

## **SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT OF THE BLACK SEA REGION**

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**Abstract:** Our country has as an important objective the supply of raw materials coming through the maritime and river trade routes from abroad and also from the undersea mineral deposits. Considering the improvements in the field of undersea surveys and exploitation and also in securing economical activities that take place at sea and on rivers – naval transportation, tourism, shipbuilding and in bringing up its own image and status on the international scene by keeping still the national flag on the world seas and oceans.

Maintaining maritime and river interests are base priorities for Naval Forces which must be able to project the power of Romanian state on free seas for defending economical interests on the river and seas communication routes and also wherever their own interests and NATO's interests are asking to.

**Keywords:** naval communications, Naval Forces, Geo-politics, economical interests, naval power, security

### **1. THE GEOSTRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE BLACK SEA AREA**

Since ancient times the Black Sea basin represented a crossroads of economic, political and strategically interests. The old caravans and maritime routes of the Silk Road were connections between eastern and western civilizations as well being a hub for the great strategists looking to fulfill their economic and military goals. The geopolitical and area security evolution in the Black Sea basin, the geographic position, the risks and threats as well as the advantages offered by the economic, political and military cooperation are and were very attractive for the European and transatlantic organizations. All these factors attract a lot of attention towards the issues affecting the region.

Romania's foreign policy has among its priorities the Black Sea Zone which it considers a very important matter of national security. An analysis of the Black Sea area geopolitical features must start from the key obstacles and the identification of certain dilemmas facing the members of the region. Countries attempt to tailor their efforts to the dynamic process of creating both regional and global security. Also, the impact of the transition towards the post-communist member states while adapting to the New Order of Euro-Atlantic security is an essential factor for understanding the current phenomenon. Last but not least, to analyse the Regional Powers, such as Russia or Turkey, interests', in particular in terms of competing for energy resources and natural resources transit lines, that link the Mediterranean, Black Sea, Caspian Sea and Central Asia, is to define conclusive geopolitical perspective in the short run as well as in the near future.

In the new geo strategic context the influence the historical evolution carries is a factor to be taken into account when consider the relationship between the Black Sea area and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or the European Union and also in proving the increasing importance of this region. Thus, for centuries the Greek and Romanian, Italian, Turk and Russian mariners, used the Black Sea for military and economic purposes. In the past, great empires extended their domination over the Black Sea region, both because of the riches (grain, ore, timber and fish) found here but also for its geostrategic importance. For this reason, the Black Sea was seen as a buffer zone between civilizations. In recent times, however, the Black Sea region is seen globally as a transit area between Central Asia and the Caucasus and also between the Middle East and Central and Western Europe.

It should be pointed out that South Eastern Europe, including the Black Sea extended zone, is the only European region where the so called „frozen conflicts” still exist and their resolve is a hot debate topic for the international security structures.

The membership of Romania in the Euro-Atlantic security structure and the European Union, and also the characteristics that resulted from the evolution of the geopolitical relationships in the Black Sea Zone and its adjacent regions lead, inevitably, to a shift in national security strategy and, hence, the military strategy, with major implications for the role, place and destination of the armed forces, in general, and naval forces in particular. This new context in which Romania can be found means, besides guaranteeing stability and national security, increased responsibilities in the field of generating regional and European stability and security.

After joining the European Union, Romania is forced to make a national contribution to the European security structure, which complement the tasks and responsibilities assumed within NATO.

Referring to the significance that the Black Sea basin holds for Romania, a representative of our country appreciated back in 2010 at the annual meeting of the commanders in charge of the navies stationed at the Black Sea, that the Black Sea region is perceived as an area with significant geopolitical importance for the states adjacent to it and also their neighbours. It requires a real Euro-Atlantic strategy aimed, on the one hand, to ensure stability, democratic, security and prosperity, and on the other hand, creating the appropriate dynamism for the processes of democratic transformation. The fundamentals of this strategy should start from the realities in the area as well as from the dynamic in which this zone articulates with the global evolution.

Bearing this in mind along with what the president of Romania highlighted recently, at least three characteristic elements of the Black Sea region can be determined.

Firstly, all states in the region reunite around some fundamental values and interests governing current development of international relations i.e: democracy, human rights, free market economy and fight against terrorism.

Secondly, all states in this area are linked in one way or another to the Euro-Atlantic security structure. From NATO's point of view, the region consists of Member States of the Alliance, Member States of the Partnership for Peace and States that develop special partnerships with NATO. In terms of the European Union, the states in the region are expressing more and more firmly, their option for integration; some of them have already signed the treaty of accession while others will start accession negotiations or develop an active and dynamic cooperation with the European Union.

Thirdly, the Black Sea region evolved as a major link which carried out the connection between the Euro-Atlantic strategic zone and the Middle East, the Caspian Sea and Central Asia.

The Black Sea region is positioned in the focal point of the two major strategic flows that are situated on the same trajectory, but evolving in opposite ways and linking the two geostrategic spheres. The exchange between the producer and the consumer of energy on the one hand, and between the security provider and the security consumer, on the other hand. Currently, profound transformations occur on an internationally scale and consist of a democratisation progress, an ongoing search process for security as well as changes in the character and nature of the risks and threats to the regional and global security. Taking this into consideration, the concerns of the Romanian government regarding international relations and cooperation are geared towards an active contribution to the policy of peace, stability and security.

The importance of this area, situated between two hotspots with a higher than average potential for conflict (the Balkans and the Caucasus) as well as the proximity to the Eastern Mediterranean basin (marked by conflicts in the Middle East and the Islamic terrorist exacerbation), is primary highlighted by the following elements:

- Being located at the confluence of three geopolitical areas considered to be on top of the current conflictual situations with acute problems concerning security and stability (the South of Europe, the Middle East and the Eastern Europe);
- It represents the exit way to the High Seas for Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria and transcaucasian countries;
- It is criss-crossed by the many oil and natural gas routes originating from the Caspian Sea and Central Asia to the West, and also includes TRACECA energy route;
- It includes a segment of Russia southern border and in the same time is the extremity of the NATO South-Eastern flank;
- includes, at least, a segment of drugs trafficking network in Central Asia and Middle East, the weapons trafficking from countries of the former Soviet Union and even traffic with emigrants from Central Asia to the West;
- possesses important submarine resources, a large network of ports and port facilities, and a seaside agreeable, offering, thus, multiple facilities for commercial cooperation and tourism;
- It represents a perfect environment to develop military cooperation.

Increasing importance of the Black Sea region in geo-political context, at the beginning of the third millennium, is given by the necessity of strategic raw material flowing, economic and military cooperation and increasing involvement of the great powers and international organizations in problems concerning the region.

## **2. ROMANIA'S MARITIME AND RIVERINE INTERESTS REGARDING STABILITY AND SECURITY AROUND BLACK SEA AREA**

Romania's location in the Black Sea region and its connection to planetary ocean represents a strategic advantage that have to be exploited with maximum efficiency.

As it was mentioned, in the context of the foreign policy priorities, Romania gives particular attention to the Black Sea problems, this concern being a matter of great importance for the national interest.

Romania wants to promote its own maritime and riverine interests that are imposed by its status as one of the local maritime powers and by the lenght of its maritime and riverine borders.

From this perspective, our country has major interests in providing inland raw materials by sea and river channels, in the extraction of natural resources of continental shelf, the future perspectives of development for submarine extraction operations, for ensuring economic activities that are

carried out at sea and on the river, shipping, tourism, naval shipyards, and in promoting its image worldwide through national flag arboring on sea going ships. Also, a matter of great importance is the Euro-Atlantic involvement on the extended Black Sea region.

The essence of a maritime power is given by the range of possibilities to be used, as efficiently as possible, and its wealth, and the length of its water ways in its own interests, and in its ability to deny access to the sea of its potential enemies. According to the *Romanian Naval Forces Doctrine*, the constituents of the maritime power are:

- the forces and naval military means, including those of the border police, maritime air force and marine infantry;
- merchant marine;
- the infrastructure and logistic resources, including: the naval bases, the ports and supply points, the storage depots, the shipyards, the dockyards and airports;
- the naval academy;
- the professional leagues and associations;
- specialized compartments of the media;
- the construction sites and the naval companies ;
- the companies, facilities and specialized vessels in offshore drilling and reasearch;
- the companies and associations that to promote sea side tourism and the means they possess;
- the reasearch institutes engaged in research on aquatic environments and their logistics.

These elements of maritime power are fuelled and arise from conditions such as:

- the geographic position; the topographic configuration; the territorial extent; the length of its coast line; the availability of harbours and natural bays that can shelter ships in times of rough weather; the presence of inland water ways, lakes, rivers and channels that allow navigation;
- the type of governance; the external political and economic relations; state maritime policy;
- the resources and war capability; the economy; the natural resources; the land lines and infrastructure; the communication network; population; the armed forces etc.

Taking into consideration the aspects mentioned before, the maritime power of a nation can be viewed as an interdependent system. Very strong symbiotic relationships exist between naval trade and the resource it caters to which in turn determines a nation's political power and its status as a dominant naval presence that in turn favours trade.

Political and economic evolution of Romania is closely linked to the policy on the maritime activities. A well developed Romania will mean in the future a new states as a maritime power.

The area of interests covering sea and river zone are an integral part of the national, economic and political policies of Romania. They evolve in time depending on maritime power and the political situation. The maritime and riverine interests are promoted through negotiations and treaties and defended by the Naval Forces, that need to be able to project the states power at sea, with the aim of defending economic objectives, sea and river lines of communications wherever its own interests or those of North Atlantic Treaty Organization require.

The *Doctrine of Naval Forces Operations*, underlines the fact that Romania is very interested in keeping its territorial integrity, preserving free passage on the Danube towards the Black Sea, mainly trough the river tributaries and the Danube-Black Sea Channel. As well by ensuring conditions for imposing and preserving maritime areas of interest to conduct permanent economic activities, providing stability in the area, to defend infrastructure in coastal areas and sea environmental protection as well as taking part in military operations along with NATO allies and partners.

Given the complex political and economic situation in the Black Sea area, the existence of Naval Forces is the supreme argument which gives credibility to the Romanian policy regarding the defence of its naval interests. In this context, completing the transformation and switching to the new stage of modernization of the Naval Forces is a national priority. Recent activity and the future of the Naval Forces is oriented towards creating forces capable of responding to the risks and threats of the new security environment in the region, and in the same time, to be interoperable with the maritime structures of North Atlantic Alliance. The main objective of this approach was to set new concepts and legislation, doctrines, regulations and manuals of ensuring the legislative framework to enforce the missions, adapt the system of planning and management of military operations, implementing procedures in order to train together with allies and partners, upgrading ships and equipment, providing forces with the latest generation weapons, capable of providing both interoperability with NATO forces as well as fulfilling all tasks with maximum efficiency.

Transformation and modernization of the the Romanian Naval Forces should relate at all times to the next goal: on short run and long run, Romania must be able to defend alone its maritime interests in the Black Sea as well as on the high seas, together with allies and its partners. In this respect, it is necessary that our country to become a regional maritime power.

### **3. NOWADAYS RISKS AND THREATS TO THE ROMANIAN MARITIME INTERESTS**

In the current age, there are several possible threats that might manifest themselves in the range of the naval forces and its vicinity, such as the escalation of interethnic and religious conflicts near Romania; limiting freedom of movement for shipping or activities guaranteed by the international maritime law; violating maritime, river or land borders, carrying out terrorist actions; specific actions related to the IT and economic warfare both targeting civilians and military; weapons, ammunition and drugs trafficking; hazardous

materials smuggling; illegal migration; pollution and, not in the last line, a possible nuclear accident.

Direct assault against the Romanian seaside in Dobrogea Region, though less likely, remains a threat which Romania must face at any moment.

Romania does not consider any state as a potential threat to national security and, like any other Armed Forces, the Naval Forces may participate in the settlement of disputes that relate to sea and river, in particular trough peaceful means, maintaining a safe and secure climate in the region.

The involvement in the joint naval exercises along with the other Black Sea states' fleets in the regional initiatives, such as the Group of Naval Cooperation in the Black Sea - BLACKSEAFOR, contributes toward building a trust field environment, friendship and good neighborly relations with all states around the Black Sea.

According to the *Romania's National Security Strategy* the military power is the last leverageing tool used in ensuring the security of the country, that makes the military option something not to be neglected.

The current analysis of the risks and threats from the region, depicts a certain ranking, with regards to the probability of the conflicts arising to which the naval forces will have to react. Those could be non-military asymmetric actions, focused on organized crime, drug trafficking, smuggling and flow of refugees on its way to the sea, against acts of piracy and terrorism at sea and in ports. These do not exclude the possibility of outbreaks of either a regional armed conflict, which is characterized by combining unconventional and conventional operations, of small or medium intensity, in all environments on water, air or in cyber space, or a major conflict, consisting of a conventional war based on means with great maneuverability, precise hits, multidimensional forces protection, using means of information and electronic warfare.

To the list add natural disasters and environmental incidents that cannot be compared with the above because of their unpredictability, but generate major effects requiring the intervention of the Naval Forces.

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