



ASPECTS OF ROMANIA'S MARITIME STRATEGY – PAST AND PRESENT

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The historical research through the study of documents allows us an analysis of the evolution and maturation of strategies in general, and maritime and naval strategies in particular, on both a global and national scale, the objective of this study being knowledge and understanding of strategies over the ages. This study is relevant both for the military environment in terms of direct threats to territorial integrity and for the private sector, taking into account the economic importance of maritime and river borders.

Keywords: naval power; naval strategy; maritime strategy; maritime power.

The evolution of warfare, especially naval warfare today poses countless challenges, and deciphering and solving them by empirical methods has become insufficient. Increasingly complicated and sophisticated means integrating advanced technologies increase the need for abstraction and modelling of strategic reasoning.

The epistemology of warfare and therefore of the work of the military body will enable commanders and, in general, the personnel of defence staffs to respond effectively to threats through rigorous planning combining cognitive tools to create bridges between theory and practice. The rationale for a strategy is that it can be put into practice, i.e., the epistemic foundation of the object of military science, i.e., armed combat, is translated into the successful implementation of a military strategy. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that strategic action can be confronted with totally unforeseen and un-researched circumstances for which doctrine or strategy offers no solutions.

Classical military theory considers strategy as the exclusive domain of leadership, meaning the art of conducting warfare, obviously to achieve political goals. Strategy elaborates the logic and perspective of military combat, and tactics are mainly concerned with the effective use of means in combat. The relationship between politics, strategy, and tactics was clear, with each level dealing exclusively with the role of its domain, in the broader practical action.

***Romanian Naval Forces**

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However, as strategic armaments developed in the second half of the 20th century, e.g., strategic aviation, strategic missiles, nuclear submarines carrying nuclear weapons, etc., the evolution of technical military means out of the tactical sphere was seen to play a decisive role in the conduct of conflicts and, at the same time, determined the evolution of all components of military art. The decisive role of strategic weapons in international relations also determined relations between the major powers, giving rise to a strategy of means, with the whole military strategy focused on an arms race competition arm with advanced technical means.

Nowadays, the word strategy is ubiquitous in all activities of social life, businesses, institutions, and corporations; also, the adoption of this word, as a process or concept, in many fields and disciplines is extremely generalized, to the extent that "no human activity, however simple, banal or intimate, can now be reasonable without a strategy"¹.

Whether we refer to strategy as the process of the authorities emitting it, or to strategy as the cognitive function of an individual, the proliferation of this word has attracted countless meanings, definitions, and understandings, but the one constant throughout its journey has remained its importance.

For a comprehensive understanding of the term, we will analyze the theoretical evolution of strategy, thus in the pre-Napoleonic period, the *stratagemata* (*stratagema*) of the ancient Greeks in the 4th century BC implied the use of deception or trickery to gain either military or political



advantage, and the term *strategika*, emphasized art, intuition, and intelligence, in a nutshell, the genius of the commander (general)².

At the same time, Chinese generals and philosophers in Asia were also taking a theoretical approach to strategy, notably through the voice of Sun Tzu (544 BC - 496 BC), whose writings are studied and applied today in almost every military and civilian domain. In the contemporary translation of *The Art of War*, the word strategy appears several times, and essentially similar to the Greeks, the strategy indicates the art, the general's skill in gaining an advantage over the adversary, but, unlike the Greek view, it is not necessarily represented as the manner of organization or deception but rather as the general's adaptability and flexibility with regard to the enemy and circumstances³.

Regarding maritime strategy, the concept did not exist, but looking back to ancient Greece, Thucydides (460-400 BC), a Greek historian and politician, mention maritime power as the condition of well-being. He also dictated the "naval policy" of Athens, making it the first city-state to gain advantages by using its military and commercial fleets, and in his writings, he notes, "There was no warfare on land that resulted in the acquisition of an empire"⁴

The first step towards the abstraction of the term strategy was accomplished in 1770 by Jacques Antoine Hippolyte, Comte de Guibert (1743 - 1790), a French intellectual and military practitioner, who, at the age of 27, having already accumulated sufficient military experience, published the work "Essai général de tactique", in which military science is treated systematically, acquiring a major influence. He differentiated between elementary tactics, which were extracted from "grand tactics", which in turn would become the strategy known at the time as "the art of the general"⁵.

The proper introduction of the word strategy (*strategique*) was attributed to Paul Gedeon Joly de Maizeroy (1719-1780) in 1771, who described the term as sublime, representing "the art of the commander, to wield and employ appropriately and with adroitness all the means of the general in his hand, to move all the parts that are subordinate to him, and to apply them successfully"⁶.

Summing up the writings up to that time, the lower aspects of war were those aspects that concerned rules, principles, aspects that concerned

tactics in general, and the higher aspects of war concerned situations "which were never the same, which are entirely the domain of genius", "knowledge of the command of armies", "the art of drawing up plans for a campaign and directing its operations"⁷.

A further idea that emerged was that strategy could be described and understood in terms of geography, based on physical and mathematical considerations, and Heinrich von Bülow (1792-1846) was the man behind this theory.

The holistic understanding and approach to warfare had its starting point in Napoleon's conquests that changed the character of European conflicts. Wars were no longer fought by small professional armies led by an aristocratic elite, but by armies of nationalist recruits led by professional personnel and supported by society.

The new paradigm of war, namely the engagement of the whole of society, i.e., the popular masses in war, generated the writings of Baron Antoine Jomini, General Carl von Clausewitz, and General Helmuth von Moltke, all of whom developed strategy and established its role in the war equation.

For Jomini (1779 - 1869), for example, strategy existed as an integral part of the art of war defined as "the art of conducting the war on the map" and the main purpose was to mass forces at the decisive point of a campaign⁸. There is some resemblance to Bülow's theory, outlined above, and that is the focus on answering the 'where' rather than the 'why' question. Jominian strategy, although attributed to the commander is stated to be constant, whereas tactics were dynamic thus "Strategy alone will remain unaltered, with its principles the same... since they are independent of the nature of the arms and the organization of the troops"⁹.

Carl von Clausewitz's (1780 - 1831) perspective on strategy provides us with a deeper understanding that was to become the foundation of today's philosophies on approaching war. Clausewitz's definition of strategy is both simple and comprehensive: "Strategy is the use of engagements for the object of war", and furthermore "strategy must study combat in relation to its possible results". Simply put, the art of war is in tactics and strategy. Tactics refers to the form of individual engagement, and strategy regards the use of tactics. Tracing Clausewitz's writings, it becomes obvious



that it is not the action itself that is to be classified as tactical or strategic, but the consequences, the effects of that action which determine its tactical and/or strategic nature¹⁰.

For Clausewitz, Sun Tzu's ideal of achieving victory without fighting becomes an exception or even an impossibility, admitting that such a case could only occur in theory¹¹.

The German General Helmond von Moltke (1800 - 1891) offers a new perspective, although influenced by Clausewitz, developed his own theories of warfare so he defines strategy as "Strategy is a system of makeshifts. It is more than a science. It is bringing knowledge to bear on practical life, the further elaboration of an original guiding idea under constantly changing circumstances. It is the art of acting under the pressure of the most demanding conditions...That is why general principles, rules derived from them, and systems based on these rules cannot possibly have any value for strategy"¹².

The introduction in 1890 of the sea power theory by the American Admiral Alfred T. Mahan (1840 - 1914) in his well-known work "The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660- 1783" has changed the course of history thus revolutionizing military thinking in general. Mahan identifies three elements that are essential for the development of sea power: the creation of forwarding points of support: ports, military bases, etc.; strong, powerful positions in straits and on the main trade routes; and the availability of a globally present maritime fleet capable of transporting goods and men rapidly to strategic points. It conceptually delineates maritime power in two ways: a functional one through geographical aspects, population size, mentality, the form of government, and an institutional one through the state's interest in the planetary ocean, in other words, the naval policies by that state¹³.

Mahan managed through his work to anchor maritime concepts in the strategic perspective, enabling maritime power to permeate the highest spheres of military thinking, introducing naval strategy into military strategy.

A new vision of maritime strategy was introduced with the publication in 1911 of Sir Julian Corbett's (1854 - 1922) "Principles of Naval Strategy". He conceptualized maritime strategy as part of foreign policy, thus laying the foundations for naval diplomacy. Corbett states that maritime

power would have a political side thus placing maritime strategy in the hands of the politicians and it should reflect the will of the state and serve its naval interests.

Compared to Mahan, Corbett's main emphasis is on controlling sea lines of communication, leaving naval combat itself in the background. In his view, the success of a naval combat does not necessarily represent a victory at a strategic level, alternatively maintaining control of own maritime communication lines and blocking the enemy ones can have a strategic purpose¹⁴.

For Julian Corbett, command of the sea, or control of the sea in time and space, should be a primary objective of naval forces.

I believe that the theories formulated by Corbett are applicable to the Romanian naval forces, especially as he has established generally valid concepts that can be applied without advanced technological development.

The French Admiral Raul Castex (1878 - 1968) in his five-volume work "Theorie Strategiques" of 1929-1939, the most extensive treatise on maritime strategy in existence, proposed an analytical method of approaching it, thus borrowing Mahan's historical method, focusing more on strategy as a whole and not only on naval strategy. He wrote that in addition to land or naval strategy there is an overall strategy (what might today be translated as national security strategy) that transcends and coordinates the others. He regarded strategy as an art rather than a science, asserting that the simple principles governing strategy cannot be considered as rigid, mathematical formulas but flexible guidelines leaving room for creative imagination and military genius¹⁵.

German Vice-Admiral Wegener (1875 - 1956), a leading German naval strategist of the interwar years, published in 1929 his major work "Naval Strategy of World War". He strongly argued that Germany's policy of building a large battle fleet without securing free access to the open waters of the Atlantic was essentially futile. Wegener was influenced by Mahan and Clausewitz, however, pointing out that Germany had built a fleet without considering geographical conditions.

Furthermore, Wegener also argued that a decisive naval battle was only significant to the warfare if it removed the obstacles that block the achievement of the strategic objective in a war



at sea. He explained that war at sea consists of a tactical and a strategic part. The tactical part is the action, while the strategic side is the effect. If the strategic side is missing, as it was in the North Sea during the First World War, then the effect is missing and only the tactical part remains. If the strategic objective is missing, then the battle ceases to be a means. The battle becomes aimless, and therefore an end in itself. For Wegener, a naval battle was a means to an end, not an end in itself¹⁶.

Wegener, systematically concluded that maritime power is a product of the following factors: fleets (war, merchant, fishing along with human resource), bases (ports, shipyards, naval infrastructure, geostrategic position), and maritime consciousness or thinking (the culture and attitude of the state-society towards its maritime i.e., the state's naval policy)¹⁷.

Although Russia is eminently a tellurocracy, it also contributed to the maritime strategy theory through Admiral Gorshkov (1910 - 1988), whose series of 11 articles published between 1972 and 1973 introduced new elements in the calculation of maritime power, namely the maritime concern of the state to exploit the Planetary Ocean for its own benefit¹⁸.

As military technological breakthroughs changed the character of warfare (railways, telegraph, etc.), along with mass recruitment, military thinking once again changed its vision of strategy, so that it would no longer take particular account of the expansion of the battlefield, and could no longer be applied to a single battle, but was aimed at a much-expanded context which would have to take into account social, economic, and political aspects. Although it will continue to be associated with the military, separated from politics, strategy is beginning to take on new dimensions of subordination concerning politics.

The influences of Clausewitz and Moltke, as well as participation in the First World War, left their mark on the writings of B.H. Liddell Hart (1895-1970). Thus, the 20th century is dominated by his concepts launched in 1954, being the first theorist to introduce politics into the definition of strategy, stating that, (as Clausewitz and Moltke also asserted) since war is governed by politics, strategy must take it into account in its formulation and implementation, further claiming that strategy remains the responsibility of the commander, seen

as "the art of the general"¹⁹. The simple definition he implements is "the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy"²⁰.

Liddell Hart also felt the need to improve the military lexicon of his time by introducing the term Grand Strategy, which was responsible for setting objectives, calculating and developing the economic and human resources of a state to support the war services (army), and providing the basis for the actions of military commanders²¹.

Although the newly introduced definition changed the course of strategic theory, the nature of strategy could not be fully understood until Liddell Hart spoke of the "indirect approach".

The introduction of the indirect approach to strategy was the spark of genius in his work, which involved more of a way of thinking, an attitude, and a way of approaching the problem, rather than studying the map.

Based on Liddell Hart's writings, in 1980, Edward Luttwak (born in 1942 in Arad County, Romania) created the levels of war from the two strategic levels and thus introduced five levels of warfare: technical, tactical, operational, theatre strategy, and grand strategy. All these levels are not separate but rather interconnected. In the same paper, Luttwak stated that although the definitions of the levels are arbitrary, the natural delineation between them is provided by the scale of action and the variety of means employed²².

The introduction of the term operational art into military terminology came as a natural consequence of the thinking of Clausewitz and Liddell Hart set out in words by Luttwak in his studies²³, and although he did not arrogate the term to himself, he was among the first Western theorists to mention it and required its integration into military doctrine. The term was first coined by the Russian Aleksandr A. Svechin in 1927²⁴. By introducing the operational level, the military was empowered with operational art, while at the same time transferring strategy to the higher (politico-military) leaders²⁵.

In 1989, Colonel Arthur Lykke, simplistically defined strategy by an equation as follows: Strategy (S) = Scopes (ENDS-E) + Ways (WAYS-W) + Means (MEANS-M)²⁶.

Lykke's article focused primarily on military strategy, which he separated into "operational" and "force development". For Lykke, the operational



strategy was synonymous with operational art and dealt directly with plans of action, while force development resided in civilian-military discourse and ensured that the military had resources commensurate with expectations²⁷. The success of this theory was resounding with adherents, including those from the present day.

In terms of contemporary theory, Hew Strachan establishes a new definition of strategy as "it is about doing things, about applying means to ends" acting "at the interface between operational capabilities and political objectives"²⁸. Colin Gray, on the other hand, has provided a different definition of strategy, describing it as "direction and use made of means by chosen ways in order to achieve desired ends"²⁹.

As far as theories on maritime strategies of today are concerned Geoffrey Till synthesizes all prior theories on maritime power, concluding that it stems from sources such as: *maritime community, national resources, appropriate forms of government, geographical conditions* that will determine its constituent elements such as: *commercial navy, port infrastructure, bases, harbours*, etc. and last but not least *forces and means of warfare*³⁰.

Romanian maritime military strategy

The foundations of the Romanian Naval Forces originated in the Flotilla Corps established by the High Order 174 of 22 October 1860 by the ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza³¹.

Recorded as the first writing regarding the maritime domain in the Romanian military literature, in the volume "War on the Danube" published in 1905, belonging to officers Eugeniu Botez (1877-1933) and Nicolae Kirițescu, valuable conclusions, lessons identified and learned are specified, as well as details on the strategic importance of the Danube River³².

A second work appeared in 1909, written by Constantin Nic Păun, called "The mission of our navy", in which he discussed both the importance of the maritime domain for the states from an economic and political point of view and the missions of the navy for the protection of the country's maritime and river borders³³.

Romanian military specialists in the maritime domain, dating back to the beginning of the 20th century, tried through various studies and writings to convince the political class and public opinion of

the need to exploit the maritime and river borders in order to develop the maritime economy by creating both a commercial and a military fleet.

In his participation at the Conference "Maritime Power as a factor of civilization and national defence" held at the Romanian Naval League headquarters, in 1928 in Bucharest, Commander Ioan Bălănescu (1878-1946), defines maritime power as "the totality of the means by which a country exercises its rights in the exploitation of the maritime domain, in order to obtain all the economic, political and military benefits, is called maritime power"³⁴, adding that maritime power is based mainly on three elements: the merchant navy with its ships and commercial ports, the military fleet with its ships and military ports and, of course, on the wealth created by the maritime realm. Also, in the author's stand view, the state's naval policy dictates its maritime power through the development of naval programs or plans concerning the growth of the commercial and military fleets, the advancement of specific maritime education, practically the development of the Romanian maritime society.

In addition to many other specific articles such as "Naval Offensive and Defensive" (Revista Marinei Române, 1929, no. 4), in 1929 in the 3rd issue of the Revista Marinei Române, he published the article "The Sea Fleet, Duty of our Nation"³⁵ in which he highlighted aspects regarding the need for the development of the Black Sea Navy.

Analyzing the paper "We need a Military Navy"³⁶, the authors, commanders Eugeniu Rosca (1884-1950) and Emanoil Koslinski (1889-1951) noted that "it is of paramount importance for a state that has an open sea route to create a national merchant fleet and ... it is inconceivable to develop the merchant navy without creating and developing in parallel the Military Navy, designed to defend it. Both navies are indissolubly connected: together they constitute the maritime power of the country"³⁷. Also, an important point covered in the paper is the definition of maritime power in close connection with economic, political, social and military factors. The "naval plan" presented in this scientific work establishes the type, characteristics, and the number of ships, the composition of the air fleet, the organization of the naval base, the equipment needed to defend the coasts, the resources needed to train personnel, etc.



In his work "Naval Strategy"³⁸ published in the publication "Marina Română" in 1930, Lieutenant Commander Horia Macellariu (1894-1989), quoting from the treatise "Strategic Theories" belonging to his professor of naval strategy, the French Admiral Castex, introduced new terms and concepts into the Romanian maritime military thinking, presenting generalities of strategy, but also specific notions of naval strategy by naming the missions of the naval forces regarding maritime communications, with their evolution and their influence on the development of the state, as well as analyzing the notion of command of the sea.

As a result of the Romanian Navy's participation in the First World War, practically the second war it took part in, the first being the War of Independence in 1877 (this being mainly on the Danube River), a young navy, at the beginning of its path, Captain Eugen Săvulescu (1901-1964) published the article "The aspirations of modern Romania and our naval policy" in the magazine of the Romanian Naval League, *Marea Noastră*, which represented the first analysis of our own missions in the First World War.

The interwar period was a period of growth for Romania's maritime power, therefore, the military and commercial navy developed through the acquisition of naval platforms (ships, seaplanes, submarines), the augmentation of personnel, and the development of institutions with a specific naval profile.

From its foundation until the outbreak of the Second World War, the Romanian Navy went through a long series of naval development programs/plans, which originated in 1881, when the first naval program was sent to King Carol I for approval, followed by one in 1888, and then in 1906, when the Navy received a substantial fund. Later, in 1921, a fourth modernization program appeared, followed by the 1924 program, which was largely completed even though the funds had been halved. The sixth naval program in 1929 was called the Romanian Naval Program, drawn up in two versions, maximally and minimally. The year 1938 brought a new naval program, followed by that of 1939, which also included studies on Romania's naval situation concerning possible adversaries, and the ninth program, elaborated in 1940, was a programmatic document also called the Naval Endowment Plan "Hypothesis 15"³⁹.

The upsurge in development was halted by Romania's entry into the Second World War, and the consequences of this war were disastrous for both the military and merchant navies. However, from 1960 onwards, when the Communist Party came to power, Romania experienced its most prosperous period in terms of maritime activity. The Second World War, with its naval campaigns, highlighted the importance of maritime power. Romania's military and merchant navy began its rise with an extensive naval build-up program.

Although Romania was under the influence of the Soviet Union, military specialists also analyzed the works of Western authors, and one of the great theoreticians of the communist period was Major General Corneliu Soare, under whose editorship several books were published, including "Contemporary Military Theories", "History of Romanian Military Thought", etc.

The conclusion of Romanian military specialists regarding strategy was that "the subordination of military strategy to state policy was and remains an objective necessity determined by the essence of war as a social phenomenon"⁴⁰.

The use of technologies as force multipliers since the 1991 Gulf War has highlighted the fact that technology can no longer be entirely excluded from the strategic equation.

Today, the level of development of science and technology and their use in warfare have the power to influence both state policy and military art. Moreover, the military field of innovation is starting to be overtaken by the civilian one, the conquest of space by commercial enterprises raises serious questions about the military approach concerning threats from the cosmos, and by this, I refer to military systems and equipment using satellite signals (positioning systems, navigation systems, communication systems, etc.).

As far as the maritime domain is concerned, today's military specialists consider that a "strategy must be defined by the following characteristics: it must be proactive and anticipatory; it must be hierarchical, i.e., it must clearly define the objectives, define and identify the ways to achieve them, identify and provide the possibility of developing the means to achieve the objectives"⁴¹, and the absence of a maritime strategy for Romania creates a void for economic and national security.



Conclusions

We can assert that the defining elements of a strategy are based on a pertinent analysis of the current situation, followed by the most realistic identification of the critical aspects requiring improvement, which will be translated into policies aimed at solving them and ending with a coherent and coordinated action towards the implementation of the guiding policies.

The essence of a strategy is not just about giving guidance for implementation, but most importantly, about orientation based on the resources available, which, in most cases, are intended to constrain the area of action. Thus, constraints and restrictions also apply in the case of strategy development. Another very important aspect is that the proposed objectives must be measurable and achievable.

Most often mistakes made in adopting a strategy are as follows: failure to correctly diagnose the problem, inadequate planning of resources, setting objectives that are too ambitious or too easily achievable, and last, but not least, false presumptions about own competence.

Strategy should not be seen as a product of political or politico-military entities, but rather as a process, one that evolves as circumstances change.

I believe that the development of a strategic culture based on our own, historically acquired, but also borrowed, assets could guide us towards the adoption and implementation of a coherent and realistic maritime strategy, and that this process will increase Romania's maritime power.

I believe that it is necessary to distinguish between the national maritime strategy and the naval strategy, the former concerning the acceleration and enhancement of the state's maritime power, and the latter basing its courses of action on naval power, i.e., naval forces, but not limiting itself to using them exclusively, but rather involving all categories of forces, one of its objectives being the security of its own sea lines of communication. The launching of a maritime strategy integrating aspects of maritime legislation review, reform of maritime and port administrations, building a merchant fleet (the strategic component of state security), financing projects and participation in international maritime projects will enable the development and exploitation of the sea for the benefit of the state.

The overview of the path followed by Romanian maritime philosophy up to the present is a natural condition for understanding the progress made throughout the years of its existence, and the periodical elaboration of syntheses will highlight both the particularities and the originality of the autochthonous military specialists.

As a result of this analysis, a very important aspect to point out is that in order to theorize the content of military science, both theoreticians and practitioners are needed.

The maritime feature of Romania is the state's gateway to a better future. The power of a coastal state is conditioned by the maritime development of the state, i.e., the maritime industry with all that it implies, ports and port terminals, shipyards, exploration and exploitation of the marine environment, including tourism, are strategic objectives, and protecting them requires a strong naval force, not necessarily numerous, but sufficiently equipped and very well trained.

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