Master’s Thesis:

The Security Dilemma of the Wider Black Sea Region

With a Focus on Russia, the United States of America, and Romania

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Abstract

The topic of this paper revolves around the security environment of the wider Black Sea region, with a focus on three protagonist states, and an alliance: Russia, the United States of America, Romania, and NATO. This work comes as a response to the normative demand of avoiding an inter-state conflict in this part of the world, an area already characterized by deep mistrust, frozen conflicts, separatist movements, transnational organized crime, terrorism, and great-power struggle between holders of nuclear capabilities. The objective of this paper is explanatory, namely to help pinpoint the root causes of potential conflict between regional players. By pursuing a Defensive Realist approach, it is suggested that perception of insecurity lies at the heart of the negative dynamics. It is the inter-state security dilemma that could have the ultimate effect of transforming tensions into a spiral of conflict, unless such dilemma is mitigated through its regulators. Therefore, ‘by alleviating the security dilemma, conflict in the wider Black Sea region can be avoided’. The testing of this hypothesis constitutes the contents of this paper. The conclusion of the thesis confirms the expected results, namely that there is a security dilemma operating in the wider Black Sea Region, and that the regulators have the ability to influence its escalation, yet particular specifications are to be observed.
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1.1 The Wider Black Sea Region

The following research will be centred on the wider Black Sea region.\(^1\) This area consists of a series of countries with direct access to the Black Sea, but also of countries that are neighbouring the sea, and countries that have a strategic interest or presence in the area. More specifically, two categories of actors can be constructed. First, the ‘protagonists’ of the processes under investigation: Russia, the United States, Romania, and NATO as an alliance. The second category comprises ‘secondary’ actors: Turkey, Ukraine, Moldavia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. It can be argued that Turkey is a major player in the region, especially as a result of the Russian annexation of Crimea,\(^2\) and thus it should be considered a protagonist. The criteria for the categorization above, however, does not focus on power, status, or military capability, but on the role of each country in the main dynamic of this paper, namely the perception of insecurity. Also, Turkey tends to have a Middle Eastern orientation. Nonetheless, this does not exclude Turkey from the list of key players in the Black Sea region. On the contrary, Turkey’s relations with neighbours, such as with Greece over Cyprus, are an illustrative case of negative regional interactions. In this paper, nonetheless, the discussion will be centred on the interactions between the protagonists.

The latest events surrounding the Crimean Peninsula, together with the prospects for a revival of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet,\(^3\) point to a consistent and long-term interest in the region from Russia. There have for long been talks about the idea of a Russian Imperial rebirth. Even if one disagrees with this argument, one must at least accept the concept of Russia’s ‘near abroad’ in relation to this area of reference.\(^4\) As for the United States, the direct interest in the region goes back to the post-Cold War period. The three pillars on which the American strategy for the Black Sea has been maintained are access to the Caspian for energy diversification, regional stability/security at Europe’s eastern border, and political/economic reform that fosters transparency, rule of law and competitiveness.\(^5\) NATO has become a node in the regional network after 2004, when Bulgaria and Romania joined the Alliance. Allegedly, both countries, which enjoy

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\(^1\) Map 1, p.8
\(^2\) Turkey and Russia’s Age-Old Struggle for Regional Supremacy (May 12, 2014), Foreign Affairs website: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2014-05-12/ankara-black-sea
a valuable strategic location, were extended invitations to NATO in 2002 after they had strongly supported the United States’ actions in Afghanistan after 9/11.6

The choice of Romania as the fourth protagonist is founded upon a unique mix of traits the country possesses, such as strategic relations, negative interactions, history, and geographical location. More precisely, Romania’s long turbulent history in the region under Ottoman, Polish, Czarist/Soviet, and Austrian-Hungarian dominion,7 its NATO and EU recent membership, its strategic partnership with the United States,8 its participation in NATO’s BMD program9 and the resulting direct tensions with Russia,10 11 its common past with Moldova, but also their re-unification aspirations,12 its dormant territorial disputes with Ukraine,13 but also their common position in relation to the recent events involving Kiev and Moscow,14 are all relevant ingredients that make the country a protagonist in the Black Sea region. Lastly, Romania has assumed Chairmanship of the BSEC as of July 1, 2015 for the following six months.15 This puts Bucharest in a privileged position to set the agenda for the region in the field of economic cooperation, a field that can play a strong part in the management of mistrust.

In selecting the variant of the wider Black Sea region’s membership, the option gravitated towards the EU’s definition of the region,16 as it takes into consideration, apart from sharing a Black Sea shore, the states’ common history, proximity, and other ties.17 Whether or not there is indeed such a thing as the Black Sea region, opinions vary in function of the conceptualizations of

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6 Linden R. (2009), p.273
7 For a detailed history of Romania, see Constantiniu F. (tr.) (2011)
8 Parteneriatul strategic România-SUA, Romania’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (tr.): http://www.mae.ro/node/4944
9 Romanian and US officials inaugurate at Deveselu location to deploy antimissile system, Romania’s Permanent Delegation to NATO: http://nato.mae.ro/en/romania-news/561
11 Romania demands explanation over Russian threat (May 11, 2014), dw.de: http://www.dw.de/romania-demands-explanation-over-russian-threat/a-17627761
13 Kruglashov A. (2011)
14 Mesajul Preşedintelui României, domnul Klaus Iohannis, în faţa Camerelor reunite ale Parlamentului (tr.) (June 22, 2015), President of Romania: http://presidency.ro/?lang=ro
15 România a preluat Preşedinţia în Exerciţiul a OCEMN (tr.) (July 1, 2015), Romania’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs: http://www.mae.ro/node/32707
16 This view is the foundation of the EU’s Black Sea Synergy (more on this, here: http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/pdf/com07_160_en.pdf). Other interpretations would be a more restrictive one, namely one that focuses on the six littoral states, and a very extensive one, which is the foundation of the BSEC (more on this, here: http://www.bsec-organization.org/member/Pages/member.aspx)
17 EU’s Black Sea Synergy (2007), p.2 (footnote 1)
In this paper, the wider Black Sea region will not be reflected upon as a cohesive entity, and not even as the chief unit for our analysis. It is simply the context or background on which particular states operate. Better said, the systemic level of analysis consists not of the region itself, but of the configuration of states that happen to also designate the Black Sea area. What is crucial is the interaction between these actors. The Black Sea region is a point of reference in the analysis because it encompasses the upper-mentioned states, which are emblematic cases for this study. The proposition is that the states in this area are caught in two different primary struggles: a security/geopolitical one (between the United States/NATO and Russia), and an ideological one (between the ‘Western model’ and emerging alternative models). In this paper, the emphasis is on the security/geopolitical aspect of the Black Sea.

Why is it relevant and necessary to investigate this part of the world? It can be looked upon the Black Sea area as upon a leaking barrel of gunpowder that could explode at any point with dire consequences for the well-being of the people both within and without the region. The current events in Ukraine, the earlier Russo-Georgian War, the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistrian-Moldavian conflicts, the separatist war in the Northern Caucasus are all instances of tension, mistrust, instability, and direct traditional threats to regional security. Nonetheless, the region is also showing signs of positive development. The best illustration is the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC), which is an initiative that took off in 1992 within the realm of economic cooperation, but which can become very successful in a secondary manner, namely through the side-effect of promoting a culture of collaboration and mutually-beneficial interaction. Not to mention identity-creation.20

Are these issues more than mere cases of locally contained dangers, and if yes, why are they relevant to the outside world? The answer is yes, and the explanation is as follows. First of all, the enlargement of the EU and of NATO to Romania and Bulgaria, together with the war on terrorism have brought the attention to this part of the world, which is a source of pressures and hazards to the safety of Central Europe.21 Second, the current events in Ukraine have created strong

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19 By ‘Western model’ we refer to liberal democratic regimes, free market economies, and secular societies. By alternative models, we refer to the so-called managed democracies, economies that include state monopolies over certain sectors, and religious societies and states.
20 Vahl M., Celac S. (2007), pp.174-175
21 Maior G (tr) (2012), p.183
antagonism in public opinion between supporters of Russia, and supporters of the West.\textsuperscript{22, 23} Such a strong polarization of opinions, and such a radical gap between the two sides are dangerous to any peaceful solution. Furthermore, this could amplify the already existing tensions in the region, which could ultimately lead to the ‘melting’ of the frozen conflicts on the ground. Moreover, the situation could end up with an affirmative answer to the question of whether or not we are witnessing a new Cold War.\textsuperscript{24} The urgency of research on the motivations behind the latest events is overwhelming, and needs a response. In this paper, precisely such an answer will be attempted. No direct analysis of the Ukrainian crisis will be pursued, but there is hope that the results of this work will contribute to answering the question of why this event is taking place. Also, the goal is to answer this question from a ‘non-partisan’ standpoint.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Map1_BlackSea.jpg}
\caption{Map 1: The Wider Black Sea Region. Source: The European Union's Black Sea Synergy}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{24} Managing the New Cold War. What Moscow and Washington Can Learn From the Last One (July/August 2014), Foreign Affairs website: http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141537/robert-legvold/managing-the-new-cold-war
1.2 Aim of Paper, Research Questions, and Claim

The rationale behind this paper is to come up with a realistic combination of solutions to the deadly mix of problems present in the wider Black Sea region. There is thus an overarching normative goal. It is a good idea to caution readers against viewing this work as the only possible understanding of the issues at hand. On the contrary, the more perspectives are put out there, the greater the chances of discovering that special key to the puzzle. This is merely a contribution to the attempt to improve relations between the regional actors. In order to even contemplate a resolution/prevention for the ongoing/potential conflicts in the Black Sea region, there is the need to first comprehend the root causes of the negative interactions, which is therefore the explanatory task of this paper.

The underlying research question could be summed up as ‘what is the cause of instability in the wider Black Sea region?’ In trying to answer this, the assumption is that the perception of threat creates high-levels of insecurity among regional actors, with conflictual consequences on inter-state relations. As such, fundamental to this discussion will be the Defensive Realist claim that the mechanism of the security dilemma can lead to conflict among states, unless properly mitigated. As such, the formulation of this paper’s hypothesis is: ‘by alleviating the security dilemma, conflict in the wider Black Sea region can be avoided’. Practically, it must first be determined whether or not it is plausible that a security dilemma exists in the region. Second, it must be explained what it means to alleviate this dilemma, and it must be investigated whether or not the ‘alleviators’ are tied to the tensions that could eventually bring about conflict. If these two tasks can be positively concluded (a ‘yes’ answer), then the claim will be proven right. The security dilemma is chosen as the independent variable for explaining conflict out of a long list of alternatives.

A specification is called for at this point. Threat perception is a subjective trait of the political/military leadership of a state. Therefore, it is difficult to doubt the authenticity of perceptions. For instance, it is possible for a political scientist to claim that what a political leader describes to be a threat to his country is simply a justification for military intervention.

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25 The definition of conflict is loose in this paper, and it can consist of either all-out war or subversive action. There is, however, a military security dimension to the actions which we define by conflict. The so-called ‘colour revolutions’ can be an example of subversive action, thus of conflict, because they put national sovereignty and the state apparatus at risk. Revolutions can indeed bring about state failure, and therefore they would constitute an example of internal conflict, but also of external conflict if one or both sides are proxies for outside actors. Economic sanctions, use of energy leverage, hostile rhetoric are not examples of conflict, but are better defined as examples of tense/negative relations.

26 The so-called ‘alleviators’ will be later on conceptualized as ‘regulators’ of the security dilemma.

27 For studies on the possible causes of war see Cashman G. (2000) and Van Evera S. (1999). Shortly, we could mention the ‘human nature’ of men, the psychological needs of political leaders, misperception, the type of government, the type of economic system, geography, the level of political instability, the history of war involvement, the structure of the international system (the balance of power, polarity, polarization), etc.
Nevertheless, this requires the political scientist to assume that the political leader is being dishonest. And it is not a simple task to prove the inner feelings of that political leader.

Even if the value of subjective perceptions is taken for granted, there is in this study, however, a distinction between a genuine threat perception, and an unauthentic one, on the basis of the object of the threat itself. The threat perception is genuine if that particular threat is perceived to be affecting the immediate security concerns of a state. The perception of threat ceases to be genuine once the threat is linked to far-fetched security concerns or power status considerations. For example, if a leader perceives his state to be threatened by another with invasion, occupation, military encirclement, blockage of access to sea lanes and natural resources, but even with subversive action, then the leader’s perception of threat is genuine. On the other hand, if a leader perceives his state to be threatened by another country because the latter is becoming economically competitive, is constructing conventional military facilities in a different region of the world, is being hostile to the former’s military presence in a part of the world ‘far away from home’, is challenging its hegemony and dominating power position, then the leader’s perception of threat is not authentic, as there is no imminent threat to the survival of his state. Threat perception morphs into intentions, and then into actions. It is crucial thus to assess if the perception of threat was authentic or not, as this will allow us to decide if the action was based on security-driven intentions, or on expansionist ones. Briefly, the nature of intentions affects whether the security dilemma exists or not. Also, the aggressive behaviour of a state motivated by ‘security through expansion’ is justifiable only according to Offensive Realism, a strand of Political Realism opposed to Defensive Realism.

\[28\] In the case of nuclear arsenal the threat to security is immediate, even if the build-up of such capabilities takes places in a different part of the world. Obviously, the destructive capacity of nuclear weapons makes distance irrelevant.

\[29\] Tang S. (2010), pp.53-54
Chapter 2: Research Design and Methods

2.1 Overview
This work is based on qualitative analysis, more towards the interpretivist side of the research approaches continuum. According to this approach, the subjective meaning of the things motivating actors is of primary importance. Accordingly, the perception of insecurity lies at the heart of this analysis. Regarding the conditions of the security dilemma, aside from material aspects like anarchy and military capabilities, the lack of malign intentions of one state is the object of subjective interpretation from other states, but also from that state itself. Moreover, even the element of fear within the concept of anarchy is immaterial, and prone to interpretation rather than to quantification.

This gets even clearer when thinking of the regulators. Asymmetrical distribution of power and external alliances influence relations between states precisely because they are subjectively perceived as hostile or protective. Military power can surely be quantified, but such a concept truly becomes valuable when interpreted in the context of state intentions, and of threat perception.

Second, this work follows a deductive path. It strives to derive the explanation of an event from a theoretical hypothesis about the cause of that event. Thus, the explanation of the tense relations in the Black Sea region is derived from the theoretical reflections provided by Defensive Realism, and by the security dilemma. Even if the deductive approach is fundamentally a way of establishing general claims about the causes of phenomena, the research strategy in this paper does not follow the causal explanation approach. Such an approach would aim towards theory development, and theory testing through empirical cases. In other words, theory comes first, empirical cases second. This paper envisions the exact opposite. Starting from a normative goal for a precise empirical case, the explanation of the case is attempted by employing an a priori chosen theoretical approach. Naturally, the validation of the hypothesis, thus of the theory behind it, is significant. It is, however, merely a side effect of the result of successfully explaining the dynamics behind inter-state relations in the Black Sea area.

If the introduction alludes to the underlying nature of the project (policy-oriented research), it can, however, be argued that no normative work has any solid foundations without an explanatory part, and without theoretical reflections. How can one prescribe a solution to a problem when the problem is not fully understood? How to understand a problem without making use of some sort of pre-existing theory? Part I and Part II of this paper will address exactly

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30 Della Porta D. & Keating M. (eds.) (2008), p.23
31 Ibid., p.63
32 Ibid., p.61
these two points by adding the empirical ‘interpretive case study’ layer to the normative rationale. Moreover, it has to be clear that in this paper there will be no explicit prescriptive part. This paper is simply explanatory. But what stands behind this endeavour is a normative goal, namely finding one possible explanation to the crises in the wider Black Sea region, as to avoid intensification of tensions, and their transformation into conflicts. A future prescriptive work could be developed on the basis of the results of this paper.

Case study refers to a research strategy that focuses in-depth on one or a small number of phenomena, with the aim of investigating the configuration of each case, and to generalize its features to a larger class of phenomena, through developing and evaluating theory (italics added). In this paper, the second part of the definition (in italics) is replaced with the normative goal. Therefore, this case study centres on the security environment of wider Black Sea region, with the aim of understanding the rationale behind the perception of threat. Thus, theory development is substituted with the proposition of a solution meant to avoid inter-state regional conflict: alleviation of the security dilemma. Furthermore, the interpretive case study makes instrumental use of theoretical frameworks in providing explanations for particular cases. This is in line with the research pathway of this paper:

During the investigation, the researcher can build categories, time frames, and even uncover new relations. Part of this has already been done in the beginning of the paper during the definition of the wider Black Sea region, and during the categorization of the states (protagonists and secondary actors). Additionally, the time frame of the analysis is established as starting from the 2000s to July, 2015. Also, by accepting the possibility that the hypothesis might fail, a revision of the main concepts and guiding principles used in the analysis can occur. Many times, the theoretical framework is not limited to the beginning of the investigation because the researcher is often learning from the cases he studies.

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33 Ibid, p.226
34 Ibid, p.227
36 This time frame is not strict and rigid. Current events are linked to previous historical episodes, and one cannot analyse an issue covered by the time-frame without at least referring to circumstances that go previous to the 2000s. Especially in the case of unresolved conflicts. As for July, 2015, it is the actual period when this paper is being written.
37 Della Porta D. & Keating M. (eds.) (2008), p.231
Process tracing is an important element of the case study. It is needed to uncover the relation between potential causes and observed outcomes.\(^\text{38}\) By applying an interpretative perspective, process tracing enables the examination of the reasons that actors give for their behaviour, namely of what actors want, and of what they do. The deductive approach already allows to ‘a priori’ assume why actors choose certain paths. The bonus of process tracing is to ‘flesh out causal mechanisms’.\(^\text{39}\) Very importantly, process tracing makes the shift from understanding causality to finding policy solutions.\(^\text{40}\) In this specific study, it is expected to trace the process of threat perception at the core of inter-state relations, process that causes tensions through the mechanism of the security dilemma.

Lastly, it can be useful to say a few words on the sources of information that shall be used for this paper. The main evidence under investigation shall be official documents, such as for example security and defence strategies, official statements, pieces of legislation (mostly with foreign policy implications). Second, despite the rhetoric that they contain, interviews and public discourses of relevant political leaders are essential for observing the motivations behind actions, or at least the motivations that such leaders want to portray for the public. Finally, international treaties, even if not directly related to the Black Sea region can be sources of information and proof of state intentions, and of foreign policy directions.

### 2.2 Methodology Specifications and Structure of Paper

Part I of this paper constitutes its core, and it has a twofold objective. First, it is to control the presence of the security dilemma in the region by referring to its 3 existential conditions.\(^\text{41}\) Analysis and interpretation are key for this task. To assess whether the Black Sea region is indeed an anarchical sub-system, the investigation will be focused on the regional institutional environment, more specifically on the BSEC, for traces of supranationalism. A brief analysis of its statute will be undertaken for proof of genuine sovereignty renunciation, or the contrary, of rules meant to solidify it.

The investigation will proceed with the military sectors of the protagonists for defensive and offensive capabilities, as to tackle the condition of ‘some accumulation of power’. If answered positively, this will show that Black Sea states have the military strength necessary to back up their interests. Under anarchy, this leads to mutual uncertainty over intentions, thus reinforcing insecurity in their relations.

\(^{38}\) Infra.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., p.233

\(^{40}\) Ibid., p.235

\(^{41}\) A more detailed account on the theory of the security dilemma is to be found in the next chapter
Regarding the lack of malign intentions, the interpretative and process-tracing tools will be strongly put to work. The emphasis will be on a couple of conflictual cases that could be described as instances of expansionist behaviour, with the goal of outlining alternative explanations. If a confrontational process fed by genuine security concerns can be traced, then it will be at least plausible that the regional actors under scrutiny have benign intentions.

The second aim of the paper consists of the attempt to prove that if the security dilemma exists in the wider Black Sea region, by alleviating it, inter-state conflict can be avoided. Hence, Part II of the paper. How will this practically proceed? With considering the effects of the security dilemma’s regulators on the regional relations. Thus, the military capabilities of protagonist Black Sea states will be compared to testify for the presence of asymmetric distribution of power. This descriptive part is not entirely relevant without an interpretation under the following assumption: the weaker party will always overreact to threats, precisely because of its inferior position in relation to the stronger party. Correlation between ‘overreaction’ and a weaker power position provides validity to the material regulator, and thus altering it would bring results. How to find this correlation? By contrasting the power position of a state with its foreign policy and rhetoric.

The next step will be to analyse what Black Sea states do in terms of alliances by sorting out how states react to NATO, and vice-versa. More specifically, the assumption to test will be that an alliance can be perceived as threatening by the state against which the alliance is directed, even if it is defensive in character, and especially if it includes external actors. If this were the case, a defensive alliance would bring hostility between allies and non-members. Practically, the task is to find out whether or not NATO is directed against any Black Sea state, and if any Black Sea state sees NATO as an enemy. This allows once more to trace (or not) the perception of threat, and to connect it to the presence of NATO in the region. Are states’ relations destabilized by NATO’s presence or not?

If the answer is positive to all these inquiries, the hypothesis will be proven right. In the meantime, a lot will have been learnt about the wider Black Sea region, about the relations between the states, about the causes that lie at the heart of their hostilities or partnership, and finally about what to focus on when trying to improve the quality of their interactions. Only secondary, by proving the validity of the hypothesis, will the strength of the Defensive Realist approach have been underscored. It must, however, be kept in mind that the opposite might also be true. By the end of Part II, it is possible that the preliminary expectations will have been disconfirmed.
Chapter 3: Theoretical Toolkit

3.1 Multi-Level Theoretical Framework

In this paper, there is a structural level of analysis, backed by the unit and the individual one. The mechanism of the security dilemma will be the structural explanation for conflict, backed by a number of unit-level factors such as military capability, foreign policy, or alliance choices of states, and by individual-level variables such as misperception over intentions.

Is the security dilemma the best and only factor to explain state behaviour? Obviously not. Its usage is the result of a choice. However, one cannot discard its significance, regardless of its relative strength or lack of explanatory power. Moreover, the security dilemma does not exist in a vacuum. It exists among actors, within a context. The characteristics of these actors cannot be stripped down only to distribution of power. There are other elements that differentiate states among themselves, such as for example geographical location, strategic culture, or alliance preferences. Finally, actors are not black boxes. Their leaders are not always rational, and if they are, mistakes surely happen as with misperception. The point is that by focusing on the security dilemma, one takes into account a rich variety of other fundamental aspects of International Relations and Security Studies, which in fact give value to this concept. Therefore, a further research paper could be developed on the basis of this work, as to include the above-mentioned aspects.

3.2 Defensive Realism

It is exactly this richness that makes it difficult to pin down the theoretical toolkit employed in this paper within a grand-theory of IR. Nonetheless, the Defensive strand of Political Realism is complex enough to permit a serious and multi-faceted explanation of the issues around the wider Black Sea region.

Much has been written within the Defensive Realist tradition, but the most systematic account of this theoretical perspective, and its implications/recommendations for policy have been put forward by Shiping Tang. His description of the security dilemma will be the model for this paper. Contrary to popular belief, Defensive Realism does not operate only at the structural level. On the contrary, in addition to Structural Defensive Realism, there is Neoclassical Defensive Realism, Human Nature Defensive Realism, even individual-level Defensive Realism. There is a

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42 Authors such as Charles Glaser, Stephen Van Evera, Robert Jervis, Jeffrey Taliaferro, Stephen Brooks, John Herz, Glenn Snyder, Arnold Wolfers, Stephen Walt, and even Kenneth Waltz can be seen as Defensive Realists
44 With a few alterations nonetheless
45 Tang S. (2010), p.11, Table 1.1
vital bifurcation in Political Realism not between levels of analysis (which are complementary to each other), but between Offensive\textsuperscript{46} and Defensive Realism.\textsuperscript{47} The ‘real fault lines’ between the two strands lie in their diverse strategic inclinations over how to manage fear and uncertainty over intentions.\textsuperscript{48} They both agree over the anarchical nature of the international arena, and over the centrality of self-help in state behaviour, but diverge over the means of such self-help.\textsuperscript{49}

3.2.1 Cooperation

The first distinction between Offensive and Defensive Realism is to be observed in their views on cooperation. On the one hand, the former sees cooperation purely as a temporary alliance against a common threat.\textsuperscript{50} The obstacles in front of genuine ties are concerns over cheating and considerations on relative gains. Regarding cheating, there is always the risk that when two states set an agreement, one of them will defect in order to gain from the other’s commitment.\textsuperscript{51} International competition assigns states the status of ‘potential enemies’, which reflects itself on their position towards gains. Each actor wants not only to gain from cooperation in absolute terms, but to gain more than others.\textsuperscript{52}

On the other hand, Defensive Realists do not conceive of states as necessarily aggressive. On the contrary, their common interest lies at least in their desire to avoid costly competition.\textsuperscript{53} Regarding risks, despite admitting to the dangers of cooperation,\textsuperscript{54} Defensive Realists recognize that the benefits can outweigh the risks. Occasionally, states choose not to pursue a selfish self-help policy through defecting on agreements (initiating own arms build-up), but to cautiously remain a partner until solid proof of the other’s aggressive intention exists.\textsuperscript{55}

Finally, regarding gains, by making a distinction between ‘instruments of policy’ and ‘ends of policy’, it becomes clear that in the security realm, what matters are only absolute gains. In this sector, military power is simply instrumental towards the goal of security. There is a point in talking about gains only when there is an increase in security, and not in the instruments.\textsuperscript{56} Relative gains in security entail striving to relatively reduce the security of the others. This could be counterproductive, because following the logic of the security dilemma, a less secure counterpart has more incentives to pursue an expansionist policy, with negative consequences

\textsuperscript{46}The spearhead of Offensive Realism is considered to be John J. Mearsheimer. The most emblematic picture of this strand of Realism is painted in his work The Tragedy of Great Power Politics (2001)
\textsuperscript{47}Tang S (2010), p.14
\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., p.19
\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., p.19-20
\textsuperscript{50}Ibid., p.20
\textsuperscript{51}Mearsheimer J.(2001), pp.51-52
\textsuperscript{52}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{53}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54}Jervis R. (1978), p.178
\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., p.176
\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., p.73
for one’s own security. Conversely, if states conceive of security gains in absolute terms, cooperation in this area can be mutually-beneficial since it brings a piece of the security pie to each party. Thus cooperation can be desirable.

3.2.2 Relative Power
Offensive Realism reflects on the maximization of relative power as the only means of self-help available in the anarchical system. There is no danger associated with such a policy. On the contrary, it would be dangerous not to strive towards becoming more powerful than others, since one can never know how much power is enough for security.

Defensive Realists perceive the maximization of relative power to be dangerous, and potentially self-defeating. First, states will tend to balance against a power-maximizer, which in turn will reduce the security of the latter. Second, the state who aims at increasing its relative power for security purposes will see his efforts undercut by the existence of the security dilemma.

3.2.3 Offensive versus Defensive Behaviour
The most crucial difference between the two variants of Realism lies in the preference over strategy. Offensive Realism accepts the usefulness of defensive measures, but stresses the incentives for offensive behaviour resulting from anarchy. Balancing behaviour is acknowledged, and thus power-maximization aims precisely at aggressively overcoming the balancing efforts of others. The same with regard to the security dilemma, which can be escaped only by eliminating the other side altogether, or through hegemony.

Defensive Realism draws different implications from anarchy, balancing, and the security dilemma in terms of strategy. Offensive self-help behaviour (expansion) is precarious in the eyes of Defensive Realists. Anarchy provides strong incentives for restrained behaviour. A power-maximizing state will undoubtedly be perceived as a threat, thus it will always be balanced against. The only way to reduce the security dilemma is to pursue a strategy of moderation.

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57 Ibid., pp.74-75
58 Ibid., p.76
59 Tang S. (2010), p.21
60 Ibid., pp.21-22
61 Ibid., p.29
62 Ibid., p.30
63 Ibid., p.29
64 Ibid., p.30
3.2.4 Offensive versus Defensive States

For a more precise reading of the security dilemma further on, it is essential to discuss how states differ from one another through Defensive Realist lenses. Tang suggests a clear-cut categorization of offensive and defensive states, meant to replace the dichotomy ‘revisionist-status quo’.\(^6\) Simply put, whether a state is offensive or defensive depends on its choice between the Offensive and Defensive Realist ‘operational code’.\(^6\) Tang recommends to frame such categorization as a dichotomy of ‘malign and benign states’.\(^6\)

In what way is this relevant for the security dilemma? According to Tang, a genuine security dilemma can exist only between Defensive Realist states.\(^6\) This is what he calls the conditionality of the security dilemma, namely that when two states intentionally threaten one another (malign intentions) the dilemma is not present.\(^6\) Moreover, Tang’s proposition has serious implications on the causality between the security dilemma and war, a presumably very weak causality. The only way the security dilemma can lead to war is through pre-emptive and preventive war.\(^7\) He discards the first by empirically proving its rare occurrence,\(^7\) and argues that preventive war is not in line with the Defensive Realist operational code, whose focus is on deterrence/defence and on trying to change the mentality of the aggressor.\(^8\) Plainly put, once a state chooses to engage militarily with a preventive of pre-emptive goal in mind, it ceases to be a Defensive Realist state, and instead opts for Offensive Realist prescriptions. Hence, the dissolution of the security dilemma.

3.2.5 Security-Seeking versus Expansionist States

At this point, a diverging path from Tang is being proposed for this study. The distinction is between security-seeking states (defensive states), as opposed to expansionist states (offensive states).\(^3\) When a state is expansionist, its behaviour is motivated not by immediate insecurity, but by an aspiration to maximize relative power. This desire could have a far-fetched security-seeking purpose (prestige and glory could also be final ends), but the existence of such a goal is overshadowed by its expansionist methods. A defensive state, on the other hand, is behaving with moderation and caution. Nevertheless, it can turn aggressive when the threat to its security is immediate, or potentially immediate. Aggressiveness is especially justified when its perpetrator

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\(^6\) Ibid., pp. 27-28; 31
\(^6\) Ibid., p.31
\(^6\) Ibid., p.32
\(^6\) Ibid., p.39
\(^6\) Ibid., p.47
\(^7\) Ibid., pp.83-84
\(^7\) Ibid., pp.84-85
\(^7\) Ibid., p.89
\(^3\) The dichotomy security-seeking/expansionist is interchangeable with defensive/offensive as long as the suggested distinction is accepted
perceives the target to be an offensive state. As can easily be observed, our categorization is less rigorous than Tang’s, but it has more applicability in the real world. It is rarely possible to categorize actors as definitely offensive or defensive on the basis of Tang’s definitions.74

The consequences of this proposition on the security dilemma are as follows. The security dilemma is indeed conditional on state intentions. It is true, uncertainty cannot be done away with, and thus a state can never know whether the other state is security-seeking or expansionist. But a defensive state will have a different approach towards uncertainty than an offensive state. It is useful now to go back to the distinction between authentic and non-authentic perception of threat. Perception of threat is legitimate in both cases, but the object of threat makes a difference (state survival, as opposed to far-fetched security goals/ambition or prestige). On the one hand, a defensive state will be motivated by a genuine perception of threat,75 thus the intentions behind its behaviour will be benign. On the other hand, an offensive state will be guided by a non-authentic perception of threat, hence malign intentions.

To sum up, an authentic security dilemma cannot exist between security-seeking states and expansionist ones. These constitute only offense-defence relations. The best exemplification of the differentiation between a situation in which a genuine security dilemma exists, and a situation in which there is none is offered also by Tang with reference to the relation between Hitler’s Germany and France/Great Britain prior to the Second World War. Surely, none of the two sides could know much about the true intentions of the other side. Nonetheless, Hitler’s concerns were not with the survival of the German state, but with maximizing power and territory. Hitler’s Germany was not a defensive state. Thus, it is difficult to argue that Hitler had been part of an authentic security dilemma.76

At its lowest point, the security dilemma can be dormant. At its highest point it can evolve into a spiral, which could conclude with conflict. Therefore, even security-seeking states can turn aggressive. Pre-emptive and preventive actions, (war included, but not only war: subversive actions, intervention in the domestic affairs of other states, military posturing, deterrence, economic pressure.) can be the result of the maximum intensification of the security dilemma.

74 For a more detailed description of each category of states, see Tang S. (2010), pp.106-115
75 The explanation for the distinction between authentic and non-authentic perceptions of threat is to be found in the section on ‘Aim of Paper, Research Questions, and Claim’
76 Tang S. (2010), p.50
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intentions Underlying State Behaviour</th>
<th>Examples of Object Under Perceived Threat</th>
<th>Presence of Security Dilemma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benign: Defensive State</td>
<td>State Survival; Citizens; Sovereignty; Autonomy/Independence; Borders; Allies;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malign: Offensive State</td>
<td>Possessions Abroad; Military Bases ‘Far-Away From Home’; Hegemony; Power Status; Prestige; Dominion;</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Conditionality of the Security Dilemma. Source: by author*

### 3.3 The Security Dilemma

Any discussion about the security dilemma would be framed around what Tang calls the ‘BHJ formulation’, more explicitly around the definitions and elaborations of this theory proposed by Butterfield, Herz, and Jervis. It can be useful to summarize the existing conceptions of this theory. Authors refer to the security dilemma as to the unpremeditated negative dynamic that occurs when the increase in a state’s own means of security reduces the security of another state. The unintentional threat that one’s aim towards security poses for another state forces the latter to increase its own means of security, which in turn becomes threatening to the former. Faced with this threat, the former sees himself obliged to increase his means of security even further, which leads to a vicious circle of negative reactions.

According to this traditional view, the security dilemma is a dynamic process based on action-reaction. It thus implies a beginning, and a time when there was no dilemma. According to the conception proposed in this paper, however, the security dilemma is a permanent, static state of affairs, with no precise beginning, and no time when the dilemma had been absent. Simply put, a country’s security poses an inherent threat to another country’s security. It is a tragic state of affairs, as none of the two countries means any harm to the other. An increase in the security of one state translates into an increase in the threat to the security of the other, which ultimately translates in a deadly vicious cycle. At this point, the situation becomes dynamic, but now we have moved past the security dilemma into a spiral of conflict. This represents the escalation of the dilemma, and it can result in aggressive behaviour. To make it clear, an arms race is not an example of the security dilemma, but of the next phase following this dilemma, namely the escalation into a spiral of conflict. This understanding is compatible with Defensive Realism. It is

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77 Ibid., p.39  
78 The works referred to here are Butterfield H. (1951), Herz J. (1950), and Jervis R. (1978)  
true that the security dilemma is permanent, thus states will always feel insecure in their relations to other states. But states can cooperate, and gain in mutual security if they take the proper steps in mitigating the security dilemma. They will not eliminate it, but reduce it to its dormant state. The spiral is thus distinct from the security dilemma. There can be a spiral of conflict even between offensive states, which is not the case for the security dilemma. Some spirals are sparked by security motives, while some by incompatible power ambitions.

The existence of the security dilemma can be assessed by the co-presence of 3 conditions. First, an anarchic system which elicits uncertainty over current and future intentions, and also over fear. Second, 'some accumulation of power', even if for defensive purposes, since military capabilities will always contain offensive elements. Third, 'lack of malign intentions on both sides'. The logic is that due to uncertainty over others' intentions, and due to fear, a state will be forced to accumulate at least a minimal amount of military capabilities for defensive purposes. Since such capabilities can also have offensive usage, the other states will feel threatened, and will thus be forced to acquire its own military capabilities. This implies that none of the two sides had any malign intentions whatsoever. Hence, a genuine security dilemma.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Conditions for the security dilemma:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Anarchy;</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Some accumulation of power;</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Lack of malign intentions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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80 Provided that the actors satisfy the conditionality criteria
81 Motives is in this paper a synonym of intentions
82 Tang S. (2010), p.62
83 We omit to say 'international anarchic system' since the security dilemma can easily operate within a regional subsystem as well
84 Tang S. (2010), p.39
85 When we talk of power, we mainly refer to military capabilities. We do not negate the significance of the other elements in the power equation (economic performance, attractiveness), yet we focus on the military area because we see it as the main cause of threat perception among states
87 Ibid., p.40; this formulation is more appropriate than for instance 'presence of defensive states'. By malign intentions we understand expansionism. Benign intentions can produce aggressive behaviour in the form of deterrence, prevention, or posturing, when responding to an immediate real or perceived threat. This especially when the side against which aggressiveness is shown is seen as being an offensive state
3.3.1 Alleviating the Security Dilemma

There is no positive way to escape the security dilemma. First, anarchy cannot be eliminated from the system at the moment. What can be done is to mitigate its effects. Second, states will never voluntarily renounce the right to defend themselves, exactly because of the anarchic nature of the system in which they operate. Thus, states will always maintain a minimal amount of military machinery and infrastructure.\(^8\) Finally, by changing the character of states from defensive to offensive, one does not escape the dilemma, but merely replaces it with all-out power competition, and eventually with occupation/mutual destruction.

Defensive Realism, as the more optimistic strand of Political Realism, provides an opportunity for a more peaceful future. The discussion on the security dilemma model would be incomplete without incorporating the so-called ‘regulators’ of the dilemma, whose severity they influence.\(^9\) There is a distinction between material and psychological regulators.\(^9\) In this paper, precedence will be given to material regulators. The first in line is the asymmetric distribution of power. Tang suggests that the weaker party will always overreact to threats precisely because of its inferior position in relation to the stronger. Thus, the stronger ought to be more reassuring and self-constrained in its behaviour, because failing to do so will inevitably conclude in having to face an opposing alliance.\(^9\)

The second material regulator is constituted by external alliances.\(^9\) An alliance can be perceived as threatening by the state against which the alliances is directed, even if it is defensive in character, and especially if it includes external actors. However, the inclusion of threatening actors in cooperative systems can reduce the uncertainty over intentions.\(^9\) Both alliances and the asymmetric distribution of power influence the severity of the security dilemma. This severity can be reduced through proper state foreign policy.

<table>
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<th>Material regulators of the security dilemma:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. asymmetric distribution of power;</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. external alliances;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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\(^8\) A special case is Japan, whose Self-Defense Force has been created only in 1954, after renouncing war and military forces on the basis of Article 9 of its post-war Constitution. More on this, here: http://global.britannica.com/topic/Self-Defense-Force

\(^9\) Tang S. (2010), p.41

Psychological regulators can be misperception, distrust, concerns for reputation and credibility, fear, general aversion to loss. For more on this, see Ibid., pp. 68-9

\(^9\) Ibid., p.66-67

\(^9\) Ibid., p.66

\(^9\) This statement is in line with the logic of cooperation according to Defensive Realism
The theoretical background on the regulators presented above will constitute the backbone for Part II of this paper. If a strong link can be found between the regulators and the perception of threat, then it will be clear that by modifying them, one can modify the security dilemma. As such, one can affect the possibility for regional conflict to take place. Whoever would use this research as inspiration for foreign policy should pay close attention precisely to how these regulators operate.

3.3.2 Expectations
By applying this model to the case under study, the following results are expected. First, the subsystem of the wider Black Sea region is anarchic. Whatever forms of inter-state cooperation are taking place, they are characterized by intergovernmentalism. Hence, the dominion of national interest.

Second, all countries in the region possess military capabilities, which are employed to back up their national interest. It can be assumed that the interests of one actor will not always be compatible with those of another actor. This only amplifies competition, and in the presence of armaments, increases mutual threat.

Third, and at this point the discussion can be extended, there can be at least one interpretation according to which the states in the region are defensive, even if they might behave aggressively at times. In this sense, the main dynamic is the relation between the United States/NATO and Russia. The smaller powers in the region perceive Russia as expansionist, and in its turn, Russia perceives them as enablers of expansion in their relation to the United States. This because Russia perceives the increase of US/NATO influence and presence in the region as offensive. Russia’s main intention is not to expand or increase its relative power in comparison to the other regional states, but to maintain or increase its security in the face of amplified US regional military and political manifestation. Russia’s aggressive behaviour is not expansionist, but defensive and deterrent. It sometimes assumes the last-resort, pre-emptive or preventive behaviour meant to block the perceived increase of threat.

Following this logic, it would be difficult to present the US-Russia relations as a security dilemma simply because assuming that Russia is defensive, means that the US tends to get closer to the definition of an offensive state. At the very least it can be argued that the American military presence is far closer to Russia’s borders, than vice-versa. Also, it is not the case anymore that Russia could overcome the only hegemon in the world in terms of relative power. Vice-versa is indeed possible, and sometimes even desired by US policy-makers. The only factor that is able to cut from the offensive characterization of the US is the fact that its presence is requested by the smaller regional states, through alliance-making. Protecting allies is a defensive objective. More
than this, the United States ceases to be an offensive state if its security concerns regarding terrorism are considered. That is to say, if one describes the American presence in the region as motivated by the need for access and allies during the war on terror, then the United States is acting out of immediate security imperatives.

In conclusion, smaller regional states are as defensive as Russia, and as the United States is. However, these regional states perceive Russia as offensive for its reactions against what Russia perceives to be an American expansionist policy in the region. Therefore, there is a high regional security dilemma present because there are defensive states authentically perceiving each other as threatening.

Regarding the regulators, it is expected that there is indeed an asymmetry in the regional distribution of power, which creates tensions within groups of states. For instance, Romania's power is smaller than Russia's. Thus, we expect Romania's foreign policy/rhetoric towards Russia to be characterized by 'overreaction'. The same goes for the Russia-US relation, which can be described as imbalanced in terms of power. In this case, it is expected that Russia will be the actor that overreacts to the actions of the other. As such, distribution of power does have an effect on the relations between the states.

Alliances such as NATO are expected to be negatively perceived by countries like Russia, especially because it has the United States as member. Particular Alliance members are expected to give NATO an anti-Russian orientation as well. This destabilizes relations between member states and Russia. More so if the Alliance aims to expand towards Russia's borders.

3.3.3 Possible Counterarguments
The following counterarguments can be understood as contrasting points to what it is expect to be found. First, EU’s engagement with the region can and will modify its anarchic nature, as competition founded on national interest will be replaced by deeper cooperation. Second, a limited amount of military capabilities can have less adverse effects on threat perception. After all, if one state is stronger than another, the former can expect to defeat the latter, and it will thus feel secure.94 Third, there are cases of offensive behaviour in the Black Sea region, as Russia is indeed expansionist and undemocratic. By compromising values, and by reducing countries to mere geopolitical elements, the liberal democratic progress, and the independence achieved by Eastern Europe will be again lost. Regional states should have the right to determine their political and strategic future, so Russia has no right to make any demands.

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94 The response here is that no leader is ready to voluntarily accept the death of even one of its citizens. Also, a limited military capability can have disastrous effects on an adversary state of limited size. Finally, if military capabilities can be hypothetically coupled with nuclear power, then even a single strike could mean the loss of millions of lives. Again, no state is ready to accept such a risk.
Regarding alliances, Russia must commit to a peaceful cooperation with NATO, and should stop seeing Western actions as a threat. Russia ought to put away its Cold War lenses. NATO is a defensive alliance, and it is Russia’s assertiveness that has put the two in opposing camps.

Furthermore, a stronger criticism could be that the security dilemma approach is dangerous and counterproductive because it is appeasing. Russia should indeed be contained by the United States and NATO so that no attempts at rebuilding the Russian empire would be successful. Also, Russia is seen as stuck in the past by following realpolitik perceptions of politics and international affairs. The world today is being increasingly constructed on Liberal IR prescriptions, and Russia is refusing to adapt. Most of these counterpoints will be addressed during the analyses in Part I and Part II.

3.4 Alternative Theoretical Pathways
The choice of employing Realism as theoretical perspective does not imply the inability of other IR grand-theories to shed light on the processes of the wider Black Sea region. On the contrary, in order to get the most complete depiction of international affairs, a large variety of theoretical approaches is desirable. Also, after the examination of the existing literature on the subject, it became almost mandatory to take a more ‘materialistic’ path. One that is less influenced by ideology, by value-impregnated concepts like liberalism, democracy or human rights, and by other ‘immaterial’ considerations such as the importance of ideas or institutions. This is not to say that all these works are worthless. Far from it. It is only to say that this paper is limited to one facet of IR and Security Studies, one facet analysed as multi-dimensionally as possible. The goal is to add in value to the body of literature out there. Additionally, the wider Black Sea region cannot yet be conceived of in terms of ‘postmodernity’, henceforward the relevance and suitability of Realist assumptions, its readings, and its prescriptions.

At this point, it would only be fair to briefly treat an alternative path towards understanding international or regional affairs. Liberal Institutionalism also makes an attempt at coming up with a solution to the anarchical trait of the system. Constellations of interests, together with interdependence allow for, and ask for, cooperation to take place among international actors. The purpose is to gain joint benefits, and to avoid joint loses. International institutions and international organizations have the ability to obstruct defection on agreements, or at least to show when a state intends to do so. Thus, to reduce uncertainty. Furthermore, international

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95 The new liberal imperialism (April 7, 2002), The Guardian: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/apr/07/1
96 We have in mind mainly the works of Axelrod R., Keohane R. (1985), and Keohane R., Martin L. (1995)
organizations can help reduce transaction costs between states by creating permanent bureaucracies and channels of constant interaction.\textsuperscript{98}

First, it should be mentioned that this theoretical framework is not contradictory to Defensive Realism, since according to the latter, cooperation should play a crucial role in international affairs. As for institutions, it is worth mentioning that Defensive Realists leave the question open. Agreements have been reached on vital issues (disarmament) even in the absence of formal institutions, because states found other solutions for gathering the necessary information or because states opted for lesser options, namely ad-hoc agreements.\textsuperscript{99} Thus, it can be said that Defensive Realism identifies ways of cooperating without paying too much importance to institutions.\textsuperscript{100}

With regard to the particular case of the wider Black Sea region, the Institutionalist framework has already been put to good use in analyses of the regional cooperation initiatives (BSEC),\textsuperscript{101} on the integration of such initiatives with European ones (EU Synergy Strategy),\textsuperscript{102} and on the sub-state level by addressing for example how regional and local formalized interaction can affect human security threats or mitigate distrust.\textsuperscript{103} It could be even bravely argued that the existing literature on the wider Black Sea region has been mostly inspired by other-than-Realist theoretical understandings of security and cooperation. As such, it could be concluded that this paper could in fact fill up a void in the existing literature.

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., pp.18-20
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., p.85
\textsuperscript{101} Hajizada M. & Marciaq F. (2013); Homorozean A. (2010);
\textsuperscript{103} Saari S. (2011 a&b)); Tassinari F. (2011)
In this part, the body of existing literature on topics adjacent to the one of this paper will be scrutinized. In choosing which pieces of writing to select as relevant, the source was first considered. In this sense, the focus is on articles published in academic journals, but also on books on the topics of interest. The field of study under examination can be narrowed down as Political Science–International Relations–International Security.

The second criteria is related to the elements that constitute the topic. On this basis, two categories emerged: writings on ‘the wider Black Sea region’, and writings proposing ‘regional strategies’. The relevance of the first category is self-evident. As for the works on regional strategies, it can be useful to think of strategy in terms of objectives/instruments, but also in terms of assumptions/premises. An objective is defined on the basis of pre-existing premises regarding a situation. This paper has precisely the scope of providing an assumption which could inspire a future strategic objective. Therefore, it is necessary to assess if the assumption proposed in this paper has already been proposed.

Finally, ‘the wider Black Sea region’ category, can be further divided into writings dealing with ‘energy’, ‘BSEC and institutional aspects’, ‘security/defence/geopolitics’, and ‘country focused writings’. This proved to be helpful in sorting out which papers provide essential information and arguments for the topic at hand, which ones are merely useful as backgrounders, and finally to see where if there is any gap to be filled.

4.1 The Wider Black Sea Region in Articles

The body of literature on this topic has been advancing rapidly especially after 2007 when Romania and Bulgaria were granted EU membership. The region has been measured in terms of energy security, the military and defence interactions, geopolitical interests, institutional framework, national and trans-regional relations. With regard to the area of energy, Winrow explores the link between regional geopolitics and energy security, arguing that the interested states form their foreign policies on the basis of crucial factors such as location of energy resources and transportation to Europe. His conclusion is that due to uncertain relations between producers, consumers, and transit states, the diplomatic agenda of interested states will certainly include energy security for the years to come.

Paillard proposes an interesting and non-ideological view on the geopolitical dynamics around energy security in the Black Sea region. He puts this particular region alongside the

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104 Namely the role of the security dilemma in determining regional relations
105 Winrow G. (2007)
106 Ibid., p.233
Middle East as future keys to energy stability, as Europe sees its vital potential in terms of exploration and transit in the context of its energy security needs. Furthermore, he talks of how Western Europe and America substituted Russia in its influence in the area. Finally, he observes the emergence of a new energy transit axis from Central Asia to EU markets via the Black Sea and the Balkans.

An American approach is presented by Baran and Smith who provide us insight into the US strategy for the Black Sea and the Caspian regions. Their work focuses on the regional interest of the US in securing the flow of Caspian oil and gas towards the West by attempting to break the control of Russia over the region's energy transit routes. Finally, they talk of how the US aims at reducing Moscow's interference into the domestic lives of the states in this area for the purpose of moving them closer to the West, allowing them thus to open up towards economic and political reforms.

Another attitude towards the Black Sea region was adopted by those observing it from an institutional angle. Hajizada and Marciacq are questioning the kind of region WBSA is, and whether it is being framed by the BSEC or by the Black Sea Synergy of the EU. More precisely, it explores the nature of regionalism in the area by considering the case of trade relations. The argument is that in this field, the WBSA is showing signs of a regionalism driven by the EU. An interesting element in this paper is the consideration of 'region' as socially constructed, as opposed to a geographical expression. In this sense, different criteria can create different regions. It is shared practices, understanding, and assumptions that give regional configurations meaning.

Japaridze's account is more policy-oriented. He is analysing how the BSEC can contribute to building relationships throughout the world, arguing that in order for it to become effective, the regional organisation demands reform in order to adapt to today's strategic realities. After offering some reflections concerning regional dynamics and developments, he ends up with a series of policy suggestions for BSEC reform.

In a comparative manner, Homorozean is drawing lessons from other regional configurations such as the Northern Dimension and South-East Asia in order to understand what the regional order around the Black Sea is. Also, she is questioning the level of contribution brought by
cooperation initiatives in ‘creating patterns of sustainable development and a high degree of actors’ involvement’ in the Black Sea region.\textsuperscript{114}

The most relevant to our topic are however the writings on security and geopolitics/geostrategy. Sanders gives us a very well informed strategic analysis of the Black Sea region in two instances. First, by taking a European perspective, she explains aspects of Black Sea maritime security by arguing that European security is actually under threat both in terms of ships, shipping and military personnel, and in terms of criminal activities and terrorism.\textsuperscript{115} She concludes her reasoning by claiming that such security threats cannot be properly dealt with by the littoral states for a few reasons: lack of naval and infrastructure capabilities, strained regional relations that affect maritime cooperation, and ineffectiveness of the existing military operations in the Black Sea.\textsuperscript{116}

In another paper, she puts the attention on Russia’s real maritime power in the Black Sea. She follows three criteria in assessing Russia’s abilities in the sea: quantitative together with qualitative factors (maritime resources available and the capacity to put them to use), and ‘the environment’ (Russia’s relations with the key regional players).\textsuperscript{117} Her conclusion is that the assumption according to which Russia’s maritime power in the Black Sea will increase in the future can be questioned: fewer maritime platforms, qualitative problems, and poor relations with actors like Romania, Georgia, and the US.\textsuperscript{118}

A backgrounder for the security landscape in the Black Sea region is offered by Özdamar. His paper is rich with information about the security challenges in the region. His argument is that the likelihood of interstate conflict is high given the increases in military expenditure from some actors, and the change in the military balance.\textsuperscript{119} He concludes with a few policy suggestions: cautious monitoring of military spending, downgrading of plans for NATO expansion to Georgia and Ukraine, increased resources for international organizations that can be useful in conflict resolution, and finally continuation of regionalization.\textsuperscript{120}

Lastly, another good opportunity for understanding the geopolitical dynamics in the region is provided by Sherr. In a 2011 article, he presents the Black Sea as a region with asymmetries in interests, capacity and perception, and distrust. This piece of writing is very valuable for observing the differences between expectations and the realities on the ground following the

\textsuperscript{114} Homorozean A. (2010)
\textsuperscript{115} Sanders D. (2009)
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., p.119
\textsuperscript{117} Sanders D. (2012)
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., pp.67-8
\textsuperscript{119} Özdamar Özgür (2010)
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., pp.357-8
Russo-Georgian war of 2008, event he sees as the ‘re-establishment of the saliency of hard power in the region’.\textsuperscript{121}

The last category of relevant writings on the ‘wider Black Sea region’ is the body of literature that takes the perspective of one actor, the ‘country-focused writings’. Most are centred on an EU perspective towards the region. Aydin is questioning whether the Black Sea region, with its post-Cold War cooperative attempts, deserves EU’s attention. Also, the old character of his paper (2005) is revealed when he wonders upon the problems awaiting the EU after a next round of enlargement towards Romania and Bulgaria.\textsuperscript{122} An interesting part of his work is constituted by his suggestions for a further EU commitment towards the Black Sea.\textsuperscript{123}

Pursuing a realist thinking, Nitoiu analyses how the EU has changed the national interests of the regional actors following the crucial moment of the Russo-Georgian War.\textsuperscript{124} Nitoiu’s argument is that Romania and Bulgaria’s admission into NATO and the EU have altered the regional balance of power: an increased European integration on top of strong Euro-American relations are powerful factors in both establishing a Western hold on the area to the detriment of Russia, and in reducing regional great power competition.\textsuperscript{125} One of his assumptions is however that NATO-EU relations embody a zero-sum game due to US ambitions for NATO and French ambitions for the EU. This is to the detriment of both entities, with countries like Romania being caught in the middle.\textsuperscript{126}

For a talk on EU-Russia relations in the Black Sea region, Nilsson’s work is to be considered. His paper is centred on the regional actions of the former, and the responses of the latter under the circumstances of geopolitical competition. One element of this competition lies in the form of a struggle between EU’s attempts to diversify energy sources through new transportation routes, and Russia’s sponsored projects. The second element is the contrasting approaches of the EU and Russia to conflict resolution, with the latter striving to maintain the status quo as opposed to EU’s aim of establishing a secure, stable, and democratic neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{127}

Bulgaria’s position in the Black Sea region has also been brought to our attention by Nieto in an article exploring how NATO’s presence in the region has been increased by the geopolitical factor. In this paper, he discusses Bulgaria’s contribution to NATO, and also the effects of the Russo-Georgian war on Black Sea geopolitics.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{121} Sherr J. (2011)
\textsuperscript{122} Aydin M. (2005), p.258
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., p.274-7
\textsuperscript{124} Nitoiu C. (2009)
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., p.53
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid, pp.53-4
\textsuperscript{127} Nilsson N. (2008)
\textsuperscript{128} Nieto W. A. S. C.(2008)
Finally, Karagiannis introduces the readers to Greek foreign policy in the Black Sea region. Through Joseph Nye’s concepts of hard and soft power, the author claims that Greece has resorted to a strategy mixing both forms: economic might, military and public diplomacy, pipeline development, multilateralism, and finally a behaviour inspired by political values, culture, and history.\(^{129}\)

### 4.2 Regional Strategies

In terms of strategic paths for the wider Black Sea area, two major approaches can be accounted for. First, there is a category of strategies that suggest a Euro-Atlanticist direction. Second, a category centred on trust-building in a region characterized by deep distrust.

Regarding the first category, after having painted the geopolitical picture of the Black Sea region, Ulger goes on to discuss the operating regional security frameworks, and to propose alternatives for a Euro-Atlantic strategy.\(^{130}\) As for his suggestions, he asks for democracy, good governance, and the rule of law as guidelines to follow in bringing about stability.\(^{131}\) Also, the creation of a genuine Black Sea identity is essential.\(^{132}\) In line with Euro-Atlanticism, his strategy is premised on the need for a continued enlargement of NATO and the EU.\(^{133}\)

Vahl and Celac review the existing EU policy instruments for the Black Sea region. Also, they talk about the region’s identity, in particular with regard to the BSEC. Finally, their paper presents seven areas of EU-Black Sea cooperation security and stability; energy; transport; environment and sustainable development; science and technology; justice and home affairs; democratic institutions and good governance.\(^ {134}\)

The most punctual and policy-oriented article in this category must be Aydin and Triantaphyllou’s. Theirs is a report meant to contribute to the strategy of the Commission on the Black Sea in four areas: peace and security, economic development and welfare, democratic institutions and good governance, and regional cooperation.\(^{135}\) Among the policy recommendations they include: improvement of BSEC, tackling of conflicts via existing mechanisms, a new security mechanism to include both EU and Russia, a focus on economic issues, cooperation schemes at all levels, intercultural dialogue, training of professional groups, and promotion of good governance and civil society.\(^{136}\)

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\(^{129}\) Karagiannis E. (2013), p.75  
\(^{130}\) Ulger F. (2007)  
\(^{131}\) Ibid., p.64  
\(^{132}\) Ibid., p.65  
\(^{133}\) Infra.  
\(^{134}\) Vahl M. & Celac S. (2007)  
\(^{135}\) Aydin M. & Triantaphyllou D. (2010), p.373  
\(^{136}\) Ibid., pp.376-9
With regard to the second category, namely trust-building strategies for the Black Sea region, Saari introduces us to a region ‘torn by instability and distrust’. She refers here to non-military threats: weak and poor states, disputed uncontrolled zones, organised crime, human trafficking, and irregular migration. In this article she also discusses the existing research on trust.\textsuperscript{137} She does not confine distrust to neighbour relations, but expands it to include the levels of citizen-authority, and of political actors as well.\textsuperscript{138} Her hypothesis is that trust is key in establishing cooperation between and inside states, and thus for security.\textsuperscript{139}

The same Saari suggests in another article strategies for managing distrust and increasing cooperation in the Black Sea region.\textsuperscript{140} Her argument is that trust-building efforts should be aimed at sub-state and transnational levels as institutional cooperation arrangements cannot realistically work in a context of non-trustworthy behaviour.\textsuperscript{141} For her, the solution lies in grassroots initiatives aimed at improving human security.\textsuperscript{142} She talks of ‘nurturing trust through a bottom-up approach’.\textsuperscript{143}

The last author we are going to refer to in the series of trust-building strategies is Tassinari. His paper is assessing the EU policy in the Black Sea region from the angle of trust. By touching on the constructivist approach, he puts the notion of ‘region building’ as EU’s rationale for the period 2006-2011.\textsuperscript{144} Tassinari concludes that the EU should improve its promotion of political reforms in the region, reforms that should belong more to the political arena (democracy and good governance), rather than to the technocratic one. Also, for the regional states, he suggests a regional-building path that involves independent actors to the detriment of national governments. Finally, he stresses the significance of civil society and non-state actors as participants in government-originated initiatives.\textsuperscript{145}

\textsuperscript{137} Saari S. (2011a)
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., p.215
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., p.216
\textsuperscript{140} Saari S. (2011b)
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., p.337
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., p.341
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., p.342
\textsuperscript{144} Tassinari F. (2011)
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., pp.236-7
4.3 The Wider Black Sea Region in Books

Before closing the chapter, it would be useful to mention one more series of interesting works that are syntheses in terms of the elements of this paper’s topic. Cornell’s piece of writing analyses the wider Black Sea region as hub of European security. By having the EU-Black Sea relations as the central point, the author discusses the regional developments in the fields of stability and conflict management, democracy and rule of law, energy security, and organized crime/terrorism. More than this, the long paper/book has a policy-recommendation part in which, again, the EU is the receiver. These policies are meant to constitute an EU strategy for the wider Black Sea region, and they too follow the areas presented above: stability, democracy, and so on.

The work of Asmus is a cohesive collection of essays, again on the topic of a Euroatlantic strategy for the Black Sea region. This multi-topical book handles the idea of Black Sea regionalism and of the necessity for a strategy oriented in this direction, it gives an overview of the perspectives that key actors such as the US, Germany, and Turkey have on the regional affairs, it analyses the EU-Black Sea relations within its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), it discusses regional cooperation especially in the area of security, it suggests alternative paths in dealing with Russia (competition and engagement), it tackles energy security, and finally it discusses the other regional players, such as Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine. The issues covered in this work are varied and complex, which makes the book a very useful source of information and analyses of the wider Black Sea region, and of its relations with the EU or the US.

Next in line would be Hamilton and Mangott’s work. This is also a collection of essays and research works that altogether present a rich discussion on a multiplicity of themes ranging from regionalism, to regional perspectives (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Russia), to transregional issues (economics, energy, security, and democracy), and to transatlantic relations and conceivable strategies.

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147 Ibid., pp.8-12
149 Ibid. pp.15-33
150 Ibid., pp.37-65
151 Ibid., pp.69-81
152 Ibid., pp.83-97
153 Ibid., pp.101-121
154 Ibid., pp.125-153
155 Ibid., pp.158-212
156 Hamilton D. & Mangott G. (eds.) (2008)
4.4 Conclusions and Positioning of this Paper within the Field
The articles and books presented provide essential descriptions of the geopolitical context. Also, they help identify better the actors' national interests. Moreover, the reader now has access to an interesting history of the region itself. From a theoretical standpoint, they allow for a better grasp both of how foreign policy choices are made, and of concepts like region, identity, border, and trust. Most of the works are case studies centred on the regional countries, while others offer pertinent analyses of external players, such as EU, NATO, and the US. Also, fundamental is the exhibition of their relations to Russia.

Additionally, in the body of literature presented, one could encounter empirical investigations of the Black Sea states' military capabilities. Energy, trade, and institutional issues have also been discussed. The articles focused on strategy are crucial backgrounders on the current commitments and engagements of the regional states. They are highly valuable for being able to recognise which changes are required when planning an alternative strategic route.

With regard to the place of this paper within the existing body of literature, by focusing on the protagonists of the wider Black Sea region, the awareness of the regional forces is further heightened. A potential security strategy for this area inspired by the side of the story presented in this paper would allow policy-makers to broaden their strategic vision. Furthermore, gravitating towards the Defensive Realist approach ramifies the line of thinking about the issues surrounding the Black Sea. The proposition is a pragmatic and non-ideological description of events. Normatively, this research does not develop in terms of preferred or less-preferred political systems, market configurations, or value-systems. The only ethical guidelines are avoiding conflict through a reduction of the security dilemma, stability creation, and trust-building.

Furthermore, the application of the concept of the security dilemma as both explanatory variable for inter-state conflict, and as inspiration source for a future strategy takes readers on an alternative path outside the regional strategies already proposed in previous works. This thesis is sharp and pointed towards this particular Realist concept, and towards its use in the context of the Black Sea region. Solving the tensed puzzle through the security dilemma and through the perception of insecurity allows those interested to come up with a solution demanding of a vigilant stance with regard to the prescriptions suggested by the so-called Euro-Atlanticism or Transatlanticism.

In conclusion, the uniqueness of this work lies in the particular mix of a few elements such as the use of Defensive Realist theoretical concepts (with original fine-tuning\textsuperscript{157}), the construction of the case under study (the security environment of the wider Black Sea region, the time-frame

\textsuperscript{157} See the Theoretical Framework chapter, the section on 'Security-Seeking Versus Expansionist States'
set between 2000 and July, 2015, and the distinction between protagonist and secondary actors), the underlying normative goal (prevention of regional conflict), and finally the absence of ideological concerns (pragmatic analysis of national interests/capabilities and regional interactions with ethical considerations only in terms of inter-state conflict avoidance).
5.1 Anarchy

Anarchy is to be defined as a state of affairs characterized by the absence of an official hierarchy among states, or of a higher authority, including in non-state form. According to Structural Realists such as Waltz, in an anarchic system, states are formally equal to one another, no international government exists, international organizations might be present, and supranational entities can exercise functions in important matters, but only with the approval of the states concerned.158 To better define anarchy, the description of its opposite can be helpful. What stands in contrast is a hypothetical international law-based system revolving around a supranational entity capable of controlling states, of judging their behaviour, and of imposing its will on them independently of the states’ consent or dissent. Such a system would operate on three premises: the dilution of national sovereignty, the delegation of power to a superior authority, and the acceptance/implementation of deliberations on the basis of the ceded authority.

The case of the European Union is proposed as a successful example of a non-anarchical regional system, or as Robert Cooper calls it, a postmodern order in which member states purposefully and mutually interfere in each other’s internal affairs. The same author points to the CFE Treaty as potentially bringing about the same fuzziness of the border between domestic and foreign affairs, this time in the sphere of security. Strong inspections over the military capabilities of signatory states demand a renunciation of areas of sovereignty through mutual vulnerability for the benefit of transparency.159

On another note, there are voices according to each not even the EU can be interpreted as more than an intergovernmental organization operating at multiple levels. In dealing with the charge brought against the ‘democratic deficit ‘of the EU, or even worse, with the idea of a European ‘superstate’, Moravcsik is reassuring. The EU Treaties contain a series of substantive, fiscal, administrative, legal and procedural constraints on the policies that the supranational entity can pursue, constraints purposefully agreed upon by the Member States.160 Hence, areas of sovereignty pertaining exclusively to the states.

In the case of the Black Sea region, the currently operating institutional framework was put in place by the BSEC Charter,161 which established the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. It is the materialization of the Black Sea states’ intentions to cooperate economically

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158 Waltz K. (1979), p.88
159 Cooper R. (1996), pp. 19-21
161 Charter of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, May 1, 1999
in the region, and to build the foundations for integrating their markets into the global economy.\(^{162}\) Thus, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine are the eleven original Founding Members, to whom Serbia was added in 2004.\(^ {163}\) Does the organization allow for the development of a system of governance capable of eliminating anarchy? The answer has to be no, and three sets of evidence support such argument.

First, an analysis of the Charter on the basis of the theoretical toolkit of International Organizations proves that the BSEC was never contemplated to touch on the member states’ sovereignty. Theoretically, the main organs of an international organization are the plenary organ, the executive council, and the administrative staff.\(^ {164}\) More significantly, the plenary organ is the expression of sovereignty, all states being represented.\(^ {165}\) In this case, the BSEC’s Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs plays this role. According to Article 11 of the Charter, it is the main decision-making organ. Under its decisional privilege lie matters submitted by the Subsidiary Organs, together with the establishment or termination and definition of tasks of the latter, membership and ‘observer status,’ adoption and modification of the Rules of Procedure, functioning of the BSEC, and any other issue that it would see appropriate.\(^ {166}\)

Moreover, the set-up of relations with third parties is also to be ultimately decided upon by the Council.\(^ {167}\) In consequence, it can be argued that due to the Council’s final say in decision-making, the BSEC has traits of a very high-level of intergovernmentalism. This model of integration requires negotiations and compromise between powerful actors with the result being the lowest common denominator of their interests.\(^ {168}\) In accordance, in the absence of consensus, Council Resolutions cannot be agreed upon, and Resolutions are the only acts that are binding to all member states.\(^ {169}\)

The model is tempered by majority-voting on Decisions, which however affect only the States that gave a favourable vote.\(^ {170}\) Precisely because of this, it is not satisfactory to conceive of the BSEC as an organization of ‘shifting coalitions of member states’.\(^ {171}\) The majority of interests expressed in Decisions does not bind the ones who vote ‘no’. Apart from it being a weakness in the decision-making process of the BSEC (if the goal is supranational governance), it also

\(^{162}\) Summit Declaration on Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Istanbul, June 25, 1992
\(^{163}\) The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) , Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/the-black-sea-economic-cooperation-organization-_bsec_en.mfa
\(^{165}\) Ibidem, p.66
\(^{166}\) BSEC Charter, Article 11, p.6
\(^{167}\) Ibidem, Article 9, p.5
\(^{169}\) BSEC Charter, Article 17, p.5
\(^{170}\) Ibidem, Article 18, p.5
underscores that national sovereignty is untouchable. More so, since any proposal demands Council approval, it can be concluded that the constellation of state interests is the foremost input in the BSEC. The bottom line is that the institutional arrangement created in the Black Sea region allows at most for cooperation under anarchy, thus for the mitigation of its effects, and not for its elimination.

Second, it can be argued that the BSEC has not even been successful in its main endeavour. Trade in the Black Sea area is mainly directed towards the EU partly because of the latter’s instruments employed in the region. Despite the fact that, for some regional actors, trade choices are being influenced by the BSEC, the rationale lies in their geographical proximity far more than in the organization’s policies. It can be even sustained that regionalism around the Black Sea is enhanced more effectively by the EU, rather than by the BSEC. Such negative appraisal reinforces the view that cooperation under anarchy is not smooth, let alone capable of eliminating the latter altogether.

Others, however, suggest the contrary. Supposedly, if the region’s history is taken into account, the results of the BSEC can be interpreted as ‘impressive’. Aydin makes reference to the BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future document (of 2001), which enlists several sectors for cooperation alongside joint projects meant to bring about internal reforms and integration of the region’s national economies. Also, the document cited by the author brings attention to macroeconomic reforms, establishment of strong and resilient financial systems, support for national development programmes, and much more. Apart from the dated analysis, whether such plans have been truly taken to fruition is a matter of further debate. For the goal of this paper, it suffices to notice that the existence of such proposals, even if successfully implemented, does not in any way affect the intergovernmental character of the BSEC, thus the anarchic nature of the region.

Lastly, EU’s interaction with the region does not transform anarchy. It can be sustained that the EU does have a strategy for the region, but taking a closer look at such inter-regional approach reveals as follows. First, it is clear from the start that the path chosen by the EU when engaging with the Black Sea is on a bilateral basis with the countries. The EU policies fit under the pre-accession strategy with Turkey, the ENP, and the Strategic Partnership with Russia. More specifically, the EU-BSEC channel serves mainly a communication function for the coordinator of

173 Aydin M. (2005), p.267
174 Ibidem, pp.267-268
175 Infra.
176 Ibidem, p.269
177 EU’s Black Sea Synergy (2007)
178 Ibidem, p.3
projects, thus there is no goal to alter the region’s governance structure. It can be seen mainly as a recognition from part of the EU of the Black Sea states’ efforts to assume the characteristics of the institutionalist/liberal world order.

It could not be otherwise, since the EU needs access to Black Sea states mostly on bilateral level in fundamental policy areas. For instance, one of the crucial goals of the EU, energy diversification via the southern Gas Corridor, demands in the short-term adding Azerbaijan to the list of gas supplies, and reaching towards Turkmenistan, Iraq, and Iran in the long term. This increases energy competition between BSEC member states: between Russia and Azerbaijan as sources, but also between Georgia and Turkey as transit states. Such a situation reinforces the states’ national interest, thus the core of anarchy, and blocks any possible shift in the nature of the BSEC, or of the nature of the region.

To sum up, the BSEC does not have the institutional-juridical traits necessary to enable the emergence of a system of governance able to replace the anarchic structure. Furthermore, as it stands, the BSEC’s fulfilment of its main goal, intra-regional trade, is questionable. Despite its list of postmodern goals, the organization remains intergovernmental in essence, as the member states are not willing to cede sovereignty. Finally, not even the EU, which we might accept as having overcome the anarchy of international life, is willing to allow the intra-regional competition of the Black Sea to evaporate. One might even go as far as to argue that all the EU has achieved is to become an economic block of states competing anarchically in an inter-regional environment. Therefore, one should not expect the EU to help construct an effective Black Sea competing block.

5.2 Some Accumulation of Power: Military Capability and Interests
The second existential condition for the security dilemma is ‘some accumulation of power’, understood as military capability, which despite having a defensive purpose can contain offensive elements. Accumulation of power refers to the possession of military capabilities, which is enough to create suspicion among international actors under anarchy. Even if such capability is limited. The fact that all Black Sea states have armed forces is easily verifiable, and this should be enough of an argument to support the claim that each of these actors have ‘some’ power projection instruments. Yet, this section will present an analysis of the protagonist states’ maritime capabilities to exemplify such accumulation of power. The analysis could be extended

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179 Ibidem, p.9
181 TANAP Secures First Step with Groundbreaking Ceremony (March 18, 2015), Natural Gas Europe: http://www.naturalgas europe.com/tanap-pipeline-groundbreaking-ceremony-kars-turkey-22781
183 And not necessarily to an increase in the capabilities.
to all branches of the military, but for the purpose above, the analysis of the Navies suffices. The maritime power of a littoral state is a valuable factor to consider as it can be conceived of more broadly than simply instrumental to war. Instead, it also includes the ability to pursue non-military interests, such as in the area of natural resources, or to uphold the freedom of the oceans.\textsuperscript{184}

As such, the result of this discussion will be twofold. It will solidly prove the presence of military capabilities, and it will identify what interests lie behind the development of these capabilities. Why does a treatment of interests strengthen the argument? For Defensive Realists, the conflict of interest between actors is not only inescapable, but a basic feature of state interaction as it has consequences for the level of the security dilemma.\textsuperscript{185} In short, the existence of interests that might be conflictual further influences the perception of threat that springs from military capabilities.

5.2.1 Romania
To begin with, Romania has a 245 km long Black Sea coastline, a major port (Constanta), and it is crossed by 1.075 km of Danube, which represents 38% of the river's length.\textsuperscript{186} The country’s fleet is comprised of vessels operating both in the Sea, and on the Danube River. The function of the Maritime Fleet consists of the protection and defence of the coastline, of the territorial waters, and of the Romanian interests within its exclusive economic area. Also, the Maritime Fleet allows for an active presence in the international waters of the Black Sea for the pursuit of the country's interests, or for the protection of international law, either independently of with partners/allies. As for the River Flotilla, its function is to guard and defend the Danube Delta,\textsuperscript{187} the maritime and inner Danube, and Romania’s interests in internal waters.\textsuperscript{188}

Quantitatively, regarding the Maritime Fleet, Romania possesses as follows: four frigates,\textsuperscript{189} three missile fast patrol boats,\textsuperscript{190} four corvettes and three torpedo patrol boats,\textsuperscript{191} four minesweepers and one minelayer,\textsuperscript{192} three helicopters,\textsuperscript{193} the marine infantry,\textsuperscript{194} and diving

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{184} Sanders D. (2012), p.47
\item \textsuperscript{185} Tang S. (2010), pp.43-44
\item \textsuperscript{186} Romanian Navy Website (tr.): http://www.navy.ro/
\item \textsuperscript{187} Romania and Ukraine have disagreements over the Danube Delta regarding the latter’s construction of the Bastroe Canal. For more on this, see: EU: Bastroe canal is illegal (March 7, 2008), HotNews.ro: http://english.hotnews.ro/stiri-top_news-2524277-bastroe-canal-illegal.htm
\item \textsuperscript{188} Romania Navy, Global Security.org: http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/ro-navy.htm
\item \textsuperscript{189} Romanian Navy Website: http://www.navy.ro/en/diverse/fregate/index.html
\item \textsuperscript{190} Romanian Navy Website: http://www.navy.ro/en/despre/div_rachete/diviz.html
\item \textsuperscript{191} Romanian Navy Website: http://www.navy.ro/en/despre/div_50/diviz.html
\item \textsuperscript{192} Romanian Navy Website: http://www.navy.ro/en/despre/div_min/diviz.html#m4
\item \textsuperscript{193} Romanian Navy Website: http://www.navy.ro/en/despre/grup_elicoptere/dategenerale.html
\item \textsuperscript{194} Romanian Navy Website: http://www.navy.ro/en/despre/bim/index.html
\end{itemize}
capabilities including a submarine.\textsuperscript{195} The River Flotilla has the following configuration: three monitor ships, five armoured patrol boats,\textsuperscript{196} six river minesweeping patrol boats.\textsuperscript{197}

Romania’s interests in the Black Sea are ranging from political, to economic, and to military/security. First, the Black Sea is Romania’s gateway both to the World Ocean, and to a middle-power status: a source of political capital. This status is justified by the significance that the sea holds for the United States and for Europe.\textsuperscript{198} Second, in 2009, Romania had won a territorial dispute with Ukraine regarding the maritime border, which benefited the country in terms of 70 billion cubic meters of gas and 12 million tons of oil due to the International Court of Justice’s verdict to give Bucharest sovereignty rights over 80% of the disputed sea floor.\textsuperscript{199} More than this, another oil reserve, 60 km from the shore, was discovered in 2014. According to evaluations, the extraction would bring out around 200,000 tons of oil.\textsuperscript{200} Energy security and economic interests are therefore crucially tied to access to the seaside. Finally, in terms of security, the strategic location of Romania is an opportunity for Bucharest to nurture its interest in consolidating a military relationship with NATO and Washington. For instance, the port of Constanta has recently harboured several US military vessels such as the destroyer USS Truxtun,\textsuperscript{201} the destroyer USS Cole and the frigate USS Mount Whitney,\textsuperscript{202} but also NATO naval groups such NATO Standing Maritime Group-2 (SNMG-2).\textsuperscript{203}

\textsuperscript{195} Romanian Navy Website: \url{http://www.navy.ro/en/despre/cscaf/index.html}
\textsuperscript{196} Romanian Navy Website: \url{http://www.navy.ro/en/despre/div_67/nave.html}
\textsuperscript{197} Romanian Navy Website: \url{http://www.navy.ro/en/despre/div_88/nave.html}
\textsuperscript{198} Dinicu A. (2005) (tr.), p.2
\textsuperscript{199} Chifu I., Suliuc A., Nedea B. (2010), p. 78
\textsuperscript{200} Ce inseamna pentru BUGET noua descoperire facuta de Petrom in Marea Neagra. O sonda ar putea umple 3800 de rezervoare pe zi (tr.) (July 16, 2014), Stirile Pro TV.ro: \url{http://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/omv-petrom-a-descoperit-un-nou-zacamant-de-titei-in-marea-neagra.html}
\textsuperscript{201} DISTRUGĂTOR SUA în România. USS Truxtun vine în Portul Constanța, pentru antrenamente cu românii și bulgarii (tr.) (March 7, 2014), gandulinfo: \url{http://www.gandul.info/stiri/distrugator-sua-in-romania-uss-truxtun-vine-in-portul-constanta-pentru-antrenamente-cu-romani-si-bulgarii-12209199}
\textsuperscript{203} Un grup de 6 nave de lupta din tarile NATO au ajuns in Portul Constanta. Exercitii comune ale militarilor romani si americani (tr.) (March 13, 2015), Stirile Pro TV: \url{http://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/un-grup-de-6-nave-de-lupta-din-tarile-nato-ajunge-in-portul-constanta-exercitii-comune-ale-militarilor-romani-si-american.html}
5.2.2 Russia

As for Russia, its maritime power is divided among the Northern, the Pacific, the Baltic, the Black Sea Fleets, and the Caspian Flotilla. Nuclear capable-submarines are present only in the first two fleets, and the focus will be on the Black Sea Fleet, which is located in Sevastopol (Crimea) and Novorossiysk (Krasnodar). The rationale behind Russia’s Maritime Policy is constituted by the country’s national interests in oceans, such as the inviolability of sovereignty, rights and jurisdiction over its exclusive economic zone, and the freedom of the high seas.

In relation to the Black Sea in particular, among the policy directions for Russia are the improvement of the legal framework that regulates the Black Sea Fleet’s harbouring in Sevastopol, which is to remain the main base. Another goal is the creation of the necessary conditions that would enable the home and use of marine capabilities for the protection of Russian interests in the Black Sea. The understanding of the recent annexation of Crimea, and thus of Sevastopol, can be partly facilitated by referring to the goals above. More than this, Sevastopol has a historic and identity/emotional significance for Russians due to the loss of their ancestors’ lives during the Crimean War, and during the battles against the Axis in World War II.

Politically, the Black Sea is for Russia a vehicle for demonstrating great-power status in the region, alongside Turkey. Its maritime presence allows the projection of power and pursuit of interests into the Mediterranean or the Indian Ocean, but also over land such as the Caucasus.

Economically, the majority of the Russian trade, including energy exports, passes through the Black Sea. Allegedly, three-quarters of the tankers crossing the Bosphorus are related to Russia.

Regarding Russia’s comprehensive capabilities in the Black Sea, the list is as follows: nine antisubmarine ships, seven amphibious ships, two submarines, four minesweepers, five missile boats, twelve coastal defence warships, and five intelligence ships. According to the arms procurement plans, the number of warships will include 80 more by 2020.

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204 Russian strategic nuclear forces (February 25, 2015), russianforces.org: http://russianforces.org/navy/
206 Ibid., p.11
207 Sanders D. (2012), p.45
208 The role of the Black Sea Fleet in Russian naval strategy (March 6, 2014), Russian Military Reform: https://russiamil.wordpress.com/2014/03/06/the-role-of-the-black-sea-fleet-in-russian-naval-strategy/
209 Sanders D. (2012), p.45
210 Black Sea Fleet website: http://flot.sevastopol.info/eng/ship/today.htm
211 Black Sea Fleet website: http://flot.sevastopolinfo/eng/ship/today_all.htm
212 Putin orders vast expansion of Russia’s Black Sea fleet with new base in territory he seized from Ukraine – as fighting continues in war-torn country (September 23, 2014), Mail Online: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2766733/President-Vladimir-Putin-orders-vast-expansion-Russia-s-Black-Sea-fleet.html
5.2.3 The United States and NATO

The United States and NATO have over the last decade shifted their attention to the wider Black Sea region for a series of reasons, such as the idea of extending the EU-NATO tandem beyond Eastern Europe, the new threatening environment of the Middle East that revealed itself after 9/11, and energy security. After the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the Alliance, the United States found a partner in the two countries for the promotion of a regional strategy based on a transatlantic framework. America’s policy in the region has focused on securing the transit of energy supplies, the promotion of stability and security, and political and economic reforms, the goals being energy diversification, security and freedom, and transparency and rule of law.

As for NATO, the main interest has been to show readiness to follow up on its imperative to protect the member states, including those from the Black Sea region, in accordance with Article 5 of its constitutive treaty.

NATO and U.S. maritime forces cannot have a permanent presence in the Black Sea. Their stay is regulated by the Montreux Convention on the Regime of the Straits which states: ‘Vessels of war belonging to non-Black Sea Powers shall not remain in the Black Sea more than twenty-one days, whatever be the object of their presence there’. The passage of warships through the Straits in time of war is dependent on Turkey’s position in such war. In times of peace, the passage is free, but prior notification of fifteen days should be given to Turkey by non-Black Sea States for their intention to cross the Straits. For littoral states the time of notice is eight days.

Despite the limitations, the United States and NATO have proven reliability to allies from the Black Sea in numerous occasions. For example, in June 2014, a French frigate was entering the region as the third NATO surface ships in the Black Sea at the time. A month later, the U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel was visiting USS Vella Gulf, which was on a port call in Constanta, Romania, during a tour around the Black Sea. During his visit, the Defense Secretary announced a ‘stronger presence of U.S. ships in the Black Sea’. Another event took place the same year on the 12th of April, after the U.S. destroyer USS Donald Cook had entered the Black Sea. Allegedly, a Russian plane that flew over it had activated its electronic warfare device, thus disabling all equipment aboard the ship. As a result, the destroyer sailed back to the Romanian port.

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215 NATO Strategic Concept (2010), p.14
216 Montreux Convention (1936), Art. 18 (2)
217 Ibid., Art. 19-21
218 Ibid., Art. 13
Significantly, the U.S. vessel was equipped with the so-called Aegis Combat System, a defensive system able to neutralize the ballistic missiles of the enemy combatant. In 2014, the American presence in the Black Sea has supposedly been of 207 days. 2015 started with destroyer USS Cole entering the Black Sea in February. In March, the NATO maritime group SNMG2 was concluding joint, but separate exercises and operations with Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey. Finally, on April 10th, USS Donald Cook was returning in the waters alongside the French reconnaissance vessel Dupuy de Lome.

To sum up, it is clear that aside from clear strategic and non-military interests, the protagonists of the wider Black Sea region also have the muscle to back up the pursuit of such interests, either individually or cooperatively, such as the case of the NATO alliance. The lack of a regional government or policeman, thus the anarchical nature of this subsystem, allows for uncertainty and suspicion to appear. As a result, the players make sure to have reliable military capabilities, even if limited and defensive. Unfortunately, even this is consequential for the security dilemma. It can therefore be concluded that the presence of the second criterion of the existence of the dilemma is confirmed.

More than this, it can argued that the regional interests of the actors above can at times be conflictual, which only enhances this dilemma. For instance, the case of Moldova is symbolic, and it has often put Romania and Russia face to face. Romania’s interest in re-unifying with Moldova on the basis of a common language, nationality and history has attracted hostile responses from Moscow. In 2009, Russian MP Serghei Markov was accusing Romania’s leadership of intending to annex Moldova, and the Moldavian leadership of fomenting conflict (with Transnistria) by pursuing the path of re-unification with Romania. In 2011, Romanian President Traian Basescu addressed the issue by stating that ‘Romania has no experience in the annexation of other states’, thus rejecting the idea of a Romanian-Moldova reunification project, but explained that the goal is for Moldova to become an EU member state. However, the year before, he had indeed stated that Bessarabia could return within the Borders of Romania in the next 25 years. President Basescu is also renowned for having stated in 2005 that the Russian Federation treated the Black

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As its own lake. Finally, in 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin suggested that Moldova’s self-proclaimed Republic of Transnistria should be allowed to decide its future through democratic self-determination. In 2006, 97% of the voters in Transnitria decided to join Russia in a referendum not recognized by the international community. Since Crimea’s annexation has also been justified by Moscow on the basis of a referendum, the authorities in Chisinau have every reason to fear the same outcome for its own separatist problem. This would be problematic for Moldova’s EU or NATO accession as envisioned by Chisinau, but also by Bucharest. Romania’s current President Klaus Iohannis expressed his conviction that Moldova could fulfil its destiny only within the EU.

5.3 Lack of Malign Intentions
The third condition for the existence of a security dilemma is the lack of malign intentions. Two difficulties arise at this point. Intentions are hard to truly know. First, leaders justify behaviour in terms of security all the time. No politician will admit to being exclusively expansionist, as the current international system is founded upon the equality and sovereignty of nation-states, and upon the illegality of the unilateral threat or use of force. In consequence, no state leader wants to appear defiant in the face of international law. Another difficulty has to do with the trustworthiness of the concerns expressed by leaders. Methodologically, the choice is to give value to official positions, and to take perceptions of threat into account, rather than to judge their validity. It is however useful to go beyond the official line by presenting alternative interpretations of states’ behaviour in the region. Also, the reader should remember the distinction between authentic threat perception, and non-authentic threat perception, as both shall be addressed.

The cases under investigation are Turkey-Greece and Russia-Georgia. The first case is relevant because Turkey and Greece have been engaged for decades in disputes over Cyprus, with a coup d’état and an invasion on the record. Such actions are surely questionable under the aspect of intentions. More than this, both are NATO member states, yet their differences have still not been resolved. Could it be that even states that are members of a collective defence system can
be engaged in a security dilemma? In the second case, the Russo-Georgian War of 2008 is significant because it can be an emblematic illustration of Russia’s relations with smaller powers in the Black Sea. More often than not, secondary powers such as Romania, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and even Ukraine cannot be described as expansionist. This justifies the choice of focus on the intentions of Russia, as this country does have the capacity to be an expansionist actor. Nevertheless, these smaller countries can be perceived as facilitators of American power in the region, and at this point it is necessary to treat the intentions of the United States as well. This is why the Russo-Georgian war is relevant: due to U.S.-Russian tensions in the region, the end result is conflict between Russia and a lesser power. Most of Russia’s interactions with its smaller neighbours can be interpreted in the same key as Russo-Georgian relations.

5.3.1 Turkey and Greece
The relations between the two countries are best exemplified in reference to the Cyprus dispute. Briefly, the episode has the following history. The island had been inhabited by Greeks since the second millennium BC, but due to its strategic location it has been occupied in turn by the Romans, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Crusaders, the Venetians and lastly by the Ottomans, which leased the territory to the British Empire, which officially turned it into its colony in 1925. In 1960, Cyprus gained its independence, with sovereignty being handed over to a government led by its President Archbishop Makarios, and by Vice-President Fazil Kucuk on the basis of a Constitution founded upon the ethnic composition of the country: a distribution of public sector positions of 70% Greek Cypriots and 30% Turkish Cypriots. Three years later, intercommunal violence erupted, leaving the two communities (and their guarantors Greece and Turkey) in a situation of mistrust, which could not be resolved even with the deployment of the U.N. Peacekeeping Force in 1964 or through American mediation. In 1967, the whole country had descended into conflict, until 1974 when a Greek-inspired coup overthrew Archbishop Makarios, and the Turkish military invaded.231

Ever since, the country has been divided into the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (de facto capital: North Nicosia), and the Republic of Cyprus (capital: Nicosia), the latter of which joined the EU on May 1 2004. The most important effort to mediate between the two parts is the so-called Annan Plan, a series of U.N. sponsored negotiations meant to reunite the country. The conditions of the Annan Plan would have been implemented if they had been accepted by both communities via separate referenda. In 2004, however, the majority of Turkish Cypriots responded yes to the plan, but the majority of Greek Cypriots rejected it.232 As such, the effort failed to produce a practical result.

231 The Editors of Mediterranean Quarterly (2014), pp.65-65
232 Infra.
This situation above is presented in contradictory terms by both Greece and Turkey. On the one hand, Greece’s version portrays Turkey as a malign state which aims to expand its territory to include the island of Cyprus. Thus, despite recognizing that the issue is indeed multifaceted, Greece accuses Turkey of illegally invading and occupying 37% of the Republic of Cyprus’s land. Not only, but it expresses discontent with mass violation of fundamental human rights and freedoms, such as in the case of Greek Cypriot refugees, of missing persons and their relatives, of ‘the enclaved’ in the occupied territories. Athens is backing up its interpretation with international support, more specifically with U.N. Security Council Resolutions 541/1983 and 550/1984. Moreover, it points to the Turkish President’s position to the issue as proof of opposition to a Cypriot unification, in spite of reconciliatory rhetoric.

Finally, aside from the Cyprus case, Greece is offended by a series of other Turkish complaints and demands such as the contestation against Greece’s sovereignty over territorial waters, the disputation of Greece’s national airspace and of sovereignty over islands, and the demand that Greece ought to demilitarize the islands in the Eastern Aegean. Greece sees the Turkish approach to this demands as not compliant with international law since it relies on threat of war, and on violation of airspace with military aircraft, instead of on the peaceful resolution of disputes.

Turkey, on the other hand, is portraying Greece as expansionist because it has always desired to make Cyprus a Greek land as expressed through the idea of ‘Enosis’ through the means of Greek Cypriot struggle. The Turkish narrative takes us previous to the 1974 invasion, namely to 1955 when Greece supported the Greek Cypriot’s terrorist organization EOKA, which under the guidance of Archbishop Makarios murdered everyone who opposed the annexation of the island. The importance of Turkey is essential for the Turkish Cypriots as the former was the guarantor of the latter under the conditions of population of minority. Such condition became relevant in 1963 when Greek Cypriot militia attacked Turkish Cypriots, and when political power was usurped by the former. Turkey points to the failure of the U.N. at the time to condemn such developments, and to the injustice of recognizing the Greek Cypriot administration of the time as the real government of Cyprus through Security Council Resolution 186/1964.

More than this, Turkey is basing its accusations on the so-called Akritas Plan, a conspiracy allegedly aimed at dissolving the existing Republic of Cyprus (at the time) in a few stages, and at bringing about union with Greece. This plan had been created in cooperation with the Greek Army.

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234 Infra.
236 Merriam-Webster Dictionary Website: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/enosis
officers in 1963, and it entailed the suppression of the Turkish resistance, and the avoidance of foreign intervention before the plan had been taken to most of its fruition: to change the provisions of the 1960 Constitution, to eliminate the Treaty of Guarantee, and to portray the Greek Cypriots as fighting for self-determination rather than for Enosis.\textsuperscript{238} Turkey claims that this plan was put into practice by Archbishop Makarios, thus resulting in the civilian massacres of 1963, 1964, 1967, and 1974.\textsuperscript{239}

As for the invasion, Turkey's side of the story presents Greek troops assembling in Cyprus, and backing the Greek Cypriot National Guard in a coup d'état against the very same Makarios, replacing him with Nicos Sampson. In such circumstances, not only Turkish Cypriots, but also Greek Cypriots were asking for Turkish help. According the Turkey, it was Sampson himself who claimed that had Turkey not responded, he would have not only proclaimed Enosis, but annihilated the Turks in Cyprus.\textsuperscript{240} Just as Greece, Turkey invokes international key actors such as the U.N. to prove the illegal character of the counterpart's behaviour. For instance, pointing to the referenda above, Turkey underlines Kofi Annan's disappointment with the Greek Cypriots' rejection of a solution to the 40 year old problem.\textsuperscript{241}

More recent developments in Turkish-Greek relations point towards the same pattern of interaction. For instance, Greek media has recently talked in negative terms of the relation between the Turkish President Erdogan and the newly elected Mustafa Akinci (leader of the 'Turkish-occupied north'). Newspaper Ekathimerini portrayed the new Turkish Cypriot leader as describing the relation between Turkey and Turkish Cyprus in terms of brotherhood, rather than in terms of mother and child. Also, it reported Turkish President Erdogan as suggesting to Akinci to 'listen to what he says'.\textsuperscript{242} The underlying story is that the new leader in North Nicosia might pursue an independent line from Ankara. On the other side, Anadolu Agency, a state-run Turkish news agency, reported Erdogan as stating in a joint press conference with Akinci how the Greek Cypriots should no longer 'make things difficult' as 2015 could be the 'solution year for Cyprus'.\textsuperscript{243} In this case, the message is unity in the common pursuit of a solution, with Greek Cypriots bearing the responsibility to cooperate more.

\textsuperscript{238} Akritas Plan, Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/akritas-plan.en.mfa
\textsuperscript{239} Infra.
\textsuperscript{240} Cyprus (Historical Overview), Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/cyprus_-_historical-overview_en.mfa
\textsuperscript{241} CYPRUS: WHAT HAS HAPPENED?, Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/cyprus_-_what-has-happened_en.mfa
\textsuperscript{242} Erdogan raps new Turkish Cypriot leader (April 27, 2015), Ekathimerini.com: http://www.ekathimerini.com/4egc/_w_articles_wsite1_1_27/04/2015_549497
The Cyprus case can be interpreted as a situation in which two benign powers see each other as threatening to one another’s interests on the island. Turkey’s interests are related to the Turkish ethnic minority who has indeed suffered injustices since the 1960s. Greece’s interests are related to the status of an island that has been inhabited by Greek people for millennia, many times under foreign occupation, and now under Turkish claims. The Greeks on the island, naturally, have an interest to be autonomous, and maybe even reunited with their ‘brothers’. Not only, but being part of the EU legitimizes such ideals both in the eyes of the leaders, and of the citizens. If the EU recognizes them as the genuine people of Cyprus, how could their aspirations be wrong or malign?

The case that both countries are expansionist can be made as well. It can be thus argued that Greek Cypriots took the 1960 agreement as a temporary step in their path to rule the whole island, while the Turks took it as a guarantee against the domination of a Greek majority. Even Britain has a role in such interpretation, as the agreement left the British military bases intact. Therefore, there are Greek aspirations to power and dominion based on nationalism, with disregard for minorities. There are also Turkish worries of losing influence over an island over which it had lost sovereign authority at the end of the 19th century. Finally, the British Empire is struggling to maintain its military outpost far from home.

Such a nationalistic/imperialistic narrative is plausible. But so is the one according to which the actors are merely seeking the security of their own people in the face of perceived threat coming from the other side. Thus, it is plausible to conclude that behind the behaviour of Greece and Turkey (even of Britain as guarantor of the new order) are benign intentions, even in an atrocious episode such as the Cyprus dispute. The process that can be traced is the attempt by Turkey and Greece to maintain a secure position in the perilous dynamics on the island. It is possible to flesh out a causal mechanism between the actions of Greek Cypriots, with the backing of the Greeks, and the reactions of the Turkish Cypriots, with the backing of the Turks. It is also possible to flesh out a vicious circle of violence, and an escalation towards attempts at a Greek coup d’état and eventually a Turkish invasion. It is, in conclusion, possible to justify aggressive behaviour through a genuine perception of insecurity. As for NATO membership, it can indeed provide a security umbrella both for Turkey and Greece against one another, as well as against outside threats. Yet, for as long as the Cyprus dispute is not settled in a satisfactory manner for the two countries, insecurity regarding their own nationals that actually form Cyprus will remain a driving force in the foreign policy of the two countries.

245 There are views according to which there is no Cyprus because there are no Cypriots. There are only Turks and Greeks sharing the island of Cyprus. See more on this here: Bibó I. (2013)
5.3.2 Russia and Georgia

The Russo-Georgian War has many times been presented as the best example of Russian aggression towards a smaller, defensive neighbour, a democracy even.\(^{246}\) If this were the case, then the region's security dilemma would be non-existent, as one of the major players in the Black Sea would be an expansionist state. It can be the case, however, that even regarding Russia, aggressive behaviour is misinterpreted as malign. And there are actually voices that point to U.S.' increased presence around Russia's borders as fuelling the latter's perception of insecurity.\(^{247}\) Is this enough to justify a military campaign without altering the benign character of a state? What about Georgia's behaviour? According to an EU-sponsored report, it was Georgia that had started the 'unjustified war' by shelling the breakaway region of South Ossetia.\(^{248}\) Did it have pressing concerns for security?

The Russo-Georgian War is said to have been started by the Georgian aggression against the capital of South Ossetia, Tskhinvali, but also against Russian troops stationed in the break-away region. This offensive had led to the Russian disproportionate response to defend South Ossetia in the form of air, land, and sea attacks against Georgia, to the support of another break-up region, Abkhazia, and finally to the military occupation of both regions, formalized by the unilateral recognition of independence.\(^{249}\) Various narratives of what had happened during those five days of war subsequently appeared. According to the first one, the war was an opportunity for Russia to reassert itself as a regional, even global power by destroying one of United States’ allies, as Georgian President Saakashvili had been pro-American. Additionally, it was Russia's intention to persuade other former Soviet states to stay in line, and not to follow the example of Georgia. Finally, it was Kremlin's response to the Western policy regarding Kosovo.\(^{250}\) It is thus the portrayal of Russia as a regional hegemon, ready to invade neighbours in order to showcase its might and power. It is a case of Russian revanchism/revisionism\(^{251}\) emboldened by its revival as a great power, and fuelled by the loss of territories such as the Black Sea coast, Crimea, Donbass, Belarus, South Urals, and Southern Siberia, after the fall of the Soviet Union. All these territories had been inhabited by ethnic Russians for 500 years, and they were constitutive parts of the Russian Empire.\(^{252}\) Such an explanation disproves the claim of 'lack of malign intentions'.

\(^{246}\) Let Georgia be a lesson for what will happen to Ukraine (March 14, 2014), The Guardian: http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/14/georgia-lesson-for-ukraine-crimea-referendum-trick
\(^{247}\) This is a tale of US expansion not Russian aggression (August 14, 2008), The Guardian: http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/aug/14/russia.georgia
\(^{248}\) Georgia ‘started unjustified war’ (September 30, 2009), BBC News: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8281990.stm
\(^{249}\) Welt C. (2010), pp.63-64
\(^{251}\) Kanet R. & Larive M. (2012), p.79
\(^{252}\) Rasizade A. (2009), p.14
Immediate security-seeking motives were not behind Russia’s actions, but imperial nostalgia, together with aspirations for glory, power, and status.

The Offensive Realist interpretation introduces the centrality of United States in the equation: an active player in the region with geopolitical and energy interests. According to this view, the United States implemented the so-called buck-passing strategy, namely it co-opted Turkey together with pro-Western ex-Soviet states (GUAM) in helping to balance Russia. With the rise to power of Erdogan and AKP, the Turkish-Russian relations improved, whilst the relations with the United States deteriorated, as for example in the case of Turkey’s parliament refusal to allow U.S. troops access to Iraq via its own territory. In consequence, the United States resorted to a strategy of NATO enlargement in the region. By integrating Ukraine and Georgia into the alliance, Washington would prevent Russia from intervening in the affairs of the ex-Soviet states, thus removing a serious obstacle to American access to the region’s resources. On this background, Russia was becoming increasingly suspicious of the United States’ presence close to its area of interest, and more importantly of the incremental American-Georgian military cooperation during the War on Terror. Furthermore, at the NATO Bucharest Summit of 2008, the American representatives had argued in favour of the admission of both Georgia and Ukraine, a plan that was eventually agreed upon (Germany and France had been opposed at first), but as a long-term goal. Nevertheless, in the face of uncertainty over U.S. intentions (significant had been an additional 1000 American troops in Georgia for the Immediate Response 2008), Russia decided to take advantage of the Georgian internal conflict, and secure itself by establishing control over the South Caucasus.

This explanation puts forward the claim that Russia had immediate security concerns, as Georgia is its southern neighbour, an area populated by Chechen rebels, and a country led by an anti-Russian, pro-American leader. As for the United States, a portrayal that describes it in such imperialistic terms excludes the security dilemma from the set-up. The United States is shown as being guided by secondary interests, not by imminent security concerns. It is using tactics to contain a potential competitor in a region far away from home, and it aims to use a collective defence system, NATO, to selfishly pursue its own goals. These are all expansionist/malign intentions.

Does this mean that the claim according to which Russia, Georgia or the United States lack malign intentions is to be rejected? Not quite yet. It can still be argued in support of such claim. As long as this is can be done, the presence of the security dilemma is still plausible. By focusing

253 Karagiannis E. (2012), pp.81-82
254 Ibid., pp.82-83
255 Ibid., pp.85-87
256 Georgia’s Pankisi Gorge, Home to Many of the Chechens Fighting in Syria (July 22, 2014), Balkanist.net: http://balkanist.net/georgia-is-home-to-many-of-the-chechen-fighters-in-syria/
on the unit level, the 2008 conflict can be explained as the intensification of a security dilemma that had started after 2003 between Tbilisi and South Ossetia (and implicitly the Russian protectors). More specifically, the escalation towards the 2004 conflict, which had been triggered by the trade and movement restrictions imposed by Georgia on South Ossetia. It had been an escalation provoked by misperception together with hostile decisions. In addition to the new restrictions, Georgia had deployed special troops in what the 1992 ceasefires agreements called the conflict zone. Allegedly, it had been this move that increased the Ossetian and Russian suspicion, triggering their reaction.

What were Georgia’s intentions behind such move? After 2003, the new power elite was starting a ‘war on smuggling’, in which South Ossetia was the main culprit. The region had for long been acknowledged a channel of contraband into Georgia, but also of arms and drug trafficking, and a safe haven for Chechen terrorists. As such, the consolidation of military security around, and even within, the break-away region (as to contain the potential reactions of those negatively affected), could be interpreted as a defensive measure in a broader Georgian security strategy. A series of deterrent actions and reactions followed, culminating with South Ossetian armed forces detaining Georgian security troops, and thus in the first fire-fighting. By analogy, on this background, the 2008 war could have followed the same logic. It can be argued that neither Georgian, nor Russian ambitions were the cause of the conflict, but instead it was the existence of a security dilemma, better said its escalation.

In such a context of mistrust and tension/conflict, it is only natural for Georgia to look outside for support, and which better ally than the United States? Washington had been in search of friends during the 2000s for its ‘War on Terror’ efforts. It had even engaged in a partnership with Russia itself who, for example, did not protest against the movement of U.S. troops in Central Asia. The upper-mentioned American-Georgian military cooperation is also proof of the interest that the United States had in acquiring support from the region. Also, during the War in Afghanistan, the Romanian air base ‘Mihail Kogălniceanu’, close to the Black Sea, had been of great use to U.S. forces, especially during the pull-out stage when it replaced the previous one in Kirghizstan as the new transit point. Around 50,000 US troops and other cargo passed the area in this phase alone. It is clear thus that Washington had a strong intention to make allies in the

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257 Welt C. (2010), p.64
258 Ibid., p.65
259 Ibid., p.72
260 Ibid., pp.83-84
261 Ibid., p.92
Black Sea region in order to fight what it perceived an imminent threat to its national interest, namely Middle Eastern terrorism. Georgia was taking advantage of this to promote its own security-driven agenda. Its aspirations to become a NATO member were tied to the help given to the United States in the field of counterterrorism. Not only, but in 2008 it threatened the U.S. to withdraw its military support as it needed to fight the war against Russia. This shows that Saakashvili was aware of his country’s importance to America’s efforts in the Middle East, and that he also knew how to promote his cause. Also, he had previously made a trip to Washington to push the agenda of admission into NATO. In light of all this, the American engagement with Black Sea states, in our case Georgia, can be seen as a response to demands made by regional powers who had genuine security concerns. In exchange for their support to fighting terrorism, what the U.S. could do was to at least give them a voice within the NATO alliance, and to sustain their membership aspirations. Therefore, there was no plan to encircle Russia, and the intentions of the United States were not malign.

To sum up, the best explanation for the character of intentions in the Greek-Turkish relations or in the Georgian case is certainly a mix of all the presented interpretations. Following just one understanding while discarding the others is a self-limiting approach to take, as it requests closing an eye to other factors. Nonetheless, there is enough proof to sustain the plausibility of the claim that Black Sea states ‘lack malign intentions’. Therefore, it can be concluded that the conditions for the presence security dilemma in the relations around and within the wider Black Sea region are satisfied. Once more, one should not fall in the trap of equalizing the dilemma to the spiral of conflict. The current lack of a military engagement between Black Sea states (controversial) does not mean the dilemma is absent, but that it is being kept under control.

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266 At least the 5 states chosen, and in the two situations discussed in this paper. As they are very representative cases, the conclusion could be extended to the entire region.
6.1 Asymmetric Distribution of Power

Having proved the possibility that the security dilemma exists in the relations between Black Sea states, it is now possible to continue testing the hypothesis that ‘by alleviating the security dilemma, conflict in the wider Black Sea region can be avoided’. The ultimate result of alleviation rests in the regulators, thus if their effect on the relations between the regional actors can be proved, it can also be assumed that they will influence the dilemma, and therefore the occurrence of conflict. For example, if asymmetrical distribution of power makes weaker states overreact towards more powerful ones, with negative consequences on threat perception, then this material regulator is influential for the security dilemma in terms of escalation. On the flipside, mitigating the asymmetry in power (i.e. self-constraint of the stronger states, or the reduction in the overreaction of the weaker ones) will block the dilemma from escalating. Hence, the avoidance of conflict.

Methodologically, there will be a comparison in the regional distribution of capabilities by focusing on military spending, and a presentation of reactions by interpreting foreign policy choices and political stances. As for the case under scrutiny, the focus is on the Romania-Russia-United States triangle. The rationale behind the choice is as follows. Romania-Russia relations could be interpreted as symbolic for a weaker state overreacting towards the military might of the other. Romania, however, treats the United States as a friend regardless of its higher military power. Does this mean the logic above is not solid, or simply that it is not only asymmetrical distribution of power alone that affects the relations between states?
6.1.1 Romania-Russia-The United States

After the 1990s, it is clear that the Romania public spending for the military sector has shown a tendency of constant decline in terms of GDP allocation. Very dramatic has been the transition from 1992 to 1993. In terms of percentage of GDP, the reduction represented almost a cut in half in just one year, namely from 4.3% to 2.7%. As of year 2006, the expenditure has been maintained under 2% of GDP, with the lowest level reaching 1.3% in 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2014.\textsuperscript{267} In nominal terms ($U.S.), for year 2014, the expenses were estimated as $2.543 billion, with the highest point reached in 2008 with $3 billion.\textsuperscript{268}

As for Russia, after 1997, the expenditure has also been dropping, but the reduction has not been as dramatic as in Romania’s case. For example, in 1997, the expenditure was at 4.3% of the GDP, and one year later it went down to 3.0%. However, in 2002 it had gone back to 4.1%, after which a series of cuts took place. In 2009, the military spending was again at 4.1% of the GDP, followed once more by a cut. This until 2012, when the expenses were going up 4.0%, then to 4.2% (2013), and finally to 4.5% (2014).\textsuperscript{269} In terms of $ U.S., the lowest point was at $6.469 billion of military expenditure in 1999, a sum that has increased 10 times since 2010-2011. In 2014, Russia was spending $84.462 billion on its defence.\textsuperscript{270}

The simplest comparison for year 2014 reveals that Romania was spending approximately 34 times less on military than Russia. More than this, during the entire 2000s, Romania has been spending from 10 times to 30 times less than Russia. Such a difference can be surely interpreted as a situation of increasing asymmetric distribution of power. Even an economic comparison reveals the Russian superiority. Regarding GDP per capita, in 2013, a Russian was earning 1.5 times more than a Romanian. More specifically, for that year, in Russia the GDP per capita was $14,611 a year, compared to $9,490 a year in Romania.\textsuperscript{271} As a result, according to the overreaction claim, one can expect to see this power asymmetry having consequences on the relations between the two countries, in the sense that Romania would overreact against Russia.

At this point, it is essential to analyse America’s relative power position to Romania. This enables a comparison of the latter’s attitude towards the United States, to the attitude towards Moscow. Thus, after 1993, America’s percentage of GDP destined for the military has been reduced to under 4%, reaching the lowest point of 2.9% for three consecutive years, in 1999, 2000, and 2001. After this, there was a steady increase up to the year 2010, with a maximum of 4.7%. Since then, the expenditure has been declining, and in 2014 it reached 3.5% of the GDP.\textsuperscript{272}

\textsuperscript{267} SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, Share of GDP
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid., Current USD
\textsuperscript{269} Ibid., Share of GDP
\textsuperscript{270} Ibid., Current USD
\textsuperscript{271} The World Bank Data website: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD
\textsuperscript{272} SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, Share of GDP
In monetary terms, the highest level of spending was reached in 2011 with $711.338 billion, and the lowest in 1996 with $271.417 billion. This means that even when the United States was spending the least on its military, it was still overcoming Romania’s maximum spending level by more than 90 times. Under such circumstances, one would expect Romania to overreact ‘3 times more’ with regard to Washington than it does when dealing with the Kremlin. Yet, this is obviously not the case.

Romania’s official security policy is deeply influenced by its membership in the European Union and NATO. The risks and threats to its national security are first perceived through this membership. Among such threats are those to the borders of the state, especially in the east since these borders coincide with the borders of the two organizations. Therefore, the current security strategy of the country is founded mainly upon three elements: integration within the European Union, NATO membership, and the consolidation of its strategic partnerships. As such, Romania is in the process of developing a so-called Euroatlantic identity.

Regarding the Black Sea region, the main goal of Romania is the creation of a space of democratic security and stability, and of economic prosperity through the increasing involvement of the Euroatlantic structures. The Black Sea area is not seen as a buffer, but as a bridge between Europe and the Middle East, the Caspian, and Central Asia. Under these conditions, Romania perceives the expansion of NATO and of the EU in the region as beneficial to the democratic foreign policy choices of regional actors, to the prevention of the escalation of risks and threats, and to the resolution of the existing conflicts or tensions.

So what is the link between this foreign and security policy direction, and the relations with Russia and the United States? Romania obviously gives precedence to the alliance with the United States, to the detriment of relations with Moscow. First, we can mention that Romania, along with Bulgaria, joined in 2005 the so-called ‘Group of Georgia’s Friends’, and thus provided Tbilisi with arms during the times after the Rose Revolution. More than this, it was Romania’s President Traian Basescu who was acting as the main mediator in the strengthening of the engagement of the United States in the region via the Black Sea Forum of 2006. Even more significantly, Romania’s President was very vocal during the Russo-Georgian War, asking for continued Western involvement in the Caucasus. Additionally, in the same period, the Bush administration was signing an agreement with Romania for the establishment of U.S. military bases on its territory. All these decision were part of a so-called ‘NATO-first’ policy, which was not well-

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273 Ibid., Current USD
275 Ibid., p.21
276 Ibid., p.27
277 Ibid., p.32
278 Ibid., p.34
received by Russia. Another example was Romania’s support for the idea of extending NATO’s antiterrorist ‘Operation Active Endeavour’ from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, an idea strongly opposed by Russia.

There have been, however, signals of constraint from Romania’s side vis-à-vis Russia, as was the case when President Basescu did not participate in a summit meeting of the GUAM countries in 2008, a month before the Georgian conflict. This group had been in the past taking an aggressive stance against Russia’s actions, thus Romania’s non-participation could be seen as a cautious move meant not to create tension with Moscow. Also, another instance of cautionary approach has been shown by Romania with regard to the non-recognition of Kosovo. The logic is that this would create a precedent that might be used by Russia with regard to Transnistria, where the latter’s 14th Army is still located, therefore risking a potential division of Moldova on the blueprint of Serbia-Kosovo.

In more recent times, Romania has been on the side of the West, as for example in the case of the Ukrainian crisis. In the beginning of 2015, Romania’s newly elected President Klaus Iohannis has portrayed relations with Russia as being overshadowed by the latter’s involvement in Ukraine, and that this state of affairs would not change unless Russia respected the principles of international law. Also, President Iohannis underlined Romania’s support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine, and the condemned Russia’s annexation of Crimea as illegal on his trip to Kiev on March 17, 2015. Furthermore, Romania’s Foreign Ministry has refused to recognize the so-called ‘Treaty on Alliance and Integration’ between Russia and South Ossetia. The level of antithetical rhetoric reached very high levels, as proved by the exchange of replies in May 2014 between the Russian Deputy Prime Minister Rogozin, who was warning that he would fly on board a TU-160 bomber over Romania in the future. He was claiming that Romania had blocked its airspace at the request of the United States, so that he remained stranded in Transnistria after visiting the Victory Day celebration. Romania’s President at the time, Traian Basescu,
responded by ironically questioning himself how much vodka Rogozin had been drinking before making such statements.\textsuperscript{285}

Finally, the strongest point of contention between Russia and Romania must be the latter’s participation in the European Phased Adaptive Approach program of the United States,\textsuperscript{286} program that has been integrated by NATO into its Ballistic Missile Defence efforts.\textsuperscript{287} According to the agreement between the United States and Romania, the former is granted access to the Romanian military base of Deveselu, where they would place anti-ballistic missile interceptors, together with all the necessary infrastructure for its interoperability, under a ‘Romanian Commander’.\textsuperscript{288} The Russian response to NATO/US BMD plans has been negative so far. Moscow sees the program as detrimental to its security, and as potentially directed against itself. As such, in 2011, then-President Medvedev was enlisting possible measures that Russia would take if the United States and NATO would continue to disregard Russia’s interests: development of cyber war capabilities aimed at the BMD system, increase in the protection of Russia’s nuclear weapons facilities and launchers, development of strategic ballistic missiles as to overcome the defences, the deployment of attack capabilities such as the Iskander ground-to-ground missiles, targeting the elements of the American BMD system.\textsuperscript{289} In consequence, Romania too became a target for Russia.\textsuperscript{290}

At this point, the link between a smaller relative power and its overreaction in the relation with a stronger counterpart can be analysed. In its position towards Russia, it is not clear whether Romania is or not ‘overreacting’. It depends on the definition of overreaction. If the term is taken literally, it is surely not the case. Romania’s relations with Russia are not the best. Their friendship has been strained over the last 20 something years. And Romania’s inferior position regarding the relative distribution of power has not helped to improve the situation. At the same time, its positive relations with the United States, and with NATO, has worsened Russia’s position towards Bucharest. Nonetheless, Romania’s approach is far from overreactive. On the contrary, it could be argued that Russia has been more vocal against Romania due to the latter’s new strategic orientation. In a way, being part of the transatlantic alliance has reassured Romania. But this has to do with the ‘external allies’ regulator of the dilemma, which we will tackle later on. In short, a


\textsuperscript{286}Agreement between Romania and the United States of America on the Deployment of the United States Ballisitic Missile Defense System in Romania (2011), Article 1.1

\textsuperscript{287}Whitmore S. & Deni J. (2013), p.3

\textsuperscript{288}Agreement between Romania and the United States of America on the Deployment of the United States Ballistic Missile Defense System in Romania (2011), Article 2.1, Article 4.15

\textsuperscript{289}Cimbala S. (2012), pp.443-444

literal interpretation of overreaction does not allow to find a strong correlation between asymmetric distribution of power and the security dilemma.

Despite this, if one looks at 'overreaction' differently, another result can be observed. It should not be forgotten that Romania is a sovereign and autonomous state. Its NATO membership, and its good relations with the United States have come at a high cost in terms of security, but also of sovereignty. For example, the decision to install the BMD interceptors on its own territory has turned Romania into a primary target for any state aiming to eliminate NATO's deterrent. Romania’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs is aware of this, but justifies such a decision as not having put the country under a greater risk than it previously had been. As a matter of fact, the NATO membership implies costs outweighed by the benefits. There is indeed a high cost to security, but in the absence of this particular strategic orientation, the costs would be even higher. Romania’s willingness to accept these costs can be understood as a necessary overreaction against an asymmetrical distribution of power in Russia’s favour.

The same reasoning applies to Romania’s NATO membership application. One should not forget that the Soviet Union incorporated Bessarabia and North Bukovina in 1940, territories that had previously been part of Greater Romania. After the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, parts of these territories had remained under the control of the newly-established Ukraine. In 1997 however, Romania signed a Treaty over the frontiers with Ukraine, which pointed to the delimitations that had existed at the time of the Soviet Union. Thus, Bucharest gave up any pretentions over what used to be its own territory. Prior to becoming a NATO member, Romania had to renounce such aspiration, and settle all jurisdictional disputes with neighbours, as this is one of NATO's elementary conditions for inviting a state to become party to the Alliance. Giving up one's own territory can be interpreted as a serious reaction, overreaction even, in the face of a higher threat, which we can be attributed to Russia’s higher standing in the power hierarchy.

In conclusion, the symbolic reduction of autonomy, the renunciation to territorial claims, and what some call the ‘outsourcing of foreign policy’, can all be interpreted as the overreaction that results from a relatively lower accumulation of capabilities-Romania’s inferiority in relation Russia. As such, it is possible to argue for a positive correlation between asymmetrical

293 Treaty between Romania and Ukraine regarding the regime of frontiers (2003) (tr.), Chapter 1, Article 1
294 Study on NATO Enlargement (September 3, 1995), Chapter 1, B.6, NATO website: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_24733.htm
295 Why is Klaus Iohannis outsourcing Romania’s foreign policy? (May 15, 2015), LSE Blogs: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsee/2015/05/15/why-is-klaus-iohannis-outsourcing-romanias-foreign-policy/
distributions of power and negative relations between states, thus for the detrimental effect of this regulator on the security dilemma.

The question now is why is Romania not overreacting against the United States, if the relative power of the latter is greater than that of Russia? According to classical balance of power theory, a state will join alliances (or a state in this case) in order to be secure from a state or group of states with superior resources. But this is exactly the opposite of the above. Romania (the weakest player) is joining the more powerful of the two actors, the United States, in order to deter the less powerful one, Russia. This reasoning is flawed as it considers only the level of power as factor of balancing. Instead, what matters is, among other factors, whether this power is threatening or not to the balancer. Accordingly, states that appear to have offensive intentions will be more often balanced against that those with benign intentions. Therefore, if, for example, Romania’s special relationship with Moldova is considered, it is clear that the support of the Transnistrian separatist regime by Russia is perceived as offensive. Considering Romania’s position towards the Georgian issue, it is again obvious that the former interprets Russia’s behaviour as malign. The same applies to the Ukrainian crisis. Finally, the long history behind Romanian-Russian relations cannot help but make Bucharest distrustful of Moscow. Hence, the balancing act against what Romania perceives as threatening.

To sum up, there is a relation between power asymmetry and negative reaction or adversarial positioning towards the stronger actor. Nevertheless, an exclusively material analysis is not enough, as many cases would remain unexplained (i.e. Romania-United States). What needs to be kept in mind is the perception of intentions. A simple equalization of power between Romania and Russia might not reduce the security dilemma by much, unless better transparency over intentions is adopted by both states, especially by the latter. At the same time, an ever more increase in military capabilities by Russia, accompanied by a stronger rhetoric, even if directed against the United States, will make Romania and other regional players reluctant to doubt their balancing efforts against Moscow. Hence, the path towards escalations.

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296 Walt S. (1985), p.5
297 Some factors that can determine balancing/bandwagoning can be ideological solidarity or divisive ideology, foreign aid, penetration (covert infiltrations). See Walt S. (1985)
298 Ibid., p.8
299 Ibid., p.12
6.2 External Actors and Alliances

The second regulator of the security dilemma is the presence of an external alliance in the configuration of regional relations. The analysis will proceed with an evaluation of the effects of NATO over Black Sea relations. Is this defensive alliance a destabilizing or stabilizing factor? Does it have any effect whatsoever? Only after understanding this aspect can one claim to have an idea about whether expansion or limitation/reform is the next best step for NATO to take as to help reduce the security dilemma in the wider Black Sea region.

In reaching a conclusion in this sense, two issues need to be addressed. First, does any Black Sea state perceive NATO as a possible enemy? Second, is NATO directed against any Black Sea state? Better said:

1. Does Russia perceive NATO as a potential enemy?
2. Is NATO directed against Russia?

Before beginning the analysis, a preliminary point must be made as to the need to answer the questions above. Some might ask: is it not obvious that the answer is yes? Not certainly. There are arguments according to which Russia’s perception of NATO as an enemy is a myth.\textsuperscript{300} Also, there are arguments according to which Russia is too weak compared to NATO countries for the Alliance to be directed against it.\textsuperscript{301} Thus, the answer to the two questions is not unanimous. This is why it is not in vain to attempt a response. Answering these questions will test the assumption that NATO is perceived as threatening by Russia, even if it is a defensive alliance, especially if it is directed against the latter, and even more so if it includes an external actor, i.e. the United States. How does this influence the security dilemma? By intensifying the insecurity between Black Sea states and Russia, through the former’s participation in a military alliance that is perceived as threatening by the latter.

The underlying logic is that mutual perception of threat is at the core of NATO-Russia interaction. The role of the Black Sea region in the NATO-Russia dynamic plays out through NATO member states and NATO aspirants that are also regional actors - countries like Romania, Georgia, and Ukraine. The interaction between NATO and Russia (primary dynamic) has an effect on the interaction between these regional actors and Russia (secondary dynamic) via their contacts with the Alliance. It will, thus, have an effect (positive or negative) on the security dilemma.

How to connect the primary and the secondary dynamic? By analysing the elements in common: the overall cooperation between Russia and NATO, NATO's Ballistic Missile Defence programme, and enlargement. First, it should be assessed whether overall relations are positive or negative, thus if membership in the Alliance would have detrimental consequences on the

\textsuperscript{301} Brookings.edu (June 8, 2015): http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/order-from-chaos/posts/2015/06/08-russia-not-strong-baev
intra-regional relations. Second, Romania as a regional actor, and the Black Sea itself, could be affected by the BMD discussion.\textsuperscript{302} If Russia perceives the BMD project as threatening, and cooperation on the issue out of discussion, it can be concluded that this will affect how Russia relates to Romania, and to the Black Sea, with consequences for the whole region. Finally, the next step in NATO’s enlargement eastwards would include Russia’s ‘backyard’. If enlargement proves to be a serious topic of contention between the two, it can be concluded that a move in this direction would radically change the way Russia behaves to its neighbours that aspire to become Allies, especially if the likelihood of admission increases.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Graphic 3: The Effect of NATO on the Inter-State Relations between Russia and Romania, Georgia, and Ukraine. Source: by author}
\end{center}

6.2.1 NATO-Russia Overall Relations

At the official level, probably the most important document to regulate overall NATO-Russia relations has been the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, to which one can add symbolic events such as Russia joining the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (1991), the signature of the Partnership for Peace (1994), and the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council (2002).\textsuperscript{303}

The 1997 Founding Act states that ‘NATO and Russia do not consider each other as adversaries’.\textsuperscript{304} Areas of cooperation and consultation agreed upon by the two are: security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area, conflict prevention, strategy, defence policy and military doctrine of both, arms control, nuclear safety, missile defence, nuclear weapons, terrorism and drug trafficking, and much more.\textsuperscript{305} In this context, crucial is the role played by the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) as an element of the new security framework. Both NATO and Russia have pledged to cooperate in adapting the Treaty to the new post-Cold War

\textsuperscript{302} Phase I and Phase II of the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) entail the deployment of American Aegis cruisers in the Black and Mediterranean Seas (together with a radar in Turkey), and the creation of a ground-based interceptor in Romania. For a detailed discussion on BMD, see: Mankoff J. (2012)

\textsuperscript{303} NATO’s relations with Russia (April 24, 2015), NATO website: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50090.htm?

\textsuperscript{304} Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation (1997), p.3

\textsuperscript{305} Ibid., pp.10-11
security environment, the result of which is the Final Act on the CFE, adopted at the Istanbul OSCE Summit in 1999. This document presents a series of commitments by OSCE countries (including Russia) to reduce their conventional military forces and even destroy armaments.

What can be observed is that the prospect of a partnership between the Alliance and Russia has been there after the end of the Cold War. Also, as mentioned earlier, during the 2000s, Russia was willing to facilitate America's access to its operations in Afghanistan. Both aspects are supportive of a positive and optimistic interpretation of NATO-Russia engagement. This until 2007-2008, when interaction began to take a negative turn. The Russo-Georgian War was the clear-cut event that symbolized the start of the disintegration of the collaboration. Hence, the suspension of the NRC in 2008 as a result of Russia's 'disproportionate military action in Georgia' (meetings re-established from 2009), and again in 2014 in response to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, but even previously, Russia’s suspension of the CFE Treaty in July 2007. Russia would withdraw entirely from the CFE in March 2015.

6.2.3 Russia’s Perception of NATO
At this point, it is necessary to comprehend the justifications Russia has put out for its position towards NATO, while touching on the three topics mentioned above. First off, in the overall relations context, regarding the 2007 suspension of the CFE Treaty, the following explanations had been put forward by the Russian administration. One reason was Russia’s description of the requirement issued by NATO to withdraw Russian troops from Georgia and Moldova as ‘illegitimate and invented’. According to Moscow, withdrawal was a bilateral issue between Russia and Georgia/Moldova. Moreover, Moscow did eventually abandon two bases in Georgia. Another reason was the lack of fulfilment of the requirement for the Baltic States to join a ratified adapted CFE, so as to avoid the deployment of NATO troops on their territories. Additionally, there was dissatisfaction with the basing of America military units in Romania and Bulgaria, as this would not have been conforming to the two countries’ ceilings in terms of force size. Russia was also requesting the removal of ceilings for its Flank forces as to compensate for NATO’s enlargement.

306 Ibid., p.12
308 NATO’s relations with Russia (April 24, 2015), NATO website: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50090.htm?
309 Russia suspends arms control pact (July 14, 2007), BBC News: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6898690.stm
310 Russia Completely Withdraws From Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (March 10, 2015), Sputnik News: http://sputniknews.com/politics/20150310/1019309874.html
311 Kremlin would re-write or kill CFE Treaty (July 19, 2007), Moldova.org: http://www.moldova.org/kremlin-would-re-write-or-kill-cfe-treaty-59271-eng/
Therefore, Russia was perceiving itself as having been more than cooperative on the CFE issue, in contrast to what NATO had been doing. According to Russian media, Moscow had ratified the Adaptation Agreement while NATO had not, Moscow had destroyed 15,700 military items 'outside the CFE Treaty' while NATO had only been enlarging eastwards, Russia had proposed to create a global missile defence system while NATO had decided to set up a ballistic missile system on the country's 'doorstep',\textsuperscript{312} Even former Soviet Union President Gorbachev expressed discontent with the behaviour of NATO countries towards a Russia that had been willing to do its part in the agreement.\textsuperscript{313}

In the regional context, with the Ukrainian crisis on the background, Russian President Vladimir Putin was making remarks on the path pursued by NATO in relation to Russia. In a July 2014 meeting with the Federation's Security Council, the President was making a series of points. First, he was reassuring the security apparatus of his country that a 'well-measured' response would be given to NATO's expansion in the direction of Russia, and that his government would 'take note' of the global missile defence system that was being set up by the West. Second, NATO was building up its forces in the Black Sea, a move that is not defensive, but an 'element of the US offensive system deployed outside the mainland'. Most significant was his reference to Russia not being part of any alliance, fact that strengthens the state's sovereignty, and that other countries and alliances should be considering Russia's national interest. Finally, the President was stating: 'No one will interfere in Russia's domestic affairs'. Such an interference could be put in place through instruments such as 'security services, modern information and communication technologies', 'puppet NGOs' - in a word, 'soft power'.\textsuperscript{314}

To sum up, Russia's perception of NATO has become very negative since the second half of the 2000s. Moscow feels entitled to scepticism, backed up with proof of NATO's unfriendly behaviour and hypocrisy. Furthermore, NATO is perceived in the Kremlin as an American military tool, while NATO member states as facilitators of America's expansionist project. Such countries are ready to give up their sovereignty, whilst Russia does not have any intention to do so. More than re-locating its military forces in Eastern Europe and in the Black Sea region, the United States is actually attempting to destabilize Ukraine through covert regime change. The United States is attempting the same in Russia through contemporary tools of soft power, such as information warfare.\textsuperscript{315}

\textsuperscript{314} 'We will react to NATO build-up!' Key Putin quotes from defense policy address (July 23, 2015), RT: http://rt.com/news/174768-putin-security-nato-ukraine/
\textsuperscript{315} The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation (2010), Art. 12, d)
6.2.4 NATO’s Perception of Russia

After Russia had suspended its obligations regarding the CFE Treaty in 2007, NATO showed itself ‘deeply disappointed’ with the decision.\textsuperscript{316} The same was the reaction to Moscow’s complete withdrawal from the Treaty in 2015.\textsuperscript{317} The Alliance would have continued to further cooperate with Moscow, as it did not perceive the latter as an enemy. This is the main message that NATO has been putting out over the last 20 years. But how does this official position fit with the actual developments on the ground in terms of enlargement, Ballistic Missile Defence plans, and recent military exercises in spite of Moscow?

First, regarding the cause of the first ‘dispute’ between NATO and Russia, namely the Georgian War, it can be pointed out that the former’s attitude had not been anti-Russian. NATO pursued the conclusions reached by a group of independent international experts (led by Heidi Tagliavini) on the causes of the war. More specifically, even though the hostilities had been sparked by Georgia, the responsibility of the conflict could not be assigned to just one side. Russia itself, however, had behaved in an unjustifiable manner by continuing its military engagement after the ceasefire agreement. Thus, both sides had violated international law.\textsuperscript{318} Nonetheless, NATO does not recognize the separatist regions of Georgia as autonomous, and it supports the country’s territorial integrity. More than this, it demands that Russia reverses its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The resolution of the territorial dispute should instead be peaceful and pursued in collaboration with the OSCE, the UN, and the EU.\textsuperscript{319} Finally, NATO members agreed that Georgia would eventually become an Ally, if it satisfied the requirements. This position had first been adopted at the 2008 Bucharest summit, and reiterated subsequently at NATO summits in 2009, 2010, 2012, and 2014.\textsuperscript{320}

How can it be that NATO is portraying itself not to be antagonistic towards Russia, when in fact it has been contemplating enlargement, regardless of Russian protests? First of all, NATO does not see its behaviour as disrespectful of Russian concerns. On the contrary, the Alliance is aware that Moscow will always be sceptical about NATO’s arguments regarding enlargement. Together with the European Union, NATO is a ‘continental unification’ project. Thus, it does not have a final point, which naturally determines Russia to perceive the development of both

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{316} Allies deeply disappointed by Russian suspension of CFE obligations (July 16, 2007), NATO website: http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2007/07-july/e0716a.html
\textsuperscript{317} Experts: Russia’s withdrawal from the CFE Treaty is a signal to the West (March 13, 2015), Russia Beyond the Headlines: http://rbth.com/international/2015/03/13/experts_russias_withdrawal_from_the_cfe_treaty_is_a_signal_to_t_44471.html
\textsuperscript{318} Committee Report 180 PCNP 09 E rev 1 - GEORGIA AND NATO (2009), Art.11, NATO Parliamentary Assembly website: http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=1776
\textsuperscript{320} NATO’s relations with Georgia (March 23, 2015), NATO website: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_38988.htm
\end{flushleft}
organizations as a ‘permanent assault’. But it is precisely because NATO is not an anti-Russian project that the enlargement is ‘open-ended’. What Russia ought to be doing instead is to understand why its neighbours are seeking NATO membership.\footnote{NATO enlargement and Russia: myths and realities, NATO Review Magazine: http://www.nato.int/docu/Review/2014/Russia-Ukraine-Nato-crisis/Nato-enlargement-Russia/EN/index.htm} Second, regarding NATO being an American instrument, the Alliance is pointing to the fact that it is comprised of sovereign nations that had individually chosen to join the Alliance. The decisions within NATO are taken by consensus, thus all members must agree to what the decision entails. Finally, the participation in NATO operations is subject to each country’s own willingness or internal legal procedures.\footnote{NATO-Russia relations: the facts (May 22, 2015), NATO website: http://www.nato.int/cps/eu/natohq/topics_111767.htm#cl101} Therefore, the Alliance is not a tool for American hegemony, and it operates with full respect for the members’ national sovereignty.

Regarding the Ballistic Missile Defence program, NATO has over time repeatedly reassured Russia. Most recently, NATO’s spokesperson Oana Lungescu has once more asserted that ‘NATO’s missile defence system is not designed or directed against Russia[…].The aim of NATO missile defence is to protect our European Allies against the increasing threats posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles’.\footnote{Statement by NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu on misleading and incorrect Russian statements (April 16, 2015), NATO website: http://www.nato.int/cps/eu/natohq/news_118761.htm?} In dealing with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov’s remarks about the failure of NATO to alter its BMD plans after a successful negotiation with Iran as being a sign that the BMD system had not been created against an Iranian threat,\footnote{US Plans for Anti-Missile Defense in Europe Remain Concern for Moscow (April 16, 2015), Sputnik News: http://sputniknews.com/military/20150416/1020957271.html} Lungescu underscored that the Iranian framework did not change the fact that there was a proliferation of ballistic missiles in the world.\footnote{Statement by NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu on misleading and incorrect Russian statements (April 16, 2015), NATO website: http://www.nato.int/cps/eu/natohq/news_118761.htm?} The source of threat had thus not transformed.

Lastly, as regards the latest developments in NATO-Russian relations on the regional level, the former’s position is that the military deployments, exercises, and other decisions have been taken as a result of Russia’s aggression in Ukraine. First, NATO’s Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg was, in an interview, describing Russia as having negatively changed its approach in recent years, a proof of which was that it had been ready to ‘use force to change borders’. Also, Moscow had been modernizing its military forces, exercising more, increasing its air, land, and sea presence, especially in the form of snap exercises. In consequence, NATO has been reinforcing its collective defence with increased military presence in its Eastern Flank, with more flights and air policing, with increased sea presence, more exercises, but also more readiness through the...
establishment of the Readiness Action Plan, which entails the mobilization of ‘elite elements’ within 48 hours.326

NATO has been accusing Russia of supporting the separatist rebels in the east of Ukraine, claiming to have plenty of proof of Moscow providing troops.327 In the attempt to respond to a crisis that might emerge during the Ukrainian conflict, NATO has initiated a hotline with the Armed Forces of Russia in May of this year.328 Nevertheless, the Alliance is maintaining all ‘practical cooperation’ with Russia suspended due to the Crimean annexation, and due to involvement in eastern Ukraine.329

What can be concluded from all the above? Mainly that NATO perceives Russia as an increasing threat. This has to do with the Georgian War, the unfounded opposition to the BMD, with Russia’s increasing military spending and exercises, with the annexation of Crimea, and with the destabilization of eastern Ukraine. As for its own actions, NATO does not perceive them as provocative, but only misunderstood/misrepresented by Moscow. NATO had been enlarging eastwards at the request of Central and Eastern European states, and is supporting the accession of countries like Georgia and Ukraine because it is those countries’ sovereign right to accede. Also, NATO has been reinforcing its military presence in the Black Sea region because it had to reassure the region’s member states that the Alliance was ready to protect them in the face of a resurgent Russia.

6.2.5 Conclusion

The results can now be discussed. Regarding question 1, ‘does Russia perceive NATO as a potential enemy?’, the answer is both yes and no. As for question 2, ‘is NATO directed against Russia?’, the answer is again both yes and no. Why both yes and no? In the case of Russia’s perception of NATO, during the 1990s, and during the first half of the 2000s, Russia was ready to engage and cooperate with the Alliance. As such, no real antagonism was present. Things changed later on, because of what Russia understood to be an expansion of the United States close to the Black Sea area, through NATO enlargement. In the case of NATO, the same logic applies. Before the Georgian War, despite criticism over Russian regional and internal affairs, NATO was ready to build a security framework with Moscow. However, Russia’s tough public discourse against

326 How to Deal with a Resurgent Russia (April 24, 2015), NATO website: http://www.nato.int/cps/eu/natohq/opinions_118948.htm?
327 Russian troops support rebel offensive in Ukraine, NATO says (January 25, 2015), Reuters: http://in.reuters.com/article/2015/01/25/ukraine-crisis-nato-idINKBN0KY02T20150125
329 Statement by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following his meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (May 19, 2015), NATO website: http://www.nato.int/cps/eu/natohq/opinions_119871.htm?
what NATO had considered a natural unification project (enlargement) pushed some members of the Alliance (mostly Eastern Flank) to question Moscow’s intentions. Therefore, to direct the Alliance against their stronger neighbour.

What does this imply? On the one hand, the external alliance is indeed perceived as threatening by a non-member state, especially if it appears to be directed against the latter, and if it consists of an external actor. This is more or less self-evident. On the other hand, however, this insecurity is not inherent in the existence of an external alliance. It depends on how that alliance behaves, and how it communicates that behaviour. This is not self-evident. If an alliance is being set-up against such an actor, further intensification of that actor’s protest against the alliance without the latter paying attention to the legitimate concerns of the states covered by the alliance will only strengthen that very same alliance. This is again not self-evident, as one would expect to see the Alliance take notice of the concerns of the non-member state, with results in terms of more cooperation with the latter, instead of more aggressive posturing.

In other words, if NATO continues its enlargement project in disregard of Russia’s concerns, this will only further provoke the latter, which could result in a worsening of Russia’s attitude towards Romania, Georgia, and Ukraine. It could result in an escalation of the regional dilemma from one direction. Hence, potential conflict. If Russia, on the other hand, keeps on building up its defences, intensifying its military presence, radicalising its rhetoric, intervening more in the internal affairs of Ukraine, this will only mobilize NATO member states, especially the ones from the Black Sea region, including Turkey, against Moscow. It will result in higher Allied military presence near Russia’s borders, with a potential for escalation of the Black Sea security dilemma from the other direction.

In conclusion, external alliances do have an effect on their member states’ relations with non-member states, either a positive or a negative one: mutually-beneficial cooperation, or mutually-destructive hostility. This translates into the mitigation or the escalation of the security dilemma already present between the two sides. Thus, by improving the way these alliances are created and especially managed (better communication of benign intentions, more engagement with opponents, better cooperation within as to reduce gaps in public discourse), and by reducing the hostility of a non-members state’s attitude towards the alliance, the security dilemma can be mitigated, and even brought to a dormant level.
Final Remarks

Having reached the end of the discussion, it is now possible to sum up the results. The initial questions upon which our hypothesis has been based on are:

- Is it plausible that a security dilemma exists in the wider Black Sea region?
- Are the regulators of the security dilemma influential on the tensions that could bring about conflict?

The answer to both questions has been yes, but a few specifications are demanded. Regarding the existential conditions of the security dilemma, anarchy and some accumulation of power tend to be easily proven by evidence. In a strict sense, anarchy is clearly the norm in the Black Sea regional relations. Intergovernmental organisations are present, and even military cooperation. Yet, no higher authority has replaced national sovereignty. A realist approach would preclude any developments in this sphere, yet for the sake of argument, the suggestion of a transforming force of the European Union has been accepted. Nonetheless, it has been proven that the effects of a higher engagement with regional players will most likely create competition, rather than cooperation.

As for accumulation of power, it has been shown that countries like Romania and Russia, but also alliances like NATO, are ready to back up their interests at sea (and not only) with at least some naval capability. The assumption of threat perception, and the mechanism of the security dilemma, translate this military capability into perception of insecurity, a situation that risks deterioration under the circumstances of competing interests. One example was the opposing positions of Romania and Russia towards Moldova. In this paper, the cases have been chosen either on the basis of the categorization of protagonist and secondary actors (with a focus on the former), or on the basis of significant traits of regional players (inclusion of secondary actors). As such, even if we chose to focus on the protagonists, it is not impossible to prove that all Black Sea states have some accumulation of power, and even competing interests.

Moving forward, the analysis becomes less solid, and the conclusions more prone to interpretation. Having chosen two conflictual cases (Cyprus dispute and Russo-Georgian War) as examples of aggressive behaviour, it has been proven that it is least plausible that a narrative according to which none of the participants is malign/expansionist exists. Therefore, the choice was to agree that malign intentions had been lacking in both situations. A similar analysis could be applied to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Transnistrian conflict, and why not to the current events in the Ukraine. The limitations on this paper impose the resort to the examples

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330 For instance, the Black Sea Naval Co-Operation Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR). More on this, here: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/blackseafor.en.mfa
mentioned above. It is, however, expected that the same dynamics apply to all cases. The geographical location of the actors (close neighbours), the US presence in the region, and the strong mistrust are effective conditions for determining genuine security concerns, thus security-seeking behaviour. Nonetheless, it must be admitted that there is a possibility that either Russia’s behaviour, or the interests of the United States in the region, are guided by deep-seated expansionist aspirations. It will be the policy-maker’s prerogative to pursue the defensive or offensive narrative of these events.

Are these conditions enough for the security dilemma to exist? The answer is yes. It can be pointed to the lack of hostility between other regional actors as a counterargument to the presence of insecurity. Nevertheless, the security dilemma does not exclude a lack of antagonism. The explanation behind the current calm relations between ‘friendly’ neighbours such as, for example, Russia and Turkey, lies in the dormant character of the dilemma. There is no serious tension between the two, as they are both properly communicating their intentions. Turkey’s predominant security concerns lie at the moment with the Arab world (i.e. Syria/the Kurds),331 and Russia feels less threatened by such foreign policy orientation than say America’s perceived influence in the post-Soviet space. Also, the energy deals (i.e. Turkish Stream) between the two countries are an instrument of building interdependence,332 which obviously does not eliminate competition, but improves cooperation, thus alleviating mistrust. Despite the positive state of relations, occasional scuffles are still occurring. For instance, Turkey’s position against recognizing Crimea as part of Russia, and the emphasis put on the rights of the Tatar minorities on the peninsula.333 Finally, some recent tensions arose around Russian President Putin’s position towards the so-called Armenian genocide, a gesture criticised by Ankara.334

Having established that it is indeed plausible that a security dilemma is operating within the Black Sea region, the hypothesis suggested that by alleviating it, conflict would be avoided. The two material regulators- asymmetric distribution of power and alliances- have been proven to influence inter-state relations in terms of increasing the perception of threat. For more precision, asymmetric distribution of power determines the overreaction of the lesser power in its relations with the stronger power, especially if the latter is perceived to be a menace or an enemy. Also, as predicted by Defensive Realism, a stronger, threatening player will always be balanced against by the weaker counterpart. The role of the United States, perceived as a benign state, is exactly that

334 Turkey’s Erdogan criticises Putin over Armenian “genocide” comments (April 27, 2015), Reuters: http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/27/us-turkey-armenia-russia-idUSKBN0N1I1AR20150427
of reassuring weaker states like Romania against what Bucharest perceives as a malign aggressive Russia. This has also shown that perception over intentions matters as much as (if not more than) distribution of power. A simplistic analysis of material capabilities does thus not suffice.

Lastly, external alliances operating in the region tend to have a negative effect on the relations between states that are part of the alliance or aspirants to becoming such, and states that perceive the alliance as targeted against themselves. The defensive character of such an alliance does not improve the perception of insecurity, especially when the alliance is ever-expanding, and when it aims to create defensive systems capable of eliminating the deterrent force of the non-member state. NATO’s intentions to include Ukraine and Georgia, together with its Ballistic Missile Defence project have put Russia on the move towards an aggressive path. Moscow sees its unfriendly neighbours as potentially backed by NATO troops and weapons systems, and its nuclear deterrent cancelled out by the BMD. At the same time, however, the relations between the Alliance and Russia have not always been bad. Previous cooperative experiences prove the plausibility of a positive future, if, and only if, the two sides manage to communicate their intentions better, and to take a measured/prudent approach to enlargement/defence. Moscow must understand that NATO members like Romania, and NATO aspirants like Georgia and Ukraine, have chosen the Alliance as a security umbrella against Russian attempts to assert its great power status. Such status, even if rooted in an immediate need for security, will cause insecurity in neighbours, because the security dilemma cannot be eliminated! Turning aggressive will only escalate the situation into a spiral with conflictual consequences, or at least with deep scars of mistrust that will hardly ever heal.

Engaging the post-Soviet space with reassurance, with mutually-beneficial cooperation projects (instead of instruments for leverage), with proposals for joint military exercises, with acceptance of a multitude of regional institutional frameworks or cooperative attempts (even if they exclude Russia) - these must all be in the pacifying arsenal of the leaders in the Kremlin. As for NATO’s approach, leaders within the alliance would have to accept once and for all that the perceptions of Russian leaders matter. Indeed, NATO must show resolve and commitment to members, but regional peace must be a more valuable goal than establishing a raison d’etre for the organisation. Europe, and especially the Black Sea states cannot eliminate Russia from the map, and as such, they should find ways of partnering with an increasingly assertive state. Concessions will have to be made in return for guarantees whose implementation can easily be verified.
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