

Romania – an International Actor in the Context of the Extensive Region of the Black Sea

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Abstract: In the globalized world of the 21st century, the international relations are presented as a mandatory element for maintaining the balance of world power and peace. Although the international actors, such as states or international organizations, are trying to establish as many relationships as possible of various kinds (economic, political, military) through diplomacy, all over the world, at macro level, the international actors should first achieve a harmony or a general state of good understanding at the micro level, i.e. in a certain geographic region to which they belong. Romania, as an actor of international relations, has as own purpose, and also imposed upon accession to the European Union, maintaining the diplomatic relations in the region of Central-Eastern Europe, both with its neighbors and with the states in the proximity of the Black Sea region. The article aims at outlining better the role that they have, in the geopolitical context, the countries from the extensive region of the Black Sea, in the consolidation of economic and political cooperation relationships, which would lead to stability in the region.

Keywords: Black Sea Basin; cooperation and partnership; regional security

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the Black Sea region is, in its essence, the point of intersection of four different geopolitical dynamics. The first two dynamics are based on the interests of the two powerful states in the region, namely Turkey and Russia. Apart from these two, we add many countries included in the European Neighbourhood Policy. United States, however, regards the region as a gateway in its policies carried out in the Middle East and Eurasia. Thus, the Black Sea became an intersection² of the four parties involved, Turkey, Russia, USA and EU. As a result, the security and stability in the Black Sea basin had reverberations throughout the entire Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area.

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² Idea taken from (Kempe & Klotzle, 2006, p. 5)

2. The Extended Area of the Black Sea - Characterization

In the system of contemporary international relations, the diplomatic relations play an important role in the development of the interconnections between states, interconnections that lead to economic development, to the development of human rights and freedoms, by spreading democratic values and also mutual exchange and understanding the culture of nations and ethnic groups. In the context of the formation and development of more and more international organizations with different military, security, integration, economic development objectives, such as the European Union¹ or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization², the international relations system has become more open and aware of the problems and emerging needs in all areas of study and they try solving those needs through diplomacy and, in the case of Europe and the European Union's vision, the idea of integration.

Romania, once accepted in the European Union, has become a member of this "family" of states that share the same norms and values, generally represented by leading accession criteria set by the *Copenhagen Criteria*.³ The European Union is an international actor best defined by the phrase *sui generis*.⁴ Romania, being part of this organization, ceded willingly a part of its sovereignty, in order to achieve a greater collective good, which would meet the needs of all Member States, going on the idea of "unity in diversity".⁵ The process by which Romania has gone in order to join the European Union was a complex one. This process continues to manifest through the phenomenon of European integration, but the ability and speed with which Romania manages to assimilate the new rules imposed by the EU, are low and slow.

Since the fall of communism in Romania until 2014, over about 24 years, the Romanian state fought for integration in the new democratic and values distant from the Eastern bloc ideologies during the Cold War. The slowest areas are economic, the justice and the infrastructure; it can be said that the areas are interconnected and the malfunction of one domain draws after itself the mismanagement of other areas. For this purpose, the development and integration

¹ The European Union is a unique economic and political partnership between 28 European countries, which together comprise the majority of the European continent. <http://europa.eu/about-eu/>.

² Political and military organization whose primary objective is the maintenance of peace and security of its members. <http://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/> accessed on 04/03/2014.

³ Any country that wants to join the European Union must meet certain general criteria in order to join: political - stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy; economic - the existence of a market economy and ability to compete with other European markets; Legislative - accepting the *acquis communautaire*.

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen_en.htm

⁴ Latin phrase meaning: unique, one of its kind, of nature, of its type, in its variety.

<http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/sui+generis>.

⁵ This phrase is the slogan of the European Union, encouraging cultural diversity and acceptance by all other members. Source: http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/motto/index_en.htm.

of the Member States, the European Union aims at helping states with some regional development strategies and action plans. These strategies that aim at bringing all areas of Europe to European standards regard not only the European Union member states, but also the states in its neighborhood, entering within the *European Neighbourhood Policy*.¹

In the case of Romania, in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Romanian state has diplomatic relations not only with countries that are our direct neighbors, but also with countries that are in the extensive region of the Black Sea. The extensive region of the Black Sea includes all the states in the vicinity of the Black Sea, and for this the region there are various international organizations, international agreements and action plans that take into consideration the various aspects of the region, which improved and developed, can lead to individual and collective development of all involved countries. These are: the demographic, social, political, administrative and economic aspects. Another important issue is the fact that Romania owns more than a third of the Danube's waters, 1075 km, but the most important aspect from a geopolitical and geostrategic point of view was and still is the fact that it flows into the Black Sea in our country. (Maftai, 2012, pp. 75-85) In order to achieve the objectives of regional development in the extensive area of the Black Sea it requires a high degree of interstate cooperation. To this end, it was created the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.² This organization³ includes Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine. This organization aims⁴ at developing and diversifying the bilateral and multilateral cooperation in accordance with the principles and rules of the international law, improving the business environment and promoting the individual and collective initiative of enterprises and companies directly involved in the process of economic cooperation, the development of economic cooperation and enhancing the mutual respect and trust, the dialog and cooperation between BSEC⁵ member states.

Another instrument of regional development and intensification of international relations was the creation of The Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Program. The Black Sea basin is one of the main areas of interaction between the EU and its

¹ The objective of the European Neighbourhood Policy is to share the benefits of the EU neighboring countries EU, strengthening the stability, security and welfare of all concerned. http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/international/neighbourhood_policy/index_en.htm.

² Additional information on the Organization can be found on the official site: <http://www.bsec-organization.org/Pages/homepage.aspx>.

³ Fundamental documents that gave birth to the organization were represented by Istanbul Declaration and the Bosphorus Statement, signed on 25 June 1995 in Istanbul by 11 heads of state and government. In 1998, it was signed, at Yalta, the "BSEC Charter", which entered into force on 1 May 1999 and it became the founding document of the organization.

⁴ <http://www.mae.ro/node/1501> accessed on 15.03.2014.

⁵ Acronym for Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

eastern neighbors, and it benefits from a rapid and intense structural evolution. After the last extension of the European Union since 2007, with the entry of two littoral states, Romania and Bulgaria, and Turkey¹ leading negotiations to join, the European Union now has shores to the Black Sea. As a result, the interest of the European Union for a stronger stability and security in the area has increased. In order to face the emerging challenges in the region, and how they might affect the relations with southern and eastern neighbors of the European Union, the European Union decided in 2003 to promote a new approach in terms of cooperation with neighboring countries, which resulted in the formulation of a comprehensive strategy in May 2004, that is the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The Current legal framework regarding the EU relations with these countries are exposed to the *Partnership and Cooperation Agreements*.² The common priorities are established through the Action Plans of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The *Cross-Border Cooperation Program*³ is an integrated component of the ENP⁴ and the *Strategic Partnership of the EU - Russia*⁵, allowing them both EU member states and partner states to work together at regional level. The main objectives of the Program CBC on the external borders of the EU are to support sustainable development along both sides of the EU's external borders, to reduce differences in living standards between these borders and to address the challenges and emerging opportunities with EU enlargement.

There are several challenges and issues related to regional development. All eligible regions are below the average level of development of the EU, both for Member States and the partner countries in the region. The annual gross domestic

¹ Turkey, as a state candidate, under negotiation, is not covered by the Article of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument no 1638/2006, but it is allowed to participate in the Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme, under Article 86 (4) of regulating the European Commission no. 718/2007 and Article no. 9 (5) of the regulation of European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument.

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_relations/relations_with_third_countries/eastern_europe_and_central_asia/r17101_ro.htm accessed on 16/03/2014; <http://www.blacksea-cbc.net/> accessed on 16/03/2014.

² These agreements have as objectives strengthening democracies and developing their economies through cooperation in a wide range of areas, and political dialogue. They establish a Cooperation Council which has the task to oversee the implementation of the agreements.

³ Cross-border cooperation with neighboring countries of the European Union regards the promotion of a coherent and integrated approach of the regional development, addressing common challenges, ensuring efficiency and security at the external borders and encouraging cooperation at local level.

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_relations/relations_with_third_countries/eastern_europe_and_central_asia/r17104_ro.htm accessed on 16/03/2014.

⁴ Acronym for the European Neighbourhood Policy

⁵ The partnership aims at producing a more comprehensive framework of the EU-Russia relations, reflecting on the increase in cooperation since the early 1990s. Source: <http://eeas.europa.eu/russia/> accessed on 16/03/2014.

product per capita is less than 3600 euros¹, the only significant exception being some regions of Greece. Although all regions have a very dynamic growth, which slightly reduces this gap and it creates the foundation for future improvements, the economic imbalances are still strongly evident.

As a result, all the countries in the Black Sea are facing a strong tendency of migration towards Europe's strongest economies, which generated a negative net migration balance. In some cases, migration is so strong, especially among the working population and skilled workers, that has become a constraint for local development. The infrastructure quality and quantity of the region reflects the general level of economic development. Availability of transport infrastructure is limited, even considering the low rate of use of this part of the infrastructure, reflecting low levels of economic development. Utilities infrastructure is also still underdeveloped in terms of running water, which is not available for many of the inhabitants of regions, especially in rural areas. In addition, one can see many other challenges. Among these we mention the recent domestic and international tensions that have become frozen conflicts and recently, the case of Ukraine and the Civil War, being even active or hot. Other problems are posed by illicit trafficking in persons, illegal migration, structural geographical constraints and insufficient structural social and economic infrastructure. However, the challenge identified by the partner states as being the most relevant for the strategy program is the environmental degradation², which is rooted in the geological structure of the basin, accelerated by the human factor, especially with geopolitical and economic changes of the early 90s. All countries are intensively dependent of energy, which has a huge impact on the environment. The lack of infrastructure for the preservation of the environment leads to massive pollution of rivers and streams, especially in the rivers from the basin and also the Black Sea itself.

3. Regional Security

The security and stability in the Black Sea are not only important for the littoral states, but also for the *Euro-Atlantic community*. (Ciocoiu, 2006) In addition to the wide range of natural resources available in the area, the potential energy transport routes added a strategic importance to the region. In this respect, Turkey assigns particular importance to regional bilateral or multilateral cooperation initiatives and mechanisms with coastal states. Currently, the security and stability in the Black Sea is built on two main pillars. The first is the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), above mentioned in the paper, and the second is BLACKSEAFOR, which is a regional naval force. The Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation

¹ Statistics taken from The Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme, the official document, the final version, 2007, p. 6.

² Detailed strategy of the EU at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/index_en.htm.

(BSEC) and BLACKSEAFOR are two successful examples of skills of Turkish foreign policy in terms of *proactive initiatives*. (Babaoglu, 24 August 2005, para. 9) These initiatives were designed to fill the strategic gap in the region that came with the collapse of the USSR before NATO¹ and EU presence in the region.

Another tool that helped the formulation of a security strategy is the European Defence Agency.² The European Defence Agency is the European Union agency that facilitates defense cooperation among its Member States and also including cooperation in research and technology domain, procurement of arms and military training. The European Defence Agency was born from a joint action of Ministers of the EU Council on 12th July 2004, in order to support the Member States and the Council in their effort to improve the European defense capabilities in the field of crisis management and to sustain the *European security and defence policy*.³ The role of the European Defence Agency is to develop defense capabilities, to promote research and technology regarding weapons, to facilitate cooperation on armaments and to create a competitive European armaments market, and to strengthen the technological bases of defense and the European industry.

Another program is regional security in the Black Sea Security Program⁴, whose overall objective is to encourage the regional policy through cooperation and integration. The program is unique in its mission to bring together the political elites of the region with officials of the United States in order to gain a deeper understanding of the issues affecting the region and encouraging the problem solving in areas of common interest. The program involves senior military representatives and civilian security specialists from the United States and ten regional partners: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine.

The program aims at deepening participants' understanding regarding the global strategy and regional defense organization, military reform and restructuring; identifying the many areas where there is an agreement between the Black Sea countries to focus on their common history and on the fact that they share the same values and norms; tracing the areas where cooperation currently exists in areas of vital interest and at the same time to identify those issues that separate them and which present a challenge for regional cooperation; exposing the Black Sea officials pluralist ideas of the American system and the national community security of the United States of America.

¹ Acronym for The North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

² The official site of the European Defence Agency: <https://www.eda.europa.eu/>.

³ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/institutional_affairs/treaties/lisbon_treaty/ai0026_ro.htm.

⁴ More details at <http://www.harvard-bssp.org/bssp/about>.

*The European Security Strategy*¹ outlined a framework for EU interests in the neighboring areas. The highest risks for the EU in terms of the region are represented in the security field. The war in Georgia has not resulted in an influx of refugees in the Western European countries, but still affected transport routes for oil and gas, and the political and military consequences of the war continue to affect Georgia and the neighboring regions, thus affecting many of the partner countries of the EU. A military confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, possibly involving Russia and Turkey, could have more dire implications for the European Union. The Civil War in Ukraine and bloody confrontations continue to affect currently the Black Sea area in terms of stability, given that Ukraine was a candidate for membership in the European Union; but the recent events could pull Ukraine far back in the path of integration and accession.

Besides these issues, the weakness of states in the region and the existence of some legally unrecognized entities attract criminal and terrorist groups, which turns the region likely to become an illegal traffic point of arms, drugs and human beings. Terrorism, the inefficiency of states, regional conflicts and organized crime are among the most pressing security threats presented in the European Security Strategy. (Maftai, 2009) It is therefore in the interest of the Union to work on those threats with the regional states. Members of the extensive area of the Black Sea continue to have persistent challenges in terms of security, dating back to the fall of the Soviet Union, especially the unsolved armed territorial conflicts. The EU enlargement has brought unsolved conflicts in Transnistria in Moldova, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and the conflict stronger and extended to the North Caucasus region. The situation in these regions is far from stable, thus causing the frustration of unresolved conflict determine the parties to resort again to the use of arms. The negotiation and peacekeeping procedures continue to be dominated by Russia, which is being identified more as part of the conflict, rather than a neutral mediator.

In order to prevent these conflicts and to secure the area, the European Union continues to build institutions meant to ensure the rule of law and the democratic values. In this respect, it can be seen a notable progress in Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey, by trying to reach the European standards. The EU Member States show concern on the fact that Europe is becoming increasingly dependent on Russia for energy and they need to formulate an energy security strategy so that the EU Member States do not become entirely dependent on Russia. Thus, Europe is trying to diversify its energy sources, especially in terms of natural gas. Not being under the control of Russia, the Caspian region has a special interest for Europe in the

¹ The objectives and threats targeted by the European Security Strategy are: the terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, incapacity and failure of states and organized crime, http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/fight_against_organised_crime/r00004_en.htm accessed on 03/18/2014.

near future, having significant deposits of natural gas, which could ensure the needs of the European states, i.e. the energy security.

Also, in order to ensure security in the region, the European Union should have a more active role in the negotiations and peace keeping in the Caucasus, as it did in Transnistria. The EU has the capacity to serve as an impartial entity, which would bring a much needed legitimacy and credibility of these processes.

The European Union should develop a broader regional strategy in order to solve conflicts by addressing the right of small countries to sovereignty and territorial integrity. This approach should include the Russian Federation in the peacekeeping discussions and to be part of a strategic partnership between Russia and the European Union. In parallel, the EU should actively support the development of policies, supporting national minorities in the countries of the region, continuing the phenomenon of integration.

The EU should also support the role of NATO in the extensive region of the Black Sea, which is crucial in advancing regional security. And, finally, the EU should develop a close partnership with the United States, and both powers should coordinate their policies towards the region, taking advantage of the strong points and complementary roles. We can say that security is rooted at the micro level. Starting with each individual and to supranational entities such as the European Union, longing for security has always been strong. The best way to ensure the regional security is to first ensure the national or even local security, solving our own political, ethnic, social conflicts, and then we can aspire to regional, global, integrated even security.

4. Conclusions

The EU, as a response to the dynamic security in international relations, developed a so-called *common foreign and security policy*¹, which aims at strengthen the EU's external abilities through the development of military and civil capabilities regarding the conflict prevention and management in critical situations.

What is difficult to achieve the common policy is not setting goals and identifying threats, but determining the means by which to pursue these objectives as being an organization consisting of 28 states, each wanting to have a word for such decisions; it is difficult to trace methods for implementing strategies. The EU uses several strategies, programs, action plans regarding security.

A tool for addressing the problem of security is represented by the European Security Strategy which has developed a comprehensive framework for EU interests in the continent. One of the most important areas in terms of security is

¹ http://eeas.europa.eu/cfsp/index_en.htm.

the extensive region of the Black Sea as it is a special geostrategic point, having two riparian states very strong from the military and economic point of view, Russia and Turkey, and there is the proximity to the Middle East, where there have been several recent political conflicts, known as the Arab Spring phenomenon.¹

Romania is a global player with a special status in the context of the extensive region of the Black Sea and it plays an important role in the geopolitics of the region. In light of all the above mentioned aspects, the security, the geographical, the institutional and political aspects, Romania presents and continues to show interest in creating and intensifying the international diplomatic relations with its regional partners, even from other continents such as North America and Asia.

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¹ This term refers to the outbreak of civil revolt against the government systems of each state, as discontentment for the practiced authoritarian or dictatorial regime.

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