



THE CONTRIBUTION OF NAVAL DIPLOMACY TO REGIONAL MARITIME SECURITY

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In the context of the military conflict in the Black Sea region, with implications for regional security, the approach proposes a solution to strengthen international relations by capitalising on the non-coercive potential of the naval presence on the maritime communication routes in the Black Sea, starting from the premise that the Romanian Navy is the military instrument of power through which the state projects its naval diplomacy, a mission manifested under the auspices of ways of asserting national maritime and fluvial interests.

With a wide range of diplomatic instruments through which the Romanian state manifests and consolidates its geopolitical position and interests in the Black Sea and the Danube River, at the political-military level there is the possibility of using specific ways of contributing to the consolidation of regional maritime security.

Practically, the proposal to carry out a regional cooperation initiative in the Black Sea, by establishing an air-land-naval battle group, under the auspices of the collaboration of allied partners, candidates, and the riverine countries of the Black Sea Extended Area. Punctually, through this approach, a solution is presented regarding the contribution of the Romanian Navy to the consolidation of regional, maritime, and fluvial security, through simple steps, resuming a previously applied model, and effectively using military instruments through regional cooperation.

Keywords: naval diplomacy; regional leadership; maritime security; community-European perspective; Danube River;



INTRODUCTION

As an academic in the field of higher military education, I would like to suggest a solution to strengthen international relations in the context of the military conflict in the Black Sea region. I want to submit to the attention of specialists in defence diplomacy the use of the non-coercive potential of naval presence on the ways of maritime communications in the Black Sea.

To achieve this, I suggest leveraging a well-established instrument of state diplomacy, namely *naval diplomacy*, declared as the mission of the Romanian Navy, which can be manifested through ways of asserting national maritime and fluvial interests.

Regarding the variety of diplomatic instruments through which the Romanian state manifests and consolidates its geopolitical position and interests in the Black Sea and the Danube River, I believe that at the political-military level, there are specific ways of contributing to the consolidation of regional security, under the conditions of a volatile regional security environment.

Thus, in order to materialise the contribution of naval diplomacy in maintaining regional security, I suggest a concrete solution for how the Romanian Navy can contribute to the consolidation of regional, maritime and fluvial security. This solution involves simple steps, resuming a previously applied model, effectively using already existing military resources for regional cooperation.

Practically, my proposal is to create a regional cooperation initiative in the Black Sea, on the model of Turkey's Black Sea For initiative (which was suspended in 2014), but with the collaboration of allied partners, candidates and the riparian states of the Wider Black Sea Area. I would like to mention the fact that the previous model was unsuccessful, despite its stated goal of increasing regional security by: *“strengthening friendship and good neighbouring relations between regional states and increasing interoperability between the naval forces of these states”* (Özdal, 2011, p. 34). However, Russia's actions

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in Ukraine in 2014 and the 2015 Turkish-Russian airstrike incident proved that the initiative did not work.

Concretely, I propose the establishment of an air-land-naval battle group in the Black Sea, by developing and perfecting an appropriate force to which all Black Sea riparian states that are part of the community and allied bloc, candidates, and regional partners will contribute.

THE JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROPOSAL

The national arguments underlying the substantiation of the proposed solution are from the range of interests of regional and zonal expression and capitalisation of the geostrategic position, declared in the National Security Strategy (2020, paras 47-49) such as:

- access to the sea;
- exit to the sea at the mouths of the Danube;
- capitalisation of trans-European economic corridors (capitalisation of critical port infrastructure, communication lines, energy networks and submarine cables);
- security of maritime and fluvial communication routes;
- access to raw materials and resources;
- obligations assumed by participating in coalitions, alliances, partnerships;
- maritime and organisational resilience.

I believe that increasing the awareness of the need and importance of regional security must be done from two perspectives, an allied perspective and a community-European perspective, by applying a maritime security strategy to the Black Sea, aiming, as far as possible, at a common agenda and undeniably on the promotion of these common interests. In my opinion, the soft value of this proposal can be identified and the strengthening of regional security can be achieved by increasing the political-military and diplomatic capacity.

Soft solutions

To substantiate this proposal, I want to bring to attention some soft solutions, as possible contributions of the Black Sea riparian states and the leading factors of the Black Sea fleets to regional security from a military perspective. The soft valence of my proposal is given by:

- regional leadership;
- defence diplomacy;

- naval diplomacy;
- maritime security culture;
- maritime consciousness.

Regional leadership, I believe, is, from a political-military point of view, a strategic leadership model that offers a leadership approach adapted to the dynamic and unpredictable contemporary operational environment. Starting from the premise that in the field of regional security in the Black Sea, regional leadership is given by the profile of political leaders in the region, principles such as multilateralism and the internationalisation of the region will form the basis of the definition of regional leadership. Factors such as politics, economy, society, and culture, will form the basis of defining the leadership of the Black Sea region. *“The leadership of the Black Sea region must be based on a strong political and economic network, harmonised (legal, economic, diplomatic and financial) with the other neighbouring regions, in a convergent and participatory manner”* (Panait, 2021, p. 20).

According to the international relations theory, multilateralism refers to an organisation, usually of the alliance type, in which the participants pursue a common goal. Internationalisation refers to the exchange of good practices, collaboration, cooperation and international mobility, an aspect that underlines the international character of a military action. Thus, it can be considered that the two principal characteristics can be the basis of my proposal, outlining its soft profile.

Defence diplomacy represents the totality of actions carried out by a government, through the use of components of the national security system, through which it implements measures to increase confidence between states, contributes to the development of collaborative and cooperative relations between armies, and ensures the conditions for creation or operation of alliances, coalitions, partnerships and regional initiatives, to reduce the climate of tension and maintain a balanced state of regional security (<https://prezi.com/clwamc3baewu/diplomatia-apararii-parte-principala-a-diplomatiei-general/>).

Naval diplomacy includes the actions of national representation, as well as a component of diplomacy, which is also called the naval strategy of influence.



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Naval diplomacy is manifested by the use of at least one component of maritime power in support of political and diplomatic activities and represents the set of measures to promote maritime and fluvial interests, to influence the behaviour of other countries in the sense of favouring an advantage related to a defined goal or objectives, including for discouragement.

For example, the “*Diplomacy (politics) of gunboats*” represented at the beginning of the 20th century defence of property rights of Western investors. Today, naval diplomacy is understood as the use of naval power, the basic component of maritime power, to support the state’s position in negotiations.

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Following the main missions of the Romanian Naval Forces, the ways of manifesting naval diplomacy and the contribution to diplomatic support in the maritime field are as follows:

- naval representation;
- naval presence;
- discouragement;
- preventive naval deployment (prepositioning of forces);
- the show of force.

Maritime security culture. According to the National Security Strategy for 2020-2024, by analogy with the general security culture, the security culture manifested in the maritime field could represent the totality of values, norms, attitudes, or actions that determine the understanding and assimilation of the security concept at the level of security maritime. Thus, it can be considered that a culture of maritime security represents a process of formal, informal, non-formal, and continuous lifelong education, based on an already existing security culture.

Also, the national interest in security is declared “*the desirable state of existence of a nation, of an organic and inclusive community, aimed at defending and promoting fundamental national values, ensuring prosperity, guaranteeing respect for democratic rights and freedoms, protection and security of its members*” (SNApT, 2020, p. 14).

Thus, in my opinion, maritime security culture represents a state of manifestation of a security heritage in the maritime and fluvial



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field, cultivated, developed, consolidated, and affirmed, intended to provide the state with the possibility of manifesting maritime power and maintaining its integrity, independence, and sovereignty over territorial waters, including the preservation of the right of access to the sea and the exploitation of river potential.

Maritime consciousness is a part of the security culture, manifested in the maritime field, in correlation and through the promotion of national values on fluvial communications, the seas, and oceans of the world, the manifestation, protection, defence, and guarantee of maritime and fluvial interests.

Romania’s maritime and fluvial interests should be understood as part of the national interests, along with the other components: economic, political, social, cultural, demographic, etc.

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Under these conditions, I believe that the promotion of Romania’s interests in the maritime and fluvial field by contributing to maintaining the security of the Black Sea and the Danube River must become a component of the national conscience. “*Romania cannot evade the regional responsibilities represented by promoting and ensuring a climate of stability and security in the Black Sea region*” (Cioroaba, 2023). Thus, I believe that such an approach will primarily represent a way of manifesting the maritime conscience and implicitly a way of affirming the national conscience, as a result of an affirmed maritime security culture.

Proposals and directions for action

Having presented soft aspects regarding the possible contributions of the states bordering the Black Sea to regional security through political-military measures as well as educational culture, I would like to submit some proposals regarding the directions of action that require greater attention from decision-makers in the political-military field but also in the attention of educational program coordinators.



I promote the establishment of a heterogeneous multinational naval battle group, destined for the Black Sea, with centralized command, with missions of surveillance of maritime communications and protection of naval transports. This involves designating a naval battle group to the Black Sea with extended littoral, surface, MCM (mine countermeasures) and antisubmarine warfare capabilities.

From a political-military point of view: along with strategic partnerships, I bring to attention the opportunity to develop some local partnerships.

Proposal: resumption of the regional cooperation development mission through a local initiative.

Participants: fleets of the Black Sea riparian countries and the wider Black Sea region.

Beneficiaries/benefits: from all parties involved:

- the benefits of direct participants through naval presence, promotion and confirmation of mutual trust, standardisation of work procedures, action complementarity etc.;
- partner benefits: international visibility, increase in mutual trust, interoperability, confirmation of partner position through direct contribution, etc.;
- benefits of candidates to the allied bloc: international visibility, affirmation of mutual trust, interoperability, reduction of the capability gap, demonstration of candidacy, etc.

Concretely, I promote the establishment of a heterogeneous multinational naval battle group, destined for the Black Sea, with centralized command, with missions of surveillance of maritime communications and protection of naval transports. This involves designating a naval battle group to the Black Sea with extended littoral, surface, MCM (mine countermeasures) and antisubmarine warfare capabilities. My vision involves a proactive participation of the fleets of the Black Sea riparian countries that can contribute to strengthening regional security in the current conditions of the dynamics of military actions generated by the conflict situation in the North of the Black Sea.

From the point of view of the educational culture, the soft feature of my proposal mainly targets the human component, which must acquire a nuanced valence towards:

❖ promoting the culture of maritime security (here, military education plays an important role, at all levels, gradually with the hierarchical increase of the forms of training; public promotion; organisation of social events on security issues; involvement of civil society; volunteering, etc.)

❖ promoting leadership at all levels of military education; military leadership has the advantage of multidisciplinary staff training

from the first stages of professional training; the product of military leadership is expected to “*evaluate options, anticipate, be prepared for unpredictable situations and make decisions in situations of risk and uncertainty*” (Cioranu, 2021, p. 5), as presented in the cited study. It is deduced that personal development through the development of emotional intelligence and critical thinking is a mandatory step that will strengthen the profile of military leadership.

I believe that concerning the development of critical thinking, the educational component contributes to the development of the most important skills of the military leader and implicitly to the increase of decision-making quality, through:

- the ability to formulate reasoned points of view;
- the power to predict some solutions to the analysed problems;
- the ability to identify action alternatives;
- the ability to create logical deductions;
- the ability to avoid biases;
- the ability to estimate the effects of the decisions taken.

The personal development of the military leader is a complementary component that contributes to the development of military leadership. Qualities such as emotional balance and maturity are developed through the promotion of organisational culture in close connection with the development of emotional intelligence (Chiorcea, Cioranu, 2021, p. 163).

In these conditions, military leaders need to be proactive, reactive, concerned, challenged, and removed from routine tasks (Cioranu, 2021, p. 3). This outlines a new profile, a product that comes of a resilient school of thought, which is the aim of higher military education.

Regarding maritime and organisational resilience, I believe the Romanian Navy has a crucial role to play in the doctrinal and operational adaptation to the dynamics of hybrid actions and multi-domain operations in the Black Sea.

To implement the launched proposal, the Romanian Navy must approach the issue from two perspectives:

- it needs to identify what means are needed to contribute to strengthening maritime security by participating in such a regional initiative;



ROMANIAN
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- it needs to determine what the Romanian Navy's actual contribution to this initiative will be.

To adopt the proposed model, the Romanian Navy must identify:

- the opportunities to develop new collaborative relationships with Black Sea coastal fleets, as well as strengthen existing ones;
- the development of military capabilities for action in the Black Sea concerning emerging risks and threats;
- the solutions to promote the culture of security through direct involvement in social life and educational measures (educational programs in military educational institutions in the maritime field).

CONCLUSIONS

Considering the current geopolitical context, Romania can become a centre of coagulation of regional interests by promoting a regional leadership model. The Romanian Navy will thus serve as a political-military instrument to promote national maritime and fluvial interests, as well as a vector of Euro-Atlantic and EU Community interests in the region.

To conclude this approach, I present some forecasts regarding the role of a regional initiative developed on the proposed model. This model is perfectible, considering the possibility of identifying other constructive arguments that would strengthen the launched idea as well as practical solutions for establishing the naval group, in terms of structure, command and control and assigned missions.

At the political level:

- it will allow firm decisions to be made during crises;
- it will provide interstate solidarity against hybrid threats.

At the military level:

- it will provide an appropriate active and timely response;
- it will anticipate threats;
- it will contribute to counteracting risks.

In conclusion, a political-military, decision-making and educational approach must be taken to strengthen regional security.

Defence diplomacy and maritime diplomacy play a significant role in the political-military aspect, to which strategic leadership is paramount.

In terms of decision-making, the contribution of the naval forces of the Black Sea fleets (especially the Romanian Navy) is crucial for the establishment of a naval group in the Black Sea. Its missions are aimed at maritime security, but also the soft measures that maritime leaders can adopt, leadership, security culture, and maritime awareness need to be developed.

From an educational point of view, the role of naval military education has been emphasised, mainly for the development of skills of future military leaders, by promoting critical thinking, developing emotional intelligence, and monitoring personal development.

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