

CONFERENCE PRESENTATION

The international *Romanian Military Thinking Conference*, having the theme *NATO-EU Resilience, Military Capabilities Enhancement and Cooperation for the Development of a Black Sea Security Strategy*, was held at the Palace of National Military Circle, between 14 and 16 November 2023, by the Defence Staff, in the context of the anniversary of 164 years since the Defence Staff was established.

PARTICIPANTS:

The conference was attended by over 50 national and international experts in the field of security studies. Among them we can mention:

- international experts in security studies;
- personalities from Romania having acknowledged expertise in the field of security, diplomacy and international relations;
- university professors within the military and civilian higher education system;
- Romanian military leaders from the Defence Staff and the armed forces services;
- specialists and experts from institutions belonging to the National System of Defence, Public Order and National Security;
- officers and experts within the Defence Staff structures as well as within subordinate ones.

CONFERENCE DEVELOPMENT:

The conference focused on expert-level discussions and was organized in the format of 7 panels and 3 round tables, part of them being coordinated by the following institutional partners: New Strategy Center, Center for Conflict Prevention & Early Warning, I2DS2 – Integrated Intelligence, Defence and Security Solutions, University of Bucharest, E-ARC. The discussion topics were as follows:

- *NATO's defence and deterrence posture on the eastern flank of the North Atlantic Alliance. Romania, a provider of security and stability in the region;*
- *Romania's role in the Ukraine, NATO and Black Sea equation – a security perspective and lessons identified from the conflict in Ukraine;*
- *The influence of the conflict in Ukraine on the security environment in the Black Sea Region – evolution and perspectives;*
- *NATO-EU Naval Cooperation: Strengthening Euro-Atlantic maritime posture in response to Russia's war in Ukraine by achieving allied technological superiority in the Black Sea;*
- *Integrated Air and Missile Defence in the Allied Context and the national perspective in the current and future Black Sea security environment;*

- *Transforming Euro-Atlantic Defence: Empowering common defence capabilities and resources in the evolving security landscape;*
- *A security perspective regarding enhancing readiness, availability, and resilience in Romania and the Black Sea area;*
- *The impact of emerging and disruptive technologies on future military actions – national implications for ensuring a security strategy in the Black Sea;*
- *The power of information in the process of building resilience in the current security environment in the Black Sea Region;*
- *Maritime resilience in the age of hybrid threats;*
- *The straits question. Conflict and cooperation at the Black Sea.*

MAIN MESSAGES PROMOTED DURING THE DISCUSSIONS:

- In the current security context, there are multiple challenges, including of technological nature. That is why, at NATO level, cohesion, cooperation (with member and partner states in the region) and interoperability are very important elements;
- The United States of America has a vision regarding the Black Sea security strategy, focused on five main directions:
 1. increasing political and diplomatic commitments in the region;
 2. strengthening regional security and cooperation by supporting a significant NATO presence in the area and defending freedom of navigation in the Black Sea;
 3. supporting regional economic cooperation to increase resilience and ensure an effective framework for business development;
 4. promoting the principle of energy security;
 5. supporting democratic principles by fighting corruption and disinformation.
- NATO operations in the Black Sea region are conducted in compliance with international norms in the field;
- NATO desires neither to have a confrontation with Russia, nor to become a threat to Russia. NATO is strengthening its posture in the Black Sea region to anticipate possible crises and to be able to respond to them adequately, in the context of the strategic initiative importance;
- As a NATO member state and a Black Sea littoral state, Romania has increased its investments in the military field, confirming the fact that it is a security provider in the region;

- Regarding the relationship between the EU and the security situation in the Black Sea region, the EU involvement becomes obvious, especially through the Strategic Compass;
- The addition of some *hard power* elements to the already existing *soft power* ones and the strengthening of crisis management missions in the region, in the context of the Common Security and Defence Policy, would represent desirable ways forward;
- At the cognitive level, there may be actors that try to (re)define the physical space, so that it can meet their own interests, the role of military diplomacy becoming very important in this context;
- Security investments in the eastern flank of the Alliance contribute to protecting the transatlantic core;
- The security agenda in the region should be developed jointly, despite the challenges related to the development of an active multidimensional security posture, defence diplomacy thus playing a key role.

The event was attended by the Chair of the Committee on Defence, Public Order and National Security within the Romanian Chamber of Deputies, Laurențiu-Dan Leoreanu, as well as by the ambassadors of Bulgaria, Georgia, the USA and Türkiye in Bucharest.



General Daniel PETRESCU emphasized that security in the region is a priority for our country and for the allied countries. *“It is important to assess our understanding of resilience. (...) NATO is interested in the sovereignty and defence of the Alliance members in the Black Sea region. The war between Russia and Ukraine has revealed a high degree of cohesion among member states, as well as a vision of how it should be responded. (...) Security in the region is a priority for our country and the Allied forces. (...) Actions are needed for strengthening the resilience of society. The Armed Forces must be modernized to respond to complex threats. (...) New domains and technologies must be used”*, said General Petrescu.

Deputy Laurențiu LEOREANU, for his part, drew attention to the threats and security risks of the past decades. *“The Russian Federation is an undisciplined actor at the international level, a country that does not belong to any established value*

system. The Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, is part of the praxis of territorial conquests, based on two constants – fear and insecurity. (...) Our country, as a country with a triple border – national, NATO and EU – has established and strengthened, through concerted efforts, its status as a security provider in the area, but these efforts must be intensified in the future as well, especially in the context of a security strategy for the Black Sea”, declared the parliamentarian. According to him, “in the current security context, NATO and the EU can no longer afford to have an area of insecurity in their immediate vicinity”. “We are aware that, without regional stability, the economic and geostrategic potential of the Black Sea cannot be exploited. (...) From a legislative point of view, the Parliament of Romania has supported the objectives of our country. (...) The need to have a security strategy in the Black Sea, as a tangible result of our joint efforts, must be aimed, first of all, at redefining its dimension, and the idea of a bridge versus a border could be replaced with a new more comprehensive and more appropriate conceptualization. The Black Sea could become a strategic platform for the spread of democracy and stability, an emerging centre of sustainable development”, emphasized Laurențiu Leoreanu.



The ambassador of Bulgaria to Bucharest, Radko Todorov VLAYKOV, showed that the current period is one of crisis and challenges. “It is difficult to talk about our mission as ambassadors considering the ongoing aggression in the vicinity of our territory, considering that the international security rules have been in danger lately. It is of international importance, considering that the international security has been endangered by the invasion of Ukraine. First of all, it is about the invasion of Georgia and the continued occupation of territories. (...) We must accept our common interest in this area. The Black Sea is a key concept within NATO and it represents the responsibility of the wider region and must be seen as a responsibility for the Alliance as a whole, given NATO involvement, there is intense cooperation between NATO and the EU in this area. (...) We must promote unity and security in the area”, said the ambassador of Bulgaria.



Georgia and Romania are partners in a close cooperation, and the security of the Black Sea is a guarantee of peace and stability, said the **ambassador of Georgia to Bucharest, Tamar BERUCHASHVILI**. “We share common values and interests and I consider that building sustainable resilience is our common goal to face the current challenges. I express my appreciation to the Government of Romania for supporting the sovereignty and integrity of Georgia, as well as our integration into the European Union. Georgia is responsible, it is a responsible partner of the European Union and it is also a partner for the security of the region. The security of the region is closely related to the security of Georgia. Georgia is ready to contribute to the European Union security and to NATO security through missions that counter the Russian occupation. (...) In many ways, Georgia already acts as an ally. In addition, Georgia participates in the NATO exercises in the Black Sea, we are part of all regional and bilateral initiatives, (...) it is necessary to develop measures with our partners, with our neighbours, to ensure security in the Black Sea in all areas”, stated Beruchashvili.

The ambassador of the USA to Romania, Kathleen KVALEC, mentioned that, as the US President, Joe Biden, also stated, the current period is a turning point in international history. “We are facing a defining moment (...) – challenges, the situation in Ukraine, the Hamas attack, global climate changes must also be mentioned. (...) The invasion of Ukraine represents an attack on international security, as we should also see the situation in the Black Sea. (...) The US interest is to work with global partners (...) with a view to a period of peace and prosperity. The United States of America has a vision regarding the security strategy for the Black Sea, focused on five main directions:



1. increasing political and diplomatic commitments in the region;
2. strengthening regional security and cooperation by supporting a significant NATO presence in the area and defending freedom of navigation in the Black Sea;
3. supporting regional economic cooperation to increase resilience and ensure an effective framework for business development;
4. promoting the principle of energy security;
5. supporting democratic principles by fighting corruption and disinformation”, said the ambassador.

Kathleen Kavalec added that the current situation will reshape the international future and create new partnerships, while existing ones will strengthen, such as the partnership between Romania and the USA. *“We must demonstrate that our partnership envisions a strong world for future generations. A strategy must be developed regarding the Black Sea countries. (...) Cooperation is crucial, not only for Romania, but also for international security”*, emphasized the US ambassador to Bucharest.

According to the **ambassador of Türkiye to Romania, Ozgur Kivanc ALTAN**, actions to conquer territories are inappropriate in this century. *“We had such actions in the past. (...) Türkiye has supported Ukraine’s independence, even before the invasion, since the conquest of Crimea. (...) We have closed the corridors for Russian ships. We have closed our airspace for Russian planes and we are in favour of the sanctions imposed in this conflict. We have supported Ukraine through both technical and humanitarian assistance. (...) Russia’s invasion has led to a food crisis at global level. The global food market has been affected because of this conflict. Türkiye is trying to contribute to potential negotiations and we want to revitalize this process together with the United Nations. (...) Diplomacy must be restored to ensure peace in the area and the integrity and sovereignty of an attacked country. We will maintain our support for Ukraine to win not only the war, but also peace. Türkiye has an important role in the stability and security of the Black Sea area. The security of the Black Sea must be a priority”*, emphasized the ambassador of Türkiye.



In a video message, **NATO Deputy Secretary General, Mircea GEOANĂ**, reaffirmed the importance of partnerships between Romania and international allies. *“We can learn so much from each other. Building stronger societies and more critical infrastructure is a team effort. We have now agreed on infrastructure coordination. NATO represents a deep commitment to defend each other from attack and to stand by each other. We are doing everything necessary to protect our nations, our values and our peoples, and this is what we will continue to do for the protection of Ukraine, the Black Sea region and the entire Alliance”* said Mircea Geoană.

PANEL 1
NATO’S DEFENCE AND DETERRENCE POSTURE
ON THE EASTERN FLANK OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC ALLIANCE
– ROMANIA, A PROVIDER OF SECURITY AND STABILITY
IN THE REGION
(COORDINATED BY THE DEFENCE STAFF)

Guest speaker

- **MG Konstantinos KOLOKOTRONIS** – Director, Military Intelligence & Security Branch, Hellenic National Defence General Staff

Moderators:

- **MG Remus-Hadrian BONDOR** – Chief, Strategic Planning Directorate
- **NAVY CAPT (ret.) Cristian BOGDAN** – Scientific Advisor, *Romanian Military Thinking Journal*

Speakers:

- **RADM UH Alper YENIEL** – Chief of Strategy Plan and Policy Division, Turkish Armed Forces
- **Antonia COLIBĂȘANU** – Senior Geopolitical Analyst & COO, Geopolitical Futures Lecturer, SNSPA, Senior Associate Expert, New Strategy Center
- **Mark OZAWA** – Senior Researcher, NATO Defense College
- **Tengiz PKHALADZE** – Senior Fellow, European Centre for International Political Economy

NATO Response following Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine

Immediately after the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, the North Atlantic Council decided, for the first time, to activate the allied defence plans, thus being deployed on the allied eastern flank, including in Romania, elements of the NATO Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). In Romania, the precursor land element of the battalion-level VJTF was deployed, provided by France as the framework nation.

During the extraordinary NATO Summit in Brussels, on 24.03.2022, the Heads of State and Government decided to establish four new battle groups in Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary, to safeguard the security of the allies, as part

of a wider set of measures to strengthen the allied deterrence and defence posture in the medium and long term.

In Romania, France took over the role of the battle group's framework nation and, in July 2022, started the deployment of the troops of the Battle Group format, which have gradually increased, simultaneously with the completion of the infrastructure works in the National Joint Training Centre Cincu.

Deterrence and defence measures also include air defence systems, airspace reconnaissance assets, and multi-role aircraft for air policing and enhanced vigilance missions. At the same time, the USA has focused its attention on the Black Sea. Washington decided to deploy a divisional command and a brigade of approximately 3,000 troops to Romania. In addition to these reassurance measures, US Congress members advanced a bipartisan legislative proposal – the Black Sea Security Act –, that called on Washington to increase its commitments to regional countries, increase military assistance and improve coordination with NATO and the EU. If passed, the bill would lay the foundations for a first-of-its-kind US strategy for the Black Sea region.

PANEL 2

ROMANIA'S ROLE IN THE UKRAINE, NATO AND BLACK SEA EQUATION. A SECURITY PERSPECTIVE AND LESSONS IDENTIFIED FROM THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE (COORDINATED BY THE CENTER FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION & EARLY WARNING)

Guest speaker

- **Simona COJOCARU** – State Secretary and Head of the Department for Defence Policy, Planning and International Relations, Ministry of National Defence

Moderator:

- **Narciz BĂLĂȘOIU** – Director, Center for Conflict Prevention & Early Warning

Speakers:

- **Iulian CHIFU** – President, Center for Conflict Prevention & Early Warning

- **Vira KONSTANTYNOVA** – Independent Analyst, former Foreign Policy Advisor to the Chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament (2019-2021)
- **Greg SIMONS** – Lecturer, Department of Communication Science, Turiba University
- **James SHEER** – Senior Fellow, International Center for Defence and Security, Tallin
- **Andrei SOLDATOV** – Senior Fellow, Center for European Policy Analysis
- **Mustafa AYDIN** – Professor, Kadir Has University, Istanbul
- **BG (r.) Ion COROPCEAN** – Director, Agency for Military Science and Memory, the Republic of Moldova

24 February 2022 will remain a watershed date in European history; that day, the Russian regime led by President Vladimir Putin launched a military invasion of Ukraine, marking the return of war in Europe for the first time in decades.

Much of what has transpired since the war's onset has come as a surprise, whether in its political and strategic dimensions or operational and tactical terms. The war was not an impossibility before 24 February, but it was certainly viewed in the West as improbable from the perspective of a rational cost-benefit analysis. This is especially so when one considers Putin's attempt to swallow the entirety of Ukrainian territory. The means with which Russia attempted its conquest also raised several questions as to its armed forces' level of preparedness, organisation, and operational ability. Today, it is clear that Russia's military capacity was overestimated while Ukraine's capacity to resist was underestimated.

For its part, the Atlantic Alliance has displayed a political unity that was admittedly lacking in recent years. The United States has demonstrated unequivocal commitment to the defence of Europe, while European Allies have shown both political resolve and a will to take defence spending seriously. Very little dissent or freeriding has occurred in the West. Solidarity with Ukraine has been optimal, both politically and through the delivery of weapons.

The European Union (EU) too has acted swiftly, most notably through the imposition of sanctions on Russia in lockstep with US and UK sanctions. The EU has also decided to finance the delivery of weapons to Ukraine.

This debate examined some identified lessons that NATO, its allies, and its partners could draw from the war in Ukraine while the Alliance released its new

Strategic Concept and, once again, has demonstrated its ability to adapt to a new environment.

Discussion Topics

- (Policy / Diplomacy) NATO's response to Russia's aggression and implications for both the EU and for NATO's new Strategic Concept;
- (Policy / Diplomacy) Diplomacy in conflict;
- (Military) Ukraine's military performance on the battlefield;
- (Military) Russia's military performance on the battlefield;
- (Economy) Economy supporting the participants in conflict;
- (Social) The human factor in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict;
- (Info) the role of STRATCOM before and during military operation in Ukraine;
- (Infrastructure) the role of infrastructure in military operations.

PANEL 3

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE ON THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN THE BLACK SEA REGION – EVOLUTION AND PERSPECTIVES (COORDINATED BY NEW STRATEGY CENTER)

Moderator:

- **MG (r.) Paul HURMUZ** – Senior Associate Expert, New Strategy Center

Speakers:

- **MG Cristian-Daniel DAN** – Deputy Chief, Land Forces Staff
- **Yordan BOZHILOV** – Director, Sofia Security Forum
- **Tacan ILDEM** – Chairman, Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies
- **MG (r.) Vakhtang KAPANADZE** – Director on Defence and Security Policy, GEOCASE

NATO identified the Black Sea Region as an area of strategic importance in the 2022 Strategic Concept (NATO, 2022c). Now, it must develop a strategy outlining its approach to regional security – this entails the development of a tailored and structured approach, including an Action Plan, to address threats and challenges emanating from the Black Sea region; it should also include a comprehensive

approach to broader challenges such as food and energy security and should align with the European Union for maximum effect.

Furthermore, NATO allies should draft their own, national Black Sea Strategies highlighting their interests in the region and detailing how they will support the broader NATO Strategy. The United States is moving in this direction, with strong bipartisan legislation seeking to drive the development of an American Black Sea Strategy moving through Congress. Other allies should follow suit.

Such actions would demonstrate the commitment of NATO allies to ensuring the security of the BSR while also highlighting the region's importance to their own security and economy.

PANEL 4

NATO-EU NAVAL COOPERATION: STRENGTHENING EURO-ATLANTIC MARITIME POSTURE IN RESPONSE TO RUSSIA'S WAR IN UKRAINE BY ACHIEVING ALLIED TECHNOLOGICAL SUPERIORITY IN THE BLACK SEA (COORDINATED BY THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST)

Guest speaker

- **H.E. Dorin DUCARU** – Director, European Union Satellite Centre

Moderator:

- **Olga R. CHIRIAC** – Visiting Professor, University of Bucharest / Project Europe Director, Irregular Warfare Initiative, Modern War Institute, West Point

Speakers:

- **VAM Mihai PANAIT** – Chief, Naval Forces Staff
- **COL Sönke MARAHRENS** – Director, Community of Interest on Strategy & Defence, Hybrid Center of Excellence
- **James H. BERGERON** – Political Advisor, NATO Allied Maritime Command
- **Robert KOCH** – General Staff Officer, Allied Command Transformation

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has mobilised international efforts to coordinate the support given to Ukraine, not only at the national level but also at that of NATO

member states. The support took the form of humanitarian, economic and military aid.

In this context, NATO moved from reassurance to deterrence and defence measures, including the deployment of response forces, to strengthen its posture and presence in the eastern flank. Considering the geographical location of Ukraine, the Wider Black Sea Area has acquired an even greater importance than before the invasion, with maritime security being mentioned, in the new NATO Strategic Concept adopted in Madrid, in June 2022, as a major element of peace and prosperity.

Ensuring the NATO standing naval presence to deter potential threats to the Alliance is a constant concern for the Romanian Armed Forces, which participate every year in the missions of the Standing NATO Maritime Group 2/SNMG 2 and the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 2/SNMCMG 2, with frigate-type ships (having a helicopter on board and a SOF team) and sea dredgers.

Moreover, Romania maintains its contribution to Operation Sea Guardian, with the T22 frigate. Because of the conflict in Ukraine and its consequences for the free passage of military ships through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, the missions have been successively cancelled.

To ensure maritime security in the Mediterranean Sea, the Aegean Sea, the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, the Romanian Armed Forces contribute to the missions of the NATO Standing Naval Forces with staff personnel in the embarked commands.

Technological progress can have significant military implications, changing the nature of war and the character of conflicts. As a result, future Alliance operations are expected to occur in a different setting. Thus, to adequately respond to technological threats, security and defence decision-makers must focus on capability development activities and operations planning, at the three levels – strategic, operational and tactical, in the medium and long term. Therefore, Romania, alongside the other member states of the Alliance, is implementing the appropriate measures, to contribute to the collective defence effort, as well as to NATO's defence and deterrence posture, especially in the eastern flank, where the Wider Black Sea Region is located, considering its particularities, mainly generated by its geostrategic position, while being aware of the technological impact on armed confrontations.

PANEL 5
INTEGRATED AIR AND MISSILE DEFENCE IN THE ALLIED CONTEXT
AND THE NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE IN THE CURRENT AND FUTURE
BLACK SEA SECURITY ENVIRONMENT
 (COORDINATED BY THE DEFENCE STAFF)

Moderators:

- **BG Florin-Marian BARBU** – Chief, Operations Directorate, Defence Staff
- **COL Daniel ROMAN** – Associate Professor, “Carol I” National Defence University

Speakers:

- **MG Remus-Hadrian BONDOR** – Chief, Strategic Planning Directorate, Defence Staff
- **BG (r.) Dan CAVALERU** – Former Deputy Chief, Air Force Staff
- **CMDR Vică ILEA** – NATO Integrated Air & Missile Defence, Centre of Excellence
- **Aaron SHIFFER** – Maritime and Carrier Operations, Joint Air Power Competence Centre
- **COL Eugen CĂLIN** – Commander, 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment
- **COL Bogdan DUMITRESCU** – Commander, 61st Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment
- **COL Valentin-Eugen PETRESCU** – Commander, 50th Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment
- **MAJ Andrei NISTOR** – Chief, Artillery and Anti-Aircraft Missile Office, Land Forces
- **COL Bogdan BORCILĂ** – Chief of Staff, 1st Surface to Air Missiles Brigade

Russia's air and missile attacks on Ukraine underscored the importance of Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD) and, more specifically, Surface-Based Air and Missile Defence (SBAMD) as an essential part of NATO's Defensive Counter-Air (DCA) capability. As the military conflict continues, the looming question hangs heavily on NATO's eastern border: are NATO SBAMD forces ready for action at a moment's notice?

It is vital to the security of NATO that Air Defence (AD) operators are NATO mission qualified now because they must be ready to act and fight with little or no warning, as a crisis can quickly turn to conflict. After experiencing thirty years

of air superiority in NATO operations, the change in threat perspective urges NATO nations to reconsider defence against air threats.

Panel Topics:

- GBAD in the context of electronic warfare;
- Impact of drones on GBAD;
- Lessons identified regarding GBAD in the context of the conflict in Ukraine;
- Defense and deterrence measures on NATO's eastern flank: air defense organization in response to Air shielding operations;
- Hypersonic missile challenges for GBAD;
- Integration of IAMD national control elements into NATINAMD;
- NATO IAMD Education and Training;
- Integration of GBAD in multi-domain operations;
- Changing the GBAD philosophy in the "*Patriot Context*".

PANEL 6

**TRANSFORMING EURO-ATLANTIC DEFENCE:
EMPOWERING COMMON DEFENCE CAPABILITIES AND RESOURCES
IN THE EVOLVING SECURITY LANDSCAPE
(COORDINATED BY I2DS2)**

Moderator:

- **Niculae IANCU** – President, I2DS2/Integrated Intelligence, Defence and Security Solutions

Speakers:

- **Radu CÎȘLEANU** – Director, Military Intelligence Agency, the Republic of Moldova
- **Thomas-Durell YOUNG** – Senior Academic Advisor, President's Office, Defense Security Cooperation University, Washington, DC
- **MG (r.) Pedro SALVADA** – President & CEO INNOV LEAN, Former Head of the F-16 Programe, Portuguese Air Force
- **Emanuel CERNAT** – Managing Partner, Corporate Affairs Strategies
- **RADM (LH) Ion-Cristian LIȘMAN** – Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Resources

In an era of dynamic security challenges, this panel aimed to bring into focus the innovative policies and groundbreaking initiatives undertaken by NATO and the EU to strengthen Euro-Atlantic and European defence capabilities while effectively managing defence resources. With a particular emphasis on the Black Sea security context, the panel sought to explore how collaborative efforts within the Euro-Atlantic area could empower collective defence and effectively respond to the rapidly changing security landscape.

Panel Topics:

- **A Comprehensive Approach to Euro-Atlantic Security Challenges.** This topic addressed the evolving nature of conventional and hybrid threats and the need for a comprehensive approach to counter them. Panellists examined how Euro-Atlantic nations could effectively adapt their defence capabilities, leverage intelligence sharing, and strengthen civil-military cooperation to address both conventional and hybrid threats in a rapidly changing security environment.
- **Harnessing Resilience and Technological Advancements for Future-Ready Defence Capabilities.** This topic focused on the critical role of resilience and technology in transforming defence capabilities. Panellists examined how leveraging resilience, embracing emerging technologies, and fostering innovation could enable NATO member states to adapt to evolving security threats, optimise resource management, and enhance their defence preparedness.
- **NATO Capability Initiatives: Driving Defence Excellence and Interoperability.** This topic explored the importance of Euro-Atlantic nations' cooperation and interoperability in developing and sharing common defence capabilities. Panellists discussed partnership models, joint procurement initiatives, and collaborative research and development efforts to enhance defence cooperation, maximise resource sharing, and foster a stronger Euro-Atlantic defence community. The discussion highlighted NATO's capability initiatives, including meeting capability targets, the new Defence Production Action Plan, the Multinational Ammunitions Warehousing Initiative, and the renewed Defence Investment Pledge. Panellists analysed the impact of these initiatives on enhancing collective defence capabilities, fostering interoperability, and promoting efficient resource utilisation within NATO member states.
- **Strengthening European Defence through Collaborative Endeavours: EU Defence Initiatives.** This topic emphasised key European references for capability

development, such as the EU Capability Development Plan and the ensuing cooperation framework for its execution, which includes defence initiatives like the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). Panellists discussed the objectives, achievements, and challenges associated with these initiatives, emphasising their role in fostering research and development, promoting defence industrial cooperation, and enhancing European defence capabilities.

By focusing on these key topics, the panel provided valuable insights into the transformative initiatives of NATO and the EU while exploring the broader themes of deterrence and defence through resilience, technology, cooperation, and adaptability. It aimed to foster engaging discussions, identify opportunities for collaboration, and offer actionable recommendations to drive the continued enhancement of Euro-Atlantic defence capabilities and resource management.

PANEL 7

THE POWER OF INFORMATION IN THE PROCESS OF BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE CURRENT SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN THE BLACK SEA REGION (COORDINATED BY THE DEFENCE INTELLIGENCE TRAINING CENTRE/ GENERAL DIRECTORATE FOR DEFENCE INTELLIGENCE)

Moderator:

- **COL Dorinel MOLDOVAN** – Director, Defence Intelligence Training Centre

Speakers:

- **MG (r.) Paul HURMUZ** – Senior Associate Expert, New Strategy Center
- **MG (r.) Adrieian PÂRLOG** – Professor, Global Studies Center, University of Sibiu
- **Ioan Mircea PAȘCU** – Professor, National School of Political Science and Public Administration, SNSPA
- **Cristian BARNA** – Training Manager, INTELLIGENCE4ALL
- **Silviu NATE** – Director, Global Studies Center, University of Sibiu
- **LTC Răzvan ZAHARIA** – Romanian Intelligence Service

The complexity, dynamics and implications of the current regional and global security environment oblige the Romanian and allied decision-makers, regardless of the actional layer, to get a comprehensive knowledge of reality, request and imperative representing a continuous and permanent challenge, as well as an opportunity for intelligence services.

The challenge comes from the informational immensity of sources, technologies and procedures and their products, which offer, at the same time, liabilities and opportunities for actionable information/intelligence and knowledge.

Therefore, the mandatory integration of these components in a lucrative formula has to represent the unique option for the leading factors of Romania, on immediate, medium and long terms. Moreover, in the spirit and constitution of national resilience, wisdom should be the fundamental feature and optics of strategic choices, considering, at least, opportunity cost and cost-effectiveness approaches.

PANEL 8

ENHANCING READINESS, AVAILABILITY AND RESILIENCE IN ROMANIA AND THE BLACK SEA AREA (COORDINATED BY THE “CAROL I” NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY)

Guest speaker

- **H.E. Cristian DIACONESCU** – Scientific Council Member, New Strategy Center

Moderators:

- **COL Dan-Lucian PETRESCU** – Centre for Defence & Security Strategic Studies, “Carol I” National Defence University
- **Mirela ATANASIU** – Scientific Researcher, Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies, “Carol I” National Defence University

Speakers:

- **Adrian DUȚĂ** – Vice-president, Euro-Atlantic Centre for Resilience
- **COL Ioan MISCHIE** – Deputy Chief of Air Force Staff for Operations and Training

- **BG (r.) Plamen BOGDANOV** – Associate Professor, University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, Sofia
- **Yehven MAHDA** – Executive Director, Institute of World Policy

The Black Sea Region holds a maximum strategic interest for Romania and the other riparian states, but also for NATO, EU and Russia as influence actors in this part of the world. There are many challenges related to the Black Sea Region that need to be approached by the Euro-Atlantic community. Among them, war, maritime security and freedom of navigation, energy and food security, new technologies implemented in military capabilities and fighting disinformation are already on the agenda of this panel. However, the utmost importance is given to Russian recent strategy and actions in the region. From implementing and continuously reinforcing the concept of A2/AD to building up forces and culminating with military aggression against Ukraine, all of these need a high level of readiness and resilience from all the actors involved. The riparian states in the Black Sea Region struggle to build resilience in all sectors, political, economic and social, in the face of Russian attempts to destabilize them and subvert their sovereignty. Therefore, Euro-Atlantic nations must work together as a single community to identify connections and to engage states far beyond the close proximity as equal partners, forging security relations centred on mutually and holistically building up readiness and resilience.

Topics:

1. Black Sea Region– important geopolitical nexus in the global arena. From the global perspective, the Black Sea Region is a geopolitical and geo-economic nexus of strategic importance connecting the Central Asia and Caspian Sea routes to the old European continent. It is a focal point where Russia, Europe, the Middle East, the Balkans and the Caucasus meet and where the forces of democracy, Russian military aggression, Chinese economic influence and the instability in the Middle East converge.

2. Security and defence challenges in the Black Sea Region. The Black Sea is a region of multilayered tension. It is the arena of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and of Russia-NATO competition while serving as a projection area for Russian and Turkish visions regarding regional order. It is also a prolific field for a mixture of information campaigns and state-sponsored and non-state backdoor cyber proxies, due to its unique geopolitical landscape and geostrategic position. This convergence

amplifies the risk of contagion and the potential for adverse consequences, which are challenging to quantify and anticipate accurately.

3. NATO response to Russian-Ukrainian War. This unprovoked aggression compelled the Alliance to rethink the approach to its primary core task – Deterrence and Defence – and focus more on strengthening readiness and identifying resources that are necessary to cope with and operate in the new geopolitical and security environment.

4. Romania – resilient actor in the Black Sea Region. The Black Sea Region has become an area where the interests of great world powers and great civilisations collide. The struggles for expanding spheres of influence bring many risks and threats, which may have a serious impact on our national security when exploiting vulnerabilities. Romania must continuously build resilience to face these security challenges by promoting cooperation within regional cooperation formats and the Euro-Atlantic organisations and by supporting and encouraging the strengthening of the Black Sea Region security architecture.

PANEL 9

MARITIME RESILIENCE IN THE ERA OF HYBRID THREATS (COORDINATED BY THE MARITIME SECURITY FORUM)

Moderator:

- **RADM (r.) Constantin CIOROBEA** – Vicepresident, Clubul Amiralilor, and Editor in Chief, Maritime Security Forum

Speakers:

- **Iulian FOTA** – State Secretary for Strategic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- **NAVY CAPT Cornel TĂNĂSESCU** – Chief of Staff, Fleet Command
- **BG (r.) Mircea MÎNDRESCU** – Scientific Council Member, New Strategy Center
- **NAVY CAPT Lucian SCIPANOV** – Director, Naval Forces Department, “Carol I” National Defence University
- **Radu TUDOR** – Political and Defence Analyst, Antena 3 News Channel

The Black Sea region, as a geographical location, lies between Southeastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Middle East and the Mediterranean Sea, representing an area of connection but also of division. This position offers some advantages but, at the same time, a series of political, economic and military disadvantages. Here in this region, Europe, the Balkans, Russia, the Middle East and the Caucasus meet, and it is where the forces of democracy in the west, Russian imperial and military aggression in the north, Chinese economic influence in the east, and Middle Eastern instability in the south converge.

The economic importance and exceptional role of transport routes have made the Black Sea a de facto arena for competing and irreconcilable strategic interests over the past decade. Russia has unilaterally changed the architecture and dynamics of security in the region not only through conventional military means but also through highly sophisticated intelligence warfare and hybrid means. On the other hand, Türkiye pursues a policy of promoting its position as a regional power without considering the interests of the countries in the region, NATO or the position of the EU.

All these aspects surprised other countries in the region, NATO and the EU in terms of developing credible means to combat these actions.

In the long run, the Black Sea region will continue to be of particular importance to Moscow, and Russia will continue to improve its military capabilities and position in the region – both through armed conflicts and information warfare actions.

On the other hand, Romania, Ukraine, Georgia, and even Bulgaria are interested in a more significant presence of the US, NATO and the EU in the Black Sea in order to achieve a stable security environment in the region favourable to economic development and, in this case, an action to review the limitations that the Montreux Convention. Currently, imposes cannot be excluded. Perhaps even an analysis of the situation regarding the Black Sea State, whether it can remain closed under the provisions of the Montreux Convention or become an open sea by applying Montego Bay.

In addition to these aspects, several trends that can influence maritime security need to be taken into account, such as:

- Significant increase in imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG);
- Increased investment in renewables and expansion of offshore installations;
- Increased cyberattack activity (GPS blocking/jamming);

- Proliferation of unmanned vessels (air, surface, submarine);
- Failure to establish an effective surveillance system to cover long distances of submarine cables and pipelines;
- Legal limitations (Rights and jurisdictions in different maritime areas);
- Protection of critical maritime infrastructure involves several parties/countries involved.

Romania must use its geostrategic position to accelerate the development of its trade relations and beyond. Given the favourable position on the main river transport artery in Europe, through which it manages the lower course of the Danube together with its neighbours, we appreciate that this gives our country a chance to become one of the most considerable river powers. However, only a proper naval policy and strategy can turn Romania's chance into reality.

Romania must establish a credible force in the Black Sea to monitor and defend maritime lines of communication, respond to security challenges in the region, and protect resources and economic objectives in the EEZ. We must realise that NATO is as strong as any member state.

Romania's access to the Black Sea can be an opportunity for economic development. However, it can also become vulnerable if we fail to achieve a stable security environment in the region.

PANEL 10

THE IMPACT OF EMERGING AND DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES ON FUTURE MILITARY ACTIONS – NATIONAL IMPLICATIONS FOR ENSURING A SECURITY STRATEGY IN THE BLACK SEA (COORDINATED BY THE EURO-ATLANTIC CENTRE FOR RESILIENCE E-ARC)

Moderator:

- **Valentin ENE** – Head of Strategic Analysis, Euro-Atlantic Centre for Resilience

Speakers:

- **Marek KALBARCZYK** – Deputy Director RTI & Head of Unit, EU-Funded Defence Research, European Defence Agency
- **Cristian SFICHI** – Key Account Manager, Defence and Security, THALES Group
- **Tudor CURTIFAN** – Editor-in-Chief, Defense Romania

- **Prof. Marinel-Adi MUSTAȚĂ, PhD Habil** – Director, PhD Interdisciplinary School, “Carol I” National Defence University

The panel discussed the complex and multifaceted topic of how emerging and disruptive technologies are shaping the landscape of future military actions, with a specific focus on the security implications in the Black Sea Region. The conversation, moderated by the Euro-Atlantic Resilience Centre, brought together, in a whole-of-society approach, perspectives from academia, the private sector, institutions and specialised media, to highlight the impact of technological trends on the security environment in the Black Sea Region.

Key Discussion Points:

Technological Advances in Warfare: The panellists discussed the latest technological developments, mainly artificial intelligence, cyber warfare, autonomous systems and space technologies, and how these are being integrated into modern military strategies. The debates were focused on the current security status in the Black Sea and the trends identified.

Human Factor: Technology will continue to be developed, but the human factor will still be the central element, or not? The panellist delved into the future scenarios of human-machine interaction in the military field.

Implications of Military – Industry relations: How can industry play its part in keeping the technological edge, paramount in a complicated security environment? How investments in emerging technologies are affecting the defence industry and influencing global supply chains?

Ethical and Legal Considerations: How will technological developments impact the rules of engagement? The panel debated the future use of Artificial Intelligence in warfare and the autonomy it will have, touching on the challenges of accountability, the protection of civilians, and the laws of armed conflict.

Strategic Implications: The panellists discussed the strategic implications of these technologies, such as how they influence doctrines, force structures, and the balance of power between nations. They explored how emerging technologies are changing the dynamics of asymmetric warfare, including the challenges posed by non-state actors and irregular warfare. Are these elements reshaping the nature of conflicts and deterrence? How will a conflict look in 20 years?

ROUND TABLE

THE STRAITS QUESTION. CONFLICT AND COOPERATION AT THE BLACK SEA

(COORDINATED BY THE INSTITUTE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES
OF DEFENCE & MILITARY HISTORY - ISPAIM)

Guest speaker

- **Carmen-Sorina RÎJNOVEANU** – Director, Institute for Political Studies of Defence & Military History

Moderators:

- **Manuel STĂNESCU** – Deputy Director, Institute for Political Studies of Defence & Military History
- **Șerban CIOCULESCU** – Scientific Researcher II, Institute for Political Studies of Defence & Military History

Speakers:

- **Petre OTU** – Chairperson, Romanian Military History Committee
- **Liliana BOȘCAN** – Assistant Professor, University of Bucharest
- **Șerban PAVELESCU** – Senior Researcher, Institute for Political Studies of Defence & Military History
- **Mihai SANDU** – Deputy General Director, Romanian Agency for International Development Cooperation
- **Tudor VIȘAN-MIU** – Scientific Researcher, Institute for Political Studies of Defence & Military History
- **Adrian-Vasile POPA** – Assistant Professor, National Intelligence Academy

A glance at the map of the Black Sea shows us that the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits have a complex significance for the European continent and implicitly for our country. They ensure the naval commercial connection of South-Eastern Europe with the Mediterranean and the Middle East-North Africa (MENA). Thus, they have become a very important element of any security and defence equation not only for EU states but also for non-EU ones (Russia, Ukraine etc.).

Regardless of the historical period we refer to, the straits have played an extremely significant role for the states of the Balkan Peninsula and, especially,

for Romania. The geographical characteristics of the two straits have decisively influenced the evolution of the positions adopted by Romania regarding the regime of commercial and military traffic. The main premise of any approach to the mentioned topic has been that of preventing the Black Sea from becoming a closed area. That is why the principle of freedom of maritime navigation, which is even more important for the states in the region, has been constantly promoted. On these coordinates, Romania's approach to the question of the straits has been aimed at ensuring the maritime connection, in both peacetime and wartime, with the Mediterranean basin and from there with the Atlantic Ocean as well as with the Indian Ocean, via the Suez Canal.

A country like Romania, a NATO and EU member state, needs to ensure that the surface and underwater vessels of its allies can enter the Black Sea as freely as possible to help deter aggression against Romania, Türkiye or Bulgaria. Moreover, the flow of trade through the straits has to be free, without blockages other than accidental or short-term ones. That is why Romania has always been in the camp of those who support the freedom of passage through the straits and the as unrestricted as possible access to the military vessels of the non-littoral states.

The round table discussion was dedicated to analysing the straits question starting with the Crimean War and up to the Cold War period, while also considering the current challenges to the international security system in the region.

