



ROMANIA - A RESILIENT STATE IN THE FRONT OF THREATS FROM THE BLACK SEA REGION

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Abstract: *BLACK SEA REGION IS AN AREA WHERE THE INTERESTS OF GREAT WORLD POWERS AND GREAT CIVILISATIONS COLLIDE. THESE STRUGGLES FOR SPHERES OF INFLUENCE IN THE BLACK SEA REGION BRING A NUMBER OF RISKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES. THE GREATEST THREAT TO THE SECURITY AND STABILITY OF THE BLACK SEA REGION TODAY IS THE REVISIONISM AND EXPANSIONISM OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION. THUS, THE RISKS POSED BY THIS THREAT WILL NEED TO BE MITIGATED. ROMANIA MUST SHOW RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF THESE SECURITY CHALLENGES BY PROMOTING COOPERATION WITHIN REGIONAL COOPERATION FORMATS AND WITHIN THE EURO-ATLANTIC ORGANISATIONS OF WHICH IT IS A MEMBER, AND SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE THE STRENGTHENING OF THE BLACK SEA SECURITY ARCHITECTURE.*

Keywords: *THREAT, SECURITY, RESILIENCE, COOPERATION, DETERRENCE, BLACK SEA*

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INTRODUCTION

The Black Sea region is an area where Russia, Europe, the Middle East, the Balkans and the Caucasus meet and where the forces of democracy in the West, Russian military aggression in the North and East (Mărcău, 2022, pp. 9-10), Chinese economic influence in the East and instability in the Middle East in the Southeast (Peptan, 2020, pp. 9-18), converge. The countries of the Black Sea region that are developing a friendly relationship with the US (Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine) also have a complex alliance structure with both NATO members and partners and the European Union, and a common border - across the Black Sea - with Russia, the region's main competitive rival and military aggressor.

The Black Sea region is also the place where the Kremlin tests the credibility and determination of the alliance, and where the security situation has escalated in the conventional and unconventional plan over the past two decades: from the invasion of Georgia in 2008 to the illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea. 2014 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 (Mărcău, Peptan et.



Al, 2022), cyber attacks and fake news operations. Russian acts of aggression take place regularly in the terrestrial, maritime and hybrid fields. To do so, the Kremlin has militarized the Crimean Peninsula, which is now a massive Russian military outpost that serves as an anchor for Moscow's aggression against Ukraine on land and sea, for intimidating NATO allies, and as a test ground for US engagement by European states.

Given these coordinates of the strategic picture of which Romania is a part, it is important for the Romanian state to be able to adapt, anticipate and respond adequately to security challenges and threats generated by the unpredictable and volatile security environment of the Black Sea region.

Thus, in my approach, I want to highlight some elements regarding the characteristics of the Black Sea regional security environment, the risks, threats and vulnerabilities that converge in the region and that impact the security and resilience of Romania. I will also try to show that Romania must support the consolidation of the defense and deterrence policy developed by NATO on the eastern flank of the alliance as well as to promote the regional formats of cooperation.

REGIONAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT. RISKS AND THREATS TO ROMANIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY

In terms of conventional threats, shortly after the dissolution of the USSR, Russia realised that it faced a serious national security problem on its borders, with threats coming from within the former Soviet space. With weak political and diplomatic coercive tools at the time, Russia resorted to the threat or use of military force to create instability in the regions concerned, creating a frozen conflict architecture that gave it a wide palette of political, strategic and military options for the states concerned, and against the expansion of Western social, economic and security values.

The military occupation of Transnistria in the Republic of Moldova (1991), Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia (2008), the Crimean peninsula and Donbas in Ukraine (2014), plus the unclear security situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, and, at the same time, the excessive militarization of the Southern Military District and Crimea, respectively, Black Sea Fleet, respectively, has led to an exacerbation of political, military, social and economic insecurity in the states affected by the Russian military occupation, as well as to a certain “geopolitical anxiety” for the other states in the region, characterised by risks, uncertainty and ambiguity about the future (Polyakova, 2021).

In this context, the main military risks and threats to national security are determined by the further strengthening of the military potential in Romania's neighbourhood (militarisation of Crimea and the Black Sea basin by the Russian Federation), the conduct of military exercises (especially short-notice ones), the development of offensive and defensive capabilities on NATO's eastern flank by Russia and the large-scale invasion of Ukraine. Although the risks associated with a conventional aggression on the national territory remain at a minimal level, this possibility cannot be excluded, given Romania's geographical position, in the proximity of areas with high security risks, as well as the assumption by the Romanian state of an active role in securing NATO's eastern flank and in maintaining the strategic balance in the region (Ministerul Apărării Naționale, 2021).

MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN THE RESILIENCE OF ROMANIA IN FRONT OF IDENTIFIED RAV (RISKS / THREATS / VULNERABILITIES)

Lately, the notion of resilience has become an increasingly fashionable term in various fields of activity. Those who are interested in and use the term, such as states, communities, interest groups, civil society, international organisations, etc., interpret resilience in a wide range of contexts, generating debates about what resilience is and how it can be used. Moreover, the understanding of the concept is contextual and differs from one field to another. Thus, some experts have borrowed the



term resilience from psychology to define a person's ability to adapt quickly, through learning and with less stress, to a tragedy, problem or failure (Albu, 2022, p.6).

Resilience is broadly understood as “the ability of a community, service, area or infrastructure to detect, prevent and, if necessary, resist, manage and recover from disruptive challenges”. Resilience concerns not only physical entities - services or infrastructure - but also society at large. This term highlights the ability of an organisation or state to either continue to operate under severe conditions or to recover as quickly as possible from a disaster (Lasconjarias, 2018, p. 48).

According to the National Strategy for National Defence, “the concept of Romania's resilience is addressed in two key aspects: the inherent capacity of entities - individuals, communities, regions, state - to resist and adapt articulately to violent events, causing stress, shock, disasters, pandemics or conflicts, on the one hand, and the capacity of these entities to quickly return to a functional state of normality, on the other hand” (Administrația Prezidențială, 2020).

On the security challenges at the eastern border of NATO and the EU and in the Black Sea region, Romania must work for a stronger anchoring of the two organisations in the region and for an applied cooperation with regional allies. Military cooperation within the framework of established formats in the region, the development and dynamisation of broad, innovative concepts with European and regional allies and partners, the operationalisation of national initiatives adopted at allied level contribute to the objective of maintaining regional security and the resilience of the Romanian state (Ibidem).

Thus, in my opinion, Romania's resilience can be achieved by contributing to making the Black Sea a stable, democratic and prosperous area, by opening the Black Sea to European and Euro-Atlantic values and cooperative processes, and by stimulating regional cooperation with a focus on concrete projects that benefit all states in the region. In short, the resilience of the Romanian state in the face of threats in the Black Sea region can be achieved by supporting the strengthening of NATO's defence and deterrence policy and by promoting cooperation in the Black Sea region.

Since Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine in 2014, NATO has taken important initiatives and decisions in terms of defence posture and deterrence. These initiatives and decisions were reflected in the 2014 “Enhanced Operational Readiness Action Plan (RAP)” and continued at the 2016 Warsaw Summit, when it was also decided to create a Forward Presence on the eastern flank (an enhanced Forward Presence - eFP on the north-eastern flank and a tailored Forward Presence - tFP in the south-eastern, in the Black Sea region) (Romania's permanent delegation to NATO, 2021).

The most recent NATO summit in Brussels (June 2021) also signalled the further strengthening of NATO's military deterrence and defence posture, as well as the Alliance's political profile, increased engagement with partner states in the Black Sea region to enhance resilience and maintain technological progress. to counter Russia's conventional and hybrid malign actions and leverage against Black Sea littoral states (NATO, 2021).

While a robust defence and deterrence architecture is emerging in the Black Sea region from a security perspective, in terms of political and regional cooperation, despite the existence of several cooperation formats, there is still much room for further work and improvement, given the relative lack of new initiatives.

The Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), established in 1992 following an initiative by Turkey, now has 13 members from the wider Black Sea region. With the recent appointment of a new Secretary General in the person of former Romanian Foreign Minister Lazăr Comănescu, the organisation is expected to raise its profile, increase its efficiency and come up with new initiatives, identifying optimal solutions for the rational management of the institutional difficulties hindering the smooth functioning of the organisation (MAE, 2021a).



Other regional cooperation platforms, such as the “Three Seas Initiative”, which covers countries from the Barents and Baltic Seas to the Adriatic and Black Seas, include only Bulgaria and Romania in the Black Sea region. The aims of this initiative are to increase convergence and cohesion between the new EU Member States, while reducing the economic development gap between the different areas of the EU, and to improve interconnectivity in the fields of energy, transport and digital technologies (MAE, 2021b).

The “Bucharest Format (B9)” is an initiative launched in 2015 by Romanian President Klaus Iohannis and the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, involving NATO member states on the Eastern flank (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia), with the aim of deepening dialogue and cooperation between these countries in order to articulate their specific contribution to the ongoing processes within the Alliance. On 10 May 2021, the most recent meeting took place, attended by US President Joe Biden. According to the B9 Heads of State Joint Statement, they discussed security developments in the Euro-Atlantic area, including the Black Sea region. The need to maintain a strong and lasting transatlantic link was reaffirmed and the role of the US for Europe's security was considered indispensable (Lupitu, 2020).

Romania's initiative to set up and host the Euro-Atlantic Resilience Centre came in the context of national, NATO and EU assessments that point to the need to intensify joint efforts to effectively manage a growing spectrum of challenges. Thus, this project is a concrete and strategic initiative of Romania, which contributes to strengthening the resilience of NATO, the EU and its member states, as well as partner states. Through the rapid establishment and operationalization of the Centre, our country will become a pole of excellence and a provider of expertise for NATO and EU member states and partners in the field of resilience. At the same time, the expertise provided by the Centre will be useful and will be able to support Romanian institutions in relevant areas (MAE, 2021c).

CONCLUSIONS

Romania must support the need for a common Allied regional strategy based on the principles of unity, cohesion and solidarity. For the time being, we see a somewhat divergent approach on the part of some NATO and EU member states, more evident between the northern part of the Eastern flank, where Poland and the Baltic states share the same vision and voice within NATO and the EU, and the southern part, where more dialogue and understanding between member states and Black Sea partners is desirable and necessary to achieve a common vision on regional security. Moreover, this differentiation between the two sides of NATO's eastern flank can contribute to misinterpretations and policy discrepancies, while Russia has a unified and unique approach to NATO that serves its interests well. It is also imperative to further deepen NATO's relationship and interaction with the European Union, actively involving like-minded partners in the Black Sea region.



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