

RECONSIDERATION OF ROMANIA'S FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES - ENHANCING THE GEOSTRATEGIC ROLE IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

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Abstract

After the Cold War, the chance of Romania was achieved by two strategic objectives of the Romanian foreign policy, the accession to NATO and integration into the European Union. Thus, Romania was able to escape the area dominated by the “rough power politics” and to take shelter in this “consensus” area, where there are rules and clear mechanisms for adjusting any conflicts with the guarantee to respect the national interest of each member state.

The article presents the overall framework and also analyzes the main issues and ideas that are important and of which depends a good foreign policy. In this regard, it must be reminded and also emphasized the strategic importance of Romania as a country bordering the Black Sea, within the context of its position at the boundary of the two organizations. Therefore, it is argued that one of the main goals of foreign policy should be oriented towards enhancing the role in the Black Sea region as this objective concerns not only Romania's interest, but also the organisations to which Romania belongs, Romania having the obligation to promote it. Thus, this article analyzes Romania's Strategic Partnerships in terms of cooperation and bilateral relations in the energy field, in other words in terms of the energy security in the Black Sea. The article also takes into account the initiatives, various formulations and the proposals for projects launched by Romania and not only, in and for this strategic region.

Keywords

Black Sea region, Energy Security, European Union, foreign policy, Strategic Partnership

1. INTRODUCTION. DEFINING THE FOREIGN POLICY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BLACK SEA REGION

The MFA's (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) mandate is to assure the exercise of the external policy of the Romanian state, according to the national interests and Romania's status as a member of the European and Euro-Atlantic structures (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014). Thus, the External and Security policies must be understood from the point of view of Romania's membership in the European Union (EU) and in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Romanian diplomat Nicolae Titulescu used to say: "Give me a good internal policy and I will give you a good external policy" (Rădulescu 2013). This means that a state can't have a successful external policy if it doesn't have a successful internal policy, a statement that can be further applied in the case of the EU. The meeting of the European Council from December 2013 discussed the need of common External and Security policies and common tackling of issues in the field of Defence. The question asked according to the mentioned facts is: has Romania a good domestic policy?

The Black Sea is a region characterized by complex evolutions, which presents both security risks and opportunities. Therefore, Romania's efforts must have a goal to reduce the risks and increase the opportunities (Diaconescu 2012). The followings will provide arguments for the need of consolidation of Romania's geo-strategic role in the Black Sea region, as an essential objective of the external policy.

2. INITIATIVES LAUNCHED IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

It is a fact that the appearance of the EU in the Black Sea region led to the initiation of new proposals, integrating projects and regional cooperation. In March 2007, 3 months after the accession of Romania and Bulgaria in the EU, the Romanian rapporteur Roberta Anastase launched the project called Black Sea Synergy. Romania has been successful in promoting the Black Sea Synergy, which was a form of cooperation between the EU and the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the most important organization in the region. But the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 blocked the development of

this project below its potential. Also, the actual revised form of the Black Sea Strategy is the result of the contribution of another Romanian rapporteur, Traian Radu Ungureanu (Chifu 2013, 145, 154).

The main objective of the Black Sea Synergy is to strengthen the cooperation in the Black Sea region with the beneficial involvement of the EU. It provides the guide lines for the proposal of any pragmatic cooperation projects between the states in the region and the EU in the fields of democracy, human rights, good governance, border management, frozen conflicts, energy, transport, environment, maritime policy, fishing, commerce, migration, education, research and development (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014). Romania backs up the need to pass in a stage of real transposing of the differentiation and complementarity principles between the Black Sea Synergy and the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership, according to the political statements assumed at the EU level. The two European initiatives, currently at the stage of implementation of all the projects and recommendations within the networks developed under their aegis, both regional and macro-regional, can lead to shaping a regional identity recognized at EU level.

BSEC was founded in 1992 and still remains a useful frame for dialogue and for the stimulation of mutual trust between the member states through both its wide range of activities and its structure. BSEC also sets the basis for a future enrolment in more ambitious projects. Romania was actively involved in sustaining and strengthening BSEC and also in continuing the reform process in the organization, developing in the same time relations of cooperation with the EU and other regional initiatives (Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Another initiative launched in the Black Sea region, is represented by the Forum for Partnership and Development launched by Romania in 2007 which included governmental, non-governmental and business dimensions (Chifu 2013, 144). Although it had relevant achievements in the field of environmental and civil protection, among them being also the Black Sea Trust of the German Marshall Fund, this initiative has never materialized through a second edition. The states from the Black Sea region, Caucasus and Central Asia succeeded in constituting the International Fund for Cooperation and Partnership of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea (BSCSIF) with its headquarters in Bucharest and which concerns the promotion of regional cooperation in a more inclusive concept than the one of the extended region of the Black Sea. From 2009 the concept of cooperation Black Sea - Caspian Sea began to be developed

cohesively and inclusively through a series of projects which promote the cooperation between the countries from the region. In this context, Romania's endeavour for maintaining very good relations with Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan materialized through the launch of Azerbaijan – Georgia – Romania Interconnector (AGRI). The refinement of the concepts, the materialization of the concept of Extended Region of the Black Sea as a concept of complex security was determined by the entrance of the EU in this area and its soft power (Chifu 2013, 145, 155).

3. STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE BLACK SEA REGION - ENERGY SECURITY

3.1. Strategic Relevance of the Black Sea Region for NATO

Being localized in the immediate neighbourhood of NATO, it's natural for this area to benefit from an increased attention from the Alliance. Fields as maritime situational awareness, energy security or the response to other asymmetrical security provocations offer the possibility of an increased involvement of NATO in the mutual benefit of the states from the region and from the Alliance (Senate – the Department of External Parliamentary Relationships, Documentary file NATO).

The 48th paragraph stipulates, as a continuity of the Bucharest NATO Summit, the importance of the Black Sea for the Security of the Alliance. Maintaining this area into the primary fields of concern is in the interest of Romania and it represents a further security warranty for the Romanian state.

During the Chicago Summit of May 20th-21st 2012, NATO undertook once again through the 52nd paragraph responsibilities in the fields of the energy security, of energy supply, of the diversification of the routes and the sources of supply with energy resources, which it considers to be of a critical importance (Chifu 2013, 111-112). NATO will focus on the aspects in which it can bring an added value, especially in the defence of the critical infrastructure and of the energy transport routes.

One of Romania's goals as a NATO member is supporting NATO role in providing stability, as a promoter of reforms and regional cooperation in the immediate vicinity of Romania (Balkans and the Black Sea area). As the Black

Sea region, being a part of Europe and a bridge to Central Asia and Afghanistan, is important for the Euro-Atlantic stability, Romania will join the efforts of coastal states to enhance the regional security (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014).

There are two principal trends regarding the allied states positions concerning the role of NATO in the field of energy security. One is formed by Poland, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Romania, these being the states which supported the necessity of an ambitious role for NATO in the field of energy security. The other is formed by France, Germany, Norway and Greece, states which consider that this field is of the competence of the national authorities or other international authorities, better suited than NATO and which have at their disposal more suitable instruments for intervening. USA maintained its supporting role towards the first allied group, preferring a reliance role in this issue. On an intermediary position are situated states like Italy, Netherlands, Denmark and Estonia (Senate – The Department of External Parliamentary Relations, Documentary file NATO).

3.2. Strategic Importance of the Black Sea Region for the European Union

An important aspect that must be mentioned and which demonstrates the importance of this area for the EU is related to the conflicts from the extended region of the Black Sea: former frozen conflicts in the Georgian regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia occupied and unilaterally recognized by Russia after the Russian – Georgian war of 2008; the conflicts from Ukraine, Trans-Dniester and Nagorno-Karabakh, but also the conflicts from Northern Caucasus and the Crimea situation (Chifu 2013, 76-77).

Due to the geographical position, to the role it can have in the transport of hydrocarbons and energy resources, the Black Sea is considered an area of strategic interests, assuring not only the energy security of Romania, but also contributing substantially from this point of view at the EU level (Chifu 2013, 51). The capacity of approach, innovation and the established relations are Romania's chance to contribute with an added value to its partners and allies. Thus, there are three categories of relevant relationships in this field: the Strategic Partnership with Turkey, the relationship with the Caucasus states and with the states from Central Asia. In the followings these will be presented according to the MFA's official information.

3.2.1. *Relations and Strategic Partnership*

Concerning the relationship with Turkey, Romania recognizes Turkey's major role in the Black Sea, in the stability of the extended Middle East, in the NATO frame (the second army of the Alliance) and as a model of Muslim Sunni modern state. The Romanian-Turkish Strategic Partnership signed in 2011 contributes at the consolidation of the bilateral rapports in the economy and energy fields and also in the field of cooperation in a series of sectoral domains. In August 2012 the negotiations for the text of the Action Plan for the implementation of Romania - Turkey Strategic Partnership were finalized. Subsequently, after the signing, the sectoral dialogue was intensified with the purpose of the elaboration and the implementation of projects in domain like economy, energy, transport, internal affairs, defense, culture, education, social affairs and tourism (Chifu 2013, 41).

According to a press release of MFA, on April 15th of current year there was a meeting between the State Secretary, Bogdan Aurescu, and Turkmen External Minister's first adjunct, Vepa Hadjiev. During the consultation, the State Secretary for Strategic Affairs, Bogdan Aurescu, emphasized the necessity of the intensification of the common actions for realizing the project of the Black Sea - Caspian Sea International Transport of Goods Corridor, convening with the Turkmen side actions for this purpose. Subsequently he underlined the importance of the cooperation between the ports of Constanța and Turkmenbaşı, which would facilitate the access of Turkmenistan's energy resources and goods on the European market, but also the success of some regional projects of cooperation in the area (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014).

The relationship with the Caucasus states is important from the point of view of energy security, of the capacity of production and transit and also of the geographical position. Romania supports the sovereignty, the independence and the territorial integrity of the three Caucasian states. Georgia is of a major strategic importance for the Euro-Atlantic community because loosing the democratic and pro-occidental orientation of Georgia equivalents with loosing the Black Sea and the transit corridor Central Asia-EU (Chifu 2013, 51).

Azerbaijan is a pivotal state relevant in the production and in the transit from alternative sources and on alternative routes of hydrocarbons. The main element of the Strategic Partnership between Romania and the Republic of

Azerbaijan is constituted by the cooperation in the energy field. The first targeted is the PEO Project (Constanța-Trieste), which will contribute to the increase of the EU energy security through the connection of the Caspian oil with the European market on a direct and secure line. As it was mentioned subsequently, Romania's endeavour for the maintaining of very good relations was concretized also through the AGRI Interconnector which follows the delivery of natural gas and petroleum from the Caspian Sea Area towards Romania, under a liquefied form, on the route Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014). The AGRI Project aims to capitalize the natural resources of Azerbaijan, Georgia's position as a transit country, the strategic position of Romania in terms of assuring direct access of Azerbaijan's natural's gas to Europe and also the potential of Hungary as a liaison element with Central Europe's gas market (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014).

Concerning the relationship with the Central Asian states, Romania has a General Partnership with Turkmenistan which develops starting from the dimension of an energy strategic partnership. Turkmenistan has unexplored and unexploited hydrocarbons reserves with special relevance in the global energy equilibrium. Moreover, Turkmenistan has appreciable potential in delivering gas through the Trans-Caspian pipeline towards Azerbaijan and further through the AGRI Project (Chifu 2013, 42, 51).

Kazakhstan is a state that plays a major role of equilibrium in the region. From a commercial point of view, Romania is for Kazakhstan the most important partner from Central and Eastern Europe. KazMunaiGaz's ownership of 100% of Rompetrol's shares means that this is the greatest Kazakh investment in all the EU space. Kazakhstan has an important role in the process of the diversification of the sources and the transport routs of the Caspian energy towards Europe, as part of the process of assuring energy security. Thus, Romania remains interested in implementing energy projects in the framework of AGRI, encouraging the participation of Kazakhstan in accomplishing the possibilities of transporting the Caspian energy in the frame of the Southern Corridor (Chifu 2013, 42).

It can be said that for all the European states this Corridor has a particular importance, as it represents diversified sources and alternative transport routes, all related to the viability of this project and accessing the energy resources of the Caspian Sea in other ways than through the monopolized Russian route.

3.2.2. Pipelines and energy security

The Russian – Ukrainian gas crisis, which took place in January 2009, damaged directly the interests of the EU members, demonstrating once again that the energy is a political tool for Russia. It was the 19th incident of this kind and the 3rd major incident after the Russian – Belarusian petrol crisis from 2005 – 2006 and the Russian – Ukrainian gas crisis from 2006 – 2007. As a result of the crisis the idea of a European Energy Security Policy was created, in order to avoid the dependency and for compensating undelivered quantities that could occur in the case of another cessation in the supply of the EU member states with energy resources (Chifu 2013, 79).

From a geological point of view, the natural gas reserves constitute the main potential of the Black Sea Basin. In order to develop new gas sources there are three strategic directions for Romania: enhancing the productivity of the mature conventional deposits through the application of new extraction technologies; the exploitation of the new discoveries from the continental shelf of the Black Sea; the development of the gas-bearing clays deposits – shale gas (Dudău 2014).

It must be mentioned that from an energy capacity point of view, Romania is better prepared than Bulgaria to face a crisis, a fact which is due to its internal production and to the interconnections with the European Union network, while Georgia relies on Azerbaijan and Armenia on Russia (Chifu 2013, 148). According to BP Statistical Review (2013), in 2012 the proven natural gas reserves were of 100 billion cubic meters (cbm) and the oil reserves were of 100 million tons; both representing half of the reserves in 1992. The annual gas production is of 10.9 cbm and the consumption is of 13.5 cbm. For oil, the annual production is of 4.1 million tons at a consumption of 8.8 million tons. The aggregate rate of dropping in the hydrocarbons reserve is of 10% per year, which means that, in the absence of supplementary resources, the dependency from gas imports will increase in the next 10 years from less than 20% in the present to as much as 50% (Dudău 2014).

The most important project of the external energy policy of Romania, the Nabucco gas pipeline, failed definitely in June 2013, when the competition for the Azeri gas transport towards the EU was won in favour of the TAP project (Trans Adriatic Pipeline). The Southern Gas Corridor (SGS) will connect the

Caspian Basin with southern Italy through Turkey, Greece and Albania. The decision was mostly commercial, in the detriment of the strategic necessities of Eastern Europe. Even so, Romania disposes of sufficient internal and external possibilities to increase its energy security.

Another project in connection with Romania's energy security is South Stream. This was conceived in 2007 as a response to Nabucco and it represents the idea of a gas pipeline of a great capacity (63cbm/year) that is meant to transport Russian gas through the Black Sea towards Austria and Italy, crossing South Eastern Europe. Subsequently, in the context of the "gas wars" between Russia and Ukraine, South Stream became also a tool for diplomatic-political pressure over Kiev, threatened with the useless of his enormous transport system and gas deposits. After the completion of the North Stream gas pipeline through the Baltic Sea, South Stream might play a similar role of Ukraine's "ring road" through the Black Sea.

The most important states (from a geostrategic, political and economic point of view) involved in the South Stream project are Italy, Germany and France (Gulunga 2012).

For Romania, South Stream might represent, in the next years, another natural gas source accessible through the Bulgaria-Romania Interconnector. If a few years ago South Stream represented a risk of deepening the energy dependency by a monopolistic exporter, the structural transformations of the European gas markets create favourable conditions for a new Russian gas pipeline to be, just like that, a new source of energy in a competitive trading environment, contributing, in fact, to the general flowing of the market. In December 2013, the European Commission asked that the six bilateral contracts signed by Russia with the EU member states regarding the South Stream building to be renegotiated and aligned to the liberalization standards of the Third Energy Package.

3.2.3. *The Russian Federation Stand*

The Russian Federation manifests the greatest interest for South Stream, being the one that initiated the project by the Gazprom Company means. In the framework of this project, Russia tries to apply more geostrategic interests of

dependency on the regions and the countries that are involved directly or indirectly to the South Stream.

In connection with the Caspian Sea and Central Asia, Russia tries, by the South Stream pipeline means, to regain the lost influence trying also to counterbalance Turkey and Iran, which are engaged in establishing some influence in the Caspian Sea - Central Asia region, taking advantage of the retreat of the Russian power. Building a new gas pipeline with a big enough capacity (63 billion cubic meters per year), which will fuel, in a great part, the Caspian Sea region, Russia makes the countries from this area, like Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan to be more and more dependent on it. Thus, the independence of the states from Central Asia (obtained after the USSR break down) can become almost insignificant, if Azerbaijan would be completely subordinated to Moscow's control, as a result of the decisive importance of this state from a geopolitical point of view, thanks to its vast natural resources of energy.

Concerning the Black Sea, Russia would rather have Turkey and Bulgaria more involved in the project, rather than Ukraine and Romania. In 2011, Turkey agreed that South Stream can transit its territorial waters. Although they are contestants somewhat from a influence in this region point of view, Russia and Turkey decided to collaborate in the South Stream, especially that they have experience with the Blue Stream pipeline. Probably, through these two projects, Russia wants to make Turkey more dependent on the Russian gas. Russia doesn't deliberately offer Ukraine the possibility to participate in the Gazprom project as a result of the instability and the insecurity of the gas transit. Also, Russia, through this geostrategic manoeuvre, wants to demonstrate to Ukraine that it still depends a lot from the Russian gas and that it must give greater importance to the long term relationship with the Russian Federation.

Not lastly, Bulgaria is preferred in the detriment of Romania concerning the collaboration with the Russian Federation in the South Stream project because of the conflicts of interest and the frictions between Russia and Romania. The proposal from the Russian side for a collaboration with Romania has as a purpose putting Bulgaria under pressure so that it will involve in the project, if it doesn't want to be replaced by Romania (Gulunga 2012).

Therefore, it can be said that the East European gas market is quasi-monopolistic, dominated by the Gazprom deliveries. The prices which the

eastern EU states pay for the Russian gas are, on average, with 15% bigger than those from the Western European markets. According to Izvestia (January 2014), the average selling price of the Russian gas in Romania, in the first half of 2012, was of 431.8 \$ for 1000 cubic meters comparatively to 379.3\$ in Germany (Dudău 2014). Also, it can be said that the relationship between Germany and Russia is a major issue because Berlin takes care of its own interests and this can become a problem for Central and Eastern Europe (Chifu 2013, 82). The strengthening of the relationship with Russia takes place through the building of the North Stream pipeline through the bottom of the Baltic Sea. Through this pipeline, the Central and Eastern European states are excluded from the energy equation Berlin-Moscow.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, it can be said that in her entirety, the Black Sea region constituted and will constitute a priority interest on the long run for the external policy of Romania. In this article, it was justified why Romania needs to enhance its geostrategic role in the Black Sea region.

The article pleads for the Black Sea Synergy project as it proposes themes that include all the domains as it was showed in the paper. Despite some seemingly failures, the Black Sea Synergy must remain of priority for Romania and to continue through cooperation initiatives in domains like energy, transport, environment and regional security. A successful external policy of Romania will have to consider the status as member of the European Union and NATO, to sustain the access of the opportunities which come from the East and must reinstate the Romanian diplomacy in the role of vector between East and West. Undoubtedly, energy is a very important issue and Romania has responsibilities in the framework of NATO and EU at the Black Sea. The energy security equation of the European Union is extremely complex and it definitely implies the Southern Corridor and in this context, it is relevant the way of approach and innovation of the relationships and Strategic Partnerships of Romania. This thing was realized by the EU in the frame of the successive and revised Energy Security Strategies.

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