution, a state) that served as a catalyst for integration. In the case of the Baltic Sea, one could for instance identify certain region builders (e.g. CBSS, EC, etc.) that served as catalysts. In addition, one could refer to an emergent “club mentality”, defined as an implicit, informal process of socialisation whereby elites, by attending similar events and participating in common research projects and publications (among other region building activities), not only developed in some instances personal ties but also gradually developed a similar thinking and attitude *vis-à-vis* the process of region building.

Lastly, examining the region builders in the Black Sea one could identify the presence of different “voices” over the existence, importance and future of the Black Sea region. This was the case in the Baltic Sea as well, but it seems that in the case of the Black Sea the divergence was profoundly deeper. Overall, and in reference to the Baltic Sea, the idea of a “Black Sea region” was not endorsed by the regional official foreign policy elites (Romania being perhaps the sole exception), the local authorities and it never gained momentum at the level of the civil society. Inclusiveness and regional ownership were limited, if not absent.

The discursive construction of the Black Sea took place within a context of continuous interactions and networking characterised by the diffusion and dissemination of logics and scripts among different kind of actors both within and outside the BSEN. It is exactly this network-driven approach that critically considers the intertwining of agency and structure, the analytical importance of “elites” and “networks” and the significance of geographies of power, and examines in this context the conceptualization, dissemination and implementation of the idea of a Black sea region. It therefore addresses how the whole project of writing

the Black Sea was in essence a story of diffusion based on technologies of expertise. The elites operating under the “auspices” of the BSEN intervened through modes of representation –“talking, writing, teaching...”<sup>366</sup>– in order to portray their readings of the Black Sea as political necessities.

Overall, although there are indeed references to region builders in the RBA literature this chapter expands RBA’s understanding of region builders by highlighting how the region builders in the Black Sea failed to talk and write the Black Sea into existence. Seeking to better understand region building this chapter discussed: i) the effects of incessant interaction and networking embedded in a network of relations; ii) the significance of grass-roots participation that was evident in the Baltic but absent in the case of the Black Sea; iii) the interplay between actorness and institutional structures; iv) the absence of formal hierarchy and how diversity prevailed over a limited centrality; and v) the lack of inclusiveness and regional ownership. All these parameters shed light on the process of region building in the Black Sea but even more importantly can potentially contribute to a better understanding of region builders and the context of their actions in the context of RBA. Indeed, by focusing on the region builders and the context of their actions there is no doubt that although these elites did manage to form a vocabulary and articulate a script for the Black Sea region, the project of talking and writing the Black Sea region into existence was soon stigmatised and abandoned.

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<sup>366</sup> Edward Said, *Representations of the intellectual* (London: Vintage, 1994), 36.

# Chapter V

## Practices as tools of region building

“...the field of practices is the place to investigate such phenomena as agency, knowledge, language, ethics, power and science.”<sup>367</sup>

### 1. Introduction: arguments and objectives

Following the unravelling of the BSEN, the identification of the region builders involved, and the settings of their actions/interactions, this chapter continues elaborating on the mechanics of the discursive construction of the Black Sea region and moves from questions of “who” (region builders) to questions of “how” (practices). Attention is paid to “...the kinds of language and *ways* of speaking used, the concepts that emerged, the *techniques* and *methods* that were developed.”<sup>368</sup> In doing so, the argumentation departs from the “linguistic turn” and follows the “practice turn”<sup>369</sup> in order to showcase the link between the text and the policy

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<sup>367</sup> Theodore R. Schatzki, ‘Introduction’, in Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr Cetina and Eike von Savigny eds. *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 13–14.

<sup>368</sup> Andrew Neal, “Michel Foucault,” in Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams, eds. *Critical Theorists and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2009), 167 [emphasis added].

<sup>369</sup> Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, *International Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, “International Practices,” *International Theory* 3, no.1 (2011):1-36; Emanuel Adler, “The Spread of Security Communities: Communities of Practice, Self-Restraint, and NATO’s Post-Cold War Transformation,” *European Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 2 (2008):195-230; Rebecca Adler-Nissen, “The Diplomacy of Opting Out: A Bourdieusian Approach to National Integration Strategies,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 46, no. 3 (2008):663-684; Iver B. Neumann, “To Be a Diplomat,” *International Studies Perspectives* 6, no. 1 (2005):72-93; Iver B. Neumann, “ ‘A Speech That the Entire Ministry May Stand for,’ or: Why Diplomats Never Produce Anything New.” *International Political Sociology* 1, no. 2 (2007):183-200; Iver B. Neumann, “The Body of the Diplomat,” *European Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 4 (2008):671-695; Iver B. Neumann, *At Home With The Diplomats: Inside a European Foreign Ministry* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2011); Vincent Pouliot,

outcome. The focus is again on the elite level of action as the efforts of conceptualising, disseminating and materialising the idea of a Black Sea region took the form of elite level pronouncements. If regions are indeed talked and written into existence, then a legitimate question is how exactly this process occurs on the ground, *in practice*. In the particular case of the Black Sea, what implications transpired from the practices that sought to talk and write the Black Sea region into existence? What were exactly these practices of region building and what did they entail and imply?

Starting with the assumption that “all actors always have a limited practical baggage, sedimented in contextually legitimate narratives and logics of action,”<sup>370</sup> this chapter identifies this kind of a practical baggage – a repertoire of actions – available to actors involved in the discursive construction of the Black Sea region. Even more importantly, it goes beyond a simple taxonomy of this repertoire of actions and highlights the impact of these practices on region building in the Black Sea. Yet, to quote Lagendijk: “the relationship between representation and the effect of action is not a direct one, since the latter is also influenced by distribution of resource, procedural specificities and the power agents can wield.”<sup>371</sup>

The overarching objective is to open up the politics and methods of writing the Black Sea region, and refer to these extra-linguistic practices in order to: i) amalgamate the practical/contextual with the representational, i.e. to highlight the correlation between texts and practices; ii) demonstrate how practices not only were means of conveying the accompanying meanings of the textual representations, but rather how they had their own impact on the process, and last but not least; iii) to examine exactly how within the elite-network framework

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“The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities,” *International Organization* 62, no. 2 (2008):257-288; Vincent Pouliot, *International Security in Practice: The Politics of NATO-Russia Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>370</sup> Felix Ciută, “Security and the Problem of Context. A Hermeneutical Critique of Securitisation Theory,” *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 2 (2009): 321.

<sup>371</sup> Arnaud Lagendijk “The Accident of the Region: A Strategic Relational Perspective on the Construction of the Region's Significance,” *Regional Studies* 41, no. 9 (2007): 1196.

certain practices were ways and means to spread certain discourses and to establish a conceptualisation of the Black Sea region.

Everyday practices of region building in international relations are generally “...taken-for-granted, common sense, and trivial – in short, the unnoticed”<sup>372</sup>. As Bourdieu points out: “the logic of practice lies in being logical to the point at which being logical would cease being practical.”<sup>373</sup> This is why in this thesis the analysis of utterances, stories and narratives on the Black Sea region is also “concerned with the information over and above the linguistic meaning and it consists of inferences based on non-linguistic world knowledge”<sup>374</sup>. The discursive construction of the Black Sea, as designed and implemented by elites, did not arise in a vacuum but under the influence of a wide range of contiguous patterns of actions.

A focus on practices sheds light on the process of region building and shows that it was not only the text and its meanings that mattered but also the ways these meanings were transferred and enacted. It further demonstrates that regions are not simply talked and written into existence. As it will be shown, the practices in the Black Sea promoted a peculiar foreign policy activism that was not limited to state entities, but it also involved local and regional entities, thus breaking with established practices that favour a traditionally hierarchical, top-down and institutional way of region building.

Following Schatzki’s point of view, this study does not try to study all of the “potentially labyrinthine complexity”<sup>375</sup> of practice. Instead it develops overviews of fields of practice, thus referring to the details of practice which work “in the

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<sup>372</sup> Michael Hviid Jacobsen, “Introduction: The Everyday: An Introduction to an Introduction,” in Michael Hviid Jacobsen, ed., *Encountering the Everyday: An Introduction to the Sociologies of the Unnoticed*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 2.

<sup>373</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of practice*, Trans. R. Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 79, 86.

<sup>374</sup> Stevenson, Rosemary, *Language, Thought and Representation* (Chichester: John Wiley, 1993), 4-5 [emphasis added.]

<sup>375</sup> Theodore R. Schatzki, “Peripheral Vision: The Sites of Organizations,” *Organization Studies* 26, no. 3 (2005): 477.

sense of extraction from a fuller reality.”<sup>376</sup> Based on my polymorphous engagement as well as on textual analysis,<sup>377</sup> the main categories of practices region building in the Black Sea region observed are: publishing, lobbying, organising conferences, networking, testifying, funding and institutionalising.

## 2. The “practice turn” and IR: international relations *in practice*

The “practice turn” in the discipline of IR was introduced amid the so-called Third Great Debate, but it began to gain momentum in the early 2000s and soon became a significant research pillar in the edifice of social constructivism. Nevertheless, as Andersen and Neumann argue, more than two decades after the first references to practices in IR there is still “no consensus on what studying practices in IR really entails”<sup>378</sup> regardless of the increasing momentum in studying practices.<sup>379</sup> As

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<sup>376</sup> Ibid., 477.

<sup>377</sup> Critically reading documents often can reveal important hints on practices and implicit knowledge. In prefaces and prologues one can find interesting references to the key actors involved, the context of region building and patterns of actions on the ground.

<sup>378</sup> Morten Skumsrud Andersen and Iver B. Neumann, “Practices as Models: A Methodology with an Illustration Concerning Wampum Diplomacy,” *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 40, no.3 (2012): 480.

<sup>379</sup> The literature on practices is both interdisciplinary and ever growing. For an overview, not limited to IR, see: Emanuel Adler, *Communitarian International Relations: The Epistemic Foundations of International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Emanuel Adler, “The spread of security communities: communities of practice, self-restraint, and NATO’s post-Cold War evolution,” *European Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 2 (2008):195–230; Gunther Hellmann, “Pragmatism and international relations,” *International Studies Review* 11, no.3 (2009): 638–662; Peter J. Katzenstein, “A world of plural and pluralist civilizations: multiple actors, traditions, and practices,” in Peter J. Katzenstein ed., *Civilizations in World Politics: Plural and Pluralist Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 1–40; Friedrich Kratochwill. “Of false promises and good bets: a plea for a pragmatic approach to theory building,” *Journal of International Relations and Development* 10, no. 1 (2007): 1–15; Anna Leander, “Practices (re)producing order: understanding the role of business in global security governance,” in Morten Ougaard and Anna Leander eds., *Business and Global Governance* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 57–77; Jennifer Mitzen, “Anchoring Europe’s civilizing identity: habits, capabilities and ontological security,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 13, no.2 (2006): 270–285; Christian Büger, and Frank Gadinger, “Reassembling and dissecting: International Relations practice from a science studies perspectives,” *International Studies Perspective* 8, no.1 (2007): 90–110; Michael C. Williams, *Culture and Security: Symbolic Power and the Politics of International Security* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Rebecca Adler-Nissen, “The diplomacy of opting out: a Bourdieudian approach to national integration strategies,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 46, no.3 (2008): 663–684; Vincent Pouliot, “‘Subjectivism’: toward a constructivist methodology,” *International Studies Quarterly* 51, no.2 (2007): 359–384; Vincent Pouliot, “The logic of practicality: a theory of practice of security



Poulliot points out: “[a]ll in all, taking a practice turn is no small business for the IR discipline.”<sup>380</sup> It is no exaggeration to argue that most of the practice turn is primarily driven by ontological, epistemological and methodological contemplation.

A definition of practices is provided by Theodore Schatzki, who argues that a focus on practices is “a loose, but nevertheless definable movement of thought that is unified around the idea that the field of practices is the place to investigate such phenomena as agency, knowledge, language, ethics, power and science.”<sup>381</sup> Adler and Pouliot further point out that studying practices means “to explain and understand how world politics actually works, that is, *in* practice,”<sup>382</sup> a kind of a “raw data of social science.”<sup>383</sup> As Bourdieu succinctly argued, it is “the done thing...because one cannot do otherwise,”<sup>384</sup> thus being “socially meaningful patterns of action, which, in being performed more or less competently, simultaneously embody, act out, and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world.”<sup>385</sup>

This study follows the Bourdieuan tradition and incorporates Pouliot’s methodological inductive approach to practices.<sup>386</sup> Whereas Foucault was

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communities,” *International Organization* 62, no. 2 (2008): 257–288; Vincent Pouliot, *International Security in Practice: The Politics of NATO–Russia Diplomacy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Vincent Pouliot, “The materials of practice: nuclear warheads, rhetorical commonplaces and committee meetings in Russian-Atlantic relations,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 45, no. 3 (2010): 294–311; Leonard Seabrooke, and Eleni Tsingou, “Power elites and everyday politics in international financial reform,” *International Political Sociology* 3, no.4 (2009): 457–461; Antje Wiener, *The Invisible Constitution of Politics: Contested Norms and International Encounters*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>380</sup> Pouliot, “The Logic of Practicality”, 285.

<sup>381</sup> Theodore R. Schatzki, ‘Introduction’, in Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr Cetina and Eike von Savigny eds. *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 13–14.

<sup>382</sup> Adler and Pouliot, “International Practices,” 3.

<sup>383</sup> Pouliot, “Methodology”.

<sup>384</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 18.

<sup>385</sup> Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, “International practices,” *International Theory* 3, no.1 (2011): 4.

<sup>386</sup> Vincent Pouliot, “‘Subjectivism’: Toward a Constructivist Methodology’, *International Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2007): 359–84; Vincent Pouliot, “Methodology” in Rebecca Adler Nissen ed. *Bourdieu in International Relations: rethinking key concepts in IR* (forthcoming 2012).

interested primarily on the impact of practices and Bourdieu on how practices emerge, this study focuses on the practices themselves, i.e. the meanings they carried and the political repercussions. Practices constitute the empirical foundation for subsequent theorisation or region building and this section starts from the premise that most of the actions within the BSEN were not the product of instrumental rationality (logic of consequences), or communicative action (logic of arguing), but rather the product of norm-following and practical knowledge.

A focus on practices highlights the mutually constitutive dynamics between agency and structure. In a programmatic essay outlining their understanding of practice theory, Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot proclaim that they “take agency and agents as emergent from, and being continually reproduced by, practices, which capture both structure and self, and discourse/knowledge and the material world.”<sup>387</sup> Shedding light on practices further demonstrates how meanings, as constituents of symbolic power, were communicated in and through social/network relations by the use of certain practices. This is how they “transcend the dichotomy between political practices, as representations of the material balance of resources, and ideas”<sup>388</sup> and bring together the discursive and material worlds.

Overall, one could refer to the following points when discussing practices, their relation to discourse and policy change: i) practices are an integrated part of discourses but at the same time they can be considered to be in a sense outside textual representations thus enjoying a relative autonomy; ii) discourse and text structure practices but simultaneously practices might have an impact on discourses; iii) while discourse itself is constitutive of the possibility of policy/political change, such changes are operationalised and enacted through contextually specific practices.

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<sup>387</sup> Adler and Pouliot, “International Practices,” 20.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid., 3.

### 3. Practices: seeing into and beyond the BSEN

An advantage of the practice turn is that it encourages an in depth empirical examination. Manning highlighted the need to study “the real-life situations that are its [the discipline of International Relations] *raison d’être* ... [b]ecause it is real-life situations that have to be assessed, situations as they actually come about.”<sup>389</sup> The idea is to also explore the unintended or unseen consequences of practices, namely how certain practices themselves, regardless of their underlying discursive status and meanings, created divisions. How, for example, funding in the Black Sea was viewed with scepticism by regional actors and how it was perceived as a source of legitimisation of certain ideas? What did the organisation of a conference imply?

A point made by Foucault is that the complicated picture of international politics is actually made up of innumerable practices. In the case of the Black Sea one could refer to “sub-practices” or “micro-practices” that have gone unnoticed in the scholarly research, thus underlining the need to treat them as a valid object of analysis in this study.<sup>390</sup> Region building in the case of the BSR was a field of international practices where the production and dissemination of knowledge resulted from the meeting of different socio-academic habitus and their associated positions within different sites of power.

A reason to focus on practices in the particular case of the Black Sea is exactly because the elite involved had to use different patterns of actions in order to address primarily elite-audiences. The practices adopted in the case of region building in the Black Sea were characterised by a strong disengagement from typical bureaucratic practices. All these practices were detached from the hierarchical line of administration found in a ministry for foreign affairs and did not abide to the traditional rules of diplomacy. This model of practices promoted a category of

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<sup>389</sup> Charles Anthony Woodward Manning, *Nature of International Society* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 160.

<sup>390</sup> James Der Derian, *On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Western Estrangement*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987); Richard L. Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

politics that favoured both actions such as publishing edited volumes and organising conferences and actors such as think-tankers, former politicians, journalists, and in general stakeholders that for one reason or another had an interest in the Black Sea. For the Russian and the Turkish elite, a Black Sea region, regardless of its form, existed only in the sphere of intergovernmental relations. Any reference to a Black Sea region had meaning and potentially an impact only in the context of an official policy platform, be it the BSEC as an official regional organisation or through official diplomatic channels.

The practices of the Western think-tankers of writing about the Black Sea, addressing elite audiences, funding initiatives, lobbying politicians and overall constructing a region from bottom-up were in many occasions weighed against bureaucratic and diplomatic practices. The region building of the Black Sea, as articulated within BSEN in the context of the GWOT, was integrated into the normal bureaucratic procedures of the ministries involved or interested in the process (i.e. Romania and to a less degree, US, Greece, Bulgaria, and EC) but at the same time there were indeed practice(s) of building the Black Sea region that were less formalised and evolved according to the nature of the agents involved and the tools they had at their disposal.

### *Conceptualisation: the rise of the “Black Sea region”*

As argued in the previous chapters the concept of a “Black Sea region” first came into being in the early 1990s, amidst efforts by Turkey and Romania to promote a vision of a Black Sea Region.<sup>391</sup> The flagship initiative was the establishment of the

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<sup>391</sup> Reading the literature and talking to officials, one discovers different interpretations the most well-known being that: i) it was based on the vision of neo-Ottomanism whereby BSEC served primarily as a source of both legitimisation and influence for Turkey’s foreign policy ambitions; ii) it was an alternative to European integration stemming “from Turkey’s disappointment with the European Community’s negative response to its application bid for a full membership”. See, Tunç Aybak, “Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and Turkey: Extending European Integration to the East,” in Tunç Aybak ed. *Politics of the Black Sea: Dynamics of Cooperation and Conflict* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 32-33.

Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. The discursive construction of the Black Sea as enacted by primarily regional actors soon lost its momentum. It then re-emerged as a policy concept approximately around 2000.<sup>392</sup>

One of the first ideas of the elite actors committed to the idea of an emerging Black Sea region was to “brand” these countries to the official state institutions and sites of power by grouping them. The underlying logic was to adopt the same model used in Europe where Central and Eastern European countries were grouped, geographic spaces were re-written and regions were labelled (e.g. the Baltic Sea region, South-eastern Europe, Western Balkans, etc.). As mentioned in the previous chapter, according to Konoplyov, “the idea of a Black Sea region, the concept of a region itself was nothing but a political instrument, a tool; not an objective.”<sup>393</sup> The conceptualisation of the Black Sea was therefore directly linked to the practice of lobbying for it.

After 9/11 and the launch of the Global War on Terror and prior to the enlargement rounds of NATO and the EU, the GMF (and to a lesser degree other US-based institutions) raised the public and political profile of the Black Sea by launching publications, invigorating the discussions on the Black Sea at the governmental level and organising highly visible events, thus establishing an agenda with clearly defined objectives for the Black Sea.<sup>394</sup> Until then, any regional focus had been limited to the functioning of BSEC, GU(U)AM and other projects of either multilateral or regional scope; that focus was either thematic (e.g. ‘frozen conflicts’) or state-focused (e.g. Russia’s policy towards its former satellites from the Soviet Bloc).<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> The primary objective is to highlight the time when a web of different origins, understandings, meanings and “scripts into being” were woven together to bring about an agenda, a vocabulary and a set of ambitions for the Black Sea.

<sup>393</sup> Sergey Konoplyov, in discussion with the author, Hebelyada, Turkey, June 28, 2012.

<sup>394</sup> Felix Ciută refers to the role of the GMF as a political vector in his publication “Region?” 124-125.

<sup>395</sup> The first attempt was made in 1999 in the context of the Institute for Security Studies of the WEU that was later renamed to ISS EU. See, Valinakis, “The Black Sea Region”.

The GMF organised highly visible events that gathered policy makers, practitioners and scholars from all over the world and provided them with the opportunity to reflect on the Black Sea in “strategic” terms. These high-profile events represented the Black Sea’s debut as a region in the minds of the Western world, particularly in the minds of US State Department and European officials, both from Brussels and other European capitals. It should be noted at this point that it was not the State Department or another site of (official) power that asked the GMF to examine the importance of the Black Sea, but rather the GMF itself that put the Black Sea case on the foreign policy agenda of the official policy institutions. Steven Larabee, who was involved from the very beginning in the discussions on the Black Sea recalls: “The idea of a Black Sea region was Ron Asmus’ brainchild. Period. We, and some others involved, we had access to the official sites of power, our knowledge and expertise was welcome, if not appreciated”<sup>396</sup>, further adding that “the US political system, compared to the European, is more porous and allows for interaction among state practitioners and scholars.”<sup>397</sup> These events and the discussions that followed resulted in edited volumes that supported a Euroatlantic strategy for the region and set the agenda of the US to a large degree. In 2004, in GMF’s first monograph on the Black Sea, Ron Asmus and Bruce Jackson asked “Why do we need a new Euro-Atlantic strategy for the Black Sea region today?” later referring to “two major reinforcing components. The first element has to do with completing the job of consolidating peace and stability within Europe. The other has to do with addressing threats posed by the Greater Middle East. A subsidiary but still important strategic consideration pertains to European access to energy supplies.”<sup>398</sup>

Crucially, the GMF did not merely participate in the discursive construction of the Black Sea, but also set the tone by creating a vocabulary and a language for

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<sup>396</sup> Steven Larabee, in discussion with the author, Hebelyada, Turkey, June 27, 2012.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> Asmus and Jackson, “The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom,” 21.

the Black Sea. More precisely, it talked of a wider Black Sea area/region revealing not only the lack of an unwanted conceptual precision, but also a very vague, if not ambivalent understanding of how the Black Sea can and should be conceptualised. With only a few sporadic expressions that used the term Black Sea region/area (i.e. a paper produced by Valinakis at the Paris-based Institute for Security Study in 1999) it was the discussions that started in 2002 and resulted in highly visible conferences and publications in 2004 where the concept of a Black Sea region/area came to light. GMF provided also the context for discussants to demonstrate a direct link between the Euroatlantic security and the Black Sea. Not only a Black Sea region existed but it was also connected to the GWoT, to energy security, and to power projection (of the West) to the Greater Middle East, among other policy priorities. Scholars started using depictions such as “bridge”, “frontier”, “barrier”, “hub”, “major crossroads” while introducing gradually the vocabulary and the underlying connotations of traditional geopolitics.<sup>399</sup>

It was thus through the *practices* of publishing, organising conferences, and lobbying for a Black Sea region that a discourse of a Black Sea region gradually emerged with its own vocabulary that promoted certain understandings of *where* and *what* the Black Sea region was. At the same time this vocabulary triggered conflicting debates over the Black Sea region and its future. Even more importantly, it was not only what was being said or how but also who was saying what. GMF and all of the US-based institutions were met with strong suspicion

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<sup>399</sup> A quantitative approach that would demonstrate in detail where and how these words have been used would serve as basis for justification for the findings of the study but would miss the point. A simple google search exhibits the textual connections. To use the example of the concept “bridge” that was used repeatedly in the first book published by GMF on the Black Sea, a simple Google Search reveals that only in the first 5 pages (Google Search: 18 August 2012) it is used in at least 15 different sources ranging from think-tank publications and academic articles to articles in the News and in texts in the websites of National Ministries for Foreign Affairs, where in some cases there also direct references to the GMF publications.

from governments in the region, particularly Russia, and every initiative was either opposed or simply ignored.<sup>400</sup>

It should be mentioned that when referring to the GMF context, the main focus is on the two edited volumes published in 2004 and 2006 respectively. Although, in the literature there are many publications associated with the GMF (i.e. GMF scholar publishing for another think-tank or a publication that is heavily influenced by the writings of the GMF), these two publications deserve special attention. First of all, they hosted the views of key stakeholders from both within and outside the region thus serving as a *quasi*-platform of the Euroatlantic strategy. Second, these publications were the products of various workshops held in different countries involving a number of people. Therefore, they should not be seen as the products of single authors but rather as the products of interaction and networking. Scholars and politicians alike met numerous times in different cities, talked about the Black Sea, exchanged views and the product of these processes were the publications. Third, they were presented before political audiences in highly visible events and therefore had a direct policy impact as they set the tone.

There were several key developments that triggered the interests of these think tanks in the emergence of a Black Sea region: the enlargement of the EU and to a certain degree of NATO, which brought the Black Sea closer to the EU, the activities of other US institutes, primarily the GMF, and in a more technical sense the launching of the Black Sea Synergy, a product influenced by CEPS. Hence, compared to the GMF that set the agenda and had an impact on the policy process, the European think-tanks basically followed the momentum.

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<sup>400</sup> In one of the first meetings discussing the establishment of the CBS a Russian Ambassador, responsible for issues related to the Black Sea and BSEC in particular, expressed his discomfort with the launching of this initiative. In particular, any reference to GMF was met with suspicion, if not frustration, and any reference to organising conferences or funding was met with scepticism. The question monotonously raised was: why is the GMF involved? Even, beyond the content the very practice of conceptualising, disseminating and trying to implement the idea of a Black Sea region in western circles and outside the traditional realm of foreign policy making in the region, primarily in Turkey and Russia, was met with strong scepticism.



### *Dissemination: transport with transformation*

The concept of a Black Sea region remained until its gradual weakening an elite product and gained momentum in wider foreign policy debates through the dissemination of these elite level pronouncements. Dissemination in the case of the discursive construction of the Black Sea region was of utmost importance. As Dodds and Sidaway argue: “[g]eopolitics is dependent on both the ‘production and dissemination of strategic texts and maps’<sup>401</sup> and “in all cases classical geopolitics rested on the *international* circulation of geopolitical ideas”<sup>402</sup>. How can dissemination be defined? Did it simply imply the circulation of texts and ideas? An interesting way to understand the dissemination of the idea of a Black Sea region is by adopting Said’s model based on the following stages:

- i. The point of origin where a particular set of relations enabled the birth of an idea.
- ii. The distance traversed in moving to a new destination.
- iii. The conditions of acceptance or resistance at the point of destination.
- iv. The transformation and adaptation of an idea to its new context since ideas inevitably change as they become tied up in different socio-material networks.<sup>403</sup>

Reading these stages one realises that dissemination is actually never “transport without transformation”<sup>404</sup>. In the particular case of the Black Sea one needs to mention two significant factors that affected the process. Namely: i) the snowball effect; and ii) the presence of hubs. The GMF tried actively to spread the

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<sup>401</sup> Klaus Dodds and James D. Sidaway, “Locating critical geopolitics,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 12 (1994): 518.

<sup>402</sup> James D. Sidaway, “The geography of political geography,” in Kevin R. Cox, Murray Low and Jennifer Robinson eds., *The Sage handbook of political geography* (London: Sage, 2008), 44.

<sup>403</sup> Edward W. Said, *The world, the text and the critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

<sup>404</sup> Bruno Latour, “On recalling ANT,” in John Law and J. Hassard eds., *Actor-network theory and after* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 15.

idea of a stable and prosperous Black Sea region, as imagined and/or wished for by the West while also promoting a certain agenda and strategy and expressing them in various publications.<sup>405</sup> It is clear from the works of the GMF that the perpetuation of the master narrative of the Global War on Terror and the expansion and consolidation of Euro-Atlantic security permeated the debates on the Black Sea and became enduring characteristics of the region building discourse.

Lastly it should be noted that overall think tanks dealing with US foreign policy issues (e.g. Brookings Institution, Council on Foreign Relations) have been particularly influential due to their direct connections to the White House, State Department and Department of Defence, acting as a pool of resources for these official sites of power.

### *Dissemination: the practice of publishing*

Publishing became an efficient mechanism of disseminating the overarching idea of a Black Sea region. GMF and other US-based institutions started publishing monographs, edited volumes and policy oriented papers on the Black Sea as a region, Authors from both the think-tank world and the policy sector started writing on a wide range of issues (e.g. energy, conflicts, democratisation, etc.) related to the Black Sea. The two monographs published by the GMF were not simply products of scholarly works. The list of contributors is noteworthy in terms of policy relevance and influence.<sup>406</sup> These works had an impact and became points of reference due to both the visibility and extensive network of the publishing

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<sup>405</sup> <http://www.gmfus.org/blacksea> (accessed on 14 October 2011).

<sup>406</sup> Reading the short bios of both the contributor and the participants in the workshop one realises, the political leverage of these two publications. To list a few representative names and their most important, without going to details: Matthew Bryza (Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs of the US, 2005-2010), Sergiu Celac (first Minister of Foreign Affairs in post-Communist Romania), Konstantin Dimitrov (Bulgarian politician and a Member of the European Parliament until 2007), Mircea Geoana (foreign Minister of Romania from 2000 to 2004), Tedo Japaridze (foreign minister of Georgia in the aftermath of the Rose revolution, 2003 – 2004), Rouben Shugarian (Armenia's Deputy Foreign Minister, 1999-2005), Borys Tarasyuk (foreign Minister of Ukraine 1998-2000, 2005-2007).

institutes and quite often to one author's prestige and status in the field. Besides, the contributors of these two publications there were important workshops held in various cities (e.g. Berlin, Brussels, etc.) with the participation of numerous policymakers and scholars. In the particular case of GMF, both landmark monographs publications were presented in high-exposure events prior to the Istanbul and Riga NATO summits.

Thinks tanks with prestige, at least in Europe and the US, high budget and "free access"<sup>407</sup> publications were sources of influence for other think tanks. At the same time, numerous think tanks were sources of influence for the policy sector overall. The ICBSS is an interesting case as in many occasions the special advisor in foreign policy issues of the Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis (2004-2009) would contact the Centre asking for information on issues related to the Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership. Even more interestingly, scholars of the ICBSS would have access to official policy documents of the Permanent Representation of Greece in the European Union, thus demonstrating a direct link between a research body and official state entity, as a permanent representation.

Overall, publishing became an efficient practice of disseminating the idea of a Black Sea region. In the case of the NATO Defence College the authors involved in the NDC adopted the same concepts and ideas with GMF. For instance, the authors of an NDC volume titled *The Role of the Wider Black Sea Area in a Future European Security Space* published a year after the GMF's first book, not only subscribed to the concept of a wider Black Sea but they also made the same references to concepts such as Euroatlantic security, democracy, civil society, NATO's role, energy security, all omnipresent in the works of GMF and its authors.

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<sup>407</sup> In contrast to the academic sector where the dissemination of publications is free inside the field, through systems such Athens and Shibolet, but rather limited for outsiders, most of the think-tanks work hard to make their work visible to the general public and the policy sector. To give a few examples, the GMF made available the two books published on the Black Sea for free and ICBSS also when publishing a policy brief or a Xenophon paper would send it immediately to literally thousands recipients for free through emails and would send hard copies to the Ministries and other state institutions with a foreign policy focus.

Even in cases where there are no specific references, one can identify strong resemblances. To demonstrate this resemblance, as a form of *normalisation* of certain ideas and concepts, in a work written by Ponsard and published by NDC one reads that: “it [the wider Black Sea] offers direct strategic access to bases and theatres of operations in the Middle East and Central Asia, but also connects Caspian Sea resources with Europe and therefore contributes to energy security and the future stability of oil and gas markets.”<sup>408</sup> Accordingly, in the GMF’s works one reads that “the Black Sea region is at the epicenter of Western efforts to project stability into a wider European space and beyond, into the Greater Middle East”<sup>409</sup> further adding that “a final consideration in the strategic case pertains to the role of Euro-Asian energy supplies in providing for the energy security of Europe as well as the environmental quality of the Euro-Atlantic.”<sup>410</sup> In this regard, most of the works published in the NDC can be approached not as products of certain scholars but rather as products of their relations to other texts. Publishing became a practice of normalisation and standardisation.

Publishing was a practice with various spill-over effects. Its impact was not straightforward and sometimes difficult to discern. For example, reading the Report published by the Commission on the Black Sea that overall had the objective to reinvigorate the initiative for a Black Sea region, one could discern again similar practices and the use of similar concepts. Although the CBS gained significant visibility, accessed the mass media and was more inclusive in terms of membership as it invited scholars from the region, it soon lost momentum and it did not have an impact on the region building process. The fact that the Black Sea Trust of GMF sponsored the activities of the Commission caused controversy among regional elites (i.e. diplomats, high ranking state officials, etc.) that considered the initiative to serve the interests of the GMF and of the West overall.

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<sup>408</sup> Lionel Ponsard, “Conclusions,” in Jean Dufourcq and Lionel Ponsard eds. *The Role of the Wider Black Sea Area in a Future European Security Space* (Rome: NATO Defence College, 2005), 45.

<sup>409</sup> Asmus and Jackson, “The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom,” 21.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

Thus, the practices used by CBS were similar to the ones used in the context of BSEN. CBS tried to influence the process by disseminating publications, lobbying various European capitals in order to draw the attention of European foreign policy elites and organising conferences. This grass-roots foreign policy activism had an impact especially in terms of how this initiative was perceived by certain audiences in Turkey, the Russian Federation and other countries in the region. Being a member of the Commission on the Black Sea I remember how difficult it was to meet officials from certain states and invite them to endorse this initiative. When visiting Istanbul and Moscow with the objective to present the work of the CBS, members of the delegation were met with strong scepticism, if not opposition. In a conference organised by CBS in Istanbul, one of the participants – a well-known and influential Ambassador of Turkey – openly questioned the role and the objectives of the CBS arguing that discussing ways to promote stability and improve regional cooperation, among other things, are objectives pursued by politicians and diplomats, and not from NGOs that neither have the expertise nor the democratic legitimacy to do so. The ones that decided to endorse the work of the Commission were basically “outsiders” in their own countries.<sup>411</sup>

Furthermore, the publication of the academic *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, launched by Routledge in 2001 was designed to “take both an academic and also a more *practical policy-oriented* approach” to the region (emphasis added).<sup>412</sup> The journal’s creation was a tell-tale sign of academia’s increasing interest in the Black Sea. At the same time, however, the journal was from the very beginning associated with the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), an influential think tank in the context of South-Eastern Europe and the ICBSS. As a result the journal had a policy-oriented agenda that led to its increased visibility among policy makers, making it more of a point

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<sup>411</sup> For a detailed list of the members of the Commission: <http://www.blackseacom.eu/members/> (accessed on 12 January 2013).

<sup>412</sup> <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/fbss> (accessed on 16 October 2011).

of reference in the think tank and policy-oriented world than in academia. In total, eight special issues and an edited volume<sup>413</sup> dealing with the Black Sea were published by the journal. Reading the articles on the Black Sea one identifies many members of the BSEN<sup>414</sup>, and even more importantly the same concepts and meanings dominant in the GMF's driven attempt to discursively construct the Black Sea region.

Additionally, several semi-academic edited volumes were published dealing with the Black Sea. Although these works were usually produced by individual scholars and academics, some of these authors were connected to institutions and broader elite networks that supported their own visions for the Black Sea. For instance, Oleksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze, both with policy experience and positions in think tanks involved in the discursive construction of the Black Sea region, edited a volume titled *The Black Sea region. Cooperation and Security Building* in 2004 hosting contributions from scholars such as Sergiu Celac and James Sherr. A few years later, in 2010, Daniel Hamilton and Gerhard Mangott edited a volume titled *The Wider Black Sea Region in the 21st Century: Strategic, Economic and Energy Perspectives*. Temuri Yakobashvili, Zeyno Baran Svante Cornell, Michael Emerson and F. Stephen Larrabee are scholars that were involved in GMF activities and had a policy oriented perspective. The focus of these volumes was primarily on security (e.g. energy security, frozen conflicts) and cooperation (e.g. regional institutions and projects) and in most cases there was a strong normative dimension in the sense that most of the chapters had policy recommendations.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>413</sup> Dimitrios Triantaphyllou ed., *The Security Context in the Black Sea Region* (London: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>414</sup> The list is not exclusive, but among the people that were involved in one way or another in the works of the BSEN was: Steven Larabee, Mustafa Aydin, Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, Panagiota Manoli, Sergiu Celac, Fabrizio Tassinari, etc. All these, for example, were either members of the CBS or the GMF and contributed to the special issues of the Journal for Southeast European and Black Sea Studies.

<sup>415</sup> For a list of monographs see: Oleksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze eds., *The Black Sea region. Cooperation and Security Building* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe and East-West Institute

### *Dissemination: practices of socialisation*

Besides publishing, the organisation of events (conferences, task forces, roundtable discussions, etc.) constituted a significant practice of region building resulting into influential debates and discussions on the Black Sea. In most cases these events were followed by the publication of reports and edited volumes, thus forming a significant part of the Black Sea literature. One such event discussed earlier is the ICBSS Symposium, composed of young interested professionals whose goal was to contribute to dialogue, understanding and cooperation in the Black Sea region.<sup>416</sup> Another example is the Harvard Black Sea Security Program (HBSSP), founded in 1997 “to encourage regional security through cooperation and integration” by “[bringing] together leading policy makers in the [Black Sea] region with senior US officials to gain a deeper understanding of issues affecting the region and to encourage problem solving in areas of common interest”<sup>417</sup>. The program has since produced several reports on the Black Sea. The underlying idea was to promote inclusiveness but in most of the cases the people invited were already members of the BSEN.

Other significant events to the promotion of the idea of a Black Sea region in primarily the Western world were organised by the Institute for Security Studies of the EU (ISS EU), the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), the

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2004); Tunc Aybak ed., *Politics of the Black Sea: Dynamics of Cooperation and Conflict* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001); Ayse Ayata, Ayça Ergun, Isil Çelimli eds., *Black Sea Politics: Political Culture and Civil Society in an Unstable Region* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005); Carol Weaver and Karen Henderson eds., *The Black Sea Region and EU Policy* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2010); Hamilton and Mangott eds., *The Wider Black Sea Region in the 21st Century*.

<sup>416</sup> For an extensive account on the organisation of the Symposiums, namely the area of interests and the participation (both speakers and participants), see: <http://www.icbss.org/index.php?cid=140> (accessed on 21 October 2011).

<sup>417</sup> Regarding the rationale behind the launching of the program, the level of participation and its visibility see: <http://www.harvard-bssp.org/bssp/news> ((accessed on 21 October 2011).

Koerber Stiftung,<sup>418</sup> the Suedosteuropa Gesellschaft,<sup>419</sup> and Chatham House. In most cases these events were followed by publications.<sup>420</sup>

Furthermore, significant members of the BSEN, in terms of influence and policy networking, established bridges with official sites of power, primarily the US State Department. Key stakeholders such as Ronald Asmus, Bruce Jackson, Steven Larrabee, Ian Lesser, and Vlad Socor, among others, testified before highly influential Committees (e.g. US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations) and acted as the official informants and *quasi* architects of US foreign policy *vis-à-vis* the Black Sea region.<sup>421</sup> Testimonies were quite significant practices in the process of region building, although they primarily served bureaucratic purposes (i.e. record keeping). Furthermore, scholars in various think tanks were frequently asked to deliver speeches and offer their services and expertise to EU institutions.

The GMF managed to broaden the debate on the Black Sea as influential policy makers such as Matthew Bryza, Temuri Yakobashvili, Tedo Japaridze, Sergiu Celac and Peter Semneby, and well-known scholars were granted the

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<sup>418</sup> To give some examples: Thomas Weihe ed., *The Black Sea Between the EU and Russia: Security, Energy, Democracy*, 134th Bergedorf Round Table (Hamburg: Körber-Stiftung, 2007).

<sup>419</sup> The Südosteuropa Gesellschaft in cooperation with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Osteuropakunde organised in Berlin on 14-15 May 2009 an International Conference titled “The Black Sea Region: New Challenges and Opportunities for Regional Cooperation,” where several speakers – both academics and practitioners – from all over Europe discussed the prospects of the Black Sea. Following the event, the institute published several papers in the journal *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen* based on the presentations of the conference. See for example, Dimitrios Triantaphyllou and Yannis Tsantoulis, “EU’s Policy towards its new eastern neighbours: A new Ostpolitik in the making or a mélange of different concepts and priorities?” *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen* 5: 6-18.

<sup>420</sup> Overall, the list is vast and there is no reason to refer to all the events organized. There was particular reference to the ICBSS and the HBSSP because both have focused exclusively on the region and acted to a certain degree as hubs in the think tank world, together with GMF. For further information on the activities concerning the Black Sea see the following think tanks and institutions: <http://www.iss.europa.eu/activities/detail/article/european-foreign-policy-and-the-black-sea-region/>; <http://www.koerber-stiftung.de/en/international-affairs/bergedorf-round-table/protocols/protocol-detail/BG/das-schwarze-meer-zwischen-der-eu-und-russland.html>; [http://www.suedosteuropa-gesellschaft.com/index.cfm?page=reg\\_koop\\_schwarzmeer](http://www.suedosteuropa-gesellschaft.com/index.cfm?page=reg_koop_schwarzmeer) (accessed on 19 October 2011).

<sup>421</sup> Vlad Socor, “Advancing Euro-Atlantic Security and Democracy in the Black Sea Region,” *Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, Subcommittee on European Affairs, 8 March 2005; Bruce P. Jackson, “The Future of Democracy in the Black Sea Region,” *Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, Subcommittee on European Affairs, 8 March 2005.



opportunity to express their opinions in edited volumes. They were given not only the power to speak, but also the opportunity to speak in front of large audiences. This way, the project of region building was politically legitimised. To “play” with the Foucauldian understanding of power, power was not simply expressed through knowledge but knowledge itself was directly influenced by institutions/vectors of power. Writing on the Black Sea was indisputably an efficient practice of region building that gained prominence in the context of region building.

*Dissemination: the practices of lobbying and funding*

The GMF and those with access to the official sites of power in Washington occupied an important agenda-setting role, acting also as lobbyists. Ronald Asmus was instrumental in the expansion of NATO to include former members of the Eastern Bloc, and one could argue that he conducted similar lobbying efforts in promoting the vision of a Black Sea region. In their reply to Newhouse’s article, Asmus and Rosner did not deny the significance of lobbying, but attempted to justify their position, arguing in particular that NATO enlargement was a success.<sup>422</sup>

It is also important to note in this context the different perceptions of lobbying in different countries. While in Washington and Brussels lobbying is traditionally considered to be an integrated part of the political apparatus, a cog in the political machinery, lobbying has different forms and impacts in places such as Moscow or Ankara, where it is not institutionalised and in many regards not a preferable and patterned way of political action.

In addition, lobbying as a semi-institutionalised practice was not limited to the actions of the GMFUS. Lobbying was omnipresent during the process of region building and involved different kinds of actors in different contexts. Romanian foreign policy elites actively lobbied in Washington and Brussels, attempting to

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<sup>422</sup> Ronald D. Asmus and Jeremy D. Rosner, “Logic, Not Lobbies,” *Letter to the Editor, Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (July/August 2009).

promote their vision of a Washington-Brussels-Bucharest geopolitical axis in the Black Sea region. Countries such as Bulgaria and Greece also lobbied in Brussels within the environment of the European Commission, trying to influence the process of drafting a European strategy for the Black Sea. Comparing the first draft of the Black Sea Synergy with the official version of the document one does not observe an editing process but an essentially bargaining process.

Funding also emerged as a practice of region building. The Black Sea Trust (BST) is a typical example of a vehicle that provided grants to local and regional entities committed to objectives that were in symmetry with the objectives of the GMF, the trust's main sponsor. The BST has since played a pivotal role by providing grants to various entities (e.g. local and national NGOs, policy institutes) in order to implement their projects. The GMF pursued its objective of promoting regional cooperation and good governance by focusing on the roles and performances of civil society. What is interesting though and calls for further attention is the eligibility for funding and the policy themes covered. Reading Calls for Application for funding, it becomes evident that funding had as an objective to promote both regional/local ownership and a bottom-up approach in the process of region building. According to the website of the Black Sea Trust: "BST provides grants to local and national NGOs in the Wider Black Sea Region, to governmental entities, community groups, policy institutes, other associations to implement projects in the three programmatic areas of the Trust: civic participation, cross-border initiatives and Eastern Links. BST's Confidence Building Program supports the activities of non-state actors in the South Caucasus and its neighbouring regions by promoting mutual understanding and reconciliation between populations in territories involved in (armed) conflicts" further specifying that, in terms of eligibility, "individuals and political parties may not apply" but rather "Non-governmental organizations, governmental entities, community groups, policy

institutes, other associations.”<sup>423</sup> In terms of the size of the grants, most grants fell between \$15,000 and \$25,000 but, under certain conditions, can reach the amount of \$75,000.

Besides the Black Sea Trust that has provided significant amounts of funding to numerous entities covering a wide range of policy issues since its inception, the European Commission also emerged as a source of funding for entities that viewed and or promoted the idea of a Black Sea region. On the EC’s website one reads: “Horizon 2020, the New EU Framework Programme launched this year and running until 2020, provides a wide array of funding opportunities in the research and innovation domain. Its first work programme (2014-2015) includes a targeted call for the Black Sea region. The proposed funding amounts to EUR 1.5 million and all the Black Sea countries are strongly encouraged to apply.”<sup>424</sup> What is noteworthy is how the European Commission follows in this regard the logic of the Synergy, thus promoting the idea of a Black Sea region through cross-sectoral regional initiatives that address primarily issues of low politics such as fisheries, coastal tourism, and infrastructure development among other policy areas of cooperation.

Reading the background paper on the sustainable development of the economy of the Black Sea it is interesting to note the beneficiaries. According to the document:

“[o]verwhelmingly, the organisations that benefit most from these initiatives are national public sector institutions/organisations. Where such organisations are involved, there is no obvious pattern across different sectors, although tourism appears to be poorly

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<sup>423</sup> See, <http://www.gmfus.org/grants-fellowships/grantmaking-programs/black-sea-trust/> (accessed 16/07/2012) See, <http://www.gmfus.org/grants-fellowships/grantmaking-programs/black-sea-trust/request-for-proposals/> (accessed 16/07/2012).

<sup>424</sup> For further information on the structure of the funding, the scope of activities and its underlying logic, read: [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/newsroom/cf/mare/itemdetail.cfm?item\\_id=14534](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/mare/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=14534) (accessed 12 September 2014).

represented. Local administrations are also reasonably well represented, mainly in the environment and transport sector. They are less involved in centrally run sectors such as fisheries and energy. There is little involvement of trade organisations, private companies, or NGOs in these initiatives, which possibly reflects the nature of the funding programmes and their eligibility rules, which generally target public sector/non-profit institutions.”<sup>425</sup>

Funding was thus designed to promote region building along the lines of the Baltic Sea region building. The mimesis is evident in the document where the Baltic is presented as a role model: “[c]ooperation between non-EU countries and EU Member States operates largely on a bilateral basis in contrast to EU initiatives in other geographical regions, e.g. the Baltic.”<sup>426</sup> This practice favoured basically sectoral initiatives (i.e. Interstate Oil and Gas to Europe [INOGATE], the TRANsport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Central Asia [TRACECA], and the Black Sea Pan-European Transport Area [PETrA]), supported the role of institutions such as BSEC and promoted “cooperation for the Black Sea region as a whole.”<sup>427</sup> Funding was seen in this regard as a practice both privileging and endorsing particular categories of action and actors that shared a similar view with the EC on the development of a Black Sea region following the model of the Baltic Sea. Besides the BST and the EC, other funding initiatives started to emerge such as the Black Sea-Caspian Sea International Fund (BSCSIF) that had the objective basically to bypass the official channels of diplomacy and encourage region building through sectoral cooperation with the participation of local communities, NGOs, the business sector, etc. According to the Statute, the objectives are to promote cooperation in the following areas: “democratization, justice and human rights, economy, scientific research, education, culture and environment, development of

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<sup>425</sup> European Commission, *Background Paper for the Stakeholders Conference – Sustainable Development of the Blue Economy of the Black Sea*, 30 January 2014, Bucharest, Romania.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

competence, human resource development, poverty reduction, fight against terrorism, organized crime and drug traffic, fight against addictions, aimed at ensuring a lasting and efficient cooperation between both the countries in the region and the countries interested in achieving the objectives and aims of the Association.”<sup>428</sup> Hence, funding was a practice of region building that promoted regional ownership thus avoiding the vocabulary of geopolitics and a state-driven logic of cooperation. Funding was promoting region building from the bottom-up.

This, however, created reactions as most of the states in the region preferred to deal with such initiatives at the governmental level and not at the local or NGO level. Grass-roots activism, especially from foreign authorities was met with suspicion described in several occasions as a Trojan horse.

#### *Materialisation: enacting the “Black Sea region”*

Region building was not limited to producing and disseminating the idea of a Black Sea, but also included limited efforts to “materialise/implement” this idea on the ground. In this context, institutionalisation is considered in policy circles and among scholars working on regionalisms and regional integration to be an efficient way of establishing the idea of a region. Paasi, in particular, suggested that regions “gain their boundaries, symbolisms and institutions in the process of institutionalisation...” further adding that “[t]his process is based on a division of labour, which accentuates the power of regional elites in the institutionalisation processes.”<sup>429</sup> Yet, in the context of the discursive construction of the Black Sea region in 2000s building institutions was not a favoured practice among the elites in the BSEN. First of all, it was a practice that required significant political and economic resources and secondly, one could already find regional institutions in

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<sup>428</sup> International Fund for Cooperation and Partnership of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, *Charter of the Associations – Articles 13-14*, Romania, 2009.

<sup>429</sup> Anssi Paasi, “The resurgence of the ‘Region’ and ‘Regional Identity’: theoretical perspectives and empirical observations on regional dynamics in Europe,” *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 1 (February 2009): 121.

place thus risking significant overlaps. In addition, this was not a preferred practice exactly because it violated the logics of region building of the BSEN that promoted a bottom-up/grassroots approach. Although BSEN did establish channels of communication with official state entities, one could also discern and attempt to bypass official channels and actors of diplomacy in the countries of the Black Sea and build the region from bottom-up. In this regard, the region articulated by the BSEN did not prioritise regional institutions and only limited try to incorporate the existing ones to the vision of a Black Sea region as BSEC, having primarily an economic agenda, did not fit the priorities of the GMF and BSEN in general.

The only institution that emerged as an instrument for region building was the Black Sea Forum. Traian Băsescu, having the resources to use the practice of institutionalisation, launched the BSF with the objective to “consolidate regional commonalities” and promote “a common vision of democratic and sustainable development.”<sup>430</sup> The “mimesis,”<sup>431</sup> to use Ciută’s words, was “the experience acquired from regional cooperation in South Eastern and Central Europe, the Baltic Sea and Northern Europe, which generated enhanced confidence among participating countries”<sup>432</sup>. Overall, the idea of BSF was based on or had the intention to promote regional/local ownership, but as it will be shown, it actually became a source of fragmentation as its rationale and agenda were self-undermining and contradictory.

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<sup>430</sup> Black Sea Forum, *Joint Declaration of the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership*.

<sup>431</sup> Ciută, “Region. Why Region?” 136-139.

<sup>432</sup> Black Sea Forum, *Joint Declaration of the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership*.

<b>Table III: a taxonomy of practices</b>	
Publishing	Publications as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tools of dissemination of knowledge→ Spill-over effect</li> <li>▪ Tools of policy influence→ power/knowledge</li> <li>▪ Tools of “grass roots” foreign policy activism→ legitimisation (i.e. non politicians articulating foreign policy voice)</li> <li>▪ Tools of normalisation and construction of “truth regimes”</li> <li>▪ Tools of intertextuality</li> </ul>
Organising Conferences	Conferences/Workshops, etc as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tools of interaction and networking</li> </ul>
Lobbying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tools of agenda setting</li> </ul>
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tools of involvement (i.e. civil society), local/regional ownership and legitimisation of region building</li> </ul>
Testifying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tools of political influence</li> </ul>
Institutionalising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tools of implementation</li> </ul>

#### **4. Conclusions**

Practices, although omnipresent in any process of region building, have been largely ignored in the context of RBA as there have been a limited number of implicit references to how region building can unfold. Neumann argued in his work that “the very first step has been a series of conferences, think tank reports, and articles in more or less scientific journals. The first steps have been taken by intellectuals, to some extent the cultural elite but in a more clearly political

form.”<sup>433</sup> Browning refers in his work to how the Norwegian Foreign Ministry asked the historian, Einar Niemi, to produce a scholarly work examining and presenting the close ties and historical sympathies that flourished among people in Norway and Russia in the context of the Pomor trade route.

As shown in this chapter, a more explicit focus on region-building practices enables a more comprehensive understanding of their constitutive role. The practices of “conceptualisation” and “dissemination” sought to “materialise” the idea of a Black Sea region, and also triggered political reactions by the regional elites and primarily state officials. The practices adopted in the case of region building in the Black Sea were characterised by a strong disengagement from typical bureaucratic practices and did not always abide by the traditional rules of diplomacy. This model of practices promoted a kind of politics that was met with scepticism by the Russian and the Turkish elites operating at the level of the state.

Such practices, either in the form of publishing or funding, reflected, consolidated and also shaped the discursively articulated political principles and priorities discussed in the previous chapters – i.e. who should act and what should be discussed. This model of practices was internalised by scholars and political elites, who reproduced it “by favouring core knowledge as more authoritative and scientific in comparison to local variants.”<sup>434</sup> These practices reflected neoliberal principles that constructed legitimate and privileged ways of acting and policy making, thus acting as forms of normalisation and standardisation. Hence, the practices of region building in the Black Sea emerged as another trigger of contention exemplifying conflicts and contradictions within the region building discourse. Not only the idea of a Black Sea region itself but also how it was

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<sup>433</sup> Ole Wæver, “Culture and Identity in the Baltic Sea Region” in Pertti Joenniemi ed., *Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region: Needs and Prospects* (Tampere, 1991), 102.

<sup>434</sup> Arlene Tickner and Ole Waever eds., *International Relations Scholarship Around the World* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 335.



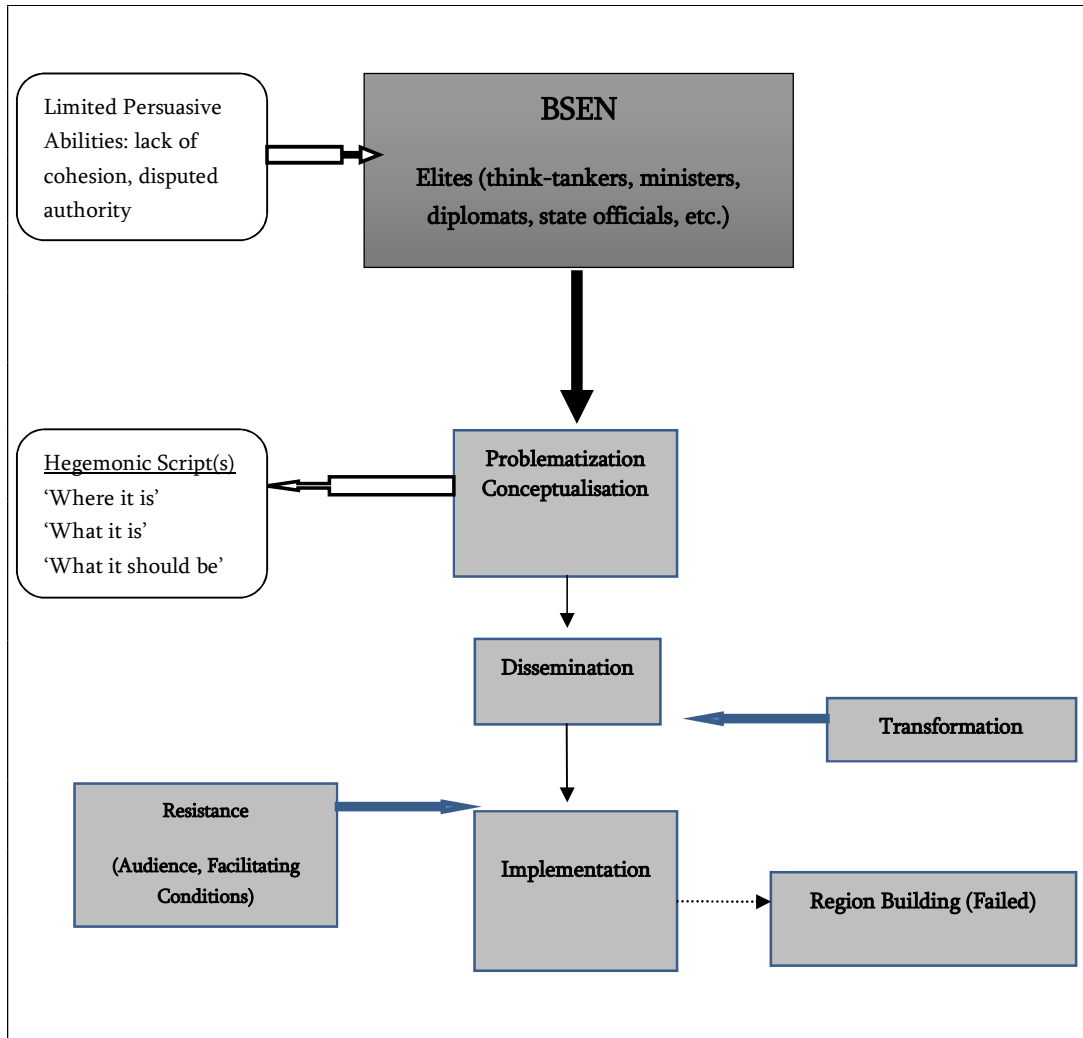
attempted to come into existence was a site of contention triggering further political reactions.

Publishing documents, organising conferences, bringing together policy scholars, academics and politicians and overall raising awareness turned out to be the main practices of region building. Their examination leads to three significant conclusions: i) they served both as platforms for knowledge production and knowledge dissemination; ii) they did serve as mechanisms/sources of legitimisation of the region building process by involving the civil society, local entities and promoting a bottom-up region building; iii) they promoted exclusiveness as the people participating in this kind of events were primarily elites that shared more or less the same ideas and were familiar with this set of practices.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that an obstacle in critically examining practices is that some of them – particularly the practice of lobbying and funding – are relatively difficult to trace and analyse in the context of region building. Although lobbying is an institutionalised practice in both the US and the EU, in the case of building the Black Sea its informality was celebrated as a virtue. During my engagement with the project I witnessed first-hand numerous cases of lobbying that are difficult to reproduce. Similarly, with the exception of the Black Sea Trust of the GMF, the EC and some other institutes such as the Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Carnegie Endowment, funding was a practice characterised by a lack of visibility. Although these limitations make the research, in terms of the raw data presented, less persuasive, the argument that practices did have an impact does shed light on under-examined aspects of the region building process. Such practices were both means of construction of the Black Sea region and of legitimisation and production of “privileged” agents, i.e who is eligible to participate in the process of region building? Hence, practices did not solely construct the Black Sea region, but they also in the process constructed “legitimate” and privileged ways of acting and policy making in the region, thus acting as forms of normalisation of certain ideas and concepts. These practices reflected neoliberal principles and were also

originated in specific places (i.e. Washington, Brussels, etc.) thus also demonstrating particular geographies of power.

**Graph V: BSEN and the practices of region building**<sup>435</sup>



<sup>435</sup> This graph basically presents the practices of the BSEN and how these resulted to the failure of the process of region building. It should be noted that the idea is not to present a model of causality where A-B-C leads to D. It would be misleading to support a strict sequence of actions and events as conceptualisation, dissemination and implementation were continuously intertwined. In this regard, attention should be noted to the: i) material/semiotic symbiosis and the significance of elite networking and how it was that characterised by a lack of cohesion and authoritative power; ii) problematization/conceptualisation and what the hegemonic scripts contained; iii) the transformation – through interpretation – of these scripts, and lastly; iv) different forms of resistance to the attempts to discursively construct the Black Sea region.

Practices, as tools of region building and tools of policy making, were not politically, ideologically and spatially neutral or impartial but on the contrary they were politically and ideologically driven tools with political repercussions. Following Andersen and Neumann's suggestion to construct a model of practices, in the case of the Black Sea one could talk of a "Western" model of practices that was met with scepticism and disapproval by the various audiences in the Black Sea.<sup>436</sup> It is no exaggeration to argue that it was the various elites using these practices who managed to set the tone of the discourse and put the Black Sea on the agendas of official sites of power. Members of parliaments and ministers of foreign affairs and defence did not start talking about the Black Sea out of nowhere. On the contrary, they were the recipients of certain practices enacting particular speech acts, stories and narratives that transformed the Black Sea from an undefined, ignored geographic space into a politically ambivalent one.

Overall, a focus on practices offers a more processual view of region building and can contribute to RBA's understanding of region building as it unfolds on the ground. Neumann, who years after his engagement with the Baltic Sea and RBA produced significant work on practices, and a few others did refer in their work to how the Baltic Sea region was talked and written into existence but overall RBA's contribution lies on examining the discursive aspects of region building analysing the politics of representations and issues pertaining to identity, geography, institutions and security.

What this chapter shows is that a focus on practices can indeed deepen RBA's understanding of regions, and the ways these are talked and written into existence. In particular, the case of the Black Sea shows how practices such as publishing, organising conferences and lobbying did manage to raise the profile of the Black Sea and gave momentum to the idea of a Black Sea region but at the same time

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<sup>436</sup> Morten Skumsrud Andersen and Iver B. Neumann, "Practices as Models: A Methodology with an Illustration Concerning Wampum Diplomacy," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 40, no. 3 (2012):457–481.

created scepticism among the regional elites that opposed the idea of a Black Sea region as projected in various fora. In reference to the case of the Baltic Sea region, it was evident that grass-roots foreign policy activism increased local/regional ownership and inclusiveness and legitimised region building while institutionalisation also proved to be a powerful practice of region building. This was not the case in the Black Sea. To conclude, studying practices can indeed enhance RBA as it represents an efficient way of examining region building on the ground and in practice.

## Chapter VI

# Writing space: the cartography of the Black Sea

“Since the struggle for control over territory is part of history, so too is the struggle over historical and social meaning. The task for the critical scholar is not to separate one struggle from another, but to connect them, despite the contrast between the overpowering materiality of the former and the apparent otherworldly refinements of the latter.”<sup>437</sup>

### 1. Introduction

The spatial representations of the Black Sea acquired a significant position in the discursive construction of the Black Sea region. If, to use Paasi’s words, “[r]egion’, then, appears to be the meeting point of various concepts of space,”<sup>438</sup> in the case of the Black Sea the readings of its own space became a point of divergence both revealing and escalating political tensions. This is why space should be understood as an open and on-going production, rather than as a static and stable expression of territory. To use Massey’s words: “[s]pace is always under construction; it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed.”<sup>439</sup> Interestingly, in the context of the Black Sea this process took place predominantly outside the

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<sup>437</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 331-332.

<sup>438</sup> Anssi Paasi, “Europe as a Social Process and Discourse: Considerations of Place, Boundaries and Identity,” *European Urban and Regional Studies* 2001:16.

<sup>439</sup> Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), 9.

region. When performing region building, the agents within the BSEN imagined and identified a discrete, bounded space as a “territory” characterized by meanings and binaries that served their own policy beliefs and policy actions. Although addressing the questions of who and how in the previous chapters shed light on the mechanics of region building, an essential question that remains to be addressed is what it was exactly that they tried to talk and write into existence. In other words, how was the Black Sea portrayed? What were its predominant representations? What kind of a Black Sea region was projected in the region building discourse?

This chapter analyses the spatial representations of the Black Sea, their political consequences, and how all these conceptualizations of spatiality implied different forms or relations between centres and margins, core and peripheries. Indeed, it both identifies the predominant spatial representations and attempts to examine their functions. As Kuus points out:

“Geographical analogies and imaginaries play a central role in the process: they appear self-evident, perform specific political work outside analytical scrutiny, and shape policy before anything is put on paper. They function as a latent framework that can be activated at any time as an argument of last resort...When geographical knowledge crystallizes into explicit geopolitical claims, it is recognised immediately and made operational quickly.”<sup>440</sup>

Indeed, it is important to discuss how the writing of the Black Sea region presupposed many things, including particular definitions of “self” an “other,” “inside” and “outside,” “core” and “margins”. Adopting RBA’s approach vis-à-vis space, one should treat it as unstable, “relational” – it gets its meaning from how subjects are mutually situated –, a space of “emplacement” (i.e. spatial relations,

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<sup>440</sup> Kuus, *Geopolitics and Expertise*, 197-198.

ensembles and circulations).<sup>441</sup> Different spatial representations entailed different, and often conflicting, territorialisations and each one implied a particular form of controlling space. According to Said:

“Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the *struggle* over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.”<sup>442</sup>

These spatial representations were disseminated through the practices examined in the previous chapter and a discourse of territorial politics that was characterised by a strong geopolitical vocabulary. The dominant approaches in the discursive construction of the Black Sea region, as expressed within the BSEN, were particularly influenced by the scholarship of traditional geopolitics. Vigorous debates over the Black Sea were shaped by politically consequential assumptions about the importance of territoriality. It became commonplace to characterise the Black Sea by using depictions such as a “natural geopolitical centre,”<sup>443</sup> “frontier of freedom,”<sup>444</sup> “heartland,”<sup>445</sup> “barrier,”<sup>446</sup> “bridge,”<sup>447</sup> “hub,”<sup>448</sup> “major crossroad,”<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> Jeremy W. Crampton, “Space, Territory, Geography,” in *A Companion to Foucault*, ed. Christopher Falzon, Timothy O’Leary, and Jana Sawicki (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing, 2013), 385.

<sup>442</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 7.

<sup>443</sup> Oleksandr Pavliuk, “Introduction,” in Oleksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze eds. *The Black Sea region. Cooperation and Security Building* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe and East-West Institute 2004), 3-13.

<sup>444</sup> Asmus and Jackson, “The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom,” 17–26.

<sup>445</sup> Heartland is a widely used concept in the realm of traditional/classical geopolitics, and in the case of the Black Sea it actually triggered a debate regarding its exact position. See for instance, Aydin, “Europe’s Next Shore: The Black Sea region after EU Enlargement,” 5; Liviu Bogdan Vlad, Gheorghe Hurduzeu and Andrei Josan, “Geopolitical reconfigurations in the Black Sea Area at the beginning of the 21st century,” *Romanian Review on Political Geography* XI, no.1 (2009): 65-76.

<sup>446</sup> Jeffrey Simon, “The Black Sea: Building Bridges and Barriers,” in Ronald Asmus (ed.), *Next steps in forging a euroatlantic strategy for the Wider Black Sea Area*, 83-100.

<sup>447</sup> Ian Lesser “Global Trends, Regional Consequences: Wider Strategic Influences on the Black Sea,” *Xenophon Paper* 4 (Athens: ICBSS, 2007): 9.

<sup>448</sup> Cornell, “The Wider Black Sea Region: An Emerging Hub in European Security”.

<sup>449</sup> Rumer and Simon, “Toward a Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region,” 2.

“an area that lies at the centre of a Mackinder-type “geopolitical heartland”<sup>450</sup> or “the frontier between the Heartland and the Rimlands.”<sup>451</sup> According to Triantaphyllou and Acikmese, “[i]t [the Black Sea] finds itself in regular redefinition as to what it is...a bridge, a buffer zone, a pivot, a transit zone or a corridor, inter alia.”<sup>452</sup> All of these geopolitically loaded spatial representations gave rise to significant contradictions, and had a direct impact on the discursive construction of the Black Sea region as they implied different understandings of the Black Sea region.

The objective here is not to study the geography of the Black Sea region with pre-existing, common-sense perceptions, but to foreground “the politics of the geographical specification of politics”<sup>453</sup> and showcase how foreign policy elites attempted to construct the Black Sea space from a seemingly detached and objectivist Cartesian perspective. To this end, this chapter proceeds as follows. First, it identifies the imagined geographies and mindscapes that carried the different categories of spatial representations. Second, it assesses how this *mélange* of spatial representations both implied and attempted to produce different forms of relations and it concludes with an assessment of the consequences of these spatial representations. The overarching objective is to both analyse how spatial representations had an impact on the process of region building and to contribute to RBA’s analysis of the discursive construction(s) of space.

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<sup>450</sup> Aydin, “Europe’s Next Shore,” 5.

<sup>451</sup> Goncharenko, “The Wider Black Sea Area: New Geopolitical Realities, Regional Security Structures and Democratic Control: A Ukrainian View,” 23–32.

<sup>452</sup> Sinem Akgul Acikmese and Dimitrios Triantaphyllou “The Black Sea Region: The Neighbourhood too Close to, yet still Far from the European Union, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*,” (2014): 2 (published online, 26 June 2014).

<sup>453</sup> Dalby, “Critical Geopolitics: Discourse, Difference, and Dissent,” 274.



## 2. Imagined geographies, mindscapes and margins

Understanding, however, the importance of spatial representations as crucial components of the discursive construction of the Black Sea region requires the analysis to focus first on imaginative geographies, the prevailing mindscape, and the notion of margins in this particular case study.

Imaginative geographies are discursive constructions that “fold difference into distance through a series of spatializations.”<sup>454</sup> They construct strong binaries and oppositions between familiar (“Us”) and unfamiliar spaces (“Them”).<sup>455</sup> As Campbell argues, “the constitution of identity is achieved through the inscription of boundaries that serve to demarcate an ‘inside’ from an ‘outside,’ a ‘self’ from an ‘other,’ a ‘domestic’ from a ‘foreign’”<sup>456</sup> and as Dalby further adds:

“the essential moment of geopolitical discourse is the division of space into ‘our’ place and ‘their’ place; its political function being to incorporate and regulate ‘us’ or ‘the same’ by distinguishing ‘us’ from ‘them’, the same from ‘the other’.”<sup>457</sup>

Imagined geographies and spatial representations were tools of demarcation and identity construction in the case of the discursive construction of the Black Sea. The region-building initiatives became subsumed within wider discursive structures that constituted the Euroatlantic space as a unified (and Western) civilizational and security bloc. The Black Sea region, to use the words of Lehti, “was an area where everything still remained to be done...[an] experimental space, or laboratory...upon which the West can act out its civilising fantasies.”<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>454</sup> Derek Gregory, *The colonial present* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 18.

<sup>455</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 54.

<sup>456</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, Revised Edition), 9.

<sup>457</sup> Dalby, “Critical Geopolitics,” 274.

<sup>458</sup> Marko Lehti, “Competing or Complementary Images: The North and the Baltic World from the Historical Perspective,” in Hiski Haukkala ed., *Dynamic Aspects of the Northern Dimension* (Turku: Jean Monnet Unit, University of Turku 1999), 28.

This approach implies a performative understanding of the nature of language whereby language is not only constitutive of the world, but also leads to particular kinds of conduct rather than others.<sup>459</sup> In this regard, Ron Asmus, a key figure in the discursive construction of the Black Sea region and with no inclination to theoretical contemplation, referred indirectly to the performative role of language, where he argued:

“The use of language is obviously important. By embracing the concept of a wider Black Sea region, the initial proponents of this approach were in fact trying to establish *a new political and strategic framework* for Western strategy that knits together diverse debates over Turkey, Ukraine and the Southern Caucasus and in which the strategic whole was greater than the sum of the individual parts.”<sup>460</sup>

A concept that can be particularly helpful in this regard and highlight the various nuances of imagined geographies is the concept of the mindscape. According to Liulevicius, a mindscape designates:

“the mental landscape conjured up by looking out over an area: ways of organizing the perception of a territory, its characteristic features and landmarks. This entails much more than a ‘neutral’ description, since it signifies an approach, the posture of advancing into the landscape...A mindscape, then, yields both a description and prescription of one’s relationship to the land, what the mind styles for itself as a typical landscape as it is and ought to be.”<sup>461</sup>

A mindscape points to what is to be taken as “normal” and “abnormal” in a spatial sense and serves as a guide to the future in the sense that it frames a situation, acts within it, as well as envisioning the order as it “ought” to be, thus becoming

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<sup>459</sup> Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 17-18.

<sup>460</sup> Asmus, “Introduction,” in Asmus ed. *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, 15.

<sup>461</sup> Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity, and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), 151.

prescriptive.<sup>462</sup> Mindscapes reveal how narratives operated in broader discursive fields established by other narratives and demonstrate how both region builders and “identity markers” (such as the notion of margins) are always embedded in a web of other concepts.”<sup>463</sup> As Browning and Lehti argue: “[mindscapes] can be inferred from the way other related concepts are being deployed”<sup>464</sup>.

Seen through this conceptual lens, one notices how the concept of “margins” served as a point of reference in the discursive construction of the Black Sea region. The concept of “margin” is, according to Parker, etymologically related to the old word “marches,” which referred to “those edges that were difficult to penetrate and from whence various shadowy dangers threatened a feudal order”<sup>465</sup>. More generally, the marches (marchlands) were areas where territory was not divided into clearly defined blocs, but was instead more fluid and zonal.<sup>466</sup> As such, whilst the *medieval marches* were zones where the feudal order was challenged, margins in a similar way pose challenges and raise questions in the post-Cold War era related to the Westphalian order of nation-states where space is strictly demarcated and defined according to the territory of a state. In broader geographical discourses the concept of margin carries negative connotations as its characterised by an inherent weakness that derives from a position far away from the centre, close to an edge, thus representing margins in discourse as objects and sites of passive action.

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<sup>462</sup> Daina Stukuls Eglitis, *Imagining the Nation. History, Modernity and Revolution in Latvia* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 8-10.

<sup>463</sup> Christopher Browning and Marko Lehti, “Beyond East-West: Marginality and National Dignity in Finnish Identity Construction,” *Nationalities Papers* 35, no. 4 (2007): 695; Ole Wæver, “Identities, Communities and Foreign Policy: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory” in Lene Hansen and Ole Wæver eds. *Between Nations and Europe: Regionalism, Nationalism and the Politics of Union* (London: Routledge, 2002), 20–49; Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>464</sup> Browning and Lehti, *Beyond East-West*, 695.

<sup>465</sup> Noel Parker, “Integrated Europe and its “Margins”: Action and Reaction,” in Noel Parker and Bill Armstrong eds., *Margins in European Integration* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press 2000), 7.

<sup>466</sup> Steven Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers and Noble Power: The Making of the British State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1995), 18.

Noel Parker attempted in his work to challenge this passivity and lack of subjectivity, highlighting the need to “dissociate marginality from the idea of inferiority to, or dependence upon, a corresponding core.”<sup>467</sup> According to Parker, margins do have power and the capacity to influence and “bite back” and “are not merely the products of external powers”<sup>468</sup>. Parker’s critique was interesting, as by highlighting the positive conceptualisation of margins, he unintentionally showed that a margin is in essence an unstable concept; it acquires meaning contextually and it can be either superior or inferior to a centre. Margins must be understood as discursive concepts that are inherently unstable and interdependent and do not have fixed meanings.<sup>469</sup>

What this emphasises is that marginality should not be equated *ex ante* with inferiority and superiority or dependency and autonomy. On the contrary, “marginality” (and “peripherality”) is treated as a contextual and a socially constructed concept that is capable of acquiring different expressions and meanings; a fluid concept. In particular, the main concern here is to demonstrate how discourses of marginality and spatial attributions, as products of a mindscape, were not simple empirical or conceptual characterisations, but that it was the representation of space that defined to a significant extent the region in political and security terms.

### **3. Mindscapes and gazes: the institutional/geopolitical paradox**

Examining the region building discourses, it becomes evident that the process of spatialisation was never monolithic. On the contrary, the idea of a Black Sea region

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<sup>467</sup> Parker, “Integrated Europe and its “Margins,” 8.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>469</sup> Christopher S. Browning and Pertti Joenniemi, “Contending Discourses of Marginality: The Case of Kaliningrad,” *Geopolitics* 9, no. 3 (2004): 699-730; Veronique Pin-Fat, “(Im)possible Universalism: Reading Human Rights in World Politics”, *Review of International Studies*, 26/4 (2000): 663–74, and Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner 1999).

acquired meaning contextually based on different spatial meanings. The main categories of representations were the institutional and the geopolitical and both approaches reflected different understandings of space and expressed different policy priorities.

### *The “institutional” mindscape*

Chronologically, the first category of spatial representations emerged in the 1990s in the context of BSEC. These were the first official, albeit hesitant, attempts to delineate geographically the Black Sea region and one discerns a polyphony of terms carrying different geographical connotations. From the *Bosporus Statement*, signed in Istanbul in 25 June 1992, until the *Istanbul Summit Declaration on the Occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary*, signed again in Istanbul in 26 June 2012, terms such as “BSEC region,” “Black Sea region,” “Wider Black Sea Area,” or simply “region” were used interchangeably, often within the same documents. Spatial terminologies were very elastic and vague. An early conclusion is that most of the documents, in particular the early ones, reflected a political will to be vague. Geography was initially limited either to the state territories, or to the body of water of the Black Sea as a source of environmental concerns and illicit trafficking. Space was framed in terms of institutional membership and state-centric geography (i.e. the Black Sea as a body of water and the surrounding states) and any reference to “strategic” terms was purposefully avoided.

From the beginning, with the Summit Declaration on the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Bosporus Statement, both signed the same day, there were references to a “...common interest in the Black Sea area”<sup>470</sup> and to the fact that “[t]hey [the Heads of States and Governments] recognized that this occasion could usher in era of peace, stability and development in the *region* and agreed that they

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<sup>470</sup> Organization for the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *Summit Declaration on the Black Sea Economic Cooperation* (BSEC PERMIS: Istanbul, 1992).

would all strive in good faith to achieve these ends.”<sup>471</sup> A few years later, in 1995 in Bucharest, there were references to both a BSEC region and a Black Sea region “as an integral part of the European economic process which meets their interests, as well as those of Europe as a whole.”<sup>472</sup> For the first time there were references to European structures and the Black Sea was portrayed as an emerging part of Europe’s expanding geography. A year later, in 1996 in Moscow, the declaration reads: “[t]hey [the Heads of States and Governments] will work to ensure that the Black Sea region finds an appropriate place in a new Europe of cooperation and integration. They will strive for utilizing the rich potential and favourable development prospects of the Black Sea region to improve their ties with adjacent and neighbourly regions.”<sup>473</sup>

It was in Yalta in 1998, where for the first time it was explicitly stated that “BSEC Region” means the territories of the Member States. However, at the same time it was stressed “that in the 21st century the role of the Black Sea region, both in world politics and in the global economy, will grow substantially, due to its *strategic location* and vast economic potential (Art.2).”<sup>474</sup> In Istanbul, 25 June 2002, it was further pointed out that “[the] Black Sea region, with its position right at the heart of Eurasia, stands to reap great benefits from its increased global *geostrategic importance* (Art. 3).”<sup>475</sup> In a similar tone, in the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fifteenth Anniversary Summit of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (Istanbul, 25 June 2007), the declared objective was “...to build up together, in a step-by-step approach, our common future through mutual cooperation at all levels –state to

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<sup>471</sup> Organization for the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *The Bosphorus Statement* (BSEC PERMIS: Istanbul, 1992).

<sup>472</sup> Organization for the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *Statement of the High Level Meeting of the BSEC Participating States*, (BSEC PERMIS: Bucharest, 1995).

<sup>473</sup> Organization for the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *Moscow Declaration of the Heads of State or Government of the Participating States of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation* (Moscow, 25 October 1996).

<sup>474</sup> Organization for the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *Yalta Summit Declaration* (Yalta, 5 June 1998).

<sup>475</sup> Organization for the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *Decennial Summit Declaration: Looking Beyond Ten Years of Cooperation and Progress* (Istanbul, 25 June 2002).

state, region to region, people to people– so that the BSEC region becomes an integral part of a stable and prosperous Europe” (Art.12).<sup>476</sup> It becomes evident from these documents that this category of spatial representations was initially limited to the member states, and contained terms such as a “BSEC area,” “Black Sea region,” or simply “region”. Soon, however, the term “wider Black Sea area” was used as an instrument denoting the region’s proximity to Europe; an area becoming part of Europe’s geography.

To understand this shift, it is important, to put all these different terms and definitions into context. In the beginning the BSEC had solely an economic focus and its policy priorities were limited to trade, environment, emergency issues and combating crime, among other areas of cooperation, primarily limited to low-politics. Furthermore, with the unique exception of Greece, as a non-littoral state, there was no vicinity to the EU. This gradually started to change with the acceleration of the negotiation process of Bulgaria and Romania, the preparations for the launching of the ENP, and the fact that BSEC itself started to discuss issues related to security, albeit hesitantly. It was in Istanbul on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June, 2002 that the Heads of States and Governments of BSEC started to put security concerns on the Organization’s agenda and authorise the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CMFA) to develop policy proposals to that effect. In a working paper on security that followed the region was presented as:

“[b]eing at the *crossroads* between Europe and Asia, the BSEC is contributing to a new quality of relationships that are developing among countries inside the region and beyond. As such, the region has the peculiarity of being an integral part of the all-European system of security and cooperation – all BSEC countries belong to

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<sup>476</sup> Organization for the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *Declaration on the Occasion of the Fifteenth Anniversary Summit of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation*, (BSEC PERMIS: Istanbul, 25 June 2007).

the OSCE and the Council of Europe – and, at the same time, *a vital link* to the outlying regions further east.”<sup>477</sup>

It should be mentioned, however, that this document was only adopted at expert level. Following a decision of the Committee of Senior Officials on 21-22 March 2005, it was never adopted as an official BSEC document reflecting in particular Russia’s and Turkey’s reluctance to upgrade BSEC to the status of an organisation with a security agenda. Nevertheless, it is a tell-tale sign of the BSEC’s new “security flavoured” understanding of the geography of the region. From an understanding of space, limited to the territories of its member states, the region was portrayed in BSEC’s documents as a geographic space emerging at the “crossroads,” an intertextual concept, representing a “vital link” to the further east for the West.

### *The geopolitical mindscape*

Paying attention to the spatial representations that characterised the region building discourse one cannot help noticing the prevalence of the geopolitical mindscape. Based on an attempt to simplify and control space, this mindscape actively suppressed the complex geographical reality of the Black Sea in favour of geopolitical abstractions that always returned, explicitly or implicitly, to an idea of marginality. This thesis suggests a categorisation of three perspectives/gazes that refer to the Euroatlantic, the core European and the Romanian. One could notice in this categorisation significant overlaps but also differences among these gazes in terms of their spatial representations. It is different to talk of a neighbourhood than a buffer zone, a bridge than a ring of friends, a pivot than a platform of power

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<sup>477</sup> According to the compilers of BSEC’s key documents, “it should be noted that according to the decision of the BSEC Committee of Senior Officials in Istanbul, on 21-22 March 2005, this document is adopted at expert level and does not constitute an official BSEC document. Ioannis Stribis and Dimitris Karabelas (comp), *The BSEC at Fifteen: key documents (1992-1997)* (Athens: ICBSS, 2007), 273. The document is titled “A Working Paper on the Ways and Means of enhancing the BSEC Contribution to Strengthening Security and Stability in the region”.



projection. Hence, this section sheds light on the diversity of spatial representations within the same mindscape. BSEN talked of a Black Sea region but within BSEN different institutions and different elites projected different understandings of a Black Sea region. The majority of the elites involved adopted a strategic framing of geography from the beginning. In their works, the Black Sea space was presented by the region builders as an area of opportunities and uncertainties, both constraining and facilitating the policy objectives of the West.

It is interesting to note how they were embracing both the artificial character of the geography of the area and an elasticity suited to fit the Euro-atlantic strategy: “[with NATO members Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey dominating the western and southern shores and newly minted CIS states Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, and Georgia along the north and east, *the region begins to take shape*.”<sup>478</sup> From these references it becomes evident how the region was portrayed “as broad and variegated... as the North German Plain or the Baltic/Nordic zone.”<sup>479</sup> Not only was it argued that “there is strong evidence that the Black Sea is indeed starting to come together as a region”<sup>480</sup> but also through these new lenses it was emerging as “a core component of the West’s strategic Hinterland...[located] at the epicenter of Western efforts to project stability into a wider European space and beyond, into the Greater Middle East”<sup>481</sup>. The Black Sea was emerging as a region “...built on a core supposition, that is, that the Black Sea is a distinct geographical unit.”<sup>482</sup> Therefore, due to the fact that this was a region in the making, terms such as wider Black Sea region or Black Sea/Caspian region were used interchangeably.

The graphs below, and the ones that follow, have the objective to demonstrate the widespread tendencies in the literature on the Black Sea region to

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<sup>478</sup> Asmus and Jackson, “The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom,” 19 [emphasis added].

<sup>479</sup> Ibid., 20

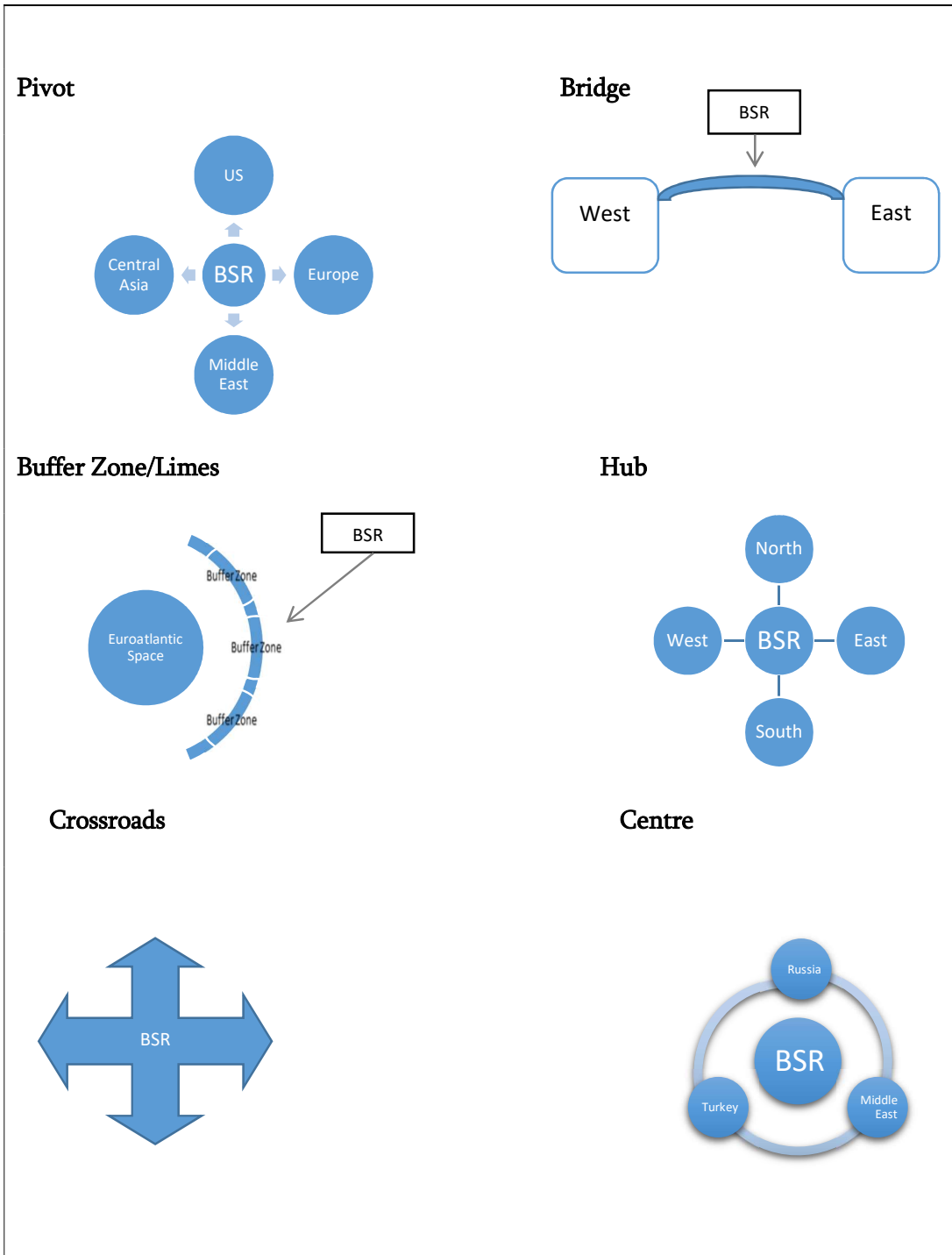
<sup>480</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>482</sup> Bruce Hitschner, “The Sea Friendly to Strangers: History and the Making of a Euro-atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea,” in Asmus et al eds, *A New Euro-atlantic strategy for the Black Sea region*, 27.

simplify space and depict something inherently complex as something as simple as a bridge for example. Furthermore, an important function of the graphs is that they showcase the confusions and contradictions that characterised the representations of the Black Sea space. For instance, how is it possible to portray a space as both a bridge and a buffer zone?

Graph VI: Spatial representations, western geopolitical gazes



These spatial representations clearly signified different understandings of the Black Sea and were based on different logics of security. The first spatial representation referred to a central spatial position whereby the Black Sea was presented as a “natural geopolitical centre”<sup>483</sup>, a “geopolitical pivot”<sup>484</sup>; an area that lies at the centre of a Mackinder-type “geopolitical heartland.”<sup>485</sup> Drawing from the works of traditional geopolitics, many approached the Black Sea as an area located at the epicentre of the new “Great Game”, a term that was coined to depict the strategic rivalry and competition between the British Empire and the Russian Empire over dominance in Central Asia.<sup>486</sup> Many followed this logic and referred to the Black Sea as being “at the epicentre in the grand strategic challenge of trying to project stability into a wider European space and beyond into the Greater Middle East [emphasis added]”<sup>487</sup> in a location “that makes [it] an indispensable part of Euro-Atlantic security and prosperity”<sup>488</sup> or from the perspective of the regional actors, as Ravzan Ungureanu, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, puts it using the exact same words an “... indivisible and part of Euro-Atlantic security.”<sup>489</sup> Overall, the Black Sea was discursively presented as an emerging

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<sup>483</sup> Oleksandr Pavliuk, “Introduction,” in Pavliuk and Klympush-Tsintsadze eds. *The Black Sea region*, 3-13.

<sup>484</sup> Aydin, “Europe’s Next Shore” 5; Bordonaro, “Bulgaria, Romania and the Changing Structure of the Black Sea’s Geopolitics”; Alexander Goncharenko, “The Wider Black Sea Area” 23-32; Ionescu, “Wider Black Sea Region Cooperation” 19-27.

<sup>485</sup> Aydin, “Europe’s Next Shore”, 5.

<sup>486</sup> Almost a century ago, the British geopolitician, Halford Mackinder highlighted what he perceived to be of vital importance for controlling what he called the Heartland. In his own words: “Who rules East Europe controls the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World Island; Who rules the world Island commands the World”. See, Halford Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (London: Constable Publishers, 1942), xviii, [Original edition, 1919]. In the case of the Black Sea it actually triggered a debate regarding its exact position. See for instance, Aydin, “Europe’s Next Shore”, 5; Liviu Bogdan Vlad et al. “Geopolitical reconfigurations,” 65-76.

<sup>487</sup> Asmus and Jackson “The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom,” 22.

<sup>488</sup> Traianu Basescu, “Inaugural Speech”, Bucharest, 21 Dec. 2004; Traianu Basescu, “Speech delivered on the Occasion of the Conference “Black Sea Area and Euro-Atlantic Security: Strategic Opportunities””, Bucharest, 20 April 2005, 3; Traianu Basescu, “The Black Sea Region – Advancing Freedom, Democracy and Regional Stability”, Speech at the Council on Foreign Relations, Washington DC, 10 March 2005.

<sup>489</sup> Ravzan Ungureanu, “Remarks on a Security Concept for the Wider Black Sea Area,” In Jean Dufourcq and Lionel Ponsard eds. *The Role of the Wider Black Sea Area in a Future European Security Space Volume 1* (Rome: NATO Defence College, 2005), 15.

centre having, as it will be shown, clear implications on how security was perceived and framed.

In contrast, portraying the Black Sea as a bridge was based on a cooperative logic that had application on a number of policy areas. The argument was that the Black Sea basin may become a true “control tower” of the Eurasian space and the “arbiter” of the Middle East,<sup>490</sup> and “a link of cardinal importance between the Euro-Atlantic community...and the strategic belt Middle-East – Caspian Sea – Central Asia.”<sup>491</sup> In particular: “[g]eographically situated at the *crossroads* of the European, Eurasian and Middle East security spaces, is, from a geopolitical standpoint, in the proximity of the Heartland”<sup>492</sup> and serves as a transit area “for bringing oil and gas from deposits to buyers, getting gas and oil from the Caspian region and Central Asia to markets in Europe”<sup>493</sup> or in Lesser’s words: “...a bridge to a wider strategic space on the southern and eastern periphery of the continent”<sup>494</sup>.

The image of “bridge,” omnipresent in the literature on the Black Sea, characterised by a high degree of iteration and presupposition, was not limited to security and energy related issues but also had cultural connotations as it was presented as a “bridge to and from Europe, and as the “gatekeeper” of European identity, the filter through which the core identity is challenged and changed.”<sup>495</sup> As Lesser points out, the use of the notion of “bridge” had “...additional cultural-political and economic dimensions. On the political front, the Black Sea, like the Mediterranean, was portrayed as a historic meeting place between the Muslim,

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<sup>490</sup> Hurduzeu and Josan, “Geopolitical reconfigurations,” 74.

<sup>491</sup> Romanian Presidency, *The National Security Strategy of Romania*, 2006, 19. Available at <http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/SSNR/SSNR.pdf>.

<sup>492</sup> Vlad, Hurduzeu and Josan, “Geopolitical reconfigurations,” 66.

<sup>493</sup> Geir Flikke ed., Einar Wigen, Helge Blakkisrud and Pål Kolstø, *The Shifting Geopolitics of the Black Sea Region: Actors, Drivers and Challenges* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2011), 21.

<sup>494</sup> Lesser “Global Trends, Regional Consequences,” 9.

<sup>495</sup> Graeme P. Herd and Fotios Moustakis “Black Sea Geopolitics: Dilemmas, Obstacles & Prospects,” *G84* (Camberley, Surrey: The Conflict Studies Research Centre, 2000), 6.

Western and Orthodox worlds. For some, this role was best described as a bridge between civilizations while for others, the role was more accurately described as a barrier or a strategic glacis between competing civilizations.”<sup>496</sup>

In terms of energy security, the “[g]eopolitical potential of the Black Sea region, located at the *crossroads* of Europe and Asia, is mainly determined by the fact that important trans-continental communication corridors lie across it” further adding that “one greatly uncovers the significance of geopolitical area, which is a *corridor* through which Russia gains the possibility to enhance its influence within Near East, and the USA” to conclude that “...the European Union itself observes the Black Sea and the region in general as a “bridge” connecting Europe and Caspian region”<sup>497</sup>. In the official homepage of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs one reads that “the region’s geo-strategic position as a natural link between Europe and Asia and between Central Asia and the Middle East, constitutes a vital trade link as well as an important transit route for energy.”<sup>498</sup>

The title of a conference, organised by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the Swedish Institute for Social Affairs with the participation of many members of the BSEN and supported by the EU Commission, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the European Parliament and other collaborating partners, was “The Black Sea as boundary or bridge?”<sup>499</sup>. This shows the omnipresent debates on the nature of the Black Sea. It is a typical example of the prevailing discourse on the Black Sea characterised by almost an obsession with geopolitics and various contradictions.

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<sup>496</sup> Lesser, *Global Trends, Regional Consequences*, 12.

<sup>497</sup> Olyana Kindyaliuk, “The Black Sea: energy bridge,” *Eurodialogue*, <http://www.eurodialogue.org/The-Black-Sea-Energy-Bridge> (accessed 10 December 2013).

<sup>498</sup> Ebru Kunt Akin, *The New Geopolitical Order in The BSEC Region*. Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/the-new-geopolitical-order-in-the-bsec-region-tr.mfa> (accessed 10 December 2013).

<sup>499</sup> To read the report, see: Micaela Gustavsson and Bezen Balamir Coskun eds., *The Black Sea as boundary or bridge? Implications of EU and NATO Enlargement, and the Regional Security*, Stockholm, 28 November 2003, [http://www.sipri.org/research/conflict/publications/black\\_sea](http://www.sipri.org/research/conflict/publications/black_sea) (accessed 12 December 2013).

The Black Sea was also portrayed as a buffer against perceived threats for the West's security based on a conflicting logic. In a series of Policy Memos of the Harvard Black Sea Security Program's (HBSSP) homepage one could find a section of memos titled "The Black Sea Region: Conflict, Cooperation or Buffer Zone?"<sup>500</sup> In another paper, the Black Sea was portrayed as "...a kind of "imperial line," a buffer area between great powers, a cordon sanitaire against barbarian invasions and, of course, an area of economic routes linking Western Europe with the Middle East, India and the Far East."<sup>501</sup>

Being a buffer implied a liminal position, i.e. located at the edge, thus differentiating/distinguishing a centre and its outside, *un monde et son contraire*, "order and chaos."<sup>502</sup> The idea of liminality, and of limes in particular, was to create around the centre – in this case the West – a zone of stability and peace, a ring of good friends to use the conceptual language of the EU. According to Foucher, limes represent: "essentially a strategy aiming both at containing unwelcome migrants and at organising trade with Romanised peoples and to bring them into a sustained peaceful relationship with the Empire."<sup>503</sup> What is important to note is that limes are based on and derive from an "asymmetrical relationship which remains a permanent source of tension."<sup>504</sup> The notion of liminality in the context of the discursive construction of the Black Sea space had powers of consolidation as it drew a line between what needs to be preserved and what needs to be protected.

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<sup>500</sup> "Transformations in the Black Sea region – A PONARS EURASIA WORKSHOP," *Policy Memos* Nos. 41-54, Washington, D.C. December 2008. To download the report: <http://www.harvard-bssp.org/static/files/379/Transformations%20Black%20Sea%20Region%20PONARS.pdf> (accessed 12 December 2013).

<sup>501</sup> Şerban Filip Cioculescu, "Rethinking the Black Sea: Between the trans-atlantic and the Eurasian Projects," *South African Journal of Military Studies* 41, no.1 (2013): 1-2.

<sup>502</sup> William Walters, "The Frontiers of the European Union: A Geostrategic Perspective," *Geopolitics* 9, no.3 (2004):690-691; Ola Tunander, "Post-Cold War Europe: Synthesis of a Bipolar Friend-Foe Structure and a Hierarchic Cosmos-Chaos Structure?", in Ola Tunander, Pavel Bayev and Victoria Ingrid Einagel (eds), *Geopolitics in Post-Wall Europe: Security, Territory and Identity* (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage 1997).

<sup>503</sup> Michel Foucher, "The Geopolitics of European Frontiers", in Malcolm Anderson and Eberhard Bort eds., *The Frontiers of Europe* (London and Washington, DC: Pinter 1998), 236.

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

Furthermore, the Black Sea was presented in numerous texts as a “frontier between the Heartland and the Rimlands”<sup>505</sup> located “in between” major centres of power “...geographically situated at the crossroads of the European, Eurasian and Middle East security spaces, is, from a geopolitical standpoint, in the proximity of the Heartland, the control of which causes a complex geopolitical, diplomatic and economic-military game.”<sup>506</sup> According to Foucher, “[f]rom the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, and perhaps part of the shores of the Adriatic Sea, a kind of “Middle Europe” (Europe médiane, Mitteleuropa), an in-between Europe, is reviving, whose fate will be decided partly from outside the region, in Washington, Moscow, Bonn/Berlin and, perhaps, in London and Paris.”<sup>507</sup> In a similar tone, according to Arbatova, “[t]he wider Black Sea region is a “region of regions”. Being part of Wider Europe, it includes the Caucasus, the Caspian region and the Balkans, which in turn bridge the Black Sea to Central Asia and the Middle East.”<sup>508</sup> This idea of an “in-between” space can be traced to the thought of Halford Mackinder who at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was referring to a strong buffer zone between the great powers of Germany and Russia.

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<sup>505</sup> Goncharenko, “The Wider Black Sea Area” 23–32.

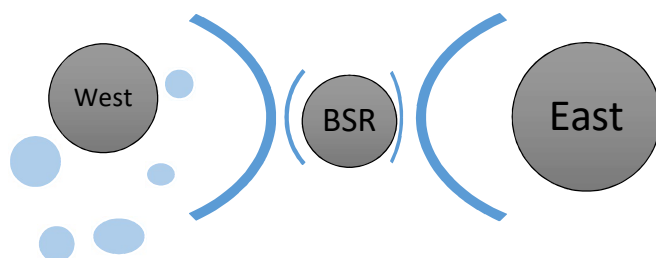
<sup>506</sup> Liviu Bogdan Vlad, et al, “Geopolitical Reconfigurations in the Black Sea area at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century,” 65-66.

<sup>507</sup> Foucher, “The Geopolitics of European Frontiers,” 236.

<sup>508</sup> Nadia Alexandrova-Arbatova, “The impact of the Caucasus crisis on regional and European security,” *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 9, no.3 (2009): 289.



## Graph VII: Black Sea region: “in between”



The last category of spatial representations that characterised a significant part of the region building discourse and can be found in numerous official policy documents was one of “inside/outside” based on logics of inclusion and exclusion. In the European context this binary referred to the EU that “cannot be conceived without borders, but these borders are bound to remain moving and contradictory”<sup>509</sup> becoming closely intertwined with security concerns. According to the European Security Strategy:

“It is in the European interest that countries on our borders are well-governed. Neighbours who are engaged in violent conflict, weak states where organised crime flourishes, dysfunctional societies or exploding population growth on its borders all pose problems for Europe. The integration of acceding states increases our security but also brings the EU closer to troubled areas. Our task is to promote a ring of well-governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations.”<sup>510</sup>

The logic of the inside/outside representation blurred the boundaries between being “in” and “out” of the EU. It was a useful discursive construct in terms

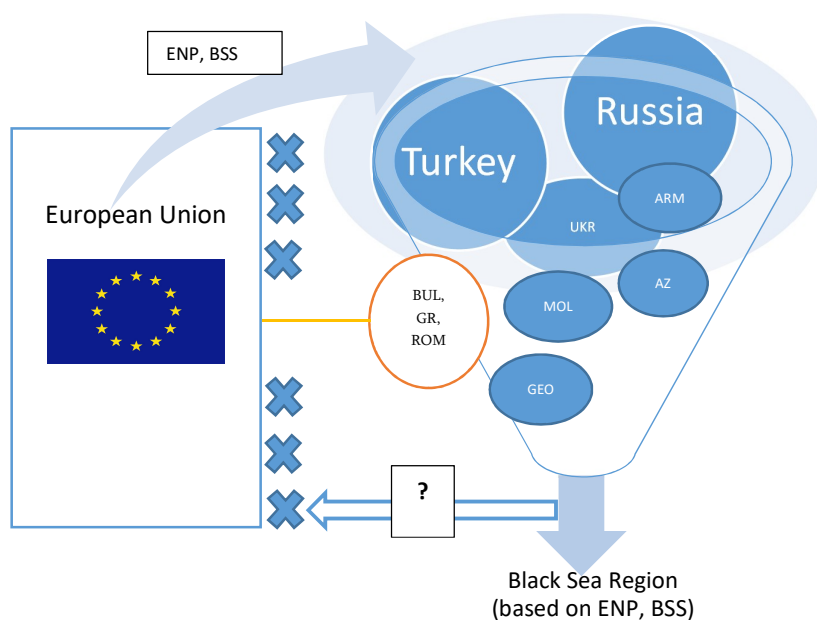
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<sup>509</sup> Anssi Paasi, “Europe as a Social Process and Discourse: Considerations of Place, Boundaries and Identity,” *European Urban and Regional Studies* 2001: 9.

<sup>510</sup> European Commission, *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Policy*, Brussels, 12 Dec. 2003.

of “breaking up the dualism of enlargement/inclusion and neighbourhood/exclusion policies ... and coming up with hybrid solutions that are at the same time inside and outside of overlapping communities.”<sup>511</sup>

**Graph VIII: homogenising and blurring: inside/outside binary**



The Black Sea was also portrayed as a possible European space of influence, waiting to be Europeanised; a “Europeanised utopia”<sup>512</sup>. The concept of “neighbour” was not accompanied by the notion of “European”, thus depriving these “troubled” areas from any kind of Europeanness.<sup>513</sup> In the context of the Black Sea it is interesting to refer to Bigo who points out in his work that it is better to understand how the binary “Fortress vs. Sieve” Europe has been mobilised by foreign policy elites in Europe in order to encourage policies where neighbours are treated as both

<sup>511</sup> Marcel Viator, “Ever Closer? Enlargement, Neighborhood, and the Question of “European Identity”, in Almut Möller (ed.), *Crossing Borders. Rethinking the European Union’s Neighborhood Policies*, Berlin: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, August 2011), 15; Andrey Makarychev, “Russia—EU: Competing Logics of Region Building,” *DGAP Analyse* 1 (March 2012): 13.

<sup>512</sup> Freerk Boedeltje, “The Other Spaces of Europe: Seeing European Geopolitics Through the Disturbing Eye of Foucault’s Heterotopias,” *Geopolitics* 17, no. 1 (2012): 1, 8.

<sup>513</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

part of the problem and potentially its solution. Hence, the idea of Fortress Europe should be understood basically as “something of an impossible dream,”<sup>514</sup> a European fantasy.

When discussing spatial representations and their political ramifications it is essential to discuss Romania’s foreign policy vision and in particular critically examine its perspective towards the Black Sea space. Sergiu Celac, the first Minister of Foreign Affairs after the fall of the Ceausescu regime, wrote in a book published by GMF:

“Approximately ten years ago, my colleagues and I at the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs tried hard to construct a persuasive case for Romania’s bid for NATO membership...So we played up the geopolitical argument: strategic location on the Black Sea, link to the South Caucasus and the oil-rich Caspian beyond, a land bridge - together with Bulgaria - for NATO’s southern flank: Greece and Turkey.”<sup>515</sup>

This excerpt shows to a large extent the first (unsuccessful) attempts to draw the attention of the West. The next efforts promoted spatial representations that were not limited to the Romanian space but included the Black Sea as a whole. The purpose was to construct a “Washington-London-Bucharest geopolitical axis”<sup>516</sup> and relocate Romania at a geopolitical centre signalling a shift to the normality of the West from the abnormality of the Cold War past. This logic drew the attention of the West. As Lesser points out, “[t]he strategic importance of the Black Sea

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<sup>514</sup> In his words: “...the idea that social and security problems can ultimately be solved by the total control of borders is chimerical and logistically impossible. Didier Bigo, “Frontiers and Security in the European Union: The Illusion of Migration Control,” in Malcolm Anderson and Eberhard Bort eds., *The Frontiers of Europe* (London and Washington, DC: Pinter 1998).

<sup>515</sup> Sergiu Celac, “Five Reasons Why the West Should Become More Involved in the Black Sea Region” in Ronald D. Asmus et al eds., *A New Euro-atlantic strategy for the Black Sea region*, 138.

<sup>516</sup> Traian Băsescu, “Inaugural Speech”, Bucharest, 21 Dec. 2004; Traian Băsescu, “Speech delivered on the Occasion of the Conference “Black Sea Area and Euro-Atlantic Security: Strategic Opportunities””, Bucharest, 20 April 2005, 3; Traian Băsescu, “The Black Sea Region – Advancing Freedom, Democracy and Regional Stability”, Speech at the Council on Foreign Relations, Washington DC, 10 March 2005.

derives from its role as a political and logistical hub for power projection to crisis-prone areas beyond the Black Sea basin. The US and NATO debates about Black Sea security often feature the ability of states around the region to facilitate the projection of military power to the Caspian, Central Asia and the Middle East.”<sup>517</sup>

The representation of the Black Sea region as a platform for power projection was based on a reversal of marginality, actively endorsed by the Romanian foreign policy elites. The underlying idea was to conceptualise margins positively by portraying them as assets. This foreign policy argumentation gained momentum in the context of the GWoT and portrayed Romania as no longer stuck on the periphery, at the margins, but as moving from the periphery and the East towards Europe and the West. To use Bănescu’s words, the Black Sea was situated at a “geostrategic location at a crucial point of global affairs”<sup>518</sup>. The marginality of the present was presented as a resource to escape the marginality of the past. Prime Minister Năstase, speaking before an US audience in 2003, pointed out how Romania, and the Black Sea overall, could serve as “an excellent platform for various regions”<sup>519</sup>. What Romania attempted to do was to re-conceptualise marginality “as a resource and site of action”<sup>520</sup>. The diagram below shows how in the policy context of the GWoT that brought about a new understanding of the geography of the Black Sea space and its significance the Black Sea was portrayed in both official and scholarly discourse as a platform for projection, a type of space that could be used by the West to safeguard its interest, maintain stability and project power. The Black Sea was acquiring new meanings as its location was portrayed as a positive attribute.

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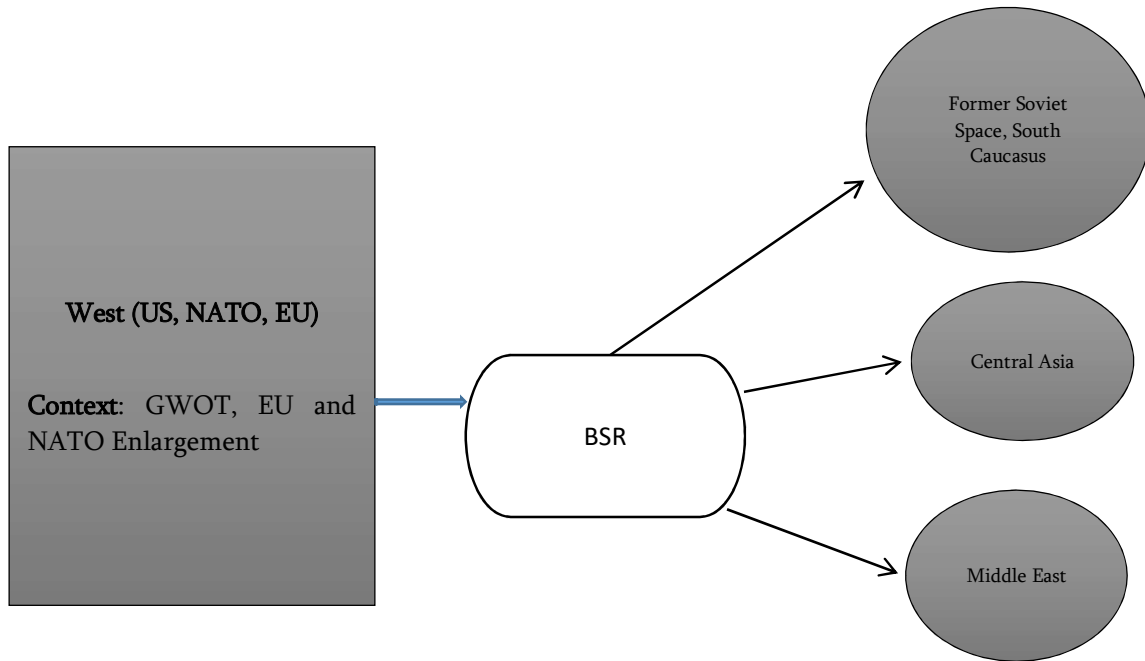
<sup>517</sup> Lesser, *Global Trends, Regional Consequences*, 11.

<sup>518</sup> Traian Bănescu, “Speech delivered by the President of Romania at the Conference “Black Sea Area and Euro-Atlantic Security: Strategic Opportunities””, Bucharest, 20 April 2005.

<sup>519</sup> Thomas Fuller, “Romania dangles use of a sea base to woo U.S.”, *International Herald Tribune* 18 June 2003.

<sup>520</sup> Christopher Browning and Pertti Joenniemi, “Contending Discourses of Marginality: The Case of Kaliningrad,” *Geopolitics* 9, no. 3 (2004): 699-730.

**Graph IX: the Black Sea region as platform for power projection**



**Table IV: Categories of Spatial Representations – mindscapes and gazes**

<p>Institutional Mindscape</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Terminology</u>: pluralism – “BSEC region”, “Black Sea region”, “Wider Black Sea Area”</li> <li>▪ <u>Approach</u>: legal/institutional approach towards geography based on BSEC’s structure; gradual references to European structures</li> <li>▪ <u>Objective</u>: Black Sea as an emerging part of Europe’s expanding geography</li> <li>▪ <u>Concept</u>: synergies</li> <li>▪ <u>Representations</u>: institutional, territorial</li> <li>▪ <u>Voices</u>: foreign policy elites in the context of BSEC, regional experts</li> </ul>
<p>Geopolitical Mindscape [GMF]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Terminology</u>: “Black Sea region” and “wider Black Sea region”</li> <li>▪ <u>Approach</u>: strategic framing of geography; Black Sea as “a core component of the West’s strategic Hinterland...[located] at the epicentre of Western efforts to project stability into a wider European space and beyond”</li> <li>▪ <u>Representations</u>: buffer, bridge, pivot, “frontiers of freedom”, “natural geopolitical centre”</li> </ul>
<p>[EU]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Terminology</u>: Black Sea region</li> <li>▪ <u>Approach</u>: geopolitical approach based on simplifying and controlling space; active suppression of the complex geographical reality of places in favour of controllable geopolitical abstractions</li> <li>▪ <u>Objective</u>: Black Sea a possible European space of influence, waiting to be Europeanised</li> <li>▪ <u>Representations</u>: neighbourhood, periphery, ring of friend, Wider Europe</li> </ul>
<p>[Romania]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Terminology</u>: Black Sea region</li> <li>▪ <u>Approach</u>: spatial representations as policy tools; geography of the Black Sea as a resource that could be utilised precisely in order to relocate Romania at a geopolitical centre</li> <li>▪ <u>Objective</u>: moving from the periphery and the East towards the European and the West</li> <li>▪ <u>Representations</u>: civilisational and strategic crossroads</li> </ul>

#### 4. Spatial representations, relational thinking and marginalities

As mentioned above, spatial attributes ceased to be simple descriptions. In addition to the political implications of the spatial representation on the process of region building, these spatial representations privileged an understanding of space *in relation* to other spaces. Attaching spatial labels and epithets to the Black Sea produced implicit forms of relations. In the case of the Black Sea, an adequate understanding of its space can only come “through a conception of places as open, discontinuous, *relational* and internally diverse”<sup>521</sup>. As Dodds argues, “working in binaries, geopolitics tends to “divide the world into discrete places, often informed by a judgement on *hierarchy*, which positions some places as superior to others.”<sup>522</sup>

In this context, marginality can be particularly useful when examining the interplay between spatial representations and power relations. Yet, whereas marginality, as a post-structural conceptualisation of territoriality, implies a position at the margins, at the edge of a core space thus entailing a sense of “*inferiority* to, or *dependence* upon, a corresponding core”<sup>523</sup> this study shows that marginality was an integral component of a region-building strategy where the margins (e.g. the Black Sea) were not simply treated as a passive *object* of geopolitical interference,<sup>524</sup> but also, established the region (and its builders) as geopolitical subjects in their own right. This meant that the relationship between the centre and the margin was never a stable one, but swung like a pendulum between different subject and power positions, with the margins acquiring a central position once the attention of the erstwhile centre had been captured. The

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<sup>521</sup> John Allen, Doreen Massey, Allan Cochrane, et al. *Rethinking the Region* (Routledge: London, 1998), 143.

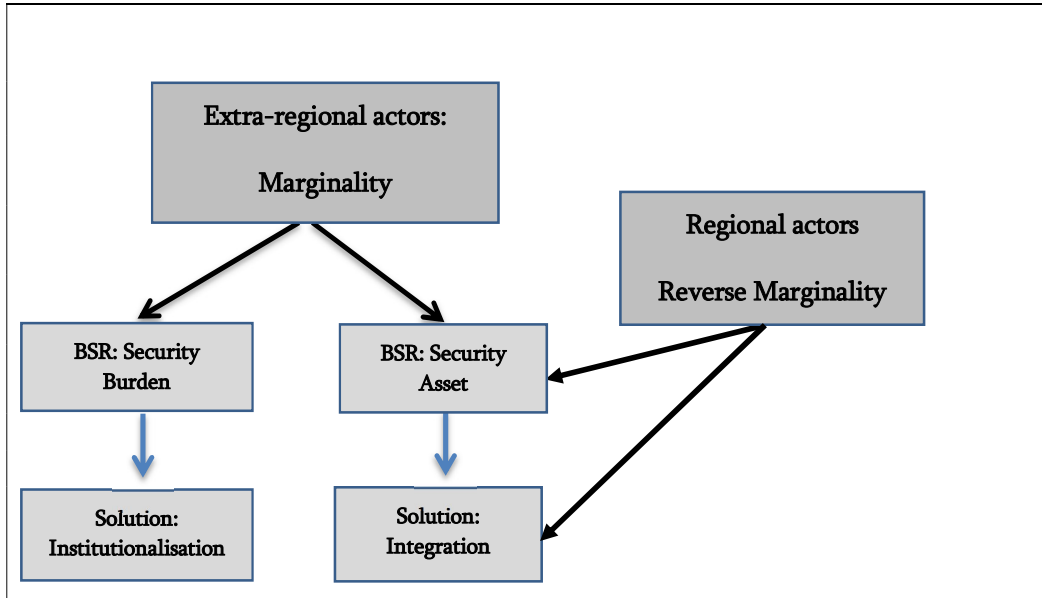
<sup>522</sup> Klaus Dodds, *Global Geopolitics: A critical introduction* (Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2005), 2.

<sup>523</sup> Noel Parker, “A Theoretical Introduction: Spaces, Centers, and Margins,” *The Geopolitics of Europe’s Identity*, ed. Noel Parker (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000), 8.

<sup>524</sup> As it will be shown throughout the thesis and by simply reading official policy documents, one realises that the Black Sea was often treated as a passive geographic space, or in Ó Tuathail’s words when referring to Ireland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “a virgin territory in need of husbandry”. See, Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics – The Politics of Writing Global Space* (London: Routledge, 1996), 5.

diagram bellows illustrates how marginality was intrinsically linked to different security logics and envisaged solutions.<sup>525</sup>

**Graph X: The flows and perceptions of marginality**



In the discourse of the Black Sea region, the margin acquired its significance and attributes in the context and in particular in relation to a core. In this case, the core was the Euroatlantic space. Understood as an outpost, the Black Sea was portrayed in the context of BSEN as something to be defended in order to safeguard the interests of the West. As Asmus and Jackson point out in the beginning of a GMF edited volume, “[g]eographically located at the edge of each region, the Black Sea has not been at the center of any”<sup>526</sup> further adding that “[t]he inclusion of the wider Black Sea region in the Euro-Atlantic system would both consolidate the foundation of this system and buttress it against many of the future threats to its peace and stability, which concern us most.”<sup>527</sup> In a similar tone, Solana argued that “[t]he region is an interface toward the Greater Middle East, which gives it

<sup>525</sup> This graph should be read in connection to and accordance with the subsequent security logics.

<sup>526</sup> Asmus and Jackson, “Frontiers of Freedom”, 18.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid., 21.



enormous importance *for* European and transatlantic security”<sup>528</sup>, while according to Shugarian the underlying objective for the West was “to use the region as a potential bridge to the Middle East.”<sup>529</sup> All these statements suggest how the margin, the Black Sea in this case, was subordinated to the core’s needs. The underlying assumptions of the region building in the Black Sea, when subsumed within wider European and Western discourse(s), were based on an understanding of the Black Sea space lacking subjectivity. The Black Sea was imagined and treated as an object to be acted upon by the West. The relationship between the West and the Black Sea was not only between a core/centre and a periphery/margin, but also one of a subject (the West) and an object (the Black Sea). The Black Sea was treated either as an asset or a burden. The omnipresent assumption was that only if it could be controlled could it become part of the Euroatlantic space. Overall, the Westernising discourses of space treated the margin as something problematic, and as something that needed to be managed in order to become part of the centre and potentially an asset.

Furthermore, marginality was not simply conceptualised in spatial and geographic terms, but primarily in ideological, temporal and teleological terms. Marginality implicitly referred to a past that needs to be overcome and a liberal future that needs to be achieved. In this context, marginality was perceived as an obstacle, thus carrying negative connotations as it was associated with broader political terms such as poor governance, lack of democracy, corruption, a series of threats but at the same time there were references to a future above and beyond this lack of progress. Lastly, as already mentioned, marginality provided the Black Sea and its space with a strategic dimension capable of overcoming the divisions of the Cold War. Marginality was reversing in the sense that it was used as a tool for Romania, to position itself at the core of a geopolitical axis. The margins were

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<sup>528</sup> Javier Solana, “Preface,” Asmus, ed. *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, 7.

<sup>529</sup> Rouben Shugarian, “From the Near Abroad to the New Neighborhood: The South Caucasus on the Way to Europe,” in Asmus et al. eds, *A New Euro-atlantic strategy for the Black Sea region*, 52.

portrayed as assets for the core. In other words, the portrayal of the margin as an asset for the (Western) core endowed the margin with its own *sui generis* centrality, one that made the initial core entirely dependent on the location and political success of a new core emerging in Black Sea region.

Table V: Marginalities	
EC	<p><b>European Marginality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Black Sea at the margins of Europe as a possible European space of influence, waiting to be Europeanised; a “EUtopia”</li> <li>▪ <u>Approach</u>: conditionality and developmental policies; limited references to issues of security</li> <li>▪ <u>Concepts</u>: neighbourhood, periphery, ring of friends</li> </ul>
GMF	<p><b>Euroatlantic Marginality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Black Sea at the margins of the Euro-atlantic space as a pivot, “buffer zone”, bridge.</li> <li>▪ <u>Approach</u>: “strategic framing of geography; securitization of geography.</li> <li>▪ <u>Concepts</u>: buffer, bridge, pivot, “heartland”, “frontiers of freedom”</li> </ul>
ROMANIA	<p><b>Reverse Marginality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Black Sea as an emerging strategic space part of a Euro-atlantic space.</li> <li>▪ <u>Approach</u>: geography of the Black Sea as a tool of positioning Romania at a geopolitical centre</li> <li>▪ <u>Concepts</u>: strategic location; asset for the West</li> </ul>

## 5. Spatial representations and resistance

The aforementioned spatial representations lead to different forms and expressions of resistance and opposition. As argued, writing space is not a politically neutral process. In the particular case of the Black Sea, its cartography provoked political tensions inside the region. The question “why a Black Sea region?” that characterised numerous debates that included regional foreign policy elites was

usually followed by a response along the lines of “Why this kind of a region?” The main voices were located outside the BSEN and expressed the official foreign policy approaches of Turkey and Russia. Both were based on similar historical legacies, memories, images (of the Black Sea) and fantasies that while in the past served as sites of contention between the two countries, this time they were serving as uniting forces against what was perceived as a common threat: the project of discursively constructing and portraying the Black Sea in Western discourse as a bounded space in need of a change.

### *The Black Sea as a “Neo-ottoman” Turkish lake*

Turkey reacted to these imagined geographies quite aggressively from the onset. According to Kikiogly, Turkey’s outlook to the Black Sea has been fundamentally “conditioned by the Straits regime and its historical background.”<sup>530</sup> From a Turkish point of view, the main representation of the Black Sea was one of a closed sea, an “Ottoman lake”. Being imagined and portrayed as a “lake” in public discourse had political implications. Turkey’s Black Sea policy was driven by the historical and political value of the Montreux Convention carrying heavy symbolisms. According to Kinikiogly:

“First of all, the Montreux Convention is one of the founding documents, which secured and legitimized the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Second, the Montreux Convention signifies international recognition that the Turkish Straits are under Turkish sovereignty. Third, the Montreux Convention allows Turkey to play a central role in the region at a time when energy security, frozen conflicts and terror-related security concerns are of great international concern.”<sup>531</sup>

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<sup>530</sup> Suat Kinikiogly, “Turkey’s Black Sea Policy: Strategic Interplay at Critical Junction” in Asmus, ed. *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, 55.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

This means that the location of the Black Sea could only acquire geopolitical significance through Turkey. For the Turkish foreign policy elite, the Black Sea was where Turkey was and any potential significance/value for the West should take into account Turkey's "unique" position and interests in the region.

*The Black Sea as Russia's geopolitical "near abroad"*

For the Russian Federation, the representations of its space have been attached historically to its national identity and foreign policy orientation. Due to the Russian portrayal of its vast territory, natural resources on its soil, separatist movements and the presence of profound ethnographic diversity at its borders, foreign policy elites in Russia have privileged historically an understanding of territory as both a source of strength and vulnerability.<sup>532</sup> In this context, any attempt by the West to build a Black Sea region and enter Russia's southern neighbouring area, regardless of its exact demarcation, was met with scepticism and a feeling of vulnerability.

The underlying reasons were the legacy of the USSR, the revival of the near abroad concept following the turbulence of the 1990s, the particularities of the Montreux convention, and overall Russia's attitude toward the idea of regionalism.<sup>533</sup> In reference to the legal regime of the straits, Russia shared with Turkey the concern over the regional status quo and had a similar disdain for the possible negative effects of extra-regional powers on the 1936 Montreux Convention, which regulates the transit of warships and their stay in the Black Sea.

Overall, western spatial representations of the Black Sea among Russian elites were met with scepticism. Even its mere portrayal as a region could trigger negative reactions. In a meeting, organised by the Commission on the Black Sea in

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<sup>532</sup> For an interesting analysis of Russian thinking *vis-à-vis* its space, read: Mark Bassin, "Classical Eurasianism and the Geopolitics of Russian Identity," *Ab Imperio* 2 (2003): 257–267.

<sup>533</sup> Andrey Makarychev, "Russia—EU: Competing Logics of Region Building," *DGAP Analyse* 1 (March 2012): 11.

September 2008 in Moscow, the Russian officials were first of all reluctant to meet with the delegation of the Commission on the Black Sea, that was actively promoting the idea of a Black Sea region, and second the reactions of Russian academics in MGIMO – known as the academic apparatus of Russia’s foreign policy elite – to the idea of a Black Sea region was simple and straightforward: “there is no such thing as a Black Sea region.”<sup>534</sup> Uttering the word region had performative functions triggering political responses. Russia’s understanding and perceptions of its neighbourhood, including what appeared in the region building discourse as Black Sea, derives from a series of grandiose geopolitical phantasies. The study of traditional geopolitics in Russia has historically promoted the idea of defensive belts surrounding the Russian “heartland” and following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the loss of Caucasus and Central Asia, fears of encirclement soon permeated the geopolitical mind-set of Russia. When discussing Russia’s geopolitical mind-set the Heartland theory acquires significant attention as it is the one granting Russia an upgraded role in world affairs while providing also a theoretical justification of Russia’s culture of distrust *vis-à-vis* Western powers.

Any reference to a Black Sea region was perceived to be a geopolitical move aimed at further distancing countries in the Black Sea from the Russian sphere of influence, shifting the Black Sea space as a whole closer to Europe.<sup>535</sup> As Makarychev argues, both “Central and Eastern Europe” and “the Greater Black Sea region” (or “the Black Sea- Mediterranean region”) were “viewed with particular suspicion in Russia as regional platforms aimed at more forcefully linking the vast Euro-Asian areas to the enlarging West, strengthening the pivotal security roles

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<sup>534</sup> I attended this meeting in my capacity as a member of the Commission on the Black Sea. My main duties were to keep record of the discussions between members of the Commission and Russian foreign policy elites, primarily academics.

<sup>535</sup> Nadia Alexandrova-Arbatova “Troubled Strategic Partnership: The Black Sea Dimension of Russia’s Relations with the West” in Hamilton and Gerhard (eds.) *The Wider Black Sea Region in the 21st Century*, 293; Andrew Makarychev, “Russian Perceptions of Black Sea Regionalism,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* (Fall 2009):71.

played by NATO and the EU in its southern and eastern peripheries, and securing energy transportation routes essential for the West.”<sup>536</sup>

Furthermore, according to Makarychev, “Russian attitudes toward regionalism are still heavily influenced by traditional state-centric—and mostly hard-security-driven—power politics calculations,” further adding that regionalism is “viewed as a policy of major international powers that are eager to form blocs and alliances to serve their geopolitical purposes.”<sup>537</sup> Russia’s hesitant and distrustful attitude towards region building was primarily based on the fear that region building was a policy instrument of the West driven by the objective of challenging Russia’s dominance in its near abroad.

## 6. Conclusions

The production of space in the discursive construction of the Black Sea region reflected asymmetrical power relations, with some agents actively participating in the production of spatial representations, with others either reproducing or opposing them. The spatial representations of the Black Sea region reflected not only different understandings of the Black Sea space, but also divergent policy interests and contradictory visions. Therefore, the underlying argument of the thesis is that region building was “...not about geography but about adherence to a particular set of values as defined by the West.”<sup>538</sup>

An underlying theme of the chapter is that the process of writing the Black Sea space shaped and performed politics and was accompanied by notions of control, security and identity. Writing space should be seen as a politically loaded process as spatial representations were in essence means of simplification that produced “differences between two spatial markers (“Europe” and “East”), a

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<sup>536</sup> Makarychev, “Russia—EU: Competing Logics of Region Building,” 6.

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>538</sup> Browning “The Region-Building Approach Revisited,” 61.

practice that was heavily imbued with an identity dimension: “we” are the former, “they” are the latter.”<sup>539</sup> The discursive construction of space of the Black Sea, as expressed through numerous and divergent representations, served as both a description of the Black Sea through the region builders’ eyes and a prescription for its proper ordering. What this particular case study reveals, is how this diverse cartography, based on the iterability of portrayals such as bridge and barriers, were directly linked with the main point of reference of region building: security.

The hierarchical relationality examined in the thesis through the lenses of marginality adds to the RBA debates on the relationships between core and periphery and marginality in particular. In the case of the Black Sea, its marginal status was initially linked to a spatial and political imagination that reduced it (the Black Sea) to a geopolitical “object” and reinforced the lines of exclusion that defined it. The Black Sea region as a margin acquired its significance and attributes in relation to the Euroatlantic space. Understood as an outpost, the Black Sea was portrayed as something to be defended in order to safeguard the interests of the West. However, this case also shows marginality to be inherently elastic and unstable. Regional actors such as Romania used the strategic utility of this marginal space to establish the Black Sea as a geopolitical asset.

The spatial representations of the Black Sea region reflected not only different understandings of the Black Sea space, but also divergent policy interests, contradictory visions and in many cases an “...adherence to a particular set of values as defined by the West.”<sup>540</sup> At first sight, the similarity between the spatial representations of the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea is striking as one could indeed notice in the spatial representations of the Baltic Sea similar metaphors, notions and contradictions. Yet, in the particular case of the Black Sea the spatial representations were linked to security and grand geopolitical narratives.

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<sup>539</sup> Ian Klinke, “Postmodern Geopolitics? The European Union Eyes Russia,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 64, no.5 (2012): 930.

<sup>540</sup> Browning “The Region-Building Approach Revisited,” 61.

Although, indeed one could discern in the region building discourse of the Baltic Sea notions of core, margins and bridge the spatial representations were primarily referring to its relation with Europe. In the case of the Black Sea, being at the margins was – explicitly or implicitly – linked to being culturally inferior or backwards and in security terms, it revealed how the Black Sea was approached as a security asset or a security burden.

Examining the discourse on the Baltic Sea and the ways it was portrayed spatially one can indeed identify a plethora of spatial representations and depictions that often clashed with each other. Yet, this diversity turned to be productive. In the case of the Black Sea, however, the different spatial representations not only entailed different, and often conflicting, territorialisations which resulted into an enduring confusion of where the Black Sea was or should be. The ways spatial representations were constantly linked to or expressing security logics made the Black Sea's spatial representations not only a site on confusion but also of contention. In contrast to the Baltic Sea, which RBA viewed to be in a struggle to re-locate itself in reference to Europe, the Black Sea was portrayed in discourse to be in a regular redefinition as to what it is – a bridge, a buffer zone, a pivot, etc. – and where it is.

To conclude, the examination of the spatial representations of the Black Sea region marks a distinctive characteristic in comparison with the RBA analysis of the discursive construction of the Baltic Sea region. The case of the Black Sea illustrates a linking of different sets of vehemently contested spatial representations to diametrically opposed logics of security and identity. Bearing in mind the verdict of “failure” of the Black Sea region building process noted from the start, this is important because it suggests that the “writing and talking into existence” of regions is unlikely to be successful in cases where such spatial disjunctions are prevalent and accompanied by persistent resistance. As the next chapter will show, this conclusion is further reinforced by the analysis of the security discourses that underpinned the attempt to write the Black Sea region into existence. The Black



Sea was a liminal space, neither developed and “westernised” nor underdeveloped and backward, neither part of the Euroatlantic space nor distant and far away but in the process of becoming part of it. Hence, the Black Sea was portrayed as a space located in the centre, at the borders and at the margins simultaneously. All these representations were premised primarily on one notion: (in)security.

# Chapter VII

## Different logics of security, clashing region building visions

“Security...is not a noun that names something, it is a principle of formation that does things.”<sup>541</sup>

“Security is forever a goal to be achieved, not a fate that is guaranteed.”<sup>542</sup>

### 1. Introduction

The concept of security indisputably saturated the discursive construction of the Black Sea region. Almost any publication, official policy document, conference, testimony on the Black Sea region had direct references to a wide range of security issues, from the traditionally defined military threats (i.e. “frozen conflicts”) to a series of risks (i.e. environmental degradation, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction [WMD], etc.). Writing and talking the Black Sea region into existence was essentially a security project as security claims were central to the “struggle” of/for a Black Sea region. The emerging political rhetoric evoked a diffuse insecurity that stemmed from the Black Sea’s location in a “geopolitically and geoculturally active” region.

Yet as already suggested above, the standout feature of region building in the Black Sea was that the actors involved, the practices used, and the

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<sup>541</sup> Michael Dillon, *Politics of Security: Towards a Political Philosophy of Continental Thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 16.

<sup>542</sup> Quoted anonymously in Merje Kuus, *Geopolitics Reframed: Security and Identity in Europe’s Eastern Enlargement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 46.

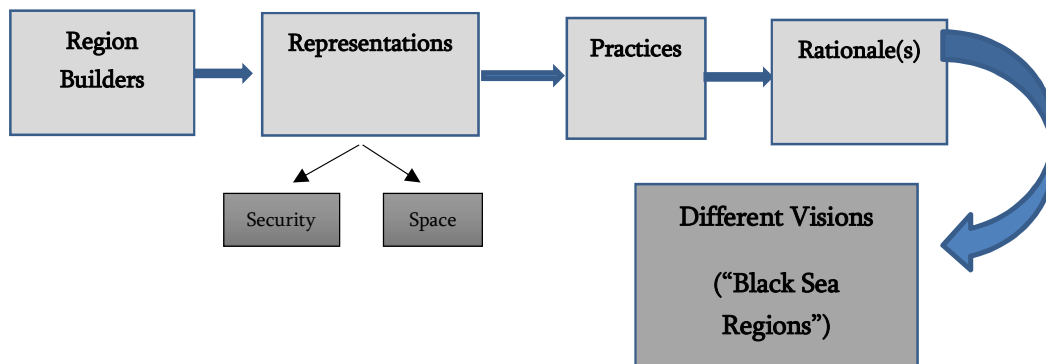
representations of space were linked or derived from different, if not opposing, security necessities, priorities and logics.

First of all, writing and talking about security created an aura of urgency that was met with scepticism at the regional level by some of the local foreign policy elites. Security served as “a powerful political tool in claiming attention for priority items in the competition for government attention.”<sup>543</sup> Secondly, by referring mostly to the language and vocabulary of security and traditional geopolitics, the discussion was limited in terms of both what is being discussed and who was in a position to discuss these issues. Furthermore, as already noted, the security discourses of the Black Sea were directly linked to the spatial representations of the Black Sea. All the aforementioned conflicting representations of space examined in Chapter VI (i.e. “frontiers of freedom,” “heartland,” “barrier”, “bridge,” “hub,” “major crossroads”) were premised on conflicting logics of security. What appeared to be an issue of geography had significant security implications and *vice versa*. The proliferation of aforementioned notions was a derivative of an ongoing diffusion and fragmentation of security. As it is shown in the graph below, representations, practices, rationales were closely intertwined, resulting altogether into different visions of/for the Black Sea region.

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<sup>543</sup> Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, 370.

Graph XI: Region Builders, rationales, practices and representations



Taking into account the overarching importance of security within the region building discourse, the purpose of the chapter is to examine the operation of the different security discourses, as integral parts of the region building discourse, and in particular:

- i. to highlight the profoundly problematic relationship between security and region, coined here as region/security nexus, indicating basically that these two notions were so closely intertwined that they should be treated as separate, i.e. a region is discursively constructed and can take different forms through different paradigms and logics of security;
- ii. to demonstrate how the discursive construction of the Black Sea region revolved around different, competing security paradigms, logics and representations;

This chapter discusses how different paradigms of security resulted into different visions *for* and formulations *of* the Black Sea as a region. The principal question *vis-à-vis* regions and security is not limited to how a region can be described in security terms but how regions are both a “cause and effect” of security.

To this end, this chapter adopts a security issue-based taxonomy and examines critically the interplay between the different security paradigms,

the opposing security logics and the security representations of the Black Sea region itself. A paradigm denotes a specific way of viewing reality and more accurately a way of seeing and constructing security in a regional context. According to Kuhn a (scientific) paradigm refers to “universally recognized scientific achievements that, for a time, provide model problems and solutions for a community of practitioners.”<sup>544</sup> In this study a paradigm refers to the beliefs, norms, and analytical criteria that constitute the way a region builder perceives security; the framework that identifies *what* needs to be discussed (i.e. a conflict or an environmental issue), *why* it should be prioritised and *how* it should be addressed. Although in the documents examined there are no explicit references to well-defined “security paradigms”, this chapter will show that region-building discourses were underpinned along the lines of what can be identified as realist, liberal and risk paradigms of security.

In terms of structure, the chapter is divided into five sections. The first section reiterates RBA’s position on security and how it perceives security’s impact on the process of region building. The next section incorporates the region/security nexus into the theoretical framework of the thesis and demonstrates its interlinkages with the aforementioned spatial representations (Chapter VI) and the overarching operation of both the region builders and their scripts. The section that follows outlines the main security issues that characterised the discursive construction of the Black Sea region and the manner in which these were approached through different security paradigms which subsequently resulted into different visions for the Black Sea region. The last section examines how the portrayal of the security issues lead to different kinds of envisaged solutions.

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<sup>544</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 10.

## 2. The region/security nexus: the case of the Black sea region

As mentioned in detail in Chapter I, the majority of regionalist studies has adopted a top-down approach *vis-à-vis* regions, thus ignoring the constitutive nature of region building. Traditionally, attention has been paid to variables such as anarchy, distribution of material capabilities, performance of regional institutions, economic interdependencies and overall patterns of amity and enmity, among other factors.<sup>545</sup> The region itself was approached as a pre-existing entity, a kind of a platform where regional policies unravel. It was RBA, and in particular the writings of authors such as Anssi Paasi, Alexander Murphy, Iver Neumann, John Agnew and Christopher Browning, among others, that problematized the idea of a region.

The starting point of this chapter is the troubled relationship between security-speak and region-building. In this context, this chapter problematizes the conflicting logics of security and highlights the profoundly problematic relationship between region and security. What does this link between security and region indicate? Is there a region/security nexus that needs to be addressed? What happened in the particular case of the Black Sea where one can observe the coexistence of different security discourses, to use Browning's terminology, and what do different security discourses imply?

There is indeed a deep conceptual link existing between security and region or any other constellation (i.e. state, community, etc.). Traditionally, in the Hobbesian tradition the state and its functions is the outcome of fear and hence the society and its citizens are willing to surrender degrees of their individual freedom and power and sign a social contract that grants to the state the role of the security provider. In a similar tone, Wæver argues that the process of European integration was based on the fear of the past; a past

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<sup>545</sup> Iver Neumann, in his work, refers to "two dominant approaches in the existing literature: an *"inside-out"* approach focusing on cultural integration and an *"outside-in"* approach focusing on geopolitics". See, Neumann, "A Region Building Approach to Northern Europe," 53.

defined by war and power struggles, that served as the driving force of European integration.<sup>546</sup> As Browning and Joenniemi point out further, it seems that a widespread idea exists that identifying a “security issue” is a central (and perhaps even necessary) component in providing states with a motivation to cooperate with each other in dealing with formations of political space seen as reaching beyond the ordinary statist options.<sup>547</sup>

The question that needs to be addressed is what happened in the case of the Black Sea. In this case different actors raised different security questions that required different answers subsequently promoting different kind of regions. Overall, one could see an overarching conceptual and political ambiguity. As Triantaphyllou and Acikmese point out, the Black Sea seems to be “...in constant flux and home to competitive political, ideological and geographic narratives.”<sup>548</sup> The discursive construction of the Black Sea region was characterised by both realist and liberal undertones where surprisingly the referent object, to use the language of securitization, was the state, the individual, the region itself and the West. The idea of a region was driven by a series of processes of constructing “self” and “other” while promoting both “inclusion” and “exclusion.” Overall, the relationship between region and security is profoundly problematic and warrants close conceptual and theoretical scrutiny. This is primarily because, as it will be shown, security affects both the manner in which region building takes place and the way region builders, audiences and theorists alike think about regions overall.

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<sup>546</sup> Ole Wæver “European Security Identities,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 34 (1996): 103–32; Ole Wæver “Insecurity, Security, and Asecurity in the West European Non- War Community,” in Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett eds., *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 69-118.

<sup>547</sup> Browning and Joenniemi, “Regionality Beyond Security?” 234.

<sup>548</sup> Sinem Akgul Acikmese and Dimitrios Triantaphyllou “The Black Sea Region: The Neighbourhood too Close to, yet still Far from the European Union, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*,” (2014): 2 (published online, 26 June 2014).

A careful examination of the region building discourse of the Black Sea reveals an interplay of competing security paradigms, security logics and representations that derived from different rationalities and a troubled region/security nexus. Hence, following the different and conflicting spatial representations, one could notice the same conflicting representations of security. One could argue that discursive construction of the Black Sea has been one of confusion profoundly marked by fundamentally different understandings of what constitutes security.

When unravelling the mechanics of the process, it becomes evident that even the actors involved, the practices used and the representations of space were linked or derived from different, if not opposing, security “necessities” and logics. Realist understandings and expressions of security such as “balance of power,” “security dilemmas,” “geopolitics of energy” actively intersected with liberal and risk paradigms of security that prioritised issues such as environmental degradation, illicit trafficking, poor governance and referred to a region building from the bottom-up with the support of the civil society and regional key stakeholders.

Regardless of the security paradigm adopted, security functioned in a powerful manner in the context of region building. First of all, writing and talking about security created an aura of urgency that was met with scepticism at the regional level by the local foreign policy elites. Security served as “a powerful political tool in claiming attention for priority items in the competition for government attention.”<sup>549</sup> Second, by referring mostly to the language and vocabulary of traditional geopolitics the discussion was limited in terms of both what is being discussed and who is in a “position” to discuss these issues.

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<sup>549</sup> Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, 370.



The security discourses of the Black Sea were directly linked to the spatial representations of the Black Sea. All the aforementioned conflicting representations of space (Chapter VI) were premised on different logics of security. The proliferation of notions such as margins, buffer zones, bridges was part and parcel of an ongoing diffusion and fragmentation of security. Different security logics naturalised and legitimized the effects of the different spatial representations and assumptions. To refer to Aydin's perspective that clearly showcases the link between projections of space and security, "there are geostrategic reasons to link the "Black Sea" area (in the strict geographical sense, consisting only of the six littoral states) with the wider geographic areas of the Caucasus, the Caspian and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe when dealing with the political and economic security and stability of the region."<sup>550</sup>

Furthermore, security was elastic acquiring different forms and meanings. To use the words of Buzan, "[s]ecurity is a generic term which has a distinct meaning, but varies in form"<sup>551</sup> and as Lipschutz points out, security has "specific meaning only within a specific social context. It emerges and changes as a result of discourses and discursive actions intended to reproduce historical structures and subjects within states and among them"<sup>552</sup>. Security is a focal point when addressing questions of "who" (region builders), "how" (practices) and "what" (representations). In other words, an argument of the thesis is that region building cannot be examined and properly understood outside security and hence one could not think regionality, or region building, beyond security.

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<sup>550</sup> Aydin, "Europe's next shore", 6 [emphasis added].

<sup>551</sup> Barry Buzan, "Rethinking Security after the Cold War," *Cooperation and Conflict* 32, no. 1 (1997): 15.

<sup>552</sup> Ronnie D. Lipschutz ed. *On Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 17.

### 3. Security and region building: paradigms, logics and implications

Security has its own history and remarkable evolution. The end of the Cold War brought about a resurgent interest and marked the departure from the narrow realist view of security by incorporating different paradigms and concepts of security, thus meaning different things to different people. In order to address the omnipresence and complexity of security this paper examines the totality of security that prevailed in its discursive construction. It is under the umbrella of this totality that one can discuss the contested nature of security, in terms of coexisting security paradigms (i.e. realist, liberal, risk), security logics (i.e. conflicting, cooperative) and security representations of the region itself (i.e. asset, burden) while revealing the overarching problematic symbiosis of security and region.

When referring to totality the objective is to showcase how security in the context of region building was a realm of different actions and perceptions that defined the very idea and practice of region building. The main point is that this totality logic of security was expressed both in terms of ubiquity but also in terms of numerous, and in this case contrasting, logics. This totality can be expressed in terms of: i) a *mélange* of the “war paradigm” and the “threats plus risk paradigm;” ii) the parallel elucidation of the concept of regional security itself, by including “...other sectors than the military...and allowing for a transformation of the Realist, conflictual logic of international security,”<sup>553</sup> and iii) a multiplicity of security actors – region builders – and practices. In reference to the region builders, in particular, it is interesting to refer to Beck’s work on risk who highlights how the “professionals in charge of defining risks become key social and political positions.”<sup>554</sup>

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<sup>553</sup> Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen, *The Evolution of International Security Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 188.

<sup>554</sup> Ulrich Beck, “The Terrorist Threat: World Risk Society Revisited,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 19, no.4 (2002): 45.

Both the spatial and the security representations of the Black Sea reflected broader debates on the ever evolving nature of security. A question that seemed to accompany the process of region building was on the scope and nature of security and in particular whether security should be limited to the military realm or whether it was necessary to link to security to issues such as illicit trafficking, minority rights, individual quality of life, welfare, etc. Yet, whereas in Central and Eastern Europe one could see a transformation of security into a series of threats, “in terms of societal instability rather than in terms of state-sponsored military action,”<sup>555</sup> in the case of the Black Sea region one could see a mix of both traditional military threats (i.e. “frozen conflicts”) and modern risks (environmental degradation, social cohesion, individual welfare, etc.). Interestingly, as it will be shown, in both cases the West was projected as a security provider.

The Black Sea “regional security quilt” included many contradictory and a few overlapping mechanisms, initiatives and strategic bargains which offered little hope that truly comprehensive regional solutions could be found.<sup>556</sup> Indicative of the differing security representations of the Black Sea are Fenopetov et al.’s references in their work where they argued that the security architecture of the Black Sea –if there is one– could be outlined in terms of four distinct security constellations. Namely, as: i) a Security Gap (i.e. between Russia and the West); ii) a Security Vacuum (i.e. composed of countries like Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine that seek a “security umbrella”); iii) a Security Complex (i.e. “a group of states whose primary concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national

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<sup>555</sup> Giuliano Amato and Judy Batt, *The Long-term Implications of EU Enlargement: The Nature of the New Border* (Florence: European University Institute in Florence, 1999); Heather Grabbe, “The Sharp Edges of Europe: Extending Schengen Eastwards,” *International Affairs* 76 (2000): 519–36; Grudzinski and van Ham, *Critical Approach to European Security*, 150; and Walker, “The Subject of Security,” 71.

<sup>556</sup> Oksana Antonenko, “Towards a comprehensive regional security framework in the Black Sea region after the Russia–Georgia war,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 9 no.3 (2009): 263–264.

securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another;”<sup>557</sup> iv) Security Overlap (i.e. a list of common security concerns among both regional and non-regional actors that overlap (e.g., on nuclear non-proliferation, the struggle against terrorism, and economic security).<sup>558</sup> This categorisation reveals the ambiguity surrounding the security status, both conceptually and politically, of the Black Sea, its accompanying representations, and what these different understandings of security meant for the region itself.

There were certain closely intertwined and overlapping security issues that dominated the security agenda. These were primarily the following: “frozen conflicts,” energy security, lack of democracy and poor governance, environmental degradation, and last but definitely not least terrorism. Examining security from an issue-based perspective has the advantage that it showcases how different security issues were approached through different lenses, based on different security paradigms and characterised by different referent rationalities, referent objects and envisaged solutions. As it will be discussed, there is a tendency in the literature to think in terms of a realist or a liberal paradigm and then classify accordingly a security issue or a solution to it. Yet, the region building discourse of the Black Sea demonstrates that there were issues –energy security being perhaps the most prominent example– that were approached through different security paradigms. Lastly, it should be noted that an issue based taxonomy does not imply an autonomy of the security issue examined. On the contrary, this taxonomy shows how the main security issues were directly linked with each other at many different levels.

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<sup>557</sup> Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 46.

<sup>558</sup> Vladimir Fenopetov, Bruce Lawlor, Tedo Japaridze, Yannis Tsantoulis and Alex P. Schmid, “New Security Threats—Old Security Architecture and Mind-Sets: Countering the Threat of Radiological and Nuclear Terrorism in the Black Sea Region,” *American Foreign Policy Interests: The Journal of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy* 33, no.5 (2011): 199.

### *Frozen conflicts: inside/outside the region*

Examining the discursive construction of the Black Sea region, the so-called “frozen conflicts”, a controversial term compared to the more accurate “protracted conflicts,” occupied a significant part in the debates of the state of play and the way ahead for the Black Sea region.<sup>559</sup> The ways these were portrayed in the context of region building reflected primarily, if not solely, a logic of war that prioritised the role of the state, territorial integrity, the importance of military threats, and the balance of power, thus treating the Black Sea region as a kind of a “regional security complex.”<sup>560</sup> The region was, in other words, defined in terms of anarchy, polarity, geographical proximity and patterns of amity and enmity. The Black Sea was basically portrayed to be hosting a series of security dilemmas for both the West and the states of the region.

What is interesting to note though is that the prevalent mode of “geopolitical thinking” projected the region’s military conflicts as an item of the Euroatlantic agenda. More precisely, the significance of these conflicts was acknowledged in numerous documents, speeches and statements of high ranking officials of NATO, the EU and OSCE. The security status of the region, in terms of the frozen conflicts, was not limited to chronic disputes and historical animosities but it also reflected extra-regional concerns of stability. The regional security state of play was portrayed as the outcome of more fundamental differences between the West – US, EU, NATO – and

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<sup>559</sup> The so-called frozen conflicts, as listed both in academic and policy discourse, are: Abkhazia (de facto independent from Georgia), Nagorno Karabakh (de facto independent from Azerbaijan), South Ossetia (de facto independent from Georgia), and Transnistria (de facto independent from Moldova). Many also argue that Crimea might evolve into another “frozen conflict”. Overall, there are numerous papers and policy documents addressing the conflicts, but for an interesting analysis, read: Dov Lynch, “Separatist states and post-Soviet conflicts,” *International Affairs* 78, no. 4 (2002): 831 – 848.

<sup>560</sup> According to Buzan and Wæver, RSC is “a set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another”. See Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 44.

Russia. Hence, these served as points of reference to the relations between Russia and the West. In this regard, a conflict between two parties acquired an extra-regional dimension. The Russia-Georgia war in 2008 is perhaps the most profound example of the transformation of the conflict into a conflict between Russia and the West. This position was expressed in several works and although the reference to the Black Sea region was not explicit, one can identify the same spatial representations and security logics deployed for the Black Sea.<sup>561</sup>

From a Russian perspective, the dominant perception was that it was the West, primarily through NATO enlargement, that was trying to increase its influence in Russia's "near abroad," and be engaged in conflicts that the West could not comprehend. For the elites in the West, it was Russia that raised obstacles and impediments in creating a stable environment in the region that would secure western interests. Most of the problems identified and presented in the literature, based on a "competitive logic of the geopolitical framing of the region,"<sup>562</sup> never acquired a solely regional or bilateral scope but instead were framed as interconnected and overlapping, regional and extra-regional. Indeed, the efforts to launch a strategy *vis-à-vis* the "wider Black Sea" region granted gravity to NATO's enlargement and the involvement of the West in general while rendering the idea of a regional security agenda, either as a uniting or a dividing force, impossible.<sup>563</sup>

Even more importantly, the conflicts were portrayed in the West as a security issue directly linked to both the fight against terrorism and democracy promotion in the region. According to Asmus, "[i]t is widely and correctly believed that these unresolved fragments of Soviet Empire now

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<sup>561</sup> Ron Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia and the future of the West* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, January 2010).

<sup>562</sup> Ciută, "Region?", 126.

<sup>563</sup> Stephen Larrabee, "NATO and the Black Sea security" in Hamilton and Mangott eds. *The wider Black Sea region in the 21st Century*, 277-292.

serve as shipping points for weapons, narcotics, and victims of human trafficking, as breeding grounds for transnational organised crime and, last but not least, for terrorism”<sup>564</sup> while Solana argued “[t]he frozen conflicts should not sideline the tasks of democracy. The populations expect leaders to pursue the goal of democratization relentlessly. Moreover, democracy and conflict resolution are linked.”<sup>565</sup>

As a result, the Black Sea region was portrayed as an area of increasing strategic competition and rivalry between Russia and the West; an important aspect of a struggle for power and influence that surpassed the borders of the Black Sea. The realist paradigm of military, inter-state threats was accompanied by a conflictual logic characterised by notions of “self” and “other” both outside and inside the region. Different interpretations of the conflicts led to different understandings of the Black Sea region itself. The Black Sea was portrayed from different angles as a “regional security complex,” a geopolitical entity and a potential source of instability. Different ways of thinking about the frozen conflicts, resulted into different ways of thinking about the region overall and what it should become. For Russia or regional states, frozen conflicts were seen either as a regional or domestic issue whereas for Western actors these conflicts were portrayed to represent a source of insecurity. Different formulations of the problems promoted different solutions, either in the form of Turkey’s efforts to resolve the Nagorno Karabakh conflict for instance or in the form of security initiatives to expand Euroatlantic integration and include states such as Georgia and Ukraine.

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<sup>564</sup> Asmus and Jackson, “The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom,” 21.

<sup>565</sup> Javier Solana, Speech at the Conference “Common Vision for a Common Neighbourhood,” Vilnius, May 4, 2006.

### *Energy Security: a security pendulum*

Energy, energy security or the “geopolitics of energy” to use the language used in the prevailing discourse, emerged as a key security issue in the context of region building. According to Ciută, the domain of energy in general has been “...saturated with the language of security.”<sup>566</sup> Energy had a profound impact on the way the people involved in the discursive construction of the Black Sea thought about both security and region in general. As Ciută points out, energy can be seen as: i) an instrument, a state asset; ii) a cause of inter-state competition and great power conflicts, and; iii) a factor of socio-economic, political and environmental instability deriving from energy policies (e.g. energy disruptions).<sup>567</sup> What one can observe is the coexistence of a plethora of divisions characterised by an uneasy mixture of economic, political and cultural connotations. Energy emerged as a both contested and all-encompassing issue and as Winrow observes in reference to energy: “neither the mercantilist nor the liberal perspective alone fully accounts for political and economic realities.”<sup>568</sup>

According to Mangott and Westphal, “because of its geographic location as a bridge to the energy abundant countries of the Caspian Basin and central Asia the Black Sea region will be of major importance for the EU as a transit corridor.”<sup>569</sup> In a similar tone, Baran and Smith further argue, “[a] successful implementation of this trilateral strategy will allow the Black Sea region to become a conduit of energy diversification, security and freedom between

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<sup>566</sup> Felix Ciută, “Conceptual Notes on Energy Security: Total or Banal Security?” *Security Dialogue* 41 (2010): 124.

<sup>567</sup> For a more comprehensive account on how energy is viewed in the literature, read Ciută, “Energy Security,” 129.

<sup>568</sup> Gareth M. Winrow, “Energy security in the Black sea region: Economic interdependence or commercial and political rivalry?”, *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 2, no. 2 (2002): 149.

<sup>569</sup> Gerhard Mangott and Kirsten Westphal, “The Relevance of the Wider Black Sea Region to EU and Russian Energy Issues” in Hamilton and Mangott eds. *The Wider Black Sea Region in the 21st Century*, 154.



Europe and the Middle East and Central Asia.”<sup>570</sup> In other words, energy was not simply about pipelines and business deals but it was primarily about broader political effects. Energy was basically all about bringing the region to the West politically and economically; *Drang nach Westen*.

As Lesser observes: “new energy projects, in particular oil and gas pipeline routes, have captured the imagination of strategists inside and outside the region as part of a competitive great game across Eurasia.”<sup>571</sup> Thumann, contributing to an influential GMF publication, argued that “today, pipelines are as important for geopolitical relations on the Eurasian continent as railways were all over Europe in the 19th century.”<sup>572</sup> Such an understanding of energy habituated a distinct vocabulary, a geopolitical jargon. The following excerpt by an analyst reveals the prevailing elite discourse on energy:

“These [i.e. energy] issues have been widely analyzed as a new “Great Game” — a *struggle over spheres of influences* between Russia, China and the West...The renaissance of *neorealist balance of power* approaches is reflected in the economic sphere by switching from multilateral agreements towards bilateral ones.”<sup>573</sup>

Klare went even further suggesting that in the post-Cold War era a new geography of conflict has developed in which resource flows, instead of ideological and political divisions, form the main fault lines.<sup>574</sup> The region was portrayed in many works as: “...a region of complex geopolitical fault lines

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<sup>570</sup> Zeyno Baran and Robert A. Smith, “The Energy Dimension in American Policy towards the Black Sea Region,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 7, no. 2 (2007): 266.

<sup>571</sup> Lesser, *Global Trends, Regional Consequences*, 29.

<sup>572</sup> Michael Thumann, “European Energy Security, The Black Sea and Russian Interests – Can There be a Common Strategy,” in Asmus ed. *Next Steps in Forging a Euro-atlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, 126.

<sup>573</sup> Mangott and Westphal, “The Relevance of the Wider Black Sea Region to EU and Russian Energy Issues” 155.

<sup>574</sup> Michael T. Klare, “The new geography of conflict,” *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 3 (2001): 49–61.

and frontiers.”<sup>575</sup> The underlying principle of this war logic was survival and energy security was viewed as a derivative of the overarching anarchic conditions. In this context, the Black Sea was therefore no longer regarded as “marginal” or “peripheral,” but was rather viewed as the “linchpin between core Europe and the wider Middle East”.<sup>576</sup>

The Black Sea was, however, also represented as a source of instability. According to Arbatova:

“The heterogeneity of the Black Sea region in terms of security arrangements...and the growing importance of the Black Sea–Caspian region as an *energy transport corridor* imply that instability in this area can have significant ramifications not only for domestic and regional security, but also for European and international security.”<sup>577</sup>

In addition, energy was framed as a military issue that could be dealt under NATO’s jurisdiction. General James Jones, NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, in an event organised by the GMFUS (i.e. Brussels Forum, April 2006) highlighted the need for the Euroatlantic organisation to play a more active role in terms of the security of the pipelines, the energy terminals, and the transportation of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and oil by tankers.<sup>578</sup> Richard Lugar, Republican United States Senator, went even further in a conference organised by GMFUS, under the auspices of the NATO Summit, and suggested that NATO should first include energy related issues under the provision of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, and second, establish security mechanisms capable of protecting NATO’s member states,

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<sup>575</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>576</sup> Asmus, “Next steps in forging a EuroAtlantic strategy for the wider Black Sea,” 17.

<sup>577</sup> Nadia Alexandrova-Arbatova, “The impact of the Caucasus crisis on regional and European security,” *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 9, no.3 (2009): 289 [emphasis added].

<sup>578</sup> GMF Brussels Forum, *Do We Need a Transatlantic Policy? Transatlantic Challenges in a Global Era* (Brussels: GMF Brussels Forum, 30 April 2006).

such as Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey, from possible energy disruptions and other energy related issues.<sup>579</sup>

At the same time, however, energy was treated as a favourable field of cooperation. The most prominent example is the INOGATE Programme. Initially standing for “Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe” its primary objective was to facilitate energy cooperation between the EU, the littoral states of the Black and Caspian Seas and their neighbouring countries. Priority was given to the areas of oil and gas, electricity, renewable energy and energy efficiency. This view of energy, based on a liberal paradigm, advocated a cooperative logic of security. The idea was to discuss low-politics issue and engage the local energy community, i.e. promote a bottom-up region building.

Reading the declarations and a series of documents in the official website one can notice the absence of the geopolitical jargon and instead take note of a politically neutral wording that included “attracting investment,” “supporting sustainable energy development,” and “converging energy markets.”<sup>580</sup> Furthermore, reading the Synergy of the EC one can also discern a liberal view of energy characterised by many references to “a clearer focus on alternative energy sources and on energy efficiency and energy saving, which will release important energy resources” and to the “upgrading of existing and the construction of new energy infrastructure.” There were also explicit references to the environmental dimension of energy with the EC stating in the document that it “has a specific interest in developing a sustainable and ecological oil dimension to its co-operation in the region.”<sup>581</sup>

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<sup>579</sup> Richard Lugar “Energy and NATO” Keynote speech to the German Marshall Fund Conference on 27 November 2006, Riga”. Available from <http://Lugar.Senate.gov/energy/press/speech/riga.html>.

<sup>580</sup> For further information on the objectives and scope of activities of INOGATE, visit: [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/energy/policies/eastern-neighbourhood/inogate\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/energy/policies/eastern-neighbourhood/inogate_en.htm) and <http://inogate-tag.org/inogate/home.php?lang=en>.

<sup>581</sup> Commission, “Black Sea Synergy,” 5.

This liberal paradigm was essentially encompassing “soft” security issues such as environmental problems and economic performance, thus shifting the concern away from states, as the primary actors, and involving individuals and local communities.

What one can discern from these representative statements that characterised the discursive construction of the Black Sea was that energy was portrayed as a security issue through different paradigms and logics. According to the realist paradigm, it was portrayed as a military issue that needs to be addressed at the higher level of political authority, namely the state, and the prevailing logic was that of war. The jargon was mostly realist but instead of security dilemmas and arms races one could find numerous references to “geopolitics of energy,” by-pass pipelines, energy wars and alliances, etc. In most of the cases, energy projects such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC), Southstream, Nabucco, or the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) were portrayed as “geopolitical tools” and new arenas of competition characterised by underlying notions of “self” and “other,” West and East, thus promoting a conflictual logic of security. As Cheney put it, in references to Russia’s foreign policy, oil and gas should be seen as “tools of intimidation or blackmail.”<sup>582</sup>

At the same time, however, there were region building voices that referred to energy projects as ways of establishing a region, promoting interdependencies and increasing stability and prosperity in the region. INOGATE was such an initiative, albeit with limited visibility and impact on the process of region building. In terms of spatial representations, it is important to note again how the Black Sea was mostly portrayed as a bridge, thus portrayed as an asset for the West.

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<sup>582</sup> Steve Lee Myers, “Cheney Rebukes Russia on Rights,” *New York Times* (Europe), 5 May 2006.

Last but not least, in numerous documents dealing with energy security one could discern the influence of the risk paradigm. The paradigm of risk, with risk identified as “a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself,”<sup>583</sup> highlighted the existence of new dangers in the region that were caused not by random acts of nature but by the very practices of human modernization themselves. According to Beck, “[i]n the course of the exponentially growing productive forces in the modernization process,” further adding, “hazards and potential threats have been unleashed to an extent previously unknown.”<sup>584</sup> As Elbe also points out that, “[t]he ‘reversal’ of the relationship between past, present and future: the actual social impetus of risks lies in the projected dangers of the future...The center of risk consciousness lies not in the present, but in the future.”<sup>585</sup> Consequently, energy was portrayed as no longer tied to the source of origin representing a longer term security risk capable of causing security ramifications in the future. Hence, depending on the perspective and the security paradigm adopted energy swung as a pendulum between logics of conflict and cooperation. Different security logics prioritised different security actors, actions and different formulations of energy related problems promoted different solutions to these problems. To conclude, energy security – in contrast to the case of the Baltic Sea where energy security did not have any impact – defined to a significant extent the process of region building in the Black Sea as different meanings attached to energy transformed constantly the idea of the Black Sea region itself.

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<sup>583</sup> Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), 21.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>585</sup> Stefan Elbe, “Risking Lives: AIDS, Security and Three Concepts of Risk,” *Security Dialogue* 39, no. 2–3 (April 2008): 181.

*Terrorism: under the umbrella of the GWoT*

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, terrorism served as the crucial component of the new grand foreign policy narrative: the GWoT. This was a narrative that actively intersected with the region building discourse. According to Asmus:

“Following September 11, 2001, the strategic attention of the West has shifted in a profound and, in all likelihood, enduring way. The combination of locking in stability in Europe and the growing awareness that a locus of new threats emanated from the wider Middle East led us to see the region through a new prism. What once seemed to be marginal or on the periphery of Europe was now much closer and central. In a sense, the wider Black Sea region is the linchpin between the core Europe and the wider Middle East.”<sup>586</sup>

The attempt to develop a broader strategy towards the “wider Black Sea” region imparted a specific importance to NATO enlargement and the US actively supported NATO membership for both Ukraine and Georgia.<sup>587</sup> However, this policy made it impossible for NATO to provide security in the Black Sea region as a whole.<sup>588</sup> The Black Sea was portrayed as a potential part of the Euroatlantic security space and “...the next and third sea that serves as a geopolitical center for the expansion of Europe’s stable and peaceful security system.”<sup>589</sup> It was represented to be “strategically located at the junction of Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East,” thus greatly benefiting “the *citizens* of the countries concerned as well as contribute to the overall

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<sup>586</sup> Asmus, “Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Black Sea,” 17.

<sup>587</sup> Larrabee, “NATO and the Black Sea security” in Hamilton and Mangott eds. *The wider Black Sea region in the 21st Century*, 277-92.

<sup>588</sup> Celikpala, “Escalating rivalries and diverging interests” 293.

<sup>589</sup> Tedo Japaridze and Bruce Lawlor, “The Black Sea: a special geography—an explosive region,” *American Foreign Policy Interests: The Journal of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy* 31, no. 5 (2009): 302-303.

prosperity, stability and security in Europe.”<sup>590</sup> Located at a critical junction the Black Sea made sense as a distinct political unit as long as it could be utilised in the fight against terrorism and it was viewed by the West, and by Romania in particular, as a platform for power projection and a buffer zone. Hence, terrorism was portrayed in the West as a security issue of utmost importance and any references to terrorism were characterised by an aura of a strategic necessity.

Yet, terrorism was viewed differently by regional actors. Although the majority of the actors involved realised the special gravity attached to the GWoT by the US, they had a different view of terrorism and what it means in the context of the region. Two security initiatives that demonstrate a different security paradigm and logic are the Black Sea Naval Force (BLACKSEAFOR) and the naval operation Black Sea Harmony. BLACKSEAFOR was established in Istanbul on 2 April 2001, under Turkish leadership, with the participation of Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia and Ukraine. From the onset, the objective was to improve maritime security through coordinated activities and operations in the fields of: Search and Rescue Operations, Humanitarian Assistance Operations, Mine Counter Measures, Environmental Protection Operations, Goodwill visits, and any other tasks agreed by all the Parties. Following the launch of the GWoT, fight against terrorism was included in the scope of activities.<sup>591</sup> What is interesting to note, though, is how maritime security –framed as state-centric, military issue– needed to be dealt solely at the regional level. According to Article IV of the Agreement:

“The BLACKSEAFOR is established in order to contribute to the further strengthening of friendship, good relations and mutual

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<sup>590</sup> Commission, “Black Sea Synergy”.

<sup>591</sup> Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze, “Cooperative Efforts in the Black Sea Region,” in Pavliuk and Klympush-Tsintsadze eds., *The Black Sea region*, 50-51.

confidence among the Black Sea littoral states as well as to improve peace and stability in the region.”<sup>592</sup>

Turkish officials in particular argued in many occasions that they could not understand why there was such an insistence on NATO penetrating the region.<sup>593</sup> Black Sea Harmony was another regional security initiative that aimed at deterring terrorism and asymmetric threats worldwide.<sup>594</sup> The logic was again one of cooperation at the regional level but exclusion at the extra-regional. In this regard, the Black Sea was viewed as regionally controlled, close security space and terrorism served a “region building” function. Terrorist activities by not recognising national borders were in a sense stressing the need for region building.

The concept of risk was also utilised by scholars to explore a host of other prominent security issues ranging from weapons of mass destruction<sup>595</sup> and the nature of contemporary terrorism,<sup>596</sup> through to aspects of the “War on Terror.”<sup>597</sup> Terrorism was a key security issue whereby the languages of risk and security converged and was identified as a major threat to European Security.<sup>598</sup> This pre-occupation of preventing and managing potential future threats was indicative of the incorporation of risk assessment in the way security was constructed by many region builders. Concerning terrorism in particular and the portrayal of the proliferation of weapons of mass

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<sup>592</sup> To read the Agreement in detail and other relevant documents related to the structure, activities and mandated of the BLACKSEAFOR, visit the following homepage: <http://www.dzkk.tsk.tr/denizweb/blackseafor/english/agreement/agreement.php>.

<sup>593</sup> Suat Kiniklioğlu, “Turkey”s Black Sea Policy: Strategic Interplay at a Critical Junction,” in Asmus ed. *Next Steps in Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, 61.

<sup>594</sup> For an overview of the official documents, visit: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/blackseafor.en.mfa>.

<sup>595</sup> On weapons of mass destruction see: Beck, *World Risk Society*.

<sup>596</sup> See L. Freedman, “The Politics of Warning: Terrorism and Risk Communication,” *Intelligence and National Security* 20, no. 3 (2005): 379-418.

<sup>597</sup> See Keith Spence, “World Risk Society and War Against Terror,” *Political Studies* 53 (2005): 284-302; and Mikkel V. Rasmussen, “It Sounds Like a Riddle”: Security Studies, the War on Terror and Risk,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 2 (2004): 381-395.

<sup>598</sup> European Union, *A Secure Europe in a Better World*, 3.



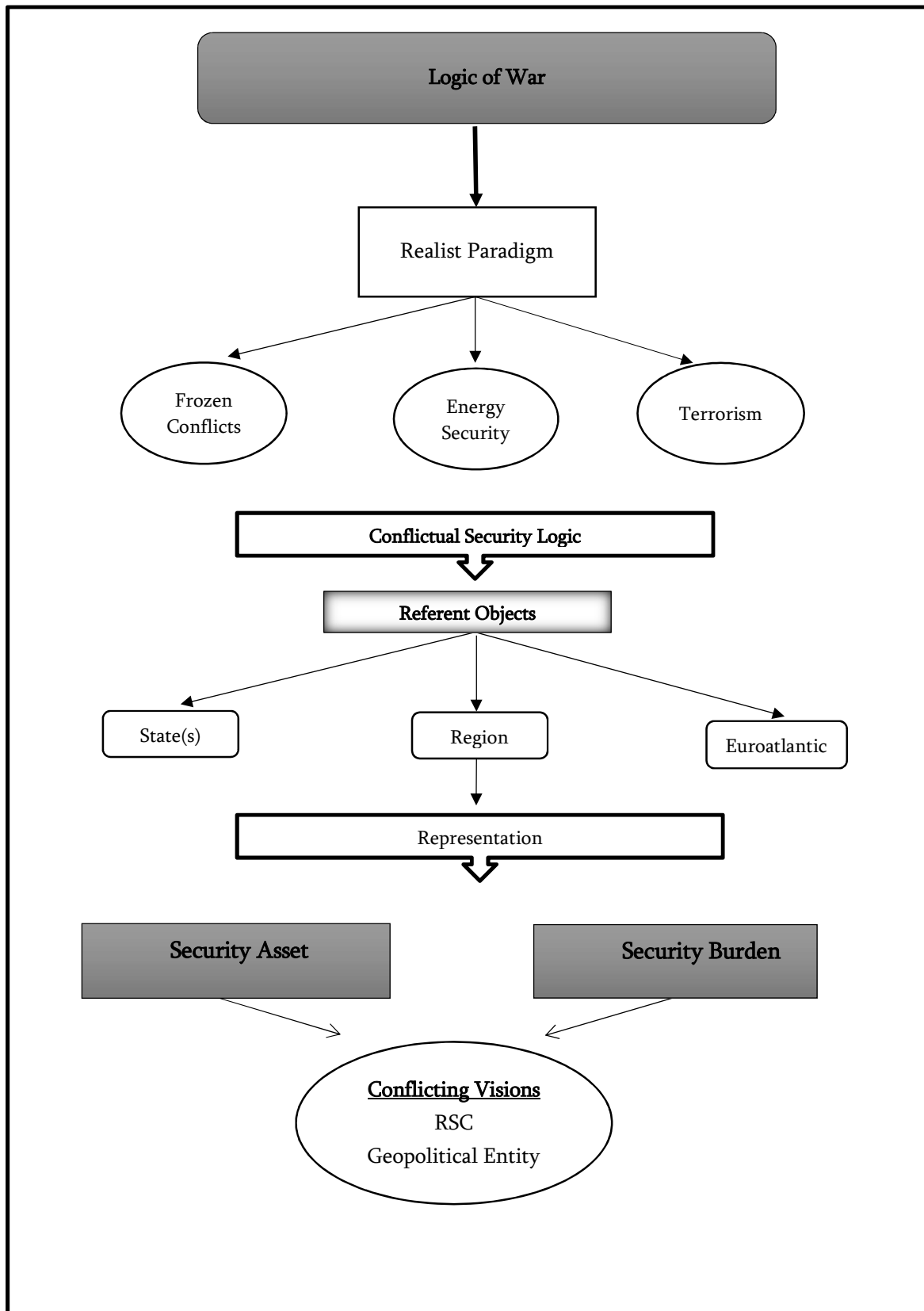
destruction as a key threat in the ESS there were explicit references that “the risks of proliferation grow over time.”<sup>599</sup> Terrorism was portrayed in the region building discourse in the form of an invisible yet ubiquitous enemy. It was essentially portrayed as an elusive threat that can only be managed.

Terrorism seemed to imply different, if not contradicting, visions of what the Black Sea is or should be in the fight against terrorism. On the one hand, it was viewed as an existential threat that could unite the region. On the other hand, terrorism was viewed as an issue above and beyond the region whereby the region itself was portrayed as an asset and/or a burden for the West. Terrorism and the ways it was viewed entailed a clash of both geographical scope (regional *vs.* extra-regional) and nature (geopolitical *vs.* institutional) and the way it was portrayed in the region building discourse signalled a shift to the objective of managing threats that have become elusive, less predictable, yet ubiquitous.

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<sup>599</sup> Ibid.

Graph XII: The Realist Paradigm and the Logic of War



*Environmental degradation: regional problems, regional solutions*

As already mentioned, security within the discursive construction of the Black Sea region was not limited to a statist and realist understanding. This is more than evident in the Black Sea Synergy and other documents that adopted a sectoral approach to the security status of the Black Sea. Security expanded, or was transformed, to include policy priorities such as environmental protection, illicit trafficking and organised crime. Security was seen through sectors, i.e. “views of the international system through a lens that highlights one particular aspect of the relationship and interaction among all of its constituent units.”<sup>600</sup> Within this paradigm of constructing issues outside the realm of military threats and territorial integrity one could also see elements from the risk paradigm that has become relevant in both policy and academic parlance in the West. Indeed, increasingly embraced and addressed in security policy documents such as the European Security Strategy (2003) one could read references to how Europe now faces threats which are “more diverse, less visible, and less predictable.”<sup>601</sup> Not only security spilled-over to fields outside the military sector, but it was also more fragile and elusive; almost a-territorial and without an origin.

In terms of environmental protection one should refer to the Danube Black Sea Task Force (DABLAS). DABLAS was set up in 2001 with the objective to strengthen cooperation in the area of environment with a particular focus on water and water-related ecosystems in the Danube and the Black Sea. Having as a referent object the local communities and the individuals living on the shores of the Black Sea and the environmental degradation of the Black Sea ecosystem as a manufactured risk, to use the conceptual language of risk theory, the environmental degradation was

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<sup>600</sup> Barry Buzan, Charles Jones and Richard Little, *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 31.

<sup>601</sup> European Union, *European Security Strategy*, 3.

represented as a security issue through a cooperative logic that engaged member states of the EU, the EC, regional institutes and the civil society. Both the actors involved and the practices used (i.e. investment projects, research programmes, etc.) were based on a bottom-up understanding and promoted a cooperative logic of security and region building.<sup>602</sup>

When addressing environmental issues in the European context the environmental status of the Black Sea was also framed as a European issue. The wording in the following excerpt is clear: “[m]arine waters under the sovereignty and jurisdiction of Member States of the European Union include waters in the Mediterranean Sea, the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea.”<sup>603</sup> The Black Sea was approached as a marine region of high importance and the environment was portrayed as a security concern that needs to be addressed through a cooperative logic. In the Synergy, the wording was straightforward: “[c]ountries of the Black Sea region need to enhance implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and establish a more strategic environmental co-operation in the region.”<sup>604</sup> BSEC was also particularly active in the field of the environment and one could read in the official website a series of Declarations, Reports and Action Plans highlighting the nature of pollution as a growing risk.<sup>605</sup>

In this regard, environmental degradation was based on a co-operative logic of security that prioritised cooperation at a technical level, favoured the participation of regional actors, welcomed the expertise and the funding of the EU and overall promoted a “bottom-up” understanding of the process of

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<sup>602</sup> For further information on the activities, donors, existing projects and objectives of DABLAS see: <http://www.icpdr.org/main/activities-projects/dablas>.

<sup>603</sup> European Parliament and the Council, *Directive 2008/56/EC establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy* (Marine Strategy Framework Directive), Brussels, 2008.

<sup>604</sup> Commission, “Black Sea Synergy,” 6.

<sup>605</sup> For detailed information on BSEC’s activities see: <http://www.bsec-organization.org/aoc/environprotect/Pages/information.aspx>.

region builders. Overall, addressing issues related to the environment seemed to correspond to the formula “Regional Problems require Regional Solutions” that was successfully applied to the case of Europe’s North. Region building was an antidote to regional security concerns. Last but not least, environmental degradation and the way it was both constructed and portrayed in Europe was along the lines of a risk paradigm that threats are no longer tied to the source of origin but do travel.

*Lack of democracy and the “frontiers of freedom”*

The lack of democracy in the region was framed as a threat in the Euro-Atlantic strategy towards the region. Judy Garber, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, in her address stated: “U.S. interests in the Black Sea are focused on advancing democratic and market reforms”<sup>606</sup> and “[a] commitment to democratic values is the pillar of U.S. foreign policy in the Black Sea region.”<sup>607</sup> Democratic transformation was one of the main objectives of the US foreign policy and in this context both the Rose Revolution in Georgia (2003) and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (2004) were hailed as successes of the West. Yet, the process of democratisation was first of all linked to NATO’s enlargement and second because it was perceived to represent a break of these countries from their Soviet past and a kind of an obstacle to Russia’s aspiration for regional hegemony.

As Ronald Asmus noted, the debate on NATO’s role in contributing to Black Sea security is an *extension* of the moral and strategic arguments that drove the debate on enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe in the

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<sup>606</sup> Judy Garber, “U.S. Perspectives on the Black Sea Region,” “Trans-Atlantic Perspectives on the Wider Black Sea Region,” Keynote Address at the Woodrow Wilson Center Conference, Washington, DC, June 10, 2008. Available for downloading at <http://merln.ndu.edu/archivepdf/EUR/State/105827.pdf>.

<sup>607</sup> Ibid.

1990s.<sup>608</sup> Bruce Jackson, director of the US Committee on NATO, argued emphatically that “[t]he year 1989 represented a *moral revolution*, not a political one, and this we must bear in mind. Today, all countries in the east cling to Europe more than ever: Democracy has a unique opportunity to control them from the North to the whole circumference of the Black Sea.”<sup>609</sup>

According to Socor: “effective state- and democracy-building and strategic interests are twin sides of a common set of U.S. and Euro-Atlantic interests in the Black Sea region”<sup>610</sup> with Jackson further pointing out that: “[t]he Black Sea region is an area of enormous democratic potential. The policy of the United States has to be to support new democracies, to dissuade or deter foreign powers from intervening in their development, and to ensure that the Euro-Atlantic institutions they seek remain open to them.”<sup>611</sup> In a similar tone, Baran argued that, “[t]he West needs to strongly encourage internal reform and institution building in these states to bring them closer, while they in turn need to demonstrate the political will to reform their political systems and economies and thereby also prove their shared transatlantic values.”<sup>612</sup> The lack of democracy was portrayed as a source of instability as it was linked to unpredictable authoritarian regimes, a locus of threats such as proliferation of WMD and illicit trafficking.

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<sup>608</sup> Asmus, *Next steps in forging a Euroatlantic strategy for the wider Black Sea*, 16.

<sup>609</sup> Quoted in Martin Simecka, “The Havel Paradox,” *Transitions Online*, March 21, 2003, <http://www.tol.cz> (accessed May 20, 2014) [emphasis added].

<sup>610</sup> Vladimir Socor, “Advancing Euro-atlantic security and democracy in the Black Sea region,” Testimony before the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on European Affairs, March 8, 2005. Available for downloading at: <http://www.jamestown.org/fileadmin/EDM/Resources/SocorCongTestimony030805.pdf>.

<sup>611</sup> Bruce Pitcairn Jackson, “The Future of Democracy in the Black Sea Region,” Testimony Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on European Affairs, March 8, 2005. Available for downloading at: <http://www.newamericancentury.org/blacksea-20050309.htm>.

<sup>612</sup> Zeyno Baran, “Developing a Euro-atlantic strategy towards Black Sea energy: the example of the Caspian,” in Asmus et al *A New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region*, 123.

Democracy was high in the political agenda of Europe as well.<sup>613</sup> The Synergy was the first European, official policy document listing democracy, respect for human rights and good governance, managing movement and improving security, among others, as the main cooperation areas.<sup>614</sup> Most of the security references were highlighting how conflicts by their very nature hold up the development of democracy and in particular how internally displaced citizens and refugees pose specific problems for local societies.<sup>615</sup> Even more importantly, these representations were emphasizing the role that civil society can play and also its impact on institutions such as the executive, legislative, judiciary and media, not to mention reconciliation and conflict resolution, is not in dispute.

The statements above demonstrate how security and its portrayal was not limited to the realm of inter-state competition and military threats. Security was expanded to include democracy, prosperity and the well-being of the individual. These references to lack of democracy as a security issue seemed to liberate the discursive construction of the Black Sea from the burden of geopolitics. Yet, reading carefully the quotes made by Socor and Jackson one could clearly discern an underlying conflictual logic that referred to the Russian “Other.” That means, in order to achieve and consolidate democracy Russia needs to be adequately addressed. The lack of democracy was constructed as a threat through a realist paradigm privileging the state as the main actor and interstate competition as the main course of action.

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<sup>613</sup> Franz-Lothar Altmann, Johanna Deimel and Armando García Schmidt, “Democracy and Good Governance in the Black Sea Region,” *Policy Report IV* an initiative of the Commission on the Black Sea (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2010).

<sup>614</sup> Sabine Fischer, “The European Union and security in the Black Sea region after the Georgia crisis,” *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 9, no.3 (2009): 341.

<sup>615</sup> Franz-Lothar Altmann, Johanna Deimel and Armando Garcia Schmidt, “Democracy and good governance in the Black Sea region,” *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 10, no. 3 (2010): 309.

Furthermore, when addressing democratisation in the context of region building one could discern a clash between top-down and bottom-up democratisation. On the one hand there were references in policy documents such as the Synergy to local ownership, NGOs and the role of civil society in the process of democratisation as “[c]onfidence-building and the promotion of reconciliation are areas where civil society can become involved with help from the international community and international think tanks in order to lay the foundations for a peaceful resolution of the conflicts in the Black Sea region.”<sup>616</sup> On the other hand, in numerous publications and official strategy documents one could see how membership to NATO was portrayed to be directly linked with the process of democratisation.

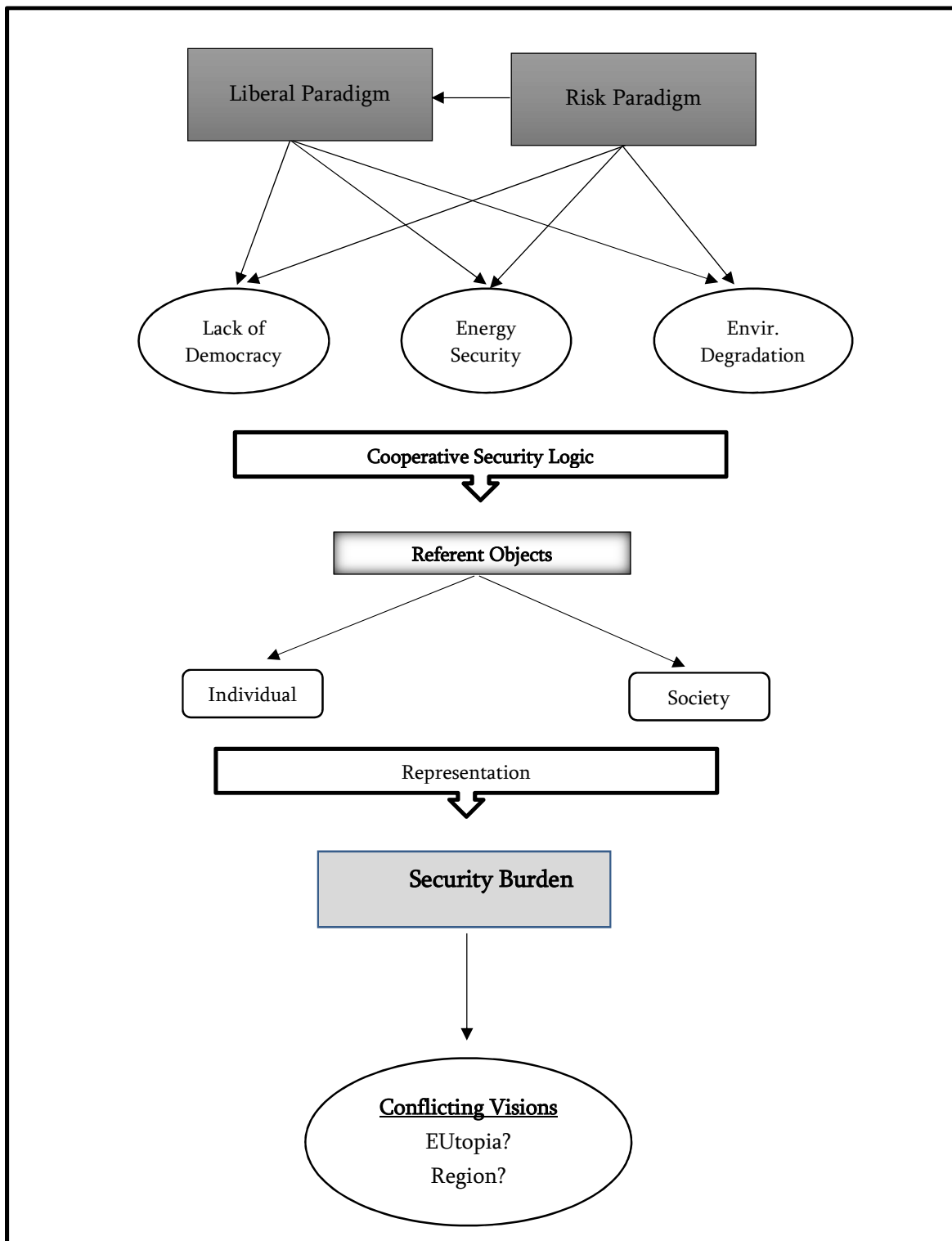
Once again, regional actors with different security logics approached with scepticism, especially in terms of security issues, any effort to promote a grass-roots activism. Democratisation in this context was perceived to be solely a pretext. To conclude, the lack of democracy was a security issue that was portrayed to be of both regional and extra-regional scope and concern based on both a conflictual and cooperative logic of security. It was caught between a geopolitical and an institutional perspective and a bottom-up and a top-down approach *vis-à-vis* democratisation. These different views implied essentially different readings of the region itself.

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<sup>616</sup> Ibid., 316.



Graph XIII: The Liberal and the Risk Paradigm



#### **4. The security representations of the Black Sea: asset and burden**

Reflecting on the security paradigms, logics, and always in accordance with the spatial representations, one could observe how the Black Sea region itself was characterised by conflicting representations. Depending on the security paradigm the Black Sea was framed either as a security asset or a security burden. By positioning it at the margins, as part of the long belt of conflicts stretching from North Africa to Southeast Asia, and pointing out its various crises that beleaguer it including high birth rates, high unemployment, ethnic strife and refugee movements, limits to democratic rule of law, high corruption, clan loyalties, Islamic revival, and terrorism it was presented as a burden, a problem that needs to be resolved. “[T]he Black Sea area has always been a source of uncertainty, insecurity, invasions, and migration”<sup>617</sup> and now the unresolved fragments of the Soviet Empire could “...serve as shipping points for weapons, narcotics, and victims of human trafficking, as breeding grounds for transnational organized crime and, last but not least, for terrorism.”<sup>618</sup> In this context, the Black Sea region was viewed both as an asset and a burden. It was viewed as an asset in the sense that “the strategic importance of the Black Sea derives from its role as a political and logistical hub for power projection to crisis-prone areas beyond the Black Sea basin”.

At the same time, though, it was considered to be a burden as the Black Sea was portrayed to be “...one of the key routes for bringing heroin to the European markets and dangerous technologies to al Qaeda and other terrorist groups.”<sup>619</sup> Socor emphatically highlighted the security problems for the extra-regional actors by arguing how these will eventually “undermine Euro-Atlantic strategic, economic and democratic interests in this region.”<sup>620</sup> In a similar tone, “the Black Sea region has itself become a focal point for many of

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<sup>617</sup> Maior and Matei, “The Black Sea Region,” 40.

<sup>618</sup> Asmus and Jackson, “The Frontiers of Freedom,” 21.

<sup>619</sup> Ibid.

<sup>620</sup> Vladimir Socor, “Frozen Conflicts: A Challenge to Euro-Atlantic Interests,” 127.

these transnational issues, ranging from organized crime, human trafficking and secure energy flows to environmental degradation, terrorism and nuclear smuggling.”<sup>621</sup>

As a result of the existing conflicts the region overall was framed as a security burden, a potential threat to a series of interests located inside and outside the region. In Asmus’ words: “[o]vercoming them is a precondition for putting these countries on a firm course of reform and anchoring them to the West. A strategy to do so will require a much more proactive Euro-Atlantic role.”<sup>622</sup> This way the Black Sea was portrayed to belong in a problematic neighbourhood, a vaguely defined source of concerns and at the same time the point of reference was the individual, the local and the EU overall.

At the same time, however, the region was also framed by many in the region building discourse as a security asset. More precisely, concentrating on energy the focus was on the Euro-Asian energy corridor that linked the Euro-Atlantic system with Caspian energy supplies and the states of Central Asia bringing the vast energy reserves of the area “to European markets through multiple secure and environmentally safe routes”<sup>623</sup>. In Baran’s words, the Black Sea could become an “ideal *conduit* by which non-OPEC, non-Gulf oil and natural gas can flow into European markets.”<sup>624</sup> Hence, even as a bridge it was treated as an asset. Furthermore, it was also presented to be located at the epicentre of Western ambitions to project stability into a wider European space:

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<sup>621</sup> Hamilton, “A Transatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea?” 322.

<sup>622</sup> Asmus, “Developing a New Euro-Atlantic Strategy,” 15.

<sup>623</sup> Asmus and Jackson, “The Frontiers of Freedom,” 23.

<sup>624</sup> Zeyno Baran, “Developing a Euro-atlantic strategy towards Black Sea energy: the example of the Caspian,” in Asmus, et al. eds. *A New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region*, 116.

“As NATO expands its role in Afghanistan...the wider Black Sea region starts to be seen through a *different lens*. Instead of appearing as a point on the *periphery* of the European landmass, it begins to look like a *core component* of the West’s strategic hinterland.”<sup>625</sup>

In other words, the strength of the region stemmed from the “changing “military significance of the Black Sea” as a platform of power projection and a buffer zone [in respect of] energy security.”<sup>626</sup> Lastly, anchoring the Black Sea region in the West – premised on a broad concept of “democratic security”<sup>627</sup>– presented the Black Sea as a platform for the spread of Western values further East and South.<sup>628</sup> Following the logic that underpinned EU and NATO enlargement the Black Sea was portrayed to be “...at the frontiers of freedom.”<sup>629</sup> The West had a moral imperative to spread democracy, establish free market economy and strengthen the civil society. Building the Black Sea was not about minimizing inter-state competition but about cultural values. According to Mat Bryza, Deputy Assistant for European and Eurasian Affairs (2005-2010), the United States supported the peaceful settlement of disputes in the region eager to strengthen democracy and promote economic reform while being interested in boosting commercial ties and energy links in the region.<sup>630</sup>

In short, security was not only high in the agenda, in one form or another, but even more importantly the underlying security logics were instrumental in portraying the Black Sea region as a security asset or a burden. Being a security asset or burden, however, required and implied different

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<sup>625</sup> Asmus and Jackson, “The Frontiers of Freedom,” 22.

<sup>626</sup> Maior and Matei, “The Black Sea Region,” 49-50.

<sup>627</sup> Răzvan Ungureanu, “Remarks on a Security Concept for the Wider Black Sea Area”, *NATO Defense College Occasional Paper* 11/1 (2005): 15-17. The concept of “democratic security” was initially formulated by the Council of Europe in the “Vienna Declaration”, 9 October 1993.

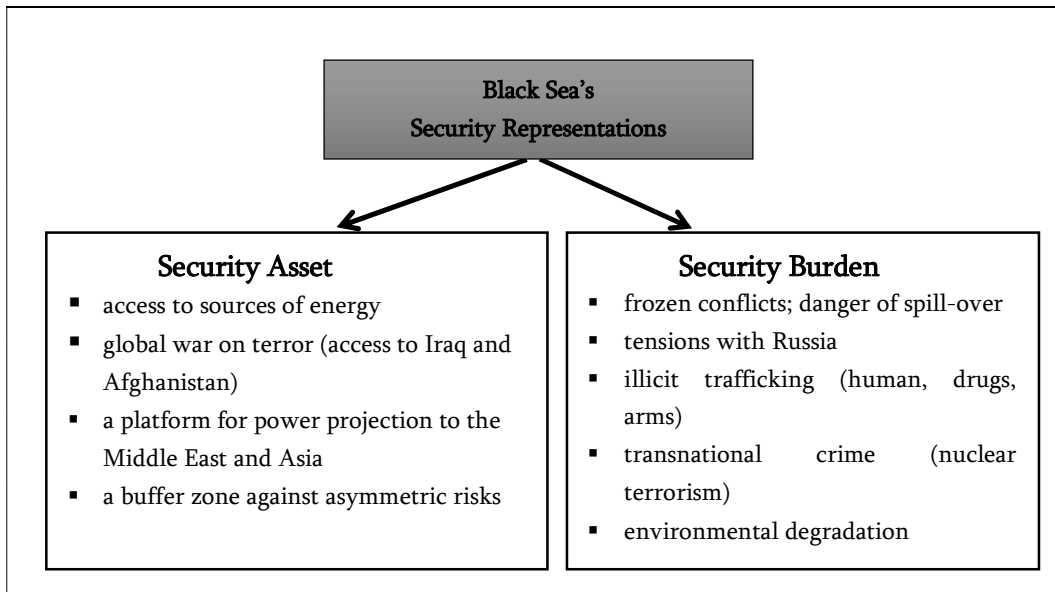
<sup>628</sup> Asmus and Jackson, “The Frontiers of Freedom,” 22.

<sup>629</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>630</sup> Bryza, “The policy of the United States toward the Black Sea region,” 38.

policy prescriptions and these envisaged solutions, either proposed by regional or extra-regional actors, were primarily expressed in the forms of institutionalisation and/or integration. Once again different visions of “what the Black Sea should become” were clashing with each other.

**Graph XIV: Security Representations of the Black Sea Region in the West<sup>631</sup>**



## 5. Security and the envisaged solutions

Security acquired a significant position in the region building discourse. Yet the picture would be incomplete if one did not take into account the policy prescriptions stemming from these security paradigms. These solutions were framed in the various debates primarily in two forms: integration with/into the West and regional institutionalisation.

Integration was the declared objective of the Euroatlantic strategy, as presented in the literature and occupied a significant part of the GMF’s efforts to draft and promote a Euroatlantic strategy for the West. Integration basically meant the inclusion of certain states (i.e. Georgia, Ukraine, Romania,

<sup>631</sup> Ciută, “Region? Why Region?” and Ciută, “Parting the Black Sea (Region)”.

Bulgaria) of the region into the Euroatlantic structures (i.e. NATO, EU) or the active participation of states in Euroatlantic projects. Hence, the rationale was to anchor “the Black Sea region to the West”<sup>632</sup> and bring it closer to the West with the objective to eventually make it part of it. The main argument was that the interest of the US in the region had increased since the start of the Global War on terror and the US was in need of increased military presence in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (e.g. over-flight rights were needed in order to safeguard logistical support for the operations in Afghanistan). The Black Sea region was becoming vital to the strategic purposes of NATO in the neighbouring regions.<sup>633</sup>

There is no doubt that both the Global War on Terror and NATO’s increasing presence and missions in the neighbouring regions served as catalysts. As Delanoë and Konoplyov argue, “[t]he integration of some of the Black Sea states to Euro-Atlantic security structures was supposed to provide stability while enhancing NATO’s capacities of intervention.”<sup>634</sup> Integration, directly associated with the processes of enlargement, acted as “an umbrella in security, political, economic, social and cultural terms”<sup>635</sup> and provided the context of interaction between security (politics) and region(al) framing.<sup>636</sup> Overall, this was a project essentially based on the idea of building new identities for states in the region such as Georgia and Ukraine.

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<sup>632</sup> Asmus et al, “Introduction,” in Asmus et al. eds., *A New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region*, 10.

<sup>633</sup> Cornell et al, “The Wider Black Sea Region,” 65 -67.

<sup>634</sup> Sergei Konoplyov and Igor Delanoë, “Continuities and Ruptures: Tracking the US Interests in the Black Sea Area in the Context of the “Pivot to Asia,”” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 16, no. 3 (2014):358.

<sup>635</sup> See for example Ciută, “Why Region?” 121; Cottey ed., *Subregional Cooperation in the New Europe*; Ian Bremmer and Alyson Bailes, “Sub-Regionalism in the Newly Independent States”, *International Affairs* 74, no.1 (Jan. 1998):131-47; Andrew Cottey, “Europe’s New Subregionalism” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 23,no.2 (June 2000):23-47; Martin Dangerfield, “Subregional Cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe: Support or Substitute for the “Return to Europe?””, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 2 no.1 ( 2001):55-77.

<sup>636</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

The idea of institutionalisation, defined as the “formal procedures and structures that regulate and facilitate the functioning of the region,”<sup>637</sup> on the other hand, was expressed by various European scholars and other policy and institutional actors (e.g. Romanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, BSEC) as the most suitable policy option. The key developments that incited a constant and vigorous debate were the enlargement of the EU that brought Europe closer to the Black Sea, as well as the launching of the Black Sea Synergy on a more technical level (funding, regional projects, etc.).

Overall, the focus was on cooperation, both between the EU and the states in the Black Sea and within the region. Specifically, attention was paid to: i) the design and implementation of policies such as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Black Sea Synergy (BSS) and the Eastern Partnership (EaP); ii) the EU’s role towards the resolution of the frozen conflicts; iii) the promotion of cooperation in various policy sectors including trade, environment and transport; and last but not least, iv) the Europeanization of the states of the region. Europeanisation, in particular carried several meanings primarily referring to “an incremental process of re-orienting the direction and shape of politics to the extent that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organisational logic of national politics and policy making.”<sup>638</sup> In reference to security in particular, the

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<sup>637</sup> Fawn, ““Regions” and their study,”19.

<sup>638</sup> Robert Ladrech, “Europeanization of Domestic Politics and Institutions: The Case of France,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 32, no1 (1994):69. Radaelli puts it relatively different and defines it as “a process involving, a) construction, b) diffusion and c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, “ways of doing things” and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, political structures and public choices” Claudio M. Radaelli, “Europeanisation: Solution or problem?” *European Integration online Papers (EIoP)* 8, no.16 (2004):3. In the case of the Black Sea, and following a similar debate over the Balkans or –more “politically correct– over South-eastern Europe, Europeanisation was again presented in the literature as a process involving primarily democratisation, market economy, etc. especially in the ENP countries. On Europeanisation and the Black Sea, see: Stella Ladi, “Rival Hypotheses of Europeanization: Comparing the roles of the EU and BSEC in Good Governance Reforms,” paper presented at the ECPR General Conference, Reykjavik, 24-28 August 2011.

argument was that region building was necessary as an antidote to security issues, but at the same time the presence of those security issues was hindering the process of region building. Overall, one could discern in the “European” literature, a call for institutionalisation as the means to bring the region closer to the EU.<sup>639</sup>

## 6. Conclusions

The core argument in this chapter is that in the discursive construction of the Black Sea region the problem was essentially circular: different security logics generated different rationales for region building; subsequently, these different rationales promoted disparate understandings of what the Black Sea region is or should become. The contribution of the chapter is that it revealed how different paradigms of security resulted into different visions *for* and formulations *of* the Black Sea as a region. The principal question *vis-à-vis* regions and security was not limited to how a region can be described in security terms but how regions are both a “cause and effect” of security. This study demonstrated how the problematic region/security nexus was expressed in a multiplicity of projections of “what the Black sea is” and visions of “what the Black sea should become” and how security overall was a ubiquitous principle of formation characterised by different rationales and purposes with an unguaranteed fate. The attention to rationales and their implications of the

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<sup>639</sup> Zacchary Ritter, “EU Engagement in the Black Sea Region: challenges and opportunities,” SWP Working Paper FG3-WP/09; Bogdan Aurescu, “The role of the European Union in the Wider Black Sea region,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 10, no.1 (2011): 35-45; Adam Balcer ed. *The Eastern Partnership in the Black Sea Region: towards a New Synergy* (Warsaw: Center for European Strategy –demosEUROPA, 2011); Aydin, “Europe’s Next Shore; Karen Henderson and Carol Weaver, eds. *The Black Sea Region and EU Policy: The Challenge of Divergent Agendas* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010); Alexandros Yannis, “The European Union and the Black Sea Region: The New Eastern Frontiers and Europeanisation”, *ICBSS Policy Brief7* (2008); Maior and Matei, “The Black Sea Region,” 33-51; Panagiotis Gavras, “The Black Sea and the European Union: Developing Relations and Expanding Institutional Links”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 4 no.1 (2004): 23-48.



discursive construction of region can indeed contribute to the debates on security and how it was closely intertwined with the idea of a region.

The discursive construction of the Black Sea was one of confusion profoundly marked by fundamentally different understandings of what constitutes security. Indeed, the Black Sea “regional security quilt” included many contradictory and a few overlapping mechanisms, initiatives and strategic bargains which offered little hope that truly comprehensive regional solutions could be found.<sup>640</sup>

Overall, the problem in the particular case of the Black Sea region derived from the formulation and proliferation of different security logics that resulted into the emergence of different kind of problems and envisaged solutions and subsequently to the formulation of different kinds of region. What happened – both conceptually and politically – in the case of the discursive construction of the Black Sea region what that different region builders through different security paradigms, logics and constructions of threats clashed with each other, thus resulting to a confusion of what security means and how it should be dealt with in the process of region building.

The Black Sea region was talked and written into existence through different logics of security that combined different – past and present, regional and extra-regional – security dynamics that demanded different instruments of region building and projected different kinds of security framing and visions. Overall, the discursive construction of the Black Sea can be seen as a process of interaction between security politics and regional framing; a context where the idea of a Black Sea region and the contested nature of security actively intersected.

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<sup>640</sup> Oksana Antonenko, “Towards a comprehensive regional security framework in the Black Sea region after the Russia–Georgia war,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 9 no.3 (2009): 263–264.

To reiterate, the priority of the chapter was to observe the mutual modulations of region/security. The overarching argument is that there was no single rationale but a series of conflicting and contradictory purposes expressed primarily in terms of security logics, paradigms and representations. The study of the discursive construction of the Black Sea region suggests that different categories and practices of security clustered contextually according to different meanings produced by the situated region builders. To use the words of Ciută: “[t]he key is that security can take different meanings.”<sup>641</sup>

Security was a ubiquitous principle of formation “doing different kind of things” defining region building. The way(s) it was constructed and understood in the context of region building of the Black Sea had a profound impact on the way region building was conducted. Security as “...first and foremost a performative discourse constitutive of political order”<sup>642</sup> was in this context constitutive, or to be precise non constitutive, of the Black Sea region. Different security actors, different security priorities, different formulations of security threats and risks resulted into an excessive securitization that subsequently produced the equivalents of a “region building paranoia.” As already mentioned, security has been thoroughly addressed in the context of RBA, but regardless of the sophistication that characterises many of the papers on security, there is no definite answer on the importance of security. Reading the RBA literature, one finds references to different security discourses, the importance of security as a catalyst for region building, and/or the lack of security as precondition of success of region building. By examining the case of the Black Sea this study discussed: i) how the omnipresence/totality of security in the region building discourse transformed the idea of a Black Sea region (i.e. different security logics resulted into different Black Sea region(s)); ii) how the different security logics clashed with each other thus

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<sup>641</sup> Ciută, “Energy Security,” 138.

<sup>642</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security*, 199.

dissolving the idea of a Black Sea region (i.e. the Black Sea was presented as a both an asset and a burden, a motive and an obstacle for region building); iii) how security can be unpacked and studied through different paradigms (i.e. risk, liberal, war) and an issue based taxonomy. Hence, in the particular case of the Black Sea security was not simply a crucial aspect of the region building discourse but even more importantly it defined region building and the very idea(s) of a Black Sea region and in particular of what it means and what it should become.

# Conclusions

“Against positivism, which halts at phenomena – ‘There are only facts’ – I would say: No, facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations.”<sup>643</sup>

## 1. Introduction

Region building hinges essentially on the production and dissemination of knowledge and expertise that is made in particular places by particular people and for particular audiences. Yet, as the analysis indicated, the production and dissemination of this kind of knowledge of/for the Black Sea needs to be studied both in context and in its inherently dispersed character. It needs to be studied genealogically. Hence, this thesis highlighted the importance of who talks and writes regions into existence, how this process takes place beyond language and text, what is being talked and written into existence, and finally why a region is talked and written into existence; i.e. what are the underlying rationales. An examination of how and by whom the Black Sea was talked and written into existence allowed for a processual view of region building, thus shedding light on a series of important nuances that can indeed shed light on the conditions of region building. It also offered a perspective of region building on the ground and from the “inside.” To both summarise the main findings and expand the understanding of other discursive constructions, the concluding section recapitulates the overarching structure of the thesis and further discusses the contribution of the thesis both in empirical and theoretical terms.

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<sup>643</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, (quote dated late 1886 – spring 1887 in his Notebooks).

## 2. Different region building voices, one Black Sea region?

The endeavour of building the Black Sea region was based on region builders whose practices and expertise were in a position to produce and reproduce it. The articulation of a Black Sea region by these elites was an integral part of the reconfiguration of the Black Sea space.

Hence, in reference to region builders in particular, the main findings of the thesis are the following. First of all, when discussing any discursive construction, it is important to examine the cohesion of the region building voices and articulations expressed. Was the Black Sea region the product of one region building voice? A critical examination of the discourse and a familiarity with the actors involved revealed the exact opposite. Many different kinds of region builders, inside and outside the region, projected different understandings and visions of/for a Black Sea region. To quote Allen et al., “[t]hinking ‘a region’ in terms of social relations stretched out reveals, not an ‘area’, but a complex and unbounded lattice of articulations.”<sup>644</sup> For instance, the EC had a different perception of what the Black Sea is and should be compared to GMF’s vision, as expressed in a series of monographs, edited volumes, and policy papers.

Secondly, this thesis managed to bring the background actors (i.e. a think-tanker) to the foreground, thus revealing their actions, interactions and overall impact. Once these elites are not seen as simply performing/executing functions of the state apparatus, they subsequently become analytically and conceptually more valuable. Indeed, in the case of region building in the Black Sea one could notice the direct collaboration and interaction between the state apparatus of policy-making and the think-tank world, an element demonstrating a series of interplays among different kinds of actors, their texts and practices. By providing a nuanced understanding of agents that surpasses the traditional comprehension of actorness in IR, the thesis highlighted the crucial role played by both individuals and

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<sup>644</sup> John Allen, Doreen Massey, and Alan Cochrane, *Rethinking the Region: spaces of neoliberalism* (Routledge: London, 1998), 65.

institutes in the discursive construction of the Black Sea region. Lastly, a closer examination of the region builders and their actions indicated the constitution of an elite network which subsequently revealed a “club mentality,” numerous ties and interactions, geographies of power (i.e. Washington, Brussels, Romania) and efforts to “standardise” agency (i.e. who was in a position to talk and write the Black Sea region into existence). This observation is empirically and analytically important as it shows the importance of relatively under-examined factors and aspects of the process such as socialisation, standardisation (of actions and thinking), and contagion (of ideas).

Although many people with different backgrounds talked and wrote the Black Sea region, with the passage of time a core club emerged that started to address the issue of the Black Sea region as almost an issue of exclusive concern. Ultimately, the existing club mentality led to an extent to a kind of standardisation of agency. Participating in joint projects, writing for particular think-tanks and journals was based on or required a kind of compliance to a *de facto* set of principles, norms, and beliefs that guided the process of region building. It should be noted, however, that this “club mentality” was not the product of concerted efforts of some elites, but rather the product of accidental and spontaneous ties, institutional positions, and numerous spill-overs of texts and their representations and logics.

The whole project of writing the Black Sea became, in essence, a story of diffusion based on technologies of expertise. Knowledge, norms, texts and practices standardised agency and empowered elites to talk and write the Black Sea region according to their own different gazes. In reference to the RBA that has indeed fruitfully addressed the competing region building voices and the region builders involved in the case of the Baltic Sea, the argument is that the identification of the region builders involved (i.e. inside, outside the region) and an analysis of the elite of network and its effects (i.e. club mentality, contagion, limited regional ownership, etc.) in the case of the Black Sea region, as a failed region building

project, can potentially contribute to the RBA's development. Indeed, the analysis of the elite network (i.e. BSEN) that operated in the case of the Black Sea and the critical examination of its key attributes, characteristics and effects on the process of region building revealed the uniqueness of the region building project and the paramount role of the region builders and their visions involved in this context.

### **3. Practices: region building beyond the text and on the ground**

Following Neumann's exhortation to "return practice to the linguistic turn,"<sup>645</sup> a focus on the practices used by the various elites in both the production of knowledge/truth regimes and the dissemination in certain contexts shed light on the mechanics of the process of region building. By accentuating social practices such as publishing, lobbying, organising conferences, among other standardised and socially meaningful patterns of action, the objective was to highlight some of those "trifles that only seem like trifles when they are set down in a book, but while circulating the world are regarded as very important matters."<sup>646</sup> As Kuus points out, the underlying objective should be "to avoid the illusion of contingency that privileges events over processes."<sup>647</sup>

The region building discourse was mediated both by interactions between people and by practices in a certain context (i.e. elite networks, institutions, conferences, etc.). Roundtable discussions, dissemination of publications, and access to official sites of power did have an impact on the circulation of certain meanings and representations. Policy documents and their accompanying representations were not the products of a pre-given political mandate but emerged from various processes of lobbying, testifying, and publishing.

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<sup>645</sup> Iver B. Neumann, "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy," *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 31, no.3 (2002): 627–651.

<sup>646</sup> Nikolai Gogol, *Dead souls: A Novel*, Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Classics, 1997 [1842]), 228.

<sup>647</sup> Kuus, *Geopolitics and Expertise*, 7.

A publication, a conference, a testimony, a funding scheme did not simply convey information relevant to the Black Sea region. These constituted attempts to conceptualise the “realities” of the Black Sea region in one way or another. All these practices served as persuasive devices by simplifying the complex reality of the Black Sea further suggesting a case for what the Black Sea region is or should look like. All the practices of publishing policy papers, edited volumes, monographs, organising highly visible conferences, bringing together policy scholars, academics, and politicians and overall raising awareness turned out to be significant practices of region building and coordinated efforts to talk and write it into existence. It was not only the text and its meanings that mattered to the audiences but also the ways these meanings were transferred and enacted. Concerning RBA and its development, the argument is that a focus on practices offers a more processual, bottom-up understanding of region building while also demonstrating the importance of practices within the region building context. As discussed in Chapter V, it was through the *practices* of publishing, organising conferences, and lobbying for a Black Sea region that a discourse of a Black Sea region gradually started to emerge that promoted different understandings of where and what the Black Sea region was and what it needed to become.

#### **4. Representations of space: different gazes, different visions**

Space in the discursive construction of the Black Sea region was projected as a pre-existing terrain within which simply and naturally “objects exist and events occur”<sup>648</sup> and politics and security “naturally” mattered. A careful examination shows that the spatial representations of the Black Sea acquired a significant position in the discursive construction of the Black Sea region reflecting not only

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<sup>648</sup> Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (Athens: University of Georgia, 2008), 95.



different understandings of the Black Sea space, but also revealing contradictory priorities of “what the Black Sea should become.”

If, to refer again to Paasi’s words, “[r]egion...appears to be the meeting point of various concepts of space,”<sup>649</sup> in the case of the Black Sea the projections of its own space became a point of divergence both revealing and escalating political tensions. When performing region building, the agents within the BSEN imagined and identified a discrete, bounded space as a “territory” that served their own policy beliefs and policy actions. Different spatial representations entailed different –and often conflicting– territorialisations.

In addition to this cartography of the Black Sea, a focus on the representations of space revealed two other important political consequences. First, the Black Sea region was presented as an “object,” a “neutral” or “passive” space in which extra-regional powers (generally the USA or NATO) could implement their own policies and strategies. Democracy promotion, conflict resolution, and energy diversification, among others, were all policies of the West and the states of the Black Sea were either the recipients or the agents for their implementation. The idea of the superiority of the West formed a significant aspect of this perspective and the hegemonic discourses of the centre were so powerful in part because they were bolstered on the margins.<sup>650</sup>

Foreign policy elites reduced the complex regional environment of the Black Sea to an objectified security burden or asset. The underlying idea of the elites was that for the Black Sea to become a less threatening factor in the post-Cold War era, it must come closer to the West on both political and, if possible, broader cultural terms. In the words of Asmus, Dimitrov and Forbig, the ambition was nothing else but to “anchor the countries of the Black Sea region to the West.”<sup>651</sup>

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<sup>649</sup> Paasi, “Europe as a Social Process and Discourse,” 16.

<sup>650</sup> Merje Kuus, “Critical Geopolitics,” in *The International Studies Encyclopedia*, vol. II, ed. Robert A. Denemark (New York and London: Blackwell, 2010), 683–701.

<sup>651</sup> Asmus et al, “Introduction,” in *A New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region*, ed. Asmus et al., 10.

To conclude, spatial attributions also had significant security implications. It was the representation of space that defined the region in political and security terms. Geopolitics, as a discursive and performative apparatus of policy making and region building, did not reflect a certain reality; it shaped it. Following RBA's rich tradition in examining spatial representations, this study referred to RBA concepts such as marginality and mindscapes and managed to shed light on the relationship between spatial representation, security logics and geopolitical narratives, while revealing an omnipresent confusion on where the Black Sea is and what it means. As discussed in Chapter VI, the particular case of the Black Sea demonstrates a linking of different sets of vehemently contested spatial representations to diametrically opposed logics of security and identity. Taking into consideration the verdict of "failure" of the Black Sea region building project, the argument made in the thesis is that the "writing and talking into existence" of regions is unlikely to be successful in cases where such spatial disjunctions are prevalent and accompanied by persistent resistance.

## **5. Security logics, rationales and the end of the Black Sea Region**

Security functioned in a powerful manner in the context of region building. It is no exaggeration to argue that this region building project was essentially a security project. The chapter on security critically examined the conflicting logics of security and highlighted the profoundly problematic relationship between region and security. This stemmed from the interplay of competing security paradigms that revealed different rationalities on a series of security issues.

Addressing the conflicts was based on the paradigm of military, inter-state threats and was accompanied by a conflictual logic characterised by notions of "self" and "other" both outside and inside the region. Different interpretations of the conflicts led to different understandings of the Black Sea region itself. The Black Sea was portrayed as a regional security complex, a geopolitical entity, and

an asset or a burden for the West. In terms of energy security, one could notice the interplay of different security paradigms and opposing security logics. According to the realist paradigm, it was portrayed as a military issue that needed to be addressed at the higher level of political authority, namely the state, and the prevailing logic was that of war. At the same time, however, there were region building voices that referred to energy projects as ways of establishing a region, promoting interdependencies, and increasing stability and prosperity in the region. Depending on the perspective and the security paradigm adopted, energy swung as a pendulum between logics of conflict and cooperation, “self” and “other,” inclusion and exclusion.

Terrorism seemed to imply different, if not contradicting, visions of what the Black Sea is or should be in the fight against terrorism. On the one hand, terrorism and other illegal activities were viewed as an existential threat that could foster cooperation and unite the region, but on the other hand it was viewed as an issue above and beyond the region whereby the region itself was portrayed as an asset and a burden for the West. The portrayals entailed a clash of both geographical scope (regional vs. extra-regional) and orientations (geopolitical vs. institutional). Different security paradigms, logics, referent objects, and security actors resulted into different kinds of visions for the Black Sea region.

Addressing issues related to the environment seemed to correspond to the formula “regional problems require regional solutions” that was successfully applied to the case of Europe’s North. Region building was portrayed as an antidote to regional security concerns. Yet, even in the realm of environmental protection one could see a representation of the Black Sea both as an emerging environmental energy complex and a security burden for the West and the EU in particular. Lastly, following the logic that underpinned the EU and NATO enlargements and framed security in cultural terms, security in the case of the Black Sea region acquired cultural connotations. In terms of democratic security, the Black Sea was portrayed to be at the frontiers of freedom and a potential platform for the spread of

democratic values and norms in the Middle East and Central Asia. Yet this perspective was treated with scepticism inside the region. By disseminating conflicting understandings and representations of security the region builders were subsequently implying different security solutions and representations of the region itself.

Exactly because security was omnipresent in the region building discourse the core argument, which potentially has analytical and theoretical importance for future works, is that security alone fundamentally transformed the idea of a Black Sea region. It is essential to understand not only how security was omnipresent but also how, depending on the security perspective/discourse, the idea of a Black Sea region transformed itself. Different security discourses generated different Black Sea regions. In the case of the Black Sea, security was both the cause and the effect of region building, both an incentive for action and a problem to be addressed. Different discursive constructions of security produced different policy outcomes that actively intersected with region building and the representation of the region itself.

Taking into account, however, that every region building process is, at least to some extent, unique this thesis does not seek to offer a rigid taxonomy of security and its region building functions. It does, however, offer ideas on how an approach towards security can be structured; a framework that identifies what needs to be observed and examined and how.

## **6. Conditions of region building: a reflection**

As already discussed in Chapter II, in order to better understand both what happened in the particular case of the Black Sea it would be helpful to refer again to the case of the Baltic Sea region as the *par excellence* constructivist “liberating moment” of the early 1990s.<sup>652</sup> Discussing the ways RBA scholars approached the

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<sup>652</sup> In the literature one can find references to other “regions” such as the Mediterranean, Central and Eastern Europe, South-eastern Europe, Caspian and most recently to the Eurasian region but

Baltic Sea is an efficient way to show how RBA has served as a point of reference and source of influence for this thesis in particular and at the same time it shows how the Baltic Sea was in political terms the blueprint – a success story – for region building for the Black Sea. Therefore, in order to conclude on the failure of region building in the Black Sea and understand what is distinctive about the Black Sea region project it is important to show how a reading of the process of region building in the Baltic and the Black Sea can reveal a series of striking similarities and differences.

Many scholars and region builders alike believed that the Baltic Sea could indeed be applied to another *mare clausum*: the Black Sea.<sup>653</sup> Indeed many referred to the presence of candidate EU members (Turkey), non-members (Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, etc.), and, member states (Bulgaria, Greece, Romania) and highlighted similarities in regional institutions (e.g. the organisation for Black Sea Economic Cooperation that is in some respects similar to the CBSS) and policies of regional scope (i.e. environment).<sup>654</sup>

In terms of the similarities as portrayed in the region building discourses one could refer selectively to the following:

<b>Table VI: Similarities in region building in the Baltic and the Black Sea</b>	
<b>Baltic Sea region building</b>	<b>Black Sea region building</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Representations of centres (i.e. West) and margins (i.e. Baltic Sea, Black Sea)</li> <li>▪ Security discourses (i.e. liberal, realist, asecurity) and hard and soft security issues (i.e. inter-state disputes, environmental risks, etc.)</li> </ul>	

judging from the publications and the numerous conferences there is no doubt that the emergence of RBA is directly associated with the Baltic Sea.

<sup>653</sup> Michael Emerson, *The Elephant and the Bear: The European Union, Russia and their Near Abroads*, Brussels, CEPS, 2001; Hiski Haukkala, *Towards a Union of Dimesions: the Effects of Eastern Enlargement on the Northern Dimension*, Helsinki, Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Report no. 2, 2002.

<sup>654</sup> Haukkala, “Towards a Union of Dimesions,” 29-30.

- EU and NATO as institutional and politics points of reference for the emerging regions
- Presence of Russia and processes of “othering” of Russia
- Institutionalised regional cooperation (i.e. BSEC and BSCS) and policy initiatives (i.e. Northern Dimension and Black Sea Synergy)
- Neoliberal mode of cooperation (e.g. free trade, FDI, private initiatives, etc.)
- Plethora of region builders involved and different region building voices
- Active involvement of region builders outside the regions.
- Prevailing belief that the emerging regions could serve as bridges to the West, i.e. region building as an instrument of Europeanisation and integration into broader euro-Atlantic structures.

Yet, many did refer to significant differences such as the ambivalent presence of both the EU and Russia in the Black Sea, the political instability in countries in the region (Ukraine, Georgia, etc.), as compared to the Baltic Sea, and most importantly the prevalence of hard security issues including territorial disputes.<sup>655</sup> Concerning the EU in particular and the process of Europeanisation the region building discourse in the Baltic Sea was based to a significant extent on the idea of the Baltic Sea becoming an integral part of Europe whereas in the Black Sea the relationship with Europe was portrayed as more complex and ambivalent. Lastly, one could refer to how the notion of togetherness, as the trademark of the Baltic Sea region, was missing in the case of the Black Sea.

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<sup>655</sup> Vahl, “The Northern Dimension as a Model for Relations between the European Union and its Near Abroad,” 9; Emerson, “The Elephant and the Bear, 38-40.

<b>Table VII: Differences in region building in the Baltic and the Black Sea</b>	
Baltic Sea region building	Black Sea region building
Foundational stories, past as a region building resources, references to a pre-existing Nordic region.	Lack of foundational stories; limited and unpersuasive references to a common past.
Strong regional and local ownership, inclusiveness and participation.	Weak regional and local ownership, inclusiveness and participation.
Endorsed by the civil society and state authorities.	Absence of the civil society and rejected by Russian and Turkish authorities.
Time framework: <u>1990s</u> post-Cold War euphoria, Russia's weakening.	Time framework: <u>2000s</u> (Global War on Terror, EU-NATO enlargements in 2004 and 2007), Russia's resurgence, Turkey's hegemonic aspirations.
"We-ness", strong historical references to a common past, attempts to construct a regional identity.	Lack of "we-ness", weak mythologies, limited efforts to construct a regional identity.
References to tradition of strong welfare state, pacifism, social democracy among others; all embedded into commonalities of culture, languages, and religions.	Limited references to commonalities, only to common problems and challenges.
Realist, liberalist security discourses and asecurty concerns and incentives	Region/Security nexus: security was omnipresent and fundamentally defined the idea of a Black Sea region.

Examining carefully both cases one could argue that a key difference derived from the meanings attached to and the priority given to security within the region building discourses. In the Black Sea, the emergent region/security nexus meant

that different security paradigms generated different rationales for region building that subsequently were based on and promoted disparate understandings of “what the Black Sea region is” or should become. Even more importantly, as the discussion on the conditions of success in the Baltic Sea indicate, one could identify in the region building discourse in the Baltic coordinated efforts to establish a sense of historical continuity and a common vision for the future. Although security was indeed important in the region building discourse in the Baltic Sea, there was a strong underlying narrative of we-ness that was clearly missing in the Black Sea. The references above should be seen to contribute to a better understanding of why and how region building in the Black Sea, in a context characterised by power relationships and firmly established historical cleavages, soon became a “tabula plena”.

## 7. Complementing RBA and the way ahead: towards a genealogy

Neumann raised a crucial question in his work that seems particularly intriguing when reflecting at this point on the key findings of the thesis. In particular, he asked:

“[I]s it possible to construct a region as it were *ex nihilo*? The region-building approach would side with radical constructivists and answer yes. It is always possible to find some link, some pre-history, which can be used to justify the inclusion of a certain actor in a certain region.”<sup>656</sup>

Indeed, is it possible to discursively construct a region from scratch? Are there no requirements or preconditions? Must regions, as discursive constructions, always resonate with particular audiences? The case of the Black Sea demonstrates that the success of the discursive construction of a region is by no means guaranteed and instead hinges on a series of contextually specific parameters. One could argue

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<sup>656</sup> Neumann, “A region-building approach to Northern Europe,” 73.



that what was missing in the case of region building in the Black Sea was this kind of “pre-region” myths, memories, values and symbols. In addition, the fact that the process was initiated and driven by extra-regional actors seems to have triggered suspicion at the regional level mostly by the Russian Federation and Turkey. Or, lastly the existence of hard security issues and the articulation of contending – and to some extent incompatible – logics of security did serve on many occasions as impediments to the region building efforts. Nonetheless, it would be misleading to provide a definite answer to this question. Driven by the empirical material examined throughout the thesis, this study adopted a genealogical posture thus showing the necessary commitment to approach region building as a historically emergent and always contested product of multiple practices and multiple alien interpretations.

Yet, beyond the particular case of the Black Sea, a valid question at this point is: should we care about region building projects and their conditions of success or failure? A concluding argument made in this thesis is that regions and region building processes will remain relevant. Amid the emergence of new grand narratives (e.g. the decline of the West and the rise of the rest, return of *Realpolitik* in reference to the relations between Russia and Europe and the US, etc.) many in the field of IR seem to have underestimated the importance of regions still implying that regions were simply products of an ephemeral euphoria caused by the end of the Cold War. Yet, one can already discern signs of the rise of new regions, albeit sometimes the word “region” is missing. Writing recently in *The Guardian*, Robert Skidelsky argued for example that Eurasia was “an idea whose time, it is said, has come around again”, building on the almost textbook-like RBA claim that “[d]ifferent world regions have different histories, which have given their peoples different ideas about how to live, govern themselves and earn a living.”<sup>657</sup> It is difficult to predict whether the idea of a Eurasian, an Arctic or a Southeast-Asian

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<sup>657</sup> Robert Skidelsky, “Eurasia is an idea whose time has come around again,” *The Guardian*, Sunday 21 June 2015.

region will monopolise the academic and policy debates in the future. There are nevertheless signs indicating that region building is and will remain a politically relevant process, regardless of the exact term – region, area, space, etc. – used in policy and academic discourse. The writing of space and security and the efforts to construct a sense of “we-ness” are and will remain essential parts of international politics. In this regard, this thesis followed RBA and sought to utilise its potential by adopting a genealogical posture, thus examining the constitution of the overarching (region building) discourses, the role of elite networks, the importance of practices, and the significance of security and spatial representations in this context.

Indeed, its proposed theoretical framework should be useful to all scholars studying not only regions, but other imagined forms of community, and discursive formations in general. Following RBA, an overarching argument of the thesis is that a region should be better understood not as a thing, an entity but as a process. To use the words of Proust, “the only real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in looking with new eyes.”<sup>658</sup>

Overall this framework of analysis can be, with the necessary adjustments to the contextual particularities of a case study, applied to other discursive formations and processes covering a wide range of policy issues. In the literature inspired by the Foucauldian view of the power/knowledge nexus there has been a tendency to examine discourse and its implications in a way that ignores both the possibility and conditions of failure. The extension of the argument formulated in the thesis is that, just as the Black Sea region discourses were shown to have “failed” to bring a region into existence, other discursive projects can also be studied even if they lack hegemonic or counter-hegemonic status, or have “failed” in their own terms. By examining the region as a subject and a product of geopolitical engineering, this thesis demonstrated how the very idea – or, more accurately, different ideas – of

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<sup>658</sup> Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time – Vol. V*, edited and annotated by William C. Carter. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013, 2015.

the Black Sea region was self-undermining and eventually abandoned. Different representations of a Black Sea region resulted into a non-existent Black Sea (region).

To conclude, this thesis aimed to contribute to the development of the Region Building Approach. In doing so, it examined the attempts to formulate a political and institutional vision for the Black Sea region in the post-9/11 era, thus investigating in depth how regions are “talked and written into existence”. Through a genealogical reading, it identified the elements that distinguish the Black Sea from other successful cases of region building, most notably the Baltic Sea region. In this regard, this autopsy of the failed region-building of the Black Sea (region) adds to the analytical and conceptual toolbox of RBA; a theoretical perspective with a continued relevance in the contemporary European and global context.

## **Annex**

The table below indicates a selection of events, relevant to the developments in the Black Sea region that I attended either as a speaker, an observant, or as a participant. With the exception of the HBSSP and the Symposiums all other events were held explicitly under the Chatham House rules. Although in many occasions I took detailed notes and kept an archive for office use I purposefully avoided to list any names in the thesis. I decided nevertheless, to mention nationalities in order to demonstrate the different perspectives and interpretations of “what the Black Sea (region) is” or “what the Black Sea (region) should become”. In terms of participants and their capacities, the vast majority were think-tankers, former policy makers and key stakeholders, diplomats and a limited number of academics. On some of the websites of the hosting institute one can still find a detailed list of the participants of the events. It should be also noted that most of the events took place from 2006 to 2010. Since then, the focus, as expressed in terms of publications and conferences, has been rather limited; an observation that reinforces the main findings of the thesis.

### **List of events**

<b>Date and Place</b>	<b>Event: theme</b>
26/06 – 01/07/12 Heybeliada, Turkey	2012 International Neighbourhood Symposium: “Security and Democracy in the Eastern Neighbourhood and the Mediterranean South in the Wake of the Arab Awakening” Organised by: Kadir Has
29/06 – 04/07/10 Aegina, Greece	3rd International Black Sea Symposium: “The Black Sea Region in Flux” Organised by: International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS)
04/2010 Boston, US	Harvard Black Sea Security Program Organised by: John F. Kennedy School of Government of Harvard University.

- 14-16/05/2009  
Berlin, Germany
- International Conference on “The Black Sea Region: New Challenges and Opportunities for Regional Cooperation”, Berlin, Germany.  
Organised by: Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft
- 03/04/2009  
Athens, Greece
- Round Table Discussion on “Debating the EU’s New Eastern Policy: The Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership”, Athens, Greece.  
Organised by: Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) in Warsaw; Embassies of Poland and Sweden in Athens
- 9 Feb. 2009  
Rome, Italy
- Launching of the Commission on the Black Sea. Closed discussions took place to discuss the objectives and the function of the Commission.  
Organised by: CBS
- 8/9 Jun. 2009  
Istanbul, Turkey
- The first round table of the CBS was held in Istanbul, where experts discussed the situation and future of the region. The four working groups presented their concepts for the Policy Reports.  
Organised by: CBS
- 24 Sep. 2009  
Moscow, Russia
- The second round table of the Commission was held in Moscow. Participants discussed possibilities of international cooperation, threats to the region's stability, and exit strategies.  
Organised by: CBS

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