

ROMANIA'S ROLE IN ACHIEVING REGIONAL ORDER IN THE BLACK SEA AREA

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Romania as a European maritime state, a member of the most important organizations in the Euro-Atlantic area, NATO and the European Union, is now asserting itself, as a state-recognized in terms of its status, in a period with challenges but also with multiple opportunities. The role of Romania in the realization of the regional order in the Black Sea area is important and it is achieved by intensifying the political, economic or diplomatic measures, but also by intensifying the efforts to strengthen the interoperability at NATO or EU level, in support of the efficiency of the Allied deterrence and defense mechanisms. 15 years after Romania's accession to NATO, it is in a favorable position to strengthen the national defense capacity, which includes the realization of the capabilities necessary to make our response to symmetrical and asymmetrical threats more efficient. Thus, starting with 2017, Romania has fulfilled its commitment to NATO regarding the allocation of 2% of GDP for defense, in order to continue the transformation and modernization process.

Keywords: regional order; security; cooperation; military dimension; risks and threats; the Black Sea region.

Introduction

Broadly speaking, security, prosperity, and peace are concepts of value to the citizens of any state. The Romanian Constitution, the National Security Strategy of Romania, and the National Defense Strategy of the country define the concepts, principles, and benchmarks of the security and stability of the Romanian state in a systemic and comprehensive approach, in the context of European construction and Euro-Atlantic cooperation.

From the historic perspective, but also from the present and future challenges at global and regional level, the transformations of the strategic environment, when the international systems have become much more complex, characterized by a persistent instability, the need to develop, transform and size the political, economic, military relations, social and environmental at domestic level and with a close international relationship or interdependence is obvious.

In the context of the contemporary evolution of the security environment in the Black Sea region, the military power of a state is a factor of

vital importance, and the military dimension is one of the main pillars of the state's stability.

It is well-known that, as a major player, the state must have alongside political and economic structures also a credible and well-structured military force, with a combative power to the extent of its responsibilities.

The Eastern border of Romania, land (summing 273.8 km – land border with Ukraine), river (amounting to a total of 856.8 km – of which 680.6 km with the Republic of Moldova and 176.2 km with Ukraine), and maritime 9199, 4 km (of which 30.2 km with Ukraine)¹ also, represent the external border of NATO and the EU.

From this point of view, but also from the point of view of being a member of these organizations, Romania is part of a common area of security and defense. Also, the efforts that must be made by both, Romania and the neighboring states require time and patience with a solid construction based on the principles of universal democracy.

In other words, as well-known analysts Ayse Gunes - Ayata, Ayca Ergun and Isil Celimli analyze the situation in the Black Sea region with much pragmatism: "*Nowhere has the weakening of the state itself paved the way for the reinforcement of either the market or civil society. It would then be absurd to expect this to happen automatically in the Black Sea region.*"²

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Developing and strengthening Romania's capacity to ensure Euro-Atlantic security and stability

The ethno-genesis of Romania was a complex process, which led to the emergence of a Neo-Latin people, the sole heir of the Eastern Romans. With the completion of this process, at the end of the eighth century, the indigenous population became the Romanian people.

Romania has a history and national identity for over 2000 years³. The Romanian state was formed in 1859 and gained its independence in 1877. In 1918, Romania, through the Great Union with Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia, achieved the dream of a nation. Between 1881-1947, Romania was a constitutional monarchy, and from 1947 became a republic. After the Second World War, part of the Romanian territory was occupied by the URSS and Romania became a communist state and a member of the Warsaw Treaty⁴. After the December 1989 Revolution, Romania implemented economic and political reforms, joined NATO on March 29th, 2004, became a member of the European Union in 2007 and signed the Strategic Partnership with the United States of America⁵. Romania, as a European maritime state, a member of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, has acquired, in the geopolitical space of the Black Sea, a well-recognized role according to its status, benefiting from the natural advantage of its hydrographic network and wide openness towards the horizon of the Mediterranean and Atlantic worlds.

Romania, with an area of 237,500 square kilometers and a population of 21,413,815, is a coastal state on the Black Sea, along with Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Turkey and Georgia. With a length of 245 km of the maritime coast, Romania occupies an important place in the countries bordering the Black Sea, due to the size of the land with sea exit⁶.

The Black Sea had its special importance since ancient times both for the Romans, "*Byzantine lake, during the Roman Empire*"⁷, but also for Greeks or Athenians as they appear in the writings of the well-known classical Greek historian, Plutarch: "*Pericles also sailed into the Black Sea with a large and splendidly equipped fleet, and there he treated the Greek cities considerably and secured by negotiation the various local arrangements*

which they desired"⁸.

Currently, Romania has a growing economy, a free market and a good presence in the region, representing, without false modesty, a pillar of stability for Euro-Atlantic security and cooperation. For Romania in this context, the Black Sea and the Danube remain the basis, the foundation on which the independence and the binder for further development have been achieved. The stability and cooperation process in the Black Sea area is one of the main strategic directions in the security policy for the coming years. Leaders in this region should be sufficiently balanced and strong enough to discourage and manage potential risks and threats to Euro-Atlantic and regional security and stability, as there are many challenges for all nations in the region.

The successful participation of the Romanian Army with Euro-Atlantic partners in the campaigns in Iraq, the Balkans and Afghanistan or participation in major naval operations in the theatres of operations in the Mediterranean, Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean, in the fight against terrorism in the war in Libya or in the anti-piracy fight, demonstrates the professionalism of the political and military structures and the fact that Romania has embarked on this path of continuous modernization and transformation, in order to be able to face the present and future challenges. By extrapolating, at European and regional scale we can consider that more can be built, viable solutions for the European future can be identified.

Romania's contribution to Euro-Atlantic and regional organizations so as to maintain regional balance and order in the Black Sea area

The security system, at the state level, is characterized by its five dimensions: political, military, economic, social and environmental. The military dimension or military security represents the capacity of the state to respond in the face of risks, threats, aggressions, to analyze and eliminate vulnerabilities and risks to the security of the state.

Ensuring the stability of the state is implicitly achieved through this military dimension and one of the first identified path of achievement, refers mainly to the transformation, modernization or development of military structures. This must be

continuous, with a high degree of flexibility and adaptability, so that the interconnection with the global system is constantly realized.

Starting from the current demands of the modern world, the military dimension that we design and modernize, in fact must meet the criteria of efficient management, with a balanced structure of interoperable forces and with an appropriate infrastructure. The military dimension of state security should be sufficiently balanced and strong enough to discourage and manage potential risks and threats to state security and stability.

Developing a structure of forces to be able to act in the complex environment of modern type warfare is, in my opinion, one of the most effective ways in this analysis. The emergence of new concepts, such as: collective security, common security or security through cooperation, imposed, at the level of the European Union and NATO, structures of which Romania is part of the need to identify concrete solutions for the future of common defence.

On a different note, increasing the operational efficiency of battle groups, scheduling the stand by periods and revising the concept of the rapid military response of the European Union is a very high concern in the current Ukrainian crisis context. The idea of a small military structure, with high mobility and combat capacity, ready to intervene in a short time in crisis situations for the security interests of the European Union is transposed in practice, also internally, according to the Concept of restoring the fighting capacity, for the Romanian Army, for the period 2019-2026, by setting up TF (Task Force) or TG (Task Groups⁹).

The European concepts, together with the NATO ones, can be the basis for the necessary transformations, for the modernization and interconnection of the military dimension and its contribution to ensuring the stability of the state. At the state level, all these concepts must be transposed into action policies to make the role of the military dimension more efficient.

Another way is to determine the security-strategy-forces ratio and its organization or optimization. This is achieved by analyzing the synchronization matrix and determining the optimal solutions based on the elements presented above, the effects of the use of forces on tangible elements (equipment, quantity

of forces, their quality, capabilities, mobility, logistics, reserve of forces, organization of forces, the fighting power) and intangibles (morale, discipline, training, leadership, doctrine, the desire to fight, public support, alliances and coalitions).

Still, the best solution that a state can adopt to ensure the stability of the state, from the point of view of the use of the military dimension of security, is to respect the commitments made and to participate with forces and means in the theaters of operations with Euro-Atlantic partners. Thus, starting with 2017 Romania has fulfilled its commitment to NATO regarding the allocation of 2% of GDP for the defense to continue the process of transformation, modernization and endowment of the armed forces.

As a result of this fact, Romania is currently in a favorable position to strengthen the national defense capacity, which will include the realization of the capabilities necessary to make our response to symmetric and asymmetric threats more efficient. Also, Romania has stepped up its efforts to strengthen interoperability with the NATO allies in support of streamlining the allied deterrence and defense mechanisms, such as those corresponding to the NATO Immediate Response Plan¹⁰.

The successful participation of the Romanian Army with Euro-Atlantic partners in the campaigns in Iraq, the Balkans and Afghanistan or participation in major naval operations in the theaters of operations in the Mediterranean, Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean in the fight against terrorism, in the war in Libya or in the fight anti-piracy demonstrates the role and importance of the military dimension of security in the Black Sea region.

The participation of Romania and the prospects for the coming years need to be highlighted in this context. Romania participated in the operationalization of EU Battle Groups in EU or UN missions, and of these, the most important are Romania's participation in Operation ATALANTA to fight piracy with King Ferdinand Frigate in 2012, for a period of 60 days or participation starting with this year with an aviation contingent of four helicopters and over 100 servicemen in the UN mission in Mali.

Participation with senior staff in EU or NATO HQ, along with the participation since 2017 in the NATO Sea Guardian operation or the continuation

of participation with an important contingent in Afghanistan, within the Resolute Support Mission (RSM), shows clearly that Romania is consistently committed to the Euro-Atlantic effort of realization of the regional order in the Black Sea basin.

Recent developments and short- medium- and long-term perspectives, refer to the EUMS's concerns regarding the elaboration of the documents and the standardization of the training activities of the Battle Groups (BGs)¹¹. It is considered that although the preparation of the BGs is the responsibility of the contributing Member States, there are different approaches that require a standardization of the training of the BGs.

The already predictable success of the most important operation conducted by the European Union, Operation ATALANTA, which has been in operation since 2008 or Operation EUNAVFOR Sophia shows that a military force of the European Union is being built seriously and intelligently for the present and the future. The EU Naval Task Group has been operating in the Gulf of Aden and the Somali Basin since 2008 and comprises ships, aviation and special forces with a strength that has reached around 1500 military personnel.

Displacement of the national contingent of the Marine Infantry Regiment in the Afghanistan theatre of operations under Operation "Resolute Support", participation in the VJTF¹² of the NATO Rapid Reaction Forces package for a period of six months with King Ferdinand Frigate or participation in Operation SEA GUARDIAN in the Mediterranean Sea. These are only three elements that support the contribution of the Romanian Naval Forces to the joint effort of the Romanian Army within the Alliance and EU, to maintain stability in this extended region of the Black Sea.

Also, the participation with ships and senior staff in NATO naval Task Groups during their deployment in the Black Sea or the development of multinational or bilateral exercises to maintain interoperability but also to develop cooperation or to maintain a balance of power in the region are other noteworthy elements. The Romanian Naval Forces have made an important premiere, in the last years, in the participation to the operations of Active Endeavor, Unified Protector, Atalanta, Sea Guardian or national, multinational and international exercises such as: the integration of the organic helicopter; the integration of special operations

forces (FOS) and EOD groups onboard ships; achieving a flexible structure at the organization level; the deployment of marine infantry in theatres of operations in Afghanistan or the Baltic Sea.

The role of Romania in achieving the regional order in the Black Sea area as well as its role in the process of regionalization of the Black Sea is also important to be used as an opportunity. We can say that this role has importance and consistency also due to the fact that within the international relations, Romania proves having principles and character, as the famous American professor Milan Vego shows in his book "Joint Operational Warfare, Theory and practice": "Successful Leaders at any level of command possess certain character traits and professional knowledge and experience that distinguish them from less capable commanders."¹³

It is evident, however, that the use of the resources of all five dimensions of security is by far the most effective way to achieve and maintain the stability of the states and, implicitly, of the Black Sea region. The comprehensive approach of security policies and external strategies as well as defence strategies remain of interest both to the state's leadership and to its citizens, also. From this perspective, Romania should also do more to identify major, medium, and long-term objectives and to assume the role intended by geopolitical and geostrategic positioning, to continue the policy of maintaining a stable balance of power in the Black Sea region and its extended region.

Consequently, maintaining the balance of the role of the political, economic, military, social and environmental dimensions is the optimal way, the most effective solution, for ensuring the stability and security, not only of the state but also of the regional one, if we talk about the Black Sea region.

Conclusions

Starting from the current requirements, the specificity of the structures we design must meet the following criteria: efficient command and control, balanced structure of forces, interoperability and appropriate infrastructure, all to bring the forces under the Romanian Defence Staff close to the requirements of the modern joint war, at sea, on land and air. In the context of the integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures and the modernization

of the Armed Forces through the acquisition of equipment or systems compatible and interoperable with those of our partners, the elaboration of the strategic documents was imposed as one of the top priorities.

As a Black Sea riparian state, located near the insecurity zone in the Balkans and at the entrance of the main river transport axis between the Middle East and Western Europe, Romania must have a credible and well-structured naval force, with a combative power over the measure of the responsibilities of the sea and the Danube river. In the context of the contemporary evolution of the security environment, the country's maritime power is a factor of vital importance, and the Romanian Naval Forces is its main pillar.

Successful participation of the Romanian Army with Euro-Atlantic partners in the campaigns in Iraq, the Balkans and Afghanistan or participation in major naval operations in the theaters of operations in the Mediterranean, Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean in the fight against terrorism, in the war in Libya or in the fight anti-piracy, demonstrates the role and importance of the military security dimension.

Security, stability, and prosperity in this region depend largely on regional and international actors: the European Union, NATO, Russia, the USA, Turkey, and, not least, China. However, probably the most important are the relations among the US, the European Union and Russia.

Romania is one of the main actors in the geopolitical scene of the Black Sea region. Democracy, respect for the fundamental rights of citizens, and good governance are solid, fundamental principles of the European Union. The main objective of the European Union is to promote democracy within the European Union but also in its vicinity. It is a priority for the European Union that the projection of a medium and long-term vision be applied with adequate consistency.

In the region of the European Union, a significant number of states have a population consisting of different ethnic categories and still religious, cultural or social differences are difficult to deal with. However, there are no obstacles to overcome. Cultural and religious differences are by far the ones that can be easily overcome. Leaders can resolve these divergences through positive creativity. From this point of view, Romania is a

very good example. The 18 minorities living in harmony on the territory of our country are an example and an opportunity for leaders in the wider Black Sea area¹⁴.

Important actors as US, NATO, the European Union, Russia and China are the ones who need to expand the dialogue and extend it to the whole area. When we do these things, it is necessary to bring into this equation the role of the Danube because, as Mihail Kogălniceanu said, "*The Danube Way to the Black Sea is the key to our salvation*".

The geopolitical foundations of the Black Sea region, the regional potential of the Black Sea, the dynamics of the regionalization process as well as the regionalization process from Romania's perspective are key elements in establishing a clear vision. The conceptual bases of the regional order, political identity and regional order in the Black Sea are analyzed and clarified in terms of comprehensiveness.

Romania is constantly adapting to the Euro-Atlantic framework also by elaborating quality programmatic documents, from the National Defence Strategy to the Security Strategy for the Black Sea, with the adoption of a new Doctrine of the Naval Forces, edition 2018, a fundamental document for the deployment of the Romanian Naval Forces actions, a document that essentially contains a sum of principles, a set of rules and, at the same time, a sum of "*teachings*", lessons identified or learned, transformed into standardized operating procedures at the level of the Naval Forces structure, with a vision for modernization. These programmatic documents include the principles and priority directions of development and modernization of the Armed Forces of Romania, in the medium and long-term, and have a real contribution to the development of regional order in the Black Sea.

The development of a maritime consciousness of the citizens of Romania, of the Romanian people, is the foremost desideratum of this doctrine, along with the other basic documents of the Romanian Naval Forces Staff. It is equally important for us, but especially for future generations to understand that the development of a maritime consciousness as the visionary Mihail Kogălniceanu did is essential. The development of a maritime consciousness could continue from this point and can be developed throughout the extended region of the course of the

Danube to the Black Sea, supported on the strategic pillars of the Romanian Naval Forces. Starting from the current demands of the modern world, the new doctrines, specific to the structure of the forces that we design, which we modernize in fact, must meet the criteria of efficient management, as a balanced structure of interoperable forces and with appropriate infrastructure.

After 15 years since Romania's accession to NATO, achieving compatibility, interoperability among the armed forces of NATO members is also required by correlating and harmonizing the legislative framework, both horizontally and vertically, in all fields of activity. The lessons identified and the lessons learned after participating in operations and missions, at international and multinational exercises, brought important gains and feedback, needed for the development and transformation of all operational related activities. The transformation of the Romanian Army and implicitly of the Romanian Naval Forces for the last 15 years is obvious, but this does not mean that it is completed. The process must be understood as a continuous one, involving all the mechanisms and forces that contribute to this development.

At the end of 2019, Romania as a European maritime state, a member of the most important organizations in the Euro-Atlantic area, NATO and the European Union, is now reinforcing its character and position as a state-recognized according to its status for the first time in history at the leadership of the Council of the European Union, a period with challenges but also with multiple opportunities.

NOTES:

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