

Economic Aspects Regarding Romania's Position in the Framework of International Cooperation in the Black Sea

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Abstract

Black Sea cooperation has been fundamental on three dimensions: economic, political and military. From a military point of view, have been developed regional initiatives such as SEEBRIG and BLACKSEAFOR, the last one being a naval cooperation body comprising six countries, aiming at mutual knowledge, strengthening trust and security in the Black Sea, actions being focused on humanitarian issues, search and rescue, pollution, etc.

The purpose of this paper is to present, in a concise manner, the importance of cooperation between the states that have access to the Black Sea, the European Union, in this context, playing a key role. Romania, an EU member state, is an important player in the Black Sea region, and the issue of economic security in this area cannot be approached or solved without the support of this European organization.

As a founding member of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, Romania supports its objectives (ongoing dialogue with the EU, the Stability Pact, the fight against organized crime, the Transport Action Plan), considering that BSEC has significant potential for developing economic cooperation in the regional level, to promote stability and security, as well as to build a community of interests and values on the Black Sea.

Key words: cooperation, Black Sea, changes, economic security.

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1. Introduction

As concerns aspects related to international security, international cooperation must cover a large range of risks, threats and dangers to security, no matter how these manifests. Security along the Black Sea, but also cooperation in these regions are very delicate matters, so as much as neighboring countries, but also those in the region have their own concepts of how security and stability in the region should look like.

The political, economic and military domains are essential as concerns cooperation at the Black Sea, as these represent the main interests of regional states.

At a regional level, there are mechanisms and organizations like The Organization for Economic Cooperation at the Black Sea (which operates the European Instrument of Neighbors and Partnership and the Document Concerning measures of growth and security at the Black Sea), the Conference for Regional Security at the Black Sea, the Naval Cooperation Group at the Black Sea, the South-Eastern European Brigade, the Multinational Force for Peace in South-Eastern Europe, the Initiative for Defending Borders.

2. Theoretical background

From a theoretical point of view, the paper is based on the study of several valuable works in this field, based on two very important areas, security and economics. During the paper, we used concepts as security, regional cooperation, economic cooperation, resources, etc..

3. Research methodology

The approach to some economic aspects regarding Romania's position in the framework of international cooperation in the Black Sea is the result of an empirical documentary analysis conducted by studying and analyzing existing documents in the current period, regarding the international security, the economic security, the importance of the Black Sea, Romania's position in this context.

Considering the fact that the observation is the first method of data collection used, the paper is mainly based on explanatory research. The paper highlights the way in which international security faces the tendencies of fragmentation in the Black Sea region, and in particular, the security of Europe - with a geopolitical dilemma in its relationship with it: integration and creation of stability versus disintegration and latent conflicts. It seems that the answer to these challenges lies in international cooperation based on four main elements: a spirit of partnership, support and mutual respect, the creation of opportunities for regional cooperation and positive and constructive relations with governments in the region.

The empirical research realised will open new, current research directions, being strongly anchored in the reality of today. Also, considering the complexity of the domain, I consider that there are many aspects that can be identified and used in a future study.

4. Findings

The findings of the empirical study are presented in the following subchapters.

4.1. The European and the management of regional integration

In recent years, the European Union's policy on the Black Sea region has undergone significant changes. The place of the disparate initiatives of the Europeans has been taken by a coordinated and long-term policy, oriented towards achieving clear objectives. (Gavrilă, 2009, p. 33).

As part of the strategy, the EU intends to rely mainly on Romania and Bulgaria. The European Union is making substantial efforts to expand its presence on the Black Sea, which is considered a link between Europe and the Caspian Sea, the latter being extremely rich in energy resources.

In addition, the Black Sea region has gained key importance in terms of control over transport arteries, gas and oil pipelines, to which Europeans are paying close attention to ensure their energy security. The loyalty of potential partner countries contributes to the promotion of EU interests. If Romania and Bulgaria are already promoters of EU policy in the region, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, the Republic of Moldova, but also Turkey provide political support to European initiatives. Instead, the interests of Russia and Ukraine, two major Black Sea states, are not taken into account, as the two countries being left out of the EU project.

4.2. Romania's interests in the region

As the process of opening up and connecting the region to the Euro-Atlantic community is in its infancy, Romania can contribute to its development and capitalize on the opportunities it offers. This requires a coordinated, consistent inter-institutional policy, with defined medium and long-term objectives, based on the following overriding interests: consolidating, in the eastern proximity of Romania, a stable, democratic and prosperous area, by opening the Black Sea region to Euro-Atlantic cooperation and integration; designing Romania's regional role and its favorable economic and strategic positioning; consolidating Romania's profile as a substantial and constant contributor to the elaboration and application of NATO and EU policies towards the Black Sea region.

The Romanian approach to the Black Sea region is a multi-vectoral one, which involves concerting bilateral efforts with regional and Euro-Atlantic ones, using a wide range of tools in various fields of activity and attracting private economic partners and civil society in tandem with Romania's regional actions.

The principles that form the basis of the Romanian approach are: multilateralism, transparency, pragmatism, complementarity, synergy and flexibility. Based on these principles the following objectives will be looked after: projecting Romania's role in the project logic (democratic foundation, regional cooperation with western implications, integration; flexible politics, multi-vector and doubled by a long term arrangement as well as financial one); promoting multilateral solutions to regional problems and promoting regional cooperation with the logic of EU and NATO politics (good neighbors and democratic security); choosing NATO and EU in the efforts of democratic change and stability in the Black Sea region, as well as attaching this to western values and ideologies; developing, including with the help of the US or that of NATO allies, projects of cooperation by a small number of states interested in the region, so that the rest can attach later on, at any time, once an interest to cooperate is found; cooperating and coordinating with allies that have similar interests in the region: USA, Great Britain, Poland, the Baltic states; attracting Germany, France, Italy into regional projects; identifying projects that can be made with Russia.

A partnership with relevant non-governmental actors from Romania, USA and Europe for the promotion of regional and bilateral projects favorable to Romania's interest in the Black Sea area. Romania will act to promote its interests in the Black Sea region by: strengthening regional security and stability (combating cross-border risks, securing the eastern land and sea border, resolving frozen conflicts); sustainable economic development and capitalization of business opportunities; promoting a strategy for the Black Sea region, generating the deep and coordinated involvement of European and Euro-Atlantic organizations in the region. (Gavrilă, 2009, p. 33)

Democratic options and reform processes initiated in the Black Sea region are still affected by internal interests and external influences in order to preserve an outdated status quo. The tension between the new trends and the risk factors must be carefully controlled because it can potentiate both the salutary evolutions and the disaggregation processes.

In this sense, we can identify some opportunities that our country has: Romania's membership with NATO, the EU opens the possibility of capitalizing on the tools available to these institutions and influencing their policies in the Black Sea region, in the sense of Romania's interests in this area; the pro-European orientation of Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova can be used to influence their conduct in the region; creation of the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument which will finance joint cross-border cooperation projects between EU Member States and neighboring countries.

The European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument will have, according to the European Commission's financial proposals, significant sums for the development of regional cooperation (among eligible states are also those from the Black Sea area) and has the merit of harmonizing the rules for granting / implementing projects with EU funding; the Black Sea region occupies a central place in the regional strategies of major international actors. Through the expertise provided to them, Romania can contribute to the attenuation of regional rivalries and to the development of cooperation reflexes in the region; the prospect of placing American military facilities on the Romanian Black Sea coast, as part of a broader process of consolidating Romania's status as a privileged interlocutor of the USA in the Black Sea issue.

In achieving these objectives and interests, a whole series of obstacles and vulnerabilities are identified: The Black Sea region is a space of multi-civilizational coexistence, in which, historically, conflict situations have delayed the formation of an authentic culture of dialogue and cooperation. The extensive Caucasian space, adjacent to the region, marked by outbreaks of tension and conflict, affects the availability of regional and international actors to get involved in joint projects; national elites have so far demonstrated difficulties in conceiving regional cooperation as a vehicle for promoting national interests in a non-competitive logic, as opposed to developments in the Baltic Sea and Central Europe.

Any comparison between the functionality and the grandeur of the Visegrad Group, for example and GUUAM shows the weakness of regional formats; exclusive approaches concerning the Black Sea of certain regional states and their opposition to the involvement of other outside actors into this problematic; the tendency of some regional states to become the main poles of attraction for western powers, despite regional initiatives, because of their recent pro-European reorientation; the lack of sense both at euro-Atlantic and regional levels concerning the implication levels in the region and the perspective that is insufficiently built up (be it on a long term) to transform the

Black Sea into an inland sea of the euro-Atlantic geographic space; the perception in some European and Euro-Atlantic environments that security risks in the Black Sea region do not have a direct impact on the West and that they can be sufficiently managed by riparian states; the constraints imposed on the EU's external action by internal difficulties (non-ratification of the European Constitution in France and the Netherlands, lack of agreement on the EU's financial perspectives for 2007-2013, increasing reluctance of European public opinion to continue the enlargement process); the risk of remaining a de facto Romanian territory outside the European transport corridors and the diversion of the main flow of goods from Europe to the areas adjacent to the Black Sea, on routes around Romania (lack of regular direct connections between Constanta and Mangalia ports and other Black Sea ports) maintaining hot-spots of conflict as ways of obstructing the European and democratic path of the states in the region; incidence in the region of the competitive interests of some actors of global importance; the tendency of some neighboring states to limit the approach of the region's problems to the frameworks offered by the existing regional instruments, although they have demonstrated their limitations in certain respects.

4.3. Economic, political and military cooperation

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) initiative was officially launched by the signing of the Istanbul Declaration on June 25, 1992. The founders of BSEC are eleven states: five Balkan countries (Republic of Albania, Republic of Bulgaria, Hellenic Republic, Romania, Republic of Turkey), three riparian countries (the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Ukraine) and three Caucasian countries (the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan and Georgia). The importance of the region is given by human and natural resources, the potential of energy sources, especially oil and gas and location strategically significant transit.

The evolution of economic cooperation around the Black Sea took place in the following stages:

- the first, of training, without results and without a clear organization, lasted until the meeting in Bucharest, in 1995, when the foreign ministers adopted an "Action Plan" which led to the consolidation of the cooperation mechanisms;

- in the second, the system of the Ministerial Troika was introduced, joint funding of the Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS) in Istanbul began, meetings were intensified at all levels and the BSEC Charter was signed in Yalta on 5 June 1998;

- after the signing of the Charter, the BSEC assumed all the characteristics of a regional international organization and took an institutionalized form, with a wide variety of cooperation structures and a large number of bodies empowered to adopt documents of international value. On April 30, 1999, on the occasion of the Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the BSEC member countries in Tbilisi, the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation was effectively established, following the deposit of ratification instruments by 10 member states, including Romania.

Since that date, BSEC has become a regional structure for economic cooperation. The BSEC has acquired observer status at the UN since October 8 1999, following the adoption of Resolution A/54/5. The two documents adopted in Istanbul on 25 June 1992, Declaration on Black Sea Economic Cooperation and Bosphorus Statement, indicate, among the main objectives of the BSEC, the acceleration of the economic and social development of the Member States with a view to their integration into the European Union, arising from the geographical proximity and complementarity of national economies.

The inclusion of other important objectives, such as political and security issues, was deliberately avoided. On June 25, 2002, in Istanbul, the heads of state and government of the Black Sea region marked, in an extraordinary meeting, the tenth anniversary of the creation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

After defining priority areas for cooperation, BSEC focuses on regional development projects, among which the most important are: the interconnection of electricity networks and connection to Western European systems; the development of transport infrastructures, by extending to the East the great European highways; construction of pipelines for the transport of oil and natural gas; modernization and interconnection of communication systems (under construction).

Romania's presence in NATO partially modifies the strategic concept in relation to the Islamic East and the ex-Soviet space, expanding NATO's capacity for action towards the Black Sea and Caucasus basin. In this sense, Romania is already considered a strategic stronghold on the southeastern border of the Euro-Atlantic area, in the vicinity of the Black Sea, and must become a spearhead to the east of Euro-Atlantic allies to preserve and even develop interests in the area.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the theoretical study showed that the Black Sea was a connecting element between East and West, and between North and South, constituting, at the same time, as a wider border, buffer zone type, between them. In conjunction with these valences, as human mobility developed more and more, the Black Sea began to be one of the most important connecting points for trade routes in general, and in the last century and especially today, one of the the main junctions of the routes of energy-carrying products.

It was found, as a matter of fact, that this area prospered and was the most stable in the periods when it was not isolated and was connected to the world or regional trade network. In recent decades, but especially after 1990, the Black Sea area has gained even greater importance based on a number of new elements of the international political, economic and military situation.

Thus, new values generated by the international situation and, especially, by the regional interests of the main international players were added to those known from history: emphasizing the geostrategic importance caused by the contact position of the three tectonic plates of maximum strategic importance today - the West (with NATO and the EU), the (predominantly Islamic) Orient and the ex-Soviet space (still under the control and influence of the Moscow power centers); emphasizing the need to develop routes of energy-producing products south of the Black Sea, to ensure the primary energy base of the West, as an alternative to those already existing on the northern side of the Black Sea, controlled, to a large extent, by Moscow.

6. References

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