

Reactive Regionalism:

A Comparative Historical Analysis of Russia-EU Interaction within
the Black Sea Geopolitical Environment, 2003-2012

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Abstract

Recent events within the Black Sea geopolitical environment reveal that Russia is taking extreme measures to retain its 'strategic glacis'. Meanwhile, the EU maintains its vocal promotion of a neighbourhood that should be conflict-free, prosperous and well governed. Even if it is feasible to envision the potential for achieving the EU's goal of promoting a ring of well governed countries to the East with which it can enjoy close and cooperative relations, in addition to a Russia-loyal near abroad comprised of countries which have 'space' as a main characteristic, this thesis argues that the two outcomes are mutually exclusive. Black Sea state leaders have become acutely aware that the nature of the EU makes balancing Russia both possible and impossible at the same time. Positioned within intersecting spheres of influence of a traditional and a modern great power, Black Sea small states are caught in a pragmatic limbo regarding their foreign policy orientation.

Borrowing insights from Buzan and Waever (2003) and Neumann's (2003) region-building approaches, this thesis finds that between 2003 and 2012 the Black Sea geopolitical environment has shifted from an environment sharing a 'regional security' logic to a (potentially transitory) 'region' per se. Through the case studies of Moldova and Georgia between 2003 and 2012, the thesis makes a cross-sectional historical comparison to put forth an 'integrated approach' to understanding how conflict, economic dependence, and foreign policy orientation serve as 'triggers' of change in the Black Sea geopolitical environment. The thesis concludes that the Black Sea has generated a new form of regionalism, a 'reactive regionalism' characterized by pragmatic responses to traditional and aggressive (albeit predictable) Moscow and the extremely appealing European model, which, however, provides no substantial geopolitical backing.

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Preface

The subtitle of this thesis, namely ‘A cross-sectional Comparative Historical Assessment of the Outcome of 10 years of Russia-EU Interaction within the Black Sea Geopolitical Environment’ needs to be treated as both indicative of this thesis’s main research methodology but also as a conclusion. If the first of its meanings is one that is expected within a doctoral dissertation, the second comes as a result of long and arduous reflection whilst researching the conclusion that this topic represents the valid research target. In 2011, the first title of this research was along the lines of ‘a deep and comprehensive assessment of the impact of foreign policy conditionality on the development of the Moldovan wine industry’ – an extension of this author’s MA interests. Further to the conclusion that the (i.e. geopolitical) factors influencing the development of the Moldovan wine industry were, in fact, influencing Moldova as a whole and, moreover, were not only influencing Moldova but the region, the focus shifted. The next working title was unclear, as common features (what were to become *variables*) were beginning to appear obvious within the research process, and, in its infant form, tailored around geopolitical factors influencing the Black Sea as a whole. If the said factors were influencing the Black Sea, and were particularly preeminent during the 2000s, the perspective of the research process shifted to the element of novelty within the Black Sea following the beginning of the period – the EU. However, the intermediate title of ‘The impact of the European Union on the Black Sea geopolitical environment’ was also concluded upon to be insufficient, because two other elements began to come to the attention of the research process. First, as the presence of the EU appeared insufficient to explain the *common factors*, it was necessary to explore its interaction with the pre-EU status quo. Second, as a result of exploring this interaction a new, intellectually relevant reality was forming, and it required the use of new research capital (*Reactive Regionalism*). As a result, the sub-title of this thesis also stands as the finite form of a research process.

However, if the finite form of the research focus can be ascertained within the sub-title, then the thesis itself encapsulates the research process. As such, the content of this work represents a (cliché acknowledged) journey of discovery for both the reader and the author, which, I ask, should be approached as such. Reactive regionalism represents the end result of a process of interpretation which happened by following the entrenched structure of the written text, and it was the written text – codification of the research endeavour – which enlightened the author of the clarity and value of the end result. Consequently, I have allowed the form and structure of the work to reveal this process.

Acknowledgements

Within an constantly evolving research focus throughout the process of completing this thesis, my first and foremost humble recognition of tremendous support due to my two supervisors – Dr Audra Mitchell and Dr Nicole Lindstrom, from the University of York, Department of Politics, who have not only guided me through writing a doctoral thesis but, knowingly or not, have represented models of both intellectual performance and academic behaviour. Their impact on my professional evolution has been vital, extending beyond this thesis, to influencing my standards and expectations of myself, as well as my critical ability to assess and perform any given intellectual challenge. For this reason, the only limitation that I feel in expressing my gratitude is that of linguistic ability.

It is also necessary to mention my admiration to the overall approach to the educational process employed by The University of York, which translates into its setting representing far more than a purely scholarly enterprise. The university stands as an ideal environment for the achievement of personal and professional maturity. It provides all the necessary (academic, welfare, technical) tools to a high standard and in an outstandingly friendly and collegial environment, for the true formation of an individual in an academic sense, and for the creation of the *rite of passage* which is a doctoral dissertation aiming to bring a true contribution to knowledge. I am privileged to have studied at York and I will pride myself with this asset in all my future endeavours.

This thesis is, of course, illustrative of the research process and of the opinions of its author. It is in no way indicative of the position of any state, government or international representation. With this element having been clarified, I feel free to also state my appreciation for the support given to me by the Embassy of Romania to the Court of St James's in terms of allowing me to gain the skills and experience which I have put to (hopefully good) use in the process of discerning between what is relevant and what is not in the assessment of a given international context.

Last, but by no means least, I feel it is vital that I state both my humble recognition and my immense admiration for my wife, Arina, and mention the emotional and, sometimes, motivational support of without whom I find it very difficult to see how I could have successfully completed this formative period in my life. She represents for me a true example of strength and excellence – a model that I will always strive to follow.

Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this thesis represents the original result of my own work, and has not been submitted for examination at the University of York or at another institution for another award.

1. The Topic

1.1. Introduction

This thesis researches the impact of 10 years of Russia-EU interaction on the Black Sea geopolitical environment through the use of Comparative-Historical Assessment. In doing so, it takes into consideration the premises that the EU's approach to the area has altered a status quo previously enforced by the Russian Federation; that the EU's immense normative appeal was sufficient to attract but unfit to protect the small and diverse powers (which will be denominated as 'subject states' to the EU – Russia interaction) making up the Black Sea geopolitical environment; and that the nature of the two great powers interacting over the Black Sea represents a unique occurrence within contemporary international relations. In addition, the thesis identifies the lack of a sufficiently systemic account of the area within academic contributions, arguing that the understanding of the actual geopolitical realities in existence requires the employment of more than 'sectorial' approaches, and that an informative path for assessing the Black Sea can only be based on the common characteristics displayed by the states which are part of it.

In responding to the above mentioned necessities, the thesis factually identifies three common characteristics displayed by the Black Sea states, namely risk of conflict, economic dependence, and declared foreign policy orientation and adds to them a measurement component – either already in existence, or the result of conceptual innovation – transforming them into conceptually valid qualitative assessment instruments (or variables), of a particular, inter-dependent nature. The assessment of the shifts in the said variables, and the *triggers* behind such shifts are subsequently merged together in an integrated approach, involving the representative cases of Moldova and Georgia, which assesses the common elements behind the shifts within all three variables and identifies a new form of reactive regional instinct at the Black Sea which it dubs *reactive regionalism*.

Considering the existence and manifestation of various forms of intentional regional creation, primarily stemming from the EU, concerning the Black Sea, as well as the security primacy of the common characteristics analysed in the form of variables, the theoretical contribution of this thesis is placed at the intersection between the approaches of Neumann (2003), which views region-building as an agency-based process, and Buzan and Waever (2003), which identify that a set of units sufficiently close in regards to the elements generating their individual securities cannot be considered separate from one another, thus forming a Regional Security Complex. However, the thesis also argues that although an agency attempting to generate the region exists, the region being created is not that intended by the EU. Also, even if the elements generating threats in the Black Sea cannot be seen as individual to each subject state, the level of institutional cooperation within national security is too shallow to permit the identification of a Black Sea Regional Security

Complex. As a result, *reactive regionalism*, although clearly meeting contemporary theoretical requirements to be considered a form of regionalism, in fact tailors to traditional definitional requirements, representing a common feature of the actors subject to it and having a potentially transitory nature.

Although the verification of the recurrence of reactive regionalism cannot be verified without an entity similar to the EU emerging to share a different neighbourhood with a different traditional great power, the theoretical validity of the subject is significant both within the disciplines of international relations and within comparative politics, not least as the thesis argues that a new type of regionalism is emerging from contemporary geopolitical interactions. The analysis of the Russia-EU interaction over a common neighbourhood, the theoretical extrapolations referring to subject states' inability to balance and unwillingness to bandwagon, as well as the testing of the definitional contributions referring to the EU, coupled with the potential for application of the integrated approach either in a different timeframe or in a different geopolitical environment, represent the assets of this thesis' theoretical contribution to knowledge. However, the practitioner environment stands to benefit as well from the conclusion of this thesis, not least as its conclusions generate an interpretation of predictability of the Russian Federation as well as an approach handbook for the correct perception and substantive diplomatic interaction with the states in the Black Sea geopolitical environment.

1.2. Premises and approach

The 2003 European Union (EU) Security Strategy states that

“It is in the European interest that countries on our borders are well governed. Neighbours that are engaged in violent conflict, weak states where organized crime flourishes, dysfunctional societies or exploding population growth on its borders, all pose problems for the EU [...] Our task is to promote a ring of well governed countries in the East of the EU ... with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations.” (cited in Fischer, 2009: 338).

The statement above represents, similarly to a national security strategy, the enumeration of certain issues (in this case conflict, weak states, organized crime, dysfunctional societies and exploding population growth at the EU border), followed by a strategy to tackle them (promoting a ring of well governed countries in the East of the EU). The EU's conclusions regarding the problems faced by its neighbours to the East may arguably not be considered the most pressing issues, particularly from the standpoint of people living there. The EU's strategy to play a role in their transformation into 'well governed' states (in 2003) also lacks details on the mechanisms through which they plan to achieve these aims. Nevertheless, what is significant about the EU's 2003 declaration is that it felt the need to approach its Eastern Neighbourhood in manner worthy of a security strategy.

The EU's approach to its Eastern Neighbourhood has evolved since 2003. The creation of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2004 marks a critical juncture in the EU's relation with the broader region. The Black Sea Synergy (2008) and Eastern Partnership (2009) initiatives built upon the ENP and adapted the EU's approach to its Eastern neighbourhood to address the particular issues facing the region. As such, it is not necessary to analyse the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood from the point of view of the (2003) Security Strategy alone. The document stands as relevant for its day, and a comprehensive analysis could not be created without accounting for the subsequent foreign policy instruments.

Nonetheless, it is relevant to note that in 2003 the East of the EU was not in accordance with EU security expectations. The EU thus felt the need to openly declare its intentions to play a role in modifying it. However, given that the subsequent year the EU underwent its largest (Eastward) enlargement, followed by the inclusion of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007, it becomes clear that the issues identified in the EU Security Strategy did not apply to new or EU applicant states, but to those states for which full EU accession did not represent a realistic option. Consequently, the obvious focus of the EU 2003 declaration was former Soviet states (excluding Baltic EU members).

In 2007, the issuing of a Black Sea Synergy declaration identified a Black Sea region as a:

[D]istinct geographical area, rich in natural resources and strategically located at the junction of Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East. With a large population, the region faces a range of opportunities and challenges for its citizens. The region is an expanding market with great development potential and an important hub for energy and transport flows. It is, however, also a region with unresolved conflicts, with many environmental problems and inefficient border controls thus encouraging illegal migration and organized crime. (EU Commission, 2007: 2).

Consequently, not only had the EU's approach to its Eastern Neighbourhood changed. A clearer delineating element of what it consisted of was established, and a significant role within this delineation was to be played by the Black Sea geopolitical environment.

This thesis explores the results of the EU's approach to its neighbourhood or, to the part of its neighbourhood represented by the Black Sea. In this capacity, the thesis defines the EU's consistent approach to its (Black Sea area) neighbourhood as emerging in 2003 and triggering a series of sequences of interaction, with Russia and the (further codified as 'subject') states in the area, which result in a new regional reality being established in the neighbourhood of the Union by the end of 2012. The thesis argues that the results of the EU's approach to its neighbourhood have, in fact, been the results of a triple interaction between the EU, Russia and the Black Sea subject states, with the latter developing an instrumental asset which allows them to pursue their interests (what I

denominate as declared foreign policy orientation). Moreover, in discussing the matter at hand, the thesis does not only considers subject states to represent those countries littoral to the Black Sea, but those that are codified within EU policies as belonging to the Black Sea geopolitical environment.

In understanding the purpose of this thesis, prior to moving forward and clarifying the question triggering the research process, three key premises must be established.

First the EU, in approaching the Black Sea, has begun to alter a Russia-set status quo.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly independent states found themselves confronted by destructive conflicts, having limited economic potential and also subject to their status as neighbours of the Russian Federation. Although a strong Russian desire to keep the country's Western immediate abroad loyal was not as apparent during the 1990s as it became in the 2000s, former Soviet states were quick to realise that their primary role, as imposed on them by Russia, was that of 'space' or 'buffer' between itself and the West. A (resurgent) Russia was beginning to conduct loyalty appraisals of its neighbours more and more as the West (in this case, the EU) was moving ever-closer.

Second, the EU benefits from enormous normative appeal. But it does not represent a balancing option.

The Russian Federation's assertive approach to its neighbours did not take away Black Sea states' willingness to pursue, with various degrees of both enthusiasm and pragmatism, different geopolitical options in order to attempt to overcome their 'buffer' role imposed from the outside. A potentially promising 'way out' during the 2000s was pro-EU orientation. However, this did not translate into balancing Russia, not least because the EU did not provide security guarantees. The NATO-EU univocal characteristics (from the point of view of the area) meant that they found themselves at the edge of a very appealing West which, however, did not provide 'salvation' from Russia.

Finally, the Black Sea represents (by definition) a diverse environment, and the only relevant manner in which it can be appraised is based on shared characteristics.

Buzan and Waeber (2003) describe 'regional security complexes' as a set of units linked together sufficiently closely that their individual security cannot be considered separate from one another. The Black Sea fits this criterion, at least with regards to its background features¹. In addition, a key part of the literature on regions (Neumann, 2003) views region-building as an agency-based process. Based on the characteristics of the Black Sea (highly diverse) geopolitical environment, this thesis identifies that, gestating or not, the regional characteristics of the Black Sea area can

¹ See chapter on regionalism in the Black Sea.

only be identified among the elements that subject states exclusively share. This is in spite of neighbours' attempts at envisioning a region on other terms (the EU) or of completely disregarding this option (Russia).

However, if the area's diversity does not allow for the identification of such characteristics on a historical scale (Braudel's *longue durée* offering little insight), it does, however, allow for the extrapolation of the conditions of regional formation to contemporary shared elements. In other words, even if Black Sea subject states do not share historical common elements, they do share contemporary ones. As such, only through the assessment of these features can an informed interpretation of the area arise. This conclusion not only leads the researcher to key factors in understanding the Black Sea, but also hints towards one of the few methodological paths through which such an understanding can be achieved – namely, comparative historical assessment.

This research method is vital for the process of understanding the outcome of ten years of Russia-EU interaction on the Black Sea geopolitical environment for two reasons. First, it allows for the informed identification of relevant elements worth taking into consideration and, second, it provides the space for conceptual innovation permitting the transformation of the said characteristics into measurable instruments ('variables') of a non-fixed nature. In other words, the attributes and position of the variables within the analysis remains within the assets of the researcher (which bears the necessity of explaining his/her choices). Second, it permits the creation of a narrative which takes into account the full array of elements which the researcher considers to be relevant (in this case, what I denominate as 'the integrated approach'), and avoids the 'sectorial focus' of previous literary contributions.

For the purpose of this thesis, it is vital to clarify both that the author has used his prerogative of conceptual innovation only when no alternative was available (no established measurement instrument existed) and that the 'variables' of the 'integrated approach' represent variables which are characteristic of the Black Sea non-EU states, namely: risk of inter-state conflict; economic dependence; and the use of declared foreign policy orientation. The interpretation of their shifts forms the integrated approach.

However, a distinction must be made between the denomination of 'variables' of the 'integrated approach' (or common characteristics – a result of the features of the employed research method) and traditional definitions of 'variable'. If the latter's origins, type-differentiation and purpose are beyond the scope of this paper, common characteristics variables, understood as such within this contribution, require a more substantial clarification.

Variables, within the 'integrated approach' of this thesis, refer, as argued, to common realities shared by Black Sea states, to which a codification component (a measurement scale) is added. However, they represent first and foremost an extrapolation from historical considerations

(immediately prior to the period under study) of key elements shared by all non-EU Black Sea states.

The variables, or the common factors shared by the subject states (declared foreign policy orientation, risk of inter-state conflict and economic dependence) share the imminence of effect, as an exclusive nature. The existence (or the ending) of the state (through war or economic collapse) is the first instance where this characteristic is manifested. Second, the territorial integrity (or its dismemberment) of the subject states is a potentially imminent effect of loyalty appraisal, trade potential and conflict. Third, given that the Black Sea represents an area characterised, in general, by divided societies, and where ‘coloured revolutions’ are possible, the imminence of effect of the elements under consideration as variables is present with regards to social cohesion (along the lines of the country’s geopolitical orientation).

The variables under analysis, in spite of apparent similarities, are neither dependent nor independent. They are subject to a triangular interdependence – a fluid nature which allows for the interpretation of either of the three as generating the other two. The importance of the shifts in variables brings, for the purpose of the integrated approach, generates the (artificial) necessity to allocate to them a measurement tool.

Based on the agency emitting the imminence of effect of the variables, they are subject to a hierarchical nature. As such, given that the risk of conflict and economic dependence can be interpreted as generated by the context (or by the actions of the neighbouring great powers) of the subject states, while declared foreign policy orientation represents a state-owned foreign policy tool used in response to loyalty appraisal, declared foreign policy orientation takes on a primary role. In addition, as I show, the use of declared foreign policy orientation in a context where bandwagoning (with Russia) is not desired and balancing is not an option, represents the defining feature of ‘reactive regionalism’, it is easy to envision the hierarchical precedence of this variable.

However, if the elements shared by Black Sea states constitute the key for regional formation, their mere presence, or identification, does not represent a distinctive Black Sea feature. Instead, it is their interaction that spawns what I identify as ‘reactive regionalism’, since the risk of inter-state conflict, economic dependence and declared foreign policy orientation may be encountered, separately or in a variety of other variable ‘groups’ within most geopolitical contexts. As such, it is vital to understand that the way in which modifications occur within them generates the non-typical nature of the Black Sea geopolitical environment, and not their mere existence.

Thus, defining characteristics of reactive regionalism are connected with the particularly new nature of the common elements’ interaction environment in which it occurs. Within the culturally diverse Black Sea geopolitical environment, the post-2003 context witnessed the existence of two powerful external actors: one which represents a completely original political construction and the

second, a traditional power which demands loyalty from its peripheral ‘subjects’ and which, most importantly, has proven to be unable to understand the first in any other way except through its own ‘traditional’ perspective, thus considering it an immediate threat. The unique nature of the first actor (the EU), makes it constantly innovate instrumentally in its approach to its immediate abroad through different sets of policies and approaches, thus becoming the main political agency behind the process of Black Sea regional creation. Also, the defining characteristics of the EU radiate enormous appeal, disturbing the Russia-set Black Sea status quo and generating increasingly desperate responses from the traditional power.

Within this context, subject states, in their majority, do not desire bandwagoning with the Russian Federation, not only as the traditional power does not possess the same normative appeal of the EU, but primarily because such a measure has proven to lead to significant social ‘convulsions’, which have been denominated as ‘coloured revolutions’ – resulting from the grassroots positive reactions to the EU’s appeal within significant (non-Russian speaking) demographic segments of the population. However, even if the EU’s appeal transcends the government level within the subject states, the EU itself does not allow the space for balancing at a government level, as it does not provide the required security guarantees that the subject states commonly need. What is left is a *reactive instinct*, within the Black Sea small powers, which represent *the neighbourhood of someone*, in using their declared foreign policy orientation – a state-owned narrative tool with which they express intentions and can secure rewards or coercions from one side or the other. All states that employ this tactic to respond to the pressure arising from their geopolitical environment are thus defined as being part of the Black Sea reactive region, no matter what the outcome of the tactic may be².

Identifying the theoretical placement of reactive regionalism within mainstream theories on the subject involves considering the existence and manifestation of various forms of (agency-generated) intentional regional creation and the nature of the shared (security) elements by the parties involved. The EU represents a vocal promoter of regional integration within the Black Sea, not least as its instrumental base makes it well tailored for applying a set of policies in its relationship with a set region. In addition, the security primacy of the common characteristics analysed in the form of variables, also hints to reactive regionalism’s intellectual placement - at the intersection between the approaches of Neumann (2003), which views region-building as an agency-based process, and Buzan and Waever (2003), which identify that a set of units sufficiently close in regards to the elements generating their individual securities cannot be considered separate from one another, thus forming a Regional Security Complex. Both contributions suggest that to study regions and regional development, we need to analyse actors’ practices and perceptions and share a comparative theoretical focus – acknowledging one another as relevant – as well as

² As Armenia and Georgia stand as examples of different uses of the declared foreign policy orientation tool.

embodying some of the most relevant contributions to the field of international relations within the 21st century.

Nonetheless, while acknowledging that reactive regionalism is dependent on being constructed on the said intellectual contributions, and not on others, it is worth drawing attention towards its characteristic of uniqueness, even within this framework. In other words, this thesis also argues that although an agency attempting to generate the region exists, the region being created is not that intended by the EU. Also, even if the elements generating threats in the Black Sea cannot be seen as individual to each subject state, the level of institutional cooperation within national security is too shallow to permit the identification of a Black Sea Regional Security Complex.

As a result, *reactive regionalism*, although clearly meeting contemporary theoretical requirements to be considered a form of regionalism if placed at the intersection between Regional Security Complex Theory and Agency-based regional construction, in fact tailors to traditional definitional requirements, representing a common feature of the actors subject to it and having a potentially transitory nature, given by the potential for either the contextual characteristics which generate it to change (which would translate into a change of instruments for Russia or the EU), or for the region to split.

1.3. Introducing the investigation triggers and the investigation

As stated, in light of and even prior to Brussels' emergence as a geographical actor at the Black Sea, this contribution aims to assess the impact that the EU's immense normative appeal, instrumental base and nature have had on the Black Sea geopolitical environment. In other words, the question of this thesis is: What has been the impact of 10 years of interaction between Russia and the EU on the Black Sea geopolitical environment?

The validity of the subject, and its relevance to knowledge stem from the distinct and particular character manifested by the Black Sea geopolitical environment, where, as I show, different sets of foreign policy logic are manifested by the most important regional poles of power (the EU and the Russian Federation).

Given the multitude of elements characterizing the area, I argue that all attempts at interpretation, as well as any policy recommendations, must take into consideration the fact that although it may appear that the features manifested by the concerned states are neither new, nor in any way unmodifiable, the generating elements behind their existence bring about the characteristic of particularity (or novelty) for all actors involved – not least because the Black Sea represents the first instance of interaction between their substantially different defining characteristics - with which only an 'integrated approach' can deal with.

Such an 'integrated approach' involves transcending the box-ticking requirements of potential analyses on whether the EU, Russia, or different Black Sea subject states are able to achieve their

geopolitical aims and objectives within the area, and pursuing a path of identification and codification of the few elements that can be deemed as both common and valid for all stakeholders involved. The European Union's particular polity nature, with an international law personality and with powers beyond those of any other international organization but with fundamental elements which confuse and render redundant all comparisons between itself and a state; the Russian Federation's great power assertiveness and its typical capacity to render mute the international system's basic agencies due to the role it occupies among them; Black Sea states, among which the only pragmatic common internally-generated characteristic is diversity, all represent fascinating potential instances of analysis and all have represented the targets of academics' and policy-makers' interests. However, the Black Sea represents more than the sum of its parts, not least because all these arguably uncommon elements find themselves interacting in a single space – the Black Sea geopolitical environment.

With this in mind, it is noticeable that between 2003 and 2012, among the wide array of international interactions concerning the area, given the consistency and predictability of the aims and objectives of the great power entities' (Russia and the EU) attitude towards the area and their instrumentation, three common features appear to unite the Black Sea subject states³: the risk of inter-state conflict, economic dependence and, above all, the significance of declared foreign policy orientation as a mechanism for survival.

These three descriptive variables are, through the use of cross-sectional comparative assessment, analysed within two case studies – Moldova and Georgia – relevant for the existing conceptual classifications concerning the area (Eastern Europe and the Caucasus) in order to establish an understanding of the systemic outcome of such an exceptional area holding one clear denomination: the neighbourhood of *someone*. In other words, only by understanding the character of exception of the Black Sea geopolitical environment – given by the emergence of a territorial interaction between the EU and Russia, by the EU's attempts to construct a region in the Black Sea in order to make it the focal point of its policy, and by the subject states' characteristics of being subject to an omnipresent and omnipotent scrutiny of their foreign policy *orientation*, the results of which impact in an instrumentally consistent manner on their *economic dependence* and societal realities of *conflict* – can a relevant analysis be carried out.

1.4. Deconstructing the question

Understanding the impact of Russia-EU interaction within the Black Sea geopolitical environment raises, aside from a term-definition requirement, three key questions: The first one refers to understanding what the EU, Russia and Black Sea subject countries as key actors within the

³ The term 'Black Sea subject states' refers to, for the purpose of this thesis to all countries within the Black Sea geopolitical environment which either enjoy geographical access to the Black Sea (Ukraine, Georgia, Turkey) or not (Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan) and excludes countries which have joined the EU during the period under study (Bulgaria and Romania) and the Russian Federation. This selection is made based on the behaviour of the states under analysis during the period under study.

envisioned environment of analysis, bring to the ‘equation’. Moreover, this first question takes into consideration the fact that, at this time the EU is not dealing, within its Black Sea neighbourhood, with “a ring of well governed countries with whom it can enjoy close and cooperative relations”, because, although it cannot be definitively argued that the Black Sea was at any moment characterized by “states where organized crime flourishes” or “exploding population growth”, its other features are not those desired by the EU from its immediate neighbours. The other non-EU states existing in the Black Sea area portray characteristics that have the potential to challenge and intrigue even the most versed of International Comparative Politics scholars. Surprisingly similar (and measurable) issues of identity, conditionality, orientation, and dependency on other actors for economic development, complemented by an acute and continuous risk of ‘old school’ inter-state conflicts leave little room for manoeuvre for either of the Black Sea subject states and, through their volatility, stand as immense challenges for local decision-makers and post-factum interpreters alike, either in Brussels, Moscow, Washington or anywhere else.

The answer to the first question (or the understanding of actors in the Black Sea) stands as a premise which imposes the second question, which refers to the logic-imposed obligation to explain this nuanced outcome with the use of the appropriate methodology. Within this endeavour, a set of clarifications is required, in the form of addressing more specific issues, such as defining the nature of the Black Sea in practical and theoretical terms, and placing it within both an established literature framework and within a hierarchy of primacy on the world stage – in order to understand why the answer to this question would be important. In other words, the actors having been understood, the second question focuses on the object of their interaction, or, what they are aware they are denominating aims and objectives for – what is the Black Sea geopolitical environment?

Having addressed these issues in the chapters to come, the third key question which arises is what did the Black Sea become as a result of the above-mentioned realities? In answering this question, there are few methodological perspectives that can provide such an informed assessment as a cross-sectional historical assessment of two case-studies within the area within a given time-frame (or, what I denominate to be the ‘integrated approach’). It must be clarified here that this thesis questions the entire array of fundamentals behind the EU’s practitioners and scholars’ decision to classify the Black Sea as a policy-region by arguing that if one is to look at the Black Sea from a regional point of view, the only way to issue a verdict on the area’s regional characteristics would be to look at the geopolitical common elements shared by subject countries⁴. As such, it is easy to notice that, in this case, stimulating democratic and economic reforms and opening up opportunities and challenges through coordinated action in a regional framework is not possible without a sustained pro-Western orientation from the point of view of subject states. The Russian reaction after the establishment of GUUAM, or after Moldova’s declaration of intent to join the

⁴ Thus, as I show, the preferred term in denominating the Black Sea area, is that of ‘geopolitical environment’

Euro-Atlantic structures speaks clearly of this reality. In the same way, facilitating practical projects in areas of common concern or supporting stability and promoting development cannot be done in an environment subject to economic dependence (in itself sanctioned by virtue of displayed loyalty) in the region, not to mention the potential for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, where a realist logic has been shown to take precedence over all else. That is to say: feasible or not as a framework for regionalism, the Black Sea has emerged into a new form of regionalism, which has a potential to meet the EU's goals, Russia's goals and subject states' goals, however, not all at the same time.

This thesis thus looks at the Black Sea region through the common features' point of view primarily because subject states themselves have recurrently stated that the barriers to their pro-Westward focus lie in the three elements that this thesis identifies as variables (declared foreign policy orientation, coerced through conflict and economic dependence). It is also worth noting here that there is indeed substantial evidence for risk of inter-state conflict, declared foreign policy orientation, and economic dependence to be indeed shared elements of Black Sea states, and that affecting these three variables in such a way that declared foreign policy orientation becomes overly acute in one direction or the other has been shown to bring countries closer to the EU or closer to Russia, depending on the direction. The interpretation of all variables section of this thesis reveals the instances when this has happened.

1.5. The subject's intellectual location

When placing this contribution within the wider academic discourse on the topic, it is worth mentioning that any analysis of the Black Sea geopolitical environment benefits from a substantial amount of academic contributions already in existence, including here secondary sources (journals dedicated to the subject either directly or in a tangent manner), in addition to other sources of information and opinion coming from within subject states, various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and from within the European Union itself.

However, in general, the literature on the region focuses on external factors (EU and Russia), at the expense of considering the domestic and regional context in which they play out, although Black Sea 'systemic' accounts are present (Ochmann, 2009), either purposefully or otherwise. Such would be the case with Miller & Toritsyn's (2005) work, entitled 'Bringing the Leader Back In: Internal Threats and Alignment Theory in the Commonwealth of Independent States', or with contributions such as that of Özdamar (2012), which investigates security in the Black Sea area having in mind a traditional, narrow definition of the term.

On the other hand, comparative accounts that point to domestic factors (from parties to administrative structures) are available both within the framework of EU-subject states dialogue (Barbarosie and Barbarosie, 2005; Barbe, et. al. 2009; Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2009; Bosse, 2010; Solonenko, 2009; Korosteleva, 2010), and that of 'blaming' Russia (Popescu, 2005;

2006; 2009; Rumer and Stent, 2009; Allison, 2008;). Moreover, the realities in Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Ajara, and even Crimea have received a fair share of attention from conflict scholars (Whitman & Wolff, 2010; de Waal, 2010; Özdamar, 2010; Rumer & Stent, 2009; Allison, 2008; Popescu 2006, 2005, Kaufman, 1996; King, 1994), while continuously being interpreted and re-interpreted as ‘ethnic/ethno-national conflicts’, ‘frozen conflicts’, ‘political conflicts’, ‘examples of state failure’, (Kennedy, 2010:514 - 515) and so on.

Of outstanding quality, the above-mentioned contributions address various issues of concern for multiple disciplines. What is missing, however, is the mere understanding to the fruitful nature of (systemically) assessing the Black Sea geopolitical environment as an area of interaction of a variety of actors which portray non-typical characters. On one hand the EU – a completely novel polity – is facing a state characterised by both significant capabilities and a long history of generating international logic in such a way that it constantly seeks to situate itself in opposition to another pole (or, at present, in opposition to the mainstream of practitioner international politics). In other words, the existing literature on the subject, although substantial, fails to take into account the broader structural context. An ‘integrated approach’ offers an alternative or bridge between the multitude of general approaches on the area, focussing on the skeleton of elements that the divers set of actors portrays in common – and using them in order to create a single narrative. In addition, this contribution extrapolates from the findings of analysing the results of the Russia-EU interaction over the Black Sea geopolitical environment in order to identify the ‘rules of the game’ in the case of the contemporary and potentially recurring interaction between ‘traditional’ state powers and novel establishments within international law, as applied to their common neighbourhood.

For the purpose of this thesis, the theoretical framework for analysing the geopolitical environment from a comprehensive standpoint based on the variables in existence is constructed with the building blocks provided by Buzan and Waever’s securitisation studies and Neumann’s region-building approach. Buzan and Waever’s work on the structure of international security in a no-longer bipolar international order facing increasing numbers and types of threats has started after the end of the Cold War, but it is particularly their analysis of regional security complexes (RSCs) formation that influenced the outlook in chapter 3 of this thesis, due to a number of elements. Firstly, the underlying premise of the entire regional security complexes theory (RSCT) that ‘threats travel more easily across short distances’ – that states suffer from a gradient “loss of strength” over distance – is completely confirmed in the Black Sea area, the meeting place of the European neighbourhood and the Russian strategic glacis. Secondly, Buzan and Waever make it relatively easy to ‘test for an RSC’ in a geographical space by providing a set of necessary and contingent conditions for its emergence (elements such as polarity, anarchical structure, territorial adjacency, patterns of amity and enmity). Thirdly, even though a constructivist method is advanced for aggregating security interdependence across sectors, the bulk of Buzan and Waever’s analysis

focuses on threats to, and securitisation by states, which perfectly fits the Black Sea area's characteristics. Ultimately, for a thesis aiming to assess a region from the point of view of its members' reactions to great powers, Buzan and Waever represents the first go-to academic resource.

Nevertheless, despite their standing, securitisation analyses emphasise the politicisation of the security discourse, and as such, are only obliquely relevant to a regionalism-oriented work. Therefore, I have supplemented RSCT with Neumann's region-building approach, as it provided the ideal bridge between security and regional discourses. Neumann's crucial point employed in analysing the Black Sea geopolitical environment is that regions are created or emerge by virtue of political actors' agency, irrespective of the existing (or non-existing) cultural, historical, linguistic affiliations in a geographical space – in other words, regions will appear as the result of a conscious choice to manipulate political discourses. Therefore, Neumann argues that, when it comes to investigations of the regionalist 'phenomenon', the most important question that needs to be asked is 'whose region is being created?'. This particular insight has been employed in chapter 3 when a survey of the various cooperation initiatives in the Black Sea becomes the ground for my contention that different regions are created along the coast (some openly artificial), depending on the nature of the driving force behind each program (great power, regional power, small power).

The methodology of this thesis is committed to comparative historical analysis, which benefits from excellent reviews by Mahoney (2005) and Capoccia and Kelemen (2007). The notion of *triggers* and the construction of variables – particularly that of foreign policy orientation – rely on the building blocks elaborated by these reviews, and the various criticisms launched at this methodology at a general level are taken into account and addressed by taking into consideration the peculiarities of the Black Sea environment. Mahoney (2005) also presents guidelines for qualitatively selecting cases and conducting cross-sectional analysis, which proved immensely fruitful for the discussion in chapter 14. It is this author's view that the complexity of the environment under analysis generates the need for the employment of a methodology which allows for both temporal assessments and conceptual innovation, not least because the nature of the EU-Russia interaction, as seen in the Black Sea, represents a novel occurrence, requiring first and foremost the space for innovating equally at a conceptual level.

Such an innovation is, within this thesis, represented by the measurable set attributed to subject states' declared foreign policy orientation, a codification enterprise which benefits enormously from the conclusions of Proedrou's (2010) article which explores Ukraine's indeterminate stance between Russia and the West. The author, using the assumption that theories of international relations are complementary, as opposed to being mutually exclusive, instrumentalises the realist, liberal, and constructivist theoretical frameworks in order to account for Ukraine's repeated shifts between its two major foreign policy options (re-alignment with Russia) or incorporation within

Western structures. Even if Ukraine does not represent a case-study within this thesis, Proedrou's theoretical framework is indispensable for the process of conceptual innovation through which the declared foreign policy orientation variable is generated.

1.6. Structure, perspectives and scope

Having in mind a dual purpose - of logical flow and of clarity, this thesis is divided in three sections:

The first chapter of the first section of this thesis is dedicated to the exploration of the EU as an emergent actor within the international arena, with a set of theoretical perspectives which evolved in order to allow a comprehensive understanding of its approach to its neighbours (such as 'external governance'), and with a region-building methodology, arising from its institutional character. With regards to the contribution of this chapter to answering the set of questions resulting from the research subject of this thesis, it is easy to identify that the EU's definition of self and use of the external governance discourse in clarifying the set of measures it employs when dealing with neighbours in general, and with the Black Sea area in particular, represents a key element.

The second chapter within the first section (Section I *Setting the Scene*) of this thesis explores the Russian Federation as the actor projecting its traditional views in its Western immediate abroad (the majority of which is, in a geopolitical sense, represented by the Black Sea). In a chapter answering the key sub-question referring to whether the nature of the relevant capacity/capability actors in the area (such as the Russian Federation) represents an element with which Brussels is equipped to deal with by previous experience, the Russian Federation is presented as an outstandingly predictable actor which unanimously codifies both the foreign policy capabilities of Black Sea states, and the relevant variables employed within the integrated approach.

Next, this thesis moves on to the exploration of Black Sea regionalism. However, this third chapter of the first section does not only explore the region-building endeavours of the EU within this area (as Russia does not have any), but also looks, within the framework of regionalism as a scholastic topic, at whether the Black Sea can be qualified as a *region* in general. In addition, keeping in mind Buzan & Waever's exceptionally valid (2003) assertion that "threats travel faster over short distances", taking into consideration the common factors of *proximity of threat* and *unanimity of threat* as characteristic features of the Black Sea, the chapter also explores the potential of the area of representing a *Regional Security Complex* (RSC) on its own, or belonging to a different logic than that perceived by the EU. Last, but not least, the chapter reveals why the term *Black Sea geopolitical environment* represents a theoretically safe refuge with regards to the outstandingly particular character of the area. The validity of this chapter extends, however, beyond the attempt of understanding whether the Black Sea can be seen as a region, to also understanding whether the EU has indeed managed to identify the Black Sea (as a *region*) in a way that reflects pragmatically

the area's realities and not only the EU's instrumental capabilities when approaching its neighbours – a key element within the research question.

At this point, it must be emphasized that the necessity for structuring the first section of this thesis in a logically informative flow-like manner represents one of the key characteristics of my approach, but, however, not the only one. The second defining characteristic of this section is the adaptation of perspective to that characteristic to each topic under scrutiny. In other words, the EU is judged by virtue of its theoretically-defining external governance framework; the exploration of Black Sea regionalism is based on the constructivist outlook of Buzan & Waever – a perspective which risks very little in terms of missing an issue of relevance; and the analysis of Russia displays a profoundly realist tone, based on both Russia's apparent lack of willingness/ability to perceive the outside world in any other way. Such a view is motivated by the necessity of employing an actor-oriented view, brought about, as I show, by the use of historical assessment methods.

Chapter four of the first section of this research is dedicated to specifically describing cross-sectional comparative historical assessment as a research method employed within this thesis, namely the necessity for its use, its strengths and the strategies for mitigating its perceived weaknesses, and the way in which it is applied to the case-studies under investigation.

The fifth and final chapter within the *Setting the scene* section is focused on defining the common elements (or shared characteristics) of *declared foreign policy orientation*, *conflict*, and *economic dependence* as codified variables as part of the cross-sectional investigation, the hierarchical relationship between them, and the theoretical use of existing instruments (or the rationality used in developing new ones) in setting up their measurable nature.

Section II – *Analysis* – dedicates three chapters to each individual case study. Each chapter within the analysis of each case-study (The Republic of Moldova and Georgia, to be more precise) tailors to the need to cater firstly to the information-intensive needs of a cross-sectional comparative methodological endeavour, secondly, to carry-out an informed and accurate assessment of the events narrative triggering or resulting from each modification within the variables under consideration, and thirdly to switch the framework from an internal to an external point of view in order to be able to emit an informed and instrumentally relevant narrative concerning each case study's position and role within the Black Sea geopolitical environment. Each of these requirements is dedicated one chapter within each case study, in order to stylistically avoid losing focus on the comparative task at hand, and to clarify the relevance of each element of focus in an attempt 'to have in mind the overall endeavour of analysing the forest when each tree is taken into consideration'.

The relevance of Moldova and Georgia as case-studies stems from the academic/practitioner opinions of them belonging in slightly qualitatively different environments (Eastern Europe and the

Caucasus), or, as Buzan & Waever (2003) codify it, different sub-complexes of an RSC. The first country, Moldova, manifests a component of self-definition in relation to the orientation variable because of previous belonging to both Romania and the USSR. This led to severe identity concerns in addition to geopolitical ones in choosing either a pro-Eastern or a pro-Western approach. This self-definition component is shared with its Eastern European neighbour – Ukraine. With a very small economy, Moldova does not only manifest a strong economic dependence between 2003 and 2012 on regionally ‘normal’ (i.e. energy) sectors, but also on other products (wine) which for itself represent a lifeline for economic survival. Its protracted conflict – Transnistria – has been subject to significant changes over the past 10 years, without however re-exploding into war. The other case example, Georgia, a country existing in the highly dynamic geopolitical environment of the Caucasus (involving poles of military power which also include Turkey, Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) is somewhat similar to Moldova from the point of view of monosectorial economic dependence but finding itself in a better macro-economic position. It is also the only country whose conflict indicator escalated to war in the past 10 years and its orientation modified as a result – making it a perfect candidate in the search for a ‘representative sample’ of Black Sea states.

The third section of this thesis (Section III – *Conclusions*) ties together each of the findings of the previous sections’ variable exploration in its first chapter which undertakes the ‘comparative’ tasks within the ‘comparative analysis’. The first chapter explores the relations between the variables under scrutiny, as applied to both case studies, textually codifying the results of the ‘integrated approach’. Last but not least, the second chapter, on the basis of the integrated approach, provides an answer to the question: “What has emerged in the Black Sea as a result of 10 years of Russia-EU interaction?”, in addition to making policy recommendations and subsequently identifying niches for further research.

It is also worth mentioning here that this contribution primarily focuses on 21st century developments within the Black Sea region (more precisely between 2003 and 2012). This is done not only in order to minimize the technical and temporal constraints placed on the investigation and on the measurement instruments used but also because although it is clear that post-2003 policies are indeed connected with pre-2003 realities, the latter are of a different nature and revolve around distinctive events. More clearly, the present-day Russian approach to its ‘near-abroad’ represents a clear result of the Putin presidency’s re-assessment of Russia’s role in the international arena within the post-early 2000s geopolitical environment and less of previous administrations’ strategies. On the other hand, prior to the early 2000s, the European Security and Defense Strategy found itself in an infant form at best, similarly to the EU’s Black Sea-oriented expansion. Consequently, as the two major poles of power in the area reveal signs of modification of approach in the post-2003 period, this investigation can only tailor itself to factual characteristics. This isn’t to say, however, that events taking place after 2012 do not display a character of relevance. On the contrary, situations such as the present-day conflictual *explosion* within Ukraine – what I

denominate to represent a definitional Black Sea state as well – manifests tremendous value as a verification mechanism both within the framework of the present research and in terms of analysing the impact of the European Union on the Black Sea geopolitical environment.

1.7. Why the US is not considered a ‘littoral presence’

The United States represents a significant actor within the Black Sea geopolitical environment, not only through multilateral initiatives such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization but also through bilateral cooperation with subject states, a certain level of involvement within the region’s protracted conflicts, and with a continuous high-level dialogue with Russia. From the point of view of this thesis’ identified variables, the US is perceived as an integrated (and generating) part of ‘the West’, or at least it is perceived as such by a number of subject states (including, most notably, Georgia). Actions of the government in Washington are indeed able to the full array of analysed variables within this context.

However, by comparison with the two subject powers⁵ – the EU and Russia, the US State Department represents the emitting entity for a Black Sea strategy even to a lesser extent than Moscow, during the period under analysis. The EU’s focus on the Black Sea as a region and Russia’s focus on its ‘near abroad’ allocate significantly more energy to formulating context-specific generic policies and complex approaching aiming to increase their involvement within the area on a multi-level framework.

In addition, in relation to the Black Sea, the EU constitutes a *present* and *valid* actor – distinct from the US (in spite of some radical opinions within the Russian Duma) and distinct in relation to both dealing with Russia and the other subject states. As a result, aside from the fact that technical constraints would not allow the US actor to be introduced in an ‘integrated approach’ on the area, and considering the issues of proximity and specificity of the Russia-EU interaction, it is safe to conclude that the US’s impact on the three variables is limited at best and that any and all correlation between the US and a shift in one or more variables can be identified and explained as such, without requiring the adding of the US to the Russia-EU-subject states framework.

1.8. Relevance of the subject

The subject has two major areas of relevance: The academic track – for which the subject is significant for scholars looking at regionalism, EU regional policy, ESDP, ENP, and the EaP, for scholars in the field of conflict studies, and comparative political systems and, most significantly, to academics looking at interpretations of International Relations – as the area provides one of the few instances of interaction between two schools of thought with regards to the international environment (Russia and the EU). This is the case as the EU and Russia approach their common area with typical school of thought approaches: Russia is portraying a strong traditional realist view; while the EU is anything but realist (its school of thought is highly disputed). The area shows

⁵ The term ‘subject powers’ is to be noted as distinct from that of ‘subject states’

which approach is more pragmatic; and the practitioner track – for which the thesis represents an excellent instrument for policy action both from within the case study countries and from the point of view of the political entities acting on a higher than bilateral level in the area. It is also a potential instrument (or starting point) for diplomatic dialogue in addressing the area’s grievances both on a bilateral and on an institutional level. As such, the use of this thesis as a ‘handbook’ for approaching the Black Sea, would be a most desired outcome.

Last, but by no means least, this thesis’ conclusions – that the Black Sea geopolitical environment has spawned a potentially transitory form of *reactive regionalism*, reveal the areas of applicability of such a finding.

SECTION I

Setting the Scene

2. The geopolitical determinants arising from the nature of the European Union (EU)

The geographical location of the Black Sea states in the neighbourhood of the EU places them into a unique position. Given the Union's goal of having a ring of well-governed peaceful neighbours, they are the targets of the EU policies aiming to bring this goal about, and can choose to be on the receiving end of certain benefits deriving from a deep bilateral relationship. At the same time, though, acting on the EU offers can be interpreted negatively by the Russian pole of power, an aspect realised by the Union policy-makers. This chapter will explore the mechanisms employed by the EU in order to exert an influence over its partner countries by looking first at the main perspectives adopted in the Europeanisation literature. It will consequently compile a set of conditions for EU impact that bear in mind the very particularities of the Black Sea geopolitical environment, and then investigate each of them based on the modes of governance involved and the particular domestic areas targeted by the Union's policies.

2.1. Background

The development of the European Union (EU) towards a political system *sui generis* has been closely associated with an increase in its international presence. The academic literature initially struggled in its efforts to describe it, for – as Lynch (2003) notes –

“The European Union is a unique, not to say strange, political actor, with divided and clashing institutions, unclear sovereignty, a weak sense of common interests and few institutions in the political area, yet able to achieve its declared ends” (p. 78)

Traditional accounts of EU foreign policy used a projection of the unitary state actor model and an agency-based perspective to gauge its performance. As a result, their natural conclusions underlined the Union's restricted capacities owing to a lack of strategic coherence, legal authority, power resources or formal competencies (Hill, 1993; Smith, 2003). However, the relative success of the Union in achieving its declared ends - pointed out by Lynch (2003) - signalled the need for a change, not only in the approach adopted by these studies, but also in the nature of the concepts used in characterizing the EU.

The answer was found in the external governance perspective. The EU external relations' basic feature is the establishment of institutionalised formal cooperation, monitoring and political dialogue on a wide range of issues and with a broad range of agents and actors through bilateral and regional structures (Magen, 2007: 374-375). Due to the EU's increased international presence, one has witnessed an increase in the influence born by the Union over non-Member States and international affairs more broadly. The Black Sea geopolitical environment features instances of all

the types of external relations that the EU has developed, from the traditional field of external trade to democracy promotion or co-operation in various policy fields falling under the EU's legislative competence (Lavenex, 2004). The overarching foreign policy initiative through which EU's external governance activates in the Black Sea is the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), although policies may come as well as a result of bilateral co-operation agreements.

The initial studies on the impact the EU may exert on domestic policies relied heavily on the analytical framework developed for evaluating Europeanisation in candidate member states. Indeed, as Lavenex and Schimmelfennig (2009) point out, "the most prominent case of external action based on the projection of the EU *acquis* is enlargement", so in a sense the enlargement process represents the apex of EU's external governance and at the same time is illustrative of the Union's gravitational pull as a model of integration, a normative and civil force, and – as is the case for most of the Black Sea states – an important trade partner and source of capital. However, since the Union started to focus more on deeper integration rather than the accession of new members after the fifth wave of enlargement, it is widely acknowledged that this Europeanisation model has already been exhausted (Weber et al, 2007; Lavenex and Schimmelfennig, 2009). Hence, the notion of external governance aims to analyze methods of integration into the European system of norms and rules that remain below the threshold of membership.

By contrast then to the early studies which argued that EU rule transfer occurred mainly in the framework of 'governance by conditionality' (roughly speaking, a take-it-or-leave-it bulk choice for candidate countries) (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004, 2005; Sedelmeier, 2006), analyses of external governance beyond enlargement emphasize the possibility that variations may exist and be tolerated in the content, validity and organizational context of European governance rules. In other words, as opposed to the case of enlargement, the EU-third-country relations equation does not have a unique institutional solution. This assumption, coupled with the already noted dissatisfaction with the unitary state actor/agency based model for characterizing the EU, has led to the adoption of a more structural, institutional view towards external governance.

2.2. Models of Europeanisation

This novel view on external governance benefits from a theoretical background composed by different models of Europeanisation – in other words, different models characterizing the process of adaptation to the EU system of norms. Thus, the 'governance by conditionality' framework has been supplemented by a sociological approach, which was found only marginally relevant in the enlargement context (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005; Sedelmeier, 2006).

The first model relies on the logic of consequences and explains compliance through cost-benefit calculations in relation to alternative courses of action (Grabbe, 2005). Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004, 2005) identified a series of conditions affecting the probabilities of convergence with EU norms and regulations, most importantly the size and speed of rewards, the credibility of

threats and promises (connected with the historical track record for delivering the rewards), the determinacy and clarity of the rules promoted by the EU and the size of the domestic costs for adoption. In relation to the Black Sea, although at the moment the only candidate country in the area is Turkey and for the other states the possibility of using conditionality for overcoming the domestic costs of adoption without the prospect of membership is less powerful, this model still possesses relevancy. Within the ENP framework, the EU offers a set of incentives that can be deemed strong enough to trigger reforms and closer standards between the Union and individual Black Sea countries. The latter may have intrinsic desires for reform, convergence with “the West” and the adoption of EU regulations in the hope of accessing the single market, obtaining European investments and gaining visa facilitations. On the security side, Black Sea states might want to increase cooperation in order to manage common threats (Weber et al, 2007).

Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier (2004, 2005) contrast ‘governance by conditionality’ with social learning and lesson-drawing, two Europeanisation models which can be conflated into one sociological approach for comparison purposes. Adoption of, and compliance with EU norms are explained through a logic of appropriateness. Hence, the foreground is occupied not by costs and rewards, but by the perceived legitimacy of EU rules and the correlated level of conflict with the domestic sphere. According to constructivist empirical analyses, socialisation represents a crucial factor for an effective implementation of external norms and it is facilitated by complex learning (Flockhart, 2006), persuasion (Checkel, 2003), an interaction between epistemic and political communities (Adler, 1992) or the mutual acknowledgment of teacher-pupil roles (Gheciu, 2005). Even though they find a sociological approach only obliquely relevant to explaining compliance in the accession context, Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005) stipulate that the socialised agent must identify to a certain extent with the social group of the norm-maker.

2.3. External Governance/Domestic Impact

Before delving into the way the two models of Europeanisation interact in shaping compliance and/or alignment of norms in third-countries, some note must be taken of the characterisations which this process – dubbed ‘external governance’ by some authors, ‘domestic impact’ by others – has received in the specialist literature.

There is a subtle difference between the two concepts. On the one hand, the ‘domestic impact’ of external actors has been conceptualised in terms of the adoption, implementation and internalisation of their norms and rules (Morlino and Magen, 2009), of their influence on third-countries governments’ legislative behaviour (Kelley, 2004), or of their domestic bureaucracies (Finnemore, 1993). If a sectoral, policy-focused view is adopted, this impact translates to the ability of the EU to modify domestic goals at policy level (Hall, 1993). Hence, to a certain extent, authors concerned with the EU’s domestic impact employ a mechanism of correlation between an initial status quo and a subsequent change in the domestic coordinates which could be plausibly attributed

to a set of EU rewards, demands or socialisation processes. In other words, the emphasis lies more heavily on detected policy-level or high level adjustments.

On the other hand,

“[E]xternal governance takes place when parts of the *acquis communautaire* are extended to non-member states’ (Lavenex 2004: 683). This external governance can, however, also develop participatory elements and hence move closer towards alternative forms of integration when regulative expansion is accompanied by the opening-up of organizational structures of policy-making. This is possible especially in areas governed by horizontal, participatory and process-oriented modes of policy-making, often referred to as ‘network governance’.” (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig, 2009:796)

One can notice that in the case of external governance, it is the systems of rules that represent the point of departure for any analysis, with the focus being on the process of bringing about compliance or norm alignment. Moreover, the above definition stands as a testimony for the external governance literature’s reliance on an institutional, structural view. In this context, governance is understood as institutionalised forms of coordinated action that produce collectively binding agreements (Benz, 2007), and in relation to the EU, it assumes the existence of a common system of norms beyond the Union’s formal authority. As the present chapter is mainly focused on the question of how the EU transfers its rules to Black Sea third-countries – in other words, on the *process* of approximation to EU norms and practices -, I will henceforth use the concept of ‘external governance’ to refer to the extension of the EU system of rules beyond its borders.

2.4. External Governance Evaluation Framework

Although – as mentioned before - the early Europeanisation literature confronted the ‘governance by conditionality’ model and the sociological approach in order to separately specify their relative explanatory strengths, I will follow a suggestion put forward by Youngs (2004) and take as a starting point the idea that analysing the EU’s impact on individual Black Sea states (see the case study chapters too) and the area as a whole requires a certain degree of commensurability in relation to both models. Given the nature of the premises advanced on both sides, one can imagine that in a theoretical ideal case, an effective external governance process will imply that cost-benefit calculations are carried out inside favourable environments, already attuned to EU norms.

In this sense, Lavenex and Schimmelfennig’s (2009) external governance definition noted above signals attempts to conflate the ‘governance by conditionality’ and sociological approaches through its references to “network governance” and the “participatory” elements encountered in the policy-making process, while at the same time maintaining an important role for institutional factors. Along the same lines, within an external governance perspective, the ENP has been characterised as an external projection of internal policies (Lavenex, 2004), stressing the importance of (a) the

clarity and degree of legalisation of EU's promoted rules and norms, and of (b) the administrative capacities of the target states.

Therefore, combining the 'governance by conditionality' model, the sociological approach and the insights from an external governance "reading" of the ENP, one can identify three background conditions for ensuring compliance and alignment with EU rules and norms:

- (1) Target states will comply with the Union's reform demands if they consider these reforms legitimate and appropriate (Schimmelfennig, 2002). In an ideal case, the respective countries would steer towards reforming because they see them in line with their normative and identity values.
- (2) The reform process will most likely occur if the incentives offered by the EU outweigh the implementation costs and overcome domestic or foreign veto players (with an attached caveat that a high degree of legalisation of clarity of EU norms and rules will encourage reform (Franke et al, 2010: 151).
- (3) The administrative capacities of the targeted states are crucial for effective EU-oriented reform (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig, 2009).

Putting all these conditions on an equal footing represents a divergence from the mainstream approach of the literature on EU impact. However, as I will exemplify in the following sections, the Black Sea environment represents a peculiar space, where attributing explanatory power to ideological or normative factors and the geopolitical context is justified (Magen, 2007). There is no question that these background conditions are very generic and will manifest themselves differently 'on the ground', depending on the administrative capabilities of the target country, the various coordinates on the larger 'power map' including the respective state and the EU, and the degree of interest and involvement of the Union in the actual reform processes. In fact, it was noted since the EU's early days that the effects of external governance have differed across a large spectrum. Therefore, analyses of the process have not only focused on the conditions deemed to facilitate an effective rule-transfer, but also on the diverse forms and contents that external governance may take and their associated chances for success. Depending on the theoretical perspective adopted, the mode of governance followed by the Union in the external governance process is deemed to follow different models. Lavenex and Schimmelfennig (2009) provide an extremely useful summary of the various positions in this field:

The *Institutionalist Perspective* envisions the mode of external governance as following that of internal governance, with its effectiveness increasing with the legalisation of rules and/or the legitimacy of rules. As such, it sees the hierarchical mode of external governance as the most effective. On the other hand, the *Power-Based* perspective sees the mode of external governance as varying with structures of power and interdependence, as follows: in option a., a high and asymmetrical interdependence in favour of the governance provider tends to produce a hierarchical

mode of governance; option b. sees high and symmetrical interdependence as conducive to market governance; while option c., sees medium (symmetrical and asymmetrical) interdependence as conducive to network governance. According to this view, the effectiveness of external governance increases with the bargaining power of the governance provider and the hierarchical mode of governance is the most effective one.

In accordance with the *Domestic Model Perspective*, the mode of external governance follows the mode of third-country domestic governance, while three elements can increase the effectiveness of external governance: the resonance of EU rules, the EU compatibility with domestic institutions, and as the number of adversely affected veto players decreases (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig, 2009).

Based on the analysis in the previous chapter, the Black Sea geopolitical environment provides a fruitful ground for testing these different perspectives. One can observe that there are deep connections between the existence of the background conditions for EU impact and the mode of governance chosen to spearhead the external governance process. I noted previously that, even though none of the Black Sea states can be definitely characterised as “weak states”, considerable shortcomings may exist in what Way termed their “regime competitiveness” and consequently in their administrative capacities of implementing reforms. Therefore, the choice between a domestic model and an institutional perspective – more specifically, the choice between a third-country domestic mode of governance (D1) and a EU mode of governance (II) – becomes crucial with regards to meeting condition (4) and ensuring a fertile background for EU impact.

In addition, as the analysis in the previous chapter shows, the Black Sea geopolitical environment presents a ‘power map’ featuring strong polarity, two great powers (the EU and Russia), at least one regional power (Turkey), and in some cases emotionally-charged coordinates on the Wendtian amity-enmity scale. These elements translate into different degrees of interdependence between Black Sea states and the two power poles – Russia and the EU. In the context of external governance the interdependence of Black Sea states from Russia may interfere with the formation of a favourable normative environment (condition (1)), with the perceived worth attached to EU incentives and with these incentives’ ability to trump domestic and foreign veto players (condition (2)). In the case of one Black Sea state – Ukraine – Dimitrova and Dragneva’s (2009) analysis of the rule-transfer process attributes such a high level of importance to interdependence with Russia that the predominant institutional perspective for investigating external governance is turned on its head:

“Rather than arguing [...] that the degree of existing institutionalization affects the success of external governance, we see interdependence as the driving force for institutionalization. [...] EU institutional rules appear to be the effect, rather than the cause, of developments in the foreign policy arena. Therefore, we argue, in line with the power model formulated by

Lavenex and Schimmelfennig (2009), that interdependence with Russia is a key variable defining the effectiveness of the EU's external governance.”

Without stepping over the analysis in the following chapter, it is worth mentioning at this point that the Russian foreign policy has become more assertive during Putin's leadership, aiming to prevent the Western influence (exerted by the EU, NATO or the US) in the former 'Soviet space' or its 'strategic glacis' (Averre, 2007). This assertiveness expresses itself particularly in Russia's immediate neighbourhood (which partially overlaps with the Black Sea area), and has led to reluctance to cooperate with external actors in this space, with discussions about general principles of cooperation becoming increasingly conflictual in recent years (Lukyanov, 2008: 1117). Consequently, particularly when the interdependence of the target state from Russia is high, the question of which perspective best reflects the EU's external mode of governance bears an additional premium, as it is indicative of whether the EU takes a case-by-case approach and 'plays in the power system' when necessary or whether it tends to utilise its internal mode of governance as a model irrespective of the target state.

The following analysis will review the different cooperation programmes and initiatives activating in the Black Sea area, and move on to investigate whether the three above mentioned conditions are met and to what extent they are working towards norm alignment and EU-induced reforms in the Black Sea partner countries.

2.5. EU at the Black Sea – Cooperation Programmes and Initiatives

The European Neighbourhood Policy

The overarching EU foreign policy initiative under which Black Sea states are targeted by the Union is the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Developed in 2004, the Policy was put together in order to prevent the appearance of “new dividing lines” between the newly enlarged EU and its neighbours (EEAS, n.d.) (note the similar language of “dividing lines and spheres of influence” used by GUAM members for characterising their organisation (GUUAM, 1999). Although later on enriched by regional and multilateral cooperation initiatives, the ENP represents chiefly a *bilateral* policy between the Union and each partner country and offers a comprehensive set of concrete sector-level cooperation opportunities. However, a focus on these sectoral policies should be adopted only when particular policies are analysed, otherwise it risks missing the important fact that the ENP possesses an organic characteristic as a meta-regime rather than a basket of individual policy goals (Weber et al, 2007: 221).

Most importantly, the ENP was initiated in order to target security threats (understood comprehensively) by surrounding the Union with a 'ring of friends' and 'well-governed states' in its neighbourhood. The European Security Strategy developed one year before the ENP launch identified five key threats confronting Europe in the 21st century, all found in or applicable to the Black Sea environment: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, regional

conflicts, state failure and organised crime (EEAS, 2003). Five years later, “some [of these threats] have become more significant and all more complex” (EC, 2008: 3). Moreover, the Union’s energy security is directly linked to the Black Sea as the latter represents the main transport corridor for Europe. (Manoli, 2012). Therefore, EU’s interests in the area can be seen as derivative from consolidating the market economy and democratic governance of individual states, managing transnational security and unresolved conflicts as well as maintaining access to energy resources and balancing the Russian interests. In addition, the Black Sea bears a strategic importance in relation to wider security challenges in the Middle East, Turkey and Central Asia.

Therefore, the Union has designed a number of more targeted multilateral initiatives, linked to the advancement of regional policies in the Black Sea area. These can be best understood as a type of what Telò (2001) termed “cooperative regionalism” – aimed at structural adjustments in the neighbourhood. In other words, while the new initiatives might promote the intensification of trade and capital flows within an integrated area, integration represents only a secondary result of the main aim – policy coordination in selected sectors. With regards to the security threats identified above, targeted regional programs are foreign policy options “pursued as a response to systemic changes and the need to integrate in the global level” (Manoli, 2012).

Targeted Regional Initiatives

The Black Sea Synergy (BSS) was proposed by the European Commission in April 2007 and launched one year later in Kiev, with “the very specific objective of identifying and supporting what the partners in the region want to do together” (EC, 2010). Although individual countries around the Black Sea basin were already EU partners in various projects initiated under the ENP umbrella, the BSS represented the Union’s first attempt at a multilateral Eastern track of the ENP, a regional attempt to mirror the Euro-Mediterranean process or the Northern Dimension. Thus, its centre of gravity lies in the Black Sea area and not in Brussels, emphasising intra-regional cooperation. The Synergy marks an update of the EC’s 1997 Communication, where the notion of “sectoral partnerships” first appeared connected with the Black Sea multilateralism.

The warm welcome received by the Synergy’s launch from all the local elites contrasts with the less enthusiastic reactions to the unveiling of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) in 2009. Granted that the Russo-Georgian war over South Ossetia led the EU to speed up the establishment of the latter, both policies aim at enhancing cooperation on the Eastern borders of the Union. However, based on the nature of their initiators and on their respective policy finalités, it can be inferred that the BSS and the EaP were driven by different motivations. Whereas the first was a German creation, guided by economic interests in Russia (Hahn and Schuch, 2012), the latter was the expression of Poland’s desire to create a clear-sighted framework for Ukraine’s EU path (Manoli, 2012). As a result, the BSS was envisioned as a Russia-inclusive program that did not define any concrete issues in respect of the Partnership countries, while the EaP specifically identifies an apex for the EU-non-

member states cooperation process in the form of enhanced Association Agreements. As such, the two programs are liable to create tensions and reduce the efficiency of EU actions in the area because they are pulling from two separate centres of gravity – one in the Black Sea, one in Brussels.

The EaP features a multilateral track encouraging partner countries to cooperate in the areas of (i) democracy, good governance and stability; (ii) economic integration and convergence with EU sectoral policies; (iii) energy security; and (iv) contacts between people (Council of the EU, 2009: 9). In addition to the already mentioned Association Agreements, the EaP promises deep and comprehensive free trade agreements, steps towards visa liberalisation and a multilateral framework in which to discuss, consult and receive assistance on issues pertaining to the four areas.

2.6. EU as a Conditionality-Imposing Agent

Various assessments of the EU policy vis-à-vis its (Black Sea) neighbours have expressed scepticism with regards to the Union's ability to influence domestic reforms (Schimmelfennig, 2009; Wolczuk, 2010), because the EU's appeal has not been matched by a corresponding set of incentives – what Agh (2010) refers to as the “carrot crisis”. Theoretically, in order for the above condition (2) to be met, the cost-benefit calculations carried out by target governments have to overcome the reform implementation costs and the ‘weight’ of potential veto-players.

One needs to differentiate here between coercion and conditionality mechanisms. The EU aims to manipulate cost-benefit calculations via the latter, through an institutionalised context and in the form of treaties or other commonly agreed documents. The threat of punishment in this sense is ‘soft’, but does not affect the starting point status quo. For instance, both the ENP and the EaP are governed by the ‘more for more’ principle that continuing cooperation and alignment will depend on the progress that partner countries make in their reform and modernisation efforts. By contrast, coercion may manifest itself through use of force or subversion and it implies the assertion of direct control of one actor over another (Nincic, 2010). This mechanism of ensuring compliance can disturb the initial status quo and in the Black Sea context is more closely associated with Russia (Lukyanov, 2008; Averre, 2009).

The central instrument of the ENP towards partner countries are the Action Plans, ‘soft law’ documents adopted as recommendations of the PCA Cooperation Council. While denying membership, the Plans seek to strengthen the positive aspects of conditionality by promising a stake in the internal market and a set of rewards. Although codified in generic terms, they envision benchmarks in the political and economic sphere which, if met by the target state, would trigger a deepening of the relationship between that state and the EU. However, any sort of cost-benefit calculations based on the Action Plans can only be estimated in a lax manner, since alongside some concrete steps, the Plans also strengthen the ‘value’ conditionality of the PCAs in the sense that

progress is dependent on the partner state's adoption of the "shared values" at the core of the ENP (Dimitrova and Dragneva, 2009).

Conditionality is embedded in the sector-level principles of the ENP and translated across into the individual countries' Action Plans. The main bulk of policy alignment envisaged by the Policy represents the projection of (pre-Lisbon) first-pillar policies where the relations between the EU and partner countries are not exclusively based on hierarchical conditions (Lavenex, 2004). However, when the policy area in question is characterised by a high degree of clarity of the supranational acquis hierarchical arrangements with a high degree of conditionality will emerge, even in the ENP context, which generally presents weak and vague incentives (Lavenex and Wichmann, 2009).

Trade and economic integration can be considered the EU's most internally communitarised, hierarchical and regulated policy area. The common market and its rules represent the basis of its acquis (Wolczuk, 2010), and conditionality is clearly linked with the rewards of signing a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the partner countries that recognise the need to avoid regulatory competition between member states and consequently approve and comply with the Action Plan guidelines for economic integration. Due to the single market philosophy, the European Commission has the mandate to evaluate and monitor the progress registered by countries wishing to sign a DCFTA, but cannot negotiate the conditions attached in the Action Plans – in this sense, obtaining a DCFTA represents a 'take it or leave it' process. In addition, because the whole European market becomes open to states that eventually sign a DCFTA, it is in the area of trade and economic integration that the EU's Action Plan recommendations are consistently accompanied by the imposition of monitoring and assistance for adaptation (Andoneva, 2005: 139), as for example through the production of periodic reports on the progress of the Action Plans' execution.

In other policy areas the ENP goals are less defined, and hence the associated incentives and implementation are harder to measure. As mentioned above, the availability of rewards and a certain degree of clarity in the quid-pro-quo bargains are crucial for conditionality to be practicable. The consequences of this aspect can be gauged from the EU-partner states cooperation in the sphere of security and defence policy. The Action Plans operate on the condition that there is a 'shared values' basis between the Union and third countries, which in the foreign policy dimension can get practically translated into a spectrum of actions, ranging from alignment with the EU Common and Foreign Security Policy (CFSP) acts to cooperation on conflict resolution and management (Pardo-Sierra, 2011). What is problematic in this area, at least from a conditionality point of view, is the fact that endorsing the Union's CFSP acts, Common Positions or Joint Actions does not appear to be a politically or financially costly process and the incentive of being officially considered an ally of the European Union may have very little cachet in the domestic context.

Indeed, in situations when such endorsement could have had political consequences, some Black Sea states – Georgia and Ukraine – have not joined the CFSP acts (Barbé et al, 2009). Moreover, while the EU stresses the key importance of (protracted) conflicts settlements in the Action Plans, these documents only contain declaratory statements without more specific mentions of timeframes or of measures to be implemented. The Moldovan Action Plan (EC, 2005a) refers to the “strong EU commitment to support the settlement of the Transnistria conflict” (p.2) and the “reinforc[ing of] political dialogue between the EU and Moldova” (p.12), with almost identical statements to be found in the Georgia Action Plan (EC, 2006). While the EU commitments to conflict resolution are vague, both Action Plans set clear and specific norms and arrangements to be implemented with regards to the countries’ signing of international anti-terrorism agreements, the exchange of classified information in terrorism-related matters, compliance with international norms on WMDs and enhanced cooperation to prevent arms trafficking and export (EC, 2005: 10, EC, 2006: 16). It could be argued that in these cases the EU simply acts as a transmission belt of international regulations, and only demands what is considered the norm in the ‘civilised world’. However, one cannot help but infer that elites in partner countries might feel that the burden balance is heavily tilted towards them in what should have been a quid-pro-quo bargain (if a pure conditionality perspective is applied). Indeed, after the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest, when the idea of a Georgian and Ukrainian accession to the organisation was put to bed for the foreseeable future, the EU chose to offer Georgia the possibility of alignment with its CFSP goals without granting it a different security guarantee. As a result, “[t]he lack of substance in Common and Foreign Security Policy cooperation and the pressing hard security issues that faced the Saakashvili administration led to a disregard of the EU until the aftermath of the August 2008 war” (Pardo Sierra, 2011). These elements show that the effectiveness of EU conditionality can be limited in those cases when the rewards offered are perceived as not worth the implementation costs or when domestic or external pressures pull in a different direction. It would be possible, however, for small incentives to be effective in normatively favourable contexts, so it is to the EU’s mechanisms for shaping the domestic environments that I now turn.

2.7. EU as a Normative Agent

There is a growing recognition in the external governance literature that, as a consequence of the generally weak and vague ENP incentives (with the exception of the DCFTA), the ENP and EaP conditionality should be conceptualised as a process rather than a clear-cut cost-benefit calculation (Sasse, 2008; Wolczuk, 2010). This element acknowledges the varied responses and learning curves that the EU may receive from its partner countries, but - more importantly - the denomination of *process* signals the EU’s utilisation and importance attached to socialisation mechanisms which led to what Wolczuk (2010) terms the “joint ownership” of the reform efforts. However, the normative alignment and the legitimacy of the EU modernisation demands will only be as strong as the degree of their acceptance by domestic elites and the partner countries’

environments (Schimmelfennig, 2002). Hence, in order for condition (1) above to be met, the EU must transmit policies together with the ideas and philosophies behind them in order to persuade third states that these are “appropriate and, as a consequence, to motivate them to adopt certain policies” (Schimmelfennig, 2009: 8). The legitimacy of norms and practices is thus of paramount importance, and while it might be difficult to quantify them, one can use proxies such as the discourses and ideational arguments used by elites to defend certain courses of action, the existence of network and institutional capacity building initiatives, the creation of expert groups and the intensity of political dialogue. It is telling in this context the use of the term “partnership” by the Union, anticipating long-term cooperation based on “mutual commitments” and “shared values” (EC, 2003).

With regards to economic and trade integration, in addition to the DCFTA practical reward offered by the EU, the Union utilises a series of socialisation mechanisms aimed at educating and assisting partner countries in the implementation of the PCAs. Network building is supported through TAIEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange), an EU instrument helping third states become acquainted with, apply and enforce EU law, supplemented by a monitoring programme (EC, 2014a). TAIEX employs typical persuasion mechanisms – workshops, expert missions and study visits – aimed at internalising certain rules and ways of proceeding within the elite and administrative classes of beneficiary countries. Along the same lines, the Twinning programme targets institutional capacity building, focusing on the transposition, implementation and enforcement of EU legislation, but with more precise policy objectives in sight, agreed by the Union and partner countries’ administrations (EC, 2014b). The ever-present *long-term* relationship goal is pursued through the joint ownership of the programme aims, alongside a secondary EU objective of sharing good practices developed within the Union with the beneficiary states.

One can also note here that monitoring mechanisms, while representing a key resource in ‘governance by conditionality’, may also support socialisation via their secondary ‘shaming’/‘social exclusion’ and trust-building functions. The 2008 war in South Ossetia not only gave advocates of an increased EU regional profile (most notably Poland) an impetus to reinforce the ENP in the East through the EaP, but also to accompany the new and already existing cooperation frameworks with more consistent benchmarking and monitoring mechanisms. As a result, in the recent years, regular rounds of contacts occurred in the subcommittee of trade and economic affairs, between experts working groups, TAIEX actions and the first Twinning projects (Pardo-Sierra, 2011).

2.8. The Importance of the Domestic Context

I cannot fully elaborate on condition (3) above because the majority of the theoretical and empirical evidence will only be introduced in the case study chapters below. It suffices to say at this point though – as an anticipative conclusion - that the external governance literature tends to overlook

the partner countries' agency and regional geopolitics when analysing the Union's impact (even though separate 'models' – the Power Model and the Domestic Model – were put forward by Lavenex and Schimmelfennig (2009), there is only a small number of contributions which relinquish the Institutional Model).

By contrast, what the case study chapters will highlight is the fact that, in spite of uneven administrative capacities among ministries and agencies, the core group of decision makers in the two states is stable and committed to implementing the EU reforms, with the state having the infrastructure to act on the Action Plan; if it does not – or did not – do so, it is because of conscious policy choices.

2.9. Conclusion

It is a widely agreed conclusion in the academic literature that the EU represents a unique polity, exercising power and influence through a specific set of policy instruments which would be difficult to match by a traditional actor. In this sense, the European and Russian great powers meet over their common neighbourhood in circumstances that neither have faced before in their history. From the Russian side, this meeting's uniqueness is given by the nature of the Union, whereas from the EU side it is the first time it is 'dragged' into a 'fight' over a geographical space where it needs to make the most out of a limited set of policy options.

I have highlighted above that there is still uncertainty about the exact mechanisms through which such policies are pursued by the EU. While the dominant academic opinions emphasise the importance of credible and consistent incentives for the Union to record a domestic impact in partner countries, I have also investigated the hard-to-quantify concept of 'normative appeal' – the gravitational pull which the Union exerts over its neighbours and the various programs that are focused on transmitting its governance values. In the same vein, I have complemented insights from the institutionalist view on external governance with perspectives that point out the importance of interdependence and of the partner countries' agency. While it is perfectly understandable why, given their origins and triggers, the institutionalist perspective has prevailed over the power-based view and the domestic model, the peculiarities of the Black Sea area require one to pay close attention to all three conditions.

Consequently, this chapter has shown that, despite perceptions that the EU suffers from a "carrot crisis", the use of incentives is prevalent when it comes to inducing reform, particularly in the economic sector. The Union uses them as well when it comes to norm alignment in foreign policy, but if they are to be successful in that dimension, incentives need to be supported by the *inherent normative appeal* the EU exerts over partner countries. Even if that appeal is felt, however, interdependence with Russia might thwart full norm approximation. Lastly, as the case study chapters will show more extensively, the Black Sea countries will act as active agents when the circumstances allow them to, and therefore reform implementation or the lack thereof may also be

attributed to the conscious choices that elites make at the domestic level. In fact, part of the EU's gravitational pull derives from the fact that its policies towards the area recognise this aspect (the more for more principle).

3. The geopolitical determinants resulting from the policies of the Russian Federation

3.1. Introduction

At the time of writing of this thesis, voices within the international community and mass-media dedicate extensive analyses to the Russian early 2014 annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea and to the ‘explosion’ of the East of Ukraine – developments that indicate both that an *Anschluss* (Atlantic Council, 2014) is possible in the contemporary world and, at the same time, raise severe concerns for the potential for large-scale inter-state war in Europe. The need for American high-ranking diplomats to clarify that war is off the table in their country’s response to the crisis, along with the plurality of international multilateral initiatives (including those of the EU) calling for and imposing “sanctions on Russia” (BBC News, 2014) and on Vladimir Putin’s inner circle, reveal, however, that the international community risks being considered by Moscow as late-responsive, and having different priorities.

Such perception has the potential of bringing with it the interpretation that Moscow’s *traditional* actions in the international arena⁶ can be enforced with low coercive costs, and damage both Russia’s image and that of the international system at a time when the defining features of the international status quo were slowly gaining the character of permanence within public views. Thus, cases such as direct intervention in the drawing of boundaries of a different state, along with outright annexation of its territories – *in today’s Europe* – is not only a possibility, but also a reality, and international organizations, such as the EU, risk being dubbed irrelevant within this logic if they do not hold a strong political-military potential.

This being stated, however, it is also logic which dictates that a number of elements require clarification. First, it is this author’s view that war in Europe is possible, should (as a last resort) the pillars of collective defence on the continent fail. However, the situation in Ukraine does not represent one of the cases in which their strength is put under scrutiny, in spite of media attempts to go in this direction. Second, the situation in Ukraine does indeed boast a character of exception in relation to regional and systemic stability, but not in regards to the overall characteristics of the crisis, but merely in relation to the opportunistic Russian annexation of Crimea. Third, the Russian Federation represents one of the most consistent actors in the world in terms of foreign policy, boasting one of the most predictable sets of measures in relation to its immediate abroad. As such, the analysis of the time period subject to this thesis’ investigation (2003 - 2012) is more than

⁶ Understood within the framework of interpretation of the Russian Federation’s approach to its neighbourhood as being similar to that of states in the XIXth and early XXth century Europe – an issue backed by a substantial corpus of literature (See Popescu, 2006b, 2008; see Averre, 2009, among others)

revealing towards the completely predictable nature of the contemporary events in Ukraine. This chapter aims, among other aspects, to clarify the assertions above.

In addition, this chapter aims to define the Russian Federation as a *great power* within the Black Sea region, though explaining its role of guarantor of a self-imposed logic – one that results from well within Russia’s self-perception of being more than a *normal state*, and one which also imprints on the Black Sea its very own character of exception, relevant for both subject states and, very importantly, for the success or failure of the EU in approaching the region in a way that would guarantee the achievement of its own neighbourhood goals.

In doing so, this chapter uses a Russia-emitted almost exclusively realist perspective, with the exception that it takes into consideration Buzan & Waever’s (2003) theoretical differentiation between ‘regional powers’, ‘great powers’, and ‘superpowers’ in order to allocate a conceptual definition to the international *niche* occupied by the Russian Federation, and subsequently moves on to clarifying the way in which Vladimir Putin’s Kremlin reached the level of self-perception it boasts today.

For the purpose of clarifying the character of consistency of the Russian approach to its immediate abroad, the chapter moves on to identifying the key principles that Russia is using (successfully or not) in the legitimisation of its actions on the international arena, prior to moving on towards analysing whether the Russian Federation is indeed a *traditional* actor.

Last but not least, this chapter investigates the role of the Russian Federation as *the* generating element for the Black Sea region, in order to provide the line of justification for the necessity of creating an *integrated approach* for the analysis of the performance of the EU in approaching this geopolitical environment, for the adjustment in the instrumental base that Brussels employs, and, most importantly, in the service of the EU’s goals, for the ante-factum interpretation of the way in which the Kremlin will approach its immediate neighbours to the West.

3.2. Russia’s historical determinants in the Black Sea

The previous section of this paper has revealed, among other issues, the fact that within a *region*, the pertinent actors attempt to utilise the regional component in such a way in which their ideals⁷ become regional nuclei. Within the Black Sea, in spite of a significant disparity of power⁸ between stakeholders, there are significant few who can boast with this achievement – The EU, the Russian Federation and, arguably, Turkey, although the power status of the latter, potentially and optimistically defined as *regional*, is beyond the scope of this paper. The Russian Federation, however, faces the necessity of clarification between defining itself as a ‘great power’ or as a ‘superpower’.

⁷ Understood as foreign policy aims and objectives

⁸ Understood in all definitions/forms of the term ‘power’

The exclusion of the Russian Federation from the category of mere ‘regional power’ stems from Buzan & Waever’s (2003) understanding that a regional power is “excluded from the higher level calculations of system (global) polarity” (p. 36), although they do define the polarity of any given RSC through the fact that their capabilities loom large in their regions. This cannot pragmatically be stated about Russia, as its recent history, its present military-political capabilities and both its approach to relevant actors in the international arena and its international institutional standing make it notable at a global level. If Russia was to be considered a mere regional power, this affirmation would be valid during the 1990s, when ‘shock therapy’, financial collapse, and misguided foreign policy goals made it little more than a regionally relevant entity, in spite of its self-perception.

However, following the coming to power of Vladimir Putin, Russia’s role in the world began to change. In order to understand this change, however, it must be clarified that towards the end of the twentieth century, the rouble’s 1998 crash had brought the state of the Russian Federation in a highly uncomfortable position, not least by confirming the perceived unsuitability of previous reforms throughout the decade. Dagestan had become an area of conflict due to the Chechen insurgencies and the country, existing within unprecedented borders – beyond which it had weak neighbors – was de facto outside the European political system.

The country’s mere regional role is also confirmed by academic commentators, which saw Russia as, although subject to globalization, no longer benefiting from its previous influence and, even in optimistic comparisons, having an economy similar to that of a medium-size European state (Lynch, 2003: 10-11).

These were elements which Vladimir Putin identified at the dawn of his first term as president and urgently attempted to change. In addition, Putin noticed that although the international environment portrayed strong levels of dynamism, Russia did not constitute a part of the mainstream process of change. Previous pursuits within the doctrine of ‘multipolarity’ (primarily during Yevgeny Primakov’s term as foreign minister) only managed to place the country in a ‘no man’s land’ of international relations, and this became crystal clear after Kosovo, “where NATO carried out an aggressive act with a complete disregard of the Russian position in the UN and when the OSCE had proven useless” (Grushko, 2002). The Russian Federation subsequently “woke in a different world” (Krasnaya Zvezda, 7 May 1999, as cited in Lynch, 2003), finding itself in a similar position to that of Yugoslavia (under a constant NATO threat and without allies). In Putin’s view, the country’s zealous (albeit useless) objections to NATO’s first wave of enlargement resulted in even more isolation and represented a distraction from what should have been Russia’s most important goal – revitalizing the state. Adding to this, the Russian Federation quickly needed to abandon both the improbable prospect of alliances in Asia and Ivanov’s foreign policy doctrine of “maintaining a balance between the volume of international obligations of the state and the material resources with

which these obligations have to be provided” (Lynch, 2003: 12) and replace it with a more pragmatic purpose of “maintaining foreign policy in line with state capabilities” (Lynch, 2003: 11), which would bring about (the very much needed) predictability and friendliness within Russia’s external environment.

It must also be clarified that, at this time, in spite of the re-alignment that Putin was carrying out in Russia’s foreign policy, the term ‘superpower’ was still used in theoretical-interpretative circles in relation to the Russian Federation. According to Buzan and Waever (2003), the term superpower is demanding of broad spectrum capabilities, exercised across the whole of the international system. An actor with this attribute must possess first class military-political capabilities and the economies to support such capabilities. They need to see themselves and be accepted by others in rhetoric and behaviour as having this rank. In the case of the Russian Federation, however, during the early part of Putin’s first term as president, although the rhetoric was present, and previous governments had indeed attempted to act “across the whole of the international system”, “maintaining foreign policy in line with state capabilities” meant that Russia did not have the capabilities to back this denomination, and the image of Russia was little more than a ‘curtain of smoke’.

The solution identified by the Kremlin in order to justify the fact that the Russian superpower was re-aligning was to coin a theoretical term superior to that describing the Federation. In other words, the Russian Federation needed to (re)align with the West, primarily because “although the world may be multipolar, there was only one hyperpower” (Lynch, 2003: 15). Moreover, the attempt to maintain foreign policy in line with state capabilities resulted in a key foreign policy priority, which remained the only *truly Russian goal*, outside of the country’s alignment goals: Keeping the loyalty of Russia’s immediate abroad in the West – namely the countries which were to become the EU’s eastern neighbours – which, with the notable exception of Belarus (due to geographical position and lack of loyalty concerns), and Turkey (in itself a regional power⁹), represent the Black Sea geopolitical environment.

Other areas allowed space for alignment to the West. After the September 11 terrorist attacks Putin used Russia’s own experience in Chechnya to open a large number of cooperation channels with the West in general and with the US in particular. In the war in Afghanistan Russia created air corridors, shared intelligence with the US and the UK, participated in common activities with the former Soviet Union states in South Asia, and provided weapons and military equipment to the Northern Alliance (Rumer & Stent, 2009: 91 - 104). This was done mainly because of Putin’s understanding that the hyperpower of the world was not Russia (Lynch, 2003: 15).

⁹ Also see the section on the choice of case studies for clarification regarding Turkey’s position in the Black Sea.

By comparison to the Yeltsin era, Putin also created the mechanisms to enforce Russia's proposed aims. Greater coordination between decision-making factors in Moscow and foreign policy consensus based on the recognition of weakness, of the fact that the Cold War logic ended in Kosovo, and of the fact that Russia is an actor in a globalized world (Rumer & Stent, 2009: 91 - 104), meant that Putin had the space to focus on the strengthening of the institution of the state, and also on fiscal and, most importantly, on military reform (Lynch, 2003: 26).

The Foreign Policy concept of the Russian Federation, approved by Putin in 2000, created a growing trend towards the establishment of a unipolar structure of the world (Rumer & Stent, 2009: 91 - 104) with the economic and power domination of the US (The Foreign Policy concept of the Russian Federation, 2000), and also that "attempts to introduce into the international parlance such concepts as 'humanitarian intervention' and 'limited sovereignty' in order to justify unilateral actions bypassing the UN Security Council are not acceptable" (Ivanov, 2003: 23, as cited in Lynch, 2003: 28). Thus, elements of the genuine and pragmatic departure from the factual (but not rhetorical) regional power level of the Russian Federation were beginning to take shape and Russia accepted its role as a great power.

It must be clarified here that, according to Buzan and Waever (2003: 34 - 35), the nature of a great power rests on a single key - the fact that it is reported by others on the basis of system-level calculations about the present and near-future distribution of power as a significant international actor, subject to acknowledgement of its ('great') role by others. As such, the rapprochement between NATO and Russia was seen as the relevant element in this sense. It was also accelerated by negotiations regarding deepening the institutional relationship between the two. At the Reykjavik Summit in May 2002 the NATO-Russia Council was agreed upon, after long negotiations. This framework allowed for the two entities to "work as equal partners in areas of common interest", and represented "a mechanism for consultation, consensus-building, cooperation joint decisions and joint action" (Lynch, 2003: 25). It also boasted a Preparatory Committee and a large number of working groups.

However, Russia's position would not remain the same for long. By 2006, the country became more assertive and outward-looking (Popescu, 2005: 3), completing its definition of great power with the final defining feature of the concept - the fact that it is treated as if it can bid for superpower status in the short-medium-term (Buzan and Waever, 2003: 35 - 36). This was the case because of four factors: First, after the rouble's collapse in 1998, the Russian economy experienced a period of steady growth, strongly supported by high levels of income coming from the rising price of oil and gas. Thus, Putin was able to declare: "the growth of the economy, political stability and the strengthening of the state have had a beneficial effect on Russia's international position". [Thus, Russia should continue its civilizing mission on the Eurasian continent] (Putin, 2004, as

cited in Popescu, 2005: 3). Second, starting from the premises that an authoritarian regime, which does not face challenges in domestic politics, becomes less inclined towards compromise in foreign policy, Russian elites have taken measures to secure their positions at the detriment of democratic pluralism. In addition, in order to be able to legitimize authoritarianism and increased centralization, Russian elites generally depicted their state on the outside as a strong, dynamic and pragmatic entity, and on the inside as a ‘besieged city’ under continuous threat from terrorism and ‘orange’ revolutionaries (Popescu, 2006a: 3). Third, events on the international scene have proven favorable to Russia’s taking such an approach (Popescu, 2006a: 4): the US was trapped in dealing with Afghanistan – Iran – Iraq; the EU was in a moment of crisis regarding its self-definition; the EU and the US needed Russia to form a triplet that would work for preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons capabilities; the ‘orange’ governments in the CIS were experiencing difficulties in the political and economic realms.

Fourth, Russia’s victory in Chechnya meant that Moscow no longer faced constraints in relation to supporting secessionist entities in other areas (Popescu, 2006a: 4). Thus, Russia switches to the offensive in international relations, as Popescu (2006) commented at the time:

“International affairs are a fight, and in this fight Russia has to re-establish its regional dominance. This is new prism through which Russia sees its international relations. Thus, the new Russian agenda is not to maintain current levels of influence in the CIS, but to reestablish Russian dominance in most of the CIS... Russian policies on Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria are both indicators of a new trend and the means to put into practice a new foreign policy agenda.” (p.4)

Thus the Russian actor regained its vigor and increased its involvement in its immediate neighbourhood and the shift brings Moscow in a position in which it was no longer required to hide behind the superpower definition masking the demise of state power during the 90s. Already at the mid-2000, its process of becoming a great power, recognized bilaterally and multilaterally as such, and taken into consideration for short and medium-term claims to superpower status, was complete. Also complete was its set of measures in relation to its main foreign policy priority – the Black Sea geopolitical environment¹⁰ – which had been attempted since 2003 and were to define the region for the years to come.

3.3. Russia’s key interests in the Black Sea and the methods used to achieve them

The previous section has explained how the Russian Federation came to fulfil the role of a great power in the international arena, and how the only priority it was left with, outside of an attempt to align its foreign policy goals with state capabilities – which meant pursuing collaboration with the

¹⁰ An area, however, never theorised with this denomination by the Kremlin.

US when the issue being pursued was outside of its power capacity – was to focus on maintaining within its ‘sphere of influence’ its immediate abroad to the West.

As such, Russia’s first necessity was to secure the loyalty of its immediate neighbours to the West – which it considered to represent its ‘strategic glacis’ – an area including Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan – the majority of which are considered to represent ‘Black Sea states’. However, it is worth mentioning that, in spite of various CIS initiatives, Russia did not denominate any particular foreign policy platform for dealing with the Black Sea area, Moscow having the concept of ‘near abroad’ as including countries that do not play a role within the Black Sea geopolitical environment, such as Belarus (Berindan, 2010: 5).

Russia desperately needs its near abroad. It is difficult to allocate a single explanation to Russia giving the task of *securing* its immediate abroad to the West the status of foreign policy priority, not least as a number of complementary justifications have appeared throughout time among the country’s political elites. Such views reference the practice of great powers of holding a strategic glacis, memories of *exposed borders* in front of the fascist onslaught during the Second World War, rights and responsibilities with regards to the destiny of the territories of the Former Soviet Union¹¹, the remnants of a bi-polar interpretation of the international system (in which the proximity of NATO represents a security risk for Moscow), cultural and historical shared values between Russia and its neighbours, and even more radical views, less prominent within the Kremlin (although not excluded), of pan-slavism and pan-orthodoxy, or the necessity of a pan-Russian-speaking state.

In addition, within some radical, albeit common opinions¹² within the Russian Duma, most, if not the entire set of structures within the international system represents the outcome of the USSR’s loss of the Cold War, and thus an extension of the US interests (a view also considering the EU *an offspring* of Washington). Thus any expansion of such structures can be seen as attempting to alter Russia’s (independently-developed) political culture (with its oligarchical features). Moreover, the radiant appeal of the US-promoted style of (European) democratic and liberal governance is immense – to the extent that it threatens the internal acceptance within Russia of the practice of authoritarianism, thus undermining the very basis of Kremlin’s power and requiring it to spawn interpretations with regards to the *originality* or *particularity* of the Russian democracy (presented as a competing model to that of *the West*) for the eyes of the Russian people.

Given the above, it is this author’s view that among the many, and sometimes conflicting, views and judgements emitted by Russia on the nature of the international environment, its *absolute*

¹¹ Or, what is left of them after the Baltic states have joined *the Western World*

¹² Although, it is worth mentioning that different extents of such views could be identified at any level of Moscow’s foreign policy agenda.

necessity to keep the near abroad loyal to Russia represents a true constant, either because of Russia's reticence in accepting a lesser role for itself within the modern, post-Soviet world, or as a defence mechanism for the country's (un-)democratic practices. As such, Russia is ready to defend this aim in front of both *the West* and its neighbours as well.

With this in mind, it is relatively easy to identify how, following Putin's centralization of state capacities, beginning with the early 2000s, the Russian Federation began developing an instrumental base for assessment and enforcement of loyalty within the near abroad.

3.4. Russia as appraiser of loyalty in its near abroad

The primary element employed by the Russian Federation in the attempt to maintain its influence (which is not a synonym with sharing influence) over the countries in the Black Sea and the rest of its near abroad is the interpretative-symbolic allocation of each foreign policy decision made by countries within its near abroad within either a pro-Russian intent category, or an anti-Russian one. As such, Moscow scrutinizes the actions of its neighbours in the attempt to maintain constant awareness on their desire to remain as Russia expects them to behave – loyal to Russia's plans for the region, or against them.

As reality reveals, however, in Moscow's eyes the two paths are mutually-exclusive, and any action which does not comply with Russia's plans can be subject to sanctions, especially if it involves a declaration of abidance to values, or plans, other than those codified by Russia. Such is the case more often than not, as this research reveals, not least as the exploration of case-studies show. In relation to Moldova, Makarychev (2010) points out that:

“Moscow generally views its relations with Moldova from the vantage point of geopolitical schemes, where the sheer size of Russia predetermines its dominance in the entire post-Soviet territory, or prescriptions governed by political realism, where the success of Russian policies depends on the strict pursuit of ‘national interests’. Both perspectives, however, look deficient. Russia's geopolitical ambitions, based on a shaky foundation of repeated – and mostly unconvincing – references to common historical memories, are not very welcome in Moldova. The re-actualization of the experience of the Soviet Union makes Russian identity conceptually trapped in a Soviet past that is not only rejected by the majority of Eastern and Central European nations, but also increasingly less attractive for the European-oriented segments of Moldovan society” (p. 3).

This view is also applicable to the case-study of Georgia, one of the least-loyal near abroad states, from Moscow's point of view, and subject to substantial coercion (Ryabov, 2011).

An issue of vital significance for the purpose of this thesis is the fact that on a year-to-year practice basis, what has been codified by Moscow as an anti-Russian set of value statements/measures and done by states within the near-abroad, was seen as pro-European (or pro-EU) – the other entity with comparably immense capabilities and claims on the region, although with notable, albeit unfeasible, given the geographical characteristics of the area, (pro-US) exceptions on the part of Georgia. Even within this particular state, as this thesis' case-studies reveal, a pro-European component has a higher feasibility characteristic insofar as representing a threat to Russia's interests within the given time-frame.

Consequently, it becomes apparent that Russia is entrusting its smaller neighbours to the West with a dualist-symbolic responsibility component – *declared foreign policy orientation*¹³ - an added element of attention to each of their foreign policy decisions, limiting both their decision-making sovereignty, when it comes to collaborating with certain (European) actors within the international environment. This component, with its double role of symbolic deterministic feature of foreign policy decisions (for Black Sea states) and measurement mechanism (for the Russian Federation approaching the Black Sea states), represents, as I show, the single most relevant defining element for all interaction between Russia, the European Union, and Black Sea states after the early 2000s. Perceiving it as such helps not only the enterprise of shedding light on the nature of consistency of Russia's decisions in the area, but also boasts the potential for the EU's success in achieving its own goals with regards to the region.

However, perceiving Russia's constant appraisal of loyalty within the Black Sea represents only half of the challenge faced by European policymakers when approaching the region, not least due to Russia's actions in cases where its loyalty appraisal results in an anti-Russian (or codified as *pro-Western*) verdicts. This is when Russia's role of loyalty-coercer comes into light.

3.5. Russia as coercer of loyalty in its near abroad

Russia rewards the loyalty within the Black Sea, primarily with economic incentives and with the backing of what it considers to be a pro-Russian regime in the given country¹⁴, without introducing a series of *technocratic* policy-targets such as the ones set out by the EU. With this in mind, however, the coercive instrumental base of the Federation is significant, not least as it has had to use it on a number of occasions.

Moscow's readiness in using both sides of its approach to its immediate neighbours is clearly codified on the occasion of discussions with Moldova on its trade-focus. Dimitrii Medvedev, the then Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, declared in 2012 with reference to Moldova joining

¹³ See section on variables

¹⁴ See case studies for more information on Russia's support for *pro-Russian* oriented political entities

the Customs Union (CU) with Russia that “*If you participate in an international formation you receive a certain set of privileges. If you do not ... you can face some problems*” (my emphasis, as cited in Siscan, 2012: 56) – a declaration which, by the practice of Russia during the past decade, could easily be interpreted as “Moscow expects Moldova to join the Customs Union with Russia, and Moldova will be rewarded, or else!”, as opposed to a generic comment concerning the benefits of joining international organizations. This interpretation is backed in practice by the fact that Moldova’s choice at the time was between two mutually-exclusive paths: Russia or the EU – an issue made clear by Dirk Schubel, the Head of the EU Delegation in Chişinău, which stated around the same time that: “If Moldova aims at a deeper trade regime with the EU, it should determine itself on the way as the EU and CU are not compatible for us, because in the EU there are other rules, taxes and tariffs.” (as cited in Siscan, 2012: 56). This *blunder* on behalf of the EU, of informing Moldova that one choice excluded the other, was quickly refuted by elite Brussels representatives later on, but the instance is relevant with regards to Russia’s perception that a deeper Moldova-EU trade relation would represent an anti-Russian measure.

The example of Moldova also proves relevant with regards to what happens in the case of anti-Russian measures. Hagemann (2013) noted that:

“The EU exerts conditionality on Moldova in the form of the incentives it offers in the ENP framework, Russia, in the other hand, could make an alternative, unconditional offer that spares the government the costs of rule implementation; at the same time it could use reinforcement by punishment, either economically or militarily.” (p. 5)

And reinforcement by punishment, either economically or militarily, are, in fact, the elements identified by Hagemann as representing the instrumental base of the Russian Federation, when its loyalty-assessments result in an anti-Russian verdict.

Economic sanction measures

The first such instrument – economic sanctions – as the 2003 – 2012 period reveals, refers to two mutually-enforcing strategies of the Russian Federation. The first one involves a set of measures¹⁵ aiming to increase the volume of trade between itself and a given common neighbourhood country in the key economic sectors which portray features of prominence for that country. This has been the case with Moldovan wine, or with Georgian wine and mineral water – key industries for the two countries (ITC, n.d.). In addition, given the Russian potential for energy export and the limited energy production capabilities within Black Sea states (with notable exceptions), low-price

¹⁵ A relatively open trade-market, relatively few standards of quality for products entering the country, preferential supplier policies, etc.

incentives are used and a relationship of *economic (trade) dependence*¹⁶ between the two entities begins to take shape.

With the first strategy in place, the Russian Federation paves the way for its use of the second strategy – namely economic bans. Such was the case in 2005 with regards to Georgia, in 2006 and 2009¹⁷ with regards to Moldova, when, as I show in the case-study chapters of this thesis, the identification of pro-Western orientation within the Black Sea states preceded findings of the Russian Consumer Protection Agency findings that such products were unfit for consumption in Russia (the Economist, 2013). Later on, when the loyalty analyses of the Russian Federation revealed more positive results, the bans were lifted¹⁸.

Military sanction measures

The second characteristic element within the Russian instrumental base for loyalty coercion within its immediate abroad is also twofold and consists of Moscow playing an active role in the blocking of the resolution of protracted conflicts within its neighbouring states (for the opening of which it has also played a role) and, as Georgia has revealed, direct military intervention – although the latter represents such a radical measure that Moscow feels the need to find a normative/legal justification, other than coercion.

The protracted conflicts

Unlike a substantial proportion of Russia's instrumental base in coercing its immediate abroad into pro-Russian loyalty, protracted conflicts (Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia) within Russia's neighbourhood do not represent a creation of the Putin regime, although their twofold nature (of keeping Russia's 'boots on the ground' within neighbour states and cancelling out the states' potential for joining either the EU or NATO, within the Russian view), was fully used by the Putin regime. Nonetheless, in the case of most of the Black Sea's protracted conflicts, both the emergence and the 'peacekeeping' form of Russian presence in the Black Sea geopolitical environment was agreed upon as the best solution for maintaining Moscow's influence in its immediate abroad (Ryabov 2011: 264) during the early 90s.

The new trend of policies employed by post-2003 Russia was manifested especially in relation to the secessionist entities in Moldova and Georgia. Popescu (2006: 4-7), in an exceptionally valuable summarization, has managed to conceptualize the similarities identifiable within Russia's approach

¹⁶ See section on variables

¹⁷ In addition to other bans following the period under analysis, coupled with bans on other products imported from different states within the common neighbourhood, depending on geopolitical orientation

¹⁸ Such bans are customarily coupled with extensive re-negotiations on the price paid by immediate abroad consumers for Russian energy.

to the conflict areas. A first such feature – diplomatic support – is primarily identifiable in the Russian Federation’s constant blocking of the OSCE common statements regarding the withdrawal of Russian forces activating within the respective regions. This was the case on the OSCE Ministerial Councils in 2003, 2004, and 2005, where decisions were blocked as a result of disagreement between a substantial number of OSCE members on one hand and Russia on the other. This is complemented by political support for the establishment and functioning of ‘secessionist communities’, involving here a wide array of activities including summits, ministerial meetings and cooperation networks mostly hosted by the city of Moscow and Russian officials, in addition to bilateral meetings between the president of the Russian Federation and the ‘presidents of the republics’. The legal basis for Moscow’s involvement within such enterprises is strongly helped by a policy of ‘passportisation’ (Popescu, 2006b: 5), through which Russian citizenship is granted en masse to residents of the separatist territories (especially Abkhazia and South Ossetia) – helping Russia increase the weight of its legitimacy when ‘protecting its own citizens abroad’. However, this policy, coupled with that of support for the building of state institutions within the territories, has been shown to lead, in some cases, to the actual outsourcing of separatist state institutions to Russia. This was the case with the organisms dealing with defense and intelligence within the separatist territories in 2006. Regarding this particularity, Popescu (2006) has noted: “such arrangements are not necessarily welcomed in the secessionist entities themselves, especially in Abkhazia and Transnistria, but are according to officials desired mainly by Russia” (p.6)

In relation to the dialogue between the separatist areas and the affected countries, Moscow aims to constantly play a vital role within conflict settlement mechanisms – albeit pursuing end-results which match its national interests. As such, a by-the-book conflict resolution, in the Russian point of view, would provide unbalanced and decisive influence to the (re-integrated) separatist territories within the decision-making procedures of the respective state¹⁹. Such was the case with the so-called ‘Kozak Memorandum’ for Transnistria, which was in the end rejected by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova on the grounds of questionable viability. The alternative to such resolutions, within Moscow’s policy, is preserving the status-quo, which allows Russia to increase its maneuver space and safeguard its own interests in the area in the case that reaching an agreement would be ‘counterproductive’ (Popescu, 2006b: 4-7). As Popescu (2006) notices:

“... the conflicts are not frozen at all. It is their settlement that is frozen. The preservation of the status quo means the entrenchment and deepening of the conflicts. Thus, the ‘status quo game’ means moving away from a solution while fuelling tensions which could escalate at any moment [...] in fact the secessionist entities ‘outsource’ not only some of their institutions, but the control of their entities to the

¹⁹ Although Moscow’s decision to ‘recognize’ Abkhazia and South Ossetia seems to have, ironically enough, cancelled this capability for Russia – thus being interpreted as a *mistake* even from the Kremlin’s point of view (Averre, 2009)

Russian Federation. Most of the population in these regions have Russian passports, pensioners receive pensions from the Russian state, the Russian rouble is the local currency, many of the de facto officials of the secessionist entities are sent 'on missions' by the Russian Federation. In addition, there is a process of legislative harmonization between the legal systems of the Russian Federation and those of the secessionist entities." (p.7)

The issue of direct military intervention as representing an instrument of coercion of loyalty within the near abroad for the Russian Federation represents a contentious one, not least as two competing narratives manifest with prominence in regards to explaining Russia's actions in Georgia in the summer of 2008. One is the Russian one, claiming that its reaction was retaliatory and *ad hoc*. Second, states that in order to 'protect Russian citizens' it was the intention of Moscow to attack Georgia for the reason of coercion (Allison, 2008: 1169). This thesis dedicates a significant section to exploring the issue of conflict within Georgia, and the events surrounding the armed confrontation between the two countries are best left to their respective case-study. However, the interpretation of military intervention as a tool of coercion needs to be addressed keeping in mind the following elements:

First, it is clear that in any armed confrontation with a different state, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the Russian Federation could not be denominated as an 'aggressor', and would not find itself on the receiving end of such consequences, although, if sufficient evidence would point to such a gesture, the consequences would be of a severity that would put into question the very nature of the international system. In addition, the findings of the Independent International Fact Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia ('the Tagliavini Mission') concluded that Georgia was preparing for war in the same extent that Russia did – but Moscow, as a great power held greater responsibility in preventing a convergence of dramatic events (Ryabov, 2011: 274).

Second, the instrumental base of the Russian Federation, as applied to its immediate neighbours to the West, did not, for around 20 years, involve a direct military intervention within a state. Consequently, based on the above it would be safe to assume that the use of such an instrument was not premeditated. This isn't to say, however, that Russia's behaviour wasn't indicative of the fact that it would be ready to go to war against any of its Black Sea neighbours if the situation required it (a narrative that it openly promoted), or that it did not prepare military plans in preparation for such situations. However, this is to say that Russia's behaviour indicates the fact that it decided to go to war against Georgia because, in its own view, *it was required to do so*.

Its requirement to do so, in August, 2008, was firstly designed around *the Responsibility to Protect* doctrine²⁰, which, as both the international community and academic commentators have stated, was based on misinterpretation, deliberate or otherwise (Allison, 2008: 1152 - 1154). What followed was the justification of the Russian Federation of their legal right to intervene in the protection of its own citizens – an element without much substance within international public law, not least as no conclusive evidence was ever presented in which Russian-speakers had been targeted by Georgian troops on the basis of their ethnicity.

What was then left for the Russian Federation was to identify international law as an element which is subject to a monopoly on interpretation – meaning that if Russia’s intervention in Georgia is not legally justified, than it must mean that legal justifications are designed to work against Russia. Moreover, if international law in itself represents a Western value, than the entire worldwide set of values is faulty, including when it comes to expectations on how states should develop (Averre, 2009). This path led Russia on a line in which it had to defend its very organization as a stately entity, along with its democratic record, and to develop *competing narratives* with which to aim at regaining international legitimacy.

This development, coupled with the generally self-defeating recognition (from an instrumental perspective) of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, leads any informed observer to conclude that its military involvement in the brief (hot) conflict came about as a result of its perception that it was risking its control over Georgia’s separatist provinces, and it needed to prove its capacity for punishment. In other words, given Tbilisi’s actions prior to the open confrontation, one of the key instruments for coercion that the Russian Federation had in Georgia – the existence of *the protracted conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia* – was under threat of no longer existing. As such, Russia felt an absolute need to defend it – a measure with a strong character of emergency²¹ – which Russia desperately attempted to mask in a normative coat.

This attempt, however, although representing the dawn of a series of attempts pursued by the Russian Federation to build its appeal through a variety of bilateral channels, press, NGOs, and international organizations, following 2008, was, given the foreign policy choices made by Black Sea subject states, unsuccessful, as Kremlin could not escape the fact that:

“Russia discovered in the five days of the Georgian war that it does not have any meaningful ‘soft power’. Russia is dangerously lonely in the post-ideological world. The end of the Soviet Union and the death of communism deprived Moscow of its universal language and universal appeal; nothing has emerged to replace it.” (Krastev, 2008)

²⁰ Also on re-interpretations of International Humanitarian Law

²¹ A lack of reaction would have set a significant precedent, in Moscow’s eyes

Moreover, the Russian Federation was seen following the August war as a revisionist power (Ryabov, 2011: 276) which, in opposition to its previous engagement with the Caucasus, was no longer interested in maintaining a status quo, in spite of its sustained (albeit failed) efforts to find an international law justification for its actions (Allison, 2008). Also, Georgia did not transform into a pro-Russian frightened loyalist – pursuing, arduously, the completely opposite foreign policy orientation path. Russia remained subject to demonization in the Georgian narrative, as it was throughout the 1990s and 2000s (Boden, 2011: 129).

However, the absolute necessity to rebuild Russia's image and to work towards the creation of a system of Russian 'soft power' was not the only element that, as subsequent events show, Russia concluded from its military intervention in Georgia. As the events in Ukraine today reveal, beyond the analysis timeline of this thesis, but valid in representing a verification mechanism for the interpretation of the Russian instrumental base identified within this section, Moscow also concluded that it could intervene militarily in a neighbouring state with relatively low penalty costs – if the situation transformed into an imminent danger of either losing the loyalty of the neighbouring state or a fundamental instrument for keeping it – the new narrative construction costs would be worth paying as long as the typical instrumentality (*paralysing* the neighbouring state with a protracted conflict) is constructed as a result of the intervention.

3.6. Russia's failure at instrumenting 'soft power'

The events of the war in Georgia, as stated, represented for the Russian Federation an alarm sign in terms of its perception within the contemporary international system. At the same time, however, it also represented an occasion for the reassessment of its image pros and cons, together with those of the competing actor (the EU). The result was the Kremlin's conclusion that Russia was finding itself in a deficit of 'normative appeal' (one of the strongest ENP assets), which is achieved through 'soft power' instruments (Makarychev, 2010).

Consequently, attempts were made to reach-out to the new pro-Western governments within neighbouring states through non-governmental channels. One example of these measures involves the *Priznanie* ("recognition") Foundation in Chisinau, Moldova (which was originally funding humanitarian projects in Ukraine), which had the air of a Western-type NGO aiming to foster contacts between policy-makers and other sources of opinion. However, the fact that *Priznanie* was seen as a Kremlin offspring and not as an independent civil society organization led to polarizing effects and undermined its actions (Makarychev, 2010: 4). Nonetheless, even within commentator circles, the perception of an existing Russian 'soft power' became existent, to the extent that attempts were made to codify it (Table 1).

Table 1 – Russian Neighbourhood Policy (RNP) and ENP compared in 2009 (Wilson and Popescu, 2009: 328)

| Russia | The European Union |
|---|---|
| Hard power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blockades of wine, vegetables, meat • Oil and gas embargoes • Raising energy prices • Infrastructure takeovers • Secessionist conflicts • Military pressures • Non-withdrawal of troops | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial assistance • Protectionism on sensitive products but offers a distant perspective of free trade • Inactive in secessionist conflicts before EUMM • Active in border controls Moldova-Ukraine |
| Soft power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheap energy • Economic growth • Visa-free regime • Open labour market • Protection of authoritarian regimes • Exporting 'sovereign democracy' • Russian citizenship and pensions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative on enlargement but provides an attractive but 'unachievable' model • Tough visa policies • Supports democracy • Perceived as being weak and in a deep crisis • Image of economic protectionism |

Makarychev (2010), taking this example into account has commented on Russia's stance following 2009:

“The deficit of value-based policies is detrimental to attempts to make use of soft power as a foreign policy tool. The way soft power is understood in the Kremlin does not match the expectation of the new Moldovan elite and just strengthens the perception that Russia is still a *realpolitik* type of power dabbling unsuccessfully and mostly ineffectively with soft power resources. Such soft power ‘experiments’ are doomed unless Russia can offer a long-term concept of post-Soviet integration that is attractive and competitive compared to the EU model. Russia dubs the Moldovan drive to Europe ideologically-biased, while considering its own policy towards CIS countries as ‘pragmatic’. Yet alleged Russian pragmatism can easily turn into geopolitical sloganeering, which fails to offer an efficient conceptual framework for tackling the problems that Russia faces in countries located on Europe’s doorstep” (p. 4 – 5)

If low-level image-promotion measures were deemed unsuccessful, the Russian Federation needed its own EU-like model, and, through the form of a Customs Union (later to transform into an ‘Eurasian Union’), the Kremlin also began issuing claims of sharing fundamental values with Europe. Nonetheless, though, Moscow has found itself more and more at odds with the EU on principle towards the end of the 2000s (Averre, 2008). The clash became more and more visible not in regards to content, but to the source of principle-emission. In other words, Russia has denounced the ‘universality’ value of Western norms (promoted by the EU) and claimed that it too holds a prerogative within principle-emission, insofar as it is able to promote the Russian political model as one to follow. This opinion is best summarized by foreign minister Lavrov himself:

“Concerning the question of what we have at our disposal apart from diplomacy, I would stress again that it is above all our internal development, our internal prosperity, our attractiveness for other countries... the actions we undertake to strengthen and expand humanitarian cooperation in the CIS framework. Our influence, like the influence of any other country in today’s world, depends more and more on so-called ‘soft power’” (Lavrov, 2008)

However, it is vital to understand the reactive element behind the identification of such a necessity within Russian high-ranking political circles. Such a reactive characteristic is best seen when looking at the elements that Russia was attempting to promote when claiming to share the European goal of “establishing stable and friendly states at its periphery as a prerequisite for security” (Averre, 2009: 1696) – namely sovereignty, regime stability and non-interference in the internal affairs of these states (Dav, 2007: 5 - 6). Any attempt to promote peace within the common neighbourhood, such as that of the EU which focused on the pejoratively-coined term of *democratisationism*, which, as a strategy of Europeanisation, contravenes Russia’s interests of “*protecting the internal order*” by “*projecting internal order*” within neighbouring states and risks their ‘desovereignisation’ (S. Medvedev, 2008: 225).

At this time, however, Moscow was unable to overcome the sensation, on the part of both commentators and states within the shared neighbourhood, that in spite of “sophisticated efforts to promote common understandings through regional organizations – the CIS, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Eurasian Economic Community and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization...these efforts produced patchy results, stemming from the absence of a genuine common ideology and differing strategic aims among the regions’ states, so that in practice bilateral relations have often predominated.” (Averre, 2009: 1697). Moreover, commentators of Russia’s approach to its immediate neighbourhood such as Makarychev (2008) have even wondered whether the Russian Federation is “in principle committed to (any) norms, as opposed to pursuing self-interest through conquest, force or possession.” (p. 3 - 4)

What is worth emphasising is that the attempt of the Russian Federation to pursue a ‘soft power’ path in a sustained manner, and formulate a competing logic ‘with that of the West’ further to 2008, represents in fact a strong attempt by the Russian Federation to combat what it perceived to be the ‘threat of European soft power’. The attempt, by a state with such rigidity as Russia, to develop a sector of influence-building with which it had so little experience and chance of success, can easily be interpreted as a desperate measure to gain at least some normative legitimacy and maybe some appeal with its neighbours. However, when such a measure would have failed (and Russia’s end of 2012 loyalty-appraisals at the Black Sea pointed towards this), in the long run²², the Russian actor can only perceive its instrumental base as exhausted – making it a highly dangerous

²² See sections on orientation within the case-study chapters

defender of its immediate abroad – one with very little to lose. It is thus indeed fairly easy to understand Russia’s contemporary involvement in Ukraine and, in addition, to deplore the international community’s lack of foresight, which allowed events to pursue a path of instability – more typical than not – within the Black Sea geopolitical environment.

3.7. Timeline of escalation (or timeline of confidence)

Given the above interpretation of the instrumental base employed by the Russian Federation within the Black Sea geopolitical environment, based on the exploration of its approach to *defending* its near abroad, Moscow’s interaction with the area can be divided into two periods: The instrumental period succeeds Putin’s coming to power in Russia and precedes Russia’s war with Georgia. The reactive period succeeds Russia’s war with Georgia and extends beyond the period under analysis within this thesis. Table B summarizes the two:

Table 2 – The timeline of Russia’s approach to its immediate abroad

| Time period | Denomination | Characteristics |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| Early 2000s - 2008 | <u>The instrumental period</u> (denominated as such due to the rigid application of a set of coercion instruments) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and application of an assessment and enforcement of loyalty instruments²³ • Development and application of economic coercion mechanisms (increased trade dependence and bans) • Development and application of military coercion mechanisms (encouraging ‘dynamic standstills’ within protracted conflicts) |
| 2008 – 2012+ | <u>The reactive period</u> (denominated as such due to Russia’s perception that it is ‘losing its immediate abroad’) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping the instrumental base of the previous period • Supporting the instrumental base of the previous period with (i.e failed) attempts at ‘increasing Russia’s soft power’ (image promotion, NGOs, International initiatives/organizations, contradicting ‘the West as a model’) |

In understanding the shift between the instrumental period and the reactive period in interpreting Russia’s approach to its immediate abroad, it is worth keeping in mind Tsygankov’s (2006) description of Russia’s instrumental base in approaching the Black Sea region as guided by the principle “if not by tanks, then by banks”, meaning “if Russia does not possess the willingness/ability to enforce loyalty by force in the Black Sea, then the Black Sea should be dependent on Russia”. Further to the 2008 conflict, however, the metaphor can be reinterpreted into

²³ What this thesis denominates as Declared Foreign Policy Orientation (assessment), and Conflict & Economic Dependence (coercion mechanisms)

“if not by banks, then by (normatively-coated) tanks”, meaning “if all other elements still fail, Russia needs to be able/willing to use military intervention as a coercive mechanism, but this means branding it in an internationally-accepted manner.”

3.8. Russia’s great power rhetoric in the international arena

In a slightly forced attempt at finding common theoretical ground between the EU and Russia’s approach to the Black Sea geopolitical environment, one of the few conceptual instruments available is that of ‘structural power’ (control over the key ‘structures’ of power – security, production, credit and finance, and knowledge, beliefs and ideas) – an attempt at interpreting the two actors in a similar manner is made by Averre, in 2009, based on the theoretical codification of Strange (2004: chapter 2). Thus, the two’s interpretation results in what was denominated in a sovereignty-Europeanization binary (Hopf, 2008: 5) in regards to two sides of a spectrum of security and governance. This represents one of the few theoretical points of view through which the two entities become comparable enough so that they can be analysed in conjunction. However, this chapter does not sanction the Russian model as a model in itself, it does not allocate to it the value of a newly-emerged conceptual finding – which would require such an enterprise. Other models envision the fact that “Insofar as Russian foreign policy is seen as having normative content at all – in terms of how domestic political culture and Russian ideas about the international system are translated into its external relations – it is presented as being rooted in ‘great power’ norms of the ‘modern’ era which are incompatible with the EU’s” (Tulmets, 2007: 207).

For the purpose of this thesis, however, I offer an alternative perspective in building up to the attempt to understand to the achievement of EU goals beyond its borders:

The instrumental base applied by the Russian Federation to its immediate neighbours does indeed boast a strong character of consistency. However, although the same cannot be stated about Moscow’s rhetoric within the international environment, a number of features still manifest a significant amount of recurrence. Such features hold significant interpretative value, not least as, in their overwhelming majority, they represent little more than empty rhetoric, but which does risk undermining any academic or practitioner analytic endeavour through entangling into granting them the value of fact. As such, their clarification as mere rhetoric, holds not only the value of premise for the pursuit of this thesis’ analysis, but also that of potential guidance for further research.

Firstly, the Russian Federation will seek a constant image branding as a *besieged citadel on the inside and outstandingly powerful on the outside*. In this sense, *the inside* represents the image dynamic between the governance in the Kremlin and the Russian people, while *the outside*, represents the international image of the Russian state. This reality can easily be revealed by any

comparative analysis of the Kremlin's rhetoric targeted at a Russian and a foreign audience, respectively, and has as a primary purpose the maintenance of the legitimacy of the Russian government – or, otherwise put, the justification of the necessity for the Russian government's practices. In this sense, it is worth analysing the use by the Kremlin of culturally-symbolic elements of significance from the country's past – such as the responsibility of holding the legacy of the Great Russian Empire, succeeded by the USSR and, presently in the hands of the Federation – elements used to both portray Russia as an actor with huge power potential (on the outside) and invoke a constant threat (on the inside) from forces seeking to keep Russia from reaching its potential. Also within this framework is the association of any entity seeking to 'control' Russia's immediate neighbourhood with past friends-turned-enemies, such as the 'fascist forces' (BBC News, 2014), which, depending on circumstances, can either be the EU, the US, or even anti-Russian governments following *coloured* revolutions. However, in this situation, the rhetorically-presented responsibility of the Russian government becomes one of defence both outside and within (against protesters militating against the Putin regime).

Secondly, *Russia is not 'a normal state'* – represents a justification used by the Kremlin in both allowing itself the right of criticising what it denominates as *the unilateral right to the interpretation of international law*, and in justifying its (un-)democratic practices. In Lavrov's words:

“Those who criticise the internal development of our country cannot explain clearly why Russia *cannot be considered a normal country*... On the whole one must admit that this problem is of wider importance for the entire post-Soviet space. As has happened more than once in history, society in a state of intellectual 'ferment' faces the temptation to accept as axiomatic the dubious premise that 'the sun rises in the West', and that what has been achieved there is the end product of humanity's development, a kind of 'end of history'. This often disorients and demobilises society and as a result harms democratic development... we are acting in the European way, from the position of a pluralistic political culture, which by definition should treat debate with tolerance. This kind of discussion should not be approached from the position of infallibility of any party.” (Lavrov, 2008, my emphasis)

Such a view is manifested in relation to Russia's day-to-day political environment, and, most importantly for the purpose of this thesis, does arise as a result of Russia's self-perceived right to unilateral intervention in the affairs of its neighbours. As such, it is easy to identify how openly unacceptable justifications, for Russia, such as *Responsibility to protect* or 'humanitarian intervention' were indeed (although poorly) put to use in the attempt to justify Moscow's military intervention in Georgia and, when they failed at convincing the international community, the right

to emitting a new rule – *of protecting a country's own citizens* – was employed with an allegedly legitimate right of emission of international norms. Needless to say, Russia's right of norm-emission was not denied, but its claim of citizens under threat was.

Thirdly, *Russia has its own soft power*, is an additionally empty statement. The Kremlin's attempt at building its 'soft power capabilities' stands as an indicator that Russia does not particularly understand the concept of 'soft power', and only sees it as a potential PR set of measures. In other words:

“Due to differences in political culture, Russians find it very difficult to understand the complex post-modernist logic which Europe declares... for Russia, this is the traditional understanding of force, based on economic and military-political levers; whereas for the European Union, it is soft power used to expand the European legal space and make the European model more attractive to neighbouring countries (Lukyanov, 2008: 1114)”

And, in this sense, the more extreme elements of the Duma explaining the EU as an offspring of Washington represent little more than an attempt to understand a modern logic which eludes them. Moreover, reality reveals that Moscow is terrified of the radial effects of the EU's model for its immediate abroad, especially if they would emit from its own borders. This is why Moscow manifests such vocal opposition to the signing of Association Agreements (AAs) between the EU and Black Sea countries. The AAs are not synonyms with accession, but, given the amount of institutional adaptation to a model other than Russia's that they entail, they constitute a risk which Russia is not prepared to take.

3.9. Conclusion: Russia the traditional power in the Black Sea geopolitical environment

This chapter has revealed that the Russian Federation represents a great power having its immediate abroad – the area encompassing the majority of the Black Sea geopolitical environment – as a foreign policy priority. As such, it expects and enforces loyalty within the area, and is prepared to work tirelessly in defending its influence over the region.

Russia's foreign policy represents a nucleus of the Black Sea, and its approach, with a consistent instruments base, represents, as I will show, the fundamental aspect requiring an integrated approach for the study of this geopolitical environment – one which consists of the cross-sectional comparative analysis of declared foreign policy orientation, conflict, and economic dependence within the two relevant case studies of the area.

The Russian Federation is identified within academic literature as a *traditional* actor – one who still maintains hard power as a primary instrument in approaching its foreign policy goals, not least as any attempts of employing a wider instrumental range fail. A verification mechanism of this failure is the present-day crisis in Ukraine, which is relevant of the Russian perception that a soft-power instrumentation, once unsuccessful, must be backed by hard-power involvement. Although outside the scope of this paper for any other reasons than verification of findings, the crisis in Ukraine does indeed raise one key question – which will be left for exploration within future research – namely, if Russia, through the use of hard-power instruments acknowledges the failure of its appeal as a model and remains consistent to its verification-coercion long-tested approach in the case of Ukraine, does this mean the emergence of a new stage in its approach to the Black Sea? If so, which is the next country to represent the subject of coercion?

In any case, the vital element proven within this chapter is the fact that, in approaching the Black Sea in its Former Soviet Union areas, the EU is faced with a new logic – one that it has not, in its existence, faced before.

4. Black Sea Regionalism

In policy documents, high-level declarations and the relevant academic literature, one finds increasingly the denomination of *region* juxtaposed to the Black Sea geographical space. This chapter will investigate whether this appellative can be consistently and coherently be applied to the area, based on the premise that there is a clear difference between using this term in the political discourse to achieve particular aims and using it in a theoretically informing manner. The question whether the Black Sea qualifies as a region is also vital for placing the Russian and EU activities in the area in the appropriate light and understanding the strategic position of the case-study states.

It is this author's opinion that no investigation of regionness in a post Cold War context - especially in a geographical space marred by instability - could be carried out without appealing to the Regional Security Complexes literature. Therefore, the theoretical framework used below borrows insights from Buzan and Waever's work, but complements them with Neumann's region-building approach, to help move the focus from *regional security* to *regionness per se*.

4.1. Old Regionalism vs New Regionalism

The character of *region* applied to the Black Sea area may be questioned if one adopts an 'old regionalism' perspective (Söderbaum, 2003: 4), the main reasons lying in the type of premises used by this school to study regional inter-state organisations. It is important to note that the academic development of 'old regionalism' was to a certain extent triggered by the post Second World War bipolar world geopolitics and the creation of the various European Communities (Hettne, 2003: 23-24). Against this background, starting from premises that the interests of the actors involved are clear-cut and set, and that regions are 'given' (in that they simply represent formal organisations) was perceived as an appropriate way to then explain a particular set of activities and flows within a regional framework (Haas, 1973). However, factors such as the end of the Cold War, the sharp rise in the number of inter-state organisations with focuses beyond the 'old regionalism' favourites – trade or security -, and increased globalisation have fostered since the late 1980s new theories grouped under the umbrella-term of 'new regionalism' (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2002; Tavares, 2004; Telo, 2006).

This thesis will use a framework drawn from the 'new regionalism' scholarship to infer the 'regionness' of the Black Sea area. Siding with 'new regionalism' does not automatically imply choosing a particular theoretical approach – 'new regionalism' encompasses theories that have been "associated over the years with a variety of disciplines, institutions, schools and debates" (Söderbaum, 2003: 2). However, I understand this choice as an acknowledgment that the previously-mentioned factors triggering the 'new regionalism' scholarship play a key role in any

process of regionalisation, and particularly so in the case of the Black Sea. Firstly, the end of the Cold War created completely new geopolitical realities in the area: new states appeared on the coast following the break-up of the Soviet Union, while the end of bipolarity allowed for emerging powers like Turkey to assert themselves alongside the Russian declining hegemonic power (Cornell et. al., 2006: 14; Berindan, 2010: 2). In this sense, the early 1990s represented a formative phase for the Black Sea area, when regional cooperation actually became possible. Secondly and connected with this point, globalisation and the diversification of regional organisations around the globe gave the newly independent states and local powers a tool in the form of the regionalist rhetoric in order to enhance their international standing (Manoli, 2011: 1). These opportunities arising in a multipolar environment create a fertile empirical background for applying a ‘new regionalism’ framework.

In order to theorise the Black Sea area I will stem from the constructivist presumption that regions should not be taken as given a priori, but rather represent social constructions (Katzenstein, 1996; Hettne: 2003; Jessop: 2003; Neumann, 2003). This view challenges the rationalist premise mentioned earlier that the interests, ideas and identities of actors are set before the social interaction. The term “regionness” has been introduced in the ‘new regionalism’ school’s terminology to express precisely the *process* through which a geographical space is transformed from a passive to an active object. In this sense, regions “come to life as we think and talk about them” (Hettne, 2003), are “emergent, socially constituted phenomena” (Jessop, 2003) and “not given once and for all” (Fawcett, 2005). The constructivist approach implies that the puzzle is to understand and explain the process through which regions are coming into existence and are being consolidated rather than investigate the workings of regional organisations. The latter become second-order phenomena compared to the mechanisms of regionalisation and region-building. This ranking of focuses represents a theoretical assumption guiding the following discussion on the Black Sea area.

Nevertheless, before elaborating on the particular framework adopted, it is worth highlighting that, given its above-mentioned triggers and features, ‘new regionalism’ authors were bound to offer a model or “ladder” of regionness on which regions-in-the-making could be located at one given point in time. This is not to say that discussions on the extent to which a territory qualifies as a region are entirely new. For instance, a classical definition by Nye (1971) identifies a macro-region as “a number of states linked together by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence” (p.vii), recognising *de facto* that interdependence can vary between different fields (economic, political, or social). However, under ‘new regionalism’ these variations are analysed more extensively, no longer focusing on states, but also on civil society actors and territorial units that transcend geographical borders, and more importantly, they become signposts on an “integration spiral” (Agh, 2010: 1244) that translates the process of becoming a region. In

other words, these variations are no longer followed along sectoral lines, but play a role in a holistic assessment of a territorial space's development into an active actor.

For different authors, the 'ladder' of regionness accommodates a different number of steps, going from a regional 'space' (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2002; Têlo, 2006) - roughly identifying a geographical location with a loose, non-institutionalised network of economic, social or cultural relationships – to a fifth or sixth stage where the units become an integrated structure in the form of a regional “institutionalised polity” (Tavares, 2004: 28), a “regional union of states” (Têlo, 2006: 127) or a “region-state” (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2002: 44). This last level is a hypothetical scenario, which speaks to the fact that breaking down regionness represents an analytical device that only describes actual groupings approximately. Nevertheless, the exercise can prove useful insofar as it provides a yardstick to which regional developments may be traced back.

Table 3 – The 'ladder' of regionness (adapted from Hettne and Söderbaum, 2002)

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Regional Space | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A geographical unit with “some translocal relations”. |
| 2. Regional Complex | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early relations of interdependence, increased social contacts and transactions. • “ever-widening translocal relations – positive and/or negative – between human groups and influences between cultures”. |
| 3. Regional Society | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appearance of a number of different actors, apart from states, on different societal levels that move towards transcendence of national space, making use of a more <i>rule-based pattern of relations</i>. • Dynamics that imply the emergence of a variety of processes of communication and interaction between a multitude of state and non-state actors and along several dimensions, economic as well as political and cultural, i.e. multidimensional regionalisation. • This rise in intensity, scope and width of regionalisation may come about through formalised regional cooperation or more spontaneously. |
| 4. Regional Community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographical space turned into an active subject, with a distinct identity, institutionalised or informal actor capability, legitimacy and structure of decision-making, in relation with a more or less responsive regional civil society, transcending the old state borders. • Convergence and compatibility of ideas, organisations and processes within a particular region. • A mutually reinforcing relationship between the ‘formal’ region, defined by the community of states, and the ‘real’ region, in which a transnationalised regional civil society also has a role to play. |
| 5. Region-state | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary evolution of a group of formerly sovereign national communities into a new form of political entity, where sovereignty is pooled for the best of all, and which is radically more democratic than other ‘international’ polities. • National interests may prevail but do not necessarily become identical with nation-states. |

From the array of constructivist, reflectivist and post-structuralist models of regionalism sharing the assumptions that regions represent social constructions, Neumann's (2003) *region-building* approach identifies the political aspect of regionalisation as the most important feature of the process of becoming a region, whereas the *regional security complex* theory (RSCT), advocated by Buzan and Wæver (2003), complements a military-political focus with concerns over 'new security sectors' (economic, environmental, societal). Although at first sight the two theories might look as an unlikely couple, they share a constructivist background and a commitment to apply a self/other or inside-out/outside-in perspective to the political project of building regions. In the following section, I will therefore summarise the main tenets of the two theories, pointing out similarities and differences, and then pull together a theoretical framework informed by both which will be used to analyse the Black Sea area.

4.2. The Region-Building Approach

Neumann (2003) takes a post-structural approach to regions in order to "work on the inside" of the concepts that are used in the regionalism literature. His parallel with the nation-building process highlights the fact that regions, much like nations, represent "imagined communities", borrowing Anderson's terms, but Neumann goes on to ask whose region is actually being constructed. In doing so, he identifies a blank spot in much of the mainstream new regionalism scholarship, including Buzan's RSCT, which he nevertheless finds closest to his theoretical framework by virtue of its application of inside-out and outside-in factors in defining a security complex – "the most remarkable feature of his definition [...] is the absence of a subject" (Neumann, 2003: 166).

Consequently, one of Neumann's (2003) central arguments is that the establishment of regions is chronologically preceded by region-builders – political actors who, as part of a political programme, see it as being in their interest to imagine and construct a region (p.161). Agency starts working with cultural ties and similarities, but these are not in and of themselves politically relevant until they come to play a role in the service of a political cause (Neumann, 1997). When applying these insights to the region-building narrative of Northern Europe, Neumann's reflectivist and constructivist commitments surge to the surface in the way he conceptualises the main actors' interests and choices. Against the logic of 'rational choice', he shows that in building different discourses in relation to the Baltic Sea area political actors employ a wider rationality, motivated by ideas, identity, accumulation of knowledge and learning, rather than simply by traditional routines, structural factors and established institutions. Indeed, at one point he compares one such discourse with that used in the "German romantic nationalist literature" (p.173). Regions then are defined in terms of speech acts (p. 162), a terminology used by Buzan (1991) in his initial construction of the RSCT, and involve a wide set of agencies on the ground.

Neumann's argument here is that one needs to go to the root of where, by whom and for whom region-building statements and strategies are formulated and made relevant. Irrespective of how

natural any regionalism discourse might seem, the above-mentioned rationality underlying these statements and strategies points out their historical contingency, and in turn unveils whose region is being constructed. Ultimately,

“each actor tries to impose a definition of the region which places the actor as close as possible to its several cores. These cores are both territorial and functional, and the way to take hold of them goes through manipulation of knowledge and power” (Neumann, 2003: 160).

In this light, it becomes conspicuous that the region-building approach does not attempt to dismantle the premises on which the new regionalism scholarship was built, but aims to offer a perspective for “dotting the margin” of the debate and partly refocus it on the structure-agency dyad.

4.3. Regional Security Complex Theory

Barry Buzan and Ole Waever’s RSCT has been developed shortly after the end of the Cold War, and in this sense it chronologically matches the appearance of new states on the Black Sea subject and, consequently, of the possibility of regional cooperation. The theory rests on the intuition that most types of threats travel more easily over short distances (Buzan and Waever, 2003: 45) – that most states confront a punishing “loss of strength” gradient over distance (Boulding, 1962). Therefore, according to Buzan and Waever, security interdependencies tend to cluster in regional formations. RSCT’s first theoretical twist lies in its treatment of such formations as having an analytical and ontological standing distinct from the system or from the state level. The second twist comes from treating polarity, unlike in traditional IR theory, as an independent variable from the patterns of amity/enmity between units.

Despite “flirting” with open constructivist possibilities, in their book ‘Regions and Power’ Buzan and Waever (2003) present what could be construed as a fairly orthodox reading of security. They stress now and again that regionalism is to expand and enrich IR theory and emphasise “ideas of bounded territoriality and distribution of power that are close to neorealism” (p.4) and the “significant opportunities for analytical synergies between RSCT and neorealism” (p.481). The theory also retains the key neorealism variables of anarchy and polarity as characterising the regional level. Constructivism plays a part, however, by indirectly influencing the definition of a region adopted by the authors. More specifically, regions are conceptualised in “functional terms of security” (Buzan and Waever, 2003: 43), a functionalism which is then qualified with accumulated history: the recurrent patterns of amity and enmity are subject to social construction. The variation of this variable represents one of the reasons why, when discussing the RSCs in their individual chapters, Buzan and Waever point out how regions can expand and contract.

One must note here that the authors do advance a more prominent constructivist method when sketching the wider agenda for securitisation studies prompted by the post Cold War geopolitical context. They argue that the constructivist approach is necessary if one is to maintain a coherent security concept (with regards to different referent objects) while adding new security sectors – economic, societal and environmental – alongside the initially-studied military and political ones. On this reading, a RSC is

“a set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another” (Buzan and Waever, 1998: 201).

With the addition of the new sectors, Buzan and Waever allow for the possibility that the interdependence of the units in question can be analysed along sectoral lines, while the constructivist background requires that any such sectoral analyses be in the end integrated in order to detect cross-influences.

4.4. Theoretical Framework

Buzan and Waever’s RSCT represents perhaps the most important contribution to the study of international relations after the Cold War. They brought back to the front of debates a ‘reshaped’ theoretical *security* concept that could attempt to analytically tackle the new geopolitical realities: the appearance of new states, the end of bipolarity and the emergence of new threats against a variety of referents. By contrast, Neumann’s region-building approach just aims to offer a richer perspective by highlighting the contingency of regionalist discourses on various political programmes. Despite these more modest ambitions, Waever (1997) regards this approach as an actual “school” (p.293). I will argue that insights from both ‘schools’, building upon their points of difference, can help put the Black Sea area in an informing theoretical perspective.

Both the region-building approach and the securitisation approach located at the core of RSCT use the methodology of the ‘speech act’ and the importance of discourses for understanding the empirical world – evident in their emphases on politicisation in region-building and securitisation, respectively. Stemming from these similarities are the crucial distinctions that both theories make between the analyst and the political actor, between the analysis of reality and the construction of reality. In both the region building and RSC theory agency is given a high premium and plays a key part in creating regions and in elevating an issue to the level of a security issue.

Their treatment of region genesis and ‘ontology’ is where the two theories diverge, an element also evident from the different ways in which constructivism is applied in the region building approach and RSCT. Despite characterising Buzan’s contribution as “the most useful” in the new regionalism literature, Neumann (2003: 165) takes issue with the fact that even here the existence of a region is taken as a given. The security complex represents “an empirical phenomenon with

historical and geopolitical roots”, “a durable rather than permanent pattern” (Buzan, 1991: 191). However, as it was noted above, in the most recent statement of RSCT, Buzan and Waever (2003) make apparent their constructivist commitments in the individual chapters highlighting how regions can expand and contract. As it was noted earlier by Buzan (1991), the empirical side of the argument “courts the charge of reification”, but that is simply to be expected from a theory which sees the patterns of amity, enmity and indifference between states (rather than the regions) as undergoing social construction in an otherwise fixed geographical environment.

What this difference highlights is the fact that the two theories actually perform two different operations. RSCT is concerned with the analysis of security interdependence, and only laterally and contingently touches upon regionalist outcomes, i.e. the nature of the regions constructed by political agency. Borrowing the region building approach’s language, Buzan and Waever’s theory represents one of the many new regionalist frameworks, since the delineation of regions as security complexes is a technical question. Hence, notwithstanding the similar constructivist and discourse analysis commitments shared by RSCT and the region building approach, the two focus on different speech acts – the security and the region building speech act, respectively, and these should be understood separated for the purpose of applying their insights to the Black Sea area. As Buzan and Waever (2003) put it:

“The existence of an RSC is not in terms of the discursive ‘construction of regions’ [...] RSC is an analytical concept defined and applied by us, but these regions (RSCs) are socially constructed in the sense that they are contingent on the security practice of actors” (p.75).

This suggests that, to a certain extent, the investigations of the patterns of amity and enmity and of the power relations between units that RSCT embarks on can shed a light on the type of cooperation or conflict taking place in one area, and thus on the type of region-building at work there. In other words, a map of units, each bearing different coordinates of amity/enmity/indifference and of relative power, may highlight whether a potential regionalist discourse would unfold along ‘old regionalist’ lines, ‘new regionalist’ lines or a combination of the two (see the table below for specific features). One of the reasons why RSCT does not focus on regionalist outcomes is due to the fact that such outcomes represent “an element in [the] analysis but not the basis of it” (Buzan and Waever, 2003: 75) and, as mentioned before, such outcomes are perceived as separate from the securitisation discourse. More importantly, however, such a map cannot play any role unless the units themselves perceive themselves as being parts of a region.

Indeed, an application of the region building approach at this point would show that even this last condition can be weakened – as the creation of a region is *preceded by political agency* and actors need only be aware that they find themselves in circumstances where a regionalist discourse could work to their advantage. In this case, the analytical prism of security (understood in RSCT terms)

may explain what happens with regards to region building (or lack thereof) if the actors constructed by the security analyst as a potential RSC are aware of existing as a possible region.

Thus, the construction of a region represents an element of security analysis on the condition that the analyst focuses on agents which perceive their circumstances as favourable for formulating a regionalist policy.

Table 4 – Old vs New Regionalism (adapted from Hettne, 2003: 23-24)

| Old Regionalism | New Regionalism |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bipolar Cold War context | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multipolar world order in the context of globalisation |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created ‘from above’ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spontaneous and voluntary, ‘from within’ |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economically inward-oriented and protectionist | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Open’, compatible with an interdependent world economy |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific with regards to objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive and multidimensional societal project |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually groups of neighbouring nation-states | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both state and non-state actors |

This proposition represents the theoretical standpoint from which the following analysis of the Black Sea area will be carried out. However, since the investigated ‘object’ has a geographical basis centred around the Black Sea, it is necessary to clarify here the potential issue of territorial construction of regional security (and consequently, of the region). In RSCT “RSCs are [...] a very specific, functionally defined type of region, which may or may not coincide with more general understanding of region” (Buzan and Waever, 2003: 76), and in this it is different from the result obtained if the basic premises of the region building approach are drawn towards their conclusion – that it would be theoretically possible to build a region “*ex nihilo*”, without neighbourhood as a necessary condition (Neumann, 2003: 176). Nevertheless, Buzan and Waever (2003) hold the territorial criterion quite firmly (p.116-118). Therefore, if region building is to be an aspect of RSCT analysis, the analyst must focus on actors not only on the basis of their awareness of potentially belonging to a region, but also along functional lines in relation to territorial location. This implies that the selection of units must ‘match’ the relevant ongoing security interdependence in the area and consequently also be in tune with a territorial criterion.

4.5. A Black Sea region?

Following the break-up of the Soviet Union a host of new states appeared on the subject of the Black Sea, although geographical proximity only accounts for considering the Black Sea as a *regional space* (see table above). Across history, the area has been under the occupation of various empires and never under just one hegemon. As Berindan notes:

“The Black Sea has been present in world history through the writings of the ancient Greeks that dwelled on its western shores. Along its shores thrived different civilizations, cultures and religions. Thanks to Genoese colonies the Black Sea has been a part of the Mediterranean world. For centuries it was considered to be an Ottoman Lake. Late 18th and 19th centuries witnessed the advent of Russia as a Black Sea power. With the exception of the Crimean War the ‘hospitable sea’ never witnessed any major confrontations and peace in the modern era has been preserved due to the provisions of the Treaty of Montreaux. At the beginning of the 20th century the map of this part of the world was already settled and during the Cold War the Black Sea separated the two defence alliances.” (p. 2)

This multitude of influences along the Black Sea shores is heavily noted in Charles King’s (2004) history of the area. When discussing the post-Cold War period, he highlights the various linkages which started to form between the new states. His view that “connections define the degree to which different countries form a region – politically, strategically and economically” (King, 2006: 27) highlight the potential for the area to become a *regional complex* by intensified communication and transfer of resources. These historical “connections”, as well as the common maritime environment, could also be – one would expect – powerful tools for any political leader of the day wishing to pursue a region building discourse. The new states and the end of bipolarity created an unprecedented context in the Black Sea area – although some strong patterns of amity or enmity were present between various pairs of states (the strongest one probably being the amity between Romania and Moldova), the common starting point on the Wendtian scale used by Buzan and Waever was that of indifference. In terms of power relations, the Russian Federation remained a great power at system level, while a new muscular Turkish foreign policy doctrine indicated that Ankara aimed at positioning itself as a strong regional player in the Black Sea area (Berindan, 2010: 2; Manoli, 2011: 1).

Comparing this immediately post 1991 context with the way the Black Sea area evolved between 2003 and 2012 in geopolitical and security terms, a number of aspects have undergone developments – aspects which, for clarity purposes, need to be broken down. Bearing in mind the theoretical framework advanced above, three questions require clarification: (1) whether the units in the Black Sea area can be analytically constructed as a potential RSCT, (2) whether the actors in the area perceive themselves as being in a situation where a regionalist discourse would be beneficial and, finally, (3) what type of region appears to be built. I will explore questions (1) and (2) together, and (3) separately.

However, before pursuing this, a note must be made on the geographical lenses used to look at the Black Sea. There are different approaches which could be adopted: a restrictive one including only the coastal states, or a broader one guided by the membership list of the Black Sea Economic

Cooperation (BSEC) – namely, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine. Nevertheless, the mostly cited definition in recent years seems to be that of a ‘wider Black Sea region’, a notion that first appeared in a European Commission Communication from 2007 and refers to all the BSEC members with the exception of Albania and Serbia (as they belong under the EU’s Western Balkans policies). The term ‘region’ as used in the EC document does not have the analytical connotations that it has in this thesis. Moreover, although allocating importance to territoriality, the theoretical framework adopted here uses the lenses of security practices and the actors’ perceptions of the similarity of such practices to judge which geographical actors may belong to a particular regionalist exercise. Hence, it is this author’s opinion that one should not follow previously delineated area borders to study the Black Sea, but allow the theory to inform the geographical extent of the potential region.

4.6. RSC potential and actors’ perception

Buzan and Waever’s book *Regions and Powers* (2003) – dedicated to analysing security at regional level across the globe – does not identify a Black Sea RSC. Due to great powers’ presence and historical construction of amity/enmity patterns, the Black Sea subject is divided between the European RSC (the Balkan sub-complex), the post-Soviet RSC (the Caucasus sub-complex and the western ‘theatre’, comprised of Belarus, Ukraine and Russia itself) and Turkey, the last acting as an insulator from the Middle Eastern RSC (p.364-437). That being said, the authors did not discount the possibility of the area actually evolving towards an RSC in the event power dynamics become more balanced against the Russian great power’s ‘weight’ (p.416-423). Moreover, given that this contribution was published at the beginning of the period of time investigated in this thesis, it is worth reconsidering whether such power shifts and changes in amity/enmity patterns have occurred.

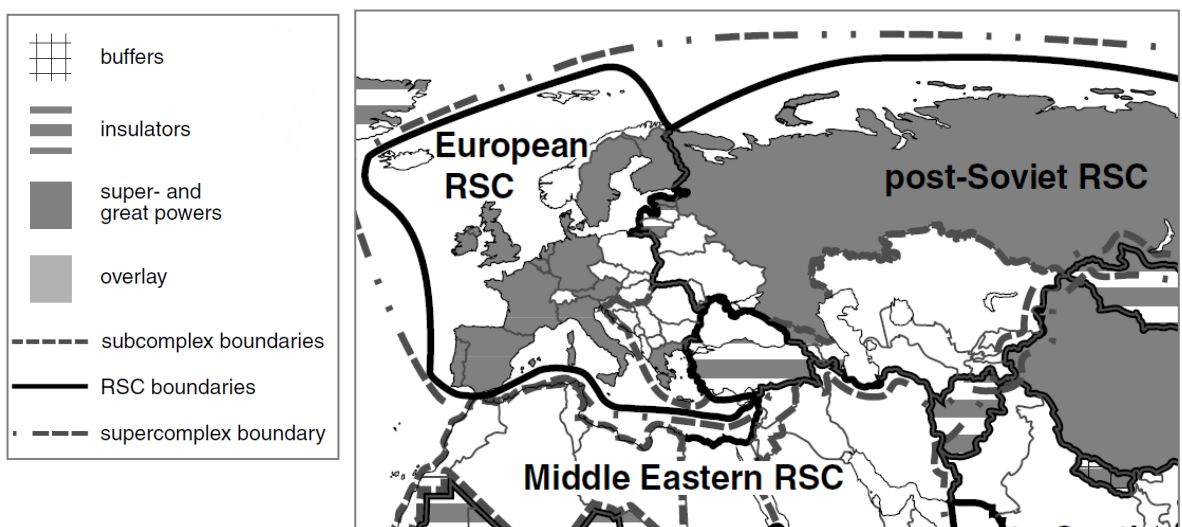


Image 1 – RSCs Intersections over the Black Sea (Buzan and Waever, 2003: 364)

Although Buzan and Waever's 1998 and 2003 definition of an RSC switches from state-centric assumptions and instead considers any (supra- or sub-state) 'units' as possibly having interlinked security practices, I would argue that in the Black Sea case, it is still the states that play the major roles in securitisation and desecuritisation. As previously mentioned, many of them are new states, requiring stability and consolidation before other units or actors can confidently raise issues as security issues and securitise them. Moreover, some of them emerged from the breakup of the former Soviet Union or after a long period of socialist rule, and hence have a history of strong state rule. In the literature investigating cooperative efforts in the area, the high level of security dilemma among the Black Sea countries is still identified as the most destructive factor (Kempe and Klotzle, 2006: 6; Alexandrova-Arbatova, 2008: 9; Çelikpala, 2010: 8; Manoli, 2011: 2). Insecurity understood in realist terms remains at the core of international relations around the Black Sea, and with regards to all the 'hard' and 'soft' security issues, it is always the state structures that are threatened. The sheer range and number of such threats also highlight the focus of local security practices on the military-political dimensions: military, armed conflict (the most recent example being the August 2008 war between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia and Abkhazia), protracted or 'frozen' conflicts (such as the cases of Nagorno-Karabakh), (arguably) unilateral military interventions (as the 2014 de facto annexation of Crimea by Russia), closed borders and lack of diplomatic relations (between Armenia and Turkey), organised crime and terrorism (primarily linked to the national level, but also connected with regional and international networks). Once a focus on states as the main units is established, an analysis of the Black Sea area at the end of the period studied – in 2012 – reveals that the underlying conditions for the formation of an RSC in the region are met.

- Buzan and Waever's statement that threats travel more easily across short distances is reinforced by the physical adjacency of the states along the coast, although the requirement that the group of states maintain their own exclusive border needs to be revisited later on.
- The Black Sea area also boasts an *anarchic* structure – despite the existence of a number of inter-state organisations, there is no one structure dealing with the security threats mentioned above in a consistent manner.
- The *balance of power* has undergone changes from the post-Cold War initial context. Although Russia remains a great power in the area and Turkey continues to assert its presence, the European Union has also entered the power muscle calculations through bilateral cooperation programs with countries in the area and by physically establishing a foothold on the coast after Romania and Bulgaria became members in the organisation in 2007.

The power relations presuppose *polarity* linkages within a potential RSC, whereas the patterns of amity or enmity transcend these into the *social construction* of the RSC with its division into roles (friend, enemy, rival), which make the patterns "durable" (Buzan and Waever, 2003: 45). The

Black Sea area exhibits polarity through the presence of Russia, the EU and – to a much lesser extent – Turkey. Since, as it was mentioned at the beginning of this section, the most common standpoint for states in the region after the Cold War was that of indifference towards the others, I suggest that an important lens on investigating changes on the Wendtian scale is via the extent of cooperation in the area. This recommendation is strengthened by the fact that the limited capabilities of the new coastal states and the sheer range of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ security threats in the area require institutions with wider abilities. The number of institutional initiatives overlapping in the area is impressive, particularly as they have not been generated solely by the great powers. This suggests that there is no one particular Black Sea cooperation paradigm.

Table 5 – Institutional membership within the Black Sea geopolitical environment in 2013

| | ENP Black Sea members | EaP Black Sea members | Black Sea Synergy members | CIS Black Sea members | CSTO Black Sea members | GUAM members | BSEC members | Community of Democratic Choice Members |
|------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--|
| Armenia | X | X | X | X | X | | X | |
| Albania | | | | | | | X | |
| Azerbaijan | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Belarus | | | | X | X | | | |
| Bulgaria | | | X | | | | X | |
| Georgia | X | X | X | withdrew | | X | X | X |
| Greece | | | X | | | | X | |
| Moldova | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X |
| Romania | | | X | | | | X | X |
| Russia | | | X | X | X | | X | |
| Serbia | | | | | | | X | |
| Turkey | | | X | | | | X | |
| Ukraine | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X |

One form of such cooperation, supported financially mainly by the EU with the aide of other international donors, focuses on sectoral multilateralism and includes interstate projects and programs tackling ‘soft’ security threats, such as the environment (the Danube Black Sea Task Force) or transport and energy infrastructure (the Baku Initiative, INOGATE or the Transport Corridor Europe – Caucasus – Asia). Insofar as these technical programs do not only include the coastal Black Sea states and have been initiated by the EU, they do not fully inform on the extent of cooperation in the area. However, they have played a significant part in fostering tailor-made multilateralism (Manoli, 2011: 2-3).

Apart from these programs, it is fair to say that the EU has been rather late to draft a comprehensive regional policy targeting the Black Sea specifically. Until then, the EU dealt with the states in the area through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Strategic Partnership

with Russia and the Turkey pre-accession process (Agh, 2010). The Black Sea appeared as a fully-fledged policy area on the EU radar screen only in 2007 with the launching of the Black Sea Synergy, concomitant with the EU's physical reach to the western Sea shores (EC, 2007). The Synergy constitutes less of a comprehensive and conventional regional policy and more of an initiative to intensify cooperation in the area in key sectors – energy, security, transport, or environment -, clearly discarding military or hard security threats (EC, 2007: 11). Further EU cooperation mechanisms in the area were introduced in the aftermath of the Georgian-Russian conflict of 2008. The Eastern Partnership (EaP) launched in 2009 tried to move away from confined sectoral initiatives and beyond the ENP geographical reach and to offer comprehensive schemes aimed to tackle the recently highlighted state vulnerability and insecurity in the area.

On the other side of the power dyad, Russia's regionalist initiatives must be assessed in light of the fact that “[h]istorically Russia has considered the Black Sea Region to be a crucial component of its national security and for this reason the protection of the Russian sphere of influence is deemed to be in the national interest” (Çelikpala, 2010: 8). The performance and consolidation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is strongly connected with how well these regional interests are safeguarded, given the organisation's territorial reach and its genesis. However, as Roeder (2002) notes, the CIS functions unilaterally in an open manner, a feature that hinders it from becoming what would be deemed as a successful international organisation. Most notably, CIS does not include the operative *quid pro quo* whereby the dominant power – Russia – gains an empire by granting peripheral states some influence over its policy (Buzan and Waever, 2003: 411). In addition, the security arm of the CIS – the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) – had encountered problems from the very beginning, with several CIS members not signing the Tashkent Treaty and others leaving the body afterwards. Consequently, CSTO remains a primarily Russian-oriented organisation which mainly helps its members to patrol its southern borders (Roy, 2000: 197; Trenin, 2001: 118-119). It did not become a NATO-like collective security body, as its name suggests, although whether that was actually the initial Russian intent is debatable.

Outside the EU and Russian cooperation initiatives in the area, the Black Sea environment has birthed a number of organisations and forums for discussion and coordination, two of which require mentioning. The first one is GUAM (an acronym of its member states – Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova, with Uzbekistan joining in 1999, but withdrawing in 2002) – a sub-regional consultative structure not including the regional powers. Buzan and Waever (2003) identify it as one of the two key organisations in the area and a litmus paper for the degree of dissatisfaction with the Russian dominance. It is worth mentioning here that although all the GUAM member states belong to CIS, with the exception of Georgia, which left the organisation in 2009, none of them participate in the CSTO, and that its member states characterise the organisation as being against “dividing lines and spheres of influence” (GUUAM, 1999). From the beginning, GUAM identified regional conflict and the threat of terrorism, especially along

nationalist lines, as its main priorities (GUUAM, 1999). The presidents of the member countries pledged to collaborate in resisting separatism and seeking international support to settle regional conflicts, in the spirit of “territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs and inviolability of borders” (GUUAM, 1999). Although not openly stated, these actions are aimed at the Russian influence in the area, and in particular, against the fact that in ‘frozen’ conflicts resolution attempts, Russia supports solutions that imply either changing borders or an unacceptably large transfer of sovereignty to the territorial stronghold of the rebelling minority. The GUAM statements are all the more suggestive given the fact that, as of late 2013 and the events in eastern Ukraine, all its member states are involved in a frozen conflict. In geopolitical terms, GUAM’s importance lies in an opening towards NATO (with various degrees of ambition regarding hopes of membership) and the OSCE, and the overall emphasis its members put on fostering “cooperation in the Black Sea and Caspian regions” and develop it “as a non-hierarchical, interlocking and open system” (MFA, n.d.). More recently, GUAM also extended its areas of activity to democracy promotion, energy security and the formation of a free trade area among the member states (GUAM, 2006), a move which could signal a relinquishment of the organisation’s early security ambitions in light of constant Russian influence.

The second cooperation platform not initiated by Russia or the EU was founded as a product of the Cold War era in 1992 and represents Turkey’s attempt to assume leadership in the area. The Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) appeared at the beginning to focus on economic relations and fostering multilateralism, as was stressed in organisation’s Decennial Summit in Istanbul:

“Over the past decade the BSEC has proved its value as a forum of trust, understanding and cooperation. It has fostered significant progress in its Member States’ policies on promoting democracy, market economy and open society and, through this, has supported the efforts towards a better positioning of our region in today’s world, in which countries are moving ever closer towards openness and economic integration.” (BSEC, 2002: 65).

The same document, however, also goes on to stress the new dimension of security and stability concerns introduced in the BSEC agenda (BSEC, 2002: 66). As such, the organisation evolved to include ‘soft’ security priorities, such as crime prevention or energy security (BSEC, 2007: 1) and it works in partnership with other international bodies along sectoral or project-based lines (BSEC, n.d.). To date, BSEC remains the largest regional cooperative effort and, although it does not deal with ‘hard’ security threats, it provides a forum for dialogue even between member countries with strained diplomatic relations (eg. Turkey and Greece).

By adopting the lens of “levels of regionness”, what one witnesses in the Black Sea area in the aftermath of the Cold War is the formation of a *regional society*, coming about mostly through

formalised regional cooperation. The brief survey of (some of) the bodies activating in the area highlight the fact that the Black Sea subject boasts now an intensified network of relations, common threats identified by different organisations and the potential emergence of actors other than states. Going back to the list of minimum ‘criteria’ that have to be met in a territory for it to be able to foster the formation of an RSC, one can acknowledge that the Black Sea area roughly complies with these key variables, though there are a number of qualifications that have to be made.

I would argue that, despite the fact that a decade has passed since Buzan and Waever discarded the existence of a Black Sea RSC, it is still debatable whether the patterns of amity and/or enmity transcended polarity and *socially constructed* the RSC. As mentioned before, historical contingencies and sub-regional identities (the Caucasus, the Balkans) have prevented the emergence of a Black Sea identity, at least until the end of the Cold War. In this sense, the intensified regional cooperation could act as a top-down attempt to construct a network of partners which may – in time – become translatable in the Wendtian scale. This is particularly relevant in light of the threats identified in the ‘new’ sectors by the area’s inter-state bodies – the marine environment, economic integration, migration.

“The new [RSC] definition intentionally opens the possibility of another kind of construction of RSCs that is increasingly relevant especially in the ‘new’ sectors: regions can be created as patterns within system level processes” (Buzan et al, 1998: 198-200).

It could be argued, hence, that interdependence emerges in the area with regards to the new security sectors where the biggest regional organisation – BSEC – and the other smaller bodies are activating. However, to investigate security practices in the area from the constructivist framework advocated by Buzan and Waever, one would need in the end to ‘aggregate’ the levels of interdependence across all sectors, and it is the military and ‘hard’ security dimensions that pose the biggest problems at this stage.

Having examples from other established RSCs which managed to form a security component, it is worth noting that there is a profound need for the Black Sea area states to create an organisation that would have the capability to deal with its emerging security threats. So far, the largest regional organisation – BSEC – started out with a clear economic focus, and only enlarged its agenda towards ‘soft’ security issues, precisely in order to keep open a forum for dialogue between all its member states. As noted above, the activities of the various inter-state bodies operating in the area could be construed as attempts for top-down regionalisation, but borrowing a key insight from Neumann’s region-building approach suggests that each ‘power stakeholder’ attempts to create and impose a definition of the region which places the respective actor as close as possible to its several territorial and/or functional cores. The maps of the Black Sea inter-state organisations feature

different territorial ranges which, coupled with the geopolitical polarity aspects of the area, present a picture of mainly two ‘blocs’ being formed along the subject – one triggered by the Russian presence, and a more recent one, influenced by the EU’s regional and bilateral cooperation initiatives (in the military security sector, the EU’s presence is substituted by NATO’s). When looking at regional initiatives in which neither Russia, nor the EU are present as members – most notably GUAM, but also the Community of Democratic Choice (CDC) or the Black Sea Forum (BSF) -, one notices on the part of state officials a high-level language and spirit emulating the EU’s discourse on democracy promotion and consolidation in the area. This aspect highlights the different mechanisms used by the two power poles to take hold of regional cores. Whereas Russia exploits its relative hard power vis-à-vis its neighbouring states (given that threats travel more easily across short distances), the EU also appeals to mechanisms going beyond a strict rational choice framework, for example by engaging the attractiveness of the democratic model of governance (see also chapter 3). This dichotomy present on the Black Sea coast can be interpreted as a movement towards forming *durable* amity and enmity patterns between the states in the area, but it is this author’s opinion that the two decades which passed since the end of the Cold War have not provided enough evidence to be able to ascertain that an RSC is indeed forming, despite the fact that the “key components of essential structure in a security complex” (Buzan, 2003: 143) are met to certain extents. Therefore, for the purpose of ascertaining the nature of the area and because the possibility of an RSC forming in the Black Sea cannot be fully discarded, I will still explore question (3) below.

However, before moving on to (3), one needs to ‘test’ the Black Sea area against the two conditions which Buzan (2003: 142-143) delineates as stifling the creation of an RSC. The first one focuses on the low capabilities of the local units and on the entirely domestically-directed security perspectives that these poor capabilities entail. The second condition involves the phenomenon of *overlay* which occurs when the direct presence of outside powers in a region is strong enough to suppress the normal operation of regional security dynamics, via, most notably for the Black Sea context, extensive stationing of armed forces in the overlain area. With regards to the first condition, although “countries of the region have rarely experienced security, democracy and prosperity” (Alexandrova-Arbatova, 2008: 9), their state structures are not weak *per se*. More than half of the countries on the Black Sea coast have a socialist or communist history and have inherited a legacy of strong government. Indeed, most of these states score in the 4th percentile in the Brookings Institution Index of State Weakness (2008). Moreover, given the powerful EU/NATO – Russia polarity analysed above, one can also argue that, even if some of the states’ structures are not fully operational, countries do not have the option of disregarding security interactions, at least with the two poles.

At first sight, the persistence of ‘frozen’ conflicts in the Black Sea geography would suggest that the area is overlain by Russia. However, it is questionable whether this great power represents an

outside power or whether its strong military presence is just a consequential feature of an *inner* potential RSC polarity.

4.7. The type of region being constructed

The argument made in the theoretical framework advanced above was that the construction of regional security may explain what kind of outcome is created in terms of regionalism – that is, what type of region is being formed -, if the units analysed are aware of being in similar conditions that recommend a regionalist discourse and actions. It was observed above that actors in the Black Sea area do meet the latter requirement, an aspect which could be acknowledged, among others, via the level of inter-state cooperation occurring there. It was also ascertained that, although the Black Sea is not an RSC, it meets the conditions which in time could lead to the formation of one. These aspects legitimate an – at least counterfactual – investigation of the type of region potentially being formed in the Black Sea.

The main premise of this analysis is a ‘mental map’ of the area with states carrying coordinates relating to patterns of amity and enmity vis-à-vis every other state (friends, enemies, rivals) and an overlapping layer suggesting the polarity, the great powers and the different territorial and functional region cores that these powers attempt to impose through specific mechanisms. In the Black Sea’s case, in light of the analysis in (1) and (2), this ‘mental map’ suggests that the area’s security interdependence is constructed in a more traditional manner, echoing an ‘old regionalism’ framework. The actors’ discourses are state-centred, cooperation platforms are shaped by manipulating the existing balance of power or in attempts to defy it (GUAM) and, despite ‘soft’ security issues being identified as threats, the presence of ‘frozen’ conflicts and nationalist-secessionist movements led to security being narrowly defined (GUUAM, 1999). Consequently, if one is to witness the emergence of a region in the Black Sea area, its construction can be presumed to revolve around alliance-building and, more generally, around functionalist cooperation, the beginnings of which can be witnessed in the activities of the organisations surveyed above.

4.8. Conclusion

The previous analysis has investigated the possibility of the Black Sea area having evolved into an RSC since Buzan and Waever’s latest conclusions on the issue. This chapter has built up a negative answer to this question; however, it has found that the area has undergone changes which translate into it meeting the baseline criteria for potentially becoming an RSC in the future. This aspect, corroborated with the theoretical framework used, allowed for an exploration of the type of regionalism which could be unfolding in the Black Sea area. The main actors are aware that their similar circumstances amount to a regionalist discourse and policies working to their advantage. However, the area’s instability and the powerful polarity (translated along territorial lines) means that any emerging region (with its associated identity) will be constructed with ‘old regionalism’ mechanisms, along functionalist cooperation and alliance-building. At the moment, both poles –

the EU and Russia – attempt via different mechanisms to impose their own conceptualisations of the area.

These elements are not enough to confidently talk about a Black Sea region, but they suffice to highlight the importance of the area as a geopolitical space of vital importance, not least because, as Lesser (2007) puts it, “the Black Sea is watched as a bell-weather of future relations between Russia and the West” (p.11). Therefore, from this point I will be using the term *geopolitical environment* as a theoretical refuge when referring to the Black Sea area.

5. ‘The Integrated Approach’

5.1. Review of premises

Having explored both the EU’s emergence and approach to the area and the Russian Federation’s logic-generating feature within the Black Sea geopolitical environment, as well as having understood that the Black Sea geopolitical environment can, from certain perspectives, represent a *region*, but not a regional security complex, this chapter complements the *Setting the scene* section by revealing the characteristics of the ‘Integrated approach’ – the cross-sectional comparative analysis of the common measurable features of Black Sea subject states, within two representative case studies.

Recapitulating the major elements stated previously, the EU interests in the Black Sea area are divided into three categories: Security; Democracy, Respect for Human Rights and Good Governance; and Economic interests. (Fischer 2009: 338 - 339). Brussels’s institutional approach to the Black Sea was first manifested in the form of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs), subsequently in the form of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and later in the Eastern Partnership (EaP). In addition, as stated in the Black Sea Synergy Document, issued by the European Commission in 2007, the Black Sea region represents a “distinct geographical area, rich in natural resources and strategically located at the junction of Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East. With a large population, the region faces a range of opportunities and challenges for its citizens. The region is an expanding market with great development potential and an important hub for energy and transport flows. It is, however, also a region with unresolved conflicts, with many environmental problems and inefficient border controls thus encouraging illegal migration and organized crime.” (EU Commission, 2007: 2). The EU’s different layers of approach to the Black Sea do not contradict each other. They build one upon the other in manifesting a more or less coherent set of policies, increasing in intensity after 2004. On the other hand, the other significant actor in the Black Sea – Russia – does not denominate any particular Black Sea policy, but plays a defining role in establishing its characteristics. It sees the region as its near abroad (or strategic glacis) – an area that includes all of Russia’s western neighbouring countries and where the majority of Moscow foreign policy interest is invested in the search for loyalty and security, understood as having a belt of loyal states between itself and ‘the West’.

The EU itself recognizes that it has “artificially constructed a region to make it the reference point in its policy” (as cited in Fischer, 2009: 334), which means that Brussels only identifies a certain set of (namely multilateral) instruments being available to itself and attempts to find a way to approach the area in such a way that it feels comfortable. The characteristics that the EU identifies as common elements in the Black Sea are thus: a large population, an expanding market, an energy hub, an area with unresolved conflicts, environmental problems, illegal migration and organized crime. In addressing the issue, the EU attempts to meet its 2003 goals: to promote a “ring of well

governed countries in the East of the EU and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations.” (EU, 2003).

In this sense, acknowledging the EU’s opinion of an “artificially constructed” region, this thesis identifies nonetheless three non-artificial common characteristics in existence within all Black Sea non-EU states in the form of the explored variables which are created as a result of the Russia – Black Sea states interaction. It verifies the EU’s effect on the said variables and compares the EU’s effectiveness in promoting its above mentioned policy goals with the success recorded by Moscow in obtaining loyalty and security, while keeping in mind that, given the nature of the foreign policy instruments involved and the geopolitics of the Black Sea, for the subject states, collaboration with one pole of power translates into an antithesis with the other. The states’ collaboration with one or the other is mutually exclusive. This is the Russian position, acknowledged but by no means shared by the EU.

It must be clarified here again that this thesis questions the entire array of fundamentals behind the EU’s decision to classify the Black Sea as a policy-region by arguing that if one is to look at the Black Sea from a regional point of view, given the area’s propensity towards interpretations of regionalism, a logical responsibility arises - to look at the geopolitical common elements shared by the subject countries. Nonetheless, in judging Brussels’ goals for the region, as they are codified in the Black Sea Synergy goals, and as a method for providing a set of answers to the array of questions raised by the research subject, one can notice that they are not incompatible with a pro-EU result, even within a potentially flawed regional approach. For example, one can notice that, in this case, stimulating democratic and economic reforms and opening up opportunities and challenges through coordinated action in a regional framework is not possible without a sustained pro-Western orientation from the point of view of subject states. The Russian reaction after the establishment of GUUAM, or after Moldova’s declaration of intent to join the Euro-Atlantic structures speaks clearly of this reality. In the same way, facilitating practical projects in areas of common concern or supporting stability and promoting development cannot be done in an environment subject to economic dependence (in itself sanctioned by virtue of displayed loyalty), not to mention the potential for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, where a realist logic has been shown to take precedence over all else. That is to say: feasible or not as a framework for regionalism, the EU’s approach to the Black Sea geopolitical environment has a potential to meet the EU’s goals. This thesis thus looks at the Black Sea region through the framework of subject states’ common features (other than those of the EU) and assesses whether the EU’s lenses can help meet its goals, primarily because subject states themselves have recurrently stated that the barriers to their Westward focus lie in the three elements that this thesis identifies as variables (declared foreign policy orientation, conflict and economic dependence). As a result, it is possible to extrapolate that, even with a potentially misguided approach, a shift in the variables would lead to a Westward focus and the achieving of EU goals, and thus EU success in the region.

It is also important to once again note that there is substantial empirical evidence for the proposition that conflict, declared foreign policy orientation, and economic dependence represent variables within the assessment of Black Sea states. Affecting these variables in such a way that they become overly acute in one direction or the other has been shown to bring countries closer to the EU or closer to Russia, depending on the direction, although the variables themselves manifest a certain degree of ‘hierarchy’ in relation to one another.

This section is dedicated to explaining step-by step the research methods employed as building blocks in the construction of this thesis’ methodology, beginning with the utility of the comparative-historical analysis. However, the definitional characteristics and interaction between the three variables is left for the subsequent chapter.

5.2. Key terms

What I denominated as ‘the integrated approach’ to the Black Sea geopolitical environment refers to carrying out a cross-sectional comparative-historical analysis of economic dependence, conflict and declared foreign policy orientation within two case-study countries, subject of the Black Sea and indicative of the contextual variety within the area concerned between 2003 and 2012. This is followed by an analysis of the variables manifested in the Black Sea region within a framework of EU-Russia interaction, as manifested on the subject states. The three variables stem from common elements identified within Black Sea states and have been concluded upon both with the use of already available empirical measurement methods (in the case of economic dependence and conflict) and, as needed, through designing tools that codify the reactions of states to external stimuli – in accordance with the procedures arising from the use of the research method. The necessity for denominating the result as an ‘integrated approach’ stems from the need to distinguish between the methodology employed in this research enterprise and the research methods (such as comparative-historical analysis) used in its construction, coupled with the symbolic requirement to evaluate the ‘integration’ of Black Sea states in a single ‘approach’. This necessity becomes apparent while keeping in mind the European Union’s denomination of a Black Sea region, which the existing literature on the area has, as I argue, insufficiently approached in an epistemologically non-sectorial form. In other words, as stated in the introductory chapter of this thesis, the literature on the region focuses on external factors at the expense of considering the domestic and regional context in which they play out, while, on the other hand, comparative accounts that point to domestic factors (from parties to administrative structures) are available both within the framework of EU-subject states’ dialogue and that of ‘blaming’ Russia. An ‘integrated approach’ offers an alternative or bridge between the multitude of general approaches on the area, focussing on the skeleton of elements that the diverse set of actors presents as variables. Moreover, given the nature of comparative-historical analyses, conceptual innovation, employed in this thesis as an explanatory instrument, represents one of the most commonly pursued paths.

Both case studies portray a certain level of economic dependence, a pressing need for expressing a position within the Russia – EU spectrum, and a social environment of conflict. These elements display a strong level of inter-linkage and, most importantly, constitute variables identifiable within all Black Sea non-EU states.

Consequently, this thesis explores these three common elements in the form of variables vis-a-vis the presence and actions of the European Union and Russia as shift-generating political actors in the region. Looking at the regional cross-sectional modifications within each variable represents the original contribution to knowledge – the added value brought to the existing literature on the topic – through bringing together the sectoral recommendations for the region into a single narrative. The integrated approach makes use of all modifications as a result of external causality within all case studies and formulates the single narrative cross-analysing the instances of change within the given contexts in revealing whether the EU is successfully meeting its own targets by acting as an external agent of change within the Black Sea by comparison to Russia. The answer to this question in turn feeds into an investigation of the type of regionalism taking shape in the area. No previous approach takes into consideration the common elements of all Black Sea states and looks at how the EU is acting as a policy changer within those.

The utility of comparative historical analysis in the present research is primarily based on its use of the concept of trigger (as opposed to that of correlation - Mahoney, 2005: 91) in arguing that the temporal placement of certain events influences an outcome, or a set of outcomes, which are the subject of investigation. This brings with it a requirement for an explanatory corpus focusing on early events within a sequence (in this case, elements which dictate Black Sea actors' logic between 2003 and 2012), considering that not only their nature, but also the moment when they occurred decisively shapes causal trajectories. In this sense, the research method is known to explain causality between distant or close historical events and outcomes, some of which not being expected to occur (Mahoney, 2005: 91). This path-dependent approach is customarily used in arguing that a selection of events (from within many) has a long-run decisive impact, while keeping in mind the counterfactual assumption (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007: 355) that, if the event in question had happened at a different time, the outcome would have been different (Tetlock & Belkin, 1996, as cited in Mahoney, 2005: 92). Such is the case with a significant number of comparative-historical contributions, including those of Moore (1966), Tilly (1990), Collier & Collier (1991), Aminzade (1992), Zuckerman (1997), Pierson (2003). Regarding this feature of comparative historical analysis, Mahoney (2005) notes that:

“ [...] it is worth emphasizing again that analysts outside of the field of comparative-historical analysis have their own tools for studying temporal processes. However, these analysts can use these tools only insofar as they formulate temporal hypotheses and have access to data to test them. The fact that

comparative-historical analysts trace their variables over time makes them especially likely to notice temporal effects and then actually study them in their substantive research” (p. 92).

It is this author’s opinion that only by assessing *triggers of change* within the variables can a comprehensive cross-sectional analysis be carried out, which in turn will speak to the nature of the regionalism forming at the Black Sea. However, in order to clarify the context-specific triggers behind every modification in the studied variables, it is necessary first to distinguish between external and internal triggers and thus to mitigate the weak point of any cross-sectional historical study – causality.

5.3. Causality and the Integrated Approach

In the Black Sea context, this thesis understands the concept of external causality as the link between a foreign agent triggering change and an internal variable change. In order for this link to be proven, it must be *declared* (or intended) by the mechanism triggering change (the foreign political entity declaring a policy to be aimed at a certain issue), it must be *perceived* as such by the mechanism subject to change, and it must be *recurrent* in more than one occasion. The Black Sea geopolitical environment displays common elements. As a result, both Russia and the EU, when acting as an agent of variable change in any of the Black Sea countries, repeat the process in the others, primarily because they are attempting to affect similar issues (with the notable exception of the EU’s rhetoric with regards to declared foreign policy orientation²⁴). In the case of internal causality, however, the qualities of *declared* and *perceived* are triggered by the same agent, with recurrence being a possibility and not a requirement for internal causality to be classified as such. The case study chapters distinguish between the two types of causality through the use of the background information sections.

This thesis’ methodology also employs the concept of narrative primarily as a result of the strong connection between the social sciences concepts of causation and sequence. In attempting to prove the former, researchers seek to use time-series data, if available (Rueschmeyer & Stephens, 1997: 57). In the case of Black Sea subjects, availability of data does not represent a barrier. If statistical approaches would traditionally tend to focus on temporarily punctual contexts within a given set of circumstances, comparative-historical analysis requires the inferring of causality through the use of chronological (or overtime) data and reserve this element a high rank among the tools at their disposal (Brady & Collier 2004; Rueschemeyer & Stephens, 1997). Stylistically speaking, this results in a narrative of events which tailors both to the methodological requirements of information provision and to the formulation of a singular integrated approach narrative.

²⁴ See subsequent chapter on the dynamic between variables

5.4. Case studies

By understanding the difference in approach between comparative-historical research and statistical methods one anticipates that the requirements concerning the number of case-studies are also substantially different. Having as a focus the informally recognized idea of ‘process analysis’ (Mahone, 2005: 88), analysts using comparative historical analysis will conclude on causal inference only when a small number of case-studies is investigated and when they examine the *specific mechanism* (George & Bennet, 2005) through which an independent variable (Russia/EU) affects a dependent one (in this case: conflict/declared foreign policy/economic dependence). This is done first by observing an association between two issues and then by assessing whether the association is reflective of causation when investigating the mechanisms that link cause and effect in particular cases (Mahoney, 2005: 88).

With regards to the benefits of this method, Mahoney (2005) points out that:

“This form of process analysis is currently one of the most powerful techniques for overcoming problems of selectivity and omitted variable bias that plague nearly all social research. These problems arise because analysts cannot know for certain whether the associations they discover are causal or simply the spurious product of an unknown accident variable (Liebersohn, 1985). However, if analysts can point out to specific linking mechanisms that connect cause and effect, they are in a much better position to assert that the relationship is causal.” (p. 89)

As already stated within the introductory chapter of this thesis, the relevance of Moldova and Georgia as case-studies stems from the academic and practitioner opinions that they belong to qualitatively different environments/sub-complexes of the FSU RSC (Eastern Europe and the Caucasus). The first country, Moldova, manifests a component of self-definition in relation to the orientation variable because of its previous belonging to both Romania and the USSR. This leads to severe identity and geopolitical concerns manifested in choosing either a pro-Eastern or a pro-Western approach. This self-definition component is shared with its Eastern European neighbour – Ukraine. With a very small economy, Moldova does not only manifest a strong economic dependence between 2003 and 2012 on regionally ‘normal’ (i.e. energy) sectors, but also on other products (wine) which represent lifelines for the economic survival of the country. The Transnistrian protracted conflict has undergone significant changes over the past 10 years, without however re-exploding into war. The other case study, Georgia, a country existing in the highly dynamic geopolitical RSC sub-complex of the Caucasus is somewhat similar to Moldova from the point of view of monosectorial economic dependence, but finds itself overall in a better macro-economic position. However, it is also the only state whose conflict indicator escalated to war in the past 10 years and its orientation modified as a result – making it a perfect candidate in the search for a ‘representative sample’ of Black Sea states.

5.5. Making use of comparative-historical procedural assets

The actual utility of the comparative-historical approach is subject to significant debate among supporters of statistical research. The main argument advanced is that necessary and sufficient causes are irrelevant to social sciences because they cannot escape the charges of triviality or tautology. An example of a trivial necessary cause within findings (Dion, 1998; Braumoeller & Goertz, 2000, as cited in Mahoney, 2004: 83), irrespective of the value of the dependent variable, would be that humans need to exist in order for a revolution to take place, as the cause would be present both within the case of a revolution and in the absence of it. A tautological sufficient case would be the proposition that industrialization of a large-scale represents a sufficient cause of economic development, due to the lack of a clear temporal/definitional distinction between the two concepts.

However, as Mahoney (2004) reveals, a number of empirical criteria which aim to avoid trivial and tautologically flawed statements are in existence. For example, with regards to the triviality of statements, concerns can be avoided if the dependent variable is always present within the example population. Also, in relation to tautological errors, inquiring about temporal location by comparison to outcomes would resolve the flaw. Moreover, Goertz (as cited in Mahoney, 2004: 83) identifies around 150 hypotheses avoiding the flaws, which include cross-national assessments. Ten such hypotheses are identified in TABLE 1.

Table 6 – Example hypotheses about necessary and sufficient causes (Mahoney, 2004: 84)

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Amsden (1992) | A relatively equal distribution of income is necessary for successful late industrialization. |
| Drowning (1992) | A low level of domestic resource mobilization for warfare is sufficient for democracy in early-modern Europe. |
| Goldhagen (1997) | Virulent anti-Semitism is sufficient to produce a willingness to kill Jews. |
| Hicks et al. (1995) | Working-class mobilization is necessary for the creation of an extensive welfare state. |
| Mahoney (2003) | Extensive Spanish colonialism is usually sufficient for social underdevelopment. |
| More (1966) | A relatively strong bourgeoisie is necessary for a revolution leading to democracy. |
| Rueschemeyer et al. | State consolidation is necessary for political democracy. |
| Ragin (2000) | Political liberalization, economic hardship, and either investment dependence or government inactivism are almost always sufficient to generate severe IMF protest when a country faces an austerity program. |
| Skocpol (1979) | The combination of state breakdown and peasant revolt is sufficient for social revolution in agrarian-bureaucratic societies. |
| Waldner (1999) | A low level of elite conflict is necessary for a developmental state in the Third World. |

Other contributions which employed conceptual instruments from within comparative-historical analysis have focussed on national social welfare policies, European law and EU budgetary policy, labour unions, the practice of setting agendas in policy-making, UK devolution, banking,

regionalism in East Asia, foreign policy, comparative political economy, the generic causes of war, US constitutional law, and, very importantly for this thesis, macro-historical analyses of development within entire regions (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007: 345)

In the present thesis, subsequent to exploring the modifications of the variables within each case-study, a section is dedicated to concluding on the EU's/Russia's impact on the region through hypotheses similar to the ones above, including examples such as “measures of nature ‘I’ carried-out by the EU/Russia would yield results of nature ‘II’ within Black Sea subject countries”.

One of the most significant criticisms brought to this method by sceptics is that it is reliant on an inappropriate deterministic logic for social sciences (Liebersohn, 1991; Goldthorpe, 1997, as cited in Mahoney, 2004: 83) which risks leading to invalid conclusions by basing them on potential single instances of measurement error. The research method itself, though, provides two solutions to this issue. The first is to employ a probabilistic convention (an implicit aim at reaching a benchmark of 90% probability of necessity and/or probability). The second is to allow for a minor amount of measurement error – even if the method does not respond to quantitative stimuli – by taking into consideration the requirement for the cases that do not meet the score for confirming the hypothesis to only be slightly adjusted in order to meet the criteria. Guidelines are in existence (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007: 363).

A final but no less significant criticism refers to the lack of methods for assessing the significance of independent variables (others than those identified when forming the hypothesis) and their role in affecting the conclusion. Even if authors such as Mahoney (2004: 85) invoke existing coefficients for measuring the deterministic or probabilistic value of a given variable, it is worth noticing that a potential risk in this thesis is faced by the *declared foreign policy orientation* variable (see description below). However, acknowledging that various elements within the state apparatus are able to trigger change within foreign policy, and that, irrespective of the particular triggering element, the nature of (the perception of) change is not affected - modifications within the variable take place either way, given the circumstances in which the effects of the shift are felt (international loyalty appraisal), it is safe to identify states as unitary organisms within the international arena. Moreover, actors subject to change are quite vocal in identifying which element is the trigger of the change and the subsequent array of information concerning the aspects triggering orientation shifts provided in this thesis represent the mechanism for verifying if their perception is accurate, in accordance with the procedures of the research method.

Until the early 2000s, many sociologists did not recognize historical research as a distinct methodological framework, the preferred term being ‘secondary analysis’ (Leming, 1997) due to a focus on secondary analysis (understood as the use of evidence from non-primary sources).

The approach refers to a systematic interpretation of sources already in existence for exploring modifications within one or more variables of interest (Leming, 1997). Historical research aims to shed light on certain *trends* and *recurrences* within a given number of contexts (mostly countries) by enabling the process of understanding and solution seeking in the past to have relevance for contemporary issues (Pakvis, n.d.). In doing so it seeks to re-evaluate existing data vis-à-vis existing (or self-formulated) hypotheses, generalizations and theories (Pakvis, n.d.).

In any historical-comparative research project, the value of synthesizing evidence is manifested in the formulation of a narrative of findings. The steps that need to be undertaken in relation to such an enterprise involve firstly the conceptualization of a research topic (or question) (Pakvis, n.d.). Secondly, an immersive approach to the background of the involved case studies is compulsory in order to avoid misleading occurrences with trends and to reveal causal links. This is followed by an evaluation and re-organization of evidence within newly created conceptual categories, concluded through synthesis and narrative formulation.

As a methodology primarily focused on identifying trends from already existing sources, historical-comparative research reserves an important role for the external appraisal of sources (through verifying authenticity and authorship) and an internal one (through assessing the sources' meaning and intent) (Neuman, 2007: 309; Pakvis, n.d.). It is worth mentioning here that the present analysis benefits from not facing the barrier of lack of evidence and/or scarcity of sources, as historical distance does not constitute an issue either in terms of timeframe or reality perception (as it would have been the case for looking further back within history). Also, a highly significant obstacle within comparative attempts within historical research – the lack of an accurate and/or reliable account of history – is rendered inapplicable due to both the variety of accounts on the given case studies and a diversity of points of view on the sensitive political or ethnic issues involved.

Although this historical method brings in a number of advantages, as it is unobtrusive (understood as not affecting results through the act of research), limiting the potential for subject-researcher interaction, and it is well tailored for the envisioned trend analysis (Leming, 1997), it does present a number of apparently restrictive characteristics. Firstly, the method involves difficulty in identifying and dealing with exceptions. Secondly, it makes defending the applicability of a certain factor/variable in any given context difficult (in relation to the potential applicability of other factors, variables or trends). Thirdly, the group of contexts (or countries) involved may not be independent of one another (Pakvis, n.d.)– an issue that has been codified as ‘Galton’s Problem’ (Neuman, 2007: 320 - 326).

In relation to the first two issues, it is worth mentioning again that the method itself has a mechanism for overcoming them through an emphasis on the role of substantial background information (Neuman, 2007: 309). Within this thesis, this mechanism is applied through a focus on the internal politics of Black Sea states – the subjects of this historical research. Codifying them as

‘complex organisms’ translates into not only granting them the status of responders to a context which completely dictates their actions, but also in verifying their reactions through dedicating substantial amount of focus to their internal politics. Moreover, the actors involved are quite vocal within the international arena when it comes to justifying (or deploring) or identifying the reasons behind certain sets of actions.

In relation to the third limiting characteristic, notably this thesis does not argue for the conceptual independence of the case study countries. Black Sea countries are denominated as such by the European Union, they perceive themselves as such in relation to it and even actors like Russia, that do not have targeted regional policies, approach the majority of them through a unanimous ‘near abroad’ logic. The region’s common elements legitimize the countries’ assessment as a group, and this is why this thesis has employed the ‘geopolitical environment’ concept as a theoretical safe refuge. Within this area, the two major actors (the EU and Russia) possess immense capabilities in relation to the other states and employ (conflicting) foreign policy instruments typical to themselves. Even leaving the discussion on Black Sea regionalism aside, given the interaction of these instruments and the discrepancy in capabilities between the two subject great powers and the other countries, it seems implausible that another over-arching feature (other than the EU-Russia interaction) would explain the three already identified variables within the Western edge of the Russian RSC.

One of the most significant issues within comparative methodologies in social sciences in general, and within comparative-historical research in particular, lies in the approach taken in relation to the number of studied cases. Thus results a distinction in typology between statistical, comparative and case study methods. According to Lijphart (1971: 683 – 684, as cited in Lor, 2011: 8) the primary difference between statistical and comparative methods lies in the number of cases used (large and small numbers, respectively), while the case study normally focuses on one subject (within this field, the subject is usually a country). Another distinction (Landman, 2008: 26, as cited in Lor, 2011: 8) differentiates between a comparison of many countries, few countries, and single-country studies.

This thesis makes use of two such frameworks: single-country studies (case studies) and few countries comparison (the comparative method). The former proves useful not only in combating the above mentioned potential limitations of the historical method through an extensive focus on background but also because “good descriptions of individual cases are useful as raw materials for comparisons, or as the first step in a comparative study” (Landman, 2008: 5, as cited in Lor, 2011: 11). Single case studies generally employ a qualitative approach when dealing with the subject (Lor, 2011: Chapter 4) and in this thesis they provide the fuel for the trigger-based approach of the cross-comparative assessment of the three variables.

Making use of the array of instruments available within the Historical Research methodology, this thesis assesses three (n.b. political) common elements within the Black Sea geopolitical environment as specific variables within the given context – declared foreign policy orientation, conflict, and economic dependence. In the case studies, each variable is checked at given moments in relation to the actions of either Russia or the European Union that (within the discourse of the country-case) affect it. Due to the special requirements of focusing on the background of any shift in the said variables, the timeframe involved in the research process starts in 2003 (the moment of the Kozak Memorandum) coinciding with the emergence of the present Russian policy towards the case studies and the end of 2012, which is considered the terminus ante quem date codified as ‘present-day’ due to availability of data concerning the variables. Depending on the number of policy actions identified as triggers of change within the analyzed variables (if their number allows for a visually accessible representation), all three variables can be presented in a single graphical representation.

Following the case-studies, this thesis will focus on exploring the three variables within the entire Black Sea geopolitical environment. A graphical representation of this cross-sectional research interpretation will involve each country’s position in relation to the said variable in the given context. It thus becomes easy to identify the purpose of this thesis – identifying trends on a chronological scale in relation to countries’ reactions to the external policies of the two major actors within the Black Sea. As Mahoney (2004) comments, “Which is the best method for testing necessary and sufficient causation depends in part on how one chooses to represent necessary and sufficient causes. Philosophers and many others use a dichotomous logic in which X is a necessary cause of Y when the following statement is true: ‘Y only if X’. Likewise, for a sufficient cause the following applies: ‘If X, then Y’.” (p. 85 - 86)

The most commonly used theory within comparative-historical methodology is considered to be George & Bennett’s (2005) (consistent with Mill’s 1843/1974 conclusions and with the findings of Przeworski & Tuene, 1970) ‘typological theory’ (Mahoney, 2004: 86), consisting of the construction of typologies with cells representing different values within both dependent and independent variables. In this logic, a researcher can reach the conclusion that a given type is not necessary for an outcome if the said type is both present and absent, respectively, within a number of cases that all portray the characteristics of the outcome of interest. Examples of academic contributions employing comparative-historical methods of analysis abound in terms of richness of explicit comparisons and transnational analyses (Hanagan, 2011: 141). They include the works of Drowning (1992), Luebbert (1991), Mahoney (2001), and Yashar (1997), Goldstone (1991), Goodwin (2001), Collier & Collier (2001), and Wickham-Crowley (1992). These contributions “offer sophisticated typologies that designate cases as similar or different across theoretical dimensions. These dimensions then are treated as values on variables and matched to assess whether cases follow patterns of correspondence consistent with necessary and sufficient

causation” (Mahoney, 2004: 87). In accordance with this procedure, employed in the present thesis, the three elements of commonality identified among the Black Sea states have been transformed into variables and nuanced in such a way that they can be measured and classified for identifying the *trigger links* in the geopolitical environment of the two case-studies.

Consequently, this thesis does not only use a substantial amount of information in backing the issue of causality (a procedure in itself - see the discussion below on variables) (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007: 345) but also asks a number of ‘what if no X?’ questions, as an additional mechanism for verifying causality between EU/Russia actions and shifts in variables, where logic dictates it. In addition, through the conceptual understanding of the idea of ‘critical junctures’ (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007: 341), the research method is able to explain the motivations behind choices made by the actors/contexts under analysis.

The idea that, in spite of the wide array of sophisticated tools available to statisticians in looking at intervening variables, the practice of identifying causality is reserved for qualitative data evaluation is backed by a number of scholars (Hedstroem & Swedberg, 1998; Goldthorpe, 2000; George & Bennet, 2005). Even without taking this debate into consideration, the fact that the purpose of a comparative historical assessment is a theoretically-informed discussion on the generative processes that produce an association (Mahoney, 2005: 89) in the first place makes this methodology the most appropriate fit for the present thesis.

6. The variables of the Integrated Approach

In terms of establishing measurement instruments applicable to the results of conceptual innovation, the practice of historical-comparative analysis employs two procedures: that of operationalising the development of indicators and that of scoring cases – namely, applying the developed indicators to the contexts under scrutiny (Adcock & Collier, 2001, as cited in Mahoney, 2005: 95). These conceptual instruments, however, must be rooted in phenomena and circumstances present in the real world and identified as such (Hanagan, 2011: 137). For the purpose of this thesis, even if the other two variables are clearly rooted in real-life events, the variable of declared foreign policy orientation pursues this established path, as the required measurement of the extent of pro-Western/pro-Eastern positioning of the case-study countries calls for such an innovation, and the lack of an existing measurement instrument imposes it. As Przeworski & Tuene (1970) argue, “The fact that indicators can have different meanings across contexts suggests the importance of using context-specific indicators” (as cited in Mahoney, 2005: 96).

However, in clarifying the fundamental dynamic between the variables of this thesis’s Integrated Approach, clarity dictates that an example-value can be given in statistical terms to the declared foreign policy orientation’s (abbreviated as ‘orientation’) relationship with conflict and economic dependence. As such, in a ‘traditional’ sense, given Russia’s employment of orientation as a mechanism for appraisal of loyalty within the Black Sea geopolitical environment, it becomes visible how the variable could be interpreted as independent in relation to the dependent conflict and economic dependence. In other words, within the Black Sea logic, a pro-Russian orientation can result in low conflict (or even the potential resolution of conflict – as it was almost the case with the ‘Kozak Memorandum’ in Moldova) and a stable power-dyad of economic dependence with Russia. Nonetheless, in keeping with the previous chapter’s explanation as to why this logic does not constitute the desired (or useful) path, there are two reasons why such a distinction (between dependent and independent variables) is not employed.

First, keeping with the scholasticism of Historical Assessment, the lack of focus on *correlation* and its replacement with *trigger*, along with the understanding of a ‘variable’ (exclusively) as a measurable conceptual instrument, translates into the fact that such an identification has the mere value of clarity, and nothing more. Second, keeping in mind the fact that at no point during the EU’s instrument-creation endeavours one can see a conceptual creation of *orientation* with the status of requirement within the process of external governance, it would be safe to assume that the EU *does not* represent an actor which appraises loyalty in the area. Its goals, of ‘peaceful

neighbours' and 'flourishing economies' do, however, tailor to the other two variables. As such, an independent variable could not be constructed without being applicable to both geopolitical actors – Russia and the EU to the same extent. Moreover, as it was revealed by the EU diplomats' approach to a Republic of Moldova facing a trade choice between the EU and the CU²⁵, the Union makes an intentional measure out of escaping the perception that the policy requirements it places on its neighbours (which it rewards with incentives) have a mutually-exclusive character with any other set of measures.

Consequently, this thesis attempts to identify causality within the entire set of relationships between its analysed variables, while bearing in mind the caveat that orientation represents a hierarchically more prominent measure with the capacity, as an appraisal mechanism, to impact the other two variables to a greater extent than the reverse – in itself a procedure in full accordance with Historical Assessment.

It must be clearly stated that the term *variables*, as applied, for the purpose of this thesis, to the region's common geopolitical characteristics, refers to the descriptive measurable attribute given to each issue under assessment and to it alone. Historical analysis, while allowing such an endeavour, also allows for clarity-motivated analogies between this process and that of employing dependent or independent variables for the purpose of political research. One such example would be to consider declared foreign policy orientation as an independent variable – *triggering* changes within conflict and economic dependence (seen in this case as dependent variables). This, as I show, is the case in Georgia's or even Ukraine's conflicts with Russia (conflict), or the bans on trading certain products with Moldova and Georgia (economic dependence) as a result of their loyalty appraisal. On the other hand, Moldova's pro-Eastern re-alignment during the Voronin era (primarily due to economic dependence), as well as Georgia's re-opening of dialogue with Russia following the war (conflict) represent instances where conflict and economic dependence trigger changes within orientation, producing thus a shift in the defining nature of the variable (if the above-mentioned analogy is used) towards being perceived as the dependent variable. However, in fact, depending on the circumstances under which shifts occur, and/or on the time-based snapshot of the shifts, the nature of the dependent-independent relationship will vary throughout the period under study. This is because declared foreign policy orientation is a state-based instrument, one of the few variables arising from Black Sea states themselves, and not internally induced – although Russia's loyalty appraisals seem to impose the necessity for it to be used. On the other hand, the risk of conflict and economic dependence depend on the subject countries' relationship with the poles of power they face as neighbours. More importantly, however, it is vital to note that declared foreign policy orientation exists primarily because both the interaction between the poles of power and the coercive potential of the other two variables are in place.

²⁵ See chapters on the case-study of the Republic of Moldova

6.1. Declared Foreign Policy Orientation

The words ‘foreign policy orientation’ are very much used in academic and practitioner language, but seldom defined. This is perhaps the most challenging indicator in question, not least because in Political Science and related disciplines there is no Foreign Policy Orientation indicator in existence for states. The number of states in existence and the complexity of the international system are too great for such an indicator to be empirically feasible. However, in the case of the Black Sea, common elements are greater than differences and the conceptual innovation feature of comparative-historical assessments imposes the creation of a measurable concept to describe contextual recurrences. Consequently, by using theoretical visions on the issue of *change/shift* in foreign policy orientation, it becomes possible to design an original indicator, applicable within the Black Sea context and based on an academic look at how states carry out foreign policy modifications.

It must be noted here that, in terms of overcoming the disjunction between reality and perception when it comes to foreign policy orientation, the validity of the indicator stems from how it is perceived by the actors involved in the environment. For example, as reality shows, it is merely enough for countries such as Moldova or Georgia to openly declare their adherence to the East/West (understood as Russia/EU) for a reaction (up to and including a policy shift) to be triggered on the opposite side²⁶. This is because ‘ownership’ over the Black Sea geopolitical environment represents an element showing relevance almost exclusively if acknowledgement is given to it by the parties involved. In a very cynical interpretation of regional international relations, this is the Russian position and it has been acknowledged in both the Union’s External Action Service statements and within its bilateral summits with Russia. This position is best codified by the EU Institute for Security Studies:

“The EU’s Eastern neighbourhood is a region in transition. Diverging foreign policy orientations, frozen conflicts, and a very low level of inter-state cooperation further fragment and polarise the region. Russian claims for a dominant position make it difficult for the EU to respond adequately to the challenges emanating from the Eastern neighbourhood.” (ISS, n.d.)

Consequently, a 5 step indicator (Table 7) can be created, as follows:

²⁶ Which is represented exclusively by Russia, in practice - thus revealing the particular influencing characteristics of orientation.

Table 7 - The measurement of declared foreign policy orientation

| Codification | Description |
|------------------------|--|
| 1 pro-eastern | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openly declared pro-Russian orientation • Collaboration with Russia having a prominent role within foreign policy concepts and public statements • Pro-Russian state propaganda • Strong economic and security (bilateral and institutional links) with Russia • The actively presented acknowledgement (by the country) that involvement with Russia translates into minimum (or ‘neighbourly’) links with the EU |
| 2 mixed-eastern | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openly declared pro-Russian orientation, but with a special care for increasing collaboration with the EU. • Collaboration with Russia having a prominent role within foreign policy concepts and public statements • State propaganda with a less radical orientation component. • Strong economic and security (bilateral and institutional links) with Russia • The actively presented acknowledgement (by the country) that involvement with Russia DOES NOT translate into minimum (or ‘neighbourly’) links with the EU |
| 3 neutral | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openly declared balance of the two actors’ interests • Attempts to display a neutral (or open to both sides) image • The state’s refutation of the ‘one side excludes the other logic’ • The lack of one particular clear trading/security partner |
| 4 mixed-western | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openly declared pro-EU orientation while specifying the special role of the country-case-Russia relation • Meeting EU agenda of cooperation having a prominent role within foreign policy concepts and public statements while at the same time allocating space to pro-Russian feelings. • Pro-EU image promotion within the state, with a special care of avoiding a logic of exclusion • Collaboration within ENP, EaP and CSDP is pursued while having in mind not to affect the Russian actor. • The actively presented acknowledgement (by the country) that collaboration with the EU DOES NOT translate into ‘escaping the Russian grip’ |
| 5 pro-western | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openly declared pro-EU orientation • Meeting EU agenda of cooperation having a prominent role within foreign policy concepts and public statements • Pro-EU image promotion within the state • Strong emphasis on ENP, EaP and CSDP collaboration with the EU • The actively presented acknowledgement (by the country) that collaboration with the EU translates into ‘escaping the Russian grip’ |

Keeping in mind the complexity of the international environment, even within the Black Sea geopolitical environment, it is easy to discard the interpretation of the variable as ‘a judgement call’. This is indeed the case. However, it is very seldom throughout 2003 – 2012 that Black Sea states have attempted to refute a self-image view as a false interpretation. Decision makers within the case study countries are normally clear regarding the image that the country is attempting to portray and both the EU and Russia have displayed the capacity for interpretation in accordance with the countries’ desired image. Even instances of public diplomatic dialogue share a level of clarity when referring to orientation, even with the desired and expected etiquette. Consequently, this measurement instrument meets both the research method’s requirement for operationalization and that of measurement (given the established categories above).

Sources for the interpretation of the variable within the case-studies include foreign policy strategy papers, public statements concerning orientation, text of agreements, and publications of the Institute for Security Studies (for its non-bias and high academic integrity record).

A significant issue at this point is making a clear distinction between declared foreign policy orientation and rule adoption through external governance. The so-called ‘external governance’ perspective has been applied to the relationship between the EU and partner countries in the attempt to identify the role of persuasion and incentives vis-à-vis adoption costs and rules at a domestic level (see chapter on the EU). These studies have concluded by pointing out the importance of conditionality and the membership perspective in relation to ‘governing externally’ the policy choices made by partner countries - namely, which measures lead to the successful adoption of EU norms and rules. The framework considers that, notwithstanding which elements guide the actors’ conduct, their behaviour is driven by “the relative clarity of their identities, power resources, and implications of actions and outcomes” (Hagemann, 2013: 4). These elements are valuable as a starting point in creating a measurement instrument for the declared foreign policy orientation, since they are taken as a given and supported by a comprehensive corpus of literature (March and Olsen, 1998, as cited in Hagemann, 2013).

An example of such academic contributions are Dimitrova and Dragneva’s (2009) conclusions that “the stronger the interdependence with Russia in a specific sector, the weaker the influence of the EU, assuming a Russian quasi-veto power on reform in some sectors” (p.854). However, if this would be the general rule in the Eastern Neighbourhood, then the fact that certain countries (in Hagemann’s analysis, Moldova under Voronin) chose to participate in the ENP in spite of Russian pressure not to do so, and, more importantly, the fact that they could benefit from EU financial support even if they did not perform well within all categories of their Action Plan, means that governments do not necessarily bow to external pressure (Hagemann, 2013: 2) and that their decisions can be motivated by internal factors. This particular argument is proving immensely

valuable in differentiating between what this thesis codifies as declared foreign policy orientation and other forms of analysing conditionality-related decision-making.

Hagemann (2013) sees Moldova not performing well enough between 2005 and 2009 due to its poor record in the ‘common values’ (Democracy and the Rule of Law) chapter of its Action Plan. The author notices how:

“... neither the EU nor Russia could effectively influence rule adoption without caveats: while approximation went smoothly in customs reform, even despite coercive interference from Russia, cooperation in areas covering common values was almost non-existent, even though they were underlined as central by the European Commission. Despite this mixed record, the Voronin government managed to attain subsequent increases in financial and technical support and further trade facilitation. This suggests that rather than the influence of the two regional powers, the interest of the Moldovan government was the strongest predictor of rule adoption and application.” (p. 3).

However, this thesis explains how Voronin’s government did not increase/decrease its record on ‘shared values’ unless this was defending what it perceived to be the control and integrity of the state (or what was left of it given the Transnistrian issue). This point of view is clearly visible in Voronin’s speech after the 2009 ‘Twitter Revollution’, in which he accused the initiators of ‘undermining the statehood of Moldova’ (HotNews, 2009) for protesting against the undemocratic control policies of the PCRM (albeit hinting, though, that the said initiators were the Government of Romania, a discussion beyond the scope of this thesis). All other measures were aimed at overcoming the previous era’s ‘pluralism by default’ in the favour of the Party of Communists in the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) through control of rump Moldova – making ‘common values’ an unfeasible solution for the Moldovan political climate. Consequently, notwithstanding the validity of Hagemann’s (2013) findings – that the PCRM found the space to partially implement ENP elements (p. 9), but external governance hadn’t resulted in a significant norm change in Moldova, it became clear that facing Russia on the issue of customs actually represented the extent to which Voronin’s Moldova could become pro-European. A full adoption of the Action Plan at the time would have translated into a potential undermining of the country’s statehood (as understood by the PCRM) and thus the state’s ability to react in case this measure would have been perceived as an anti-Russian stance. Consequently, the ‘external governance’ platform could not account for the significance of implementing customs reform as a statement of stance, while the framework of declared foreign policy orientation *can*. Evidence of this (ironically even visible in Hagemann’s findings) is the fact that Russia did react coercively even to the customs reform, and that the EU chose not to sanction Moldova, even if Brussels had openly placed a high importance on ‘shared

values' (Hageman, 2013: 12) – both entities thus perceiving the element of change in Moldovan norms.

Using the example above it becomes easy to notice how declared foreign policy orientation is an assessment of the significance of political choices within the Black Sea logic (where improving relations with one pole of power translates into cooling them with the other) and not a matter of identifying the origin of those choices. Black Sea countries, or at least those whose territories are unanimously internationally recognized, are sovereign nations, which are indeed able to make international policy decisions. These decisions, given the characteristics of the area, have an additional symbolic feature, which external governance-driven analyses are unable to fully grasp. Thus, although elements from the 'external governance' framework are used in designing 'declared foreign policy orientation' as an innovative assessment instrument, the perspective alone would prove insufficient in the attempt to understand the consequences of Black Sea states' policy choices. The example above reveals that both Russia and the EU seem to react as if they perceive norm changes in the way countries such as (but not exclusively) Moldova expect them to, and that 'declared foreign policy orientation' stands as the conceptual innovation which helps codify this phenomenon.

6.2. Economic dependence

The Economic Dependence Indicator, the indicator used in this case, represents an assessment instrument of state 'capabilities' based on World Bank or EU import/export data. The theoretical reasoning behind it is an enterprise of methodological pioneering of two German scholars, Dinkel and Fink (2010). The scholars notice that aside from 'traditional' indicators of state power at a given moment (GDP, balance of payments, etc.), economic capabilities result from trade dyads where the percentage of imports/exports sets the standard for the dependence of one state on another. Within this vision, power relations ensue when a state is less dependent on a trade relation than its "suppliers". Similarly, power relations ensue when a state is less dependent on a trade relation than its "customers".

“Thus, we may speak of export dependence and import dependence that arise because trade relations are valued differently by the two partners in an exchange [...] Dependence and power are two faces of the same coin. State A potentially has power over state B if state B is dependent on state A. Conversely, state A is less powerful if it is dependent on others.” (Dinkel and Fink, 2010: 1-3)

The indicator is extensively justified by the authors' contribution.

The (simplified) equation behind the indicator is:

$$export\ dependence_{a,b} = \frac{\frac{exports_{a \rightarrow b}}{\sum exports_a}}{\frac{exports_{a \rightarrow b}}{\sum imports_b}}$$

The same can be applied for the import dependence factor. The values which result are interpreted as follows:

Values Meaning

- 0-1 For state A, the trade flow is less important than for state B ~ state A is more powerful/less dependent than state B.
- 1 The importance of the trade flow is equal for both partners.
- >1 For state B, the trade flow is less important than for state A ~ state A is less powerful/more dependent than state B.

When looking at export/import dependence, it becomes clear that a 6%/3% relationship of dependence between actors is not, in terms of significance, equal to one such as 40%/20%. In order to mitigate this, a system of weighting results is in place for measurements within the case-studies.

The indicator becomes valid for this thesis in its finite form, which represents the arithmetic sum of imports/export dependence indicators in relation to an envisioned partner. For example, a weighted set of equations, repeated throughout the 2003-2013 period provides a table of dependence (on Russia/the EU or both) for each of the Black Sea case study states. The applicability of the indicator is revealed in a number of statements made by policy makers within BS states which reveal sectorial dependencies on Russia as barriers in foreign policy dialogue.

Critics of the method would argue that the premise that economic dependence leads to power relations may require extensive argumentation. However, this thesis sees this indicator as one of capability, not power.

The sources used for calculating the results of this variable include World Bank/EU primary data on exports/imports per country.

6.3. Conflict

This indicator envisions conflict situations as a special type of social systems – a particular social reality functioning under its own rules and able to escalate and de-escalate by virtue of the

modification of the said rules. Aside from displaying a chronological assessment method involving a conceptual scale in a given timeline, the Heidelberg Institute's definition of conflict is the reason why it represents the employed (5 points) measurement tool – as it is most compatible with the qualitative nature of Black Sea conflicts, which range, within the thesis' assessed timeframe (2003 - 2013) from protracted conflicts ('disputes/non-violent crises') to all-out war ('war'). A hint of the capacity of the indicator to take into consideration the elements triggering disputes in the sense that this paper understands them is the indicator's assessment of a confrontation between the Romanian government and the Hungarian minority in Romania for regional autonomy. This would be a situation with a nature not exclusive to Romania and relevant (in terms of approach) for understanding the majority of conflict triggers in the area of the Black Sea. Most other indicators disregard this issue. The fact that this indicator has a set of instruments assessing it reveals that it is equipped to deal with Black Sea particularities. Indicators are available for all years assessed by the thesis as snapshots of the region.

Table 8 - Conflict intensities within the conflict variable

| State of Violence | Intensity Group | Level of Intensity | Name of Intensity | Definition |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|---|
| non-violent | low | 1 | Latent Conflict | A positional difference over definable values of national meaning is considered to be a latent conflict if respective demands are articulated by one of the parties and perceived by the other as such. |
| | | 2 | Manifest Conflict | A manifest conflict includes the use of measures that are located in the preliminary stage to violent force. This includes for example verbal pressure, threatening explicitly with violence, or the imposition of economic sanctions. |
| violent | medium | 3 | Crisis | A crisis is a tense situation in which at least one of the parties uses violent force in sporadic incidents. |
| | high | 4 | Severe Crisis | A conflict is considered to be a severe crisis if violent force is repeatedly used in an organized way. |
| | | 5 | War | A war is a type of violent conflict in which violent force is used with a certain continuity in an organized and systematic way. The conflict parties exercise extensive measures, depending on the situation. The extent of destruction is massive and of long duration. |

The indicator does not cater specifically for the inter-state nature of the regional conflicts in particular. However, this does not affect its applicability because the indicator involves *at least two*

parties, meaning here that assessing a country-case/secessionist entity/Russia situation is indeed possible. The conflict represents a social system with diverse actors, not an opposition of two parties. In addition, critics may argue that the numerical codification of a given situation may be false, in accordance with the findings of this thesis. However, the sections concerning background information on each of the case studies suggest that the Heidelberg Institute findings can indeed be applied in the Black Sea contexts.

Prior to 2003, all of the Heidelberg Institute assessments would use a 4 points system. However, given that the triggers behind the present-day Russian foreign policy position were just starting to be in place in 2003, and that the ENP began in 2004, the focus of the thesis is set to the timeframe 2003 – 2013.

It is worth mentioning here that, even while working with three measurable variables, no Black Sea indicator would be created. The numerical codifications of the variables are useful for assessment of change, extent of change and graphical representation. However, this thesis would risk an ‘excess of empiricism’ if it would combine them into a numerical framework, no matter how generic that would be.

SECTION II

Analysis

7. Moldova – The Black Sea state

The state of Moldova, with a population of about 4.2 million and sandwiched between Romania and Ukraine had never existed as an independent political entity before 1991. In spite of this reality, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova gave birth to one of the most vocal national movements of the *perestroika/glasnost* period (King, 2003: 61). Later on, following the collapse of the USSR, Moldova became the only country in the FSU RSC where major political debates were (and still are) identifiable along the fundamental aspects of national identity (Tudoroiu, 2011: 238). They resulted into a system of ‘pluralism by default’ (Way, 2002), where due to long term structural factors, a civil war with an ethnopolitical component, and severe economic grievances, political power poles manifested such fundamental differences that little room for compromise existed and none had the ability to exercise control over the others.

Following changes to the constitution and the transformation of the country from a semi-presidential regime to a parliamentary one in the early 2000s, the Party of Communists (PCRM) came to power as a disciplined and cohesive force (Way, 2003: 137). However, the PCRM’s prominence within Moldovan political decision-making was replaced in 2009 by the Alliance for European Integration (AEI) (Tudoroiu, 2011: 242), a multi-party group openly determined to set Moldova on the path towards European integration. In the meantime, a highly risky game of treading a fine line between the interests of the Russia and the West, while avoiding the re-emergence of civil war and economic collapse, was played by Moldovan elites. The present-day outcome of this game owes a great deal to both international constraints and to the internal typical nature of the Moldovan political landscape.

With this in mind, this chapter sets-out the line of arguments in accordance to which Moldova represents an emblematic country for the Black Sea geopolitical environment – namely of the post-Soviet Eastern European component of the area’s RSC²⁷, in a similar fashion with Georgia’s attribute of representativeness for the Caucasian sub-complex – the two being both comparable in size and manifesting a significant amount of differentiation in order to qualify as ideal case studies for the Black Sea geopolitical environment.

In this capacity, the chapter fulfils a triple responsibility. First, it reiterates the theoretical instrumental base for the exploration of the Moldovan republic as a case-study within a cross-sectional comparative endeavour, by summarizing the employment of the key methodological terms of *trigger* and *narrative*. Second, it defends the representativeness of Moldova for the three variables under scrutiny by narratively revealing their emergence as realities within the republic.

²⁷ Understanding it generically as the post-Soviet Regional Security Complex – the denomination of ‘Eastern European’ standing as a simple geographical clarification

Third, it mitigates the potential for one of the weak points of historical methods – namely the lack of perspective with regards to any other potential element which could explain chronological outcomes.

As I explore, in the case of Moldova, a strong candidate for the position of variable is the country's particular character is represented by identity, given by the limited independent statehood experience of the country and by the potential for identity-pertinence to another cultural entity – Romania. As such, the chapter considers Moldovan identity in light of the Russia-Moldova dynamic, which, in accordance with the premises of this thesis²⁸, represents the trigger behind the character of particularity of the Black Sea geopolitical environment.

In addition, in doing so, this chapter also serves as a working instrument for the clarification of and distinction between the representativeness and uniqueness of the Republic of Moldova within the Black Sea geopolitical environment, while also meeting one another of the methodological requirements of historical comparison – of providing substantial insight into the defining features of the case-study (also referred to as providing background information) for the purpose of emitting *informed judgements* in relation to the factors under analysis.

7.1. The methodological motivation in understanding pre-2003 Moldova

As argued within the methodological chapter, the concept of *trigger* – as opposed to that of *correlation* – sees the temporal placement of certain events as influencing an outcome or a set of outcomes which are subject to analysis (Mahoney, 2005: 91). This concept also brings along the necessity for a substantial explanatory corpus focussing on early events within a sequence. However, the utility of the employment of the concept of *trigger* is visible when comparing the two case studies under scrutiny with the present-day developments in Ukraine vis-à-vis Russia. In other words, a path dependent approach which explains outcomes, some of which were not expected to occur (such as the potential opening of what can become a protracted conflict in East Ukraine in 2014) is highly relevant for cancelling the surprising nature of said outcomes. As such, the narratives of Moldova and Georgia reveal great insight into what could be anticipated as a Ukrainian outcome by 2014.

However, the use of *triggers* and not *correlations* does not constitute a complete methodological endeavour, not least because of the necessity of establishing the clear connection between occurrences and outcomes. This is where the key concept of *narrative* is situated – in a position which explains the sequence.

As such, it is necessary to understand that, although Moldova in 2003 represented a subject of Russia's loyalty appraisal (declared foreign policy orientation), of its instrumental employment of

²⁸ The premises' justification, in this case, is identifiable within the chapter which focusses on the Russian Federation as a logic-generating actor for the Black Sea geopolitical environment and within the chapter clarifying the definitional understanding and employment of the Black Sea variables.

coercive methods (conflict and economic dependence), the triggers of this reality are not significantly altered from the Georgian ones, and the narrative sequence reveals that this came to be due to ‘pluralism by default’ and a weak statehood experience. However, to assert that it is sufficient for Moldova to represent a FSU Black Sea state in order for it to portray the ‘presence’ of the three variables would risk bordering both on trivially necessary causality and on tautologically sufficient conditionality, thus creating a closed loop where Moldova’s character of Black Sea FSU state would stem from the existence of the three variables and the three variables would stem from Moldova’s character of Black Sea FSU state – an issue representing a methodological flaw, an uninformed judgement, and a blind approach to Moldova’s particularity.

In reality, however, Moldova, similarly to its Black Sea neighbours, became a Black Sea state²⁹ through its own narrative, involving a fragmentation of power among political entities within the country, but not the emergence of clan-like structures as in Georgia; an identity-spawned protracted conflict, but one which led to three identity-paths, in no way similar to that of ‘Georgia for the Georgians’ discourse of its Caucasian neighbour; and a potential for economic development with a lower set of capabilities than those of Tbilisi. Such differences in the extent of which triggers of post-2003 Black Sea realities have manifested within subject states represent, in fact, one of the key justifications why the regional character of the Black Sea represents required the refuge into the term *geopolitical environment*.

Looking at Moldova’s narrative between its independence and the period under study is vital, primarily because this period *triggered* the way in which Moldova could react to the impact of the resurgent Russian Federation in the early 2000s and beyond, and the extent to which it could act within the EU-codified instrumental base for external governance. Also, this period stands as an immensely relevant time-frame in which any other element of relevance for the potential for transformation of the country into an *ideal neighbour* (such as an additional variable) for the EU could emerge³⁰. Consequently, the republic’s pre-2003 narrative in a necessary presence within this thesis.

7.2. Moldova’s path to independence

At present, the internationally recognized territory of the Republic of Moldova consists of two regions (Picture M.1.). The larger, western region – Bessarabia (Basarabia in Romanian) - is predominantly Romanian speaking (King, 1994: 345-368, as cited in Kaufman, 1996: 120). Originally part of part of the Moldovan principality, the region was annexed by Russia as a result of the peace of Bucharest (1812), which ended a Russo-Turkish war (Kolsto, et. al, 1993: 977). In 1878, with the independence of the Kingdom of Romania (formed in 1859 from the union of rump Moldova and Wallachia), the name ‘Moldova’ disappeared from the political map of Europe and was transformed into a simple denomination of a historical and cultural region of Romania (Kolsto,

²⁹ Understood as a state acting within the Black Sea geopolitical environment without representing a great power

³⁰ In itself, a mitigating element for the conceptual innovation required by the methodology.



Image 2 – Map of the Republic of Moldova with Transnistria highlighted (The Velvet Rocket, 2011)

et.al, 1993: 977). In 1918, when the newly installed Bolshevik regime in Russia was still in the process of consolidation, Romania (re)annexed Basarabia (Kolsto, et. al, 1993: 978), an event that, as history would reveal, was never accepted by Moscow.

With the organization of the Soviet state as a federal republic, in 1922, the area to the left of the river Nistru (‘Dniester’ in English) was joined with the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Two years later, however, it was transformed into the Moldovan Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic (MASSR) (Kolsto, et. al., 1993: 978), an entity similar to Karelia ASSR (vis-à-vis Finland) or Buriat-Mongol ASSR (vis-à-vis Mongolia) (King, 1999: 121) designed as a bridgehead for the reconquest of Basarabia, and whose ‘symbolic’ capital was declared the right-bank city of Chişinău (Kolsto, et. al, 1993: 978).

In 1940, as a result of the secret additional protocol to the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, Basarabia was reannexed by Stalin and united with the MASSR (Kaufman, 1999: 120). Subsequently, Romania joined the Axis powers, participated in the German offensive on the Eastern Front, reconquered Basarabia and also occupied the territory on the left of the Nistru, giving it for the first time the name of ‘Transnistria’ (Kolsto, 1993: 979). The Axis was to lose the Second World War, however, and Stalin was to recapture Transnistria, together with Basarabia, and unite them into the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) - an entity part of the USSR (Kolsto, 1993: 979), which was to remain in existence until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The policies implemented in Moldova after 1940 are considered responsible for the emergence of powerful contentious ethnic symbols and grievances. As a primary justifying element of Basarabia’s reannexation, Stalin decreed that Romanian speakers in Moldova were in reality Moldovans, different linguistically and historically from Romanians. The local language was thus Slavified, to be written only through the use of the Cyrillic alphabet, and was added an extensive number of Russian loan words. In addition, Moldova’s history was ‘rewritten’ in order to remove any legitimate connection with Romania and to emphasize historical ties with Russia (Kaufman, 1996:121).

Also, a large number of Russian and Ukrainian ‘colonists’ was brought in, in order to run the new industrial complexes transported in the area, especially in Transnistria (Kolsto, et. al., 1993: 979), and to secure Soviet control in the region (Kaufman, 1996: 121). Gradually, ethnic Moldovans became little represented in ‘desirable’ positions and began dominating the agricultural sector. The Moldovan SSR became actively incorporated into the Soviet system (Kolsto, et. al., 1993: 979).

Although by the 1970s the economic unbalances began to be addressed, progress was slowed by the economic difficulties undergone by Russia in the 1980s. In addition, as Kaufman (1996) notices:

“The problem was that any attempt to address these grievances would seem threatening to Russophones: imposing the priority of the Moldovan language and the Romanian tricolor flag (which had been flown by Romania in World War II) seemed to foreshadow a renewal of the chauvinist policies of fascist Iron Guard Romania, and giving better jobs to Moldovans meant taking them from Russophones. These symbolic and economic issues exacerbated powerful, emotionally charged group stereotypes held by both groups: Moldovans labeled Russians and Ukrainians as interlopers or communists, while Russians saw echoes of 1940s – style fascism in every manifestation of pro-Romanian nationalism.” (p. 121 - 122)

The needed uttering space for the open expression of these disputes was to be found in Gorbachev’s ‘glasnost’ (Kaufman, 1996: 122). This policy opened the way for the formation of Moldovan nationalist discussion groups, which quickly merged into a Moldovan Popular Front (MPF) – an organization made up of Moldovan writers, artists, historians and linguists and which aimed to support “the rebirth of Moldovan (read: Romanian) national culture” (King, 1994: 350). In addition, the MPF was proving useful both for the late ‘80s efforts of the MSSR’s leadership to gain more concessions from the crumbling Soviet leadership, and in Moldova’s Politburo confrontation between Semion Grossu (party first secretary – appointed by Moscow) and the other Moldovan Soviet elites, such as Snegur, Țiu, and Sangheli.

On the 31st of August, 1989, under strong pressure from the MPF, and in spite of the strong opposition from the Moldovan Communist Party, the Moldovan Supreme Soviet adopted three language laws, which stated that Moldovan is to be the main state language of the republic “used in political, economic, social and cultural life and [functioning] on the basis of the Latin script” (King, 1994: 350). This was the first of a number of measures taken by the Moldovan local elites in setting the country on the path towards independence from the USSR. By the end of 1990, Moldova declared its sovereignty within the Soviet Union and adopted the tricolor flag emblazoned with ox-head seal of the historical Moldovan Principality leaders Dragoș and Ștefan the Great.

7.3. The emergence of identity polarisation

The issue of identity represented an intrinsic factor of the country's emergence from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and was connected with the activity of the Popular Front. However, the organization's short lived experience in government (under Prime Minister Mircea Druc in 1990-91) proved disastrous. The sentiments of the Front in general, and of the culture minister Ion Ungureanu in particular successfully estranged Moldova's ethnic minorities and destroyed the strong coalition that the Front had built in facing the Communist party. After Druc, the Front's members never held a major ministerial portfolio (King, 2003: 66) again.

On the basis of the above-mentioned occurrences, authors have identified that identity issues left little or no room for compromise and unanimous governance. If other CIS countries (such as Ukraine) were split into two identity constructs, Moldova was split into three (Way, 2002: 137). This characteristic – typical to Moldova – boasts such significance, that it has the potential to introduce *identity* as a fourth variable within Moldova's post-2003 development. King (2003) has named these three fundamentally defining sets of ideas in relation to Moldova's political environment since 1991 onwards:

Pan-Romanism

The fundamental belief held by the Popular Front was that Moldovans and Romanians constituted a single pan-Romanian nation. Although this idea could be identified in the extensive debates over language and culture which arose throughout *glasnost*, it was only in 1992 that the Front declared pan-Romanism as a fundamental component of its political programme (King, 2003: 65). In February 1992, under the leadership of former journalist Iurie Roşca, the Front transformed into an official political party (the Christian-Democratic People's Party). Even since 1991, elements from the Front, primarily centered on president Snegur, had left the organization to form the (more moderate) Agrarian Democrats. However, following February, the Front became subject to multiple splintering, even losing individuals otherwise in favor of maintaining close ties with Bucharest.

Also, subsequent to February 1992, events led to the materialization of a moderate Unionist camp, which left Roşca's organization on the grounds of instance and political relationships. The moderate figures of the Front noticed that maintaining immediate union as a basic commitment within the party platform would alienate the exact groups that the Front needed in order to be able to reclaim political power (King, 2003: 66). These elements left the Front and united under an organizations subject to a continuous shift in name – The Intelligentsia, The United Democratic Congress, the Block of Peasants and Intellectuals, and the Party of Democratic Forces) (King, 2003: 67).

Eurasianism

The absolute opposite in terms of identity in Moldova is represented by the elites promoting increased integration with Russia and the CIS, or even re-establishment of the Soviet Union. Although the elements of Moldovan society making up this category do not define themselves as ‘Eurasianists’, King (2003: 67) has used this denomination given the fact that they resembled political elements in Russia and Ukraine at the time of their emergence.

Not surprisingly, the nucleus of Moldovan Eurasianism is in Tiraspol, the ‘capital’ of the area that even since the late 1980s spawned strong opposition movements to the Front’s calls for pan-Romanism. The region across the Nistru is populated in its majority with Ukrainians and Russians (with Moldovans, however, representing the single largest ethnic group) (King, 2003: 67). A former component of the Soviet defense industry and thus boasting substantial industrial capabilities (Hensel & Gudín, 2004), Transnistria is still home to a large number of military personal, reservists and their families. As a political representative, the United Council of Work Collectives lead the front in a series of workers’ strikes in 1989, expressing opposition to the policies enforced by Chişinău (King, 2003: 67).

Given the fact that the leadership in Tiraspol has not been directly involved in Chişinău’s internal policy decision-making, except for a small number of ‘Transnistrians’ crossing the river to vote in Moldova proper, Eurasianism never completely represented a policy systematically pursued by the Moldovan authorities (King, 2003: 68).

Moldova has embodied a divided state since 1992. In spite of this factor, however, Eurasianist political organisms did take shape on the right of the Nistru. The Unitatea-Yedinstvo group, representing a left-wing formation constituted primarily from Russian and Ukrainian ethnics, also rose in opposition to the cultural and language reforms promoted by the Front. Adding to this, in 1993, Yedinstvo vocally supported Moldova’s entry into the CIS, and in 1994 it gained 22 percent of the vote in the parliamentary elections (King, 2003: 68).

The Party of Communists in the Republic of Moldova (PCRM), the successor of Moldova’s Communist Party (banned after independence) was (re-)established in 1994. By 1995 it had managed to attract some of Yedinstvo’s Slav supporters and, more importantly, to also appeal to non-Slavs by demanding a return to the security and stability of the past. With an anti-reform, as opposed to an anti-Moldovan message, the (very disciplined) PCRM earned a number of positions in the 1995 local elections, a plurality of seats in the parliamentary elections in 1998 and won the parliamentary elections in 2001 and 2005 based on the idea that establishing a close relationship with Moscow did not translate into promoting a single ethnic group in Moldova (King, 2003: 68).

As subsequent sections of this thesis reveal, the peak of pro-Moscow orientation in Moldova came after the arrival in power of the PCRM in 2001. Between 2001 and 2003, sustained efforts of

rapprochement made by Moldovan president Voronin translated into preferential treatments for Russian businesses in Moldova, the promotion of the Russian language in the country, and in moving closer to the Russian Federation in social, political and economic terms. In return, Voronin hoped that Russia would withdraw support for Transnistria (Popescu, 2006b: 2).

Basarabism/Moldovanism

What King (2003: 68) christens ‘Basarabism’ – also referred to as ‘Moldovanism’ (Tudoroiu, 2011) represents the only dominant orientation in Moldovan policy since 1991 until 2001. In a practical behavior, even the PCRM adopted more or less this guideline following the failed ‘Kozak Memorandum’³¹. Basarabism defines Moldova as a distinct political and cultural space with interests and customs that derive from external conditionalities imposed by its strong neighbors, and with internal conditionalities arising from the multiple identities of its multi-ethnic population (King, 2003: 69).

Evidence of the Republic of Moldova’s overarching Basarabist pragmatic influence is found in the country’s ‘foreign policy concept’ (agreed upon and adopted in February 1995), which codified reality as follows:

Table 9 – Fragment from *Moldova’s Foreign Policy Concept* (1995) (King, 2003: 69)

| |
|--|
| <p>1. <i>Moldova is an independent and multi-ethnic state. Its multi-ethnic character and willingness to grant territorial autonomy to minorities and to distinct sub-regions set it apart from other neighboring ‘national’ states, such as Romania or Bulgaria. Foreign policy should also be aimed at enshrining the territorial integrity of the state by developing peaceful relations with neighbors.</i></p> |
| <p>2. <i>Moldovans and Romanians have a common heritage, but their separate histories, from 1812 to 1918, and from 1940 to the present, have created distinct traditions and identities. The analogue for relations between Romania and Moldova should not therefore be Germany, one nation briefly separated by the vicissitudes of war and then reunited as a single state, but rather Germany and Austria, two distinct peoples sharing a common linguistic and cultural heritage. Moldova this has a special relationship with Romania, but this relationship does not exclude the maintenance of equally important ties with Russia, Ukraine and other countries.</i></p> |
| <p>3. <i>Moldova should continue to develop cultural, political and economic links with the Russian Federation and other countries within the CIS. These links, however, should be built on the basis of genuine partnership, not political and economic domination.</i></p> |
| <p>4. <i>Moldova should remain a neutral state, as described in the 1994 Constitution, but this neutrality should be re-examined depending on changes in the regional and international environment.</i></p> |

Arising from this set of ideas was Moldova’s eagerness in participating in a number of international projects in Eastern Europe and The Former Soviet Union³², such as the Central European Initiative (a 1997 trans-border co-operation agreement between Ukraine, Moldova and Romania), the Black Sea Economic Co-operation (BSEC), and GUUAM (involving Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) (King, 2003: 69).

³¹ See section on declared foreign policy orientation

³² See previous chapters for the discussion of the institutional character of Black Sea regionalism

Adding to this, as King (2003) notes:

“In its relations with Romania and Russia, though, the practical results of the ‘Basarabist’ orientation are perhaps the clearest. Working in the middle ground between Romania and Russia has not been easy, since elites in both Moscow and Bucharest tend to see Moldova’s warming to one side as evidence of cooling in relationships with the other. But for a small country locked between two states that formerly controlled its territory, keeping both sides happy has become something of an art among Moldovan foreign policy makers.” (p. 70)

7.4. Identity as a variable

Given the fact that cross-sectional historical assessment customarily involves the conceptual innovation and/or practical identification of the elements which are subject to the cross-sectional assessment per se, the particular importance of identity in Moldova, coupled with the occasional union discourse arising from either Chisinau or Bucharest, in addition to the presence of Romanian flags within post-2003 periods of radical re-orientation carried out in Moldova, all raise the possibility for identity to represent, by virtue of historical assessment methods, a variable in itself worth taking into account in analyzing the development of Moldova.

However, unlike declared foreign policy orientation, conflict, and economic dependence, identity lacks a number of defining features which do not tailor to the constructive needs of a variable’s presence within a Black Sea geopolitical environment state. Firstly, even if identity was subject to a potentially measurable three-way split within the republic, at no point during the period under scrutiny was identity pursuant or determinative of a geopolitical path taken by Moldova. With the exception of the early period preceding and immediately following the country’s independence and for a brief (arguably diplomatically *tactical*) pro-Russian 2001 – 2003 PCRIM intermezzo (likely to have had the resolution of the conflict in Transnistria as a goal), only basarabist measures can be identified in the country’s geopolitical responses. Even cases such as what was to be denominated the ‘twitter revolution’³³ where the Romanian flag was flown by protesters in Chisinau, were not followed by *Union with Romania* as an element on Chisinau’s (or Bucharest’s, for that matter) political agenda as it is clear that the Alliance for *European Integration*’s immediate geopolitical goal was clear in its denomination. Consequently, if an identity-based variable were to be constructed in the case of Moldova, its measurement would reveal only one mark – ‘basarabist’.

Secondly, no identity-based variable could account satisfy the ‘perceived as such’ requirement-component of variable creation, as it is employed within this thesis, not least, as I show, due to the fact that there are few indicators of the fact that the Russian Federation did,

³³ See section on conflict in Moldova

during the period under study, perceive within Moldova the existence of three identity constructs, but two – pro-Romanian and pro-Russian identity – associating the former with anything that was ‘anti-Russian’, all within the appraisal of loyalty which served as its instrumental base.

Thirdly, at no time in Moldova the identity component took on a unanimous character, the country representing a multi-ethnic and multicultural environment, in which identity, and its associated aims and objectives (at a political level) depend on the defining features of the emitting individuals as well as on the rhetoric that they employ at a given time.

As such, identity does not qualify as a variable within the Moldovan republic, but more of a highly-valuable asset in the search for particularity within the country’s pre-2003 narrative, of triggers of post-2003 realities.

7.5. The emergence of the Transnistrian conflict

Another Moldovan characteristic element within the Black Sea geopolitical environment is represented by *its* protracted conflict – seen, in this case within the framework of the Russia-Moldova instrumentation, but, however, with its own emergence-particularities.

In the parliamentary elections of February and March, 1990 the Popular Front collaborated to a significant extent with the reformers of the supreme soviet of the MSSR (Roper, 2008: 117). Mircea Snegur was elected chairman of the Supreme Soviet in May and president of the Parliament in October (Way, 2002: 128). In the following year, the parliament decided that the election of a president was necessary, and in December, 1991, Snegur won (Roper, 2008: 116). However, given the modifications of the nationalist narratives within the Popular front, the initiative began to break down, taking with it parliamentary consensus and problems were quick to appear during the period with both the Gagauz (Turkic-speaking Slavs in the South of the country) minorities of Moldova and the Transnistrians, which had already moved to boycott the national assembly and declare autonomy (Way, 2002: 128).

Events evolved and, after the coup attempt in Moscow, Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov organized a referendum and presidential elections. The result was that expected, given the province’s composition: an independent Nistru region, with Smirnov as president (Kaufman, 1996: 128). Thus, open warfare erupted between the two sides of the Nistru in 1992 and it lasted from March to July. At that time, “The Moldovan government called on the West-bank population to defend the territorial integrity of the Moldovan republic, which had declared its independence from the USSR in August 1991. Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR) leaders on the East-bank in turn accused the Moldovan government of carrying out *genocide* against the ethnic Russian minority.” (King, 1995: 111) The strongest battles were fought around the city of Bendery (Tighina in Romanian). Although support from Moscow had started to arrive in Tiraspol as early as 1990 (as

Russia had a feeling of protecting its own citizens) with the sending of KGB agents (Kaufman, 1996: 130), and with a stream of visits of high-ranking Russian officials in Tiraspol (King, 1995: 112), the situation underwent a dramatic shift. In 1992, once the conflict started to portray signs of imminent involvement of Romania and Ukraine, the Russian 14th Army, led by Gen. Lebed intervened in force and halted the armed conflict almost instantly. (King, 1995: 111). By this time the casualties of the conflict were around 300 dead and 1000 wounded (Way, 2002: 129). The conflict has not been resolved until the present day.

Authors (Tudoroiu, 2011: 239) have interpreted the Kremlin's instrumentalization of the crisis in Transnistria, and its decisive involvement as measures aiming to continue Moscow's regional influence and keep Chişinău in its sphere of influence. Notably, following the Moldovan defeat in Transnistria in 1992 originally an ally of the Popular Front, President Snegur ceased to support it and became, as stated, a promoter of Moldovanism.

The Moldova at the west of the Nistru faced economic collapse. Between 1991-93 production contracted around 60% and purchasing power went down around 80% Averaging about 10% contraction of GDP per year, through the 90s (Tudoroiu, 2011: 239), by the year 2000 Moldovan GDP went down about 70% by comparison to Soviet times. (Way, 2002: 128). By 2001, with an average household income of about 2 dollars/day, Moldova became the poorest country in Europe, having one of its few economic lifelines from remittances (7.1% of GDP in 1998 evolving to 36.2% in 2007) sent by its massive number of emigrants working outside the country (Tudoroiu, 2011: 239). The socio-economic environment of the country was characterized by a weak civil society with a low rule of law experience and no independent business class (Way, 2002: 129).

7.6. 'Pluralism by default' or 'a government for every orientation'

The image portrayed by Moldova outside of the country during the 1990s was perceived differently than it was felt within. Given that, although the Chişinău leadership had a *de jure* control over all aspects of the country (including officially non-partial institutions such as the police and the tax revenue service), and that it sometimes used such services to undermine competitors' abilities (Way, 2002: 129), Moldova's presidents continuously failed to impose their will to parliament and individually on its members (the strongest parliament in the former Soviet Union) (Roper, 2008: 118). This, coupled with the high number of (mostly foreign funded) NGOs activating in the country, which sometimes benefited from (i.e. volatile) political support (Way, 2002: 129), and with the high number of existing media institutions belonging to (and in the service of) both pro-Romanian and pro-Russian ideological factions, give the image of a surprisingly competitive democratic political power system by CIS standards, second only to the Baltics (Way, 2002: 127-130). So, in spite of poverty, economic decline, and 'ethnic' conflict, elections were bitterly fought in 1990, 1994, 1998, and 2001 and won by different ideologies which sometimes appealed for support to a strong Constitutional Court and a strong legislature. This was, however, not the case.

In reality, the purposes and aims of the political factions making-up the country's (post 1994 constitutional reform) political landscape made compromise very difficult. The government was too weak to impose authoritarian rule as even winning political disputes or rigging elections was affected by low elite cohesion and loyalty. This represented what authors have denominated as 'pluralism by default' (Way, 2002: 127 - 134).

In the country's 1996 elections, the story is that of a highly-fought campaign in which president Snegur faces his own prime-minister, Sangheli, and pro-Russian parliament speaker Luchinski (Roper, 2008: 119). Petru Luchinski wins and begins a campaign of attempting to centralize political power around the institution of the president (Tudoroiu, 2011: 239), a similar characteristic to that of president Snegur, but with a higher use of the post-soviet remains of the secret police against competitors (Way, 2002: 129). In 2000, Luchinsky attempts to push for a constitutional change which would transform the country into a presidential republic. However, the parliament's reaction is the exact opposite and a constitutional change is made, but its result is a parliamentary regime with an indirectly elected president (Roper, 2008: 119; Tudoroiu, 2011: 239). Unfortunately for the Moldovan president, the parliamentary republic system did indeed translate into more powers to the president of the republic, granted that the president's party maintains control over the parliament – a goal that Luchinski never achieved.

7.7. The PCRM

The above-mentioned framework gave a direct advantage to the most disciplined of parties, the PCRM (Roper, 2008: 114). In the February, 2001 elections, the PCRM won 71 of the 101 seats in the unicameral parliament and achieved the first communist comeback in the former Soviet Union (FSU) (Way, 2002: 130). Highly cohesive, disciplined, and tightly organized, the PCRM represented, at the time, the only force in Moldova able to rise from the established 'pluralism by default' (Way, 2002). In addition, the electoral platform employed by the PCRM relied on the perceived inefficiency of the previous system and the halt of reform by confrontations between president and prime-minister (Roper, 2008: 114). With a strong majority in parliament, Vladimir Voronin was elected president of the new parliamentary republic - and was quick to take advantage of the new system and forego the so called 'incumbent incapacity' (Tudoroiu, 2011: 240) of the previous decade.

What followed in Moldova was an (strongly pro-Russian) attempt at returning to the Soviet era symbols, coupled with a complete turn on economic reform, characterized by:

“...the overlap between state and political party structures; the concentration of all the levers of power in the hands of the President and a small circle of intimates; [...] the limitations and infringements of basic rights and freedoms of citizens; the control of the public and private mass-media and the harassment of the few independent ones; the quasi-voiding of sense of the very act of justice by subordinating the judiciary to the

political power; [and] the subordination and seizure of the business environment.”
(Panaite, 2010: 9, as cited in Tudoroiu, 2011: 240)

The PCRM moved forward and banned an opposition party (and ‘its’ newspaper) and took control of the state media. The legislature followed, as the PCRM replaced more than 70% of the heads of appellate and district courts and imposed more parliament control over the appointment of Constitutional Court judges (Way, 2002: 131). However, in manifesting pro-Russian orientation, when attempting to impose the Russian language as mandatory in primary schools across the country, the party faced fierce protests by the pro-Romanian nationalist opposition in 2002 led by Iurie Rosca (Way, 2002: 138). As a result, the PCRM concluded that it could not coerce the country into submission due to both internal protest and international pressure. They thus decided to downscale their plans and follow a more ‘soft’ authoritarian approach and not attempt to restore the whole soviet-style framework (Tudoroiu, 2011: 241). The path became obvious primarily when as a result of being in power, quite a number of PCRM high ranking members became very rich.

7.8. Conclusion: Moldova – The Black Sea state

Thus Moldova stood at the beginning of 2003 as a highly divided state. Spawning identity concerns similar to those in other Black Sea states (such as Ukraine) but with an additional in-between component, the republic represented simultaneously a ‘typical’ Black Sea state and an exception. The exploration of Moldova’s declared foreign policy orientation, within the subsequent chapter will shed light on how this contributed to a significant level of dynamism within the variable.

Also similar to other Black Sea states, Moldova represented in 2003 a sovereign nation which did not hold full control over the entirety of its territory. This being stated, though, as the exploration of conflict in Moldova will clarify, Transnistria did not manifest the same level of dynamism in its escalation as in other situations typical to the area (such as South Ossetia and Abkhazia), and the issue of conflict in the republic did not subsequently escalate to war as it is in the case of the other case studies. The presence of Russian forces in the area seems to have discouraged Chisinau from considering this option. Having the bulk of its industrial capabilities in a separatist province also led Moldova to find itself in a dire economic situation – dependent on foreign trade – boasting almost exclusively agricultural capacity – yet another element within what was to be Russia’s coercive capacity in relation to the republic.

8. Moldova – assessment of variables

As shown within the previous section, the Republic of Moldova manifests all the defining features of a Black Sea geopolitical environment state – a territorial conflict, trade dependence and an acute concern for the outcome of its foreign policy orientation. At this thesis reveals, however, Moldova is the most peaceful of the case-study countries, the most dynamic in its external alignment, and a quite successful story from the point of view of trade dependence, consequently having a set of particularities which result in a particular outcome – worth taking into account as an individual narrative. This chapter dedicates attention to the development of all three issues of concern: declared (and thus perceived³⁴) foreign policy orientation, conflict, and economic dependence, by exploring the triggers and results of modifications (or lack of) within each, and by bringing into light, for the use of the subsequent chapter, the elements which differentiate between the external approaches of both the EU and Russia and their success.

8.1. Moldova – the subject of loyalty appraisal

As already argued, the ‘methodological prerogatives’ granted to this analysis by the use of comparative-historical assessment instrumentation both allow and demand the use of conceptual innovation as a research tool. This is the case with what this thesis denominates as ‘declared foreign policy orientation’³⁵ – a common element of states within the Black Sea geopolitical environment with an attached measurable component.

Within this thesis, as argued by the chapter on variables, declared foreign policy orientation employs the use of a 5-step measurement tool which allows the placement of Moldova, in any given moment, on a spectrum between pro-Western and pro-Russian orientation. It is important, however, to codify clearly what is understood by both *edges* of the spectrum, not only due to style consideration, but also as in order clarify which element of Moldova’s actions could be placed under the ‘pro-Western’ umbrella. This necessity is most important, not least due to a slight interpretative difference which will become apparent between the case study of Moldova and that of Georgia, in this regard. In other words, by accepting the fact that ‘declared foreign policy orientation’ represents a foreign policy instrument employed by Black Sea states due to their awareness of representing the subject of loyalty appraisal and, at the same time, to their awareness that existing in the Black Sea geopolitical environment involves the acknowledgement of the proximity of both Russia and Europe, it is necessary to categorize the elements that subject countries include in their pro-Western narrative.

³⁴ See methodological chapter

³⁵ See chapter on variables

Within the declared foreign policy variable, the pro-Eastern edge (codification 1) of the assessment instrument in use involves an open pro-Russian orientation rhetoric (sometimes even stated as such), in addition to the fact that collaboration with the Russian Federation occupies a prominent role within foreign policy concepts and public statements. Moreover, in such cases, Black Sea states employ a significant pro-Russian state propaganda and maintain strong economic (bilateral and institutional) links with Moscow, while presently acknowledging that involvement with Russia translates into minimum (or sometimes rhetorically codified: ‘neighbourly’) links with the European Union. The difference between this level of orientation and the mixed-eastern one (codification 2) stands in nuance – mainly in the extent to which mentions of a ‘special care for increasing collaboration with the EU’ is added to the country’s open pro-Russian rhetoric, coupled with a less radical pro-Russian propaganda component. Most importantly, however, the key defining element of codification 2 in orientation lies in the actively presented acknowledgement (by the country) that involvement with Russia DOES NOT translate into minimum (or ‘neighbourly’) links with the EU and that the potential for dialogue is not excluded.

A neutral interpretation of this variable revolves around the identification of an openly-declared balance of Moscow and Brussels’ interests in relation to the given state, in addition to the visible attempt to display a neutral (or open to both-sides) image. States which employ this stance actively refute the ‘one side excludes the other logic’ not only in rhetoric, but also do not have a particular trade/security partner.

Mixed-western declared foreign policy orientation, in practice, manifests into an openly declared pro-EU strategy for the given state, while specifying the special role of the country-case-Russia relationship, as well as the reality that meeting the EU’s agenda of cooperation has a prominent role within foreign policy concepts and public statements, while at the same time allocating space to pro-Russian feelings. The EU’s image promotion within the given country is present within the state but also the special care of avoiding a logic of exclusion, as well as the pursuit of PAC, ENP, EaP and CSDP features also keeps in mind not to affect the Russian stance.

The other edge of the spectrum (codification 5: pro-Western) involves, as expected, an openly declared pro-EU orientation and the meeting of EU agenda goals having a prominent role within foreign policy concepts and public statements. The EU’s image and role of ideal is high-flying within state propaganda, as well as within institutional collaboration. Most importantly, however, pro-Western orientation involves the actively presented acknowledgement (by the country) that collaboration with the EU translates into ‘escaping the Russian grip’.

With these elements being re-taken into consideration, it is important to clarify the encompassing value of pro-Western orientation levels. If Russian opinions may be construed³⁶ as considering all Black Sea state-led foreign policy measures without the quality of pro-Russia aims and objectives

³⁶ See chapter on Russia

as anti-Russian in potential, the premise of acknowledgement of this element leaves room for the easing of interpretation. In this sense, an easing of interpretation is to consider, in the case of Moldova, pro-Western orientation as pro-EU orientation. In an alternative scenario, all elements without a clear-cut orientation feature, if not seen as pro-Russian (understood as pro-Eastern), would be analytically difficult to digest as they would involve pro-Other orientation. Fortunately, Black Sea realities involve the pragmatic feature of pro-Non-Russian orientation being, in reality, pro-EU – with the case of Moldova only offering the potential for pro-Romanian orientation, manifested with an increased enthusiasm following Romania’s accession to the EU. With this in mind, and with Moscow’s already discussed association of non-pro-Russian orientation being considered anti-Russian orientation, Moldova is an analytically straight-forward case. Georgia, on the other hand, will be subsequently discussed.

An additional element requiring attention is represented by the *sources* of declared foreign policy orientation. In this regard, it is vital to acknowledge that the variable does not become apparent merely in country-case rhetoric. On occasions, the instrumentalization of a measure, on the part of a Black Sea state, stands as a stronger indicator of the country’s position, as opposed to its narrative (or discourse in the international arena). One such example would be the signing of AAs, which, given the development of the Russian CU, boast a definitive orientation feature not necessarily connected with rhetoric.

8.1.1. Appraising Moldova’s loyalty and the case to do so

Representatives of both international organizations and academic contributions see the election process in Moldova in the early 2000s as generally free and fair (OSCE, 2003: 1; Oldberg, 2004: 70, as cited in Hagemann, 2013: 7). However, the cohesive Party of Communists under Vladimir Voronin, following its initial wide-spread public support, continued with the creation of a so-called uneven playing field within the Moldovan political arena, in which, as Hagemann (2013) notes:

“... this comprised the abuse of public resources for party interests, limitation of fundamental freedoms (e.g. association and of assembly), control of the media, abuse of the judiciary, and changes of the polity towards centralisation. Thus, after 2001 the chance in Moldova to accomplish genuine democratic reforms seemed worse than ever.” (p. 7)

Bilateral relations with between Moldova and the EU debuted with the 1994 signing of an EU-Moldova Partnership and Cooperation agreement (PCA) which only entered into force in June 2001. Also, the country joined the EU Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. Prior to the ENP and the EaP, though, it is easy to point-out that Moldova had a marginal importance for the EU (Bosse, 2010) as the 1991-2006 EU assistance amounted to about 300 million Euro (Tudoroiu, 2011: 252).

A joint EU-Moldova ENP Action Plan was adopted in February 2005 by the Cooperation Council between the two which leads the EU increasing its presence in Moldova, and to the true possibility of shifts in orientation which would go beyond the neutral level. In October 2005, an EU Commission Delegation opened in Chişinău and Adriaan Jacobovits de Szeged was appointed EU Special Representative for Moldova (the Delegation of the EU Commission to Moldova, n.d., as cited in Tudoroiu, 2011: 253). This is the time when Voronin’s speech became already resolutely European.

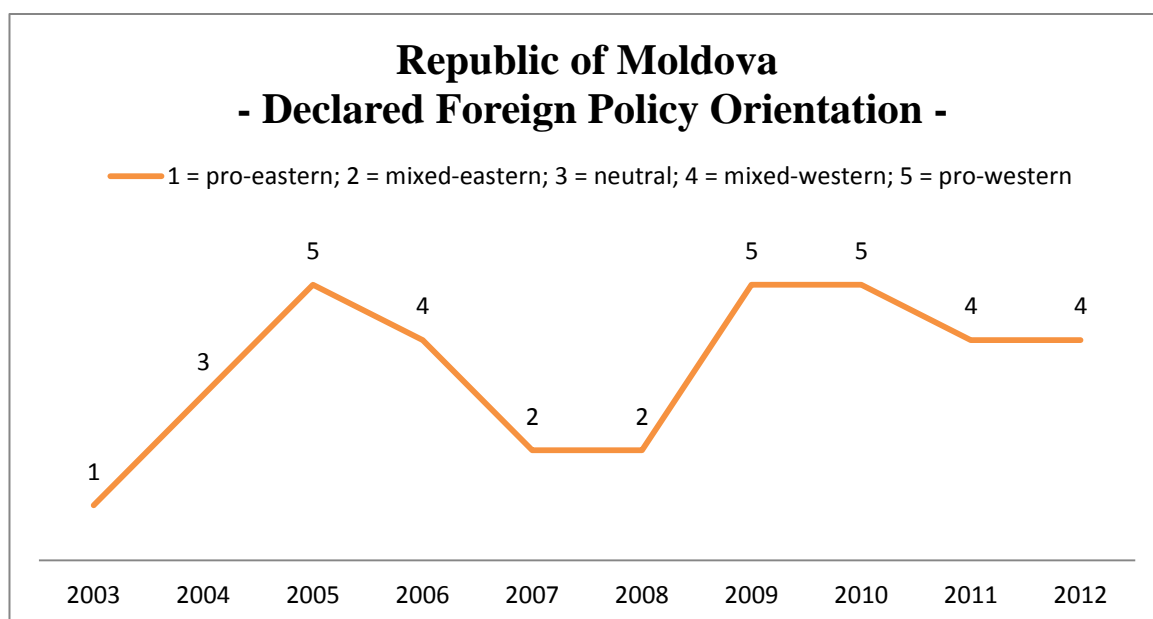
The EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) was started in November 2005 following the request made by the presidents of the two countries. The purpose of EUBAM (still in existence) is to provide expertise, assistance and equipment in order to promote increased cross-border cooperation between Moldovan and Ukrainian authorities and bring frontier control capabilities in the Transnistrian area in line with EU standards. In halting cross-border traffic to and from the area to the left of the Nistru, the mission was for the most part successful (EUBAM, 2010: 3).

Thus, with the increased involvement of the European Union in Moldova in the first half of the 2000s, the country’s foreign policy orientation became highly dynamic.

8.1.2. 2003 – 2012

As stated, the issue of declared foreign policy orientation in the case of Black Sea states required the establishment of a measurement instrument. The results of applying the platform explained within the previous chapter are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10 – The Republic of Moldova – Declared Foreign Policy Orientation (2003 - 2012)



As Popescu (2006) points-out:

“Between 2001 and 2003, it seemed that the policy line in Moscow was that a reunited and friendly Moldova was more important to Russian interests than a pro-Russian Transnistria and an unfriendly Republic of Moldova. Thus Russia moved to limit its support for Transnistria in order to promote a settlement of the conflict.” (p. 2).

The statement above, coupled with keeping in mind the defining features of the early PCRM, reveal how it is easy to codify Moldova’s declared foreign policy orientation in 2003 as pro-eastern. In 2003, Voronin attempted to follow through on some of his electoral promises, one of which was the settlement of the conflict in Transnistria through establishing a special relationship with Moscow (Tudoroiu, 2011: 242). This was noticed and welcomed by the Russian side in the form of the ‘Kozak Memorandum’. Discussions went as far as deciding where Smirnov (the Transnistrian leader) would be subsequently sent as governor, in order to isolate the character from Moldovan political life. The agreement involved a form of unbalanced federalization of Moldova, with the Gagauz and Transnistrian regions occupying a special position and having the ability to block all major political and constitutional modifications in the country, and the presence of the Russian army in the region until 2020 (Tudoroiu, 2011: 242).

Voronin accepted Moscow’s proposal in the first instance but, in the face of public protest, dialogue collapsed after the Moldovan Parliament rejected the adoption of the proposal (also under strong EU pressure) based on the idea that adopting such an agreement would lead to the creation of a dysfunctional state, with the Transnistrian territory exercising too much influence within Moldovan politics (Popescu, 2006b: 3). From then onwards, the Russia – Moldova relation cooled. Subsequently, after at the end of 2003, Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan blocked Moldova’s accession to their Common Economic Space.

What resulted was ‘the revolution in the head of Vladimir Voronin’ (Ghinea & Panaite, 2009: 100, as cited in Tudoroiu, 2011: 241). At the 2004 NATO summit in Istanbul, Voronin asked for the departure of Russian troops from Transnistria (Tudoroiu, 2011: 241), not only hinting to the fact that the country’s orientation had changed, but also that the Moldovan government will later align with the other geopolitical actor.

In order to understand this decision, it is worth mentioning that this was the time of the launch of the European Neighborhood Policy and of the ‘coloured revolutions’ in Eastern Europe. The PCRM and Voronin aimed to take advantage of these new developments and adopted a new stance - codified as neutral in 2004 and subsequently as pro-western, when agreements with the EU were in place in 2005. The PCRM also created a partnership in 2005 with the pro-Romanian Christian Democratic Popular Party (which had been the origin of the anti-PCRM protests in 2002) and they

ran and won the elections together on a pro-EU accession, reform, and democracy platform (Tudoroiu, 2011: 241).

However, as this thesis subsequently reveals, a number of agreements with Europe were not implemented beyond the rhetoric level. Moreover, in March 2006, Russia introduced a ban on wine imports from the Republic of Moldova³⁷, exercising what was to become a common coercive reaction when its loyalty appraisal towards Moldova would not yield desired results. In the period immediately leading up to that moment, wine exports made up around 10% of Moldova's GDP, and around 80% of all wine was exported to Russia. Thus, the Russian restrictions created a severe shock in Chişinău's balance of payments. The geo-political reasons behind this decision have been discussed in the previous chapters. At this time, the relevant element is that the impact of this decision on the country's economy was devastating. Up to that moment, 85% of Moldova's wine exports were directed towards Russia. The industry suffered losses of about \$180 million and most wineries started struggling to find funds to remain in existence (Gilby, n.d.).

Notwithstanding the extensive debates started by the event within political and economic circles within both Moldova and Russia regarding the quality of Moldovan wine and the political motivations that brought-about the ban, it is worth noticing how voices in Moldova, especially from within the opposition at the time, argued that:

“The fact that Russia could use economic blackmail was foreseeable 15 years ago [...] The Kozak Memorandum was yet another signal that there exists a necessity for a national geopolitical strategy [...] For many years now, Moldovan winemakers have been warned that dependency on a single market would prove risky in the long run, and that they need to improve the quality of exports towards Russia” (Moldova Noastra, 2006).

In addition, it is worth mentioning that the EU did not particularly emphasize its attention on Voronin's undemocratic practices due to its hope that closer ties would bring with them a gradual process of democratization on the Moldovan side. Dr Kálmán Mizsei, the successor Special Representative (SR) concentrated his efforts on the settlement of the crisis in Transnistria. If this attempt had been successful, would have increased the EU's prestige in the area. However, for this to be achieved, political stability in Chişinău was required. And the EU SR supported constantly the PCRM's (undemocratic) actions – to the extent that after the riots in April 2009, the SR even attempted to temper the anti-communist criticisms of EU Ambassadors and even tried to convince the opposition parties to give the PCRM the one vote it required in order to elect a president and stay in power. The crisis in Transnistria was not solved, though, and the PCRM took advantage of the situation to delay the implementation of their commitments on an indefinite period. The Action

³⁷ See chapter on economic dependence

Pan came to an end with major deficiencies within the fields of judicial reform, media freedom, and the business climate (Tudoroiu, 2011: 253).

The PCRM suffered a significant shock. By losing the 2007 local elections, Voronin realized that the new openness to the West was not only very risky in relation to Russia, but was also affecting the basis of his constituency – the foundation of him retaining power. Consequently, a re-orientation towards Russia takes place in the PCRM rhetoric in 2007 and new restrictions on the press and political parties were imposed between 2007 and 2008. Only within the economic field, some reform commitments were honoured by the government led by Prime Minister Grecianfi. By 2009, though, the PCRM had reached such a level of authoritarianism that a ‘vertical of the power’ phenomenon reached climax in the eyes of activists and opposition (Tudoroiu, 2011: 242). Nonetheless, the advances in customs reform hint to the fact that the Voronin government, even with an openly-declared pro-Russian orientation between 2007 and 2009, took a special care for increasing collaboration with the EU (in itself a clear indicator of mixed-eastern orientation).

Prior to the parliamentary elections in April, 2009 opinion polls revealed support levels of 35%-40% for the PCRM. They won, however, 60 out of the 101 parliamentary seats (61 were needed for election of a president) (Pippidi & Munteanu, 2009: 136). The opposition claimed mass rigging, and today the issue is still up for debate as no definitive evidence has been provided. However, the allegations were sufficient to ignite large scale youth protest and reignite the identity issue – leading to the emergence of the so-called ‘Twitter Revolution’ and to a new conflict in the Republic of Moldova (Pippidi & Munteanu, 2009: 138)³⁸.

New elections were called for July 29, 2009 and the PCRM only won 48 seats. The rest was divided between a number of parties: (‘Our Moldova’ Alliance – 7 seats, the Liberal Party – 15 seats, the Liberal Democrat Party of Moldova – 18 seats, and the Democrat Party of Moldova – 13 seats). These parties created the Alliance for European Integration (AEI) with 53 seats which allowed it to form a government with interim President Mihai Ghimpu (founding member of the old MPF and head of the Liberal Party), and interim Prime Minister Vladimir Filat (leader of the Lib Dems) as prime-minister. They enrolled on a path towards pro-democracy, and openly declared pro-Western foreign policy. Improved relations with Romania and brought Moldova closer to EU association, and a dismantlement of ‘the vertical of the power’ began to take place. Following this moment, a number of high profile communists defected from the PCRM. Fundamental change in Moldova appeared to take place, making Moldova’s orientation indicator fully pro-western. However, the AEI did not have enough seats to elect a president and the PCRM demanded fresh elections. The AEI, passed a law which imposed a one year interval between two consecutive early elections, hoping to gain time to prepare a new constitution for adoption (Tudoroiu, 2011: 243).

³⁸ See section on Conflict in Moldova

The AEI called on the 9th of March 2010 a referendum on the new constitution without fresh elections but the PCRM protested. The European Commission for Democracy through Law of the Council of Europe (the so called ‘Venice Commission’) and the president of the EU Commission, Barroso asked Moldova to organize fresh elections, though, and abandon the idea of a constitutional referendum. (Tudoroiu, 2011: 243) later, in March 2012, the AEI, after successfully navigating a series of pressures from Russia, the PCRM (which boycotted Parliament) and other political entities (Rodkiewicz, 2012) finally managed to gain three defectors from the PCRM side and elect Nicolae Timofti, a relatively neutral judge as the President of Moldova.

Under the AEI, though, it became clear, though, that the opportunity presented by Brussels’ openness was understood by the Moldovan political leaders, not least as the AEI began to continuously press EU officials to offer Moldova an enhanced status. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the EU Commissioner for External Relations and ENP, visited Moldova in November 2009 and declared the EU’s support for the country’s European aspirations. New negotiations for an Association Agreement began on the 12th of January – the same day when Gunnar Wiegand, the EU’s chief negotiator stated that the Moldova was ready for the conclusion of the agreement (Hotnews Moldova, 2010, as cited in Tudoroiu, 2011: 253). At the Moldova Partnership Forum, on the 24th of March, hosted jointly by the EU Commission and the World Bank and attended by Vlad Filat (Prime Minister), Stafan Fuele, EU Commissioner for Enlargement and ENP stated that Moldova was a ‘reliable partner’ with a coherent strategy of reforms and clear targets. Also, he announced a 75% increase in the EU contribution for 2011-13 making Moldova the recipient of the second largest share of EU aid per capita. This, in itself represents only a part of a package of 2.6 billion dollars (half of it in the form of nonrefundable grants) promised by international donors. Also, discussions on a free-trade agreement and visa-free travel for Moldovans in the EU were announced to follow (Tudoroiu, 2011: 253). Membership, though, is not at present a topic of discussion (Schmidke & Chira-Pascanut, 2011: 468)

However, as Tudoroiu, argued in 2011:

“The problem, however, is that Brussels is not offering an explicit path to EU accession. The experience of other post-communist states shows that only such a ‘carrot’ leads to full compliance with EU conditionality... In the case of Moldova, the first obstacle is represented by national unity and identity disputes. But out of the large number of Moldovans that have acquired Russian or Romanian citizenship, many did it simply in order to work abroad. For them, a common gastarbeiter identity blurred previous differences. The scale of this mutation would increase considerably if all Moldovans (including the Transnistrians) were offered the perspective of a European identity. This might help moderate diverging trends and, ideally, start a process leading

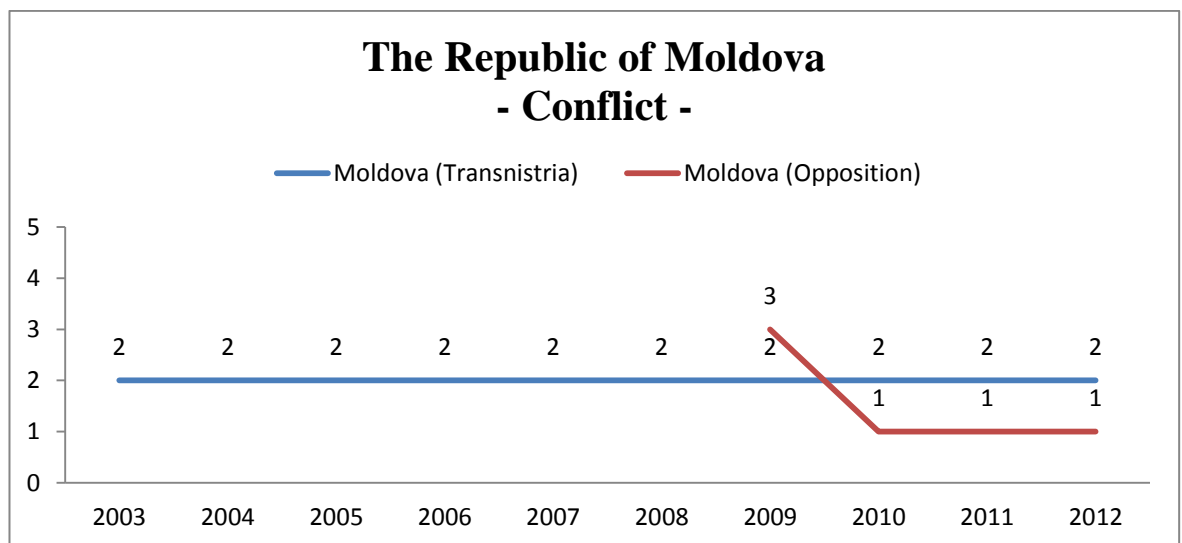
to the creation of a common, balanced identity that would make present disputes irrelevant” (p. 254).

In spite of this pro-Western logic employed by the authorities in Chişinău, the experience of the previous semi-consolidated authoritarianism the pressure of the PCRM and of Russia, and the tolerance of Moldovan citizens to authoritarian practices, both the AEI and Moldova were fragile and, as Tudoroiu (2011) argued: “The key of this dilemma is not in the hands of the politicians in Chişinău. The final outcome will be decided most likely by the structural factors affecting the Moldovan society itself.” (p. 243). Thus, in 2011, the Alliance decided to sign the country’s entry into a Customs Union with the CIS (Moldovan Ministry of Economics, 2013). This, coupled with the election of a so-called ‘neutral candidate’ as president (Rodkiewicz, 2012), the debates with the EU on the issue of ending the political crisis, and the AEI’s denial that it has anti-Russian intentions (Makarychev, 2010: 2) hint towards a temporisation of the AEI’s pro-EU actions to more pragmatically manageable levels in 2011 – 2012 (to mixed-western) in order to cater to the country’s potential for trade and societal divisions.

8.2. Conflict

The Heidelberg Institute for Conflict Research’s Conflict Barometer – the measurement instrument chosen for measuring the conflict variable within this thesis³⁹ – identifies in the Republic of Moldova two conflicts: Moldova (Transnistria) and Moldova (Opposition). The former displays a remarkable inflexible character and the latter emerges in 2009 and subsequently decreases in intensity. Both are displayed in Table 11. This, as argued, makes Moldova one of the most peaceful Black Sea states. However, this also does not translate into lack of action within the elements characterising the conflicts. On the contrary, this section is dedicated to revealing the substantial dynamic which has led to their surprising lack of ranking shift.

Table 11 – The Republic of Moldova – Conflict (Conflict Barometer (2003 - 2012))



³⁹ See section on conflict in the methodological chapter

8.2.1. Moldova (Transnistria) – or ‘the ballad of a dynamic stand-still’

As stated, the conflict in Transnistria displays a surprisingly inflexible character. This isn't to say that actions influencing it did not display a significant dynamic. On the contrary, the elements triggering change within the Republic of Moldova represent the same elements which made the conflict in Transnistria NOT change intensity and remain, in the Institute's codification, a manifest conflict – the severe form of non-violent conflict. When acknowledging the instrumental value of the conflict in Transnistria for Moscow, it is important to notice that although the coercive element of intervention was not used as a result of Moldova's shifts in orientation, the resolution of the conflict did not happen, while the only instance of being close to reaching an end was during Moldova's peak in pro-Eastern declared foreign policy orientation.

In 2003, although following a number of OSCE agreements which involved the withdrawal of Russian forces stationed in the territory, Moscow kept its troops on the left side of the Nistru. Chişinău was considering Transnistria, in spite of the region emitting its own currency and having own armed forces, as a part of the integral Republic of Moldova. However, the fact that the leadership in Tiraspol had the capability to refuse that year entry to 13 Moldovan politicians and to Vladimir Voronin himself, was an indicator that this feeling was anything but shared. In addition, in the same year, Transnistria refused to take part in the local elections in Moldova (Conflict Barometer, 2003: 13). Later on in the year, in November 2003, the (collapsed) Kozak Memorandum, involving the federalization of the Republic of Moldova and the granting of substantial autonomy to Transnistria (Conflict Barometer, 2004: 12) was close to implementation. This represented, as stated, the moment when the situation in Transnistria was closest to ending. However, the belief that it would lead to a dysfunctional state, coupled with EU pressure, led to it not being implemented (Popescu, 2006b: 3).

On the 15th of July, 2004, the conflict manifested a potential for escalation as the authorities on the left side of the Nistru began closing Moldovan schools in the area. A counter-reaction came from Moldova in concert from both the EU and the US, which renewed visa sanctions against the separatist republic. As a response, Transnistrians blockaded the railways which lead into Moldova and in September, Voronin proposed a new plan for ending the conflict (Conflict Barometer, 2004: 12 - 13).

In early 2005, the government in Chişinău decided to delay resuming negotiations with the PMR and blocked the entry to Transnistria of Russian and Ukrainian representatives. The same year saw, at the initiative of the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko, a new plan to end the conflict, which came to the forefront of discussions. On the 22nd of July, 2005, the government in Chişinău passed the law concerning the basic regulations of the legally special status of Transnistria – in which it granted the province “special territorial autonomy” (Conflict Barometer, 2005: 15) within the federal state of Moldova. Later that year, the Russian Federation issued a statement in which it

recognized the territorial integrity of the Moldovan state, and negotiations (which also involved the EU and the US) resumed (Conflict Barometer, 2005: 15). Later in the year, the EU sent EUBAM to help the Moldovan government control the Transnistrian border and opened a delegation in Chişinău (Hagemann, 2013: 14).

Negotiations were not to last, though, and from the 7th of March 2006 onwards, due to a new dispute over customs regulations, they were suspended. It is worth noticing that the suspension of talks comes subsequently to Moldova peaking in pro-Western orientation, the value of trigger of the first variable being as visible as Russia's coercion. Later in the year, on the 17th of September the authorities in Tiraspol organized a local referendum. Results indicated that 97.1% of participants desired the secession of the PMR and subsequent alignment with Russia. Later in the year, the Duma recognized the referendum as a legitimate enterprise and asked for the international acceptance of the results. However, this was not achieved and even the head of OSCE Moldova denominated the referendum as illegitimate. Moreover, the 1500 strong Russian military presence in the separatist republic remained a reality, in spite of the Russian Federation's past assurance that it would be withdrawn by 2002 and Voronin's calls for a replacement with a multinational peacekeeping task-force (Conflict Barometer, 2006: 14).

The year 2007 saw a great deal of dynamism in the Transnistrian conflict, although this did not lead to either its exacerbation or attenuation. Although negotiations remained suspended, in July, the authorities on the left side of the Nistru issued a statement that, given the recognition of Kosovo the authority in Transnistria must be recognized. Subsequently, the same authorities rejected the measure of resuming negotiations due to the requirement of first reconstituting economic autonomy. On the 4th of November, the pseudo-leaders of Transnistria (Igor Smirnov), Abkhazia (Sergei Begapsh) and South Ossetia (Eduard Kokoity) met in Sukhumi and signed a charter which called on the international community to recognize their independence, and decided on increasing the level of mutual cooperation between the 'republics' and Russia (which included the presence of Russian peacekeeping troops). Subsequently, Voronin reiterated his call for replacement of the Russian troops with an international body of forces⁴⁰. Moreover, on the 14th of September, the authorities in Chişinău filed a complaint with the United Nations in regards to human rights violations on the left side of the river in the PMR (Conflict Barometer, 2007: 16).

Transnistria reiterated its demand for international recognition in 2008 through its 'foreign ministry', which again made reference to Kosovo. Later that year (on the 10th of March), in yet another attempt to end the conflict, Moldovan President Voronin promised the PMR extensive autonomy, wide-ranging authority, and acceptance that Transnistria would keep its flag, language and emblem. On the 11th of April, in Bendery, Smirnov presented a contract for friendship and cooperation to Voronin and hopes were kindled that the talks suspended in 2006 would resume.

⁴⁰ See section on orientation

This idea was aided by a 2+5 (also known as 5+2) format (Moldova/Transnistria + Russia, Ukraine, OSCE, EU and the US) meeting which took place on the 9th of September, in which Russia was keen on assuming a mediator role in the conflict. However, a subsequent meeting scheduled for the 25th of September, which was to preclude a joint statement regarding the settlement of the conflict – which also involved the presence of Medvedev – never took place as the parties did not manage to agree on a venue. Transnistria thus continued to demand a higher number of Russian troops as peacekeepers (up to 3000) as well as resuming air patrols (Conflict Barometer, 2008: 18).

The following year, a trilateral meeting took place in Moscow between Medvedev, Smirnov and Voronin, following Sergei Lavrov, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs' first visit to the Republic of Moldova after taking office in 2004. The meeting resulted in an agreement on the potential replacement of Russian forces in the PMR with an OSCE international mission – but only once a peace agreement was signed. In addition, the leaders demanded resuming the 5+2 negotiations on the 25th of March in Tiraspol. However, this meeting did not take place either, as the Moldovan President, Vladimir Voronin, cancelled it. Later on, relations once again cooled as Igor Smirnov made declarations which accused Chişinău of imposing trade constraints and also refused OSCE-demanded talks with Moldova. On the 29th of July, the PMR (or most of it) boycotted the Moldovan parliamentary elections and on the 26th of October, the PMR reiterated its demand of more Russian forces. However, at this time Chişinău had formed a government with a strong pro-Western orientation. Consequently, this demand was rejected by Moldova (Conflict Barometer, 2009: 15 - 16).

In 2010, in spite of the fact that formal 5+2 format negotiations had been suspended since the end of February 2006, informal talks continued in the same format – namely five such meetings took place between March and November. They focused on trust-building measures, freedom of movement, and, of course, the establishment of a framework for resuming formal talks. One element proved to be particularly difficult to overcome, namely the lack of agreement over the issue of peacekeepers. If on one side, the PMR was demanding an increase in the number of Russian troops (rejected by Moldova), Chişinău was seeking the replacement of Russian forces with a civilian mission (rejected by Transnistria). As such, negotiations were proving difficult and thus discussions with other main protagonists were more fruitful. The president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich and the President of the Russian Federation, Dimitry Medvedev, met on the 17th of May 2010 in order to sign a joint statement on the settlement of the conflict in Moldova. This statement did indeed guarantee a special status for the separatist territory but also affirmed the Republic of Moldova's territorial integrity and sovereignty. In addition, on the 5th of June, Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor and the Russian President emitted a joint statement proposing the establishment of an EU-Russia security forum – which would work on identifying a solution to the conflict. The idea was welcomed by Chişinău as it had, on more than one occasion, requested the change of status of the USA and the EU in negotiations from observer to mediator. Even a

completely informal meeting between the then Moldovan Prime Minister Vlad Filat and Smirnov (at two football matches) was useful in reaching an agreement on more trust-building enterprises and restoring land-line telephony. Nonetheless, during the parliamentary elections in Moldova proper, on the 28th of November, the police forces of the PMR did ‘foil an attempt’ to establish a polling station in Korzhevo (disputed village in the Dubossary district) (Conflict Barometer, 2010: 16).

However, by 2012, although the intensity of the conflict had not changed, the participating actors had. On the 21st of March, 2012, Moscow nominated deputy Prime Minister Dimitri Rogozin to the (newly created) position of Russian president’s special representative for Transnistria. The move was seen as a way of increasing the pressure on the Moldovan government to accept the Russian (federalization) solution to the Transnistria conflict. However, the Transnistria today is no longer the one in 2003, not least due to the loss of grace of Igor Smirnov, who had led the region for 20 years. Smirnov was no longer preferred by Moscow as he had managed to gain a certain level of autonomy from Kremlin (Rodkievicz, 2012: 5). Consequently, Moscow ‘ordered’ that the December 2011 ‘presidential’ elections in Transnistria should not be rigged in favor of Smirnov. It supported Anatoly Kaminsky, the parliament speaker. However, Yevgeny Shevchuk (former speaker of the Parliament) won the elections, and quickly proved that he is an acceptable candidate for Russia (Rodkievicz, 2012: 5)

In relation to the future prospects of the conflict in Transnistria, Rodkievicz, (2012) argues that:

“The ‘Caucasian’ model of conflict-solution will be used by the Kremlin as a means of putting pressure on Chişinău to accept the federal model for Moldova. Should Chişinău resist, however, it is to be expected that the Kremlin will abandon the idea of using the reintegration of the two parts of Moldova as a tool for drawing the country into its zone of influence, and will opt for a ‘legal divorce’, i.e. achieving some form of international recognition for Transnistria.” (p 6)

In other words, the instrumentally-coercive value of Transnistria is apparent, unlike in the case of Georgia, in the fact that within all instances of peak in pro-Western orientation, as appraised by the Kremlin, the conflict did not increase in intensity, but, however, its prospects for resolution were given a more distant nature – and the long-term coercive value of the protracted conflict was that it was left even more *protracted* as a measure taken by Moscow in order to discourage Moldova from *disobeying*.

8.2.2. Moldova (Opposition)

In relation to the conflict which emerged in 2009 in the Republic of Moldova, it is worth mentioning that its denomination of ‘Moldova (Opposition)’ is somewhat deceiving, as it erupted between the PCRM (in power) and opposition parties, and continued with the newly-formed AEI in

power and the PCRM in opposition. The contentious elements of the conflict have not been subject to change, consequently the denomination can still be considered appropriate. In addition, as the case of Georgia also reveals, it emerged as a result of a dramatic shift in orientation – or, otherwise put – in a regionally typical *coloured revolution*, which involves a change in government on the basis of geopolitical orientation.

Even before the events in April, in late February and in March 2009, the police of the Republic of Moldova raided twice an independent television station in the country. Within the elections that year, the PCRM managed to secure 61 of the 101 seats in the Moldovan Parliament, constituting enough for the election of a president. However, the opposition staged three days of protests, accusing the PCRM of fraud. Events turned violent on April 7th, 2009, when, in Chişinău's main square, somewhere between 10,000 and 30,000 individuals accused the communists of fraud. The flags of Romania and of the European Union were raised over the Parliament building (which was set on fire) and on other central government buildings in Chişinău. This was to be called Moldova's 'Twitter Revolution' – after the main method of information used to rally the protesters. Only after a few hundred arrests was the police able to regain control of the city by the next day (Pippidi & Munteanu, 2009: 138).

What followed was a recount of the votes with the result that the PCRM had only won 60 seats. Thus, following two failed attempts to elect a president, the PCRM moved to organize new elections on the 29th of July. In these elections they faced the newly-established Alliance for European Integration (AEI), which was made up out of four parties from the then opposition (The Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova, The Liberal Party, The Democratic Party of Moldova, and the Our Moldova Alliance) (Conflict Barometer, 2009: 15).

Given that the AEI did not have a sufficiently large parliamentary majority in order to elect a president⁴¹ (61 out of 101 seats were required), the conflict continued through the following year. A referendum organized on the 5th of September, in which Moldovans were asked whether an amendment of the constitution was in order – which would allow for direct presidential elections – and against which the PCRM campaigned, was inconclusive due to the low turnout of voters. In parallel with this situation, investigations into the events of the 'Twitter Revolution' continued and one Moldovan police officer was put on trial for killing a protester and the former Interior Minister of the country, along with the former chief of police were charged with negligence. In addition, Voronin himself was accused with abuse of power (for allegedly having provoked in secret the events of 2009) and discussion went as far as lifting Voronin's immunity and putting him on trial. As a response, Voronin accused the AEI of falsifying the November parliamentary elections – in which eventually the AEI, although obtaining slightly over 50% of votes still lacked the number of seats which would allow it to elect a president (Conflict Barometer, 2010: 16).

⁴¹ See section on Moldova's shift towards a parliamentary republic

In 2012, even after the AEI had managed to ‘survive’ prolonged Russian pressure, and a PCRM boycott of parliament (Rodkiewicz, 2012), it managed to obtain three votes from the PCRM side and elect Nicolae Timofti – a perceived neutral candidate, as the President of the Republic of Moldova. However, even if it had ended a long-standing political crisis, this moment was followed by a massive move of protest organized by the PCRM in the centre of Chişinău.

8.3. Economic dependence

If one would look at the trade performance of the Republic of Moldova, given its restricted access to foreign markets during the 2000s (the 111th out of 125 countries ranked by the World Bank in 2008) it would be difficult to identify any success in dealing with the country’s heavy dependence on trade (Prohntichi, et al. 2009: 50, as cited in Hagemann, 2013: 6). Nonetheless, the importance of reaching markets and obtaining trade opportunities was constantly expressed by Moldovan producers and even by political elites (in political campaigns such as 2009). Moldova represents the only member of the CIS to hold membership (since 2001) of the WTO and to also be included in the ENP – as such it is seen to have advanced further than any other member of the EU in its relationship with Brussels (Siscan, 2012: 25). Also, its External Trade Volume increased in 10 years (between 1997 and 2007) from \$2 billion to \$3.7 billion. Most notably, however, is the fact that trade with the EU and the CIS had an inversely proportional rapport (Siscan, 2012: 50). Siscan had anticipated that the tendency would be intensified under the EaP. However, analysts from the Republic of Moldova have pointed out to the significance of high levels of competition within the EU on similar products with those of the republic and on the ever pressing issue of different standard requirements, thus making the prospect of eastward (or at least non-EU) export more feasible. This section is dedicated to exploring the difficult tract followed by the republic in the attempt to overcome its economic dependence. In order to do so, prior to exploring the economic dependence indicator, it is necessary to look at volumes, percentages and sectorial trade – for the purpose of creating a clear picture of Moldovan trade within the dyad of power formed by the use of the economic dependence indicator.

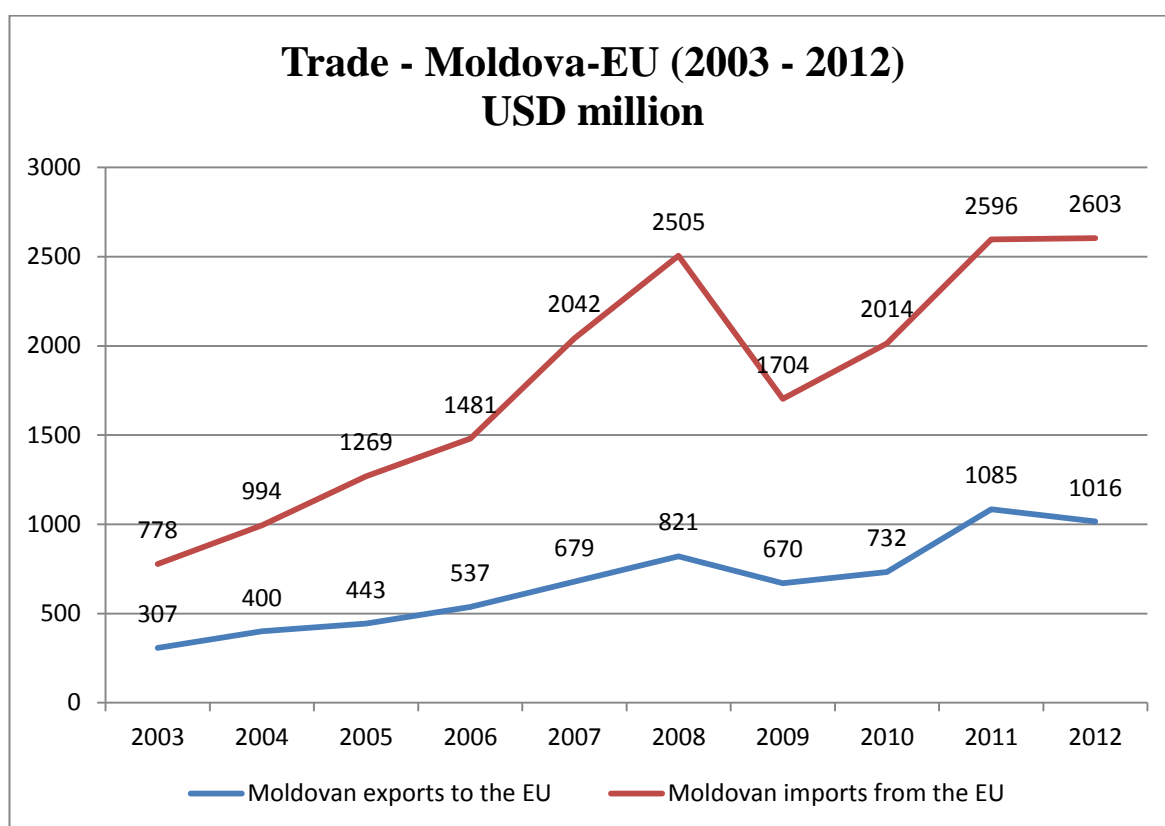
8.3.1. Trade with the European Union

In the early 2000s, in terms of share of Moldovan trade, both the EU and Russia were relatively equal partners for Chişinău. However, following 2001, the share of Moldova-EU trade slightly increased over the level of Moldova Russia (Hagemann, 2013: 6).

Table 12 shows, using data from the International Trade Centre (ITC), the volume of Moldova – EU trade between 2003 and 2012. Aside from the highly obvious trade deficit that the measurement reveals, it also clarifies how bilateral trade between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova has increased in the second half of the 2000s. It is worth noting that the 2009 decline has been explained both within practitioner and academic circles as a visible result of the 2009 World

Financial Crisis (Siscan, 2012: 53), recovering in subsequent years, and not having any correlation with geopolitical or geoeconomic orientation, as it is the case in 2006.

Table 12 - Trade between Moldova and the EU (2003 - 2013) (ITC. n.d.)



Even if one is not to take into consideration at the moment the significant trade deficit in the Moldova – EU relationship⁴², it is worth noticing how the volume of trade between the republic and the European Union increased significantly over the 2003 – 2012 period with exports exceeding a triple figure and with imports almost quadrupling. Table 13, complementing the above indicator, reveals the significance of trading with the European Union in terms of percentages occupied by the EU within Moldova’s overall imports and exports.

⁴² It will be discussed in the latter part of this section

Table 13 - Moldova - EU trade in percentages (ITC, n.d.)

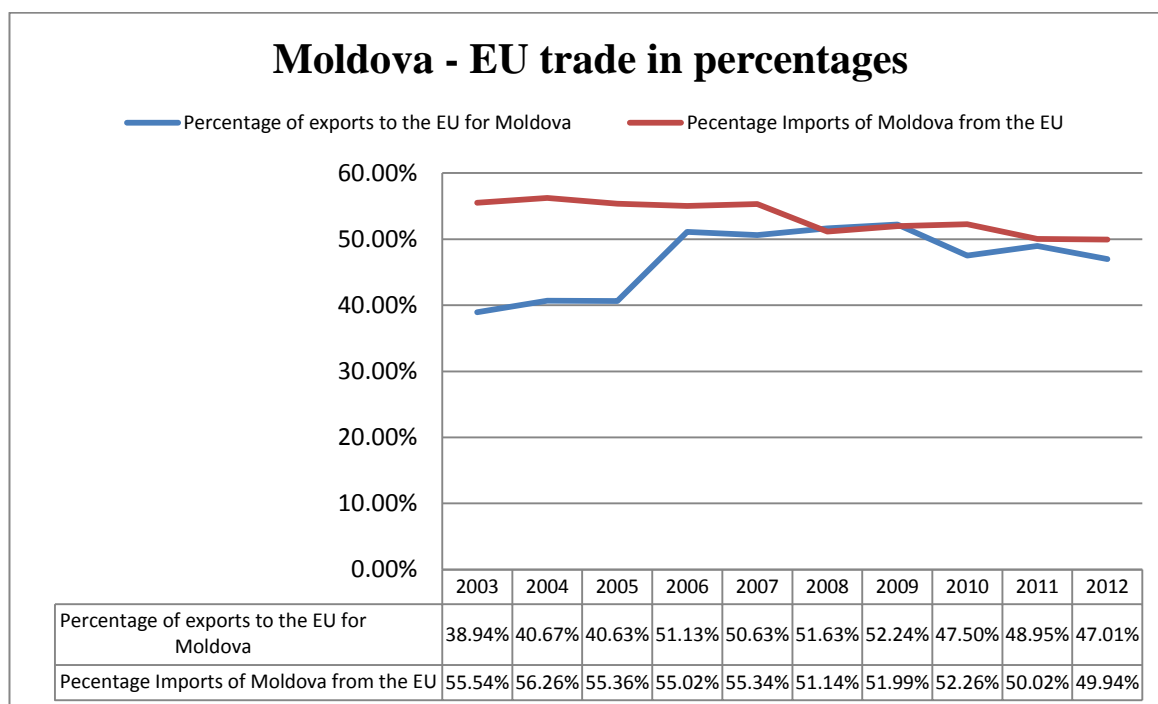


Table 13 reveals how the EU became Moldova’s most important trading partner in the mid-2000s (an element also visible within the literature on Moldova - Hagemann, 2013: 15), and how, in the period surrounding the Russian 2006 ban (and three subsequent years), the majority of Moldova’s exports were destined for the EU. In relation to imports, it appears that only in 2012 the majority of foreign products in Moldova were not of EU origin.

However, in subsequent years, following the World Financial Crisis and the drop in trade that followed it, it appears that the share of EU-oriented exports did not again reach mid-2000s levels. The explanation for this feature, as the subsequent section of this chapter identifies it, is relatively straight-forward: Moldovan businesses could not keep up with EU standards of competitiveness, and, when opportunities arose, they oriented in other directions (Siscan, 2012). The most obvious direction was Russia, which, following the 2009 ban, stopped coercing Moldova economically through export bans throughout the period under scrutiny. Other destinations also became feasible. A series of bilateral agreements with both CIS and non-CIS/non-EU countries such as Morocco, followed by the establishment of the Customs Union, meant that Moldovan opportunities for export diversified and the EU was no longer the singular pragmatic alternative to a geopolitically charged trade with the Russian Federation.

However, as the period between 2003 and 2012 reveals, this did not translate into a lack of necessity for accessing the EU market for Moldova. On the contrary, as trade dependence on Russia was very strong in the early 2000s and as alternatives were few, Moldova was in dire need to have the opportunity to sell westward. Consequently, taking into consideration the nature and practice of the EU, tables 12 and 13 not only reveal trade data, but also policy insights. Within the

ENP framework, incentives for access to the European market are given to neighbouring states on the basis of normative collaboration.

8.3.2. Normative collaboration

The EU-Moldova normative collaboration developed gradually. As events revealed, it was anything but easy for the Moldovan elites to pursue it, as Russia had constantly considered such measures to be oriented against it (Hagemann, 2013). Nonetheless, the Action Plan between Chişinău and Brussels was approved in 2005. In 2008 Moldova was granted by the EU Autonomous Trade Preferences. In 2010, negotiations between Moldova and the EU on an Association Agreement were launched. Between 2011 – 2013, through the National Indicative Programme (adopted by Chişinău in May 2010), a budget of EUR 273.1 million was made available to the republic if improvements in the chapters of good governance, rule of law and fundamental freedoms; social and human development; and trade and sustainable development were to be registered. In 2012, the issue of a DCFTA (Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area) began to be negotiated within the framework of the Association Agreement Negotiations (ENPI Info Centre, 2013a). Negotiations on the DCFTA were concluded in 2013 (ENPI Info Centre, 2013b). Table 14 clarifies chronologically the key points of the normative evolution of Moldova’s access to the EU market.

Table 14 - Key points in the normative evolution of Moldova's access to the EU market (compiled from Siscan, 2012: 52 and ENPI Info Centre, 2013b)

| Key points in the normative evolution of Moldova’s access to the EU market (1999 - 2013) | | |
|--|---|--|
| Year | Platform | Description |
| 1999 | General System of Preferences (GSP), as part of the PCA | Applied to over 7000 processed goods to which customs tariffs were totally or partially reduced |
| 2006 | New GSP for 2006 - 2015 | Applicable to 7200 products – decision made within ENP |
| 2008 | Autonomous Trade Preferences for 2008 – 2012 | Unlimited and duty free access to the EU markets for all products originating in Moldova except for certain agricultural goods – was offered due to the positive results of the EU – Moldova Action Plan |
| 2011 | ATP amended | Increase in tariff quotas for wine and other agricultural products |
| 2012 | Negotiations on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA – comes into effect in November 2013) | Full ENP incentives applicable – complete access to the EU market |

The Russian Federation reacted coercively to such evolutions and, as argued, one of its most successful coercive methods was the 2006 ban. However, in response to it, the Republic of Moldova pursued a sustained policy of reform and alignment with the EU (and to other relevant international standards) within the ‘Customs’ sector, having as a purpose the granting of further trade facilitation with Brussels, and highly visible within the discussion on the country’s declared foreign policy orientation. Adaptations included (Table 15):

Table 15 - Moldova's customs reform process (Hagemann, 2013: 9)

| Element of adaptation | Adoption |
|---|--|
| The principle of risk-based customs control | As early as 2005 – through the modification of the customs code and other relevant legislation (European Commission, 2006:8) |
| Legislation on competences in certification of origin and the issuing of export certificates | April 2006 (European Commission, 2006: 8) |
| Provisions on intellectual property rights in the customs code | In preparation as early as 2007 (European Commission, 2008: 9); applied in May 2008 (European Commission, 2009: 10) |
| Draft customs procedures code with the aim of further alignment with EU standards | December, 2008 (European Commission, 2009: 10) |
| Improved code of ethics | December, 2008 (European Commission, 2009: 10) |
| Ratification of international conventions (a requirement of the Action Plan) – including here the Istanbul Convention on Temporary Admission, and the Kyoto Convention on Simplification and harmonisation of customs procedures | 2009 (European Commission, 2009: 10) |

Such legislative elements were complemented by administrative measures within relevant services, including Moldova’s customs management system (ASYCUDA), IT management services and even the Border Police. As a result of criticism, identifiable within the first Progress Report of the Action Plan within the customs sector, Moldova’s customs service began issuing preferential certificates of origin to both CEFTA (Central European Free Trade Agreement) and CIS countries (Hagemann, 2013: 9). Most significantly, however, Chişinău opened its procedures to Transnistrian exporters (European Commission, 2008: 8, as cited in Hagemann, 2013: 9).

8.3.3. EU incentives for reform

The EU, although prior to the full launch of the ENP and prior to missions such as EUBAM, although not having a significant presence in the region, was seen as a source of significant financial support, TACIS (the instrument of Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent

States), EIDHR (the EU Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights) and micro-financial assistance, being, as already stated, on the giving end of around 320 million Euro to the Republic of Moldova between 1991 and 2006 (Spruds, Danelsons, and Kononenko, 2008: 7).

Moldova's progress in customs alignment was perceived by the EU as a success with minor shortcomings and rewarded as such. Chişinău received its promised incentives in the form of a GSP+ (a Generalized System of Preferences Plus), in addition to trade facilitation (European Commission, 2008: 9) and the promise for an upcoming full trade agreement (European Commission, 2009: 10). This was backed by financial/technical assistance for the implementation of the elements of customs reform (400,000 Euro worth of technical equipment for the customs service, 730,000 Euro for the border guards, 12 study trips to Western Europe for stakeholders, etc.) (Spruds, Danelsons, and Kononenko, 2008: 9). As Hagemann (2013) comments: "[EU] conditionality was highly credible as monitoring was close and incentives granted promptly." (p. 10)

Moldova emerged from the 2006 embargoes, not as a coerced pro-Russian awed and terrified peripheral actor of international power relations, but as a recipient of 45 million Euro of assistance from the EU (for compensating the country's embargo and energy losses) (Hagemann, 2013: 14). In addition, the 2009 embargo had little or no effect.

In 2012, the Head of the European Union Delegation to Moldova not only described the year as the most successful within the entire history of EU-Moldova cooperation. As a result, European Union aid to the republic amounted to around 151 million Euro – making possible even calculations per capita, in which each citizen of the country had received 41 Euro. This represented an 'absolute record' within the neighbourhood, due to Moldova's exemplary "utilization of funds" (ENPI Info Centre, 2012).

8.3.4. Reform? Yes! Capacity? Maybe! - The difficulty of selling westward

Discussing the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) between Chişinău and Brussels, the result of the long-sought Moldovan access to the EU market, Siscan (2012) has commented:

"The DCFTA means higher degree of economic integration: not only goods but also services will receive access to circulate free at the EU - Republic of Moldova market. It also presupposes higher degree of intellectual property protection of the EU and the Republic of Moldova and higher technical requirements, quality standards, etc. ... As a base for the DCFTA there become such facts as the Republic of Moldova has adopted over 700 EU standards since late 2009 on the free movement of goods and technical regulations, developed food safety strategy, and is in gradual approximation with the EU rules in the area of sanitary and phyto-sanitary standards" (p. 53)

The issue of trade deficit, however, is also an element worth taking into consideration as in the late 2000s and early 2010s it was seen as impacting Moldova's prospects for economic development. The phenomenon was particularly difficult to address, especially since it had been seen to have multiple causal factors, including here trade liberalisation, the (still perceivable) effects of the Russian 1998 crisis, the 2006 ban, the economic downturn in 2008, and many others (Siscan, 2012: 51). Thus, voices within the country asked, in light of new developments on the relationship with the EU, what would it take to actually make more use of the judicial framework in existence with Brussels (Siscan, 2012: 52). Expectations with a positive outlook on the future in the republic, in relation to the DCFTA, were complemented by cautions statements, if not true manifestations of concern regarding the move. Preeminent proponents of the latter view, such as Dr Elene Gorelov, the vice-director of the Centre for Strategic Research and Reforms, underlined in 2012 that:

“The chronic negative trade balance is dangerous for sustainable economic development of the country. More than that, the persistent tendency of negative trade balance has been taking place under the GSP and ATP. In other words, Moldova has not solved yet its problem with competitiveness of its goods at the EU market as well as with strengthening its trade positions even having unilateral trade preferences. The Agreement on DCFTA contains high risks for local producers ... the implementation of the system evaluation of goods in line with the EU standards, infrastructures for quality and SPS norms are very expensive. It would be great if Europeans help in purchasing the necessary equipment for laboratories. The further maintenance of their functioning, however, is expensive for economy ... I [also] worry if Moldovan goods will be able to compete at all at the local market with European ones which would be free from customs duties. It is important to take into account that agriculture of the European countries is seriously subsidized, and export of goods is encouraged... it is necessary to increase the competitiveness of Moldovan goods.” (as cited in Siscan, 2012: 54)

Thus, the issue of competitiveness of Moldovan products represented a key concern for Moldovan elites. In response, following the completion of negotiation on the Free Trade Agreement (due to enter into effect in November, 2013), the Government in Chişinău drafted a report which indicated more than 300 European directives that required implementation in order for Moldovan businesses to reach a level which would allow them to compete on the European market, and the establishment of a Competitiveness Committee to include stakeholders from both the public and the private sectors. Hopes run high that relatively free access to both the EU and the CIS⁴³ market would provide a boost for the export-dependent Moldovan economy (Moldova.org, 2013).

⁴³ See section on trading with Russia.

Another element of significance in relation to the DCFTA was seen to be represented by the newly emerged Customs Union (the CU) with CIS countries – namely that it appeared to represent a significantly more accessible market for Moldovan producers to sell to. In addition, it offered prospects of amelioration, on the front of Moldovan dependence on Russian energy (Sisican, 2012: 56) by reducing gas tariffs – not least due to Moscow’s interpretation that joining the CU would represent a pro-Russian gesture, which would bring with it *rewards* in other economic sectors.

8.3.5. Trade with Russia

In terms of power dyads resulting from economic factors, Russia doesn’t only represent a constant military presence in Transnistria. It also represents the main supplier of (i.e. cheap) energy (gas) to the republic. This, coupled with the role that the Russian Federation occupies as a destination for the main export product of Moldova – wine – gave Moscow a strong level of capability in relation to coercing Moldova during the 2000s. And indeed, the possibility of sanctions/incentives coming from Moscow had already represented in the early 2000s (and even before), a significant element to be accounted for by Moldovan authorities. Following a dispute between Chişinău and Moscow in 1998, Moldova handed over control over its gas transmission network to Gazprom (Bruce, 2007: 35, as cited in Hagemann, 2103: 8), being the first CIS country to do so. In addition, around the ‘Kozak Memorandum’, when all indicators revealed optimism towards the ending of the conflict in Transnistria, Russia made Moldova an offer for cheaper gas (Bruce, 2007: 35, as cited in Hagemann, 2013: 8). The settlement never came to be, however, and thus the offer was withdrawn.

Trade between Moldova and the Russian Federation (Table 16.) reveals a significantly different dynamic than that with the European Union between 2003 and 2012. First, the value of trade is much smaller, representing about half of that with the EU. Nonetheless, given the size of the Moldovan economy and that of Russia, and comparing them with that of EU27 taken together, it is easy to see that it is to be expected that the scale of trade would be substantially different. In addition, it is noticeable that the peak of imports from Russia to Moldova came prior to the so-called ‘Twitter Revolution’, in the peak of Voronin’s pro-Russian post-2003 discourse (even with a pro-EU customs reform)⁴⁴ and it dropped during the Financial Crisis. However, unlike the EU-Russia trade, even under the AEI’s policies of western alignment, a trend of westward access instinct is manifested in Moldovan trade. Moreover, this trend seems to benefit the republic as it brings with it a positive trade balance, with exports outweighing imports after 2010.

⁴⁴ See section on orientation

Table 16 – Trade – Moldova-Russia (2003 - 2012) (ITC, n.d.)

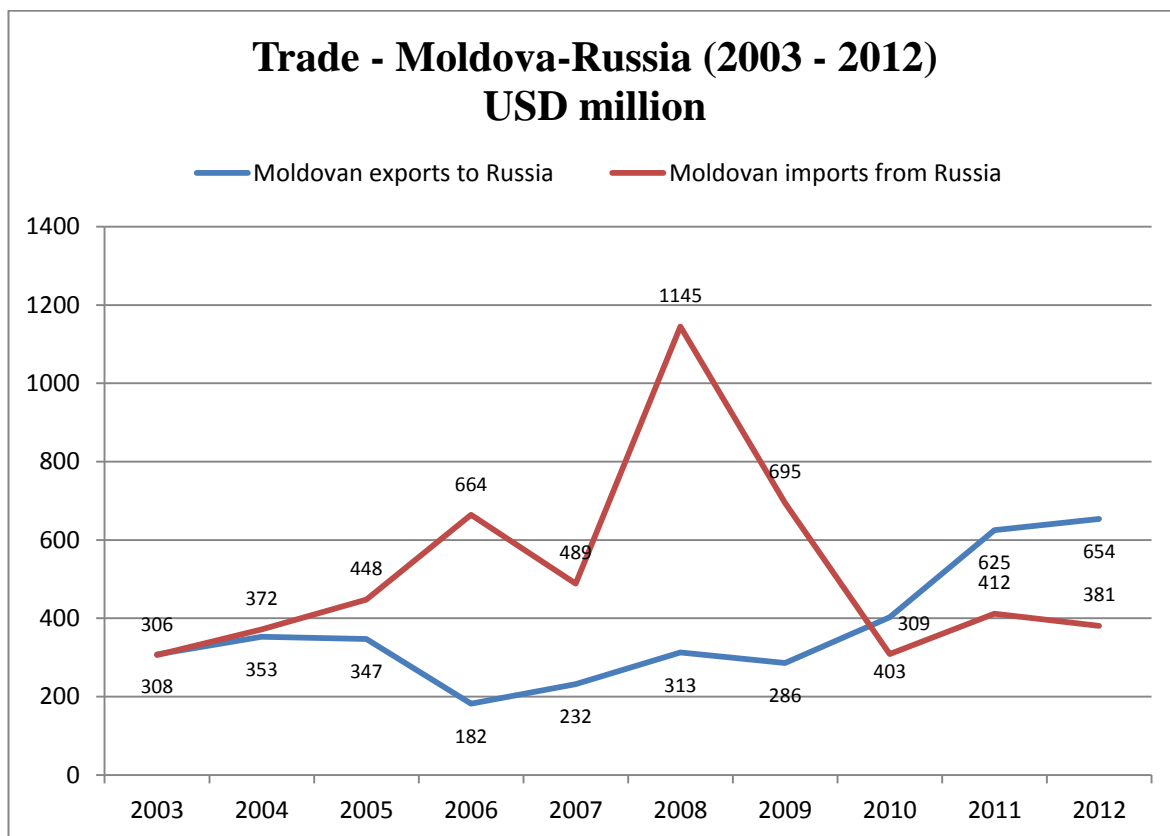
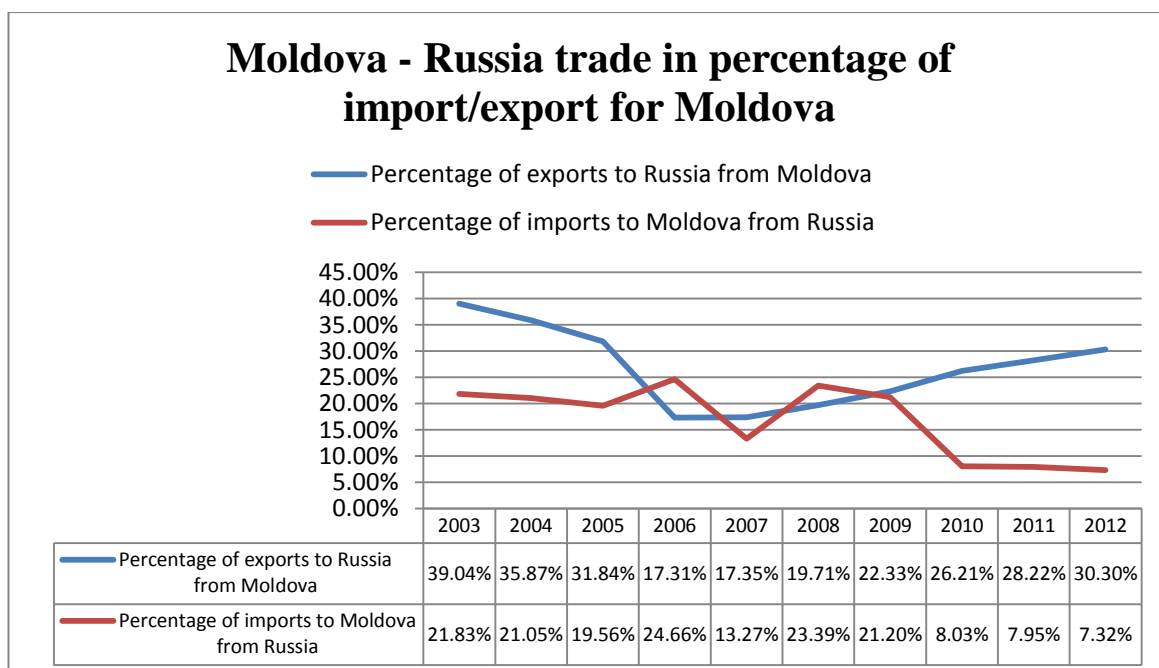


Table 17. – the evaluation of percentages of trade reveals a similar trend – that of inertial movement of Moldovan products towards the Russian market, within a scale lower than that of trade with the EU. In addition, it is noticeable that as the percentage of Moldova-EU export decreases in the period leading up to present-day, that of Moldova-Russia increases.

Table 17 -Moldova - Russia trade in percentage of import/export for Moldova (ITC, n.d.)



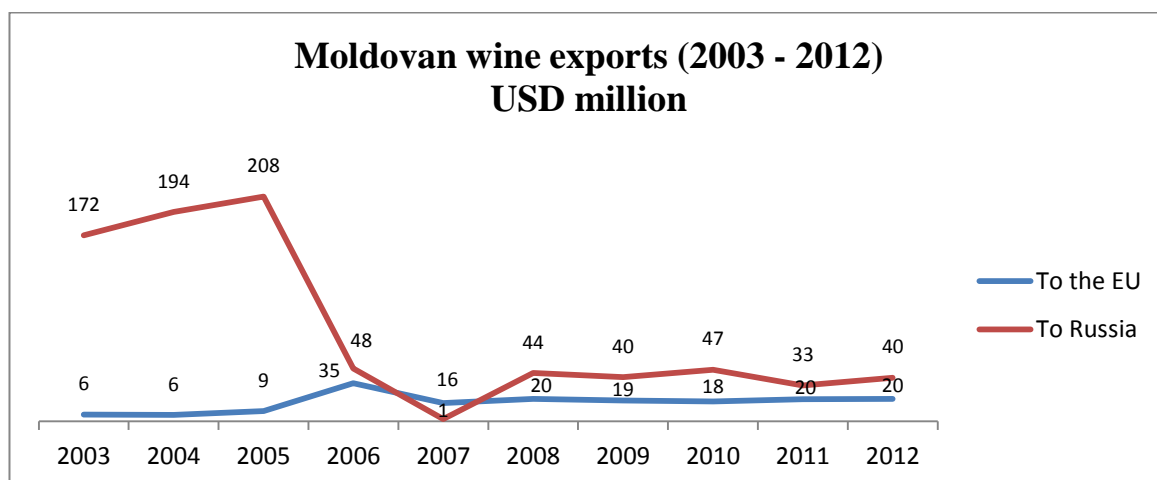
If one is to simply explore the findings of tables 16 and 17, a question would arise: Why would the Republic of Moldova feel the need to and make foreign policy statements (perceivable as shifts in orientation) which would hint at an impending necessity to orient its trade westward? The answer lies partly in the tables themselves (namely in the 2005 – 2009 period), in which Russian coercion represented a limiting factor which Chişinău was constantly hoping to avoid. The subsequent section of this sub-chapter is dedicated to exploring the impact of Russia’s approach on Moldova’s economic dependence.

8.3.6. The 2006 ban – or ‘how to kneel an industry’

The Russian Federation was in 2006 Moldova’s biggest trading partner of wine (Spanu, 2006), with 80% of all of the republic’s production being exported to Russia, and its biggest energy supplier (Larsson, 2006: 226), providing the country with 98% of its necessity. Moscow used these levers in the 2006 – 2007 period in order to establish an embargo against Moldovan wine and other products of agricultural origin, justified through the allegation that they did not meet the required hygiene standards. A number of authors (*The Economist*, 2006; Amonte, 2010: 2; Korosteleva, 2010: 1279), however, have revealed the coercion value of the embargo⁴⁵ – which aimed to punish Chişinău’s pro-Western orientation⁴⁶. The likelihood of this being the case is backed by the end of 2005 declaration of Andrei Kokoshkin, the chairman of the Duma State Committee for CIS Affairs, that if Chişinău would grow any closer to the European Union, it would lose its strategic partner status with the Russian Federation (Minzarari, 2008: 23).

Table 18, through revealing the tremendous drop in Moldovan exports towards Russia in 2006, and the fact that they never returned to previous levels, shows the impact of the gesture on the Republic. Nonetheless, the table still shows that, given the lower quality standards of the Russian market, Moldovan wine can still find a place on Russian tables, to a double extent than on European ones.

Table 18 - Moldovan wine exports (2003 - 2012) (ITC, n.d.)



⁴⁵ See also previous chapters on Russia’s coercion methods in the near abroad

⁴⁶ See section on Moldova’s Foreign Policy orientation in the period

Given the primacy of the wine industry within Moldovan economic capabilities, as a result of the Russian ban, Moldova revised its growth figure from 6.5% to 4% and the country's wine industry shrank by 40% in 8 months from March 2006 onwards. If together with tobacco, beverages added to around one third of exports for Moldova in 2005, after the wine sector registered losses of around 180 million Euro, during 2007 the level of this trade category was 11.23% (Amonte, 2010: 3; Prohntichi, et al., 2009: 41, as cited in Hagemann, 2013: 8). Vladimir Putin announced that Russia would lift the band on Moldovan wine and meat products in late 2006.

Gas was not a trade dependence sector to be overlooked, however, during the 2006 events. Even if reductions had taken place even prior to that date, they were not seen to have a geopolitical component, but more an economical one – namely debt and prices. This was less the case following the conclusion of the Action Plan between Chişinău and Brussels as the country's gas payment record improved. In 2005, a fixed rate of 80 Dollars per 1000 cubic meters of was agreed upon and very few indicators existed that economic aspects would change this. Nonetheless, the winter of 2005/2006 came and the gas supplies were cut (for both Moldova and Ukraine). By the summer of 2006 prices for this product had doubled (Reinhardt, 2008:88, as cited in Hagemann, 2013: 8 - 9), thus revealing that the Russian Federation (following 2004), with its newly-found spirit of offensive foreign policy, would not back down from coercing countries which at a given moment would pursue a westward orientation, and increase their costs of compliance to 'western demands' (Popescu, 2006a: 4). Given the circumstances, as Hagemann (2013) notes:

“In this high-pressure situation it could have been expected that the government would back down from further European integration, and, as a poor and extremely vulnerable country, remain in a more neutral position between the two powers. However, this flexing of muscles against Moldova not only created a strong incentive to abstain from further European integration, but also one to enhance these processes, as the economic instability of Russia had become complemented by political unreliability, making it an even more unattractive partner.” (p. 9)

Russia banned Moldovan wines from entering the country, once again invoking health risk and quality concerns (Decanter, 2010) in 2009, following the 'Twitter Revolution'. However, certain wines (of superior quality) were allowed access to the Russian market. Moreover, by 2012, not only was the ban lifted (Interfax, 2012), but discussions between Chişinău and Moscow already involved the issue of opening a third hub for imports from the republic, in addition to Moscow and St Petersburg (Moldova.org, 2012). Insofar as Table 18 reveals, the industry was not only prepared to deal with such a measure, but it survived it almost unharmed.

8.3.7. The Customs Union

In 2011, at Sankt Petersburg, the CIS concluded on a free trade agreement, which was subsequently ratified by the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia and Kazakhstan. On the 27th of

September, 2012, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova ratified the agreement and it came into effect in January 2013 (Moldovan Ministry of Economics, 2013). Prior to this agreement, Moldova had signed a number of bilateral trade agreements with a number of CIS countries, which contained, however, a number of exceptions from free trade. This free trade platform also had exceptions as characteristics (i.e. Russian gas and wood still maintained export taxes). Most importantly, however, the agreement gave Moldova free access to exporting to the CIS – in parallel to EU-Chișinău free trade negotiations.

A dilemma concerning the potential for mutual exclusivity of two paths arose in Moldova in the late period under study. This dilemma owed partly to public opinion surveys carried out in the country, which asked respondents whether they would prefer the EU or the CU if the decision was subject to a referendum. Such endeavours had mixed results – hinting at little more than the highly obvious polarisation of the Moldovan society (Siscan, 2012: 56) It also owed to statements of relevant policymakers from both the EU and Russia, which contributed to the creation of such feelings through very visible reactions. On one hand, Dimitrii Medvedev, the then Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, declared in 2012 with reference to Moldova joining the CU that “*If you participate in an international formation you receive a certain set of privileges. If you do not ... you can face some problems*” (my emphasis, as cited in Siscan, 2012: 56). On the other hand, Dirk Schubel, the Head of the EU Delegation in Chișinău, stated around the same time that: “If Moldova aims at a deeper trade regime with the EU, it should determine itself on the way as the EU and CU are not compatible for us, because in the EU there are other rules, taxes and tariffs.” (as cited in Siscan, 2012: 56).

Consequently, the Moldovan Ministry of Economics, when announcing the agreement, felt the need to specify that: “the agreement does not contravene the Republic of Moldova’s internal and external policy which has as an objective European integration, nor other international engagements of the country.” (Moldovan Ministry of Economics, 2013)⁴⁷. Later on, a statement by Ștefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, in the moments preceding the Vilnius summit, completely contradicted that of the Head of the EU mission in Chișinău, as the Commissioner was keen on emphasising that: “We [the EU] will not force upon partners the dilemma of having to choose between relations with the East and relations with the West. That would constitute a false dilemma” (ENPI Info Centre, 2013c), thus ending what could have been construed as a foreign policy blunder carried out by the EU Ambassador.

Within Moldovan civil society, attempts have been made to create conceptual instruments to compare the EU and CU models of integration.

⁴⁷ The statement also serves as a valid indicator for measuring declared foreign policy orientation in 2012.

Table 19 - Comparison of advantages and disadvantages of joining the EU or the CU frameworks (kp.md, 2012, as cited in Siscan, 2012: 57)

| Comparison of advantages and disadvantages of joining the EU or the CU frameworks | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| | • | European Union | • | The Customs Union |
| + | - | Liberalisation of Visa regime (as a long term perspective) | - | Easier to negotiate with partners of the former USSR |
| | - | Access to European markets | - | Moldovan goods will be more competitive |
| | - | Possibility to work and study in the EU countries | - | It is possible to negotiate the cut of tariffs on gas |
| - | - | Moldovan goods can be seen as of less quality | - | The CU is just forming |
| | - | High probability of disappearance of local producers (those who would not be able to endure standards) | - | We won't have preferences of the EC: high probability of the protectionist measures for Moldovan goods by the EU |

The table reveals that the CU is seen as not entailing the EU's 'additional package' of requirements, by being perceived as an almost exclusively economic union. Also, keeping in mind the findings of this chapter (as codified in the above tables), it would seem as a less difficult to access track for Moldovan products.

8.3.8. Economic dependence in the republic

Applying Dinkel and Fink's (2010) indicator of economic dependence (as seen in the capabilities dyad forming based on trade between two countries) on the economic performance of the Republic of Moldova between 2003 and 2012, reveals fascinating results. As codified in the methodological chapter of this thesis, the indicator works by (in this case) by looking at Moldovan exports to entity B (Russia or the EU) and identifying their percentage in relation to the overall exports of Moldova, and dividing the result on the percentage of imports of Moldova of overall imports of entity B. The indicator is applied to imports and exports by simply reversing the equation. Results are subsequently weighed through a mathematical process which gives value to percentages in order to distinguish between situations in which a 6% vs 3% dependence and a 20% vs 10% percentage, with the latter being more significant. Results yield a value which, if between 0 and 1, would reveal that entity B is more dependent on the case-study country; if 1, dependence would be equal, and if >1, the case-study country would be dependent on entity B. An overall indicator of economic dependence is achieved if weighted results of both import and export dependence are added.

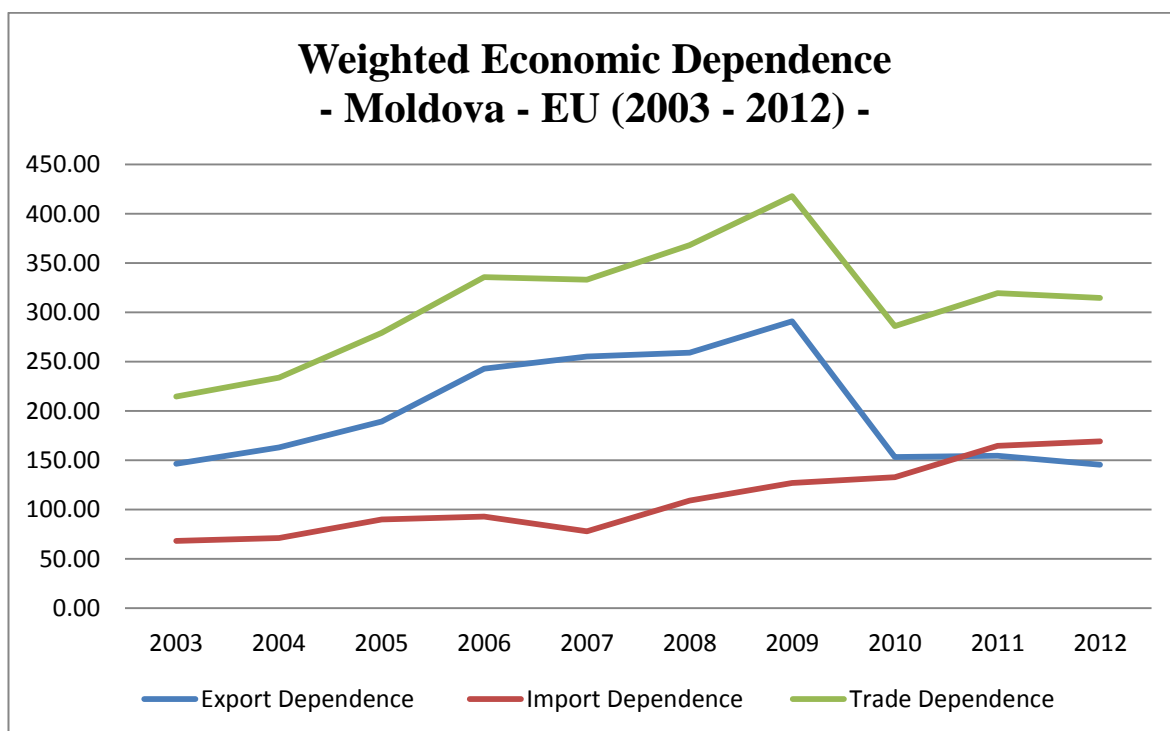
Table 20 reveals, in judging the economic dependence of the Republic of Moldova in relation to the European Union, Moldova is clearly the dependent entity, the resulting indicator being in the order of hundreds (so, clearly >1). This does not represent a surprising conclusion as the percentage of trading with Moldova within the (i.e. huge) EU overall trade would automatically reveal such results. Moldovan wines, and other products, no matter how substantial their presence might be in the EU market, are no match in percentages with the amount of other products present in the EU. Moreover, as it has been shown, EU products occupy, on the other hand, a substantial proportion

within Moldovan trade. This, however, by no means invalidates the indicator, as, within a logic in which Moldova is dependent on the EU for trade, shifts in dependence are significantly revealing towards the outcome of certain measures.

Thus, if one is to look at the import dependence of the republic, it is noticeable that it has been on a constant rise since the beginning of the period under study, with little drops. Its 2012 value is roughly threefold that of 2003 – so Moldova is in 2012 three times more dependent on EU imports than it was in 2003. The increasing presence of EU products in Moldova and the lack of competitiveness of native industries has been explained above.

The export dependence of Moldova on the EU pursues a different trend, however. As expected, given the series of institutional adaptation measures implemented in Moldova after 2005 and the Russian failed attempts at coercing the country into geopolitical submission, it was on a constant rise between 2006 and 2008 (meaning that the role occupied by EU-oriented export within Moldova’s overall export increased in its significance within the EU’s overall imports), peaking in 2009. Following the World Financial Crisis, however, and the political crisis in Moldova (not having a president and the PCRM boycotting the parliament), the EU’s significance within Moldova’s export dependence decreased to roughly its 2003 levels – hinting again at the trade deficit of the Republic in relation to the EU and at the difficulty of using the institutional levers for access set in place by the process of westward-oriented reform.

Table 20 - Weighted Economic Dependence - Moldova - EU (2003 - 2012)



The Moldova-Russia economic dependence indicator portrays overall similarity with Table 20. Insofar as revealing a relationship of dependence between Chisinau and Moscow. However, again

taking into consideration the size of the Russian economy (and implicitly, its overall trade volume), this is an expected occurrence. What is unexpected, however, is Moldova's import dependence on Russia. It is well known among analysts of the region that Moldova is dependent on Russian energy (importing 95% of its overall necessity from Russia). What is not so well conceptualised is the importance of this trade for the Russian Federation. If in 2003 the value of Chisinau's imports dependence on eastern products was above 1 (high dependence), after oscillation within the mid-2000s, the value of the indicator in 2012 is 0.14 – meaning that the Russian Federation is in fact dependent on exporting to Moldova to a greater extent than Moldova is on importing from Russia. This surprising finding must be digested carefully, as it risks yielding false positive results. This would be excellent news for the republic only if the product that played the biggest role within imports from Russia was not energy (or products used to generate it). As the 2009 gas row has revealed, the energy sector is strategic even for economic powerhouses in Europe (such as Germany), and alternative suppliers are difficult to find. Consequently this does not translate into significant assets on the Moldovan side. Nonetheless, understanding that at the end of the period for which data is available, Moldova could work in a logic in which it was not only itself that required imports from Russia, but it was also Russia that needed to export to Moldova, the capability-revealing value of the economic dependence indicator is shown. With a Moscow which needs exporting to Moldova, Moldova thus has slightly more *capabilities* of negotiation – and reality has revealed that, at least in discourse, AEI policy-makers in Chisinau have introduced slightly more demanding nuance in their discussions with Moscow in regards to energy contracts – partly undermining Russia's economic coercive capacity.

Exports, however, display a different trend. If the 2006 ban has had a limiting impact on the Moldovan dependence on selling to the east, the easiness of selling Moldovan-made products in the Russian Federation had subsequently pushed the indicator upwards similarly to an unseen force attempting to re-establish a natural status quo – also seen in Moldova's joining of the Customs Union.

Table 21 - Weighted Economic Dependence - Moldova - Russia (2003 - 2012)

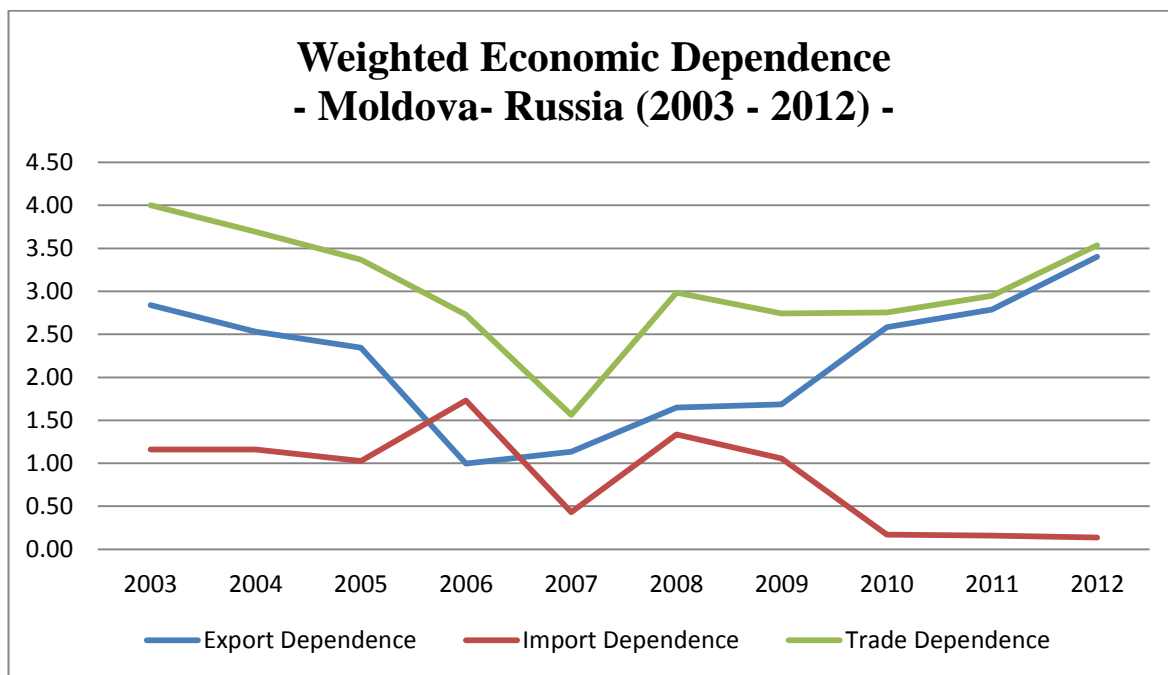
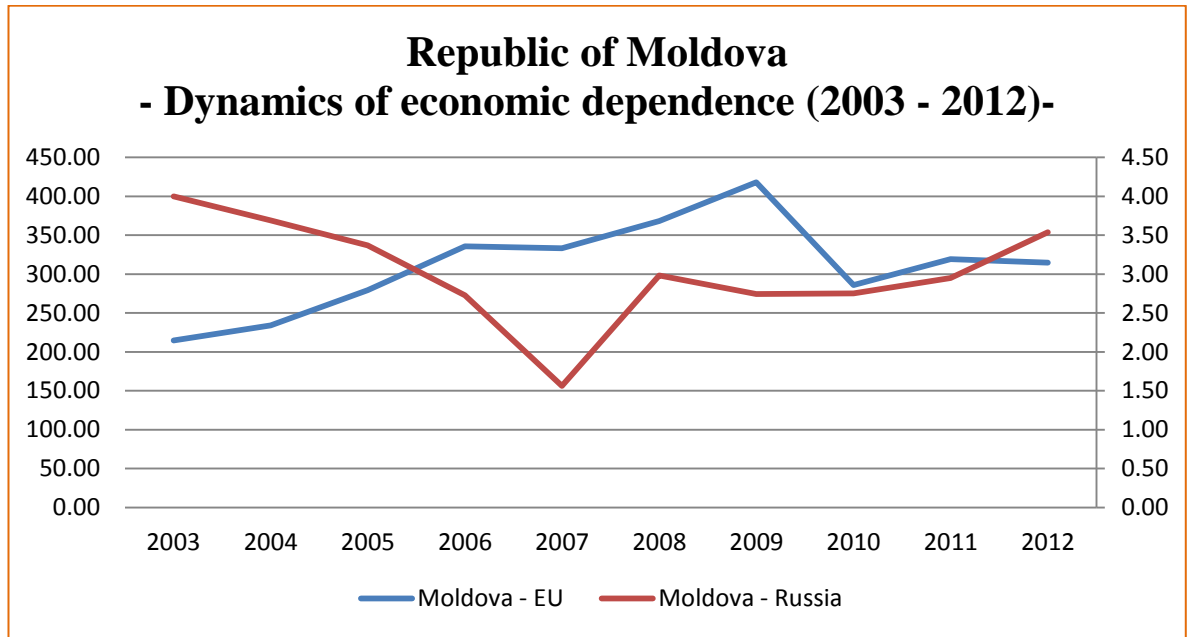


Table 22, revealing the sum of import and export dependencies of Moldova in relation to both EU and Russia (and constituting in fact the definitive economic dependence indicator for the republic), clarifies the value of change – as displayed in the 2003 – 2012 findings. Again, given that the value of the indicator is above 1, its numeral denomination becomes less relevant than the comparison of 2012 as *terminus ante quem* with 2003 as *terminus post quem*. In addition, the coincidental potential division by 100 of Moldova – EU dependence on Moldova – Russia dependence makes the indicator easy to display.

Findings show that in 2003, Moldova’s dependence on the EU was relatively low, increasing in the mid-2000s, and subsequently decreasing following the World financial crisis to levels about 50% higher than the 2003 moment. Consequently, Moldova is roughly 50% more dependent on trading with the EU than it was in 2003.

On the other hand, Moldovan dependence on Russia was peaking in 2003, as no substantial agreements (with the exception of the PCA) were in place between the EU and Moldova, it decreased in the mid-2000s, following an inversely-proportional trend that that of the EU around the 2006 ban, and quickly bounced back, however, not reaching levels higher or at least equal to that in 2003. In 2012, Moldova was roughly 12.5% less dependent economically on Russia than in 2003. It is worth noting, though, as the graphical representation reveals, in the recent period, Moldova’s economic dependence indicator in relation to Russia had a more dynamic upward trend than that with the EU – a potential prognosis for growth in its value in light of the Customs Union.

Table 22 - Moldova - Dynamics of economic dependence (2003 - 2012)



8.4. Conclusions

This chapter has undergone a detailed analysis of the Moldovan republic's declared foreign policy orientation, conflict and economic dependence – in the framework of Moldova's belonging to the Black Sea geopolitical environment. The narrative of this case-study's variables has revealed a relatively dynamic set of shifts within the instrumentation of its loyalty appraisal, as well as the expected coercive outcomes.

If, on one hand, Transnistria's 'dynamic stand still' meant that the instrumentalization of Russia's coercion (as a result of pro-Western shifts in orientation) was manifested in the indefinite postponement of advances within the conflict resolution process, and not in its exacerbation, the emergence of conflict within Moldova proper boasts a character of similarity with all 'colored revolutions', which bring with them severe ripples within Black Sea societies.

On the other hand, trade dependence – a measurable feature of power dyads involving Black Sea states and, at the same time, a coercion instrument used by the Kremlin in relation to the countries in its immediate abroad, reveals, surprisingly enough, success for Moldova. The republic revealed indeed an almost instinctual easiness in selling eastward, most likely given by decades of experience in this endeavour, coupled with a good performance in terms of westward policy alignment – in spite of what can be perceived as a more difficult to achieve set of goals. Most importantly, though, a metaphorical interpretation regarding Moldova's economic dependence would be to denominate the country as an *immunised state* to economic shocks caused by coercive methods. As such, it is unlikely that Russian bans can cause post 2012 Moldova the impact they did in 2006.

Nonetheless, the narrative isn't yet complete and the subsequent chapter, analyses the elements which differentiate between the external approaches of both the EU and Russia in relation to Chisinau between 2003 and 2012.

9. Moldova seen from Brussels and Moscow

If, within the process of analysing Moldova as a case-study within a comparative historical assessment endeavour, previous chapters have focussed on clarifying firstly the characteristics of uniqueness and representativeness of the given country-case in order to meet the methodological requirements, and secondly on exploring the change behind the variables of declared foreign policy orientation, conflict and economic dependence within the Republic of Moldova, this chapter changes the perspective from Moldova to the great powers in the region – the Russian Federation and the European Union. This is necessary in order to provide the conceptual instruments for the subsequent shaping of conclusions within this thesis – which shed light on the common feature value of their interaction in the geopolitical environment of the Black Sea. Consequently, attention is firstly given to reactions and/or policies emitted from Brussels in relation to events and developments in Moldova – identified as indicative of the EU's approach to the republic, and the process is secondly applied to the Russian Federation. In doing so, this chapter primarily makes use of the insights of Hagemann (2013) and Makarychev (2010) on the approaches to Moldova of the EU and Russia respectively, as the two authors' points of view summarize the actors' approaches in an indispensably valid manner.

9.1. The EU – or 'sticks and carrots' where the stick means withholding the carrot

In the early 2000s, it is safe to state that the Republic of Moldova's institutional integration with both the East and the West was equally weak. If a PCA was in place between Chişinău and Brussels (keeping in mind that this excluded Moldova from any potential process which would result in membership), the CIS was the only institutional link between Russia and the republic (Hagemann, 2013: 6).

On the westward side, the conclusion of an EU-Moldova Action Plan (in February of 2005) meant that Chişinău was conclusively included in the ENP. However, this did not translate into a more substantial contractual relationship beyond the PCA, although, keeping in mind the newly-significant criteria of precision, obligation and delegation within the new collaboration, authors (Hagemann, 2013: 7) have noticed that this new relationship did entail a more substantial degree of legalization. In addition, within this framework, even elements of coercion could be manifested in the form of denial of incentives (or withdrawing funding). As an example, Chişinău was required to bring its legislation in the customs sector to EU/international standards, increase the capabilities of its customs service, reforming itself and its procedures, *in order to be granted ATPs* (European Commission, 2005b: 18). In addition, through the Action Plan, even more than in the PCA itself, the sectors of 'Democracy and the Rule of Law' - involving reform within the issues of the fight against corruption, local self-government, elections and the parliament, in addition to reform of the judiciary for the achievement of impartiality and effectiveness (European Commission, 2005: 5 –

6), were complemented by the ‘Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms’ chapter (freedom of expression, association, and assembly and the fight against ill-treatment and torture – European Commission, 2005: 6 – 7) and classified as ‘common values’, subject to analysis for the granting/withdrawing of funding.

9.1.1. Moldova’s good performance in trade, poor performance in ‘common values’

Christian Hagemann (2013: 10) entitles his chapter on the implementation of the ‘Common values’ chapter in the EU-Moldova Action Plan as *Conditionality and Common Values: Much Support, Little Progress*. In this chapter, both the issues of ‘Democracy and the Rule of Law’ and ‘Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms’ are seen as having registered in the Republic of Moldova little or no progress, especially when compared with the success of customs reform.

The former issue was shadowed by the PCRM’s election performance, which occupied during campaigns more than three quarters of advertising space (OSCE, 2007:13, as cited in Hagemann, 2013: 10), illegal use of the judiciary and security forces, the party’s threat to close ‘non-loyal’ TV stations, police obstructions of opposition rallies, culminating with the events of the ‘Twitter Revolution’ (OSCE, 2009: 2, as cited in Hagemann, 2013: 10). Even when legislation aiming to bring Moldova’s polity closer to the ‘common values’ was adopted (as was the case with the Law on Public Assembly in February of 2008), the European Commission noticed a poor record on implementation (European Commission, 2009: 6, as cited in Hagemann, 2013: 10). On occasions, Chişinău seemed to comply to EU demands (as was the case following the 2005 elections when the electoral threshold for entering Parliament was lowered to 4%). However, such elements could be characterised as superficial at best, as even the threshold itself was reversed to 6% in 2008 (OSCE, 2009: 6, as cited in Hagemann, 2013: 10). Moreover, the situation did not prove brighter in the legal sector either.

As the section on declared foreign policy orientation has revealed, this is the time when the PCRM’s discourse moves from the 2005 pro-western enthusiasm to the cautions, post-2006 ban, pro-Russian orientation, with a key regard for achieving the country’s interest of being able to sell products on the EU market (thus carrying-out the requirements of customs reform) but not hinting to the Russian Federation that it is in any way disloyal.

9.1.2. The EU’s intentional lack of coercion

As Hagemann (2013) points out:

“On the whole, the Progress Reports do not fail to mention explicitly shortcomings in the fulfilment of goals defined in the Action Plan, and continuously criticise the slow or mostly non-existent progress ... It appears [however] that as long as the situation did not significantly worsen to a level as bad as that in, for example, Belarus, it was improbable that funding would ever decrease, or even not further increase” (p. 12).

The author also comments:

“The EU offered the Moldovan government concessions to support its drive for further trade facilitation and financial and technical assistance, but it also demanded, among other things, adherence to common values. As this included the creation of a level playing field in Moldovan politics, it tackled directly one of the pillars of power of the Moldovan government.” (p. 7 - 8)

In addition, even with the lack of significant progress within ‘Democracy and the Rule of Law’ chapter, the European Commission concluded publicly that developments in the republic had ‘broadly followed the lines anticipated in the Country Strategy Paper (CSP) 2007 - 2013’ (EC-ENP, 2010: 4) and funding for the next three years increased by 60 million Euro (by comparison to the previous three years, reaching 237.17 million). In addition other Technical Assistance Instruments continue to function in Moldova, along with the EU Governance Facility (which only in 2008 granted 16.6 million Euro to the republic) (European Commission, 2009: 22).

Indeed, criticism did not lack in the EU-Moldova dialogue, and the PCRM, as opposed to simply ignoring demands, would implement them superficially and/or delay or undermine reform concerning the chapter.

“Overall, conditionality was applied neither strongly nor credibly during the whole period where common values are concerned, even though the number of possible levers accessible to the EU increased with the higher dependency on its funding and on trade with the EU on the side of the Moldovan government ... There are hints that the EU anticipated this relationship and consciously turned a blind eye to the government’s abuses: they were closely monitored in the Progress Reports, however, they were not sanctioned ... After all, it must have come as some kind of relief to the EU finally to have a partner in Chişinău who was, if not a liberal democrat, at least fully in charge of the country⁴⁸.” (Hagemann, 2013: 12 - 13)

Hagemann (2013: 14) has also noted that in the case of the Republic of Moldova, the legalised relationship with the EU, coupled with ‘credible conditionality’ (or, more clearly put, granting promised incentives) led the Moldovans under Voronin to a significant degree of alignment with the West in the areas where, domestically, adoption costs were perceived as low. At the same time, Chişinău seems to have blocked the Russian foreign policy offensive which came after the ‘coloured revolutions’ in Georgia and Ukraine. Unlike what Moscow was hoping to achieve, Moldova emerged from the 2006 embargoes, not as a coerced pro-Russian awed and terrified peripheral actor of international power relations, but as a recipient of 45 million Euro of assistance from the EU (for compensating the country’s embargo and energy losses) which pursued its

⁴⁸ See previous section of this chapter for the pre-PCRM ‘pluralism by default’

interests in such a way as to be able to withstand the next coercive measure given by Moscow. Moreover, it did so while getting as much as possible from Brussels while conceding as little as it considered necessary. Later on, when the situation seemed to demand it, in the 2009 elections, Chişinău even used the justification that Russia has noted that events were “in full correspondence with democratic and legal norms” (Korosteleva, 2010: 1280) in the attempt to legitimise the PCRM behaviour.

9.1.3. The EU is not tailored to deal with dysfunctional governments

Following the ‘Twitter Revolution’, as it has been previously stated, the EU successor of the Special Representative to Moldova has even tried to convince the AEI to give the communists one vote in order for the republic to be able to elect a president (Tudoroiu, 2011: 253). This was not achieved, though until the election of Timofti, through a different process and much later. When the acuteness of the crisis did pass, however, the EU Commissioner for Enlargement did point the attention of Moldovan policymakers in the direction of the need for cohesion, or representativeness and of avoiding the polarization of society, in order for reforms to be carried-out within the ‘common values’ chapters (ENPI Info Centre, 2013) – an issue still requiring attention.

This series of reactions indicates towards the absolute prerequisite on the part of the European Union to work with governments in full control of the country’s political arena. Moreover, Brussels seemed to even take note but overlook the strong declared pro-western orientation of the AEI government in order to make sure that it had what it denominated as a partner of dialogue, even if that partner of dialogue might not be pro-Western (or it would be but to a lesser extent) – but at least it would be capable of embodying the representative of the country in international relations. This represents a significantly different approach than the Russian one – which manifested willingness towards even granting legitimacy to the leaders of separatist republics and/or any organism within Black Sea states which would be perceived as an eurasianist⁴⁹.

9.1.4. EU foreign policy blunder

Needless to say that Brussels has constantly attempted to avoid placing itself in a coercive light, and its *blind eye* to half of the cooperation agenda with Chisinau is relevant for its consideration of Chisinau as a government under special watch from Moscow⁵⁰. As revealed previously, even when entire chapters of the Action Plan with Moldova were not (or were insufficiently) fulfilled, the EU chose to treasure what needed to be treasured and continue offering financial incentives for reform. Keeping this in mind, it would be even less conceivable to imagine that the EU would take it upon itself to coerce Moldova to exclude an element of orientation in order to secure EU support. Well, this did happen.

⁴⁹ See section on identity frameworks in Moldova

⁵⁰ Or a government employing its declared foreign policy orientation as a foreign policy tool

Invoking technical issues, namely that the lack of commonality on taxes and tariffs between selling on the European market and through the Customs Union with the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Head of the EU Delegation in Chisinau's statement on the incompatibility of both for Moldova (Siscan, 2012: 56) and the necessity of choosing one, was nothing short of a huge foreign policy slip-up, not least because it was, in fact, a statement coercing Moldova to choose one – in itself, a Russian-style measure. The Executive of the republic replied in accordance, stating that the CU was not a priority on the agenda at the time (Siscan, 2012) – a typical evasive response in the east vs west dilemma in the area – not least because signing of the CU agreement took place eventually.

The fact that this moment was perceived as a mistake in approach by Brussels came with Štefan Füle's (the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy) statement in the moments preceding the Vilnius summit, which completely contradicted that of the Head of the EU mission in Chişinău, by denominating as a 'false dilemma' (ENPI Info Centre, 2013a) to ask Moldova to choose between East and West.

The moment is extremely revealing towards the EU's approach to its near abroad. If, on one hand, Brussels is actively attempting *not to act* in Russia's realist logic even though it has commissioners in full awareness of the features and characteristics of the difficulties faced by Black Sea subject states (such as the Republic of Moldova) in relation to their foreign policy orientation, on the other hand, its representatives do not boast the pseud-discipline (or lack of individual decision-making powers) of Russian diplomats (of always emitting nothing else but the Russian official position), and can easily be derailed by unidirectional perceptions from the ground. Nonetheless, such elements are revealing towards the EU's approach to Moldova, in line with Brussels's institutional neighbourhood goals, one of which is not to be perceived as a loyalty-coercer.

9.2. The Russian approach – or 'sticks and carrots... but we are fresh out of carrots'

Hagemann (2013) noted that:

“The EU exerts conditionality on Moldova in the form of the incentives it offers in the ENP framework, Russia, in the other hand, could make an alternative, unconditional offer that spares the government the costs of rule implementation; at the same time it could use reinforcement by punishment, either economically or militarily.” (p. 5)

Having these issues in mind, it is worth mentioning that Russia displayed anything but passivity in relation to Moldova, in spite of Moscow's disorientation in regards to what to do when the AEI came to power, as the second wine blockade in 2009 did not have a significant impact (Makarychev, 2010) Using not only Transnistrian but also Moldovan press, Russian newspapers, and internet platforms available in the country Russia maintained a propaganda campaign against NATO, the US, Western Europe and pro-Western/pro-Romanian local political figures. In 2009,

51.8% of Moldovans believed Russia should be Moldova's most important strategic partner (only 26.2% believed the same about the EU). Voronin was trusted by 44.4% of respondents but Medvedev had 73.4% and Putin 77.9%. Accession to NATO was supported by 20.7% and rejected by 46.4% of the population, and the US as the most important strategic partner had only 2% supporters. Voronin's 2007 pro-Russian turn is thus not surprising. Issues that have affected Moldova's democratic development, such as the low socio-economic development, political culture inherited from the communist and pre-communist past, dominant role of Soviet elites, the Transnistrian secession, and the Russian influence and propaganda did not disappear overnight. (Tudoroiu, 2011: 254)

9.2.1. Russia's generic descriptors in approaching the republic

Moldova occupies a special position within the Russian foreign policy logic and indications exist that the Russian interest in the area has increased in light of the Russian attempt to both clarify the basis of its relations with the West and to keep the FSU area in Eastern Europe permanently within its sphere of influence. Moscow wants to continue its military presence in Moldova in order to both nullify Moldova's chances of joining NATO and establish the principle that it is entitled to unilaterally make decisions regarding its military presence within the FSU. The area also represents a potential site for placing a missile system similar to that of the US in Romania (Rodkiewicz, 2012: 2).

Moscow's actions have revealed that it was also attempting to prevent Chişinău from potential integration into the EU and implementation of the Third Energy Package, although it failed at achieving this. It would prefer that Eurasianism be the pursued doctrine. Thus it attempted to convince Moldova's decision-makers to join the Common Economic Space (which was a successful enterprise). In this way it would win the regional competition with the EU and reveal to Brussels that all its efforts in the CIS would be unsuccessful without Moscow's cooperation (Rodkiewicz, 2012: 2-4).

Also, Moscow desires to solve the Transnistrian crisis with the 'Kozak Memorandum' (and the 5+2 discussions formula) solution which involves 'asymmetric federalization' of Moldova which would maximize Tiraspol's impact on the policy of the federal authorities, their limited impact on Transnistria and the presence of Russian forces there, while at the same time shifting the political orientation of the country towards the east. Up to present, this has been attempted through a combination of pressure on Chişinău's decision-makers and party representatives within the AEI for a pro-Russian change of stance and decreasing the levels of autonomy that Tiraspol benefited from in relation to Russia⁵¹ (Rodkiewicz, 2012: 2-4). Understanding Moscow means that one understands that this would be the ideal way to keep Moldova loyal.

⁵¹ For a comprehensive description of Russian actions in the CIS up to present-day, see previous chapters.

9.2.2. The AEI confusing Moscow – or why Moldova was pro-Western at the end of 2012

Following the so-called ‘Twitter Revolution’, the loss of the PCRM in the rerun of the 2009 elections was perceived by Russia as challenging its position in the Republic of Moldova, thus as Andrey Makarychev (2010), a scholar at the Nizhny Novgorod Civil Service Academy (in those days), put it at the time, triggering the necessity for a policy re-shape in relation to Chisianu. In Makarychev’s words:

“The main reasons for Russia’s policy disorientation in Moldova are to be found in the sphere of identity politics (including perceptions, expectations and interpretations of foreign relations). Unfortunately, Russia seems to have underestimated the importance of identity to Moldova, involving debates on reunification with Romania and the choice of a European future, as well as the rethinking of relations with Russia. As a result, Russia is unsure how to proceed in its policy towards Moldova, which is now stuck between relatively traditional geopolitical approaches and the application of more sophisticated ‘soft power’ tools” (2010, p.1).

Makarychev continues to hint that on the Russian side, the relationship with Moldova was predicated on the (i.e. false and simplistic) judgement envisioning an intrinsic (and path-dependant) link between common history and future association (Makarychev, 2010: 1). In addition, by overestimating the political capital of the PCRM, by publicly manifesting support for Voronin and by considering the AEI to be anti-Russian, Moscow led itself into a no-man’s land of bilateral potential for success in relation to the AEI government of Moldova due to its own issues of misperception of the other party (Makarychev, 2010: 1 - 2). The issue is also visible in the post-Twitter foreign policy orientation in Moldova, which was never to turn pro-Eastern again.

Firstly, even if in July 2009 the PCRM won the highest number of seats, this transformed into political defeat, as the four opposition parties won more seats combined (Tudoroiu, 2011: 253), even if they were not allowed to establish a formal alliance (Tudoroiu, 2011: 243). Secondly, Russia seemed to have forgotten that it was under Voronin that the ‘Kozak Memorandum’ was rejected, the economic bad *had to be enforced* and Iurie Rosca (a nationalist) came to be a government member – so in his pro-Russian delivery potential, maybe Voronin was not all-powerful? Thirdly, the AEI had constantly refuted claims that it had anti-Russian intentions and the continuous division between pro- and anti-Russian Moldovan politicians and experts, carried out by Russian organizations and mass media was not accounting for realities on the ground (Makarychev, 2010: 2). In other words, it appears that Russia did not even account for the existence of ‘*Moldovanism*’ as a believable framework – an unfortunate occurrence, from Moscow’s standpoint, not least as this, as discussed, was one of Moldova’s key individuality elements.

A misperception-based approach can, of course, only result in misconceived policies. Surprisingly enough, though, even with such a characteristic in place, a strange similarity of discourse is identifiable when comparing the positions of Moscow and the PCRM within two major points, hinting towards the fact that even if one actor was not perceiving the other in a pragmatic way, points of similarity between Moscow and pre-2009 Chişinău were concealing this aspect. The first one is the simultaneous view that the AEI was attempting a reunification between Romania and the Republic of Moldova (Makarychev 2010: 2). If for Voronin this was manifested through expelling the Romanian Ambassador to Chişinău (HotNews, 2009) following the 2009 violent events⁵² and through speeches reporting attempts to undermine the statehood of his country (HotNews, 2009), for Moscow this represented the justification for emitting policies which would aim to maintain the republic's sovereignty (Makarychev, 2010: 2). For both, as events showed, this perception backfired. For Russia it managed to reveal its state-centric view of international relations – of immense scepticism towards trans-/supra- national organizations/institutions – and the similarly immense lack of space for dialogue between itself and the AEI, which declared Euro-Atlantic integration as the very reason for its existence (Tudoroiu, 2011). Moreover, unfortunately for the Kremlin, this also played a self-defeating role in the EU-Russia dialogue on sharing common approaches to the Europeanization in the ‘common neighbourhood’ in light of the Eastern Partnership (Makarychev, 2010: 2).

The second point in the surprising set of similarities is the view that the role of defenders of Moscow's interests in Moldova was held exclusively by Russian native speakers. This did not only led to a complete absence of socio-cultural or professional dialogue with non-Russians in Moldova but also to the creation of so-called ‘professional Russians’ - individuals which campaigned for pro-Kremlin orientation simply by virtue of the financial support made available by Moscow for compatriots abroad – an occurrence which also did not help in matters of pragmatism. Both of these elements have played a limiting role for Russia's spectrum of action in the republic and also added an element of controversy to available measures (Makarychev, 2010: 2).

In describing the interests of Moscow in the Republic of Moldova in 2010, Makarychev points out to the following unanimously applicable characteristic:

“Moscow generally views its relations with Moldova from the vantage point of geopolitical schemes, where the sheer size of Russia predetermines its dominance in the entire post-Soviet territory, or prescriptions governed by political realism, where the success of Russian policies depends on the strict pursuit of ‘national interests’. Both perspectives, however, look deficient. Russia's geopolitical ambitions, based on a shaky foundation of repeated – and mostly unconvincing – references to common historical memories, are not very welcome in Moldova. The re-actualization of the

⁵² See section on Conflict in Moldova (Government vs. Opposition)

experience of the Soviet Union makes Russian identity conceptually trapped in a Soviet past that is not only rejected by the majority of Eastern and Central European nations, but also increasingly less attractive for the European-oriented segments of Moldovan society” (p. 3).

9.2.3. Clearing the confusion

Granted that even the notion of ‘national interest’ has a more or less hollow meaning in Russia itself (Makarychev, 2010: 3), being able to legitimise a large amount of actions just by adding to them this denomination, in attempting to identify the applicability of the concept in relation to Moldova, Makarychev (2010) does identify the following features:

Table 23 - Russian 'national interests' in the Republic of Moldova (summary from Makarychev, 2010: 3 - 4)

| Russian ‘national interest’ in the Republic of Moldova | | |
|---|---|--|
| Articulation | (pseudo-)Public justification | Public rhetoric |
| Moldova must remain politically independent | The EU is nothing more than a junior partner of the US | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The EU will not lobby for the membership of Moldova (or Ukraine and Georgia for that matter) - The EU is a ‘closed club’ without sufficient financial resources to help weak economies - EU membership translates into manipulation, submission, loss of identity, and provincialization - The EU brings with it new economic challenges (high prices and the need to re-orient trade westward) - These issues are not applicable in the post-Soviet model of integration⁵³ |
| Moldova must not reunite with Romania (as a separate issue of importance) | This completely contravenes Russia’s interests and the interests of (the significant number of) Russians in Moldova | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Past references to World War Two Iron Guard Romania - Unclear – as a number of Russian analysts would see this as allowing the separation of Transnistria and its assimilation by Russia |
| Moldova must remain neutral (not to join NATO) | Moldova would otherwise lose its sovereignty | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unclear – as not alternative security arrangements seem to be offered by Russia |
| Negotiations over Transnistria must remain in their current (5 + 2) format | It is in the interest of fairness (which ensures respecting Russian interests) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unclear – as Transnistria’s role for Russia (useful for pressing Chişinău/strategic importance vis a vis NATO/potential future Russian territory/all of these elements combined); its debts to Gazprom and its political system have not been strongly debated in Russia |

Such elements of interest being more or less in place, Moscow’s 2010 problem of instrumentalization, namely the lack of ‘normative appeal’⁵⁴ (one of the strongest ENP assets) through ‘soft power’ instruments, became apparent. Consequently, attempts were made to reach-

⁵³ An issue that has been seen as actually weakening Russia’s commitments as they may be seen simply as a succession of bilateral agreements (Makarychev, 2010: 3)

⁵⁴ See chapter on Russia

out to the new pro-Western Chişinău and to NGO actors within the republic. One example of these measures involves the *Priznanie* (“recognition”) Foundation (which was originally funding humanitarian projects in Ukraine), which had the air of a Western-type NGO aiming to foster contacts between policy-makers and other sources of opinion. However, the fact that *Priznanie* was seen as a Kremlin offspring and not as an independent civil society organization led to polarizing effects and undermined its actions (Makarychev, 2010: 4).

Makarychev (2010), taking this example into account has commented on Russia’s stance following 2009:

“The deficit of value-based policies is detrimental to attempts to make use of soft power as a foreign policy tool. The way soft power is understood in the Kremlin does not match the expectation of the new Moldovan elite and just strengthens the perception that Russia is still a *realpolitik* type of power dabbling unsuccessfully and mostly ineffectively with soft power resources. Such soft power ‘experiments’ are doomed unless Russia can offer a long-term concept of post-Soviet integration that is attractive and competitive compared to the EU model. Russia dubs the Moldovan drive to Europe ideologically-biased, while considering its own policy towards CIS countries as ‘pragmatic’. Yet alleged Russian pragmatism can easily turn into geopolitical sloganeering, which fails to offer an efficient conceptual framework for tackling the problems that Russia faces in countries located on Europe’s doorstep” (p. 4 – 5)

9.2.4. A change in Russia’s attitude? No.

In conclusion, in relation to Russia’s approach to Moldova, it becomes obvious that the period of disorientation which followed the coming to power of the AEI – to which Moscow responded with a ban on wine which proved unsuccessful, the previous experience of the long-run harming impact of the 2006 ban, and the lack of progress with pressure on the AEI, in addition to analysts’ opinions such as that of Makarychev (2010), finally piled together to potentially give Russia the impression that more normative appeal, as opposed to coercion, is the way to go.

An example of normative appeal is, in itself, the Customs Union, which, as a purely economic endeavour, without the ‘additional package’ of reforms (that the EU imposes for market access), and with the characteristic that Moldovan products *do sell*⁵⁵ in the CIS to a greater extent than they do in the EU. In addition, even if accompanied with the typical Russian threatening tone in relation to countries in the common neighbourhood, that if Moldova does not join “it can face some problems” (Dmitry Medvedev, as cited in Siscan, 2012: 56), Moldova’s ratification of the CU treaty was accompanied by a perspective of re-negotiation of energy prices. This, in other words, represents incentive – of a different nature than previous mainstream approaches to Moldova.

⁵⁵ See the section on economic dependence

However, given the present-day events in Ukraine, it becomes apparent that Moscow abandoned this path, considering it not sufficiently valuable as an instrument.

9.3. The narrative of the Republic of Moldova – what if no?

Moldova, a small and at a first glance relatively insignificant state finding itself in the area of interaction between the European Union (a complex and modern-thinking political organism) and the Russian Federation (a ‘traditional’ actor of international relations), plagued by civil war, societal dysfunction – caused by identity concerns -, and facing economic collapse, stands as a vivid example of not only an extremely valid area of research, for scholars of various social sciences disciplines (including here international relations) but also of the impressive capacity of state structures to exist and generate policies which make the best out of what can only be characterised as a poor context.

Having never had any statehood experience, Moldova emerged following the end of the Cold War with a trifold division of collective self-perceptions, with an almost anarchic internal political environment (characterised by little power pertaining to each pole)⁵⁶ and an impending armed conflict. Being on the losing end of the armed confrontation with the separatist republic of Transnistria (and with the Russian forces backing it up), the republic faced economic collapse in the 90s, the lack of a centralised structure which could implement, or at least try to, developmental policies, having one of its few lifelines in good quality agricultural products – which it was desperate to sell.

The ‘pluralism by default’ of the 90s was replaced with a ‘vertical of power’ embodied by the Party of Communists in the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) in the early and late 2000s – a relic of the old soviet elites’ thinking and behaviour patterns which brought (i.e. authoritarian) order into the country’s political environment. At the end of the 2000s, the PCRM government was replaced by a ‘coalition of the non-communists’ – an ad-hoc necessity grouping made up by pan-romanists and moldovanists who shared both a strong feeling of disgust towards the PCRM and a desire for Euro-Atlantic integration.

Externally, Moldova primarily faced an emergent European Union, expanding eastward and finding itself ‘trespassing’ on the ‘strategic glaxis’ of the Russian Federation. The former, facing internal perceptions of overextension, designed an Eastern Neighbourhood Policy, an Eastern Partnership, and a Black Sea Synergy, all of which included Moldova, but none of which offered the country the prospect of membership. What it did offer was financial incentives and the possibility of selling its products to the west. Moreover, it represented a potential way out of the ‘glaxis’ and of the conflict that it entailed. It did, however, have its own rules and a highly developed mechanism for rule transfer, in accordance to which dialogue would take place on an exclusive basis.

⁵⁶ Although not to the same extent as Georgia

The latter actor, entrusted with a new foreign policy spirit, pseudo-democratic cohesion and newly discovered financial resources, was a keen supporter of governance by own rules within each of its neighbours, as long as this translated into loyalty towards itself. More importantly, however, Russia, given its nature of appearing weak and under threat inside and boasting with power on the outside, perceived any form of collaboration with a western institution almost instinctually to be an American advance which would threaten its security. Due to this logic, relations with Moldova's neighbours became mutually exclusive.

Security was also a constant concern for Moldova, although given Chisinau's acceptance of the fact that it could never win in an armed confrontation with the Russian troops stationed in Transnistria, it never manifested signs that it would consider this option. Neither was Moldova ready to give too much leverage to the PCRM through the features of the 'Kozak Memorandum'-style of ending the conflict. Thus, a 'dynamic stand-still' was imposed in the protracted conflict and negotiations happened on an on and off basis, involving all the international actors with the slightest concern for the issue in a 5+2 format, and allowing Moscow's power of coercion only to manifest in terms of delaying conflict resolution.

Even with the conflict not resolved, the PCRM government was attracted by the appeal of the West and moved to orient itself on the path of collaboration and implementation of reforms – albeit cautiously – in order to avoid undermining the basis of its own power, its doctrinal integrity and its relationship with Russia. This, however, turned into little more than rhetoric after Moscow found itself in a situation requiring the coercion of its Moldovan 'friend by definition' and introduced an export ban which severely crippled the Moldovan economy. However, if in the short run, the ban resulted in a declared re-orientation of Moldova towards Russia, Chisinau realized that the best way to deal with the foreign policy dilemma it faced was to create space for leaving it – and be able to sell westward. A counterfactual exploration would see little point in implementing reforms for the PCRM had the Action Plan with the EU not have been suggested by Brussels (with the financial incentives that accompanied it). In addition, with the enthusiasm of the pro-European discourse of the post-2005 Moldovan government, the Russian ban (and subsequent actions) can be the only reasonable explanation for the return to a pro-Russian rhetoric in 2007 and 2008, in light of a trigger-based narrative.

Thus it continued collaborating with the EU in the field of customs reform. The EU, on its own end, perceived the value of Moldova's pursuit of customs reform, especially in regards to the energy it required in facing Moscow, and, although did not turn a blind eye to the lack of shared values pertaining to democracy and the rule of law, it did reward every Moldovan advancement in reform.

The communists went too far, however, in the attempt to maintain a pro-Russian orientation, increase westward trade and maintain their 'vertical of power', all at the same time. Consequently,

in 2009 Moldova ‘exploded’ both socially and politically and the new coalition came to power. The attempt to use any justification to orient westward (pan-romanism, anti-communist spirit, anti-Russian resentment, etc.) was however faced with both political incapacity (as the PCRM had the power to block decisions) and with a counter-reaction from both elements within Moldovan society which did not view reality in the same way, and external pressure from a disoriented Moscow – which by the time of its second (failed) ban, began to have voices within which criticised the long-term impact of its actions in Moldova.

In parallel, dependence on Russian gas and the absolute necessity of export, brought Moldova slowly into a new trade dynamic, which did not necessarily work in its advantage, as it involved a trade deficit spiralling out of control. Moreover, access to the western market did not mean that the republic’s production was prepared to manifest strong competitive advantages in Europe. In addition, having Russia as the main energy supplier constantly meant that pro-Russian loyalty could constantly be measured in the price of cubic meters – an issue that the EU could not substantially help with. Nonetheless, towards 2012, Moldova did manage to gain slight capabilities from the fact that as it needed Russian gas, Russia was in need of selling it to Chisinau. However, economic dependence remained a factor for Moldova, along with the impression that the most pragmatic option for export is the East.

With the election of a so-called neutral candidate, however, Moldova’s AEI executive began to show signs of normality, although this translated into an absolute necessity to first catch-up on reforms useful for pro-EU orientation and for temporising the westward enthusiasm due to the characteristics of Moldovan society and to the lack of performance in trade. Also, by accident or not, by the end of 2012 as Moscow began to apply some lessons from its western neighbours and had brought Moldova into a fortunate position – being able to sell both westward and eastward, and without the fear of immediate coercion. Any counter-factual assessment not taking this element into account would have very little to rely on in explaining the AEI’s post 2011 orientation.

9.4. Conclusion

This chapter has firstly focussed on changing of perspectives, for the purpose of shedding light on which set of methods of approaching the republic is more successful from the point of view of the Russia – EU interaction in the shared neighbourhood, followed by a sub-chapter dedicated to bringing together the findings of the Moldovan case-study for achieving a narrative of the Republic of Moldova in the Russia vs EU logic, applying to it the so-called ‘what if no?’ logic in relation to the shifts in the analysed variables (as a mitigating element for any potential methodological gaps), and summarizing the manifestation of the Black Sea geopolitical environment in Moldova – with regards to the results of the three elements under scrutiny.

In concluding on the Moldovan case-study, it must first be stated that the republic represents an environment with which the EU can enjoy close and cooperative relations at the moment. This is

the case primarily because of the EU's use of incentives – financial support and access to its market. This isn't to say, however, that Moldova is at the moment a completely successful case from the point of view of the ENP. Far from it! The previous chapter's economic dependence indicator reveals an almost inertial move of Moldovan products towards eastern markets- with far fewer demands in regards to quality and identification of sources. The conflict indicator reveals that Transnistria, although not having any pragmatic potential of re-igniting as an armed conflict, has remained a severe issue of concern. If missions such as EUBAM have helped tackle organized crime in the area, negotiations with the EU participation have yielded little results. Consequently, Moldova is not a 'peaceful neighbour' – as required by the ENP, although it is one of the most peaceful Black Sea states. Thirdly, the declared foreign policy orientation indicator reveals high levels of support for the EU from the Moldovan government. It must be mentioned, however, that the AEI has a declared role of 'Euro-Atlantic integration' – to be interpreted in the long run as EU membership, and not neighbourly relations. Given that indicators exist that Moscow is both forming an alternative form of collaboration (presently in its emerging stage), that membership is presently off the table, and that the Russian Federation seems to be in the process of identifying elements which can increase its normative appeal in relation to countries such as Moldova, it would have been difficult to anticipate that the window pro-western orientation in Moldova would remain open for much longer without the prospect of membership. Nonetheless, Ukraine *happened*, and Russia proved that upon the exhaust of its coercive instrumental base, it will not hesitate in relying on its military assets. As such, very little holds Moldova from completely abandoning pro-Eastern orientation as a feasible option.

story became one of lost supply chains and demand. This reality, coupled with the ensuing breakdown of administrative frameworks, severe recession, unemployment, inflation, etc., was not uncommon for the CIS space. However, the acuteness of the impact on the new republic was particularly sensible, as, by comparison to 1989, by 1994, Georgia's cumulative output decline was three quarters – the lowest in the entire Eastern Block (IMF Working Paper, WP/96/31, as cited in Gogolashvili, 2011: 175).

This chapter lays the foundation for the assessment of the second case-study – the South Caucasian republic of Georgia. In doing so, it looks, in a similar manner to Moldova's case-study, at the defining features of the Black Sea state, from its contemporary origins (following the fall of the Soviet Union) to the beginning of the assessed period. This is necessary in order to understand the environment in which declared foreign policy orientation, conflict, and economic dependence manifest and where nuance (or otherwise codified, 'uniqueness') plays a role in giving the republic its individual character. As such, in order to mitigate the potential for missing one of the key representative elements with regards to Georgia's development as a Black Sea state, although the reiteration of the methodological motivation in understanding the pre-2003 case-study will not revolve around re-presenting the employed understanding of *trigger* and *narrative*, it will, however, focus on the similarities and differences between Moldova and Georgia with such elements taken as lenses of the approach.

10.1. The methodological motivation in understanding pre-2003 Georgia

The path-dependent approach between *triggers* and *outcomes* is *narratively* explored in the Georgian case, which has in mind the exact elements as in the case of Moldova. As stated within the analysis of the Moldovan republic, both subject case studies within the Black Sea geopolitical environment display a strong similarity in terms of, first of all, size, in addition to other vital components, as well as a strong dissimilarity. These features make them ideal candidates for any comparative historical assessment carried out with reference to the Black Sea, although this statement does not stand as synonym with them representing the only options for such a research endeavour.

Moldova and Georgia share, as I show, a number of features, such as an emerging post-Soviet identity rupture within the geographical boundaries of the state, which, in the case of Moldova spawned three identity directions, of which one predominated, and in the case of Georgia, two (a nationalist rhetoric and an identity set within the separatist provinces), of which one has, in a similar manner, predominated. In addition, a common occurrence of economic collapse is also visible within both republics, leaving them (although for different reasons) with an almost exclusive agricultural potential and with a strong necessity for export. In this sense, it is worth noticing the feature of *record breaker* for both countries, having Moldova as 'the poorest country in Europe' and Georgia 'the country with the highest cumulative GDP collapse within the CIS'.

Also, within their evolution, one can notice a significant fragmentation of the state, based on weak statehood experience and a pluralist by default organic polity. However, a significantly more radical component is visible within the Georgian case, as well as one of fast-moving realities. Last, but by no means least, Moldova and Georgia share the narrative of feeling a desire to return to Soviet-era *peacefulness* and *discipline*, with the PCRM and the Shevardnadze governances catering to this requirement – although proven a false-ideal within both cases.

In a summary of comparisons between the two states, however, it is worth understanding that the typicality of Georgia revolves, most clearly, around radical and fast-moving occurrences, obligating the reader *to keep up* with a significantly more violent narrative.

10.2. ‘Georgia for the Georgians’ and economic failure – the beginning

As said, by 1991 the Gamsakhurdia leadership was exercising state functions. However, the republic’s economy was ‘unbalanced and chaotic’ (Gogolashvili, 2011: 175). The Russian rouble was the legal tender (as Georgia had no national currency), Soviet judicial regulations were in place (and would stay in place for a few years), no constitutional system and no medium- and long-term objectives for the republic, were complemented by a populist leader and a political structure which could only respond to imminent issues. Given the country’s dependence on the rouble, all efforts both during and after Gamsakhurdia represented a copy of those in Russia. Such was the case with the implementation of ‘shock therapy’ – the attempt to immediately adopt neo-classical and neo-liberal measures, which began in Georgia in 1992, and aimed to pursue Leszek Balcerouicz’s (the Polish Prime Minister between 1989 and 1993) ‘11 points plan’ – pursued in his country (Gogolashvili, 2011: 175 - 176). Although with some success, the set of measures’ implementation was incompletely executed (Papava, 1999, as cited in Gogolashvili, 2011: 176).

Following independence, Georgia’s real GDP cumulative decline reached 70% in the four years following 1991 and the country’s GDP reached 30% that of 1989 by 1996 (Djugeli & Cahntladze, 1999). Subsequent to a period of minor growth in mid 1990s, the Georgian economy was significantly affected by the 1998 Russian crisis, not only due to its strong reliance on the rouble but also due to trade. The Georgian (primarily agriculture-based) economy being reliant of exporting citrus fruit and wine in a proportion of 75% to the Russian Federation – a reality applicable well into the early 2000s (Suzuky & Miah, 2010: 426).

A number of more pressing issues, though, were about to take precedence. Prior to the independence of the Georgian republic, although the Soviet state structure was representing itself as a place of relative harmony among the ethnic groups that made it up, a number of public protest instances were revealing of tensions, especially among ethnic Georgians and the Abkhaz. On the other hand, the ethnic Ossetians were seen as more of a successful story of integration in the area, especially in light of the history of links between the pre-Russian colonisation Georgian royal family and local feudal families (Sotieva, 2009). Nonetheless, in the attempt to differentiate

between what Gamsakhurdia saw as Russian and Georgian identity, political elites in Tbilisi articulated a “Georgia for the Georgians” nationalistic set of slogans – which, as expected, raised severe concerns among minorities in the country (USAID/Georgia, 2002, as cited in Gegeshidze, 2011: 27) and led to the emergence of counter-nationalism primarily in South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Ghia & Pinto, 2006, as cited in Gegeshidze, 2011: 27). The country’s biggest concern became ethnic pluralism.

As the Georgian attempt at establishing independence was exclusively focused on the confrontation with Moscow, no separate mechanisms were established in relation to the South Ossetian and Abkhazian autonomies and their problems were considered only within the anti-Moscow framework (Gegeshidze, 2011: 28) – a retrospective huge error in approach.

10.3. Conflict

Although generally taken together within today’s analyses due to practical reasons, Abkhazia and South Ossetia constituted (and were perceived as) different instances of conflict at the time of their emergence, their difference stemming primarily from the provinces’ status in the Soviet Union. If prior to the fall of the USSR South Ossetia represented an autonomous region within the SRG (the Soviet Republic of Georgia), Abkhazia embodied an autonomous republic (Boden, 2011: 124). Nonetheless, in the period surrounding Georgia’s independence, tensions between both and Tbilisi quickly heightened. As early as late 1980s, the (newly elected) Ossetian Supreme Council took what was considered a step towards secession from Georgia and proclaimed the South Ossetian Republic. In response, the Georgian Supreme Council abolished South Ossetian autonomy. A so-called ‘low intensity war’ (Gegeshidze, 2011: 28) broke out between the government and the South Ossetians as the Gamsakhurdia government attempted to amend the South Ossetian status by force. Described by King (2008), the war constituted a set of instances in which:

“In 1991 and early 1992, the Georgian military launched an offensive to stamp out the South Ossetian secessionist movement. The ragtag Georgian army was beaten back by a combination of local fighters, irregulars from the Russian Federation, and stranded ex-Soviet soldiers who found themselves stuck in the middle of someone else’s civil war and chose to fight on behalf of the secessionists.” (p. 4)

What resulted was 2,500 dead and around 60,000 (originally denominated as) IDPs (internally displaced persons), of whom a substantial percentage eventually took refuge in North Ossetia and a Russia-brokered peace agreement in 1992 (when Gamsakhurdia was no longer in power) through which not only had the government failed in its attempt but also lost de facto jurisdiction over the region (Boden, 2011: 125).

In relation to Abkhazia, a different solution was pursued. Gamsakhurdia attempted to offer the Abkhaz a compromise solution which involved a power-sharing system. This arrangement, however, collapsed due to the erratic structure of Georgian politics (Gegeshidze, 2011: 28).

In order to understand why, it is worth stating that, as commentators have noted:

“...the period of time between the 1990 elections and Gamsakhurdia’s eventual downfall in January 1992 was marked by increasingly erratic one-man rule, a general increase in street violence, and the outbreak of war in South Ossetia.” (USAID Georgia, 2002)

By the end of 1991 Gamsakhurdia’s base of support was all but gone and one of the most powerful paramilitary forces in Georgia (‘the Mkhedrioni = the Horsemen’ - Gegeshidze, 2011: 28) established themselves into the centre of a coup which ousted Gamsakhurdia. Subsequently, a newly created institution (the Military Council), dominated by local warlords, took control of the country in a *coup d’etat* in 1992 and attempted to gain international legitimacy. In the end, however, among Georgian elites, the decision was made to transform the Military Council into a State Council and invite (Georgia-born) Major General Eduard Shevardnadze, the former Foreign Minister of the USSR (Suzuky & Miah, 2010: 425) back to Georgia to participate in the institution’s activity.

10.4. Early international mediation in the separatist provinces

The significance of international organizations’ involvement in Georgia’s internal conflicts is substantial, not least due to its revealing character towards the sense of emergency apparent during the 90s in the republic. In a series of measures welcomed by Tbilisi – as it was seeking international support as a defensive mechanism against Moscow’s interests – a conflict settlement mandate was conferred to the OSCE in South Ossetia (in 1992) and to the UN in Abkhazia (in 1994), both of which were to remain in place until the 2008 war, when they would be revoked or non-extended (Boden, 2011: 126). Following 1997, the so-called Geneva process – which at present has the Russian Federation, Georgia, the EU, the United States, the United Nations, the OSCE and the unrecognized authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Paul, 2011) – and a series of conferences in Athens, Istanbul and Yalta (in 2001), through the tactical component of confidence-building, played an immense role in counteracting even more deepening of inter-ethnic alienation (Boden, 2011: 131).

The European Union, with a new security doctrine emitted in 2003⁵⁷, only took a “stronger and more active interest” in the region following that year and, through its special representative, its ‘New Neighbourhood Policy’ (2004) and the EaP, as well as its monitoring missions, did gradually achieve a high level of involvement – however much later than the UN and the OSCE, which it

⁵⁷ See section on the European Union

ended up replacing more or less on the ground (Boden, 2011: 127)⁵⁸. The EU's involvement in Georgia following 2003 will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

However, it is worth noting that although critics generally see the persistence of ethno-territorial conflicts in Georgia as evidence of the failure of the international actors involved in conflict resolution on the ground - with the subsequent all-out war in 2008 as the end of such a trend, Boden (2011: 127 - 128) argues that although such arguments are valid, they reveal an incomplete picture of the impact of the OSCE and the UN in the area in the 90s and 2000s until the August War. The fact that in the about 15 years since the signing of the ceasefire agreements, with the use of unarmed military observers, and facing many aggravated situations of crisis, the OSCE and the UN helped prevent a number of situations that could have easily escalated into war represents, in the author's view, the comprehensive way to assess the impact of the two organizations. In addition, when the EU 'joined in' with the local peace-seeking efforts, through the major agenda of confidence-building and cooperation among all stakeholders, many elements of success have been recorded.

Nonetheless, in the 1994 – 2008 period, not all initiatives were successful. The 'Baden Document', introduced by the OSCE in 2000 (in relation to South Ossetia), followed by the UN-drafted 2001 'Distribution of Competences between Tbilisi and Sukhumi' (Abkhazia) failed in their attempts at conflict resolution primarily due to high-level political support as, for example, Russia only rejected the former document after additional Georgian demands (Hansjorg, 2008: 44, as cited in Boden, 2011: 129) and manifested only initial support for the latter (Boden, 2011: 129). In explaining this, Boden (2001) comments: "... there was a certain reserve [within the international organizations] against exposing oneself in the foremost political level" (p. 128).

10.5. The 'Shevardnadze era' – or returning to discipline and peace

With Eduard Shevardnadze in charge of the State Council, having replaced Gamsakhurdia, the feeling was that of relaxation in the nationalist rhetoric, tolerance towards differences of opinion and the allowing of independent media manifestations together with political parties, granted that the latter would recognize the government's legitimacy (Nodia, et.al, as cited in Gegeshidze, 2011: 29). However, this isn't to say that the level of violence in the country decreased. Even if Shevardnadze's first goal was order, the initial years of his rule were dedicated to discarding "the competing gangs of criminals that had originally placed him in power" (Gegeshidze, 2011: 29), which was anything but a peaceful process, especially since even supporters of the ousted Gamsakhurdia established a territorial stronghold in Mingrelia, in the western part of the country. In addition, if in July of 1992, the peace agreement brokered by Moscow resulted in the formal cessation of hostilities in South Ossetia, war with Abkhazia broke-out as Tbilisi's troops entered

⁵⁸ See the following chapter

the province with the declared goal of ‘guarding rail and highway connections’ (Gegeshidze, 2011: 29) following a number of constitutional disputes with the province. In King’s (2008) words:

“In 1993, Georgia went to war again to preserve its territorial integrity – this time seeking to prevent the Abkhazians in the northwest from following the Ossetian example. That conflict also ended in defeat for Tbilisi. As a result, both provinces have remained functionally separate from Georgia [...] with their own parliaments, economies, educational systems, and armies – as well as a powerful narrative of valiant struggle against Georgian tyranny.” (p.4)

Shevardnadze eventually managed to regain control of Mingrelia as the Georgian army won against pro-Gamsakhurdian gangs and paramilitaries. However, the Abkhazian militia, as seen above, benefiting from the support of volunteers from North Caucasus and the (i.e. covertly) the Russian armed forces, won confrontations with Georgian troops (Gegeshidze, 2011: 29), following the death of around 8,000 individuals, and a substantial displacement of around 250,000 ethnically Georgian population from Abkhazia ensued (Boden, 2011: 125). Again, Moscow’s involvement in brokering a peace agreement, also ensuring for itself the role of mediator between the two sides, led to the cessation of hostilities with Abkhazia and with the ‘freezing in place’ of the (n.b. lack of) resolution of second conflict which would play a vital role in Georgia’s future internal and external policy (Gegeshidze, 2011: 29). As a typical feature of Moscow-brokered cease-fires, Russian armed forces remained stationed in place as peacekeepers – allowing Russia to work in cementing the de-facto independence of Georgia’s separatist provinces, in a similar manner to the case of Transnistria (King, 2008: 5).

10.6. Building an economy?

In the meantime, however, with the support and financial involvement of the IBRD (the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) and the IMF, Georgia began transition towards the market economy system following the end of 1993, through stabilization at a macroeconomic level, liberalization of prices and trade, current account convertibility, privatization, social measures, and institutional and legal frameworks consolidation (Glenn, 1994). IMF evaluations would subsequently group Georgia’s development characteristics in the 1990s into two categories: The first (1994 - 1997) was characterized by stabilization at a macroeconomic level which resulted in growth; and the second (1998 - 2003) was identified by weak implementation capacity, rampant corruption and an unfriendly climate for business; which were followed by growth in the subsequent period of the ‘Rose Revolution’⁵⁹ (IEG-WB, 2009), so economic alignment with the West did not turn out to represent such an easy task to achieve.

Between 1994 and 1997, with the failed military confrontation with Abkhazia, Georgian authorities seemed to have increased their motivation for reform – an occurrence which also brought about an

⁵⁹ See subsequent sections

improvement of Georgia's image in the West, making the US and the European Community 'advisers' of the republic and considering Tbilisi as westward oriented (Gogolashvili, 2011: 179).

As a result of the IMF's involvement in Georgia, the Shevardnadze government introduced the 'Anti-crisis Program of the Republic of Georgia' and with it, a pro-reformist team which would be in charge of implementation (Gogolashvili, 2011: 179).

The measures taken in line with the intention for reform of the Georgian elites, however, did not bring the republic into a position to cope well with the 300,000 IDPs from Abkhazia (followed by another 30,000 later on), a quarter of the population being unemployed, drought, and the collapse of the Russian currency, all of which took their toll on the country in the 1997 – 1998 period (Gogolashvili, 2011: 180). In addition, other initiatives which originated early in the Shevardnadze era – such as 'the coupon' – were eventually seen as outright failures. The coupon – the Georgian provisional national currency following the rouble – introduced in 1993, was unsuccessful as due to failing fiscal and monetary policies, by 1994 it ended up worth 0.0000005% of a US Dollar (2 million coupons = 1 USD) – a more than disastrous value (Gogolashvili, 2011: 177). The coupon was replaced by the 'Lari' (abbreviated 'GEL') in 1995 at a parity rate of 1 million to 1.

10.7. Political landscapes during the era of 'confused Yeltsinism'

A new Georgian constitution was adopted in 1995, and in the subsequent parliamentary and presidential elections both Shevardnadze and the Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG – created by the Georgian leader in 1993) won by a significant margin. What followed was a so-called 'hybrid political regime' in which: "... real power was concentrated in [the hands of a] fairly narrow elite. Within one of the most important power centres was the team of 'young reformers' headed by Zurab Zhvania, Chairman of the Parliament" (Gegeshidze, 2011: 30), with a substantial part of the legitimacy of the regime's policy represented by the component of the Russian-Georgian relationship – namely the threat of Russian involvement within Georgian internal affairs (Gegeshidze, 2011: 30). This represented not only a valid issue within Georgia, but also in relation to diplomatic and financial support from the West.

However, a substantial amount of academic contributions (Antonenko, 2005; Busygina, 2007; Lo, 2003; Lurch, 2000, as cited in Filippov, 2009: 1830) see the set of Russian actions in relation to Georgia as inconsistent as a matter of frequency, resulting from various compromises and subject to change in concert with the balance of power modifications between Yeltsin's Institution of the Presidency and the Russian Defence Ministry, the Duma, various regional elites and Moscow's practitioners of foreign affairs. Overall, however, as Lynch (2000: 12) argues: "... to concentrate solely on the chaotic state of affairs 'may be to confuse focus with significance'. In short, while there was little that had a claim to brilliance in Russian policy toward Georgia during the Yeltsin period, there was nothing disastrous or puzzling either." (as cited in Filippov, 2009: 1830). An instance of Russian involvement with a clearly visible component but with little delivery was the

Georgian entry to the CIS under Shevardnadze in mid 1990s – a locally unpopular measure - in the hope of Russian help for the reintegration of Abkhazia. The deal was not ratified by the Duma and a number of regions in Russia even signed economic cooperation deals with Abkhazia (Antonenko, 2005: 226 – 227).

Such characteristics understandably allowed for a certain degree of advancement in the latter half of the 1990s towards what was perceived to be a western legal framework, which included a new civil code, civil proceedings code, criminal proceedings code, tax code, general administrative code, and other legal reforms which were seen to bring the republic in the direction of European standards (Gegeshidze, 2011: 30). In addition, a series of young reformers, including here a rising Mikheil Saakashvili, pushed for changes in the judiciary through the introduction of a meritocratic system which replaced Soviet-era and style judges.

10.8. The beginning of collaboration with the EU

The signing of a PCA between the European Union and Georgia took place on the 22nd of April, 1996 and the framework came into force in the middle of 1999. The PCA had components of collaboration within various economic fields, in addition to education, science, infrastructure and energy and codified the obligation, on the part of the EU to provide technical assistance to the republic in return for Georgia's 'soft obligation' to approximate its laws with the *Acquis*. In other words:

“A marked increase in the amount of EU funding received by Georgia and a significant diversification of the programme areas in which projects were financed occurred after 1999, when relations between Georgia and the EU were put on a contractual footing with the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement entering into force. As part of the envisioned political dialogue to be developed on issues pertaining to security, stability, economic development, institutional reform and human and minority rights, a hope was expressed that ‘such dialogue may take place on a regional basis, with a view to contributing towards the resolution of regional conflicts and tensions. The Presidency conclusions of the Cologne European Council were even more optimistic, expressing the conviction ‘that this will also facilitate ... the quest for lasting solutions to persisting conflicts in the region’ (Whitman and Wolff, 2010: 89).

At the time, however, the EU was not ready to take on a more substantial approach within conflict resolution in Georgia (Popescu, 2011)⁶⁰. Nonetheless, by 1999, undergoing a process of reform which brought in a pluralist spirit and space for media and NGOs-led debate, Georgia's democratic advance was noticed internationally and the country was also admitted in the Council of Europe, being the first in its region to be granted this position (Gegeshidze, 2011: 30 - 31). A particularly significant moment, indicating Georgia's self-perception, was the declaration of the late Georgian

⁶⁰ See chapter on Georgia seen from Brussels

Prime Minister, Zhvania, on the occasion, who stated: “I am Georgian, therefore I am European” (As cited in Kakachia, 2013: 2).

1999, though, was also the year of sharp decrease in the willingness of reform in Georgia, and thus implementation of components such as the PCA was not effective. Circumstances had changed to such an extent in the country by this time that even WTO membership was explained in commentator circles exclusively as the outcome of the work of the previous years (Gogolashvili, 2011: 181 - 182)

The international arena revealed significant instances of praise to the developments in Shevardnadze’s Georgia. Citing a UNDP National Human Development Report in 2000, Jobelius (2011) shows how: “Of the former Soviet republics, Georgia has been one of the leading countries in providing its population with access to human rights. The country’s commitment to a free press and respect of political rights have been remarkable in a region of the world not yet known for ensuring respect of such rights to their full extent” (p. 77).

The drive for reform in the search for western-style democracy in Georgia was, as said, not to last, however, and this reality became identifiable as early as the effects of the 1998 Russian crisis hit Georgia. Faced with economic decline and with an increasingly organized opposition, the Shevardnadze style of governance lost momentum and the attempt to prevent the rise of other political elites began to fail, and ‘informal patronage’ (Jones, 2013: 5) returned to be the order of the time. As Gegeshidze (2011) comments:

“His [Shevardnadze’s] strategy to keep afloat meant controlling the emergence of autonomous political actors. He would never allow for exclusive access to administrative resources and international development funds. By means of repeatedly reshuffling clientelistic networks Shevardnadze thus played down the role of ‘young reformer’. Instead, as the effects of early reform began to be felt, Shevardnadze’s ‘balancing tactics’ allowed anti-reformist opposition to become increasingly resistant. Faced with tradeoffs between corrupt retrogrades and those liberal reformers, Shevardnadze withdrew support for serious reform. Consequently, the regime lost democratic face” (p. 31)

Gogolashvili’s (2011) opinion is complementary. The author explains how:

“... the Plan [for reform during 90s’ Georgia], if implemented in a comprehensive and the prescribed way, was expected to have the same effect as in Chile in the 1980s. But Georgia was not Poland, and in addition to the communist legacy, it suffered from the lack of independent institutions able to carry out basic state functions. The civil war and the power deficit were probably further reasons for delays and inconsistencies in the reforms” (p. 177)

10.9. The prelude to the ‘Rose Revolution’

In the early 2000s, two significant documents were emitted by the Shevardnadze leadership, which, unsurprisingly for Georgia, did not give the impression that they were aiming for objectives to be carried out in concert with one another. The first, Georgia’s NPLH (the National Programme for Legal Harmonization - 2001) (Kereselidze, 2002) was aiming to bring every governmental institution/agency in approximation to the legal framework of European standards. The second, the EDPRP (or Georgia’s Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Programme - 2002) was envisioning a wide range of programmes aiming for good governance, market liberalization, privatization, stability in the financial sector, education and health reform, and came as a result of Georgia’s collaboration with the World Bank, the IMF, and was seen as the time as the approach that would set the foundation in place for the republic’s economic development (Gogolashvili, 2011: 182 - 183).

However, by this time, in a stalled-reform system, Georgia had accumulated social expenditure arrears which, together with current expenses exceeded the state budget, of its 35% tax base was collecting merely less than 14% of GDP in tax and had, as a result, a relatively huge ‘shadow economy’ generating its gross domestic product. More than 20 entities which worked towards controlling the market overburdened the economic arena and, towards the end of Shevardnadze’s government, their number would increase (Gogolashvili, 2011: 183).

Georgia slowly began to be characterised by the practices of fraudulent elections and corruption, to the extent that the political elite’s interests took precedence over any and every element of the republic’s political arena. Such issues, coupled with economic decline, not only led the image of Georgia to become that of one of the most corrupt countries in the world (or even of a ‘failing state’ - Gegeshidze, 2011: 31) but also estranged a troika of ‘heavyweight young reformists’ (the speaker of the parliament and other ministers and high-ranking party officials) – namely Zhvania, Burdjanadze and, Saakashvili – which created a new opposition by breaking with the ruling elites and establishing their own party in 2001 and 2002 (Jobelius, 2011: 78). They were to overthrow the Georgian leader in what would be called ‘the Rose Revolution’ (Gegeshidze, 2011: 32).

In relation to the subsequent lack of pace of reform, Gogolashvili (2011) has commented that:

“It is difficult to explain the mechanism that changed the government’s attitude towards the reform process completely ... To our understanding, the gains that the period of rapid reforms brought to society, created a strong negative motivation within the government linked to corruptive groups. Privatization, liberalization of prices and foreign trade, reducing the state ownership of businesses opened up huge ‘possibilities’ to those who were able to employ their official positions for their own business interests. The rise of the numerous formally free business structures, but in fact

controlled by high-level government officials through corruptive practices caused moral degradation of state institutions, including the police.” (p. 180 - 181)

By 2001, the embedded rampant corruption in Georgia, gave the West the impression that a power change was necessary for reforms to continue.

However, not all commentators agree that the Shevardnadze regime had reached the level of anti-or non-democratic definition. Jobelius (2011) notices how between the 2000 reports and immediately preceding the 2003 ‘Rose Revolution’, there is a surprisingly fast-paced change in depictive approach, hinting to the importance of depicting the Shevardnadze set of policies as ‘unacceptable conditions’ as a strong legitimizing factor for the post-2003 regime – a reality lasting at least until 2008 (Jobelius, 2011: 77 - 78). Even with this in mind, it is relevant to account for a very clear indicator of the situation within the republic, at the end of Shevardnadze’s rule: Georgia was a weak state.

Opinions within the literature (Demetriou, 2004, Closson, 2009) see the Caucasian republic in the timeframe between independence and the ‘Rose revolution’ as a state somewhere on the spectrum between weak and outright collapsed, with unanimity of *on the brink of failure* sometime in the early 1990s. Faibanks Jr (2001, as cited in Closson, 2009: 761) has identified the fact that “in the winter of 1993-94, the Georgian government could not manage to defend the country, keep order on the streets of the capital, pay state workers, collect taxes, or print the currency in common use.” (p. 50). Interpretations of this feature attribute the situation to either corruption, Russia’s damaging involvement, or ethno-territoriality. However, most notably, employing Way and Levitsky’s (2006), endeavour of designing a measurable framework for the codification of coercive state capacity is very revealing. The authors concluded that *cohesion* (understood as the compliance of actors within the state) and *scope* (holding a well-trained state apparatus able to penetrate deep within society) are the necessary ingredients – to a greater extent than opposition strength – required for a strong coercive state (p. 387). An indicator of both being low within Georgia in the ‘2003 Rose Revolution’, when relatively small crowds (of 20,000 to 30,000) (Mitchell, 2004: 345; Fuller, 2003; as cited in Way & Levitsky, 2006: 389) were able to overthrow the regime, does reveal that the spirit of the 1990s reform was not visible as a set of capabilities which had increased the power of the Georgian state. Shevardnadze’s state was, from this point of view, as weak as Gamsakhurdia’s, more than a decade before.

10.10. Conclusion

This chapter has revealed the representative character of the Republic of Georgia as a Black Sea state – the emergence of internal conflict with a potential for international escalation; strong economic dependence on its bigger neighbours, and the emergence of an East vs West orientation dilemma – due to identity (not as vocal as Moldova) and geopolitical constraints (stronger than those faced by Moldova). It has also revealed, for the purpose of following methodological

guidelines, the fact that the republic manifests a certain amount of individuality – visible in a particularly violent post 1989 development within a weak-to-failing state. These aspects, as I show in the subsequent chapter – manifest themselves in the exploration of the Georgian variables in surprising ways, making the enterprise of assessing the republic a deeply fascinating one.

11. Georgia – assessment of variables

This chapter focuses on exploring the development of declared foreign policy orientation as a foreign policy instrument, conflict, and economic dependence, as coercive outcomes, in the case of the Republic of Georgia between 2003 and 2012. In order to do so, it first clarifies a number of political elements of relevance arising from the modifications resulting from the so-called ‘Rose Revolution’, which overthrew the Shevardnadze government and replaced it with that of Saakashvili. Subsequently, it brings into discussion the apparently surprising clash between Georgia’s perception of self (namely of being European) and the actions taken by Tbilisi in its pre-2008 war collaboration with Brussels. Subsequently, I argued, due to the circumstances of the war, only 2 out of the 5 declared foreign policy orientation indicators are applicable to the republic. In relation to conflict, the Caucasian republic, as I show, displays one of the most violent decades within the Black Sea geopolitical environment, and each moment of shift within the Heidelberg Institute’s Conflict Barometer is thoroughly assessed. In the end, within the Russia-EU-Georgia economic and institutional dynamic, the economic dependence indicator equation is applied to the republic.

11.1. The ‘Rose Revolution’ – or understanding the early 2000s

As the parliamentary elections in 2003 were seen by the Georgian public as rigged in a blatant manner, and a measure through which Shevardnadze was attempting to follow the ‘rules of the game’ and exclude his rivals (Jobelius, 2011: 78), the issue of legitimacy in government moved, following popular protests, towards Mikheil Saakashvili, which was 4% short of winning the January 2004 elections by 100% of the votes. Popular protests during ‘the Rose Revolution’ consisted of around 5000 demonstrators in the immediate aftermath of the elections, increasing to around 20,000 subsequently (Lincoln, 2004), with input from the activity of the Rustavi 2 TV station and indicating the weakness of the Georgian state at the time (Way & Levitsky, 2006: 389).

Later in the year, in March, Saakashvili’s UNM (the United National Movement) (Jobelius, 2011: 79) won two thirds of the seats in the Georgian parliament, thus providing the new leader with the support necessary for the implementation of any reform agenda (Gegeshidze, 2011: 32).

The first element on the reform agenda referred to the constitution of the country, followed by a significant structural reform⁶¹. Within the constitutional reform chapter, which began as soon as February, 2004 (Jobelius, 2011: 79), a significant portfolio of powers was transferred to the institution of the presidency, which now held control over the legislature and the executive (Gegeshidze, 2011: 32). The president could now appoint the prime minister, the minister of defence and the minister of the interior, in addition to the governors of Georgia’s administrative

⁶¹ See section on economic dependence in Georgia

regions. Also, in case the parliament could not agree on a budget, it could be dissolved by the president – a power that would also apply in case the prime minister did not survive a confidence vote, if the president would decide that this is the way to go, as opposed to appointing a new cabinet (Jobelius, 2011: 80).

As Gogolashvili (2011) codifies the importance of the Rose revolution:

“The Rose Revolution opened up new perspectives and inspired new hopes. A new president and a new legislative brought new people to the government. The style, enthusiasm and rhetoric with which Saakashvili started his first term in 2004 promised very speedy and drastic reforms in all spheres of the social life” (p. 184)

The new president focused on consolidating the institution of the state. In addition, raising the rate of tax collection through improving the capacity of the tax authorities and cleaning the Shevardnadze-era mafia and clan entities through police reform and ‘internal clean-up’ were quick to follow, in addition to jailing a number of former government officials. This led to a quick and significant increase in Georgia’s budgetary revenues (along with bringing into legality a large section of the economy) and in the creation of what was considered for the republic a more friendly business environment under the supervision of a functioning state which began to pay its social debts (Gogolashvili, 2011: 184).

Thus, at this time, the new Georgian government began gaining de facto control over the country and, as a significant element of relevance – this entrusted Tbilisi with a feeling of power – which it would use in both attempting to regain control over the entirety of the Georgian territory and in bringing Georgia on the path towards westernization – the ‘natural path’ of Georgian identity.

11.2. Declared foreign policy orientation

11.2.1. Georgian identity – the background

In order to understand the identity features of relevance towards Georgia’s declared foreign policy orientation, a summary of the main triggers behind it, emitted in March 2013 by Kornely Kakachia, from the Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF) is proving indispensable. In the author’s words:

“During the last 20 years since regaining its independence, the main goal of Georgian foreign and internal policy was to disassociate itself from its Soviet past and escape from Russia’s historic, strategic and civilizational space. Similarly, it often distanced itself from post-Soviet institutions and regional groupings like the Commonwealth of Independent states (CIS), the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Customs Union, etc. dominated by Moscow. In some ways, ‘desovietisation’ was Georgia’s nationwide slogan constructed by an identity-based narrative. Consequently, as

Georgia attempted to find security through an ideology based on its ‘Black Sea’ identity, given its political, security and economic realities, and a prolonged period of tension with Moscow, it also developed the national narrative that considered Russia to be an existential threat. In some way this seemed quite logical and even necessary, because Georgia was (and still is) in the process of shaping its identity and determining its corresponding national interests.” (Kakachia, 2013: 1 - 2)

Such a view, held by the newly-installed authorities in Tbilisi, was manifested in the public instances of rhetoric portraying full EU integration as the most significant strategy for the long term. As the successor of an ancient Christian kingdom, Georgia saw itself as in charge of restoring historical justice – which meant overthrowing the historical circumstances which had isolated it from the European civilisation in order to be able to pursue its ‘normal’ course (Kakachia, 2013: 2). Such a statement was more than visible in the country’s National Security Concept, adopted in July 2005 – in what was still considered the early days of the Saakashvili governance. The document envisioned the republic as:

“An integral part of the European political, economic and cultural area, whose fundamental national values are rooted in European values and traditions [and which] aspires to achieve full-fledged integration into Europe’s political, economic and security systems, and to return to its European tradition and *remain* an integral part of Europe” (Georgia, 2005, as cited in Kakachia, 2013: 2, my emphasis)

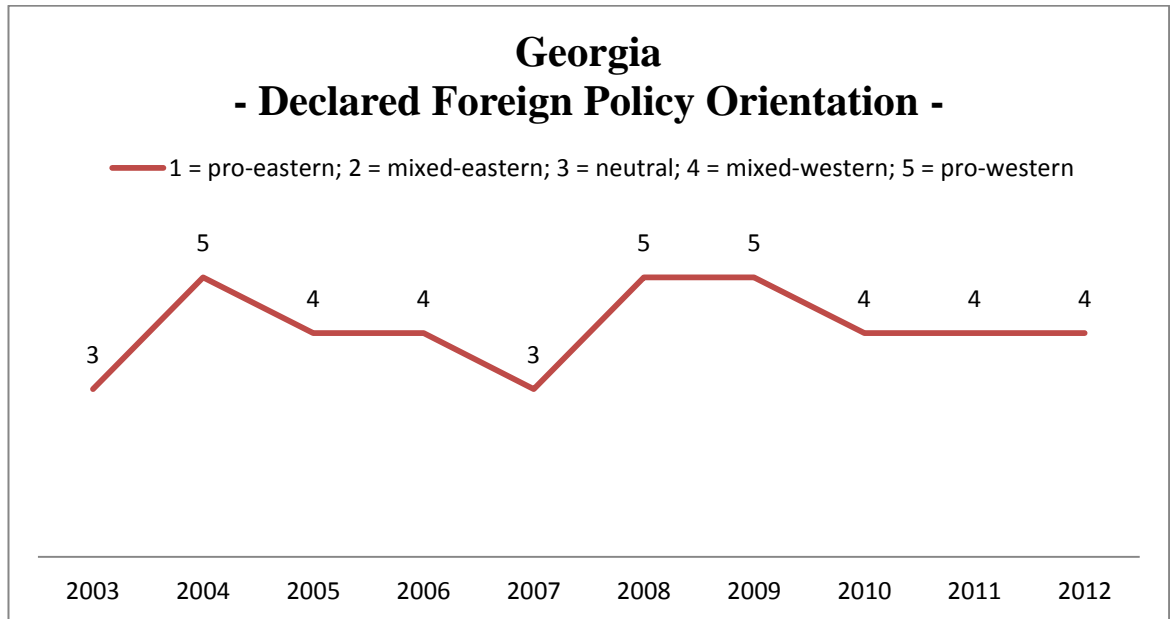
The opinion was continued in the end of 2011 new version of Georgia’s National Security Concept, which added an additional component, though,:

“... the aspiration of the Georgian people to achieve fully fledged integration into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the EU, and to contribute to the security of the Black Sea region as a constituent part of the Euro-Atlantic security system” (Kakachia, 2013: 2)

Thus, as rhetoric has it, Georgia, in accordance with its internationally presented views, has constantly been pro-European in its approach as an instance of normality based on its self-perception. Well, Table A reveals that this was the case only as far as the Caucasian republic has not, in the 2003 – 2012 period, manifested pro-Russian orientation. However, given that within the defining elements of orientation as a measurable element, the feature of *perceived* is as relevant to that of *declared*⁶², it becomes clear that the republic has struggled in manifesting its intended pro-European values in a way in which Europe would see them as such.

⁶² See section on methodology

Table 24 - Georgia - declared foreign policy orientation (2003 - 2012)



The shift from 2003 (neutral) to 2004 (pro-western) is almost synonymous with the shift denominated as ‘the Rose Revolution’ from the government of Shevardnadze to that of Saakashvili, the spirit of which was maintained through the emission of public value-statement documents such as the above-mentioned 2005 National Security Document. However, later on, the situation would be subject to change.

11.2.2. Georgia’s different approach to development

As specified, the Saakashvili government denominated early in its term European integration as Georgia’s highest priority (Gogolashvili, 2011: 184). Thus, it was expected at the time that the European economic point of view would be, similarly to other contexts in the Black Sea, adopted also in Georgia. However, this was not the case for long as, if in the early period of his government, Saakashvili had no choice but to focus on dealing with the difficulties of the system inherited from Shevardnadze, by late 2005 an ultra-liberal point of view, however, was becoming apparent in Georgia – as the envisioned framework for economic development (Gogolashvili, 2011: 185) and it was in a relationship of mutual exclusivity with the European one.

Thus, Georgia’s government subsequently abandoned the Shevardnadze era EDPRP and produced a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) which contained few references to the country’s European ‘advisors’. This was followed by a declaration of the Minister of Reform Coordination that no redistributive approach was to be pursued in the process of alleviating poverty. In return, economic growth would generate jobs and this was the best policy to reduce poverty (Gogolashvili, 2011: 185). Consequently, the perception of this element decreased the likelihood of the EU and Georgia being on the same level of mutual perception and pushed down the orientation indicator for 2005.

In interpreting this view, Gogolashvili (2011) has noticed how:

“The vision of the economic targets was rather positivist than normative, as some basic economic liberties were ignored. The most radical negative behaviour took place when property rights were violated in numerous cases ... The refusal to continue with EDPRP was also a demonstration of a new economic policy.” (p. 185)

Later, in 2006, as EU – Georgia negotiations regarding the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan (ENP AP) began, the dissimilarity of approaches between Tbilisi and Brussels became even more apparent, both in the policy dialogue between the two entities – as Georgia decided on postponing the AP’s trade chapter’s implementation – but also within the republic itself. The State Minister’s Office for European Integration had the task of implementing the ENP AP and the State Minister’s Office for Reform Coordination was responsible for rapid growth. Most importantly, the two institutions, in light of 9 – 12% economic growth in Georgia between 2005 and 2007 were seen as clashing (Gogolashvili, 2011: 186 - 187). In addition, the extent to which the Saakashvili government’s macroeconomic stabilization was successful in Tbilisi’s eyes was not only visible in the no longer existing problems with electricity and gas supplies. More importantly, however, when in 2006 Russia issued an embargo on Georgian products – resulting in the loss of the biggest market Georgia was selling towards⁶³, the impact was only felt in a 1% loss of GDP *growth* in the following year, and not as an economic shock (Gogolashvili, 2011: 184) – as was the case in the Republic of Moldova.

Gogolashvili points-out to the potential for a false perspective being the trigger behind Georgia’s impression that a radical-liberal approach was to be more successful in the republic, as opposed to the EU economic model. First of all, as the author argues:

“Georgia’s economic success ... after the Rose Revolution, could be attributed in large part to the anticorruption measures, but also to the large-scale privatization, the easing of the tax and other burdens on businesses. This stimulated direct investment inflow, which stood at an annual level of 20% of GDP during the four and a half prewar years. As the investments originated mainly from the Gulf States, Central Asia and Russia, the government was hesitant to introduce European market access rules and product safety regulations ... Refusing any protectionism, preferential treatment of the priority areas, promotion of export or any other government intervention, the main accent was put on the creation of a fully liberalized environment ... efforts were directed rather at improving the position of the Economic Freedom Index than at reaching any other type of benchmark indicator.” (Gogolashvili, 2011: 187)

⁶³ See section on the Republic of Moldova for clarification on a similar embargo on the Republic of Moldova

11.2.3. Political ‘loss of face’ and the end of the ‘Rose Revolution’

In addition, even if the concept of ‘libertarianism’ was increasingly publicly articulated in 2007 and 2008, with civil unrest at the end of 2007, a number of corrections were introduced in the 2008 budget and a third of the budget ended up being sent towards social spending (Gogolashvili, 2011: 187). Moreover, if prior to the 2008 military confrontation Georgian policy-makers were stating that PCA obligations were only in accordance with Tbilisi’s interests if membership would be on the table, following the war with Russia, Georgia was to find itself in the position to reconsider its choices and this reconsideration was noticed in the country’s post-war BDD (Basic Data and Directions document), which, although was referencing ultraliberal values did allocate a substantial focus to ‘public welfare’ (Gogolashvili, 2011: 188).

Thus it is required to once again clarify that, given Georgia’s stance, the fact that, in accordance with the methodological course pursued within this thesis, declared foreign policy orientation stands as the measurable codification of a foreign policy instrument. As such, similarly to the case of Moldova, from the Kremlin’s point of view, one can easily understand that the logic of mutual exclusion of a pro-Western (no matter what that is) course is applicable with regards to pro-Eastern orientation. In other words, what Georgia seemed to seek during the early 2000s, was pro-Western alignment in the period immediately following Shevardnadze’s cautious declared position between the two poles. Subsequently, during 2005 and 2006, it would have been easy to notice how Georgia’s position would indeed pursue Western ideals, without excluding the potential for dialogue with the Kremlin – a clear codification 4 on the orientation measurement scale. However, once a declaration of priority is given – which specifies that PCA obligations are conditioned by the potential for membership – it becomes clear that no matter how Tbilisi attempted to use its foreign policy instrument of declared foreign policy orientation in relation to the two poles of power it dealt with most directly, this was not pro-European, and whatever it was focused on, did not prove pragmatic for the republic. As such, by virtue of ‘exiting the scale’, Georgia’s declared foreign policy orientation is denominated as neutral for the year 2007.

However, if lack of common vision on the issue of economic development was significant enough to drag on EU – Georgia negotiations, political developments in post-2004 Georgia were the ‘cherry on the top’, which resulted in Brussels’ considering Tbilisi a partner only in narrative (in practice – to be avoided) – a perception which can also only be codified with *neutral* orientation in 2007 – not least because there is no evidence to indicate that Georgia was not aware of the fact that its position was perceived – and thus acted willingly in promoting such an image.

In addition, actions do not speak in favour of a position or another. Such political endeavours go back to another set of measures instituted in Georgia, which included securing the dominance of the UNM through electoral reforms (six of which took place between 2004 and 2008) – up to the point that political parties lost the prerogative to decide the members of the electoral commission in

favour of the institution of the presidency (Jobelius, 2011: 80). In addition, internal developments within the Georgian polity did not favour the pace of the reform and the result of the constitutional modifications began to be felt in a weak legislative body with few oversight capabilities, an executive which was increasingly coercive of the judiciary and an overall government which would intervene in both the independence of the media and in abusing property rights (Gegeshidze, 2011: 33). This was visible throughout the 2000s as the Saakashvili presidency introduced a ‘merry-go-round’ of staff, especially in and at the top of ministries, in order to prevent the creation of stable circles of opposition, and allowed primarily access to media outlets such as Imedi TV, Rustavi 2 and the state broadcasting corporation – all seen as loyal to the government (Jobelius, 2011: 81). Even cases of murder have been recorded, involving members of the Georgian government (Gegeshidze, 2011: 33 - 34) in an increasingly Russian-style governance system. As Gegeshidze (2011) notes, at the time:

“The government became progressively remote, failing to communicate with citizens and focusing on public relations. Fast reforms, undertaken with excessive arrogance and self-confidence, failed to benefit most of the public. Instead, unemployment increased and the majority of the population remained below subsistence levels.” (p. 34)

Most importantly, however, such cases were not characteristic of, as was the case in Moldova, a pro-Russian regime. The so-called arrogance of the Georgian government (Gegeshidze, 2011) became particularly acute in late 2007 when Tbilisi announced the postponement of the spring 2008 general elections. When the government decided that the protests had gone on for too long it took action of ‘indiscriminate and disproportionate force’ (Gegeshidze, 2011: 34) which consisted of declaring a state of emergency, attacking the main opposition TV station, closing all broadcasters, with the exception of national institutions, and dispersing the crowds, claiming the (unsubstantiated) threat of a coup organized by Moscow (Gegeshidze, 2011: 34). The western response (in this case that of the EU, NATO, OSCE, the Council of Europe and western governments) was one of concern with an immediate request for the cessation of the state of emergency and the reopening of broadcasting institutions. At this time, Georgia was neither pro-eastern, nor pro-western, again, by virtue of dropping the instrument altogether.

What followed was a highly debated elections process in which the Saakashvili government was accused of using financial and administrative public resources for securing the minor margin which allowed the incumbent to remain in power, with many claiming that the events represented “the end of the Rose revolution” (Gegeshidze, 2011: 35). Moreover, the subsequent growth of the employment of authoritarian measures by the Georgian government, coupled with the lack of success in increasing living standards in the country, in addition to the loss of territory as a result of

the 2008 clash with Russia, led Georgian society to increasing polarisation and to new protests in the spring of 2009 – mitigated better than the previous ones by Tbilisi (Gegeshidze, 2011: 35).

11.2.4. War with Russia and love with Europe

Gegeshidze, (2011) notes:

“In the wake of the August 2008 war, despite undeclared diplomatic isolation of the Georgian authorities, during which Western government leaders restrained from frequent contacts with impulsive president Saakashvili and his entourage, Tbilisi nonetheless was able to sensibly use the huge post-war political and financial support rendered to Georgia as a country fallen victim to Russian aggression. Due to this assistance the impact of a significant slowdown in economic growth caused by a serious deterioration of the investment climate was mitigated. Moreover, as the local elections in May 2010 have been deemed ‘clean’ in toto, the challenges from the opposition were largely defused and President Saakashvili and other top brass have been rehabilitated in the eyes of influential Westerners” (p. 34)

The financial impact on Georgia of the war with the Russian Federation was estimated through a joint endeavour by the UN and the World Bank to be around \$4.5 billion. As a result of the absolute need to support the republic’s recovery, the European Union organized in October 2008 a donors’ conference which managed to raise around \$3.25 billion for confidence (re-)building measures, social necessities and investments. In addition, Brussels sent a 200 strong civilian monitoring mission at the Russia-Georgia border and also, at this time, began with Tbilisi Visa Facilitation and DCFTA (Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements) negotiations (Gogolashvili, 2011: 189) – hinting that the war had turned the tide on Georgia’s credibility abroad, along with bringing a new dynamic to its foreign policy orientation – making it completely and perceivably pro-western – and employing its orientation as a foreign policy instrument seeking ‘to escape the Russian grip’. As such, 2009 and 2010 are characterized by codification 5 – to be followed by the reopening of dialogue with Russia.

Most importantly, however, the result of the military confrontation between Russia and Georgia resulted, through its outcome, in the indefinite postponement of reaching an agreement that Tbilisi would consider in its interest concerning the status of the secessionist territories. The obstacles set in place – namely the Russia-recognized independence of the territories, the breaking of diplomatic relations with Moscow and the destruction of confidence between the parties – seemed insurmountable at the time. The conflict was by no means resolved. On the contrary, it seemed to be heading towards a new ‘freeze’ which was completely against Georgia’s interests (Boden, 2011: 132). In other words, Russia, through the recognition of the separatist regions in Georgia, did indeed secure a new status quo, but this reality obliged Georgia to re-approach Moscow in substantial terms in the future, only by accepting the said recognition. Better said: The Russian

Federation unintentionally took away the potential for Georgia to ever become pro-eastern in its orientation, without adding a level of recognition to its lost territories.

11.2.5. Grievances not disappearing overnight

Even with the rejuvenation in approach brought-about by the war, the Georgian republic and the European Union's points of disagreement did not disappear overnight, not least as the economic component remained as one of the key debate issues within Georgia itself. Gogolashvili (2011) has codified these (seen as mutually exclusive) choices (Table 25) as follows:

Table 25 - Georgia's 'options' (Gogolashvili, 2011: 192)

| Path | Goal |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Libertarianism | No economic or trade allies but with open borders to business, commodities, immigration and services – low taxes and no regulation restrictions – ‘small government’ – low social protection |
| Adopt EU policies | Transform into an EU-compatible environment and gain a share in the EU market – become part of the wider European area |
| Reconciliation with Russia | Accept Russian influence – re-join the CIS – join the Customs Union and potentially benefit from low energy prices – have Russia as a destination for agricultural products (unlikely due to the ‘occupation’) |

The Liberty Act – in Georgia was a statement of values concerning the path of the Georgian economy – it was softened to be less extreme and this is revealing towards a new cautiousness of the Saakashvili administration (Gogolashvili, 2011: 191) and thus leaning towards the European solution.

This did not mean that the Georgian narrative was fully embraced by Brussels – evidence of this being the overall lagging behind of Georgia by comparison to other Black Sea states in terms of ENP collaboration. However, the lack of communication between Brussels and Tbilisi was no longer that of 2007 and Georgia's orientation indicator (2010 and 2011) stands as evidence of this. Nonetheless, neither was the republic on a complete European track – as its internal political environment was not in a condition to qualify for AP requirements. On the contrary, by 2010, when a new constitutional reform agenda was conceived – one which would increase the prime-minister's power, to the detriment of the president, and give little extension of the parliament's competencies (Jobelius, 2011: 81 - 82), it was expected that Saakashvili would run for it, as he could not pursue three consecutive presidential terms due to constitutional limitations (Gegesidze, 2011: 35 - 36). Authors have pointed-out to the fact that although reforms were decided upon in 2010, they would only come into effect in 2013, the time of the subsequent presidential elections, as evidence of this intent (Jobelius, 2011: 82). Thus, opinions such as that of Gvodsev (2004), that

“the political processes in Georgia and Russia appear to be moving in tandem” (as cited in Jobelius, 2011: 87) seems more than a valid look into the future at the time of its emission.

Moreover, by 2011, as Jobelius (2011) commented at the time:

“All political institutions, parliament, government, governor’s offices, town halls and municipal councils are in the hands of [the] UNM today. In view of the marginalized, quarrelling and erratically acting opposition, Saakashvili’s UNM has succeeded Shevardnadze’s CUG as the dominating state party.” (p. 80).

This was particularly visible as the government once again staged a crackdown on demonstrators on the 26th of May 2011, hinting towards the ever increasing polarisation within Georgian society (Gegesidze, 2011: 37).

The transparency of such realities on the international arena represented an element which undermined Georgia pro-western orientation through the only component independent of Georgia itself – *perception*. This created the impression, in trivial terms, that Georgia ‘doesn’t mean it’, when it comes to working with Brussels, or at least it is not ready to take on such commitments – a situation best described as ‘mixed-western’.

11.2.6. Thawing the permafrost – or becoming ‘mixed-Western’ and beyond...

In addition to Brussels’ perception component, it is worth noting that even with suspended diplomatic relations, contact between Tbilisi and Moscow was not only possible, but also quite recurrent (although not involving Saakashvili directly). An example of this being the high-level negotiations which finally allowed Russia’s accession to the WTO – in exchange for Georgian – Russian common monitoring along the trade borders of Georgia’s separatist provinces. This agreement was announced in late 2011 by Saakashvili as a ‘diplomatic victory’ for Georgia and “an acknowledgement of what Georgia’s customs borders are” (BBC News, 2011). Whether this was the case or not is still a matter for discussion. Nonetheless, though, this instance is highly relevant towards portraying Georgia’s mixed-western orientation. A statement made by Dimitry Medvedev in early 2012, included the words:

“... We are absolutely ready to restore diplomatic relations with Georgia. We didn’t break them off. There is only one person I don’t want to have business with. You probably know who I am talking about [Saakashvili]; I won’t meet him and shake his hand...” (NewEurope, 2012).

This hinted at a potential thaw of relations – without, however touching on the issue of the separatist territories. It also hinted that the Georgian president was a *persona non grata* for Moscow, but that dialogue was possible on Russian terms.

In what was to become the end of the Saakashvili governance and the beginning of a new set of elements helpful for identifying the Caucasian republic's 2012 declared foreign policy orientation (which remains mixed-western but due to other elements than Brussels' perception of validity of Georgian claims), on the 5th of October, 2011, Bidzina Ivanishvili (the richest man in Georgia) announced his intention to enter politics, form a new party and compete in the following year's elections against the incumbent government. He quickly gained the support and benefited from the image input of Patriarch Ilia II and former president Shevardnadze. The authorities' response was to revoke his citizenship – invoking that him also holding a French one invalidates it and thus he cannot candidate in elections. This did not prevent the Georgian magnate to form a new party – the Georgian Dream (GD) and rally around him notable opposition parties and figures, along with the repressive measures which were 'expectedly associated' with such a position, and substantial popular support. As an example around 100,000 Georgians participated in the rally which announced the start of the 2012 electoral campaign for the GD – and such popularity was seen in the October 1st, 2012 parliamentary polls, where the GD won 54% of the votes and the UNM only 40.3% - marking the first democratic power transition since Georgia declared independence. Ivanishvili's citizenship was restored by Saakashvili and he was appointed Prime Minister. In the period immediately following the elections, the new GD government in Tbilisi manifested publicly its intention to re-ignite dialogue with Georgia's separatist provinces (while excluding the issue of recognition, though) and with Russia – although a visit to Moscow was at the time off the table (Conflict Barometer, 2012: 20 - 21).

Not long after becoming the entity in power in Georgia and, as a result of the above-mentioned constitutional modifications, the entity in charge of the republic's foreign policy, Ivanishvili's cabinet declared unwillingness to alter the Georgian state's pro-western orientation and insisted that Abkhazia and South Ossetia embody integral parts of the republic – thus diplomatic relations with Russia would not be re-established until Moscow's recognition is reversed and its troops withdrawn. However, discussions on trade and other elements of common interest are possible as an element which would turn down the temperature between Tbilisi and Moscow (Whitmore, 2013). Such desires were indeed received by the Kremlin and, in the following year, discussions began on lifting the Russian ban on wine and mineral water following the 'spy scandal' (World Review, 2013)⁶⁴

These developments, by which it is meant the emergence of a new Georgian government, its willingness to discuss issues of common interest with Moscow, the limitations of this set of discussions, given by Russia's recognition of Georgia's separatist territories, and the GD's 'clean slate' in terms of credibility in Brussels, hint toward the fact that it is highly likely for Georgia's declared foreign policy orientation to remain at an indicator of 4 for years to come. At the moment, Russia and Georgia's positions are in a mutually exclusive stance, the EU, although presently

⁶⁴ See sections on conflict and economic dependence in Georgia

involved on the ground in Georgia, does not portray a long-term solution to this issue, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia are conducting diplomatic activity within the few states which recognized them. Moreover, with the contemporary events in Ukraine on the table, it is difficult to understand how even in the medium-term Georgia would need to instrument a shift in the main loyalty appraisal tool that Moscow is using.

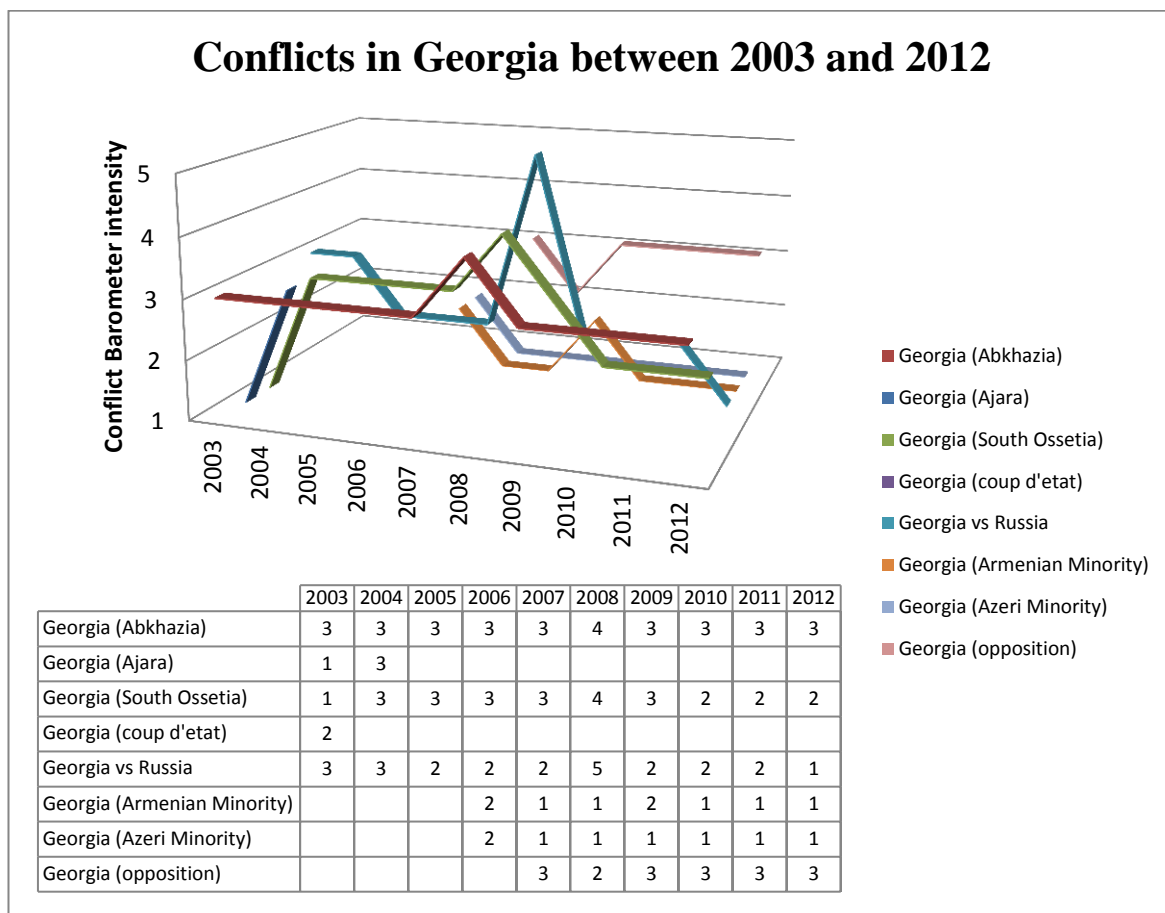
11.3. Conflict

As already stated, the Georgian republic portrays a frighteningly violent development between 2003 and 2012, with instances of use of force against civilians, armed skirmishes, kidnappings, executions, and war, making any informed observer associate its context with a multitude of similar situations from different regions and historical ages – all combined into a single country displaying one of the most violent recent histories within the Black Sea geopolitical environment. Creating a visual representation of the instances of conflict identified by the Heidelberg Institute's Conflict Barometer (Table 26.), however, does not only provide an aesthetic account, but also an argument for the pragmatically motivated focus on a few of them within the context of this thesis.

Technical elements, such as space, indeed represent a coercive factor in making such a choice. However, relevance for the study at hand takes precedence over such concerns. First, it is important to notice that two of the presented conflicts - Georgia (Ajara) and Georgia (coup d'état) – represent short developments subject to quick resolution (the former) or instances already covered in different sections within this chapter (the latter – representing in fact the 'Rose Revolution'). Second, another two – Georgia (Armenia minority) and Georgia (Azeri minority) – are less to do with the EU – Moscow – Tbilisi foreign policy dynamic within a shared neighbourhood and constitute situations with a character of (cultural majority – minority dynamic in which both cultures are politically self-determined in a second state) typicality which exceeds that of the Black Sea area. In other words, they are present throughout the world.

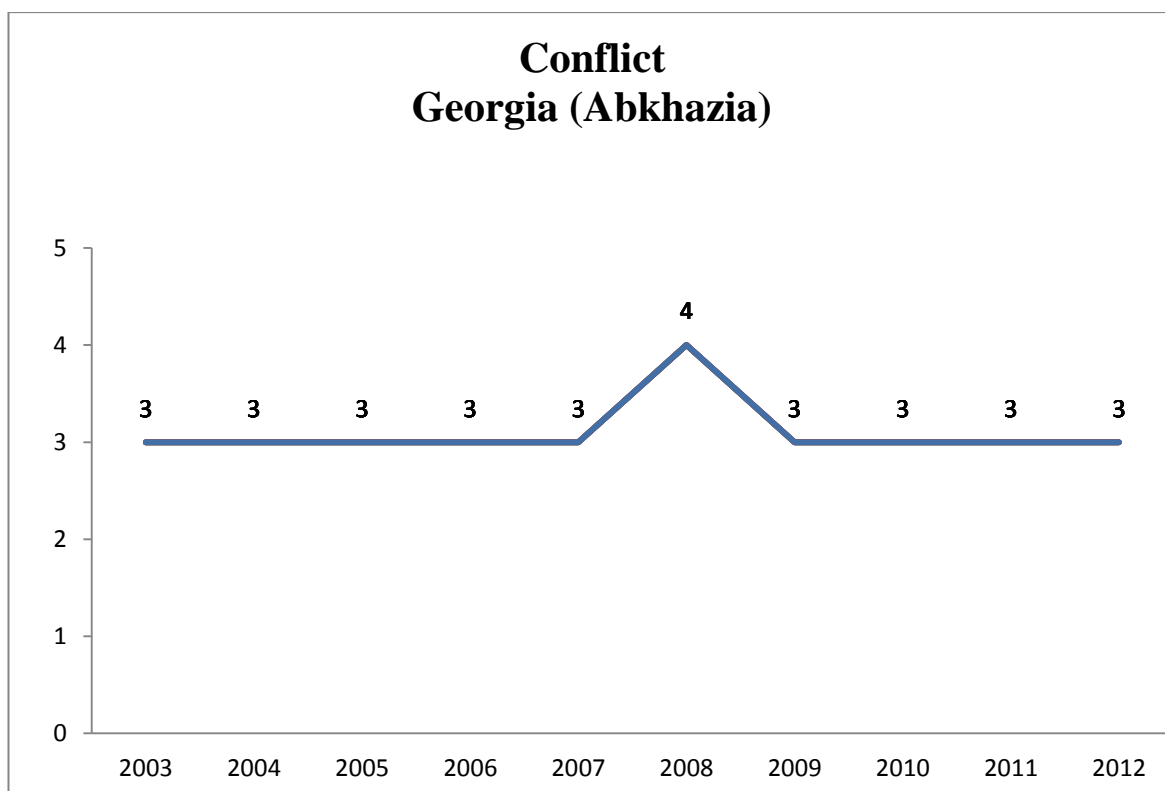
Consequently, in order to mitigate the risk of overly-focussing on non-vital aspects in order to treasure the methodology-imposed need of sufficient background information, a differentiation tool is developed to help choose which conflicts should remain under scrutiny. Thus, I have focused on conflicts which have long-term effects on the Georgian state, *and* are considered to involve or create strategically vital foreign policy concerns and implications, *and* are emblematic for the Black Sea geopolitical dynamic in so far as the parties or issues involved are concerned. All three characteristics are met by Georgia (Abkhazia), Georgia (South Ossetia), Georgia vs. Russia, and Georgia (opposition), which, if not scrutinised, would render the attempt at judging the modifications (or lack of) of conflict in the Black Sea South Caucasian Georgian republic as insufficient.

Table 26 - Conflicts in Georgia between 2003 and 2012 (Conflict Barometer, 2003 - 2012)



11.3.1. Georgia (Abkhazia)

Table 27 - Georgia (Abkhazia) (Conflict Barometer, 2003 - 2012)



In 2003, the Heidelberg's Institute's Conflict Barometer saw the conflict between Georgia proper and the separatist Republic of Abkhazia as a result of the latter's desire to secede from Georgia and subsequently unite with the Russian federation. From a military standpoint, the conflict had not re-erupted since the 1994 UN UNOMIG mission mediated ceasefire, also observed by the CIS peacekeepers, even if in late 2002 and early 2003 civilians had been either killed or arrested in clashes with both the Abkhaz paramilitaries and Russian forces. In March 2003, Raul Khadjimba, the 'Abkhaz Prime Minister' offered a strong rejection to the Georgian plan of federalization (which was aiming to also include Abkhazia) and, later that month, Abkhazian forces attacked Tbilisi's power supply. The Barometer's codification of "crisis" (indicator codification: 3) during that year is also supported by the events in June, when in Abkhazia three UN observers were taken hostage and released following negotiations (Conflict Barometer, 2003: 12). The indicator was not to change for the following year, even in spite of Mikheil Saakashvili, the new Georgian President's envisioning of the reintegration of the province into Georgia as a key priority. On the contrary, in order to increase the substantiation of its claims on independence, Abkhazia organized a presidential vote in October. When the Abkhazian electoral commission made public the information that (Russian-backed) Khajimba, was second in the polls to the opposition candidate Sergei Bagapsh, a ruling of Abkhazia's Supreme Court was needed in order to invalidate the elections. On the 11th of November, one person was killed when Bagapsh's supporters stormed the presidential office as part of the protests asking for a repeat of the elections.

The situation deteriorated to the extent that the Kremlin felt the need to get involved and accuse the opposition of aiming to overthrow the pro-Russian Abkhazian leadership. In the given circumstances, Moscow hinted that it might intervene in Abkhazia – an element which triggered Saakashvili's protests – and a potential hint at its lack of coercive self-imposed limitations, along with his denomination of the Abkhaz elections process as illegitimate (Conflict Barometer, 2004: 11). In January 2004, elections were rerun and Bagapsh won 90.1% of the votes, a crippling score for Khajimba. Nonetheless, the newly elected de facto president informed Tbilisi that the independence of Abkhazia was to be seen as a precondition for any subsequent negotiations taking place between him and Georgia proper. Adding to this later that month, the separatist authorities made public their objective to issue Abkhazian passports. This measure was followed in March by a separatist parliament-issued law on Abkhaz citizenship – instances to which, as was expected, Georgia protested. Protests went both ways, however, as Georgia proper announced its objective of building up its military capabilities in order to be prepared to join NATO. On the other hand, the Abkhazians revealed concern over the Georgian accumulation of military assets, the intention to further integrate with Russia, and refused to take part in the July talks between UN and Georgia regarding Abkhazia's future. In August, the armed forces of Abkhazia organized their largest manoeuvres since 1994. The Conflict Barometer indicator for the country did not change in 2005,

even if events seemed to exacerbate - proof of this being the two (failed) assassination attempts on Ankvaba, the Abkhazian Prime Minister (Conflict Barometer, 2004:13).

Within the following year, both Abkhazia (from Russia) and Georgia (primarily from the US) continued to benefit from substantial political and economic support from outside. This led to a series of complaints made by the government in Tbilisi, culminating in a parliamentary resolution calling for the withdrawal of the Russian troops from the separatist province – and a worsening of tensions around the conflict, primarily triggered by the worsening of Russia-Georgia relations. In July, in spite of a ban codified in the 1994 ceasefire agreement in Moscow, Tbilisi's forces entered the Kodori Valley in an operation targeting 'The Hunters' (militia troops formerly on the Georgian side). Abkhazia reacted to the gesture as if it represented a provocation and did not attend the weekly talks with Georgia, Russia and the UN. On an international level, Georgia's gesture was subject to sanctions – literally – through UN SC Resolution 1716 from October 13, 2006, which condemned its troop movements. This was followed by an Abkhazian-Russian military manoeuvre and an Abkhazian request to Moscow for the recognition of sovereignty (Conflict Barometer, 2006: 13) Even if recognition did not happen at this time, the Conflict Barometer indicator was not to change as the elements characterising the crisis continued to occur. Otar Turnaba and Alik Khishba (Abkhazian officials) were assassinated by unknown individuals in December 2006. In February – March of 2007, excluding Georgian citizens, Abkhazia organized local elections which were, again, not subject to international recognition but were subject to a Georgian protest at the UN. As yet another part of the Russia-Georgia conflict was manifesting over the crisis in Abkhazia, public accusations from Tbilisi claimed that Moscow's troops had used helicopter gunships to attack two Georgian villages. Later in the year, in August, accusations from Georgian media that Russian and Abkhaz troops are harassing Georgians in Gali, also reached the forefront of discussions; and in September-October, skirmishes between the Abkhazians and Tbilisi's forces led to the death of a few Abkhazians, incidents followed by a Georgian accusation that Moscow was increasing its military presence within the separatist republic, during the following month (Conflict Barometer, 2007: 14).

On the 4th of November, 2007, a tri-lateral meeting was organized in Sukhumi between the 'heads of state' of Abkhazia (Bagapsh), South Ossetia (Kokoity) and Transnistria (Smirnov), which resulted in a charter calling for independence recognition, the continued presence of the Russian armed forces (codified as 'peacekeeping forces') and mutual cooperation⁶⁵ (Conflict Barometer, 2007: 14).

If the period prior to 2008 in the Abkhazian conflict could be characterised as a form of dynamic stalemate, similar to Transnistria (but of a higher intensity), in which the Heidelberg Institute's Conflict Barometer did not change, the events in Georgia in 2008 led to a situational explosion.

⁶⁵ See chapters on Russia and Moldova

The situation manifested on the separatist territory firstly in the form of a succession of incidents between Georgian and Russian (under a CIS mandate) troops at the Georgian-Abkhazian “border”, followed by renewed efforts from Tbilisi to internationalise the peacekeeping force. Later, following the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo (and its partial international recognition), it went on a path of abrupt deterioration – although the events in the separatist province would not, in the view of the Heidelberg Institute, escalate to full-blown war (indicator 5), as it was the case in other parts of Georgia (Conflict Barometer, 2008: 16).

Moscow declared at the beginning of March, 2008, that it no longer saw itself as party to the transport, economic and trade 1996 sanctions imposed on Abkhazia – measure which was followed by an Abkhazian plea to both the UN and Moscow for recognition of independence. Although this recognition did not happen at this time, it was replaced by an additional set of measures which aimed to bring Russia-Abkhazia relations even closer together. Saakashvili, the Georgian President, aimed to use the occasion to offer the Abkhazians a peace plan – which was immediately rejected (Conflict Barometer, 2008: 16 - 17).

What followed was a series of (Abkhazian/Russian) anti-aircraft missiles taking down Georgian surveillance drones over the separatist republic, an increase of the number of Russian troops in the area (by 500 paratroopers and 400 civil railway personnel, the latter brought to repair the Sukhumi – Ochamchire railway lines), and public concerns from Tbilisi that such measures were preparing a Russian military intervention in the separatist province. Later in the year, during June-July, a number of individuals (some of which were Georgian police) were killed in what was denominated as a series of ‘terrorist attacks’ within Abkhazia and at its border. With a German proposal at the forefront, the international community made an effort to present a peace plan to the Tbilisi and Sukhumi political elites. However, this measure was unsuccessful and, as a result of increased severity in the clashes between Georgia proper and South Ossetia, the Abkhazians not only cancelled the August-planned negotiation but also mobilized their armed forces. Between the 9th and the 12th of August, a Russo-Abkhazian offensive in the Kodori Gorge area successfully expelled the Georgians from the area, along with around 1000 ethnically Georgian civilians (which were displaced), apparently without casualties on either side. Later, when the Six-Point Ceasefire Agreement was tabled to the Georgian and Russian sides (ending the Russia-Georgia war), Abkhazia signed through Sergei Bagapsh. On the 26th of August, 2008, the Russian Federation recognized the independence of Abkhazia and signed with ‘the new republic’ a treaty of friendship and cooperation which paved the way for the creation of a local Russian military base. What subsequently followed, in the words of the Heidelberg Institute is a situation in which:

“... internationally-brokered talks in Geneva to mediate between Georgia and Russia foundered over the unresolved question of Abkhaz and South Ossetian participation in the negotiations. Informal talks were held on November 19, to be continued on a

monthly basis. However, the situation in Abkhazia remained tense, with a series of assassination attempts on Abkhaz and Georgian officials in the border areas as well as repeated armed attacks on police posts in the region” (Conflict Barometer, 2008: 16 - 17).

It is worth noting once again that the events in Abkhazia were not seen as having escalated to war (indicator 5), as was the case in the Georgia – Russia conflict, although they reached indicator 4, namely that of ‘severe crisis’ during 2008. In 2009, however, the Abkhazian situation reversed to that of a Transnistrian-style ‘dynamic stalemate’ of a higher severity, characterized by a succession of highly violent albeit confined events. The establishment of an IPRM (Incidents Prevention and Response Mechanism) within the ‘Geneva talks’ framework (under OSCE, EU and UN mediation), represented one of the few tangible results of negotiations involving the parties to the conflicts in Georgia, with the separatist provinces being recognized at the time only by Russia, Nicaragua and Venezuela. The UNOMIG (the local UN observer mission to Georgia and Abkhazia, established since 1993) was terminated with a Russian veto on its extension, and the de facto international monitoring authority with a substantial mandate over the area was left to be the EUMM (the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia) – which signed in January, 2009 a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Defence of Georgia which would unilaterally restrict troop movements and heavy weapons placements in the territories immediately adjacent to both Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Conflict Barometer, 2009: 13).

Mine explosions and firefights between Abkhaz militia and Georgian police on the ‘borderline’ between Georgia proper and the separatist province, along with bomb explosions in Gagra and Sukhumi during Vladimir Putin’s visit to Abkhazia, represented the characteristics of the middle period of 2009. A number of Russo-Abkhazian treaties established the framework for the placement of Russian border guards and coast guards in the province and 1700 troops in a Russian base in Gudauta. Incidents did indeed follow these measures, especially as a result of the Georgian law on occupied territories – which granted Tbilisi the right to detain vessels moving to and from Abkhazia. As a countermeasure, Russia began escorting vessels in Abkhazia’s waters, along with detaining ships which would violate ‘the republic’s maritime borders’. One such instance was the arrest of 5 Georgian individuals, fishing off the Abkhazian coast on the 11th of November (Conflict Barometer, 2009: 14).

At the end of 2009, in what can be described as the ‘success’ of Abkhazian and South Ossetian ‘diplomacy’ (or lack of, actually), the fourth state recognizing the independence of the two separatist republics became the South Pacific island of Nauru. What followed was a completely unrelated process of internationally non-recognized elections in Abkhazia, in which Bagapsh was re-elected. In late January of 2010, the Government of the republic of Georgia “endorsed the document *State Strategy on the Occupied Territories: Engagement Through Cooperation*

concerning the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia” (Conflict Barometer, 2010: 14) – which, in its form of platform for subsequent cooperation with Tbilisi, was rejected by Sukhumi. In addition, although the Geneva process continued, it had yet to yield any substantial results – to the extent that Abkhazian political elites manifested their belief that the process was deadlocked and they should consequently withdraw from it (Conflict Barometer, 2010: 14 - 15).

In early 2010, following the signing of a Russian-Abkhazian military cooperation treaty, Russia deployed coast guards around the Abkhazian port of Ochamchire and established the basis for the placement of around 3000 troops for 49 years near the ‘border’ with Georgia. Adding to this, even as US representatives claimed that this was already in place (presence denied by Russia as it would break the Peace Plan), Moscow made public its plan to place long-range air defence systems in the separatist province. In August, relations between the separatist province and the Kremlin were even more strengthened with Dimitri Medvedev’s visit to Sukhumi (the Russian President bringing with him promises of political, economic and security support for the area), but this was not sufficient to prevent subsequent *incidents* between Georgian and Abkhazian forces – including here a mine blast in Gali, the burning of a number of Georgian houses in Dikhazurga (in June), the assassination of Abkhaz customs officials, a roadside bomb in Tagiloni and the killing of Dimitry Kasia, the leader of the administration of the village of Rep (for which a suspected Georgian was killed during interrogation), and Russian military exercises in Abkhazia. An additional element worth noticing during the year is that of the 13th of September opening of the International Court of Justice hearings into the Georgia vs Russia case over violations of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination – in both of the separatist provinces (Conflict Barometer, 2010: 15).

The local ‘dynamic standstill’ of the ‘crisis’ (indicator denomination: 3) continued in Abkhazia all the way up to 2012 – the final year of this analysis, with the execution of three men in Gali by unknown perpetrators in May, the killing of one and the arrest of another three in Primorsk – as a result of the previous incident, with ‘parliamentary’ elections in Abkhazia (the first since the Russia-Georgia war), and with four rounds of the Geneva talks which were generally seen as unsuccessful. Adding to this, frictions between the Head of the EU Monitoring Mission to Georgia and the Abkhazian authorities began to multiply as the latter accused the former of “disrespecting Abkhazia” (calling for his replacement) – instances which were followed by Sukhumi’s refusal to participate within IPRM meetings. Nonetheless, EUMM’s mandate was to be extended by another 12 months in the area (Conflict Barometer, 2012: 21).

It is worth stating that, in judging the potential for resolution of the conflicts in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Boden (2011) has argued that:

“Today, Abkhazia and even more so the thinly populated South Ossetia in many ways represent protectorates, whose security is guaranteed by the presence of Russia. The

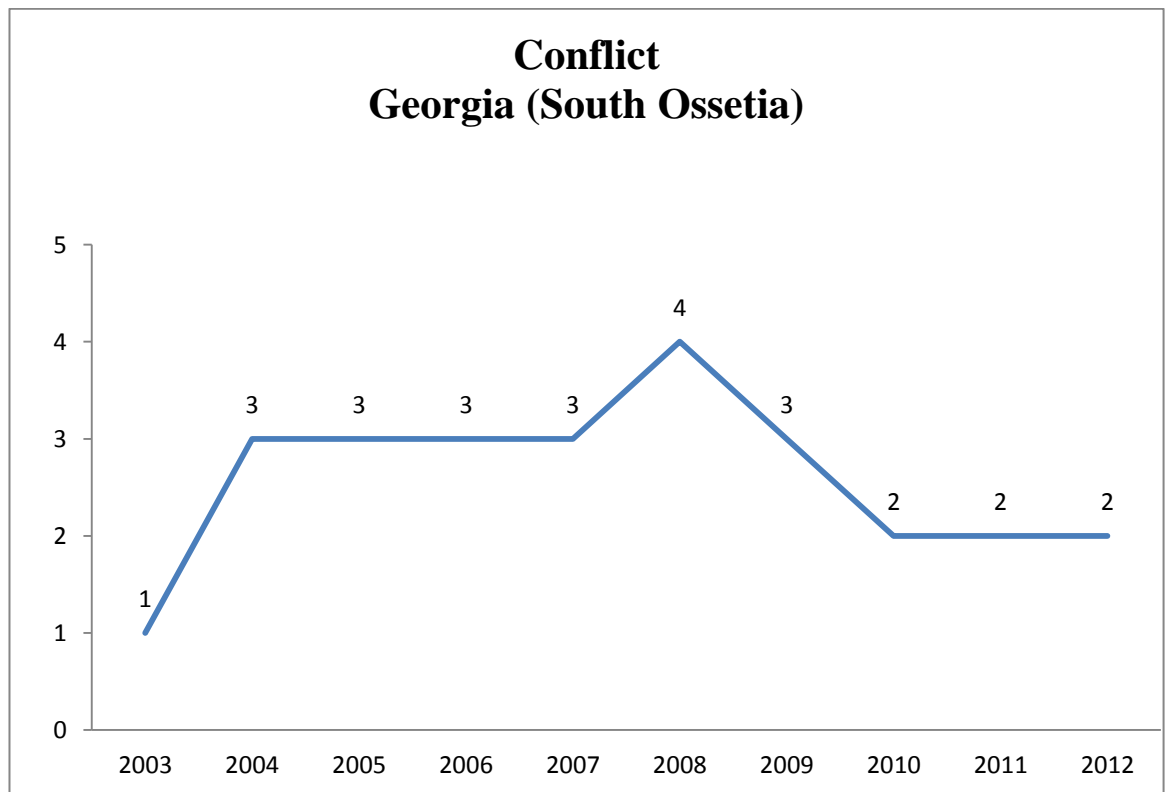
statement that solutions in South Caucasus will not be feasible without Russia, let alone against Russia still holds true today. At the same time, it is clear that Russia is trying to enforce such interests in Georgia, which are very difficult to reconcile with the other parties involved. This includes the exploitation of inter-ethnic conflict for a power policy projection in the South Caucasus, which is still regarded as a kind of backyard of the Russian military” (p. 129)

In agreement, Popescu (2011: 331) by identifying the goals of the EU in relation to Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be primarily of a defensive nature has seen the perspectives for conflict resolution in Georgia’s two separatist territories in not so optimistic terms. As the author argues:

“On Georgia’s conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia the EU should pursue its policy of ‘engagement without recognition’, while also supporting Georgia’s territorial integrity, not least by reacting strongly against any Russian pressures on Georgia. The EU should also stay engaged in the long term through its EU monitoring mission which plays a key stabilising role in the region. Beyond that, there is little the EU or any other international actor can do to change the situation for the better around Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The policies of all actors involved are too entrenched and rigid to allow any breakthrough.” (p. 333)

11.3.2. Georgia – South Ossetia

Table 28 - Georgia (South Ossetia) (Conflict Barometer, 2003 - 2012)



The South Ossetian goal, as understood in 2004, in its conflict with Georgia proper, was to join the province of North Ossetia within the Russian Federation – with Moscow maintaining peacekeeping forces within the province (Conflict Barometer, 2005: 13). As the newly elected President in Tbilisi, Saakashvili⁶⁶ aimed, as a priority, to re-establish Georgia's central authority over the republic's entire territory. Consequently, the first measure undertaken by Georgia in the middle of 2003 was to deploy 400 soldiers on the border of South Ossetia and offer the separatist territory the prospect of a special status within a federal state solution. This enflamed the situation by comparison to the previous year, as the Heidelberg's Institute's Conflict Barometer jumped from an indicator value of 1 to one of 3⁶⁷. Saakashvili was unsuccessful, however, and following more than a week of confrontations (bordering violence), a meeting was organized in Moscow in which the joint (Russia-Georgia) control commission would discuss the issue. Tbilisi's requests were clear: a demilitarized separatist territory and joint control over the Rokski tunnel – Russia's major potential entry point into Georgia in case of war. Throughout the months of July and August a number of skirmishes were reported between the separatists and the Georgian armed forces, leaving tens dead on both sides – followed by a ceasefire agreement in August. This moment, in Ryabov 's (2011) view, represented a turning point, as:

“The events of August, 2004, when Georgian forces attempted to regain control over Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia, finally put an end to the Russian and Georgian governments' attempts to work together constructively, although previously the parties in the conflict had made significant progress toward resolving their issues. Moscow then decided that the Georgian president, Mikheil Saakashvili, was unreliable, and Tbilisi finally understood that there was no hope that Russia would help Georgia restore its territorial integrity. Up to this point, however, Moscow had for the most part tried to remain equally distant from both sides of the conflict, and had even occasionally taken steps to resolve it.” (p. 266)

In November, Kokoity (South Ossetian leader) and Zhvania (the Prime Minister of Georgia) signed a demilitarization agreement with the OSCE as observer. Nonetheless, the period was followed by limited firefights (by Georgian standards) (Conflict Barometer, 2004: 11). Another offer of federalization was rejected by South Ossetia in January of 2004 and in February, relations between Tbilisi and Tchinvali cooled as the former accused the latter of orchestrating a bomb attack in Gori, which killed three police officers. Later on, in May, a Georgian attack on Ossetian paramilitary forces in the proximity of Kurtra left 5 (Ossetians) dead. Georgian losses were also registered during 2005, as a result of a heavy weapons attack on Georgian villages close to the South Ossetian border in September. In a revealing instance regarding the potential for resolution of the conflict

⁶⁶ See previous sections on the beginning of Saakashvili's presidency.

⁶⁷ And it would not return to its 2003 value up to present day.

through federalization at the time, it is worth noting the South Ossetian ‘President’s’ statement that he hoped for his republic to gain independence prior to 2007 (Conflict Barometer, 2007: 13).

In 2006, the Heidelberg Institute noted that:

“The breakaway republic of South Ossetia continued to strive for secession from Georgia. The not internationally recognized de-facto President Eduard Kokoiti repeatedly called for the establishment of political unity with North Ossetia, which is part of the Russian Federation. Despite obtaining good relations to the South Ossetian government, Russia so far remained noncommittal regarding the demand to recognize South Ossetia’s independence or its unification with North Ossetia.” (Conflict Barometer, 2006: 13)

In an effort to dismantle what it considered the biggest barrier to conflict resolution in South Ossetia, the Georgian parliament passed a resolution which set an ultimatum for the departure of Moscow’s troops from the separatist province. In response, Tskhinvali made a public request that Russia maintained its peacekeepers and soon after (in August) began issuing its own passports (Conflict Barometer, 2006: 13 - 14).

Irakli Okruashvili’s (the Georgian Minister of Defence) helicopter came under fire at the beginning of September from South Ossetian militia – an incident which preceded another series of skirmishes between the Georgian armed forces and the South Ossetian militia, while on the political arena a South Ossetian referendum on independence, at which 99 per cent of voters declared their desire for secession, was denominated publicly by Western actors (meaning here the European Union, the United States and the OSCE) as undemocratic and invalid (Conflict Barometer, 2006: 14). Tbilisi’s reaction was quite the opposite to that of recognizing the referendum. In December, Georgia established an alternative government of South Ossetia in the areas of the province it controlled – the South Ossetian Provisional Administrative Entity. The leader of the new administrative structure was Dimitry Sanakoye – a direct competitor to the de-facto authority lead by Eduard Kokoity. Even with the South Ossetian parliament’s rejection of such measures, the government in Tbilisi passed a law on the reform of the South Ossetian administration in February (Conflict Barometer, 2007: 14).

Political instances of tension were ‘backed’ by violence on the ground as between January and March of 2007, both members of the South Ossetian militia and Georgian police were killed in skirmishes. Adding to the situation were instances where, South Ossetian militias would fire mortars at villages populated by a majority of ethnic Georgians and subsequently cut water supplies – as was the case from May to July. At the beginning of July, Kokoity declared publicly that South Ossetia might organize (i.e. terrorist) attacks throughout Georgia, and, in another instance typical to the Georgian context, Saakashvili, as a result of the discovery of an unexploded projectile in the

proximity of a Georgian village, accused Moscow of undertaking air raids over the republic – denied by the Kremlin (Conflict Barometer, 2007: 14 - 15). On this background came the trilateral meeting with the other heads of the separatist territories for South Ossetia – to which Kokoity was a signatory (Conflict Barometer, 2007: 15) and Saakashvili's refusal to participate in the joint control commission's meetings following October until his request to add to the negotiation format the EU and the OSCE (Conflict Barometer, 2008: 17).

Kosovo's declaration of independence did not pass unnoticed in South Ossetia and an appeal from the parliament in Tskhinvali was sent to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Moscow and the CIS. It asked, of course, for recognition of South Ossetian independence. This did not happen yet, though, and Russia answered with another wave of 'intensified relations'. What followed was an increase in the intensity of the skirmishes between the South Ossetian militia and forces of the Georgian Interior ministry, followed by both a denunciation made by Tskhinvali against Tbilisi for the amassing of troops at the 'border' and by one in reverse for the construction of fortifications, along with more skirmishes. In the immediate period, the Heidelberg institute identifies (but does not denominate as such) an escalation spiral between the Georgian and the South Ossetian sides to the conflict, namely:

“... According to Georgia, South Ossetian militias attacked a Georgian military post on July 29, while South Ossetia accused that Georgian units had opened fire against two South Ossetian villages. Both sides blamed each-other for a shootout claiming six lives on August 1. The next day, Georgia accused South Ossetia of having attacked six Georgian-controlled villages. The fighting resulted in the evacuation of more than 800 South Ossetians from Tskhinvali and the surrounding villages to North Ossetia. On August 5, in a rapid succession of armed clashes between the various villages, increasingly heavy weaponry was employed including grenade launchers and armoured combat vehicles. Severe fighting broke out on the morning of August 7, followed by unsuccessful last-minute mediation attempts by Russia, and the declaration of a unilateral ceasefire by Georgia that evening. However, around midnight Georgia launched a large-scale military operation against South Ossetia. Supported by heavy artillery, Georgian troops took control of Tskhinvali and several surrounding villages... Russia intervened in support of South Ossetia, claiming to protect Russian citizens in South Ossetia.” (Conflict Barometer, 2008: 17 - 18)

By the 8th of August, South Ossetian troops, with support from the Russian armed forces, regained control over Tskhinvali. For four days afterwards, the Russian air force carried out sorties over Georgia. Aside from the few hundreds dead, what had become the Georgian war against the Russian Federation also left 22,000 IDPs (internally displaced persons) which relocated from Georgian villages within South Ossetia, not least as Tbilisi lost control over Akhalkgori – the only

district in the separatist province under its de facto jurisdiction. What followed subsequently was the Six-Point Ceasefire Plan, mediated by the French Presidency of the EU and Russia's recognition of independence, coupled with the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. This, as was the case in Abkhazia as well, created the grounds for a Russian military base in the separatist province (Conflict Barometer, 2008: 17 - 18).

The issue of participation for both Abkhazia and South Ossetia represented the element which foundered the success of the UN/EU/OSCE-brokered "Geneva Talks" in October and only an informal framework could be held the next month, even if the South Ossetia – Georgia conflict would de-escalate back to previous years' levels. Also, in light of Georgian accusations of 'ethnic cleansing' in South Ossetia in relation to the Georgian population and NGOs activating in the separatist republic, Russia was asked to 'step up' in its local occupying power responsibilities and take measures which would end the South Ossetian militia attacks on Georgians in the district of Akhalkori. As expected in the conflict, throughout the year, instances of bomb explosions, kidnappings, assassination attempts and bombardment from both sides of the border remained on the agenda within the area (Conflict Barometer, 2008: 18).

As stated in the previous section on the conflict between Tbilisi and Sukhumi, at the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009, the Russian Federation, Nicaragua and Venezuela were the countries which had recognized the independence of Georgia's two separatist provinces, and, with the exception of the establishment of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism, the lack of results within the "Geneva Talks" were also felt in South Ossetia. As the OSCE mission's extension was vetoed by the Russian side, for both Abkhazia and South Ossetia the EUMM was to represent the international supervisory corpus. Also in a similar fashion with Abkhazia, a Tskhinvali – Moscow agreement in September of 2009 allowed the stationing of 1700 members of the Russian armed forces in the province (in its capital). The series of skirmishes, assassinations, kidnappings and mine explosions continued between the Georgians and the South Ossetians and, in addition, even the EUMM and OSCE unarmed representatives were opened fire upon. In two particularly severe incidents, in February and April, 2009, two representatives of the OSCE were detained by the militias, only to be released before the day ended. Moreover, by the end of October, more than 20 Georgian citizens had been detained due to attempting to 'illegally cross' the South Ossetian border (Conflict Barometer, 2009: 14).

It is worth noting that the EU Independent Inquiry Mission's findings on the causes of the Russo-Georgian August 2008 war identified the Georgian offensive on Tskhinvali as the trigger of inter-state war. However, the Mission did not identify instances of (the invoked term of) genocide against South Ossetian ethnics, although it did find evidence of ethnic cleansing of Georgian ethnics in South Ossetia following the war (Conflict Barometer, 2009: 14).

By the middle of September, 2010, Tuvalu had joined the group of countries which recognized the independence of South Ossetia. At the end of the next month, following (non-internationally recognized) elections, Alla Jioyeva (from the day's opposition) won 56.7% at the polls. However, The Supreme Court of South Ossetia not only invalidated the elections but also banned Jioyeva from being a candidate again (Conflict Barometer, 2011: 18). The elections process in the separatist territory was to be extended well into 2012, when, in April, former KGB pro-Russian Leonid Tibilov managed to secure 54% of votes, defeating his counter-candidate, David Sanakoyev (Reuters, 2012).

The series of incidents characterising the “dynamic stalemate” in South Ossetia have been registered by the Heidelberg Institute in 2011 as well, as:

“On May 18, two Georgians were injured in a shootout in the district of Sachkhere near the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) between the region of South Ossetia and Georgia. Georgia's ministry of Internal Affairs claimed that Russian security personnel had opened fire. In contrast, South Ossetian authorities said that its border guards had detained a group of Georgians crossing the ABL and were shot at by unidentified perpetrators. Georgian citizens crossing the ABL were repeatedly detained by South Ossetian law enforcement agencies. Between May and June, South Ossetian authorities detained at least 15 people, most of whom were released later. Over the year, Georgia and South Ossetia exchanged more than 20 prisoners which had been detained after the 2008 war.” (Conflict Barometer, 2011: 18 - 19)

Between December, 2010 and September 2011, Russia triggered repeated Georgian protests for military exercises, placing Tochka-U ballistic missiles in its South Ossetian military base, and ratifying a treaty codifying legally the permission of the Russian Federation (given by South Ossetia) to station its troops in the province for 49 years. The Geneva Talks, involving the two countries did continue but did not reach any significant results – even concerning the return of refugees. Following the UN General Assembly's endorsement of a resolution on the status of IDPs and refugees from the regions involved in the 2008 war, South Ossetia left the negotiations table. Georgia attempted to bring a case against Russia to the attention of the International Criminal Court – namely that Moscow had breached the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination between 1990 and 2008 in its involvement within the Georgian conflicts. The case was declared to be not admissible, however, as Georgia “had not sought remedy before the UN or in negotiations with Russia before addressing the Court” (Conflict Barometer, 2011: 19). Nonetheless, as Boden (2011) correctly summarises:

“20 years of Georgia's independence – this also means 20 years of ethno-political conflicts surrounding the secession territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This is the worst legacy that Georgia has inherited from the Soviet era. The consequences are

to be felt to the present day as a festering wound. The political, economic, social and cultural development of independent Georgia cannot be understood without them. As long as these conflicts are not settled by mutual agreement, the country will remain in a condition of latent instability” (p. 125)

11.3.3. Georgia (Russia)

Table 29 - Georgia (Russia) (Conflict Barometer, 2003 - 2012)



In 2003, the Russia – Georgia conflict was primarily seen by observers such as the Heidelberg Institute as to do with Chechen rebels’ bases being located within Georgian territory. The Conflict Barometer’s indicator of 3 (“crisis”) was identifiable at the time in incidents such as that of Pankisi valley (in which 5 Chechens died) and in Georgian accusations that Moscow is supplying the irregulars with weaponry, on one hand, and in the Kremlin protesting against US reconnaissance flights over the Russia-Georgia border, on the other. Moscow sent signals to Tbilisi that it had the power to emit legislation which could potentially both isolate Tbilisi from an economic standpoint, while at the same time bring closer to itself Georgia’s separatist republics. Adding to this, following Georgia’s refusal to extradite a number of Chechen rebels it had arrested the previous year, the Kremlin threatened with a strike on the rebels acting within Georgian territory (Conflict Barometer, 2003: 13).

Throughout the following years the conflict between the two states decreased slightly in intensity from 3 (‘crisis’) to 2 (‘manifest conflict’) and, most importantly, by 2005 the major issue triggering the conflict was no longer the Chechens but, in the view of the Heidelberg Institute, international power. Georgia’s non-Moscow orientation triggered a number of reactions from the Kremlin, including the recalling of its Ambassador from Georgia, suspending post, transport links and border openings with the county, and, most importantly for this thesis – the closing of its market “for

Georgian wine and mineral water” – a measure directly correlated, in the view of the Heidelberg Institute (Conflict Barometer, 2006: 15) with Georgia’s foreign policy orientation and affecting the country’s *trade* and *conflict* indicators (my emphasis). In late September, the authorities in Tbilisi arrested four Russian officers and accused them of spying. As a response, Russia closed its Embassy in the Georgian capital and gave a direct order to its troops in Georgia to open fire if there was a need to defend their bases – also meaning that it would no longer act in accordance with an agreement signed with Georgia in March, as a result of which it should withdraw its troops. Later on, in October, law enforcement agencies in Russia ‘tracked down’ around 100 Georgians residing in Moscow and working there illegally, and deported them to Georgia, and arranged flights for Russian citizens to leave Georgia (Conflict Barometer, 2006: 15 - 16). For the deportations, Georgia opened a ECHR (European Court of Human Rights) case against Russia in March of next year (Conflict Barometer, 2007: 17). In spite of EU and NATO calls to lift sanctions on the Caucasian republic, Gazprom doubled its prices for Georgia – threatening that it would cut off the gas supply unless payments were made with the new tariffs (Conflict Barometer, 2006: 16).

At the end of 2006, as Georgia was portraying signs of blocking Russia’s World Trade Organization (WTO) accession, Tbilisi announced that as a result of Gazprom’s tariff rises, it would seek to import natural gas from its Azeri neighbours. As part of the narrative, in December, the State Duma called for international recognition of Abkhazia, and, following the Georgian accusation regarding the use of gunships on Georgian villages⁶⁸, the Russian Federation introduced visa requirements for some Georgian citizens. In September, the Russian armed forces delayed access to the Georgian representatives to a conference focusing on reforms in the separatist territory of South Ossetia. An action – reaction process unfolded, which, as codified by the Heidelberg Institute, involved instances in which:

“Russian soldiers detained three Georgian policemen in October 30. One day later, Georgia decided to push for an accelerated withdrawal of the Russian peacekeeping forces. In early November, Saakashvili accused Russia of being behind recent opposition protests in Georgia and threatened to expel the Russian ambassador, who had only returned to Tbilisi on January 23. Georgia recalled its ambassador to Russia on November 7.” (Conflict Barometer, 2007: 17)

2008 was the year of the escalation to war between Georgia and Russia – the only instance of such an occurrence in the Black Sea within the period under consideration. On the background of the previous year’s accusations on involvement in the Georgian protests, Georgia’s NATO aspirations, and various incidents involving clashes between peacekeepers and Georgia’s armed forces, in December, 2007, the Russian Federation announced publicly the suspension of its participation in

⁶⁸ See section on Abkhazia

the CFE (Conventional Forces in Europe) Treaty. The CFE⁶⁹ represented a limiting convention for conventional weapons deployment in the area west of the Ural Mountains. This, as expected, induced Georgia with a sense of insecurity as Russian troops were free to mass at its borders (Conflict Barometer, 2008: 21).

However, at the beginning of 2008, the tension in the relations between the two countries seemed to ease following a meeting between the Georgian and the Russian presidents in Moscow (in February), where press releases presented the potential for joint customs posts at the Georgian-Russian border areas within South Ossetia and Abkhazia and the resumption of air travel. A deal was struck on the former issue – namely the Gantiadi and Roki posts – for which Georgia was to allow Russia's access to the WTO. This wasn't to be, though, as Kosovo's declaration of independence brought with it the lifting of economic sanctions on Abkhazia and closer relations between Moscow and Georgia's separatist republics – which practically destroyed the WTO deal. Instead, following the destruction over Abkhazia of a reconnaissance drone belonging to Georgia, Georgia announced that it had abandoned the air defence deal made with Russia back in 1995. The Kremlin subsequently sent 900 additional troops to Abkhazia (500 armed paratroopers and 400 railway workers), some of which repaired the (Sukhumi - Ochamchire) railway line which was to transport around 9000 Russian troops into Georgia during the war, and supplemented them with another 400 soldiers during May. The Georgian ambassador to Moscow was once again recalled in July, following Russian intrusions into the Georgian airspace and Georgian and Russian military exercises. As tensions were rising on the South Ossetian scene, Russia warned that it would not stand on the side-lines in the case of a military confrontation. What followed was that:

“On August 7, Georgia launched a military operation to recover South Ossetia. Barracks of Russian peacekeepers in Tskhinvali, the South Ossetian capital, were hit when Georgia hit the town, killing ten peacekeepers. Russia threatened retaliation and announced measures to protect Russian citizens in the region. In the early hours of August 8, Russian army units crossed the border to South Ossetia. Subsequently, Russia launched massive air strikes all over Georgian territory, mainly targeting military installations but also hitting the Georgian town of Gori. Russian ground forces pushed Georgian troops out of South Ossetia on August 9 and 10, and supported Abkhaz militia in driving the Georgian army out of the upper Kodori Gorge in Abkhazia. Russia's Black Sea Fleet blockaded Georgia's maritime borders. Its troops then advanced from Abkhazia and South Ossetia deep into Georgian territory, destroying military hardware and ammunition, and setting up buffer zones around South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The brief war left 370 Georgians, both troops and civilians, as well as approx. 80 Russian soldiers dead.” (Conflict Barometer, 2008: 21 - 22)

⁶⁹ Also see sections on the CFE's use as a narrative in relation to the Republic of Moldova

As a result of the peace agreement, mediated by the EU Presidency, following the deployment of the EUMM, Russia withdrew back from within the buffer areas it created. The Georgian argument, however, which demanded that the armed forces of the Russian Federation should withdraw to the pre August 7 positions, was counteracted with Moscow's claim that the sections of the Six Points Agreement which made reference to troop withdrawal no longer applied after its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as sovereign states. Following the lack of substantial success of the 'Geneva Process', which only made informal talks possible, an instance in which Georgia claimed that Russian troops had opened fire on a convoy transporting the presidents of Georgia and Poland was denied by the Kremlin, which denominated it to be a Georgian provocation (Conflict Barometer, 2008: 22). In the middle of December, Russia withdrew from Perevi (a village close to the administrative border with South Ossetia – on the Georgian side) and then returned only a few hours afterwards, in spite of concerted EU – Georgia demands for permanent withdrawal (Conflict Barometer, 2008: 18).

As Boden (2011) argues:

“The re-legitimization of military violence as a means of solving conflicts had a psychologically disastrous effect, as the renunciation of the use of force had been one of the few positions that all parties to the conflicts had shared. A future consequence of the August War was the collapse of the conflict settlement mechanisms agreed among the conflicting parties thus far, including the Joint Control Commission for Georgian-Ossetian Conflict Resolution (JCC) and the Joint Consultative Group (JCG) for the Abkhaz conflict. Furthermore, existing mandates for conflict settlement were either terminated or non-extended for the OSCE and the UN. The principle of territorial integrity was also shattered, which had been advocated as a legal foundation for any settlement by all the mediators, including Russia, before.” (p. 126)

The situation created after the August War of 2008 was one in which Russia acted strongly (in its public narrative) in support of the independence of the secessionist areas. This included cancelling all potential forms of dialogue with the republic through the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Tbilisi and working actively for the consolidation of 'sovereignty' in the two areas, along with 'ensuring their security' through the deployment of strong offensive weaponry in their territories (Boden, 2011: 129).

The threat of economic sanctions to countries supplying Georgia with military equipment was sent, along with an arms embargo on Georgia, from the Russian Federation in January, 2009. Provocative behaviour was later in the year the accusation of the moment, when later in the year a (NATO) 'Partnership for Peace' exercise near Tbilisi was succeeded by the Russia-organized 'Caucasus 2009' military-exercise, in which Putin presented Russia's condemnation of the NATO support for the Georgian regime which suppressed opposition activists, and Saakashvili blamed

Russia for still wishing to crush the statehood of his republic. On the 18th of August, 2009, Georgia withdrew from the CIS. The following month, the Head of the EU's international enquiry mission concerning the causes of the August 2008 war, Heidi Tagliavini⁷⁰ announced that “no evidence of a large-scale Russian incursion into South Ossetia prior to the start of hostilities was found. However, [...] Russia had used disproportionate force and violated international law in its retaliatory attacks on Georgia outside South Ossetia” (as cited in Conflict Barometer, 2009: 18).

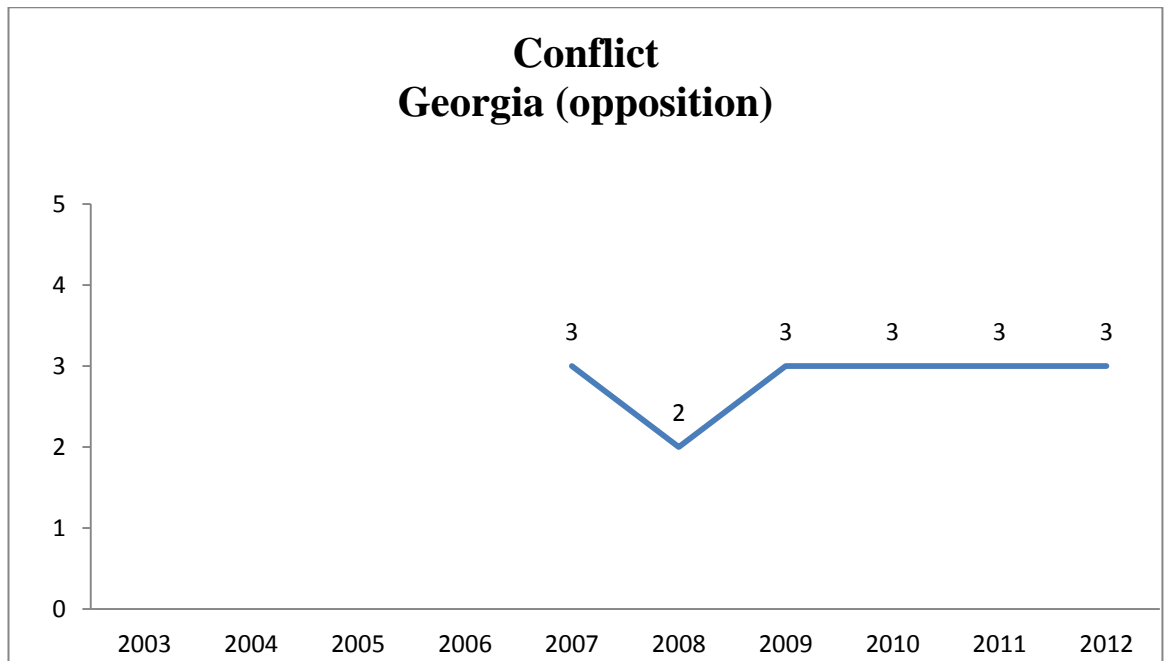
Nonetheless, from 2009 onwards, the Conflict Barometer's indicator value for the Russia – Georgia conflict decreased dramatically to 2 ('manifest conflict'), and subsequently 1 ('latent conflict'). The single land border post between Georgia proper and Russia was opened following around 48 months of closure and direct air traffic was restored between the two countries at the beginning of January. Nevertheless, the situation was not resolved, as the publicly declared willingness on the part of Saakashvili to organize bilateral talks without imposing preconditions was not met with the same enthusiasm by the Kremlin, which declared its unwillingness to discuss anything with the incumbents in Georgia and met the opposition instead, in addition to accusing Georgia of undergoing a military build-up. Georgia also voiced concerns over the accumulation of military assets on the opponent's part, especially in relation to the signing of a contract for the purchase of Mistral amphibious assault ships from France, negotiated by Russia. Adding to all of this, the Georgian position was that the normative basis of collaboration which allowed for the presence of Russian armed forces in Georgia's separatist provinces represented a direct violation of the Six Points Ceasefire Agreement, signed in 2008.

It is also worth noting that a “Strategy on Occupied Territories” was emitted by Georgia in January 2010 – involving a wide-ranging set of measures aimed at reconciliation and the rebuilding of confidence between itself and the separatist territories (Boden, 2011: 131). Espionage accusations, though, from both sides, together with assertions of blame over harbouring of Islamic militants ‘peppered’ the events, even in spite of reconciliatory measures, such as that of Tbilisi – to establish interparliamentary groups with the separatist ‘legislatures’ – were met with scepticism and, sometimes with outright accusations. The latter case applied when Georgia unilaterally abolished visa requirements for 3 months of residence for residents in the North Caucasus. Even blunders could be encountered – as was the case with the Imedi TV fake news report on another Russian invasion of Georgia – which created severe panic, anger and criticism from Russia, the EU and NATO, in one of the few instances where the East and West agreed over something concerning the Caucasian republic (Conflict Barometer, 2010: 19).

⁷⁰ Swiss diplomat – Switzerland, at this time, was also offering good offices between the Russian Federation and Georgia.

11.3.4. Georgia (opposition)

Table 30 - Georgia (opposition) (Conflict Barometer, 2007 - 2013)



From the end of September and moving to the beginning of November, 2007, protests erupted in Georgia. On November 2nd, around 50,000 individuals gathered in Tbilisi to protest against the Saakashvili government, accusing it of corruption and silencing the opposition (such as Okruashvili). This represented the largest protest gathering in Georgia since the Rose revolution. In response, authorities, through with the riot police, employed water cannons and tear gas to disperse the crowds and Saakashvili imposed a 9-days long state of emergency. However, victory against the crowds was not synonymous with political victory and the President announced early elections on the 5th of January, 2008, which were welcomed by the opposition (primarily rallied around Levan Gachechiladze). Following this decision, in respect of Georgian legislation, Saakashvili resigned as president on the 25th of November and, in what was considered to be a correlated element, Okruashvili was again arrested in Germany on the basis of a Georgia-issued Interpol warrant (Conflict Barometer, 2007: 14). Saakashvili won an absolute majority in the January elections but protests deploring the irregularity of the elections process followed in Tbilisi. Later, on the 21st of May, 2008, Saakashvili's UNM (United National Movement) won two-thirds of the seats in the Georgian parliament – and rigging accusations (in addition to public protests), along with threats to boycott the legislature followed from the opposition. Even the OSCE manifested criticisms in relation to the democratic standards in use in the Caucasian republic. The 'crisis' (as codified by the Conflict Barometer) was frozen in place throughout the Russia-Georgia war in August, but defrosted in September, when the Georgian opposition, already having been restrained in its potential for campaigning during the previous elections due to state control over public channels and gathering activities, reiterated their demand for the resignation of the President and added to it that of an inquiry into the war. Saakashvili's position was not helped in late October,

when the DMUG (the Democratic Movement – United Georgia) was formed under Nino Burjanadze, a former member of the Saakashvili camp. The occasion to protest against Saakashvili was not lost at the anniversary of the ‘Rose Revolution’, nor, for that matter, at the 1 year anniversary since the first major protests against the President had taken place (Conflict Barometer, 2008: 17).

On the 10th of March, the following year, clashes between police and protesters in front of the Parliament Building in Tbilisi left four with minor injuries. The crisis was additionally enflamed by the arrest of 9 DMUG members and the following period was characterised by demonstrations (also denominated as riots) with in excess of 50,000 participants, more arrests and unsuccessful negotiation attempts between government and opposition representatives. Even if the Georgian Orthodox Church became involved in the pro-opposition camp, the entity denominated as the Georgian opposition still embodied two main camps which differed in terms of their radical/moderate expectations and the timing and means of future elections in their requirements (Conflict Barometer, 2009: 14).

More criticism was brought about by the December 2004 amendments to the election law, setting the margin at 30% plus one vote for each candidate to be denominated eligible to pass from the first to the second round of local elections. As expected, the opposition was highly critical of the legislation modification, which it saw as a way for the UNM to secure the May upcoming elections. Critiques increased in ferocity when, as a result of a (UNM-dominated) parliamentary election, a candidate favoured by Saakashvili – Kharatisvili – was named as the new head of the Central Election Commission. However, even with such measures in place, a common space for unity among opposition poles of power could not be identified and no *one* Georgian opposition was formed. Clashes between rioters and the Georgian riot police continued up to and after the May 30th elections, where the UNM won two thirds of votes (including in Tbilisi) and the OSCE reported systemic irregularities (Conflict Barometer, 2010: 15).

In July of 2010, through a constitutional amendment, the powers of the institution of the Georgian Presidency were diminished in favour of those of the institution of the Prime Minister and ten opposition parties published, in response, a letter denouncing the fact that this amendment could allow Saakashvili to continue in power as Prime Minister after his term in office would end, and demanding the postponement of the implementation of the change until 2012. However, the measure was voted and passed in parliament on the 24th of September. Later on, following the establishment of the Georgian Party (GP), having Levan Gachechiladze as one of its key figures, the image that followed was one in which:

“From mid-October on, relatives of GP leaders were arrested on charges of fraud or having carried out bomb attacks in Tbilisi. On November 4, unknown assailants opened fire on the children of another GP leader. A bomb attack on a Tbilisi office of

the opposition Labor Party, staged by unknown perpetrators on November 28, left a woman dead.” (Conflict Barometer, 2010: 15)

In the following year, as a result of pressure from the EU and OSCE, a meeting was arranged between the UNM and eight opposition parties representing the entity of ‘the opposition’. The two sides failed to agree, however, on the matter at hand, namely a new electoral law reform, and the lack of success was subject to each side blaming the other (Conflict Barometer, 2011: 19). The clash between government and opposition continued throughout the year and well into the following one. It involved a series of rallies carried out by the opposition and severe counter-measures taken by the authorities. The situation would lead to a new government in Georgia (Conflict Barometer, 2012: 20).

Concerning the power change in Georgia, Jones (2013) has commented:

“President Saakashvili’s party, the United National Movement (UNM), lost the election in 2012 because it failed over nine years to improve the lives of ordinary Georgians. The majority remained impoverished, unemployed, and unable to secure basic health needs. The government’s disastrous economic policy was an ideological neo-liberal fancy which fetishized Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), eliminated jobs, neglected the rural economy, stimulated corruption, and economically and socially marginalized the vast majority of Georgians. Saakashvili should be given some credit: he brought Georgia out of the post-Soviet era into the twenty first century; he ended the ‘feckless pluralism’ of the Shevardnadze era, removed the old Soviet nomenclatura, expanded state capacity, increased the budget, and propelled Georgia toward Europe and NATO. At the same time, he created a corrupt surveillance state, dangerously close to Putin’s model of the ‘power vertical.’” (p. 4)

11.4. The surprising existence of Georgia

In judging the perspective for resolution of the set of conflict-related issues that Georgia is facing, Boden (2011: 134 - 135) has pointed out to the prerequisite need for both substantial democratization in Georgia, in order to modernize society and decrease the perception that the judiciary represents the arm of the executive, and for a convincing minority policy, which would bring with it the perception that Abkhaz and South Ossetian minorities can indeed *survive* in the “Georgia for the Georgians”.

Adding to this, it is clear that any conflict resolution (especially in relation to the separatist territories) must involve a good relationship between Moscow and Tbilisi – or at least the backing down of one of them from the set of claims it has from the other. This represents a solution which seems good in theory but unlikely in practice. One cannot help admire, however, that Tbilisi’s

approaches, no matter how good or poor have been – have kept Georgia on the map, as the necessity for such achievements appears common in the Black Sea geopolitical environment.

Prior to moving to assessing the dyads of power conclusions arising from the use of the economic dependence indicator within the Georgian case, it is worth noticing the value of the Conflict Barometer as both an empirical and a narrative tool within this thesis, as well as acknowledging its performance as an international assessment instrument.

11.5. Economic Dependence

In looking at the elements behind Georgia's economic dependence – as a feature of Black Sea states activating at the crossroads of the Russian and European neighbourhoods; at its ways of manifestation; and at the elements behind the instances of change behind this indicator, it is necessary to pursue a clarification path of the main features which characterise Georgia as an actor on the global trade market. As in the case of Moldova, simply providing an interpretation of the economic dependence indicator would yield very few interpretative results and would satisfy in a too small extent the methodological requirements of this analysis. Consequently, an overview of Georgia's privileged position as an energy transit area is first explored, a clarification of the importance of agricultural products such as wine and mineral water are specified, the effects of the Moscow – Tbilisi relationship dynamic on trade are subject to mentioning, along with the (the relatively lack of substantial) collaboration between Georgia and the EU.

11.5.1. Understanding Georgia's economic environment – key to understanding Georgia's economic dependence

As already argued, following the 2003 'Rose Revolution' with significant support for Saakashvili's presidency and with a strong majority in parliament, the Georgian regime undertook a process of reform which aimed at liberalising the economy, attracting FDI (foreign direct investment), decrease low-level corruption, improve the efficiency of administration, legalize sections of Georgia's highly developed 'shadow economy', provide a system of uninterrupted energy supply and rebuild roads (Gegeshidze, 2011: 33) all of which through the lenses of a libertarian approach.

In the post-2004 period these efforts included the momentous deregulation of the labour market which included, among other elements, taking away the state anti-monopoly prerogatives in favour of disallowing it to act against them altogether. Such measures reached a high-point in 2006 with a new Labour Code, to which the International Labour Organization (ILO) reacted by denominating it as 'one of the most hostile to employees in the world' (Jobelius, 2011: 84). It included abolishing work inspections having as a purpose adherence to workplace health regulations; enabling employers to dismiss staff without giving them any reason for dismissal, not specifying rights to participation within trade unions, punishing 'illegal strikes' with up to two years in prison.

Invoking the constancy of the water and energy supply in urban Georgia, decreasing the length of border-crossing formalities, the easing of import – export requirements, the decrease in social expenditure, the simplification of taxation system, the FDI increases, in addition to, most significantly, the high levels of economic growth in the 2005 – 2008 period, Tbilisi branded the de-regulating framework as a success story. By the end of 2009, a new Law on Economic Freedom, Opportunity and Dignity, a ban on the establishment of state monitoring organisms or the introduction of the obligation to organize a referendum for tax increases (the latter measure in 2010) complemented the Georgian state’s approach to “preventing the executive from deviating from the course of liberalizing the economy [in order to turn the country into a] flagship of worldwide economic liberalism” (Saakashvili, 2009, as cited in Jobelius, 2011: 85).

In judging the tailoring of this form of liberalism to the Georgian polity, Jobelius (2011) has identified three characteristics of reference with outcomes that bridge the gap with the country’s authoritarian system of governance (Table 31).

Table 31 - Combining Georgian economics and politics (adaptation from Jobelius, 2011: 86)

| Characteristic | Outcome |
|---|---|
| This form of liberalism places the process of modernization in Georgia in a clearly identifiable political narrative | Shows that state power in Georgia is legitimate as it pursues an efficient modernization project |
| This form of liberalism involves an easy differentiation between supporters (friends) and opponents (foes) | Facilitates aggression of foes – those who argue for increased regularisation or provision of public assets |
| This form of liberalism is suspicious of collective decision-making mechanisms and organized interests outside the buyer-seller relationship | Allows for authoritarian-style (i.e. and reduced in size) formal government |

These characteristics did not only lead mainstream (or better specified – in government) decision-makers to a clash with the country’s trade unions, organizations which are ever increasing in strength (Jobelius, 2011: 87). They also lead representatives of economics and the non-governmental associative environment in the republic to reveal scepticism in relation to the country implementing EU regulatory procedures as a requirement for an association agreement with Brussels. Such an example is the ‘For European Georgia’ NGO network (set up in late 2010), with a manifest which makes references to Margaret Thatcher, Hayek and von Mises and demands a Georgia without regulation, by also specifying that “anyone who opposes [our values] is our opponent” (Coalition for the European Georgia, 2010).

Following the August War of 2008, Georgia’s clear-cut pursuit of libertarian goals was no longer so clear-cut, as the lack of trade barriers and the non-regulatory business environment (which also had the component of extensive privatisation) was complemented by the percentage of a third of the state budget going into social programmes, in addition to huge investments in large public

works, having the purpose of promoting development. In attempting to explain this phenomenon, Gogolashvili has argued in 2011 that:

“This eclectic approach may be caused by a complex environment, which is undergoing the process of deep restructuring with regard to the mind-set of the citizens, political culture, state institutions, microeconomic measures and traditions, social peace-building, ideological self-identification and so on ... We can observe a continuous promotion of certain politico-economic ideas by the governing structures in an attempt to make the public believe that there is a long-term vision. In reality, the implementation tends to appear quite eclectic and adaptive to short-term difficulties” (p. 174)

11.5.2. Georgia’s assets in promoting its ideals

Nonetheless, in having the ‘courage’ to stand up to the European Union and promote its libertarian ideals, Georgia had one significant asset: a role within energy transit. The Caucasian republic represented a key player in almost all of the Union’s Southern Gas corridor plans into the continent within the 2000s (Meister & Viëtor, 2011: 337 - 338), with the exception of Nabucco and South Stream (Table 32), and this did provide it with an exceptionally important asset. This being said, it is worth understanding that this element provided Georgia, as I show, primarily with significant international attention from the EU, US and Russia, and secondarily, it represented one of the few trade lifelines that the republic had throughout the 2000s.

Table 32 - Southern Gas corridor plans in the 2000s (Meister & Viëtor, 2011: 337 – 338)

| Project | Start of project | Companies | Routes/Length/Capacity/Costs | Start of delivery |
|--|------------------|---|--|--------------------|
| Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) | 2003 | EGL (CH) 42.5%, Statoil (NO) 42.5%, E.ON Ruhrgas (DE) 15% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Azerbaijan – Georgia – Turkey (BTE (built already)) • Turkish and Greek gas network (built already)) • Greece – Albania – Italy: 520 km / 10-20 bcma / 1.6 billion EUR | 2016 (first stage) |
| Interconnector Turkey-Greece-Italy (ITGI) + Interconnector Greece-Bulgaria (IGB) | 2007 | DEPA (GR), DESFA (GR), Edison (IT), BEH (BG), Botas (TR) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Azerbaijan – Georgia – Turkey (BTE (built already)) • Turkish gas network (built already)) • Turkey – Greece (ITG (built already)) • Greece – Italy (IGI): 807 km / 9 bcma / 500 million EUR • Greece – Bulgaria (IGB): 170 km / 3-5 bcma / 140 million EUR | 2015 |
| Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania | 2010 | SOCAR (AZ), GOGC (GE), ROMGAZ (RO), | Azerbaijan – Georgia – Romania – Hungary; Transport Georgia – Romania to be | 2016 |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|------|---|--|--------------------|
| Interconnector (AGRI) | | MVM (HU) at 25% each | conducted with LNG tankers/ n/a/ 7 bcma/ Natig Aliyev: 2-5 billion EUR, earlier estimates: 4-6 billion EUR | |
| White Stream | 2005 | GUEU-White Stream Pipeline Company (composition unknown; Seat: London) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 1: Azerbaijan – Georgia – Romania • Option 2: Azerbaijan – Georgia – Ukraine/ onshore: 650 km; offshore to Romania: 1,100km; offshore to Ukraine: 630 km/ 8-32 bcma/ 2-4 billion EUR (first stage) | 2016 (first stage) |
| Nabucco | 2004 | OMV (AT), MOL (HU), Transgaz (RO), BEH (BG), Botas (TR) and RWE (DE) at 16.67% each | Turkey – Bulgaria – Romania – Hungary – Austria/ 3,893 km/ 31 bcma/ 7.9 billion EUR; Günther Oettinger: 12-15 billion EUR | 2017 |
| South Stream | 2007 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offshore: Gazprom (RU) 50%, Eni (IT) 25%, Wintershall (DE) 15%, EDF (FR) 10% • onshore: Gazprom (RU) + BEH (BG), Srbijagas (RS), MFB (HU), OMV (AT), Geoplin Plinovodi (SI), Plinacro (HR), DESFA (GR) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 1: Russia – Bulgaria – Serbia – Hungary – Austria • Option 2: Russia – Bulgaria – Serbia – Hungary – Slovenia • Option 3: Russia – Bulgaria – Serbia – Hungary – Austria and Bulgaria – Greece – Italy • Option 4: Russia – Romania – Serbia – continued as in options 1-3 • Sideline: Serbia – Croatia/ offshore: 923 km; onshore: 1,600-2,540 km depending on the route/ offshore: 63 bcma; 20-22 bcma at the endpoint depending on the route/ 15.5 billion EUR; earlier estimates: 19-24 billion EUR | 2015 |

As an example, Russia’s agenda towards Georgia increased in chapters once energy began to represent an issue. The region between the Caspian and the Black Sea became, in the 90s, a transit route for oil and gas – and the (self-decided) necessity for Russia to remain itself a transit route was at a clash with, for example, the decision made in 1999 by Georgia, Turkey and Azerbaijan to construct the Baku (Azerbaijan) –Tbilisi (Georgia) – Ceyhan (Turkey) pipeline – in spite of Moscow’s fierce opposition (Ryabov, 2011: 268). As Ryabov (2011) explained it:

“In this new international landscape, both Azerbaijan, a gas producer, and Georgia, a potential transit country, assumed new international roles, which strengthened the standing of these states in regional politics and reinforced the position of groups advocating for reduced dependence on Russia and curtailing Russian influence in the region.” (p. 269)

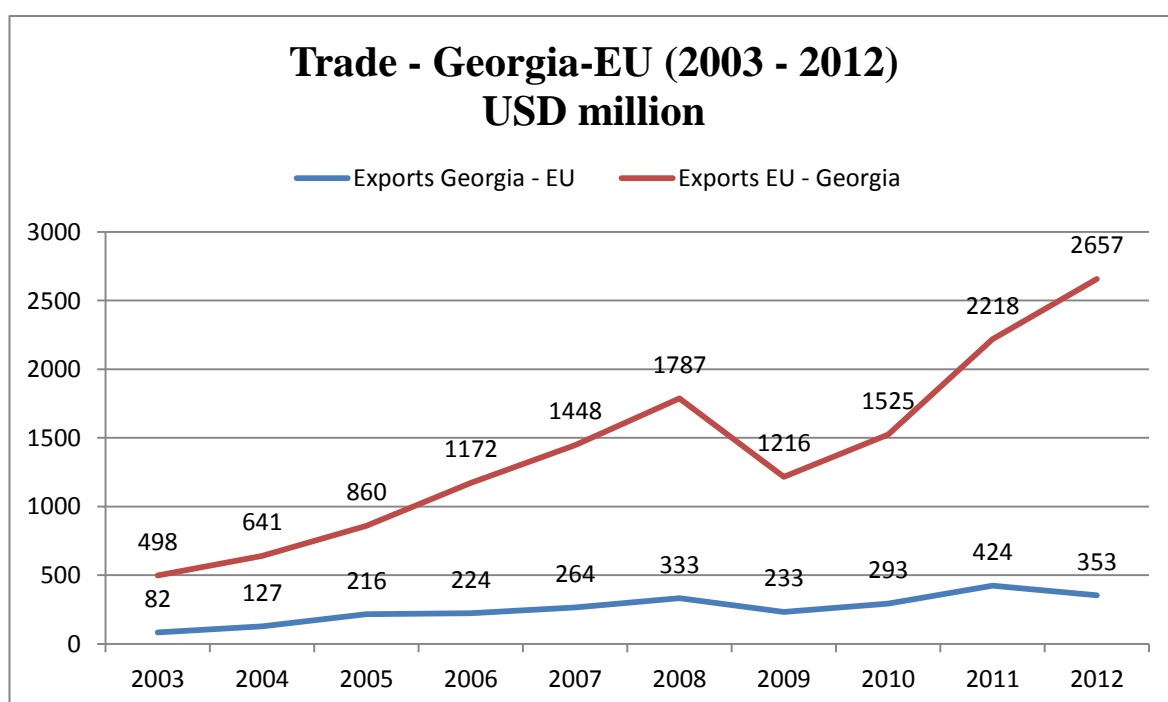
In addition to energy, however, a handful of other sectors of the Georgian economy do manifest themselves as assets on the international market. According to the International Trade Centre (ITC), other main exportable goods are agricultural products (which, in this case, include prepared foodstuffs, edible fruits and nuts, and wine), in addition to iron, steel and precious stones (ITC, n.d.).

Looking at the performance of Georgian products on the significantly vital EU and Russian markets, reveals a comprehensive image of a Caucasian state using its best assets in a highly competitive environment.

11.5.3. Trading with the European Union

In light of Georgia’s difficult process of negotiations with the European Union throughout the early 2000s, one can understand and interpret a certain trend within the Georgia – EU overall trade dynamic (Table 33). It is worth noticing that within the framework of a non-DCFTA relationship, Exports from Georgia to the EU appear to be on a relatively constant upward trend, beginning at a little over \$80 million in 2003 and reaching a peak of a little over \$420 million in 2011, after which they were subject to a minor decrease. The situation would be optimistic for Georgia if its imports from the Union would not be on a similar trend – only on a significantly higher level - and thus being revealing of a substantial trade deficit within the relationship. The only moment when the level of imports from the European Union is decreasing in Georgia is around the World Financial Crisis. At the time, however, as Table 33 reveals, neither was the level of EU exports to Georgia approaching imports, nor was the downward trend long-lasting.

Table 33 - Trade Georgia - EU (2003 - 2012) (ITC, n.d.)



As stated, libertarian ideals prevented the early Saakashvili government from pursuing a stronger and more substantial pro-EU line of collaboration prior with the 2008 war with the Russian Federation. However, May of 2009 instituted a new felling of momentum in the attempt to push for Association Agreements with the European Union, along with visa-facilitation and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs) between Brussels and the South Caucasian republics – Georgia included. The component of assimilating significant portions of the *acquis*, and thus not exclusively free trade, meant, on the EU side, that there existed a perception that this set of measures would contribute greatly to the attempt to modernise and develop the economies of the signatory countries. However, if by 2009 Georgia was lagging (along with Armenia) behind Moldova and Ukraine (they had visa facilitation in place and Ukraine was negotiating its DCFTA and its Association Agreement), the EaP launch was seen as an acceleration moment. In the case of Georgia, it was still, however, not unanimously viewed as helpful, not least because it risked reversing the country's ultraliberal policies, harming growth and FDI (Messerlin/Emerson, et. al., 2011, as cited in Popescu, 2011: 328). Thus, by the middle of 2011, Georgia (along with Armenia for that matter) was just preparing the beginning of DCFTA negotiations.

As a result of Georgia's loss of attractiveness for foreign investments, Tbilisi perceived at this moment a substantial need for pursuing the path of the free trade agreement with the EU and to reconsider its radical policy views (Gogolashvili, 2011: 189). However, the move was not clear-cut. DCFTA discussions involved meeting *a priori* conditionality on the European side in terms of introducing EU-style trade regulations and such a request was in direct contradiction with Georgia's libertarian approach. What followed was thus a series of attempts on the part of Tbilisi to either 'soften' the European Commission's conditions and/or to reinterpret them – a move which only resulted in the delay of the beginning of the actual negotiations (Gogolashvili, 2011: 190).

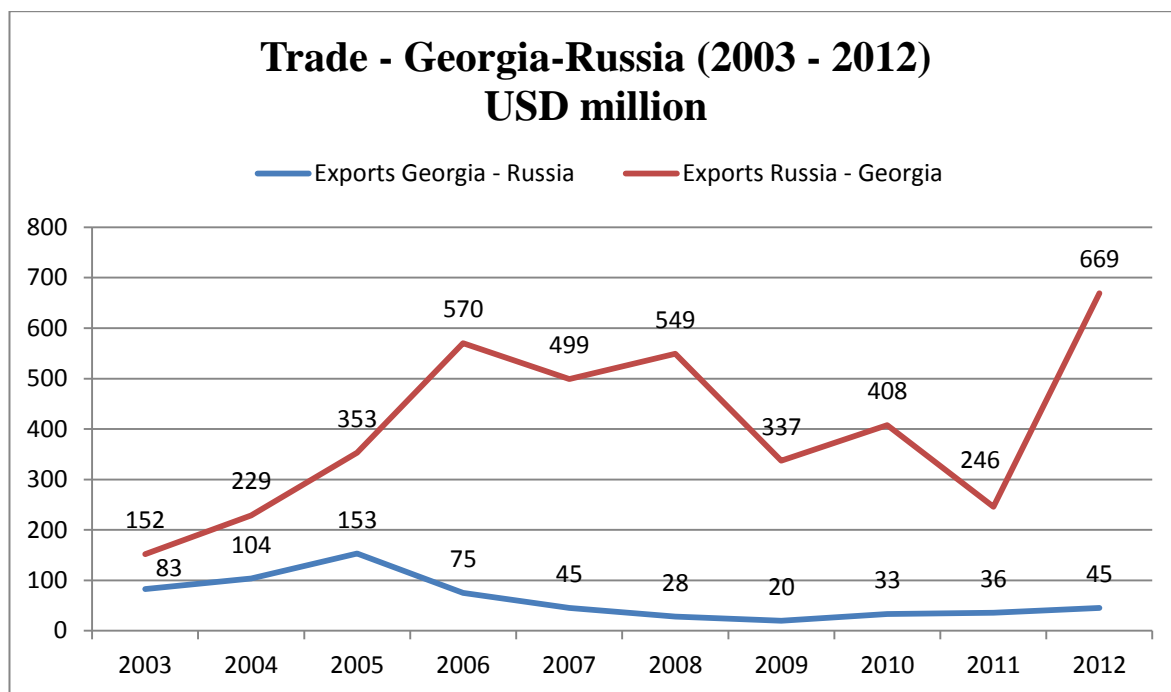
With the arrival of the Eastern Partnership (EaP), similarly to the rest of the common neighbourhood, AA (or Association Agreement) discussions began between the republic and the Union in July 2010. At this time, it is worth mentioning that DCFTA negotiations were still stalled, even though advancements in meeting conditionality-related obligations had happened on the Georgian side (Gogolashvili, 2011: 190). Georgia is presently still seen as lagging behind other countries from within the Black Sea geopolitical environment (such as the Republic of Moldova) in its normative collaboration levels with the EU.

11.5.4. Trading with the Russian Federation

Unfortunately for the South Caucasian republic, the trade deficit occurrence is highly valid in relation to the Russian Federation (Table 34) as well, although at a smaller scale. Trade with the Eastern actor manifests itself in a small increase in exports through the early 2000s – peaking at a little over \$150 million, followed by a drop and stabilisation – in which Georgia's export level in 2012 is similar to that in 2007. Imports from Russia, on the other hand, manifest a clear upward

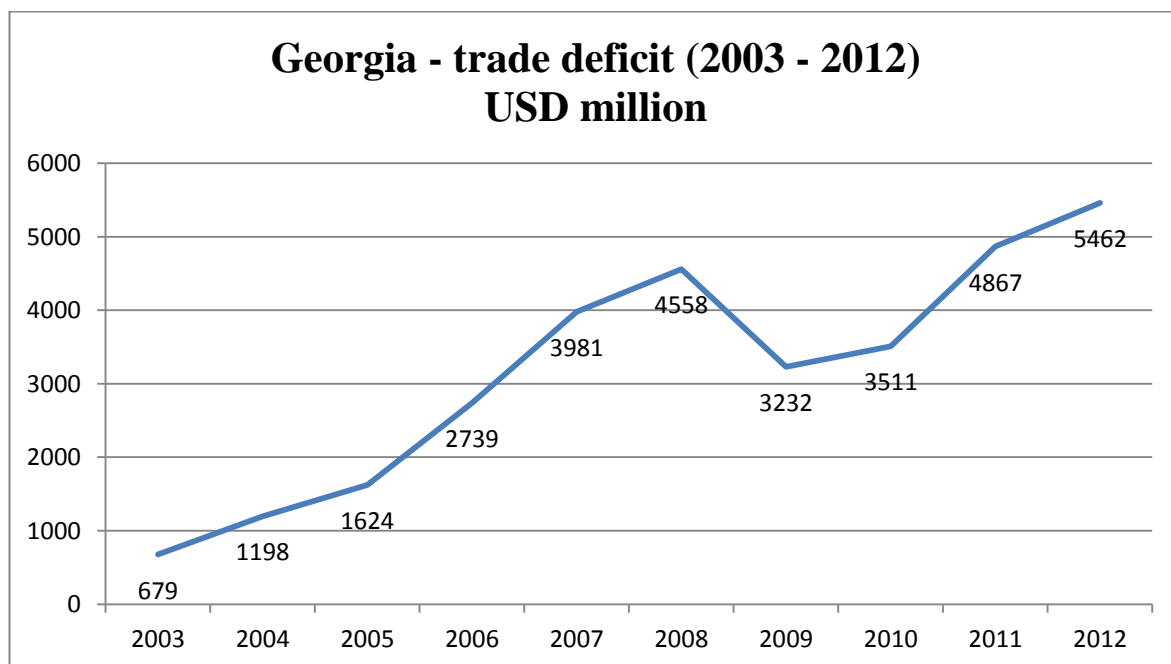
trend – reaching a peak in 2006, a relatively stable oscillation prior to the 2008 war and an oscillatory descend in the years following the war – only to return on an upward trend, reaching record levels in 2012: the year in which Russia – Georgia talks on trade resumed.

Table 34 - Trade - Georgia-Russia (2003 - 2012) (ITC, n.d.)



Such findings impose a look at Georgia’s overall levels of trade deficit (Table 35) in the past 10 years, which reveals an alarming trend of increasing – to the extent that in 2012, it reached a level almost tenfold that of 2003.

Table 35 - Georgia's overall trade deficit (2003 - 2012) (ITC, n.d.)



It is worth mentioning here that, as Gogolashvili (2011) noted in 2011:

“Georgia is still one of the most liberal economies and occupies a high position in the economic freedom related ratings. The country resisted and did not collapse after the war of August 2008. It stayed stable during the most severe years of the world economic crisis as well ... Considerable success in the energy field, road infrastructure and urban development was noted and praised. Still, the country is vulnerable to external shocks and changes that affect international markets. The reason is to be seen in a weak performance of industry low competitiveness, low productivity, a lack of know-how and an existing technological gap ... No single branch of the economy is developed in such a way as to compete internationally or domestically. Agriculture, employing almost 50% of the population, is not able to satisfy the needs of the domestic market.” (p. 190 - 191)

Such opinions are backed by the conclusions of the ITC, which, in its comprehensive country profile identifies weak competitiveness, low productive capacity and trade deficit, market concentration (on a limited number of destinations: Turkey, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Canada, Bulgaria and the United States – for more than two thirds of its exports following the Russian 2006 ban), underdeveloped quality management infrastructure, Limited access to finance, and continued need to improve customs procedures as the key trade issues faced by the country (ITC, n.d.)

11.5.5. Mid 2000s – banning some sectors - energy excluded

In 2013, on the occasion of announcing the re-opening of dialogue on trade between Russia and Georgia following the 2008 war, a *World Review* article, in reference to Russia’s ban on certain sectors of Georgian export 7 years before, stated:

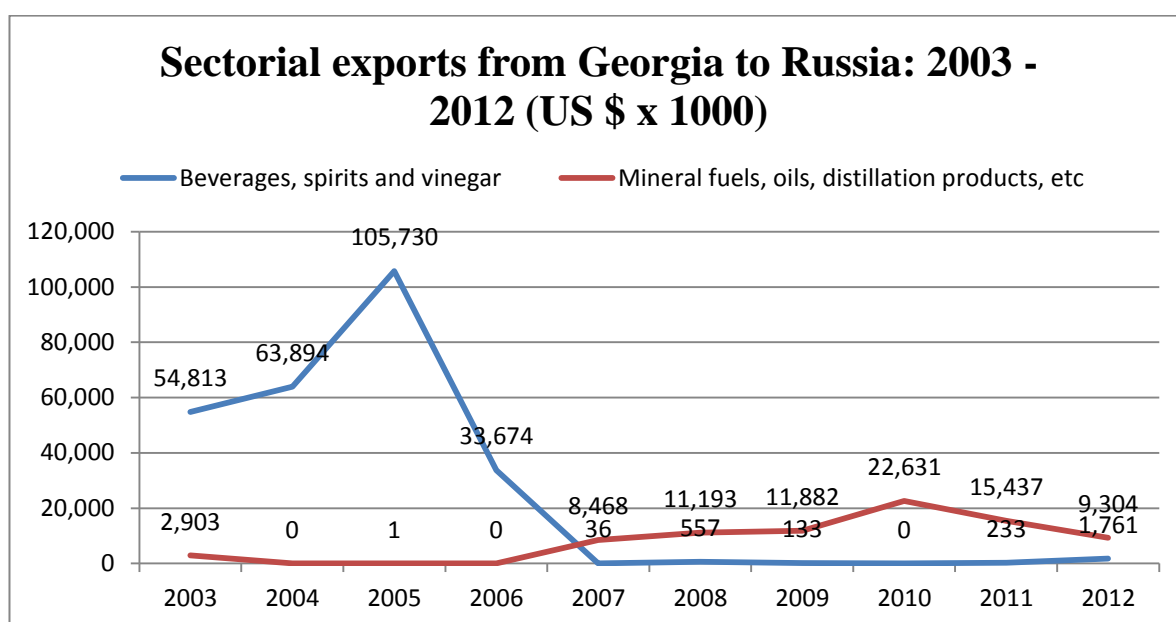
“Trade between the two countries had been disrupted in 2006, when Russia banned imports of Georgian wine and mineral water, allegedly over quality concerns, and devastated the vital wine industry. But there can be little doubt about the political nature of such reservation. The Russian agency in question, the Federal Consumer Protection Service, has shown an uncanny ability to discover health hazards in imports from countries that the Kremlin views as unfriendly” (World Review, 2013)

Willingly or not, the article hinted towards the strong connection between declared foreign policy orientation and trade sanctions – a typical occurrence in the Black Sea as a result of Russian measures - already observed in the case of the Republic of Moldova, and, in the case of the South Caucasian republic, triggered by its declared foreign policy orientation by virtue of its loyalty appraisal component.

Nonetheless, as Table 36 shows, Georgia’s ban on wine and mineral water, although it stopped any significant trade of such products originating in Georgia, it did open a door for one of Georgia’s key

assets – energy – of which Russia was also interested (Ryabov, 2011), and which ensured that inflow of capital did remain a reality even if not to the same extent.

Table 36 - Sectorial exports from Georgia to Russia: 2003 - 2012 (ITC, n.d.)



SOURCE: ITC, n.d.

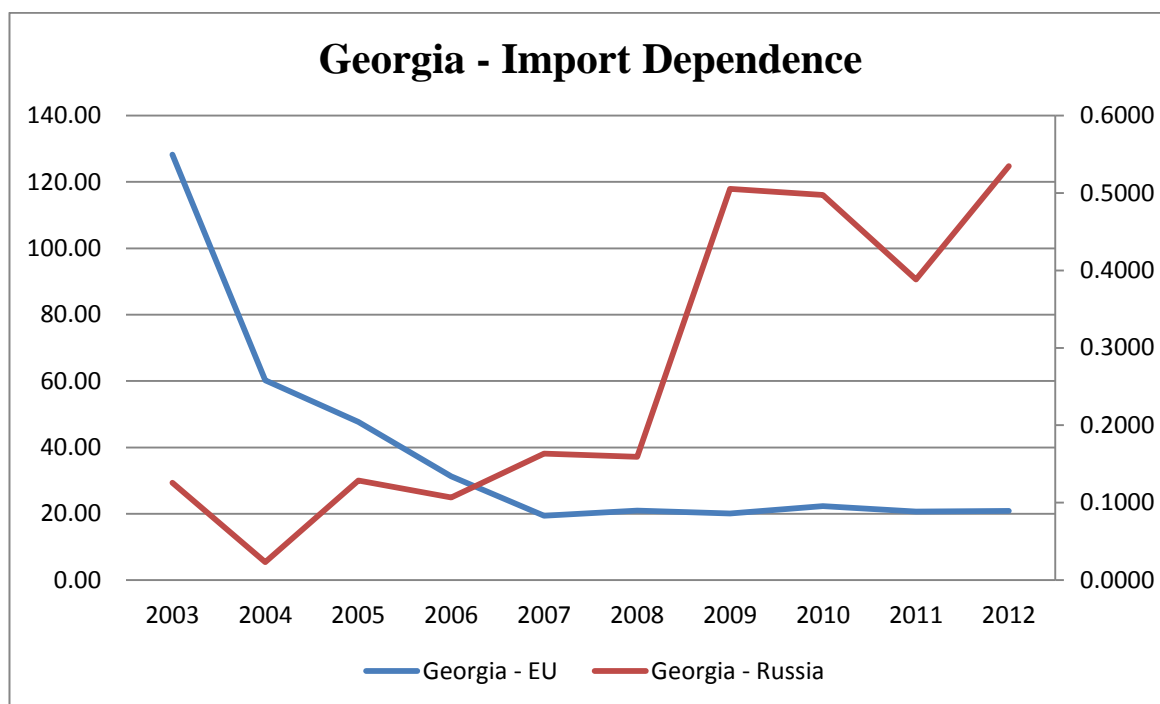
11.5.6. Georgia's trade dependence indicators

It is important to re-emphasise that the trade dependence indicators applied to countries belonging to the Black Sea geopolitical environment represent exclusively indicators of economic power in relation to a given state. In addition, given the comparable size of the European and Russian economies – or, better said, given the significant difference in size between the two – it is anticipated that they will display values within significantly different scales.

One such example is Table 37, referring to Georgia's import dependence on the EU, compared to that on the Russian Federation. The EU is clearly the actor on which Georgia is dependent primarily due to the size of its (the EU's) imports base: meaning that the percentage of Georgian imports from the EU per total Georgian imports divided by the percentage of EU exports to Georgia per EU total exports – all weighted: will indicate a clear figure in favour of the EU because of the high EU total imports (compared to Georgia's entire import base). The surprising finding here is that the same relationship was expected in the case of import dependence on Russia. This is by no means the case. As the indicator reveals, throughout the 2000s, a value less than 0.5 is recorded (with the exception of 2012) – which translates into the fact that Russia was more dependent on exporting to Georgia than Georgia to importing from Russia. Following 2011, the relationship is one of equality. The interpretation of this finding is that, although substantial, Russian products played a smaller role on the Georgian market than Georgian products on the Russian one until 2012.

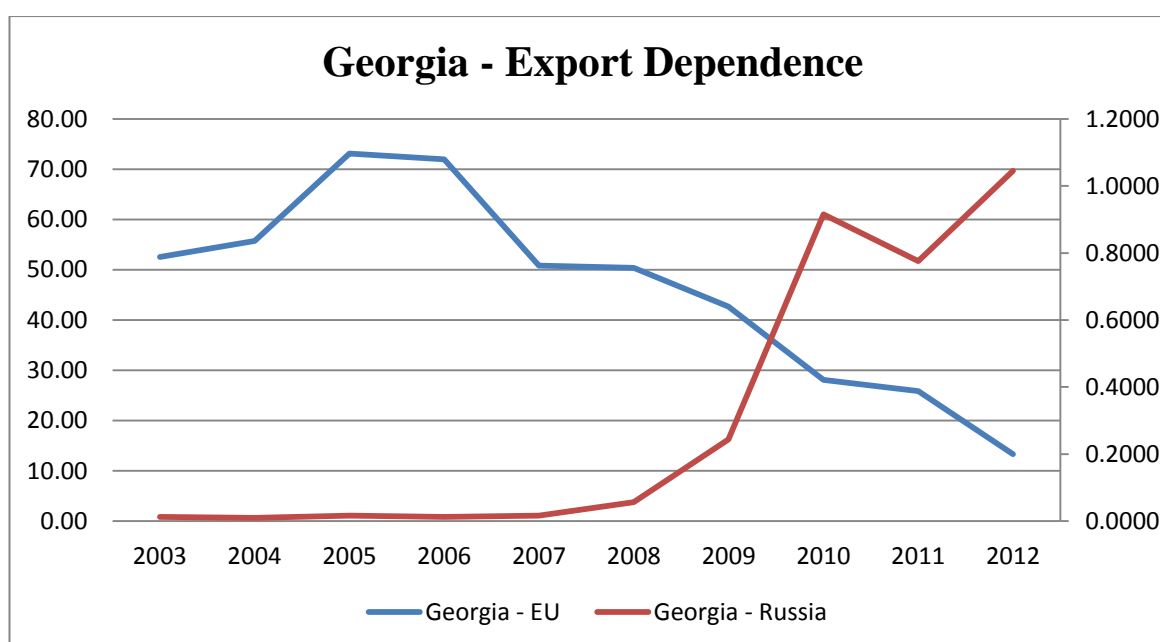
It is also worth mentioning that although clearly in the EU's favour, the indicator also reveals that between 2003 and 2007 (the 'cooling' of Brussels – Tbilisi relations), the EU's importance within the overall Georgian imports decreased 7 times – meaning that market diversification (of imports) was significant for Georgia.

Table 37 - Georgia's import dependence (2003 - 2012)



Export dependence (Table 38.) pursues a similar course – the only difference being the slightly different timing of the modifications – in the case of the EU (similarly to the situation in Moldova), the World Financial Crisis representing an element worth taking into account.

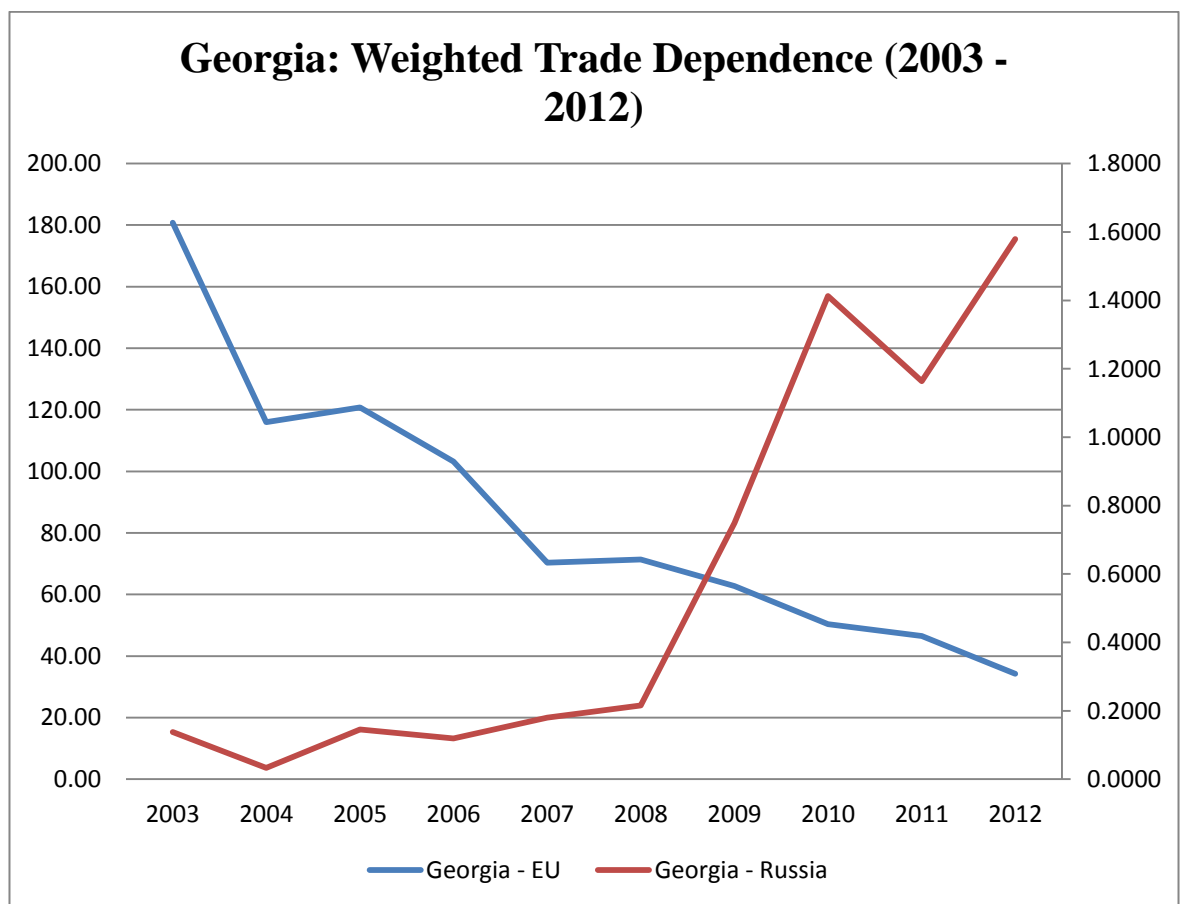
Table 38 - Georgia - Export dependence (2003 - 2012)



The weighted trade dependence indicator for the Georgian republic (Table 39) reveals that, between 2003 and 2012, Georgia remained strongly dependent on trading with Europe (by comparison to the European dependence on trading with Georgia). However, the level of EU trade importance for Georgia decreased significantly in the period under scrutiny – with a low point in 2004, 2007 and subsequently a sustained drop – most likely motivated by the strong Georgian desire to find alternative markets, where its products would face other standards of competitiveness.

On the other hand, Georgia’s dependence on trading with Russia (by comparison to Russia’s dependence on trading with Georgia) worked clearly in favour of the Caucasian republic throughout the early 2000s. Only following the 2008 war was Georgia in a position to depend on trading with Russia to a greater extent than Russia with it.

Table 39 - Georgia: Weighted Trade Dependence (2003 - 2012)



11.6. Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the analysis of the elements of narrative behind the Georgian state’s modification within its variables of declared foreign policy orientation, conflict, and economic dependence in order to build the methodological instruments for the second case study of this cross sectional assessment of the Black Sea geopolitical environment – as manifested in the representative cases of Moldova and Georgia. The subsequent chapter is dedicated to providing a

Brussels/Moscow perspective on the development of Georgia, and in formulating the narrative of the Georgian republic between Russia and the EU.

12. Georgia seen from Brussels and Moscow

As per procedure in conducting an assessment of the case studies within the Black Sea geopolitical environment, this chapter modifies the perspective from one in which the case studies' instances of variable modifications are explored to one in which the major Black Sea poles of power's approach is explained in relation to the countries in question. This task is carried-out vis-à-vis the South Caucasian republic of Georgia primarily based on the immensely valuable contributions of Ryabov (2011 – in regards to Russia) and Popescu (2011 – in regards to the EU). Subsequently, a Georgian narrative is formulated, which summarizes the findings of the case-study within the comparative historical assessment.

12.1. Georgia seen from Moscow

Towards the end of the Soviet Union, Ryabov (2011: 259) points-out to the relevance of the communist perception that the emerging democratic regimes in both Georgia and Armenia had played a leading role in helping the collapse of the USSR.

During Yeltsin's time in office, Ryabov (2011: 260) hints towards an institutional clash of interests within Russia relating to the country's approach to the geopolitical context of the South Caucasus, with the president and the foreign office manifesting a policy of support towards the integrity and sovereignty of the neighbouring countries and the Ministry of Defence acting only in relation to achieving border security – thus clashing with the former.

As Ryabov (2011) notes:

“In the 1990s the Russian Federation was eager to join the Western world and place a high priority on democratic reforms and supporting those reforms in neighbouring republics. But by the next decade, it had positioned itself as a state with its own sphere of influence in the world, and Russia began to try to maintain its hegemony in the territories of the former Soviet Union. There was a noticeable increase in anti-Western ideology in Russian foreign policy, especially in regard to the South Caucasus.” (p: 260)

The conflicts in Georgia represented in reality for Russia a potential threat for its own territorial integrity, as a substantial part of Moscow's focus was directed in the early 90s towards combatting ethnically-motivated desires for separatism (within Russia) stemming from (i.e. substantial) populations of Circassian descent. When military confrontation broke out between Tbilisi and separatists in Abkhazia (which were of Circassian descent), Moscow found an opportunity to channel Circassian hatred away from itself and towards Georgia. Thus, Russian policymakers did not prevent or stop the flow of North Caucasian (Circassian, Cossack and other ethnicities)

volunteers into Abkhazia to support the fight against Georgia and Russia supported, of course, Abkhazia (Ryabov, 2011: 264).

The ‘peacekeeping’ form of Russian presence in the Black Sea geopolitical environment was agreed upon as the best solution for maintaining Moscow’s influence in its immediate abroad. If in the early 90s, Western political entities such as the US and the European Community were in favour of Russia taking a frontrunner role in CIS peacekeeping endeavours, this position was subsequently changed much later (Ryabov, 2011: 264). As Ryabov (2011) notes:

“Several factors contributed to Moscow’s new strategic view of its foreign policy objectives in the South Caucasus. First, the Kremlin and the government departments responsible for developing and implementing foreign policy were well aware that there was no chance that the parties involved in the regional upheaval would agree to resolve their conflicts in the near future through compromise and mutual agreement. At the same time, no single power or military-political alliance existed, either inside or outside the South Caucasus region that could force the hostile parties to come to an agreement based on the suggestions of outside players. Therefore, Russian foreign policy began to focus on enforcing the ceasefire and retaining Russia’s key role in preserving the post-war status quo, which in no way conflicted with the general aim of the foreign policy Moscow had been pursuing in international affairs in the 1990s” (p. 264)

The Russian Federation has more or less represented the international actor subject to demonization throughout the Georgian narrative between 1990 and 2012. If in the 90s there was no debate over the fact that Moscow gave armed support to the two separatist provinces – an element which led to the dual defeat of Georgia, its stance was relatively ambiguous throughout the subsequent period. Russian representatives were working within the formal conflict settlement mechanisms but, at key moments, they refused to participate in consensus with the other stakeholders (Boden, 2011: 129).

Although considering Russia as a difficult partner in the region, Boden (2011: 129 - 130) has hinted towards the growing significance of Moscow’s interest in South Caucasian stability, especially due to North Caucasian concerns. Thus, re-establishing diplomatic relations transforms into a goal significant for both parties to the conflict, in spite of deep-running emotions.

Following the 2004 events in South Ossetia, the Russian Federation’s approach to the South Caucasus in general and to Georgia in particular changed (Ryabov, 2011: 271), and keeping in mind the significance for Moscow of the fact that in light of the Iraq theatre of operations unfolding, the perceived presence of the US and EU at its ‘doorstep’ (which supported the coloured revolutions and aimed to ‘unfreeze’ conflicts), the area was becoming a hugely important line of defence of Russian interests (Ryabov, 2011: 271). Georgia’s declared intentions of Euro-Atlantic

integration and of making use of the EU and NATO as instruments which would help restore its de facto lost provinces was very unwelcomed in the Kremlin. In addition, Georgia became increasingly vocal in demanding the replacement of Russian peacekeepers in both regions with an international police presence. In 2007, Russia withdrew from the country. However, after in 2006, the upper part of the Kodorsk gorge came back under the control of Tbilisi, and Georgia announced that the government of Abkhazia was to relocate there from the Georgian capital, the Kremlin began to take into consideration the possibility that Georgia would use military instruments to integrate the separatist territories (Ryabov, 2011: 272).

As Ryabov (2011) notes:

“The process of developing a new policy toward Georgia and the conflicts there sparked serious, time-consuming discussions in Russian political circles. However, these discussions, which took place in the atmosphere of secrecy characteristic of decision-making in today’s Russia, never reached the level of public debate. In the end, a new Russian policy was defined in relation to Georgia’s former autonomous areas, which was unofficially called ‘rapprochement without recognition’.” (p. 272)

A ban on trade and economic relations with Abkhazia was lifted by Moscow by August of 2006. Moreover, by April 2008, the then president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, initiated a set of measures to assist Georgia’s separatist territories, through which, *informal* legal recognition was granted to the Abkhazian and South Ossetian governments and to all entities registered there (private sector producers and traders). Even if at this time, the Russian government was not formally recognizing the territories, analysts have hinted towards the identification of a certain gradual economic and political assimilation of the areas, which was in full swing. In accordance with the 2002 Citizenship Act in Russia (which allowed for former USSR citizens to apply for Russian passports), passportisation⁷¹ was encouraged in order to ensure Russian presence and interests in the area in the long run (Ryabov, 2011: 273).

In 2006, tensions increased between Tbilisi and Moscow as Russian troops, as a result of being accused of espionage, were expelled from the republic. In response, Russia introduced visa requirements for Georgian citizens and expelled them en masse on various grounds (Ryabov, 2011: 273).

Ryabov (2011: 273 - 274) codifies a set of causal relations between 2006 and the Russia-Georgia war in 2008 to the extent that it sees the latter moment as an inevitable outcome of their existence. In addition to the expulsion of Russian alleged intelligence agents, a series of ‘mixed signals’ coming from Brussels and Washington were taken by Tbilisi as a guarantee for support in case his country would be subject to a Russian military intervention. In reality, as the author reveals:

⁷¹ See previous chapters

“It seems that neither the US nor the EU were able our anxious to convince Moscow that they were ready to consider Russian interests when resolving conflicts in the vicinity of Georgia’s former autonomous areas, provided that the process of resolution would become multilateral. On the contrary, Georgian politicians felt that statements and actions by certain American and European diplomats helped to downplay the significance of Russian interests in the region. Moscow perceived this as an alarming sign that once again the West intended to ignore Russian interests. [...] Therefore the Russian leadership came to the conclusion that military force could be used against Georgia to secure the status quo in the regions of the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian conflicts, especially because this tactic could be officially justified as essential to the protection of Russian citizens living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.” (Ryabov, 2011: 273 - 274)

The findings of the Independent International Fact Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (“the Tagliavini Mission”) concluded that Georgia was preparing for war in the same extent that Russia did – but Moscow, as a superpower held greater responsibility in preventing a convergence of dramatic events (Ryabov, 2011: 274).

A great deal of debate has surrounded Moscow’s decision to recognize the independence of the Georgian separatist republics, with commentators drawing attention to the fact that this move is significantly different from the Kremlin’s previous strategy of “rapprochement without recognition”. Ryabov, however, interpreted it as the only way in which Russia would maintain its peacekeeper status in light of a post-war settlement in which it would risk losing its ‘hold’ on South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Nonetheless, as Ryabov (2011) argues:

“Moscow was well able to imagine the negative repercussions that recognizing these countries would bring for Russia in the international political arena. However, it later became clear that the Kremlin and Foreign Ministry only miscalculated the reaction of countries in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to Russian recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Not one of the countries in these international organizations, including Belarus, Kazakhstan, and China, was willing to support the Russian position [...] Only a few countries in Latin America and Oceania recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but this was enough for Moscow to assign Abkhazia and South Ossetia the status of partially recognized states. In terms of Russia’s relations with the West, the Kremlin assumed that the discussion of Georgia’s territorial integrity would eventually devolve into a routine exchange of opinions and accusations.” (p 275 - 276).

The Russian Federation was seen following the August war as a revisionist power (Ryabov, 2011: 276) which, in opposition to its previous engagement with the Caucasus, was no longer interested in maintaining a status quo, in spite of its sustained (albeit failed) efforts to find an international law justification for its actions (Allison, 2008). However, no matter how Moscow envisioned the new Caucasian geopolitical architecture, it had neither the resources (including ideas), nor the appeal to establish a new security structure in the area. This, coupled with the decrease in EU and US activities in the area as a result of the World Financial Crisis, meant that neither the West nor the East could provide Georgia with a new development and foreign policy model, while at the same time the previous strategy was put on hold in an indefinite manner. Georgia was no longer capable of influencing militarily what happened in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, joining NATO was no longer feasible and its separatist territories were establishing long term legal links with Moscow. In addition, any potential for dialogue with Russia and, for that matter, with its separatist republics, was off the table due to the issue of Russia's recognition of the two as independent states. In 2011, Ryabov codified the situation as:

“In this environment, no single global or regional player has sufficient resources to provide the countries in the region with any kind of new momentum, acceptable to all the nations there and making it possible to create a new system of international relations in the South Caucasus” (p. 277)

Moscow – a state with limited resources and an unattractive socio-political model - perceived its position to be weakened in Georgia's territories (which it controlled), and, I would argue, reacted in a manner that could not possibly hope to reopen dialogue with Georgia for the short-to-medium term by acting against its own interest – coercing Georgia not into loyalty – but into the inability to become Eastward oriented without recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent entities.

On the other hand, as a result of the spring of 2011 EU recognition of the fact that the Abkhazian reality was that of a 'de facto state' what resulted was an 'engagement without recognition' strategy which, unsurprisingly, was also not welcomed by Tbilisi. Georgia was hoping to limit international contact with the separatist territories to only Tbilisi-organized channels. This resulted, in Ryabov's (2011: 278) view, in a standstill, only benefiting Moscow (due to the gradual legal, security and economic absorption of South Ossetia and Abkhazia) – which, as stated, Moscow itself, was dissatisfied with.

It thus becomes obvious that Moscow has both lower loyalty expectations and lower coercion capabilities in relation to Georgia by comparison to Moldova. The limited, albeit notable effects of its ban on Georgian products during the mid-2000s was but an indicator of the measures to follow. The narrative of Tbilisi within the Black Sea geopolitical environment in relation to Moscow is more one of ambition than one of potential hope for positive loyalty appraisals. In other words,

Moscow, following 10 years of coercive instrumentation experimentation on the Caucasian republic seems to have resigned itself to pursuing a path where Georgia *cannot* join Europe. The immense narrative of conflict in Georgia, presented within this thesis, would suffice on its own for this conclusion. As a by-product, though, such an approach also cancelled much of the republic's potential for use of its declared foreign policy orientation as a complete tool in bargaining the interests of the East and the West.

12.2. Georgia seen from Brussels

When analysing the EU's approach to the South Caucasus region in the two decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Popescu (2011) identifies three phase of engagement: "strategic neglect in the 1990s, expectations of growing involvement between 2002 and 2008, and fall back towards stagnation bordering on neglect again." (p. 317)

During the first decade following the fall of the Iron Curtain, little dynamic was in place between Brussels and the South Caucasus, not least due to the EU's primary focus on enlargement in Central and Eastern Europe and on its attempts to secure the Balkan space. Neither, hugely significant economic support for the region, nor a strong element of leadership in relation to conflict resolution in the three major conflicts (Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Kharabakh) were of the essence for Europe, even in spite of the fact that economic assistance did exist – although as a result of technical policies which did not tackle the 'heavyweight' local political issues. It can thus be deceitful to merely take into consideration that, in the final decade of the 1990s, the EU had invested more than one billion Euro into the South Caucasus, making it the single largest provider of development projects financing. Nonetheless, in 2004, Dr Vladimir Socor, the well-known commentator from the Jamestown Foundation denominated the EU as "the great absentee from the economic, political and security affairs of this region" (Socor, 2004: 61, as cited in Halbach, 2011: 301).

Adding to this, a clear 'Russia-first' approach became public knowledge as a result of a 1995 EU Commission Communication on the subject of the South Caucasus which stated that "a key element in an eventual resolution of the conflicts will be the attitude of Russia" (as cited in Popescu, 2011:318).

This approach, however, changed after 2003 as the process of Eastward enlargement for Europe was contouring in its shape, the CFSP developed under the ESDP and thus Brussels was developing an instrumental base for affecting the region. In addition, with the development of the ENP in 2003, even if the region was not originally included, it was later made clear that the South Caucasus did not embody a distinct area from the other neighbouring regions and was thus added to the Policy in the following year. As a result, a new set of measures appeared, as the 2003 EU – Georgia strategy paper revealed, which codified the fact that "the EU wants Georgia to develop in the context of a politically stable and economically prosperous Southern Caucasus. In this respect,

the conflicts in Abkhazia (Georgia) and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia remain a major impediment [...] the resolution of internal conflicts also appears as a major condition for sustainable economic and social development” (EU Commission, 2003, as cited in Popescu, 2011: 319 - 320). Georgia in particular had an additional element of attention granted to it from the EU as a result of the ‘Rose revolution’ in 2003, which was seen to challenge the presumption that the South Caucasus would be forever stuck in an artificial logic of authoritarian, corrupt post-Soviet false democracy. Not least, the event, coupled with the success in reintegrating Adjara, seemed to give a new impetus to Tbilisi’s efforts at reintegrating the country’s separatist regions⁷², keeping in mind Saakashvili’s declared strategy. In this respect, EU saw itself as unable to see these developments from the side-lines (Popescu, 2011: 320 - 321).

Last but not least, the EU’s energy interests in the South Caucasus transformed Georgia into a perceived key transit node for Caspian gas and oil. Thus, the EU Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) programme was embodying an instance of evidence that the hands-off option was no longer feasible as an option, an element made clear by the Commission in 2003, with the argument: “secure and safe export routes for Caspian oil and gas will be important for the EU’s security of energy supply as well as crucial for the development (economic, but also social and political) of the Caspian region” (EU Commission, 2003, as cited in Popescu, 2011: 321).

Popescu (2011) has codified the set of policy instruments employed by the prior to 2008 EU as a result of the more dynamic post-2003 engagement with the South Caucasus in general and with Georgia in particular:

Table 40 - EU - Georgia post-2003 policy instruments (compiled from Popescu, 2011)

| Instrument emission | Instrument description |
|-----------------------|--|
| Summer of 2003 | Appointment of an EUSR (EU Special Representative) for the South Caucasus – conflict resolution prerogatives |
| Summer of 2004 | Inclusion of the South Caucasus countries in the ENP – backed by Action Plans with Georgia and with Armenia and Azerbaijan |
| 2004 – 2005 | Deployment of EUJUST (the Themis Rule of Law mission) – in Georgia – “to assist the new government in its efforts to bring local standards with regard to rule of law closer to international and EU standards, and to embed stability in the region” (Cp. Council Joint Action 2004/523/CFSP, 2004, as cited in Popescu, 2011: 322) |
| 2005 onwards | Deployment of EUSR Border Support Team – in Georgia – for supporting border management reform |

However, the number of policies above, together with the perceived privileged position of the Georgian republic in the EU’s eyes, can be deceiving. As Popescu (2011) argues:

⁷² See section on the conflict variable in Georgia

“Despite the multitude of EU policy instruments, the EU failed to play the necessary backup role to implementing EU’s vision. Despite grand rhetoric on the neighbourhood, EU member states were not fully committed to implementing this vision. The limits of EU policies started to be visible pretty soon” (p. 324)

This was the case not least due to the fact that both EUSRs (EU Special Representatives) found themselves struggling in the attempt to increase the Union’s relevance within the settlement attempts concerning the Georgian conflicts – primarily due to lack of cohesion on the part of EU states. Thus, precedence was given to technical assistance and to projects which, in their intensity and scope, were insufficient in preventing the outbreak of the 2008 war. An EU camp which was completely in support of the Georgian position and completely opposed Russia’s approach was facing another set of states which hoped to avoid tensions with the Russian Federation. This represented the primary factor limiting European impact on the area (Popescu, 2011: 324).

This did not mean that the EU was not diplomatically active in the Moscow – Tbilisi – secessionist territories dynamic. However, when significant situations were discussed, as was the case of the 2005 Russian veto on a OSCE Border Monitoring Mission in Georgia, EU influence did not help and the Russia-dominated component of the peacekeeping force in Georgia was not subject to modification (Popescu, 2011: 326). Consequently, Popescu sees the outbreak of the 2008 war not only as revealing towards the severe instabilities of the Caucasus but also as an indicator of the limits of the power of the European Union. The EU did find the way out of the war through the activity of Nicolas Sarkozy (France held EU presidency); the EU’s post-war (unarmed) observers were vital in stabilising the conflict areas; and the EU’s organizing of a post-war conference of donors helped significantly the republic in re-building efforts. Nonetheless “These were successes, but of a minor and tactical nature. EU’s diplomatic activity during and after the war contrasted with its reluctance to get involved in conflict-mediation before the war” (Popescu, 2011: 326). Re-freezing the status-quo, along with cancelling out some of the detrimental effects of the confrontation represented the key indicators that a long-term political strategy was missing.

As Boden (2011) comments:

“... The August War of 2008 marks a new stage of internationalization of the Georgian secessionist conflicts, even if the mandates for the OSCE and the UN were terminated as a result. A strong commitment of the international community of states in the settlement of the conflicts in Georgia suggests itself. In this context it is the EU which is called upon more than ever before. It has already assumed a central task in dispatching a military mission to the administrative borders with South Ossetia and Abkhazia following the August War. Nowadays the EU has become the most important international player in resolving the conflicts in Georgia. For this, it has at its

disposal a unique variety of tools, which should be put into practice consistently.” (p. 133)

The policy framework developed following the Russia-Georgia conflict exacerbation (meaning here the Eastern Partnership) was connected by Popescu to the Georgian situation in a causal manner. In other words:

“The international shock of the 2008 war dissipated relatively quickly under the pressures of the economic crisis, and a sense that the EU can do little in the South Caucasus except for trying to refreeze the status quo – preventing further destabilisation but without solving the problems per se. Still one of the *effects* of the war, was the launch of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) – an attempt to repackage and re-energise the ENP. The EaP offers a very wide platform for EU-South Caucasus cooperation and in its vision it is both strategic and comprehensive: it aims to foster stability through EU contribution to conflict settlement, it aims to foster prosperity through deep and comprehensive free trade areas (DCFTA) and financial assistance, it aims to facilitate people to people contacts through visa-facilitation and education programs.” (Popescu, 2011: 327, my emphasis)

12.3. The narrative of Georgia within the Black Sea geopolitical environment

With a statehood experience interrupted a few centuries ago, the republic of Georgia gained independence with the fall of the Soviet Union only to find itself struggling economically, financially, politically and militarily. The process of becoming a state, however, did not come easy, as the last remains of a local communist elite did their best (and worst) in attempting to prevent the inevitable: the manifestation of the breakup of the Soviet Union locally. In doing so they played on and exacerbated local ethnic and cultural grievances to the extent that they embodied the fuel that would later light the fire of conflict in the new independent state.

Lack of a better option at the dawn of statehood meant that whichever motive differentiated the locals from the Soviets was the symbol to rally around, and the embodiment of such a symbol was Zviad Gamsakhurdia – a nationalistic-oriented and charismatic leader which managed to transform the endeavour of obtaining territorial statehood to one of obtaining a land for a former Soviet people – a ‘Georgia for the Georgians’. What was to be Georgia, however, was not only made up of Georgians and this began to be felt almost immediately. South Ossetia was the first to rise against such views and the support it received from North of its border was more than enough to secure a victory against the ill trained and inexperienced clans denominating themselves as the Georgian army.

The situation degenerated and consequently, the new state called upon its most well-known, experienced and prestigious politician it had – Eduard Shevardnadze. With him came hopes of

peace, reconciliation and development – but it was not to be. Abkhazia, having its own views of statehood, would win confrontations against Georgia and take with it both the hopes for ‘a Georgia for the Georgians’ and local peace. Conflicts froze in place – with them Russian peacekeepers, international organizations, and Georgia was left to endure transition hardships in its own violent way.

Prestige and experience for the Georgian president meant international trust and support for a spirit of reform, which would, as hope had it, bring with it a prosperous and democratic nation. As fate had it, however, the Shevardnadze enthusiasm died down and from antipathy to demonization, there was a mere step to take. The main ‘demonizers’ were none others than the president’s old low-level followers but their denomination was a new one – the United National Movement.

Fame and glory once again befell Georgia as ‘the Rose Revolution’ brought with it hopes for democracy, hopes for pursuing Georgia’s ancestral pro-European path, and for the reintegration of the lost territories. However, what was proving to be Georgia’s vision of a European future proved highly non-European, and the republic slowly lost Western attention. Adding to this, the attempt to reintegrate the lost territories resulted in Georgia undergoing one of the bloodiest series of conflicts within the entire contemporary Black Sea environment, together with a war with Russia. Losing the war meant losing sight of when or how it will get its territories back. In this reality, the country’s performance of temporarily bringing Russia to the position of being more dependent on trading with Georgia than Georgia on trading with Russia embodied a big achievement.

What was needed was a shift in approach, and more lenience towards what Europe pleaded with Georgia to believe that ‘European’ meant. However, critics of the government argued that what was needed was a new government. This came to be in 2012 and hope was re-kindled, with new dynamics, new approaches, and new challenges, all within an environment in which the republic can brag about its mere existence.

The search for models represents a characteristic for the Georgian republic – first Russia, with its ‘shock therapy’, then Poland with its ‘free market reforms’, then a theoretical view of an ultra-libertarian US and last, but potentially not least, the EU. One thing is clear, though, Russia can no longer be a model.

SECTION III

Conclusions

13. The comparative assessment of The Black Sea geopolitical environment between 2003 and 2014

This chapter was preceded by two major sections: The first attempted to set the stage in order for the purpose of this thesis to be both explained and placed within contemporary research within a theoretically informed manner. This endeavour resulted in an exploration of the Black Sea area which concluded that, given the extensive methods of interpretation of what *regionalism* actually entails, the Black Sea can be interpreted as both representing and not representing a region, depending on the point of view one employs⁷³. On the other hand, taking into consideration one of the most significant contributions to contemporary interpretations of securitisation, the Black Sea cannot be critically denominated as a regional security complex, representing in fact the westward edge of the ‘former Soviet Union space’, with a particularly relevant manifestation – the Caucasus sub-complex, all of which legitimise the (n.b. ‘safe’) denomination of the area as a geopolitical environment. In addition, in discussing the two key power players acting *upon* the area, the thesis has identified the EU to represent a truly modern political construction radiating an immense appeal on its eastward neighbourhood and actively seeking (through *external governance* channels) the transformation of its neighbours into compatible discussion partners, not excluded from the European project, but without having the potential to either disturb it (through conflict ‘at the border of the EU’, or through economic *necessity*) or to play a politically decisive role in its subsequent development (accession being presently *off the table*). The Russian Federation, the other actor, however, was identified as one of the *traditional* great powers on the international arena – with a clear and almost obsessive foreign policy goal – keeping its westward ‘immediate abroad’ loyal, through any means at its disposal. As such, the Russian actor is continuously in need of conducting loyalty appraisals, which, if resulting in unsatisfactory conclusions, are backed by coercive mechanisms. Moscow did attempt to employ more than coercion in relation to its immediate abroad but, as reality has shown, was unsuccessful as its interpretation of alternative actions was a mere shape without content, denominated as ‘soft power’ but not comprehensively understood as such, and proven eventually redundant by the events in Ukraine – which, although outside the period under scrutiny, still boast an exemplary value.

The second part of this thesis evaluated in detail, as required by the *necessities* of establishing measurable instruments within a cross-sectional comparative analysis, the narratives of Moldova and Georgia, as representative cases for the Black Sea geopolitical environment, in light of the identification of *declared foreign policy orientation* as the foreign policy tool used by Black Sea

⁷³ See chapter on Black Sea regionalism

states in placing themselves within the Russia-EU spectrum, and the coercive outcomes of this Russia-generated logic: conflict and economic dependence.

With such elements behind us, this chapter is dedicated to merging all the information together into the comparative assessment of the Black Sea geopolitical environment, as arising from the representative examples of Moldova and Georgia between 2003 and 2012. It must be said, though, that this endeavour represents significantly more than a technical merger of information. By all standards, its fascinatingly revealing character boasts more than an informative set of characteristics – and excels, as I show, in its revealing nature for a new type of regionalism arising from contemporary circumstances.

13.1. Instrumental loyalty appraisal in the Black Sea

Before we move on to the cross-sectional analysis, it is important to reiterate the features which the foreign policy instrument of declared foreign policy orientation, as a measurable variable, is based on, not least as this instrument comes as a result of conceptual innovation. As stated, the pro-Eastern edge (codification 1) of the assessment instrument in use involves an open pro-Russian orientation rhetoric (sometimes even stated as such), in addition to the fact that collaboration with the Russian Federation occupies a prominent role within foreign policy concepts and public statements. Moreover, in such cases, Black Sea states employ a significant pro-Russian state propaganda and maintain strong economic (bilateral and institutional) links with Moscow, while presently acknowledging that involvement with Russia translates into minimum (or sometimes rhetorically codified: ‘neighbourly’) links with the European Union. The difference between this level of orientation and the mixed-eastern one (codification 2) stands in nuance – mainly in the extent to which mentions of a ‘special care for increasing collaboration with the EU’ is added to the country’s open pro-Russian rhetoric, coupled with a less radical pro-Russian propaganda component. Most importantly, however, the key defining element of codification 2 in orientation lies in the actively presented acknowledgement (by the country) that involvement with Russia DOES NOT translate into minimum (or ‘neighbourly’) links with the EU and that the potential for dialogue is not excluded.

A neutral interpretation of this variable revolves around the identification of an openly-declared balance of Moscow and Brussels’ interests in relation to the given state, in addition to the visible attempt to display a neutral (or open to both-sides) image. States which employ this stance actively refute the ‘one side excludes the other logic’ not only in rhetoric, but also do not have a particular trade/security partner.

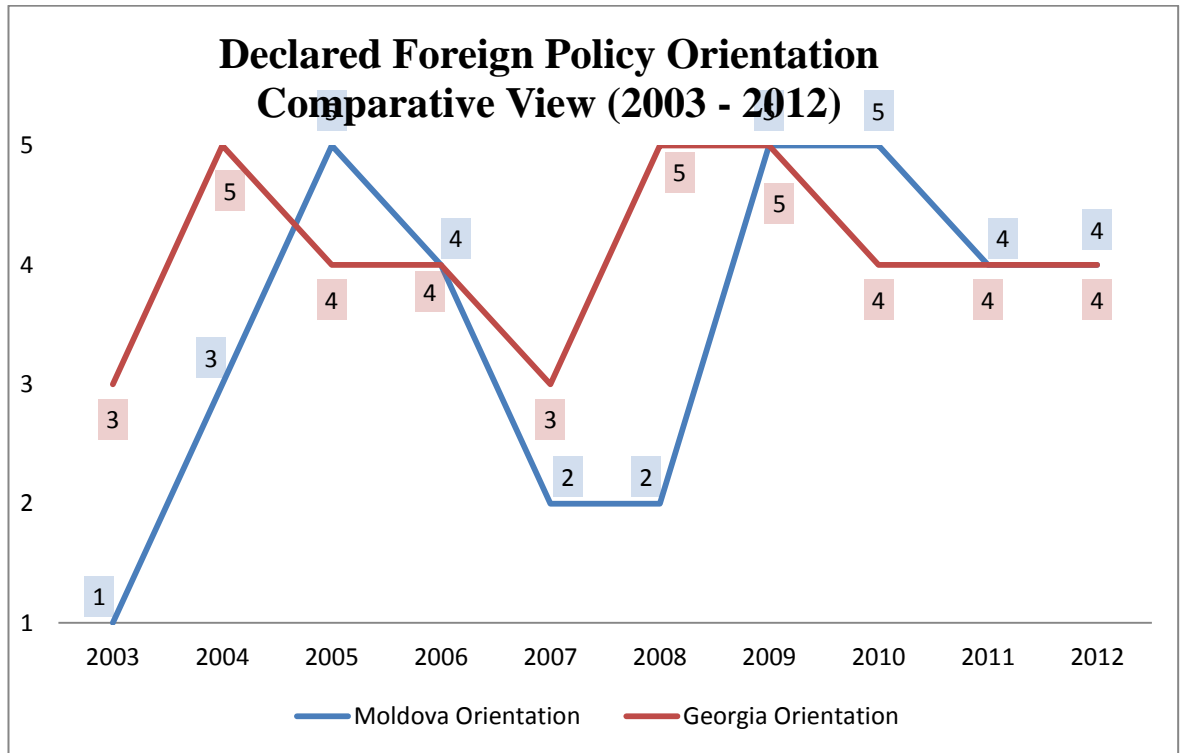
Mixed-western declared foreign policy orientation, in practice, manifests into an openly declared pro-EU strategy for the given state, while specifying the special role of the country-case-Russia relationship, as well as the reality that meeting the EU’s agenda of cooperation has a prominent role within foreign policy concepts and public statements, while at the same time allocating space

to pro-Russian feelings. The EU's image promotion within the given country is present within the state but also the special care of avoiding a logic of exclusion, as well as the pursuit of PAC, ENP, EaP and CSDP features also keeps in mind not to affect the Russian stance.

The other edge of the spectrum (codification 5: pro-Western) involves, as expected, an openly declared pro-EU orientation and the meeting of EU agenda goals having a prominent role within foreign policy concepts and public statements. The EU's image and role of ideal is high-flying within state propaganda, as well as within institutional collaboration. Most importantly, however, pro-Western orientation involves the actively presented acknowledgement (by the country) that collaboration with the EU translates into 'escaping the Russian grip'.

It is also most important to note that, given the character of particularity – explored within the case studies - a number of nuance-based adaptations are required within the subject states' practical use of the feature, in order to grasp the instrumental value of the indicator to the most of its extent. First, in the case of Moldova, given the fact that one of the key issues with regards to the country's particularity is represented by an autonomous identity set of definitions, a pro-Western orientation also regards orientation towards Romania – not least because of Romania, at the moment where orientation is manifested as such, was, in fact, a full member of the EU, and also because, in Russian eyes, all elements on non-pro-Russian orientation constitute, as discussed, anti-Russian orientation. In a similar manner, the indicator's adaptation to the Georgian context takes into consideration that Georgia is a self-aware actor employing orientation as a foreign policy instrument, having the characteristics of *declared as such*, *perceived as such*, and *recurrent on more than one occasion*. With this in mind, the understanding that Georgia made, in 2007, declarations according to which it considered its PCA obligations as conditioned by the potential for membership, translates into neutral orientation. In other words, I understand Georgia at the time as neither pro-Eastern, nor pro-Western, in spite of the fact that it did not declare *this*. With such elements having been clarified, Table 41 brings together the codifications for the two case studies of relevance for the Black Sea geopolitical environment.

Table 41 - Declared Foreign Policy Orientation - Comparative View (2003 - 2012)



13.1.1. Cross-sectional evaluation of yearly elements of change

A cross-sectional comparative assessment of declared foreign policy orientation in Moldova and Georgia finds the former during the coming to power of the PCRM, coupled with the adjacent discussions surrounding the ‘Kozak Memorandum’ to be completely pro-Eastern, while its Caucasian neighbour finds itself during the ‘neutral cautiousness’ Shevardnadze era. The following year, however, the situation was to undergo a dramatic transformation. It is worth mentioning that 2004 was the year of the launch of the ENP, which was coupled, in Georgia, with the aftermath of ‘the Rose revolution’ – a radical and sudden shift in government which invoked legitimacy from both its desire to escape the clan-based politics of the past, as well as to pursue Georgia’s European *destiny*. Such a change, albeit of a slower pace, was also characteristic of Moldova following the failure of the Kozak Memorandum for the resolution of the conflict in Transnistria and Voronin’s request that Russian forces leave Transnistria.

Moldova was to reach Georgia’s level of pro-Western orientation in 2005, with the common candidature of the PCRM and the Christian Democrat Popular Party, having a decidedly pro-Western elections platform. However, the Caucasian actor emits, at this time, its National Security Concept, which, although full of pro-European references, also marks the beginning of the stage when Georgia’s pro-European rhetoric began being perceived as primarily formal.

Russia’s coercive reaction, which ‘crippled’ the Moldovan economy, coupled with Voronin’s understanding of the risk of undermining the basis of his own power, translate into a Moldova backing down from pro-Western declared orientation, to the level of Georgia, whose ENP Action

Plan already boasted approach disparities between Georgia and the EU, in spite of a still pro-EU rhetoric. The following year, however, given Georgia's declarations regarding the PCA, the republic can only be interpreted as employing a neutral instrument within the Russia vs EU logic. Georgia was not, however, to drop, during the period under study, in the side of pro-Eastern orientation. Such a feature was, however, characteristic of Moldova, where Voronin's pro-Russian 'vertical of power' began to manifest – although, however, not excluding dialogue with the EU and still advancing within customs reform.

The war between Russia and Georgia brought-about the biggest disparity of declared foreign policy orientation between the two republics, throughout the entirety of the period, involving, on one hand, a militarily defeated Georgia but highly vocal on the international arena, *raising the alarm* with regards to its loss of territories and to the necessity to escape the Russian 'aggressive grip' and benefiting from the EU's financial support in reconstructing the country. On the other hand, Moldova remained in its mixed-Russian orientation, only to strengthen the 'vertical of power'. As events revealed, however, Voronin's decision to keep the country on the path to pro-Eastern orientation triggered Moldova's coloured revolution the following year, in a conceptually odd colloquial denomination of 'Twitter Revolution' – a dramatic shift in orientation, typical to Black Sea states.

The Georgian characteristic of rapidly attempting to catch-up with European integration, as well as its lack of dialogue with Russia, characterized its 2009 complete pro-Western orientation, while the AEI's coming to power in Moldova brought the two republics in a position to share the same level of orientation immediately after they had experienced their largest difference in this regard the preceding year.

If the apparent continuation of the dialogue with Russia (although excluding Saakashvili from this endeavour), followed by a change in leadership, made Georgia into a mixed-Western actor, with a pro-European agenda but with continuous dialogue with Russia, the AEI kept its pro-Western spirit for one additional year, subsequently giving assurances that it is not anti-Russian, pursuing the path of integration into the CU and supporting a 'neutral' candidate for the position of president.

If this would represent, in brief, an account of the yearly findings within the case studies of Moldova and Georgia combined, with regards to declared foreign policy orientation, a narrative of findings reveals more comprehensive results.

13.1.2. The narrative of the Black Sea geopolitical environment

If the 2003 – 2012 period is looked at per ensemble, a particularity of declared foreign policy orientation becomes apparent – the 2003 period is, apparently, in both countries, characterised by the 'governance of the old', or the way in which Georgia and Moldova have managed to achieve stability at a political level, through the return of former-Soviet symbols (even to individual

symbols) of order and stability – namely the Shevardnadze and Voronin governances, respectively. However, between 2004 and 2006, both countries seem to undergo a certain stage of pro-European enthusiasm, followed by withdrawal, (between 2006 and 2007/8) to either a neutral orientation (understood as a non-European/non-Russian one) or a mixed-Russian one. Subsequently, maintaining differences of one year of each-other, Moldova and Georgia experience a second intensively pro-European stage (2008/2009 - 2010), followed by a unanimous alignment on mixed-Western orientation.

The belonging of both republics to the Black Sea geopolitical environment represents an insufficient justificatory element, primarily because it would consider the republics as mere witness to a geopolitical reality. On the contrary, understanding declared foreign policy orientation as an act of foreign policy, emitted by a country-agency in response to the logic with which it has to deal within *its* international environment – one which favours its security in a *realist* environment emitted by Russia, results in asking a simple question: what *triggered* such common shifts? Dictated by comparative assessment logic, the answer is straightforward – the sequence of initiatives of the EU and Russia, which have impacted on the area (Table 42).

Table 42 - Timeline of orientation for Moldova and Georgia

| Period | Descriptor | Characteristics |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| i. 2004 - 2006 | <i>Pro-Western enthusiasm</i> | Pro-Western declared foreign policy orientation |
| ii. 2006 – 2008/9 | <i>Russian coercive instrumental innovation</i> | Neutral and mixed-Eastern orientation |
| iii. 2008/9 – 2010 | <i>Threat-based acute desire to escape the Russian ‘grip’ (followed by perceived Russian instrumental failure)</i> | Pro-Western declared foreign policy orientation |
| iv. 2011 - 2012 | <i>Pragmatic realignment</i> | Mixed-Western orientation |

The first period of pro-European enthusiasm coincides with the emergence of the ENP as a consistent logic towards the Black Sea countries – an instance with a trigger value given by both temporal placement and counter-factual logic. In other words, it becomes apparent that at the Black Sea states in question began to acknowledge in the EU the potential for an alternative to Russia’s dominance over the area at the time. Had this not been the case, it was to be expected that a radical change in government in Georgia would have been played on a pro-European card at any other moment, and that Voronin could have asked for the departure of Russia’s troops from Transnistria, as well as candidate himself on a pro-European platform, also at any moment, but very little counterfactual substance would explain why both republics instinctually declared their orientation Westward in an almost simultaneous fashion. Moreover, a case for a simultaneous pro-Westward enthusiastic push is also made clear in the financial instrumentation made available to Black Sea states through the European Neighbourhood Policy, as well as the perceived generically *honourable* (understood as both appealing and non-coercive) character of its goals. With this in

mind, it becomes clear that the Black Sea geopolitical environment underwent, between 2004 and 2005, a phase of *pro-Western enthusiasm*.

However, the geopolitical realities within the Black Sea revealed that the instrumentation of *pro-Western enthusiasm* would not be allowed to last, not least due to the characteristics of the Russian actor – which, as its descriptor chapter reveals, did not share the same warm spirit in relation to its immediate abroad - and felt an acute desire, coupled with increased capabilities, to coercively innovate in order for its loyalty appraisals to manifest satisfactory results. Consequently, Russia instituted bans on the import of key Black Sea industries, and removed the conflict resolution potential from the region's protracted conflicts. Although such measures, on their own, portrayed mixed results⁷⁴, it is important to take into account the value of the understanding of the fact that the European alternative did *not* provide the prospect of membership⁷⁵, and that, at this time, the EU was not a subject actor within the Black Sea. The understanding that “threats travel fastest on short distances” meant that the Black Sea geopolitical environment entered of phase of *Russian coercive instrumentalisation* (2006 – 2008/9), in which countries (Moldova) pursued a pro-Russian path without cutting links with the EU or (Georgia) found other targets, as pro-Russian orientation was not feasible.

Nonetheless, it appears that in the sustained push to eliminate the potential of Black Sea states to execute practical measures as a result of which they would cease to serve Russian loyalty purposes, the Kremlin seems to have gone too far, pushing the subject states in its immediate abroad into a *threat-based acute desire to escape the Russian grip* (2008/2009 - 2010) following its war with Georgia. At this time, the Emergence of the EaP, as well as the EU's subject presence represented both encouraging elements for Black Sea states, and further alarm signals for Russia, not least as it appeared to have pushed its neighbours into the ‘arms of the competitor’ and was only left with the last resort – notwithstanding their declared foreign policy goals, the coercive instrumentation available to Russia did not allow them to move beyond their allocated space.

As this thesis' chapter focusing on the Russian Federation has revealed, as well as the subsequent space dedicated to case-studies, it is noticeable that at this time, the Russian Federation's instruments of economic coercion through bans also proved unsuccessful, as well as Russia's ‘soft power’ endeavours, and what followed was the understanding, from the point of view of Black Sea states, that Russia represents a predictable actor, who can only be dealt with if the potential for dialogue is not interrupted, although loyalty towards it should not be manifested. As such, Black Sea states entered a unanimous period of *pragmatic realignment* (2011 - 2012), in which dialogue with Russia was not excluded, in order to avoid excessive coercion, but the instrumental employment of orientation was to be westward.

⁷⁴ See the distinction between trade dependence in Moldova and Georgia

⁷⁵ See chapter on Georgia

Moving further from the period under scrutiny, into the contemporary events in Ukraine, it becomes easy to comprehend how a radical shift in orientation, succeeding the overthrow of a (i.e. pro-Eastern) political leader, which happened in a state where Russia did not possess one of its key instruments – a protracted conflict, led, once again, Russia to consider its instrumental base as exhausted (because of it having no alternative ‘soft power’) – an instance which, as expected, resulted in military intervention. It would not, thus, be difficult to understand that only a brief assessment of the 2014 orientation instrument would yield pro-Western (denomination 5) results in both Moldova and Georgia, and a new cyclical phase within the Black Sea geopolitical environment.

The employment of declared foreign policy orientation, as a variable, reveals this characteristic’s particularities as an assessment instrument within social sciences – a result of conceptual innovations. As already stated, historical analysis, while allowing such an endeavour, also allows for clarity-motivated analogies between this process and that of employing dependent or independent variables for the purpose of political research. One such example would be to consider declared foreign policy orientation as an independent variable – *triggering* changes within conflict and economic dependence (seen in this case as dependent variables). This, as I have shown, is the case in Georgia’s or even Ukraine’s conflicts with Russia (conflict), or the bans on trading certain products with Moldova and Georgia (economic dependence) as a result of their loyalty appraisal. On the other hand, Moldova’s pro-Eastern re-alignment during the Voronin era (primarily due to economic dependence), as well as Georgia’s re-opening of dialogue with Russia following the war (conflict) represent instances where conflict and economic dependence trigger changes within orientation, producing thus a shift in the defining nature of the variable (if the above-mentioned analogy is used) towards being perceived as the dependent variable. However, in fact, depending on the circumstances under which shifts occur, and/or on the time-based snapshot of the shifts, the nature of the dependent-independent relationship will vary throughout the period under study. This is because declared foreign policy orientation is a state-based instrument, one of the few common elements arising from Black Sea states themselves, and not internally induced – although Russia’s loyalty appraisals seem to impose the necessity for it to be used. On the other hand, the risk of conflict and economic dependence depend on the subject countries’ relationship with the poles of power they face as neighbours. More importantly, however, it is vital to note that declared foreign policy orientation exists primarily because both the interaction between the poles of power, and the coercive potential of the other two variables are in place.

As a result, the understanding of the nature and narrative of declared foreign policy orientation is vital to understanding the nature of the Black Sea geopolitical environment – a place characterised by (commonly seen) shifts in the only state-emitted instrument available to states in a systemic sense – the declaration of their loyalty, subject to periods of evolution and arising both as a result of other variables and generating them, depending on geopolitical circumstances.

13.2. Coercive mechanisms and dyads of power

If one was to only allow, as part of the formation of a narrative of the Black Sea geopolitical environment, the mere exploration of the phases that characterise declared foreign policy orientation, even keeping in mind the hierarchical relationship being in place between this variable and conflict and economic dependence, the research value of the comparative assessment endeavour would not be complete.

Accepting the two elements as coercive instruments within a Russia – subject country dyad raises the necessity to make the most out of the instrument characteristics that they portray – namely to identify the element of consistency which they carry as a result of their emission from the Kremlin. This requirement is met within the following sections

13.2.1. Conflict

As stated in the variables chapter of this thesis, the measurable feature of conflict within the Black Sea geopolitical environment is explored through the use of an over-arching instrument developed by the Heidelberg institute, employing five denominations, from 1 (latent conflict) to 5 (war).

With regards to the application of this assessment instrument to the emblematic countries for the Black Sea geopolitical environment (Table 43), an interrupted ‘dynamic stand-still’ made its appearance. The definition of this concept lies in the purpose of the conflictual situation seen as a coercive instrument – of blocking the potential for resolution, and not the events-dynamic which characterizes it, in order to keep the subject state in question in a position of impossibility of joining Euro-Atlantic structures and thus remain *de facto* within the Russian buffer zone.

Table 43 - Protracted conflicts in Moldova and Georgia (2003 - 2012)

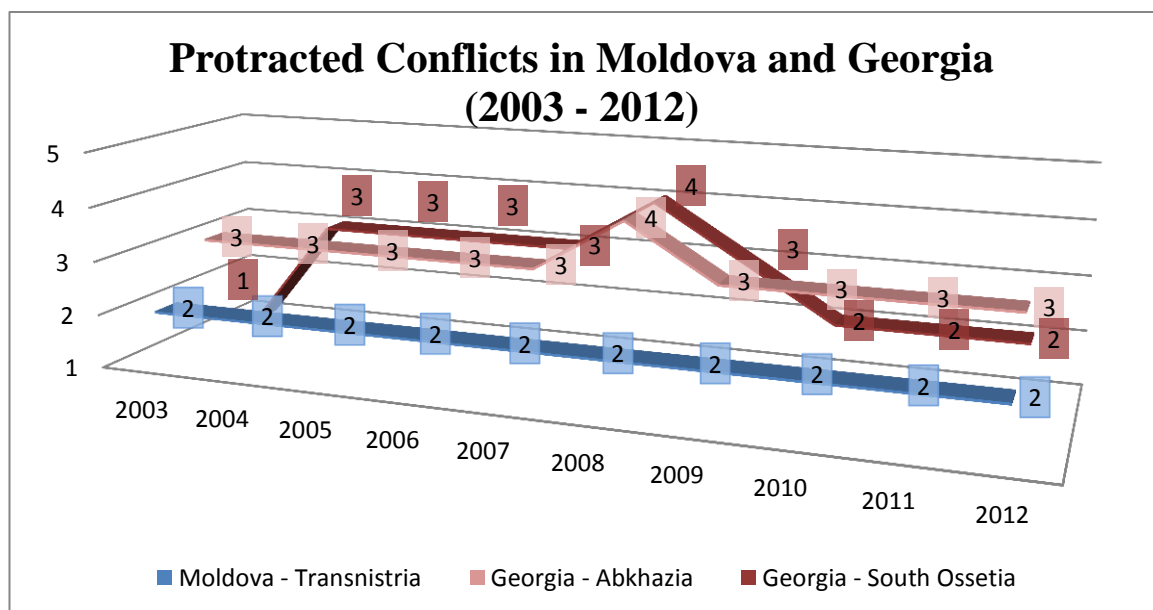


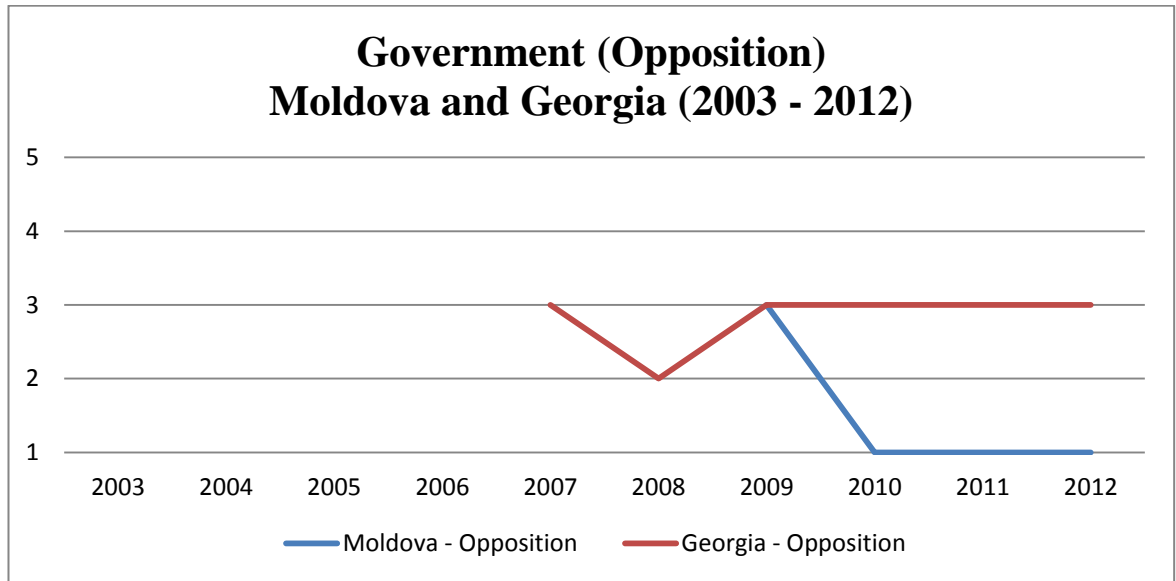
Table 43 reveals the ‘dynamic stand-still’ of the contexts of Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the last of which have been subject to escalation in 2008, as well as slight de-escalation, as a result of the Russia-Georgia war, which, once the web of rhetorical justifications is removed, had, as argued, as a primary purpose the maintenance of one of the key coercive instruments of the Russian Federation. Dynamic standstills, however, portray differences between Moldova and Georgia, not least given that Abkhazia and South Ossetia display a significantly more violent course than Transnistria – a feature which is easily interpretable if the violence particularity of the overall Georgian republic polity between 2003 and 2012 is taken into account. The Black Sea context, however, does not only reveal conflict, as the case-studies have shown, merely as a result of Russia’s involvement. I would argue that reality reveals that the Kremlin is merely instrumentalizing conflicts that it wishes to remain protracted or, as a last resort, in order to protect its instrumental base, carries-out military intervention.

In addition, however, the so-called coloured revolutions, involving shifts in the leadership of a subject country which legitimise themselves through the acute necessity of a shift in orientation, as was the case with the ‘Rose’ revolution in Georgia, or the ‘Twitter revolution’ in Moldova, bring with them the establishment of an internal situation of division. However, the finding of the integrated approach with regards to this feature is not this reality, but the fact that even in the case of a failed coloured revolution, within the Black Sea geopolitical environment, a situation of conflict is still created and potentially exacerbated.

Such an example of a failed coloured revolution becomes apparent in the case of Saakashvili’s Georgia, in which the regime is, further to 2007, facing increased criticism with regard to the *typical* democratic and political grievances⁷⁶ expected in the case of such an occurrence, but in which the regime survives, not least as the orientation component, or, better said, the shift in the country’s declared foreign policy orientation, does not represent a feasible option for either of the Black Sea state’s relevant political actors. Such a feature is revealed by table 44, which compares the Government vs Opposition conflicts in both Moldova and Georgia.

⁷⁶ See section on conflict in Georgia

Table 44 - Government (Opposition) in Moldova and Georgia (2003 - 2012)



One element worth taking into account is the fact that it is the author's view that the level of 'crisis' (denomination 3) of the Georgian case in table 44 stems from Georgia's violent character – or at least more violent than Moldova. In this case, its existence needs to be taken as a finding explained as a *failed coloured revolution*, and not by virtue of its intensity.

13.2.2. Economic Dependence at the Black Sea

The second coercive mechanism identified to represent an instrument a coercive instrument within the Black Sea geopolitical environment is economic dependence. However, as explained within the variables section within this thesis, economic dependence, in this understanding is manifested through the Russian political agency's endeavour of increasing trade relations with a state within its immediate abroad in order to build an instrumental base in order for a *ban* to take place in case loyalty appraisals yield undesired results – in itself, a measure with lowering levels of success. However, the economic dependence indicator, the measurement instrument applied within this variable, represents not an element explaining the multitude of bans or the level of trade between Russia/the EU and subject states. What it stands for is the assessment of the power dyads that arise from trade dependence or, in other words, the potential for a Black Sea state to be coerced into loyalty submission by either the EU or Russia, by virtue of its trade dependence on that entity. In this regard, the indicator reveals one of the most dynamic elements of the Black Sea geopolitical environment – the multitude of levels of economic capabilities of subject actors.

Table 45 - Weighted trade dependence - Subject states - EU (2003 - 2012)

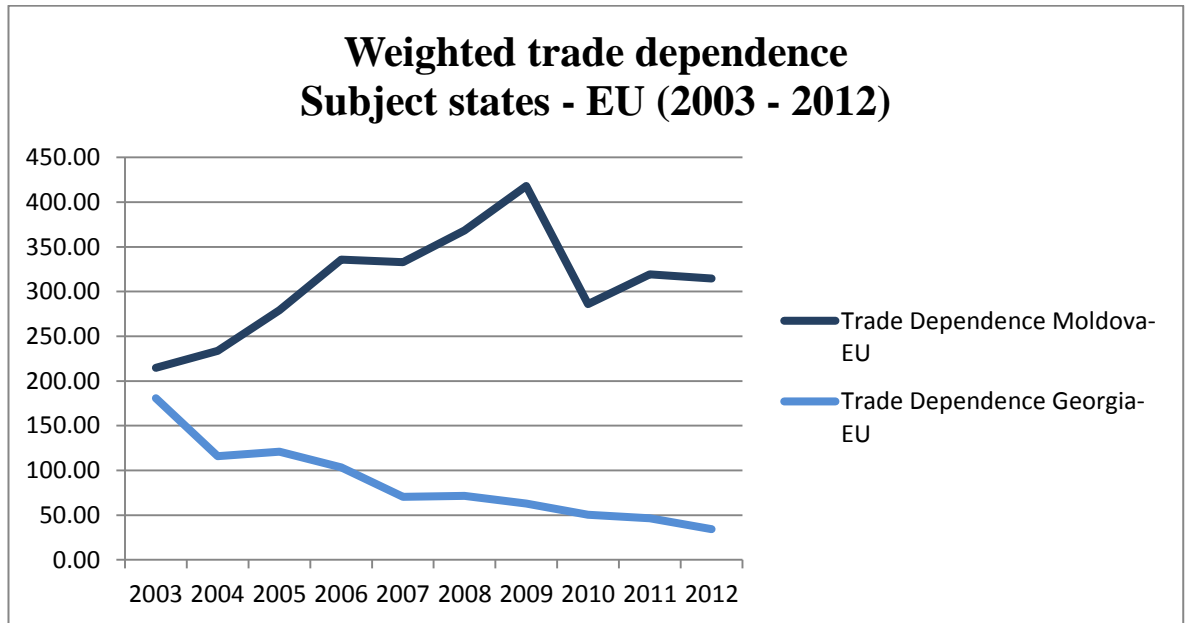


Table 45 reveals that a comparative assessment of Moldova and Georgia’s trade dependence on the EU shows how both countries find themselves immensely dependent on Brussels for their foreign trade (indicators oscillating between double and triple figures, where a >1 value is one of dependence). However, table 45 also reveals how Georgia’s dependence on the EU has decreased during the 10 years under investigation to less than a third of its initial levels, and how Moldova’s dependence on the EU peaked during 2009. In order to understand such a dynamic it is necessary to look at the case-studies’ dependence on Russia (Table 46)

Table 46 - Weighted trade dependence - Subject states - Russia (2003 - 2012)



Table 46 not only explains the results of the previous graphical representation, but also promotes the importance of the indicator in revealing power dyads. As such, one can notice that the 2006 ban on certain products affected Moldova to a much greater extent than the ban on Georgia did the Caucasian republic. However, in the case of Moldova, one can also see the explanation why the 2009 Russian ban on Moldovan wine was no longer successful – Moldova was selling westwards, although with a significantly and suddenly increased trade dependence.

Table 46 is also relevant in explaining Georgia's lowering dependence on the EU through the worsening of the country's power dyad with Russia. However, most importantly, the weighted economic dependence indicator is relevant in the sense of revealing an increase in the potential of the Russian Federation to once again use its ban with a potential for success – an instrumental element already occurring.

13.3. Clash of 'success' equals the similarity of failure

The narrative of the Black Sea geopolitical environment, as a comparative historical assessment of the area linking triggers of outcomes, also boasts significant relevance insofar as evaluating 10 years of Russia – EU interaction over the Black Sea. If, on one hand, the European Union's approach to the Black Sea geopolitical environment is motivated by the desire for 'peaceful neighbours' and 'flourishing' economic and democratic partners, and its instrumental base is incentive-based, while revolving 'external governance' with the premise that membership is not, at present, an option, on the other hand, the Russian Federation represents a completely different logic. Loyalty appraisals result (primarily) in undesired results and Russia feels the need to increasingly use coercive mechanisms.

In light of the above, it becomes obvious that the success of one of the actors in achieving its goals automatically excludes the success of the other. In other words, within the 2003 – 2012 logic, Russia cannot both maintain *control* over its immediate abroad and agree for it to represent a *desired neighbour* for the European Union. In Russia's eyes, the risk of EU membership, or, even worse, NATO membership, is too much to handle. On the other hand, the EU has proven on more than one occasion that it perceives Russia's loyalty appraisals within the Black Sea and that its consistent set of coercive measures is aimed at excluding it, but it is willingly avoiding to be trapped within this duality logic, although its 'Russia first' approach reveals that it may perceive Moscow's grip on the region, without itself having either the will or the instrumental base to remove it.

The EU is failing at the Black Sea in achieving its goals, not least as no matter how generic its Black Sea Synergy goals would appear (intentionally so in order to maintain its model-role), the 2012 geopolitical environment can be interpreted as *not the ideal EU neighbour*. On the other hand, Russia has exhausted its instrumental base in *defending* the area from the *European soft power*. The EU's appeal is simply too great and, aside from (still) maintaining control over the area through *its*

protracted conflicts, Moscow is aware that pro-Western orientation is, at present, the instinctual course for all Black Sea states.

Consequently, I argue that this reality has resulted in the establishment of a new form of regionalism within the Black Sea, one which lends a number of elements from Buzan and Waever's (2003) securisation features, but also one which display new characteristics – only typical to the mutually-annulling 'clash of geopolitical giants' of which one represents a truly contemporary construction.

14. Conclusion: ‘Reactive Regionalism’

Throughout this thesis it has been pointed out now and again that the Black Sea geopolitical environment represents a peculiar construction, made so by its history, geographical location and the interaction between its components and the actors influencing it (or, in particular, by their nature). Based on the analysis undertaken thus far, one is now in the position to clarify the nature of the Black Sea area’s idiosyncrasies and its characteristics – the elements arising from what the previous chapter has identified to represent ‘a clash of giants’.

I argue that this area emerges as a standout example of a new type of regionalism, which I dub *reactive regionalism* and which boasts a number of unique geopolitical features. Using Buzan and Waever’s (2003) RSC framework, one can conclude that the background conditions for the creation of a Black Sea RSC are met. Even though a different timeframe choice might affect the validity of this statement and even though geopolitical changes have occurred during the period investigated in this thesis (2003 – 2013), it can be persuasively argued that they have not qualitatively affected the background conditions for RSC formation. To be more specific, what one witnesses in the Black Sea area is a group of *physically adjacent* states, characterised in international relations terms as having an *anarchic* structure and a sharply *polarised balance of power*. The subject countries are in their great majority new states that emerged after the breakup of the Soviet Union and thus have a legacy of centralized state rule and the constant potential for ethnic conflicts.

The theoretical framework used in the chapter analysing the Black Sea area borrowed heavily from the RSC framework, but also invoked insights from Neumann’s region-building approach. The combined perspective recognises the fact that region-building represents a conscious choice and unfolds differently, depending on the actor that pursues this discourse. If Black Sea states understand their geopolitical context as one where a regionalist discourse could work to their advantage, then (1) one gives a theoretical role to the empirical observation that the countries under scrutiny possess political agency and are vocal in expressing concerns and justifying certain decisions, and (2) one is in a position to explore the type of regionalism that would unfold along the Sea’s subject. Following these assumptions to their natural conclusions, I showed that the Black Sea area possesses different characteristics, depending on actor perspectives, and that the potentially emerging region can only be formed along ‘old regionalism’ lines – more specifically, through alliance-building and functional cooperation. The Russian pole of power does not pursue a specific regional policy towards the Black Sea area, not least because that would attach an unnecessary and potentially harmful importance to a geographical space which Russia merely sees as part of its wider ‘near abroad’ or strategic glacis. On the other hand, the EU, since establishing a geographical foothold on the coast in 2007, has – in its words – “artificially constructed” a Black Sea region which became the focus of the Union’s policies in the area, in an attempt to forge a

“ring of well-governed neighbours” and counteract the Russian perspective by preventing the appearance or reinforcement of “new dividing lines” in its neighbourhood.

As to the countries geographically located in the Black Sea geopolitical environment, the previous chapters reveal that there is evidence that they are aware of the benefits of a regionalist discourse and that they pursue it whenever possible. The number of cooperation initiatives that have appeared in the space of only two decades speaks to that fact, as does the welcoming of external programs supporting such initiatives. One can recall at this point how warmly the Black Sea Synergy (a policy whose centre of gravity lies in the area) has been received, and also the attempt to tackle *common* threats driving GUAM. The fact that, depending on their sources, different discourses on the area emerge represents in itself a peculiar feature of the Black Sea geopolitical environment. Moreover, given that Russia did not (and still does not) emit a regionalist set of policies for the area, and that references to the Black Sea as a ‘region’ have multiplied only after the other pole of power – the EU – consistently approached the local units – bilaterally and then multilaterally, the *reactive* nature of the states’ grouping justifies the above-mentioned characterisation of the Black Sea geopolitical environment.

14.1. Characteristics of Reactive Regionalism at the Black Sea

14.1.1. The powers: ‘Clash of Giants’

The paramount aspect shaping the Black Sea geopolitical environment represents its geographical location at the intersection of the spheres of influence of two great powers – Russia and the EU. Granted that the term ‘spheres of influence’ does not properly apply to the external governance and norm diffusion processes carried out by the EU, it remains valid that the Black Sea area is a policy target for both powers, as it is part of the larger ‘common neighbourhood’. What makes this environment even more peculiar is the different worldviews and motivations employed by Russia and the EU in their actions.

Previous chapters have highlighted Russia as aiming to recreate or strengthen its sphere of influence (or strategic glacis) in a zero-sum approach to its immediate neighbourhood, while being wary of any regional influences of other external actors and sometimes reluctant to cooperate with them. Its policies are substantial and conducive to the use of both hard and soft power instruments (with smaller or larger degrees of success) in order to retain a political and economic grip on the Black Sea area. These actions are all motivated by the idea of sovereignty which, for contemporary Russia, represents the crucial element shaping its view of itself, its neighbours and the European state system. By contrast, the EU is a hybrid construction, unlike anything that activates on the international scene, using a variety of soft power mechanisms and multi-level governance for its day-to-day running and for interacting with partners. It has a legal personality within international law and is able to maintain a foreign policy not only in a similar fashion to other international organizations but also through interests’ delegation. The Union’s reasons for pursuing bilateral and

multilateral policies in the Black Sea are to do with its security – in other words, with the need to be surrounded by a ring of “well-governed” neighbours. Peace represents, in this philosophy, a derivative from economic prosperity and democracy. The EU’s very notion of governance presupposes forms of organisation that go beyond hard notions of external and internal sovereignty, and it is fair to assume that the Russian worldview does not include an understanding of external governance as a projection of the EU’s own multi-level governance system. The ‘meeting’ between EU and Russia at the Black Sea represents ultimately a clash between a postmodern political entity and the traditional modern state. While the latter interprets any actions on a black-or-white scale, either pro or against its own interests, and reacts accordingly, the Union attempts to escape this logic by a constant emphasis on the benefits of cooperation and good governance. A recent statement by Commissioner Füle highlights these aspects: “we denounce those who are trying to turn the Eastern Partnership into something it is not – a zero-sum game, a battle for spheres of influence, and support our partners to withstand the pressures of that logic [...] Geopolitical rivalry has no place in this equation” (EU, 2014).

However, given the data of this ‘equation’, one can conclude that there is no mechanism for escaping the apparent zero-sum game if the actor that conceptualises it as such continues to react by virtue of this logic. Consequently, the said actor becomes the ‘logic setter’. That this is indeed the case has been proven throughout this thesis with numerous examples and the variable of declared foreign policy orientation represents a conceptualisation of precisely these perceived shifts. Moreover, even if the EU’s policies are sectorial and target particular issues without assuming the automatic inclusion of its partners into a ‘sphere of influence’, no explanations of this fact will be heeded by an actor whose logic does not allow for this possibility. More than due to an earlier geographical presence in the area, it is due to its zero-sum logic that Russia represents the generating force behind the Black Sea environment.

14.1.2. Won’t Bandwagon, Can’t Balance – The Pragmatic Limbo

If the intuitions of classical realism were applied to the Black Sea geopolitical environment, one would expect some form of bandwagoning and/or balancing to take place, depending on the logic pursued by each state. Both these reactions require the perception of an external threat, but as this is an area with a high density of protracted conflicts, being under threat receives almost the value of a status quo. As the above analysis of the Russian actor highlighted, the use of force and of other hard means of coercion exploiting economic dependence are never off the table, with the presence of Russian forces in the disputed territories and episodes such as the 2008 Georgian war being chronic reminders of this fact, even without keeping in mind the contemporary events in Ukraine. Consequently, the Russian pole of power is perceived by the Black Sea states’ elites as a constant threat to their very existence – a threat which could be counteracted by bandwagoning or balancing. However, the empirical reality looks more like a ‘pragmatic limbo’, resulting from a number of factors.

Firstly, the majority of Black Sea states have existed in their independent form for only two decades and, although not properly characterised as ‘failed’ or even ‘weak’, they have limited economic, political and military capabilities. To give a rough example, Russia’s GDP is more than 7 times higher than the combined GDPs of Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia and Azerbaijan (2013 data). Bandwagoning would remove the ever-present threat to the economic or territorial survival of any Black Sea state, but it would also do away with any agency on the part of local governments, while at the same time being unable to resist the other neighbour’s tremendous appeal. This represents the perfect recipe for the so-called *coloured* revolutions. Moreover, since the end of the 1990s the EU entered the area with a consistent set of policies codified in the PCAs and later on in the ENP. The significance of this event cannot be overestimated – the Union changed the geopolitics of the Black Sea from a unipolar to a bipolar environment⁷⁷ and it offered the local small actors an alternative course of action. From this point on, bandwagoning no longer represented an attractive option.

However, with all the financial and political benefits that the EU brought to the table – recall the ‘more for more’ principle –, two other elements preclude the potential for balancing. The ENP, the EaP and the BSS represent incentive-based and socialisation policies drawn up by the Union with the purpose of forging closer economic ties and promoting good governance with their neighbours, but they do not offer the prospect of membership. After the 2004 and 2007 enlargement, the EU reoriented its efforts towards deeper integration, meaning that all that partner countries may hope to obtain are DCFTAs, visa liberalisations and a multilateral framework in which to discuss and manage common threats. In addition, the closer ties that can be established between the Union and the Black Sea states do not include the granting of security guarantees by the former. Georgia’s aim of advancing the accession to NATO (and therefore of obtaining such guarantees from a third party) led to a progressive negative escalation with Russia, climaxing when Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov declared after the 2008 NATO summit that “Moscow will do all it can to prevent NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia”.

Therefore, the lack of a clear membership-conducive path and of security guarantees stops any potential Black Sea states’ balancing efforts midway. Given the constant threat of use of force and economic coercive measures from the Russian side, a clear EU alternative and protection would be what these countries’ authorities would value most. Without them, the Black Sea states find themselves in a situation where balancing is impossible and bandwagoning both unattractive and potentially harmful.

⁷⁷ I use the terms ‘bipolar’ and ‘unipolar’ because, although the realist logic and the idea of geopolitical rivalry is rejected by the EU, the subject states are forced to think and act within the parameters of the traditional Russian discourse (see also the previous section). In this sense, as argued, Russia is a traditional logic generator at the Black Sea.

14.1.3. Different Histories, Similar Problems

A quick look at the Black Sea history would reveal the different aspects that have shaped the borders and the characteristics of the present-day states. At no point in the recent history has the area been under the hegemony of only one power or empire, which means that the subject political units have developed along various linguistic, cultural and economic paths. Although having the maritime environment in common, the intense commercial exchanges did not particularly foster homogenisation. Some subject states share common histories which lead to powerful patterns of amity (Romania – Moldova; Turkey – Azerbaijan), but overall the common denominator on the Wendtian scale is that of indifference, with every country being as different from its neighbour as the next one.

However, I argued in this thesis that, despite this diversity, the present Black Sea states share a number of characteristics, identified by the variables. The protracted conflicts and constant threat of use of force translate into each country functioning under a special type of social reality, with its own rules and able to escalate and de-escalate by virtue of the modification of the said rules. I have conceptualised this peculiar state of facts through the conflict variable. In addition, by analysing certain trade indicators I highlighted that all Black Sea states are heavily dependent on the two poles of power in the region in order to survive economically. The selection of indicators is by no means comprehensive, but it serves to show the power dyads that can result from overreliance on one import or export source and the vulnerability of the Black Sea states' economies when that source is removed or severely limited. This peculiar feature was conceptualised in this thesis via the economic dependence variable.

It must be mentioned at this point that the variables' applicability to the Black Sea states does not translate into identical manifestations. As stated above, each country presents different features and characteristics that will affect the intensity of conflict or the degree of economic dependence from Russia or the EU. However, the variables do highlight that – in a form or another – all Black Sea states suffer from a conflict-dominated social system and economic vulnerability.

14.1.4. Reactive Instinct

The variable that I advanced – declared foreign policy orientation – represents another common feature of Black Sea states and a (or *the*) characteristic of the reactive regionalism present in the area. The subject countries are 'sandwiched' between two great powers, of which one operates within a traditional international relations logic. Russia aims to preserve a strategic glacis around its borders, whose loyalty is constantly checked and acted upon through loyalty appraisals. As there is no fully 'Western path' available to them (see the section above on the pragmatic limbo) and

explicit pro-EU discourses and policies have been sanctioned in the past, Black Sea states possess a reactive instinct of re-orienting their foreign policy platforms whenever needed⁷⁸.

The above case studies and cross-sectional comparative analysis highlighted that, unlike the EU, the Russian actor attaches importance to the perceived loyalty levels of countries located in its near abroad. Conceptually, this was codified by placing the declared foreign policy orientation in a slight hierarchy vis-à-vis the other two variables. It follows then that, based on the recent history, the sanctions or rewards applied by the Russian pole of power will affect the economic dependence and/or conflict intensity in the respective country. However, any changes in the values of those two variables will always come after an evaluation of the state's orientation. The EU explicitly refuses to follow the same model – a Westward 'orientation' represents for the Union just a side-effect of a more wide-reaching alignment of values – but once again the behaviour of Black Sea states will follow the model imposed by the environment's traditional power. Since the logic goes along realist lines, the foreign policy orientation signals the countries' instinctual reaction to bandwagon or balance in a context where neither of these options represent feasible alternatives.

14.1.5. Spans of Small Powers

Reactive regionalism bases itself on the approaches of the states that make up the Black Sea environment. What they have in common is economic vulnerability, varying levels of conflict (internal or external) and a reactive instinct to use their foreign policy orientation in order to remain in existence and draw advantages from their geopolitical situation. However, due to their geographical location, the Black Sea countries share another crucial feature.

They are all located in what Russia deems to be its strategic glacis – a security buffer around its borders whose main quality is that of *space*. The countries in the near abroad are all *small powers* and it is in the Russian interest that they remain so. Therefore, the Russian actor will act whenever the loyalty of one of these states sways towards the West or when they show signs of development and potential for becoming regional powers. This is completely applicable to the Black Sea states – they are all small powers and, from the Russian perspective, valuable because of their location and territory. As long as the countries do not pose or become themselves problems, their loyalties are kept in check and their territorial existence relatively safe.

14.1.6. Geography

To sum up the analysis thus far, the Black Sea geopolitical environment is located at the intersection of the Russian and European Union 'spheres of influence'. It is made up by small powers characterised by economic vulnerability, varying levels of conflict and shifting foreign policy orientations which are instinctually operationalised to keep the states in existence and make the most of their situation.

⁷⁸ It is necessary to remind the reader of this characteristic being applicable *during the period under study*. For post-Ukraine crisis events, see section on the potential temporal characteristics of *Reactive Regionalism*

Bearing these features in mind, I suggest that there are five subject states that create the Black Sea's reactive regionalism: Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The first three share the most in terms of their overall behaviour and reactions to the two poles of power. As of late 2013, all three experience (protracted or not) internal conflicts; they are also the most regionally active states, having founded GUAM and participating in all the local cooperation initiatives. A crucial aspect identified in the background discussion to the case studies is the variations in the cultural affiliations and histories of Moldova and Georgia; later on, the case studies themselves have shown the differences between how the local elites' agency has manifested and the different doctrinal and practical instruments invoked in the process. However, the variables provide the theoretical answer to the question why, despite all those differences, the outcome has been the same for both countries - Moldova and Georgia have both oscillated in a similar manner in the pragmatic limbo between the two poles of power. Adding Ukraine to the equation involves adding another layer of difference, most notably those in territorial span and economic power. Nevertheless, it could be argued that to a certain extent Ukraine responded in the same way as Georgia and Moldova to its geopolitical environment and it can also be properly characterised by the three variables. The three states even achieved a common policy outcome in 2014 when they all signed Association Agreements with the EU.

Armenia and Azerbaijan differ from Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine insofar as they possess security guarantees – the first from Russia through CSTO, the latter from Turkey – and as they have a dispute between themselves (Nagorno-Karabakh). However, the variable of conflict used in the integrated approach serves to point out the existence of a certain type of social reality in the countries analysed – attaching importance to the identity of the parties involved goes outside the concept's justification. Therefore, it is fair to argue that both states are characterised by the variable, as well as by the power dyads that get formed through economic relations. In terms of foreign policy orientation, Armenia bandwagoned. Even without applying this variable's methodological assessment, the EU's description of its relationship with Yerevan clarifies that:

“Negotiations on Association Agreement, including a deep and comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), were finalised in July 2013. However, given Armenia's wish to join the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, announced in September 2013, the Association Agreement, incompatible with membership in the Customs Union, *will not be initialled nor signed* (my emphasis). The European Union will continue cooperation with Armenia in all areas compatible with this choice.” (EEAS, n.d.)

On the other hand, Azerbaijan, due to the security guarantees from the Turkish regional power, benefits from fact that its declared (pro-EU vs pro-Russian) foreign policy orientation does not represent a crucial aspect for its territorial existence and economic development. However, this in

itself stands as an indicator of Turkey's special buffer state potential for logic alteration in the Black Sea. With this in mind, it is worth noting that Azerbaijan's foreign policy options are still dualistic (pro-Turkish and everything that this entails, including potentially NATO and the EU, vs pro-Russian, which would mean giving up on Nagorno-Karabakh). Azerbaijan is placed better on any dyad of trade, but it still is dependent on selling energy resources. As such, Baku, while maintaining the point of view characteristics of Black Sea states, is the furthest extent to which a Black Sea integrated approach can be applied. One must not forget, though, that reactive regionalism takes place on a logic of diversity, and within this logic Azerbaijan brings the most diverse contribution.

14.2. Reactive Regionalism: The rules of the Game

If one would consider Reactive Regionalism as a new interpretative logic, applicable if a set of circumstances is met, the rules of this interpretative logic would be as follows:

When states, through agreement of will, establish a structure able to carry out its own foreign policy ('containing' some of their interests through delegation) and which holds supra-state prerogatives, the strange/uncommon defining characteristics of the entity will spill over to its neighbourhood – the entity will be appealing for its neighbours if it provides a model for existence and it will be perceived as a threat (albeit a strange one) if it neighboured by a great power. The latter will react with great power measures and become a 'traditional power', acting as such, not least as its logic would threaten the mere existence of its targets (states 'sandwiched' between the two). The set logic will be undesirable for a number of subjects (such as the subject states in this case). They will be tempted by the instinct to balance or they will face the stability risks of bandwagoning (depending on the appeal of the neighbouring institutional arrangement). However, given the nature of the actor they are attempting to balance towards, this will yield results as strange as the entity itself. In the case of the Black Sea geopolitical environment, the history of fundamental treaties of the EU has involved the rejection of a significantly deterrent set of military assets and the creation of a highly competitive internal market – potentially reachable with compliance to EU rules by subject states but by no means easily accessible. Thus the EU is unable to provide a way out of the coercive circle instituted by the Russian logic.

This is where Reactive Regionalism happens. However, one must emphasise the fact that, as precedents reveal, this type of behaviour of subject states does not emerge if the neighbouring great powers are of a similar nature. In other words, Reactive Regionalism will not characterise the space shared by two states with strong capabilities. In such circumstances the common neighbourhood will either split or be taken over by one of them – and choices (or lack of) will be clear for its subjects. No, for reactive regionalism to appear, one key component must be present – the international institution generating appeal and having an instrumental base which is different than that of a state, while at the same time being able to approach a great power on equal grounds - a

rare (albeit singular) occurrence. As a result, Reactive Regionalism is now an exclusive feature of the EU-Russia neighbourhood.

The key element generating reactive regionalism as a logic is the use of declared foreign policy orientation as a mechanism for maximising a subject state's (in this case a subject state's) gains, or, at least for minimising losses. Declared foreign policy orientation is the feature of the emerging system through its clear attribute of representing a *coping mechanism*, one of the few that subject states have at their disposal. As such, its presence will remain a constant wherever and whenever the reactive regionalist logic is triggered, and its measurement will indicate the country's coping intentions.

On the other hand, the risk of inter-state conflict and economic dependence are the elements of setting the logic – in our case: Russia's coercive measures. They share with orientation the characteristic of being common elements throughout the given geopolitical environment, but their substance may vary in accordance to the instrumental base employed by the great power triggering them. Orientation is an instrument of the subject states. Its shifts come both as a result of conflict and dependence, and can trigger shifts within them. Conflict and dependence, however, are instruments applied by the great power and may be different if/when reactive regionalism happens vis-à-vis another great power. What will remain constant is that declared orientation will exist as a key element for the existence of the subject states, no matter what the coercive factors are.

Thus, reactive regionalism represents a strange occurrence, resulting primarily from a strange setting – the interaction between a traditional great power and a post-modern one.

14.3. Reactive Regionalism: Eternal or Transitory?

Having already highlighted how the Russian post-2003 pragmatic realignment view has focused the entire foreign policy capability that Moscow possessed, and subsequently increased, on maintaining the Russian strategic glacis within its sphere of influence, and having also taken into account the outstandingly powerful post-2003 European radiant appeal on the area, this thesis has identified four stages of development within the Black Sea geopolitical environment up to 2013. A cross-sectional analysis of the two most similar cases pertaining to the area has shown that although the framework of thinking's applicability as well as the outcomes of the choices made until 2013 by Moldova and Georgia were in essence similar, the routes taken by Chisinau and Tbilisi have been significantly different. All of the above trigger the absolute necessity for reasoning whether the Black Sea geopolitical environment with its reactive regionalism characteristics represents a new form of in-between different great powers regionalism or a transitory phase within the larger realignment of capabilities in Europe, or within the process of EU evolution towards a more *traditional* entity. In investigating this issue, future geopolitical outcomes stand as key. However, this thesis cannot take it upon itself to pragmatically foresee the amount of events that will follow the present day and influence the answer to this question. Neither the EU's

institutional growth, nor Russia's up-to-a-point predictability is easily estimated and they bear a key responsibility for the future nature of the Black Sea. All that this thesis can do is anticipate the most probable developments and check on the basis of the current findings the extent to which they are likely to occur. In other words, the question whether reactive regionalism is transitory cannot be answered now, because the Russia-EU interaction is the first one of its kind. Many may follow if the supra-state model is adopted in a similar fashion in other areas.

14.3.1. Reactive Regionalism as a New Form of Regionalism

Returning to the revealing nature of the case at hand, if the identified characteristics of reactive regionalist geopolitics continue to be manifested for the foreseeable future – in other words, if the Black Sea remains the way it is in the medium and long term – then the instrumental value of creating an interpretative corpus specifically tailored to the new region would be justified and legitimate. In such an event, the EU's lack of security guarantees, its denial of the applicability of geopolitical reasoning and the promotion of the agency and particularity of each Black Sea state would continue to clash with Moscow's predictable instrumental base, and this interaction would lead to oscillations of orientation, much like the ones analysed in the case study chapters. Also, economic growth in the area would continue to occur at variable rates, within trade-dependent states, the potential for it being capped depending on the threat that growth might represent to Russia's interest. Within the same scenario, conflicts in the Black Sea would be frozen in their resolution and dynamic in the events that characterise them, keeping to the identified features of dynamic stalemates.

There are, however, a number of aspects which, considered together, indicate that reactive regionalism may not be here to stay. Firstly, as the case studies have shown, Russia has exposed a relatively predictable behaviour in relation with the Black Sea states, which – it is fair to assume – has been learnt by the EU and can be actioned in the Union's policies and programmes. Note that the discourse by Commissioner Füle (quoted above) utilises language and terms that support this assumption – “logic”, “spheres of influence”, “zero-sum game”. Secondly, the succession of events leading to the formation of a reactive regionalism at the Black Sea has been fast (more or less one decade), which speaks to the geopolitical dynamism in the area. Thirdly, the states that best portray the swings in policy orientation characteristic of the Black Sea geopolitical environment – Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – have all recently signed Association Agreements with the EU, symbolising a comprehensive and deep relationship with the Union. AAs do not offer the prospect of membership, but they are seen informally as precursors to it. Fourthly, another aspect that emphasises the dynamism of the area is the fact that Russia has been constantly seeking new methods to maintain its grip on the strategic glacis. Among the various measures tried by the Federation one must note the attempts to replicate the EU instrumental base – its ‘soft power’ experiments in Transnistria and the more recent establishment of the Eurasian Union. These ‘tests’ are always safeguarded and backed by the opening of already tested tools (import bans, starting

new protracted conflicts, etc). But most importantly, reactive regionalism may not last long at the Black Sea because the region is overall unstable and that satisfies the security interests of no party. Therefore, one needs to explore the various developments which could lead to a geopolitical equilibrium in the area.

14.3.2. Reactive Regionalism as a Transition to a New Equilibrium

Reactive regionalism would act as a transitory phase towards a new geopolitical order at the Black Sea if one were to witness a successful Russian resurgence along the coast. By this I mean that Russia manages to develop a new foreign policy instrumental base which complements the existing one and as a result sways the Black Sea states towards a long-term mixed-eastern or pro-eastern orientation. The likelihood of this development to occur remains slim, given that tests of western-style instruments have not proven particularly fruitful for Russia. However, its use of already tested tools – particularly affecting the conflict variable – keeps this scenario within the ‘imaginable’ dimension.

Another potential development, made more probable by the current empirical data, could follow as a result of the EU’s undefeatable appeal. The parameters of the equilibrium would be given by the fact that EU membership remains off the table, but that at the same time all states settle for a type-4 orientation (mixed-western) due to the benefits arising from a deep relationship with the Union. In this case, the ENP goals of achieving a ring of peaceful neighbours would be achieved and Russia would *de facto* lose its strategic glacis.

If the EU decides to offer the prospect of membership in its relations with the Black Sea states, the result would theoretically qualify as a third potential development route along the coast. However, the term ‘theoretically’ has an additional weight in this case, as the temporal road to accession is long and the resolution of the protracted conflicts in the area has not advanced in the past decade. In this sense, even if membership was offered, it would be hard to conceive that the Russian pole of power would not exploit its stake in these conflicts and attempt to thwart accession (see also the section below on policy recommendations). Nonetheless, one can even identify the potential for reactive regionalism to be ‘resolved’ through traditional methods – the fractioning of the area – if the AA countries eventually join the EU. What would be left has already bandwagoned in the Russian camp, with minor and debatable exceptions (Azerbaijan).

Jus cogens, practitioners’ international law no-cross line has already been breached within Ukraine. Consequently, a last potential course of action witnessing reactive regionalism as a transitory phase would involve the appearance of all-out conflict at the Black Sea, or, in other words: interstate war in Europe (which extends beyond Russia and Ukraine). Given the resurgent trend of the Russian foreign policy in the past decade, this scenario is now more likely than it was a decade ago, even though the likelihood of it occurring is very slim. It would involve the constant threat that Black Sea states face to their very territorial existence becoming actual reality as a result of military

aggression. Although the EU or other Western organisations do not offer security guarantees to the countries in the area, the complete obliteration of one political unit could qualify as a major alarm signal for the Union members and their allies, as it would entail borders insecurity. For instance, if Russia were to open a new front in Georgia or continue to push on the Ukrainian front to the point of military conquest, the results of these actions might well be all out-war at the Black Sea. One only needs to slightly consider Romania's response to a Russian (non-)invasion in Moldova (such as the one in Ukraine) in order to understand the relative closeness the pillars of collective defence on the continent find themselves to being under threat.

14.4. Applying Reactive Regionalism Beyond the Black Sea

The discussion so far has identified a number of characteristics for reactive regionalism: it forms at *the intersection between the spheres of influence* of a traditional and a modern great power, catching the *small powers* geographically located in the area in a *pragmatic limbo* with regards to their *foreign policy orientation*, which becomes an instrument for survival. Based on these features, I will now turn to investigate whether reactive regionalism represents a concept that could be analytically applied to other areas, regions or geographical contexts.

At first sight, it would appear that parallels could be drawn with others areas equivalent to a strategic glaxis, for instance with regards to the role played by all the territories and states located in the American containment strategy. It is also apparent that an orientation dilemma similar to that faced by Black Sea countries was also present throughout the Cold War within all non-aligned states, and even within units that were theoretically considered parts of one of the blocks (eg. Romania). However, even if all the elements featured in the integrated approach were met in one state (conflict, a dependent economic power dyad, a choice between two paths), it still seems that the instrumental characteristic of the Black Sea is not new.

The novelty is brought instead by the EU and its unique multi-governance system. The Union exerts an immense appeal even though it offers no security guarantees and

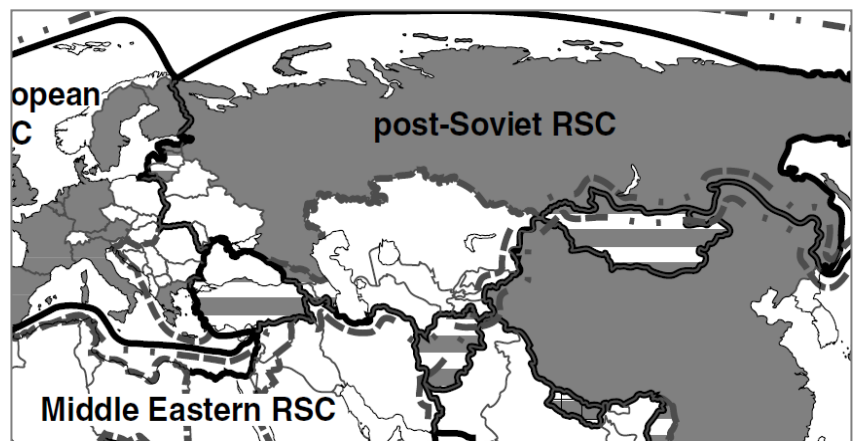


Image 4 - Review of RSCs (Buzan and Waever, 2003)

its personality under international law is still disputed in the doctrine. In other words, the EU appeals to, but does not protect its allies – its allies are not its allies.

Therefore the integrated approach can only be achieved if the EU model is replicated in a different location, geographically situated in the vicinity of a traditional great power (a power whose

external actions are guided by the principle of sovereignty), similar to Russia – the first actor that the EU ‘meets’ in its neighbourhood. In this sense, reactive regionalism does not represent a new form of regionalism *per se*, but its validity is given by its appearance in the vicinity of a modern new world order form of political organisation (such as the EU) and its utility derives from it being a functional theoretical framework that can be applied in the EU’s periphery.

At the moment there are no entities similar in political system and governance modes to the EU. Nevertheless, there is a chance for the Eurasian Union to develop into a reactive regionalism emitter for the Central Asian states, with Mongolia already playing a buffer-state role from China and the East Asian RSC and Afghanistan insulating from the Middle Eastern RSC. Yet, the empirical data suggest there is very little in the relatively predictable Russian nature that indicates the true value of doctrine-led polity making an ‘EU-like’ Eurasian Union feasible.

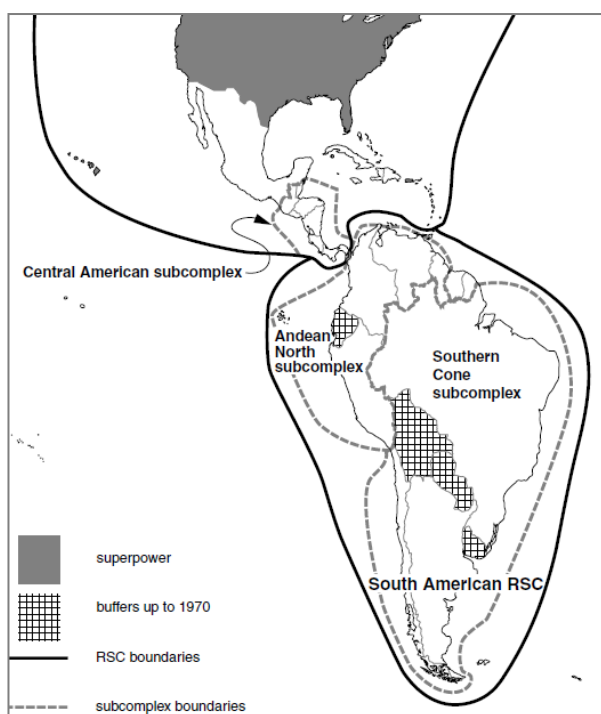


Figure 5 - The potential for Reactive Regionalism emergence in the Americas (Buzan and Waever, 2003: 340)

A more likely alternative would be a South American political entity that would push on the American ‘strategic glaxis’ and offer a choice of orientation for the states located in the Central American and Andean subcomplexes (see figure below). This possibility is supported by Buzan and Waever’s (2003) analysis:

“South America is increasingly developing as two subcomplexes with contradictory trends. The Southern Cone is on what is locally taken to be a quite robust, irreversible route to integration. With Argentine-Brazilian rapprochement firmly in place and all border questions solved, the subregion is beyond being a security regime,

approaching a security community. It is in the grey zone between the two kinds of RSC, normal and centred. In the northern (Andean) part of the continent, on the other hand, security is increasingly structured by the drugs issue, US involvement, and domestic instability that keeps the border conflicts alive in that part.” (p.340).

14.5. Validity of Interpretation

This thesis’ analysis of the regionalism phenomenon utilised insights from Buzan and Waever’s work on RSCs and combined them with Neumann’s region-building approach in order to understand what kind of regionalist outcome is created or may be created if the political units

investigated are aware of their circumstances and of the benefits of ‘working together’. Among the conclusions, I noted that if one is to witness the emergence of a region at the Black Sea, its construction can only be presumed to follow old regionalism lines and to revolve around alliance-building and functional cooperation.

Consequently, Buzan and Waever identified the premises for both the existence and the non-existence of a Black Sea region, as well as the potential for creating a more integrated regional structure – all representing realities in 2003. What Buzan and Waever found without purposefully investigating regionalism were the embryos of a new reality, given by the peculiarity of the Black Sea geopolitical environment. Such peculiarity – namely, the complete and utter difference between the two poles of power (Russia and the EU), to the extent that they are able to narrate past each other and simultaneously be correct above different topics, while at the same time having the impression that they are referring to the same thing – cancelled the applicability of positivist and/or statistical research methods on the area and left room for the pragmatic application of historical assessment instruments.

Therefore, a country-based view focusing on common elements represented the only feasible method to account for triggers, approaches and positions in relation to outcomes within an area where the mere nature of the logic-setting actors was too different to allow otherwise. I argue that any methodological endeavour aiming to assess both the neighbourhood of the EU (shared with a great power or not) and the near abroad of any other future similar polity formed in the vicinity of a traditional international law subject with strong capabilities will result in reactive regionalism in their common neighbourhood and that any instrumental base aiming to both assess and deal with the issues arising from this reality would need to use historical assessment instruments.

14.6. Policy Recommendations

14.6.1. Subject States

There is no room for radical shifts in orientation if Black Sea states wish to achieve their primary goal of remaining on the map, (ideally) within the present borders. To this end, there is also no room for ending dialogue with Russia, with the mixed-western orientation remaining the most appropriate alternative under the present circumstances. However, due to the already mentioned constant attempts by Russia to update its external instrumental base, Black Sea policy-makers need to be constantly prepared for innovations on its part, and continue to monitor the already ‘classical’ targets of conflict and economic dependence. At the same time, communication and cooperation with the European pole to the fullest extent possible allows for the Union’s soft power to influence this geographical space and to make its pacifying effects felt. On the other hand, Black Sea states have also the option of pursuing a ‘Belarussian style of peace’ and orient themselves fully pro-eastern, although they risk *coloured revolutions*. Whichever alternative is followed, however, the leaders of the countries in the area have to internalise the idea that a shift from reactive to

‘proactive’ regionalism (entailing the Black Sea states moving from a status of subjects to the status of active actors in this geopolitical environment) will only be possible if the orientation variable remains strongly, for a longer period of time, on one position.

14.6.2. The EU

The Union’s goals with regards to the Black Sea geopolitical environment are set in the ENP and can be summarised as obtaining a ring of peaceful, well-governed neighbours, a goal that is grounded in the EU’s security interests. The lack of security guarantees being offered to the countries at the Black Sea represents one element which might thwart this goal’s achievement. Recall that after the 2008 NATO Summit where Georgia’s accession to the organisation has been practically indefinitely postponed, the EU chose to offer Georgia the possibility to align with its CSDP goals and discarded the initial discussions on a potential security partnership, which is what the Georgian leadership would have valued most. This is not to say that the EU should offer a security ‘blanket’ to all the Black Sea states, but it is to say that against certain country-specific backgrounds measures more tailored to unique contexts could be pursued, going off the Union’s beaten track.

At the moment EU membership is off the table for all the states in the area, but the EU does not possess policy instruments which could counter a Russian manipulation of the protracted conflicts and of the long accession timeframe in case membership becomes a viable option for the Union. To be more precise, there is no coherent strategy that could see the protracted conflicts solved (with EU assistance) on the road to membership. In addition, the EU needs to create an instrumental base capable of dealing with a Russian influence of these conflicts and of the economic relation (two of the variables) once the orientation of any Black Sea country moves firmly on a pro-western track.

Lastly, one more point needs to be re-emphasised. One of the reasons why the EU possesses a gravitational pull with regards to its neighbours located in the Russian near abroad is the fact that, as opposed to Russia, it tends to offer a more powerful voice to the countries that pursue bilateral cooperation. The Union presses the ‘more for more’ principle in its EaP policies, meaning that stronger partnerships will be developed and greater incentives will be offered to the partner countries which exhibit commitment to the EU principles by implementing democratic reform measures. This translates into putting a premium on the states’ abilities to choose their own development routes. In this sense, it would be recommendable for the Union to invest more resources and commitment into programs such as the Black Sea Synergy that have a centre of gravity in the Black Sea and not in Brussels, as well as giving up on its ‘Russia first’ approach – which has been interpreted by Moscow as lenience.

14.6.3. The Russian Federation

The main goal pursued by the Russian policies at the Black Sea is maintaining the loyalty of a ring of states close to its borders – its strategic glacis. There is evidence suggesting that since the EU

became an active actor in the area, Russian elites have realised that they need to replicate the European model in the sense of offering more than practical incentives. In the Black Sea area normative appeal represents now the sought-after characteristic. During the ‘pragmatic realignment’ phase (the first 3 years of the time period analysed in this thesis), building a normative gravitas would have potentially been feasible. However, the subsequent approach began to be heavily based on denying the agency of neighbours and subordinating free and equal subjects of international law through conflict and economic means.

At the moment, due to this pursued path, Russia finds itself in isolation and is consequently losing the loyalty of its near abroad. Although it still holds the levers of the two above-mentioned variables, it is fair to assume that, should pressures on protracted conflicts and economic relations fail to obtain the expected results, the free agents in the Black Sea would quickly move towards a full pro-western orientation.

Yet, I argue that Russia can win the loyalty of its Black Sea near abroad by not being so scared of losing it. A fruitful and committed dialogue with the EU would mean obtaining peace and stability along the Russian borders. To be more precise, a ‘grown-up’ great power aware of its position and capabilities in the post-Cold War world order would involve understanding that cooperation with the EU does not mean ‘losing to the West’. However, these are not new insights and it is difficult to believe that the Russian political thinkers are blind to them. Consequently, given the fact that one can only conclude that Russia keeps itself in constant ‘loyalty alert’ due to the need of legitimising a defending regime, the solution for the achievement of the Russian goals in the Black Sea geopolitical environment is, without question, regime change⁷⁹ in Moscow.

14.7. Space for Further Research

It was highlighted above that the integrated approach could be applied in any circumstances where the spheres of influence of an ‘EU-like’ polity and that of a traditional great power meet. However, the research pursued in this thesis may also be expanded along various lines.

Firstly, one can analyse the Black Sea geopolitical environment through a different timeframe. Although 2003 represents the year when the EU actually advanced a regional policy for the area, bilateral relations between the Union and Black Sea countries were initiated before that date, going back to the early 1990s; hence, the foreign policy orientation represents a valid variable which can be studied outside the timeframe of this thesis. More importantly, the recent developments in Ukraine suggest that an interesting exercise could be pursued if the 2003-2012 period would be prolonged to the present day. Particularly important in this sense would be the analysis of whether the opening up of already tested instruments by Russia (fuelling conflict), coupled with a raising

⁷⁹ The perspective is that of a unitary political system. In other words, this thesis, unlike practitioner views, does not have limitations stemming from the principle of non-interference in internal affairs.

awareness of ‘being in the same boat’ on the part of the Black Sea states, translate into a cross-sectional behaviour convergence along the coast.

Secondly, the case studies set can be expanded. The above mention of Ukraine provides an obvious candidate, but Armenia and Azerbaijan can also be brought into the analytical gamut of the integrated approach. More interesting would be introducing Turkey in the discussion. As a regional power, Turkey does not fall prey to the foreign policy orientation dilemma (although one could argue that there is a level of competition with Russia over regional influence); hence, the rehashing of the premises constructing the integrating approach could be a stimulating intellectual exercise.

Thirdly, an interesting avenue could be pursued if one isolates one of the elements which the cross-sectional comparison has highlighted – the predictability of the Russian behaviour. If this aspect is adopted as a starting premise, then a wealth of further research opportunities opens up in analysing and to a certain extent predicting the course of actions adopted by the Federation in its relations with other great or regional powers, such as Japan or China. The predictability characteristic also makes these types of analyses particularly receptive to comparative historical assessment methods.

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