

SECURITATEA REGIONALĂ ÎN CONTEXTUL VULNERABILITĂȚII REGIUNII MĂRII NEGRE. CONSIDERAȚII SUMARE

REGIONAL SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF BLACK SEA REGION VULNERABILITY. SOME CONSIDERATIONS

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SUMMARY

The security of the Black Sea basin is affected by the presence of several geostrategic, political, military, economic, social vulnerabilities. The presence of these vulnerabilities in the region makes the destabilization of regional security. This article analyzes the presence of vulnerabilities in the Black Sea basin and their impact on regional security.

Keywords: regional security, energy security, vulnerability, conflict, organized crime, migration, drug trafficking, Black Sea.

REZUMAT

Securitatea bazinului Mării Negre este afectată de prezența mai multor vulnerabilități geostrategice, politice, militare, economice și sociale. Prezența acestor vulnerabilități în regiune conduce la destabilizarea securității regionale. Acest articol analizează prezența vulnerabilităților în bazinul Mării Negre și impactul acestora asupra securității regionale.

Cuvinte-cheie: securitate regională, securitate energetică, vulnerabilitate, conflict, crimă organizată, migrație, trafic de droguri, Marea Neagră.

The Wider Black Sea Area is a recent operational concept, its being frequent used especially in the geopolitical and geostrategic projections of the manifest interests of this space. From the point of view of delimitation of the extended Black Sea area, if we exactly take into account the geographical criteria, it includes the 6 riparian states (Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, Turkey and Bulgaria). However, the term „extended” refers rather to a political-economic region than to a geographical one, so we cannot ignore the political, economic and strategic importance of

countries such as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Greece . Therefore, we may appreciate that the Wider Black Sea Area extends from the Balkans to the Caspian Sea, becoming one of the most dynamic areas in the post-Cold War and the post-Soviet era. It is flanked to the west by the Balkans and to the East by the Caucasus, two spaces with a very high possibility of conflict, which in the 1990s were considered the periphery of Europe. We also can't overlook the importance of the Eurasian energy corridor, which unites the great Western consumers with the rich

energy reserves in the Caspian Sea and Central Asia [7].

With the accession of Central and Eastern European countries to the EU, the EU has become the Black Sea Neighborhood. By joining Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, the EU has become an active power in the Black Sea region. Starting from the premise that the EU is bordering the Black Sea, the problems of this region are addressed through the „European Neighborhood Policy” framework. The European Neighborhood Policy seeks to recognize sovereignty and independence, to resolve conflicts, to recognize human rights and democratic foundations and to implement economic reforms. Being located on energy routes, the Black Sea is becoming an important area for the EU. In addition, environmental factors have created a link between the Black Sea and the EU through the membership of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU. Thus, the EU has a coastline on the Black Sea, and responsibilities such as coastal protection, water scarcity and the fight against radioactive waste will come to the fore. In addition, the Black Sea oil tankers will have to comply with EU security standards. The EU’s relationship with the region is also needed to control potential immigration from the fragile and relatively underdeveloped countries of this region in Europe [8].

Despite the positive developments in the last period, the Black Sea region is not exempted from the presence of risk factors that can induce both dangerous and imminent threats at both regional and international level. Their degree of danger may evolve depending on certain conjuncture. Thus, analyzing the situation in the region, the following vulnerabilities can be highlighted, which may have a direct impact on regional security.

Maintain low-intensity conflicting situations in the freezing phase (Nagorno-Kara-

bakh, South Ossetia, Transdniestria), whose activation can also contaminate neighboring areas, and whose solution is proving to be very difficult. Maintaining interethnic conflicts in a chronic state, in order to exploit their effects, facilitates the appearance of massive flows of refugees, the amplification of tensions, the incitement to extremism, xenophobic manifestations, etc., the risks with radical propagation in the Black Sea area. Asymmetric threats are the most significant risk to regional security; the defining element of any strategic evaluation. Asymmetric threats are distinguished by the fact that they are difficult to predict and therefore almost impossible to prevent and counteract unilaterally [6]. Also, there are regional and non-regional actors in the Black Sea region: three main actors exercise a different degree of influence over security policy options [5, p. 23]. Since the collapse of the USSR in 1991, a series of violent conflicts broke out, resulting in instability and security issues in the Black Sea region and the Caspian region.

The issue of national borders and mutual territorial claims was the premises that conditioned the disputes between independent states that failed to demarcate with the collapse of the USSR. The emergence of Ukraine as an independent state is an important geostrategic evolution in Europe. Moscow and Kiev faced a wide range of issues: the Black Sea Fleet, the division of the former Soviet property, international debt repayments, energy supplies, and the Russian-Ukrainian crisis in 2014 [10]. Last but not least, the combination of tensions could be further aggravated by the disparities of military power. The Black Sea region includes the states with the three largest armed forces in Europe - Russia, Turkey and Ukraine. The other countries remain weak enough from a military point of view and are unlikely to spend significant sums in their defense budget [4].

Thus, from a geostrategic point of view on the Black Sea side, the Balkans and, in particular, that of the South Caucasus are characterized by numerous tensions and conflicts (Chechnya, South Ossetia, Transnistria, NagornoKarabakh, Abkhazia, etc.), for which international security organizations are working hard to solve [3].

In South Ossetia, the Ossetian separatists began the armed conflict in 1990-1991. Tens of thousands of Georgians were killed or left the province. In June 1992 (Sochi Agreement), Boris Yeltsin mediated the ceasefire and displaced a peace force of 1,700 people. There has also been a negotiating group for the future province (OSCE, Russian Federation, Georgia and North Ossetia). The EU has also been involved lately. The OSCE has decided to send more observers to the area as a step towards achieving greater stability and faster resolution of tensions. Changes in Tbilisi and an active US attitude will probably open new bargaining prospects; however, Georgia does not accept the Secessions of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Adjara; a solution of territorial integrity, with wide local autonomy and the withdrawal of Russian peace forces, is being supported.

Thus, Moldova is a key link in the security system in the Black Sea region. The distinguishing sign is the frozen conflict between Chisinau and Tiraspol. Its existence raises contradictions in the area of regional cooperation. A threat to regional stability and security also presents the ideological component of the conflict zone. In Transdnistria, as in other conflict zones in the states of the Black Sea region, with an effort of Russia, an archaic model that functions in the form of a parastatal formation was de facto constituted a criminal enclave with all set of illegitimate instruments. This „gloomy area”, which is specific in its own way, is an ideal place for the emergence of a „black off-shore”, with an illegal commo-

dity trap, including weapons and drugs. The annual volume of this circuit is estimated at about two billion US dollars. It goes without saying that such enclaves may not be attractive to representatives of international terrorism who naturally can act on the territories of these „black holes” of Europe only under the umbrella of Russian secret services. The ideological composition of the zones of „frozen conflicts” is marked by the amplification of the tendencies of manifestation of national intolerance, anti-Semitism and xenophobia [1].

The case of the Republic of Moldova contains some of the major issues of Russian policy towards the successor states of the former Soviet Union: the presence of the Russian-speaking population, the economic dependence and the Russian military involvement. The Transdnistrian conflict started in 1992 can not be solved by the military intervention of Russia. On this occasion, the Russians have deployed their military forces in the Transdnistrian region assuming it guarantees political stability in those localities [2].

Another outbreak of instability in the Black Sea region is Transdnistria, which was located east of the Dniester river, which proclaimed itself independence in 1990. Transnistria is a factor of international destabilization and a „center of Eastern European organized crime”. The US, together with the EU and the OSCE, support the withdrawal of Russian military bases from Transdnistria, but the Russian Federation considers it a kind of „advanced base”. Russia supports the 14th Army, which was to be evacuated under the 1999 agreement, in line with its commitments to the OSCE. The conflict is currently in a frozen phase, but it cannot be ruled out to be reactivated.

Not in the context of the analysis of the vulnerabilities in the Black Sea basin is the geographical spread of marked areas, presently, unstable, with a potential risk of

danger in the Middle East, the borders of Iraq and Iran, the Western Balkans.

Also, the diversity of issues of an identity, cultural and other nature, amplified by ethnic and confessional diversity, as well as socio-economic, political or historical causes, are also vulnerabilities that can lead to the destabilization of regional security.

Another vulnerability with an impact on regional security is the persistence of specific actions of the phenomenon of organized crime and the difficulties related to their monitoring, prevention and control through regional and international cooperation actions. The actions of organized crime structures are favored by the unstable political climate in some regions and some neighboring areas, corruption and the poor economic condition of the population, contributing to the proliferation of smuggling, illegal migration and other criminal activities. Attempts to extend the links of groups/groups, terrorist organizations and networks (Al Qaeda, Chechen and Kurdish networks, other networks) to the wider Black Sea region; The casuistry in the field confirms the tendency to extend the cells inspired by the doctrines of Islamic extremism and Al Qaeda by attracting new followers and involving them in actions directed against the anti-terrorist coalition. The regional dimension of terrorism includes a number of well-known and monitored terrorist groups operating in the Black Sea border areas; connections of terrorist networks with areas with a high potential for terrorism in the Middle East and a global dimension. All states in the Black Sea region currently participate in the multinational coalition against global terrorism [Stancu].

In this context, there is also a tendency for terrorist elements to use cross-border crime chains and routes, their logistical and human support. In the context of the accession of the Black Sea riparian states to

the European Union, the intensification of the actions on the illegal migration routes is observed. Migration flows cross the region over land routes (Ukraine and Turkey being turntables), but some important migration routes from Africa and the Middle East and the Far East cross the Black Sea basin. With regard to the measures taken to secure the land borders, undertaken by the Member States and the candidate countries of the European Union, an increase in the migration flows on maritime and river routes is expected. Illegal migration, having as main state protagonists Turkey and Ukraine, both as a source and as a transit environment (with impressive numbers of immigrants), as well as illicit arms and drug trafficking, with devastating effects on the ground social, economic and political complements the spectrum of threats and risks of the Black Sea riparian states. The problem of refugees and forced migrants, as a result of a conflict situation, of a political and economic situation, is particularly worrying. The fighting in South Ossetia (1991) and Abkhazia (1992-93) led to hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons from Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Georgia, including 40,000 displaced persons in 1998 in Georgia. In recent years, only Russia has hosted about one million people, especially ethnic Russians. These include approximately 150,000 internally displaced persons in Chechnya (Russian Federation), 23,000 internally displaced persons in the north of Osetiya; 29,000 Georgian refugees; and 20,000 former Turkish deportees [4].

No less impact on regional security has illegal trafficking in strategic material, weapons, combat and ammunition, and drugs. Trafficking of weapons, combat technology and ammunition is stimulated by both the existence of large quantities of weapons in the region and the production of weapons from riparian countries. A big part of the trafficked weapons are transported throu-

gh the Black Sea ports, and the smuggling maritime routes are considered to be safer than land-based traffickers. Strategic trafficking, a consequence of collaboration between terrorist groups and organizations and mafias in the region, especially in the former Soviet area, is also a serious threat to the security and stability of the area. Drug trafficking is favored by the development of the drug production and consumption market, as well as the change and diversification of routes, including shipping routes.

Also, in the Black Sea basin there is the persistence of vulnerabilities that can feed unconventional risk factors on the environment and the health of the population, and the inefficiency of mechanisms for coordinating civil protection (pollution, the danger of a pandemic, the smuggling of goods consumption, etc.) Tensions could gradually develop as a result of aggravated environmental problems, which are becoming more and more damaging to the interests of the Black Sea coastal states and beyond. The Black Sea becomes one of the most polluted in the world, it becomes a sink for natural and artificial vapors thrown into the rivers that feed it - Danube, Don and Dnestr, and the ecological catastrophe is so severe that it tends not to recover [St].

Regarding energy resources, riparian states at the basin of the analyzed region are highly dependent on the oil and gas deliveries from the Russian Federation, which is particularly important. Thus, with the support of Western Black Sea states, the West seeks to open up access to energy sources in the Caspian Sea and the Near and Middle East, which would in the medium term reduce the dependence of Eastern Europe - the EU in general - on The Russian Federation. However, the participation of Russian companies (Gazprom, Lukoil) in regional economic competition is hampered

by: the obligation to comply with EU rules and to liberalize its own energy market; the need for technological modernization; the high cost of transport on the „Drujba” pipeline, the railroad or the Odessa-Brodi pipeline, etc.. After all, the Russian Federation must accept the Western partnership and the cooperation of the big transnational companies and give up the relations of force with the states in its immediate neighborhood.

In order to maintain its position as the energy leader of the area and reduce Ukraine's position advantages, Moscow insists on the projects of the Novorossk-Balkan pipeline and the underwater pipeline in the Black Sea with its Istanbul terminal. Another direction of action by the Russian Federation is the offensive of Russian energy companies in Eastern and South Eastern Europe with the intention of „buying everything that can be bought”. From a practical point of view, the states of the Black Sea region depend to a large extent on Western economic assistance, which is essential to stimulate the processes of transforming the economic and social base of these states and their deep democratization. Everywhere, in varying proportions, there are important obstacles: old mentalities; weak democratic traditions; corruption; relations with international criminal organizations; illicit trafficking in drugs, arms, „live meat” through networks in Ukraine, Russia, Central Asia, etc.

In addition, the existence of several distinct sub-regions in the Black Sea region, the Caucasus, the Balkans and, to a certain extent, the Mediterranean Sea, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, is another factor that destabilizes the area. Subregional identities have prevented the emergence of a Black Sea identity, created instability and hampered the creation of a comprehensive regional security framework.

Thus, making a brief overview of the main vulnerabilities present in the Black Sea basin, it is worth mentioning that each of them has a direct impact on regional security. In order to reduce the danger of

triggering situations that would destabilize regional security, there is a need to unite the forces of all riparian states in the Black Sea Basin to liquidate or diminish the presence of these vulnerabilities.

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