"The Romanian Perspectives on the Black Sea: Challenges and Opportunities for Current Security Environment"

Symposium "International Relations at the Changing World"

University of Shizuoka, Japan

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Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished guests,

It is a great pleasure to be here and to have the opportunity to share with you a Romanian perspective on a rich and challenging topic as the Black Sea region. I would like to present my compliments to the distinguished guests and to thank to the University of Shizuoka for organizing this symposium. We need only a glance through the list of attendees – government officials, heads of regional organisations, academics and civil society representatives – to see that our gathering here is an evidence of the close relationship between security, politics, economy and culture. Although in a much traditional security analysis, the Black Sea region is defined "objectively" purely in terms of geography or history, we had to adopt an even more diversified agenda in which economic, societal and environmental security issues play alongside military and political ones.

Why we consider the Black Sea area important in the current strategic picture?

There are two main guiding reasons for this assessment. Firstly, I believe this **region has gained an unprecedented strategic weight** in recent years with respect to both the international campaign against terrorism and the enlargement of NATO and the European Union. European security dynamics is currently undergoing a significant transformation, from previous European-centric policies to an **extended approach towards new neighboring regions and new partners**. Having the Black Sea is placed at the **heartland of EurAsia**, the associated dynamics could **influence both the Western Europe security and the Asian evolutions**, and surely the relations between the two continents.

Secondly, I believe that, more recently, the Black Sea area encountered a **significant change in its traditional security paradigm** having a long term impact on the European and EurAsian security as a whole. With the re-unification of Europe and post-9/11 perceptions about the new threats, the Black Sea

has encountered a significant change and challenge to its traditional security paradigm. A change that might have a long term impact on how Europe will reshape its new security policies.

Furthermore, a **national view on the topic should be seen in conjunction with the geographical location of my own country** – Romania, that is lying on the Western coast of the Black Sea, a country which is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and some other regional organizations playing a role from a security perspective in the area and, moreover, a country who attaches a great importance to enhancing security, stability and democracy in the Black Sea region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The region, often referred to and looked at as the **Wider Black Sea Area** (WBSA), has its interesting characteristics steaming from the **unique complexity of the region**, where cultures of different roots and with, sometimes, different values are called to coexist. These differentiating features could be a linking factor, or quite the opposite, a reason for cooperation or a source of division among the populations living across.

Although it cannot be considered entirely an open sea, it is directly linked with important communication lines, through rivers (the Danube, Volga, Don) and land corridors that unite East and West, Central Europe to Caucasus and Central Asia, and from North to South, the Baltic area to South Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. The region divides Europe and Asia geographically and has been a **bridge or buffer zone between the West and Russia**. The Black Sea region represents also a **North–South boundary between the EU and Middle Eastern states**. Today there are a large number of new states in the region that gained independence after the Cold War and have an important role to play in defining the region. The EU and NATO's advance towards the West coast of the Black Sea will affect both candidate states and those states that are already members in these organizations.

The picture of regional security is mixed and there are a number of issues to be tackled. One threat is the internal conflicts that broke out in the 90s and have not yet been solved, the so called *protracted conflicts* (Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transdniester).

The Black Sea region represents a boundary and a bridge at the same time for the new challenges. There is a wide range of **new human security threats** in this region, such as human trafficking and organized crime, which may affect the surrounding countries, EU and NATO.

Our societies are more than ever 'addicted' to energy and any major disruption of supply would cause much more damage to our economies and our way of life than it would have done in the not too distant past. Energy has always been a factor in international relations, sometimes even causing military conflicts. It should not come as a surprise that **energy security** has become one of the most central themes for the international community and organizations, and a source of anxiety in relation to the competition between different energy providers. From this perspective, the Black Sea region is the gateway for most of the oil and gas transported from Central Asia and Caucasus towards Europe. Security of energy infrastructure in the region is therefore critical for the European energy security. A relevant example in this context, that I will expand later, is the **current and future projects on natural gas pipelines linking Central Asia to Europe,** directly crossing the Black Sea Basin and countries in the region, as the South Stream or Blue Stream projects, or simply crossing countries belonging to the Wider Black Sea Area, as the case of the NABUCCO project.

The region faces also a broad range of threats, such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction proliferation, illegal trafficking. All of these require a common approach not only for the countries in the region, but also for international organizations.

From a security perspective is relevant to see the Black Sea riparian states' attitude towards the EU and NATO: the majority aspire to closer ties up to full membership in the EU and/or NATO. Russia is also developing stronger relations with the EU and NATO. **With EU and NATO enlargement, the link between the stability of the Black Sea region and European security becomes stronger**. Thus, the Black Sea states have sought to develop links with European institutions as a way to build stability and development. They have also sought regional cooperation. Thus, security, stability and development in the Black Sea area depend on the region's deeper integration into the evolving Euro-Atlantic security system and the more active and sustainable presence of the EU, NATO and the OSCE in the region. These closer ties are crucial to ensuring democratic transformations in the Black Sea states, providing a stimulus to finding solutions to frozen regional conflicts, and putting an end to these countries' remaining geopolitical uncertainty. As a result, the Black Sea region becomes a testing ground for the effectiveness of a new Euro-Atlantic security.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a matter of composition, the Black Sea region is strongly related with NATO, the area comprising NATO member countries (Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria), NATO aspirants (Georgia), and two NATO partners (Russia, Ukraine). Looking from the wider perspective, we can also mention the countries from immediate

vicinity, which are NATO partner countries: Republic of Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia and the list could be enlarged depending on the ties and interests of some other countries within the Black Sea region.

The NATO's interest in the Black Sea Region has been continuously growing since its inception when NATO extended to the Black Sea shortly after the Alliance's creation, with Turkey's accession in 1952. It followed NATO's enlargement with Romania and Bulgaria in 2004. In the context, seems not to be a coincidence the fact that the **relevance of the Black Sea region for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was first officially mentioned at the NATO Summit in Istanbul**, in 2004, which noted "the importance of the Black Sea region for Euro-Atlantic security" and expressed NATO's willingness to explore means to complement regional efforts aimed at strengthening security and stability in this region, by building upon the existing formats of regional cooperation. It was the first time when a reference to the Black Sea region was included in the Declaration of a NATO Summit. The Declarations of the following Summits, in Riga (2006), Bucharest (2008), Strasbourg/Kehl (2009) and Lisbon (2010) included references to the importance attached by the Alliance to the Black Sea region, as well.

In a specific paragraph dedicated to the Black Sea, the Bucharest Summit's Declaration reaffirms "the continued importance of the Black Sea region for Euro-Atlantic security" and the willingness of the Alliance to "continue to support, as appropriate, these efforts guided by regional priorities and based on transparency, complementarity and inclusiveness, in order to develop dialogue and cooperation among the Black Sea states and with the Alliance".

So far, the **NATO/Partnership for Peace** programme has demonstrated that the partnership is the most important framework for political dialogue and practical cooperation among partner nations and NATO members in the common endeavor towards a secure and stable environment, as well as for promoting the domestic reforms and defense modernization.

Continuing to use the PfP tools, like Partnership Analysis and Review Process (PARP) and Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) the Partners from the Black Sea region will be encouraged to promote their domestic reforms and to develop their forces and capabilities in order to participate alongside Allied nations in crisis response operations.

The **role of NATO in the energy security** debate is an open question. Some claim that energy security is not a primary task for the Alliance, but a task for other organizations, which are better equipped to deal with this challenge. In spite of that, we support the idea that the issue of energy security has to become one of the key topics for the Alliance.

In this respect, the Alliance can provide an added value for the Black Sea region due to both its capacity in the area of physical protection of critical energy infrastructure and as a unique vehicle for co-operation and

co-ordination among members of the transatlantic community. Moreover, in the framework of the 2004 Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, NATO has established intensive co-operation with energy rich countries in the Gulf: Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. All these NATO co-ordination mechanisms can and should contribute to enhancing solidarity among the allies in the event of major supply disruption and other outstanding energy security challenges.

The gas crises we had in the area in the last years proved that we have to give priority in diversifying supply sources and routes. Currently, Romania is supporting the Nabucco pipeline project – that connects the Caspian region, Middle East and Egypt to the European markets, the Pan European Oil Pipeline (PEOP) between Constanta in Romania and Trieste in Italy, and the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania Interconnector (AGRI). The last project - **AGRI - has become Romania's most dynamic initiative as far as energy supply** is concerned. The project provides for the construction of a pipeline that brings gas from Azerbaijan to the Georgian port of Batumi and the construction of a liquefied natural gas terminal (LNG) in Kulevi (for liquefaction) and in Constanta (for de-liquefaction).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to EU in 2007, **the Black Sea** became an EU maritime border. **EU projects in the Black Sea** area tackle an array of issues, from environmental security to transportation and infrastructure projects, border security assistance to Black Sea countries, and assistance in reforming justice and home affairs.

Building upon its involvement in the region, prior to EU accession, **Romania steadily became an active EU member state in promoting the strategic importance of the Black Sea area** and stressing the need for an increased strategic role of the Union in the region.

The constant support of other member states, mainly Bulgaria, Greece, but also Germany – the acting EU presidency at the time – added to the success of this approach and favoured the creation of the **Black Sea Synergy**, back in 2007, as an initiative of the European Commission (with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine participating).

The Synergy offers the guidelines for the implementation of concrete and pragmatic projects of cooperation between Wider Black Sea Region states and the EU, in areas such as: democracy, human rights, good governance, border management, protracted conflicts, energy, transports, environment, maritime policy, fishing, migration, education, research and development.

Moreover, in 2007, the European Commission adopted a Blue Paper on an **EU Maritime Policy**, and consequently, in 2009, was adopted the Communication "*Towards an integration of maritime surveillance in the EU: A common information sharing environment for the EU maritime domain*" *('CISE')*. The aim of integrated maritime surveillance is to generate a situational awareness of activities at sea, impacting on maritime safety and security, border control , maritime pollution and marine environment, fisheries control, general law enforcement, defence as well as the facilitation of trade and economic interests of the EU.

The relevance of the region began to be highlighted by the emergence of more EU policies and instruments for the Eastern neighbourhood (e.g. the Eastern Partnership - May 2009).   Therefore, the **new neighbourhood policy of the EU** defined further steps in support of the democratization processes in countries like Ukraine, R. Moldova and Belarus, standing as the **most visible Eastward policy of the Union**.

While the main objective of the Black Sea Synergy is to build up regional cooperation in the Black Sea region, the Eastern Partnership is designed to foster the political association and economic integration of the partner countries with the EU.

It is worth mentioning that the European Parliament approved, in January 2011, the **need for a Black Sea strategy**, which will focus on the cooperation in the region.

We consider the importance of moving on to a straightforward, concrete delineation and complementarity between the principles of implementation of the Black Sea Synergy and the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership, as stated in various political declarations of the EU. These initiatives are now in a phase of implementation of concrete projects and recommendations proposed in the networks established under their aegis, both at regional and macro-regional levels.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is also **growing effervescence of regional cooperation** in the Black Sea region, which resembles similar processes in Southeastern Europe after the end of the Balkan conflicts. Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC), naval cooperation, Operation Black Sea Harmony, as well as initiatives broader in their scope, as the Organization for Democracy and Economic Cooperation of GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaidjan, R.Moldova), or the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership are examples of this regional dynamism. An additional proof is the launching, in 2006, of the Black Sea Euro-region, with the aim to help develop cross-border cooperation among local authorities, good governance and rule of law. As I have stated before, Romania also advocates for an EU Black Sea dimension in the context of the

European Neighbourhood Policy. Moreover, I would like to mention very briefly other elements of international cooperation that could add value to our efforts in the Wider Black Sea Area, such as: the Black Sea Trust, an initiative of the German Marshall Fund; the initiative of Black Sea Defence College, as an academic forum for maritime security.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished guests,

It is a common feature of this region to cyclically evolve between centripetal and centrifugal tendencies with the European continent. It is then a high responsibility for both policy makers and researchers to jointly provide in the future the necessary input for linking this region to the values of transatlantic security community.

At the end of the day, it is equally important to remember that defence reform or advancing democracy and prosperity is not something that has a clear-cut ending where nothing more remains to be done. It is an open-ended effort directed towards matching internal adaptation with substantial transformations. I would like to stress that the creation of a sound security framework in the near future needs the decisive involvement of international actors that have a tradition in building and consolidating sound security organizations. Moreover, I consider that we should transform the current economic and financial crisis into a window of opportunity for more serious cooperation and institutionalization. But we must not forget that any strategy does not solve the problems of the region, only working together on concrete projects towards the same goal will bring stability, security and prosperity.

I would like to conclude my remarks by saying that given the high quality of our debates today, it is rather obvious we have accomplished together a significant task. I have noticed an interesting flow of ideas and concepts that went from one panel to another in discussing the Black Sea topic.

Therefore, I am convinced that all participants share my view that the event was a successful one and I hope the insights that we all have gained will be fruitful in our future cooperation.