



THE LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE REGION – REGIONALISM – SECURITY EQUATION IN THE BLACK SEA

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This study presents a few considerations about the leadership, the geopolitical and strategic importance of the Black Sea region, and potential threats or risks against security, stability, prosperity, and cooperation. It tries to demonstrate the availability of some solutions for the improvement of peace and stability in this part of the World. Much has been written about leadership in many books, researches or studies, and every day around the world, people discuss the major world problems. Leadership could be the key point to solving the equation region – regionalism and security, and to identifying new ways of building security and prosperity in the Black Sea region, in Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Asian areas. Together, we can build bridges over the Black Sea for the present and future generations.

Keywords: leadership; geopolitic and strategic importance; threats and risks; security and prosperity; the Black Sea region.

The existing imbalances among different sub-regions of the Black Sea represented for the specialists in regionalism and security immutable controversies or endless outbursts of experiments in the laboratories of politico-military analysts. Moreover, both the concept of regionalism and that of security in this region are linked to a multitude of variables whose interaction could put regional leadership in a position easily to be assimilated by riparian states.

The post-pandemic international order will reach new perspectives highlighted especially by the evolution of the Black Sea region from the geopolitical point of view. Security in this region and the Eastern Mediterranean Sea is shaped primarily by Russia's actions, Turkey's politico-military position and, NATO and EU stance on the restrictive measures that should be imposed on Moscow as a result of the crisis in Ukraine. The geopolitical contradictions that govern this region, as a series of key paradoxes that have shaped the region's profile so far and will continue to define its future are making their presence increasingly clear. This article seeks to illustrate and bring to light these paradoxes such as the minor interaction between the economic factors of the countries in

the region, major differences in religion, ethnicity, and language, which influence regional security.

The new issues that regional security in the Black Sea will have will be primarily influenced by a new approach to NATO's regional leadership with the implementation of the new Strategic Concept¹. This Strategic Concept will take into account all changes in the environment security (probably with certain interpretations and accents specific to the Black Sea) and the need for much more applied cooperation in the field of common security. The identity of the Black Sea is a multi-dimensional one, with deep historical reverberations and shaken by multiple political-military and economic interests of many empires and alliances.

The Heads of State and Government of the NATO Member States, on the occasion of the North Atlantic Council meeting to mark the 70th anniversary of its existence, which took place in London on 3-4 December 2019, empowered the NATO Secretary General to initiate a reflection process for an assessment of ways to strengthen NATO's political dimension². On this occasion, some extremely important elements were highlighted, namely the fact that NATO needs to improve its leadership and increase its role in ensuring a climate of security and trust among nations belonging to the same region. In the same spirit, it is necessary to develop a program to accelerate knowledge and skills in areas such as leadership and planning at the command level³.

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Thus, security can be considered as a result of processes that include the *citizen* (physical security), the *group* or society, and the *region*. In this context, regional security in the Black Sea can be considered as a topical one, almost permanently, given the fact that some states in the region are characterized by instability or an intense promotion of national interests.

Region and regionalism, within security. Conceptualization

In the first part of this article, I will first define the equation *region - regionalism* from the perspective of security but also from the specific distinct elements from the Black Sea, and later I will integrate them and highlight the fundamental role of the leadership in state' instruments of power, such as diplomacy, information, military and economic (DIME).

The two concepts are extremely broad, profound, and unclear at the same time. Researchers in the field find them extremely difficult to define with a rigor that is accepted by the entire academic world. The region is a "large territory, which has certain specific characteristics (climate, relief, economic resources, etc.)"⁴. But this definition is incomplete and can be further developed taking into account the geopolitical factor. The international literature defines the region as a group of countries located in the same geographical area, but without clearly identifying its boundaries. The renowned American professor, Bruce M. Russett analyzed the relationship between the political system and the social environment, trying to identify in how many regions the globe is divided by, taking into account the similarities and differences of political systems, social and cultural homogeneity, and last but not least, economic interdependence⁵.

I think that it's wrong if we analyze the regions only geographically without taking into account the political systems that govern the Black Sea region, cultural and social homogeneity, geographical dimension, attitude towards compliance with international law, and implementation of decisions of international fora such as the UN, OSCE, etc.

But these region and regionalism definitions are connected with dynamic and rapidly metamorphosing elements, such as cooperation within the instruments of state power (DIME) and in relation to those in the Black Sea region,

the integration of states in the region within the democratic framework under the auspices UN, EU and NATO, and, last but not least, the construction and development of the region based on the common goals of all governments. Thus, regionalism within this equation can have values between unknown and vaguely defined boundaries, and leadership, as a final result, must cover multiple areas.

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Thus, security can be considered as a result of processes that include the citizen (human physical security), the group or society and the region. In this context, regional security in the Black Sea can be considered topical, almost permanently, given the fact that some states in the region are characterized by instability or intense promotion of national interests.

But these region and regionalism definitions are connected with dynamic and rapidly metamorphosing elements, such as cooperation within the instruments of state power (DIME) and in relation to the states of the Black Sea region, the integration of states in the region under democracy under the auspices of the UN, EU and NATO, and, last but not least, the construction and development of the region based on the common goals of all governments. Thus, regionalism within this equation can have values between unknown and vaguely defined boundaries, and leadership, as a final result, must cover multiple areas.

The first would be the security context in the region, which by definition should be unitary in the Black Sea region. Unfortunately, security in the Black Sea region has different facets, depending on the regional or global interests of each state or

organization that has regional interests or some to project globally. Regional leadership cannot be characterized by identity and convergence.

The second element is the international relations among the states in the region which should be based on mutual respect and trust. These characteristics influence both, regional leadership and security. The attacks by the Russian Federation in Georgia in 2008 and the illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula fully contradict both, mutual respect and trust. Moreover, leadership has reached such low levels that without the full involvement of all governmental or non-governmental actors, it would be difficult to reach an acceptable level that would restart the multi-dimensional dialogue of (international) relations.

The third element I consider to be highlighted by the lack of a leading state to take responsibility for building and maintaining a connected level of security on democratic grounds. This state or organization must show devotion, initiative and ingenuity to bring all the factors involved to the same table. They must highlight regional leadership, but without a global actor that facilitates all this and that is unanimously accepted by all states, it is difficult to initiate.

And now the fourth element intervenes, namely the actor/state/organization to support, through his quality as undisputed, and accepted without exception leader. The region should be indivisible from the security point of view and this support element must facilitate the development of relations, security and the citizen's well-being. At any risk, it will use leadership as a support instrument in the clear delimitation and definition of the Black Sea region in the security context. Of course, the *responsibility for initiating* such an approach is enormous, both for the riparian states and for the one that assumes such a construction, but without a *Leader* that all states have to recognize it, the equation becomes a mathematical system with many unknowns⁶.

The criteria for defining the region are multiple. First of all, I emphasize the importance of policy in defining a region. But politics is based on the historical, geographical, cultural elements, the nations that make up the states, the ideology of which it is part, and last but not least, the struggle for politico-military to the detriment of the regional balance of power. The greater the difference between the political spheres of each state, the

more difficult their integration in the region will be. Also, the cultural and social aspects of the states in a region can be decisive in defining the homogeneity of a region. The more homogeneous the elements listed above, the more the states will have common political, military, economic, financial and development objectives.

I believe that another important element is the border permeability, which is fundamental to the identity of the region. Otherwise, different sub-regions or even micro-regions may appear in a region, with contrasting attitudes, volatile politico-military stability and a lack of respect for common regional security.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the new regionalism, defined by the relationship, formal or informal, among *states* (but also *non-state actors*) – the relevant *civil society* – and, *private companies* appear more and more obvious. So, "... the new regionalism is not limited to interstate regional organizations and institutions... but rather is characterized by complexity, fluidity and non-compliance due to the multitude of states and non-state actors that form multiple coalitions"⁷.

Today's greatest international relations specialist, Barry Buzan, pointed out that the definition of security has undergone many forms over time, but he considers the security complex as a set of elements whose major securitization and de-securitization processes are so interconnected so that their security problems cannot be reasonably analyzed or solved outside them⁸. The famous professor of Cornell University, Peter Katzenstein, stated that "the name of the region is no longer "real" in terms of geography, but is more "natural" in terms of culture"⁹.

However, regionalism could be disregarded, or even challenged, given the ambiguities it induces and the different end results in the case of analyzes based on similar terms of comparison such as culture, religion, civil society or foreign affairs political interests. But all this fades in the face of the effects that regionalism and regional security produce: stability, democracy, and political and economic integration.

Leadership and the unknowns of the equation

The dynamics of changing the countries' borders around the Black Sea region represent



the reflection of the regional powers and their interests in a much more sophisticated puzzle such as becoming a superpower, a fact imposed by political and military leaders. This change in borders must first be assessed from a legal point of view, as Moscow has shown that national interests take precedence over respect for international legal norms. Russia is now proving that it is playing the role of the regional leader in the field of Black Sea regional security, trying to warn every time the political and military dimension of NATO and the EU. The interest of the whole region is to block or limit Russia's tendency to become a leader in the region, even if it may resort to energy blackmail or control of the Black Sea. Historical experiences and lessons learned over the last century have shown us that balance of power under common leadership could be a viable solution.

The leadership of the Black Sea region must be based on a strong political and economic network, harmonized (legal, economic, diplomatic and financial) with the other neighboring regions, in a convergent and participatory way. Building regional leadership and cooperation in all areas must remain a priority for key actors. Enormous pressure will be exerted on these leaders from outside or inside the Black Sea region, for the benefit of certain interest groups.

The UN has a crucial role to play in global security, which has assumed the continuity of maintaining an international climate of security, respect for human rights and international law¹⁰. The UN, as a global leader, has the capacity to create a network between international organizations that will accelerate the development of a region on the foundations of international relations and that will find a common denominator in promoting security in the Black Sea region. The reality is in fact a lack of cooperation among all riparian states, which, in addition to regional clusters (such as Nagorno Karabakh, Transnistria, Crimea, North Ossetia, Donbas¹¹) which creates a climate of permanent insecurity, impedes the development and promotion of the region on the principles of respect for national and international law, human rights and a substantial civic activity.

Thus, the integration of the Black Sea region in terms of politics, military, economic, financial, legal, and development and research into a much larger space, such as the Euro-Atlantic, gives regionalism,

security, and leadership multiple opportunities for development. Security cooperation between political leaders in the region must be based on the principles of multilateralism, internationalization and free trade in order to achieve both their own goals and those of the states in the region. This duality, *national - regional*, puts in front of the leader two diametrical reference points, but which must lead the region (all component coalitions) towards national, regional and global consolidation, to the detriment of factors that oppose them, such as nationalism, extremism of any kind, xenophobia and false ethnocultural identities.

Conclusions

The greatest researchers who have analyzed the aspects of the region, regionalism and security in the world develop their own theoretical, distinct perspectives, highlighting the new regionalism and approaches to the world order, closely connected with regional governance, neoclassical liberalism and regionalism, and regional security. All of these have been associated over the years with a variety of disciplines, institutions and schools, bringing new perspectives, highlighting leadership as a possible course of action. These theorists have analyzed all the tools that can be involved in developing and solving solutions of the equation in favor of leadership that allows us to use international relations as a simplifying factor of the complexity of regionalism and security. When we can define the connecting elements between regionalism and security, we will find among the multitude of solutions, in a leading place, elements that will convince us that leadership is the main catalyst for mutual trust and security in the Black Sea. The three elements of the equation are in fact inseparable, they must be treated uniformly, at the regional level¹².

Leadership, in connection with the regional unity to which the Black Sea region can aspire, and in the context of intense security cooperation, are elements that put pressure on relevant global actors, so that the new regionalism is promoted more intensely in the Black Sea region.

NOTES:

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