

## THE GEOPOLITICS OF RUSSIA IN THE BLACK SEA REGION. A ROMANIAN VIEW

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First of all, I would like to speak about the methodology of approaching this subject of research. In my view, I am trying to emphasize the Russian participation into regional mechanisms of cooperation in this area. Conciliating the idealism with the pragmatism, my analysis is focusing on the geopolitical and geoeconomical Russian interests on the Black Sea.

The work hypothesis consists of three levels of research: geopolitics and strategy, the landscape security issue - a Russian approach, and finally Russian and BSEC (Black Sea Economic Cooperation). Russia has an essential role in the dynamic of the region because it represents a center of power which linked the Black Sea area, with Caspian Space and Central Asia and promotes the institutional system of Community of the Independent States (CSI).

Also, Moscow has a key position according to the risk of „*chechenisation*” in the North Caucasus, „frozen conflicts” in Transcaucasia and Transnistria and building special relations with Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and Azerbeidjan.

Knowing a political pressure within the federation from the autonomous Russian republics (not only Chechenya, but also Karachay, Cherkessia, Kabardino- Balkaria, North Ossetia, Ingushetia) and religious struggle (from the Wahhabis, especially) Moscow must think of building a regional security complex in the Wider Black Sea region. In the framework of Moscow’s macropolitics, this region could be defined like an „European window” for Russia, connecting the relations between euroasian federation and Romania, Greece, Bulgaria<sup>1</sup> (all three states members of NATO and European Union). In addition, Russia is according a strong support for Serbia in its integration process in the institutional structure of Black Sea Economic Cooperation (2007) after ending of „Kosovo file”.

Russia, on its side, is very closely interested in the Black Sea Mediteranean cooperation and is including there a main aspect of contemporary Russian Federation economic development, taking into

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<sup>1</sup> Marian Zulean, *Security reforms in South Eastern Europe, Their Relevance for the Wider Black Sea Area Policy*, in „Romanian Journal of International and Regional Studies”, volume I, no. 1-2, 2005, pp.116-126.

consideration *Krasnodar region*. The size of this region is comparable with the territory of Austria, and its population is about 5 millions inhabitants. The business opportunities of Krasnodar region, as part of Southern Russia, have been always favorable for development of foreign trade, taking into account the presence of some important sea harbours as Novorosiisk, Sochi, Tuapse, Kaucaz, Temriuk, Anapa, Gelenjik.

Geoeconomically, we have a really Russian „geopolitics of energy”<sup>2</sup> in the area through the pipeline oil from Bulgarian Black Sea port Burgas to Greek Aegean Sea port of Alexandroupolis, estimated to cost about \$ 1 billion. One year ago, Vladimir Putin participated in a regional energy summit in Zagreb (Croatia) where he insisted to build „*the energy markets* at the Black Sea, insisting on more long term contracts”<sup>3</sup>.

Secondly, another subject of interest for Russia is the *regional system of security*, under conditions of lack regional process of demilitarisation. For a cooperative security in the zone of reference, the states are needing a regional common project under the form of the *Pontic Charter* (after the model of the Adriatic Charter on Western Balkans) the institutional and juridical document for an extended cooperation of these countries.

This collective arrangement of security completes another regional initiatives which appeared recently: „Black Sea Forum”, „Baltic Black Sea Council”, „Blackseafor” (the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group comprises the riparian nations of Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Georgia, Turkey and Russia) the economic project was entitled TRACECA and INOGATE.

Practical existence of the „community of security” in the Black Sea region must eliminates the „dilemma of security” for the riparians states like Bulgaria, Romania, (members of NATO and the EU), Turkey (NATO’s member), Ukraine, Russia and Georgia (members of CIS, Kiev and Tbilisi, which are parts in the system of GUAM).

Sectorial objectives of this security regional dimension could be: energy and gas projects - the possible added value of a regional mechanism—energy: electricity network connections according to the „Alexandroupolis Declaration of Energy Cooperation”, *transport* (developing waterways and maritime transport routes connecting Asia and Europe), *environment-* with specific fields like *fisheries* and *biodiversity*, *health* (including the preventive action against epidemics, regarding better sharing information), *tourism*, *trade*, *investment promotion* and *business cooperation*. This authentic multilateral community of security „Pact of

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<sup>2</sup> Alexandr Rusetsky, *Perspectives for the resolution of armed conflict in the Black Sea basin, in the Black Sea Region in the Changing European Context*, International Conference, Tbilisi, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> In terms of this assertions see Tor Bukevoll, *Putin’s Strategic Partnership with the West: The domestic Politics of Russian Foreign Policy*, „Comparative Strategy”, XXII, no. 3, 2003, pp. 231-233.

Stability” or „Council of Security” could develop new spheres of interaction such as *resistance to terrorism* and *cross-border crime*, drug trafic.

*Multilateralism* is an important element of this approach for functioning of a special regional partnership for security and development, in which security issue are *cooperative*, not only *collective*. In the institutional field of Black Sea economic process, Russia was trying to find its place according to *BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future* (2001), the *Baku Declaration* (2003) and *Alexandroupolis Declaration (2005) on Energy Cooperation between Black Sea's nations*. Moscow has become more active in the field of the organisation's *working groups* on information technology and communications, transport, trade and economic cooperation financial issues.

On the other side, Russia was an active academic presence in the *network of Black Sea universities*<sup>4</sup> through the activity of the *Russian think tank's*<sup>5</sup> (such as the Center for Mediterranean and Black Sea Studies, Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences and the Department of European Politics, Institute of World Economy, Russian Academy of Sciences).

During Russia's BSEC presidency in 2001 and 2006, Moscow had the initiative to promote the sustainable transport systems connecting the Black Sea region's infrastructure with the European and Asian transport networks (the possibility of international use of the Volga – Don Navigation Channel, and coordination between ports on the Black Sea, the Caspian and the Mediteranean). Finally, the Russian economic and geostrategic factor can be seen as a potential positive influence in the regional Black Sea cooperation and very useful for the regional security dynamics.

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<sup>4</sup> Mircea Malitza, *The Wider Black Sea Area*, in „Romanian Journal of International and Regional Studies”, volume I, no. 1-2/2005, pp. 98-99.

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