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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**U.S. AND NATO NAVAL ENGAGEMENT WITH RUSSIA
IN THE BLACK SEA: HISTORICAL PATTERNS AND
CURRENT PROSPECTS**

by

Alex D. Schneider

September 2016

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

David S. Yost
Mikhail Tsyarkin

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HISTORICAL PATTERNS AND CURRENT PROSPECTS**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
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ABSTRACT

Since Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014, the United States and its NATO Allies have increased their military presence and exercises in the Black Sea focused on deterring Russian aggression or coercion. Russia has also increased the number and magnitude of its exercises in the region. In some interactions in this region, Russia has acted in an unprofessional manner and has engaged in provocative conduct against U.S. and NATO military units to an extent that has placed future U.S.–Russian and NATO–Russian relations into question. This thesis analyzes how Russia's ambitious military maneuvers and the subsequent U.S.–NATO responses have resulted in a security dilemma in the Black Sea region. Russia's Black Sea Fleet buildup and modernization program will generate new economic and security concerns that the United States and NATO will confront as Russia's military capabilities expand in the region. Despite the NATO Allies' attempts to establish cooperation and open dialogue with Russia, Moscow seems unwilling to reciprocate. Until Russia engages in cooperation and open dialogue with the NATO Allies, the security dilemma will persist, and it may result in a possible flashpoint in the Black Sea region.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AA/DCFTA	association agreement/deep and comprehensive free trade area
b/d	barrels per day
BLACKSEAFOR	Black Sea Naval Force
BMD	ballistic missile defense
BSS	Black Sea synergy
CFE	conventional armed forces in Europe
CTF-64	Commander Task Force 64
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
ELN	European Leadership Network
ENI	European neighborhood instrument
ENP	European neighborhood policy
ENPI	European neighborhood and partnership instrument
EPAA	European phased adaptive approach
ESDP	European security and defense policy
ESS	European security strategy
EU	European Union
EUCOM	European Command
EUROMED	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
GDP	gross domestic product
HMCS	Her Majesty's Canadian ship
ICBSS	International Center of Black Sea Studies
MoU	memorandum of understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NAVEUR	Naval Forces Europe
NRC	NATO-Russia Council
ORT	Russian public television
PASSEX	passing exercise
PfP	Partnership for Peace
RT	Russia Today

SAP-2020	state armaments program for 2011–2020
SNMG2	Standing NATO Maritime Group Two
STANAVFORLANT	Standing Naval Forces Atlantic
STANAVFORMED	Standing Naval Forces Mediterranean
TASS	Russian state-owned news agency
Tcf	trillion cubic feet
VGTRK	All-Russian State Radio and Television Company
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States
USS	United States ship
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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I. INTRODUCTION

In October 2011, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta announced a decision to permanently station four U.S. Navy destroyers in Europe for Ballistic Missile Defense and other purposes in the Black Sea.¹ The last of these four destroyers—USS *Carney* (DDG 64)—arrived in Rota, Spain, on September 25, 2015. These four U.S. Navy destroyers allow the United States and its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to maintain a constant rotational presence in the Black Sea to deter Russian ambitions and provide NATO Allies and partners in the region with security assurances against Russia.²

Since 2014, the United States and its NATO Allies have increased exercises in the Black Sea focused on deterring Russian aggression or coercion. In response to the enhanced U.S. and NATO military presence in the Black Sea, and for other reasons, Russia has also increased the number and magnitude of its exercises in the region.³ Russia perceives the increased U.S. and NATO military presence in the Black Sea as a direct threat to Russia's national security by encroaching in what it regards as its sphere of influence. The increase in U.S. and NATO military presence and exercises in the Black Sea, and Russia's responses to these increases, have led to a number of interactions between U.S.–NATO and Russian military units. Russia has acted in an unprofessional manner and has engaged in provocative conduct against U.S. and NATO military units to an extent that has placed future U.S.–Russian and NATO–Russian relations into question.⁴

¹“Spain to Host Elements of NATO Anti-Missile Shield,” *EFE News Service*, October 5, 2011, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/896337787?accountid=12702>.

²Sam LaGrone, “Destroyer USS *Carney* Arrives in Rota Completing European Ballistic Missile Defense Quartet,” *U.S. Naval Institute News*, September 25, 2015, <http://news.usni.org/2015/09/25/destroyer-uss-carney-arrives-in-rota-completing-european-ballistic-missile-defense-quartet>.

³Thomas Frear, Ian Kearns, and Lukasz Kulesa, “Preparing for the Worst: Are Russian and NATO Military Exercises Making War in Europe more Likely?,” European Leadership Network, last modified August 7, 2015, 3–4, <http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/medialibrary/2015/08/07/ea2b8c22/Preparing%20for%20the%20Worst.pdf>.

⁴*Ibid.*

In light of these events, this thesis investigates the following questions: what are U.S. and NATO naval prospects in the Black Sea region and how will these prospects affect security in relation to Russia in this region? To answer these questions, this thesis places them in historical context. This thesis analyzes U.S. and NATO naval activities in the Black Sea since the end of the Cold War in 1989–1991, including types of exercises and capabilities and the declared purposes of these activities. It further investigates Russia’s Black Sea Fleet buildup and modernization and how they relate to the shifting power structure of the Black Sea region. Prospects and challenges for the United States and its NATO Allies in relation to Russia in the Black Sea are also explored. The policies of the European Union (EU) toward the Black Sea are examined to gain insight into the EU’s current posture and future intentions toward Russia in the complicated Black Sea region. Finally, this thesis analyzes Russian perceptions of the West to better understand the situation that is unfolding between the United States, NATO, and Russia in the Black Sea region.

A. SIGNIFICANCE OF MILITARY INTERACTIONS IN THE BLACK SEA

The significance of this research question is underscored by U.S., NATO, and Russian perceptions regarding the purposes of the multilateral exercises increasingly being conducted in and around the Black Sea by Russia and the United States and America’s NATO Allies.⁵ The Black Sea has been an important arena for Russian security, commerce, and other interests since the eighteenth century. Russia regards the increased U.S. and NATO naval activity in the Black Sea as a threat to Russian interests in the region, and an example of NATO expansion and interference in its immediate sphere of influence.⁶

⁵Frear, Kearns, and Kulesa, “Preparing for the Worst,” 1; Philip Breedlove, “Statement of General Philip Breedlove,” U.S. European Command, Department of Defense, last modified February 25, 2015, <http://www.eucom.mil/mission/background/posture-statement>.

⁶Igor Delanoe, “After the Crimean Crisis: Towards a Greater Russian Maritime Power in the Black Sea,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 14, no. 3 (2014): 370–71, doi:10.1080/14683857.2014.944386.

U.S. and NATO interests have been underlined by Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014. These interests include the security concerns of NATO's Black Sea member states (Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey) as well as the other Black Sea states, Georgia and Ukraine, which are NATO partners and which aspire to NATO membership.⁷ This concern was recently reaffirmed at the 2016 NATO Warsaw Summit when NATO leaders declared that "We condemn Russia's ongoing and wide-ranging military build-up in Crimea, and are concerned by Russia's efforts and stated plans for further military build-up in the Black Sea region."⁸

Reinforcing NATO's commitment to collective defense against the regional threat posed by Russia is part of one of NATO's "three essential core tasks" set out in the 2010 Strategic Concept.⁹ Collective defense is aimed toward reassuring NATO member states of their safety in an uncertain international security environment. The United States and the rest of the NATO Allies are committed to ensuring collective defense preparedness for their Black Sea Allies. These issues are directly relevant to the decisions made by U.S. and NATO leaders, as well as military strategists. These leaders and strategists need to understand the overarching perceptions prevalent regarding any actions or exercises conducted in the Black Sea, as well as possible Russian reactions and their consequences in the region as a whole. The Black Sea region is becoming an arena for potential NATO-Russian and U.S.-Russian confrontation that merits close analysis.¹⁰

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature providing assessments of U.S. and NATO naval activities in the Black Sea region since the end of the Cold War is scarce. Primarily, the literature consists of

⁷Delanoe, "After the Crimean Crisis," 377–78; F. Stephen Larrabee, "The United States and Security in the Black Sea Region," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 9, no. 3 (2009): 302–3, doi:10.1080/14683850902934309.

⁸North Atlantic Council, "Warsaw Summit Communiqué," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last updated July 20, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm.

⁹David S. Yost, *NATO's Balancing Act* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2014): 31.

¹⁰Sharyl Cross, "NATO-Russia Security Challenges in the Aftermath of Ukraine Conflict: Managing Black Sea Security and Beyond," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 15, no. 2 (2015): 164–65, doi:10.1080/14683857.2015.1060017.

newspaper articles and government bulletins briefly discussing plans for U.S. or NATO naval exercises in or around the Black Sea within a given timeframe, without providing further substance. However, the publication of articles containing relevant information and analyses of events has become more abundant since the mid-2000s. The more recent literature analyzes themes and trends of U.S.–Russian and NATO-Russian relations in the Black Sea region in the light of Russia’s annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and increased U.S. and NATO naval activity in the region.

Two leading schools of thought stand out in the mass of literature on the relations between Russia and the United States and NATO, and these schools of thought directly relate to each side’s perceptions of naval activities and incidents in the Black Sea.

One school of thought maintains that understanding Russia’s perspective is of vital importance to understanding its actions, which are interpreted as largely defensive in nature. Furthermore, this argument suggests that Russia’s amplified naval exercises are in reaction to the increased U.S. and NATO presence in Russia’s “sphere of privileged interest.”¹¹ For example, Igor Delanoe, a Research Affiliate at the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, has written that “[Russia’s] southern flank has been one of the most unstable ones during the past two decades, [and] Russia’s interests in the Black Sea are today mainly security related. Moscow focuses on preserving the territorial integrity of the [Russian] Federation.”¹² A common position centered in this argument is that NATO enlargement serves to further explain the more frequent and amplified U.S. and NATO presence in the Black Sea near Sevastopol, which houses the majority of the Russian Black Sea Fleet and ensures the security of Russia’s southern border.¹³

¹¹Delanoe, “After the Crimean Crisis,” 370.

¹²Ibid.; United Kingdom Parliament. House of Commons Defence Committee, *Towards the Next Defence and Security Review: Part Two—NATO*, United Kingdom Parliament, Third Report of Session 2014–15, July 2014, 18.

¹³United Kingdom Parliament, *Towards the Next Defence and Security Review*, 18; Valery N. Gorokhov and Dmitry Ye. Gorovtsov, “NATO Expansion: A View from the State Duma,” George Washington University, last modified October 13, 1993, https://www.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/demokratizatsiya%20archive/06-01_gorokhov.pdf.

Proponents of this point of view—that is, that Russia is acting defensively—also favor a policy of U.S.- and NATO-led détente with Russia that would restrict actions perceived by Moscow to be militarily offensive, and instead encourage constructive communication and cooperation. For example, Lord Richards, a former Chief of the Defence Staff, in 2014 told the House of Commons Defence Committee “that he did not believe that separatists in Ukraine were being orchestrated by Moscow. He emphasized the historical Russian claims to Crimea ... [and] made it clear that he views terrorism not Russia to be the greatest threat.”¹⁴ Advocates of this school would further argue that Russia has the potential to be a strategic partner of the Alliance against serious extremist threats in the Black Sea region and beyond.

This potential for partnership was noted in the NATO-Russia Founding Act in 1997, when the Alliance and Russia assured each other that they would not regard the other as an opponent and that they would instead work toward creating a “lasting and inclusive peace.”¹⁵ This commitment was reaffirmed in the NATO–Russia “New Quality” Declaration in May 2002. Similarly, in 2013, NATO and Russian warships participated in a joint anti-piracy exercise in the Gulf of Aden in an attempt to strengthen NATO-Russian relations, as a further example of cooperation.¹⁶ Since Russia’s annexation of Crimea in March 2014, NATO has continued to stress its commitment to keeping the channels of communication open with Russia. At the 2016 NATO Warsaw Summit, the NATO Allies declared that “We remain open to a periodic, focused and meaningful dialogue with a Russia willing to engage on the basis of reciprocity in the NRC [NATO–Russia Council], with a view to avoiding misunderstanding, miscalculation, and unintended escalation, and to increase transparency and predictability.”¹⁷

¹⁴United Kingdom Parliament, *Towards the Next Defence and Security Review*, 18.

¹⁵NATO-Russia Council, “Founding Act,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified October 12, 2009, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm.

¹⁶NATO-Russia Council, “NATO and Russian Warships Hone Counter Piracy Skills,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified April 22, 2013, <http://www.nato.int/nrc-website/EN/articles/20130422-nrc-counter-piracy-training/index.html>.

¹⁷North Atlantic Council, “Warsaw Summit Communiqué.”

The opposing school of thought maintains that Russia is a substantial threat to NATO. This school of thought is the dominant interpretation among most Western scholars and officials, especially following Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014. Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO's Secretary General during the Russian annexation of Crimea, has expressed support for this view. In April 2014, he described Russia as "speaking and behaving not as a partner, but as an adversary."¹⁸ Many proponents of this view do not believe that Russia is motivated mainly by fear of NATO enlargement. In their view, Vladimir Putin is consolidating his power base in the Black Sea region with a view to further extending Russia's influence.¹⁹ Support for this view was recently expressed by NATO leaders at the 2016 Warsaw Summit:

Russia's aggressive actions, including provocative military activities in the periphery of NATO territory and its demonstrated willingness to attain political goals by the threat and use of force, are a source of regional instability, fundamentally challenge the Alliance, have damaged Euro-Atlantic security, and threaten our long-standing goal of a Europe whole, free, and at peace. ... Russia's destabilising actions and policies include: the ongoing illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, which we do not and will not recognise and which we call on Russia to reverse; the violation of sovereign borders by force; the deliberate destabilisation of eastern Ukraine; large-scale snap exercises contrary to the spirit of the Vienna Document, and provocative military activities near NATO borders, including in the Baltic and Black Sea regions and the Eastern Mediterranean; its irresponsible and aggressive nuclear rhetoric, military concept and underlying posture; and its repeated violations of NATO Allied airspace.²⁰

Others within this circle have observed that Russia is actively working to regain its former prestige as a great power, and hold that this explains why Russia has been expanding its maritime operations in the Mediterranean Sea and boosting the intensity of

¹⁸Anders Fogh Rasmussen, "De-escalation Starts on the Ground," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified April 13, 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_109102.htm.

¹⁹Anders Fogh Rasmussen, "The Future of NATO: A Strong Alliance in an Unpredictable World," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Chatham House, last modified June 19, 2014, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/event/future-nato-strong-alliance-unpredictable-world>.

²⁰North Atlantic Council, "Warsaw Summit Communiqué."

its military exercises in and around the Black Sea region.²¹ Russia has also announced a plan to increase the Black Sea Fleet by 80 new warships not later than 2020; these new warships will be capable of longer deployments to more distant regions of the globe, a fact which further supports this interpretation.²²

Similarly, some believe that Putin has sought to reclaim Russia's former glory as an act of political self-preservation. These scholars have suggested that Russia's recent aggressiveness in the Black Sea region is due to Putin's declining popularity. For instance, the Russian public's outrage about the suspected rigging of the 2011 elections, combined with the decline of the Russian economy, resulted in a less than 50 percent approval rating for Putin; however, after Crimea's annexation in March 2014, his approval rating was amplified to 80 percent.²³ The United Kingdom House of Commons Defense Committee suggested in July 2014 that a dive in Putin's popularity or internal turmoil in Russia could directly correlate to external aggression toward the West and NATO Allies.²⁴

Another recurrent theme in much of the literature is the argument that NATO-Russian relations reflect an example of the security dilemma because each side "considers the other's enhancement of defensive capabilities—and international defense commitments—threatening."²⁵ An example of this is Moscow's view of the annual multinational NATO *Sea Breeze* exercise held in the Black Sea since 1997 that is "aimed to enhance interoperability and cooperation in the Black Sea region."²⁶ Moscow is

²¹Delanoë, "After the Crimean Crisis," 370; Maria Raquel Freire, "Russian Reactions towards EU-Black Sea Integration," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 16, no. 3 (2014): 370, doi:10.1080/19448953.2014.928540.

²²Cross, "NATO-Russia Security Challenges," 164; Magnus Nordenman, "The Naval Alliance: Preparing NATO for a Maritime Century," Atlantic Council, Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security, last modified June 2015, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/NATOMaritime_finalPDF.pdf.

²³United Kingdom Parliament, *Towards the Next Defence and Security Review*, 19.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵Mikhail Troitskiy, "The Security Dilemma and 'Two-Level Games' in U.S.-Russia Relations," PONARS Eurasia, George Washington University, last modified September 2011, 1, http://www.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/ponars/pepm_176.pdf.

²⁶Cross, "NATO-Russia Security Challenges," 165.

suspicious of the exercise being held in what it considers its backyard and answered with a last-minute unannounced “snap” drill of its own during the same time period, also in the Black Sea. The drill consisted of “a scenario directed toward the destruction of enemy ships in the sea and organization of air defense of naval groups and coastal infrastructure.”²⁷ The commentators and officials concerned about the risk of a security dilemma scenario between NATO and Russia would say that this is but one of many such examples leading to heightened tensions between the Alliance and Moscow.

The issue of a security dilemma between NATO and Russia is most strongly manifest in the perceptions that each side has of the other. These perceptions may be difficult to break and remold, especially to the extent that each side increasingly perceives the actions of the other to be undoubtedly aggressive, while perceiving its own actions as defensive in nature and therefore justified. Scholarly work by Robert Jervis lucidly outlines the role that perceptions play in international relations, and his insights are relevant to relations between NATO and Russia today.²⁸ More recent scholarly and professional works have further built upon the concepts proposed by Jervis, and have directly applied his work to global political and military actions by NATO and Russia in order to analyze how each perceives the other and to clarify the underlying causes of these perceptions.²⁹

Any move that NATO takes to defend its member states and partners is perceived by Moscow as part of NATO’s attempt to encircle and ultimately contain Russia.³⁰ The Russians and their sympathizers hold that one need only look at a map of NATO bases in relation to Russia to see why Moscow perceives the Alliance as expansionist and oriented toward containing Russia. Moscow believes that upon the end of the Cold War NATO

²⁷Cross, “NATO-Russia Security Challenges,” 165.

²⁸Robert Jervis, “War and Misperception,” in *Conflict After the Cold War: Arguments on Causes of War and Peace*, ed. Richard K. Betts, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2013), 195.

²⁹Roland Dannreuther, “Russian Perceptions of the Atlantic Alliance,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1, <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/95-97/dannreut.pdf>; Robert Pszczel, “How NATO is Perceived in Russia (Or Lessons in Optimism),” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, accessed October 22, 2015, http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2011/nato_russia/lessons-optimism/EN/index.htm.

³⁰Gabriel Mallovs, “NATO’s Security Dilemma,” NATO Association of Canada, accessed September 18, 2015, <http://natocouncil.ca/natos-security-dilemma/>.

should have been disbanded or restructured to become essentially a political organization rather than remain a political-military one. Additionally, many Russians still believe that the United States and NATO broke a promise supposedly made in 1990 giving “binding assurances that NATO would not expand ‘one inch to the east’ of unified Germany.”³¹ Russia claims that the United States has also encouraged its NATO Allies to march up and knock on the front door of Russian borders. In 2009, Dmitry Medvedev, then the Russian President, was one of the Russian officials to make such a claim.³²

This thesis seeks to investigate and analyze U.S.–Russian and NATO–Russian interactions, prospects, and perceptions in the Black Sea, as well to elucidate EU policy toward the Black Sea region, to develop a holistic view of the situation that is unfolding. By gaining a holistic view of the situation, political and military leaders will be better equipped to develop meaningful policy toward Russia in the Black Sea region. There is little literature dealing directly with U.S., NATO, and Russian exercises in the Black Sea and assessing whether and to what extent they are increasing the security dilemma in ways that could lead to a flashpoint between NATO and Russian (and/or between U.S. and Russian) security interests. Interpreting these exercises, including the capabilities involved and their purposes, is vital to understanding each side’s perceptions and the actions each may be willing, or not willing, to take against the other. Placing the events since March 2014—when Russia annexed Crimea in the Black Sea—in the context of historical trends may contribute to a better understanding of current prospects for relations between Russia and the United States and between NATO and Russia.

C. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Two possible hypotheses stand out to explain U.S. and NATO prospects in the Black Sea and how regional security may be affected in relation to Russia. The first

³¹Hannes Adomeit, “Inside or Outside?: Russia’s Policies Towards NATO,” German Institute for International and Security Affairs, last modified January 1, 2007, 3, http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/arbeitspapiere/NATO_Oslo_ks.pdf.

³²Dmitry Medvedev, interview by Georg Mascolo, Christian Neef, and Matthias Schepp, *Der Spiegel*, November 9, 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/spiegel-interview-with-russian-president-dmitry-medvedev-oil-and-gas-is-our-drug-a-660114-3.html>.

hypothesis is that the increased U.S. and NATO presence may serve to maintain the *status quo* with Russia in the Black Sea region. The increased U.S. and NATO presence in the Black Sea would highlight the need to improve military communications and transparency while operating together in close proximity with limited maneuverability.³³ Each side would cooperate enough to ensure a careful balancing act without risky confrontations, and neither side would be allowed to gain the upper hand. Relations might not necessarily improve, but each side could have a better understanding of the other's intentions in the Black Sea region.

The other, and more likely, hypothesis is that the heightened U.S. and NATO presence in the Black Sea, in conjunction with increased Russian naval assets and activities in the region, may lead to further competition with Russia and an increased risk of confrontation. Russia has already announced its plan to increase the size and capabilities of the Black Sea Fleet, which will significantly change the current balance of sea power in the region.³⁴ Actions by each side to strengthen its own defenses could be misconstrued as offensive maneuvers aimed toward degrading the other's strategic position. By 2020, Russia will have the capability to deploy warships around the world for extended periods of time, while still maintaining enough ships at home to protect its borders. Russia's government may employ its increased power projection capability in attempts to rival that of the United States and NATO as a whole, causing more tension and confrontational actions that may result in military incidents at sea with larger consequences to follow.³⁵

³³Thomas Frear, Ian Kearns, and Lukasz Kulesa, "Dangerous Brinkmanship: Close Military Encounters between Russia and the West in 2014," European Leadership Network, last modified November 2014, 12, <http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/medialibrary/2014/11/09/6375e3da/Dangerous%20Brinkmanship.pdf>.

³⁴Cross, "NATO-Russia Security Challenges," 164.

³⁵Polina Sinovets and Bettina Renz, "Russia's 2014 Military Doctrine and Beyond: Threat Perceptions, Capabilities, and Ambitions," NATO Research Paper 117, NATO Defense College, July 2015, 3-4, <http://www.ndc.nato.int/research/research.php?icode=0>.

D. RESEARCH DESIGN

Research for this thesis takes a qualitative approach that is placed in a historical context. The thesis examines trends in NATO, U.S., and Russian naval activities in the Black Sea from 1991 to 2014 that are then compared to current naval activities in the region. The historical context will not only provide a comparative platform, but it will also provide a foundation to discern current prospects for the United States and NATO within the Black Sea region. U.S. and NATO perceptions will also be identified, as well as Russian perceptions of the West, to gain a better understanding of each side. This analysis can be applied in the context of future prospects with regard to security and partnerships in the region. By examining the Russian perspective, the thesis provides an informed assessment based largely on facts and supplementing mainstream Western media accounts with Russian sources in order to gain a better understanding of the views expressed on both sides.

Scholarly publications will be relied upon to provide facts and judgements that dominate in the world today, as well as well-argued and informed assessments of current prospects within the Black Sea region. Government and non-governmental organization publications and transcripts will be utilized to gain an understanding of what national leaders and prominent organizations profess to be true, since this is where policy will be made. To a lesser extent, mainstream media articles from leading foreign and domestic news agencies will also be drawn upon to understand the opinions and perceptions of the relevant governments on each side. When combined, these sources will provide a well-rounded picture of the opinions and perceptions that dominate today, and act as a useful point of departure for analysis of future prospects.

E. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis is organized into four principal chapters: the European Union's Black Sea policy, Russian perceptions of the West, increased NATO and Russian naval activity in the Black Sea, and Russia's Black Sea Fleet buildup. Chapter II explores the mechanisms of the EU's Black Sea policy, and how the EU Big Four—France, Germany,

Italy, and the United Kingdom—operate within the policy mechanisms. Chapter III examines Russian political and public perceptions of the West, as well as Moscow's perceptions of the U.S. and NATO military presence in the Black Sea, as expressed through the Russian media. Chapter IV investigates how U.S. and NATO naval presence has evolved in the Black Sea since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989–1991 to the present. This chapter also investigates how this evolution has affected NATO-Russian relations. Chapter V analyzes Russia's intentions with its Black Sea Fleet buildup and modernization, as well as the prospects and challenges NATO and Russia may encounter in relation to one another because of the Russian buildup. The final chapter offers conclusions and suggests areas that may merit further research.

II. THE EUROPEAN UNION’S BLACK SEA POLICY: BIG FOUR POSTURES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

“[Through] its foreign policy the EU intends to take peace and stability beyond its borders,” reports Carol Weaver of the University of Leicester, “[yet] many EU member states might seem to act more independently ... with regard to the Black Sea.”³⁶ The European Union’s (EU) Black Sea policy can be described as fragmented and lacking in an overall strategy covering the region. This lack of strategic cohesion—the absence of a shared political-military vision—is in large part due to the geostrategic position of the Black Sea region and individual state interests that often compete on divergent paths. In light of an ambiguous EU policy toward the Black Sea region, this chapter asks through what mechanisms the EU’s Black Sea policy is pursued, and how the EU Big Four—France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom—operate within the policy mechanisms. To answer these questions, the analysis of EU Black Sea policy in this thesis includes the geopolitical and strategic environment surrounding the Black Sea region as it pertains to EU interests. Although the EU has published Black Sea policies, these policies have been too fragmented and often too divergent in nature to make a lasting impact for the European Union as a whole.

This chapter is organized into two sections as follows: the first section discusses the historical background and instruments of EU Black Sea policy and the second section examines how the EU Big Four operate within the EU’s Black Sea policy. This chapter will conclude with a synthesis of the main arguments and findings. Government policy publications and scholarly articles are the principal sources drawn upon to discuss and analyze the theme of this chapter.

³⁶Carol Weaver, “Black Sea or Black Lake?: How US-Russian Tensions are Affecting EU Policy,” in *The Black Sea Region and EU Policy: The Challenge of Divergent Agendas*, ed. Karen Henderson and Carol Weaver (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 67.

A. EUROPEAN UNION BLACK SEA POLICY

The Black Sea region is a geographic area surrounding the Black Sea that includes six littoral countries—Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine—and four non-littoral countries—Armenia, Azerbaijan, Greece, and Moldova.³⁷ With the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU in 2007, the Black Sea has become the EU's easternmost border in the backdrop of a complex and heterogeneous region where Europe, Eurasia, and the Middle East intersect.³⁸ With this geopolitical frame in mind, EU Black Sea policy is better understood by first reflecting on the historical background leading to its current policy.

1. Historical Background

Until the end of the Cold War in 1989–1991 the Black Sea was primarily encircled by the USSR and Warsaw Pact countries.³⁹ When the Cold War ended, geopolitical transformations occurred throughout the region and new independent states were established. Europe became preoccupied with the Balkan wars that took place within the borders of the former Yugoslavia, and with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy then still in its infancy, little attention was given to the Black Sea region during the 1990s.⁴⁰ The EU's interest in the Black Sea region was first articulated in 2003 when the European Security Strategy (ESS) revealed “that the South Caucasus was a part of the region that required further attention.”⁴¹ This was the first official publication citing the region's importance. Shortly afterward, the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) bestowed further importance on the region, bringing further attention to

³⁷Galya Vladova, “A Region at a Crossroad: New Realities and Policies for the Black Sea Region,” in *Old Neighbours - New Policies in the Countries along the Danube and the Black Sea Region*, ed. Susan Milford and István Tarrósy (Budapest, Hungary: Pécs Publikon Books, 2014), 81.

³⁸European Union, European Commission, *Black Sea Synergy: Review of a Regional Cooperation Initiative*, European Union (Brussels, Belgium: Legislative Observatory, 2015), 12.

³⁹Weaver, “Black Sea or Black Lake?,” 65.

⁴⁰Vladova, “A Region at a Crossroad,” 82.

⁴¹Mitat Celikpala, *Security in the Black Sea Region: Policy Report II*, ed. Alfred Clayton and Barbara Serfozo (Guetersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2010), 11; European External Action Service, “A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy,” European Union, last modified December 12, 2003, 8, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>.

the area.⁴² The ESDP implemented the ESS's concept of preventive engagement, which encouraged stability and nation-building along the EU's eastern periphery as a comprehensive approach to provide for European security. In 2004, Romano Prodi, then the President of the European Commission, described the ESDP's mission—summarized by Jean-Yves Haine in a 2004 Institute for Security Studies report—as “the EU offering its neighbors ‘everything but institutions.’ The aim is to promote the emergence of a ‘ring of friends’ around Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, bound together by shared values, open markets and borders, and enhanced cooperation.”⁴³

EU interest in the Black Sea area reached its apex during the EU enlargement of 2007 with the accession of the Black Sea littoral states of Bulgaria and Romania.⁴⁴ The EU was now firmly invested in the region, but had little foreign policy directed specifically toward the Black Sea region itself. At the time, the only foreign policy toward the regions east of the EU was the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), initiated in 2004. After the 2007 enlargement, the European Parliament realized the necessity for a more explicit foreign policy in the Black Sea region, which resulted in the Black Sea Synergy (BSS) initiative in 2008. The BSS was followed shortly by the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative in 2009.⁴⁵ These three initiatives—ENP, BSS, and EaP—are the instruments guiding current EU foreign policy toward the Black Sea region.

2. Instruments of EU Policy

As noted above, the three instruments that make up the EU's foreign policy toward the Black Sea region are: the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), the Black Sea Synergy (BSS), and the Eastern Partnership (EaP). The ENP is primarily a bilateral policy that connects individual EU member states to each partner state. The BSS, on the

⁴²Celikpala, *Security in the Black Sea Region*, 11.

⁴³Jean-Yves Haine, “An Historical Perspective,” in *EU Security and Defence Policy: The First Five Years (1999-2004)*, ed. Nicole Gnesotto (Paris, France: EU Institute for Security Studies, 2004), 51.

⁴⁴Celikpala, *Security in the Black Sea Region*, 11.

⁴⁵Seven Erdogan, “Black Sea Extroversion at European and International Level,” International Center for Black Sea Studies, Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, last modified December 2015, 7, http://icbss.org/media/1327_original.pdf.

other hand, is a regional cooperation initiative that takes a holistic approach to the Black Sea as a region. Finally, the EaP is a multilateral and bilateral cooperation initiative that tackles issues of shared interests between the partner countries. These initiatives are meant to operate in a complementary fashion with one another in order to meet the expectations and interests of individual members within the EU.⁴⁶ Additionally, the EU has developed a negotiation package with Turkey and a strategic partnership with Russia to address their unique relationships.⁴⁷

a. *European Neighborhood Policy*

As noted previously, the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) was introduced in 2004. It comprises 16 countries neighboring the EU, six from the East—the Eastern Partnership—and ten from the South—the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. These two separate branches of the overall ENP were created in 2008–2009 due to diverging foreign policy interests among EU member states, and the adjustment provided a clear separation of policy between EU interests in the East and the South.⁴⁸ The six states from the East are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The purpose of the ENP is to “promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the EU and on the border of the Mediterranean with whom we [the EU member states] can enjoy close and cooperative relations.”⁴⁹ It was partly implemented at the time of the 2004 Big Bang enlargement of the European Union in that the EU could manage the enlarged security environment and newly inherited instabilities within a broader geopolitical setting.

Furthermore, this was the EU’s first attempt at developing relations with its neighbors without “providing a membership perspective.”⁵⁰ The ENP seeks to reshape

⁴⁶European External Action Service, “European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP),” European Union, accessed March 11, 2016, http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/about-us/index_en.htm.

⁴⁷Celikpala, *Security in the Black Sea Region*, 11.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*; Marek Cichocki, “European Neighbourhood Policy or Neighbourhood Policies?,” in *The Black Sea Region and EU Policy: The Challenge of Divergent Agendas*, ed. Karen Henderson and Carol Weaver (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 11.

⁴⁹Erdogan, “Black Sea Extroversion,” 7.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 8.

ties with the EU's Eastern Partners through bilateral relationships with each country individually by spreading EU norms and values, as well as sharing "European knowledge, [and] principles, and [acting] to enhance stability, security and welfare."⁵¹ These bilateral partnerships are often conducted through action plans that rate a partner country's success based upon adherence to the issues recognized within the plan. This is based on a "'more for more' principle ... [whereby] a partner country should do more reforms to get more incentives from the EU."⁵² Finally, the ENP is financed by the European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI), which has allocated 15.4 billion euros to the ENP for the 2014–2020 period.⁵³

b. Black Sea Synergy

The Black Sea Synergy (BSS) was introduced in 2008 within the wake of the 2007 EU accession of Bulgaria and Romania, providing more specific policy for the area surrounding the Black Sea. The BSS covers the six ENP countries—Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine—in addition to Russia and Turkey. The purpose of the BSS is to take a holistic regional approach to EU foreign policy in the region, as opposed to the bilateral approach taken within the ENP.⁵⁴ Moreover, Seven Erdogan, from the International Center of Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), emphasizes in a ICBSS policy brief that the BSS's "primary task is defined as the development of cooperation among the countries in the Black Sea region and also between the region and the EU."⁵⁵

Three primary sectors of foreign policy are identified in the BSS, whereby an individual country within the EU has been given responsibility for each sector. These sectors with responsible EU countries include: Bulgaria for energy, Greece for transport,

⁵¹Erdogan, "Black Sea Extroversion," 8–9.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 9.

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

and Romania for the environment.⁵⁶ The BSS has been described as operating “like an intergovernmental cooperation initiative,” encouraging collaboration among partner states within the region with EU oversight.⁵⁷ To date, its most efficacious achievement has been the EU Cross-Border Cooperation Program for the Black Sea Basin. This program sponsors three cross-border projects in the region: economic and social development, environmental protection and conservation, and cultural and educational initiatives. Furthermore, it received a budget of 28.1 million euros from the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) in the 2007–2013 period and was approved for 49 million euros in further funding from the ENI during the 2014–2020 period. (In December 2013 the ENI replaced the ENPI.)⁵⁸

c. Eastern Partnership

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) was launched in 2009 as a product of the 2008 Russo-Georgian war. It is the Eastern component of the ENP, and includes the same former Soviet republics that are partner states in the ENP—Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.⁵⁹ It consists of both bilateral cooperation initiatives and multilateral initiatives. Bilaterally, the EaP “promotes building closer political ties ... as well as achieving deeper economic integration and gradual liberalization.”⁶⁰ Multilaterally, the EaP encourages cooperation between the six partner countries within its four priority areas: sustainable economic development, energy security, people-to-people contacts, and democracy, good governance, and stability.

⁵⁶Erdogan, “Black Sea Extroversion,” 10.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸Fernando Garces de Los Fayos, “The EU’s Black Sea Policy: Where do we Stand?,” European Parliament, European Union, last modified September 2013, 7, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/briefing_note/join/2013/491519/EXPO-AFET_SP\(2013\)491519_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/briefing_note/join/2013/491519/EXPO-AFET_SP(2013)491519_EN.pdf); Gerhard Schumann-Hitzler, “The Black Sea Synergy: Support from EU Policies and Programmes,” Balkan and Black Sea Regional Commission, European Commission, last modified May 29, 2015, http://www.balkansblacksea.org/pub/docs/393_dg_near_gerhard_schumann-hitzler_black_sea_synergy.pdf.

⁵⁹European External Action Service, “EU Relations with Eastern Partnership,” European Union, accessed March 11, 2016, http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/about/index_en.htm.

⁶⁰Cichocki, “European Neighbourhood Policy or Neighbourhood Policies?,” 17.

Bilateral relations serve as the EU's primary method, with support from multilateral relations.⁶¹

Through the EaP, the EU has been able to broker Association Agreements/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (AA/DCFTAs) with Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine that have fortified economic integration and political association. Moreover, the EaP has taken the initiative to include societal outreach programs that operate alongside political partnerships for a broader involvement of civil society in certain projects.⁶² Financially, the EaP plans to provide partner countries with 3.2 billion euros in ENI-funded programs during the 2014–2020 period.⁶³

3. Analysis of EU Black Sea Policy

EU Black Sea policy as implemented through its three instruments—ENP, BSS, and EaP—often lacks an overall strategy. As Galya Vladova of the University of Hamburg has rightly observed, “The multitude of EU policies and initiatives creates the impression of a lack of coherence, overlapping of agendas and a fragmented approach towards the area. In this regard it could be argued that the EU still lacks a coherent perspective and a holistic vision towards the Black Sea.”⁶⁴

Many argue that the BSS should have been a Black Sea Strategy and not a Synergy, and that this is why an overall strategy for the region is lacking and individual EU member states accomplish more on a bilateral or multilateral basis rather than on a regional one.⁶⁵ Additionally, many experts are calling for an EU White Paper on Security and Defense that would develop a single cohesive strategy among all EU member states to meet the need for a combined foreign policy agenda and strategy.⁶⁶ Now, with an

⁶¹Cichocki, “European Neighbourhood Policy or Neighbourhood Policies?,” 17.

⁶²Garces de Los Fayos, *The EU's Black Sea Policy*, 7.

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴Vladova, “A Region at a Crossroad,” 88.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶Borja Lasheras, Christoph Pohlmann, Christos Katsioulis, and Fabio Liberti, “European Union Security and Defence White Paper: A Proposal,” Friedrich Ebert Foundation, last modified January 2010, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/ipa/07075.pdf>.

understanding of the three instruments of EU policy toward the Black Sea, this chapter turns to the national policies of the four largest economies of the EU—France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

B. EUROPEAN UNION BIG FOUR POLICY

Since the European Union has 28 member states throughout Europe, it is a highly complex politico-economic organization. The organization as a whole must deal with a broad range of political, social, economic, and security issues involving member states that often operate on divergent agendas. While every member state contributes in its own way to the prosperity and security of the EU, the strongest EU member states exert greater influence in shaping and executing the EU's foreign policy agendas.⁶⁷ For instance, the EU Big Four—France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom—collectively provided for over 60 percent of the total EU budget in 2016.⁶⁸ This section focuses on the contributions that the EU Big Four provide toward EU Black Sea policy.

1. France in Black Sea Policy

France is the second leading contributor to the EU budget. It has provided 20.227 billion euros to the 2016 EU budget, which is 16.35 percent of the total budget.⁶⁹ Regardless of its financial contributions to the EU, however, France maintains minimal engagement in Black Sea policy. France instead focuses its attention on the Southern corridor through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EUROMED), which it helped launch in 2008 in order to separate its Southern foreign policy interests from the Eastern

⁶⁷Vladova, "A Region at a Crossroad," 89; Syuzanna Vasilyan, "A Cacophony: The EU's Security Policy towards the South Caucasus," in *The Black Sea Region and EU Policy: The Challenge of Divergent Agendas*, ed. Karen Henderson and Carol Weaver (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 97.

⁶⁸European Union, "Introduction and Financing of the General Budget," Official Journal of the European Union, last modified February, 24, 2016, 9, <http://eurlex.europa.eu/budget/data/General/2016/en/GenRev.pdf>.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

neighborhood where it has fewer interests.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the 2013 French White Paper for Defense and National Security makes no mention of the Black Sea region. The Caucasus is mentioned twice in the paper, but only within a broad list of other foreign security regions that the French consider areas of concern for the near future. The paper does, however, reaffirm France's commitment to the EU and NATO, and specifically cites continued bilateral agreements with Germany and the United Kingdom.⁷¹

Additionally, France has sought to maintain strong ties with Russia in the Black Sea region, including bilateral energy deals. This priority places any Eastern Partnership policy that France may have on the backburner to a greater focus on positive Russian relations.⁷² This lack of interest in the East also was apparent in France's rejection of language in the Eastern Partnership document that would suggest a membership perspective, which further indicates France's anti-enlargement stance along the EU's Eastern border of the Black Sea.⁷³ Due to France's continued commitment to NATO, the Black Sea will occasionally host French warships acting under the NATO banner, including a yearly visit from the French surveillance ship *Dupuy de Lôme* (A759) since Crimea's annexation in 2014.⁷⁴

⁷⁰European External Action Service, "Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EUROMED)," European Union, accessed March 13, 2016, http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/index_en.htm; Cichocki, "European Neighbourhood Policy or Neighbourhood Policies?," 11.

⁷¹French Republic, Ministry of Defence, *French White Paper: Defence and National Security*, French Republic (Paris, France: Ministry of Defence, 2013), 60–64.

⁷²Kataryna Wolczuk, "Convergence Without Finalite: EU Strategy Towards Post-Soviet States in the Wider Black Sea Region," in *The Black Sea Region and EU Policy: The Challenge of Divergent Agendas*, ed. Karen Henderson and Carol Weaver (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 48; Weaver, "Black Sea or Black Lake?," 67.

⁷³Weaver, "Black Sea or Black Lake?," 68.

⁷⁴Sam LaGrone, "Destroyer USS Laboon, French Surveillance Ship Enter Black Sea," *USNI News*, June 22, 2015, <http://news.usni.org/2015/06/22/destroyer-uss-laboon-french-surveillance-ship-enter-black-sea>.

2. Germany in Black Sea Policy

Germany is the leading contributor to the EU budget. It has provided 26.431 billion euros to the 2016 EU budget, which is 21.37 percent of the total budget.⁷⁵ Of the Big Four countries, Germany is the most dedicated to EU foreign policy in the Black Sea region, due in large part to EU reliance on energy supplies coming from the region.⁷⁶ Realizing the need for an EU regional policy toward the Black Sea, Germany introduced the Black Sea Synergy under its 2007 EU presidency.⁷⁷ Also, Germany is involved in more regional partnerships than any other EU country in the Black Sea area, other than those physically located within the region—Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania.⁷⁸ As strong supporters of NATO, German warships often enter the Black Sea under the NATO banner to conduct multilateral exercises and provide reassurance to its Black Sea Allies.⁷⁹

The 2006 White Paper on German Security Policy discusses Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus regional stability and integration seven times throughout the document. Many of the references repeat what was already said in the beginning of the document, but it is clear that Germany has continued to place a high priority on the Black Sea region with foremost concerns regarding energy, economy, stability, and bilateral relations with Russia for security in the region.⁸⁰ The recently released 2016 White Paper on German Security Policy, however, makes no reference to the Southern Caucasus and makes only one reference to the Eastern partners by stating that “The German

⁷⁵European Union, “Introduction and Financing of the General Budget,” 9.

⁷⁶Slawomir Raszewski, “The EU’s External Policy of Energy Diversification in the Wider Black (and Caspian) Sea Region: Regional Security Complex or Security Community?,” in *The Black Sea Region and EU Policy: The Challenge of Divergent Agendas*, ed. Karen Henderson and Carol Weaver (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 136–37.

⁷⁷Cichocki, “European Neighbourhood Policy or Neighbourhood Policies?,” 19.

⁷⁸Mustafa Aydin and Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, *A 2020 Vision for the Black Sea Region: A Report by the Commission on the Black Sea*, ed. Tim Judah (Guetersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2010), 45–48.

⁷⁹Christopher Harress, “Amid Russian Hostility in the Black Sea, U.S. Navy to Sustain Military Presence in Region,” *International Business Times*, September 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/amid-russian-hostility-black-sea-us-navy-sustain-military-presence-region-2081301>.

⁸⁰Federal Republic of Germany, Federal Ministry of Defence, *White Paper 2006: On German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr*, Federal Republic of Germany (Berlin, Germany: Ministry of Defence, 2006), 6, 21, 47.

Government will and is determined to ... develop proposals to support our Eastern partners in building capabilities and increasing interoperability.”⁸¹

The 2016 White Paper nonetheless includes an in-depth discussion of the threat posed by Russia along the EU’s and NATO’s eastern borders with its increase in military capabilities and exercises throughout the region.⁸² Like Germany’s 2011 Defense Policy Guidelines document, the 2016 White Paper makes no mention of the Black Sea region or associated policies.⁸³ The 2011 Defense Policy Guidelines and the 2016 White Paper indicate that Germany’s foreign policy focus is shifting away from Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus in order to focus on other security issues that have arisen throughout Europe. As the 2016 White Paper implies, Germany’s foreign policy focus in relation to Eastern Europe now lies primarily with Russia and its military actions in the area.⁸⁴

3. Italy in Black Sea Policy

Italy is the fourth leading contributor to the EU budget. It has provided 14.338 billion euros to the 2016 EU budget, which is 11.59 percent of the total budget.⁸⁵ Due primarily to Italy’s geostrategic location in the Mediterranean Sea, its primary foreign policy focus is on the southern EU border with an emphasis on Northern Africa and the current migrant crisis.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Italy remains engaged in Black Sea policy through EU and NATO mechanisms. As with Germany, Italy is heavily reliant on energy supplies from the region and seeks to maintain positive relations with Russia.⁸⁷ Italy also provides

⁸¹Federal Republic of Germany. German Ministry of Defence. *White Paper 2016: On German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr*, Federal Republic of Germany (Berlin, Germany: The Federal Government, 2016), 69.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 32.

⁸³Federal Republic of Germany, German Ministry of Defence, *Defence Policy Guidelines*, Federal Republic of Germany (Berlin, Germany: Ministry of Defence, 2011), 1.

⁸⁴Federal Republic of Germany, *White Paper 2016*, 31–32, 38.

⁸⁵European Union, “Introduction and Financing of the General Budget,” 9.

⁸⁶Erdogan, “Black Sea Extroversion at European and International Level,” 9.

⁸⁷Wolczuk, “Convergence without Finalite,” 48; Raszewski, “The EU’s External Policy of Energy Diversification,” 136–37.

its warships to operate under the NATO banner in the Black Sea in support of multilateral exercises and to provide reassurance to its Black Sea Allies.⁸⁸

The 2015 Italian White Paper for International Security and Defense cites the stability of the Black Sea region as a vital national interest due to its energy dependence on the region. Furthermore, it cites “the need to reassure Allies in Eastern Europe by demonstrating the ability to act jointly and quickly” in their defense.⁸⁹ The White Paper makes it clear that the Black Sea region remains a priority that Italy will address through EU and NATO instruments.

4. United Kingdom in Black Sea Policy

The United Kingdom (UK) is the third leading contributor to the EU budget. It has provided 16.471 billion euros to the 2016 EU budget, which is 13.32 percent of the total budget.⁹⁰ The UK is on par with the German commitment to the Black Sea region. As a strong supporter of NATO and a significant contributor to the EU, the UK clearly supports Eastern partnerships; however, it takes a tougher stance on Russian relations than the other Big Four members. The UK sees standing up to Russia in the Black Sea region as carrying significance for standing up to Russia in other security domains.⁹¹ If the UK deploys military units in the Black Sea, directly in what Russia regards as its sphere of influence, many in Parliament believe that this action serves as a counterbalance and deterrent for Russian military aircraft that have been flying very close to UK airspace in recent years.⁹² The UK was also the first of the Big Four to place a higher significance on the region by supporting the New Neighborhood Initiative toward

⁸⁸Harress, “Amid Russian Hostility in the Black Sea.”

⁸⁹Italian Republic, Ministry of Defence, *White Paper: For International Security and Defence, Italian Republic* (Rome, Italy: IAI, 2015), 20.

⁹⁰European Union, “Introduction and Financing of the General Budget,” 9.

⁹¹Dennis Sammut, “The European Union’s Increased Engagement with the South Caucasus,” in *The Black Sea Region and EU Policy: The Challenge of Divergent Agendas*, ed. Karen Henderson and Carol Weaver (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 79–80.

⁹²*Ibid.*

the EU's Eastern border in 2002.⁹³ The United Kingdom additionally provides its warships operating under the NATO banner in the Black Sea to support multilateral NATO exercises and provide reassurance to its Black Sea Allies, to include joint exercises with German and Italian naval assets.⁹⁴

The UK's 2015 National Security Strategy reserves a section for discussion of the Eastern Neighborhood. In it the UK cites that it "will continue to work with NATO and the EU, as well as bilaterally, to build greater resilience in the region, including through our [its] programme to support governance and economic reforms," which is a direct reference to the three EU policy instruments toward the Black Sea region—the ENP, the BSS, and the EaP.⁹⁵ The document further states that the UK "will double the existing Good Governance Fund to support economic and governance reforms in the Eastern European neighbourhood to £40 million per year," which further highlights the UK's support of a vigorous foreign policy in the Black Sea region.⁹⁶

C. CONCLUSION

The EU's Black Sea policy lacks an overall strategy and instead operates within multiple channels through primarily bilateral and multilateral agendas. The Big Four, as the leading contributors to the EU's budget, drive the EU's Black Sea policy. Whereas Germany and the UK strongly support partnerships in the Black Sea region, France and Italy primarily focus on the EU's Southern border, highlighting conflicting policy agendas among the EU Big Four. In the years to come it is expected that France will continue to primarily focus on the Southern border with minimal participation in the East. Due to the current migrant crisis, Italy's focus will undoubtedly shift even further to the South, and Germany will be forced to allocate more resources to this effort as well, as the 2016 German White Paper makes clear. The Black Sea region, however, will not be

⁹³Cichocki, "European Neighbourhood Policy or Neighbourhood Policies?," 10.

⁹⁴Harress, "Amid Russian Hostility in the Black Sea."

⁹⁵United Kingdom Parliament, *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom*, United Kingdom Parliament (London, England: National Archives, 2015), 54.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 65.

forgotten by EU foreign policy as long as Russia remains a regional actor and the EU continues to rely on energy sources from the area.

III. RUSSIAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE WEST AS EXPRESSED THROUGH THE MEDIA

“In order to make an appropriate assessment of media freedom in today’s Russia,” assert Maria Lipman and Michael McFaul, “one should view it in the context of the country’s political system and the mind-set of the Russian people.”⁹⁷ American and Russian perceptions of one another have recently reached a new low in the post-Soviet era, and this is especially evident in their interactions in the Black Sea. The American perspective sees increased Russian military aggression and media manipulation against the West, whereas Russia perceives the United States and NATO as encroaching on its sphere of influence and undermining its sovereignty. Both sides claim the other is the aggressor. In light of this clash of sociopolitical perceptions, this chapter examines Russian political and public perceptions of the West, as well as perceptions of the U.S. and NATO military presence in the Black Sea, as expressed through the Russian media. Moreover, this chapter investigates the relationship between Russia’s media and its public, as well as Russian agenda setting and media framing by some of its most prominent media agencies from 2014 to 2016. It is evident that Russia’s media is sharply controlled by the Russian Federation’s political elites; they use the media as a platform to portray the United States and its NATO Allies as corrupt aggressors who pose a direct threat to Russia’s national security.

This chapter is organized into two sections as follows: the first section explores Russian media and politics to gain further insight into their relationship as it concerns the public, and the second section examines Russian perceptions of the West and of the U.S. and NATO presence in the Black Sea. This chapter concludes with a synthesis of the findings and how they relate to continuing relations between Russia and the United States and its NATO Allies.

⁹⁷Maria Lipman and Michael McFaul, “The Media and Political Developments,” in *After Putin’s Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*, ed. Stephen W. Wegren and Dale R. Herspring, 4th ed. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010), 109.

A. RUSSIAN MEDIA AND POLITICS

Russia's many media outlets and its political landscape are tightly interconnected. Increasing globalization with nearly unfettered access to world news and social platforms has caused this relationship to intensify in recent years as Internet usage continues to increase around the globe.⁹⁸ Russian media has now become a principal tool for furthering political agendas domestically, as well as internationally. This relationship is leading to the further tightening of state control over the media in order to influence public thinking.⁹⁹ With this sociopolitical landscape in mind, the link between Russian media and politics is better understood by first reflecting on how the state gained control of the media after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

1. Political Control of the Media

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia experienced a time of relatively unimpeded freedom of the press that lasted throughout most of the 1990s. This was in large part due to Boris Yeltsin's progressive stance on laws regarding mass media while serving as President of the Russian Federation in 1991–1999. At the time, even the largest and most watched state-owned media networks, such as ORT (Russian Public Television), were controlled by private Russian citizens rather than federal state officials.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, regional television stations were controlled by the local governors, who were free (when locally elected) to promote their regional agendas without federal state interference. As the 1990s came to a close, however, freedom of the media began to shift as the Russian state began reconsolidating the media outlets that had been claimed by the oligarchs after the fall of the Soviet Union.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸Mark Kramer, "The Clampdown on Internet Activities in Russia and the Implications for Western Policy," PONARS Eurasia, last modified September 2014, 1, <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/clampdown-Internet-activities-russia-and-implications-western-policy>.

⁹⁹Lipman and McFaul, "The Media and Political Developments," 116.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 111–12.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 113.

In its effort to reconsolidate the media, the Russian state first created a government agency that was in charge of all media within the state. This agency effectively consolidated all state broadcasters, including the regional television stations previously controlled by local governors, as subsidiaries under the VGTRK (All-Russian State Radio and Television Company).¹⁰² Under the VGTRK, all “state-owned television was strengthened organizationally and financially, so the Kremlin could draw on this resource in the election cycle of 1999–2000,” state Lipman and McFaul on the initial marriage of politics and the media in Russia during the late 1990s.¹⁰³

With significant help from the state-controlled media, Vladimir Putin—with Boris Yeltsin as his benefactor—was able to win the 2000 Russian presidential election. Once Putin was President, he immediately made drastic changes to the laws regarding mass media in order to further strengthen his political power. By 2004, “the Kremlin had full control over political coverage of all major national television networks,” and furthermore, “Federal television, whose outreach far surpasses all other Russian media, was turned into a political tool for the government.”¹⁰⁴ As the years have passed, the Kremlin’s grip over the media has tightened even further, and today state-controlled media constitute an effective instrument in shaping public opinion to match the ambitions of the Kremlin.¹⁰⁵

Political scientists Matthew A. Baum and Philip B. K. Potter argue that “political elites clearly influence news media content,”¹⁰⁶ thereby setting the agenda on what is reported to the public.¹⁰⁷ This is noticeably happening in Russia today, though rather than simply influencing the media content, the Russian political elites act to control every aspect of it. Baum and Potter further “argue that the media influence nearly every aspect

¹⁰²Lipman and McFaul, “The Media and Political Developments,” 114.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 116.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 119.

¹⁰⁶Matthew A. Baum and Philip B. K. Potter, “The Relationships between Mass Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 11, no. 1 (2008): 40, doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.060406.214132.

¹⁰⁷Susan L. Carruthers, *The Media at War*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 146–47.

of the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy,” which would ideally follow a process whereby the media influences the public and the public, in turn, influences foreign policy, as is often witnessed in the United States.¹⁰⁸ In Russia, however, the process follows a path beginning with the foreign policy of the elites directly controlling the media in order to influence the public. Lipman and McFaul further clarify this relationship within Russia in the following excerpt:

With the public alienated from politics and policy making, and the channels of feedback between state and society clogged, state-control television serves as a “one-way communication tube” used by the government to communicate to the nation the appropriate picture of Russian life and to shape the public perception of the political reality and, in part, public affairs. ... In this framework, the primary functions of television include positive coverage of the top leadership and of the government decisions and policies. Television coverage does not portray Russia as a country with no problems, yet the focus is not on the problems per se, but on the top leader who stays firmly in charge and effectively handles any problem that comes along.¹⁰⁹

This example underlines the role that state-sponsored propaganda plays in Russia, both domestically and internationally, which merits further investigation.

2. Russian Propaganda

State-controlled propaganda within Russia is twofold. On one hand, it operates internal to Russia in order to “manipulate and ‘educate’ public opinion,” while also acting on an international scale to influence others throughout the world, especially the Russian-speaking minorities located across the globe.¹¹⁰ Domestically, Russian propaganda targets “those who constitute the electoral base of Putin’s political regime: the broad masses, the less advanced, the less wealthy, the less educated, the less urbanized, and the

¹⁰⁸Baum and Potter, “The Relationships between Mass Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy,” 40–41.

¹⁰⁹Lipman and McFaul, “The Media and Political Developments,” 120–21.

¹¹⁰Stefan Meister, “Isolation and Propaganda: The Roots and Instruments of Russia’s Disinformation Campaign,” Transatlantic Academy, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, last modified April 15, 2016, 6, <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/isolation-and-propaganda-roots-and-instruments-russia%E2%80%99s-disinformation-campaign>.

older rather than the younger.”¹¹¹ Television broadcasters are the primary source of information for more than 90 percent of the Russian people, and the principal instrument exercised by the state to influence its public through the creation of a “pseudo-reality ... [and a] deliberate factual misrepresentation” of events.¹¹²

Reporting on Putin dominates the Russian media, in which he is presented to the public as an unwavering and unrivaled leader. Domestic and international affairs involving Putin are always framed as crises, confrontations, and mishaps within the turmoil of a world on the brink of collapse, with Putin standing strong through it all to provide the only platform of stability available.¹¹³ It is this type of media framing that dominates and that influences the Russian public to believe that their leader is in complete control while ushering Russia into a stable and fruitful future in a world of chaos. Russian propaganda is not reserved solely for domestic purposes, however, but is also applied at the international level.¹¹⁴

There has been an increase in Russian foreign media in recent years. Initially, these media outlets—such as RT (Russia Today) and Sputnik—sought to provide the Russian point of view as an alternative to the Western—especially American—perspective that dominates the international media. More recently, however, Russian foreign media has focused “on popularizing conspiracy theories and defaming the West, in order to create the impression that everyone is lying and that there are no unequivocal facts or truths.”¹¹⁵ This kind of reporting is intended to make the Western people question the accuracy of Western media reporting, as well as to make the people question their governments more often by filling “our discourses with propaganda and

¹¹¹Lipman and McFaul, “The Media and Political Developments,” 119.

¹¹²Meister, “Isolation and Propaganda,” 6.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 6–7.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 8.

conspiracy.”¹¹⁶ The Russian news agency RT serves as an example; it has adopted the slogan “question more,” which is clearly visible throughout its website.¹¹⁷

The Kremlin’s political technocrats and public relations consultants have learned to play on Western weaknesses. For instance, the current refugee migration from the Middle East and Northern Africa to Western countries is often framed as a crisis that the United States and the European Union (EU) cannot control, which further highlights their inability to protect their borders and the citizens within. Russian media portray the migrants as “terrorists and rapists” in an attempt to attack and destabilize EU policies, such as Germany’s open door policy, by causing discord among the public.¹¹⁸ A noteworthy recent example of this was when Russia’s state-controlled TV Channel One reported that a 13-year-old Russian-German girl named Lisa was a victim of gang rape by refugees during the 2015–2016 New Year’s Eve celebration in the German city of Cologne. The report was then openly supported by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. After an investigation into the alleged incident, the story was discovered to be false, yet the hatred and resentment of Germany’s open door policy to the refugees still remains in the hearts and minds of many.¹¹⁹ This is but one example of the effect that propaganda can have on a population, and it directly leads to how liberal democratic societies perceive and evaluate news produced by Russia’s state-controlled media.

3. Freedom of the Press Assessment

In April 2016, the yearly Freedom of the Press report from Freedom House was published. This report highlights the latitude in freedom of the media and free expression within each country. Freedom House ranked Russia as 176 out of 202 countries assessed, and it assigned Russia a press freedom status score of 83 out of a possible 100, with 100 being the worst score. This score has identified Russia as being “not free” in regard to the freedom of the press in the country. The score of 83 was acquired by adding the total

¹¹⁶Meister, “Isolation and Propaganda,” 8.

¹¹⁷RT, accessed May 30, 2016, <https://www.rt.com/>.

¹¹⁸Meister, “Isolation and Propaganda,” 9.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

score of three individual assessments—the legal, the political, and the economic environments.¹²⁰

Russia’s legal environment received a score of 25 out of a possible 30, with 30 being the worst score. The factors that led to a score of 25 included the country’s use of its court system to prosecute “journalists and bloggers who expose abuses by authorities,” a practice which encourages self-censorship among these communities.¹²¹ Additionally, more than 20,000 websites are currently being blocked by the state, and “any website, blog, or public social-media account with more than 3,000 daily viewers” must register with the state telecommunications regulator, *Roskomnadzor*, “as a media outlet and comply with the regulations accompanying that status, including bans on anonymous authorship and legal responsibility for comments posted by users.”¹²² More individuals are now being charged for minor offenses under laws designed to limit free speech. Moreover, any non-governmental organization that receives foreign funding must be registered as a foreign agent for engaging in political activity, which is broadly defined and includes advocating media and journalistic freedom.¹²³ As of March 2016, Russia had identified 122 groups as foreign agents, which resulted in the shutdown of 14 of them.¹²⁴

Russia’s political environment received a score of 34 out of a possible 40 points, with 40 being the worst score. The Freedom House report cites that “The main national news agenda is firmly controlled by the Kremlin,” and that “The government sets editorial policy at state-owned television stations, which dominate the media landscape and generate propagandistic content.”¹²⁵ In Russia’s more than 400 daily newspapers, rarely can one find an article on corruption or foreign policy. Moreover, government

¹²⁰“Freedom of the Press 2016: Russia,” Freedom House, accessed May 27, 2016, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2016/russia>.

¹²¹*Ibid.*

¹²²*Ibid.*

¹²³*Ibid.*

¹²⁴Meister, “Isolation and Propaganda,” 6.

¹²⁵“Freedom of the Press 2016: Russia.”

propaganda campaigns undermine the Russian Internet as a reliable source of news, and independent reporting is punished by dismissal, physical intimidation, or official obstruction. For example, 56 murders of journalists in connection to their work have been reported since 1992, and “70 reports of attacks on journalists and bloggers” were recorded in 2015 alone.¹²⁶

Finally, Russia’s economic environment received a score of 24 out of a possible 30 points, with 30 being the worst score. A selection from the report provides the essential findings:

The Russian state controls, either directly or through proxies, all five of the major national television networks, as well as national radio networks, important national newspapers, and national news agencies. The state also controls more than 60 percent of the country’s estimated 45,000 regional and local newspapers and other periodicals. State-run television is the main news source for most Russians and serves as the key propaganda tool of the government. The government owns an array of media assets directed at foreign audiences, including RT, an international, multilingual satellite news network that promotes the Kremlin’s take on global events.¹²⁷

The Freedom of the Press report is a distinct representation of how the media operate within the political sphere of influence in Russia, and sets the framework for a discussion of Russian perceptions of the West.

B. RUSSIAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE WEST

Russia’s distinct political distrust of the West—especially the United States and NATO—stems primarily from the perception of “Western-inspired color revolutions” in Georgia and Ukraine in 2003 and 2004, respectively, and the 2011 Russian political protests.¹²⁸ Additionally, since Russia’s annexation of Crimea in March 2014, the United States and NATO have increased the quantity and scope of their military exercises in and around the Black Sea. Russia perceives such exercises as a direct military threat by the

¹²⁶“Freedom of the Press 2016: Russia.”

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Kramer, “The Clampdown on Internet Activities in Russia,” 2.

West against Russian sovereignty within what it considers to be its “vital sphere of influence,” which includes the Black Sea and former Soviet states in the region.¹²⁹ Russia believes that the former Soviet states all share a common cultural heritage that the West is attempting to influence, while the Black Sea has been regarded by the Russians as a Russian lake since the late eighteenth century.¹³⁰ Russia further believes that states such as Ukraine are vital to maintain as a buffer zone between itself and the West. Moscow perceives NATO enlargement as motivated by the purpose of tearing down such buffer zones, thereby allowing U.S. and other NATO forces to be based on its border and threaten Russian security.¹³¹

This perception of negative Western intentions has been transmitted to the Russian public through state-owned media. For example, a Gallup poll conducted in July 2014 revealed that Russians largely rely on and trust state-owned media, but they do not trust Russian non-state or Western media. In the poll, 76 percent of the public believed Russian state-owned media is reliable, whereas only 30 percent believed Russian non-state media is reliable, and a mere five percent believed Western media is reliable.¹³² These results indicate that the Russian state’s media propaganda plays a role in forming Russian public opinion about foreign affairs and fosters pride in a shared cultural heritage within the region.

The Russian news agency TASS, which is Russia’s largest state-owned information agency, regularly criticizes NATO’s military presence and practices in the Black Sea. For instance, any NATO ship that enters the Black Sea triggers reporting from TASS that tracks each ship’s location, declared intentions, actions, and time in the Black

¹²⁹Polina Sinovets and Bettina Renz, “Russia’s 2014 Military Doctrine and Beyond: Threat Perceptions, Capabilities and Ambitions,” Research Division, NATO Defense College, last modified July 10, 2015, 2–3, <http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=830>.

¹³⁰“Russian NATO Envoy Says Black Sea Will Never be ‘NATO’s Lake,’” TASS, May 30, 2016, <http://tass.ru/en/politics/879042>.

¹³¹Sinovets and Renz, “Russia’s 2014 Military Doctrine and Beyond,” 4.

¹³²Julie Ray and Neli Esipova, “Russians Rely on State Media for News of Ukraine, Crimea,” Gallup Country Data Set, Gallup, last modified July 25, 2014, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/174086/russians-rely-state-media-news-ukraine-crimea.aspx>.

Sea, as well as whether it may violate the Montreux Convention of 1936.¹³³ In April 2016, TASS reported that NATO plans to create a “Black Sea flotilla” that “seriously undermines security and stability ... forcing Russia to take adequate countermeasures to ensure its own security.”¹³⁴ This statement suggests to the Russian public that NATO will intentionally violate the Montreux Convention through aggressive military actions, while simultaneously legitimizing hostile Russian military action against NATO forces in the region. By framing the Western military presence in the Black Sea region as hostile to Russia’s national security, the media effectively shape negative public perceptions of the U.S. and NATO military presence within the region, while reinforcing a shared Russian identity that is declared morally superior to that of the West.¹³⁵

Russian political officials have used the state-run media to further Russia’s political agendas, most notably since Russia’s annexation of Crimea in March 2014. For example, in October 2014, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*—a state-owned Russian newspaper that publishes official government statements, interviews, and documents for release to the Russian public—published an interview with Nikolay Patrushev, the Secretary of the Russian Security Council.¹³⁶ The interview format makes clear that the questions asked were scripted so Patrushev could address certain Russian economic, political, and security issues.

In addressing these issues, Patrushev continually places blame on NATO, and specifically on the United States, for not only devising successful strategies against the Soviet Union that led to its collapse in 1991, but also for pursuing similar strategies in recent years for a comparable effect in Russia.¹³⁷ Interviews such as the one with

¹³³“Two NATO Warships Enter Black Sea – Source,” TASS, September 7, 2014, <http://tass.ru/en/world/748488>.

¹³⁴“Moscow Says Plans to Create NATO’s ‘Black Sea Flotilla’ Undermine Regional Security,” TASS, April 27, 2016, <http://tass.ru/en/politics/872870>.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Nikolay Patrushev, interview by Ivan Yegorov, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, October 15, 2014, <https://mideastshuffe.com/2014/10/22/cold-war-ii-interview-with-nikolay-patrushev-secretary-of-the-russian-security-council/>.

¹³⁷Ibid.

Patrushev that represent the attitude of Russia's political elite are intended to communicate to the Russian public that the United States and NATO are responsible for any negative economic or political issues that arise. This removes any blame from the Russian political elite for its failures and instead places this blame on the United States and its NATO Allies.

The projection of blame for Russian problems onto the United States and its NATO Allies can be further witnessed in a July 2016 report in the *Financial Times*. The report reveals that Russian President Vladimir Putin, Russian sports committee officials, and select Russian politicians claim that "It's possible the U.S. is behind" the World Anti-Doping Agency's verdict on Russia's concealment of doping its athletes and its subsequent partial ban from the 2016 Rio Olympics.¹³⁸ The report further reveals that "Over the past few months Russian television has been running stories about doping problems in the US. It is the same tactic that the Kremlin adopts when accused of propaganda or corruption: the west is as bad."¹³⁹ In this example, Russian officials are once again portraying the West as antagonistic toward Russia by singling out its athletes and acting behind the scenes to ensure Russia would not be fully represented in the 2016 Olympics. As the Gallup poll that was analyzed above suggests, Russia's tactics are working to influence the perceptions of the Russian public in a negative light against the United States and its NATO Allies.

C. CONCLUSION

Russian media unmistakably report the actions and intentions of the United States and its NATO Allies in a highly negative frame. Russian media bias against the West appears to stem from its insecurities and mistrust of the Western democratic political system. The Kremlin believes that the primary goal of the West is to topple Russia's authoritarian regime by influencing the Russian public to revolt against its own government, which it attempts to accomplish through numerous sources of Internet and

¹³⁸Peter Pomerantsev, "Putin's Message to the World: You Are Just as Bad," *Financial Times*, July 20, 2016, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/de025422-4d9b-11e6-8172-e39ecd3b86fc.html#axzz4F6L6NaIV>.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*

other media propaganda. The Kremlin has thus sought to severely limit Internet availability among its citizens and to commence a pro-Russia propaganda campaign upon its own people to shape public opinion. The Kremlin has simultaneously pursued an anti-American propaganda campaign in order to project its own failures onto the United States and its NATO Allies in an attempt to cast away responsibility for most of Russia's economic, political, and security concerns. There is no indication that Russia's media framing of the West in a negative light will abate in the foreseeable future. It is nonetheless essential for the United States and its NATO Allies to continue their attempts to pursue beneficial dialogue with Russia in matters that concern mutual economic and security problems.

IV. NATO AND RUSSIA IN THE BLACK SEA: INCREASED NAVAL ACTIVITY AFTER CRIMEA

“We used to do big, complex NATO exercises in all environments,” stated Royal Navy Vice Admiral Peter Hudson, former commander of NATO’s Allied Maritime Command, in a 2014 Pentagon interview, “but the world has changed. We haven’t been doing as many of those in the last 10, 15 years. But I think [Russia’s military intervention in] Ukraine has told us we need to up our game and I think that’s the plan in the near future.”¹⁴⁰ Since Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO has significantly increased its military presence in the Black Sea region through multinational exercises, and this has been especially evident in the maritime domain. Russia has also increased the number and magnitude of its exercises in the Black Sea. In light of the increased naval exercises in the Black Sea by NATO and Russia since Crimea’s March 2014 annexation, this chapter investigates how U.S. and NATO naval presence has evolved in the Black Sea since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989–1991 to the present, and how this evolution has affected NATO-Russian relations. To answer these questions, this chapter explores U.S., NATO, and Russian exercises, operations, and interactions from 1991 to the present, including the geopolitical and strategic environment. Although opportunities to pursue partnership and shared security interests exist for the United States, NATO, and Russia, it is expected that the continued U.S. and NATO presence in the Black Sea will reflect amplified tensions between NATO and Russia.

This chapter is organized into two sections as follows: the first section explores the U.S. and NATO naval presence in the Black Sea from 1991 to 2014 and the second section examines U.S., NATO, and Russian naval exercises and interactions in the Black Sea since March 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea. This chapter concludes with an analysis and synthesis of the findings. Scholarly articles, think tank publications, and

¹⁴⁰David Larter, “The New Cold War: Putin’s Forces Target U.S. Navy and Allies,” *Navy Times*, December 2, 2014, <http://www.navytimes.com/story/military/2014/12/02/russians-bully-europe-putin-navy-nato-breedlove-hudson/70121746/>.

media reports are the principal sources drawn upon to discuss and analyze the themes of this chapter.

A. U.S. AND NATO NAVAL PRESENCE FROM 1991–2014

The U.S. and NATO naval presence in the Black Sea prior to Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 was mostly designed for small-scale peacekeeping exercises with select NATO Black Sea members and partners, and only increased after the mid-2000s. The first large-scale NATO exercises in the Black Sea were held in 1995. The first was a five-day Partnership for Peace (PfP) exercise in Bulgarian territorial waters, directly followed by the more robust *Cooperative Rescue* exercise in June 1995, which was hosted by NATO partner state Romania and included naval assets from NATO Allies Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, and Turkey.¹⁴¹ Its agenda included “sea rescue operations, joint maneuvers and communications, as well as sports activities, to build up a team spirit between Romanian and NATO forces.”¹⁴² *Cooperative Rescue* was sponsored under the banner of NATO's PfP program, which was launched in 1994. Romania was the first former Warsaw Pact state to join the PfP and host a large-scale PfP exercise in the Black Sea.¹⁴³

Cooperative Rescue's success turned it into an annual NATO Black Sea PfP exercise and paved the way for more robust exercises. One such example is the annual *Sea Breeze* exercise that has been conducted in the Black Sea since 1997 under Ukraine's PfP sponsorship. *Sea Breeze* remains the largest annual NATO Black Sea PfP naval exercise today, and it has included Allies and partners such as Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States.¹⁴⁴ Although Russia was a PfP participant in past exercises, the

¹⁴¹Vladimir Rodina, “Romania Hosts PfP Maneuvers,” *United Press International*, June 8, 1995, <http://www.upi.com/Archives/1995/06/08/Romania-hosts-PFP-maneuvers/3213802584000/>.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*

¹⁴³*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴Alisa Moldavanova, “Public Perception of the Sea Breeze Exercises and Ukraine's Prospects in the Black Sea Region,” U.S. Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth, U.S. Army, last modified April 2013, <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/Collaboration/international/Ukraine/Sea-Breeze-exercise.pdf>.

Kremlin has remained suspicious of the intentions of the organizers of the exercise since its start in 1997, so Moscow's participation has been mostly limited to monitoring its activities and progress.¹⁴⁵ In all, NATO has described the majority of its Black Sea exercises prior to 2014 as naval peacekeeping exercises; these exercises included bilateral and multilateral activities such as *Black Sea Forces*, *Black Sea Partnership*, *Cooperative Partner*, and *Peace Farwater*.¹⁴⁶

In addition to exercises, the U.S. and NATO also conducted small-scale operations in the Black Sea prior to 2014. As early as 1992, NATO established an immediate naval reaction force called Standing Naval Forces Mediterranean (STANAVFORMED)—in 2005 its name was changed to Standing NATO Maritime Group Two (SNMG2)—that consisted of ships rotating from Allied member states to provide support and assistance as necessary throughout the Sixth Fleet.¹⁴⁷ STANAVFORMED participated in a number of peacekeeping operations in the Black Sea prior to 2014 that included port visits to the Black Sea littoral states. In one of the first NATO naval operations to take place in the Black Sea after the fall of the Soviet Union, following the conclusion of exercises in the Mediterranean, Standing Naval Forces Atlantic (STANAVFORLANT)—temporarily replacing STANAVFORMED in the Mediterranean—participated in NATO operation *Display Determination* in 1992, in which it conducted port visits within the Black Sea as a function of its peacekeeping efforts in the region.¹⁴⁸

The Black Sea Naval Force (BLACKSEAFOR) and operation *Black Sea Harmony* are other examples of NATO operations in the Black Sea prior to 2014. Each was initiated by Turkey, in 2001 and 2004 respectively, with U.S. and NATO support “as

¹⁴⁵Lee Hockstader, “U.S. Black Sea Maneuver Plans Spur Rising Russian Distrust,” The Washington Post, March 20, 1997, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1997/03/20/us-black-sea-maneuver-plans-spur-rising-russian-distrust/c55f5b89-f21c-4598-a810-95d3e317731b/>; Moldavanova, “Public Perception of the Sea Breeze Exercises.”

¹⁴⁶Moldavanova, “Public Perception of the Sea Breeze Exercises.”

¹⁴⁷Joel J. Sokolsky, “Projecting Stability: NATO and Multilateral Naval Cooperation in the Post-Cold War Era,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, accessed January 28, 2016, <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/95-97/sokolsky.pdf>.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*

a means for building greater transparency, predictability and security in the region.”¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, during the 2008 Russo-Georgian war the U.S. Navy destroyer USS *McFaul* entered the Black Sea to provide Georgia with humanitarian aid; however, Russia “proclaimed that it was a serious threat to Russian security and that ... Russia believed the warship to be carrying nuclear missiles. ... There were also concerns that the ship might be further arming Georgia.”¹⁵⁰ USS *McFaul* remained in the Black Sea at the ready to provide humanitarian assistance to Georgia, despite Russia’s condemnations. Two other U.S. warships were denied entrance by Turkey during this period because they would have exceeded the Black Sea tonnage limit set in the Montreux Convention of 1936.¹⁵¹ With the historical context of U.S. and NATO naval presence in the Black Sea from 1991 to 2014 in mind, this chapter now turns to U.S., NATO, and Russian naval exercises and interactions in the Black Sea region since March 2014.

B. EXERCISES AND INTERACTIONS SINCE MARCH 2014

Russia’s annexation of Crimea in March 2014 completely altered the balance of power within the Black Sea in the favor of Russia. With three NATO member states bordering the Black Sea—Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey—NATO was forced to provide assurance measures—initiated in May 2014 in response to Crimea’s annexation—to reinforce its presence in the region.¹⁵² Shortly thereafter, at the Wales Summit in September 2014, the NATO Allies agreed on a declaration for the Readiness Action Plan:

It [the Readiness Action Plan] provides a coherent and comprehensive package of necessary measures to respond to the changes in the security environment on NATO’s borders and further afield that are of concern to Allies. It responds to the challenges posed by Russia and their strategic

¹⁴⁹Sharyl Cross, “NATO-Russia Security Challenges in the Aftermath of Ukraine Conflict: Managing Black Sea Security and Beyond,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 15, no. 2 (2015): 166.

¹⁵⁰Carol Weaver, “Black Sea or Black Lake?: How US-Russian Tensions are Affecting EU Policy,” in *The Black Sea Region and EU Policy: The Challenge of Divergent Agendas*, ed. Karen Henderson and Carol Weaver (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 72.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*

¹⁵²“NATO’s Readiness Action Plan,” Public Diplomacy Division, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified October 2015, http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_12/20151130_1512-factsheet_rap_en.pdf.

implications. ... The Plan strengthens NATO's collective defence. It also strengthens our crisis management capability. The Plan will contribute to ensuring that NATO remains a strong, ready, robust, and responsive Alliance capable of meeting current and future challenges from wherever they may arise.¹⁵³

Through the Readiness Action Plan, NATO intends to effectively increase its assurance and adaptation measures in support of its Eastern Allies that share concerns about Russia, such as its Black Sea NATO Allies. NATO's assurance measures "immediately increased military presence and activity"¹⁵⁴ in the Black Sea in response to Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine while the Alliance's adaptation measures increased the number and variety of ships belonging to its Standing NATO Maritime Groups operating in the region.¹⁵⁵ For example, U.S. Navy destroyers USS *Cole*, USS *Donald Cook*, USS *Laboon*, USS *Porter*, USS *Ross*, USS *Truxton*, as well as U.S. Navy cruiser USS *Vella Gulf* and U.S. Navy frigate USS *Taylor* have all conducted high-profile cruises through the Turkish Straits and into the Black Sea since Crimea's annexation. Moreover, the U.S. and NATO naval presence will continue to increase in the Black Sea since new ports of call have been made available, such as Varna, Bulgaria; Constanta, Romania; and Batumi, Georgia. An increase in U.S. and NATO port visits may trigger further suspicion from the Kremlin.¹⁵⁶

United States Air Force General Philip Breedlove, Commander of U.S. Forces in Europe and NATO's Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, further reinforced U.S. and NATO commitment to increasing naval presence in the Black Sea in his 2015 posture statement to the U.S. House of Armed Services Committee. In his statement, General Breedlove reported that, "Despite increasing Russian presence in the region, EUCOM has increased U.S. [and NATO] maritime presence in the Black Sea through Passing Exercises (PASSEXes) and other bilateral and multinational exercises. Since April 2014,

¹⁵³North Atlantic Council, "Wales Summit Declaration," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified July 31, 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm.

¹⁵⁴"NATO's Readiness Action Plan."

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶Larter, "The New Cold War."

U.S. Naval Forces Europe (NAVEUR) has maintained a monthly periodic presence in the Black Sea.”¹⁵⁷ This increased presence was made possible by Congress’s authorization of a one billion dollar contribution to the European Reassurance Initiative in support of NATO. Chuck Hagel, then the U.S. Secretary of Defense, in 2014 announced that the money was partly intended to sustain the U.S. naval presence in the Black Sea.¹⁵⁸ The U.S. and NATO amplified presence in the Black Sea in response to Russia’s aggressive behavior in the region has, in turn, resulted in a counteraction from Russia. This reaction and counteraction by each side is best understood when analyzed through U.S., NATO, and Russian exercises and interactions since Crimea’s annexation in March 2014.

1. U.S., NATO, and Russian Exercises

As NATO’s presence has increased within the region, so too have the planned exercises in and around the Black Sea by both NATO and Russia. Since 2014, under NATO’s Readiness Action Plan, the United States and its NATO Allies have increased exercises in the Black Sea focused on deterring Russian aggression or coercion.¹⁵⁹ Jens Stoltenberg, NATO’s Secretary General, in his NATO Annual Report 2015, sums up the importance of conducting these exercises as follows:

Exercises are important tools through which the Alliance tests and validates its concepts, procedures, systems, and tactics. By demonstrating the capacity of the Alliance to respond to a range of threats, they also contribute to deterrence. More broadly, exercises enable militaries and civilian organisations that might be deployed in theatres of operation to practise working together. In 2015, NATO conducted 99 exercises and was associated with 198 national exercises. ... Many of these exercises were used as part of the assurance measures provided through the

¹⁵⁷Philip Breedlove, “Statement of General Philip Breedlove,” U.S. European Command, Department of Defense, last modified February 25, 2015, <http://www.eucom.mil/mission/background/posture-statement>.

¹⁵⁸David Brunnstrom, “U.S. to Beef up Black Sea Presence after Crimea Crisis: Hagel,” *Reuters*, June 5, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-hagel-idUSKBN0EG1GF20140605>; Cross, “NATO-Russia Security Challenges,” 161.

¹⁵⁹Thomas Frear, Ian Kearns, and Lukasz Kulesa, “Preparing for the Worst: Are Russian and NATO Military Exercises Making War in Europe more Likely?,” European Leadership Network, last modified August 11, 2015, <http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/medialibrary/2015/08/07/ea2b8c22/Preparing%20for%20the%20Worst.pdf>.

Readiness Action Plan. Of the NATO exercises conducted in 2015, 26 percent were part of the assurance measures. For the national exercises offered to NATO in 2015, 45 percent were focused on assurance. ... One of the ways to ensure that NATO's forces are connected [to partners and Allies] is through linking NATO and national exercises. ... While 73 national exercises were linked with NATO in 2014, that number more than doubled in 2015 to 198.¹⁶⁰

Furthermore, NATO conducted 162 exercises in 2014, which was twice the number of the exercises originally planned for that year. The additional exercises followed as a result of Russia's 2014 actions in the Black Sea under the then newly implemented NATO assurance measures.¹⁶¹ These numbers illustrate a drastic increase in the conduct of NATO exercises, many of which are executed in regions that Russia regards as within its immediate sphere of influence.¹⁶² Russia's Ministry of Defense "announced plans to hold 4,000 military exercises in 2015."¹⁶³ This goal was accomplished by early September of that year and marked an increase of 500 exercises from the year prior (2014).¹⁶⁴ This number, however, includes exercises and drills executed at all levels, so it is difficult to compare Russia's numbers with NATO's numbers. It is nonetheless clear that Russia has responded in kind to NATO's increase in exercises around its borders.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, Russia's national naval doctrine—signed in December 2014 and then revised in July 2015—envisions a revived presence in the Black Sea aimed at countering NATO enlargement and integrating Crimea into Russia's national economy. The Kremlin plans to accomplish this objective by strengthening

¹⁶⁰Jens Stoltenberg, "The Secretary General's Annual Report 2015," Public Diplomacy Division, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified January 7, 2016, http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_01/20160128_SG_AnnualReport_2015_en.pdf

¹⁶¹Jens Stoltenberg, "The Secretary General's Annual Report 2014," Public Diplomacy Division, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified January 30, 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_116854.htm.

¹⁶²"NATO's Readiness Action Plan."

¹⁶³Frear, Kearns, and Kulesa, "Preparing for the Worst."

¹⁶⁴Christopher Harress, "Russian Military Defense Drills 2015: 4,000 Exercises by Armed Forces Conducted this Year, Up from 2014," *International Business Times*, September 9, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/russian-military-defense-drills-2015-4000-exercises-armed-forces-conducted-year-2014-2118576>.

¹⁶⁵Frear, Kearns, and Kulesa, "Preparing for the Worst."

Russia's Black Sea naval fleet through a modernization program intended to increase its tactical abilities, as well as its size and ability to deploy to distant locations for longer periods of time.¹⁶⁶

Since March 2014, NATO has not only increased the number of regular naval exercises—by 35 percent from 2014 to 2015—but also the duration and scope of the exercises.¹⁶⁷ Of note, land-based military exercises have also increased within the Black Sea region to exceed the number and magnitude of naval exercises conducted. These exercises are intended to reassure NATO's Allies and partners within the region—through actions on land and at sea—that the United States and its NATO Allies are committed to their collective defense and resolve, as well as to communicate this same message to Russia as a deterrence mechanism. For instance, NATO's ships from SNMG2 participated in a multinational exercise in the Black Sea in March 2015 that included anti-air and anti-submarine warfare exercises, with ships from the following NATO member states: Bulgaria, Canada, Germany, Italy, Romania, Turkey, and the United States.¹⁶⁸ Such exercises are expected to recur annually, each becoming more complex than the last.

NATO's annual multinational *Sea Breeze* exercise has especially triggered concentrated responses from the Kremlin since 2014. Conducted in the Black Sea since 1997, *Sea Breeze* has always gained notable suspicion from Russia; however, during the *Sea Breeze* 2014 exercise, the Kremlin decided for the first time to conduct a snap exercise of its own during the same period also within the Black Sea.¹⁶⁹ Russia's snap exercise consisted of “20 ships and 20 aircraft including SU-24 fighters with a scenario directed toward ‘the destruction of enemy ships in the sea and organization of air defense

¹⁶⁶Nikolai Novichkov, “Russia's New Maritime Doctrine,” *HIS Jane's International Defence Review*, August 13, 2015, <http://www.janes.com/article/53643/russia-s-new-maritime-doctrine>.

¹⁶⁷David Larter, “Navy 6th Fleet Ramps Up to Face Russia, ISIS,” *Navy Times*, October 19, 2015, <http://www.navytimes.com/story/military/2015/10/19/foggo-russia-mediterranean-security-fleet-isis/74017748/>.

¹⁶⁸“SNMG2 Begins Operations in the Black Sea,” Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified March 4, 2015, <http://www.shape.nato.int/snmg2-begins-operations-in-the-black-sea>.

¹⁶⁹Cross, “NATO-Russia Security Challenges,” 165.

of naval groups and coastal infrastructure.”¹⁷⁰ Since 2014, Russia has conducted last-minute unannounced snap exercises with scenarios aimed at a “simulated war with U.S.-led NATO.”¹⁷¹ Such exercises occurred in March 2015, and again in February 2016.¹⁷² With Russia’s ever-increasing assertiveness and ambiguity of actions in the Black Sea, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg included the following observations in his 2015 Annual Report:

Concurrent with its increasingly aggressive behaviour, Russia is reducing military transparency ... through unilaterally suspending its observation of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty and the selective implementation of the Vienna Document and Open Skies Treaty. Russia exploits loopholes in these last two agreements, mis-reporting or failing to report major military exercises and using no-notice (snap) exercises. As part of its overall military build-up, the pace of Russia’s military manoeuvres and drills have reached levels unseen since the height of the Cold War. Over the past three years, Russia has conducted at least 18 large-scale snap exercises ... [that] have been used to mask massive movements of military forces (February 2014 prior to the illegal annexation of Crimea) and to menace Russia’s neighbours. These actions, among others, have contributed to an increasingly unpredictable and unstable Euro-Atlantic security environment. In response, NATO has taken defensive measures to protect and assure its members and will continue to do so as long as necessary.¹⁷³

2. U.S., NATO, and Russian Interactions

U.S. and NATO interactions with Russian military assets in the Black Sea have been less than friendly in the wake of Crimea’s annexation in 2014. With the increase of U.S. and NATO naval presence, as well as an increase in exercises by the NATO Allies and Russia within the Black Sea, military interactions are inevitable. The European Leadership Network (ELN), for instance, conducted an assessment of close military encounters between NATO member states and Russia, and discovered that nearly 40

¹⁷⁰Cross, “NATO-Russia Security Challenges,” 165.

¹⁷¹Frear, Kearns, and Kulesa, “Preparing for the Worst.”

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³Stoltenberg, “The Secretary General’s Annual Report 2015.”

incidents had occurred in an eight month period in 2014.¹⁷⁴ In a follow-on study, the ELN determined that 66 encounters occurred between March 2014 and March 2015.¹⁷⁵ These numbers underline the tension and sensitivity in the relationship between NATO and Russia, especially when NATO military and naval forces are operating within areas that Russia regards as part of its sphere of influence.

Not all of the 66 interactions reported actually occurred in the Black Sea; however, three of them did, and each interaction received considerable media coverage due to its significance. The European Leadership Network classifies each incident into one of three categories depending upon the severity of the interaction: near routine, serious with escalation risk, and high risk.¹⁷⁶ The three Black Sea interactions during this year-long period were categorized as serious with escalation risk, which the ELN describes as “serious incidents [that] go beyond the previously established pattern of interaction and involve close encounters of a more aggressive and unusually provocative nature.”¹⁷⁷

The first incident occurred on April 12, 2014, when a Russian aircraft made 12 repeated passes at close range to the U.S. Navy destroyer USS *Donald Cook* while operating in the Black Sea. The Russian aircraft was reported to be unarmed and making practice runs on the warship in a threatening manner. Although no one was hurt, this interaction could have quickly turned into an escalated scenario if the captain of the USS *Donald Cook* had believed the Russian aircraft to be armed and targeting the warship.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴Thomas Frear, Ian Kearns, and Lukasz Kulesa, “Dangerous Brinkmanship: Close Military Encounters Between Russia and the West in 2014,” European Leadership Network, last modified November 5, 2014, <http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/medialibrary/2014/11/09/6375e3da/Dangerous%20Brinkmanship.pdf>.

¹⁷⁵Thomas Frear, “List of Close Military Encounters between Russia and the West, March 2014-March 2015,” European Leadership Network, last modified March 11, 2015, <http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/medialibrary/2015/03/11/4264a5a6/ELN%20Russia%20-%20West%20Full%20List%20of%20Incidents.pdf>.

¹⁷⁶Ibid.

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

¹⁷⁸Ibid.

The second incident occurred on September 7, 2014, when a Russian aircraft passed a Canadian frigate—HMCS *Toronto*—at a distance of 300 meters while operating in the Black Sea. Unlike the case of USS *Donald Cook*, HMCS *Toronto* went as far as to lock its radar on the aircraft in preparation for a strike. The captain of the HMCS *Toronto* only backed down after concluding that the Russian aircraft was not armed and therefore posed no real threat—other than harassment and dangerous behavior.¹⁷⁹ Again, as in the previous incident, HMCS *Toronto* could well have acted in self-defense and shot down the Russian aircraft, thereby igniting an international incident of large proportions.

The third incident occurred in early March 2015, when Russian fighter-bomber aircraft used NATO warships—from Turkey and the United States—operating in the Black Sea as practice targets for attack scenarios. As with the prior two incidents, the ship’s commanding officers from either Turkey or the United States could have misinterpreted the scenario and opened fire in self-defense, causing further escalation.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, the attack scenarios, as in the prior two incidents, were unprovoked by NATO forces and initiated solely by aggressive Russian military actions.

Another incident—not reported within the timeline of the ELN study—occurred on December 6, 2015. This incident took place when the Russian warship *Caesar Kunikov* was transiting the Bosphorus Strait from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. As *Caesar Kunikov* transited the Turkish Straits, a Russian sailor was clearly seen standing above the ship’s bridge with a shoulder-mounted ground-to-air missile launcher at the ready.¹⁸¹ The sailor was aiming the missile launcher toward Turkish lands during the entirety of the transit, while a second sailor was seen next to him dressed in full general quarters battle regalia. The Turkish Foreign Minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, said that the “harassing passage” was meant to provoke Ankara into retaliatory action, and that the incident only served to further undermine NATO-Russian relations.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹Frear, “List of Close Military Encounters between Russia and the West.”

¹⁸⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁸¹“Turkish FM Slams Russia’s Missile ‘Provocation’ in Bosphorus,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, December 6, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Default.aspx?PageID=238&NID=92121&NewsCatID=341>.

¹⁸²*Ibid.*

Although NATO and Russia have not yet witnessed any serious encounters between their warships in the Black Sea, the actions of Russia's aircraft speak to the Kremlin's willingness to engage in provocative and dangerous military maneuvers. Such aggressive actions toward NATO warships in the Black Sea demonstrate Russia's mentality. The Kremlin holds that the Black Sea belongs to Russia, and that NATO is not welcome to operate in its sphere of influence. Russia's maneuvers can also be viewed as a means of intelligence collection against NATO naval forces. Russia can test NATO's responses and observe NATO's defense systems and overall preparedness in an operational environment.¹⁸³ The ELN further assesses that Russia's actions "seem intended to send a more general message of deterrence and demonstrate that Russia has the means and willingness to confront NATO and U.S. forces ... in the event of a conflict."¹⁸⁴

In respect to these interactions, it is important to note that there is currently no agreement between NATO and Russia to provide guidelines on how to manage the increase in close military encounters. Currently, there are only various bilateral agreements between some NATO countries and Russia, but not between all.¹⁸⁵ The accords that do exist, however, are incidents at sea agreements modeled after the U.S.–Soviet 1972 agreement on the Prevention of Incidents on and over the High Seas, and they may be less than perfect frameworks for today's operational environment. At this time, only eleven of the 28 NATO members have incidents at sea agreements with Russia: Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States.¹⁸⁶ Three agreements on preventing dangerous military activities remain in effect: one between the United States and the

¹⁸³Frear, Kearns, and Kulesa, "Dangerous Brinkmanship."

¹⁸⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵Ian Kearns and Denitsa Raynova, "Managing Dangerous Incidents: The need for a NATO-Russia Memorandum of Understanding," European Leadership Network, last modified March 7, 2016, http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/managing-dangerous-incidents-the-need-for-a-nato-russia-memorandum-of-understanding_3578.html.

¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*

USSR from 1989, a second between Canada and the USSR from 1991, and a third between Greece and Russia from 1993.¹⁸⁷

Nevertheless, there is currently no treaty governing incidents at sea or preventing dangerous military activities in place under immediate NATO command. This leaves 17 NATO member states—including Turkey and the other Black Sea littoral states—without clear arrangements.¹⁸⁸ This regulatory vacuum could pose a potential point of risk for crisis prevention in the Black Sea—and beyond—as NATO continues to bolster its presence in the region and come into more frequent contact with Russian naval and air forces in the Black Sea. Experts aware of these outdated or nonexistent agreements between NATO member states and Russia believe that what is currently in place is grossly insufficient to deal with the close encounters witnessed today. They further argue that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) should be developed and proposed to Russia for signature, and that it should be similar to the 2014 U.S.-China agreement to the same effect.¹⁸⁹ The presence of U.S. and NATO naval forces in the Black Sea will not diminish in the foreseeable future. It would therefore be in the interest of both NATO and Russia to sign an MoU to direct each side's military forces on how to proceed in case of a more serious incident within the Black Sea region, before such an event causes unnecessary and inadvertent military escalation in the region and beyond.

C. CONCLUSION

The data clearly illustrates that since Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014, U.S. and NATO military forces—especially naval forces—have drastically increased their presence in the Black Sea region. Russia deems NATO's increased presence in the region as a direct threat to its interests within its sphere of influence, causing heightened tensions on both sides. As tensions mount, Russia seems more willing to convey warning messages to NATO. The Kremlin has been telling the Alliance not to encroach in an area that Moscow considers its backyard by employing threatening and

¹⁸⁷Kearns and Raynova, "Managing Dangerous Incidents."

¹⁸⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹*Ibid.*

often dangerous military tactics against NATO forces operating in the area. If Russia continues to act against NATO forces in the Black Sea with provocative maneuvers meant to intimidate, a serious incident could well be looming over the horizon. It is in the interest of both NATO and Russia to avoid such hostile actions and potential negative outcomes, and to instead compose and sign an MoU that would substantially reduce the prospect of a dangerous encounter escalating into something far worse. If actions continue to escalate, however, the data clearly point to the probability of more serious adverse interactions.

V. RUSSIA'S BLACK SEA FLEET BUILDUP: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES FOR NATO AND RUSSIA

“In December 2014, Russia’s Ministry of Defense announced that 80 new warships would be added to the Black Sea Fleet by 2020,” affirms Sharyl Cross of St. Edwards University.¹⁹⁰ This signifies that “the Black Sea region has again become a theatre of heightened tension and risk between NATO and Russia.”¹⁹¹ The buildup and modernization of its Black Sea Fleet is a cornerstone to Russia’s State Armaments Procurement Program for 2011–2020 (SAP-2020). The SAP-2020 initiative increases the size and effectiveness of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet and will undoubtedly shift the balance of power within the Black Sea region. In light of this initiative, this chapter investigates Russia’s intentions with its Black Sea Fleet buildup and modernization, as well as the prospects and challenges NATO and Russia will encounter in relation to one another because of the buildup. To answer these questions, this chapter analyzes the Black Sea Fleet buildup initiative in greater detail, including the geopolitical and strategic environment surrounding the Black Sea region as it pertains to NATO and Russia. Although opportunities for partnership and cooperation in pursuing shared security interests exist, it is anticipated that Russia’s Black Sea Fleet initiative will cause heightened tensions between NATO and Russia.

This chapter is organized into three sections: the first section discusses the significance of the Black Sea to NATO and Russian interests, the second section examines the Black Sea Fleet buildup and modernization initiative and Russia’s intentions in the Black Sea region, and the third section explores prospects and challenges for NATO and Russia in relation to one another considering this initiative. This chapter concludes with a consideration of future prospects and challenges for NATO and Russia.

¹⁹⁰Sharyl Cross, “NATO-Russia Security Challenges in the Aftermath of Ukraine Conflict: Managing Black Sea Security and Beyond,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 15, no. 2 (2015): 164.

¹⁹¹*Ibid.*

A. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BLACK SEA

The Black Sea is an isolated body of water that naval vessels can access only from the Aegean Sea through the narrow Turkish Straits. It is immediately bordered by six countries—Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine. Of these six countries, three are NATO member states—Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey—while two aspire to NATO membership and are attempting to take steps in this direction—Georgia and Ukraine—despite Russia’s efforts to prevent such actions. Additionally, the Black Sea region is steeped with deep rooted Russian history and nationalism that the Russians dearly cling to.¹⁹² With this geopolitical frame in mind, the significance of the Black Sea to NATO and Russian interests is better understood by first identifying the role of maritime power within the region.

1. Maritime Power in the Black Sea

Of the six states bordering the Black Sea, only two—Russia and Turkey—have significant national naval assets immediately available with blue water capabilities outside of the Black Sea for naval power projection. The other four littoral states have small contingents of coast guard vessels with limited green water capabilities.¹⁹³ As a narrow sea, the Black Sea has tactical importance during operations with high strategic implications, especially in operations that support ground troops and infrastructure along the coastlines. As Alfred T. Mahan’s teachings emphasize regarding maritime strategy, the Russian Navy’s role in the Black Sea is particularly important “as the primary vector of influence” not only at sea, but along the large length of coastline of each Black Sea state.¹⁹⁴

In defining the true meaning of maritime power as it relates to the geopolitical construct of the Black Sea region, Igor Delanoe, an expert on the Black Sea region at the Center for International and European Studies, has offered the following definition:

¹⁹²Igor Delanoe, “After the Crimean Crisis: Towards a Greater Russian Maritime Power in the Black Sea,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 14, no. 3 (2014): 370–71.

¹⁹³*Ibid.*, 376.

¹⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 368–69.

Maritime power ... is the ability of an actor to use the maritime domain to achieve political goals. The British military emphasizes the means, and defines maritime power as the ability to project power at sea and from the sea to influence the behaviour of people or the course of events. ... Maritime power relies on both objective factors, such as material maritime capacities, and subjective factors, such as the determination of an actor to use these capacities at sea. ... Today, the definition of maritime power must be broadened to include the ability of an actor to carry out a wide range of non-military tasks related to maritime security: securing maritime traffic, protecting maritime resources, enforcing state sovereignty in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), etc.¹⁹⁵

Focusing on this definition, including the three non-military tasks enforced during peace time, maritime power within the Black Sea belongs primarily to Russia and Turkey because they utilize their naval assets to maintain such power. For instance, passage between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean is strictly controlled by Turkey alone by right of the Montreux Convention, which gives Turkey considerable leverage within the Black Sea.¹⁹⁶ Additionally, Russia extensively uses its Black Sea Fleet to protect its maritime resources and sovereignty in its EEZ. Currently, it is in the mutual best interest of Russia and Turkey to maintain the *status quo* on maritime power within the Black Sea; however, maritime power may shift in the near future as Russia builds up its Black Sea Fleet and NATO takes a more active role in the area.¹⁹⁷ The Black Sea, therefore, holds interests for both NATO and Russia that will affect stability within the region.

2. NATO Interests

The Black Sea region has begun to develop an identity of its own, which has attracted the interest of NATO. Five primary interests dominate NATO's attention to the Black Sea region: commerce, democratic reform, energy, market reform, and security.¹⁹⁸ Of principal importance, NATO is bound to assure the security of the Alliance's Black Sea member states from local aggression, such as the Russian annexation of Crimea in

¹⁹⁵Delanoe, "After the Crimean Crisis," 369.

¹⁹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸F. Stephen Larrabee, "The United States and Security in the Black Sea Region," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 9, no. 3 (2009): 302.

March 2014. Reinforcing NATO's commitment to collective defense against the regional threat posed by Russia is part of one of NATO's "three essential core tasks" set out in its 2010 Strategic Concept, and this places it high on NATO's agenda.¹⁹⁹

Moreover, NATO seeks to strengthen the posture of its partners and those who aspire to NATO membership, such as Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. These states seek Alliance membership for the benefit of collective defense on land and at sea against Russian aggression in the region.²⁰⁰ The Alliance's collective defense capabilities include the U.S.-led Ballistic Missile Defense program in the region, as well as heightened maritime presence and exercises conducted by NATO warships in the Black Sea.²⁰¹

A further NATO interest in the Black Sea is to secure regional energy infrastructures for Europe and NATO member states. Europe and Turkey rely to some extent upon Russian oil and natural gas from the Black Sea region to meet their energy needs. For instance, Turkey, which is a NATO member, obtains 60 percent of its energy supplies from Russia.²⁰² Additionally, in 2014, more than 30 percent of Europe's supply of crude oil and natural gas was supplied by Russia, which amounted to over three million barrels per day of crude oil and over six trillion cubic feet of natural gas.²⁰³ Disruption to Europe's supply of oil or natural gas would be devastating to the European Union, making it a key interest for NATO to secure now and into the future. NATO, with foremost assistance from the United States, constantly seeks new avenues of supply and partnership that will enhance the security of Europe's energy infrastructure.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹David S. Yost, *NATO's Balancing Act* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute for Peace, 2014), 31.

²⁰⁰Cross, "NATO-Russia Security Challenges," 164.

²⁰¹*Ibid.*, 165.

²⁰²*Ibid.*, 166.

²⁰³"Russia: International Energy Data and Analysis," U.S. Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy, last modified July 28, 2015, 1, https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis_includes/countries_long/Russia/russia.pdf.

²⁰⁴Larrabee, "United States and Security in the Black Sea Region," 304.

One final interest of primary concern for NATO within the Black Sea region is the encouragement of democratic reform in states in this region. Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Black Sea region states have been enveloped in much turmoil, including social and political unrest that has been exacerbated by Russia. The Black Sea region has become Europe's outer periphery. With much of what is regarded as Eastern Europe joining the European Union and the Alliance in recent years, NATO has an interest in stabilizing the area by encouraging democratic regime transitions.²⁰⁵ Nevertheless, NATO's interests are often perceived by Russia to be in direct opposition to its own interests in the region.

3. Russian Interests

Russia's interests in the Black Sea are similar in many respects to those of NATO, but its interests involve a greater geostrategic footprint. Three overarching interests drive Russia to increase its naval presence and political focus on the Black Sea: security, energy and commerce, and increasing its sphere of influence. The bottom line to Russia's security interest in the Black Sea is to secure its southern flank from a perceived NATO threat.²⁰⁶ To do this, Russia requires a modern navy that is large enough to defend the southern coastlines and provide power projection as a deterrent. Moreover, Russia values the geostrategic positioning of Ukraine and Georgia as buffer states between Russian borders and Western influence.²⁰⁷ With the relatively recent democratization of Ukraine and Georgia, Russia perceives an increased threat to its southern borders from Western influence led by the United States, the European Union, and NATO. This has led Russia to attempt to destabilize these countries through hybrid warfare in order to block further efforts toward democratization. Moscow has also increased its efforts to prevent Ukraine and Georgia from gaining NATO membership.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵Larrabee, "United States and Security in the Black Sea Region," 301.

²⁰⁶Delanoë, "After the Crimean Crisis," 370.

²⁰⁷Ibid.

²⁰⁸Ibid.; Larrabee, "United States and Security in the Black Sea Region," 301.

Russia also has strong energy and commerce interests in the Black Sea that if lost would devastate its economy. The U.S. Department of Energy has highlighted the importance of Russia's energy exports:

Russia was the world's largest producer of crude oil including lease condensate and the third-largest producer of petroleum and other liquids (after Saudi Arabia and the United States) in 2014, with average liquids production of 10.9 million barrels per day (b/d). Russia was the second-largest producer of dry natural gas in 2013 (second to the United States), producing 22.1 trillion cubic feet (Tcf). ... Novorossiysk is Russia's main oil terminal on the Black Sea coast. Its load capacity is more than 1 million barrels b/d. ... Oil and natural gas revenues accounted for 50% of Russia's federal budget revenues and 68% of total exports in 2013.²⁰⁹

Additionally, 75 percent of all tanker traffic through the Turkish Straits is either bound for Russian Black Sea ports or coming from them. In 2013 alone, the joint military and commercial port of Novorossiysk administered the transit of 117 million tons of freight, which is twice the amount of traffic received by the St. Petersburg or even Primorsk ports located in the north of Russia on the Baltic Sea where maritime traffic is high.²¹⁰

As outlined, the Black Sea region provides Russia with a significant share of its oil and natural gas. With the annexation of Crimea, one of Russia's foremost gains was a major expansion of the Russian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Black Sea. Russia's expanded EEZ includes vast additional oil and natural gas fields to exploit that were previously owned by Ukraine, and that will yield Russia export profits for many years to come. For instance, Russia now asserts sovereignty over the Pallas oil and gas field that is estimated to hold "75 billion cubic meters of natural gas and 490 million tons of oil."²¹¹

A final interest for Russia in the Black Sea region is the opportunity to increase its sphere of influence. Russia seeks to regain its position in international politics as a

²⁰⁹"Russia: International Energy Data and Analysis," 1, 10.

²¹⁰Delanoe, "After the Crimean Crisis," 370.

²¹¹Ibid., 371, 376.

recognized great power—a status that it has already openly claimed. Toward this end, Russia recognizes the importance of power projection throughout the world, especially in areas where it intends to exert its influence.²¹² What the Black Sea offers to this end is Russia’s closest access point to the Balkans, the Mediterranean Sea, the Middle East, and the world oceans at large. These are all areas of strategic importance to Russia where it seeks to expand its presence and activity, or to build upon current security and energy partnerships.²¹³ In order to protect and enhance these interests in the Black Sea region, Russia is undertaking an initiative to modernize and build up its Black Sea Fleet.

B. RUSSIA’S BLACK SEA FLEET BUILDUP INITIATIVE

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia’s naval fleets have been severely neglected. Corruption, defense budget shortfalls, and higher military priorities are among the factors that have prevented the modernization and buildup of the Russian navy.²¹⁴ Of the four separate naval fleets—the Baltic, Black Sea, Northern, and Pacific Fleets—“Russia’s Black Sea Fleet remains today one of the most obsolete Russian fleets.”²¹⁵ The 2008 Russo-Georgian war revealed to Russia the need to modernize and increase the size of its Black Sea Fleet, which was reinforced during the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea when NATO naval presence increased in the region.²¹⁶

Russia’s annexation of Crimea was an authoritative strategic coup by Russia that had two immediate effects: it removed Kiev’s ability to constrain Russia’s Black Sea Fleet buildup and modernization, and it increased the size and strength of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet. Prior to Crimea’s annexation, Kiev and Moscow had an agreement known as the Kharkov Agreement, which was signed into effect on April 21, 2010, by Dmitri Medvedev, then the Russian president, and Viktor Yanukovych, then the Ukrainian

²¹²Delanoe, “After the Crimean Crisis,” 370.

²¹³*Ibid.*

²¹⁴John A. Mowchan, “Russia’s Black Sea Threat,” *Proceedings Magazine*, February 2011, <http://www.usni.org/print/7334>.

²¹⁵Delanoe, “After the Crimean Crisis,” 371.

²¹⁶*Ibid.*

president.²¹⁷ Under the Kharkov Agreement, Russia's "lease for the Russian Black Sea Fleet [in Ukraine's Sevastopol port] was extended from 2017 to 2042, with a further five years option."²¹⁸ Through the conditions of the lease, Kiev was able to prevent any buildup or modernization of Russia's Black Sea Fleet from occurring. By annexing Crimea, however, Russia forcefully freed its Black Sea Fleet from Kiev's restrictive conditions. At the same time, Russia seized 51 of Ukraine's naval vessels from Sevastopol and placed them under Russian jurisdiction to further increase Moscow's naval hegemony in the Black Sea.²¹⁹ Since this time, Russia and Ukraine have reached an agreement and most of Ukraine's naval vessels have been returned.²²⁰

1. Current Composition and Limitations

The Black Sea Fleet currently consists of 47 warships and 5 submarines stationed primarily out of Sevastopol, located on the west side of the Crimea, and Novorossiysk, located on the west bank of Russia proper. The fleet's warships constitute 22 percent of total Russian naval warships in service from all fleets, and seven percent of the total submarine force.²²¹ With the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia gained the acclaimed strategic port of Sevastopol on the Crimea, which is home to 80 percent of the total tonnage of the Black Sea Fleet, and which is the only year-round ice-free and deep water port the Russians own in the region that is able to moor large warships.²²² Crimea also offers the port of Feodosia that hosts nine percent of Russia's Black Sea Fleet. With approximately 90 percent of the Black Sea Fleet stationed in Crimea, the significance of Crimea's annexation by Russia becomes abundantly clear: it provides Russia with greater

²¹⁷Delanoe, "After the Crimean Crisis," 374.

²¹⁸Ibid.

²¹⁹Christopher J. Miller, "In Military Rout, Russia Seizes 51 Ukrainian Ships in Crimea," *Kyiv Post*, March 26, 2014, <http://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine/russia-reportedly-seizes-51-ukrainian-ships-in-crimea-340929.html>.

²²⁰David Pugliese, "Russia and Ukraine Reach Deal for Return of Ukrainian Naval Vessels and Military Aircraft," *Ottawa Citizen*, last updated May 18, 2014, <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/russia-and-ukraine-reach-deal-for-return-of-ukrainian-naval-vessels-and-military-aircraft>.

²²¹"List of Current Ships of the Russian Navy 2016," RussianShips.info, last modified June 8, 2016, <http://russianships.info/eng/today/>.

²²²Cross, "NATO-Russia Security Challenges," 162; Delanoe, "After the Crimean Crisis," 371.

security structures and freedom of maneuver for the vast majority of its Black Sea Fleet.²²³

Furthermore, Russia's navy is comprised largely of Soviet legacy ships that are considerably outdated and in need of much maintenance and repair due to neglect throughout the 1990s and into the mid-2000s. Currently, the Soviet legacy ships of the Black Sea Fleet are mostly only capable of green water missions that support coastal defense within the Black Sea and have limited blue water capability for deployment beyond the region.²²⁴ For instance, the Office of Naval Intelligence assesses that "the average age of most of the [Russian] ships and submarines is more than 20 years. A nominal service life for most Soviet ships and submarines when built was considered to be 25 years."²²⁵ According to Igor Delanoe, "In 2014, while the average age of the main combat units [in the Black Sea Fleet] is around 27 years, the overall average age of the nearly 40 combat units reaches 36 years."²²⁶

It is clear that Russia's Soviet legacy ships have come near the end of their lifespans. This applies to the vast majority of Russia's current warships in service, including those of the Black Sea Fleet. With proper maintenance and modern upgrades, the operational lives of these ships can be extended up to 15 years at the most. As a result, many will be decommissioned in the coming years.²²⁷ Russia recognizes its predicament and knows that in order to claim the status of a great power it must repair and modernize its current warships, as well as commission new ships into service with the most current technology available.

²²³Delanoe, "After the Crimean Crisis," 371.

²²⁴Ibid.

²²⁵"The Russian Navy: A Historic Transition," Office of Naval Intelligence, U.S. Navy, last modified December 2015, 16, <http://www.oni.navy.mil/Intelligence-Community/Russia>.

²²⁶Delanoe, "After the Crimean Crisis," 371.

²²⁷"The Russian Navy," 16.

2. SAP-2020 Initiative

Russia's SAP-2020 initiative is an ambitious enterprise. The Russian government is committed to plans to modernize and increase the size of its naval fleet. As a result, the Black Sea Fleet has been allocated much of the funding and materiel because Moscow considers it to be one of the top priorities of the initiative, which provides the navy with the equivalent of 112.4 billion euros of the Russian defense budget to reach its goal by the year 2020.²²⁸ As many as 18 new warships are anticipated to be commissioned in the Black Sea Fleet by 2020, with more to come in the years after. Funding is additionally being allocated to the Sevastopol and Novorossiysk naval bases to upgrade their facilities for greater operational readiness.²²⁹

In addition to upgrading many of the older Soviet legacy ships to remain operational into the near future, the initiative further plans to add many new warships and submarines to the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Some of these units have already been commissioned and are now operational, and more are expected to follow by 2020.²³⁰ The following naval vessels are believed to be on the agenda for commissioning in the Black Sea Fleet by 2020: six multi-purpose *Admiral Grigorovich* class frigates, one or two high sea multi-purpose *Admiral Gorshkov* class frigates, one or two *Yastreb* class frigates, six *Kilo* class submarines, one or two *Ivan Gren* class amphibious landing ships, and up to four missile corvettes for near-shore operations.²³¹

Some limitations to the SAP-2020 initiative do exist, however. For instance, similar initiatives in the recent past have failed to come to fruition due to the high level of corruption and a lack of financing. "Various press reports estimate that as much as half of all procurement money [in the Russian military] is spent on bribes and other forms of corruption," according to Dmitry Gorenburg of Harvard University; and "the [Russian] Audit Chamber announced that one billion rubles of military procurement money was

²²⁸Delanoe, "After the Crimean Crisis," 371.

²²⁹*Ibid.*, 372.

²³⁰*Ibid.*

²³¹*Ibid.*

lost to corruption in 2009.”²³² Furthermore, since the Russian defense budget is tied to the prosperity of the country’s oil and gas exports that make up such a large portion of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a continuation of the SAP-2020 budget will depend on steady and rising prices for these export commodities in the future.²³³ Should the economy stagnate and exports decrease, the full budget allocated for the initiative may be reduced, with funds reallocated to more pressing needs within the civilian sector of the state. With the acquisition of Crimean oil and gas fields, as well as a crackdown on the corruption of military spending in recent years, the initiative may still prove successful. Many of the planned ships have already been commissioned, proving Russia’s dedication to see it through.²³⁴ Once these ships are commissioned, the Black Sea Fleet will prove a formidable naval power in the Black Sea region.

3. The Future Black Sea Fleet

The SAP-2020 initiative will result in “a new 21st century Russian Navy ... capable of conducting aerospace defense, anti-ship and anti-submarine warfare unlike their mostly single mission Soviet predecessors.”²³⁵ Once the SAP-2020 initiative is fulfilled, it is expected that Russia will continue its naval buildup for at least the next 10 to 20 years, placing more modern and advanced ships at the disposal of the Black Sea Fleet commander—currently Admiral Aleksandr Vitko.²³⁶ The Black Sea Fleet will also be more capable of acting as an “instrument of state” supporting Russian national interests in the region.²³⁷

The primary missions of the Black Sea Fleet are not expected to change drastically in the near future, whereas the SAP-2020 initiative will serve to better support

²³²Dmitry Gorenburg, “Russia’s State Armaments Program 2020: Is the Third Time the Charm for Military Modernization?,” PONSARS Eurasia, last modified October 2010, 5, http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/pepm_125.pdf.

²³³Ibid.

²³⁴Ibid.

²³⁵“The Russian Navy,” 17.

²³⁶Ibid., 43.

²³⁷Ibid.

the current missions. According to Igor Delanoe, these missions include, but are not limited to, protecting the enlarged Russian EEZ, “securing navigation and sea lines of communication,” exercising military and political control in the region, “promoting and protecting Russian economic and security interests in” and around the Mediterranean and Black Seas, supporting other Russian fleets operating in the Mediterranean Sea, and maintaining military dominance against perceived NATO threats in the Black Sea.²³⁸

The enhanced Black Sea Fleet will also be more capable of providing Russia with a strategic layered defense that only its navy has the ability to provide. The new *Kilo* class submarines and *Admiral Gorshkov* class frigates will be able to provide forward defense from enemy targets by forward deploying in order to strike missile launching platforms.²³⁹ The Black Sea Fleet will probably be most effective in intermediate and close-in defense, however. In this respect, the new platforms will provide a bolstered missile defense shield around Russia’s southern flank, as well as anti-ship cruise missiles for coastal defense.²⁴⁰ As Russia’s modernization and buildup of the Black Sea Fleet continue, certain prospects and challenges may arise for NATO and Russia.

C. PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES FOR NATO AND RUSSIA

In light of the comparable yet divergent interests held by NATO and Russia in the Black Sea region, as well as Russia’s Black Sea Fleet buildup and modernization initiative, conflict is bound to arise, leading to some prospects and challenges for each side. Such prospects and challenges include increased NATO naval presence within the region, enforcement of the Montreux Convention, and perceptions leading to flashpoints for NATO-Russian relations. Each carries its own strategic geopolitical implications that will affect interactions within the Black Sea region and beyond.

²³⁸Delanoe, “After the Crimean Crisis,” 371.

²³⁹Ibid., 372; “The Russian Navy,” x.

²⁴⁰“The Russian Navy,” x.

1. NATO Naval Presence in the Black Sea

Russia's increasingly aggressive behavior, including the 2008 Russo-Georgian war and the 2014 annexation of Crimea, along with its naval buildup in the Black Sea, has triggered an increase in NATO naval presence within and around the Black Sea. Led by the U.S. Navy, NATO nations have increased their patrols in the Black Sea as a deterrent to Russia. This includes permanently forward deploying four U.S. Navy destroyers in the Sixth Fleet area of responsibility, where they are homeported in Rota, Spain.²⁴¹ The primary mission of these destroyers is to provide constant BMD within the region and to support NATO missions and exercises. The first U.S. destroyer in this group of four—USS *Donald Cook*—arrived in Rota less than two weeks prior to Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, which was ahead of schedule in response to Russia's aggressive and destabilizing actions. Since then, the other three destroyers have been deployed on an expedited schedule, and since September 2015 all four destroyers have been operational in the Sixth Fleet.²⁴²

Additionally, these four U.S. Navy destroyers will work in tandem with two Aegis Ashore BMD arrays with one bordering the Black Sea—one in Romania and the other in Poland—to contribute to the U.S. European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) to BMD in Europe as a mechanism to deter Iran.²⁴³ Despite the EPAA's limited capacity, the Russians portray it as directed against them. The Sixth Fleet also “announced the creation of Commander Task Force 64 (CTF-64) to create a standalone task force ‘to address the growth and emphasis on ballistic missile defense and integrated air and missile defense mission’ in the European area of responsibility,” wherein these four destroyers will integrate for future operations.²⁴⁴ BMD in the Black Sea region has become a hot topic since Russia's annexation of Crimea because Russia now has

²⁴¹“Spain to Host Elements of NATO Anti-Missile Shield,” *EFE News Service*, October 5, 2011, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/896337787?accountid=12702>.

²⁴²*Ibid.*; Sam LaGrone, “Destroyer USS Carney Arrives in Rota Completing European Ballistic Missile Defense Quartet,” *U.S. Naval Institute News*, September 25, 2015, <http://news.usni.org/2015/09/25/destroyer-uss-carney-arrives-in-rota-completing-european-ballistic-missile-defense-quartet>.

²⁴³LaGrone, “Destroyer USS Carney Arrives in Rota.”

²⁴⁴*Ibid.*

Iskander short-range ballistic missiles at its Sevastopol naval base. This geographic location increases the missile's threat ring to target NATO member states—Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey. The larger coverage of Turkey includes Istanbul and part of the Turkish Straits. The missile is also capable of striking NATO naval vessels operating within the Black Sea.²⁴⁵

NATO's presence is increasing in the region, as are the planned exercises in and around the Black Sea by both NATO and Russia. Since 2014, the United States and its NATO Allies have increased exercises in the Black Sea focused on deterring Russian aggression or coercion. In 2015, NATO planned to conduct 270 total exercises with approximately half of them "devoted to reassuring the Eastern Allies," whereas in 2014 NATO conducted only 162 total exercises.²⁴⁶ Only half of these 162 exercises were originally planned, and the other half followed in the wake of Russia's 2014 actions in the Black Sea. These numbers illustrate a drastic increase in NATO exercises, many of which are conducted in Russia's immediate sphere of influence.²⁴⁷

As for Russia, its Ministry of Defense "announced plans to hold 4,000 military exercises in 2015."²⁴⁸ This number, however, includes exercises and drills at all levels, so it is difficult to compare with NATO's numbers. It nonetheless indicates that Russia has responded in kind to NATO's increase in exercises in the Black Sea. Moscow was suspicious of the 2015 annual multinational NATO *Sea Breeze* exercise held in the Black Sea, which it considers its backyard, and answered with a last-minute unannounced "snap" drill of its own during the same time period, also in the Black Sea. The Russian

²⁴⁵Sam LaGrone, "NATO Commander Breedlove: Imported Russian Missiles Have Turned Crimea into a Black Sea 'Power Projection' Platform," *U.S. Naval Institute News*, February 25, 2015, <http://news.usni.org/2015/02/25/nato-commander-breedlove-imported-russian-missiles-have-turned-crimea-into-a-black-sea-power-projection-platform>.

²⁴⁶Thomas Frear, Ian Kearns, and Lukasz Kulesa, "Preparing for the Worst: Are Russian and NATO Military Exercises Making War in Europe more Likely?," European Leadership Network, last modified August 7, 2015, 3–4, <http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/medialibrary/2015/08/07/ea2b8c22/Preparing%20for%20the%20Worst.pdf>.

²⁴⁷*Ibid.*

²⁴⁸*Ibid.*

drill consisted of “a scenario directed toward the destruction of enemy ships in the sea and organization of air defense of naval groups and coastal infrastructure.”²⁴⁹

Russia clearly views NATO’s heightened presence in the Black Sea as a threat. Russia is willing to intensify the situation because it considers that NATO has come too close to its sphere of privileged influence and guarded interests. For instance, Russian aircraft have been harassing NATO warships operating in the Black Sea, as Sharyl Cross highlights:

In April 2014, a Russian Sukhoi SU-24 made 12 passes at Navy destroyer USS *Donald Cook* in the Black Sea. It was reported that the Russian SU-24 came within 1000 yards of the American ship, at an altitude of 500 feet above sea level. ... Black Sea ‘buzzes’ were reported again in September 2014 when the Canadian frigate *Toronto* was overflown by two Russian Sukhoi SU-24s and an Antonov AN-26 transport plane. ... The Russian flyovers were described by U.S. and Canadian military officers as ‘unnecessarily provocative’, ‘unprofessional’ and entailing ‘risks for escalating tensions’.²⁵⁰

These incidents underscore the potential for dangerous escalation. NATO’s increased presence has triggered vigorous responses by Moscow, yet the increased NATO presence is due to Russian acts of aggression. As Russia continues with its Black Sea Fleet modernization and buildup initiative, one can expect Russia to be emboldened by its new maritime power in the region. Russia will be more willing to assert its dominance in the Black Sea against NATO assets, a course of action that could result in disaster if performed too aggressively. Nonetheless, NATO and Russia face additional challenges, including restrictions on their maritime presence in the Black Sea as specified by the Montreux Convention.

2. Montreux Convention

The Montreux Convention of 1936 has acted as a challenge to both NATO and Russia in recent years; however, the Convention places greater restrictions on states that

²⁴⁹Cross, “NATO-Russia Security Challenges,” 165.

²⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 165–66.

do not border the Black Sea, and it is therefore a major barricade that NATO must work around. The Convention controls access to the Black Sea through the Turkish Straits. Access is controlled by Turkey, which is a NATO member state. Turkey takes the Convention very seriously and will not allow any leniency concerning the set guidelines without prior notice and approval, even to its NATO partners.²⁵¹ In order to transit through the Turkish Straits to enter the Black Sea, permission must be requested at least eight days in advance through proper diplomatic channels.²⁵²

Furthermore, “the Convention limits the tonnage and time spent by [military] ships from non-Black Sea countries in Black Sea waters.”²⁵³ The maximum tonnage for all non-Black Sea countries is 45,000 tons, with a 30,000 ton limit for any individual country, and each ship may remain in the Black Sea for only 21 days.²⁵⁴ Aircraft carriers are banned from the Black Sea for all countries and submarines are banned for non-Black Sea states. Black Sea states may transit the Straits with submarines, but they must be surfaced for the duration of the transit. Otherwise, Black Sea states have no limits to tonnage or duration of time spent in the Black Sea. The United States has not agreed to the Montreux Convention, but abides by its articles to maintain good relations with Turkey—its NATO Ally.²⁵⁵

Russia, in accord with the Montreux Convention, has no naval limits within the Black Sea other than the exclusion of any aircraft carriers. On the other hand, the NATO Allies are severely restricted concerning access and the duration of operations in the Black Sea. This is a major advantage that Russia has in the region—one that makes it advantageous for Moscow to increase the size and capabilities of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet for maritime dominance of the Black Sea. It also creates a geographically strategic

²⁵¹Delanoe, “After the Crimean Crisis,” 369.

²⁵²“Traduction - Translation Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits Signed at Montreux, July 20th, 1936,” Baskent University, accessed December 5, 2015, http://sam.baskent.edu.tr/belge/Montreux_ENG.pdf.

²⁵³Delanoe, “After the Crimean Crisis,” 369.

²⁵⁴Ibid.

²⁵⁵Ibid.; “Traduction – Translation Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits.”

bastion for the Black Sea submarine fleet, which has the ability to easily transit throughout the European theater and beyond with little hindrance.²⁵⁶

Since the Straits are owned and controlled by Turkey, Russia must remain at least on neutral political and diplomatic terms with Ankara to keep the Straits open and accessible. As an example, it was reported in November 2015 that Turkey had blockaded Russian warships for a period of time—less than 24 hours—in the Black Sea by not allowing them to transit the Turkish Straits on their way to Syria. According to the Montreux Convention, Turkey is only able to take such action in a time of war or when threatened by aggression.²⁵⁷ Turkey's blockade was provoked by tension between the two countries when Turkey shot down a Russian jet on the Turkey–Syria border a week prior to the blockade, which caused a rift between Moscow and Ankara. Although motives were not publicly announced, some observers hypothesized that Ankara closed the Straits as a warning to Moscow not to retaliate.²⁵⁸

The Turkish Straits will remain an area of tension between Russia, Turkey, and Turkey's NATO Allies in the years to come. A shift in maritime power in the Black Sea from the current *status quo* to Russian dominance may cause further rifts between Moscow and Ankara leading to amplified actions on both sides. If Ankara shut down the Straits to Russian maritime traffic for a lengthy period of time, Moscow would view it as an act of war affecting its commerce and blocking its sea lines of communication.²⁵⁹ In such an event, Turkey could invoke NATO Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, and this might trigger a war of unpredictable proportions.²⁶⁰ This example sketches a worst-case scenario, but the Black Sea holds other possible arenas for flashpoints in NATO-Russian relations.

²⁵⁶“The Russian Navy,” x.

²⁵⁷“Turkey Blockades Russian Shipping, Black Sea Fleet Completely Cut Off,” *InfoWars*, November 29, 2015, <http://www.infowars.com/turkey-blockades-russian-shipping-black-sea-fleet-completely-cut-off/>.

²⁵⁸*Ibid.*

²⁵⁹*Ibid.*

²⁶⁰Yost, NATO's Balancing Act, 4.

3. Possible Flashpoints in NATO–Russian Relations

The Black Sea region, especially the Black Sea itself, is quickly becoming a stage for possible flashpoints in NATO-Russian relations. Russia's aggressive actions coupled with its modernization and buildup initiative for the Black Sea Fleet have been perceived by NATO as deliberate steps to dominate the Black Sea region. NATO has responded by moving its military forces closer to Russia's sphere of influence for longer durations to reassure its Allies and deter further Russian aggression. Additionally, NATO has significantly enhanced its BMD signature in the region, and Moscow regards this as a large NATO footprint against Russia's interests in the Black Sea region.²⁶¹

Russia has responded to the heightened NATO presence in its proximity by projecting its military power and making demonstrations of force capability. Russia will continue to build up its Black Sea Fleet as long as NATO is operating so close to Russia's vital interests located around its southern border in the Black Sea. Simultaneously, NATO will continue to build up its capabilities and maintain a large presence in the region to balance the perceived threat from Russia.²⁶²

NATO and Russian actions in this region exhibit a classic case of the security dilemma. As one side builds up its military capabilities in a particular region, the other side perceives this action to be threatening and enhances its own military capabilities in turn.²⁶³ The NATO-Russian security dilemma results from “a set of factors, including post-Cold-War differences in Eurasian policy, the highly controversial logic of nuclear deterrence, and a legacy of deep mutual mistrust,” in addition to other sociopolitical factors in the Black Sea region.²⁶⁴ Russia believes that NATO is attempting to “encircle and contain Russia,” and that all of Russia's own actions to this point have been

²⁶¹Mikhail Troitskiy, “The Security Dilemma and ‘Two-Level Games’ in U.S.-Russia Relations,” PONARS Eurasia, George Washington University, last modified September 2011, 1, http://www.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/ponars/pepm_176.pdf.

²⁶²Gabriel Mallows, “NATO's Security Dilemma,” NATO Association of Canada, accessed September 21, 2015, <http://natocouncil.ca/natos-security-dilemma/>.

²⁶³Troitskiy, “Security Dilemma,” 1.

²⁶⁴Ibid.

defensive in nature to protect its sovereignty and regional interests.²⁶⁵ If the security dilemma continues in the Black Sea region, it could have far reaching effects. Since each side perceives the other as the aggressor, and this perception is deeply rooted in a historical context, it is doubtful the dilemma will subside soon.

Furthermore, Russia's Black Sea Fleet initiative is "an attempt to change the regional balance of power" in order to assert Moscow's hegemony in the Black Sea region.²⁶⁶ In trying to regain its great power status, Russia is willing to take more aggressive steps to assert its supremacy over the weaker Black Sea states. Russia regards a larger and more powerful Black Sea Fleet as the key mechanism to assert pressure in the region. As NATO and Russia continue to face multiple challenges in relation to one another in the Black Sea region, risks of confrontations will also continue to emerge, pending a possible return to partnership and cooperation.

D. CONCLUSION

The Black Sea Fleet modernization and buildup initiative is going to provide Russia with the capability to access the greater oceans and to exert its influence throughout areas located along the world's major shipping lanes. Russia's increased presence around the world's oceans will open new prospects and challenges for the NATO Allies, as well as for Russia in pursuit of its extended interests. An enlarged Black Sea Fleet has the potential to provoke substantial tension with NATO, but it also has the potential to act as a security partner for the Alliance in the region for operations against terrorism, trafficking, and piracy. It is in NATO's and Russia's mutual best interests to pursue cooperation. As Russia's Black Sea Fleet is transformed into a veritable 21st century fleet, the greatest challenge NATO and Russia will face is that of recognizing shared interests and establishing a security partnership.

²⁶⁵Mallows, "NATO's Security Dilemma."

²⁶⁶Larrabee, "United States and Security in the Black Sea Region," 307–8.

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VI. CONCLUSION

The Black Sea region has become a contested arena between Russia and the United States and its NATO Allies with regard to economic, political, and security interests. The increase in U.S. and NATO military presence and exercises in the Black Sea has followed Russia's conduct of "snap" military exercises and unprofessional military maneuvers against U.S. and NATO military assets in the Black Sea. Russia portrays the United States and NATO as antagonists that are attempting to spread their influence in what Russia regards as its privileged sphere of influence. The United States and NATO, on the other hand, see Russia as the aggressor that is undermining international law and using "salami-slicing" tactics through hybrid warfare to effectively succeed in its objective of regaining regional influence as a great power—a status that it has already claimed. The United States and its NATO Allies have therefore increased their military presence and the quantity and scale of their exercises in the Black Sea as a response to Russia's aggressive actions, such as its annexation of Crimea in March 2014—an action that is not recognized by the EU, NATO, or the UN. The NATO Allies also recently reaffirmed their security assurance to Allies and partners in the Black Sea region at the 2016 Warsaw Summit when the Allies proclaimed that "We will also deepen our focus on security in the Black Sea region."²⁶⁷

The clashing perceptions that Russia and the United States and its NATO Allies have of one another, along with Russia's ambitious military maneuvers in the Black Sea region, have resulted in a security dilemma. This security dilemma requires open dialogue between NATO and Russia, which NATO leaders called for at the 2016 Warsaw Summit:

We remain open to a periodic, focused and meaningful dialogue with a Russia willing to engage on the basis of reciprocity in the NRC [NATO-Russia Council], with a view to avoiding misunderstanding, miscalculation, and unintended escalation, and to increase transparency

²⁶⁷North Atlantic Council, "Warsaw Summit Communiqué," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified July 20, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm.

and predictability. We also have military lines of communication. We have agreed to continue to use all these channels to address the critical issues we face, and call on Russia to make good use of all lines of communication.²⁶⁸

Despite the U.S. and NATO attempts to establish an open dialogue, the Russian Federation—under its president, Vladimir Putin—has conducted a major anti-American propaganda campaign on the Russian public. Simultaneously, Moscow also runs a pro-Russia propaganda campaign on its public that is intended to blame the West for all of Russia’s economic and security problems, while projecting the blame onto the West, and more specifically, onto the United States. As the target of this disinformation campaign, the Russian public is led to believe that its leader, Vladimir Putin, is a solid and unwavering force leading Russia to prosperity in a world of chaos.

This powerful image of Putin that Russia projects to its public is vital to its current regime survival, which is often bolstered through a demonstration of Russia’s military might. Since Russians accord high esteem to powerful leaders, it is important that Putin be viewed in this light. Furthermore, these Russian propaganda campaigns highlight Russia’s unwillingness to engage in open dialogue with the United States and its NATO Allies. Russia appears to prefer a clandestine approach to send messages to the United States and its NATO Allies. Russia has used hybrid warfare tactics, including manipulation of international law, propaganda, and shows of military force.

The Black Sea is a contained body of water that is strictly controlled by Turkey under the rules of the Montreux Convention of 1936, which provides favorable conditions for Russia’s navy. Russia will continue to increase its military—especially naval—capabilities in the Black Sea region to tip the balance of power in its favor. The United States and its NATO Allies, despite the challenges they face in relation to the restrictions of the Montreux Convention to their naval forces, must maintain consistent naval patrols of the Black Sea to deter Russian aggression or coercion. This includes the

²⁶⁸North Atlantic Council, “Warsaw Summit Communiqué.”

continuation of comprehensive combined military exercises by the NATO Allies in the Black Sea region.

Russia's buildup and modernization of its Black Sea Fleet will shift the power construct of the Black Sea in the years to come. The United States and NATO are acting now to establish a solid foothold in the region through their increased military presence, including the four U.S. naval destroyers with Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) and other capabilities to patrol the Black Sea. These U.S. naval destroyers will also prevent future gaps in the U.S. and NATO military presence in the Black Sea region, as well as provide a deterrent against Russia's regional ambitions that will further strengthen the resolve of the Alliance and its partners in the area.

Russia's continued buildup and modernization of its Black Sea Fleet will further provide Russia with opportunities for economic prosperity and enhanced security capabilities both domestically and globally. The military vessels in Russia's Black Sea Fleet will be able to travel further and remain at sea for longer periods of time. This will provide the opportunity to increase Russia's global presence and influence in areas previously unavailable. It also opens the door for greater Russian economic and security partnerships since the Black Sea Fleet is strategically positioned in a geographic region that allows for relatively easy access to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea, the Middle East through the Suez Canal, and the greater oceans beyond. Russia's ability to meet its ambitious Black Sea Fleet buildup and modernization plans, however, will depend on its continued capacity and will to invest in the Black Sea Fleet in the years to come. These factors are closely linked to Russia's economy, and more specifically, its crude oil and natural gas reserves, among other economic considerations.

Future relations between the United States, NATO, and Russia in the Black Sea region hinge on a myriad of developing economic, military, and political factors. As these factors continue to change, they will have direct and lasting effects on U.S.-Russian and NATO-Russian relations in the region. Further research is necessary as the economic, military, and political factors shift within the unstable global environment. The key areas of research may include: how the British exit from the European Union will affect EU

policy toward the Black Sea, since the United Kingdom has been outspoken against Russia's influence in the region; future patterns of U.S.–NATO and Russian military exercises and interactions in the Black Sea, and whether they will increase, decrease, or remain stable; and whether Russia's Black Sea Fleet buildup and modernization will be completed on time and as planned, considering changes in oil prices and the strength of Russia's economy as a whole.

These are but a few areas of research that need to be further examined before accurate conclusions can be drawn regarding future prospects for the United States and NATO in the Black Sea region. At this time, however, it is clear that a security dilemma exists between the United States and NATO and Russia in the Black Sea region. This security dilemma is further aggravated by deep-rooted historical politico-military attitudes that date back to the Cold War. The NATO Allies remain interested in “cooperation and dialogue on a multitude of topics [with Russia] ... to reduce mistrust, deepen understanding of the preoccupations of others, provide for reliable and continuous communication, and promote a sense of shared responsibility for international security.”²⁶⁹

Russia remains unwilling to reciprocate and continues to view the NATO Allies as adversaries. Until Russia takes steps to engage in open dialogue with the NATO Allies with the intention of seeking mutually beneficial cooperation, the existing economic, political, and security challenges will continue to overshadow current prospects for peace and stability in the Black Sea region.

²⁶⁹David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed: The Alliance's New Roles in International Security* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1998), 270.

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