

O refluxo e o fluxo do Mar Negro Sobre a Interacção entre um Sistema Regional e o Sistema Internacional

The Black Sea's Ebb and Flow On the Interaction between a Regional System and the International System

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Resumo—A partir da sua emergência, o Mar Negro como sistema regional foi moldado principalmente através da internalização do sistema internacional, seja multipolar, bipolar ou pós-bipolar/unipolar. No entanto, devido à acumulação regional das contradições inerentes à pós-bipolaridade que ultrapassaram a própria evolução do sistema pós-bipolar, este processo foi invertido. Com a crise georgiana e ucraniana de 2008 e 2014, o contexto regional foi externalizado e teve o seu próprio impacto transformador no sistema internacional pós-bipolar. Ironicamente, a externalização foi seguida pela perifericalização da região na perspectiva do Ocidente, quando este entrou numa fase de regresso à defesa colectiva e de consolidação nas suas relações com a Rússia. Isto deu início a uma nova e acelerada acumulação de tensões na região do Mar Negro, criando as circunstâncias de uma nova externalização, a da invasão russa da Ucrânia.

Palavras-Chave — Mar Negro, Rússia, Sistemas Regionais, Pós-bipolaridade.

Abstract—From its emergence onwards, the Black Sea as a regional system was shaped mainly through the internalisation of the international system, be it multipolar, bipolar or post-bipolar/unipolar. However, due to the regional build-up of the contradictions inherent to post-bipolarity which outpaced the post-bipolar system's own evolution, this process was reversed. With the Georgian and Ukrainian crises of 2008 and 2014, the regional context was externalised and had its own transformative impact on the post-bipolar international system. Ironically, the externalisation was followed by the peripheralisation of the region from the West's perspective when the West had entered into a phase of return to collective defence and consolidation in its relations with Russia. This started a new, accelerated build-up of stresses in the Black Sea region, creating the circumstances of a new externalisation, that of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Keywords — Black Sea, Russia, Regional Systems, Post-bipolarity.

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1 Introduction

The Georgian and Ukrainian crises of 2008 and 2014 had brought the Black Sea basin under the spotlight of the international politics, apparently more because they deepened the rift between Russia and the "West" than the immediate impact of these events on their direct counterparts. In 2022, the Black Sea basin "erupted" once again toward the international system, as Russia invaded Ukraine. Not only this region's crises themselves but also and in particular, their stemming from preceding systemic stresses and their ensuing influence on the international system itself deserve particular attention: The region seems to concentrate and amplify the contradictions inherent to the post-bipolar/ arguably unipolar international state of affairs. As such, more than being a sub-component of the international structure, the region seems to be in a mutually defining relationship with the international system. The regional "concentration" and "amplification" seem to have caused, through the crises mentioned above, a "premature" change within the post-bipolar state of affairs as they outpaced the natural build-up of systemic stresses. The contradictions between the Russian Federation and the ex-Soviet countries of the region, the emergence of the frozen conflicts within this framework and the western actors degree of engagement in the regional context constitute the contents of this particular phenomenon.

The study of the said phenomenon constitutes the aim of this paper. This requires a theoretical effort pertaining to the notions of regional and international system as well as their interaction, which will eventually have to go beyond the current IR literature. The first sub-section of this paper shall be reserved to this matter. The remaining sub-sections of this part will consist of studying the Black Sea basin within the conceptual framework to be proposed, as to its genesis as a regional system and as to its relationship with/ its internalisation of its contemporary multipolar and bipolar international systems.

The second section shall consist of a debate on the passage to and the nature of the post-

bipolarity, followed by the description of the Black Sea region's internalisation of the post-bipolar international system at its initial phase.

The third section shall deal with the *sui generis* transformation of the relationship between the Black Sea region and the post-bipolarity which engendered the phenomenon of externalisation of the regional context toward the international system as a result of the regional concentration and amplification of the systemic stresses that outpaced their natural course in the generality of the post-bipolar intersubjectivity. Here, the circumstances of a first externalisation related to the 2008 Georgian and 2014 Ukrainian crises, its consequences on the international system, its controversial effect on the region-international system relationship that appeared as the Black Sea's *peripheralisation* and finally, the second externalisation of the regional context that appears as the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine shall be studied in consecutive sub-sections.

2 A regional system's *genesis* and *praxis* within and in relation with its contemporary international system: The case of the Black Sea

On the "system" and the "region"

Speaking of an international system reminds, at the first place, the structural realist understanding of the interstate relations. Here the state-actors are attributed with a common axiomatic ground from which stem their fundamental behaviour patterns. The axiomatic ground consists of taking the state-actor as an entity with the single motive of survival¹, which engenders microeconomy- modeled behavior patterns² that reside on the sole parameter of "power" in the actor's interactions with other actors. The power-distribution among the actors³ defines the actors particular behavior patterns, from which an

1. Kenneth Waltz, *International Politics is not Foreign Policy*, Security Studies 1996 6(1):54-57; Also Waltz 1979, op.cit., pp93-97.

2. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing 1979, pp89-93.

3. Waltz 1979, op.cit., pp97-99.

anarchic⁴ structure/system emerges. The power-distribution and related behavior patterns also define systemic challenges and the dynamics of systemic transformations⁵ inherent to the structure. Here come forth the reciprocal positions of actors with a "qualitative edge relative to others"/ major powers, according to a series of *objectivised* power parameters⁶. The system thus becomes expressible in terms of polarity as a referential framework for the state-actors' interactions. Different types of polarity (multipolarity, bipolarity and unipolarity) as references explain, in their turn, general behavioural patterns among the poles/major powers and other state-actors. Consequently, it becomes possible to explain why actors "similarly placed behave similarly despite their internal differences"⁷. However, the consequent question of why actors "*similarly placed in a system behave in different ways*" remains unanswered and sent to the vague domain of "their internal compositions"⁸, purifying the theoretical construct from omnipresent incompatibilities, often to the detriment of its explanatory function. This situation apparently arises from the theoretical construct's concern of proposing/building objectivity in an otherwise purely intersubjective field where neither the state-actors themselves nor their system "objectively", self-standingly exist. And yet, the structural realist systemic *Weltanschauung* is fundamental to this paper, as it expresses, however in pre-selected contents, referential relations of units and sub-systems with the general appearance of an intersubjectively recognised, common state-of-affairs in absence of which no coherent IR study is possible: No element of the IR to begin with the "State" as actor- has an objective, self-standing correspondence other than an intersubjective recognition already given in praxis, which brings a praxis-born "system" and which therefore needs to be referred as such in a study.

Consequently, the polarity terminology in this

4. Waltz 1979,op.cit., Mansfield, op.cit.

5. Edward D.Mansfield, *Concentration, Polarity, and the Distribution of Power*, International Studies Quarterly 1993 (37:1):105-128; Waltz 1979,op.cit.,p95.

6. Ibid,p131; Kenneth Waltz, *The Emerging Structure of International Politics*, International Security 1993 (18:2):44-79.

7. Waltz 1996, op.cit.

8. Ibid., also Waltz 1979,op.cit.,p122.

paper shall express the intersubjective appearance of the interstate relations at a given time as a general framework, in reference to which the actors position themselves. As such, the difference with the structural realism and realism in general-bears upon precedence. Whereas the structural realism attributes quasi-ontological precedence to objective/objectivised parameters of power and power-relations in the study of the international structure and the states' behaviour within⁹, this paper takes the intersubjective appearance of this structure as a preceding, referential framework according to which the mentioned parameters gain their meaning. This paper's approach of recognising the practical precedence of the intersubjective givenness-of-the-"world" in a defined shape resides upon phenomenology/phenomenology¹⁰, to provide the study with an ontological ground rooted in praxis. The states, international relations, regional systems as well as the mentioned parameters attributed to interactions within this sphere gain meaning but on their prior and intersubjective recognition. This alteration of precedence and the avoidance from "building" objectivity do not hinder the usefulness of the structural realism's systemic terminology. The study here merely recognises the precedence of the given "meaning ground", which permits the meaningful appearance of parameters, acts and events related to interstate interactions. Consequently and borrowing Hansen's term¹¹, the system appears more as an international *order* which is intersubjective, expressible as a "normative position", a defining attitude, proposal or normative *corpus*

9. Waltz 1979,op.cit., pp161-193; J.J.Mearsheimer,*A Realist Reply*, International Security, 20(1)1995,pp8293; Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations:The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Alfred A.Knopf 1948,pp137-157; R.Jervis, *Unipolarity:A Structural Perspective*, World Politics 61(1)2009,pp188-213; Stephen M.Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Cornell University Press 1987; K.W.Deutsch, J.D.Singer, *Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability*,World Politics,16(3) 1964,pp390-406.

10. Marcus Brainard, *Belief and its Neutralization*, SUNY,Albany 2002,pp68-74; Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, Martinus Nijhoff:The Hague, 1982,pp7-9; Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology(Ideen I)*, Martinus Nijhoff,The Hague 1983,pp67-69, Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time:Prolegomena*, Indiana University Press,Bloomington 1985,pp115-116.

11. Birthe Hansen, *Unipolarity and World Politics:A Theory and its Implications*, (Oxon:Routledge 2011),pp7-8.

rather than an "objective" and neutral "structure" with theoretically and selectively- pre-attributed parameters.

This paper's approach does not coincide with constructivist or post-structuralist lines of thought either. The notions of the social construct and communicative processes appear rather as an effort to bring an explanation to the preceding intersubjectivity through bestowing causal precedence to interactions a *posteriori* to the given meaning-ground¹², therefore reversing the referential link between them. This does not disregard intersubjectivity itself but alters its nature, making it rather a product of "preceding" socio-psychological interactions rather than studying these interactions on the ground of givenness on which they meaningfully appear. As to post-structuralism, the referred-to postulates of for example- freedom, sovereignty, participation in de-centering discourse and acts quite artificially pre-condition and reverse the constitutive precedence of the intersubjective appearance¹³. It thus distances itself from the phenomenological reduction of the discourse, events and acts to reach their immediate givenness and in a way replicates constructivism. One may add the critical geopolitics to this category as its spatiality-stressing branch¹⁴.

The terms of region/regional system immediately refers to a particular space as the meaning ground of the interactions among a group of actors that are present "there", spatially bound to it and through this common

denominator, to each other. Secondly, the "region" is meaningful but in a referential relation to a generality, to which it makes part. A regional system's genesis and praxis, as intersubjective appearances themselves, would take forms through the region's particular relation to the international system-as-order, where its spatiality-based own "order" as meaning ground is referentially linked to that of the international system. This referential/constitutive relationship appears as the internalisation of the international system/order/meaning ground by the region. However, as the Black Sea has been displaying, this relation may appear as externalisation in the meaning of transformative exportation of the regional context toward the international system/order in particular circumstances or appear as peripheralisation as the relative weakening of the constitutive link between the regional and the international system.

The Black Sea's genesis and its internalisation of the multipolarity and the bipolarity

When and how the Black Sea came into being as a regional system? The Ottomans' conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and the establishment of their control over Crimea in 1475¹⁵ had made the Black Sea a "non-region" as they practically became the sole actor in that geography. Russia's entry into the space with Peter the Great's advance¹⁶ and furthered by Catherine the II's conquests¹⁷ changed the meaning ground of the Black Sea. The space gained a political identity

12. Nicholas G.Onuf, *World of Our Making*, University of SC Press, Columbia 1989,pp35-64; Nicholas G.Onuf, *Making Sense,Making Worlds*: Routledge,New York 2013,pp3-20; Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge University Press 1999.

13. R.K.Ashley, *The Poverty of Neorealism*, International Organization 38(2)1984,pp225-286; E.A.Korosteleva, *The European Union, Russia and the Eastern Region*,Cooperation and Conflict,2016 DOI:10.1177/0010836716631778; Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*, Cambridge University Press 1995,pp53-87; Also: Michel Foucault, *Power*, New Press 2000,pp474-475; W.F.Allen,*Hannah Arendt:Existential Phenomenology and Political Freedom*, Philosophy Social Criticism 9(2) 1982,pp170-190.

14. Yves Lacoste,*La géographie, ça sert d'abord à faire la guerre*, Maspéro,Paris 1976; Klaus J.Dodds, *Global Geopolitics:A Critical Introduction*, Pearson Prentice Hall,Dorchester 2005; Eds. Ingram A., Dodds K.,*Spaces of Security and Insecurity*, Ashgate,Farnham 2009,pp1-12; Gearoid O.Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics:The Politics of Writing Global Space*, Routledge,London 1996,pp1-15.

15. H.Inalcik, *Struggle for East-European Empire 1400-1700*, Turkish Yearbook of International Relations, 21, 1995,pp1-16.

16. Paul Bushkovitsch, *Peter the Great*, Cambridge University Press 2004, pp83-188; Kenneth M.Setton, *Venice, Austrians and Turks in the Seventeenth Century*, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia 1991,p422.

17. Treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca,http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/hist/eia/documents_archive/kucuk-kaynarca.php.; M.S.Anderson, *The Great Powers and the Russian Annexation of the Crimea*,The Slavonic and East European Review, 37(88) 1958,pp17-41; Eds. J.Burbank,M.Von Hagen,A.Remnev, *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power*;Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2007; John P.Le Donne, *The Grand Strategy of the Russian Empire:1650-1831*, Oxford University Press, NY 2004.

as a regional system through the reciprocal positioning of the two actors with Black Sea as a common spatial denominator. On this ground appeared further spatio-political references of interiority and exteriority related to the Black Sea that expressed the *regionality* of the two actors and the *extra-regionality* of the "Others". The region appeared on this spatio-political meaning ground as a defined part of the international system. Thus the specific parts of this space, such as the Turkish Straits, the mouth of Danube or the Crimean Peninsula/ Kerch Strait, gained meaning beyond their mere geographical "objectivity". When Romania and Bulgaria gained their independence during the XIXth Century, they appeared as new regional actors within this already-established meaning framework.

Still, what was the nature of the contemporary international system that constituted the intersubjective reference to the emergence of the Black Sea as a "region"? What were the contents of this reference at that time?

Multipolarity seems to be a valid term for the intersubjective appearance of the international system of the period, due to the reference to multiple actors with a "qualitative edge relative to others" within the interstate interactions¹⁸. Multipolarity *ipso facto* brought a flexible horizon of alignment and confrontation to actors' interactions.

As to the nature of the referential relation between the Black Sea and the general intersubjectivity of the interstate relations, in other words, as to synchronisation of the regional interactions with the contemporary state of the multipolarity, it might be correct to speak of *internalisation*. The region's internalisation of the multipolarity in its contemporary state was observable in particular in the relations between Russia/USSR and the Ottoman Empire/ Turkey as actors with a "qualitative edge relative to others" in the regional context. Within this framework, spaces that were attributed with particular meaning in the regional context often reflected the internalisation. Here the example of the Turkish Straits comes forth with its status changes that were synchronous with the fluctuation of multipolar alignments that

were internalised through the two "main" regional actors' interactions also involving the extra-regionals. The 1829 Treaty of Edirne¹⁹, 1833 Treaty of Hunkar Iskelesi²⁰, 1841 London Congress²¹, 1856 Treaty of Paris²², 1871 London Agreement²³, 1920 Treaty of Sevres²⁴, 1923 Treaty of Lausanne²⁵ and lastly 1936 Montreux Convention²⁶ display the consecutive phases of the regional internalisation of the multipolar changes. These documents have all defined and re-defined the shape of the region through reflecting the dynamics of multipolar intersubjectivity.

Multipolarity was replaced by the-then "novelty" of bipolarity at the end of the IIInd World War²⁷ which brought, in contrast to the multipolar structure, an extremely rigid referential framework concerning alignments and confrontations. For each actor of the system, the positional horizons/options were narrowed down by the state of the interactions between the two poles, whereas the multipolarity was providing the actors with wider flexibility²⁸. Here the fundamental differentiation between bipolarity and bipolarisation is of note: While bipolarity refers to the central dialectic of two specific actors regarding which the international structure takes its shape, bipolarisation constitutes a possible alignment form of the inherently dynamic multipolar structure, as exemplified before and during the "generalised" wars in Europe²⁹.

The Black Sea's internalisation of the bipolarity consisted of the contextualisation of this

19. <https://mjp.univ-perp.fr/traites/1829andrinople.htm>

20. Nikolaos Chatziioannou, *The Question of the Straits and the Soviet Foreign Policy*, International Hellenic University, Thessaloniki 2013, pp10-11.

21. N.Unlu N., *The Legal Regime of the Turkish Straits*, Ed.G.J.Mangone, International Straits of the World, Kluwer, The Hague 2002.

22. H.Temperley, *The Treaty of Paris of 1856 and Its Execution*, The Journal of Modern History, 4(3) 1932, pp387-414.

23. W.E.Mosse, *The End of the Crimean System*, The Historical Journal, 4(2) 1961, pp164-190.

24. https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Peace_Treaty_of_Sèvres

25. <http://www.hri.org/docs/straits/convention.html>

26. Recueil des Traités, Société des Nations, Vol.CLXXIII 1936-1937, N.:4015.

27. Waltz 1979, op.cit., p162.

28. Waltz 1979, op.cit., pp163-169.

29. Waltz 1979, op.cit., pp170-173; also Goedele De Keersmaeker, *Polarity, Balance of Power and International Relations Theory*, Palgrave Macmillan 2017, pp16-21.

18. See also Waltz 1979, op.cit., pp129-130.

referential rigidity in replacement of the multipolar flexibility. The region's passage from one reference to another was however not a *tabula rasa*, as observable in the Turkish-Russian reciprocal positioning. This seemed to be more like an adaptation of the intra-regional positions to the new intersubjectivity of the interstate relations. As the USSR emerged as one of the two poles of the new international system, Turkey *eventually* sought and only after difficulties found- a balance in the opposite direction, as retention of the multipolar era's alignment praxis adapted to bipolarity. Turkey was included into the Truman Doctrine, was made a partner of the Marshall Plan and ultimately became a NATO member. Here, the once flexible Turkish multipolar balancing shifted to the non-flexible balance of the bipolar-alignment. In contrast to Turkey, however, the Bulgarian and Rumanian passages to bipolar-alignment were *exogenously* imposed upon them through direct Soviet presence on their territory and ensuing political consequences, which prevented retention and adaptation of their multipolar positioning.

It is of note that in comparison to multipolarity, the bipolar-rigidity as internalised by the region is observable through the same example of the Turkish Straits' regime. Having otherwise been very changing when it was a spatial focus of the internalisation of the multipolarity, the regime was frozen in its latest multipolar form (the Montreux system) and remained unchanged throughout the bipolar-era, to the point of becoming even non-debatable except the efficiency and punctuality of its implementation³⁰.

3 The Black Sea Region of the Post-Bipolar Era: Internalisation Phase

The post-bipolarity: Retention and centrifugality

Bipolarity's end did not reverse the international

30. N.Oral, *Black Sea Security under the 1936 Montreux Treaty*, Eds. C.Esposito, J.Kraska, H.N.Scheiber, M.S.Kwon Ocean Law and Policy, Brill-Nijhoff, 2016, pp266-286.

structure to multipolarity. Instead, the transition appeared as the "unipolar moment"³¹ or as Wohlforth's unipolarity formula of $2-1=1$ ³², not necessarily in the sense of "material capacity" but as intersubjective reference. At the moment of transition- the USSR's collapse, Moscow had been preserving the nuclear and to an extent the conventional military balance. Yet at the unipolar moment and further into the post-bipolarity, it also shared the intersubjective reference to unipolarity as shown by its own westernisation attempts.

Nevertheless, the passage to unipolarity still displayed, in a way, the *unilateral continuity of the bipolarity*³³ since it did not fundamentally alter the main Western positions of the bipolar-era. To cite an example, the unipole and its allies did not replace the bipolar-NATO with a more inclusive security arrangement more fitting to post-bipolarity/ unipolarity. NATO rather received additional roles and adopted additional discourses adapted to the post-bipolar environment³⁴, while preserving its alliance structure- therefore this structure's opponent(s) at least as a "potentiality". Post-bipolar NATO cooperation processes have been selective: The new independencies and the ex-Warsaw Pact members were de facto classified according to the security concerns involving Russia, as retained from the previous continuum. The PfP, for example, provided some participants with a perspective for membership and others with a mere dialogue mechanism and ad hoc cooperation projects³⁵. Russia was firmly held at a distance despite her being part of

31. C.Krauthammer, *The Unipolar Moment*, Foreign Affairs, 70(1)1991, pp23-33.

32. W.C.Wohlforth, *The Stability of a Unipolar World*, International Security 24(1) 1999, pp5-41.

33. Waltz 1993, op.cit.; also S.Cross *NATORussia Security Challenges in the Aftermath of Ukraine Conflict*, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 2015, DOI: 10.1080/14683857.2015.1060017

34. Sarah Da Mota, NATO, Civilisation and Individuals, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham 2018, pp146-149; T.Flockhart, *Post-Bipolar Challenges*, Ed. S.Mayer, NATO's Post-Cold War Politics, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, pp71-88.

35. H.De Santis, *Romancing NATO: Partnership for Peace and East European Stability*, Journal of Strategic Studies 17(4) 1994, pp61-81; R.H.Donaldson, *The Role of NATO Enlargement in the Ukraine Crisis*, The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review 44, 2017, pp32-52; Ed. A.Cottey, *The European Neutrals and NATO: Non-Alignment, Partnership, Membership?*, Palgrave Macmillan 2018, pp61-65; also Da Mota, op.cit., pp151-155.

the PfP by 1994³⁶ and was given a rather non-binding "bilateral" consultative platform through the Founding Act of 1997³⁷ and later the NATO-Russia Council³⁸, reminding the bipolar-era setting. From the Kosovo crisis³⁹ onwards, serious international incidents proved how ethereal these consultative mechanisms were.

If the "West" largely retained its bipolar-core with adaptations, Russia does not seem to have done otherwise either. With a view to balance her bipolar-antithesis within the new circumstances, it apparently made three different attempts. The first one aimed at diminishing and/or limiting the Western alignment structure. The replacement of NATO by a new European- or transatlantic security architecture with Russian equal say was continuously reclaimed⁴⁰. To the measure of her capabilities, Russia opposed to NATO and in time to the EU- enlargement⁴¹. The second attempt consisted of preserving the prominence of the main bipolar-structures that were carried to post-bipolarity. Russia referred only to those international instances as "legitimate" such as the UN Security Council and the CSCE/OSCE where she had an equal presence. The third attempt was to produce Russia's own post-bipolarity-adapted alignment network. This consisted not only of the CIS, CSTO and the string of economic cooperation/ integration at-

tempts reaching to the EAEU but also the near-abroad concept. The near-abroad resulted in the emergence of conflicts between the pro-Western and pro-Russian factions and secessions in the new independencies⁴². In addition, Russia initiated a gradual rapprochement with China on an increasingly anti-unipolarist/multipolarist/ "polycentrist" convergence⁴³.

On the other hand, the post-bipolarity contrasts to the bipolarity in the matter of alignments as it provided the actors with a relative flexibility, despite the partial retention of the bipolar-elements within the post-bipolar/unipolar international system. The post-bipolar alignment did not have the quasi-absolute character of the bipolar one, which had been referring to a fundamental dialectic that defined the system. The relative loosening of the alignment paradigm seems to have engendered an appearance of *centrifugality*, in particular between the unipole and its allies relative to their close-knit relations of the bipolar-era. Post-bipolarity as an intersubjective environment of the interstate relations therefore appears as a dynamic coexistence between the centrifugal and retentional tendencies, both relative to the preceding bipolar intersubjectivity yet validly definable so *due* to this relativity.

Both centrifugality and retention seem to have gained intensity in parallel to the increase of the Russian opposition to the Western "unilateralism", which is also a "temporal" heritage of the bipolar-era. More Russian opposition brought stronger centrifugal and retentional tendencies to the Western alignment network in particular. It is of note, however, that these tendencies proved not to be uniform or proportional in the entirety of the international system. The Black Sea region contrasted to the rest at that point and showed stronger opposition and stronger centrifugality/retention, apparently

36. Hall Gardner, Crimea, *Global Rivalry and the Vengeance of History*, Palgrave MacMillan, NY 2015,p54.

37. https://www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm; also Luis Simón, *Geopolitical Change, Grand Strategy and European Security*, Palgrave Macmillan,Basingstoke 2013,p195.

38. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50091.htm.

39. Vincent Pouliot, *International Security in Practice:The Politics of NATO Russia Diplomacy*, Cambridge University Press,NY, 2010,pp194-230; Gardner 2015,op.cit.,pp55-57; John Norris, *Collision Course:NATO, Russia and Kosovo*, Praeger, Westport 2005,pp303-322.

40. S.Karaganov, T.Bordachev *Towards a New Euro-Atlantic Security Architecture*,Valdai Discussion Club Conference, London,8-10 Dec.2009; Pouliot,op.cit.,pp94-147; Hall Gardner,NATO Expansion and US Strategy in Asia, Palgrave,NY, 2013,pp53-55.

41. A.Wolff, *The Future of NATO Enlargement after the Ukraine Crisis*, *International Affairs*, 91(5) 2015,pp11031121; T.Casier, *Identities and Images of Competition in the Overlapping Neighbourhoods:How EU and Russian Foreign Policies Interact*,Eds. R.Piet, L.Simao, *Security in Shared Neighbourhoods: Foreign Policy of Russia, Turkey and the EU*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2016,pp13-34.

42. But see M.O.Slobodchikoff, *Challenging US Hegemony:The Ukrainian Crisis and Russian Regional Order*, *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, 44(1) 2017,pp76-95.

43. Alexander Lukin, *China and Russia:The New Rapprochement*, Polity Press, Cambridge; Bobo Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham 2002,pp67-72; also Eds. A.Melville, T.Shakhleina, *Russian Foreign Policy in Transition*, Central European University Press, Budapest 2005 for the fundamental documents of the rapprochement.

due to the main Western actors non-regionality in contrast to Russia's regionality as well as to the transformation of the region's own constitutive reference toward the new contradictory relations between the region's new actors and Russia. The disproportionality gradually brought a referential *desynchronisation* between the region and the international system from within the process of its internalisation of the post-bipolarity.

The Black Sea's internalisation of the post-bipolarity

The internalisation of the passage from multipolarity to bipolarity had altered the nature of alignment in the Black Sea region. The passage to post-bipolarity seems to have gone disproportionately further within the region, to the point of transforming the constitutive reference of the regional system. With the dismemberment of the USSR, new actors emerged in the Black Sea basin while the successor of the USSR remained a regional actor as well. Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova were *genetically* related to Russia as the USSR's successor. While the very individuation of these countries (as independencies from...) existentially distanced them from Moscow as a strong form of *centrifugality*, the same genetical bound made them parts of the Russian "near-abroad", therefore of the Russian retention in its post-bipolar positioning. This a priori positional contradiction largely constituted the meaning-ground of the political/economic even cultural in building national narratives of the new independencies - interactions between Russia and the three countries of the region. The phenomenon seems to have eclipsed the *prior* meaning-ground of the regional intersubjectivity, *roughly* the Russo-Turkish dialectic of multipolarity which had evolved into a component of bipolar-era of interstate relations.

The transformative content of the regional internalisation of the post-bipolarity may be thought on these general lines. The regional actors' policy forms and contents reflected this passage to the "new" Black Sea context. However, this kind of internalisation of the post-bipolar

intersubjectivity included the latter's "disproportionate" amplification within the regional context compared to the generality of the system. Whereas the a priori contradiction between the Russian retention and the new independencies' individuation/radical centrifugality was central to the transformation of the regional system, it constituted but a phenomenon among many for the post-bipolar international system.

The early events related to this constitutive-contradiction of the post-bipolar Black Sea context appeared through Moscow's direct/indirect pressure on the new independencies and support to their "pro-Russian" or dissident factions for limiting their western-shift⁴⁴, in particular their long-term prospects of NATO and the EU- membership⁴⁵. In this vein, the Russian-backed and maintained secessions of Abkhazia and of South Ossetia from Georgia and of Transnistria from Moldova constituted examples of the Black Sea's sui generis internalisation of the post-bipolarity⁴⁶. Consequently, these events gave further impetus to the two countries' self-distancing from Moscow, as exemplified by their colour revolutions or by the pro-western GUAM attempt that included them and Ukraine as the ex-Soviet Black Sea countries⁴⁷. In the case of Ukraine however, the relative equilibrium of the two spatially and linguistically dissociated factions⁴⁸ engendered and sustained a dispute over the country's post-bipolar posi-

44. see also D.Lynch, *De Facto States Around the Black Sea*, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 7(3) 2007,pp483-496; A.Matveeva, *Conflicts in the Wider Black Sea Area* Eds. D.Hamilton, G.Mangott, *The Wider Black Sea Region in the 21st Century*, Center for Transatlantic Relations, Washington 2008,pp177-224; N.A.Arbatova, *Troubled Strategic Partnership: The Black Sea Dimension of Russias Relations with the West*, Ibid.,pp294-318.

45. Wolff,op.cit.; Matthias Conrad, *NATO-Russia Relations under Putin*, LIT Verlag, Berlin 2011,pp59-77; J.Sherr, *Security in the Black Sea Region: Back to Realpolitik?*, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 8(2) 2008,pp141-153.

46. V.Kolossov, J.O'Loughlin, *Pseudo States as Harbingers of a New Geopolitics*, Geopolitics 3(1) 1998,pp151-176.

47. Lincoln A.Mitchell, *The Color Revolutions*, PENN,Philadelphia 2012.

48. Census data: <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/nationality/http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/language/http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/language/Crimea/http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/language/Donetsk/http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/language/Luhansk/>

tion⁴⁹. There, the power changed hands between the roughly pro-Russian and pro-Western factions without assuring either side a solid preponderance in determining the country's position. Even the Orange Revolution⁵⁰ was reversed within a few years by the pro-Russian Yanukovich's triumph in the 2010 elections⁵¹. The Ukrainian "oscillation" showed itself in Kiev's participation in and occasional stalling within the GUAM, or alternating willingness/ unwillingness for NATO membership that reflected the changes of faction in power.

For the Western-anchored regional actors and Western extra-regional actors, the internalisation of the post-bipolarity from the perspective of centrifugality and retention offers an interesting picture. In the Romanian and Bulgarian cases, the internalisation appeared as an inclination to align with/to become the "West"⁵². This took form not only as the pursuit of reforms but also as a determined cooperation with the Western actors and institutions in controversial matters such as the Kosovo Crisis⁵³ and -for Romania in particular- the Iraq War. Their being eclipsed by the imposing phenomenon of the new independencies-Russia contradiction seems to have facilitated this realignment, as their shift became but secondary to this defining element of the regional context. On the other hand, once their membership to NATO and to the EU therefore their "westernisation" was achieved in 2004 and in 2007 respectively, both centrifugality and retention in their new alignments became valid. While Bulgaria opted for a less and less westward-engaged therefore centrifugal stance in the Black Sea, Romania apparently tried to self-position as the regional

catalyser of the West⁵⁴ with a late-acquired "retentional" attitude. Bucharest initiated the "Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership" in 2006 and proposed the "Black Sea Synergy" under the EU, while Bulgaria gradually neared to a sort of equidistance between Russia and the West⁵⁵.

Being the only NATO-member of the Black Sea during the bipolar era, the very passage to post-bipolarity and the consequent "westernisation" of Romania and Bulgaria inherently narrowed Turkey's retentional horizon relative to its bipolar-era position. The transition of the regional meaning-ground toward Russia-new independencies contradiction seems to have further diminished Ankara's otherwise solidly western-anchored position as well. Turkey not only ceased to be central with "Russia" to region's definition, but also ceased to be the only regional ally/part of the West. Both this ground-shift and being not anymore the unique western-anchor in the region seem to have gradually increased centrifugality for Ankara. The internalisation of the post-bipolarity also provided Turkey with a wider horizon to develop relations with all the Black Sea actors: In a way, the internalisation of the centrifugality by itself fed even further centrifugality for the Turkish position in the new Black Sea context, while "retention" from the same perspective was further eclipsed. The process gradually decreased attachment to western expectations in the region, including security matters⁵⁶.

The Western actors' -the US' and the EU countries'- post-bipolar involvement into the region through retention and centrifugality naturally bore perspectives of extra-regionality. From the US' standpoint, the regional internalisation process seems to have constituted but a subordinated part of the general transformation of the international system, however this transformation was primarily anchored to the (change of the)

49. D.Lazarevi, *NATO Enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia*, Connections, 9(1) 2009, pp2966; R.Sakwa, *The Ukraine Syndrome and Europe: Between Norms and Space*, The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review, 44(1) 2017, pp9-31; Korosteleva, op.cit.

50. V.Paniotto, *Ukraine: Presidential Elections 2004 and the Orange Revolution*, Kyiv International Institute of Sociology Publications 2005.

51. N.Kharchenko, V.Paniotto, *The Ukraine Presidential Election: Comparing the 2010 and 2004 Exit Polls* Kyiv International Institute of Sociology 2011

52. W.A.S.C.Nieto, *A Drop in the Ocean: Bulgaria's NATO Membership and Black Sea Geopolitics*, European Security 17(4) 2008, pp517-532; T.Gallagher, *Balkan But Different: Romania and Bulgaria's Contrasting Paths to NATO Membership 1994/2002*, Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics 20(4) 2004, pp1-19.

53. see Nieto, op.cit.

54. D.Dungaciu, *Geopolitics and Security by the Black Sea: The Strategic Options of Romania and Republic of Moldova*, Eds. S.Vaduva, A.R.Thomas Geopolitics, Development and National Security: Romania and Moldova at the Crossroads, Springer, Cham 2015, pp23-51.

55. D.Dungaciu, L.Dumitrescu, *Romania's Strategic Initiatives in the Black Sea Area*, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies 2019, DOI:10.1080/14683857.2019.1623983.

56. see also S.Glebov, *Black Sea Security as a Regional Concern for the Black Sea States and the Global Powers*, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 9(3) 2009, pp351-365.

relations with Russia. The post-bipolar extra-regionality contrasted with that of the bipolar-era US, when the western alignment's rigidity was more prominent and geographically more uniform due to the very nature of the international system. Therefore, centrifugality engendered by the passage to post-bipolarity was further amplified in the Black Sea context for the US due to its extra-regionality, which became much more meaningful compared to the bipolar-era. As such, its perspective of the Russian-new independencies relations as the regional meaning ground contrasted with that of the regional actors within their immediate environment⁵⁷. This might for example explain the gap between the US support and the Georgian and Ukrainian expectations during and soon after the colour revolutions⁵⁸ or even the US' relative indifference to the amplified centrifugality of the regional allies.

The EU partners manifested an even stronger centrifugality in the Black Sea context, also amplified by their extra-regionality, yet starting "ahead" of the US: The EU's main actors' centrifugality in the post-bipolarity gained its meaning relative to the US position as their "pole" while the US-as-pole had a wider and naturally stronger inclination toward retention in balancing the phenomenon. Secondly, the centrifugality of the EU actors also appeared relative to each other as the post-bipolarity, while not hindering for long the progress of the EU integration, nevertheless widened individual policy-horizons of the EU members compared to bipolar-eras "unifying" rigidity. The decrease in European consistency began therefore almost from the very passage to post-bipolarity in matters related to common foreign policy: As an example, however the enlargement could become a common policy and progressed fast during the earlier post-bipolar "vacuum" created by the disappearance of a pole while the other remained intact, the process' momentum did but diminish gradually. This has been more directly

observable in the Black Sea context, where the extraregionality-amplified centrifugality has been distancing the EU from the US while decreasing the EU-consistency for regional policies at the same time. The latter phenomenon of centrifugality seems to have become observable through the weakness in content and inefficiency as to results of the EU's policies toward the Black Sea system and its actors. The EU policies appeared to be rather reluctant, even inconsequential due to their reduction to de facto- minimalistic syntheses of its members' often diverging positions⁵⁹.

As the main examples within this framework, the EU Neighbourhood Policy from 2004 onwards achieved little in its attempted "region-building"⁶⁰ in the already-built Black Sea context. Regarding the resolution of the frozen conflicts engendered by the internalisation, the EU's engagement and contribution have been quite inefficient and low-profile⁶¹. They lacked strong incentives, even collateral ones such as the increase of the FDI flow which was crucial for the new independencies⁶², undermining as such the EU's own regional discourse⁶³ and its reform requests from the Ukraine-Georgia-Moldova trio⁶⁴. However, perhaps the most striking example in the period of internalisation emerged at its "final" stage: The US's attempt to grant MAPs to Georgia and Ukraine at the NATO Bucharest Summit of 2008 was impeded by a part of its European partners, particularly

59. also see Simón, op.cit., pp233-251; P.Manoli, *EU's Flexible Regional Multilateralism Towards Its Black Sea Neighbourhood*, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies 12(3) 2012, pp431-442.

60. M.Cichocki, *European Neighbourhood Policy or Neighbourhood Policies?*, Ibid., pp9-28; P.Manoli, *Where is Black Sea Regionalism Heading?*, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies. 10(3) 2010, pp323-339.

61. L.Simão, *The EU's Conflict Resolution Policies in the Black Sea Area*, Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies, 16(3) 2014, pp300-313; Nicu Popescu, Andrew Wilson, *The Limits of Enlargement-Lite*, ECFR London, 2009.

62. A.Ascani, R.Crescenzi, S.Iammarino, *The Geography of Foreign Investments in the EU Neighbourhood*, Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie 108(1) 2017, pp76-91.

63. Black Seas being a *European Sea*.

64. F.Tassinari, *Region-Building as Trust-Building: The EU's Faltering Involvement in the Black Sea Region*, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 11(3) 2011, pp227-239; L.Beaugitte, R.Yann, F.Guerin-Pace, *The EU and Its Neighbourhoods*, Geopolitics, 20 2015, pp853-879; also S.Cornell, A.Jonsson, *Expanding the European Area of Stability and Democracy to the Wider Black Sea Region*, Eds. D.Hamilton, G.Mangott, op.cit., pp225-250.

57. see also Mitchell 2008, Larrabee 2008) L.E.Mitchell, *More than a Location: Crafting a US Policy for the Black Sea Region*, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies 8(2) 2008; F.S.Larrabee, *NATO and Black Sea Security*, Eds. D.Hamilton, G.Mangott, op.cit., pp277-292.

58. see also D.Tolksdorf, *Russia, the USA and the EU and the Conflicts in the Wider Black Sea Region*, Global Affairs 2015, DOI: 10.1080/23340460.2015.1080886.

Germany and France⁶⁵.

This state of affairs engendered by the EU's *double* centrifugality, had an ironic consequence in validating Russia's distinction between the EU and the US/NATO not only within the post-bipolar international system in general but also regarding the Black Sea where it was internalised through regional parameters⁶⁶. As in the Georgian and Moldovan cases, the EU activities were "favoured" even over the OSCE where the US was active, in part because they have been more sterile and more easily confined to the limits of the Russian consent⁶⁷.

4 Black Sea's Post-Bipolar "Anomalies": Externalisation and Peripheralisation

Black Sea's externalisation

In contrast to the neat rigidity of the bipolarity or to the predictable flexibility of the multipolarity, the post-bipolarity seems to have displayed an inherent instability engendered by the coexistence of retention and centrifugality as regards the intact pole and its alignment network. The inherently fragile "equilibrium" -if equilibrium ever existed- between these phenomena seemed to have deteriorated toward centrifugality as the Russian opposition to the "unipolar" policies gradually stiffened. Within this framework, the Bucharest NATO Summit of 2008 which followed Putin's notorious speech in the 2007 Munich Security Conference⁶⁸ constituted an important turning

65. Lazarevi, op.cit.; Sherr, op.cit.; C.Weaver, *Black Sea or Black Lake? How US-Russian Tensions Are Affecting the EU Policy?*, Eds. K.Henderson, C.Weaver, *The Black Sea Region and EU Policy: The Challenges of Divergent Agendas*, Ashgate, Surrey 2010, pp65-78.

66. M.R.Freire, *Russian Reactions towards EU Black Sea Integration*, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 16(3) 2014, pp370-382; D.Trenin D., *Russia's Perspective on the Wider Black Sea Region*, Eds. D.Hamilton, G.Mangott, op.cit., pp103-120.

67. see Vsevolod Samokhvalov, *Russian-European Relations in the Balkans and Black Sea Region: Great Power Identity and the Idea of Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham 2017, pp178-194.

68. Angela Stent, *US-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, Princeton University Press 2014, pp135-158; Eugene B.Rumer, *Russian Foreign Policy Beyond Putin*, Routledge 2007, pp8-9.

point, immediately observable in the NATO/ EU enlargement process.

As mentioned before, the equilibrium of the two coexisting post-bipolar phenomena did not change everywhere uniformly: This state of affairs internalisation by the Black Sea region, likely due to the following regional properties, seems to have amplified the contradictions, *outpacing* as such the general build-up of the imbalances within the generality of the international system:

- Russia's *interiority* to the Black Sea, therefore her being a direct part of the internalisation process and not only an internalised-factor of the international system, which ensured coherence between its post-bipolar global and regional positions.

- Existentially contradicting relations between Russia and the new independencies as the main meaning-ground of the post-bipolar Black Sea, aggravated by the presence of Russian footholds in Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, either as secessionist entities or a powerful pro-Russian faction.

- Difficulty of projecting force onto the Black Sea from the "outside", due to the Montreux regime's restrictions.

In parallel to the gradual strengthening of centrifugality over retention and its amplification in the Black Sea context, a new phenomenon, the externalisation of the region in the sense of providing transformative contents and forms to the international system, emerged with the Georgian and the Ukrainian crises.

The Georgian War of 2008 constituted the first open military confrontation between Russia and a new independency⁶⁹. The crisis was certainly initiated by Tbilisi's move against South Ossetia yet the prompt and massive Russian military intervention that included Georgia proper, constituted in itself a radical change in the region. The Western non-commitment in granting MAPs to Georgia and Ukraine during the NATO Bucharest Summit, only a few months before the crisis, apparently encouraged Moscow's onslaught. Moscow also recognised the South Ossetian and Abkhazian independencies in August 2008. The event contrasted with Moscow's "passivity" during the

69. Gardner 2013, op.cit., pp73-80; Ronald D.Asmus, *A Little War That Shook The World*, Palgrave MacMillan, NY 2010.

Georgian and Ukrainian colour-revolutions a few years ago⁷⁰.

Despite the vocality of initial western reactions, including an attempt to send a military vessel carrying "humanitarian aid" through the Straits, Georgia was not reinforced. On the contrary, Russia was *de facto appeased* with the US-initiated "Reset period" soon after the crisis⁷¹. The Western promise of the Bucharest Summit for the revision of Ukraine's and Georgia's MAP issues at the end of 2008 did not materialise. As an additional example to centrifugality, it is also of note that Turkey proposed right after the crisis a "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Pact" to bring together Russia, Georgia, Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan, in exclusion of the western actors.

The temporary normalisation brought by the "Reset" which enabled the new START or facilitated the Afghanistan operation⁷² was not reflected on the region, nor proved to be durable in its own context. On the contrary, the Russian fundamental policy-papers from 2008 to 2013 and beyond⁷³ amply showed that Russia's former reactionary complaints against unipolarity and NATO (and EU) expansion were replaced by a determined activism, apparently encouraged by the West's rather discursive reaction to and factual appeasement of the 2008 crisis⁷⁴. In other words, the first stage of the region's externalisation towards the international system seems to have validated the Russian policy changes both at regional and international levels.

The region's externalisation process reached its peak with the Ukrainian crisis of 2014. Ukraine then faced with a choice between the EU Associa-

tion Agreement and the adherence to the EAEU. The impasse would probably not be uncircumventable in the preceding, pre-2008 conditions, since even the Orange Revolution that had heavier impact potential had not caused disintegration or war⁷⁵. However, the pro-Russian government's fait-accompli in favour of the EAEU and the consequent events of the Euromaidan engendered far different results in Ukraine, in the region and in the international system⁷⁶. This time, the pro-Russian side seceded and Russia intervened in force. Crimea was annexed⁷⁷. The annexation itself made a return to status quo ante bellum or even the nascence of a "circumventable" frozen conflict in Crimea like other new (Lugansk and Donetsk) or old regional secessions politically impracticable⁷⁸.

The West reacted more substantially to Ukrainian crisis than it did to the Georgian War. A series of sanctions against Russia was introduced and Russia retaliated with counter-sanctions⁷⁹. During the consecutive NATO Summits that followed the crisis, the collective defence notions re-occupied the agenda⁸⁰. The Wales Summit brought the Readiness Action Plan, the Warsaw Summit a "renewed emphasis on deterrence and collective defence" as well as the stress on the "reliance to US forces" and the Brussels Summit further stress on conventional deterrence and the

70. also see D.Trenin, *Russia's Perspective on the Wider Black Sea Region*, Eds. D.Hamilton, G.Mangott, op.cit., pp103-120.

71. G.M.Hahn, *Russia in 2012: From Thaw and Reset to Freeze*, Asian Survey, 53(1) 2013, pp214-223; Lazarevi, op.cit.

72. R.Deyermond, *Assessing the Reset*, European Security, 22(4) 2013, pp500-523.

73. The Foreign Policy Concept, National Security Concept and Military Doctrine https://russiaeu.ru/userfiles/file/foreign_policy_concept_english.pdf
https://carnegieendowment.org/files/2010russia_military_doctrine.pdf <https://www.rusemb.org.uk/in1/>; <https://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>;
https://www.rusemb.org.uk/rp_insight

74. see also O.Antonenko, *Towards a Comprehensive Regional Security Framework in the Black Sea Region after the Russia-Georgia War*, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies 9(3) 2009, pp259-269.

75. see also M.E.Aleprete, *Minimizing Loss: Explaining Russian Policy Choices during the Ukrainian Crisis*, The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review, 44(1) 2017, pp53-75.

76. Gardner 2015, op.cit., pp65-69; Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West*. Yale University Press, New Haven 2014, pp86-98; Kees Van der Pijl, Flight MH17, *Ukraine and the new Cold War*, Manchester University Press 2018, pp69-86.

77. Marvin Kalb, Imperial Gamble: Putin, *Ukraine and the New Cold War*, Brookings, Washington 2015, pp158-179; Wilson, op.cit., pp110-115.

78. A.Gromyko, *RussiaEU Relations at a Crossroads: Preventing a new Cold War in a Polycentric World*, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 15(2) 2015, pp141-149.

79. Gardner 2015, op.cit., pp70-72; J.Matlary, *Realpolitik Confronts Liberal Democracy: Can Europe Respond?*, Eds. J.Matlary, T.Heier, *Ukraine and Beyond: Russia's Strategic Security Challenge to Europe*, Palgrave Macmillan.

80. Joe Burton, *NATO's Durability in a Post-Cold War World*, SUNY 2018, pp156-166.

"30/30/30 over 30 commitment"⁸¹.

At face value, the externalisation seemed to have reversed the prominence of centrifugality over retention. However, the efficiency of the NATO Summits' targets and decisions proved to be debatable: Deterrence measures through substantial/proportional reinforcement of the East-European NATO-members were almost negligible⁸². Further NATO enlargement in areas that might cross Russia, namely toward Ukraine and Georgia in the Black Sea context, has not even been a matter of serious debate⁸³. The efficiency of the Western sanctions has been at best limited⁸⁴. As such, centrifugality did not seem to be significantly reduced at "global" level and yet, the mothballed-looking "bipolar" security and readiness notions have been reintroduced to an extent, bringing a change as regards the retention.

For the Russian side, the externalisation manifested itself with less abstract contents, in favour of Russia's version of "retention": The Russian military modernisation, capacity-building and demonstrations were increased, military activity quickly "spilled over" to Syria in order to directly balance the Western influence as it was during the bipolarity. Russia could create alignments in this region, tightly with the Damascus regime and more flexibly and limitedly with Iran, largely owing to this intervention. From the Ukrainian crisis onwards the already developing Russo-Chinese rapprochement was further accelerated. In May 2014, right after the crisis, Gazprom signed a 400 billion USD natural

gas export deal with PetroChina, accompanied by other sizeable projects⁸⁵. The bilateral trade aim for 2024 was declared as 200 billion USD⁸⁶. The alignment of the SCO with the Belt and Road Initiative was introduced into discussions⁸⁷. In May 2015, the Russo-Chinese Statement for coordinating the EAEU and the Belt was signed⁸⁸.

Black Sea's peripheralisation

If the externalisation had considerable impact on the post-bipolar international structure, its repercussions on the region proper seem to have differed from that impact. As to the regional meaning-ground, the relations between Russia and the new independencies, the externalisation scarcely mobilised the extra-regional West in the region as it otherwise did, even partially, within the international system. On the other hand, the Russian regional position seems to have followed a coherent course with the changes at systemic level after the externalisation.

Russia continued to support firmly and (de facto) to guarantee the secessionist entities of the Black Sea basin. Its military and naval presence in the Black Sea region quickly increased in quality and quantity⁸⁹. Crimea was heavily militarised⁹⁰. Russia particularly increased its area-denial capacity in the Black Sea, much facilitated by the Cri-

81. J.A.Larsen, *NATO Nuclear Adaptation Since 2014*, Journal of Transatlantic Studies 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s42738-019-00016-y>; F.Heisbourg, *NATO 4.0: The Atlantic Alliance and the Rise of China*, Survival 62(2) 2020, pp83-102; J.Ringsmose, S.Rynning, *The NATO Response Force: A Qualified Failure No More?*, Contemporary Security Policy 2017, DOI:10.1080/13523260.2017.1350020; B.Stahl, R.Lucke, A.Felfeli, *Comeback of the Transatlantic Security Community?*, East European Politics 32(4) 2016, pp525-546.

82. Keir Giles, *Assessing Russia's Reorganized and Rearmed Military*, Carnegie, Washington 2017; Magnus Petersson, *NATO and the Crisis in the International Order*. Routledge, Oxon 2019.

83. A.Lanoszka, *Tangled-up in Rose? Theories of Alliance Entrapment and the 2008 Russo-Georgian War*, Contemporary Security Policy 2017, DOI:10.1080/13523260.2017.1392102.

84. K.A.Kholodilin, A.Netunajev, *Crimea and Punishment: The Impact of Sanctions on Russian Economy and Economies of the Euro-Area* Baltic Journal of Economics, 19(1) 2019, pp39-51.

85. I.Overland, G.Kubayeva, *Did China Bankroll Russia's Annexation of Crimea?* Eds. H.Blakkisrud, E.Wilson-Rowe, *Russia's Turn to the East: Domestic Policymaking and Regional Cooperation*, Palgrave Macmillan 2018.

86. <https://www.rt.com/business/466481-russia-china-200-billion-turnover>

87. E.Fels, *The Geopolitical Significance of Sino-Russian Cooperation in Central Asia for the Belt and Road Initiative*, Ed. M.Mayer, *Rethinking the Silk Road: China's Belt and Road Initiative and Emerging Eurasian Relations*, Palgrave Macmillan 2018.

88. Lukin, op.cit.

89. I.Delanoe, *After the Crimean Crisis: Towards a Greater Russian Maritime Power in the Black Sea*, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies 14(3) 2014, pp367-382; M.Celikpala, E.Ersen, *Turkey's Black Sea Predicament: Challenging or Accommodating Russia?* Perceptions XXIII(2) 2018, pp72-92.

90. K.Åtland, I.Kabanenko, *Russia and its Western Neighbours*, Europe-Asia Studies 2019, DOI:10.1080/09668136.2019.1690634

mean annexation⁹¹. The pre-2014 naval/military balance among the riparians was rapidly altered⁹², providing Russia with regional naval/military superiority⁹³. Shadowing of the NATO vessels and aircraft in the Black Sea increased steeply after 2014⁹⁴. Moreover, the newly built Kerch Bridge seems to have provided Russia with a security pretext for locking down the Azov Sea⁹⁵ as exemplified by the seizure of the Ukrainian navy vessels and personnel that probed the passage in November 2018⁹⁶. As such, the Black Sea, far from being a "strategic trap" for the Russian navy⁹⁷, seems to have become a true safe haven from where the Russian naval power could be projected outwards. This for example facilitated the maintenance of its Tartus and Khmeimim bases in Syria.

On the other hand, if there were no overt appeasement attempt after the 2014 crisis, the "West" took no step in the Black Sea that might be considered equivalent to the changes the externalisation brought to the international system either. No security guarantee or NATO/ EU membership perspective were given to the region's new independencies⁹⁸. Applying effective pressure over Russia to solve the frozen conflicts of Donetsk, Lugansk, Transnistria, South Ossetia or Abkhazia

seemed to be de facto out of the Western agenda. The secessionists-held parts of Donetsk and Lugansk were practically left to Russian influence zone like the secessionist entities of Georgian and Moldovan territory, except the OSCE process that proved to be no game-changer.

The US position towards the region remained contrasted to its growing "retentional" stance within the international system, despite Washington's expressed yet not substantiated support to Kiev. While it is possible to explain the contrast in large part through the hindrance by the European partners' divergent positioning therefore by the continuing centrifugality, the "secondarity" of the Black Sea context in the US foreign policy inherent appeared also central to this state of affairs. After all, the US itself had initiated "Reset" in the same year with the Georgian War. Consequently, even though the relative transformation of the "Western" positions within the post-bipolar international system in favour of retention over centrifugality was triggered by the regions externalisation, the return of this transformation into the regional context seemed to have been feeble.

For the EU part, the attempts such as the Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership⁹⁹ remained far from providing remedies to the essential predicaments of the new independencies. The Eastern Partnership encompassed cooperation processes aiming at concluding Association Agreements in exchange of reforms, settlement of the frozen conflicts, collaboration on energy security, in short a rapprochement with the EU on EU terms/norms yet without a membership perspective¹⁰⁰. Even then, the EU members' priorities varied as to the nature of these initiatives, hin-

91. A.Wilk, *The Military Consequences of the Annexation of Crimea*, Centre for Eastern Studies, Warsaw 2014

92. Deborah Sanders, *Maritime Power in the Black Sea.*, Ashgate, Burlington 2014; A.Klus, *The New Strategic Reality in the Black Sea* New Eastern Europe 22/April 2014

93. L.Savin, *Russian Security Frame for Black Sea Region*, Geopolitica 2017, <https://www.geopolitica.ru/en/article/russian-security-frame-black-sea-region> A.Kuimova, S.Wezeman, *Russia and Black Sea Security*, SIPRI 2018 https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/bp_1812_black_sea_russia_0.pdf

94. Åtland, Kabanenko, op.cit.

95. Blockmans, op.cit.

96. <https://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/2018/the-kerch-strait-incident> <https://www.ft.com/content/f5c68dd4-765c-11e9-be7d-6d846537acab> <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/ukraine-nato-in-talks-over-naval-escorts-through-kerch-strait>; V.J.Schatz, D.Koval, *Russia's Annexation of Crimea and the Passage of Ships Through Kerch Strait: A Law of the Sea Perspective*, Ocean Development and International Law 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00908320.2019.1605677>.

97. N.A.Arbatova, *Security Relations in the Black Sea Region*, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 15(2) 2015, pp129-139.

98. A.Legucka, *The NATO-Ukraine Relations after the Annexation of Crimea*, Ukraine Analytica 2(8) 2017, pp42-50; N.Mikhelidze, *NATO-Georgia Cooperation: A Rhetorical Engagement?*, Caucasus International 4(3-4) 2015, pp45-54.

99. Lynch, op.cit.; M.Emerson, *The EU's New Black Sea Policy* Eds. D.Hamilton, G.Mangott, op.cit., pp225-276; Cichocki, op.cit.

100. L.Delcour, *Dealing with the Elephant in the Room: The EU, its Eastern Neighbourhood and Russia*, Contemporary Politics, 24(1) 2018, pp14-29; K.Wolczuk, *Convergence Without Finalité: EU Strategy Towards Post-Soviet States in the Wider Black Sea Region*, Eds. K.Henderson, C.Weaver, op.cit., pp45-62; but also A.Vieira A., *Ukraine, Russia and the Strategic Partnership Dynamics in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood*, Cambridge Review of International Affairs, 2015, DOI:10.1080/09557571.2015.1093410.

dering coherence and consequently, credibility¹⁰¹. An example to the EU's forthcoming measures was its "encouragement" of the reform-attempts in Ukraine during the most critical times of the crisis between late 2013 and 2015¹⁰². On the other hand, following the 2014 crisis, EU could not even fulfil more than 1/5 of its financial commitments to Ukraine. As another example, the EU Commission's reluctance in providing some relief to Ukraine on the matter of its natural gas crisis (Russia-dependent) by diverting ex-Soviet pipelines and re-exporting Russian gas could only be overcome by the supreme efforts of Poland¹⁰³. A similar lack of progress characterised the Association Agreement concluded with Moldova¹⁰⁴.

As such, the afterwards of the externalisation period of 2008-2014 showed a newer and quite controversial phenomenon, the Black Sea's *peripheralisation* by the extra-regional West. The change of the Western centrifugality-retention equilibrium at "systemic" level did not seem to have had an equal validity in the region, in contrast to Russian coherence. The partial retention of bipolar-like elements in positioning toward Russia, observable in NATO Summits for example, was almost absent or not substantial- in the Black Sea context despite its being the source of transformation. Without concrete balancing through MAPs, security guarantees or substantial aid for economic recovery in particular for Ukraine and for Georgia, inconsequential discursive support from the "West" became susceptible to further reduce its credibility. Peripheralisation consequently reinforced the Russian position in the region and deteriorated the already present imbalance in the relations between Moscow and the three ex-Soviet countries.

Another consequence of the peripheralisation appeared as the increase of centrifugality among the NATO-allies of the Black Sea Basin, in the

sense of the loss of coherence among them. To cite an example, in 2016, the US and Romanian proposal of patching together a Black Sea Flotilla with three regional NATO members and US vessels on rotation¹⁰⁵ was vetoed by Bulgaria¹⁰⁶, despite the speedy increase of the Russian weight in the Black Sea area. It is of note that Sofia remained much dependent on Russia for energy, however it had to comply with the EU's Third Energy Package to the detriment of its participation in the South Stream¹⁰⁷. Another example may be the increase of centrifugality in Turkey's regional policy choices, largely due to lack of credible western engagement in the Black Sea, not only regarding the relative exclusion of the West in its bilateral relations with the regional actors but also in the form of regional initiatives and regional solutions like the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Pact proposal or the Black Sea Harmony's continuation (as the regionalised version of the Operation Active Endeavour for the Mediterranean, however in exclusion of NATO itself¹⁰⁸). Bilaterally, Ankara's close relations with the new independencies were balanced by its cooperation with Russia, including strategic projects such as the Turkish Stream which replaced the South Stream, the Akkuyu nuclear plant, increasing cooperation in military industry in addition to ever-present tourism interests and the natural gas imports.

The Black Sea's second externalisation: The Russian invasion of Ukraine

The one-sided peripheralisation of the Black Sea basin, in other words its

101. Manoli 2012,op.cit.; T.Tsakiris, *The Energy Parameters of the RussianUkrainianEU Impasse: Dependencies, Sanctions and the Rise of Turkish Stream*, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies 15(2) 2015,pp203-219.

102. A.S.Maass, *The Actorness of the EU's State-Building in Ukraine:Before and after Crimea*, Geopolitics 2019,DOI: 10.1080/14650045.2018.1559149; Rilka Dragneva, Kataryna Wolczuk, *Ukraine Between the EU and Russia:The Integration Challenge*, Palgrave Macmillan,Basingstoke 2015,pp83-99.

103. Tsakiris,op.cit.

104. Tolksdorf,op.cit.

105. Dungaciu, Dumitrescu,op.cit.

106. V.Naumescu, *Stability, Ambiguity and Change in the Discourses of NATO Allies in the Black Sea Region:The Cases of Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey*,CIRR, XXIII(80), 2017,pp187-209.

107. Tsakiris,op.cit.;M.Jiruek, T.Vlek, J.Henderson, *Russia's Energy Relations in Southeastern Europe:An Analysis of Motives in Bulgaria and Greece, Post-Soviet Affairs*, 2017,DOI:10.1080/1060586X.2017.1341256

108. Eugene B.Rumer, Jeffrey Simon, *Toward a Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region*, NDU,Washington 2006,pp22-23.

dissociation/desyndronisation from the international system's evolution toward "retention", became susceptible of engendering circumstances of another externalisation. This time, the desynchronisation seemed to reside on the region's increasing fragility due to its lack to turn toward "retention" largely caused by the continuing non-engagement of the "West" while the Russian regional engagement remained coherent with its systemic positioning. The relative letting-alone of the three ex-Soviet countries of the Black Sea and the increase of centrifugality among the three regional NATO-members contrasted with the Russian positional coherence. The gradual shift of the "West" toward retention after the previous externalisation of the regional events had ironically been increasing the distance between the region and the international system due to this contrast, as Russia reciprocated the retentional tendency also and automatically- within the region as well. As such, the Black Sea context became more and more "unbalanced" as to its meaning-ground of the Russia-new independencies contradiction.

On the ground of the Western-distancing of the region from its retention-shifting positioning in the international system in contrast to Russia's "coherence" regarding both contexts, a new externalisation event has emerged, in the form of outright invasion of Ukraine. In concrete contents, the West's avoidance of guaranteeing Ukraine or credibly deterring Russia by granting MAP or formulating bilateral arrangements encouraged Moscow to take this ultimate step concerning the post-bipolar Russia-new independencies contradiction that shaped the Black Sea regional system. The peripheralisation showed itself once again at the critical period right before the invasion, as the US Government repeatedly stated that it would not possibly deploy US military in Ukraine¹⁰⁹, even when the same Government was announcing the Russian preparations to invade, thus in a way assuring Russia instead of Ukraine. On the other

hand, the Russian "coherent" position regarding the international and regional systems is once again displayed by the Muscovite explanation of the invasion itself, which appears as a synthesis of both spheres that includes bilateral "grievances" reflecting the Russia-new independencies contradiction as well as those related to Ukraine's "western"(in particular NATO) inclination and the West's "positive" attitude toward it¹¹⁰.

As of today, the invasion has been continuing for more than three and half months. Contrary to expectations, the initial attempt to decapitate the Ukrainian regime and to occupy key cities including Kiev has failed. However, Russia has been controlling large areas in the South and East Ukraine and has concentrated its efforts on defeating or debilitating the Ukrainian resistance in these theatres, with some progress. The sort of the Russian newer and more limited offensive is still obscure but the Azov coast and the rest of the Black Sea ports of the country, except Odessa which is under blockade, are under the Muscovite control.

At first glance, the externalisation of the current war in the Black Sea basin appears to have reinforced, at least initially, the already existing retentional tendency of the West while reversing the one-sided peripheralisation of the region at the same time, therefore reducing centrifugality as regards the regional system which was, otherwise, ironically coexisting with the Western recovery efforts related to the generality of the interstate intersubjectivity. Within this framework, heavy and seemingly efficient sanctions were imposed upon Russia¹¹¹, the Ukrainian army was substantially reinforced¹¹² and NATO's collective defence identity was stressed at highest level and as never

109. <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/02/24/politics/us-troops-ukraine-russia-nato/index.html>;
https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/biden-says-ground-troops-not-on-the-table-but-putin-would-face-severe-economic-sanctions-for-ukraine-invasion/2021/12/08/3b975d46-5843-11ec-9a18-a506c3aa31d_story.html

110. https://mid.ru/en/press_service/spokesman/briefings/1800470/#11;
https://mid.ru/en/press_service/spokesman/briefings/1800470/#4;
<https://tass.com/defense/1409813>

111. <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economic-issues-watch/russias-war-ukraine-sanctions-timeline>

112. <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/03/22/ukraine-weapons-military-aid-00019104>;
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/16/fact-sheet-on-u-s-security-assistance-for-ukraine/>;
<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9477/CBP-9477.pdf>;
<https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-eu-doubles-military-aid-to-1-billion-as-it-happened/a-61226171>

before during the post-bipolar era¹¹³. However, it is difficult to predict how long this determination encompassing the regional context may endure or how long the Ukrainian resistance may hold Russia at bay in its narrowed offensive in East and South Ukraine. A "separate peace" with significant concessions to Russia, including the constitutional neutrality of Ukraine and even plebiscites in the secessionist zones was being negotiated between Kiev and Moscow during the initial phase of the war¹¹⁴. However these negotiations were suspended as Russian forces had to withdraw from the main invasion route toward Kiev and their advances toward Nikolaev-Odessa were stopped, the current Russian pressure in Donbas and the Russian control of much of the Ukrainian Black Sea coast seems to revivify Ukrainian willingness to negotiate, with now-known contents¹¹⁵. A peace with concessions appears probable in the existing circumstances, given that the territory occupied by Russia during the current war seems to be unrecoverable by Ukrainian arms alone and even the successful continuation of the Ukrainian resistance is becoming doubtful¹¹⁶. In other words, the conclusion of the war with significant Russian "gains" is becoming more probable.

The war externalised, once again, the Black Sea context toward the international system as the systemic stresses had been concentrated and amplified within the regional context, this time as result of the regions peripheralisation, outpacing their build-up in the international system. What might then be the consequences of the peace within the same framework of externalisation? In the case of the Ukrainian consent to peace

with concessions, not only the current sanctions but also those imposed upon Moscow following the 2014 crisis would lose their ground. Ukraine's constitutional neutrality would probably put an end to Georgian and Moldovan prospects of joining the Western Alliance. Russia-new independencies contradictions that have been defining the Black Sea regional system would at least be susceptible to be eclipsed. General centrifugality and regional peripheralisation would logically become preponderant phenomena, going therefore beyond the controversial coexistence of retention and regional peripheralisation that preceded the war and prepared its circumstances.

5 Conclusion

From its emergence onwards, the Black Sea regional system was integrated to the contemporary international system through internalisation. However, the internalisation of the post-bipolarity carried into the region its inherent uncertainties, stemming from the adapted-maintenance of the Western bloc and the centrifugality that coexisted with and increasingly impeded this tendency. The impact of these phenomena was amplified by the region's "unique" post-bipolar appearance that consisted of the shift of the regional meaning-ground toward the contradictions between Russia and the new independencies, Russian interiority and main "western" actors' exteriority to the region that became accentuated through the passage from bipolar to post-bipolar form of alignments. As such, the post-bipolar contradictions became more consequential and the post-bipolar stresses were built-up faster within the Black Sea context compared to the international system. The region's outpacing the international system engendered the peculiar phenomenon of *externalisation* from 2008 onwards and reached the climatic crisis of 2014. The international system, through the externalisation of the regional events, was dragged into a newer phase of post-bipolarity.

Except Russia which is an integral and forthcoming part of the two systems, the Black Sea's externalisation dissociated the regional actors once again, yet in a different fashion, from the international systems own pace: The West

113. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_193719.htm

114. <https://news.sky.com/story/ukraine-war-zelenskyy-says-ukraine-is-willing-to-consider-declaring-neutrality-and-offer-security-guarantees-to-russia-12576688>;
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/30/ukraine-offer-neutrality-meaning-constitution-russia-what-does-neutral-status-country-mean-how-would-it-work>;
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/dereksaul/2022/03/29/russia-ukraine-talks-ukraine-hints-at-progress-on-crimea-while-both-sides-optimistic-on-putin-zelensky-meeting/?sh=4f806e6e27d3>

115. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/17/briefing/russia-ukraine-war-diplomacy.html>

116. <https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2022/6/15/ukraine-to-us-defense-industry-we-need-long-range-precision-weapons>

responded to this externalisation but partially. While consolidating itself to a degree in its relations with Russia, it peripheralised at the same time the region by not credibly extending its consolidation there, whereas Russia was not only unwilling but also existentially unable to peripheralise the region due to its own "interiority" to the Black Sea. As such, the regional system became more and more unbalanced, paving the way to its second externalisation in the form of the current war in Ukraine. However this externalisation seems to have accelerated the Western consolidation/"retentional" tendency as to the international system and reversed peripheralisation of the Black Sea region, the strengthening prospects of a peace through Ukrainian concessions to Russia makes the reversal of the current situation probable even beyond the pre-war state of affairs, as it would suppress the ground of the Western systemic reactions to the 2014 crisis. In other words, if the war brought the second externalisation of the Black Sea context toward the international system, the probable form of the peace might mean a third externalisation that would not only revivify the peripheralisation but also significantly undermine the already existing Western consolidation within the post-bipolar international system.

Note: This is a personal work. It does not reflect the official views of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs where the author is working at the time being.



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