

THE VULNERABILITY ELEMENTS OF THE ROMANIAN MARITIME BORDER

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The extended region of the Black Sea represents at the beginning of this century an area with generous strategic opportunities that can ensure the prosperity, stability and security for the countries from the region, in a environment where the confrontational strategies will be replaced with the ones of partnerships, economical and political cooperation, involvement in the management of the international crisis and conflicts and actions of countering the terrorism. From Romania's point of view, this area offered and still offers economical, political and military strategy opportunities related to the access to the gigantic energy resources from the region and their exploitation and also related to the security process in which every country from the area must be actively involved.

Keywords: risks; threats; crisis; natural resources; Extended Region; security; energy resources.

The main phenomenon that influences the current security environment is the globalization that generated both opportunities and risks/threats. In what concerns Romania, as a country located within the Extended Region of the Black Sea, a region that seems for a good period of time to catch the attention of the main actors of the worldwide scene, it being foreseen a series of strategic opportunities generated by the favourable conditions of acceding to the Euro-Atlantic security and prosperity areas, opened as a result of countering the communism politic regime and installing the democracy, the expansion of NATO and EU, the abolition of controls at borders, the enhancement of the circulation for persons, merchandises, services and capitals, and also of the possibilities for technological development. These opportunities are particularly amplified in Romania's case due to our statute of NATO member, the increased possibility of integration within the European economical, political, cultural and security

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areas, the existence and coherence of the strategic partnership with the USA, the development of the role and importance of the Extended Region of the Black Sea in what concerns the objectives of ensuring the European security and energy resource, the high level of effective cooperation between the Romanian institutions with attributions in the field of security and defense and the ones of NATO and EU¹.

Even from the moment when Romania started to be mentioned in the first historical writings, the geographical context created a special statute for the Black Sea region, being influenced by a multitude and variety of political evolutions with a contradictory touch as a result of a duality that generated both advantages and disadvantages for the populations and later on for the countries that were created and developed in this region: a bridge point and in the same time a demarcation line between the continents and empires that promoted cultures, religions and populations with different styles of life and distinctive existential philosophies, with profound and various meanings, some of them very sober. The permanent confrontation between the East and the West transformed this region into an area of demarcation between the big empires and later on between the great powers, which determined that the geo-political and social evolution of this region to be characterized by pragmatism and tensions, the fight for subsistence or domination reaching devastating values in the detriment of the lucrative and advantageous relationships development.

Especially during the Cold War, the dominant characteristic of the strategic profile within the Black Sea region and its neighbourhood was settled by the fact that as a physical border between two opposite great ideologies, it couldn't manifest either of its bivalent features. The self reservation could be the best word to unilateral describe the geopolitical environment from within this area during the Cold War, even if the geographical element generated permanent possibilities with strategic and economical implications: the expansion towards the continental Europe through the Danube River, towards Eurasia through “The Silk Road” and the Black Sea's network of affluent rivers, towards the Mediterranean Sea and through it towards the Atlantic Ocean, the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean – through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, towards the oil and natural gases' strategic passages.

Although the Black Sea is not in the category of opened seas, it's being directly connected to the main means of communication by important rivers from the region (Danube, Volga and Don) and by main passages that

¹ *Romanian National Security Strategy*, Publishing House of the Romanian Official Journal, 2006 , pp. 7-8.

unite the Central Europe with the Caucasian Area and Central Asia, respectively from North to South, the Baltic basin with the Mediterranean one through the South-East of Europe. Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits transform the Black sea into a semi-opened sea, which from geographical point of view is being characterized by numerous asymmetries: the continental shelf is very wide in the North-West, but extremely shrink and abrupt in South and East, the shores are generally low in West and North-West and higher in North-East, East and South-East, the main rivers are located in the North-West and they lack in South, the length of the shore is 4.000 km and its being uneven distributed to the coastal states: Turkey 34%, Ukraine 31%, Russia 15%, Georgia 7%, Bulgaria 7% and Romania 6%².

Participating in the events at worldwide scale that followed the Cold War, the Black Sea coastal states were themselves actively involved in the scenario of the worldwide political scene reconfiguration, most of them belonging to the former communist bloc, either as a component of the URSS or their allies.

Taking into consideration the implication in ensuring an environment of security and cooperation in the region by the countries belonging to the Black Sea area, their mission is not simple if we think about the hot areas that could shake the stability, which is not quite consolidated: the Caucasian area, Transnistria and the Balkans – the “fire triangle” of the region.

The picture could be completed by the dissensions and the competition of the Black Sea’s coastal states in what concerns the supremacy of their own interests as regional leader position, the division of the continental shelf and as a consequence of the Exclusive Economic Zones of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea and also in controlling the circuit of oil and natural gases from the Caspian Sea and Central Asia zones. In the last past years, in the majority of the countries from this adjacent area of the Black Sea, the situation seems to evaluate in a stable framework, the countries clearly expressing their willingness of integration to the European and Euro-Atlantic democratic structures, in the same time with the intensification of the efforts of putting into application the provisions of the South-East Europe Stability Pact.

Even from the beginning of the new millennium, the Russian Federation redefined the new national security concept adopted on 10.01.2001 by the decree of the President Putin. This defines the national interests and emphasizes the determination of promoting them in the relations with other countries. The document underlines that a threat to the interest of creating a strong Russia is represented by the tendencies of some countries in opposing to the statute of “worldwide power pole” and in weakening its position within Europe, Central Asia, Middle Orient, Transcaucasia and Asia-Pacific zone.

² http://www.mapn.ro/smg/gmr/Arhiva_pdf/revista_4.pdf accessed on 26.04.2012

Russia's interests in the Balkans seems to be a priority because of the possibility that the transport way for the oil and natural gases from the Caspian region and the transportation vessels to cross the Russian terminals from the Black Sea, countering this way the limits drawn by Turkey for Russian petrol oil vessels that cross the straits, by imposing weight and size limits. Russia's military and political presence within the Black Sea and promoting the "pro Slavic" doctrine certify the fact that the economical interests represent the basis for the fraternity feeling with the South-Slavic population in this area. From military point of view the Russian Federation tries to counter-balance the expansion towards East of NATO by creating a new regional security structure under the central command dislocated in Moscow – "The Collective Security Organization"- which is foreseen to configure three groups of regional forces, also under Russian command, with the following disposal: the West group with forces from the Russian Federation and Belorussia; the group from South Caucasia with forces from the Russian Federation and Armenia and the group from the Central Asia, with forces from the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan and Tajikistan. For now, this remained in the initial phase because there are many unclear political and military issues, which determine reserved attitudes, especially from the Asiatic states requested to participate in the coalition.

A situation that this country cannot yet accept is represented by the dispute with Ukraine over the Sevastopol military base, where there are dislocated the vessels from the Black Sea's fleet, which's ownership wasn't permanently established. This conflict determined Moscow to build a naval military base within the Black Sea at Novorosiisk where there are concentrated the vessels dislocated from Sevastopol, in accordance with the Convention concluded with Ukraine after URSS divided. Manifesting its own interest within the Black Sea region can also be noticed in Russia's attitude within the UNO and OSCE Security Councils, where Russia supported the peace process under the auspicious of the two organisms; moreover Russia gave the consent for reinitiating the activity of OSCE mission in Chechen.

The existence in the vicinity of the Black Sea of the Caucasian hot spots increases the complexity and risks factors of the Black Sea region. This part of the region is known for unsolved conflicts such as Chechen- being considered Russia's internal affair- and the dispute between Christian Armenian and Muslim Azerbaijani for the region Nagorno - Karabah, in which Turkey is trying to manifest its influence. The separatist tendencies of Georgian republics - Abkhazia and Adjaria- are being supported by Russia, maintain this way two latent instability cores within the Black Sea's shores.

The period for preparing the accession to NATO for Bulgaria and Romania determined Russia to delay the redrawn of the military bases from

Transnistria and the two separatist republics from Georgia, attitude strengthened also by announcing Georgia's intention of acceding to NATO.

Turkey, as NATO member and taking into consideration the confusion of the former states of the URSS, has the tendency to increase its influence within the countries from the Central Asia with Islamic/Muslim majority population. Within the Black Sea basin, Turkey's influence over Georgia is very obvious. Turkey still has a lot of internal affairs to solve, which are being considered incompatible with the EU's member state statute that is trying to acquire and without which the countries of the European Community will never consent to such accession: complying with the human rights, the peaceful resolution of the Cyprus conflict, taking the necessary measures in order to balance the Islamic fundamentalism- that became very aggressive, solving the situation of the Kurdish population's statute.

Wining in the matter of the "means of transportation for the Caspian oil" – the way from Baku to Ceyhan – transform Turkey into an actor interested in maintaining the stability in the region and attracting the former soviet republics on the side of the democratic states and of the North-Atlantic Alliance.

It becomes more and more evident the tendency of Ukraine in gaining the role of regional leader, being in a sort of competition with Turkey. Ukraine is betting on increasing its military capabilities within the Black Sea basin in order to sustain its political interests. The geo-strategically position on the virtual energy route and the influence exercised within the GUUAM group (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldavia) are the main cards this country is playing. It's important to specify that on 24th of December 2003, Ukraine signed the "Treaty concerning the common use of Azov Sea by Russia and Ukraine", fact that brings a sensitive balance to the relations between the two countries, allowing Ukraine to adopt an aggressive politic towards Romania in what concerns the issues of Snakes Island and the delimitation of the continental shelf and Exclusive Economic Zone.

Romanian and Bulgaria are two other coastal states for the Black Sea, engaged in the process of Euro-Atlantic accession. Recently members of NATO, these countries significantly contributed to enlarging the Alliance south-east flank and together with Turkey they are foreseen to establish a new distribution of the maritime space within the Black Sea basin, which is now at its half. In the same time they are the owners of the region's key points of a strategic importance: the straits that make the connection with the Planetary Ocean and with the Danube's mouths. These countries are also the main promoters of the security and cooperation in the region, their initiatives being visible by creating some organisms such as: Three-lateral Romania – Bulgaria – Turkey, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Zone, the South-East Europe

Initiative for Security and Cooperation, organisms and organizations that led to increasing the confidence and security in the area.

Georgia is a country that is trying to make significant efforts in order to regain the statute of a democratic state. The poor economic development and the internal conflicts led to new confrontations, the crisis being emphasized by the conflict between Russia and Georgia. Winning the elections by the pro-West party of president Sakashvili and countering Adjara Republic's attempt of separation seem to give hope for this country to become a democratic state, which will also allow to launch again the prosper economical activities specific to Georgia.

In the last period of time, within Black Sea's adjacent area took place manifestations that weren't specific to this region, such as smuggling, trafficking in narcotic drugs, guns and even radioactive substances. Also, there were present non-compliances with the rules foreseen for navigation's vessels under different pavilions and also with the regime for phishing by Turkish and Bulgarian vessels within the Romanian exclusive economic zone, actions that were promptly sanctioned by the Romanian border police.

The activity and some successes of the organisms for worldwide and regional security in what concerns the Black Sea region, especially OSCE, represent reasons for regaining the optimism related to a positive evolution of the security environment in this part of the world. OSCE is the organization where the interest of Russia and USA are face to face, managing the East-West interest over the conflict zones from Bosnia, Kosovo and Chechen, which can support a politic focused on creating stability in the region.

The region from the vicinity of the Black Sea gained a strategic importance due to the transportation way for the oil and natural gases from the Caspian basin and Central Asia that leads to the West European countries and secondly because of the expansion of NATO's southern flank towards the entire south half of the Black Sea area, situation created by the accession of Romanian and Bulgaria to the Alliance. The increased interest of the western democracies for ensuring the energy resources through another way than the main classical one (and almost "unique" – URSS and then the Russian Federation) and removing the insecurity and instability sources from the borders recently updated by the accession of the new states to the main organisms with attribution in promoting the security and cooperation at international level – NATO and EU, supported by the main benchmark for democracy – USA-, led to the concept of "the extended region of the Black Sea", starting with 2004.³ The concept also has a redundant connotation, most

³ Ronald Asmus, Bruce Jackson, *Marea Neagră și frontierele libertății*, Revista Politică (*The Black Sea and Frontiers of the Freedom*, Policy Review), june 2004; Ronald Asmus, Joerg

likely being developed in connection with the other concept used not long ago in the specialty literature under the name of „Great Middle East”, proving the necessity of a conceptual updating in trend with the latest evolutions of the social-economical and political realities from the regions, which intentionally or not “got away” from the sphere of interests of the occidental democracies.

The increased importance of this region was especially manifested after the socking event from 11th of September 2001, when the USA and their allies in the anti-terrorism coalition discovered that this region may constitute a cohesion element and a bridgehead for the anti-terrorism campaign developed within Afghanistan and Iraq.⁴

In this context, Romania makes efforts to redefine its place and role within the international scene in general and especially at regional level, disposing of a series of strategic advantages, such as: the demographic potential (the number and quality of the population), the economic, scientific, cultural and military potential, the geographic position and also the natural resources. Another strategic advantage for our country is represented by the fact that Romania is located in the space of economic connection of the west European democracies with the Middle Orient’s commercial routes and moreover with the energy route of the oil resources from the Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf, being the owner of a significant part of the VIIth European Transportation Corridor, formed by the Rhine-Maine Canal – Danube-Black Sea. This is the reason for the augmentation of the importance of the harbours at the Black Sea, conferring them a strategic level value. Being aware of its European vocation, our country fully engaged in the process of accession to the Euro-Atlantic and European political, economical and security structures. Thus, there were consolidated and even modernized the state’s institutions, the affirmation of the democratic principle and the market economy within the entire economical-social life, the compliance with the right of the human beings and the affirmation of the moral and spiritual values of the Romanian people within the pantheon of the European and worldwide values.⁵

Forbrig, Konstantin Dimitrov, *O nouă strategie euroatlantică pentru regiunea Mării Negre*, IRSI Publishing House, Bucharest, 2004, p. 18.

⁴ Mihai E. Ionescu, *Regiunea extinsă a Mării Negre între constrângerile Tradiției și provocările noului mediu politic internațional de securitate*”, the article was published in the work paper *Securitate și stabilitate în bazinul Mării Negre*, „Carol I” National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005, p. 26.

⁵ Marius Hanganu, *Evoluția prezentă a puterii maritime în Marea Neagră și influența ei asupra geopoliticii în acest spațiu*, the article was published in the work paper *Securitate și stabilitate în bazinul Mării Negre*, „Carol I” National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005, pp. 93-94.

Being interested in installing a state of peace and security at regional and worldwide level, Romania constantly participated in the international community's efforts in managing and solving the crisis situations, with this purpose sending military troops in the operation theaters from Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq and other parts of the world.

We consider that the actually engagement of the country by sending troops for the battle of solving crisis and for countering the international terrorism constitute the determinant factor in being recognized by the main international actors as a reliable partner on the "scene where it takes place the collective security play", which led in the end at accepting Romania within the main organization that assumed the responsibility of an active implication in what concerns the peace and security climate at international level. In fact, looking back at the Romanian people's history, it's impossible not to notice that all "the natural rights" of the population and later on of the Romanian nation were gained by engaging in great sacrifice and battles, which finally led to the acceptance and recognition from the part of the main actors that at one moment had the power of decision over the nations destiny (we mainly refer to the two Unifications of the Romanians, the State's Independence and all other "critical" situations in which Romania was involved after being part of the main military confrontations).

In our opinion, the strengthening of the democratic institutions at national level and overcoming the tensions between the states of the Black Sea's Exclusive Economic Zone could transform this part of the world in a spreading starting point of security and stability for the other neighbouring countries, as a result of its integration within the Euro-Atlantic security architecture and focus of the great actors' interest directly involved in the situation of the zone - NATO, EU and Russian Federation. In this context, Romania who is already implicated in the main processes and initiatives developed in the area, can extend and consolidate its role as a stability and security pillar, by contributing in dismantling the tensions and "frozen" conflicts and also by managing the crisis and effectively countering the terrorism.⁶

In what concerns the economical level, we consider that the option of getting involved in the transportation and distribution of the energy resources of the Caspian Sea (even if the route of the main distribution way is towards West and Central Europe was established on a path that don't cross Romania) would represent "a strategic move" by accomplishing a secondary transportation route for these resources made by vessels from the oil terminals on the Asian

⁶ Eugen Bădălan, *Securitate și cooperare în spațiul extins al Mării Negre*, the article was published in the work paper „*Securitate și stabilitate în bazinul Mării Negre*”, „Carol I” National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005, pp. 9-13.

coast of the Black Sea (Baku), on sea and then on Danube and putting it in function way before the main part of the path Baku and Ceyhan is ready.

Romania made significant efforts for tempering the conflicts and to avoid the disputes in the Black Sea region within the South-East European Cooperation Initiative (SECI) and Borders Defense Initiative (BDI). Moreover, the tensions were increased by Ukraine decision of building a canal that would connect the Chilia Canal with the Black Sea (Bistroe canal), which could have destructive effects to the Danube Delta's ecosystem and to the Sulina Canal, if the works are not being stopped.

Starting even from the simple fact that the name of the region is given by the aquatic space surrounded by the states belonging to this area, we can see the great importance that must be shown to the maritime dimension, as a place of manifesting the national interests within the extended region of the Black Sea.

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