

NICOLAE TITULESCU AND HIS FOREIGN POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BLACK SEA SECURITY

Daniela Florentina BORCAN

Romanian National Military Archives

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Romania has promoted an active foreign policy that aims to defend independence, territorial integrity, and develop security to ensure peace. Nicolae Titulescu, who was the main figure in Romanian foreign policy, safeguarded the country's borders during challenging times, taking into account the importance and advantages of our territory. The political man focused on the Black Sea and the issue of the straits. In a conciliatory framework, Titulescu supported strategic cooperation and advocated the conclusion of regional alliances and conventions to harmonize the interests of peoples, resulting in strengthening security in the face of expansionist trends as well as in enhancing trade and free movement of vessels in the Black Sea.

Keywords: Nicolae Titulescu; military power; Black Sea security; strategic cooperation; Montreux Convention;

Motto: "I would say that the Straits are the heart of Turkey, but they are at the same time the lungs of Romania. When a region, through its geographical situation, is the heart of a nation and the lungs of another, the most basic wisdom dictates that these two nations should unite and make one whole".

Nicolae Titulescu

INTRODUCTION

Security in the Wider Black Sea Area is the subject of interest of Romanian historiography, the research involving a complex analysis that covers several aspects, not only geopolitical and strategic, but also historical ones. The present paper has as its main research objective the importance of the political events in Romania's interwar period, especially the importance of foreign diplomacy carried out by the politician Nicolae Titulescu and his key actions regarding Romania's contribution to the security of the Black Sea.

Nicolae Titulescu, one of Romania's most prominent diplomatic figures in the interwar period, was well known for his role in international politics and had a significant impact on the evolution of Romania's foreign policy. Through his intense diplomatic activity and international cooperation, he promoted the principles of collective security in the Wider Black Sea region, an area of strategic interest for several powers, including the Soviet Union, Turkey and littoral states such as Romania and Bulgaria.

The regime was marked by territorial tensions, as well as competition for influence in the Balkans and the Caucasus. Romania, having an extended border along the Black Sea and controlling the mouths of the Danube, had vital security interests linked to this region, including maintaining stability and a favourable balance of power.

FOREIGN POLICY DIRECTIONS FOR ACTION

Regarding Nicolae Titulescu's foreign policy, he pursued multiple directions of action concerning the principles of security, as both a supporter and a promoter of those principles. In addition to the regional alliances Romania joined, aimed at ensuring its security, such as the Little Entente (an alliance between Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia), he also supported collective security. The concept

of collective security in the European system, advocated by Titulescu, promoted cooperation between European states to prevent wars and ensure stability. Those alliances were aimed at maintaining the balance of power in Eastern and Southeastern Europe as well as at protecting Romania from potential aggression, including in the Black Sea region.

Titulescu supported stability in the Black Sea region and was actively involved in various negotiations and discussions aimed at preventing the expansion of foreign influence in the area. By attempting to build good neighbourly relations, he advocated for peace treaties that would ensure stability, such as the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. The treaty redefined borders and power relations in the Balkans and the Black Sea region after the First World War. Although Titulescu was not directly responsible for drafting the treaty, he was involved in its ratification, working to achieve a favourable balance of power in Romania. The international agreement established the borders of the Republic of Turkey, reorganizing the balance of maritime power. A principal and important provision of the treaty was the recognition of Turkey's sovereignty over the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles Straits, granting Turkey the right to exercise control over them.

The balance of power mentioned earlier concerned Romania's geopolitical position, particularly from the perspective of the international regime of the straits, the freedom of navigation in this area, and Romania's access to the Black Sea. The Treaty of Lausanne laid the foundation for regional cooperation in the Wider Black Sea Area and for the collaboration between Turkey and its neighbours. Romania benefited from the regional stability essential to this treaty, especially since one of its advantages was free maritime trade.

Being aware of the importance of maintaining peace and balance in the area, Titulescu became one of the architects of the Balkan Pact in 1934, signed between Romania, Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey, with the aim of consolidating resistance against revisionist aggression, including in the Black Sea region. The Balkan Pact guaranteed the consolidation of Romania's borders, established after the First World War, and the strengthening of relations with Turkey, aiming to ensure the stability of the region. The Balkan Pact materialized Titulescu's vision of a stable Europe that would prevent armed conflicts.

Closely related to the aforementioned treaties is the Montreux Convention, signed in 1936, after the Conference on the Regime of the Black Sea Straits, which was held with the aim of establishing a new regime on the straits. The convention regulated the regime of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles Straits, which made Titulescu directly interested in the consequences of the Convention. Thus, Titulescu

was trying to support the idea that Turkey should regain power and control over these straits, fearing that, otherwise, destabilization would occur in the region.

The new convention replaced the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which had established international control over the straits. Titulescu supported the new situation because the arrangement was much more favourable to Romania from the point of view of security in the Black Sea region. The reasons why he supported the Convention were pertinent and concerned the future of Romania's security, diplomatic relations, the right to free passage of ships, the issue of trade, the future of the economy and the geopolitical context. In addition to reducing the risk of invasion by the revisionist powers, the convention guaranteed the situation of commercial ships, their free passage during peacetime, which was essential for Romania's international trade.

At the same time, in the event of a war situation, Turkey had the right to restrict the access of foreign ships to the Black Sea region in order to protect the maritime space from external invasions. An important role was also played by the International Straits Commission, with representatives such as those of Turkey, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria and Russia, who had in mind the observance of the regime of the straits, an objective continued by the partner countries under the provisions of the Montreux Convention. For Romania, the situation of the straits was one of particular importance, taking into account the effects of navigation on the Danube. Movement on the river led the economic development of Romania.

In the 1930s, the European space faced the rise of new totalitarian political ideologies, which endangered its political and territorial integrity. For European peace, the expansion of fascism and nazism was a real danger that the nations had realized quite quickly. Nicolae Titulescu also played an important role in the normalization of Romania's relations with the Soviet Union in the 1930s. Although cautious, he considered it essential to maintain a diplomatic dialogue with Moscow in order to protect Romania's territorial integrity, especially in the context of the disputes related to Bessarabia and the Black Sea security.

The relations with the USSR were based on collaboration and prudence, on dialogue and bilateral cooperation, arguing that an understanding with the URSS could offer Romania more security, a counterbalance trying to introduce Russia into collective security alliances. As expected, Titulescu was criticized for his policy of cooperation with the USSR, especially by the conservative side that feared the great power changing attitude. Here we recall Gheorghe I. Brătianu, who expressed his mistrust and concern towards Titulescu's actions, which he considered especially dangerous, as the future and defence of Romania could

fall into the hands of Moscow. Undoubtedly, his policy had both positive effects, maintaining some tranquillity and peace regarding Romania's position in the face of regional tensions and less favourable effects with the dismissal of Titulescu. The tensions regarding the future of Bessarabia, a subject that remained sensitive even after the diplomatic discussions held between Romania and the USSR, prevented a permanent collaboration, creating a much more tense and difficult to manage framework for Romania, culminating in the Soviet ultimatum of 1940.

Through his efforts to build a collective security system and through the regional alliances he supported, Titulescu indirectly contributed to the stability of the Black Sea region. It was crucial for Romania, which depended on a stable regional environment to protect its economic and strategic interests in the area. Titulescu used the international tribune of the League of Nations to promote disarmament and the peaceful settlement of disputes, including in the regions adjacent to the Black Sea. Although his success was eclipsed by the rise of totalitarian regimes and the failure of the League of Nations, he set a precedent for Romania's subsequent approaches.

CONCLUSIONS

Titulescu's diplomatic legacy influenced Romania's foreign policy even after his death, including in the post-war period. The principles of collective security and dialogue that he promoted continued to be relevant in the policy towards the Black Sea, especially within NATO and other international organizations. In the current context of tensions in the Black Sea region, Titulescu's ideas on active diplomacy, international cooperation and conflict prevention remain important for Romania's approach to managing security challenges in the area.

In conclusion, his diplomatic activity had a significant impact on collective security. He contributed to the creation of a diplomatic framework that influenced the stability and the security of the Black Sea, a crucial aspect for Romania's foreign policy in the interwar period. As the head of Romania's diplomacy, he campaigned for peace, security, the people's right to independence and unity. The preservation of territorial integrity was also an objective of Titulescu's foreign policy. However, he was criticized in the contemporary period for the actions of approaching the USSR, being categorized as dangerous and even strange. Throughout his career, the great diplomat launched original, peaceful, courageous ideas, especially within the League of Nations, in a dangerous context, under the expansion of totalitarian regimes. His actions, carried out more than 80 years ago, still have effects today, which proves once again the power and dedication of the great politician.

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