

Wider Black Sea Region looking for a Strategic Security Concept

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The Wider Black Sea Region has entered the attention of the political experts a few years ago, when the first changes announced the increase of the particular strategic value of the region. But there is nothing that led to an increased focus on the Wider Black Sea Region than the changes that happened at the end of 2004 and during 2005. There are three phenomena that have **had a** major influence on the strategies of the region: the first is Ukraine's evolution on the international arena, the second – the Beslan syndrome and the third, perhaps the most important, the opening of the window of opportunity for Russia's engagement in the area. But the most important is the environment change, in terms of the rising interest and presence of the EU, NATO, and the US in the region.

But the rising interest in the Black Sea Region is not enough to support the legitimacy and interest for a strategic security concept in the region. For this we need to establish whether or not there is such a thing **as** a cohesive Black Sea Region, if such a region like the one called Wider Black Sea Region needs a Strategic Security Concept, who is entitled **d** to contribute to the elaboration of such a concept and last but not least, what such a concept should refer to **?**

Even if legitimacy and interest is there, if the pragmatic approach would recommend the creation of such a concept, this doesn't mean that all the actors that should be involved will agree to participate **in** this project. What is important is if the concept can go on without an important actor and if this actor can afford to let it **happen** and assuming the costs introduced by the isolation and the lack of capacity to adapt to the new changes.

1. Adapting/changing versus immobilism/isolation

The facts are showing us an increase of interest in the Wider Black Sea Region – a region defined including the littoral countries of the Black Sea, all the three Caucasian countries, and the Republic of Moldova, though the littoral countries included in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, and the ones from the GUAM – Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Azerbaidjan – but also the ones included in the CDC - Community for Democratic Choice, the organization **designed** to fulfill the idea of Democratic space from the Baltic to the Black Sea, a concept launched by the President George Bush about the completion of Europe (statement at NATO summit in Prague, www.nato.int), and defined theoretically by Bruce Jackson in “Frontiers of Freedom”(1).

NATO and the Wider Black Sea Region

Let's take NATO first. **The North Atlantic Treaty Organization** stated in art. 42 of the Istanbul summit comunique: *“We note the importance of the Black Sea region for Euro-Atlantic security. Littoral countries, Allies and Partners are working together to contribute to further strengthening security and stability in the area. Our Alliance is prepared to explore means to complement these efforts, building upon existing forms of regional cooperation”*. (2)

But since 2004, we have already the first proposal of a NATO Strategic Security Concept, the one **elaborated** by the Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington DC. “A Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region” is assumed by Eugene Rumer and Jeffrey Simon with the contributions **from** Stephen J. Flanagan, James Schear, Yuri Zhukov, presented on January 27, 2006 in Bucharest (3).

In the same period we have to realize that Ukraine has received the most important form of an Individual Plan for Assistance and Partnership ever offered to a country, this being the first step to an invitation in a Membership Action Plan. The same way, a new form of IPAP was accepted in March 2005 by Moldova, in the first Council NATO-Moldova and the draft of this paper was accepted by NATO in the first month of 2006. Even if the accession to NATO is a target only for Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaidjan, the content of the IPAP of Moldova is as important for the Security Sector Reform and the theoretical base for establishing the basic

paper for a National Security Strategy, a Defense Strategy and a development of planing of the force as if Moldova already had **declared** her firm decision to join the Alliance.

Talking about NATO, the Wider Black Sea Region has now 3 members of the Alliance – Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria – three countries that want to join NATO – Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaidjan – two countries with very well developed IPAP – Ukraine and Moldova – Armenia a member of the PFP but with a strategic partnership with Russia and Russia, with a special relation with the Alliance in the NRC – NATO-Russia Council. We will not forget about the NUC – NATO Ukraine Commission.

All these **relationships show** us that we have to realize that **NATO is an actor al the Black Sea and in the Wider Black Sea Region**, with all the costs and responsibilities that such a status is giving.

EU and the Wider Black Sea Region

EU has **launched its** European Neighborhood Policy **two years ago** – the ENP – which refers to countries with common borders with future EU member states. This is the case of Moldova, Ukraine and the three Caucasian countries. Moreover, the ENP **is designed** to **raise** the compatibility and **institutions** between the EU member state and the neighboring countries – according to the conjecture of Barry Buzan **who** says that if there is compatibility, there is less place for conflicts (4) – has **elaborated** the bases of the relations with the countries that have already stated their road towards European values and European accession. We already know that the Action plans Moldova-EU and Ukraine –EU **have been** in place **for one** year, and we have seen the first year achievements. Such Action Plans are on the way for the Caucasian countries, too.

The EU has developed its contribution in the region and this shows us the rising interest of Brussels. In this respect, the EU has developed the position of special **envoy** for the Transnistrian conflict – Mr. Adrian Jakobovitz de Szeged – who is also the representative in the 5 plus 2 mechanism since last year in November (5) representing the EU in the mechanism that should discuss and solve the frozen conflict from the Eastern districts of the Republic of Moldova.

We could not forget the Border Monitoring Mission (6) installed at the end of 2005 by the EU at the mutual border between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, with the objective to monitor the trade and the customs rules at this border, in order to offer **advice** for improving the border control and **block smuggling** and trafficking at this border. Not least important, the border monitoring mission can help in the special visa regime that both Ukraine and Moldova want for their **citizens short trips** in the EU countries.

All these efforts and the discussion about the need and the will to be involved in the Wider Black Sea Region and in the frozen conflicts **make the EU an actor at the Black Sea and in the Wider Black Sea Region**. After the 1-st of January 2007, when Romania and Bulgaria will **become** EU members, we will have two EU members, one EU associate, in the way of negotiating with the EU- Turkey, two members with Action Plans with the EU – the Ukraine and Moldova – and 3 countries that want to go for the EU and EU values – the Caucasian countries. We **cannot** forget the special **relationship** between EU and Russia. All the ingredients are there for demanding a special strategic security concept of **the** EU for the Wider Black Sea Region.

In March this year the think **tanks** close to Mr. Javier Solana, high **representative** for the Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the EU, did have their first evaluation on a EU Foreign Affairs policy in the Wider Black Sea Region. A policy is not there yet, but the mechanism for reaching a decision and to validate such a document is in place, and we expect to have such a policy no latter than the beginning of next year.

The role of the Wider Black Sea Region in the war against Terrorism

The Caucasus and Central Asia are key points for the operations on the run in Afghanistan and Irak. In Afghanistan NATO countries are involved in two missions – ISAF in and around Kabul and Enduring Freedom in the Kandahar region. The route to reach by air these countries passes through the strategic airports and military facilities in Central Asia, and all these roads are using the Caucasus as a transportation area. This **increases** the importance of the Wider Black Sea Region. And we didn't add to **these** arguments the fact that we are facing a good possibility that Iran will be a next point of military interest and action, since the issue of nuclear

proliferation is not solved yet and the **current** leadership in Teheran is conflict oriented.

In the war against terrorism, a new role is in the way of being granted to several military facilities on the Western shore of the Black Sea, in Romania and Bulgaria. These facilities operated together by American troops and Romanian/Bulgarian troops are crucial in the new strategy of the US using small bases for refuel and recharge, but also for relay of troops. This gives the added value that Black Sea represents for the US and for the coalition of the willing in the war against terrorism. We have to count that in the Wider Black Sea Area, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, are countries that have troops in Afghanistan and Irak as parts of the coalition of the willing. The flying rights are in place for all the countries in the region and did function, including Russia.

Taking the chances and using the window of opportunity

But the Wider Black Sea Area has also its own role in blocking the influx of terrorism, smuggling, trafficking of small arms, drugs, persons, but also nuclear materials. The trend of **change of** the Wider Black Sea in a transit region where the influx of threats should be blocked can overcome the cooperation needs and the trade multiplication, so that we could not talk about the strategic concept on this region, but about the enforcement of the filters for combating the basic threats that will come through this space. That's why for taking all the benefits, the region needs to have clear cooperation frameworks and support for becoming a united structure able to fight as itself towards the basic threats.

So that in the opposite postures of **bridge** and **barrier**, all the countries in the region should choose wisely what is the most important for themselves, what fits more in the objectives of one's strategic thinking: should we **lose** this rising interest of the big players in the region, or should we use the objective trends that are developing now? Should we **lose** the added value that we could gain or should we **renounce this** chance for the sake of maintaining a status quo "that didn't gave us war lately" as some will put it, even if they where the only to benefit from the status of a close sea – Turkey, Russia – and to ignore the Montreux Convention whenever they want this and it fit their interests? Should we value the potential or should we ignore what **has** happened around us, what trends are developing, what interests are rising and how the environment is changing dramatically?

I am quite sure that the countries in the region have to think about these opposite situations and to decide for themselves if it is more important to develop the relation in the Wider Black Sea Area, to cooperate and develop the trade and the economy through this rising interest for the region, improving the stability in this very unstable globalized world, trying to solve these frozen conflicts that suddenly de-freeze and explode, when someone wants that to happen, even with the help with the new actors at the Black Sea and in the Wider Black Sea Region – NATO, EU, US.

Basically, the options are split between immobilism and maintaining the status quo or change and adapt to the changes in the political and strategic environment and in the region. The secondary effect of immobilism is the isolation. Both options are open, but it is better to try to integrate in the actual world and rules and to take profit of this situation than to sit aside and to expect to be subject of the barrier that other countries that want to integrate are rising to protect the integration institutions and themselves from the upcoming threats.

2. Does the Wider Black Sea Region exist?

This is a concern for all the designers of a coherent region in the Black Sea Area. For obtaining a coherent structure we need to have basic principles to link the countries in the region. Some will argue that all the history – even the recent one, from the cold war – show that the countries in the region were in different blocks, and had fought very often one with the another. History has designated the region not as a transit and integrated one, but as an interference of blocks and cultures, with a conflictual dynamic.

Since history does not designate the region as a whole, on the contrary, it accentuates the differences between different countries (7), we should look for elements of coherence in some characteristics that are now defining those countries, in common interests or at least shared values. This, too, we will realize that we have a visible difference of weight between a big country, a former superpower and leader of the socialist world in the cold war, with an important heritage of resources in various fields, and other countries, more or less in a balanced situation. Talking about difference of interests, here the things are very clear and could underline the differences in between countries (8). We will not make an exhaustive presentation, the

best one in tackling littoral countries agenda is the document proposed as a Strategy for NATO in the Wider Black Sea Region, quoted below.

Interests and agendas

We have here first **Russia**, in a period of reflux, with huge **resources** and incomes from the high price of oil and from **raising** gas prices, at the beginning of this year, but with less good use of this advantage in investments in exploration of new resources or developing the system of pipelines. Russia didn't propose **its** own form of coherence in the region, but it shows a lot of concern for the involvement of NATO, the EU and US in the region, considering this “an aggression” or at least “an intrusion in its canonic space” as Vitaly Tretiakov described the post soviet space in terms that can be compared to the ones of Goebels “vital space” for Germany, or in more actual terms, “a space of security”, “the close neighboring zone”, a king of buffer zone of protection in terms of security – even if we are talking about a region with sovereign independent states.

Ukraine has a problem of borders both with Russia – in the Kerch straits and the Azov Sea – and with Romania in the Serpent Island and the **sea border**. But Ukraine has **emerged** as a more willing state to take its own destiny and to play a role in the region and a number of countries in the region are supporting Kiev for becoming an important cohesion center for the GUAM countries and for the CDC-Community for Democratic Choice, but also to play a role in the Black Sea, proportional with its capabilities, a role that would break the existing con-dominium between Russia and Turkey.

Turkey has an important problem in maintaining the status quo, even by being a partner to Russia, its old rival, because of the preeminence and control of the straits that link the Black Sea with the Mediterranean. So that Montreux is an intangible subject for Turkey and its efforts are going in the way of creating BlackSeaFor to imitate the NATO Operation Active Endeavor, operational in the Mediterranean Sea, in order not to allow the extension of this operation in the Black Sea. Second, Turkey **wants** to take advantage of its fleet of the Black Sea and is offering to protect all the countries of the region. This role is not granted since Romania and Bulgaria are not participating **in the Turkish** operation – Black Sea Harmony and are looking for suitable solutions to protect their own part of the shore.

At the same time, **Ukraine** has the capabilities to take **over control** of its part of the shore, but still has problems with the presence of the Russian base in Sevastopol, in Crimea. On the other hand, Ukraine had some problems with Turkey who blocked the entrance of Ukrainian oil tankers coming from Libya in the Black Sea, and **though an** understanding between Russia and Turkey in this respect, since it was Russia that gave Ukraine the use of the points of oil extraction in Libya and the same Russia is interested in maintaining Ukraine dependence on Russian oil and gas.

Talking about **Georgia, Moldova and Azerbaidjan**, these countries support a more active role of Ukraine in the Black **Sea to** counterbalance the dominant role of the former superpower, Russia, and as a principle of integration in between those former soviet countries in GUAM that will help them enter NATO and the EU **using** the model of the Vishegrad countries, the Vilnius group, the CEFTA group of the SEECP-South East European Cooperation Process, SEDM or the countries from the Stability Pact Group.

In fact, we are facing what Bruce Jackson (9) called “**a new Fulda Gap**”. Fulda was the river between the Soviet Troops and the American troops when Germany **declared** unconditioned capitulation, on the 9th of May 1945. There where no fights but still existing troops, and both parts were practically running one towards another to **occupy as much German** territory they could. In the middle was the Fulda river, and this was originally called the Fulda Gap.

Now, talking about the Black Sea, it was always seen as a Fulda Gap, since the region passes alternatively from the control of the Turkish Empire - with the maximum of evolution in the north the shores of the Black Sea – to the control of the Russian Empire – the maximum expansion in the South where the Turkish shores **meet** the Black Sea.

This space of confluence was so even in the time of the cold war, with the same Turkey as a representative of the capitalist West and all the other countries – **USSR**, Socialist Romania and Socialist Bulgaria – members of the socialist block. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the region became “a new Fulda Gap”, with the Caucasus together, so that The Wider Black Sea Region is, in itself, a Fulda Gap, on the way of being filled.

Principles of cohesion

What could we expect then, from the region? What **principles of cohesion** could we apply?

As we already seen, the relations between those countries and the main institutions of integration now – NATO and the EU, the common fight against terrorism – have naturally **changed** the aspects and orientation of the countries in the region. This is because the basic of convergence and coherence of the region is **not the geography, but the values**. Since the countries decided to join the EU and NATO and to accept the basic values of those institutions – **meaning human** rights, the market economy, **democracy** and the rule of law – this can be a good principle for a common agenda.

So that, an acceptable common agenda will be:

- **security**
- **democracy/liberty/reform**
- **prosperity**

We don't see any country in the region, nor any government who can deny an agenda with these three basic principles who are the target of any government. So that a Wider Black Sea Region **does** exist, and the basic principles are the ones presented below.

The only question that is still not solve is whether or not Russia will be or nor a part of the region, if Moscow will **accept** its place as an equal of the other states and will have the will and **capacity** to observe the basic principles and rules related to the coherence and convergence of the states in the region.

3. Do we need a security solution for the Wider Black Sea Region?

Another principle of cohesion could be a common perception of the threats. This is also the main explanation for advocating the need for a security solution for the Wider Black Sea Region. If not, common interests or common shared values could be used only for improving cooperation and relations in other fields, not specifically in designing the need for a security solution for the Wider Black Sea Region.

The threat perception

Since we have a difference of interests, let's see if we could find a common perception of the threats **in the** countries, as another principle of cohesion. Here (10) we have found the following:

In terms of threat perception, Detlef Puhl (11), has described, in a paper presented at the International Conference "The Black Sea Area and Euro-Atlantic Security: Strategic Opportunities" organized by the Romanian Presidency in Controceni, Bucharest on the 20-th of April 2005, the following diversity of the perception of threats:

- Russia define Chechnya as its biggest threat in the Region
- Armenia and **Azerbaijan** fight or ignore **each other**, and don't like to **listen to** whatever the other has to say
- Turks stand by their Azeri brothers and maintain a **closed** border with Armenia
- Turkey perceives the threats coming from East – Iran, Irak – and South – Irak, Syria, but also from the volatile situation in the Caucasus.
- Bulgaria **looks** more on the shaky situation in Macedonia and Western Balkans-Kosovo, southern Serbia, **Montenegro**
- Romania is perceiving a threat from Transnistria and the support of the separatist region by Russia
- Georgia is looking at Russia as a principal threat, **especially** by its intervention in Abkhazia and South Osetia, but also by the presence of troops in Georgia, but also in **Azerbaijan** and Armenia. It is also the case of some reserves toward Turkey, who is helping the Azeris **ignore** Tbilisi, by sea.
- Turkey fills the threat of **losing** its position at the **Black Sea** by the presence of American military facilities that would **need protection** from the sea, ensured not by Russia or Turkish Marine troops but by the constant presence of an American fleet. The threat came also from Romania, perceived as the country defending American interests in the region and able to become a more important actor in the region.
- Ukraine has its own **reservations about** Romania, but lately all the concerns moved through Russia and its dominant position and presence at the Black Sea and in the energy game, and the threat of splitting Ukraine is still perceived as a present threat.

On the other hand, we have a problem of perceiving the threats, in theoretical terms. The countries in the area meet in Kiev and establish the threats to the security of the area in a document agreed **to** by everybody.

This makes a clear separation between risks and threats in the region. The basic problem is that the theoretical approach is a cost oriented approach, which recommends that the resources will be **spent** only in terms of combating threats and diminishing the risks, in a proportion that will ensure the fact that the threats not addressed or the risks **ignored** are with an improbability low enough so that the costs for dealing with them are high **compared** to the level of the threats. This is a **cost-oriented strategy**, present in every planning of the budget of defense and security agencies.

Another approach, coming from the concerns of the consequences of potential terrorism actions, is more **consequence oriented security**. It is the case of addressing the potential consequences of trafficking WMD materials. The concept is that if you have a risk of trafficking and spreading materials in the region, you have a source of such materials – **biological**, chemical or nuclear – huge vulnerability of the facilities and of the countries in the region – including an enormous level of corruption – and also a “market” near by – the Middle East, Irak, Afghanistan – than this risks (we don’t have threats since such a trade or transfer was not identified yet on the ground, it is just theoretical) **becoming** more important through the huge consequences of the outcome of such trafficking than even a perceivable and quantifiable threat (12).

The difference of perception between cost oriented and consequence oriented is another point of divergence, **especially** between Russia and the other countries, with some reserves from Turkey, also. The basic **assumption** of this evaluation is related to the consequences of recognizing such a threats or “problems of security” since this will **mean recognizing** that the region **does** not dispose of proper means to deal with this and need outside contributions, like capability from NATO or the US. This is against the main interests of Russia and also Turkey is afraid of opening the Black Sea and the straits because Ankara will loose so an important strategic advantage and the role in the region. The other countries realize that this is not a motif to expose themselves and the whole world to the perspective of a leak of WMD materials that could arrive in the hands of terrorists.

Cohesive issues in the region

All these could not recommend the fact that the region is **cohesive** or **could be coherent** in the security field, so that it is a legitimate question if we need a security solution for the Wider Black Sea region and if we could have a clear security concept for this area. **Nonetheless**, if such a concept is feasible, **is it realistic?** Let us take them step by step and realize that we need both.

We have seen the strategic importance of the region. Coming back to **the basic and coherence values**, we have seen that **security** is also a common goal. So that a **coherent stability region**, able to **expand this characteristic over to its neighbors** – Greater Middle East, Northern Caucasus, **Iraq**, Afghanistan – become an important objective for all the countries in the region. This could be reached through a **security solution for the Wider Black Sea Region** and theoretically, could be sustained by a **security strategic concept** in the region.

The stability and a security strategic concept will help also to solve the problems of the region. It is the case of **frozen conflicts**, of **stability** and **a solution for the tectonicity** of the region in itself.

Talking about risks, vulnerability and threats in the region, all the countries recognize the following issues in the region:

a. unconventional threats and non state actors

There are no objections for considering the Black sea region as an area where classic security threats are obsolete and the security risks belong to the **new unconventional threats** delivered by **non-state actors**, that take advantage of the policies of the problem-states and of the institutional incapacity of the frail states – heading towards the models of **weak state**, **failed state** or **corrupt state**.

b. problems states: weak states, corrupt states, failed states

Problem-states are characterized mainly by their refusal to play by the rules – direct or implicit support for terrorism, tolerating traffic (of human beings, weapons, drugs, smuggling) or helping the proliferation of weapons of mass **destruction** (NBC – nuclear, **biological** and chemical).

Weak states, in collapse or with institutionalized corruption either **cannot control** this phenomena on their territory – in the first two cases – or they **look away** because of undue financial advantages as a result of the **administrative corruption** or „interested partnership” between the state organs and the dealers’ networks or terrorist groups.

c. economic interests

Another topic that is accepted by all is the need to **protect the energy routes** from the region, whether they are the **Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline**, the **TRACECA projects** or the **future Baku-Batumi-Giurgiulești route** – announced by the **taking over of the free zone and the future Moldovan Giurgiulesti port by AzPetrol** – and Azeri state firm that deals in producing, transport and distribution of oil products in Azerbaijan.

Talking again about economic security, more and more the states of the region are considering as goals for an **energy security**, and this define as alternative **access to resources** from **alternative sources**, but also **alternative routes** for delivering the oil, the gas and the electric energy. Realizing such investments need the contribution of several states, and that’s **another coherence principle**, even if, in that case, too, the interests of some countries is maintaining the status quo – specially when this country has a certain monopoly on the resources or delivery systems, as Turkey gets in terms of the passage through the straits.

d. Frozen conflicts

Included in the security risks chapter are the **frozen conflicts** of the region, that are a major mark of the area once we have witnessed that they can be warmed up and un-frozen at any time and that leaving the solution of these problems in the hands **of** institutions such as OSCE, UN and dominated by the Russian **Federation** had no results. NATO and EU, as actors in the Black Sea and in the WBS region claim the changing of the negotiating mechanisms according with the new realities, in the hope of new arguments and solutions.

Connected with this reality there are two more categories of risks. First, the accumulation in these areas of important quantities of arms, stored in old storehouses, in military bases from Soviet times or produced in

regions outside the control of responsible states, in separatist regions, raises the problem of arms traffic in war zone or zone under international embargo.

Second, another category of risks is determined by the presence of **Russian** troops and bases in the region, refusing to respect the CFE Treaty and the Istanbul engagements in front of the OSCE. This is a constant threat to the countries of the region and an argument for the delay in the consolidation of the **newly independent states**. If you are referring to the **NIS**, you need to use **Newly Independent States** as a format.

We have mentioned earlier the problem of **separatism** and the **delay in the consolidation of the newly independent states**. These risks combine and the **result** is another phenomenon which rises concern with regard to **the delay of the transition to democracy and market economy**, a fact which deepens the disparities between the states of the region, regional differences that **increases illegal** migration, all the more because the different status of the Black sea countries and their proximity to the European Union creates an attraction **to** citizens of the countries that have a long time to wait and whose economic situation is very poor – Moldova and Georgia being the poorest, and even surpassed by Armenia and Azerbaijan, if we consider the WBS region.

The problems of transition to democracy, increased by the separatist trends and the delay in the consolidation of the **newly** independent states creates arguments and direct risks in connection with **the sustainability of political legitimacy of those states and governments** and put in doubt their capacity to fight against institutionalized corruption and also the criminal groups that feed separatism and block the **consolidation of the new states**. These elements, combined with the existence of the frozen conflicts, **are of** concern because of the possibility of **fragmentation of the newly independent states**, as well as for the transit of the terrorist elements towards Europe and the preservation of political traditions and the mentalities inertia that allows for the authoritarian models of administration (or communist) to still be attractive.

As we can see, there is an urgent need for **the creation of an extended security concept for the WBS region as a security solution** for the countries of the area and a perspective for development in the sense of democracy, market economy and the well-being of the population. Essential

to this equation is NATO and EU's presence as major actors in the Black Sea area.

4. Who **is entitled** to shape a strategic concept for the Wider Black Sea Region?

The discussion related to the Wider Black Sea Region involves all the countries in the region, the big actors, the institutions that are interested in this concept but also states that have not direct interests but have good ideas and concerns in the region. The debate is open and the best idea can come from actors outside the region. But some rules should be observed.

Russia, NATO, EU, US as actors in the region, as it was already mentioned, are **entitled** to be involved in the discussion and already have developed coherent position and even frameworks for the future security concept. All the littoral countries are interested in the future of their region and some already developed concepts of the future of the region. Countries from the Wider Black Sea Region have the same legitimacy of elaborating such concepts. It could also be the case for regional organizations for cooperation.

On the other hand, our approach is that a **hierarchy** should be observed because of two reasons. The first one is related to three **objective criteria** linked with the possibility of applying the design concepts: **instruments, capabilities and capacity of assuming costs**. It is very clear that one can draw **on paper** any shape and can design any form and institution or any concept, if it is not related to pragmatic and realist resources, this will only **be** a theoretical game. That's why the three components should be observed.

The second reason is indirectly linked with the first one but is referring to **the existence** of some institutions, articulated, with **a wealth of experience in adapting to the change** of environment in the actual world, with experience in obtaining the **coherence of several member states** and **high level of functionalism** of the international institution in discussion and with **concerns and interests in the security field** in the region. These institutions have both the experience and the capacity of dealing with common issues involving several countries in the field of security as well as

the instruments, the capabilities and the capacities of assuming costs. It is obvious that we are talking here about NATO and the EU.

EU is a political union and a single economic space, based on common values, with a great level of coherence and convergence between the member countries and with a Common Foreign Affairs and Security Policy design and exercised through proper instruments. This institution can help in designing suitable development policies in the region, but also policies that could be linked to a security **concept of** this area.

NATO is a regional and global security institution, with the capacity to adapt to both environment changes – the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact and the disintegration of the Soviet Union where challenges that pushed the adaptation system in terms of finding a way and purposes of existence even if the bipolar order was out and it should design a strategy to leave without enemies (Gorbachev said in 1990 “ I will do the **worst** thing to you, I will let you **be** without enemies”, and the quotation was used by Pascal Bruckner who write an essay book “How to live without enemies”- nota!!). Moreover, NATO developed an integrated system of adapting the rules of strategic planning, cooperation in military fields and has the best responses in terms of using military in security threats, confidence building, experience in coherent and transparent Security Sector Reform, preserving the efficiency of the mechanism, together with the transparent military planning. It is **designed** basically for **the purpose of** helping in the design of a security concept in the region.

US is also involved in the matter through its global planning in security matters and its concept already in place about the protection of its interests in the region, as well as through the instruments and capabilities of EUCOM who is already responsible for this region. Since the US is also the leading force in the war against terrorism and will soon have shared military facilities on the shore of the Black Sea, it is clear that this is another actor to be involved in the future strategic security concept of the Wider Black Sea Region.

Russia is surely another actor that has - or is **supposed** to have – its own idea of a strategic security concept. If Russia will take advantage of the lessons learned and will realize that this is an opportunity that it has no **reason to lose**, Russia could join the game. If not, there is a possibility that the strategic concept will be **designed** without Russia.

The **regional cooperation organizations** like the BSEC, BlackSeaFor, GUAM, CDC and others, are could as principles of integration and kindergarten of cooperation in security matters. **They prove** to be interesting forums of consultation, informal discussions on various issues, good exercises in promoting particular projects of cooperation, and frameworks for exercising working together and trusting the others. But these organizations could not assume the tasks **of** solving conflicts, or ensuring security tasks. That's why it is less probable that those institutions could assume more of the role that they have now, but the added value can be use in the first stages of the construction of the future strategic security concept.

5. Elements of a strategic concept

As we already mentioned, a lot of the institutions and actors mentioned above already take the opportunity to draft strategic security concepts that are in different phases of elaboration or at different stages in the decision making system of those actors. That's why we are coming with some basic principles to **propose a** strategic concept.

First of all, we have to state that a **strategic security concept** for the Wider Black Sea Region should be **inclusive**, so that all the states in the region should be involved in the process. This **doesn't mean that the idea should be withdrawn** if Russia, for instance, refuses to participate in order to block the involvement of EU ad NATO in the region or in **others** to **preserve** the advantages that Moscow believe that she still enjoys.

We think that all the countries could find in this concept **an added value to their own security** and that **everybody could use the basic principles and the mechanisms**. Another condition is that the new concept should **fit in the existing structures**, so that it represents an added value to the **existing** structure and not a dissolving solution. That's why the hierarchy proposed below is a **pre-condition for the success** of such a concept.

The core of such a **strategic security concept** could be the following:

- **reference stability region, with capacity of creating security**

- **pillar region for stabilizing neighboring tectonic regions: Greater Middle East, Iraq, Afghanistan, Northern Caucasus**
- **cooperation model/ third generation strategy for addressing and engaging Russia**

The WBS as a reference stability space

Our arguments so far have dealt with the increased interests in the region and the objective need to bring to date the strategic situation by turning The Black Sea into a regional interest area, where NATO and EU will be present and involved in the new regional institutions and instruments.

To avoid talking about common points and elements that justify and recommend treating the region as a single unit, we will further refer to a concept called **reference stability space**, with **perspective of delivering security**. We understand by this the following characteristics: the creation of a security and stability space in this region with the purpose of becoming a reference space as a stability model and also a source of added security value in terms of stability in the **neighboring** areas.

The **need for such space** is given by the supreme argument that the region – a **tectonic region** in itself – is surrounded by centers of traditional conflict, that present a major interest **to American** politics, and also for the NATO and the European Union. Whether it's the Greater Middle East, Iraq, Afghanistan as conflict zones or Central Asia, all these areas **can no longer be secured** without first solving the **WBS security**. This step can provide all the necessary elements - in terms of experience and precedent - for carrying on this operation in the worse of the conditions, since the WBS region tectonic activity is characterized by **acute eruptions of reduced and controllable size conflicts**, due to the attributes of **frozen conflicts**.

This, we believe, is a major argument for the need of a **NATO coherent approach and a European security policy** in the region. This argument is also the one generating the need to treat the region as a whole and to abandon punctual approaches, country by country, region by region or conflict by conflict. It is also present in the triple quality of the region: **platform for projecting military force into Asia and the Middle East, buffer zone for asymmetric threats and key-area for testing the capacity to spread democracy and security** outside Europe.

A few steps have already been done, as the need of approaching major directions in order to get a **reference stability space** with the perspective of delivering security in the WBS region. Here, we refer to creating a defensive arch for the non-state actors' unconventional asymmetric threats through **developing control and early warning means, information sharing and defense against potential missile attacks.**

Regarding the fields and areas where the cooperation could be already put in place, the draft proposal of a NATO security concept for the Wider Black Sea Region (13) note and develop the following fields: **maritime activities, air reconnaissance, coast guard and border defense, civil protection and cooperation in emergency situations**(14).

6. Russia's role

Russia is a very important actor in the region since its **political and geographic weight** is huge **when compared** to all the states in the region. Russia is the **former center for the post-soviet empire** meaning that it has some former advantages but also weaknesses in relation with the former soviet and socialist states. The strength **comes** from the good knowledge of the region and of its partners, including the political leadership and the style of diplomacy. The weaknesses came from the fact that there is some important reminiscence of concern, reserves and miss-trust from the former partners.

Behavior and trust building

If we **are only discussing the** behavior of the Russian Federation after the fall of the Soviet Empire, some concerns are also raised by its behavior in this period. First of all, there is a great mistrust related to its policy of "**controlled instability**", applied in the **newly** independent states as a tool to control those states by supporting separatism and authoritarian regimes linked to Moscow. This is the case of Moldova, Georgia **and Ukraine**, but also **Azerbaijan feels** the same mistrust. In this respect, Russia is arguably considered either **a threat** or a **stability factor**. Maintaining its troops in the **newly** independent states against their sovereign will is a clear sign of the first type of behavior.

Last but not least, Russia's evaluation by the independent **states** and by the international community is linked with its **position in the frozen**

conflicts. Maintaining these conflicts **against legitimate** sovereign authorities of the independent states support more the idea of Russia as an unfair player and the idea that it represents a threat to the independent states.

Russia is an important player in the region and will play a specific role in the frozen conflicts, too. For this purpose it is important that any gesture and action should be **constructive, trustful, agreed by the sovereign new independent states.** On the other hand, the new independent states deserve and are **entitled** to exercise their free will in **choosing their own solutions for security, defense, foreign policy and economic development.** There is the place where these states may want to involve **EU, and NATO as a balance,** since their own capabilities are not enough to **guarantee their sovereignty,** independence and **interests.**

Russia's weakness is also linked with the **former Empire Syndrome.** This is not a new discovery, Great Britain and France **experienced** this at the fall of their colonial empires, and the **Commonwealth** and the **Francophonie** are products of the need to "sell" to the population the end of the empire. Russia didn't succeed, up to now, in **dealing with the former Empire Syndrome** at the level of elite, leadership and less at the level of population.

On the contrary, Moscow proved a **lack of capacity to offer a suitable package** – comprehensive, substantial, respecting the right of independence and security alternative solutions - **for the post-soviet states.** We can see here an acute need for ideas, professionalism and coherence in the Foreign Affairs policy. This comes also with a **transparent planning** in the Security Strategy, a **comprehensive presentation of its interests** in the post-soviet space. Everything should be explained, discussed and **adapted** to the feed back coming from those countries. Russia **does** have legitimate interests in the region that should be observed, but all have to be promoted in **the framework of independent states relations,** and not in a **center-periphery paradigm.**

Russia has a lot of instruments at the international level. This is an important instrument that could be **used** to improve its relations with the independent states. The **generosity and support** for independent post-soviet **countries'** policies, in foreign affairs, security and defense is the key in **trust building.** There is no subject that cannot be **discussed directly** between Moscow and **the independent** post-soviet countries, so there is **great**

difficulty for Russia to **explain the need for separated regions as political tools**, separatism that is a reminiscence of the last days of the Soviet Empire.

The Beslan Syndrome

Russia has also another problem in progress that could help in designing its relations with the region, and the project of a strategic security concept in the Wider Black Sea region could come from the added value in terms of security that such a project could bring. The argument is linked with what we **term the Beslan Syndrome**.

The Beslan syndrome is easy to describe by **the increased tectonic activity in the North Caucasus zone**, where some autonomous republics from the Russian federation put to question their belonging to Russia (as in the case of Chechnya where people have taken the arms, but also Ingushetia and Dagestan, they are too close to the Islamic structures from the region), attacking the “power vertical” (just as they did with the accord with the **Putin (Russian?)** Federation, together with Tatarstan and Bashkiria that opened a court case at the Constitutional Court), or at least they question the leadership sent in from Moscow (as in the case of the North Osetia, Gabardino Balkaria or Karatchevo Cherkez Republics).

Russia's diminished capacity of control in the North Caucasus, the street movement in the Republics of Gabardino Balkaria and Karatchevo Cherkezia, the errors of crisis management in North Osetia, the on-going uncontrollable war in Chechnya, the un-conventional fight with the Islamic people in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan, the lack of control over the rebellious groups in the whole of the North Caucasus area, all have led to the conclusion that Moscow has lost control in the region – despite all the military activity and sending a special envoy in the South District, the presidential counselor, Dmitri Kozak.

A real measure for the **degree of chaos** in the area is the conclusion about the Beslan tragedy, which contain elements concerning corruption, the collaboration between the officials and the criminal and terrorist networks, the lack of crisis management abilities from the people and the enforcement institutions in the southern Republics and limited decision capacities in times of crisis. To these is added, undoubtedly, the **poor quality or the recruits** from the units in the region.

This aspect re-defines the problem of the Russian Federation's contribution to the anti-terrorist war and re-opens the possibility of **re-gaining the Russian interest** for cooperation on the theme of the **fight against asymmetric threats**. This subject is directly linked with the **new opportunity for engaging Russia**. Even if today Russia denies any discussion about its national territory, in the near future, it might want/need cooperation with the western security institutions, NATO, EU and US to fight "terrorism" even on its national ground. Furthermore, **political support for Russian Federation** integrity in the North Caucasus can become, in the near future, a **real stake for Russia**.

In this context, Moscow could agree to the opening of the Black Sea and the WBS region, could accept cooperation programs with NATO in the Black Sea for fighting terrorism and asymmetric threats and could be interested in liquidating the frozen conflicts and dislocating its armed forces from Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan or Armenia to better use them in the North Caucasus area. Moreover, turning the WBS region into **a reference stability space**, with the perspective of spreading security to **neighboring** spaces, could prove useful also for the **stabilization of the tectonic region of the North Caucasus**.

All these arguments mark the first elements of a new era in the Black Sea area and in the Wider Black Sea region, whose growing importance and role is thus taking shape. This perspective forces a re-thinking of the area, of its role, of its relations with the Russian Federation and the degree of involvement from the new actors, NATO and the European Union.

7. Romania – team player with an added value

Romania has become after the 1st of May 2004, a border-country of NATO and will become after the 1st of January 2007 a border country of the EU. At this moment, Romania will have **the second longest external border** of both organizations after Poland and assumes the perspective of protecting this border, according to European and NATO provisions.

On the other hand, Romania has a **strategic partnership with the US**, which is translated into the firm participation of Romanian troops in Afghanistan – operation ISAF and Enduring Freedom – and in Iraq, in

Kosovo, Bosnia and in all theatres where a contribution of our country has been requested. On the other hand, Romania has **agreed to open 4 military facilities** to be operated in common with the US troops, and 2400 to 2600 American troops will be **stationed** in those facilities at any moment. A discussion is **underway** for hosting a facility from the Global Missile Defense.

The main target of Romania is not to use its position in an **exceptionalist way**, but to promote its interests into the organization where it belongs – NATO, EU – and in the bilateral relation with the US. Romania **doesn't** want to **raise** new problems inside these organizations, **but to be a team player**, coming in those organizations with its **added value**, according to its possibilities.

The main interest of Romania is now **to support democratic reforms, economic changes**, institutional and societal reforms in the **neighboring** countries, especially **the** Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and the Caucasian countries. These changes will make those countries closer to the EU and NATO, first in terms of **common values**, second by proving that the **political will** is doubled by actions, laws, reforms, institutions, enforcing European recommendations. Afterwards, when the conditions will be fulfilled, and the Copenhagen criteria will be observed, **Romania will support the official demand of all those countries to join the EU.**

Romania is interested in **a correct and sustainable solution for the frozen conflicts**, in sustaining the statehood of the new independent states and their consolidation as strong and valuable partners, with respect to the rules of **democracy, market economy and rule of law**. On the other hand, Romania is interested in the **strategic security concept for the Wider Black Sea Region**. These elements are already stated and included in the draft of the Security Strategy under debate **in** Romanian society and with our partners. A whole chapter is reserved for the Wider Black Sea Region and the strategy includes also Romania's point on the fundamental principles to solve the frozen conflicts (15). **Transparency of interests, strategy and planning, good governance and a behavior of a team player with an added value** are the characteristic of Romania's role in the Wider Black Sea region.

Notes

1 – Course offered on NATO Studies Center Bucharest, 2003. See also Ronald D. Asmus and Bruce P. Jackson, “The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom” in “A new Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region”, Romanian Institute for International Studies “Nicolae Titulescu”, Bucharest, 2004

2 - Istanbul summit comunique, art 42, www.nato.int

3 – “A Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region”, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 27 January 2006, INSS Staff Analysis”; also in Policy Review, June 2004.

4 – Barry Buzan, “People, States and Fear, an agenda for international security studies in the post Cold War era”, 1991, Romanian edition Cartier printing House, 2000

5 – Doc S 282/05, Council of the European Union, Brussels, 23 August 2005

6 – Doc 13059 , Council of the European Union, Brussels, 13 October 2005

7 – see R. Bruce Hitchner, “History and realizing a Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea” and Igor Munteanu, “The Black sea space: a mixture of identities” in “A new Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region”, Romanian Institute for International Studies “Nicolae Titulescu”, Bucharest, 2004

8 - “A Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region”, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 27 January 2006, INSS Staff Analysis; also in Policy Review, June 2004; see also Detlef Puhl, “What Strategy for the Black Sea Area” in Strategic Monitor, nr.3-4/2005, Institute for Political and Defense Studies and Military History.

9 - Ronald D. Asmus and Bruce P. Jackson, “The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom” in “A new Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region”, Romanian Institute for International Studies “Nicolae Titulescu”, Bucharest, 2004

10 - Detlef Puhl, “What Strategy for the Black Sea Area”, international Conference “The Black Sea Area and Euro-Atlantic Security: Strategic Opportunities”, organized by the Romanian Presidency, Cotroceni, Bucharest, 20 April 2005.

11 – Detlef Puhl, Ph.D. in political Sciences, is German Associate dean of academics, College of International and Security Studies, George C. Marshall Centre, Garmish

- 12 – Iulian Chifu, “Threats from WMD”, in “Strengthening Black Sea maritime Security”, papers from the conference, Sofia, 1-4 November, 2005
- 13 - “A Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region”, note 3
- 14 - Other papers could be found also in Ognyan Minchev, Marin Lessenski, Palmer Ratchev, “SIMN strategy: transatlantic strategy for stabilizing and integrating the Black Sea Area”, Jaroslaw Skinieczka, “Black sea area: a role for NATO?”, Heather Grabbe, “Towards a more ambitious EU policy for the Black Sea Region”, Zenyo Baran, “Developing a Euro-Atlantic strategy for the Black sea Region: Caspian Sea model”, in “A new Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region”, Romanian Institute for International Studies “Nicolae Titulescu”, Bucharest, 2004, Constantin Degeratu, “Does the Black Sea Region Exist? An increasingly dynamic geopolitical Strategic Area and its Security Concerns” lecture deliver at the conference “NATO’s Black Sea Region Security: Opportunities of Cooperation”, organized by George C. Marshall Center, Sofia, 20-24 June 2005.
- 15 – www.presidency.ro

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