Part I: **Conceptualizing the Black Sea Region**

Ninja Bumann, Kerstin S. Jobst, Stefan Rohdewald and Stefan Troebst

Introduction: Historical and Cultural Perspectives on the Black Sea Region

When the idea of publishing a handbook on the history and culture of the Black Sea was born, no one had any idea that at the time of publication the region would be at the very center of global security concerns. The annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula by the Russian Federation in 2014 brought the Black Sea into the focus of the media for some time. And in hindsight, the much-vaunted *Zeitenwende* had already begun to take shape at this moment. However, when the preparations for this handbook began in 2016, the editorial team did not expect the region to become the battlefield for future world history that is has been since the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The idea to publish a Black Sea Handbook was mainly based on an increased scholarly interest in the region among historians and area specialists that had developed a few years earlier. In 1995, the journalist and writer Neal Ascherson published the bestseller *Black Sea*, which provides an overview of three millennia of history on the Black Sea coasts and includes anecdotes and personal stories.[1] In 2004, Charles King published another popular monograph entitled *The Black Sea: A History*. Similar to Ascherson, King recounts the history of the lands surrounding the Black Sea from the Ancient Greeks to the 1990s on the basis of sources in multiple languages.[2]

Besides these two popular monographs, the essay "A Framework for the Study of the Black Sea World, 1789–1915" published in 1997 by the economic historian Eyüp Özveren was groundbreaking for the study of the Black Sea region as a historically constituted unit of analysis. Özveren characterized his so-called "Black Sea World" mainly on trans-maritime trade and commerce, which formed a cohesive unit.[3] These findings were further developed in Özveren's 2001 essay "The Black Sea World as a Unit of Analysis," in which he proposed to conceptualize the Black Sea region as a historical meso-region.[4] This ultimately inspired one of the handbook's editors, Stefan Troebst, to reflect on the conception of the Black Sea region as a "historical meso-region."[5] The present handbook aims to further investigate the structural features in historical and cultural terms that conceptualize the Balkan-Black Sea-Caucasus space as a specific space.

1 See Neal Ascherson, *Black Sea* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).

2 See Charles King, *The Black Sea: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

3 Eyüp Y. Özveren, "A Framework for the Study of the Black Sea World, 1789–1915," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 20, no. 1 (1997): 77–113.

4 See Eyüp Özveren, "The Black Sea World as a Unit of Analysis," in *Politics of the Black Sea: Dynamics of Cooperation and Conflict*, ed. Tunç Aybak (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 61–84.

5 See the chapter by Stefan Troebst on "The Black Sea Area as a Historical Meso-Region."

 https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110723175-002

1 The Black Sea as an Object of Historiography

Following these proposals to analyze the Black Sea as a historical entity, a growing number of research projects have examined different aspects of this area in the field of history and cultural studies. For instance, the ongoing project "History of the Black Sea, 18th–20th century," run by the Centre of Maritime History of the Institute for Mediterranean Studies (IMS) of the Foundation of Research and Technology (FORTH) in Rethymno, Crete, aims to analyze the economic activities of port cities of the Black Sea, which formed an integrated regional market.[6] The project "Knowledge Exchange and Academic Cultures in the Humanities. Europe and the Black Sea Region," conducted by the University of Graz and eleven other research institutions from the Black Sea region, investigated knowledge and cultural transfers between the Black Sea region and Western Europe from the late eighteenth century to the present.[7] Furthermore, the priority program "Transottomanica: Eastern European-Ottoman-Persian Mobility Dynamics" funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and under the chair of Stefan Rohdewald examines the historical ties between the Moscovite Tsardom/the Russian Empire, Poland-Lithuania, the Ottoman Empire, and Persia from the early modern period to the middle of the twentieth century. The Black Sea region is thus the main focus of the Transottoman migration society studied across the Empires.[8] And in the field of literature, the project "Batumi, Odessa, Trabzon. The Cultural Semantics of the Black Sea from the Perspective of Eastern Port Cities" implemented at the Leibniz-Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung (ZfL) explores different imaginations of the Black Sea from the perspective of those three Black Sea ports.[9] Lastly, there exists a "Black Sea Networks" initiative affiliated with the Columbia University that aims to connect regions, disciplines, and institutions in order to establish innovative interdisciplinary programs for studying the Black Sea region.[10]

In addition, some academic journals are specifically dedicated to the study of the Black Sea (and sometimes include other neighboring regions such as Southeastern Europe) in the social sciences and humanities. The interdisciplinary *Journal of Balkan and Black Sea Studies*, founded in 2018, provides an academic forum for the investigation of the Balkan countries and the former Soviet republics in historical as well as contem-

6 See "The Black Sea Research Project Web," accessed July 11, 2023, https://blacksea.gr/en/.

7 See "KEAC-BSR: Knowledge Exchange and Academic Cultures in the Humanities," Europe and the Black Sea Region, accessed July 11, 2023, https://blacksearegion.eu/.

8 See "DFG Priority Programme Transottomanica," project number 313079038, as represented on its website: accessed July 11, 2023, https://www.transottomanica.de/, and the relevant publications, especially the series, indicated there.

9 See "Batumi, Odessa, Trabzon: The Cultural Semantics of the Black Sea from the Perspective of Eastern Port Cities," ZfL. Leibniz-Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung, accessed June 8, 2020, https://www.zfl-berlin.org/project/batumi-odessa-trabzon-black-sea-semantics.html.

10 See "Black Sea Networks," Columbia University Slavic Department, accessed June 8, 2020, http://blackseanetworks.org/.

porary context.[11] A similar focus is pursued by the journal *South East European and Black Sea Studies*, which is associated with the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP). Since 2001, it has published cross-country analyses and research on individual countries within Southeastern Europe and the Black Sea region with a principal disciplinary focus on political science and international relations, political economy, political anthropology, and late modern and contemporary history.[12] And the journal *Karadeniz – Black Sea – Chernoe More*, established in 2009, is a quarterly periodical published in English, Turkish, and Russian which aims to produce and disseminate academic studies in all social disciplines.[13] In a similar vein, the online open-access journal *Euxeinos. Culture and Governance in the Black Sea Region,* published by the Center for Governance and Culture in Europe at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland, has provided political, cultural, and economic perspectives on social processes in the Black Sea region since 2011.[14]

Despite this growing number of research projects and initiatives focused on the Black Sea region, it is striking that it is not usually conceptualized as a historical meso-region sui generis in such reference works and handbooks.[15] While Russian and East European studies often divide the eastern part of the Eurasian continent into subregions such as "East-Central Europe," "Northeastern Europe," and "Southeastern Europe," only a few researchers have rather recently started to speak of a "Black Sea region" as a specific historical meso-region.

As Stefan Troebst outlines, this heuristic device serves to analyze de-territorialized units across state, social, and civilizational boundaries. And most recent historical research suggests that such a concept is also applicable for the Balkan-Black Sea-Caucasus space. Eyüp Özveren, in this regard, speaks of a "Black Sea world" that has the Black Sea as its center of gravity but encompasses a larger region. It partially overlaps with other regional conceptions, such as the "Mediterranean world," the Balkans, Eurasia, or the "Danubian world." The main constituents of the "Black Sea world" are, according to Özveren, circulations of people(s), fauna and flora, merchandise, technologies, and skills. Jörg Stadelbauer, on the other hand, draws attention to the region's distinctive physical geography. The geology and landscapes of the Black Sea area pro-

11 See "Journal of Balkan and Black Sea Studies," accessed June 10, 2020, https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/balkar.

12 See "Southeast European and Black Sea Studies," accessed June 10, 2020, https://www-tandfonline-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/toc/fbss20/current.

13 See "Karadeniz – Black Sea – Chernoe More: Black Sea International Scientific Journal," accessed June 10, 2020, http://www.dergikaradeniz.com/index.php/en/.

14 See "Euxeinos: Governance and Culture in the Black Sea Region," Center for Governance and Culture in Europe, University of St. Gallen, accessed August 16, 2023, https://gce.unisg.ch/en/euxeinos.

15 An exception is *The Black Sea Encyclopedia*, published in 2015. As it is, however, a cross-disciplinary reference book structured purely alphabetically, it does not satisfy the need for a historical and cultural handbook on the region. See Sergei R. Grinevetsky et al., *The Black Sea Encyclopedia* (Berlin: Springer, 2015).

duce many contrasts, ranging from different climate zones to mountain ranges juxtaposed with flat coastlines and significantly shaping the practices of historical actors.

2 The Black Sea from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century

The history of the Black Sea region usually begins in antiquity, around the eighth century BC, with the appearance of written texts—mostly in Greek. As David Braund points out, this often resulted in neglect of the many non-Greek peoples who inhabited the coasts as well as the hinterlands of the Black Sea, including the Scythians, Colchians, and Thracians, whose histories can be traced mainly through archeology. Due to its vast reservoir of resources for the surrounding areas as well as the Mediterranean world, the ancient Black Sea region was already characterized by the movement of people and goods. At the same time, security—especially towards the north—was a key issue. The northern Black Sea was the object of several failed imperial ambitions by the Persian, Greek, and Roman empires. In the southern Black Sea area, Byzantium/Constantinople began to develop as the center of the Eastern Romans, driven by the economic importance of the transfer of goods and peoples across the Black Sea.

Stefan Albrecht outlines the history of the "Pontos euxeinos" in the Middle Ages as a "Byzantine Sea." The successors to Eastern Rome continued to dominate the area in political and economic terms. Nevertheless, the appearance of new actors—including Rus from the ninth century onwards, the Crusaders, and the expanding Mongol Empire—gradually challenged the Byzantine dominance. Economic relations expanded globally, and trade goods moved between the Iberian Peninsula, China, and Mamluk Egypt, using the Black Sea area as a transit region. The Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 ended this global circulation of goods and turned the Black Sea into an "Ottoman Lake."

For the early modern period, Dariusz Kołodziejczyk describes how the northern Black Sea region witnessed the influences of various political actors—the persistent Golden Horde (*Ulug Ulus*), Lithuania, Nogays and Cossacks, the expanding Ottoman Empire, and, later, the advancing Russian Empire. He draws attention to the discussion of whether new political entities claiming Genghisid heritage, such as the Crimean Giray Khans, can be seen as successors to the Golden Horde, which "survived" in a diminished form until the Russian annexation of Crimea in 1783. At the same time, the Ottoman Empire exercised power on almost all the coasts of the Black Sea by the mid-sixteenth century, until its influence became challenged in the northern Black Sea areas by Cossacks and Nogays as new actors from the late sixteenth century on. The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774 and the Russian conquest of the Crimean Khanate in 1783, along with the second and third partitions of Poland in 1793 and 1795, brought the northern Black Sea region under the rule of Russia, which emerged as a major European power. Kenan İnan, on the other hand, sketches the political and economic de-

velopments in the southern Black Sea region between 1500 and 1700. While this region was dominated by the Ottoman Empire, its rivalries in trade and wars with Safavid Persia in the Caucasus and in Eastern Anatolia still significantly affected daily life and trade activities along the Black Sea.

Kerstin S. Jobst and Stefan Rohdewald trace the rivalries between the Ottoman and Russian Empires in the Black Sea region from the sixteenth century to the outbreak of World War I. With the Russian annexation of the Crimean Khanate along with the northern coast of the Black Sea in 1783, the shifting power balance was also felt beyond the Black Sea in Europe and the Near East. Russia's advance also diminished the Persian-Ottoman antagonism, as the treaties of Gulistan in 1813 and Turkmenchay in 1828 consolidated Russia's power in the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea region. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Black Sea became the central theater of war between the Ottoman Empire and the allied European Great Powers against Russia's hegemonic ambitions. At the same time, these long episodes of military confrontation were characterized by traveling concepts of warfare between the two empires. In fact, the Ottoman and Russian reforms in military, politics, and society since the eighteenth century were in many respects mutually influenced. Moreover, the Russo-Ottoman transimperial ties were fostered by economic and political networks consisting of Armenian and Greek merchant communities as well as Muslim Tatar and Circassian migrant groups.

The interwar period is presented by Adrian Brisku in a triadic narrative. While he portrays World War I as a continuation of the previous antagonism and rivalry between the Russian and Ottoman Empires, the post-World War I period is characterized by historically unusual friendly relations between the two main successor states—the Soviet Union and the Republic of Turkey—and a multilateral regime based on international law and agreements, such as the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) and the Montreux Convention on the Regime of the Straits (1936).

Onur İşçi highlights the moments of cooperation and conflict across the Black Sea during and after World War II. As he points out, the war drastically changed the political landscape around the Black Sea, as the smaller littoral Black Sea states were caught in the power struggle between the Soviet Union and Turkey. Ultimately, the Soviet Union gained two new satellite states (Romania and Bulgaria) and turned the Black Sea into a "Russian lake" free of Western interference. At the same time, Turkey remained the only littoral state outside the Soviet sphere of influence and joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in order to maintain its status free of Soviet incursions.

The end of the Cold War dissolved this block confrontation in the Black Sea area, and paved the way for intensified cooperation among the Black Sea littoral states. As a result, various initiatives and multilateral organizations, such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) or the GUAM (later GUUAM), emerged in the 1990s to promote economic and political exchange. However, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 put a halt to these cooperative political Black Sea endeavors. With the ongoing war in Ukraine (as of the summer of 2023), the prospects for a unified political landscape around the Black Sea are bleak.

While we can only speculate about future political and economic cooperation in the Black Sea, a look into the past from a historical and cultural perspective renders several structural features visible. More specifically, this handbook focuses on common ideas and identities, mobility and transfers, as well as violence, conflict, and conflict resolution, which provide guiding examples for the interconnectedness of the different Black Sea coasts from their hinterland across the Sea. Where appropriate and possible, some chapters also consider contemporary developments in the Black Sea region. However, they were only able to take into account the rapidly changing constellations up to the completion of the editorial work (2021/22).

3 Ideas and Identities in the Black Sea Region

It is not only in geopolitical terms that the Black Sea can be considered a pivotal region. The societies living on its shores have developed various shared and unifying, as well as contrasting and competing identities and ideas. Zaur Gasimov points out that the relevance of the Black Sea for regional concepts of national security and raison d'état varies enormously among the different littoral states. Drawing on Ukrainian geopolitical thinking about the Black Sea, Polish-supported Prometheanism, Russian-backed Eurasianism, and Turanian perceptions of the Black Sea, he emphasizes that only in Ukraine and Georgia is the Black Sea perceived as central to the countries' national security, while in the other geopolitical discourses, it plays a less prominent role.

From the long nineteenth century onwards, national identities emerged as relevant categories of belonging in the Black Sea region. Dennis Dierks links the regional nation-building processes to intellectual transfers from the "West" and to a symbolical (re-)alignment of the Black Sea region with "Europe." After World War I with its ensuing violent ethnic engineering, the nation-state principle was established in all parts of the Black Sea region. However, since the dissolution of the bloc confrontation, post-imperial nostalgia has been on the rise, such as neo-Ottomanism in Turkey or the concept of the "Russkii mir" (Russian World), propagated by Putin's Russia as a space of civilization distinct from and (allegedly) superior to the West.

Nikolas Pissis and Hannah Müller-Sommerfeld discuss the importance of religion and religious identities. Pissis highlights the diversity of Christian communities in the Black Sea region, including primarily Orthodox Christians of the major Slavic, Greek, Romanian, and Georgian ethno-linguistic groups, but also Armenian Monophysite communities, Levantine Catholics, Gagauz Orthodox, Russian Old Believers, German Mennonites, and Armenian and Pontic Greek Protestants. At the same time, these diverse Christian communities evolved collective identities and interacted with one another. Hannah Müller-Sommerfeld, on the other hand, presents the diversity of Muslim and Jewish communities in today's Black Sea littoral states and their historical background. She concludes that the heterogeneous and fragmented religious communities often overlap with ethno-linguistic affiliations. Muslims are predominantly Sunni, and while they form the majority in Turkey, today they can be found only as religious mi-

norities in the other Black Sea states. Jewish communities are composed of Sephardic and Ashkenazi groups, while a peculiarity of the Black Sea region is the presence of the Turkic-speaking Crimean Karaites, who reject the religious normative meaning of the Talmud and rabbinic teachings. Despite their ethno-religious plurality and diversity, Black Sea Muslims and Jews have closely intertwined histories, also due to their historical political affiliations with the Ottoman Empire on the southern and the Russian Empire, and later the Soviet Union, on the northern coast.

Tangible and intangible places of memory—or *lieux de mémoire*—play a central role in a cultural and historical perspective on the Black Sea region; thus, two major chapters deal with sites of memory and remembrance that connect the peoples and communities from across the different shores, as well as those that are objects of "wars of monuments." Nicole Kançal-Ferrari emphasizes that dominant narratives of memory sites need to be analyzed alongside silenced memories, as remembering space involves multifaceted processes of selection, often under the influence of political aims and goals. Memory sites have, then, meanings and attached memories on multiple levels—local, national, global, and across diaspora communities. Using selected examples around the Black Sea (Constanţa, Batumi and Azizi, Trabzon, the Sumela Monastery, and Bağçasaray), Kançal-Ferrari highlights the complexities of remembering and silencing the history of specific spatial sites. Tatiana Zhurzhenko, in turn, describes the tensions and contests over monuments as well as the political instrumentalization of memory in the Ukrainian-Russian conflict. She highlights that monuments link narratives about the past to a specific territory and thereby play a significant role in demarcating, contesting, and shifting national borders.

As Zaal Andronikashvili outlines, the Black Sea region is known for the location of many well-known myths, including ancient Greek, Hittite, and biblical ones. Especially the southern, eastern, and northern Black Sea region share many legends and myths with common meta-plots as well as associations with the Sea and aquatic elements. Modern literature is also connected to the Black Sea and the coast. Helena Ulbrechtová and Siegfried Ulbrecht analyze the role of the Black Sea, the Crimean Peninsula, and the Caucasus Mountains as important motifs in Russian literature since the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. They point out that Crimea and the Caucasus in particular demonstrate Russia's coloniality and acculturation processes. Larissa Cybenko depicts the prominent role of the Black Sea and Crimea in Ukrainian folk poetry and literature. She highlights that while early modern folk poetry was characterized by the tensions and military conflicts between Ukrainian Cossacks and Crimean Tatars and Ottomans, modern Ukrainian literature often depicted Crimea as an ethnic, religiously and culturally heterogeneous, and transnational place that resulted in the acceptance of the Crimean Tatars as the peninsula's indigenous population.

Kristina Popova, Nurie Muratova, and Georgeta Nazarska draw attention to the role of gender alongside ethnic, national, and religious categories by highlighting women's activities in education and culture in the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Although, as they argue, feminism emerged relatively late in

the patriarchal-dominated societies of the Black Sea region, there was a strong presence of female leadership in the interwar period.

4 Mobility and Transfers in, around, and across the Black Sea

Throughout history, the Black Sea region is also characterized by different flows and transfers of peoples, goods, knowledge, and ideas. Trade and economy played a crucial role in this, as Eyüp Özveren has already emphasized in his conceptualization of a "Black Sea World" that was also characterized by the sea and its port-cities as a trade hub.[16] More than a quarter of a century later, several research projects have already begun to analyze the trade connections and merchants' activities in the Black Sea in more detail.[17] The sea's role as a hub for trade and economy also went hand in hand with the flows of people and knowledge, however. At the same time, this mobility and transfer was dependent on the development of transportation networks and infrastructure.

Migration and human mobility constituted a defining and structural element of the Black Sea region that can be observed over the *longue durée.* István Vásáry outlines the nomadic migrations between the fourth and thirteenth centuries. Since the colonization of the Pontic coasts by Greek settlers, Greek culture and language had been present throughout Roman and Byzantine times. However, the migration of nomadic peoples arriving from the east significantly affected the demographic structures on the northern and southern coasts of the Black Sea. While the north was characterized by constant incoming nomadic migration, the Greek population and culture preserved its dominant role in the southern Black Sea region until the arrival of the Seljuks in the eleventh century. Still, the Mongol-Tatar conquest in the thirteenth century also accelerated the already ongoing Turkicization of the northern Pontic coast. Arkadiusz Blaszczyk highlights that for the period between the thirteenth and the eighteenth centuries too, Crimea and the western Black Sea region were focal points of migration, originating predominantly in the northeast and the southeast; peoples including the Seljuks, Turks/Yörüks, Armenians, Circassians, Jews and Karaites, Mongols/Tatars, and Nogays were drawn to the shores of the Black Sea for various reasons, the location

16 Y. Eyüp Özveren, "A Framework for the Study of the Black Sea World, 1789–1915," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 20, no. 1 (1997): 91–99.

17 The project "History of the Black Sea, 18th–20th century" run by the Centre of Maritime History of the Institute for Mediterranean Studies (IMS) in Rethymo, Crete, highlights, for instance, the interconnections of the port cities in the Black Sea. See "The Black Sea Research Project Web," accessed July 11, 2023, https://blacksea.gr/en/.

Boris Belge's current research project "Managing Trade: Infrastructure and Economic Practices in the Port of Odessa (1794–1905)" investigates Odesa's role for the development of trade and economy in the Russian Empire. See https://forschdb2.unibas.ch/inf2/rm_projects/object_view.php?r=4602406.

of the northern Black Sea on relevant long-distance trade routes as well as on the fringes of empires playing a significant role. Andrew Robarts, furthermore, investigates the migration that took place in the Black Sea region between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. As he argues, migration was, on the one hand, significantly shaped by the introduction of the steamships in the late 1820s, which fostered active migration along the north-south axis. On the other hand, Russian-Ottoman relations actively affected their state-driven policies toward controlling migratory populations, the largest groups including Bulgarians, Crimean Tatars, Circassians, and Jews.

Human mobility, however, also included slaves. Christoph Witzenrath outlines that from antiquity to the nineteenth century, the Black Sea area witnessed a wide variety of asymmetric dependencies, including slavery, within the various state formations. The slave trade was an important factor that not only connected the northern and southern shores of the Black Sea, but was also established beyond the Black Sea up to Mamluk Egypt. A result of various forms of human mobility was the exchange of ideas and knowledge. Dominik Gutmeyr-Schnur analyzes the increasingly internationalized exchange of knowledge that began in the Black Sea region in the second half of the eighteenth century. The region began to attract the attention of foreign scholars, and modern disciplines were developed and institutionalized in the humanities throughout the region.

All these exchanges and transfers were facilitated by the development of transfer technologies and infrastructures. At the same time, the routes were one of the most enduring facts and consequences of trade, migration, and knowledge exchange networks. For a region centering on a sea, maritime transportation was certainly significant. However, as Florian Riedler points out, before the introduction of steam shipping —that is, from antiquity to the eighteenth century—land transportation was equally important, since difficult weather conditions prevented sea travel in winter and sometimes even in summer. With regard to the "long" nineteenth century, Reinhard Nachtigal highlights the consequences of the Russian conquest of the northern Black Sea coast and the South Caucasus, which led to the development of port cities and maritime infrastructure that increasingly connected the region to other oceans. While these developments fostered trade and economic expansion, they also led to increased processes of migration. Stefan Rohdewald examines the role of energy resources and infrastructures in the Black Sea region since the late nineteenth century. He highlights the Transottoman context of Russian-Ottoman and Turkish-Iranian entanglements in the transportation of oil, and, since the mid-twentieth century, natural gas, which has a global significance for energy infrastructure. At the same time, energy resources and infrastructures have played an important role during conflicts and warfare, stretching from World War I to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

5 Violence, Conflict, and Conflict Resolution in the Black Sea Region

Violence and conflict have been present in the Black Sea throughout its history and have taken various forms. One such phenomenon is piracy—and as Albrecht Fuess points out, it has played a role from the beginnings of seafaring and maritime trade. Piracy began primarily as a coastal business, and there was not always a clear distinction between pirates and merchant seafarers. Arkadiusz Blaszczyk examines the groups and bandits operating in the border zones between empires in the early modern period, including Tatar raiders, Cossack groups, Caucasian pirates, the Celalis of Anatolia, and the Kıncalıs of Rumelia.

A general overview of the naval history of the Black Sea is provided by Tuncay Zorlu. Due to its geo-strategic and economic characteristics, the sea has been a theater of naval battles throughout history. At the same time, this has facilitated the circulation and transfer of naval technology and know-how as well as personnel. Mara Kozelsky focuses in her chapter on the Crimean War (1853–56) and its consequences for the Black Sea, where this global war started and was concentrated, while it also had significant impact on the hinterlands. The Crimean War brought about not only a new type of mass violence, but also advances and innovations in infrastructure, warfare technique, and battlefield medicine, as well as a new role of mass media in military conflict.

The geopolitical conflicts between the Russian and the Ottoman Empire in the "long" nineteenth century did not always result in direct military confrontations, as Lora Gerd outlines. Rather, they were also accompanied by "soft power" measures, such as in the case of Russia's imperial Church policy. The Holy Synod and the Russian foreign ministry used diplomatic and cultural means, based on the Orthodox faith shared with the Greek and Slavonic populations under Ottoman rule, to support their aspirations of further penetration into the Ottoman Empire.

Violence against populations has not only been a collateral effect of military rivalries and conflicts. The Black Sea region also witnessed targeted violence against specific religious, ethnic, or national groups, resulting in persecutions, mass deportations, and genocide.

Mariana Hausleitner sheds light on the destruction and murder of the Jewish populations around the Black Sea during World War II. However, she also emphasizes that, due to the different settlement patterns of Jews, the Jewish populations in the various littoral states had different experiences—ranging from the systematic destruction in southern Ukraine by the German occupying forces, to the killing of a quarter of a million Jews in Romanian-controlled Transnistria through massacres and disease, to the discrimination against Jews in neutral Turkey.

Various ethnic groups in the Black Sea region were also targeted for ethnic cleansing and genocide before, during, and after World War I. Mass violence led to the genocide of Armenians and Pontic Greeks in the Ottoman Empire. On the northern shore, the Holodomor, a man-made famine under Soviet rule, led to genocidal violence and

the mass killings of Ukrainians and other ethnic and social groups in the early 1930s. These genocidal policies continued during World War II within the context of the Soviet deportations of different ethnic and national groups. Rudolf Mark outlines the domestic reasons for as well as the role of international politics in the deportations of Crimean Tatars, Greeks, Moldovans, Germans, Italians, Meskhetians, Turks, Khemshids, and others in the Soviet Union and of Turks and Jews in Bulgaria during and after World War II. He thereby argues that although deportations cannot be directly equated with genocide, they often served as a first phase of ensuing acts of genocide.

Conflicts also emerged with the dissolvement of the block confrontation and the fall of the Soviet Union. Although the latter has often been perceived as rather peaceful, especially in contrast with the violent breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, various "intra state" conflicts emerged in the former Soviet Union, also in the Black Sea region. Jan Zofka analyzes these conflicts ranging from Moldova to Ukraine and the Caucasus. Drawing on the military conflicts in Crimea, Odesa, Transnistria, Abkhazia, and Ajaria, he investigates to what extent these post-Soviet conflicts were connected to the Black Sea. And although he states that these conflicts were mostly associated with the decay of the Soviet state, the Black Sea influenced the development of the conflicts as a site and through maritime infrastructures, but also as an imaginary space. As Alexandr Osipian highlights, such conflicts have large impacts on logistics and infrastructure. Analyzing the Russo-Ukrainian conflict between 2014 and 2022, he concludes that the military conflict on the Black Sea littoral has not only regional, but also global impact, for instance with regard to global food security.

6 Approaching the Black Sea Region as a Cultural and Historical Entity

The diverse chapters in this handbook demonstrate that all the shores of the Black Sea have been connected in some way by shared ideas and flows of people, goods, and knowledge. While these connections and transfers may have waxed and waned in scope and relevance over time, this handbook provides a basis for approaching the region as a specific "Black Sea world" or a "historical meso-region." The chapters highlight various features that connect the different shores across the sea and deep into the hinterland.

Writing a cultural history of the Black Sea, however, presents several challenges. In antiquity, the different people who inhabited the region left different kinds of traces. While we have a variety of textual sources for the Greek colonization of the Black Sea, we have very few material remains of the non-Greek peoples. As a result, the latter are largely marginalized in historiography. The availability and accessibility of (textual) sources is also asymmetrical for the later periods, while archeological findings have not been sufficiently analyzed yet either. And even for the periods for which we have fairly detailed archival documentation in various archives and languages, its anal-

ysis and interpretation often remain unbalanced. These limitations are often due to language barriers and disciplinary boundaries; for example, historians with a background in Eastern European or Russian history have tended to focus on the northern Black Sea region, using Russian, Ukrainian, and other Slavic sources, while Ottoman scholars have tended to focus on the southern shores. Fortunately, an increasing number of scholars have overcome these challenges by grasping the interconnections between the southern and northern shores, often, but not always, based on mastery of Russian, Ukrainian, and other Slavic languages as well as Turkish and/or Ottoman.[18]

The present handbook aims to overcome these hurdles by bringing together authors from different national and disciplinary contexts, resulting in diverse perspectives on the Black Sea region, from antiquity to the present.[19] The chapters' authors are thereby responsible only for their own contributions and do not accept liability for any statements made in the other chapters of the volume. The editors are certainly aware that it is not possible to cover every single aspect of the region's history during such a long period. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic, precarious academic working conditions, and other reasons made the completion of some chapters of the handbook difficult, and in some cases even impossible. Although it was not always viable, the editors have tried to fill these gaps in some other chapters, while they are aware of the remaining missing aspects and issues. The editors nevertheless hope that this handbook will serve as a basis for the further development of Black Sea studies, which will hopefully lead to the remaining gaps being filled in more detail in the future.

18 Recent examples include, for instance: Eileen M. Kane, *Russian Hajj: Empire and the Pilgrimage to Mecca* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Andrew Robarts, *Migration and Disease in the Black Sea Region: Ottoman-Russian Relations in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); Onur İşçi, *Turkey and the Soviet Union During Wolrd War II: Diplomacy, Discord and International Relations* (London: I.B. Tauris, Bloomsbury, 2020).

19 The editorial work was completed in 2021–2022. The individual chapters could therefore only cover developments up to that date.