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**ASYMMETRICAL WARFARE STRATEGY
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS TO THE BLACK SEA
REGIONAL SECURITY IN 21ST CENTURY: NON-STATE
AGGRESSIVE ACTORS AND TERRORISM**

Abstract:

Today, military politics have become a dominant factor in the aegis of the contemporary international and regional security, and this provision is also relevant in the Black Sea Region. The nature of military politics presupposes the existence of asymmetric threats, which is revealed in the implementation of functional politics by the states and implies the following components: power, chance, astonishment, armed forces, their doctrines, and armaments. The asymmetric military identification is vital to recognize at the regional level, with the example of the Black Sea Region and it's involvement of so-called 'Non-State Aggressive Actors' (DAESH, Al-Qaeda, etc.). After the Russian annexation of Crimea, the Black Sea Region would be designated as a conflict zone and therefore NATO has reinforced it's eastern security policy accordingly. The International Community witnessed that there are two regional hegemons: Russia and Turkey, pursuing their own geopolitical and economic interests in the Black Sea region and the region around the Caspian Sea (including one that sees regional power interests). Recently, China, as a global power in its own right, with its 'One Belt and One Road' Initiative (OBOR), expresses it's own interests toward the region,

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including from the asymmetric threat perception points of view. Suffice to say, the Asymmetrical wargame scenario has been demonstrated precisely in the Tskhinvali Region with wargaming between Russia and Georgia, and in Crimea with hybrid war between Russia and Ukraine. These interactions have occurred in aegis of the Black Sea Region as it grapples with asymmetric threats on both Military Strategically and Operational levels.

Keywords:

asymmetric warfare, asymmetric threats, the Black Sea Region, Tskhinvali region, Crimea, regional hegemon, Russia, Turkey, China, OBOR

Introduction

The Black Sea Region a key geopolitical entity in the make-up of security policy and stability in Europe and Asia. numerous issues in the region, including ethnic conflicts, ongoing state-building processes, the presence of vast natural resources, and strategic transport and energy corridors mean that the region is an extremely important and sensitive area.

In geographical terms, it is difficult to specify the boundaries of the Black Sea Region since there are numerous regional and sub-regional structures. In the post-Cold War period, there has been a large measure of openness to several neighbouring areas, such as the Mediterranean, the Balkans, and the Caspian region. This kind of openness makes it difficult to define both the nature of the region and its borders and is reflected in terms such as ‘Black-Caspian Seas Region’ and ‘Black-Mediterranean Seas Region’. Some analysts have even argued that the Black Sea Region is simply an intellectual invention. To avoid confusion, the approach used here is based on the definition adopted by the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC).

At the end of the Cold War, the states around the Black Sea regained their freedom and escaped from what could be described as ‘a bipolar conceptual straitjacket’. This historical event not only marked the start of a move towards independence, democracy, and a market economy, but also unleashed previously suppressed ethnic, national, and territorial conflicts, and even terrorism. From the early 1990s onwards, the region witnessed armed conflicts and an increase in political tension. Political

and territorial disagreements such as border disputes and clashes between both peoples and states are the main reason why the prospects for regional security cooperation are rather bleak. The Black Sea basin was of secondary importance for the Euro-Atlantic community during the 1990s as it focused on stabilizing and integrating central and eastern European countries from the Baltic to the Black Sea. However, in the 21st century, the changing global and regional balances created new political and security dilemmas for the Black Sea Region. The global and regional powers increasingly supported competition for political and security agendas which, although they occasionally contradicted each other, were interlinked.

After September 11th, 2001 the U.S. increased its involvement in the region, with new programs in Georgia and Ukraine, for example. This went hand in hand with the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) enlargement processes and global political developments. The differing approaches to the creation of security and stability in the region led to tension and rivalry between the regional actors.

In the post-Cold War period, the Black Sea Region failed to develop a cooperative security vision or structure in which the regional actors would have been the principal stakeholders. The Russian-Georgian War in August 2008 showed quite clearly that the initiatives designed to pacify the region had not produced a security system capable of preventing or containing internal and interstate conflicts. One lesson that can be learned from the August 2008 crisis is that the interplay of regional and global forces will continue to dominate future political and military issues in the region and it remains to be seen whether the war in August 2008 will lead to a new cooperative security environment in the Black Sea Region. Finally, all kinds of security issues ranging from energy security to environmental degradation; from terrorism to illegal trafficking in arms, human beings, and drugs continue to be unresolved as a result of the existing international rivalry.

Another important issue is energy security. The need to achieve energy supply diversity on the one hand and the risks associated with energy dependency on Russia on the other show the importance of gas and oil from other sources being piped to the European markets through the region. The energy dispute between Russia and Ukraine in late 2008 and early 2009 clearly illustrated the importance of energy security for the region and for the EU. In addition to exploration, production, and transport-related problems, oil and natural gas have become one of the

main security issues in the Black Sea Region, which as the principal energy transit route, is also a testing ground for the interaction between producer, consumer, and transit countries. This means that the region is not only a potential hub, it is the host of numerous rivalries as well.

Finally, several problems associated with soft security issues which range from environmental concerns to the potential for social unrest and economic collapse need to be analysed, especially when there is a likelihood that they will disrupt political stability and security in the region. Potential destabilizing threats such as the global financial crisis also need to be kept under review, as does the impact of the crisis on the countries in the region or on the redefinition of the roles of the regional powers, and the opportunities arising from a redefinition of the global economic environment.

By and large, the Black Sea Region is also of increasing geo-economic importance especially concerning developing energy security provisions in aegis of the European Union via the import and logistical opportunities. With the emergence of the Caspian Basin, Middle East, and Central Asia becoming some kind of energy gateway, the importance of providing and fostering security and stability in the Pan-European Area cannot be understated. It is interesting to underpin that energy security in the Wider Black Sea Region as defined by the concrete scientific and academic analytical school approaches reflected in international relations, like interdependence theory³.

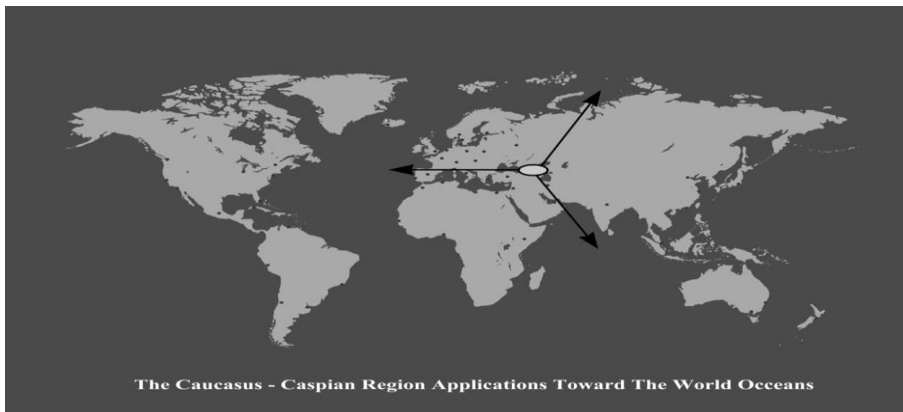
Geopolitical Classification of the Black Sea Region – Wider Black Sea Implication for the World Politics

As previously outlined, geographical implications for the Black Sea Region due to the geopolitical transmission and transformation after a ‘bipolar system demolition’ in contemporary international relations. As a result of this, regional security is increasing steadily. There are several indicators on why the region has become so important and unique not only in the Cold War period but more so afterward due first of all to the very unique geopolitical implications of the region. The region has primary access to the ‘Three Oceans’ line (Nord, Atlantic, and Indian Oceans – see Map 1) via multiple gateways including Black Sea Basin, the Persian Gulf, and Central Eurasia. Moreover, concrete geopolitical

³ I. Chifu, A. Sauliuc, B. Nedea, *Energy Security Strategies in the Wider Black Sea Region*, Bucharest 2010, p. 9.

determinants of the importance of the region are considered with three main criteria having pure geopolitical meaning.

Map 1: The Black Sea Region applicability toward the 'Three Oceans' line.



These unique geopolitical indicators are further explained below:

- 1) Combination of three concepts: Talasokratia+Telurokratia +Montekratia;
- 2) 'Eurasian Balkan' acronym for spurring new asymmetric challenges Key international energy gateway providing unlimited delivery of energy resources to international markets.

Nevertheless, the geopolitical implication is only the so-called 'macro' level of analysis and is fitted to a pan-regional classification and global political relevance of the region. To provide the so-called 'micro' level of analysis and importance of the region in aegis of the regional and local implications there are some approaches to make classification of the Black Sea Region. The classification is based on classical geopolitical identification similar to that of British geopolitical school founder Professor Halford Mackinder's 'Heartland Theory'. According to his theory, Mackinder defined the global geopolitical system into three main territorial areas: 'Pivot Area' (or another way 'Heartland'), 'Inner or Marginal Crescent', and 'Lands of the Outer or Insular Crescent'⁴. Even Mackinder endorsed simplistic dictum upon based on which he identified

⁴ G. O. Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: the Politics of Writing Global Space*, London 1996, p. 33.

then world order: “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland: Who rules the World-Island commands the World”⁵.

In this respect, based on the classical geopolitical methodology is possible to define geopolitical identification of the Black Sea region. Having considered the above-mentioned passage is necessary to figure out the following possible configuration. The configuration is identified regional geopolitical architecture in three concrete circles, similar to the British classical geopolitical school approach:

- 1) Black Sea Basin – ‘Inner Core’ Ring – namely six littoral states of the Black Sea itself (Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine, Georgia, Russian Federation);
- 2) Black Sea Region – ‘Outer Core Ring’ – the land and seascape from the Balkans to the Caucasus and from Ukrainian and Russian steppe to Anatolia;
- 3) Wider Black Sea Region (Area) – ‘Close Outer’ Ring – the territory encompasses the following geopolitical spaces MENA, Caspian Basin, South, and Eastern Europe.

Considering the geopolitical classification is important to clarify the dispositional characteristics of the regional ‘circles’. The scheme means demonstrating true geopolitical content in each of the ‘circles’ – for instance, Black Sea Basin associated with ‘Talassokratia’⁶ geopolitics, Black Sea Region – associated with ‘Montecracy’⁷ geopolitics, and Wider Black Sea Area (Region) – associated with ‘Telurokratia’⁸ geopolitics. Roughly this is the geopolitical modality of the Black Sea region and follows up the British geopolitical school founder Mackinder’s dictum is very possible to create the same version for the regional dimension and if the dictum exists, the one is to be as follow: “Who rules Black Sea Basin commands Eurasia (Post-Soviet Space). Who rules Black Sea Region commands the Pan-Europe. Who rules Wider Black Sea Region commands the World Politics”.

This interesting approach contains historical provisions that detrimentally influenced regional geopolitics. The most important and critical challenge is the fact that there are a large number of actors and clashing interests within the Black Sea Region. Using security terms, the region suffers from several historical legacies. The Black Sea Region

⁵ R. D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography*, New York 2013, p. 74.

⁶ Talassokratia – geopolitical jargon means sea power domain in politics.

⁷ Montecracy – geopolitical jargon implies influence of mountainous geographic terrain on foreign political and military strategic decisions.

⁸ Telurokratia – geopolitical jargon means land power domain in politics.

used to be treated as a 'passive area' and analysed as the periphery of more significant geographical units. Thus the Black Sea basin has been variously described as the backyard of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, as an extension of the Soviet zone of influence, as the frontier of Europe, and, finally, as the extension of the Mediterranean world. Moreover, the existence of several distinct sub-regions within the Black Sea Region – the Caucasus, the Balkans, and to a certain extent the Mediterranean, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East – is another factor that destabilizes the area. Time and again sub-regional identities have prevented the emergence of a Black Sea identity, created instability, and impeded the establishment of a comprehensive regional security framework. There are both regional and non-regional actors in the Black Sea Region, and three principal actors exert varying degrees of influence on the available security policy options (reflection of the passage is below). At the present time, the Black Sea region is becoming very important to world markets because it has large oil and gas reserves that are only now bargaining to be fully developed (taking into consideration the energy resources of Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Romania, Russia, transit potency of Georgia, Bulgaria, Turkey and very closed disposition toward the Caspian Basin). Developing these resources has resulted in competition both between companies to get the contracts to develop this potential, and between nations to determine the final export routes. According to experts of the RAND Corporation, the Caspian oil potential today is 2% of the world's total (Venezuela has one-fourth of such reserves; Iraq, one-seventh; and Saudi Arabia, one-seventeenth). Therefore, the Caspian Sea region's oil and gas potential and the Black Sea region's transition ability have attracted much attention since the breakup of the Soviet Union. Due to the unique geopolitical location, the Black Sea region interlines four very important areas: the Middle East, Central Europe, Central Asia, and Western Europe thus more raising the political status of the region for the international society. The nations in the Black Sea Region and nearby 'gateways'⁹, that includes such actors as Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Turkey, Romania, Russia, Bulgaria, are already major energy producers and exporters, and production will increase with additional investment, technology, and the development of new export outlets. The Caspian Sea is 700 miles long and contains 6 separate hydrocarbon basins. However, the Caspian Sea strategic reserves importance is difficult to consider by

⁹ Term used by the American scientist Saul B. Cohen and in this context means geographical one for key passages of the Black Sea for shipping of oil and gas. See: D. Minix, S. Hawley, *Global Politics*, New York 1998, pp. 50-51.

the exclusion of South-East Europe and the South Caucasus regions. The South Caucasus' strategic importance cannot be overestimated: it is a link between the North and the South (Russia and the Persian Gulf), it is a source of oil and gas for the European and Pacific markets¹⁰. Besides one should perceive the regional geopolitical perspective. The Caucasus has an important geopolitical role to play as a link between the North and the South (Central Eurasia, which is Russia, and the Middle East) and the West and the East (Western Europe-the Balkans-the Caucasus-Central Asia-Southeast Asia-the Far East). The true mechanism of managing the 'resources' distribution requires stable and cohesive political stability and basement. It drives all nations to engage in a new relationship mechanism and by a joint effort to build democracy, a free-minded society, and rigid statehood. Otherwise to say the broader Black Sea-Caspian-Central Asian dimension, bringing in all countries of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, would be based on the existing mechanism of the Organization for the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) of which the countries of the Caucasus and South-East Europe are members. The BSEC organization itself would be upgraded operationally, with full membership now appropriate for the EU because of the status of Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey as accession candidates, and possible association links with the South Caucasus as well as their membership in NATO. This institutionalization might be laying the foundation for further development of the Black Sea reserves exploitation to benefit all participated nations and societies. This is a real chance for regionalization success and working towards integrative negotiation ends.

Military Dimension of The Wider Black Sea Regional Security: NATO and Russia's 'New Cold War' Competition

Threat assessment criteria are being considered as the most prevalent academic instrument in reaching true realms of logics of international relations. In the 21st century, threat identification has been determined and transformed into concrete systematic modalities. Having considering the 'Copenhagen School' securitization concept where there are five rings of security provisions that are enlisted in the following way: 1) Political Security, 2) Military Security, 3) Economic Security, 4) Society Security, 5) Environment Security.

¹⁰ V. Maisaia, *The Caucasus-Caspian Regional and Energy Security Agendas – Past, Contemporary and Future Geopolitics: View from Georgia*, Brussels 2007, pp. 15-17.

Therefore, with the enumerating ‘five rings’ provision in the 20th and 21st centuries, two academic sub-fields in international relations have emerged. Namely, strategic and security studies as a whole, representing the most important contribution to the research of security issues in aegis of the political science. Even today, some authors consider them to be the only real research platform of security research¹¹. In that manner it is important for true classification of threat identification to be clarified in the manner of threat-challenge-risk. However, the classification is still plausible and general enough and yet to have been confirmed in the academic and analytical methodology frame. Nevertheless, there are two types of threats that are already identified but in a general way – symmetric and asymmetric threats¹².

It is through this lense that the military security dimension is more applicable for analysing the situation and importance of the region in the aegis of international politics. Approaching the region from the military perspective is necessary to introduce the jargon of ‘Geostrategic Gateway’ – space or area vitally important from global security and military perspectives and transposed in a modality labelled as the ‘southern limited flank’ in aegis of the CFE Treaty of Istanbul OSCE Summit. Relatively, Black Sea regional security is referred to as a ‘Geostrategic Gateway’ mainly due to the contemporary ‘New Cold War’ provision where a coercive competition between NATO and Russia for gaining dominance over the Black Sea region.

Due to the strained relations between the West and Russia, from one standpoint, an economic war between the EU/USA and Russia via sanction policy level and a military confrontation between NATO and Russia via demonstration ‘military muscles’ between competing forces is possible. In that scope, mainly NATO-Russia military confrontation as one of the dangerous ‘combat zones’ is sought to be the Black Sea Basin and its littoral territories which are labelled as the ‘Black Sea Security Dimension’. The flawed geostrategic situation in the area is making it possible to deteriorate the geostrategic environment in the area further on and the indication derives from those actions taken by the Kremlin’s incumbent authority.

¹¹ R. Ondrejčák, *Introduction to Security Studies*, Bratislava 2014, pp. 24-26.

¹² E. Beraia, *The U.S. Foreign Policy Priorities in the Post-Cold War Period (1990-2016): Georgia’s Case from Transnational Challenges (Including Migration) towards Enhancing Institutional Transformation*, Ph.D. thesis at International Black Sea University (IBSU), American Studies Program, Tbilisi, Georgia, 21.09.2017, pp. 72-73.

On July 27th, 2015 a new naval doctrine was declared and later approved by the President of the Russian Federation. This document has identified a new version or interpretation of the military doctrine that was approved by the National Security Council in December of 2015. The naval doctrine has identified strategic areas and basins, such as the Arctic and the so-called 'Atlantic' direction, which includes the Black Sea Basin. The doctrine also undermines the role of the fleet (both military and civilian), the shipbuilding industry, harbours, and rigging infrastructure as priorities for the further development of Russia's naval economy. The perception based on these documents leads to the conclusion that Russia is trying to position itself as a great power with the ability to increase its military capability on the Caspian-Black-Mediterranean Seas axis.

The Centre of this axis is the Black Sea, a basin from which NATO risks being excluded. The Russian policy-makers seek to regain its nation's great power status-quo through domination in the basin by controlling three key-points: Crimea, the mouths of the Danube, and the Bosphorus. Having considered the latest events, Russia has partially achieved these strategic goals – first occupying and then annexing the Crimea while reinforcing military positions and capabilities in the peninsula, with the creation of so-called 'The Eastern Mediterranean Task Force' to control the Turkish Straits and the Middle East (especially Syria). The naval grouping was created within the Black Sea Fleet and provided a detachment of combat ships and boats for the Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf region. Meanwhile, Russia pursued its control of the Bosphorus (the Task Force was reinforced by the nuclear-carried submarine 'Rostov-on-Don', which sailed from Novorosiisk to join the Force and was equipped with the newest strategic weaponry system 'Kalibr' missiles). With this reinforcement of naval forces, Russia is seeking to get under the control of the third pillar – the mouth of the Danube. However, to further reinforce its presence in the Black Sea basin, the Russian authority announced that 30 new ships are to be supplied to the Black Sea Fleet, including six new frigates, six new submarines, and other smaller naval landing vessels. In addition to that, the Black Sea Fleet will reinforce its anti-access strategy (A2/AD) against NATO forces. Moreover, according to the "Jamestown Foundation" – officially Moscow decides to set up in the Crimea an 'unapproachable fortress' and military key-spot. In the peninsula, with only a 2.2 million population, the Russian militaries received several SU-27SM and MIG-29 fighters, SU-25M ground attack aircrafts, IL-38N

maritime patrol/anti-submarine aircrafts, KA-52K attack helicopters, and KA-27ASW helicopters.

Additionally, the Kremlin is planning to deploy in Crimea its strategic military armaments, which enables it to carry on nuclear warheads. A regiment of TU-22M3 strategic bombers, which can be used as platforms for different high-precision missiles, will be deployed at Gvardeyskoye airfield, 15 kilometres northwest of Simferopol. It is necessary to consider the fact that in the North Caucasus Military District, now transformed into operational-strategic HQ 'South', already deployed in Engelsk airfield strategic bomber jets with nuclear devices and equipment (TU-160 'Black Bear' and TU-95M). The Rostov-on-Don military airfield already received '4+1' generation modernize aircrafts SU-34 and SU-35 also capable to carry on nuclear tactical bombs and air-to-land cruise missiles with precision guide systems. Also, with the creation of two batteries of strategic strike rocket complex 'ISKANDER-M' targeting Georgia and Ukraine it becomes clear that Russia has sufficient enough strike capabilities to operate properly in any operational directions. This is enough to demonstrate a military 'muscle show' toward these yet uncontrolled nations.

The Kremlin's decision to launch the unprecedented second phase of massive military drills 'KAVKAZ-2016' in aegis of the sudden alert mission operational-tactical level with the involvement of 11 thousand servicemen and with the usage of strike military capabilities – S-300M air-defence complexes, SU-34 jets, tactical-operational rocket systems 'ISKANDER-M', etc. means that Russia seriously considers beginning a war campaign in the region in any direction. According to Warsaw-based magazine "New Eastern Europe", together with the new naval infantry and Special Forces units, some of which have already been used as part of its hybrid war, Russia will own a significant strike force, which could help implement different military combat operations in the Black Sea basin. In 2016 the Russian Ministry Defence announced some interesting points on further reinforcement of the military capabilities in the area. For example, the Russian government would spend \$2.4 billion by 2020 to provide its Black Sea Fleet with state-of-the-art ships, submarines, air defence systems, and naval infantry. Similarly, the Caspian Fleet is being reinforced with new military ships and vessels equipped with sea-to-sea and sea-to-land cruise missiles 'Kalibr' and 'Bulava', even covered the operational-tactical zone in Syria and Iraq.

Taking together all these factors, and precise attention to the regional security environment, if the Russian government completes its missions

in the way how it has prescribed in the naval doctrine, the Black Sea Fleet will have full control over the Black Sea by 2020. In that retrospective provision, the military balance at present time between the NATO and Russian forces decreased in the proportion of 2:1 in favour of NATO, but reinforced conditions by 2020 will tip the balance in the same proportion but in Russia's favour. In that configuration, Georgia is in a dangerous positions due to its littoral space and its unfrozen seaports that Russia needs very badly. Hence, Georgia is to be coveted as new aggressive steps from the Russian authority after the Parliamentary elections, namely toward the ports directions. Hence, the Georgian government and society have to be very attentive toward any provocations spurred from the Russian side.

Asymmetric threats in a Black Sea Region – Military strategically and Operational levels

Demonstrating the nature of asymmetric warfare using the example of the Black Sea region reflects well what kind of forces Actors have. In a broad sense, we can see it as a match of interests and there is also self-interest in the game. The existence of asymmetric threats in the Black Sea region gives rise to this region as a strategically important corridor for trade, transport, and energy routes between Asia and Europe and has a very specific role for Europe, the USA, Russia, Turkey, and other countries. The Black Sea has coastlines in six countries, including the EU member states Bulgaria and Romania and NATO member countries Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey. Until the 20th Century, there was the Black Sea mare nostrum for Empires (Byzantine, Ottomans, and Russia). The Soviets also had their own interests and during the Cold War, the Black Sea was divided into blocks and after all this, Turkey wanted to build a south-east European geostrategic area. The Black Sea can become the main transport and energy transit corridor while also serving as the route for the transfer of Central Asian resources to Europe. This dimension comes in correlation with the 21st Century challenges. The current challenge is energy and energy routes, e.g. Europe needs the Black Sea to diversify its transit routes to the Caspian Sea and to Central Asia, to Iran, and maybe at some point to Iraq. Ukraine is working closely with Azerbaijan and Georgia to develop such routes. The Black Sea region is the geopolitical place for three large dimensions: US, EU, Russia.

The term ‘asymmetry’, ‘asymmetrical threat’ or ‘asymmetrical warfare’ is used very often, nowadays the term ‘asymmetric warfare’ is understood as employing terrorist methods. In *Modern Warfare* Klaus-Peter Lehmann defines asymmetry as a lack of symmetry, i.e. the existence of an imbalance. This imbalance can be expressed in several ways. He identifies five basic asymmetries: 1) the classic imbalance of forces, 2) the different determination or motivation, 3) the different legitimation or statehood (i.e. non-state Opponents are usually not on a legitimate, rule of law Base), 4) a discrepancy in the methods used as well the different quality of the resources¹³.

In this sense, a conflict is always asymmetrical when there are significant differences in terms of the forces, means and methods used, but also in terms of the motivation and morality of the opponents¹⁴. “The terms Asymmetric Warfare and Asymmetric Threats are used for the type of security threat that is directed against political, strategic, military, and economic structures in a form that does not correspond to the typical conventional threat scenarios. Asymmetry always exists when one of the conflicting parties behaves unexpectedly differently, for example through a new form of tactic, with an unexpected use or different use of existing weapons, or through attacks against »other targets«”¹⁵. Asymmetries of strength arise from the fact that one side gains a lead over its opponents through permanent innovations in military organization and weapons technology, which can no longer be made up within a foreseeable period. the superior side of shooting up new spheres and new spaces for warfare are tried, into which the other side cannot follow due to technological inferiority¹⁶. These threats are deriving from the conceptual and practical activities performed by the Armed Forces units of the Russian Federation.

This is a good case to define what the jargon ‘Asymmetric Threat’ means, one common definition declares, “Asymmetric Threat – the irregular threat of using power as the source of the threat to define the

¹³ K. P. Lohmann, *Zur Entwicklung der modernen Kriegführung. Grundlegende Asymmetrien und eine mögliche Strategie*, [In:] J. Schröfl, T. Pankratz, *Asymmetrische Kriegführung – ein neues Phänomen der Internationalen Politik?*, Baden-Baden 2004, pp. 57-62.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ F. Korkisch, *Die amerikanische Sicht: Asymmetric Warfare*. In: Josef Schröfl, Thomas Pankratz, [In:] J. Schröfl, T. Pankratz, *Asymmetrische Kriegführung...*, p. 145.

¹⁶ B. Richter, *Irreguläre Kriegführung am Beispiel des Libanonkrieges im Sommer 2006*, „Arms Et Litteris“, Vol. 18, 2006, p. 171.

purpose of attack as well as means and capabilities causing serious harm to a state”¹⁷. Asymmetry of strength is opposed to the asymmetry from weakness, where the loser tries to evade the superior side with the help of creative strategies and tactics. A classic form of strategic asymmetry out of weakness is the partisan war, the aim of which is not to reveal oneself, to evade open combat, and to act from behind the scenes, attack like a raid, and then go into hiding again. The asymmetry is based on the idea that the fighters tend to be unrecognizable. The aim is to extend the war over space and time and to wear down the superior enemy¹⁸. The partisan war was considered the prevailing asymmetric Strategy to offer resistance to a technologically and organizationally superior opponent, very often the central goal of the partisan struggle was to become a state actor and thus to achieve rebalancing. The most important difference between partisan struggle and terrorism is that partisan struggle is defensive, while the terrorism strategy also offers offensive options for the defeated opponent¹⁹.

Today there is no longer any doubt that the line between war and peace is becoming increasingly mixed and it is being purposely obscured for strategic reasons - states are destabilized from inside, for example by inciting minorities, perhaps this is an indicator that, hybrid warfare has begun to achieve political goals.

Hybrid warfare indicates a flexible mixed form of the open and covertly applied, regular and irregular, symmetrical and asymmetrical, military and non-military means of conflict to blur the threshold between the binary states of war and peace, particularly under international law. Hybrid wars include three different fronts of action: on conventional battlefields; with the public and the population of the attacked country; among the home population and the international public. Hybrid wars are therefore carried out by both state and non-state actors. These multimodal activities are generally operationally and tactically geared towards achieving synergy effects in the physical and psychological dimensions of the conflict²⁰. This means that hybrid warfare can be achieved through the use of both conventional and irregular combat modes, not

¹⁷ V. N. Konyshchev, A. A. Sergunin, *Sovremennaya voyennaya strategiya*, Moscow 2014, s. 15.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ H. Münkler, *Der Wandel des Krieges – Von der Symmetrie zur Asymmetrie*. Verlag Velbrück Wissenschaft, Weilerswist 2006, s. 148.

²⁰ F. G. Hoffmann, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, Arlington 2007.

characterized only in the military but also in the economic sense and by the intensive use of the media to wage an information war.

Why has Hybrid warfare become the ‘dark side’ of globalization and new technologies? That is the question, the fact is, that globalization and new technologies (Cyberspace) act as a catalyst for hybrid methods of warfare. In the 21st Century, the decisive characteristic for security policy is asymmetrical threats or warfare that arise in many forms. Some of these forms of asymmetrical threats or warfare can be conventional such as robbery, ambush, surprise, deception, subversion, the appearance of irregular forces, hacker attacks from cyberspace against the ICT infrastructure, etc.²¹ The prospective demonstrates if terrorism will become the central threat in the 21st Century, but at the instant after September 11th, 2001, terrorism has moved to the centre of threat perception as almost the most important asymmetrical threat or form of asymmetrical warfare, and it can be assumed that this view will continue.

Asymmetric Warfare in Tskhinvali Region and Russian Annexation of Crimea as a Hybrid Warfare Strategy

“Operating in the Black Sea signifies our commitment to partners and allies in the region. It is an important diplomatic mission (USS Donald Cook is in the Black Sea to conduct routine maritime security operations that support regional stability) and Donald Cook has enjoyed the hospitality of Black Sea countries many times before” – said Cmdr. Kelley Jones, commanding officer of the USS Donald Cook²². The U.S. Navy routinely operates in the Black Sea to work with NATO Allies and partners, including Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Turkey, and Ukraine. It is in the world’s best interest to maintain a stable, prosperous Black Sea region and deter aggressive actors who seek destabilization for their gain.

On August 7th, 2008, in violation of the ceasefire agreement of 1992, extensive, heavily armed troops entered South Ossetia, i.e. Georgia, through the Roki tunnel – this action was a response by the Russian Federation after the Bucharest Summit Declaration²³ decision on

²¹ F. Korkisch, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

²² M. Shelbourne, *Destroyer USS Donald Cook Now Operating in the Black Sea*, <<https://news.usni.org/2020/11/23/destroyer-uss-donald-cook-now-operating-in-the-black-sea>> (12.12.2020).

²³ On April 3 in Bucharest, NATO had promised Georgia membership, but, at the instigation of France and Germany, refused to include Georgia and Ukraine immediately in the Action Plan for Membership Preparation (MAP). *Bucharest*

Georgia's future admission to NATO. Russia lifted the economic embargo against Abkhazia and South Ossetia and in May 2008 sent soldiers to Abkhazia to repair the railway line on the coast that had previously connected Russia with Georgia. Russia assured that these soldiers were unarmed so that it was not a violation of the ceasefire agreement. Russia was and is now an aggressor against Georgia. Others expressed themselves more cautiously and said that Russia did provoke, but the actual process is much more complex and needs to be seen in a larger political context.

The five-day war from 7th to 12th August 2008, between Georgia and Russia, with the participation of armed groups from South Ossetia and Abkhazia did not resolve the conflict, rather it drastically changed the conflict situation and created a new front line between the West and Russia. After the war, Russia recognized the independence of the de facto states of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and immediately concluded military assistance pacts with both states, which allow it to have a stronger military presence in both territories with 3800 men and heavy weaponry in each region. From the perspective of Georgia – should Georgia be admitted to NATO shortly, the explosive situation would arise that Russian troops would be illegally stationed on NATO soil. In turn, in Russia's view, NATO would unlawfully threaten the existence of two independent, sovereign states and allies of Russia. Although the USA had modernized the Georgian armed forces through trainers and supplies of material and support for Georgia's NATO membership, many European governments, especially those of the larger countries, warned of a new NATO eastward expansion due to the foreseeable conflict with Russia as the 'frozen conflict' in Georgia. Remarkable is the fact, that South Ossetia (Area is 3,900 km with 70,000 inhabitants) strives for unification with North Ossetia and thus with Russia because North Ossetia is one of Russia's national federation subjects. South Ossetia is only connected to North Ossetia by difficult-to-negotiate passes in the high Caucasus Mountains and by the Roki Tunnel.

A conflict is always asymmetrical when there are significant differences in terms of the forces, means and methods used, but also in terms of the motivation and morality of the opponents²⁴. This case is a classic imbalance of forces: Georgia's Defence Forces – the Infantry Brigades as of 2008 numbered as follows: headquarters (60 men) and

Summit Declaration, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm> (1.12.2020).

²⁴ K. P. Lohmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-62.

headquarters company (108 men, two AIFVs), three light infantry battalions (591 men each), one combined tank battalion (two armoured and one mechanized company – a total of 380 men, 30 T-72 tanks and 15 AIFVs), a maintenance battalion (288 men), an artillery battalion (371 men, 18 122-mm D-30 towed howitzers, 12 120-mm towed mortars, 4 ZSU-23-4 self-propelled anti-aircraft gun systems), a reconnaissance company (101 men, 8 APCs), a communications company (88 men, two APCs), a combined engineer company (96 men) – all in all, 3,265 servicemen²⁵. The Artillery Brigade served as the main means of fire support for the Land Forces. In mid-2008, it numbered up to 1,200 men and included: headquarters, a battalion of 152-mm 2A65 Msta-B towed howitzers, a battalion of 152-mm 2S3 self-propelled howitzers, a battalion of 152-mm Dana self-propelled gun-howitzers, a battalion of BM-21 Grad, RM-70, and a Grad LAR multiple-launch rocket systems, a battalion 100-mm MT-12 anti-tank guns²⁶ a training battalion, a supply battalion, and a security company²⁷.

The following units belonged to the Georgian Air Force in August 2008: Air Force Operations Centre; Marneuli airbase (fighter-bomber squadron with Su-25, training squadron with L-39); Alexeyevka airbase (Mi-8 helicopter squadron, UH-1H helicopter squadron), mixed helicopter squadron (Mi-8, Mi-14, Mi-24); drone squadron; six radar stations; a radio reconnaissance unit; two air defence posts (two battalions with missile systems S-125M, two battalions with missile systems ‘Buk-M1’, up to 18 combat vehicles with missile systems ‘Osa-AK/AKM’, as well as some combat vehicles missile systems Spyder-SR) and an air defence unit; a training centre including an An-2.39 flight squadron²⁸.

Russia's Defence Forces – since 2006 regular manoeuvres of the North Caucasian military district have taken place on a large scale. One of the goals was to show the Russian troops stationed in the region to Tbilisi. The manoeuvres ‘Caucasian Frontier-2006’, ‘Caucasian Frontier-2007’ and ‘Caucasus-2008’ caused the greatest sensation. These took place in the summer and represented a series of individual manoeuvres by the 58th Army and the 4th Army of the Air Force and Air Defence stationed in the region. Individual sections of the airborne troops and the

²⁵ Ministry of Defence of Georgia, *Strategic Defence Review*, Tbilisi 2007, p. 87.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 89.

²⁷ B. Makharidze, *Interview with the head of the financial department of the Ministry of Defence*, “Defence Today”, No. 3, 2007, p. 2.

²⁸ Ministry of Defence of Georgia, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

Russian Black Sea Fleet also took part. The airborne troops were represented as usual by a tactical battalion formation of the 76th 'Pskov' Airborne Division and several units of the 7th Airborne Assault Division from Novorossiysk. The total number of military personnel involved in the 'Caucasus 2008' manoeuvres reached 10,000 soldiers and hundreds of armoured vehicles. As a part of 'Caucasus 2008', a company of the marine infantry went ashore for the first time from a large landing ship on a beach in the Imereti flatland near Sochi, a few kilometres from the Russian-Abkhazian border. Another aspect was the transfer of several Su-24M tactical bombers to the Sochi airport and the subsequent implementation of training flights from there²⁹.

The different determination or motivation – as a result of the Russian provocation, Georgia replied to take advantage of the decisive superiority of the reshaped army and to crush the core of the South Ossetian armed forces as quickly as possible, to occupy the capital Tskhinvali and to block the Trans-Caucasian highway in order to prevent transport volunteers from Russia. Russia was and is a Hegemon in the Caucasus despite Turkish interests. Also, Russia sees post-soviet countries as its 'own' place and all NATO steps in this region or Eastern Partnership politics are seen as a threat to Russia. Also, non-state opponents took part in the August War (North Caucasus mercenaries), and different ways of warfare were used, e.g. cyber-attacks and economic pressure.

The Russian annexation of Crimea at a Hybrid warfare level: Russia's strategic military planning has changed radically in the past decade. This happened under the influence of the so-called 'colour revolutions', which led to regime changes in Ukraine (Rose Revolution 2003), Georgia (Orange Revolution 2004), and Kyrgyzstan (Tulip Revolution 2005)³⁰. The experiences in the Georgian War in 2008 in particular influenced a strategic rethinking in the Russian armed forces which focused on fast, flexible units with mobile anti-tank guided weapons.³¹ This rethinking was theoretically supported by the Chief of the Russian General Staff and Deputy Defence Minister, Valeri

²⁹ M. S. Barabanow, A. W. Lawrow, W. A. Zelujko, *Die Panzer des August*, Moscow 2010, pp. 38-39.

³⁰ J. Forbrig, P. Demes, *Reclaiming Democracy: Civil Society and Electoral Change in Central and Eastern Europe*, Washington 2007.

³¹ R. Beckhusen, *To beat Russian tanks, the Baltic States Study the Georgia War: 2008 conflict with Russia proves that anti-tank missiles rule*, <<https://medium.com/war-is-boring/to-beat-russian-tanks-the-baltic-states-study-another-war-710812d7e5b8>> (11.11.2020).

Gerasimov. In an article published in a military journal in February 2013, Gerasimov stated that the ‘coloured’ revolutions of the Arab Spring, supposedly produced by the Western world, had shown how a ‘prosperous state’ quickly moved into a zone of the armed conflict and became the victim of a military intervention by NATO³². From his perspective, therefore, ‘coloured revolutions’, especially in the post-Soviet space, are to be prevented by Russia at all costs. According to Gerasimov, non-military means should be combined with the covert use of Special Forces. According to the Russian Chief of Staff, it was possible to maintain a permanent front on the territory of the enemy state. In this context, he also pointed out the special importance of mobile units and precision weapons³³. In his article published in 2013, General Gerasimov concluded that the Russian Federation also had to acquire skills for waging a ‘non-linear war’ (he avoids the term ‘hybrid war’). On the Russian side, non-linear warfare was also viewed as a means of compensating for deficiencies in the conventional armed forces. At the same time, it was of great importance for the Russian Chief of Staff to develop suitable defensive measures against a hybrid attack by the West³⁴. With the publication of a NATO review video on July 3rd, 2014, with the title ‘Hybrid War - Hybrid Response’, the term became the official language for this type of war³⁵.

The reform of the Russian Armed Forces which began in 2008, also served to prepare for hybrid military operations. The focus of the reform was the creation of small and flexible units that can be deployed quickly in regional trouble spots. Besides, the capacities in the area of Special Forces were significantly expanded. In this way, the Kremlin leadership created military instruments to be able to intervene specifically in the post-Soviet area³⁶. The ‘Zapad’ manoeuvres of the Russian army in 2013, which was carried out in Kaliningrad and on the Russian western border in conjunction with Belarusian troops, are also related to this. According to official Russian information, the ‘Zapad’ manoeuvres served to

³² W. Gerasimov, *The value of science in prediction*, “Military-Industrial-Kurier”, 27.02.2013.

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ H. Reisinger, A. Gol’c, *Hybrider Krieg in der Ukraine: Russlands Intervention und die Lehren für die NATO*, “Osteuropa”, Vol. 64, No. 9/10, 2014, p. 120.

³⁵ *NATO: Hybrid War – Hybrid Response*, <<https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2014/07/01/hybrid-war-hybrid-response/index.html>> (10.11.2020).

³⁶ M. Klein, K. Pester, *Russlands Streitkräfte: Auf Modernisierungskurs. Stand und Perspektiven der russischen Militärreform*, “SWP-Aktuell”, Vol. 72, 2013, p. 2-3.

prevent an attack by illegal armed groups against Belarusian territory. However, the military annexation of Crimea in spring 2014 was in large part noticeably similar to the manoeuvre carried out in 2013³⁷. In this case, 'Zapad' can be seen as a manoeuvre in preparation for interventions by the Russian Federation in the post-Soviet area.

Hybrid warfare practiced by the Russian Federation in 2014, after the Euromaidan Revolution are based on the ideas of General Gerasimov. On the one hand, the Kremlin leadership took advantage of the critical attitude of a large part of the Crimean population towards the new central government and supported the pro-Russian forces advocating a split from Ukraine³⁸. At the same time, Russian Special Forces (Spetsnaz) appeared in Crimea without a sovereign badge and occupied strategically important positions there. The deployment of Special Forces that could not be identified gave the Russian side an important element of surprise, as the Ukrainian troops did not know how to react to them³⁹. The military presence of Russia in Crimea increased in a very short time through the deployment of employees of the military secret service, airborne troops, and Cossack units⁴⁰.

The Russian annexation of Crimea was accompanied by the massive use of propaganda, which focused on the targeted manipulation of information. For example, there was talk of a massive De-Russification of ethnic Russians by the new Ukraine's central government or a possible takeover of the Black Sea fleet by NATO. Besides, Russian state media described the 'Maidan Revolution' as fascist and extremely Russophobic, creating an important narrative that later also came to bear in Moscow's hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine and played an important role in mobilizing the pro-Russian movement there played⁴¹.

Politically, Russia is taking steps toward a position of dominance in the Black and Azov Seas. It is trying to take control of parts of the sea, the shipping routes, or important waterways (straits). The focus of Russian policy is to strengthen the entire Russian south side on the Black and Caspian Seas and Ukraine has fundamental strategic importance location on the Black and Azov Seas. It gets the Moscow free movement

³⁷ M. Malek, *Moskaus Schlachtpläne. Hintergründe zu Russlands Krieg in der Ukraine*, "Osteuropa", Vol. 64, No. 9/10, 2014, pp. 99-100.

³⁸ D. Johnson, *Russia's Approach to Conflict - Implications for NATO's Deterrence and Defence*, "NATO Defense College Research Paper", No. 111, 2015, p. 8.

³⁹ H. Reisinger, A. Gol'c, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁴⁰ M. Malek, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

⁴¹ H. Reisinger, A. Gol'c, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

(from Kerch and the Sea of Azov) not only for those on the Crimea stationed Russian Black Sea Fleet, but also across the Volga-Don Canal to the Azov and the Black Sea incoming Caspian fleet. Reach of the Kremlin are the most important goals, even without realizing the plan, which was considered at times but rejected as currently unrealizable, to create a Russian-dominated land bridge ('New Russia') along the northern coast of the Black Sea from Mariupol to Odesa⁴². Russia is strengthening its Black Sea Fleet because it has a decisive role in the dispute with the USA and also attaches to the Mediterranean. At the same time, Moscow is expanding control in a neighbourhood region of the EU that Brussels neglects and in which Moscow has and uses the opportunity, as an 'arbiter' in conflicts that it has had a hand in creating.

Russia is not the only regional power in the region. Turkey is pursuing their interests between the three seas. The same applies to China with its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI or Silk Road Initiative), to a lesser extent for Iran and Saudi Arabia. In any case, Russia remains the most powerful state in the region. The behaviour of the other regional powers depends on whether they contribute, or cautiously, reinforce the effect of Russian politics.

'Non-State Aggressive Actors' and Black Sea Region

The phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters and returnees also had a major impact on the security situation last year, although a large number of returnees have not arrived after the military defeat of ISIS in Syria and Iraq in 2018. Returnees with military training and combat experience (handling explosives and weapons) represent a risk potential that is difficult to calculate, because they can act without empathy concerning the use of force and often maintain contact with members of terrorist organizations on site. This contact attitude can also extend to former comrades-in-arms from other countries and thus lead to networking and assembling among each other. However, the number of returnees in 2018 was low, given a large number of departures in previous years. The perpetrators of the terrorist attacks or prevented attack attempts in Europe in 2018 were (with a few exceptions) not returnees from the Syrian-Iraqi war zone⁴³.

⁴² B. Bartsch, et. all, *Antagonismen in der Nachbarschaft der Europäischen Union, Geopolitische Ambitionen in der Schwarzmeer-/Kaspischen Region*, Berlin 2020.

⁴³ *Bundesministerium für Inneres Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz und Terrorismusbekämpfung (BVT)*, Wien 2019, p. 12.

At the time in Iraq and Syria, there are still about 4,000 to 6,000 ISIS fighters, a few hundred in Afghanistan, and smaller groups in Libya, Egypt, Yemen, and the Caucasus⁴⁴. In these countries, ISIS continues to be a threat and benefits from the ongoing instability. There is a distinction in international relations and geopolitics between ‘geographical’ and ‘geopolitical’ regions and for the Black Sea region, the Caucasus plays a leading role. The unrest in the Caucasian region means unrest in the Black Sea area. Different religious confessions, traditions, and different views of freedom are especially important in the area. Radical Islam was ultimately able to establish itself in the North Caucasus through the influence of foreign Islamists and the globalization of jihadist structures. The first transnational jihad in Afghanistan (1980-88) and new communication technologies also promoted the spread of radical Islamist ideas. Also ‘Al-Qaida’ played an important role in the radicalization and Islamization of the movements North Caucasus. The first Chechen war changed the nature of the North Caucasian resistance movement, which was previously shaped mainly by secular national ideas. As a result, Islamic rhetoric was increasingly used, but that, in particular, acted as a means of mobilization and provided the movement with an ideological basis⁴⁵.

In the Muslim regions of Russia and the entire post-Soviet space, the North Caucasus is an epicentre of Islamist revolt. Armed resistance under the slogan of jihad is coordinated here by a so-called ‘The Islamic Caucasus-Emirate’. Just like ISIS, the emirate also has a court of law that implements Sharia law, which also implies Islamic law. Besides administering law, the emirate maintains a secret service, special military units, and a volunteer and martyr brigade. Despite its numerous institutions, the Caucasus-Emirate is a decentralized structure that is organized into individual cells. The most important difference to the Islamic State is in the fact that the emirate appears as an underground organization that does not have any permanently controlled territory. Even ‘The Islamic Caucasus Emirate’ declaration of war is directed primarily against Russia, the Caucasus emirate is in contact with global jihad e.g. the terrorist attack on 3rd April 2017, when a suicide bomber in

⁴⁴ J. Seldin, *Far From Dead: Tens of Thousands of IS Fighters Linger in Iraq, Syria*, <<https://www.voanews.com/middle-east/far-dead-tens-thousands-fighters-linger-iraq-syria>> (8.11.2020).

⁴⁵ A. Seib, *Vom Kaukasus-Emirat zum Islamischen Staat im Nordkaukasus - Eine qualitative Frame-Analyse zu Strategien und Zielen radikal-islamistischer Videopropaganda*, ‘Osteuropa Institut Arbeitspapiere’, Vol. 2/2017.

St. Petersburg metro killed 14 people and injured 73⁴⁶. The Caucasus-Emirate is not a regional part of 'Al-Qaida', but it is in contact with other affiliated jihad fronts. Since the Chechen wars, there has been an increase of fighters from other Islamic countries into the North Caucasus. Since March 2016, relations between the EU and Russia have been based on terms of implementation of the Minsk agreements to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine, strengthening relations with the eastern partner countries and other neighbours in Central Asia, also engagement with Russia in selected areas such as the fight against terrorism⁴⁷.

In the Black Sea region, Turkey sees itself after the terrorist attack on 11th September in its special geostrategic role for the entire West and the USA. With the fall of its last enclave al-Baghuz in eastern Syria in March 2019, the territorial rule of IS ended in the Syria/Iraq region and at the end of October 2019, the IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed in a US military operation in northwest Syria. Following this, the IS resigned after its complete military defeat in Syria and Iraq (a quasi-state actor), walked back to being an underground terrorist group and the organization continues to pursue a strategy of terror. At this time 'Al-Qaida' continues to play a leading role within the global jihadist scene and both organizations claim to use every possible opportunity to carry out of terrorist attacks⁴⁸. In Syria, the end of the ISIS created an option for many jihadist fighters to leave the region, and the Black Sea and Caucasus Region is a promising place for fighters. It is for this reason Georgia could be a short-term halt and that creates a safe route for fighters to the North Caucasus.

In this sense, the situation in Turkey shows the seriousness on the one hand, of inside state terrorist organizations, like the Kurdish separatist of Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK); and on the other hand extra-state terrorist organizations include ISIS and 'Al-Qaida' and the other global jihadist fighters. Terrorist organizations such as 'Al-Qaida' or ISIS mainly benefit from the upheavals in regional and international politics. Decisive for their development and consolidation as terrorist networks

⁴⁶ C. Osthold, *Das Kaukasus-Emirat: Genese, Struktur und Aktivitäten*, <<https://christianosthold.de/2017/04/08/das-kaukasus-emirat-genese-struktur-und-aktivitaeten/>> (7.09.2020).

⁴⁷ *Außen- und Europapolitischer Bericht. Bericht des Bundesministers für Europa, Integration und Äußeres*, Vienna 2018.

⁴⁸ *Verfassungsschutzbericht. Fakten und Tendenzen. Kurzzusammenfassung*, Berlin 2019.

are above all the erosion of state structures and the associated power vacuum – as happened in Afghanistan from 1979 onwards, Iraq in 2003 or Syria after 2011. these nations, marked by war and civil war offered at the time offered ideal conditions for ideological training and terrorist training for recruits from all over the world.

Conclusion

The Black Sea region's geopolitics is still actual and very relevant from the theoretical framework of international relations and security studies and the realpolitik perspective. However, this status would be made fragile, as the Black Sea region has become one of the world's most tragic humanitarian, political and economic disaster zones. The region enters the 21st Century still drinking the deadly cocktail of 19th Century nationalism and great power rivalry. The insecurity of the region also blocks the development of the wider Black Sea-Caspian-Central Asian economic axis. New dangerous challenges – terrorism and low-intensity conflicts may subvert the security system of the region and although these might be considered as 'external,' but little awareness of the political constraints that curb and dash all prosperous dreams of the nations within. Hence, the regional system in the Black Sea area is complex and prone toward instability but with the opportunity for enhancing security provisions in the nearest future. A new military-technical revolution has substantially affected the geostrategic environment in the Black Sea region and a 'New Cold War' has made military confrontation and ensuing stalemates steadily and intensely increase. It is symptomatic that the identification of the 'Geostrategic gateway' is precisely reinforced by the status-quo of the region due to the 'New Cold War' phase development along with Russia's involvement into the Black Sea Basin. Pair with this, 'military muscle' demonstrations which indicate that asymmetric warfare doctrine in its origin where non-state actors (military private companies, terrorist organizations, criminal groupings, etc.) and closely affiliated with state structures (like Spetsnaz forces) are still in force. The foundations of Russian geostrategy in the post-Soviet space are strategic plans, based on the tradition of 'Turanian' civilization, and the concept of the Russia-Island by Vadim Tsymbursky. Russia does not intend to rebuild the Soviet Union or create another tsarist empire, but to control space, identified as its own, and to function as one of the poles in a multipolar system. Therefore, Russian geostrategy assumes the formation of such a system by weakening the West and

building its sphere of influence. The control of own zone shall be carried out by strengthening the ties with the Russia-Island's shelf on the political, economic, and military level, and by pushing the influence of foreign power centres out of the entire great limitrof (post-Soviet area), by neutralizing those states of the great limitrof (including violating their territorial integrity) that are trying to take the opponent's side. To simplify things, this approach can be described as the Russian version of the Monroe doctrine.

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