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Chapter 3

The Black Sea Area within the International System: The Struggle for Influence between the United States and Russia

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The Black Sea Area: A Desirable Regional Security System?

Methodological Aspects

The context of the end of the Cold War, marked by the fall of the bipolar balance and the strengthening of direct relations between states, allowed for an unprecedented flourishing of regional integration processes. Thus, the concept of "regions" was more and more used as a theoretical tool for the analysis of international relations (Fawcett and Hurrell 1995; Lake and Morgan 1997), especially regarding localized conflicts: perceived, in the past, as the result of interplay of power, these conflicts are now revisited in the light of regional causes. Most often they oppose two states or communities inside one state and have only limited, regional spillover effects. Numerous examples illustrate this tendency, such as the Balkan or the Southern Caucasus conflicts. The "current" international system, as it has evolved over the last 20 years by favoring fragmentation in international relations and the emergence of small states, gives numerous conflicts a strictly regional scope, asking for a regional solution: this is what constitutes a fundamental break with respect to the previous system.

The notion of “region” covers a multitude of issues, depending on the theoretical account to which one is indebted. Thus, constructivists insist on perceptions of belonging to a community characterized by shared values: this is a subjective factor, the result of social construction (Adler 1997). Other theorists emphasize the geographical proximity as an ordering principle (Mansfield and Milner 1997). Others, again, focus on the political interdependence of states (based on economic interdependence – Russett 1967; Thompson 1973).

The phenomenon of regionalization can proceed from two different types of logic, and thus reconcile the theoretical positions of the different accounts: a certain geographical proximity of actors and their interdependence, either economic, political, or security-related, either real or perceived. The phenomenon unfolds in a double dimension, which renders the concept particularly complex (Väyrynen 2003): an inter-state dimension (and here we can speak about a process, the *regionalization*) and a transnational one (and this leads to a property which plots the geographical limits of the area, the *regionness*). The transnational dimension comprises both inter-state relations and relations between entities or groups inside states, which transcend national frontiers. The transnational dimension explains in particular why the boundaries of a region do not always correspond to state boundaries (on a large scale for instance, the Ossetian region goes beyond the Russian-Georgian border; Kurdistan, beyond those of the Middle East; on a smaller scale, Europe transcends, some say, the borders of Russia or Turkey). Thus, a region can be regarded as a group of states characterized by their belonging/involvement in a common area and having interconnected interests—particularly, in the context of this study, regarding their security.

We showed in previous research (Chatré and Delory 2010) that the Black Sea area could not be considered a region in the traditional sense of the term, and that its definition, as such, resulted primarily from a geopolitical short-cut. The geographical proximity of the states that compose it does not compensate for the weakness of their economic and political interdependence or their cultural heterogeneity. The area seems to be, above all, a buffer zone, a

zone of friction between great powers, which are themselves peripheral or even external to this space.

This study attempts to assess whether this first evaluation, performed through an analysis of the different security settings that affect the Black Sea, is confirmed when applying to the area the theoretical account based on the work of David A. Lake (1997), or whether the issues of regional security, particularly important at the Black Sea, are likely to be at the centre of the regional chessboard and lay the foundations for a unique regional space.

The Regional Security System

David A. Lake (1997: 48) defined the “regional security system” as “a set of states affected by at least one transborder but local externality that emanates from a particular geographic area. If the local externality poses an actual or potential threat to the physical safety of individuals or governments in other states, it produces a regional security system or complex.” In terms of security, an “externality” is perceived primarily as a threat, as long as the factors composing it are powerful enough to require a major political choice: “when an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object ... the special nature of security threats justifies the use of extraordinary measures to handle them” (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998). The intensity of *regional security externalities* can, in fact, be a sufficient factor for generating a homogeneous behavior among the states in a given space, thus forming a *regional security system*. According to Lake, “local externalities that produce threats to physical safety bound the sets of interacting states that constitute regional security systems” (Lake 1997: 49). Consequently, states in such a regional system are forced to take into consideration the actions and reactions of other states, in their apprehension of national security (Lake 1997: 51). Theoretically, “all salient security actions taken by one state and not solely intended to reduce the welfare of a second can be understood as externalities” (Lake 1997: 49).

Thus, in any process of regionalization, the security factor may encourage or constrain actors to cooperate. The interdependence of security issues might be a sufficient incentive to build or define a regional space. Indeed, according to Lake, “each party imposes costs upon the

other, creating a negative externality that binds the relevant states together as a set of interacting units” (Lake 1997: 49). This is the process through which a regional security system progressively takes shape. However, the security factor may also contribute to fragmentation—if two states are engaged in a bilateral conflict affecting them individually—but has only indirect impact on the other states. The lack of impact on other states can either be real—and in this case, we cannot talk about an externality—or perceived; the result is, in both cases, fragmentation. Every regional security externality harbors a potential either to promote or to affect negatively the regional relations and the regional security system it helps to generate.

In an attempt to understand how this theoretical model can be applied to the Black Sea area, we need to characterize the regional order in terms of power relations, but also in terms of threats and perceptions of threats.¹ Can we define a coherent regional order, with security cooperation among states, based on a set of threats which are perceived as shared? Or, on the contrary, can we identify characteristics of the regional order, such as decomposition or hierarchy among states, which hinder the creation of a regional space? Which is the role of external actors in this system? Ultimately, is the system based solely on the intervention of these external actors—the only ones able to define a regional network of inter-state relations?

Political and Historical Background

In the Black Sea area, the end of the bipolar era was marked by the retreat of the traditional power, Russia, and the progressive irruption of the USA, as well as—to a lesser extent—the EU. To begin with, the result of the Cold War has favored the liberation of the former Soviet republics from the Russian sphere of influence and an almost complete emancipation of the neighboring members of the Warsaw Pact (Bulgaria, Romania), which were rapidly integrated into NATO and the EU. At the sunset of Russian influence (2004/2005), almost the entire Black Sea area seemed on the edge of escaping from the Russian orbit. The deficiency of Western

¹ Lake emphasizes the fact that the perception of externalities, and not only their effectiveness, may be enough for the definition of a regional complex.

political and economic commitments, together with Vladimir Putin's rise to power, allowed Russia progressively to recover its influence: the 2008 crisis marked the peak of this come-back.

The Georgian crisis of 2008 and the election of Barack Obama have profoundly changed the regional stakes. Georgia has been perceived as the bridgehead of the American influence and of the Western political-military model. Its defeat put into question the relevance of this model, while the American administration, dependent on Russian support on a number of crucial dossiers (Iran, strategic arms control), abandoned its confrontational policy and implicitly conceded to Russia a greater "independence" in the management of its regional environment.

The simultaneity of this conflict with the political turn-around in Washington seems, from this point of view, a disengagement of the USA in the Black Sea, which Russia tries to exploit by hampering American interests in the area or by marginalizing their influence. In the context of blurred American foreign policy (postponement of NATO expansion, uncertainty as to certain strategic engagements, especially anti-missile defense, cooling of relations with Azerbaijan because of the support for Armenian-Turkish rapprochement), there are many tangible signs of growing Russian influence in the region: consolidated cooperation with Ukraine, added to the latter's renunciation of NATO accession, as well as to the extension of the lease for the Russian fleet at Sevastopol, or Moscow's maneuvers to close down the American base at Manas in Kyrgyzstan are cases in point.

In parallel, the region remains torn by a range of territorial conflicts (latent or open, even though generally qualified as "frozen"), which involve all the riparian states to different degrees. The incapacity of regional or external actors to solve them has increased the fragility of the relations between the states in the area, and placed those conflicts at the centre of their political preoccupations, thus contributing to their perception as *regional security externalities* (Lake 1997). Thus, the Black Sea area seems to offer all the characteristics that allow us to define a *regional security system*, according to the framework set by Lake (1997).

The Role of the Actors in Defining a Regional Model for the Black Sea Area

In this context, the regional powers' dynamics (Russia and, to a very different extent, Turkey), the external powers' dynamics (USA, EU), as well as those of regional states contribute to stimulate the security externalities. This happens first of all because of the opposition between regional great powers, preoccupied by maintaining the order inherited from the Cold War (Russia) or dreamed of immediately after its end (Turkey), and the powers that were under their patronage and willing to enfranchise themselves (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia). The alternatives offered by the external great powers (USA and the EU) have favored the decomposition of the former regional order, and have allowed, for a moment, the hope for the emergence of a new, NATO-centered order.

Status Quo Regional Powers

Russia and Turkey are the two dominant regional powers, heirs of the two former regional orders that have structured the Black Sea during the last centuries. This is very well illustrated by the semantics used in order to describe their foreign policies, whether it is Russia's post-Soviet neo-imperialism (Bugajski 2004), or Turkey's neo-Ottomanism (Taspinar, 2008).

Russia has been the dominant regional power since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and it represents a *status quo power par excellence*. Unable to manage the decomposition of the post-Soviet space, Russia has nevertheless continued to consider this space as one of its privileged zones of influence (Delory 2010; Alexandrova-Arbatova 2010). If some authors speak of neo-revisionism (Sakwa 2010), the term "conservative" seems more appropriate for describing the Russian policy in the Caucasus, including the fact that Moscow has used violence to restore its tutorship over the states that tried to escape it. Thus, Russia's 2008 military intervention can be qualified not as a revisionist act, meant to modify the existing system, but rather as a conservative deed, intended to reinforce the Russian empire in the Southern Caucasus. The same can be said about the Russian policy in Crimea. Even though Turkey's approach is far different in political, military, or strategic terms, Ankara has nevertheless adopted a relatively conservative policy, which relies more on a slow erosion of the Russian

power that would allow it to assert itself, than on the radical upheaval that could be brought about through NATO expansion or the revision of the Montreux Convention.²

This conservatism also exists in the area of regional cooperation. Relations between Russia and the riparian states are generally tense. As for Turkey, if it willingly presents itself as the engine of regional cooperation, it is nevertheless very reluctant in what concerns the alteration of the *status quo*. Turkey is also at the origins of several regional initiatives, such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), but it takes care to ensure these do not touch upon security issues.

The intention of powers such as Russia or Turkey is not as much to gain a bigger role in the regional system, as to preserve their primacy and exclude all contending powers. This conservatism induces frictions with other regional actors which, unlike Russia or Turkey, try to revise the regional order. However, it is Moscow's political and military position that produces opposition, by resorting to a wide range of means of pressure in order to satisfy its interests.

Revisionist Regional Powers

One of the sources of instability in the Black Sea area has been the will of the small states to modify or to challenge the existing regional order, as well as their impatience to promote their own security interests. These powers perceive their environment as being threatened, and their vital interests as being at all times potentially challenged by their neighbors. This frustration *vis-à-vis* a hostile environment, particularly visible in the Southern Caucasus, not only causes a genuine arms race, but also catalyzes the emergence of militias intended to promote or to protect their threatened interests. This further fuels the conflicts and increases instability. The risk of spillover is, however, limited by several factors. First, the arms race, as well as the region's geography, do not allow for military options unless major disequilibria appear among the confronting groups or states. Besides, Russia's stabilizing role remains decisive, since it contributes at the same time to both the perpetuation and circumscription of the conflicts. It also

² The Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits regulates warships' transit through the Bosphorus Strait and the Dardanelles. The Convention also limits the total permitted volume of non-Black Sea states' fleets in the Black Sea.

appears as a security guarantor: the Georgian war has shown the breadth of the risks associated with sudden military action directly engaging Russia, while all action that indirectly threatens its interests entails the inherent risk of Russian logistical support for certain states, thereby preventing a rapid military solution.

There is, nevertheless, an option for the small states at the Black Sea. They can actually modify their security environment by participating in security alliances—be it with Russia (this is Armenia's option, who can thus maintain the *status quo* against the much richer Azerbaijan), or with the West (this is Georgia's choice, which allows it to neutralize Russia and enhance the prospect of its reunification). Adhesion to these alliances allows these states to multiply their capacity to act simultaneously towards their neighbors but also towards the great regional powers (Russia, in the case of Georgia, and Ukraine and Turkey, for Azerbaijan). The revisionist states most often took advantage of the regional bipolarity created by USA's irruption in the area, by using one actor's support against the other's in the promotion of their national interests.

External Powers Decomposing the Regional Order

The United States and the EU appear as clearly reformative powers, although on a different scale of action. Since the end of the 1990s, the USA has tried actively to reshape the Black Sea security environment by favoring NATO implantation and the integration of the riparian states into the Euro-Atlantic security model. They are at the origin of the emergence of an embryonic Black Sea security system, since NATO, as well as the prospect of joining the EU, acted as a force of attraction and motivated the elites in their attempts to disengage from the Russian economic, political, and strategic model.

The reformist policy of the USA has nevertheless been put into practice as an ambiguous soft power. The NATO accession process has only been formalized by pre-accession frameworks with very limited security guarantees. Thus, the USA sketched a regional security system that only lasted until its first challenge, that is, the Georgian invasion. The strategy was remarkably effective, since NATO managed to attract all the states in the area through

cooperation, funding, aid to development, and the illusion of a security guarantee. Russia, having been for a long time inhibited by the fear of NATO's power, has only progressively understood the extent of the vacuum of an alliance whose only stimulus is the USA. Moreover, the only "military" support offered by NATO to the Black Sea countries helped to produce numerous white papers and other types of road-maps for reforms. Still, the USA has managed, during almost a decade, to put into question the legitimacy of Russian influence at the Black Sea, favoring the regime changes and the adoption of economic and political reforms. The American political retreat, very manifest after the Obama administration came into power, risks nonetheless to halt this progress, which had been conditioned by the hope for Western economic integration and closer relations with NATO.

The European reforming influence can be detected on a very different level and to a very different degree of intensity. Romanian and Bulgarian European integration constitute at the same time the peak of EU expansion and the limit of its influence in the Black Sea area. Unwilling to integrate the other states in the region, the EU has tried prudently to reform their political and economic systems through policy incentives, unfortunately underfunded. The EU essentially appears as a theoretical model, and more practically, as a milk cow, since the domestic reforms adopted by the Black Sea states as a result of EU recommendations are largely motivated by the expected financial benefits. If, for a while, European enlargement went hand in hand with NATO enlargement, this simultaneity has only been effective as long as Russia's weakness did not allow it to oppose either of the two. But as soon as Russia regained strength, the EU rapidly shifted to a conservative policy, trying to maintain good relations with Russia rather than expand its own influence outside its new borders. In this perspective, if the Union still has a non-negligible force of attraction, its capacity to transform the Black Sea region has become very limited. Furthermore, keeping a Russian dominated security model clearly seems more profitable than a frontal opposition to Moscow.

This power game sets the framework for the main regional security externalities likely to transform the Black Sea area into a regional security system.

Regional Security Externalities in the Black Sea Area

The multiplicity of oppositions, differences, and conflicts at the Black Sea allows the identification of certain regional security externalities that we have already evoked. Further on, we will take a closer look at them. The region is crossed by numerous crises linked to minorities and to them calling into question the borders and, finally, the states' territorial integrity. On top of these, there are energetic rivalries strong enough to affect the security of certain states of the region, and a persistent competition for influence between the USA, Russia, the EU, and even Turkey. At the same time, these different constraints have different causes and consequences. They can thus *look like* regional security externalities, without actually being such.

The Borders Issue and Territorial Integrity

The most visible regional security externality at the Black Sea is related to the territorial integrity of states, to minorities and to the contested borders. The (re)definition of borders constitutes the object of numerous negotiation processes, thus apparently limiting the conflict risks. In fact, there are significant differences between readjusting the USSR-inherited borders (whether in the former Soviet space, or in Eastern Europe) and sovereignty conflicts linked to secessionist territories. They have similar origins, but the latter are more complicated because of population mixtures and issues of territorial integrity of states.

The settlement of borders claims, although long, took the form of international institutionalization: thus, the dispute between Romania and Ukraine over Snake Island in the Danube Delta was only solved on February 3, 2009, following a decision of the International Court of Justice. On May 17, 2010, Ukraine and Russia signed an agreement concerning the delimitation of their common border in the Kertch strait, creating a joint commission in charge of this issue. But the maritime issues remain a tense subject for the two states, as well as for Turkey and Greece. More generally, the most effective conflict-solving methods are bilateral and have only limited influence on third states.

In spite of all, the issue of borders remains very salient in the former USSR, where tracing the borders of the Soviet Republics has been a political instrument for the control of the

territory, dividing cultural and/or ethnic communities in order to annihilate all forms of nationalism. The result was the creation, inside the Republics, of numerous minorities, that are perceived today as threats to the national security of states. Internal migrations within the USSR, whether forced, organized, or spontaneous, consolidated this fervor (Armenians in Georgia, Russians in Ukraine, Ukrainians in Moldova, and others). The issue of minorities concerns all the states in the region, since the dislocation of the Soviet authority liberated the revisionist energies. Thus, it represents a security issue for most of these states.

The borders issue and that of territorial integrity seem thus to be two of the most salient security externalities for the region, being at the same time a kind of matrix for all the other issues. The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan is exclusively caused by a territorial issue, while the many conflicts faced by Georgia since 1991, including the 2008 conflict, have as a source the Georgian desire to reconstitute its territorial integrity by regaining control over its border provinces. Moldovan, Azeri, and Georgian territorial integrity is now overtly denied, while that of Ukraine, Russia (Northern Caucasus), and Turkey (Kurdistan) is under threat.

Conflicts with Frozen Peace Processes

The so-called “frozen conflicts”—actually, conflicts with a frozen peace process—cannot be separated from the border issues, as they are a direct consequence of the latter. They represent a second apparent security externality. Their persistence has prevented so far all constructive and accomplished forms of cooperation: Nagorno-Karabach between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Abkhazia and Ossetia between Georgia and Russia, or Transdniester between Russia and Moldova, but also involving Ukraine and Romania.

For Caucasian states, this is obviously the main threat. The different white papers issued by the states in the region assert that restoration of territorial integrity remains a national priority for most of them. Thus, the Georgian White Paper in 2007 identifies separatists as a national threat, several positions before the risk of being invaded by a foreign power (*National Military*

Strategy of Georgia 2007). Armenian defense documents³ identify the Azeri threat as a priority, but essentially through the perspective of the separatist conflict in Nagorno-Karabach. We should also point out that Turkey, confronted with Kurdish separatism after the second Iraqi war, also places this type of threat at the top of its agenda.

Energy Issues

Hydrocarbons transit is the main strategic capital of the Black Sea, but it can also be considered a potential strategic externality, since it attracts the interest of great powers, stimulates their competition, and represents one of the most important levers used by Russia to pressure its neighbors. Hydrocarbons transit does not create solidarities among states: on the contrary, it pushes them to search for individual compromise with the dominant power—Russia—even though some of these states, such as Romania or Bulgaria, belong to powerful regional economic systems. Thus, energy transit, which renders the region attractive for foreign investors and for the great powers, is also a factor of division and exacerbation of security problems for these states, which cannot organize a common response to it.

Security Externalities: Appearance or Reality?

It is clear that the borders issue and territorial integrity represent two of the externalities that seem most decisive in influencing the regional security system. However, their impact is quite different on the actors, depending on how they deal with them (and how free/independent they are to do so). Thus, for example, Ukraine cannot approach the issue of the Russian minorities in the same way Georgia does with Ossetian and Abkhazian minorities, no more than it can treat its border issues with Russia in the same way Georgia does. The same goes for Romania and Bulgaria and, to a certain extent, for Azerbaijan and Armenia.

From this point of view, the issue of border differences and territorial integrity has a very different connotation depending on the relation between the state and its minorities, as well as

³ In the Armenian security strategy of 2007, the eight most important external threats to security include: Azerbaijan, the conflicts in neighbouring states, the threat on transit routes, the ineffectiveness of security alliances (especially the CSTO, in which Armenia is included). See <http://www.mil.am/files/NATIONAL%20%20SECURITY%20STRATEGYeng.pdf> [accessed: November 1, 2011].

on the external powers' involvement in the protection or support of these minorities. Thus, the issue of borders and minorities is central for Georgia and Azerbaijan, but much less salient in Ukraine, Romania, or Bulgaria, thanks to the positive role played by the EU (in Romania and Bulgaria) and because of the Russian influence (in Ukraine). Ukraine, which can be considered as potentially threatened by the Crimean issue, does not identify separatism as a security risk in its documents related to defense (White Papers 2008 and 2009).

Thus, for the majority of the states in the region, while the borders and territorial integrity issues remain a major security preoccupation, they have only a limited influence on the rest of the regional system. In the long run, the issue of the Russian minority in Crimea can be considered a critical security stake, but its influence on the regional security system is actually null. In parallel, the Ossetian or Abkhazian examples only had a minor influence on the approach taken by the Ukrainian military officials, since the White Paper from 2009 (published in 2010) is not very different from that published in 2008. Confronted with a problem similar to that of Georgia, Azerbaijan, in turn, did not seek to integrate a security system in contention to Russia, but preferred to keep its military ready to solve the conflict itself. But while Tbilisi sought to find a military solution, the Azeris remain prudent, and thus far have refrained from their desire to regain control.

It is also possible to go further, to recognize the weak impact of the border and territorial integrity issues in cases where the external great powers (Russia included, but the EU excluded) are not mutually involved. Thus, the impact of the conflicts between Abkhazians, Ossetians, and Georgians on the other states of the region was weak as long as the USA was not involved. But the eruption of the American model in Georgia sparked Russian concerns by reviving Tbilisi's reunification bids, and thus influencing the regional context. The same goes for the Nagorno-Karabach conflict, which had no influence on the other states of the region; only Russia holds the key to this conflict by maintaining or abandoning its support for Armenia, and is thus able to cause a spillover effect in the region. On the other hand, even though Russia supports quite a few identity claims in the Southern Caucasus, this factor has been insufficient to stimulate an

alliance of the states in the region (including Azerbaijan) against Moscow, the latter remaining an indispensable mediator that nobody can circumvent.

Does Russia's monopoly over energy distribution explain this apparent paradox? It certainly contributes to an explanation, and one can emphasize the fact that Georgia's opposition to Russia was facilitated by the creation (following an American initiative) of transit routes that are not controlled by Russia (BTC and SCP). Meanwhile, we have to be careful when looking at the so-called energy externality. If most of the states of the region are aware of the stakes related to energy routes, there is a certain overall absence of public expressions of national interest, thus marginalizing the energy issue as a domestic issue in the power struggle. If Russia has been criticized for the brutality of its approach to infrastructures and transit control, especially during the Ukrainian, Belarussian, and Georgian crises, we have nevertheless to note that none of these states took any measures to lessen their dependence on Russian gas. It can be argued that Russia is a monopolistic provider, but the roots of the conflict lay not as much in the monopoly, as in the debt these states accumulated.

Russia has to deal with states in the Black Sea region that have long been benefiting from subsidized prices, that do not pay their debt, nor have prospects to do so since they do not modernize their industrial infrastructure, and they do not make political or administrative reforms in order to rationalize their internal markets with a view to limit corruption. From this perspective, the energy issue represents an embryo of externality that could structure a regional system, since any unilateral Russian action in energy matters generates the same preoccupations in the whole region. But this preoccupation does not lead to a regionally-structured response from the regional states, which do not dispose of proper government and administrative structures. On the contrary, the national factions are operating individual solutions that guarantee their interests, most often playing the Russian card. But national elites' capitulation is not a concerted phenomenon, a recognition, by everybody, that the Russian monopoly requires submission. Instead, it is a strictly local phenomenon, which appears when a local faction triumphs over the other in its attempt to gain access to resources.

In parallel, the energy appetite of Russia and of the external powers could constitute, by itself, a strong enough incentive to stimulate the emergence of a regional security system at the Black Sea. But if the Caspian resources have constituted a considerable area for Western oil companies' investments, justifying American political and economic engagement in Georgia, this is not enough to motivate real competition between the great actors. The gas market, which could also give birth to oppositions between the EU and Russia and transform the Black Sea into an international stake, remains under Russian control: thus, the EU prefers cooperation with Russia to overt competition.

Is it finally possible to argue that there are, at the Black Sea, real security externalities that could lead to the creation of a regional security system? It is difficult to assert, since those externalities that presumably are the most obvious—such as the threats pertaining to minority issues, to borders or territorial integrity—have very different impacts on states, depending on the implication of local and external dominant powers. It would seem that, from this point of view, *the Black Sea only becomes a region when it represents a regional stake for the dominant powers.*

The Confrontation of Western, Russian and Regional Security Models: Does It Lead to the Emergence of a Regional Security System?

In fact, the most structuring security externality appears to be the confrontation between the Russian and the Western security models. This opposition constitutes the main divisive factor in the region, but also its most important defining feature after the end of the Cold War. The engagement of the USA, that, since the 1990s, replaced a Russia which could no longer keep pace, has been motivated, at first, by energy concerns (Caspian investments, BTC construction). Then, after 2001, it met a double strategic objective: to ensure bases for the big military operations (Iraq, Afghanistan) and to extend the influence of the “Euro-Atlantic” security model into the region. However, neither the USA nor Russia have taken the region for granted: the USA considered it as a part of the Caspian, Central Asian region, while Russia has been unable

for a long time to elaborate a structured regional policy, dealing separately with the problems of each state instead.

NATO expansion to the former Warsaw Pact countries was a first fracture of the region, including now three of the riparian states (Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey). During the last decade, NATO influence has considerably increased through individual partnership plans (IPAP) with Armenia, Moldova, and Azerbaijan, and through the creation of membership action plans (MAP) for Ukraine and Georgia. Until 2008, the dynamics of US foreign policy focused more and more openly on containing Russian regional influence through NATO, which constituted in itself a real externality, reuniting almost the entire region around a project of inclusion, sooner or later, into NATO, but also around the rejection of the Russian model.

This clear gap between the NATO and Russian models has led to more or less intense internal struggles in the states that are not yet part of the Alliance. Their intensity depends on the extent of the Russian influence. Thus, Ukraine has, to this day, hesitated between the will to accede to NATO and a desire for a simple rapprochement, while Armenia has played both sides in the Russia-NATO competition. On the other hand, the dynamics of the enlargement has depended not only on Washington's will to move the dossier forward, especially in Georgia, but also on the obvious growing resistance of Russia. The Atlantic Alliance is first and foremost a European alliance, and the European states were not willing to confront Moscow on this matter. The enlargement to the former Soviet space always involved certain factors that they could not control, as proven by the failure of the Bucharest summit in 2008.

The launching of genuinely regional processes constitutes a peculiar element of this confrontation between models. The first regionalization initiative, the BSEC (Stribis 2010), has been initially articulated around a project of economic cooperation: security does not fall under the competencies of the organization. Since the beginning, its contribution to regional security has been perceived through its economic dimension, because the security dilemmas of the riparian states are perceived as mutually exclusive. The BSEC progressively extended its competencies, including activities linked to organized crime or the fight against terrorism, for

example. The evolution of the BSEC is interesting because it progressively created a cleavage between its members: some of them wanted to integrate security issues in the competencies of the organization, others refused to do so. On this matter, the opposition between Russia and revisionist powers—those who contested the Russian model in order to get closer to the Western model, such as Georgia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan—has been very strong, the former refusing the expansion of the competencies of the BSEC. Symptomatically, Russia has found allies among other states that wanted to promote an alternative security model, such as Turkey, which on this dossier has a particular national agenda.

Other initiatives have been launched in order to address more specifically regional security issues in the Black Sea area, either sub-regional (GUAM/ODED) or regional (BlackSeaFor). This duplication is an effect of the attempt of the revisionist powers to unblock Russian opposition to any shift in the balance of security and to attract external actors (USA, Europe, OSCE, UN). It is also a result of the will of the regional great powers to control the invasion of competing external models. GUAM is an example of the first kind: it is a sub-regional organization that gathers Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova, but its attraction remains weak for several reasons, such as the moderate support granted by the USA, the competition of the NATO model, but mostly the divergent interests of the member states (Stribis 2010). The second situation shows regional great powers systematically intervening in order to limit the extent of the cooperation initiatives. This is the case of the BlackSeaFor, which includes Russia and Turkey, and which was introduced in order to stop any extension of NATO naval maneuvers in the area. Finally, the global security initiatives recently proposed by Russia and Turkey—such as the Caucasus security and stability pact (Turkey), or the new European security architecture (Russia)—are also symptomatic of a neo-conservative will to consolidate the influence of the regional great powers even further. A structural tendency can be detected in the regional initiatives: Russia's and Turkey's will to participate, in order to paralyze cooperative initiatives so that the regional balance of power can be maintained.

This tendency led to the disengagement of the revisionist or neutral powers, such as Georgia, Ukraine, or even Romania and Bulgaria, from the regional security organizations, as well as to the lack of vitality of sub-regional organizations. Meanwhile, it is obvious that sub-regional organizations led by revisionist states (such as GUAM) have not won a happier fate. The main reason is that none of these states has been able to promote a genuinely regional security concept, each perceiving the organization as an instrument to promote its own interests. This incapacity is all the more damaging since these organizations were initially intended to limit the omnipresent Russian influence. Their decomposition proves—if further proof was needed—not only the absence of a common perception of regional threats, but also the tendency of these states to free ride on the expense of others. In order to assess clearly the existence of a threat, they actually need to be part of an organization powerful enough to address that threat. NATO seemed to them the best option able to provide this kind of support, and the Black Sea states believed in this illusion.

The confrontation between security models represents a major, but unstable externality, because it depends as much on the political will of the initiatory states, as on the support of the other regional states for one model or the other. Thus, if this type of security externality could be sufficient to generate a regional security system at the Black Sea, the latter could only come into being through the adoption of specific policies by the great powers, especially USA and Russia. The “normal” externalities are insufficient to aggregate the regional states into a unique security system. Therefore, the emergence of a regional system here is clearly linked to the penetration of external actors (the USA, and to a lesser extent, the EU) which pushes for a decomposition, then a re-composition of the existing regional order, as well as to the capacity of the traditionally dominant actors (Russia, but also Turkey) to resist this trend.

Can Security Lead to the Creation of a Black Sea Region after the Georgian Crisis?

The existence of a Black Sea security system could have seemed obvious before the Russian intervention in Georgia. At the time, NATO appeared as the only model that could reunite the states of the region around the idea of collective security. Is this an illusion from this point

forward, since the retreat of the Western security model pushes the states of the region back to an individual security dynamic?

Asking the question in these terms can seem paradoxical since we have argued so far that collective security is not and cannot be a security externality for the region. In fact, the riparian states do not specifically aspire to collective security, except for the case in which it would allow them to promote not only their security, but also their national interests. Collective security is not, for them, a prerequisite for the enforcement of their national security, but a result thereof. Until 2008, NATO was the only system suitably matched to this type of approach, since it was flexible enough to allow the existence of a national security agenda, but strong enough—because of the supposed American security guarantee—to neutralize Russia. But one should not forget that Russia is not the USSR, and the interaction between it and the political and economic elites from the different Black Sea states is still intense, even in the states already integrated in the Euro-Atlantic security system (Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey). This is why the Georgian war did not entail a regional regrouping around the Alliance, but rather a shifting of allegiance: after the war, Russia appeared as the regional actor most capable of offering a credible security guarantee, or at least as a state which one could not frontally oppose with an alternative security guarantee, financially expensive and politically risky in this era of multiple crisis.

Thus, the fact that Moscow recognized Abkhaz and Ossetian independences, although it has created a dangerous precedent for the region, only encountered feeble opposition, including in Ukraine, a state that should have been particularly concerned by this precedent but is now moving away from Europe. The Ukrainian example proves that, faced with Russia, the transnational security preoccupations remain a relatively weak incentive for mobilization, not only for the regional states, but also for the external great powers. The USA, the EU, or NATO preferred to restore pacific relations with Russia rather than insist on this particular point.

As soon as the USA seemed less impatient to propose alternative security solutions, the impact of potential regional security externalities at the Black Sea diminished once again. Each state has reverted to its particular security concerns, which can certainly threaten their particular

vital interests, but are not global enough to mobilize the other states in the region. Once again, the comparison between Russia and the USSR can be pertinent: Russian actions do not appear to the different states of the region as manifestations of a policy that is coherently and systematically turned against them, threatening their overall security, but of a power instrument—damaging but bearable. Actually, Russian policies are not ideologically driven, intended to replace one political system by another and threatening the states, but are traditionally interest-driven, sometimes corresponding to the interests of a part of the local elites in the different states of the region.

However, the increase in Russia's power, added to the retreat of the USA, can justify the emergence of a new security externality, created by growing Russian domination. US incapacity to manage certain priority dossiers without Russia's support seems to lead to the concession of Central Asia, as well as the Black Sea area, to Russian influence. In these circumstances, the Black Sea will have to be defined as a region where Western penetration tends to be limited, but Russia will be able to promote its interests. While it is still too early to qualify the Black Sea area as a Russian sub-regional security system, certain indicators prove a discernible evolution in this direction.

Thus, while the issue of anti-missile systems' deployment in Europe remains a priority for the American administration, the installation of these systems (mobile radars and Aegis frigates) seems to have been compromised in the Black Sea and in the Caucasus. In parallel, the creation of land-based SM-3 systems that the US would foresee for Bulgaria and Romania is currently discussed in Moscow: the latter would prefer the deployment of its own S-300 and S-400 systems in the territory of these two NATO members (Delory 2010). In fact, Russia does not accept the presence of NATO strategic systems in these countries and proposes a Russian alternative. Moscow is not ready to accept that Central and Eastern European NATO members host infrastructures and troops that would allow the Alliance to express its full sovereignty. On the contrary, NATO enlargement to Romania and Bulgaria is the object of systematic

discussions, contributing to the partial exclusion of these countries from the European regional security system.

Regarding energy, the South Stream pipeline, initially proposed by Russia to provide Caspian gas for Southern Europe, tends to take precedence ahead of the European Nabucco project, designed to supply gas from Azerbaijan and the Middle East. The South Stream is certainly more credible in terms of access to resources, but Russia also managed to impose itself ahead of EU Black Sea states which will host the entry points of the pipeline into the Union. In this matter, Russia exerts an outright influence, linking tariff incentives to the inclusion of the respective states in the Russian energy network. The opening success of the Nord Stream in Germany, in November 2011, appears as a reminder to the Russian capability in EU Affairs. The Nabucco pipeline could make the Black Sea a privileged transit zone for the EU, and this could constitute an effective security externality for Russia, thus making the Black Sea a sub-region of the Russian sphere of influence. Rapid and effective construction of the South Stream could deprive Nabucco of its economic rationale, thus reinforcing Russia's control over all the Black Sea actors and consolidating its levers of influence over Bulgaria and Romania, as well as marginalizing Ukraine.

The increasing hegemonic position of Russia is not by itself a security externality for the Black Sea states: it can certainly be perceived as a threat, but also as a partner. The election of Viktor Yanukovitch to the Ukrainian presidency, and his way of governing since then, is very relevant in this context. First, he has been elected on a pro-Russian program. Second, and most important, the massive failure of different pro-Western governments brought into power by the orange revolutions has strongly corroded, in Ukraine as well as in other former USSR countries, the attraction of "reformist" parties. In exchange, the parties that showed openness to Russian interests have once again gained more credibility. From this point on, the local elites of the Black Sea states have to accept the imperative of integrating Russian security requirements.

Certainly, these different elements are only a reflection of the fact that Russia is re-asserting its influence over an area that it has been controlling for several decades, even several

centuries in some cases. This balancing movement between West and East should not be over-interpreted, since it is somehow normal. However, in terms of the creation of a regional security system, it seems more probable that the Black Sea will progressively be integrated as a sub-region under Russian influence, even though this can sometimes contravene regional states' interests. At this point, the security externalities that would allow the definition of the Black Sea as a region are those that can mobilize Russia for defending its interests in the area, as is already the case for energy issues, but also for the Montreux Treaty that guarantees its military domination of the maritime space. This is a paradoxical evolution, since the emergence of regional dynamics seems to come at odds with the concepts of "sphere of influence" and "regional domination" of great powers over their periphery. At the Black Sea, the phenomenon of regionalization of inter-state relations has only lasted for a spring, and the region seems to be destined to fulfill its immemorial role of buffer zone between empires or great powers.

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