What can cooperation in the Black Sea Region teach us about Securitization Theory

Alex Tanchev

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Abstract

As a relatively new theoretical framework, Securitization Theory has been criticized for its descriptive, rather than explanatory, nature, lack of unified methodology and its limited transferability. By using the Black Sea Region as an empirical example, I offer a new perspective on the merits of Securitization Theory–namely that it should be seen as a step towards an integrated multidisciplinary approach that allows for a dialogue between different theoretical schools. I use discourse analysis to look at data from the main geopolitical players in the region–NATO, the EU, Turkey and Russia, and investigate which are the topics that they're most concerned with and aren't willing to make any concessions. Consequently, these aspects of cross-border relations are the ones that are presented as a threat to the security interests and goals of the actors and lead to the deterioration of trust and cooperation. My findings can also contribute to the literature that deals with understanding the process of securitization itself and how past securitization moves affect the current status quo. Single isolated incidents do not, by themselves, give rise to geopolitical contention and must be discerned from other, more persistent threats. This essay also demonstrates that securitization provides the necessary flexibility in dealing with the analytical consequences of the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction, namely the desire of Great Powers to avoid military conflicts with other Great Powers and the shift to non-materialistic aspects of inter-state contention like cultural superiority and intensifying societal divisions.

Keywords

1.   Introduction

In the past several decades, the field of International Relations has struggled to come up with new and innovative explanations for the phenomena we see on the world stage and has focused on theory testing, rather than theory-building(Dunne and Wight,2013). Most of the 20th century was marked by the so-called Great Debates, in which Realism, Liberalism and Constructivism vied for academic dominance. No clear "winner" came out of the clash between them but it became evident that pluralism must be sought in order to build a more detailed model of the world we live in.

During the Great Debates, political scientists and international relations specialists began looking to other fields, seeking to develop their theoretical basis. Economists and game theorists added their take to why countries and individuals act in certain ways and how they can be motivated to follow a specific line of action. On the question of cooperation, Collective Action theory gained popularity and demonstrated that common resource management can be achieved even in areas of high contention through trust, reciprocity and good communication among other factors.

This was the context in which Securitization theory developed and came into prominence. It offered the potential to combine aspects of different theoretical schools in a new framework that would bring new life to the field. While it gained a lot of popularity, it failed to position itself in such a way so as to gain the explanatory power of a Grand Theory of IR. Even though the idea behind it was sound, it received a lot of criticism for its descriptive nature, lack of unified methodology and its low transferability due to the high reliance on context.

In this paper, I'll try to explore the nature of Securitization theory and whether a redefinition or a change of perspective of how we view this theoretical school can help us better understand where it fits in the broader field of International Relations. I'll do this by employing an inductive approach, using cooperation the Black Sea Region(BSR) as a case study–an area that has been victim to oversecuritization due to its geopolitical importance. The region has received a lot of focus on a policy level in recent years, especially on a NATO and EU level, due to the heating up of frozen conflicts and meddling in internal affairs of member-states. Yet, the process of how a

threat rises, develops and manifests in foreign policy and what that means for the theory of International Relations still remains an ample area of study. Why this geographic area represents a good empirical case that is worth investigating can be demonstrated by looking at other places that have the same underlying dynamics. The Baltic Sea Region can serve as good illustration–it bears a stark resemblance to the BSR in that it is an enclosed sea whose ports give access to warm waters; the actors are identical–NATO, the EU, Russia, former Soviet Republics and former members of the Eastern Bloc; strong historical antagonism and a large number of Russian-speaking people living outside of Russia's borders. The biggest difference is that the Baltic Sea has turned almost entirely into a "Western lake" with all countries apart from Russia being members of either the EU or NATO–a process not yet finalized in the BSR. In that sense, these sister regions can be used to provide mutually enhancing predictions for the future developments we can expect. On the one hand–if the EU and NATO were to expand their frontier further eastward perhaps we can see the same relevant stability as in the North. On the other, if the idea of credible collective defence fails and countries no longer trust their allies for their protection, perhaps we can see scenarios similar to the ones in Georgia and Ukraine in Estonia and Latvia–countries with large Russian diasporas. There has already been contention due to cyber-attacks(McGuinness,2017), illegal abductions(Walker,2015) and airspace violations(YLE,2019), however, tensions haven't escalated to an armed conflict, perhaps in no small part due to the NATO presence in the region and the possibility for nuclear war.

I begin with a short overview of the BSR in order to set up the needed context in which any action takes place. Then, I'll provide different explanations of why cooperation should or should not take place according to three theories–Realism, Collective Action and Securitization. In that section, I'll also discuss their strengths and weaknesses with the ultimate goal to better understand how they interact with each other and whether analytical blind spots can be avoided. The last chapters will be dedicated to discussing the merits and weaknesses of the methodology I have used, an overview of the gathered data and the actual analysis of the sources. I'll conclude with a summary of my theoretical contributions and the prospects for future research that stem from my thesis.

It must be noted, that I begin this analysis with a couple of presuppositions:

- no one theory can give a complete explanation of a problem

- a "dialogue" between different theoretical schools can help with this

Different aspects of separate theoretical schools should not be picked and mixed at will, however, so throughout my analysis I'll address the ontological and epistemological characteristics of the different theories and provide arguments for or against the possibility of combining Realism, Collective Action and Securitization.

2. The context of the BSR and historical overview

I argue that it is essential to understand the basic characteristics of the situation in the BSR. Context is crucial in order to adequately pick the proper theoretical framework in order to unravel the dynamics within the region. Understanding the motivations of all parties will help better analyze the collected data further on.

It this short overview, I'll begin by looking at the history of the region and will then shift towards exploring the most influential participants when it comes to cooperation in the BSR, most notably in the period 2008-2019. By adopting this approach, the power balances of the region will become apparent, making the application of the theoretical framework clearer and nested in the context of the BSR. It must be pointed out, that I'll use the word "actor" very sparingly here in order to avoid any confusion that might arise; the specifics of what constitutes an agent of contention or cooperation, will be defined in further detail from the point of view of every theoretical framework in the following chapters of this work. Being able to take a glimpse from the point of view of each side will help us better understand the motivations that lie behind the decision-making process in each entity.

Ancient Greeks referred to the body of water locked between Anatolia, the Ukrainian steppes, the Balkan Peninsula and the Caucasus mountains as the "Inhospitable Sea". Its sombre waters and the fierce peoples inhabiting the coastal lines inspired the imagination of poets and sailors alike, giving birth to many stories and myths.

Legends aside, the Black Sea, as it is now known, has seen the rise and fall of several empires and has become an integral part of their histories, cultures and traditions. The region

surrounding it was often seen as a bridge between the European and the Oriental and, in that sense, has been an arena where different interests clashed. From the Ancient and Medieval times, through the countless Russo-Turkish wars, up until the present day, World and Regional Powers have tried to reap the strategic benefits of having the region in their sphere of influence.

On top of the historical and religious conflicts, the Cold War added an ideological dimension of division between the riparian countries. With the Eastern Bloc almost encircling the Black Sea, Turkey attempted to counterweight the Soviet growth in power by joining NATO in 1952. This was the first expansion of the military alliance eastward and led to the formation of the Warsaw Pact in 1955 as an answer. This initial major step towards the securitization of the region continued escalating, with tensions reaching their boiling point in 1962 when the US placed ballistic missiles in Turkey, leading to the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The dissolution of the Eastern Bloc and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, left NATO as the main military actor in the region, while also allowing Turkey and the European Union to scramble to fill the vacuum, left by the USSR. With Bulgaria and Romania joining the ranks of the EU in 2007, it seemed that the West had secured its position in the BSR. This eastward expansion was perceived as a threat by the Russian Federation, which showed its intentions to respond radically to any more encroachments in its sphere of influence. The wars in South Ossetian in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 came at times when Georgia and Ukraine showed their intentions to develop closer relations with the US and its allies, proving the potential for destabilization in the region. As a consequence, the responses of the EU member-states(to impose economic sanctions on Russia) and NATO(putting forward the question of a Black Sea NATO fleet) further racked up relations with Russia.

The nature of these geopolitical rivalries has oftentimes made collaboration between Bulgaria,Turkey, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Georgia and Romania difficult, if not impossible. The BSR has turned into a Gordian knot of entangled interests, where even issues countries can agree on, cannot be decoupled from other problems, deeming any sort of cooperation as a sign of weakness and a step away from what could be considered the "national interest".

3. **Key participants**

Several axes of contention can be drawn in the BSR. On the one hand, there are NATO and the EU who act as platforms through which the countries of the Western World can coordinate their efforts for a shared vision of the future. On the other, there lies the Russian Federation–no longer considered a Great Power after the collapse of USSR but which seeks to regain its position in global affairs. Lastly, there's Turkey–a member of NATO but, at present, fueled by strong antagonism against the rest of the West. In this arena of entangled interests, smaller states must move with extreme caution not to tip the delicate balance of power in the region in anyone's favor–for their own sake.

In this section, I'll look at the main doctrines and principles of each major regional power. I rely on texts that serve as playbooks in the way foreign policy is carried out in general, and what role the BSR plays in their strategies in particular. I'll proceed with tracing how they developed and manifested through several critical events that shook the region–namely the 2008 war in Georgia, the 2014 war in Ukraine, the 2015 migration crisis and the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey. My goal is to look through the point of view of every actor in order to understand their motivations and to what extent they would be willing to go, in order to defend themselves from what they perceive as a threat.

a) NATO

To understand the purpose of NATO would mean to look at a summary of the context in which it was established its founding document–the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty. Along with the Marshall plan, it can be seen as a tool, through which the US secured its position in Western Europe. With the shadow of the USSR and communism already looming over the eastern part of the continent, NATO became a political organization as much as a military one(Shea,2003). Its deterrence policy, based on solidarity and shared responsibility, allowed Western Europe to focus on its financial development and rebuild itself. Throughout the years, the Alliance has demonstrated that it can change in order to adapt to external and internal shifts in the operating environment(Rice,2016).

For NATO, the BSR plays a vital role in asserting its power in the Balkans, Central Europe, the South Caucuses, the Middle East and even Central Europe(Atanasov,2018). With Bulgaria and Romania joining its ranks in 2004, the Alliance continued expanding eastwards, developing close ties with Georgia and Ukraine–both states now considered partner countries and aspiring future members. This was seen by Russia as an intrusion in its sphere of influence, eroding trust and

increasing tensions. Currently, the main challenges that NATO faces in the region are directly linked to Moscow–the increasing military buildup, interference in domestic politics and protracted conflicts, energy security and the security of critical lines of communication(ibid). As an inter-state organization, the Alliance relies on member-countries to use their diplomatic, military, information and economic potential to meets its security challenges(NATO,2017).

NATO has several main objectives in the region–acknowledging and protecting the sovereignty of all littoral states, in accordance with the rules of the Paris Charter of 1990, through deterrence and credible collective defense; stability in countries from the periphery that aren't Alliance members; and economic security so that other countries cannot use their resources as leverage for political concessions(Horrell,2016).

So, what has changed in how NATO conducts is foreign policy in the last decade or so? To begin with, the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia served as a precedent. It was the first time after the end of the Cold War when a frozen conflict became active.

At the Bucharest summit in April 2008, NATO members could not fully agree on how to proceed with the membership applications of Ukraine and Georgia. Additionally, the Alliance promised the two countries that they would become a part of the organization at some time in the future but declined to offer them a Membership Action Plan. This left Russia with an opportunity to intervene in order to limit the West's expansion in the region, without technically provoking a response from NATO. After hostilities broke out in August of the same year, the Alliance seemed to be caught off-guard with little coordinated efforts to respond to the aggression. A NATO-Georgia Commission was established at the end of the year and in the following decade attempts have been made to better prepare the country's resistance to future aggression(NATO,2019a).

It could be said that this conflict served as a rehearsal to what followed in 2014. After the war in Ukraine and illegal annexation of Crimea, the West had a much better thought-out response: it coordinated its efforts with the EU to impose economic sanctions on Moscow and suspended NATO-Russian cooperation. This crisis also became a central topic of the 2016 Warsaw summit and concentrated the allies' attention to the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and other vulnerable neighboring regions(NATO,2017).

It might seem apparent that Russia is NATO's chief adversary in the region, relations between member-states aren't as harmonious as it would appear on the surface. Tensions between Turkey and the rest of the West have been rising since the 2016 coup attempt on Erdogan, which was followed by mass purges, which even affected 150 high-ranking Turkish personnel that were working for NATO structures. For NATO, Ankara is a key partner with one of the largest armies within the organization and with a crucial position for the Alliance's influence in the Middle East. That being said, the slide towards authoritarianism has undermined the potential for cooperation with democratic member-states(Weize,2017). The Alliance is now at a diverging point where it has to decide whether to keep its core principles of democracy and solidarity or sacrifice them in order to preserve its strategic position with an actor that might not abide by them.

b) The European Union

The EU constitutes the other part of the West. It works in close cooperation with NATO since both organizations share the same strategic interests and face similar challenges(NATO,2019b), they even share 22 common members.

Recognizing the importance of the BSR, the EU has developed a two-pronged tactic for the region, focusing on initiatives that include member-states and ones that center around the partner countries that are outside the EU's borders. On a member level, it tries to facilitate environmental sustainability and energy independence in order to preserve the stability in the region and to create the necessary conditions for fruitful cooperation(EU,2018). With the war in Ukraine, the EU has stopped all cooperation with entities in Crimea that have any connections with the Russian Federation in order to avoid any claims for legitimacy related to the annexation(ibid). Even with the rising tensions, the EU has still sought to build up cooperation through engaging with stakeholders from all the riparian countries, largely avoiding state-level cooperation(EU,2019).

The region was central in the 2016 European Union Global Strategy-the closest thing that the EU has to a manifesto on foreign policy. Here, the crucial role that the figure of the High Representative plays in concentrating the members' efforts on the international scene must be mentioned. For example, while Catherine Ashton tried to find a consensus that all countries in the Union could agree on, Federica Mogherini was much more active on the international scene, putting a larger emphasis on security and defense capabilities(Ondarza and Scheler,2017).

On a partner level, the EU has relied on its European Neighborhood Policy(ENP) plan. Its goal was to develop closer ties with countries in the Union's "back yard" and to bring forth closer economic integration. As far as the BSR goes, the ENP evolved into the Eastern Partnership(EaP) in 2009 to better answer the challenges in the region. This provided a tailored approach to countries like Georgia and Ukraine, giving them access to the Union's market. The EaP was amended in 2015 after the war in Ukraine and put the emphasis on security and defense, state resilience to foreign interventions into domestic politics, democracy and transparency(CEU,2016).

The role the EU played in the 2008 war between Georgia and Russia was mainly that of a peace broker. With Nicolas Sarkozy calling for a ceasefire, the EU tried to remain as distant as possible in order to appear as a credible mediator(Barysch,2008). In reality, Europe looked feeble and disunited, as some condemned Russian aggression while others blamed Georgia for provoking the conflict(Valasek,2008). In the end, the Union was unable to come up with a common policy against Russia.

Much like with NATO, the EU was much better prepared for the conflict in Ukraine. Several rounds of sanctions were imposed against individuals, businesses and officials, related to Russia. These measures, along with the falling oil prices put a lot of pressure on the Russian economy, leading to a financial crisis in 2014 and 2015(Overland,2015). The EU demonstrated that an approach which combined economic instruments, together with close cooperation and solidarity with the affected state, is the most efficient way to stop Russian military advances. In addition, the Union showed a willingness for dialogue and a joint solution to the crisis(EU Newsroom,2014) in an attempt not to completely marginalize Moscow.

The enforcement of the sanctions was not universally accepted without opposition. Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and others have called for a lift, showing the potential for disunity within the EU, when a country's well-being is at stake.

The other big challenge that the EU faced in the region was related to Turkey-a previously aspiring future member of the Union. Facing the large migration waves, following the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the European Union and Turkey signed an accord in 2016 in order to better manage the legal arrival of refugees, while limiting their numbers on European territory. For this, Ankara was to receive 3 billion euro and a visa-free regime for Turkish citizens. Even from the start, there were tensions, as refugee numbers were misrepresented and Turkey accused the EU of

not paying the agreed-on amount as well as not implementing the visa regime(DW,2018). Rhetoric escalated with president Erdogan even threatening to send 3 million refugees to Europe(The Guardian,2016).

The 2016 coup attempt in Turkey did not improve relations, as Erdogan saw a conspiracy by the West to overthrow his regime. For the EU, the subsequent purges were a sign that the country was becoming more and more authoritarian and no longer upheld the values of the Union. As a result, the ascension talks were frozen. The EU-Turkey relationship was further strained when Germany and the Netherlands did not allow Erdogan to campaign on their territory in order to garner support for the upcoming 2017 referendum where citizens had to decide whether Turkey should become a presidential republic. The president called this "*Nazi Tactics*"(Oltermann,2017) and said that "*no European, no Westerner will be able to take steps on the street safely and peacefully*"(Saeed,2017).

Turkey has increasingly become a dangerous neighbor to the principles of the EU. This factor is further supported by the fact that ten countries, all of whom, apart from Austria, are members of NATO, see Turkey as a major threat to their security(Dennison, et.al 2018).

c) **Turkey**

The end of the Cold War brought new opportunities for Turkey. Anchored to the Western world, it sought to fill the vacuum left by the USSR by becoming a modern secular state, in which democracy and Islam coexisted. As Erdogan's AK Party came to power, domestic and foreign policy were harmonized to help achieve this goal. On the international scene, this vision was manifested by employing three mutually connected approaches–Neo-Ottomanism(or Osmanism), the "zero-problems" approach and the "strategic depth concept".

Neo-Ottomanism is based on the idea of the superiority of the culture and history of the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, Turkey's aim is to increase its influence in the territories of the former Empire, namely North Africa, the Middle East, The Balkans and the Caucuses. A more expansionist reading of this doctrine could also include the ideas of Pan-Turkism or Pan-Islamism as a justification to reach out to countries outside of the Empire's borders based on their similar culture, language or religion. This would mean that Central Asia would also fall into the projected

sphere of influence of Neo-Osmanism. This move seems to be a shift from the traditional pro-Western Turkish foreign policy based on Kemalism(Calis and Bagci,2003).

The way this approach can become successful is through the so-called "strategic depth" approach, coined by former foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu in his book of the same title. According to him "*Turkey is a European country, an Asian country, a Middle Eastern country, Balkan country, Caucasian country, neighbor to Africa, Black Sea country, Caspian Sea, all these.*"(as cited by Vuksanovic,2016). Strategic depth is characterized by two dimensions– geographic -spreading to the above-mentioned regions(multi-directionality); and historic depth– relying on the interwoven histories of the Empire and the peoples that were under its yoke. In this endeavor the country should seek allies not only in the West but from throughout the whole globe(ibid).

This tactic could only be effective, if current relations are peaceful, in order not to get entangled down in disputes and conflicts that would force Turkey to choose a side. This "zero problems" policy would allow the country to act freely and choose the best possible outcome in each situation, capitalizing on the use of soft power(Palabiyik,2010).

The war in Georgia was one of the first major displays of the AKP's foreign policy shift. Disunited as the West was in its response, Turkey decided to stay neutral with Erdogan commenting: "*it would not be right for Turkey to be pushed toward any side. Certain circles want to push Turkey into a corner either with the United States or Russia after the Georgian incident. One of the sides is our closest ally, the United States. The other side is Russia, with which we have an important trade volume. We would act in line with what Turkey's national interests require*"(Bechev,2018). For Ankara, stability and good relations with all sides in the region, including Russia, was the name of the game. Close ties with Georgia and Baku were crucial for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum and the Trans-Anatolian gas and oil pipelines.

The notion that pragmatism and gains are the driving force behind Erdogan's foreign policy was further proved by the developments after the war in Ukraine. Even though FM Davutoglu declared Crimea to be an integral part of Ukraine, there was no official statement condemning Moscow(Baştürk,2014). Turkey found itself in a tough position where it had to choose between two of the aspects of its foreign policy. On the one hand, Crimea is the home of a number of Turkic Tatars, which Erdogan has attempted to bring closer to Ankara(Kates,2014). On the other, opposing

Russia would go against the "zero problems" policy. In this position, Turkey chose to stay neutral, appealing to international law but not placing sanctions on Russia. It has also expressed its readiness to be a mediator in any future peace talks(AFP,2018).

The relations between Ankara and Moscow have followed the path of mutual convenience. Turkey is largely reliant on Putin's goodwill to not interfere in the oil and gas transportation through the Caucuses, while Russia sees Turkey as a key to the Middle East and can also benefit from the latter's control over the Bosporus and Dardanelles straits. Even during moments when tensions between the two were high, as with the downing of the Russian fighter jet by the Turkish air forces in 2015, Putin and Erdogan have managed to put aside their differences for the benefit of both sides. Examples of the warmer ties between the two sides are the aforementioned Turkish switch to a Russian missile defense system and the recently finished TurkStream gas pipeline, which served to cement Ankara's role as an energy hub on Europe's periphery.

Relations between Tukey and Western nations have taken a turn for the worse. With rising antagonism around the 2015 migration crisis and the failed coup attempt, Erdogan has used strong rhetoric to ramp up domestic support and consolidate his power. At the same time, the West hasn't stood idle. The US has imposed sanctions on Ankara in accordance with the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, which is aimed to penalize all countries that engage in business relations with Russia's defense sector(Ward,2019). Up until 2019, Turkey could rely on a strong and stable economic growth–a factor that has undoubtedly played a role in Erdogan's popularity. Currently, the Turkish lira has hit an all-time low, which has coincided with the President losing support in the 2019 local elections.

d) Russian federation

It would be impossible to understand Russian's foreign policy without looking at the persona of the man that has been in charge of the state for the past 20 years. Despite regular elections, the country has strong authoritarian tendencies(V-Dem,2018) suggesting the notion that Vladimir Putin is deeply involved in most important decisions on the international scene. Growing up in the Soviet Union and receiving his training by the KGB, Putin has called the collapse of the USSR "*the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century*"(BBC,2005). He also seems to share some of the goals of Eurasian ideologues like Nursultan Nazarbayev and Alexander Dugin, forming close ties with the latter(Barbashin and Thoburn,2014). These influences have led Putin on a path

of combining the messianism of Russian Orthodox Christianity and the superiority of Russian culture above all else with the doctrines of subversion and reflexive control all while being strongly suspicious of the West(Thomas,2004).

Eurasianism was the answer to Fukuyama's "the end of history"–with Russia being left humiliated after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc(Johnson,2011), it looked at Huntington's idea of a "clash of civilizations" and took it to the extreme, arguing that there has been and always will be a conflict between Eurasianists and Atlanticists(Dugin,2012). This ideology pushes forward the notion that the post-Soviet space is neither Western nor Eastern but something starkly different and unique, with Russia and Orthodox Christianity at its center. For Eurasianists, the world is multipolar with several Civilizations that are inevitably bound to organize into massive political blocs-Africa, China, India, the Naval Atlanticists(the US, Britain and Australia) and Eurasia(Central Asia and mainland Europe)(Dugin,2015). Consequently, the world is divided into spheres of influence and Great Powers should not interfere into the affairs of other Great Powers. Naturally, this should act as justification for the invasion of territories that "belong" to the Eurasian sphere of influence–it isn't perceived as a conquest but as ensuring the "symphony of the peoples"(Kotkin,2017).

Western values, specifically liberty and personal freedom, are seen as unrealistic and corrosive and should, therefore, be rejected(Johnson,2011). The alternative offered is the concept of an illiberal democracy, based on a strong state and the rule of law(Kotkin,2017).

Using this prism allows us to understand both Russian foreign policy and Putin's public statements. The invasion of Georgia and the annexation of Crimea serve a double purpose–they're presented as a liberation for Russian-speaking populations while also blocking Western meddling in its Moscow's "back yard". It also sends a strong signal to other neighboring countries that have large Russian-speaking minorities like the Baltic States and Moldova. Putin is also willing to accept the consequences of the imposed sanctions since the country's interests in the "near-abroad" are considered much more important.

He has also not missed the opportunity to criticize Western values in front of anyone willing to listen by criticizing how the EU nations cannot integrate refugees from Africa and the Middle East(YouTube,2018), accusing countries in hypocrisy and a conspiracy against

Russia(YouTube,2014) as well as interventionism(YouTube,2017). That way the West has become a convenient enemy that can serve as a threat in order to mobilize domestic and foreign efforts.

To sum up, the most influential actors have so far been unable to create a framework where all of them could effectively coordinate their efforts. A bottom-up approach might prove to be more promising–the geopolitical deadlock could be overcome through "islands of cooperation"(FES,2018) that could gradually build up cooperation through NGO and citizen initiatives but this scenario seems unlikely without a minimal level of political will and funding on a state level. In this context, I shall rely on the theoretical schools of Realism, Collective Action and Securitization and see how each of them interprets the current situation in the region.

4. Theoretical framework
a) Realism

As an arena where interests clash and which has seen several armed conflicts in recent years, it would be impossible to understand the BSR without the prism of *Realpolitik*. All regional players have certain goals in mind when they look at the Black Sea, so it is vital to explore the potential explanations for the present status quo that classical schools like Realism and Neorealism could provide.

The cornerstone upon which Realism is built is the presumption that the international system is inherently anarchic. It must be noted, that the notion of anarchy should not be equated with chaos. Rather, realists believe that there are very strict rules by which international actors abide, however, there's no "government over governments" with central authority that would regulate these interactions(Mearsheimer,2014, p.30). In that sense, nation-states possess the highest level of legitimacy on the international stage and are seen as its main actors. As rational players, their goal is to keep their independent status and will seek to maximize their survival opportunities(ibid, p.31). At the same time, because of the anarchic character of inter-state relations, no player can be a hundred percent certain of the intentions of others. This "fog of war", combined with the dynamic nature of international relations leads actors to be both suspicious of others and be self-reliant(ibid).

In order to ensure their sovereignty, states tend to focus on maximizing their security(defensive realism)(Waltz,1979; 2001) or power(offensive realism)(Mearsheimer,2014).

Indeed, power can either be seen as the means to provide security or security itself(Mearsheimer,2016), however, typically the increase in power is seen as suspicious by other actors. Even if a country increases its military stockpiles, either as a deterrent or as a line of defense, this can be interpreted as a hostile act by surrounding players–since no higher power could guarantee the defensive nature of these actions, opponents have no choice but to increase their own power as a reaction, in case war breaks out. This mutual fear then begins a self-reinforcing spiral that might end up driving states to hostilities even if they do not wish to harm each other(Tang,2009). The described *security dilemma* forces the actors in the system to choose suboptimal outcomes due to the inherent lack of trust between them.

If a state becomes too powerful to compete by a single other actor, countries might group together in order to balance out to rising hegemon(Gilpin 1983). This *balance of power* pushes less powerful states to cooperate so that they deal with a threat of being dominated one by one by a much stronger actor, nevertheless, realists do not view these joint efforts as long-lasting. While cooperation can appear among allies and enemies(as with the German-Soviet pact of 1939), the dynamic nature of international relations means that alliances are mere "marriages of convenience"(Mearsheimer,2014).

In order to disrupt the opportunities for cooperation, rising powers must try to convince weaker states that the outcome of the joint action will not be favorable due to the innate selfishness of all actors. Instead, less powerful countries should *bandwagon* with stronger ones–that way they avoid potentially devastating clashes between regional or global powers while also contributing to their own security by paying fewer costs(Wivel,2008). In that sense, realists view power like gravity and the stronger an actor is, the more likely it is for others to join its side(Cristol,2017).

A couple of things are noticeable from the basic tenets of realism–international relations are seen as a zero-sum game in which the gains in power of one nation is relative and should not be taken by itself but must be weighed against the gains of the other competitors as well(Grieco,1988). That is the main reason why cooperation is oftentimes unlikely as states might pass up opportunities to increase their own capabilities if it would lead to their competitors receiving more absolute gains than them. An actor's goal isn't to merely accumulate more power but rather to keep their position in the system(ibid). The result is a situation where countries have

an interest in both cooperation and conflict under the condition that they maximize their own individual gains while keeping the gain-gaps with others to a minimum.

Lastly, it is interesting to note how actors perceive and react to threats. Realists rely on the presupposition that fear is ubiquitous and is the underlying driver of all interactions. The aforementioned imperfect information of capabilities and intentions, as well as the uncertainty of the credibility of state commitments, would mean nothing if they were not combined with the idea of the worst possible outcome. While this presupposition remains largely unexplored(e.g. Stein,2013) states tend to manifest their sovereignty and react not only to traditional military threats but also to economic and cultural challenges from other actors(Rousseau and Garcia-Retamero,2007). Regardless of whether these threats are real or imagined, states continuously perceive their survival as their ultimate goal.

The basic characteristics of this theoretical school are presented in a succinct manner in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1 The building blocks of Realism

Having gone through the building blocks of Realism, we can now see how this theoretical school might explain the present situation in the BSR. The collapse of the Eastern Bloc left a huge power vacuum in the region that actors sought to fill up.To begin with, several aspects of the role of the EU and NATO must be mentioned. First off, as supranational or intergovernmental organizations compromised of sovereign nation-states, these entities, according to realists, should not be viewed as outright actors per se but rather as groups of actors. That being said, both alliances aim to coordinate the efforts of their members and, while divisions within them still exist(Kaplan,2004), I'll rely on the presumption that member-states have shared long-term visions and goals. Secondly, these two organizations do not compete with each other since they inhabit different layers of foreign policy–the EU–the sociopolitical aspect and NATO–the military one,

meaning that, if one organization were to grow in power, the other one will not feel threatened and will not try to oppose it as long as this separation remains true.

Due to the dynamic nature of international relations, as the Berlin Wall fell, both of these entities began seeking closer ties with their former adversaries in the East. From their point of view, these were steps towards maximizing their own security and power and move towards a unipolar world. While countries like Bulgaria and Romania decided the join the bandwagon and side with the EU, other actors like Russia and Turkey saw the Union as a threat to their relative position of power in the region(Askerov,2018). With the ideological aspect that divided these countries during the Cold War now gone and with a new emerging actor that threatened the status quo, both countries have a shared interest in developing closer ties. This might explain why Turkey is one of the countries that hasn't gone through with sanctions against Russia after the beginning of the Ukraine crisis–from a political perspective, Putin and Erdogan should work together to counteract the further growth of the EU's power. Interestingly, the security dilemma is in full force here since from the European point of view Russian attempts to become stronger, alienate member-states and get a tighter grip on the BSR are also seen as hostile, further increasing tensions.

Additionally, there's no Leviathan that ensures the stability of the region and prevents this spiral of insecurity. Consequently, there's no entity that could punish blatant breaches of international law like in the 2008 and 2014 wars between Russia and Georgia and Russia and Ukraine respectfully. This leaves smaller states, that have yet to choose a side, in a position where they've to carefully maneuver so as to not provoke any of the stronger actors. These factors leave the BSR in a position where suspicion between littoral states is high and countries cannot coordinate their efforts to reinstate the dialogue between them.

For all its merits, Realism hasn't been void of criticism. By putting the main focus on the nation-state as the main actor in international relations, it largely ignores the influence that institutions or groups of non-state actors have on the international system. Institutions could have a positive effect on information sharing, mitigating the negative effects of the aforementioned uncertainty because of anarchy in international relations(Slaughter 1995). One example of the effect of institutions in the BSR is the relatively contained tensions between members of NATO. As Ankara began adopting a more and more anti-Western stance, neighbouring countries like Bulgaria and Greece, which already see Turkey as a major threat, could have reacted much more

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aggressively, leading to a spiral of insecurity. Focusing on the state also ignores company conglomerates, groups of banks or other players with high capacities that can pursue their own policy agendas and be more influential than some countries(Lee and Park,2004).

Realism looks at states as unitary actors, free to make their own decisions, while ignoring the effects of the governance type, corruption, capacity and capabilities have on decision-making in foreign policy(Chrisher,2017). It has also not caught up with the lightning-paced trends of globalization and mutual global interdependence that affect both the relative power that individual states have and the bleak idea of a zero-sum game in international relations.

Lastly, the role of the individual has largely been ignored by the Realist school, overlooking any sort of agency that people can have on the formation of foreign policy(Smith,2000). Here it could be mentioned that while a lot of emphasis has been put on the stability, coherence and rationality of citizen demands(Holsti,2004, Wittkopf,1990) as well as how public opinions are formed(Baum and Potter,2008), generally most studies have dealt with people's reactions to war and hostile state behavior(Howard,1983), not grassroots efforts for collaboration and trust-building.

These are by no means insignificant criticisms that are inherent to the realist doctrines, so I argue that we must look at other theoretical schools that could fill in these gaps and offer better answers in the areas where the application of Realism isn't that effective.

b) Collective Action

In order to solve complex issues that affect multiple sides, stakeholders must often come together and attempt to coordinate their efforts. Problems such as the management of common-pool resources, sustainable fishing or global governance fall into these categories and have become the subject of research on how participants interact with each other. In an attempt to develop a rational framework, scholars have sought to explore the different ways in which individuals and institutions manage their common affairs through coercion and compliance(Commission on Global Governance,1995). These efforts fall under the category of Collective Action studies.

To begin with, it must be noted that the Collective Action literature hasn't set up a clear consensus on what it sees as the primary actor as its theoretical basis. While initial analyses focused on the individual(Olson,1965), more recent papers in the field attempt to scale up the framework

to a state or even inter-state level, looking at problems like global warming and climate change(Schenck,2008) as well as collective security(Lepgold,1998). It could be argued that the actions of the institutions(i.e. countries) are seen as the aggregate actions of individuals, however, that would overlook statist theorists like Smith(1993). At the same time, putting the focus on the state level would ignore the notion of policies as the repeated actions of citizens. We must, then, keep in mind that the line between the individual and the institution might at times be quite thin– even if a state has decided to pursue a certain foreign policy path, at the end of the day it is the repeated actions of its citizens that make this course a reality. The country might try to "convince" its citizens to act in accordance with its plans, however, that might lead to a whole other collective action problem based on how the policy is enforced and monitored. Regardless of whether we concentrate on the individual or the institutions, though, the most important take away from this dissonance is that the same basic principles apply at all levels and all actors adhere to them.

One of the core concepts in Collective Action is the idea of an overarching Leviathan that should make sure that participants follow the rules and enforce sanctions once one of the players defects(Hardin,2003). If such an entity does not exist or does a poor job, collective action efforts may lead to a situation where rational actors that have, in the past, agreed to collaborate find themselves in a system where they can get the advantages of collaboration without paying the costs for participating. This compromises the efforts of the group, leading to an undesirable outcome(Hardin,2009). Successful systems share eight common principles-clear boundaries, a balance between benefits and costs, graduated sanctions, rapid conflict resolution mechanisms, collective choice arrangements, minimal recognition of rights, effective monitoring, and polycentricity, or small-scale regimes, nested in larger-scale frameworks(Ostrom,2008). While an almighty overseer in all group cooperative endeavors seems unlikely, it is interesting that not all social interactions are prone to failure due to the selfishness of the participants(Ostrom,2002). Variables such as the characteristic of the system, geographic distance, the types of actors, institutional arrangements and the external environment play a factor in the favorable outcome of collective action(Agrawal,2007).

A homogenous system with little cultural or other differences between the participants is more likely to reach its preset goals(Varughese and Ostrom,2001). Alternatively, if collective efforts span a large geographic area with different languages, religions and norms, the ways in

which stakeholders engage with each other can also serve as a bridge to build up compliance(Henry and Vollan,2014). In cross-country collaborations, an emphasis must be put on developing as many joint operations as possible. These frequent contacts generate trust and assist in setting up a system of shared rules and values(Janssen and Ostrom,2008). The mutually beneficial exchanges go beyond the immediate gains that participants receive and, repeated over a certain period of time, negate cultural antagonism and accumulate trust(Jones,2003). This is in stark contrast with the realist assumption that the actors' goals lie outside the collaboration itself and thus "systemic interaction does not transform state interests"(Wendt,1994).

Interestingly, precisely the underlying notion of trust is what has provoked scholars that have delved into the topic. While the general consensus is that it is important and is a factor in successful collaboration(Hayashi et.al,1999) its precise role still remains somewhat ambiguous(Michel,2016). The subjective probability that an actor will go through with an action that will not harm another participant is even more important on an inter-state level where uncertain intentions and imperfect information prevail(ibid). Trust is also determined by the potential damage that defection may result in and as the stakes become higher, the more likely it is for an actor not avoid the risk of placing the outcome in the hands of others(Axelrod,1984). An impartial broker may contribute to the building up of trust(Zeev and Felsenthal,1987), however, one of most robust approaches is to continually engage in social interactions and thus develop social bonds between actors(Morgensen,2015).

This brings forth the role that identity plays in collective action, in general, and trust and cooperation, in particular. According to Melucci(1989), the process of identity building is crucial to initiating and maintaining the actors' involvement in joint efforts. A shared identity may bridge imperfections in communication and contribute to the organization and the salience of the end results(Bakardjieva,2015). Wendt(1994) has attempted to scale up the idea of identity to a state level(looking at the EU and NATO as examples) and argues that state-centric scholarship has struggled with incorporating the notion of identity in its scholarly practices, however, it is intrinsic to all international interactions. He distinguishes between two types of identities–a single corporate one, which refers to shared beliefs and institutions that lead to an exclusive group of participants see as a "we"; and multiple social ones that determine the links between actors and individuals. These identities are the cornerstone for things like community, solidarity and loyalty–the basic

premises for the formation of collective interests. The feeling of shared identity does not mean that actors are no longer rational, rather, it discourages free-riding and increases reciprocity. Alexandrov(2003) offers an updated look, exploring the relationship between identity and power and how countries choose between different identities. He concludes that a comprehensive approach is needed, focusing on provisional interpretations of the state's identity as well as its domestic and external manifestations.

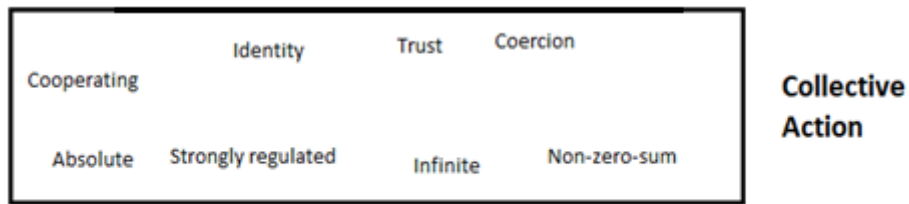The basic traits of Collective Action are presented in Fig. 2.

Fig. 2 The building blocks of CA

All that being said, how can Collective Action Theory explain cooperation, or the lack thereof, in the BSR? I consider averting an environmental crisis due to pollution and overfishing as a minimal point of contention since all riparian countries have a vested interest in overcoming at relatively little losses(Schwartzstein,2016). The region spans a large geographic area in which common resources like fish stocks are mobile which complicates the creation of a unified framework for management. At the same time, data collection and research are largely lacking due to the generally low quality of governance in the surrounding states and the lack of funds for maritime monitoring(Sumaila et.al2010). Additionally, the eight previously mentioned mechanisms haven't been put in place and enforcement of even basic rules is mostly absent(Öztürk. 2013).

The BSR is home to different peoples with distinct languages, religious practices and cultures. Even in areas that were under the rule of the Ottoman or Russian Empires, the locals have managed to keep their unique way of life, which can be seen as a barrier and has led to a creation of a "Us vs Them mentality". Continuous interactions throughout the centuries haven't succeeded in creating a shared "Blacksean" identity and further studies must be carried out to test the trust between citizens in different countries. Initiatives like BLACKSEAFOR, BSEC and BSC have

produced questionable results and haven't achieved sustained cross-country interactions on a citizen, research and state level.

The main flaws with Collective Action lie in that it has struggled to scale up its findings and apply them across multiple borders and regions. Perhaps because of that, the field of International Relations hasn't fully tapped into the potential of collective action studies literature and their lessons remain relatively unexplored. Analysts are trying to overcome this weakness, with attempts to go beyond the local and the regional and put the focus on the international level of interactions(Jagers at al.,2019).

Secondly, Collective Action does not look at the local context as a crucial factor in its models. While this is essential when it comes to the transferability of the generated knowledge, across time and space, it does not account for aspects like geopolitical competition between states and the intentional deterioration of attempts to build up cooperation.

As a consequence, this theory must be balanced out by one that looks at the "big picture" of international politics and weighs up the long-term ambitions of state and non-state actors.

c) Securitization

Realism and Collective Action seem to be radically different, with some aspects being on the polar opposite of the theoretical spectrum. This is why I rely on Securitization as a mid-range theory that combines aspects of both in order to try and build up a model of the BSR.

As mid-range theories that combine different aspects of various schools of thought, Security Studies can, on the surface, seem to differ vastly from one another. That is why Balzacq(2015) suggests an "ideal" type of securitization with aspects that all of them refer to at some degree(Table 1). Even if some theories choose to focus more on one or several characteristics, or look at points that do not fall under the "core" features, analysis should still not omit the rest of the factors.

Table 1. An ideal type of securitization.

- Threats are social facts whose status depends on an **intersubjective** commitment between an **audience** and a **securitizing actor**
- **Securitizing moves** and **context** are co-dependent
- The drivers of securitizing moves are **knowledge** claims about an **existential threat** to a referent object
- **Power relations** among stakeholders structure both the processes and outcomes of securitizing moves
- Securitizing moves are engraved in **social mechanisms** (persuasion, propaganda, learning, socialization, practices, etc.)
- Securitization instantiates **policy** changes – for example, 'deontic powers' (rights, obligations, derogations **exceptional** or otherwise, etc.)[18]
- Securitization ascribes **responsibility**

Table 1, p 106, The 'Essence' of securitization: Theory, ideal type, and a sociological science of security Balzacq, T,2015

Securitization looks at how problems emerge, develop and dissolve. The main point that scholars make is that it does not matter whether a threat is real or not–its framing in front of the citizenry is what makes it important(Waever,1995, Buzan et.al 1998). Waever(ibid) defines securitization *as a speech act that relies on a rhetorical structure based on urgency, threat and survival in order to demand the use of extraordinary measures to deal with what is considered a problem*. The goal is to convince the audience that the extreme countermeasures that will be taken are justified. The focus might be on different aspects of public life like military defense, the environment and economic stability(Buzan,1997).

Securitization may be viewed as a more extreme version of politicization(ibid)-it takes politics "*beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics*"(Buzan, et.al,1998, p.23). While security for material things can is easily applied–they can typically be quantified and restored if damaged; the boundaries become less clear when we begin talking about individuals. Life, health, freedom are much more subjective manners and leave room for interpretation(Buzan,1983). In that sense, both institutions(generally referring to the state) and individual citizens are seen as central figures in securitization. A successful outcome of securitization must be accepted by the audience and thus "rests neither with the object, nor the subjects but *among* the subjects"(Buzan et.al 1998). At the same time, serious

threats typically come from states and power, similarly to Realism, and those factors play a crucial role(Buzan,1983).

There are two levels that receive a lot of the focus of securitization–the entity that can securitize and the audience that it is directed towards. In essence, the person that is doing the securitizing must hold a position of relevant power and authority and must refer to things "*which are generally held to be threatening-be they tanks, hostile sentiments, or polluted waters*"(Wæver 2003, cited by Färber,2018). The audience must be then convinced to accept immediate policy aimed at deterring these threats. The securitization move is considered as successful if it achieves the desired status transformation. Again, similarly to Realism, context plays a crucial role in both the act itself and the audience's acceptance process.

Security is traditionally viewed as a universal good, however, at times, state mobilization can become counterproductive and linking national security to an issue may be undesirable(Deudney,1990). Weaver(1995) argues that states must strive to move towards "desecuritization" rather than securitization and switch from "emergency" to "normal" mode whenever possible. Continuous reliance on the extreme measures inherent to securitization changes the foundation of politics and may lead to a path of authoritarianism(Huysmans,1998). Buzan(1998) argues that desecuritization can easily occur in the economy and then, through the processes of globalization and interdependence, spill over to the political and military realms. In that sense, cooperation and collaboration are the "normal" state of politics that desecuritization should return to in systems of extreme antagonism.

A couple of notes have to be made on two of the aspects of securitization. First off, identity seems to play a similar role as in Collective Action. The public must be convinced that their "we-ness" is being threatened by an external force(Schmitt,1996). This danger needn't be morally evil; however, it is still highly reliant on the alienness of the stranger and the potential for conflict. Secondly, Waever focused mainly on speech acts when coming up with his theory of securitization, but other manifestations of intent should also be added to the list, especially in the present-day world where a lot of stories are spread through visual means(Williams,2003).

Secondly, there are several inherent weaknesses related to Securitization theory. One major criticism is that its theoretical framework is largely descriptive, rather than explanatory and thus resembles an interesting observation rather than a roadmap how to manage the process of

securitization(Murphy,2018). Related to this, Ciuta(2009) criticizes Securitization theory's high reliance on context to be effective. In that sense, each local reality is different and transferability of the generated knowledge is rarely possible.

Traditionally, Securitization also sees extreme politicization and the use of state power as the typical way to manage threats. With securitizing actors generally being the countries themselves, it accepts undemocratic and immediate action as the only method to deal with external and internal dangers. Applied uncritically, Securitization theory can perceive a move towards authoritarianism as legitimate and a natural consequence of dealing with a threat.

A graphical representation of the of the attributes of Securitization is presented in Figure 3.

Fig. 3 The building blocks of Securitization

That being said, Securitization theory's toolbox should be expanded to deal with these criticisms and I'll look at the BSR as a case study on how securitization could be seen as the linking force between the top town approach of Realism and the bottom-up approach inherent to Collective Action by combining characteristics of both. If that is the case, it could give us insights on how foreign policy is shaped and manifested.

5.   Research questions

The main goal behind my research would be to show how Realism, Securitization and Collective action are connected in the sphere of cooperation. This research question falls into the broader category of how different theoretical schools interact with each other and what is the role of mid-range theories such as Securitization. In that sense, I would like to explore how the process

of securitization in the Black Sea reflects that idea–does it revolve around the materialistic aspect of international relations like resources and territorial integrity or is the emphasis put on abstract characteristics like culture, identity and way of life. The figures in the previous chapter show some common ground between Realism and Securitization and Collective Action and Securitization, so I theorize that perhaps a dialogue between radically different theoretical approaches like Realism and Collective Action is possible through the use of a vessel of communication and Securitization can play that role.

A follow-up research goal would be to dissect the elements of the three theories and determine whether theoretical blind spots could be overcome by combining different theories into a single framework. Using a single lens often means sacrificing the lessons that other perspectives might bring but perhaps that needn't be the case, if a truly interdisciplinary and holistic approach is developed.

To this end, I will use the key words, mentioned in the previous chapter as a starting point for my coding process and help understand how I plan to organize my data. As a start, Realism is based on the materialistic characteristics of the world and relates to things like keeping and expanding state borders; aspects of "hard power" such as the quantity and technological characteristics of military forces and the portions of the budget dedicated towards modernizing and growing them; the acquisition of resources and strategic positions; but also the desire to gain influence over the internal processes of other entities in the region, as well as the reactions to similar acts from regional rivals.

When it comes to the Collective Action aspect of cooperation, we must look at non-materialistic aspects in relations across the BSR. Notably, the effects that trust, identity, culture, language, religion and shared history have on how foreign policy strategies are developed and how future goals are set.

We should then look at securitization at certain timeframes or on specific issues, to see if there is a prevalent domain – materialistic or non-materialistic, that takes center stage, or rather actors delve into both areas. At this point, I will attempt to take a step back and look at the bigger picture and identify a trend that will help better understand the dynamics of the BSR for the 2008-2019 period.

I'll answer these questions by using an inductive approach to see how the most influential actors in the BSR securitized and how their actions and the status quo relate to the theory of Securitization. By formulating my research in this manner, I'll reflect on the epistemological and ontological aspects of the different schools of thought and determine how securitizing actors use aspects of Realism and Collective Action to align the state's goals with the citizens' individual fears and motivations when it comes to cooperation.

6.   Previous literature

Since my thesis seeks to contribute to a relatively unexplored perspective that falls between several research topics, this paper builds on a number of strands of previous literature. As a starter, I look at the BSR in general and how, due to its specific geographic location, spans numerous areas of study, however, few specialists have attempted to come up with comprehensive analyses of the intricacies of the region. Secondly, I look at how the academic field understands cooperation–how and why it is developed and how it is maintained; specifically, I explore the point of view of Realist, Collective Action and Securitization specialists. Lastly, I take a brief look at the theoretical basis of how different theories can be combined in order to generate logically coherent knowledge. As already mentioned, my paper offers a different take on the BSR, cooperation and securitization so I'll also mention the gaps in the literature that are relevant.

The BSR in itself remains a region that hasn't received nearly enough attention from the academic community as it probably deserves. King(2004, p.4) argues that it is "*situated at the intersection of several different academic specializations, and thus central to none of them*". Combining the need to study the complex ethnonational history of the Balkans, the rise and fall of the Russian and Ottoman Empires, the tragic struggles of the people of the North and South Caucuses, the way the region is intertwined with the Eurasian idea and the sectarianism in the Middle East, has scattered efforts to generate comprehensive knowledge regarding the BSR. Due to poor quality of governance, political transitions and lack of international cooperation the states in the region have generally done a poor job at developing and financing research institutes that could produce studies that deal with the intricacies in this geographic area.

All that being said, there have been some valiant efforts to unravel the complexities of the region. While some studies focus on empirical theory testing and focus on geopolitical competitions–e.g. Russia vs Turkey(Shlykov,2018), the EU vs Russia(Veebel, & Markus,2015);

or on individual countries, others have attempted a more holistic approach and have tried to characterize the system, attempted to explain how it works and how the lack of cooperation can be overcome. Analyzers have used the prism of Realism and state interest(Celikpala,2010), international institutionalism(Manolia,2014) and have even focused on the legal aspects of preserving the environmental status of the sea–an area of shared benefit among riparian countries(Oral,2012). While the region has received a lot of attention from the field of security studies, especially after the wars in Georgia and Ukraine, an analysis from the point of view of the process of securitization hasn't been done and my study will aim at filling this research gap.

In a broader sense, this thesis falls into the category of works that deal with how cooperation is built in systems where low trust is prevalent. Realists have struggled with providing an answer to why would countries ever have incentives to help each other, if every gain for your regional competitors could be seen as a loss for you. Grieco(1998) notes that there's a cost for noncooperation as well, that is often left out of the equation, however, states will try to present their gains to be as low as possible, so as to not alarm their partners. This factor could perhaps be offset if countries were to engage in multiple small-scale acts of cooperation. The outcome of every individual interaction can be equal for both sides or even at a small loss for one side, but the sum of the whole, for the actor that engages in the biggest number of engagements, could lead to a very high net positive outcome.

As a parallel to Realism, the Collective Action literature has also attempted to give its solutions to non-cooperation in low-trust systems. It could be argued that all works that fall into that category try to deal with how cooperation can be reached and sustained, however, researchers have had problems with scaling up their findings. Coleman(1990) argues that even a small number of "zealots" can begin to transform a system and gradually attract more and more participants on their side. Axelrod's(1984) findings can be added to this idea–a small cluster of cooperators can begin to "invade" a hostile system and over time, mostly through interactions within this group, begin to convert defectors into collaborators. Unfortunately, these tests have mostly been done at an individual or a local level and attempts for these theories to be applied on an international scale are currently underway(see Jagers et.al,2019).

Not a lot of works have focused on combining several of the concepts studied by these two theoretical schools. As mentioned, Securitization seems to use aspects of both Realism and

Collective action, however, they'ven't applied to the sector of cooperation, especially in systems where it is mostly absent. Rousseau and Garcia-Retamero(2007) have attempted to tackle this issue by looking at power and identity in order to come up with a working model for cooperation in international relations. They look at threats on a state, as well as on an individual level, and come up with a series of hypotheses of what affects relations between countries.

Related to this, we also need to look at the specifics of ontology(what exists and what are its characteristics) and epistemology(what can we know about what exists) which are crucial when initiating a dialogue between different theories. Political and international relations ontology deals with the actors that populate domestic and world politics, the structure that these actors find themselves in and how they interact with each other, as well as their relative significance(Jackson et.al,2013). Ontology is often left as the "*concern of philosophers*"(Wendt,1999, p.370) and is typically not looked as specifically, yet it is at the core of every analysis. In that sense, even the most empirical researches "do" ontology(ibid). Arguably, ontology has primacy over epistemology as the correct choice of methods before determining what is actually going to be studied can only be done by chance(Wight,2006 p.261).

Epistemology, on the other hand, deals with the conditions of how knowledge can be generated(Blaikie,1993, p.6–7). It deals with the degree of certainty of our analysis and the level of generalizability it possesses(Hay,2011, p.466) and it must be differentiated from methodology– the choice of analytical strategy.

In the field of International Relations, there have been numerous claims that scientific pluralism can only be achieved by developing an adequate ontological and epistemological framework(Jackson et.al.,2013) and have scrutinized attempts to combine different theories, arguing that researchers cannot simply "*mix and match*". On the other end of the spectrum, Braumoeller(2009) has argued that one of the main results of the Great Debates in International Relations was the idea that theories were made to be pitted against one another which closed the possibility for inter-theoretical synthesis, where any attempts to combine different perspectives has been classified as "theoretical impurity".

7.   Methodology and data

One crucial factor that must be mentioned from the start is that there's no standardized approach to conducting securitization analyses(Munster,2012,). Guzzini,(2011) suggests a process tracing method, while Balzacq(2011) adds three more approaches: discourse analysis, content analysis and ethnographic research that could be employed alone or in combination.

I'll rely on discourse analysis in order to get a glimpse from the point of view of the main players in the BSR–NATO, the EU, Turkey and the Russian Federation to determine which issues they're most adamant about and where they would be willing to make compromises. This method will help us understand the underlying causes of the process of securitization as well as its external manifestations. I would argue, that this approach is by no means all-encompassing or sufficient on its own and will advocate for methodological pluralism, as future researches on the topic are done.

a) **Strengths of DA**

Balzacq(ibid) identifies three levels that could become the object of a study–the agents(both states and citizens), the acts and the context. Discourse analysis looks at both contextual and non-contextual elements and allows for the researcher to delve into all three dimensions in order to answer the "how", "who", "what", "when" and "where" of how a threat image forms, evolves and is presented. Discourses can be seen both as a source and a medium(Hardy,2004) and, as such, are inherently tied to the first two levels of analysis. At the same time written and spoken texts cannot be disassociated from the context in which they were created and cannot be understood without linking them to the "when" and "where". The ultimate goal is to understand the formation of "identities, decisions and norms"(Balzacq,2011) and situate them within a system's dynamic.

b) **Potential weaknesses of choosing this method**

One major caveat of DAs is the fact that they focus on spoken or written forms of discourse. With the Internet allowing files to be shared across vast geographic distances with near-instant speed, it is a shame that audio-visual pieces are often unaccounted for in securitization essays. This is in no small part due to the immense data that must be collected for even a single analysis; however, this echoes an underlying drawback of DA–a study is only as good as its sources. It is difficult to decide which documents to include and which to leave out–a careful balance must be struck between building a broad enough view of the research topic and functionality. I'll attempt to circumvent this by picking the essential policy documents of only the major players in the region

as the core of my study. That should by no means indicate that smaller states are insignificant, however, as stated in the "Realism" section, it is likely that they will try to align themselves with stronger actors or, at the very least, try to find a balancing position, avoiding conflict.

A common consequence of using DA is confirmation bias–researchers construct a theory and aim to prove it through applying, not testing it. I try to stay clear of this methodological weakness through a dialectic approach–asking questions and not coming in with a concrete presupposition. Nonetheless, the outcomes of this thesis must be triangulated with other studies as well in order to confirm the saliency of my analysis.

Lastly, the complete scope of this paper–testing the securitization process from the top-down and from the bottom-up proved to be too ambitious for a single person with limited funds and language capacities, so a lot is left to be desired in terms of triangulation, qualitative interviews and poll statistics across the littoral countries.

c) **Data**

The timeframe I'll mostly focus on will be 2008-2019. I see 2008 as an adequate starting point since by that time Romania and Bulgaria had already joined the EU and NATO and extended the borders of both alliances further east, changing the dynamics of the power balance in the BSR. One notable exception I make is with Russia–arguably their process of securitization towards "the West" began much earlier and I try to reflect that by additionally looking at materials from 2007. That way we can notice a pattern of issues that have troubled Moscow before, during and after the war with Georgia and lay at the root of what has been called "Cold War 2.0".

For my sources, I'll use materials related to foreign policy that could be classified as foreign policy manifestos and doctrinal foundations and manifestations. While the process of selection is pretty straightforward for NATO–an organization that has called for transparency in its relations to other players on the world stage and which must coordinate the efforts of all 29 members there are some specifics in the selection of materials for the rest of the actors in my analysis. NATO countries gather on a regular basis to discuss the issues of global importance that all member-states face. There, threats are identified and a roadmap of how to deal with them is typically devised. In addition to the declarations of those summits, I also look at documents that outline specific measures of how to deal with challenges to the Alliance. I also look at interviews, press conferences

and statements made by the Secretary General at various events in time which provides answers to more specific questions that haven't been addressed by the summit declarations, such as the rising tensions between NATO members.

The EU also uses a similar summit system where the members of the European council meet and discuss topical issues. The focus of many of the 78 summits held between 2008 and 2019, however, is put on domestic, not foreign policy. That is the reason I turned to the annual State of the European Union Speech, held by the President of the European Commission–it serves as a platform where the most crucial threats to the EU are addressed with special attention to Europe's neighborhood and the world. It also serves as a demonstration of the evolution of the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy after the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 which introduced the role of a High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The actual evolution of the FP agenda can easily be traced-from the initial steps through the much more comprehensive approach introduced by HR Federica Mogherini in the face of the newly formed Eastern Partnership(EaP), the European Union Global Strategy(EUGS) and the initiatives by the European External Action Service(EEAS). In that sense, I see the documents related to the EaP, EUGS and the EEAS as indispensable sources of understanding the motivations and tools used by the EU. I also look at the tailored approach that the Union has developed towards the BSR, in general, and Turkey and Russia, in particular. They serve as roadmaps towards the necessary conditions that need to be fulfilled in order for cooperation attempts to succeed. The "interviews, press conferences and statements" section here might seem like it is lacking, however, I discovered that with all the provided documents, reports and analyses, of the EU's FP, the interviews and press conferences seem redundant and do not contribute with a lot of new information.

The process of determining what constitutes Turkey's FP manifestos was much more difficult. The National Security Policy document, also known as "The Red Book" is classified and its contents remain largely hidden behind a veil of secrecy. That is the reason I rely on analyses in English of the tidbits of information, made available to the public, as well as of actions and restructuring made by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Policy and Armed Forces. Notably, I leave out the conclusions and the biases of the authors and look at only the facts, by comparing the information between different articles in order to verify their truthfulness. Luckily, here, the "interviews, press conferences and statements" section is extremely useful, as it provides direct

contact with the person that has been the head of Turkey for the past 16 years. Two events emerged as generating the most statements–the 2015 downing of the Russian fighter jet and the 2016 coup attempt which signified shifts of what the country considers a threat.

Lastly, I look at Russia. Their desire to become a stronger factor on the world stage has relied on thoroughly communicating their ambitions both in front of a domestic and a foreign audience. Since there's the same issue of official document classification, as in Turkey, I rely on the Annual Address to the Federal Assembly by the Russian president and the Addresses to the UN as data points. Both types of speeches are quite exhaustive and consistently and continuously set up follow a line of action in regards to dealing with the threats they face and the goals Russian FP wants to achieve. Statements in the eve of the war with Georgia, after the downing of the Russian jet and after the annexation of Crimea are quite useful in demonstrating the different aspects that of securitization that Moscow uses.

A full list of the data I have used is available in Appendix 1. A more detailed description of the selection criteria can be found in Appendix 2.

In sum, discourse analysis helps create a storyline(Hajer,1995, p.56)–a link between various different texts into one coherent narrative with a flow and momentum. Securitization can then be isolated as a factor and its effects can be related to the possibilities for cooperation. A pattern could be traced between "doctrine" texts, the FP manifestos as well as the subsequent acts and the ultimate goals that actors strive for. Securitization, as a process, might still be ongoing–such a scenario could provide predictive power of what we can expect in the upcoming years would the status quo remain the same. As a last note, the outcomes should be compared with another set of studies, testing how the securitization process has affected citizen perceptions, their willingness to engage with their counterparts in neighboring states, the trust between them and their sense of identity. This can be accomplished by using the ethnographic approach in a series of semi-structured interviews. It would be interesting, to see whether there's a sector, where people are more willing to collaborate–for example in areas where they've a shared interest(fishing) or where they're less susceptible to being impulsively influenced by political rhetoric(academic research).

8.   Analysis of the data

In this section, I'll explore the gradual deterioration of relations between the main actors in the region by adopting each of their point of view. I'll use the war in Georgia as the initial status quo and look at how and what is being securitized. Finally, I'll relate my findings to the theoretical schools and to cooperation.

a) NATO

The BSR has continuously been described by NATO states, as "important for Euro-Atlantic security" (Summit Declarations: Bucharest 2008, Strasbourg/Kehl 2009, 2009, Lisbon 2010, Chicago 2012, Wales 2014). As such, the relations of the region receive quite a bit of focus in official statements made by the Alliance and can roughly be divided into two periods–from 2008 to 2014, characterized by calls for cooperation and less antagonism; and from 2014 until now where the focus fell on Russia as an aggressor that threatened the stability of the region.

In the initial period, prior to the thawing of frozen conflicts, steps were being made towards the future membership of Georgia and Ukraine, offering them Membership Action Plans and establishing the NATO-Georgia Commission to further smooth out the ascension process. Russia was seen as an important partner whose assistance was crucial in dealing with disarmament, nuclear proliferation, missile defence cooperation and, perhaps most importantly, cooperation when dealing with the crisis in Afghanistan. Even after the war in Georgia, there were mixed messages from NATO officials–on the one hand, the recognition by Russia of South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions was condemned and the buildup of military forces near the border with Georgia was seen as "of particular concern" but, on the other, the importance of dialogue and cooperation with Moscow and the history of developing shared values and principles were given a lot of attention at the Strasbourg/Kehl summit in 2009, dedicating a whole paragraph to areas where the goodwill of Russia is essential.

At the following summits in Lisbon and Chicago, the focus began shifting–Moscow was still described as an important partner and a key factor in building a lasting and inclusive peace in the BSR, but NATO began putting up red lines identifying protracted regional conflicts as "a matter of great concern for the alliance". The threats to European populations, territories and forces were identified as the main priorities that collective defence had to prepare for. In the spirit of transparency and reciprocity NATO countries addressed the security concerns made by Russian officials brought forward by the expansion of the Alliance eastwards and tried to involve Moscow

in dialogues through the NATO-Russia Council so as to avoid a security dilemma situation that could lead to an arms race or open aggression. In several paragraphs of the 2012 Chicago Summit NATO tries to give guarantees that it isn't a threat and that relations with Russia can still be salvaged.

The Wales Summit in 2014 marked a complete shift of how NATO approached the BSR. From the beginning Russia is named as a threat to Europe "whole, free, and at peace". As a direct response to Moscow's aggressive stance, the NATO Readiness Action Plan was adopted and a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force was established. Additionally, this was the first time the term "hybrid threat" was used, an expression now turned into a staple when talking about Russia. NATO's stance after the Ukraine crisis was much more resolute and accused Russia of destroying the confidence-building mechanisms set up in the BSR. As an additional measure, the close ties with the EU were stressed and a coordinated response was decided on by the two organizations in the form of sanctions and the limited access to capital markets for Russian state-owned financial institutions. With the blatant disregard of international law and the deteriorating trust, the conditions for a cooperative and constructive relationship with Moscow were no longer present and "all practical civilian and military cooperation between NATO and Russia" was suspended. Transparency and predictability were listed as arguments of why NATO is a credible partner and the lack of good will from the Kremlin was condemned. In the following years a lot more emphasis was put on the capabilities of the Alliance both in traditional domains such as naval and air but also in developing the members' cyber and space potential.

As NATO began to mobilize the question of shared military commitments and defence expenditures entered the limelight. Since the Alliance is only as strong as its credible commitment to uphold Article 5 in case of a crisis, disunity was identified as one of the major threats that had to be faced and attempts to spread discord between the members had to be addressed. Interestingly, as Turkey adopted a more anti-Western stance, the antagonism so far has been kept separate from the Alliance level, at least from the point of view of NATO. No single member has, so far, collectively been identified as a security threat and Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg commended Ankara for its contribution in allied operations and defended each member's decision to pick their own military equipment when asked about the possibility of Turkey switching to the Russian S-400 missile system.

We can draw several conclusions from the data. First off, NATO uses typically Realist concepts such as knowledge, predictability, state sovereignty, territorial integrity and puts a lot of focus on traditional military armed forces. As such, these factors influence the Alliance's stance to other actors that challenge them. As one of the blocs during the Cold War, it has inherent mechanisms for dealing with the Realist anarchical world and it has so far managed to avoid escalations.

In recent years, we can notice a slight shift to non-Realist aspects such as dealing with hybrid attacks aimed at exploiting historical and societal cleavages, propaganda, subversion and the sense of identity. NATO and its opponents understand the importance that these factors play in the functioning of modern day societies and the high stakes that outright conflicts between state actors pose in the era of weapons of mass destruction, so they've begun exploring new ways of managing conflicts. The wars in Ukraine and the Middle East demonstrated how proxy forces can keep the conflict away from the state level.

Lastly, according to NATO, there cannot be a return to the "business as usual" status quo until Russia "demonstrates compliance with international law and its international obligations and responsibilities" (Summits: Wales, 2014, Warsaw 2016, Brussels 2018).

b) The EU

The EU is an interesting case in that we can see the gradual consolidation of the foreign policy of the Union into a single unified approach. It spent the time from the adoption of the Lisbon treaty up until the Ukraine crisis to set up its posture on the world stage and define its ambitions. From the beginning, it took a principled view on human rights, state borders, rule of law, good faith engagement and negotiations. Initially, the focus was on handling the consequences of the financial crisis and to generate political unity as this was the only way to become a credible actor in world affairs. The call for more "Europe and more Union in our foreign policy" (SOTEU 2015) became an underlying message for future calls to action.

The war in Ukraine was the first challenge that the EU countries answered in unison. The imposed sanctions were a demonstration that even though the Union lacked a joint army it could still uphold international law and negate aggression. The events of 2014 meant that the "spirit of cooperation between the EU and Russia has given way to suspicion and distrust" (ibid). Even

though these sanctions took a toll on European economies as well, through the collective efforts of all member-states President Juncker called for a "Europe that leads" opposed to a "Europe that stands on the sidelines of history" (ibid). The red lines were set and no cooperation with the regime in Moscow could exist until the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements. According to the EU's five guiding principles in dealing with Russia, there were links between loans from Russian banks and far-right European parties which were used to "express pro-Kremlin views, including calls for an end to sanctions". As multilateralism became one of the chief tools of European foreign policy, the sanctions against Russia did not rule out the strengthening of people-to-people contacts–building trust and shared commitments while not dealing with the Kremlin directly. The Union's security was threatened by the dependence on Russian energy imports and the destabilizing effects of aggressive propaganda which led to "mutual suspicion between ordinary EU citizens and Russians". Nevertheless, the EU has been actively trying to promote regional commitments in areas of shared interest through the Black Sea Synergy initiative in order to "boost the stability, sustainability, resilience and prosperity".

The other event that defined this period was the migration crisis which resulted from the civil war in Syria. This meant that, as a transition country, Turkey became a crucial partner in avoiding a humanitarian crisis. Consequently, the ascension process was accelerated and Brussels sought closer ties with Ankara. This did not mean that the EU would "water down [its] standards" (SOTEU 2016). After the brief impetus in relations, the Union stressed that "its values are its compass" and that no country that did not uphold freedom, equality and the rule of law could wish to become a member. The imprisonment of journalists and the hostile rhetoric from Ankara were criticized while differentiating between the ruling political elite and the Turkish people. The EU demonstrated that it could not become a full-fledged partner to countries that did not share its values despite their geographic proximity. Despite the suspended ascensions process, according to the EUGS, Europe still saw Turkey as a key partner in areas like "migration, counterterrorism, energy, transport, economy and trade" (The EU Global Strategy in Practice-Three years on, looking forward). The important role that the country played in dealing with the consequences of the Arab Spring in the MENA region meant that it was seen more as an ally than a threat on the EU level.

In sum, the EU does not appear to be troubled by territorial infringements or traditional military threats. I attribute this to the fact that most countries are NATO members and choose the

Alliance as the platform to deal with those questions. In addition, the EU does not currently possess the mechanisms or capacity to deal with armed conflict so it would not make sense to deal with problems related to military forces on an EU level. The strength of the Union lies in other, non-conventional challenges like meddling in internal affairs, subversion and propaganda. It tries to negate the negative effects of these challenges through education and promoting a shared sense of identity both across the continent and on a regional level.

That being said, the EU is currently putting a lot of focus on developing the European Defence Fund, the PESCO agreement and military Research and Development projects. As noted by President Juncker: "Soft power isn't enough in our increasingly dangerous neighborhood" (SOTEU 2016). The ultimate goal would be to create a "fully-fledged European Defence Union" (SOTEU 2017) –a desire shared by EU member-states and NATO.

Currently, the biggest challenge in front of the EU is to act in a unitary manner. This means that the values that all member-states share are the minimal point of contention when trying to make decisions in a qualified majority voting system and thus freedom, equality and the rule of law are the factors that define contacts and relations with other actors.

c) **Turkey**

As a start it, is important to understand who determines what constitutes a security threat in Turkey. The national security policy document, known as the Red Book, is devised by the National Security Council(NSC) consisting of the head of the Turkish Armed forces, select members of the Council of Ministers, and the President of the Republic and can only be revised in years ending with five or zero. The drafting of the Red book is "institutionalized around a broad and ambiguous national security concept; and… concealed behind a veil of secrecy" (Security sector in Turkey: questions, problems, and solutions). The result is a monopoly of knowledge in the public sphere, especially in English.

As a multiethnic country, radicalism and separatism were the cornerstones of Turkish threat perception. Due to its geographic location between several major regions prone to violent conflict, Turkey played the role of a transit country even before the Arab spring. As Ahmet Davutoglu took the position of Foreign Affairs Minister in 2009, the country began adopting a more active role in managing its regional geopolitical ambitions. As described in the section about neo-Osmanism, a

lot more emphasis was put on soft power and developing friendly relations with all neighboring countries. As Ankara's influence in the Balkans, the Caucuses and the Middle East grew, NATO attempted to take advantage of this position and offered Turkey to host the radar component of an Alliance missile defense system–an initiative led by the US (Turkey's Security Challenges and NATO). Here, it is important to note that this project received a lot of negative attention from Russia and Turkey insisted that it was presented as a part of the NATO defence plan and attempted to largely exclude the US from operating the system so as to not antagonize Moscow.

In 2010 the Red Book received an update in accordance with the new "zero problems" foreign policy plan. Greece, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Bulgaria, Georgia, Armenia and Russia were removed from the list of "threatening countries" signaling a silent revolution in the NSC. While previous versions saw Moscow as a competitor in the Caucasus region and in the fields of oil, gas and energy supply, the new document opened the possibilities for cooperation and even joint solutions with the Kremlin. It must be noted that separatism and undermining the stability of the country still came high on the agenda as Erdogan condemned parallel state structures and identified the Gülenist movement a major threat even before the coup attempt in 2016 (The Red Book: The Bible of Turkish Foreign Policy; Turkey Analysis: What Does Ankara's New "Red Book" of Threats Mean?; National Security Council under Erdoğan updates top secret national security 'book')

The possibility of a peaceful solution with Greece in key areas like the status of Cyprus meant that the EU could engage in dialogue with Ankara. The culmination of bilateral relations was deal on migrant management and the promises to Turkey for visa liberalization and speeding up the ascension process.

At the same time, relations with Russia seemed to take a hit due to the downing of the Russian jet in 2015 and the violations of human rights of Crimean Tatars during the annexation of Crimea ("Turkey will continue to defend the rights and interests of the Crimean Tatars"; "Erdogan: Turkey to defend Crimean Tatars under any circumstances") After an official apology from Ankara, however, the previous status quo was quickly restored ("Seeking to Improve Ties With Russia, Turkey Apologizes for Downing Warplane").

The 2016 coup attempt seemingly marked a stark shift in Turkey's foreign policy alignments. Erdogan criticized the West and the US in particular for supporting the Kurdish and Gülenist movements; the Netherlands and Germany were described as Nazis for not allowing

Turkish political rallies in their territory, hundreds of NATO personnel were sacked or even imprisoned and Turkey decided to switch to the Russian S-400 missile system (Erdoğan accuses Germany of 'Nazi practices' over blocked political rallies.; Turkey's Erdogan calls Dutch authorities 'Nazi remnants'; Defence and Security Policy of the Turkish Republic; Turkey's Security Challenges and NATO) In reality, these developments have led to very little changes in how Ankara conducts its foreign policy. Separatism was still the biggest threat that the country faced and EU ascension remained a top priority for the long-term and, despite rising antagonisms, Turkey has firmly aligned itself with the West while also maintaining its commitments to regional partners like Russia (Defence and Security Policy of the Turkish Republic; Turkey's Security Challenges and NATO). At the same time, NATO and the EU cannot risk to isolate Turkey because it is an indispensable strategic partner, so they're willing to look over rhetorical actions. These statements were generally made in front of a domestic audience, drawing a parallel between European and Turkish identities and juxtaposing the two in an attempt to gather political dividends.

The biggest change that has occurred as a result of the coup attempt was the restructuring of the NSC that took place after the 2017 referendum (Turkey's National Security Architecture post April 16 Referendum: Consolidating the Pillars; Rule of Law Perceptions in Turkey). As put by the EU ascension chapters, the role of the military in the political life of the country had to be limited and the new constitutional amendments did that by concentrating a lot of the decision-making power in the hands of the President and consolidating Erdogan's grasp of the country even more.

The results of securitization processes in Turkey can be summed up in several key positions. A member of NATO and with a modern army, the country does not seemingly feel threatened by outside military interference. This gives Ankara the freedom and flexibility to choose its allies without being coerced by force. Even momentary clashes of interest are quickly overcome due to the foreign policy doctrine of maintaining friendly relations with its neighbors. This could further be explained by looking at trade volumes(OEC,2019)–Turkey's biggest trading partners are the US, several EU countries and Russia. With economic development being one of the key elements in maintaining popular support in illiberal elective democracies, it is easy to see the benefit of adopting a "balancing act" approach.

The red line for the country, lies in internal secessionist movements. Turkey has tried to promote the identity of a modern secular Muslim state that is a key player in several of the world's regions, however, the repressions in the post-2015 coup reality have made it increasingly difficult to keep a tight grip on the country while avoiding both civil and international backlash.

d) The Russian Federation

In the period 2007-2019 Russia has continuously followed the same foreign policy and even major regional events such as the aftermath of the wars in Georgia and Ukraine and the downing of the Russian fighter jet by Turkey were based on the fundamental line that Moscow has kept in the past decade.

As a start, one argument made by presidents Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is that the end of the unipolar world must come to an end and that the West, led by the US, should give way to a restructuring of the balance of power (as present in all Annual Address to the Federal Assembly (AAFA) and Addresses to the UN). In this new era of international relations, it is Russia that should be one of the major actors since it is the one that upholds the ideals of democracy, rule of law and cooperation and all the crises in the world today are merely the death throes of a dying world order that can no longer promote "the non-use of force; peaceful settlement of disputes; sovereignty; territorial integrity; non-interference in internal affairs" (UN: 62nd sess. 2007; 73rd sess, 2018). Maintaining this credibility serves a valuable purpose–on the surface, Russia is playing by the rules of the Liberal World Order established after the fall of the Berlin wall and thus can take the role of a moral compass–an important message in Russian propaganda. The end goal would be to "do everything possible to make the world a fairer and safer place" (AAFA, 2007), while conveniently leaving out who the world would be fairer to.

Secondly, evoking the spirit of the Cold War, Russia has set off to create its own parallel structures as an answer to NATO and the EU, namely BRICS, the Eurasian Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Allying itself with a number of G20 countries, Russia is trying to move beyond its regional ambitions and attempting to claim a role on a global scale while also reducing the relative influence of the US.

Next, a continuous grievance from Moscow is the feeling of losing grasp of its sphere of influence. From the Kremlin's point of view, the so-called "end of history" was used as a pretext for the West to expand its geopolitical control without consulting other actors on the world stage. NATO is accused of wanting to "recreate the climate of the Cold War" (UN: 72nd sess, 2017) and the US is continuously pointed out as the actor that works "behind the scenes" (AAFA, December 2014; AAFA, Crimea Speech; AAFA 2012). America, in particular, is pointed out as the main conspirator against Moscow and is blamed for "influencing Russia's relations with its neighbors" (AAFA, December 2014) and forcing democratization instead of allowing peoples to naturally reach that point of their political development. The "policy of ultimatums and a philosophy of superiority and domination" (UN: 69th sess. 2014) are seen as the logical conclusion of why cooperation with the US is impossible.

Collaboration with the EU and Turkey, on the other hand, is possible as long as the US is renounced. The EU, and Germany in particular, is presented as a constructive and credible partner on numerous occasions, typically as an analogue to relations with Washington. Cooperation with Turkey went to a brief rough period after the downing of the Russian jet in which the act by Ankara was seen as an unprovoked and disproportionate act and a "stab in the back" (Turkey downing of Russia jet 'stab in the back' – Putin). Ultimately, Putin stressed the traditionally close relations between the two nations and said that Moscow was "ready to cooperate with Turkey on all the most sensitive issues it had; we were willing to go further, where its allies refused to go" (AAFA 2015). By seeking dialogue on an individual basis Russia is trying to isolate the US' strategic partners and sow discord within NATO. The Kremlin, for example, offered Europe a new security architecture with the EU as one signatory and Russia as the other. If realized, that would have meant a huge loss of American influence in Europe, while also giving Russia leverage not as one out of the 28 member-state but as an entity equal in influence to the EU as a whole.

The last foreign policy line is that of the shared sense of identity both within and outside of Russia's borders. During his 2007 speech, Putin describes the search for a national idea as an old tradition and favorite pastime for Russians and Moscow has full-heartedly adopted this idea. The goal then would be to convince the majority of the populace that what the Kremlin does is 1) effective and 2) in the benefit of the people. Humiliated and isolated after the collapse of the USSR, Moscow wants to demonstrate that it can "take its deserved place in the world" and is the vanguard

against evil, much like during the Great Patriotic War in the past. It is precisely Russia that promotes the "proper" values–namely morality, based on religion, customs and traditions, spiritual unity, unique cultural identity and basic family principles (UN: 64th sess, 2009; UN 73rd sess, 2018; AAFA 2007; AAFA 2008). On the other side, there's the Wests with its decadence and moral degradation. In that sense there could be no trust towards the West–even though Moscow has seemingly called for equal, open and fair relations they've received no reciprocity while "being lied to many times, made decisions behind [their] backs and placed [them] before accomplished facts" (AAFA Crimea Speech).

Further, Russia has put forward a narrative that if you are Russian speaking then you are Russian and do not belong to any other nation and Moscow has obligation to protect you even if it means infringing on another nation's sovereignty. This was the justification used in South Ossetia, Crimea, Transnistria and the Baltic Republics (Putin Widens Citizenship Offer To All Residents Of Ukraine's Donetsk, Luhansk Regions).

To conclude, the triptych of Russian Foreign policy is a balance of economic, civilizational and military forces. Despite of using traditional Realist tools in its arsenal and viewing the world from a Realist lens with international anarchy, spheres of influence, the balance of power and "might makes right" mentality, Moscow also looks at non-conventional instruments to affect international relations and promote cooperation where it finds useful. It attempts to create a messianic image of itself in order to convey an impression of invincibility both in its allies and enemies.

9.   Results, theoretical contributions and possibilities for future research

In my analysis of the data, I discover several things that can contribute theoretically to the literature on securitization and empirically to the broad field of Black Sea Region Studies. Further, I tackle my main research question of whether there's a common denominator between Realism, Collective Action and Securitization theories by demonstrating that theoretical pluralism must be employed in order to understand the complexity of securitization processes. A single theoretical perspective cannot hope to give a complete analytical picture. Rather, an integral multi-disciplinary approach is the only viable option for knowledge generation. The data shows that in order to truly

understand how actors "do" securitization, we must take aspects from the theories related to the fields of political science, international relations, history, economy, cultural studies to name a few.

Securitization is seen as a speech act that uses these of threat and urgency to justify the use of extraordinary measures. While this conceptualization is a good starting point I would also add a secondary definition which could also be related to cooperation–*the process of harmonization of the goals and expectations of the state and the citizenry*. This new framing encompasses the breadth of the securitization process and does not limit it to a single act of presenting something as a threat. Instead, securitization is the continuous construction of an image that might or might not reflect reality. This reconceptualization would also give an explanation to why sometimes securitization fails. If the process isn't sufficiently lengthy or intensive, as in the case with Russo-Turkish relations in 2015, the status quo might be restored. Alternatively, a process that has started decades ago should logically require a long time to stop.An example of this would be the current ruling elite in Russia–they were brought up in a system which villainized the US and the West, a position that they've subsequently maintained even after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc. Both aspects lead me to believe that securitization might possess some kind of momentum–after all, we do not live in an Orwellian world in which the citizens' perceptions of who the enemy is and who is the friend changes at the flip of a switch, however, further research in this area is needed.

Secondly, statists traditionally view the drafting of a foreign policy agenda as the prerogative of countries and ruling elites. This top-down approach eliminates the possibility of citizens to have any agency in controlling what their country does on the world stage. My redefinition leaves room for the possibility that a bottom-up influence from the people to the state is also possible. There has been research on the effects of civil movements on the fall of the Berlin Wall and the war in Vietnam and I believe that if analyzed further the effects of the EU policy to create "islands of cooperation" on a sub-state level can further contribute to this area.

Cooperation can only exist when areas, seen as vital to the well-being of the country, aren't threatened. They may lie in the materialist world like the control of vital resources or maintaining a certain level of military might, or in the abstract world like identity, culture and national belonging. These red lines are defined by securitization and it isn't uncommon for countries to define their interests by using both ends of the spectrum. Since these are two separate levels of

analysis, neither Realism nor Collective Action can fully explain under what conditions can cooperation occur. Securitization then turns into the linking force that connects them(see Fig. 4)
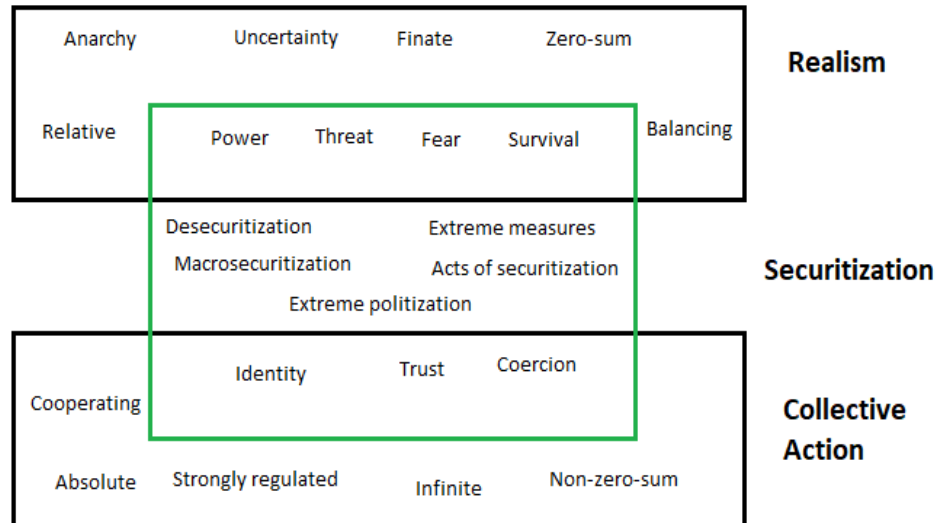

Fig 4.

This new position of securitization would also answer one of the major criticisms directed towards it, namely that it lacks explanatory power. I would argue that the strength of securitization lies elsewhere-it is a vessel of communication that allows for different theoretical schools and levels of analysis to interact with each other. Theoretical purist might argue that different theories are epistemologically and ontologically distinct, however, empirical evidence shows that policy-makers do not always follow the same logic of academics and combine aspects of different schools of thought. Different theories have typically talked past each other and haven't benefited from the lessons learned in their own area, thus, using a framework with an integrated and holistic approach could greatly benefit knowledge generation.

Lastly, my findings must be triangulated with other forms of analysis. Currently, there's very little information on the effectiveness of securitization moves. According to the Kremlin in 2014 95 percent of Russians believed that Moscow should protect the interests of Russians and other ethnic groups in Crimea(Kremlin,2014); surveys by Levada Centre show that in of 2014 the percentage of Russians that saw the EU in a positively dropped from 51 in January to 19 in September and then grew to 28 by 2017. On the other hand, despite the lack of securitization towards Turkey, some EU and NATO members till see Ankara as a major threat(Dennison

et.al,2018). It would be interesting to see if one or both organizations can initiate a desecuritization process on an alliance level to counteract the securitization on the state level. As noted, the information is sparse and offers ample area for future research.

10.   Conclusion

To conclude, the Black Sea Region–an area characterized by oversecuritization and intense power competition shows us that multiple levels of analysis are needed to adequately account for the characteristics, demonstrated by geopolitical actors' foreign policy doctrines. In an increasingly complex world with the capacity for nuclear destructions, regional and world geopolitical players have to go beyond the classical doctrines of Realism and use more non-materialistic concepts like identity, culture and trust. Securitization theory, then, provides a flexible framework that allows aspects from different theoretical schools to be combined in order to reflect on empirical examples. It also shows that countries do not become enemies at the flip of a switch–there's typically historical antagonisms at play and isolated incidents have to be distinguished from persistent security threats. Lastly, securitization is typically seen as a process that is done from a top-down perspective as policy-makers are the ones that define something as a danger to a nation's political goals, however, I theorize that perhaps a reverse process is also possible–where grassroots efforts across borders could influence how countries deal with problems of shared interest like environmental protection and climate change.

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Appendix 1.

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2010 Lisbon Summit Declaration https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm

2012 Chicago Summit Declaration
https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_87593.htm?selectedLocale=en

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2016 Warsaw Summit Communiqué https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm

2018 Brussels Summit Declaration https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156624.htm

Policy Papers

NATO Readiness Action Plan
https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_07/20160627_1607-factsheet-rap-en.pdf

Allied Joint Doctrine
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/602225/doctrine_nato_allied_joint_doctrine_ajp_01.pdf

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https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_165854.htm

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State of the Union,2015 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/state_of_the_union_2015_en.pdf

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The EU's Russia policy Five guiding principles 2018
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Remarks by HR/VP Federica Mogherini at the joint press conference following the 54th EU-Turkey Association Council https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/59719/remarks-hrvp-federica-mogherini-joint-press-conference-following-54th-eu-turkey-association_fr

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Turkey

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Defence and Security Policy of the Turkish Republic(pdf)
https://www.cidob.org/en/content/download/30264/359449/file/241-248_ANEXO_POLITICA+DEFENSA+DE+TURQUIA_ANG.pdf

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Appendix 2

As a start the inherent hierarchy of sources must be noted. FP Manifestos should be viewed as holding more weight than the interviews, press conferences and statements; the former are "set in stone" and have gone through discussions of the highest level of the institutions that have published them. Every word has been thought out and everything has been done to avoid possible misinterpretation and misunderstanding, as per standard diplomatic protocol. These sources are the attempt of the actors to appear as transparent in in their intentions in order to avoid the "fog of war" of international relations.

Consequently, the interviews, press conferences and statements provide more flexibility in understanding the nature and specifics of certain questions - aspects that might have not found a place in the official manifestos for various reasons. At the same time, it must be noted, that the sources are typically, news outlets, which could provide limited or biased representation of certain questions. The way I have tried to avoid that was to limit myself to using just the quotes by the officials, leaving out any form of analysis or interpretation, thereby avoiding source bias. Further, I have confirmed the authenticity of the speeches by either finding at least three independent from one another sources or relying on videos from the relevant interviews/speeches.

The data I have gathered and used in my thesis needed to fulfil several criteria in order to be classified as useful.

First off, they needed to be made by an official institution or by a person holding an office of power. In all cases this meant the head of the state or the leader(s) of the organization. For NATO that meant the looking at the statements, made by the summits, held by the Heads of State of all member-countries. Further, the policy papers were published by the Chiefs of Staff of the Alliance. For the "interviews" section I looked at statements made by the Secretary General at the time as the figure, in which the power of the organization is focused.

For the EU I chose the Annual State of the EU speeches made by the President of the EU Commission. Notably, I also include initiatives and statements made by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Vice-President of the Commission Federica Mogherini as the person, responsible for the foreign policy of the Union. In that sense, as policy papers, I have included initiatives by the Commission and the HR.

For Turkey and Russia, the process was pretty straightforward and I looked at the head of the country and the ministers of foreign affairs, as the ones responsible for the external relations of the countries. Here, perhaps it must be noted, that when it comes to Turkey I have looked at Recep Erdoğann as the Head of State, despite him being Prime Minister only until 2014. He then became president and remained active in the political life, leading a crusade for Turkey to become a presidential republic, de facto becoming the Head of State once more after the referendum passed.

Second, they needed to be relevant, they have to address the BSR or any of the other actors in this essay in any way. Naturally, none of the documents dealt only a single issue so I have left out the representation of other domestic and/or foreign issues that the actor addresses in one document.

Next the criteria to take into consideration during the analysis must be discussed:

It is important to understand how the information is presented and what the audience is. The data from NATO is available in English and French – the two official languages of the Alliance noting the "internal" aspect of the sought audience. At the same time, however, in order to promote the friendly neighborly relations with Russia, a represented from Moscow is always invited and typically present at these meetings showing the importance the Alliance puts on communicating its goals and concerns even outside its borders. Further, the actions of Russia are directly discussed and concrete red lines are drawn so as to improve the transparency of the intentions of NATO.

In contrast, the SOTU speeches are available in the 24 official EU languages and no link to Russia or Turkey is provided, signaling that they are mostly intended for internal "consumption". The case is similar with the policy documents, denoting importance that the Union places on reaching internal cohesion. Perhaps due to that, the focus is put on the shared values that the member-states have as the minimal point of contention.

The situation with Turkey is a bit more interesting as there seems to be an occasional divide between the official statement of the county and the rhetoric used by Erdogan. While trade relations and future interests with the West are important for Ankara, Erdogan has chosen to use strong rhetorical instruments to rack up tensions with Germany, the US and the Netherlands. It must be noted that when this was done it has always referred to internal affairs in some way (campaigning/coup attempt) and has been done in front of a domestic audience and in Turkish. The fact that these statements have had a large effect on diplomatic relations shows the effects that the connectivity of today's world has on spreading news and that no statement is purely "domestic" or "external". In addition, these statements were done at political rallies further demonstrating that the goal was perhaps to rack up political dividends for his own benefit inside Turkey. At the same time, when it came to relations with Moscow, Erdogan chose a direct channel to Putin made sure relations were restored, opposed to relying on the media to convey the message.

Lastly, I have divided the official Russian statements in two – those made in front of a domestic audience and those addressed to a foreign one. The Annual Address to the Federal Assembly are made in Russian (with full transcripts made available in English on the official Kremlin website) and address many aspects of Russian politics, both internal and external and are used by the President to gather the nation and present the ultimate goal that everyone should be working towards by presenting shared values and mobilizing the citizens towards solving the challenges that the country faces. The Addresses to the UN, on the other hand are made on an annual basis in front of a foreign audience and present how Moscow sees international relations and what the World Orders should be like.

Next, I have also taken into consideration the relative "weight" that the BSR and cross-border relations with other actors, carry by tying the language used, the frequencies of mentions and whether the structure changes throughout the years to the context of the region and the events that have occurred. For example, NATO's summit statements have a relatively similar format of

addressing all issues one by one with the BSR and relations with Russia typically falling somewhere in the middle with a couple of paragraphs to note the most recent developments. Notably that must not be interpreted as an argument that these questions had less importance in relation to other problems, but rather it makes the shift during the 2014 summit in Wales even more noticeable. Then, the declaration started with the discussion of the Ukraine crisis and relations with Russia from the very beginning and dedicating over two dozen paragraphs on the region and how the conflict should be managed. Here it must be mentioned that this essay does not rely on quantitative data analysis and will not do a word breakdown of each text but merely tries to find qualitative patterns that could help with understanding the securitization process.

Lastly, the question of the lack of official data on Turkish FP manifestos must be addressed. As noted in the "Data" section, finding the original official documents in English is impossible due to the veil of secrecy that they are developed in. For that reason, I have tried to work around that issue by looking at analyses and declarations, connected to "The Red Book" in order to serve as cornerstones that the "interviews, press conferences and statements" section can build upon. I have tried to verify the available information as much as possible and have provided multiple takes on the changes that took place during the last changes that were made in 2010, as well as the restructuring that took place after the 2017 referendum. Notably, I have sought reputable sources like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) – a NGO that comes up with annual analyses that deal with the security sector in Turkey, Carnegie Europe, which has a division, dealing with NATO and tracking the most recent developments in member-countries, SETA that works closely with the Turkish Ministry of Defense, as well as Turkish and foreign news outlets that have received limited information on what the new Redbook contains. Further, have used the bits of information that can be considered reliable and that could be verified from multiple sources (i.e. when a country is no longer considered a threat), while leaving out the analytical conclusions of the writers, thereby avoiding biases in my analysis.

I find this an adequate workaround, as the source of the information that is provided in the articles and analyses is most likely the National Security Council since it is the institution that holds the monopoly of knowledge in this case. Additionally, the actions of state officials confirm the conclusions I draw from the unofficial sources, indicating a link between what is presented as

reliable information and the actual FP manifestos. In that sense, I doubt that there would be any considerable changes in my analysis even if I was provided with the original Red Book.