SECURITY STRATEGY
IN THE WIDER BLACK SEA REGION
Case Study of Romania

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Abbreviation List

BSEC - Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation
BSF - The Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership
BSH - The Black Sea Harmony
BSP - Black Sea Partnership
CHENS - The Chiefs of European Navies
CIS - Commonwealth of Independent States
DCAF - Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces
EEZ – European Economic Zones
EU - European Union
EUBAM - EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine
FN – Naval Forces
IAF - The Institute for Alternative Futures
IMF – International Monetary Fund
JTEC - Joint Training and Evaluation Centre
NATO - The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RBSF - Russian Black Sea Fleet
UN – United Nations
USA – The United States of America
WBSR - The Wider Black Sea Region
WMD – Weapons of Mass Destruction
Abstract

Developments in recent years have led to a change in the nature of security risks and threats in Europe, with implications for risks and threats to regional and national security. In the current geopolitical and geostrategic European context, Romania's security policy as a NATO and EU member is defined by the diversification and amplification of relations with the great Western democracies and, on a regional level, the consolidation and intensification of cooperation with the neighbouring and riparian neighbouring countries of the Danube River and the Sea Black.

The particular geostrategic position of the Black Sea on the trans-European transport lines and national transport systems, the existence of natural resources, determines certain decision-makers, often having divergent interests, to exert powerful influences not only on maritime navigation, but also on the security of the whole regions. In this context, Romania is vitally interested in preserving its territorial integrity within land, sea and river boundaries, unaltered preservation of the Danube to the Black Sea through the Delta branches and the Danube-Black Sea Canal, to ensure stability in the area, freedom of movement on maritime ways, defence of the maritime infrastructure, protection of the sea and delta environment, and participation in allied and allied naval military actions.

Romania does not consider any state as a potential threat to national security. Navy forces, like the entire army, may also take part in resolving maritime disputes, particularly by peaceful means, contributing to maintaining the security climate in the region. The current status of NATO-EU membership requires the conscious, voluntary and responsible assumption of complex tasks in terms of providing an adequate response to the security risks and threats at its eastern and river frontier.

Therefore, I consider it essential to analyse the Wider Black Sea Region (WBSR) in the context of the new developments in the evolution of the security environment. It should be noted that WBSR is the only area in Europe where frozen conflicts can be detected, that is why it is fundamental to realize an analysis of the security strategies of the main actors in the WBSR and find the possibility for cooperation, to avoid more armed clashes in the region and the international environment will be favourable in the future.
Introduction

Throughout history, the Black Sea region represented a space of cooperation and trade, as well as an area of military and political confrontations. Currently, the Black Sea is a border area between the European Union and NATO and the Caucasus region. As a geopolitical area, the Black Sea is characterized by the existence of frozen conflicts, prolonged by the persistence of a Soviet "cultural heritage" of cultural, social and political-military nature, by the rivalry between Turkey and the Russian Federation for the achievement of naval supremacy, but also by attempts by the riparian states as well as the European Union to develop economic cooperation and strengthen democracy.

Changing the security context in the immediate vicinity of the Black Sea area has changed the format of cooperation in the region, launching new challenges to the European Neighbourhood Policy and triggering a revision of the Eastern Partnership. At the same time, Russia's "aggressiveness" at the regional level has led to the manifestation of NATO's increased interest in the Eastern Flank, materialized by the carrying out of large-scale naval drills in the Black Sea, but also by the location in the near future of some forces rapid reaction in several Eastern European countries, including Romania.

Moreover, the discovery of important hydrocarbon reserves in the Black Sea could give the site a central role in ensuring the energy security of both Romania and the European Union, requiring a re-evaluation at European level of development policies supported by The Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership, as well as common security. Last but not least, the recent security strategy of the European Union will not be able to ignore the developments in the Black Sea Basin, and it is necessary to adapt the policies in the field to the realities of the current security context.

For Romania, the geostrategic importance of the Black Sea cannot be disputed. The Black Sea Area presents important economic and development opportunities, but also numerous security challenges.

According to some authors, there are a number of factors in the current global context that have increased the geostrategic importance of the Black Sea, although previously it was considered a "big sea". Among these factors, I can list the following:
1. the emergence of a demarcation line between the existing or potential conflicts around the Black Sea Basin (Balkans, Transnistria, Crimea, North Caucasus, Eastern Ukraine);

2. naval activities in the Black Sea has intensified, with great potential for the emergence of naval rivalries between different regional powers;

3. the Pontic basin has turned in an economic integration centre, the economic potential represented by the WBSR member states is in the interest of non-riparian states such as Austria, Germany or Israel;

4. last but not least, the Black Sea energy potential gave it a significant geostrategic role for the European Union both because of its hydrocarbon reserves and because of the fact that, in order to be able to be efficiently used on the European market, the oil and gas reserves in the region Caspian Sea should transit through the Black Sea Basin.

Taking into account the factors listed above, a number of regional actors can be identified that have the capacity to influence the strategic decisions in the Black Sea area. Of these, I believe that the European Union, NATO, the Russian Federation and Turkey can have a particular geopolitical impact in the region. Each of them has their own vision of the strategic significance of the Black Sea, addressing differently the relations with the other actors involved in regional geopolitics.

On the other hand, given the irreversible phenomenon of globalization and the strong interdependence between states and the ongoing transformations taking place in the international environment with an impact on European and Euro-Atlantic security and, implicitly, Romania, in the present paper it is pursued the national security analysis from a multidisciplinary perspective. In this sense, it was used concepts, ideas and theories belonging to disciplines considered to be closely related to the field of research, namely military sciences, political sciences, economics, international relations theory, history and geography. In connection with the researched subject it was identified the following dimensions: the national, political, military, economic, social, ecological, and last but not least, structural and educational dimensions.

The **general objective** of the research work that the master thesis consists of is to identify, analyse and highlight the complex nature of the dimensions of security in the new context of European and Euro-Atlantic security and defence in the Black Sea Region. The master research addresses the concept of national, defence and military security in the wider context of the evolution of the concept of security after the end of
the Cold War, emphasizing the comprehensive aspect and its peculiarities at the regional and even global level. Moreover, it addresses the geopolitical aspects of national security, highlighting its peculiarities in the Black Sea region, in the context of policies and strategies adopted by the main regional actors, NATO and EU. Finally, the research addresses the issue of security in the Black Sea region from the perspective of Romania, highlighting the necessity of the country to adopt a strategic document of the type of naval and military strategies and to revise the doctrine of the national forces.

To achieve the overall goal of the master thesis, research is geared towards meeting three **specific objectives**. Thus, the first specific objective is to analyse the conceptual framework, the analytical perspectives and the basic terminology associated with the concept of security by placing it in the context of paradigmatic changes in the approach to contemporary security.

The second specific objective is to analyse the influence the complexity of the security in the region, the interests of the major global and regional actors, the types of conflicts that characterize the region and the need to internationalize the maritime domain of this region. It will put the emphasis on the geopolitical and geostrategic position of NATO and EU in the Black Sea Region through Romania’s membership. Therefore, it will be developed the concept of Romania in the context of European common security and defence and NATO.

The third specific objective is to analyse the security of Romania - present and perspectives. To what extent is Romania in the stability and security equation of the Black Sea Basin and forecast future scenarios?

In the present paper, it was opted for the use of several **research methods** specific to social sciences, namely the comparative analysis of some documents, the content analysis, the analysis of some data, the historical method, the realization of some correlations and the prospective method.

In the analytical approach, research is based on the following premises: firstly, the analytical methodology of post-Cold War security applies with particularities to national security, the comprehensive approach of which involves the operationalization of a new terminology in which the concept of national security operations occupies the central place.
Secondly, the complexity of the contemporary national domain requires the promotion of an effective national governance framework, based on a multi-layered approach, including within its conceptual framework cooperation strategies for all state and non-state actors at all levels of global integration, regional and national.

Thirdly, the geographical area of the Black Sea (delimited by the surface of the sea and the riparian states) the characteristics of a maritime region to which the theories of regionalism can apply, among which the regional security geopolitics occupy the central place.

Fourthly, the Black Sea regional security is consistently dependent on its national component, whose evolution and dynamics are strongly influenced by the interests of the main players in the region (the US, the EU and NATO), the crises and the frozen conflicts in the former Soviet space, especially the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, and the options for promoting and defending the maritime interests of the riparian states.

The content analysis method was considered appropriate in studying strategic documents and national and international legislation in the field of security, in particular national security.

The aim of these specific objectives is to highlight the conceptual framework, the analytical perspectives and the basic terminology associated with the concept of national security, the importance of national governance, the particularities of national security for the Black Sea region and the need for international openness of this geopolitical space, as well as the need of Romania to develop a programmatic document such as the national strategy that is the political foundation of the sectoral doctrines, following the model of the National Defence Strategy of the Country for the period 2015 - 2019.

There is a multitude of studies addressing security in the Black Sea region, however, the master thesis entitled Security Strategy of Romania in the Black Sea Region is distinguished in this analytical landscape by addressing exclusively national security as a basic pillar of regional security and demonstrates that the Black Sea has in fact become a new strategic direction of global security. These are the substantive (subject), methodological (analysis), and circumstantial (text, context and subtext) points of the scientific approach proposed by the master thesis, which are found in its structural logic.

The personal contribution stems, first of all, from the originality of the proposed research approach - to address security from a multidisciplinary perspective. In this sense, I used
concepts, ideas and theories belonging to disciplines considered to be closely related to the research field, namely political sciences, economic sciences, history and geography. Another contribution to the development of knowledge in the field of national information and security is the new perspective as a result of the analysis of the latest documents in the field of security, the consultation of the recent specialized literature and the changing situation in the relations between the states belonging to the European and Euro-Atlantic area and other actors, in order to obtain a complex and current picture. The paper sought to provide a clearer radiograph of how naval security influences regional security strategies and contributes to maintaining stability in the region through cooperation on the political-military line. Thus, the main personal contribution is the comprehensive method of approaching the subject and the analysis performed on the studied documents. The paper can prove to be a useful tool for specialists in the field by providing a current analysis of the main international trends as well as of the latest strategic documents.

I will start analysing the subject from the Regional Security Complex Theory introduced by Barry Buzan, after 1980, which will target groups of states whose security concerns are interconnected to such an extent that the analysis of national security issues needs to be done in this form. In the same theoretical space, interdependencies were already judged through the definition of security at five levels - political, military, social, economic and environmental - and with three securitized objects, more recently - the individual, the society and the state. The Black Sea has always been a confluence area. Currently, there is Russia, NATO, EU, Turkey in the region. In addition, the Black Sea has become the pre-transit space between EU / NATO and the Caucasus and Central Asia, where the new post-Soviet independent states were rich in oil and gas resources, as well as an alternative route avoiding the metropolis - the Federation Russian - but also the main transport monopolist in the region - Turkey.

**First chapter** of the master thesis is going to define and analyse the concept of security strategy, highlighting the preoccupations of cooperation at the national, regional and global level after the end of the Cold War and, last but not least, it aims at analysing the forms of cooperation in the Black Sea region showing their importance and evolution.

By analysing the historical and geographical background of the Black Sea this chapter stresses out the "key positions" that make Black Sea region special, giving it added value, but especially contribute decisively to the global value and importance of this space.
These "key positions" are: The Strait system (Bosphorus, Dardanele - linked by the Marmara Sea); Crimean Peninsula and the Continental Shore in front of the Romanian seaside.

This region is, more than obviously, an alert space for the intersection of strategic directions and geopolitical interests that mark the global affirmation of the main state and non-state actors that subsume its major interests. The geostrategic interests that manifest in the Wider Black Sea Region (WBSR) are strategic interests naturally generated by global actors. I have in mind the Russian Federation, the USA, NATO and the European Union, as well as the European dimension of China's policy.

The complex process of geopolitical and geostrategic redefinition in the Wider Black Sea Region has been determined from a historical perspective by the break-up of the military balance on the one hand between the states in the area and on the other hand among the major state actors of the region global vocalists affirming their interests in the Wider Black Sea Region and, in addition, in Central and Southeast Asia.

Moreover, chapter I assesses the geopolitical concept of the Wider Black Sea Region, highlighting the main geopolitical characteristics of the Pontic area. According to some researchers in the study of international relations, the Black Sea Enlargement Region is delimited by the riparian states: Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, the Russian Federation and states with no littoral peaks such as Moldova, Greece, Azerbaijan, Armenia, have a strong regional involvement from the point of view of common economic, military, energy and strategic interests. The existence of frozen conflicts, which are high-triggered outbreaks, is a regional post-Cold War constant.

In the second chapter of the master thesis it is highlighted the geopolitical variables that define the evolution and post-war assertion of the Wider Black Sea Region as a distinct geopolitical area, focusing on the understanding and analysis of frozen conflicts, and also revealing the geopolitics of borders, energy resources and military relations.

For this, I consider it necessary to analyse the security visions of the main actors in the Wider Black Sea Area as well as the nature of the relations between them in an attempt to finally reach a security assessment in the WBSR. In the present study, firstly it will be analysed as distinct themes only the major actors in the WBSR - the Russian Federation, Turkey, the European Union and the US and NATO - without this amounting to the absence of powers smaller - Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria Republic of Moldova. Their
interests, problems and status in the relationships in this space are addressed in the relationships they have with the actors analysed in extenso as well as in association with the membership in the Euro-Atlantic community.

In the beginning of the chapter, it talks about Turkey’s influence in the region, and Russia as the thread actor. Later it will be described the European Union and its expansion to Eastern Europe, trying to make it aware of its involvement in the process of cooperation. The last part will focus on NATO influence in the region through Romania’s membership.

As for the final conclusions of the second part, I consider that cooperation relations should not be limited to the Black Sea riparian actors but should be extended to the level of the concept of the wider Black Sea region from the Balkans to the Caspian Sea and beyond. Thus, actions can be addressed to a wide range of issues that directly or indirectly threaten the security of the Black Sea area.

The last chapter of the master analyses the Romania’s role of in the Black Sea region. The way and the extent to which Romania promotes and defends its interests in the Black Sea region is directly dependent on its maritime power, in this sense the major interests of the country are alertly determined by: the supply of raw materials on the maritime and river communications routes; exploitation of the sea basin; promoting and developing economic activities taking place at sea and on the river; engaging in Euro Atlantic activities and procedures developed in the wider Black Sea Region.

Romania is interested in the vital way of: preserving and ensuring its territorial integrity within the boundaries of its borders, land, sea and river; the unaffected preservation of the Danube-Black Sea access, through the river arms, but also on the Danube-Black Sea channel; ensuring stability in the region; the protection and, possibly, the defence of the infrastructure in the Black Sea national area; protection of the marine, participation in allied naval military actions as well as those engaged in relationships and partnerships.

As far as political interests are concerned, the country is interested in preserving territorial integrity and state sovereignty in maritime spaces. From the point of view of military interests, the sea offers the most generous option of manifesting these interests, which can at some point become the largest support for the regional policy developed by Romania in the Pontic area, mainly in other areas national interest at a secondary level, but which can be of great importance in the balance of political options at some point.
Such an approach would effectively help to strengthen Romania's position in the region, while increasing its influence in European Union debates on European construction and on increasing the role of the EU moderator in world politics.

The final part of the master thesis is made up of conclusions. The role of the Black Sea Region requires more than a mere collaboration with the European Union, NATO and international actors, it requires a much deeper involvement in all processes and forms of cooperation to achieve stability in the region. In the case of regional organizations, it is believed that the OSCE should become more than a mere observer of disputes and conflicts in the region, focusing in particular on economic and military cooperation.

For my master's research, I am going to study national and international documents and specialized books, reports and scientific research papers. I have also thoroughly to assess the changes in the international security environment by analysing the annual reports of some international organizations or recognized forecasting centres. At the same time, the analysis and the theoretical elaborations would be deduced from open sources, classical and digital documentation.

In the light of all of the above, I want my thesis to continue the tradition of the Black Sea region's unique approaches and to bring added value.
1. The area and theory of the analysis

1.1. The Security Concept in International Relations

If I talk about the concept of security, it is necessary to give a generic definition of security. In the Oxford Dictionary comes with the following definition “The state of being free from danger or threat”.

Security studies in the 1970s were not growing at that time, are particularly important to understand the further evolution of this area: it is the first time that, without reference to the end of the Cold War, human scientists have advanced the idea that the international system will be subjected in the near future to a radical process of radical transformation (Moștoflei, Dutu, & Sarcinschi, 2005, p. 8). Even though not all scholars agree, the end of the Cold War confirmed the theory of the late 1970s, replacing the fear of a nuclear conflict between the two great powers with risks, threats of concrete threats to national and international security: ethnic conflicts, the initiation of a difficult and long-lasting economic transition in former communist states, increasing immigrant and refugee numbers, increased environmental degradation, increasing the importance of cultural and religious affiliation in international relations, integration of Central and Eastern European countries into the Euro-Atlantic structures, etc.

All these trends have generated the need to broaden and deepen the meaning of the security concept. From the stable peace concepts of Kenneth Boulding’s (1989), and positive peace of Johan Galtung’s (1969), and from the definition of Walter Lippmann published by Professor Arnold Wolfers in "Discord and Collaboration, Essays on International Politics," he states that "a nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values, if it wishes to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by victory in such a war" (1962, p. 150), the definition of security has undergone many changes, as follows: Ian Bellany writes that "security itself is a relative absence of war," combined with a new psychological factor, represented by "a relative, solid conviction that no war that could take place would end with a defeat" (1981).

In the 1960s, well-being was considered to be the direct and unproblematic outcome of economic growth, but the subsequent social and economic theories disproved this hypothesis, considering that cultural and psychological factors are equally important.
It is noted that each definition can be placed in a certain historical context. The security problems are not fixed, but, on the contrary, have changed over time. The concept of security was viewed in the second half of the 20th century as referring exclusively to military security relations, analysts disputed this definition very seriously.

The Copenhagen School has become the common name for the whole security analysis that fundamentally reconfigured the meaning of the term security and the elements that needs to be secured.

The Copenhagen School has as its object the study of security and its implications on the individual's life. Until the Copenhagen School, traditional schools mainly taught military security, the novelty of the theorists' analysis of this school was precisely the division of the analysis into several sectors. In the 1991 high-level meeting in Rome, NATO decreed in the classical language of the Copenhagen school with representatives of: Barry Buzan, a neo-realist researcher, Ole Waever, a post-structuralist and Jaap de Wilde, the main critic of the school being Bill McSweeney: and security now has five dimensions: military, economic, political, social, ecological (Buzan, Waever, & Wilde, Security: A New Framework for Analysis, 1998).

The security concept is a very complex one. With all the scientific contributions of areas such as International Relations, Security Studies, or Geopolitics, academic knowledge has not led to an unanimously accepted definition of security. In Romania, the situation is even more confusing. Here, I find some experts and analysts, especially intelligence services, which equate the concept of security with national security and consequently consider national security as the intelligence field.

With all the confusion, one thing seems quite clear: security does not just mean the physical protection of the subject of reference, but also involves the economic, political or cultural protection of the values and interests of a nation. The formulation of a realistic security policy must begin by establishing an operational security definition and a clear set of criteria for assessing that policy.

For heuristic purposes, intersecting the two dimensions, security policy can be explained as a dynamic process that sets strategic goals and allocates resources to achieve the security of most citizens. In this theoretical model, depending on the perception of threats, there are four states, namely insecurity, obsession, false security and security. That is why the role of democratically elected political decision-makers is to ensure a
security policy that will allocate resources to achieving that security state by avoiding the two traps, false security and obsession. There are moments in Romania's history that can exemplify these two types of traps. Thus, in the interwar period, under the influence of the Wilsonian paradigm, immediately after the fulfilment of the national ideal of the Great Union, the political decision-makers considered that by realizing that sanitary cordon between the USSR and the Great Western Powers through small alliances and regional understandings, of the League of Nations, national security can be achieved. The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and the following period have shown that Romania has fallen into the trap of false security.

On the other hand, during the sixth-eighty decades of the twentieth century, Ceausescu realized that the communist ideology was a fragile binder and began to promote nationalism as a complementary ideology. His opposition to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia gave him legitimacy and began to appear as a natural follower of the great rulers of the Middle Ages.

Some institutions use an even simpler definition. Thus, the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) in Switzerland considers that national security policy is a framework whereby a country produces security for the state and for its citizens (Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control, 2015, p. 1). According to the DCAF, states need security policies for the following reasons:

- to ensure that all threats are taken into account in a comprehensive manner;
- to increase the effectiveness of the security system by optimizing the contributions of each actor;
- to guide the implementation of national security policy; to build a national consensus; to increase confidence and improve regional and international cooperation (Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control, 2015).

Often, however, there is confusion between concepts such as national security policy, defence policy and national security strategy. Figure 1 tries to clarify, graphically, the distinction between these concepts.
The main distinction is based on the concept of Clausewitz, which sees a continuum of tactical strategy tactics (Jablonsky, 2010). Clausewitz considered victories on the battlefield (tactical and operational) to make no sense if they did not respond to political (state) political commands. Therefore, the strategy would be the link between tactics and policies.

Therefore, the distinction between tactics – strategies - operations is of a hierarchical nature, of strategic levels, security policy representing the highest and most comprehensive level, the tactics being only concrete operational plans. The fundamental distinction between the concept of security policy and security strategy consists in the fact that security policy refers to the process of setting the major objectives of a state, while the strategies refer to the means of achieving those objectives. In addition, security policy includes, as a distinctive mark, a political component: the institutional level of political-military decision.

Confusion has also become possible due to the fact that the term strategy has evolved in the twentieth century from the meaning of general art to the national strategy. The concept of national strategy, sometimes called the grand strategy, has gained the connotation of coordinating national power and resources to meet national goals.

The distinction between security policy and defence policy primarily addresses the ultimate goal of policies (the nation's security, first, or defence against an external enemy for the second), and second, the means used for that purpose; while national defence is based on military means, national security engages all national resources. The confusion comes from the Cold War, when national security was equivalent to national defence.

The distinction between security policy and foreign policy is related to two aspects: 1) While the goal of security policy is narrower, of direct security for citizens, the purpose
of foreign policy is multidimensional, including maintaining relations between states in order to maintain favourable conditions promoting national interests; 2) While security policy is preoccupied by opponents, with emphasis on their military power, foreign policy is concerned with alliances and diplomatic instruments (Bartholomees, 2006).

The fundamental distinction would be that foreign policy is the positive stimulus of a state, and security policy would be the negative stimulus. However, in the context of globalization, the boundaries between the two policies have become permeable; even military diplomacy is spoken, and foreign policy is, in turn, responsible for national security. Strategic, are equally unclear.

It can be noticed that, in order to meet the requirements of the new security environment, both its analysis and policies and strategies in the same field need to be analysed all dimensions of the concept, as multidimensional security requires solutions and similar instruments. (Kolodziej, 2005, p. 42). States have developed in this respect a series of instruments that can be classified as follows:

- Non-military tools: diplomacy, intelligence gathering and analysis, alliances, economic and social policies, etc.;
- Political-military instruments: armament control, peacetime operations and humanitarian relationships, security relations between entities of the same or different states, etc.;
- Military instruments, such as: unconventional response, reduced military intervention, classical military power, information systems, etc.

The above mentioned instruments are mainly used at national level and are tailored to the circumstances and the area in which the risks, dangers and / or threats to security are manifested.

The process of formulating a national security policy follows the standard model of (Dunn, 2016), the analysis of public policies. Normally, security policy is made up of a series of decisions and strategies. The national security strategy, by its comprehensive national character, and by engaging all the components of national power, is a security micro-policy. However, the security strategy is distinguished from politics by its limited nature in time, the operational aspect, and more concrete and clear objectives and by the precise tasks set for the national security institutions. After defining national security as
a public policy issue, the strategic decision on possible courses of action and choosing the right alternative is another key issue of security policy.

The main dilemma is related to the fact that the future is unpredictable, but a strategy needs environmental approximations to recommend action courses and allocate resources. Scenarios are the heuristic and propaedeutic tool for assessing the security environment and helping to make strategic decisions to build realistic and feasible strategies. In this context, it is necessary to use scenarios as a tool to anticipate future events, but it requires considerable skills and sophisticated thinking that are formed over time.

In an ideal world, scenarios and strategic thinking should follow an ideal algorithm. Although simplified, an algorithm like the one recommended by the Institute for Alternative Futures (IAF) is very useful as a heuristic and propaedeutic means. The IAF model includes the following steps:

- trend monitoring (scanning, identifying determinants, etc.);
- developing scenarios (narrative alternatives about the future);
- developing a vision (the preferred alternative decision);
- defining missions (structuring the role of the organization to achieve vision);
- setting strategic objectives (milestones for mission success);
- developing strategies (coordinated set of actions to achieve the vision by allocating the necessary resources) (Ghica & Zulean, 2007).

Trends, scenarios, visions and strategies are part of the public policy decision-making process. Among them, the development of the national security strategy and defence strategy are the most important, most visible and most used instrument in the security policy in the Euro-Atlantic community (Taylor, Mazarr, & Nunn, 1998).

Hence, the security policy is designed to prevent threats which risks undermining the security of the state or society. These threats, in general, can be removed by a concerted action of their competent institutions state. Namely, from the perspective of national security policy, they are reunited coordinate the actions of all those responsible for security, depending on interests and threats considered the most important. State through of these organs, analyses the environment in which they operate and detects threats, the risks or vulnerabilities existing or possible to create an organizational-institutional
framework that would ensure the proper and efficient operation of the entire sector national security (Katzenstein, 1996, p. 171).

It is going to direct and convert resources into shares, to ensure the effective protection of national security. In the absence of a systematic and complex approach to the national security context, decisions based on personal intuition and individual and / or group interests will be taken. Additionally, a strategic document at national level, must set the terms and conditions, after which the success has been evaluated the efforts made to ensure the development and survival of the state.

In conclusion, today the world's states are rather unable to fully secure their own means. National security and defence policies must be based on the principle of collective and indivisible security, membership of a political-military bloc or neutrality status, strengthening bilateral relations with stakeholders of interest, regional cooperation and defence capabilities development, covering the requirements of all missions.

Therefore, a viable solution to security risks and threats appears to be regional integration, where states adopt a common security and defence policy, using the human, material, financial and informational resources available to them in a collective manner.

1.2. Historical and geographical background of the Wider Black Sea Region

Geographically located at the intersection of the European area, Eurasia and the Middle East, the Wider Black Sea Region has been regarded for centuries as a space of confrontation between Russian, Turkish and Western interests rather than as a distinct region. As a result, the study of the Black Sea in international relations was ignored and experts treat the region as a Eurasian periphery, a place where Europe, the Middle East and parts of the former Soviet Union and the Communist bloc meet, rather than as a distinct geopolitical unity of analysis.

There are still many analysts who question, as Professor Mustafa Aydin claims, whether the Wider Black Sea Region is a distinct geopolitical and geostrategic area, not really seen like this neither by the international community nor by the countries of the Black Sea Region itself, because there is not yet a hegemonic zonal power that would bring all other states together on the path of prosperity and economic growth. But the
contemporary regional dynamics of the Black Sea area changed from being just a periphery into coming into the Western attention. The WBSR is framed by two mountain ranges, the Caucasus Mountains to the east and the Balkans Mountains. In the northern region, the Black Sea has a wide opening to the largest plain in the world - the Great Russian plain, the southern shore being seconded by the Pontic Mountains. Contact area of two religious ideologies, Christianity and Islam, the Wider Black Sea Region is also the border area between the Russian Federation on the one hand and the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance on the other. The Russian Federation and NATO are represented by antagonistic ideologies such as tellucracy and thalassocracy. The North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union are the representatives of Euro-Atlanticism and Thalassocracy, conducting a policy based on the force of water, while the Russian Federation, thanks to its vast territories, is the representative of tellucracy, promoting its policies based on the strength of the land. Throughout the history of the peoples, the chroniclers of the times constantly recorded the constant battle for supremacy in the Black Sea. The total control of the Black Sea basin by the Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman and Tsarist empires is written evidence of history.

After the end of the Cold War, the Wider Black Sea Region gradually turned, geopolitical developments revealing the transformation of the cooperative confrontation. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the number of states bordering the Black Sea increased, and Russia’s influence in the region diminished. In the current geopolitical context, following the redefinition of borders and the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula to the Russian Federation in 2014, the Black Sea coastal states have the following lengths of coastlines: Turkey - 33.2%, Georgia - 8.1%, Bulgaria - 7%, Romania-6% (Nicolaescu, 2010), Russia 27.7%, Ukraine -18.3% (Calopareanu, 2012). Some geopolitics are of the opinion that the entire Balkan Peninsula would belong to this extended area of the Black Sea.

I believe that the Balkans are a complex region distinct on the geopolitical map of the world. This Balkan region has characteristics similar to the wider Black Sea Region but is not an integral part of the Pontic area. The political, military, economic and mosaic of religions of most Balkan peoples are not part of the geopolitical evolutionary processes that have influenced the Black Sea riparian states in the aftermath of the Cold War. From the Wider Black Sea Region are four NATO member states: Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece; three former CIS countries: The Russian Federation, Ukraine, Moldova, but also
the Transcaucasian states: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia. The European Union is present on the western coast of the Black Sea with the simultaneous accession of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007. In the period following the Cold War, the states of the Wider Black Sea Region entered a period of profound transition, heading for a new geopolitical architecture generated by the mutations in power rations.

Historian Gheorghe I. Bratianu (1999) had a European vision on the history of the Romanian people. His latest monograph, which appeared after the Black Sea, proved his vocation to write a complete history. He argued that the Black Sea "proved to be a factor of rapprochement and unity between the regions whose littoral is lying, more than a barrier separating peoples and civilizations." The historian was convinced that the Black Sea, the ancient Pontus Euxinus, had unparalleled economic and political importance among the Euro-Asian seas in the past three millennia.

The paper presents problems related to geography, demography, economy, institutions and culture in the Black Sea area, but also to the great political figures from Darius I to Mehmed II. Gheorghe Bratianu highlights how the Black Sea influenced the history of the peoples in the area, including the history of the Romanians.

Gheorghe I. Bratianu views the Black Sea as a "turntable" and "ordering station" that directly influences the entire European economy, determining both the flow of its prosperity and the recession of the recessions and crises. The Black Sea is the knot where all the political, economic and cultural ties between Europe and Asia are united, being the meeting point of the most important peoples and civilizations from the Mediterranean to the Pacific.

The historian believes that the sea played an important role in the establishment of the medieval state in the Romanians as "a natural and logical result of the communication routes that were moving from the markets of Poland and Central Europe to the Black Sea basically the road created State". Moreover, Gheorghe I. Bratianu considers that the Romanians' freedom itself was closely related to their access to the sea. He points out that Ottoman domination has grown after their domination in Dobrogea, Chilia and the White Fortresses, and the conquest of freedom in the modern era was due to "the return of the Romanians to the sea when the Turkish monopoly was lifted by the Treaty of Adrianople (1829) and the Romanians re-entered the pontic trade then by returning the mouths of the Danube of Moldova (1856), and by joining Dobrogea to Romania in 1878."
The historian notes that "This maritime factor owes Romanian history, in particular, to be different from that of countries left far from the great roads of trade and war, countries that are happier perhaps in times of crisis; they do not attract too much attention from diplomats and strategists. But, of course, here is the inevitable reversal of the medal: the historical interest that a geographic region exits is a privilege that is paid inexpensively. It is a fact that the Romanian history cannot be understood without taking into consideration the roads and the influences crossing the territory where it has developed until it has made it a true crossroads of civilizations and trade but also of unhappiness, invasions and wars."

Based on a multitude of narrative, economic and diplomatic sources of diverse origins, Gheorghe I. Bratianu has made a remarkable fresco of the role of the Black Sea in the succession of its civilizations in its economic, political and cultural aspect, with implications for the Romanian territory.

Therefore, the area under my master analysis is the subject of debate even from the problem of the states that make up it. In general, through the Wider Black Sea Region it can be understood that area that is circumscribed to the territories of the countries that have Black Sea exit - Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, Russia and Ukraine. But, on a short analysis of the listed countries, it is clear their diversity, the fact that they are connected by different regional systems, they are distinct from a cultural, political and economic point of view, which favoured creation of a perception that the Wider Black Sea Region is a "crushed" area between the European Union (EU) and the Euro-Atlantic area, located in the proximity of the Middle East, a "black hole" or "grey area" between the EU, Eurasia and the Euro-Atlantic area (Japaridze, 2010).

Therefore, any analysis of interactions between them will have to take into account the fact that all these states are connected to distinct mechanisms and phenomena that characterize various adjacent regions. For example, Romania and Bulgaria are The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and EU member states, Turkey is a possible EU candidate with a history of many difficulties and contradictions in this respect, but also a member of the North Atlantic Alliance. In addition, after the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to NATO, the Wider Black Sea Region has gained a key role in the "global war on terror", a war that prevailed in the Middle East, becoming the border of the alliance of states engaged in this US-led war. Russia is obviously a considerable regional power, its relations with the EU, but also NATO being marked by tensions, for example the case
of placing the anti-missile defence structures on the European countries or the energy security are examples eloquent in this sense. Then Ukraine and Georgia are visibly state entities that are Moscow's influence, and are also involved in cooperation programs with the EU (Japaridze, 2010).

Due to conflicting interests of the actors in the WBSR, both regional and global, the political and military incidents are still present. The main reasons of maintaining this uncertain and hostile environment includes the followings: the Russia’s breach on the Ukrainian territorial integrity by the invading and in the end annexing Crimea, considered to be in the post-Cold War period an incomparable action, and later fuelling the dispute by creating a crisis in Lugansk and Donetsk; the increased number of developing great military elements in the area, both by NATO (through its partnerships, especially by increasing the anti-missile capabilities in Romania) and Russia (by having access to the Crimean peninsula); former Soviet states in the vicinity of Black Sea encountered some cultural, social and economic issues by prolonging the frozen conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria and Nagorno- Karabakh, in order to control these countries (with the huge chance of fuelling them, use of blackmail to put pressure on the political decision-making decisions, economic intimidations etc.); pressing on the liabilities and risks which were created by resistance movements, organized crime, territorial controversy, illegal migration (Sauliuc, Calopareanu, & Balasoiu, 2015).

Moreover, if I analyse the role of the Black Sea in the EU's energy security equation, as a transit space linking European importers with resources in the Caspian Sea and Central Asia region, then this emerges as a space for a real competition for resources, materialized in trials of the Russian Federation to maintain its monopoly as a hydrocarbon exporter and European states to identify alternative sources. The latest alternative route projects, such as Nabucco or South Stream, also translate the Black Sea, hence creating connections with Western Balkan states as well (Petersen, 2009). Thus, the Black Sea is also emerging as an area rich in natural resources and particularly important for the energy supply of the entire European continent.

In this regard, it may be useful to recall that the Black Sea plays an important role in energy geopolitics, not only because it is undoubtedly a transit space for Russian and Middle Eastern oil and gas resources, but also a space with considerable energy resources. For example, in 2009 at the Atlantic Council's Black Sea Energy & Economic Forum, Turkish Petroleum President Mehmet Uysal argued that in the coming decades
the Black Sea could replace Russia as the main energy source (Manoli, 2012). The same theory can be corroborated by the implications of the dispute between Romania and Ukraine regarding the delimitation of the exclusive economic zone in the Black Sea.

On the other hand, if I am referring to the composition of the regional organizations established in the Black Sea, then The Wider Black Sea Region will include other actors. For example, the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) is made up of the six riparian states plus Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Greece, Moldova and Serbia. The Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership (BSF) includes the riparian states, not least Russia and Turkey (the latter also has the role of an observer alongside Serbia), but includes Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova (Calopareanu, 2012). Alongside this, there is also the EU initiative to develop Black Sea regional cooperation, known as the Black Sea Synergy, aiming at developing cooperation in terms of promoting democratic principles, addressing environmental issues, resources, security, frozen conflicts, etc.

Therefore, the WBSR, rather, designates an economic and political space that includes not only riparian states, being defined as "the sum of security complexes that brings together those states whose security problems cannot be solved without cooperation and support to other states" (Calopareanu, 2012, p. 28) The definition provides a clear picture not only of the degree of complexity implicit in the area but also of its quality of convergence area of distinct features. The WBSR is a border area, often marked by tensions, difficulties in cooperating, but also by the fact that the efforts made in this regard are necessary and beneficial for all the regions that meet at this point. Russia is not willing to lose control of Ukraine, which in the medium and long term, in the WBSR, would lead to the formation of a "cold front" with Romania on the line.

Therefore, in the present study, when I talk about the Wider Black Sea Region, I refer not only to the six riparian states, but also to the states located in its relatively close proximity - Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan.
1.3. **Black Sea as a major player for the regional security**

The area adjacent to the Black Sea is often approached in conjunction with the concept of "region", one of the notions commonly studied in security analyses or international relations. However, the meaning of the term is not clearly defined, the theoretical approaches have a heterogeneous character, depending on the school making the analyses and the factors that are taken into account. Moreover, the extremely diverse lexical field of the term "regionalization" reflects this variety of acceptances and approaches that make the emergence of a clearly defined vision of it a difficult task. For example, regionalism, regionalization, region building, regional integration, sub-regionalism, regional differences, and regions that are not and cannot be regarded as regions. Thus, in spite of an extensive literature on the subject, which attempts to explain, comprehend, predict the emergence, dynamics and development of the regions (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2000), there is no theory that can embody the pertinent explanations for the variety, specific of all regions.

Thus, I consider that it is useful, in any approach that involves a regional security analysis, to assume that each region has its own specificity, a number of characteristics that give it the status of a region, which is not equivalent to the fact that its mechanisms and processes are similar to those of other regions. For this, I consider useful the analysis of WBSR in terms of one of the most elaborated and most useful theories of regional security analysis.

In my opinion, one of the most valuable contributions in terms of the regional dimension of security studies was brought by *Barry Buzan si Ole Wæver* (Buzan & Wæver, Regions and Powers. The Structure of International Security, 2003), representatives of the Copenhagen School. They have developed The Regional Security Complex Theory, believing that it could be a useful tool to explain International Relations, but also to identify possibilities for the evolution of the international security environment and the relations between states. The authors compare two perspectives on world order after the end of the Cold War - the neo-realist and the globalist one. The first one analyses the distribution of power resources within the international system, territory and state sovereignty being key concepts for this approach to international relations and security but cannot explain the cooperative initiatives on this line nor the existence of an EU-type organization.
The globalist perspective tends to ignore the state, its territorial character in the international relations, focusing on approaches that attach greater importance to culture, transnational issues or international political economy. Both visions can provide explanations on the evolution of the international security environment, but for the useful approach is the third perspective of Buzan and Wæver - The Regional Security Complex Theory. It contains elements from both the previous views, but focuses its attention on a lower level of analysis. Buzan and Wæver define the Regional Security Complexes as a sustainable, but not permanent, substructure of the international system with an important geographical component that is given by time-dependent security interdependence patterns. In practice, Regional Security Complexes states are geographically close and their security is interdependent in such a way that they can easily be distinguished from security neighbourhood in their region. This interdependence has a series of historical patterns of the kind of friendship - enmity, cooperation - confrontation that characterizes relations established between states. In other words, a regional security complex can be defined as a "group of states whose major security perceptions and concerns are so intertwined that their international security issues cannot be independently analysed or solved" (Buzan, Wæver, & Wilde, 1998).

Therefore, I can talk about Regional Security Complexes where the pattern is that of cooperation (North America, for example) and Regional Security Complexes where the pattern is that of confrontation (the Middle East). From this perspective, WBSR is only partially in the definition of Regional Security Complexes in the sense that there is indeed an interdependence relationship between the constituent states, but it cannot be claimed a single type of historical pattern that characterizes relations between states. Thus, if the current trend is to consolidate and develop patterns of cooperation among WBSR countries, it can also be noticed conflicting relationships not only in the history, but also in the contemporary period.

Additionally, if I take into account only geopolitical changes after the end of the Cold War, when the area was divided between the two blocks, the fluctuation of patterns of relationships becomes clear. Therefore, WBSR is not a Regional Security Complex, as defined by Buzan and Wæver, since it cannot be fully integrated into the template proposed by them. However, the regional analysis from the perspective of this theory can be used to explain the security dynamics in the Western Balkans, the EU, North America,
Africa, etc. clearly reveals that, as far as this space is concerned, it should be dealt with a specific space whose features lead to a special evolution of the security environment.

One of the most recent examples of this is the Crimea annexation (2014), war between Russia and Georgia (2008) or Russia's decision to stop natural gas supply to Ukraine in 2005 and 2007 and to Moldova in 2006 (Băhnăreanu, 2007, p. 39), although, traditionally, it shall be considered the three states still under a major influence of Moscow. Similarly, the disagreement between Romania and Ukraine on the delimitation of the exclusive economic zone in the Black Sea, which was finally judged by the International Court of Justice, can be analysed. At the same time, the whole area adjacent to the Black Sea is the subject of EU and NATO efforts to strengthen cooperation, the initiative known as the Black Sea Synergy being an eloquent example. BSEC and BSF can also be put forward as arguments for the existence of a pattern of co-operation in the emergence of the WBSR. Moreover, Romania and Bulgaria are EU Member States, Turkey - candidate country, Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova have developed cooperative relations with the EU under the European Neighbourhood and Eastern Partnership Policies (Celac & Manoli, 2006) and signed the Association Agreement in 2014.

Hence, the question can arise as to whether WBSR can be considered as a changing Regional Security Complex or a separate type of space, with its own peculiarities that make it impossible to define a Regional Security Complex. According to Barry Buzan, a Regional Security Complex undergoing a changing process may have the following repercussions:

a) maintaining the status quo (involves maintaining the core structure of the complex - power distribution and hostility pattern);

b) internal transformation (the complex structure of the complex changes in the context of its external boundary, which may be the result of political integration, of the decisive change of power distribution or of major alternations in the pattern of the enemy / enemy);

c) External transformation (the core structure of a Regional Security Complex is changed by the expansion or withdrawal of its external borders);

d) coverage (involves the action of one or more external powers in the regional security complex, suppressing the indigenous security dynamics). (Buzan, Wæver, & Wilde, Security: A New Framework for Analysis, 1998)
In the Wider Black Sea Region, it can be noted the accumulation of these repercussions, which may be one of the causes of the difficulty of classifying this area as a region, in terms of international relations analyses. Thus, on the one hand, I can talk about maintaining the power distribution in the WBSR, considering the fact that the Russian Federation and Turkey have maintained over time as the main regional actors in the area, the two states bringing together the more power resources and having, thanks to them, the highest degree of influence in this space. On the other hand, it cannot be overlooked the fact that clear and clear indications of transformation can be noticed, both internal and external. The fact that the external boundary of the BSEC is not yet clearly delineated, in a way that is universally accepted at academic and political level, is relevant in this respect.

Moreover, Southwest Black Sea states have been included in regional (EU) and / or military (NATO) organizations, the Russian Federation is increasingly emerging as an emerging power, challenging the influence USA and NATO in the region, having an aggressive rhetoric about it, illustrated recently by the debate on the installation of elements of the American anti-missile shield in the area adjacent to the Black Sea. Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia are states that are considered to be still under the influence of Moscow. All this is accompanied by the obvious action of another power that clearly influences the security dynamics of this space - the US, present both through NATO and its actions in the Middle East.

In fact, the BSEC has begun to be dealt with as a result of the NATO and EU enlargement process, which clearly defines the existence of a Regional Security Complex intersecting with the WBSR on the territory of Turkey, Greece, Romania and Bulgaria. On the other hand, it is about another Regional Security Complex, under Russian domination, a complex that includes Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Therefore, it can be argued about the WBSR as a training Regional Security Complex, which is still under the influence of the forces of change, all the more so as the whole international system seems to be going through such a process characterized, first of all, by the reconfiguration of international polarity, a process in which the US, Russia, Turkey and the EU play significant roles. The WBSR is predominantly a contact area of several regions because, beyond the initiatives aimed at strengthening the relations between the states adjacent to the Black Sea, distinct approaches to this area can be identified, such as the "close neighbourhood" policy (Russia) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (EU).
Consequently, I cannot refer to the Black Sea Area as a Regional Security Complex, as defined by it, but the existence of a distinct geographic area in this area is easily perceptible. It is a crossing area for contact between different actors of the international arena, with different interests and sometimes even antagonistic, but also with common problems to solve. The cultural, civilizational, historical, political, economic, social, religious foundation, however, makes it difficult to perceive the WBSR as a coherent, unitary region. The deeply heterogeneous nature of the Regional Security Complexes can be explained, however, and because its institutional dimension, regular cooperation within regional institutions, is a relatively recent reality, dating back to 1992, since the founding of BSEC.

The term "region" refers to geographical proximity and to the existence of interdependence from the point of view of security, interdependence which, in the context of globalization, is anyway present to a greater or lesser extent among international actors, and all the more so among actors geographically close. On the other hand, the concept of "region" may imply the existence of some cooperative relations, of some institutions that provide the framework for it, but it does not exclude either the struggle for power or the possibility of a security dilemma.

The relations between the great actors in this area - Russia, USA through NATO, Turkey - reveal tensions, geostrategic games, different interests, which once again highlight the boundary of this space. At the same time, this very nature of the WBSR, borders, makes it attractive for these powers, most of them trying to expand their influence on the whole region, not just because of natural resources, but also those related to security, first of all energy, geostrategic, security calculations (the case of the EU, which through the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership tries to create a stable and predictable security circle in the immediate neighbourhood).

Subsequently, with regard to the WBSR, it can be argued that this is a region due to the existence of geographical proximity, which made possible and necessary the interaction between riparian states (though their nature differs depending on the states considered), due to the existence of some common risks and threats, as well as recent efforts to create a common approach to security issues in this area. Therefore, as long as it has to be dealt with this vision that it can be identified with all the actors involved in this area, in my opinion, one can speak of a region as a distinct area of analysis from the point of view of security. And this despite the fact that the riparian states tend to associate, at perceptual
level with different regions, the Black Sea area being only the point of their convergence, which makes the WBSR define at the intersection of the concepts of "region" and "Security", the security risks and threats (of military, political, economic, ecological, energy) being the main "regional coagulant" (Ciuta, 2008, p. 129).

In fact, according to this vision, the existence of common problems has made this space a region and a treaty as such. In my view, however, and the advantages have played an important role in the emergence of a region like the WBSR. Natural resources, its importance as transit space for Europe's oil and gas supply, have also contributed to the inclusion of the WBSR in the category of the regions and its approach as a consequence and the strategies of the actors in this area. The heterogeneity and the paradox seem to characterize the security environment of the WBSR, which is also a self-contained area and a confluence of other regions, a space for cooperation and confrontation and competition, risks and threats and opportunities, economic disparities between riparian states.
2. Geopolitical and Geostrategic positions in the Wider Black Sea Region

The Wider Black Sea Region has always been a complex border zone due to the following reasons:

- The presence of natural resources;
- Bordered by different types of government;
- Neighbouring Middle East;
- The complex character of the transit the region with a huge influence over the energy security of the European continent, including the economic security of the exporting states, in particular Russia;
- The existence of multiple cooperation initiatives, the impact of which can be considered relatively low; the fact that there are several regions in this area, each with its specificity;
- The influence of international organizations through partnerships and/or membership, especially NATO and EU.

All of this have a substantial impact on how the main actors build and develop a vision of the security environment in this space, but also on how they promote and defend their interests in the Wider Black Sea Area, as well as the relationships between they.

With the European Union enlargement decision taken in Helsinki, Europe has inaugurated a new model of development based not on the potential of a country but on a whole geographic region. It has gone from a predominantly economic process to a predominantly geopolitical process dictated by the current realities.

The massive expansion, particularly towards the East, of the European Union and NATO, is a process of transformation that not only involved new members, but also increased capabilities and potentials to combat the serious dangers and threats to continental and global security.

Eastern Europe's advancement of the North Atlantic Alliance border is an evolutionary process that has led to the affirmation of the Wider Black Sea Region as a distinct geopolitical area at the heart of the Euro-Atlantic strategic interests. Beginning in 2008 - Georgia and continuing with the Ukrainian street events in Kiev, Euromaidan, 2014 - annexation of the Crimea to the Russian Federation, and culminating in the Donbass
battles of 2015, all these actions brought the Black Sea into the centre of actions and interests of the Russian Federation, which sought to create a buffer zone between its own sphere of influence and the North Atlantic Alliance. In order to strengthen cooperation, both NATO and the European Union must focus on strengthening their key capabilities, increasing interoperability and coordinating doctrine, planning, technology, equipment and trainings (Cucos & Dimitrov, 2018).

In the short and medium run, the WBSR indicates an escalation of intense relations developed by Russia's violation of the Ukrainian territory followed by Crimean annexation. The WBSR will furthermore continue one of regions of economic and political disputes between the key regional actors, as well as the confrontation for gaining the hegemonic power in the. These conflicts are driven by the conflicting interests of the regional actors.

2.1 Russian Federation as an emerging power centre

In terms of geopolitical competition, the Black Sea had a crucial value since ancient times, from the ancient Greeks' travels on its shores. (It is said that there would have been the voyage of Argonauts searching for the Golden Lane.) Over the centuries, Greeks, Romans, Ottomans, Georgians, Armenians, Romans, Bulgarians and other kingdoms, coasts and competed for its many maritime communication routes. In the case of Russia, old ghosts still haunt the Black Sea, especially in the Crimean Peninsula. In the mid-19th century, the forces of the Ottoman, British, French and other European Allied powers fought there with the Tsarist Russia, resulting in the deaths of half a million Russians - most of them killed by illness and injuries.

Firstly, from a geopolitical perspective, the northern coast of Turkey, the straits of an enormous importance to the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, separating the Black Sea from the Aegean Sea, and the shores of several other NATO allies are all subject to pressure by Russian naval activities - most of which had originated in the former Russian-Ukrainian naval base at Sevastopol. It is the ideal port with good weather that Russia has always searched for, but also a window to the Mediterranean. As the Russians strengthen their control over the bases on the Syrian coast, they will connect their Mediterranean and Aegean vessels to their Black Sea fleet so they will exert a significant influence across the region, provoking NATO just as I do it in the north, in the Baltic Sea.
It's not just about geopolitics: there are significant economic reasons for Russia to challenge NATO and its partners. In addition to the recent oil and gas exploration, the idea of profitable pipelines that eventually would connect the so-called Three Great Region - Adriatic, Baltic and Black - is attractive for Moscow (Gherman, 2017). Russia desperately wants to be able to control the Black Sea from an economic point of view in peacetime, while it would be ready to dominate the region in the event of a conflict with the West.

The issue of energy security from the point of view of the relations between the Russian Federation on the one hand and the importing European states on the other is a focal point of the Black Sea security environment. Russia has a history of great power interrupted with the collapse of the USSR in 1991; Russia also has the fame of an actor who has always emphasized the "hard" dimension of power, which has secured its security, most of the time, by weaponry, with the help of a large army (Bâhnăreanu, 2007).

The Black Sea area has been an area of geopolitical, geostrategic significance and is considered by many analysts in this field to be "the key" to maintain a considerable influence on Europe, an influence that can be preserved under the conditions Russia remains the most important, if not the only, energy supplier for Europe (Gavrilă & Shpakovskaya, 2017). Harold Mackinder has very clearly summarized the geopolitical and geostrategic importance of the Black Sea since the early nineteenth century - "Whoever drives Eastern Europe is master of the heartland; who runs the heart of Eurasia and Africa; who runs Eurasia and Africa, dominates the world" (Brzezinski, 2016, p. 51).

For Russia, energy geopolitics is closely linked, in terms of its relationship with the EU, NATO, and especially with the countries of the WBSR, of pursuing some interests that affirm and confirm its status as a great power. In this respect, it is useful to establish the link between the use of hydrocarbons as a tool for promoting the national interests of Moscow and its relations with neighbouring countries.

The current international context, marked by the transition from the unipolar configuration to a multipolar one, with emphasis on cooperation, on the multilateral approach within existing international and / or regional bodies is considered by most of these approaches to be favourable to the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation.
In this context, relations with the neighbouring countries play a key role, Russia attempting to maintain its influence, especially in the wake of NATO and EU attempts to integrate state entities in this space into their own institutional dynamics. Many of the countries in the WBSR are still characterized by instability, a precarious security environment marked by so-called "frozen conflicts", such as Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh. In addition, it is also transit space for Russia's natural gas and oil pipelines to Europe, but also rich spaces themselves in such resources. As a result, stability in this space has become even more important for NATO and the EU.

On the other hand, Russia has perceived the enlargement efforts of these two organizations to the east as a direct threat to their own security as an invasion of its sphere of influence, a fact that is visible both through political exploitation of the status of oil exporter, as well as through politics towards the states of the former Soviet bloc. The Crimean Annexation impacted the course of international relations on a historical scale, and it was practically restored a rhetoric from the Cold War sphere that the West believed to be definitively imposed.

The illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula has changed Russia's rhetoric in the region, by getting access to the Wider Black Sea Region it can develop its power projection towards Ukraine, Romania and Turkey. Among the major consequences that the rapture of the Ukrainian peninsula has to bear are the shift in power relations in the WBSR. Taking into account that in Sevastopol, the Russian Federation maintains over 70% of its military fleet, the annexation process has provided Moscow with a capability to design its capabilities until the Mediterranean Sea (Cebotari & Plop, 2018, p. 104). Although these improvements are relevant, the process of modernization of the Russian army is a continuous process, and it also has limitations when comparing Russia with more technologically advanced countries, as is the case with the United States.

The political, economic and military actions carried out by Russia in the Black Sea region stresses again the following reasons of influence and interests:

- Recognition of Russia’s dominance in the international scene and re-establishing its influence in the weak countries from its vicinity, by using armed means (Georgia - 2008, Crimea - 2014) or by creating a hybrid war (Crimean case);
- Assimilation of Crimean peninsula by the Russian structures, reshaping the navy borders and getting access to the natural resources in the Black Sea due to the
new delimitation of the water territories and the EEZ (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014);

- Preserving its influence in the former Soviet countries such as Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Georgia and halting the process of integration into Western structures, especially by the preserving the frozen conflicts in the region (Transdnistria, Abhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabah);
- Establishing a buffer zone along the southern-western border in order to reduce the West power and influence in the region and diminish European and Euro-Atlantic organisations expantion to the east;
- Maintaining its monopoly over the supply of energy resources on the European market and using it as a foreign strategy.

By invading Crimea, Russian Federation definitely violated the bilateral agreement between Russian Federation and Ukraine The Russian-Ukrainian Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership Treaty (signed in 1997 and prolonged in 2010) and the international Memorandum The Budapest Memorandum on the Nuclear Arrangement of Ukraine (United Nations, 1994). It seems that Russia has always failed to obey its obligations from the Budapest Memorandum, thus it illustrates that Russia is capable to violate the basic international principles. Therefore, the revised plans for the endowment of Russia’s armed assets has as scope, by 2020 to improve its whole strategic nuclear forces by 100%, which before the crisis, was kept at only 70% (Kristensen, 2014).

The reorganization strategy of the Military Forces, initiated in 2008, influenced significantly the Russian armed forces entirely, especially it was paid attention to the assets set up in the vicinity of the Black Sea area. It is noted that the operational re-sub-ordinance of the categories forces and arms genes of the four joint operational-strategic headquarters set up at the end of 2010: West (Sankt Petersburg), South (Rostov-on-Don), Centre (Ekaterinburg) and East (Habarovsky) (Gherman, 2017). According to this process, the Russian Black Sea Fleet (RBSF) was subordinated to the Naval Forces Staff, subordinated to the South Joint Strategic Operational Command.

Since 2011, it was noticed the intensification of shipping programs in the Wider Black Sea Region carried out by Russia, 2013 being the ultimate activity, when the Russian Operational Maritime Group of the Mediterranean was established under RBSF (RIA Novosti, 2010). With Russia’s military involvement in the Syrian conflict, since September 2015, the Russian naval activities in the Mediterranean increased significantly
as well, by keeping in the Eastern Mediterranean at least five ships both combatant and auxiliary, although in some times their number was much higher.

At the same time, according to the Defence Express Publications, the 2020 Russian military Procurement Program, provides RFSB with the following acquisitions:

- 21 naval platforms equipped with cruise missiles and ground attack KALIBR (range 2 km);
- 12 rocket launchers (6 NPR class BUYAN-M and 6 BYROV class NPR);
- three Admiral Grigorovich class frigates;
- six KILO II submarines (Defense Express Publications, 2016).

Comparing to the naval platforms acquired by the other WBSR states, it should be mentioned a disproportionate maritime force. *Given the KALIBR missiles action range, it shall be assumed that they will be an crucial component of the A2/AD concept, along with S-30 multilevel planes, BASTION and BAL E coastal missile shield, and Tu22M3 strategic bombers* (Chong, 2017), whose pace of implementation by Russia has increased considerably since 2014.

Figure 2: The missile range launched by KALIBR system

In conclusion, it should be added that Russia prefers a regional approach to security in the WBSR, one in which it can maintain its role as leader, regional power. Therefore, according to the documents on foreign and security policy, Moscow supports bilateral and multilateral cooperation within security organizations; on the other hand, opposes the expansion and involvement of NATO and the EU in this area.
2.2 Turkey as emerging power and NATO member

Turkey is another player with a major influence on the stability and predictability of the Black Sea security environment. And this time we are dealing with an emerging power, but, unlike Russia, Turkey is also a NATO member state (since 1952) and an EU partner, candidate for its member state. In addition, another peculiarity distinguishes Turkey as an actor in the Black Sea - albeit secular, as regards the form of government, is the only Muslim country bordering this sea.

At the same time, Turkey is also a considerable military power in the Black Sea, and this quality is strengthened and supported by membership of NATO; from this point of view, it is also the closest partner of the Alliance in the area, due to Turkish presence in the Middle East, the South Caucasus and last but not the least the Black Sea (Postevka & Zodian, 2011).

Turkey has always had an important geostrategic position by placing it in the south of the Black Sea in the immediate vicinity of Russia and the Middle East. Thus, if during the Cold War the status of NATO member state secured its close relations with Washington, united by the Soviet joint threat, its geostrategic importance was subsequently identified in proximity to the Middle East in the context of the "war on terror" led by the Euro-Atlantic community in this area.

Given its geostrategic position and its economic and military power, Turkey has the following conflicting interests in the Black Sea actors:

- strategic interests of Turkey, being incomparably inferior military, apparently "abandoning" the Black Sea and re-launching, as in the Ottoman Empire, as a major player, and why not as a negotiator in the same Middle East and in the Islamic world;
- Permanent Managing Director of the Montreux Convention, strongly re-emerging after the war in Georgia in 2008 (6);
- developing and maintaining a secure environment;
- energy and economic interest since the WBSR will always remain a solid transit corridor of energy.

Especially active in former Soviet republics of Islamic culture, Turkey, the most important American pillar on the border of the Russian continental and cultural masses, is one of the regional leaders in the Black Sea. Turkey's ambitions are largely based on the conviction that after the disintegration of the USSR and Yugoslavia, it has the mission
to restore political, economic and especially cultural influence to the former territories of the Ottoman Empire (Gaber, 2018). Although the Turkish naval forces are developing, it must be emphasized the need to maintain the military advantage over Greece in the Aegean Sea and Cyprus. Although the presence in the Black Sea is significant, the Turkish fleet has as its main objective ensuring the security of the Straits, and especially the ability to operate within NATO strategies. Turkey is involved in different regional cooperation partnerships, being the founding member of several organizations including: the Black Sea Naval Force, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, and the Operation Black Sea Harmony (Atli, 2018, p. 119). Turkey has a number of own interests that it does not always promote in line with those of NATO allies (Romania and Bulgaria), aware that no regional strategy will be able to abstain from its vision.

Turkey uses its economic, political, and military tools for securing its assets and position in the region by:

- establishing valuable partnerships in the region with the WBSR’s states;
- initiating security programs and establishing regional organisations;
- controlling the Bosporus and Dardanelles Straits;
- keeping its role as a transit energy corridor by being parts in the negotiations.

While Russia invaded Crimea, Turkey did not react firmly, nonetheless this impacted the Tatar Community from Crimea, mainly because of Turkish interests in the energy sector. Meanwhile RBSF was highly modernized and in Crimea the process of accelerated militarization has influenced significantly the balance of power in the WBSR, favouring Russia and at the expense of Turkey. Unrestricted access to the Sevastopol port being in Crimea and Tartus port from Syria, gives Russia the access both north and south of Turkey, which obviously is highly unpleasant for Turkey. However, the Ankara authorities have not expressed very vehemently these concerns until a Russian fighting plane collapsed in November 2015, due to crossing illegally Turkey's airspace (Atli, 2018, p. 120).

While describing the Turkish military sphere, the relations between the Turkey and Russia developed in agreeing for Turkey to acquire some systems missiles of the S-400 type (September 2017). An example of the culminating relations which is worth mentioning is the visit of the The Barbaros-class frigate and TCG Büyükada (F-512) in the Novorosiisk port of in April 2017. At the same time, Commander of the Turkish
Naval Forces, Admiral Veysel Kosele visited his counter-part the Amiral Grigorovich, located in the Novorosiisk port. (Cucos & Dimitrov, 2018)

Analysing the current developments in Turkey's relations with Russia it can be concluded that, if the disputes between Turkey and the West are maintained, the Ankara authorities can be more easily engaged in a firmer relationship with Russia, even though this might decrease Turkey's position in the region.

2.3 Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova – the border between Russia and the West

The Association Agreement between Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova and EU was signed at the Brussels Summit on June 27, 2014. It represented a shift for the future developments of the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia. Opening up to the West offered important culminating opportunities for these countries.

After the 2014 crisis, the Kiev authorities have clearly expressed the willingness of accessing the European and Euro-Atlantic organizations. This means extensive restructuring state institutions and implementing economic and military reforms. Worth mentioning s that Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova depends on the financial assistance provided by the international institutions mainly IMF, EU and World Bank). This support is given conditionally for the implementation of these reforms, due to high financial and social costs. Subsequently, some of the population may no longer support the Western path of the country due to the social cost of the reforms. Meanwhile, the Crimea’s annexation and Russia’s implication in the frozen conflicts in the region are key points that can develop a deep anti-Russian resistance among the population.

Nonetheless, it is important that the Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova accomplish the necessary living standard, during achieving the reforms demanded by international institutions in order to develop a pro-European sentiment among the region.

The main aim for the Tbilisi authorities is to solve the frozen conflict in the Abkhazia and South Ossetia and recover control over these provinces, and this is also the most significant obstacle to normalizing Georgia's relations with Russia. Subsequently, Georgia's policy is seen as a double tinge in cooperation with European and Euro-Atlantic institution, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other (Dvali & Gachechiladze, 2017).
The Georgian authorities is promoting a foreign policy model committed to NATO and the EU, but close to Russia at the same time. Nevertheless, due to the present hostility between Russia and NATO, it is considered that NATO will decrease its relations with Georgia and will stop supplying Tbilisi with military assistance and, thereby, from promoting its membership to the Alliance, so that it will not provoke a reaction of Russia’s side (Gherman, 2017).

Of all the countries in the Eastern Neighbourhood of the EU, the Republic of Moldova is objectively the closest to Europe, coming from several points of view, such as history, language, culture and a common border with its direct neighbour - Romania, the state member of the EU. A large number of Moldovan citizens have dual citizenship (of the Republic of Moldova and of Romania), and therefore are EU citizens. As a reworking of this close relationship, the Republic of Moldova became the first of the six Eastern Partnership countries that obtained the liberalized visa regime with the EU.


As a result, all these countries have the main scope to solve the conflicts created on their territories. Thus EU continues the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, launched in 2005. The mandate of this mission was extended 4 times. EUBAM offers assistance to the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to deal with the security issues related to the movement of people and goods through the Transnistrian segment of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border. The Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova receives support for the implementation of the trade provisions of the Agreement on the elimination of customs duties, the facilitation of customs and trade procedures, the administration of tariff quotas, the approximation of customs legislation and rules of origin. The mission's activities include combating illegal cross-border trafficking, pursuing the major goal of contributing to the peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian conflict.
2.4 Role of the International Organizations in the Wider Black Sea Region

As mentioned above, the Black Sea area came to the attention of the international community only after 2001, when World Trade Centre attacks followed, by the "global war on terror", but also by the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to NATO and the EU. Thus, the consolidation of security in this area has become particularly important for the two organizations, amplified by the proximity to the Middle East, the war against terror, the quality of transit space of the Black Sea, and the presence of the Russian Federation, whose attitudes and relations with the two organizations have never been completely positive.

Following the accession of Romania and Bulgaria (2007), the EU has become the Black Sea coast, and the specific problems of this area have begun to play an important role in the security concerns of the Brussels authorities. Moreover, as I mentioned earlier, Turkey is also a candidate country, although the moment of accession has been delayed due to its difficulty in concluding negotiations on certain dossiers.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization became a Black Sea rider on Turkey's accession (1952), but during the Cold War its engagement in the region was almost null. Only after 2004, when Romania and Bulgaria became members, the involvement of the Alliance in the Black Sea region increased, especially in the late 1990s, when US attention was attracted to Caspian energy resources (Çelikpala & Erşen, 2018).

Moreover, in the WBSR there are other states with which NATO has concluded partnerships, opening also the prospect of joining the structures of the alliance. Thus, NATO has not only three Black Sea member states (Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria), but also partnerships with other actors in the region, which has made it possible to develop scenarios according to which if Ukraine and Georgia become members of the Alliance, then the Black Sea will become not a "Russian lake", but "a NATO lake".

The crisis caused by Crimea’s annexation by Russia and the destabilizing actions of Russia in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions led to an intensified deterioration of the relations between the West and Moscow. Consequently, at the NATO Summit in Wales (4-5 September 2014), the Alliance concluded that it is the need to review the defence plans and to expand its military influence in the Black Sea. According to the current developments, NATO is keeping increasing its influence in the WBSR countries by supplying Romania with military capabilities, as well as providing with more military
ships engaged in Black Sea missions, as well as intensifying the military programs and exercises (NATO, 2015).

Meanwhile, the international institutions have implemented economic sanctions against Russia. Subsequently, Russia turned to the Asian market for the acquiring the military capabilities and equipment, especially those in the field of microelectronics. However, Russia had to use only local manufacturing components in the construction of the Russian nuclear submarines with nuclear propulsion (Gherman, 2017, p. 37).

Although the analysis of the interests of the main actors in the Black Sea reveals a complex relational reality, often marked by divergences and contradictions, all these actors face common security issues. However, the same actors also have common interests in this area. Therefore, after the end of the Cold War, a series of cooperative organizations have been established and developed in the WBSR. Therefore, beyond NATO and the EU as the Black Sea riparian organizations and interests in this area, there are a number of other mechanisms and organizations that address economic, political and military issues. Among these I can mention the following:

- Black Sea Naval Cooperation Group;
- Black Sea Regional Energy Centre;
- Black Sea Trade and Development Bank;
- Organization for Democracy and Economic Development;
- Organization for Economic Cooperation at the Black Sea;
- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe;
- Organization of the Collective Security Treaty;
- South East European Brigade;
- Southeast European Cooperation Initiative;
- Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe;
- The Black Sea Commission;
- The Commonwealth of Independent States;
- The Danube-Black Sea Regional Operational Force.
- The Multinational Peace Force of South East Europe;
- The South-East European Cooperation Process;
All these organizations have emerged as a result of the awareness of the need for cooperation forums in which divergent interests can be discussed, but also of the need for security issues (international terrorism, organized crime, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the existence of some regions separatists that can fuel the phenomenon of international terrorism) should be approached in common, this being the only solution to prevent their manifestation, they diminish the effects in an efficient way. Moscow’s predisposition to show itself as a hegemon in the WBSR and as a great power in the international arena marks the current security setting.

As conclusion it should be mentioned that, the long-lasting frozen conflicts in the region and the newly created dispute in Ukraine maintains and highlights the volatility in the WBSR. Black Sea control is one of Russia's most important strategic objectives, in terms of its borders with NATO and the EU, being part of Russia's policy of regaining international power and limiting the presence of NATO.

What should international organizations do to diminish Russian plans for this vital "South"? The best course would be for the Black Sea to be approached as a strategic focus area and to ensure that there are active forces stationed and prepared for peacetime influences and for a possible struggle, just as the alliance and in the Baltic Sea and the Arctic region.

First of all, it should improve its port visits program, exercises and training missions. This means frequents visits to the ports of Romania, Turkey and Bulgaria, as well as stopovers in Georgia and on the unoccupied coast of Ukraine. This can be done by the UK-based NATO Permanent Naval Force, under the command of a three-star British Admiral, consisting of more than 20 frigates, corvettes and dragons.

Secondly, the alliance must develop and fund a coherent intervention plan for Black Sea naval operations. If some aspects of such an arrangement are already incorporated into various operational plans, the time has come to undertake a detailed analysis on which the alliance can be prepared to exercise both sea control and power projection over its waters. This planning should be done jointly by the United Kingdom Naval Headquarters and the United Nations Force Command of the Alliance in Naples, Italy, which is headed by a four-star admiral. One of NATO's grand trumps is its robust permanent operational command structure, approximately 9,000 allied troops spread across 29 countries - should be put it in charge of planning the operations in the Black Sea.
Thirdly, the US needs to increase military detachments, independent of NATO operations. They have four powerful destroyers with Aegis armament systems stationed in Rota, Spain, for missile defence and demonstration of force in the Mediterranean.

Fourthly, the US has to work especially closely with Turkey, which actually owns the Black Sea keys in that it controls the straits that guard it. Under the Montreux Convention of 1936, the rules governing their transit are extremely restrictive, and Turkey refused to sign the United Nations Maritime Law Treaty, which would move the straits into a more relaxed set of rules that govern virtually any other such stretches of water in the world. US-Turkish relations are tense at the moment, but they remain crucial in any strategy that would improve Washington's military options in the region.

Finally, the international organizations can encourage Western companies to invest in Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine. Oil and gas are crucial, but so are logistics, fiber optic cables and other communications development projects. Helping these countries to connect their economies both within the Black Sea community and with Europe and the US is that kind of mild windfall that can improve the stability of the region.

International Organizations have significant work to do in the Black Sea. Better strategic cooperation and better economic relations represent the best chance to counteract Russia's ambitions in this sea with the highest strategic value of all the major southern countries.
3. Geopolitical and Geostrategic position of Romania in the Wider Black Sea Region

3.1. Risks and Threats in the Wider Black Sea Area - Romania's Approach

Romania has 245 km of Black Sea Coast, being a maritime state member of the EU and NATO. This characteristic of Romania makes the security environment of the Black Sea Area of a special importance, as mentioned in the National Defence Strategy 2015-2019 (The Presidential Administration, 2015), I observe that Romania's responsiveness to the security developments in this area stems from a cumulating of conditions such as the NATO and EU state border status, the existence of sources of instability in the region (frozen conflicts), the need for constant and substantial involvement in solving them.

At the same time, the same document mentions among the main risks and threats and issues that, for Romania, are also related to the membership of the Black Sea Area. Among these, it is worth mentioning:

a) expanding the ways of manifesting the terrorist phenomenon at international level, by diversifying the support and recruitment base;

b) the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as the development of ballistic missile programs, as well as the emergence of state and non-state entities capable of acquiring some capabilities to produce weapons of mass destruction;

c) organized crime, of a national and cross-border nature;

d) trafficking and drug use;

e) Maintain a high level of instability and insecurity in the Wide Black Sea Area.

As mentioned above, the Wider Black Sea Area has emerged as a more cohesive and cohesive area of contact with other regions or entities, a "region between regions", is exposed to the risks and threats of globalization, to those phenomena known as the negative effects of this phenomenon, its so-called "perpetual effects" (Frunzeti, 2006, p. 53), the risks and threats favoured and amplified by globalization. Paradoxically, this very characteristic of the WBSR has favoured cooperation initiatives among actors in this area.

Beyond the tensions between the main security actors in the Black Sea, a range of risks and threats can be identified, such as frozen conflicts, international terrorism, organized crime and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, but also areas that face waves
of refugees. It is, in general, the situation of the countries on which separatist republics are located and about Turkey, which, in the context of the civil war in Syria, faces the eastern border with waves of Syrian refugees. As mentioned above, this can make a significant contribution to lowering the level of stability in the region, one of the reasons being the tense tension between Ankara and Damascus in 2012, and there are even borderline clashes (Bogzeanu, 2012). Moreover, a large number of Syrian refugees, many of whom are ethnic Kurds, may amplify the internal problem that Turkey has with the Kurdish minority.

Among the ecological disasters, the Black Sea can also be subject to anthropogenic risks, such as pollution. A recent example in this regard is the detection of a discharge of pollutants near the port of Novorossisk in the territorial waters of Ukraine. Also, along with these, it can be mentioned those that do not have an anthropogenic origin - the different types of natural disasters (most often, earthquakes and floods).

The Wider Black Sea Region, especially the Caucasus, is well-known for frozen conflicts, which are the real sources of instability in the security environment in this region, possible conflicts (Gherman, 2017). All in all, these frozen conflicts are unresolved wars or disputes, all involving Russia, as the main actors of these conflicts are entities that have separated themselves from states included in the former USSR. At the moment, all are looking for autonomy, which either drives efforts from the side. Moscow to keep them in their own sphere of influence, trying to further reduce their right and instruments of self-government, either causes Russia to use them in disagreements with the states within which they are included. It is also common that after the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to NATO and the EU, the Euro-Atlantic community has been more involved in mediating these conflicts, considering them as a real source of instability near their own borders.

It is also worth noting that between these conflicts and the rest of the threats and threats to the Black Sea (terrorism and organized crime) there is a clear connection in the sense that the persistence of these conflicts maintains the states on whose territory they are stagnating economically, political and social (Bogzeanu, 2012). These are developing, weak developing countries with poorly populated populations marked by corruption and organized crime that create a low level of security not only for themselves but also for the states they are bordering on.
On the whole, when it comes to the problem of frozen conflicts in the WBSR, four cases can be identified - Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Since 2014, the Black Sea area has come to the attention of analysts as one with an increased potential for military conflicts. The intersection of the interests of the various regional and global power centres, as well as the events in Ukraine, made the Black Sea to be looked at carefully, especially from the military perspective.

Crimea’s annexation is an event of highly importance being the shifting point from the post-Cold War period to a multi-polar one in which the emerging powers of the past two decades, especially Russia, have a growing geopolitical influence. Russia justifies the annexation of Crimea on the basis of the fundamental democratic principle - the peoples' right to self-determination - but also for historical reasons, including the precedent of Kosovo.

The Wider Black Sea Region security environment has deteriorated significantly, the year 2014 representing Russia’s reaffirmation as a great power in the international arena and maintaining its former zones of influence, supported by an accelerated arming process. Annexation of Crimea by Russia and its accelerated militarization constitute a major threat to the WBSR’s security, making all the actors in the region to reshape its security strategies.

In spite of all these characteristics of the security environment of the Black Sea Area, it should be noted that Romania never perceived any actor in the region as a possible threat. As a result, the Romanian Armed Forces, including the naval forces, are engaged in solving possible disputes by peaceful means, also contributing to the strengthening of cooperation and mutual trust between the Black Sea riparian states.

Furthermore, the risks and threats identified in the Black Sea have an obvious transnational character, falling into the negative effects of globalization, which has led to the development of the Romanian Naval Forces as a consequence. Therefore, their countermeasures are not limited to activities in the Black Sea area but also outside it. Thus, in 2004, the "King Ferdinand" frigate entered the service of the Romanian Naval Forces. Between January 30 and February 17 2018, the frigate King Ferdinand was part of the NATO Navy Group SNMG-2, which carried out maritime surveillance operations and other specific missions in the national and international waters of the Black Sea. The group also included the British destroyer HMS Duncan (D37) and the Turkish frigate
TCG Gaziantep (F 490). During the same period, he also acted in the Black Sea and NATO Permanent Navy Group of Marine Battles, SNMCMG-2 (Romanian Navy Forces, 2018). In 2005 the Romanian Navy acquired the Queen Maria frigate, equivalent to the acquisition of a "Blue Waters" type, i.e. the ability to operate at great distances the coast. These advancements in the development of the Romanian Navy are closely related not only to the need to address contemporary risks and threats, but also to NATO and EU membership, to the security vision developed at these levels, an adaptation to the belief that "Preventing conflicts and preventing the emergence of threats cannot start too early" (Council of the European Union, 2009).

3.2. The role of the Romanian Naval Forces in strengthening regional cooperation

In my opinion, there are two major categories of factors that influence the configuration of the Romanian Naval Forces, categories determined by the specificity of Romania's position within the WBSR. Firstly, it concerns the membership of the two Euro-Atlantic security structures - NATO and the EU, and second, the specific nature of the Black Sea security environment.

Romania's accession to the two structures, especially in the North Atlantic Alliance, equaled the process of reforming and restructuring the armed forces, including the maritime ones.

At the same time, joining the Euro-Atlantic structures also required the need to develop interoperability between the Romanian Navy and the Alliance. This principle of multinationalism, embraced not only by NATO but also by the EU, has made it necessary to reconsider the concept of developing relations between the armed forces and, implicitly, between their force categories. Therefore, according to the Doctrine of Naval Forces Operations (FN-1.3.) (Ministry of National Defense, Naval Forces State, 2012), the Naval Forces of Romania operate, depending on their competencies, in order to extend and deepen their integration with the similar structures of the member states of the NATO and the EU. The main objective of this type of action is to increase the capacity to act alongside similar structures developed at NATO and EU levels.
In other words, the cooperation between the Romanian Naval Forces and those of other Member States is guided by the need to develop interoperability and compatibility with them. On the other hand, as a promoter of peace and stability in the Black Sea, Romania has to participate with the Naval Forces in establishing forms of enhanced cooperation with those of other Central and Eastern European and Balkan states, as well as identifying forms of cooperation with the naval forces of some states in geographic areas of interest to Romania.

Moreover, efforts to increase compatibility and interoperability with NATO troops presuppose the permanent attachment of the Romanian Navy to the developments taking place in this framework. These include, as mentioned above, "pooling and sharing" and "smart defence", defence planning initiatives launched by the EU, respectively NATO. On the whole, the two concepts endeavour to achieve maximum security with minimum investment. Specifically, "pooling and sharing" and "smart defence" imply the alignment of national defence priorities with those of NATO, the specialization of Member States on certain sectors according to the level of development they have reached in that area and not in last but not least, cooperation between Member States to ensure security (Albu, 2018).

The aim is to concentrate investment in that sector, with the capabilities that will not be available at national level, if needed, provided by the allies at whom they have been developed as a result of "smart defence" projects.

Therefore, at least in the medium term, the configuration of the Romanian armed forces is expected to experience a new process of change, adapting the functioning of the armed forces to the context created by the economic and financial crisis.

Two of the "smart defence" components can have a significant impact on the organization and configuration of the Romanian Naval Forces - prioritization and specialization. This implies that Romania will need to concentrate its financial resources on those areas that are considered as priorities at NATO level and to specialize in providing only some defence capabilities. It is also worth noting that "smart defence" and "pooling and sharing" aim at developing or acquiring that military equipment that are too expensive for Member States to afford and unilaterally.

Romania is already part of the projects under the two initiatives. Among the projects with possible impact on the configuration of national naval forces, it can be mentioned
Romania's participation in the acquisition of terrestrial, maritime and air surveillance systems, as well as the inclusion

Romania is in the missile shield development project. However, in my opinion, the likelihood that the Romanian Naval Forces participate in such initiatives will decrease if I take into account that Romania needs modernization and/or new acquisitions in the field of naval military capabilities. Indeed, since the moment of joining NATO, the Romanian Navy has gained experience in implementing Alliance standards, being the first force category to complete the first restructuring stage of the Romanian Armed Forces Transformation Strategy (Ministry of Defence, 2016), but specialists estimate that despite the adaptability, assimilation, transformation in doctrinal, structural, functional, education and education, acquisition and modernization are two issues that are lagging behind being extremely expensive; therefore, in the coming years, the Romanian Naval Forces will exhaust their service life, having to be replaced or upgraded (Condur, 2011, pp. 86-87). Thus, if one of the factors that are taken into account when performing smart defence projects is the level of development that the national capability already knows, then the chances for the Romanian Navy to be targeted by this initiative decreases.

The above argument could also be supported by the fact that although the Black Sea is indeed an area with a high potential for conflict, characterized by the manifestation of a wide range of security risks and threats, the probability of a high armed confrontation scale is still low. Beyond the cooperation initiatives between the naval forces of the riparian states, it can be found that the availability of great powers at the Black Sea (US, NATO, Russia) to enter into a possible conflict is very small.

On the other hand, the possibility of the Romanian Naval Forces to be targeted by the two initiatives increases if I take into account the fact that Romania is still a border state of the two organizations, its ability to prevent the manifestation of the risks and threats in this space being extremely important in the security of the whole alliance and the EU. Therefore, the strengthening of Romanian naval military capabilities can constitute, from this point of view, one of the priorities set at supra-national level. This is all the more so, as I have argued in earlier works (Bogzeanu, 2012), the implications of the shift of US strategic interests to the Asia Pacific region and the need for European states to take on increased responsibility for securing their own security and the security of immediate neighbourhood states can also be found in the sub-framework of the two initiatives.
Moreover, the Romanian Naval Forces proved not only their usefulness, but also the ability to act in a multinational context by participating in the EU mission EUFOR ATALANTA, to fight piracy in the Aden Gulf. Although the mission did not take place in the waters of the Black Sea, the actions taken by the Ferdinand frigate, with which Romania participated between 1 October and 30 November 2012, demonstrated the capacity of the Romanian Naval Forces to deal with one of the most serious threats of maritime space - piracy.

Although piracy has not yet manifested itself in the Black Sea, it is still a risk for Romania's naval forces to be prepared. This is all the more so since the Black Sea is a transit area not only for the activities of organized crime networks or terrorist networks, but also for energy resources. For example, the Bosphorus Strait linking the Black Sea to the Mediterranean annually passes no fewer than 500 oil tanks (Calopareanu, 2012, p. 169), which could bring the Black Sea on the map of maritime piracy actions.

In 2011, the Ferdinand frigate contributed to the NATO operation "Unified Protector," which was conducted in the context of the civil war in Libya (2011), but outside their territorial waters. The operation involved the imposition of an area of air ban, the protection of the population and the areas populated by the threat of attacks and the imposition of a maritime embargo on arms and mercenaries. The Romanian Naval Forces participated in the achievement of the third mentioned objective. The Romanian Boat has carried out humanitarian assistance missions and rescue, patrolling and monitoring of ships in the area of responsibility, interrogation and control of suspected ships carrying arms and mercenaries to Libya. What is to be remembered about the influence of the status of NATO and EU member state on the configuration of the Romanian Navy is that they can experience a new process of transformation in capabilities. Considering that "pooling and sharing" and "smart defence" are relatively recent initiatives, but also the geopolitical and geostrategic fluid environment, developments can be geared to either increasing the quality of military equipment or reducing or maintaining it in its present form. Change is, however, the only certainty in this respect.

Between January 24 and February 13, the DM Lupu Dinescu (DM-25) was part of the NATO Marine Mine Group (SNMCMG-2 / Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 2), which carried out specific surveillance of maritime traffic in the Black Sea basin. The Romanian crew, commanded by Captain Delia Neacsu, consisted of 66 soldiers. Romanian sailors have implemented standard operating procedures for this type
of mission together with the crew of the HMS Enterprise (United Kingdom) hydrographic research vessel and the crew of the TCG Akay (Turkey) mine hunter (Romanian Navy Forces, 2018, p. 15).

The Romanian Naval Forces participate in the Black Sea security initiatives designed to help increase the level of interoperability and compatibility both as part of NATO and the EU as well as between the naval forces of the riparian states.

The Black Sea Harmony (BSH) is a Turkish-launched operation (2004) designed to guarantee the safety of the ship's traffic through the two straits linking the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, as well as the Black Sea naval communication lines. BSH is, therefore, similar to the operation under the aegis of NATO - "Active Endeavour". The overall purpose of the operation is to prevent, discourage and stop terrorist activities and actions to support them, illegal trafficking of WMD, means of transport to the target and related materials. Missions for this purpose fall within the scope of defence operations as defined by the Doctrine of Operations of the Naval Forces (2012) - military presence on commercial shipping routes, surveillance and research activities, tracking / "shadowing" contacts of interest (Danila & Custura, 2009).

The Black Sea riparian states, including Russia (since 2006), but excluding Bulgaria and Georgia, participate in this operation. Romania has signed the Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Turkey on co-operation in this operation in 2009. According to this document, the Romanian Navy performs the following maritime activities within the BSH operation, according to the international law (Romanian Government, 2009):

- systematic surveillance operations in areas of Romanian and Turkish maritime jurisdiction and its airspace;
- operations to track and identifying suspicious vessels;
- taking appropriate action if a suspected vessel is notified in the areas of Romanian / Turkish maritime jurisdiction.

Romania's participation in BSH involves its inclusion in the prevention and counteraction of threats and threats at the Black Sea and the existence of a suitable level of training for such actions. On the other hand, it also implies the responsible assumption of the status of NATO and EU member state, thus securing the waters under Romanian jurisdiction, which are also the eastern border of the two organizations. Thus, the presence of the two
Black Sea Organizations becomes even more clearly outlined as Romania engages in countering and mitigating the risks and threats in this area.

Blackseafor is another Turkish initiative, dating back to 2001, involving the participation of all other riparian states - Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia. Blackseafor is amongst the efforts to strengthen cooperation and mutual trust between riparian states, to increase the level of interoperability between their naval forces, and to contribute to promoting security and stability in this area.

Practically, Blackseafor is a framework for regional political-military cooperation, but can be put at the request of the UN and the OSCE for specific missions.

Activities carried out under this egg include search and rescue, environmental protection, humanitarian assistance, mine clearance, the fight against international terrorism. Within this framework, the Romanian Naval Forces can contribute not only to increasing the level of security and stability in the WBSR, through specific military actions but also to the development of dialogue and cooperation between the states in this space as well as between them and NATO.

The Chiefs of European Navies (CHENS) is an informal, independent forum, made up of the chiefs of the military mariners of all European Maritime States that are members of NATO or the EU.

The annual meetings promote high-level cooperation between the Member States’ naval forces, focusing on the analysis of issues of common interest in the field of maritime security. It is intended to develop a European maritime vision for 2025, which requires a balanced, adaptable and inter-operable European maritime presence (Condur, 2011).

This may be another element to announce future developments in the configuration of the Romanian Naval Forces. Another forum for cooperation is the Maritime Power Symposium (Seapower), attended by the national delegations of the Black Sea and Mediterranean countries.

Multinational Peace Force South-Eastern Europe was launched at the Defence Ministerial in South East Europe, having two components - brigade in South-eastern Europe and a group of forces of genius interventions in humanitarian crises and civilian assistance in case of disasters.
Beyond these, the Romanian Naval Forces is conducting joint training in both bilateral and other multinational formats. Among the formats bilateral, can recall exercises and Black Sea Partnership (BSP), the joint preparation of the Romanian Navy forces belonging to groups Standing Naval NATO or groups naval countries such as USA, Turkey, UK, France, Greece, Germany, the Netherlands.

However, favours sharing a set of best practices, lessons learned, also contributing to increased interoperability and naval forces of these countries to execute multinational missions formed under the aegis of NATO and the EU.

Recent examples according to the Romanian Navy Forces are:

- **SEA SHIELD 19** - The Romanian Naval Forces organizes, during 5-13 April 2019, the largest multinational naval exercise in Romania's territorial waters and in the international waters of the Black Sea. At this year's exercise, there are 14 Romanian military ships and six military ships from Bulgaria, Canada, Greece, the Netherlands and Turkey, with a total of approximately 2,200 troops, who will practice joint battlegrounds against underwater, surface and air threats, adapted to the typology of security threats in the Black Sea region.

The exercise scenario is fictitious and aims at planning and executing a Crisis Response (CRO) under the mandate of a United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSC) in the context of a security environment characterized by symmetrical and asymmetric threats.

- **Standing NATO Maritime Group** - The King Ferdinand frigate left the Constanța military port Thursday, March 28 2019, to join the NATO Navy Maritime Group NATO, which includes military ships from Canada, the Netherlands, Turkey. NATO Naval Group will carry out maritime surveillance missions in the Black Sea by 18 April to strengthen measures to discourage security challenges in the region, but there are also stopovers in the ports of Trabzon (Turkey), Constanta and Poti (Georgia) to restore combat capability.

- **Poseidon 19** - More than 1,100 soldiers will participate in the first multinational exercise organized by the Romanian Naval Forces in 2019 entitled "Poseidon 19", which will take place between March 1-8, in the districts of the Romanian territorial waters and in the international waters on the western side Black Sea. Fleet Command is the structure that planned and will lead this exercise, with 10 Romanian military ships, four
foreign military ships from Bulgaria, Germany, Spain and Turkey, as well as two fast-moving divers. The aerial sequences of the exercise will be provided by a Puma Naval helicopter, two MiG 21 LanceRs and two F-16s of the Romanian Air Force.

- Black Sea Rotational Force (2010) - US-based multi-year US Naval Force program, which sends US naval bases to regions adjacent to the Black Sea. Forces participate in security cooperation for the construction of forces, the provision of regional stability and the development of long-term partnerships with the nations in the region. The training performed in this framework in 2012 concerned urban operations with the Marine Infantry Group / Pluton, search lock operations; counteracting improvised explosive devices; installation and operation of traffic control points; sanitary instructions, with emphasis on first aid / emergency resuscitation, evacuation and transport of wounds on the battlefield.

3.3. Romania’s Strategy in the Wider Black Sea Region

Many experts define the Black Sea region in geopolitical terms as a regional security complex, especially due to the security interdependencies in the region, the presence of prolonged conflicts in the area and the energy security model that make the security links between the very complicated regional actors.

When the bipolar system collapsed, the Black Sea region became unstable due to the tensions accumulated and oppressed during the long Cold War. Thus, the frozen conflicts, the difficult relations of the Russian Federation with the regional actors corroborated with the revengeful tendencies of this state aimed at maintaining influence in the former Soviet space, as well as the vehement challenge of the provisions of the Montreux Convention, have greatly complicated the security situation in this region (Calopareanu, 2012).

The invasion of Georgia in August 2008 and, in particular, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in March 2014, proved once again the Russia's unpredictable, despicable and unrelated attitude towards the states in the region, international partners, as well as international law and agreements to which the Russian Federation is a party. The illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, and along with it and most of the military fleet of Ukraine, led to the geopolitical redesign of the Black Sea region, the change of the regional force ratio, and highlighted the need for
the internationalization of this maritime space. All these peculiarities have a negative impact both on the security of the states in the region and on regional security as a whole, and cause regional anxiety and unease.

Romania, as a Black Sea coastal state, is concerned about these developments and it is forced, both at national level and with its allies and Euro-Atlantic partners, to take determined action to counter the security threats resulting from this extremely complicated regional situation. So far, important steps have been taken through national measures, but also following the allies' decisions at the Summit in Wales in September 2014 and Poland in June 2016.

Although these measures have also targeted the maritime domain, Romania has not yet adopted a comprehensive maritime strategy that explains how this country intends to address contemporary maritime issues. In addition to the Navy Doctrine - FN-1 (2010), a complex document adopted in 2010 at a time when the Black Sea shipping does not present the current features, there is no other strategic document addressing how Romania intends to - Promote and defend its maritime interests both at regional and global level.

Romania's proximity to areas with a high instability potential, generating insecurity and to the states close to them, implies a high level of responsibility not only for national security but also for the security of the entire European space. Border status contributes to creating this state of affairs. Paradoxically, the fact that Romania faces such risks and threats makes it possible to assert itself as a responsible member of NATO and the EU, confirming the importance of Romania's membership in these structures.

On the other hand, Romania also asserted itself as a supporter and promoter of peace and security in the immediate region. Supporting the Republic of Moldova in reaching the goal of becoming a member of the EU, as well as of Georgia and Ukraine for NATO membership are part of this type of action of Romania. In spite of the support Ukraine and Georgia have received to achieve this objective, especially during the NATO summit in Bucharest (2008), this has not yet materialized. The reasons for this include not only the opposition of France and Germany to sign an action plan for Membership Action Plan (MAP), but also the subsequent course of events. In this case, it should be referred to the reactions of Russia, which I have previously analysed in the present study - the
invasion of Georgia, as well as the strategy of the "blackmail" applied to Ukraine firstly, and later Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation.

Moreover, Romania is a party and initiator of Black Sea co-operation initiatives (The Black Sea Economic Cooperation, 1992), aimed essentially at achieving not only a cooperation framework to address the specific problems of the region but also in contributing to the increase of trust between the states in this area. Some examples of this would include projects such as the Black Sea Synergy (European External Action Service, 2007), which was launched in 2007 following a proposal made by Romania, Bulgaria and Greece, supported by other EU Member States.

Practically, the fact that it is the Black Sea coast equals, for Romania, the simultaneous existence of some advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages have arisen from the specificity of the security environment of the Black Sea Area, and the advantages of being able to assert within the security organizations it is part of by taking a proactive role in managing the risks and threats at the Black Sea.

The typology of the risks and threats I have identified in the Wider Area of the Black Sea determines the type of operations the Romanian Naval Forces can carry out. Thus, according to Doctrine for Naval Forces Operations (2012) the Romanian Navy performs operations in times of peace, crisis and war.

They are classified in defence operations, offensive operations and naval operations for crisis stability and response. Defence activities include defence naval missions, anti-submarines, mines, naval surveillance (localization research, recognition, identification and tracking of surface and submarine airborne and surface targets), naval coverage (ensuring the zone defence of displaced forces in the area of responsibility of the naval forces, as well as the economic, social and population objectives within it). Also within the defence operations are the antidiscrimination defence, the defence of maritime and river shipments, the support of land forces in defence on the seashore / river and the defence of maritime oil platforms.

As far as offensive operations are concerned, the Naval Forces can participate in offensive operations on the naval communications of the enemy and in support of offensive ground forces. According to the Doctrine of Operations of the Naval Forces (2012), the Stability and Crisis Response operations are "a set of military actions designed to combat terrorist, insurgent, criminal or destabilizing actions in order to
ensure the rule of law and the safety of the civilian population, its constitutional rights as well as public and / or private property, the removal of the effects of natural disasters, industrial accidents or fighting, the rehabilitation of infrastructure, the evacuation of civilian populations in areas severely affected" (Ministry of National Defense, Naval Forces State, 2012).

In this context, the Romanian Navy plays a considerable role, being one of the main instruments not only for the defence and promotion of Romania's national interests in the WBSR, but also within NATO and the EU, but also for defending the country the perspective of the risks and threats characteristic of this space.

Romanian vision is based on the fact that because the risks and opportunities in the Black Sea area are similar to those in other areas, for example the Mediterranean, a common vision can be created to coagulate South-Eastern Europe, the Black Sea, the Caucasus and the Mediterranean; this common vision should have among its objectives, by ensuring security and stability in the region, the security of energy routes. At the same time, Romania subscribes to NATO and EU policies to support democratic processes in the region and to provide direct assistance to transition states.

Stability will be projected in the adjacent areas of the Black Sea in harmony with NATO and EU policies, the process benefiting from the functioning of Romania's partnership with Greece and Turkey. Romania will also support these processes by "developing cooperation relations with the Russian Federation as a major regional player". As a founding member of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (1992), Romania supports its objectives (ongoing dialogue with the EU, the Stability Pact, the fight against organized crime, the Transport Action Plan), considering BSEC having significant potential for developing economic cooperation to regional level, to promote stability and security, as well as to build a community of interests and values in the Black Sea.

Priority for Romania is to: harmonize and streamline ongoing institutional cooperation processes, prevent competition or hegemonic temptations, and establish a new framework for dialogue and cooperation involving all interested states and democratic organizations.

Romania seeks direct involvement in the peaceful settlement of conflicts and disputes in strategic proximity, both through national and multilateral actions, aimed at promoting
democracy, supporting efforts to bring the European and Euro-Atlantic structures closer together and those aiming at the construction security and prosperity. Romania is for the first time in a situation where both geographic position and geopolitical position give it a number of opportunities that should be valued at their true value. Romania has a diversified but quantitatively reduced range of primary energy resources, fossils and minerals: crude oil, natural gas, uranium ore, as well as a significant potential for renewable resources.

Romania, as an EU member state, NATO, The OSCE, the Council of Europe and the UN, bordering on The Black Sea and having traditional relations good with all other nations in the Pontic space, has an important role to play in increasing efficacy Black Sea Economic Cooperation and in promoting EU initiatives in this part of Europe. In fact, the factors of responsibility of the European Union have underlined in countless occasions, that she expects from the side Romania's substantial contributions to building a climate of trust and good neighbourliness among all the countries of the Black Sea region and enhanced cooperation between them and the EU (Sauliu, Calopareanu, & Balasoiu, 2015).

In this regard, Romania, which together with Bulgaria and Greece has played a special role in launching the Black Sea Synergy, it can now act in the area and in Brussels to develop this initiative in a European Union strategy with specific goals and priorities for the Pontic region, following the model of EU strategies for the region Baltic Sea and the Danube Cooperation Process. Moreover, given that the problems of this part of Europe can only be solved through political-diplomatic means, through a wide cooperation, taking into account the interests of all parties involved, it would be appropriate to create a special conciliation and mediation mechanism at the level of the specialized institutions of the country to encourage conflict resolution and disputes in the wider region of the sea Black. For the success of the Romanian initiatives in this area, it is of course essential that their substance be established in close cooperation with Turkey, Greece, Ukraine, as well as with the other states in the area.

However, despite certain strengths, Romania does not yet have the means to allow it its own position. All official rhetoric is pedalling on topics already turned on all sides and which have been largely exhausted since the 1990s. Any attempt by Romania to overcome its status and real possibilities at the vocal level will result in the loss of credibility and the failure of the any initiative. The experience of Romania's participation
in a series of regional, trilateral quadrilateral cooperation schemes (in the 1990s there was an inflation of such initiatives) shows that there were no benefits, neither economic nor influence to the ideas. From a geopolitical point of view, Romania cannot have a well-defined position because its economic and military potential simply does not allow it. This adds to the difference of interest with even some riparian allies in NATO, but especially that any strategy to build a normal relationship with Ukraine has been a constant failure.

From an economic point of view, it is necessary for the region to pay attention to joint projects that promote the liberalization and privatization of markets and to the creation of an attractive investment environment. I believe that Romania has the duty to play the role of a pole of coagulation of all forces and efforts to improve cooperation at all levels.

The region must also develop its own identity to enable it to create a viable partnership relationship with the great powers. As a result, I believe that the Black Sea Region could be a good example of cooperation if the rival states, together with regional powers and international actors, succeed in overcoming their obstacles and differences.
4. General Conclusions and Proposals

At the end of the master research, I formulated general conclusions and proposals, personal contributions and subsequent research directions. The complexity of the Wider Black Sea Region, the geopolitical characteristics corroborated with the re-establishment of the former communist states in the new borders, a process that fuelled frozen conflicts, led to the geopolitical evolution that generated strategic actions to gain the most significant regional control. The wider Black Sea region has been asserted as a distinct geopolitical structure in the period following the Cold War following the break-up of the former Soviet empire and the change in strategic options in favour of the Euro-Atlantic integration of the countries of Southeast Europe, the discovery the expansion of the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance to the East, the maintenance by the Russian Federation of military arsenals in Ukraine and Transnistria and its military intervention in Georgia in August 2008, as well as its significant political presence, military and economic US in the area (Weaver & Henderson, 2016).

The Russian Federation's ability to use its tangible and intangible energy resources to influence the results of the balance of power for its own benefit illustrates the fact that Russia will make use of all the resources it has at its disposal including energy, to impose its will and influence the behaviour of other actors on the Pontian stage in order to achieve its own interests.

Terrorism, cross-border crime, corruption and illegal immigration are major sources of instability in the Wider Black Sea Region, which are phenomena that can be tackled with difficulty, particularly because of the scale of manifestations and harmful effects on society. Romania and Bulgaria are factors of stability in the Wider Black Sea Region, but to achieve this state of affairs there was a need for an internal structural change, major political changes, accumulations over time, in conjunction with their own geostrategic advantages, to be able to become full member states in NATO and the EU.

As a state in a geopolitical area of strategic importance, Romania aims to play a substantial role in the process of defining and implementing NATO's and the European Union's security, co-operation and security policies, central and regional Wider Black Sea. Romania is the most capable and largest US ally in the wider Black Sea Region and represents the anchor to the stability and promotion of democratic values across the entire South East Atlantic flank of the North Atlantic Alliance. The Russian-Georgian war of
August 2008 dramatically changed the Black Sea security agenda, and the fundamental question was whether resuming the US-Russia relationship created the opportunity to balance the interests of the conflicting parties. Following the actions of Russia in 2014 and 2015, there was a serious strain on bilateral relations and it can be said that the 2008 resetting process was not perceived positively in Moscow, as Washington hoped, despite considerable concessions granted by withdrawing a number considerably fighters in Europe from the US.

In my view, the recommendation to maintain existing arms control regimes by US military experts is correct. Now that NATO has suspended its current cooperation with Moscow, it is essential to maintain those channels where there is still room for high-power dialogue and where mutual interests connect the United States, NATO and Russia. The arms control process has already proven its worth by overcoming conflicts during the tensest moments of the Cold War and can still provide transparency, save a certain level of trust and maintain a small segment of cooperation that can spread to other areas.

In this respect, the New START Treaty appears to be the strongest link between Washington and Moscow. Although the most recent statistical data is disappointing and there are talks between both sides on withdrawal from the treaty, monitoring the strategic capacities of the other party is still a vital national security interest for both parties. I am optimistic that these verification mechanisms will guarantee the survival of the process, ensure that the limits are met and create the conditions for further talks on the control of strategic nuclear weapons.

In the light of the stagnation of NATO-Russia relations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) may play an important role as an alternative forum for discussions where Russia is still at the same table with NATO members. Re-engaging on blocked arms control issues and restoring confidence are the first steps needed to rebuild the regional security architecture. Isolation of Russia is not the right strategy, as several European states are economically dependent on Moscow. The United States needs Russia's cooperation in other armament control areas, such as the nuclear debate on Iran and North Korea. Enforcing too harsh sanctions policy and Russia's alienation might turn against the US in these areas and could lead to far more dramatic consequences in the long run.
The ultimate goal should be a cooperative solution with careful diplomatic manoeuvres to revitalize the nuclear non-proliferation regime and restore stability in eastern Europe. An essential part of both goals is to restore the value of negative security assurance. The crisis in Ukraine seriously undermined the value and credibility of the guarantees of the great powers and the negative security assurances.

The assurances given in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum aimed to ensure Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty and included a commitment by signatories to refrain from using force. The evolution of the security climate in the Wider Black Sea Region in the post-Cold War period was a particularly dynamic one. The intrusion of individual and regional factors has changed dynamics in conflict zones. These include the attacks of September 11, 2001, the rise of political leaders with more radical positions than their predecessors, the double expansion to the east of NATO and the EU, the increasing influence of the EU in the Eastern Neighbourhood and the wider Black Sea region, the revolutions Georgia and Ukraine, 2005-2006, Russian-Georgian war in 2008, followed by Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia independence, the Ukrainian gas crisis in 2006, 2009, 2014, and the Russian aggression in 2014 in Crimea, in conjunction with supporting the breakaway separatists in eastern Ukraine in 2015.

The security situation in the Black Sea area underwent major changes because the regional security paradigm changed due to the change in Russia's fundamental strategic attitude. Peace and security in the Wider Black Sea Region are the result of the sum of peace and security of each of the Pontian states and cannot be achieved without their full cooperation. Russian Federation is trying to increase its own security level by stopping the process of NATO and EU enlargement to the east. Thus, Russia's attempt to achieve increased security induces a state of insecurity throughout the Black Sea Region.

The Black Sea countries need to actively and effectively cooperate, promote confidence-building measures in the region, and meet in good faith their obligations to reduce conventional arms and to withdraw military forces stationed illegally on the territory of other states. Taking into account the dynamic evolution of geopolitical events in the wider Black Sea region, it is noticed that the situation of the security environment has not taken a positive turn, but on the contrary, no frozen conflict has yet been resolved, some states have remained politically unstable economic and most political efforts to democratize ex-socialist states in the region face the risk of reversibility.
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