"SEA BLINDNESS"

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The analysis of a country's development areas requires a clear understanding, by decision-makers, of political, economic, social or environmental phenomena. By analysing the level of awareness and evolution of the policy and strategy of the maritime domain, correlated with their related elements, we can state that Romania has a much greater potential than the level and complexity of development at this date, and the awareness of the importance of the maritime domain should contribute substantially to its evolution. We appreciate that maritime security is a particularly important element in a country's maritime policy and strategy.

In the following contextual analysis, with a view to providing the most appropriate decision support, we seek to examine the rise of maritime security in both conceptual and practical terms. We argue that the developments in the maritime arena have been analysed by various international forums, in security studies, and that a new national agenda for maritime security studies is needed. However, much remains to be studied in the future and a direction for further research should be provided. Thus, the approach taken through this article will contribute to the awareness of the fact that, in Romania, the importance of the maritime sector has declined greatly in the past three decades.

The objective of our approach is to make national decision-makers aware of the importance of the maritime domain and, above all, of its contribution to the development of the country. At the same time, we can appreciate that our approach can contribute to increasing the level of maritime education and awareness, as belonging to a maritime nation.

Keywords: marine environment; maritime security; "blue economy"; Somali piracy; "sea blindness";

INTRODUCTION

Scientifically speaking, *"sea blindness"* is a meteorological phenomenon that occurs when water vapours in the sea evaporate and form low clouds that reflect sunlight, blocking visibility on the horizon. This phenomenon can be dangerous for sailors as it can mask the approach to land or other obstacles.

The notion of *"sea blindness"* has had an interesting development, being multiplied in various fields. Figuratively, the expression *"sea blindness"* has been adopted to analyse the consequences of neglecting the maritime domain and, by extension, it is also used in other fields such as energy, economics, environmental protection.

"Sea blindness" refers to the inability to see or understand certain issues or situations, such as those related to maritime security, environmental protection or climate change. It can be caused by negligence, ignorance or lack of interest or resources to address the issues. For example, *"sea blindness"* can be used to describe the lack of attention paid to climate change and its impact on the oceans, or to describe the failure in seeing maritime security risks such as piracy or maritime terrorism. *"Sea blindness"* is not just limited to one country's circumstances.

In 2009, reliance on maritime traffic caused the phrase to emerge when UK policymakers were labelled as suffering from *"sea blindness"*, a charge based on the failure in seeing security needs, vulnerabilities in supply disruption and in weakening the naval forces. A nationwide survey conducted by Seafarers UK in 2011 suggested that the British public was alarmingly ignorant of the island's dependence on the sea and that *"sea blindness"* was a *"huge problem"* (https://www.maritimefoundation.uk).

However, in 2017, another poll conducted by the UK Chamber of Shipping claimed that *"sea blindness is a myth"* (https://www.ukchamberofshipping.com).

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BEYOND *"SEA BLINDNESS"* – A NEW AGENDA FOR MARITIME SECURITY STUDIES

In the following analysis, we intend to examine the main issues and themes on the maritime security agenda, including the way in which they have been theorised in security studies so far. The first aspect is represented by the fact that the maritime environment should be understood as part of an interconnected security complex, which also incorporates strong connections between the land and the sea.

Secondly, we examine the ways in which maritime security actors have practically responded to these challenges, focusing on issues of maritime domain awareness, coordination of actions and operations.

Thirdly, we refer to the mechanisms by which the new maritime security agenda is disseminated to local actors through a process of decentralised security governance. We focus in particular on the efforts to distribute knowledge and skills to local actors through capability building and security sector reform.

In conclusion, we need to highlight the future challenges for maritime security studies arising from these observations.

A 1909 paper by Constantin Nic Păun, entitled *"Misiunea marinei noastre"/The Mission of Our Navy"*, addresses not only the importance of the maritime domain for states in economic, political terms, but also the navy missions to defend the country's maritime and river borders. As well, the paper *"Războiul pe Dunăre/War on the Danube"*, part of Romania's military literature on the maritime domain, published in 1905, by officers Eugeniu Botez (1877-1933) and Nicolae Kirițescu addressed the same topics (Petcu, 2013, p. 1874). We can say that they mark the beginning of Romania's preoccupations in this field.

However, *maritime security* is one of the most recent additions to the international security vocabulary. Initially created in the 1990s, the concept of *maritime security* has received increasing attention due to the heightened concerns about maritime terrorism since 2000, the rise of modern piracy off the coast of Somalia and elsewhere, and the trafficking in human beings that is so topical today. The growing importance of the so-called *"blue economy"* in recent times, as well as the issues related to maritime environmental protection and resource management have contributed to the growing interest in the subject.

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A significant number of states, as well as other international actors, place maritime security at the top of their security agendas. This priority is reflected in several governmental and intergovernmental strategies for maritime security published over the past decade, such as those of the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, India, NATO, the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU), as well as in multilateral declarations, as the G7 declaration on maritime security, and in the papers of the annual international conference on the topic, *Our Ocean* (https://ourocean2022.pw/agenda/).

While maritime security has become a core concern among major global security actors, in international relations and security studies the situation is different, as its study is haphazard at best. Existing literature tends to consider such issues in relation to specific geographical hotspots and the management of specific threats, such as maritime piracy in East Africa, strategic rivalry in the South China Sea or the Arctic, organized crime in West Africa, or human trafficking in Southern Africa and the Mediterranean Sea (China's Naval Rise and the South China Sea).

Issues such as port security, illegal fishing or environmental crime have received less attention, and the connections between all these themes remain little studied. Other sources subordinate developments at sea to broader themes in international relations, such as Great Power politics, geostrategy or international regime-building (Levy, Thompson, 2010, pp. 7-43).

The amplification of the maritime security agenda has been reflected in a renewed interest among analysts in the issue of order at sea in an age of globalisation (Bekkevold, Till, 2016; Moran, Russell, 2014; Tangredi, 2002) and in its growing significance in national strategic, political and doctrinal publications. Less attention has been paid to the maritime domain as a factor of international change and innovation in itself. The attention given to the domain risks obscuring new and specific patterns in the fields of: international relations, governance and order at sea.

We argue that the maritime security initiatives and activities that have been observed over the past decade require a more robust treatment of the issue in academic discussion. It is time for the discipline to pay more attention to the maritime area and move beyond

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ROMANIAN
MILITARY
THINKING

"sea blindness". Some summaries and generalizations need to be made regarding the basic observations about these developments and activities at sea and the ways in which they require further research need to be highlighted.

There is a growing need for providing new directions for future maritime security studies, but at the same time the challenges posed by maritime security phenomena need to be explored in wider discussions within the framework of international relations and security studies.

THE GROWING NEED FOR MARITIME SECURITY

Throughout human history, the sea has been seen as an area of danger and insecurity. The seas have repeatedly been portrayed as *"an unwanted and unwelcoming wilderness where land is a reassuring reference point"* (Mack, 2011, p. 74).

Human history can be interpreted as an attempt to master the sea. However, reviewing the literature, the vast majority of historical and political analyses describe the seas *"either as the backdrop to the scene on which the real action – i.e. the land – is seen to take place, or ... simply as a means of connection between the activities taking place on and within the coasts"* (Ib., p. 19).

The sea tends to be understood as a stage for the projection of geopolitical power, inter-state warfare or militarized disputes, but also as a source of specific threats such as piracy or as a connector between states enabling various phenomena from colonialism to globalization (Steinberg, 2001). It is where the contradiction arises between the maritime domain, seen as belonging to everyone (for the most part), and land areas as belonging to someone.

Security represents the fact of being sheltered from any danger, a feeling of confidence and tranquility that the absence of any danger gives someone, and as it appears from Maslow's pyramid, the need for security is placed, as a level of importance, immediately after physiological needs. (Lașan, 2010, p. 39).

Security represents that *"state of fact that shelters any community or state from any external and internal danger, following the adoption of specific measures, and that ensures the existence, independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity of the state and respect for fundamental interests"* (Europe 2020). It is, since the beginning of mankind, an essential concern, starting in the maritime domain from the security

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of inland waters, through coastal areas and to the planetary ocean as a whole.

Maritime security has evolved over time, emerging new sets and systems of non-coercive policies (soft policies) aimed at establishing a favorable environment/ecosystem in which both policies and coercive policies (hard policies) appear. The analysis and understanding of maritime security entail a selection of cases of success, failure or policy disregard. The objective of an analysis is to present very diverse cases from different countries, using qualitative criteria to identify *"best"* practices.

THEORIZATION OF MARITIME SECURITY AND THE PATH TOWARDS A MARITIME SECURITY

Mainly, security at sea has been theorised and interpreted from rather conservative points of view, based on traditional realist or liberalist theory (https://www.jstor.org). More recent theoretical developments, such as constructivist thinking or critical security studies, have hardly influenced the debate.

In the realist interpretation, the seas are the locus of rivalry between superpowers or regional powers. Recent discussions have focused on China's rise as a naval power and the US Asian *"pivot"*, investment in the naval capabilities of emerging powers or the growing competition for resources in the Arctic.

Generally understood as a sub-branch of strategic studies, maritime security has long been approached by focusing on international interaction, influence and order at sea (Booth, 1977; Grove, 1990; Mahan, 1890; Speller, 2014; Till, 2004).

Such work has been located primarily in classical geopolitical studies of international relations, with an emphasis on the historical aspects. Here, what Bekkevold and Till call *"top-down"* (and less *"bottom-up"*) structural influences on the international order at sea emerge, including *"global shifts in power, changing threat perceptions, naval modernization, and changes in naval capabilities and the application of the law of the sea"* (Bekkevold, Till, p. 7).

Liberal interpretations of security at sea highlight the rise of different international regimes governing activities at sea and suggest that the marine environment is increasingly subject to a form of collective public order and legal regulation.

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Liberal perspectives have been advanced particularly in the work of maritime law scholars (Geiss, Petrig, 2011). Kraska and Pedrozzo, for example, suggest that in recent years international law *"has evolved from a set of rules designed to avoid naval warfare by keeping maritime powers separate to a new global framework designed to facilitate cooperation in maritime security by bringing countries together to achieve common goals"* (2014, p. 10). Even so, such work has tended to focus on issues of technical regulation and formal international law rather than on maritime security governance more broadly defined. Ian Speller noted that *"the maintenance of good order at sea has not traditionally been subject to theoretical analysis in the same way as war activity or even diplomatic roles have"* (Speller, p. 150).

Since the 1990s, critical security studies, for example in the form of securitization theory or the security-as-practice approach, have hardly, with few exceptions, influenced the debate on security at sea (Ryan).

The concept of *maritime security*, as part of security in general, includes but is not limited to the existing themes of maritime power and maritime law, being a relatively recently synthesized concept. However, in many respects, the study of the seas has lagged considerably behind developments in general security studies. The traditional focus of the discipline has typically been *"broadened"* and *"deepened"* to incorporate a larger set of security issues, areas and activities, at least since the early 1990s. They have included so-called *"new"* security issues such as terrorism, transnational organised crime or environmental degradation, affecting a wide range of actors, including but not limited to the state, with a growing tendency to link security to development.

Broad notions of security began to gain consistent importance in academia and policy at the turn of the millennium. In this respect, it has to be mentioned the 1998 report of the Independent World Commission on the Oceans (IWCO). Published to coincide with the UN's International Year of the Oceans, it considered a range of military and non-military threats to international order at sea, as well as the ways in which maritime security governance should be reconfigured to address them (IWCO, p. 17).

This process was developed in the wake of the successful attack on the USS Cole in the port of Aden by an extremist group in 2000 and the attacks of 11 September 2001, after which the United States

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of America began to pay significant attention to the nation's maritime and security dimension. Thus, the US government published a National Strategy for Maritime Security (NSMS) in 2005, accompanied by eight supporting plans to address the *"specific threats and challenges of the maritime environment"* (US Government, 2005). The strategy was one of the first documents of the kind to explicitly conceive the maritime sphere as a distinct security complex. The strategy placed considerable emphasis on maritime vulnerabilities generated by terrorism, including the prospect of a terrorist attack either at sea or from the sea, as well as on the challenges of securing ports and coastal areas against incursions of terrorist materials, including potential weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The maritime security measures implemented in the aftermath of the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001 have generated a broad review of the organisation, force allocation and modus operandi of forces and institutions involved in US maritime security, extending them into the Mediterranean Sea through Operation *Active Endeavour*.

However, like the IWCO report, it also identified a number of wider maritime security challenges. They include the threat of piracy, illegal exploitation of maritime resources, smuggling and crime, and other threats to the free flow of maritime trade (https://www.whitehouse. gov).

The US National Strategy for Maritime Security (https://amti.csis. org) was followed by a series of developments in the overall strategy that placed order at sea at the centre of US naval thinking. For example, the *"1000 Ship Navy"* (https://www.usni.org) concept in 2005-2006 (abandoned nowadays) began with the recognition that maritime security challenges were too complex and diffuse for the United States of America to manage alone. Instead, it envisioned what Peter Haynes called *"a self-organizing, self-governing global maritime security network that coordinates the activities of the navies, coast guards, and police units of volunteer nations"* (Haynes, 2015, p. 197). This notion was controversial at that time, being hampered by suspicion of US motives from potential partner states and controversy within the US Navy. However, it pointed to some important future trends, including the difficulties faced by a single state, however powerful, in managing a diffuse and complex maritime security environment and the need for cooperative relationships with others in areas of common interest.

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It also pointed to a broader and wider understanding of US maritime power.

As a result of US efforts, a number of similar strategies have been adopted by other nations and international organisations. Most notable among them are the *NATO Alliance Maritime Strategy* (2011, https://www.nato.int/cps)[1]; the *UK National Strategy for Maritime Security* (2014, https://www.gov.uk/government) and 2022 (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-maritime-security-strategy); the *EU Maritime Security Strategy* (2014, https://www.eeas.europa.eu); the *French National Strategy for the Security of Sea Areas* (2015, https://www.gouvernement.fr) and *G7 Declaration* (https://www.mofa.go) regarding maritime security (also 2015). In common with the US strategy, these approaches are distinguished by their scale and ambition. They strive to connect different maritime threats and risks and aim to provide a comprehensive or holistic overview of the challenges faced at sea.

Thus, the EU Maritime Security conceptualizes maritime security as *"a state of affairs in the global maritime domain, where international and national law are applied, freedom of navigation is guaranteed and citizens, infrastructure, transport, the environment and marine resources are protected"* (https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu). Similarly, the UK's National Strategy for Maritime Security is concerned with *"promoting and protecting the UK's national interests at home and abroad by actively managing risks and opportunities in and from the maritime domain, to strengthen and extend the UK's prosperity, security and resilience, and to help shape a stable world"*.

Each of these maritime security strategies includes a different mix of emphases, inclusions and exclusions. NATO's strategy, for example, prioritises deterrence and collective defence alongside issues such as crisis management and cooperative security, and continues to emphasise *"hard"* naval power alongside more diffuse maritime security tasks. The UK strategy, by contrast, does not consider *"coastal defence"*, military campaigns or maritime security as part of its remit.

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[1] Strengthening the Alliance's Maritime Posture is an integral and cross-cutting part of the implementation of these two paths and was reconfirmed in the 2022 Strategic Concept.

The African Union's strategy – AIM 2050 (https://cggrps.com) emphasizes the importance of maritime resources and trade to the continent's security and economic development, with a focus on capability building in areas including coastguard capabilities and port facilities.

Even so, the general thrust of each of these approaches is an attempt to understand and engage with the maritime arena as an interconnected security complex rather than as a series of separate threats or challenges, recognising that maritime security is a collective political issue over which no single actor can exercise decisive control.

THE BASIC DIMENSIONS OF MARITIME SECURITY

The development and increasing importance of the maritime domain have generated new requirements and standards, continuing and perfecting the trend of adaptation and efficiency with regard to maritime security. All this is correlated with the existing technical and technological level as well as with the one forecasted within the extraordinary existing trend. Developments are rapid, and new regulatory documents and strategic studies provide important considerations for security studies scholars regarding the nature of maritime security.

Analyzing the contemporary maritime security complex, we can state that it consists of four domains, each of them incorporating a series of cross-cutting security concerns. The first of these domains encompasses what is best regarded as a national security issue, corresponding largely to the long-standing traditions of naval strategy and naval power (the military domain).

The national security component of maritime security involves the development and application of naval power, incorporating the military power projection and the defence of the nation at sea, as well as the use of warships to protect maritime trade routes and commerce through deterrence, surveillance, and denial (Bueger). Such concerns remain topical in many parts of the world, especially in regions of current geopolitical rivalry, such as the South China Sea.

A second area addresses the marine environment. It includes a wide range of issues such as marine pollution, ship safety and regulation, maritime search and rescue, ocean health, pollution and the impact

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ROMANIAN MILITARY THINKING

of climate change. The marine environment is a similar long-standing concern in the maritime sphere, with its genesis in international efforts to regulate shipping and other activities at sea through intergovernmental organisations such as the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) or coordinating bodies such as UN Oceans.

Marine environmental issues relate to maritime security in several ways. They are a manifestation of wider environmental security concerns at sea and in coastal areas. They concern the position of commercial shipping as a potential target for crime, terrorism or piracy and as a means for trafficking in people, illicit goods or weapons (https://www.sciencedirect.com). Environmental degradation caused by fishing or other environmental crimes has also the potential to increase the grievances of coastal populations and lead to maritime instability.

Marine environmental problems are closely linked to a third area of economic development. The so-called *"blue economy"* (https://cor. europa.eu/ro/news) concerns underpin much of the maritime security agenda. About 90% of global trade is conducted at sea, and marine resources such as fisheries or offshore oil/gas are key economic assets.

Global trade can be threatened by piracy, crime or other forms of maritime disruption, while protection and development of marine resources are often central priorities for coastal states. Indeed, it is worth noting in this regard that the African Union's AIM 2050 strategy (https://au.int/en) places *"blue growth"* at the heart of its narrative, while the EU developed its own specific *"blue growth"* strategy in 2012 (https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu).

A final area addresses human security issues, in the sense of insecurity of individuals and local communities, as well as those affecting states. Human security issues permeate much of the maritime security agenda. Fisheries protection and sustainability, for example, support the livelihoods of millions of people living in coastal regions, while the same groups are often the most vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change or maritime pollution. Such concerns relate not only to the security of individuals and coastal communities, but also to the role of human insecurity in facilitating the emergence of activities such as piracy or crime as alternative sources of employment in regions of significant economic deprivation.

The maritime security agenda could have four distinctive features. The first of them is the interconnected, sometimes interdependent, nature of the security challenges that maritime security addresses (Samatar, Lindberg, Mahayni). For example, the collapse of the Somali state in the 1990s[2] left coastal regions open to plunder from illegal, unregulated or unreported fishing by wealthier states, as well as other activities such as unregulated disposal of toxic waste. Such activities exacerbated the significant degradation of local economies and fisheries as a result of the war, and created a substantial body of socially and economically displaced youth whose primary *"useful"* skills were related to navigating through fishing or violence through conflict (Ib.)

Somali-generated piracy was tolerated by local communities because of a severely impoverished population. As a security issue, Somali piracy thus encompasses themes of national security (international naval forces in various forms), maritime security (safety and duty of care towards the crews of hijacked vessels), economic development (fisheries protection and development) and human security (among vulnerable coastal communities).

A second characteristic of maritime security is that it is at the limit or threshold of its perception. Most maritime security issues should not simply be understood and addressed as marine environmental issues alone. Instead, they are invariably interlinked with challenges on land as well, as illustrated by the case of Somali piracy discussed above.

Coastal zones, ports and other infrastructure are integral to maritime security in other ways too. Effective governance and security of port or offshore facilities are often key to managing challenges such as smuggling, looting and corruption. Let us not forget that piracy and terrorism are primarily supported and financed on land, where the leadership is located!

Third, maritime security issues often transcend the clear boundaries of government responsibility or state competence. The High Seas are by definition a transnational environment, over which sovereignty is shared and in which the state is only one actor among many.

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[2] In file: //C:/Users/lears/Downloads/itudorache,+19_POPESCU+Alba+Iulia_Somalia_studiu+ de+caz.pdf, retrieved on 1 February 2023.

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Finally, and by extension, maritime security is inherently interjurisdictional, or at least jurisdictionally complex (https://www.academia.edu).

At the international level, piracy on the high seas has been addressed primarily as a maritime law enforcement issue, governed by international maritime law. However, this aspect raises a number of questions such as how captured pirate suspects should be treated, including where they should be tried and potentially imprisoned (Ib.). Even in territorial waters, there can be significant overlap or tension. Indeed, it is instructive in this regard to consider that the US NSMS has replaced what had previously been a series of separate departmental strategies, including those of the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security (US Government, 2005).

The maritime sphere is thus increasingly understood as a complex and holistic security issue, requiring extensive international, national, jurisdictional and public-private coordination to effectively address the challenges it presents. In practice, these maritime security challenges generate new forms of association, integration and cooperation between actors.

THE MULTITUDE AND DIVERSITY OF MARITIME SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF THE COMPLEX SYSTEM

The multiple approaches to the field normally generate a diversity of solutions, individual or group ones, regarding the ways and methods of planning and manifesting forms of maritime security. All these approaches create a multitude of inconsistencies at the macro level, but also gaps in the application of international regulations, fully or partially agreed or even not assumed.

An example is that of the EU maritime security strategy development process, which takes stock of the relevant agencies within the organization itself and its members. Thus, 383 groups or organizations dealing with the problem in one way or another have been identified, their number reflecting the complexity of the maritime security environment at the European level only (https://www.google.com/search?q=Marcus+Houben), the Union being nevertheless appreciated as having legislation in the field.

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Similarly, the Contact Group on Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS[3]) faces the challenge of bringing together and coordinating the work of more than 80 states and 25 international organizations to address piracy in the western Indian Ocean (http:// www.lessonsfrompiracy.net).

The organizational and international diversity of such initiatives often creates problems in the field of maritime security. They can be observed at three levels: first, a level centered on the joint production of knowledge; then, a coordination level focused on developing common scenarios for action; and finally, an operational level, incorporating joint maritime security activities.

We can appreciate that the multitude and diversity of structures engaged in the field of maritime security, as a result of national interests, represent a disadvantage that can only be removed through theoretical and operational standardization, as well as through collaboration, coordination and international cooperation. Everything must start from an organizational approach, with the use of simple tools and a coherent and effective response to the complexity and institutional links inherent in the issue of maritime security. Maritime security must be approached in a unitary manner, making connections where they exist and avoiding actions in one area that may be counterproductive to others. However, the strengthening of maritime capacity must be done with a correlation of similar efforts on land. National or regional actors can be supported and encouraged to manage their maritime security sectors in an adapted way and within a preferred organizational model. The application of the concept tends to favor state institutions. Where such institutions are weak or even non-existent, it is necessary to increase organizational efficiency.

Thus, organisational reform often focuses on issues of professionalisation in security institutions, including the definition of clear organisational roles and responsibilities, the development of appropriate structures, tailoring and training human resources to perform specific tasks, the establishment of formal organisational planning models and their implementation based on common standards of best practice.

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[3] The CGPCS is an ad hoc international governance mechanism (International Contact Group) established in New York on 14 January 2009 to facilitate discussions and coordinate actions among states and organizations to suppress Somali piracy.

ROMANIAN
MILITARY
THINKING

The maritime security agenda actually leads to new forms of international order at sea. This process is pragmatic and incremental, driven by innovation and change in the maritime arena rather than by broader structural changes in geopolitics or international regulation.

International actors develop practical responses to specific maritime security challenges. They reflect the requirement to coordinate and integrate the four areas of maritime security, namely: maritime power, marine environment, economic development and human security.

THE MARITIME DOMAIN AWARENESS AND THE NEED FOR INFORMATION

At the knowledge level, innovation in the maritime security complex can be seen in a number of new mechanisms for producing knowledge about the maritime security environment and developing what is often called Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) or maritime situational awareness.

To that end, it is used a wide range of data, including (voluntary) tracking of ship movements through information gathering systems such as the Automatic Identification System (AIS) or Single Windows, active surveillance through naval patrols, aerial reconnaissance, satellite imagery and radar systems, as well as the collection and analysis of data from national and international agencies involved in maritime security, shipping companies, including port authorities, customs and law enforcement. MDA aims to provide a rich database of information, often in real time, so that maritime security activities – including ship inspections at sea – can be planned and directed through centralized data mining techniques.

MDA's ambitions are considerable and go far beyond maritime surveillance as conventionally understood. In this regard, it is desirable to effectively understand anything associated with the maritime domain that could have an impact on security, safety, the economy or the environment. Such aspirations require significant transnational cooperation as well as engagement with a wide range of sub-state and private actors. Other initiatives exploit the opportunities offered by new communication and information technologies to open new channels of information exchange between civilian and military actors, as well as between the navies or ships of nations that might normally be reluctant to cooperate with each other. For example, the international

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action against piracy off the coast of Somalia has been facilitated by the Mercury Information Sharing Platform (https://research-information.bris.ac.uk), which enables various stakeholders – including national navies, international missions and civilian information sharing centers – to communicate with each other via chat-based synchronous text.chat with a live feed of naval operations and piracy incidents, providing real-time data to all participating actors.

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS: WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IN THE FUTURE?

Understanding maritime security and the structural and practical challenges it poses to the way the sea is governed will require continued in-depth study of the activities and initiatives that international actors undertake to address key elements of maritime security. It involves extending beyond the perspective of traditional realist and liberal theorising and using the insights offered by new security studies to consider normative structures, practices and knowledge.

It is necessary, while preserving the knowledge of power and maritime law studies, to connect them to interdisciplinary observations, and five areas in particular require further attention. Thus, we need to understand the changing nature of maritime power and how it can be transformed through connections with marine environmental concerns, *blue economy* and human security, the new focus on maritime crime and law enforcement at sea linked to the use of a full range of practical innovations, including technology and informal practices.

Moreover, we need to review the role of formal and informal rules for maritime security governance and examine how they are implemented through operations at sea, new legal coordination mechanisms and capability building, taking into account the creativity required to manage the complexity of maritime law. In addition, we need to look at how established models of international security cooperation – alliances, multinational operations and so on – become more diffuse, complex and complementary, involving a range of national (sometimes antagonistic) and also private partners as well as other non-state actors, including shipping companies, private security companies, fishing communities and other sub-state groups.

In the same context, it is necessary to pay more attention to the connections between the land and the sea, to the diverse forms

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ROMANIAN MILITARY THINKING

ROMANIAN
MILITARY
THINKING

of maritime crime and to other threats. For the mentioned problems to be understood and mitigated, maritime security studies should include a more sustained engagement in their causes and interaction on land, as well as in their manifestation at sea.

Last but not least, it is necessary to review the structural effects of capability building in the maritime sphere. At present, these initiatives remain relatively immature compared to those on land and there is a need for systematic experience sharing.

In conclusion, we consider it is time for security studies to move beyond the *"sea blindness"* and recognize the maritime domain as a subject and instrument for change and innovation in global policy as a whole. It will lead to a more pragmatic and relevant understanding of the maritime security complex, opening up an important environment for international interaction.

It is necessary to pay more attention to the connections between the land and the sea, to the diverse forms of maritime crime and to other threats. For the mentioned problems to be understood and mitigated, maritime security studies should include a more sustained engagement in their causes and interaction on land, as well as in their manifestation at sea.

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