

COMPLEXITY, VISION AND POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WIDER BLACK SEA AREA SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

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The present article is based on the hypothesis that Russian destructiveness is not only manifested through military aggression and does not have effects only on the imbalance zones created by the Russian Federation, in order to fulfil the strategic objectives in the Wider Black Sea Area.

Being the most contested by the great global powers, since the Cold War period, when the space was divided between the military blocs of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact, the Wider Black Sea Area currently has a role of strategic importance regarding the reconfiguration of power poles at global level, being the point of intersection of the geopolitical and economic interests of South-Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Asia and the Caucasus, a space with considerable natural resources and an energy transit area with a major impact on European countries.

Keywords: Wider Black Sea Area; Russian Federation; frozen conflicts; strategic objectives; NATO;

Motto:

"We are thus located in this region, in a triple complex, where the influences from Central Europe; from the South, from the Balkans; from the East, from the Russian and Asian steppes intersect".

Gheorghe I. Brătianu

INTRODUCTION

In the century of paradigms, of non-transparent challenges, caused by multiple and constantly evolving factors, while at the international level the visions of the ongoing events in regions of strategic importance for certain global actors move from one concept to another, the global security environment is characterized by dynamism, change, unpredictability, unconventional tactics and operations, with fluctuations from one region to another.

Although after 2014, the Russian Federation seemed to focus more on the South-West, Africa, the Middle East, the South-East, and on Asia-Pacific, the year 2022, I would say, was not a peaceful year, given that the offensive operation led by the Russian military against Ukraine (starting on 24 February 2022) and, by implication, Ukraine, as the epicentre of international discussions, was only one of the 56 countries that experienced violence and war last year.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the outbreak of which has been discussed since 2021, being then only a time horizon for its outbreak, has played, since it was only a hypothesis, a significant role in straining the already unstable relations between the great powers, fuelling growing disagreements at the level of global politics, with a major impact on its ability to manage and resolve local and regional conflicts, disputes.

After decades, as the first interstate conflict that involved permanent mobilization of forces and means throughout 2022, the countries involved being part of the Black Sea littoral states, the Wider Black Sea Area (WBSA) returns, again, to international attention, being shaded in the last period of large-scale intrastate events from other areas of the world.

Being the most contested area by the great global powers, since the Cold War period, marked by political-strategic antagonism, when the Soviets could not accept the American or any other non-European power's participation in European affairs,

when the space was divided between the political-military blocs military, namely the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact (WP), the WBSA currently has a role of strategic importance in terms of the reconfiguration of power poles at the global level, being the point of intersection of Europe’s geopolitical and economic interests of the Southeast, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Asia and the Caucasus, a space with considerable natural resources and an energy transit area with a major impact on European countries.

Since ancient times, the region has been characterized by continuous security instability, based on an enormity of diverse challenges represented by ethnic, ideological, religious, commercial and other interests and differences, which, including in the 21st century, have not been able to reach a point of convergence. In fact, the instability in the area is becoming more and more accentuated, against the background of “the biggest armed conflict after the Second World War” (Dumitrescu, 2023), the Russian-Ukrainian conflict that started more than a year ago.

The tendencies of great and small actors on the geopolitical scene to consolidate their independence and influence in Europe make the WBSA an important ring in which there is a “struggle for supremacy” between them, a complex space characterized by a multitude of variables, the scene of “competition between state and non-state entities” (Bogzeanu, 2012, p. 7). The complexity is generated by a mix of the diversity of entities in this area, regardless of their nature, “connected to distinct mechanisms and phenomena” (Ib.).

CONFLUENCE OF INSTABILITY AND INTERESTS OF WBSA STATES

“Historical analysis demonstrates the iron link between European security and balance in the Black Sea basin”. (Cropsey, Scutaru, Halem, Colibășanu, 2023, p. 36).

The position of the Russian Federation regarding the Black Sea represents a serious threat to European security in a military, commercial and energy context. Since the period before the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula (2014) by the Russian Federation, the security environment in the WBSA has gone through numerous imbalances, consequences of the objectives and strategic actions of the Black Sea littoral countries and their neighbours, located in an area built on an amalgam of beliefs, ideologies, religions and more or less conservative and dictatorial tendencies.

From east to west and from north to south, the countries of the WBSA have gone through long periods of conflict and influence, most of them expressing their intentions to get closer to NATO and to the West, an aspect strongly disapproved

by the great power on the Black Sea, the Russian Federation, and the areas under its influence and control, which are maintained in the form of frozen conflicts. The purpose of unbalancing these areas is to keep NATO away from the borders of the Russian state.

If in the west and south of the Black Sea there are NATO member states, some of them being also members of the European Union, the littoral states in the north and east are entities from the ex-Soviet space, over which the Moscow administration wants to have control, u that, according to Putin’s strategy, are border provinces, areas that must be militarized or demilitarized according to own interests.

I appreciate that the most important state bordering the Black Sea is the Republic of Turkiye, a NATO member state having an imperial past, whose leadership maintains a conservative-Islamic regime, conducting a foreign policy that is seen by experts as one in an imperial form.



Figure no. 1: Inherent expansionism according to Turkey's Blue Homeland doctrine¹ (Eurocontinent, 2021)

“Turkey is very important by its simple positioning at the intersection of east-west, north-south, and the war in Ukraine benefitted it, because it had faded into obscurity, which does not suit it” (Constantin-Bercean, Blănaru, 2023). Turkey is also favoured in the region by the Montreux Convention, which gives it the power to “own” the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits. Although a NATO member, Turkey

¹ Blue Homeland doctrine expresses the holistic integration of the Turkish land and maritime claims, being part of the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan neo-Ottoman agenda. It refers to modern Turkey’s return to a larger geographical area where the Ottoman Empire used to be a hegemon.

uses this convention to keep NATO countries at a distance from the Black Sea in order not to undermine its control in the area. Moreover, the administration in Ankara plays the role of peacemaker in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and at the same time tries to maintain good relations with the Russian Federation, with which it is in agreement regarding the reconfiguration of a new world order and with which it has even cooperated in military terms, against its responsibilities as a NATO member state, contrary to the fact that in certain areas of operations the two states play on different sides of the Line of Contact (e.g., Nagorno-Karabakh). *“Both great powers of the Black Sea – Russia and Turkey – tend to oppose (each in its own way) the penetration of security and development infrastructure by the West in the region, which has been – at least for the past five centuries – the domain of bilateral competition and balance of power between the two states”* (Minchev, 2006, p. 12).

Moreover, *“the relationship between Russia and Turkey is a dual one, characterized, on the one hand, by a historical rivalry regarding the manifestation of influence in the Black Sea region and, on the other hand, by episodes of cooperation to maintain the balance of forces and reject some political or military interference of some non-littoral states, sometimes even to the detriment of the commitments that Turkey assumed as a NATO member state”*. (Matache-Zaharia, 2015, p. 248).

Bulgaria, an EU and NATO member state, a former satellite of the Soviet administration, is trying to remove communist reminiscences from the collective mentality, following the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, this process being accelerated.

However, a number of high-ranking politicians, admirers of the Putin’s regime, a pro-Russian information network, still active on Bulgarian territory, and a vast process of disinformation and propaganda, act to promote the interests of the Russian Federation in the Bulgarian state, relying on pressure mechanisms from the economic sphere, especially energy, as well as on some sympathizers of the former repressive indigenous security service.

The response of the authorities in Sofia to the Russian invasion of Ukraine involved a series of difficult decisions, as it had to identify a delicate balance in acting (or appearing to act) according to the responsibilities assumed with the Western partners, by belonging to the political-military alliances of which it is a party, and to respond, among other things, to requests for support addressed by the administration in Kiev or to avoid getting involved, according to the desire of most compatriots, who see in the Putin’s regime the same *“big brother from the East”*.

On the other hand, the fragmentation of the political class in Sofia as well as of the electorate, which generated and continues to generate (even if it is not recognized) instability not only at the political-economic-military level but also at the social level, combined with the intensification of the phenomenon of right-wing extremist political movement, which is attracting more and more followers, shows that the Bulgarian state will not be able, at least in the short term, to identify the levers necessary for the functioning of the constitutional norms.

Georgia, a republic that is part of the Caucasus region and located at the intersection between the extreme east of Europe and the west of Asia, presented and continues to present an increased interest, both for the USSR and its de facto successor, the Russian Federation, and for Western states, including the USA.

Although it was the first non-Baltic Soviet republic that proclaimed (April 1991) its independence from the USSR, the Georgian state did not achieve a real detachment from the administrations in Moscow, the causes of failure being numerous, among them the lack of real of political will, the high percentage of pro-Russian citizens (following the rotation policy of the indigenous populations carried out by the USSR), the lack of an industrial base that would generate progress, but also the passivity of the authorities, as well as of the civil society towards the Russian actions of keeping it in its sphere of influence.

The sum of political, economic, social factors, as well as the maintenance of the security forces in a precarious state, after the proclamation of independence, combined with the desire of the Shaakashvili administration to get out of the *de jure* tutelage exercised by the Kremlin, culminated in the Russian armed intervention (August), which resulted in the loss of Georgian control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The situation of coercion of the Georgian state, exercised by the Russian Federation, continued after 2008, acquiring radical accents in recent years, Russian interference in socio-political-economic life being notorious. Currently, the authorities in Tbilisi have understood (or have been led to understand), interested or not, that a loyal partnership with the Western states must begin with the political condemnation of the Russian aggression since 2008, especially against the background of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

However, although the political class in Tbilisi chooses (probably interested) to get closer to the values of the EU and NATO, a real approach to joining the two organizations remains a wish, which will not be fulfilled anytime soon.

Armenia and Azerbaijan are two states with different interests and visions, if only because they are “*caught*” in the war of civilizations, the Armenian population being predominantly Christian, while the Azeri population is predominantly Muslim. On the other hand, Armenia is a landlocked state and generally lacks mineral resources, while Azerbaijan, heavily supported by Turkey and tolerated by the EU, has acquired new opportunities for economic development and new military capabilities.

In another note, the two former Soviet republics had a similar path during the USSR, both experiencing violence towards the end of the Gorbachev administration and both declaring independence in the early 1990s.

The Armenian-Azeri conflict is not a new one, and, as always, the initial cause was the area called Nagorno-Karabakh (NK), an autonomous republic (during the Soviet period) within the former Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) of Azerbaijan, but with a majority Armenian population. Thus, in February 1988, the majority Armenian population of NK requested separation from the SSR Azerbaijan and union with the SSR Armenia, but the central Soviet authorities maintained the status for NK, which generated, throughout 1988, but also later, inter-ethnic conflicts with numerous victims (Armenians and Azerbaijanis), purges and exodus on both sides. The Armenian-Azeri conflict degenerated after the early 1990s and continued with intensity until 1994, when a ceasefire was brokered by the Russian Federation. However, following the conflict, the Armenians managed to conquer an important percentage of the internationally recognized Azeri territory, the status being maintained until 2020, when the Azeri forces recaptured most of the territories.

In the current geopolitical context, Armenia is facing significant economic difficulties, while support from the Russian Federation has seen a significant drop amid its involvement in Ukraine. On the other hand, Azerbaijan, although it is roughly a totalitarian state, manages to sequentially improve its economic situation, especially thanks to the oil industry.

Thus, in the short term, the two states will very likely have different paths, and it is not excluded that Azerbaijan will restore (not in the next period) its authority over NK.

RUSSIAN STRATEGY IN THE BLACK SEA REGION – A BITTER TASTE FOR THE KREMLIN

The grand strategy of the Russian Federation has been focused on the control of the Black Sea since the imperialist and Soviet periods, given that this control is a prerequisite for any large-scale aggression against the West.

One year after the launch of the offensive of the Russian armed forces against Ukraine, the Russian Federation adopted, on 31 March 2023, a new foreign policy strategy in which it explicitly refers to the “*aggressive policy of the European states towards Russia*” (The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, 2023), for which the Black Sea is crucial in the long term for defence.

It is imperative to remember that, even this time, part of the strategy almost completely contradicts the actions of the Russian Federation in the last 17 months, bringing to the fore principles such as “*sovereign equality of states, the freedom of their right to choose development models and social, political and economic order*” and the need to adopt some “*political and diplomatic measures to counter interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, aimed primarily at complicating the internal political situation, unconstitutional regime change or violating the territorial integrity of states*” (Ib.).

However, the anti-European rhetoric, presented in the strategy by the Kremlin authorities as the intention of “*defending national interests from threats to security, territorial integrity, sovereignty, traditional Russian spiritual and moral values, and the socio-economic development of the Russian Federation*” (Ib.), somewhat introduces the “*imperialist policy and strategy of indefinite expansion*” of President Vladimir Putin, who three days before the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict (21 February 2022) declared that “*the disintegration of our united country was determined by the historical, strategic mistakes of the Bolshevik leaders and the leadership of the Communist Party*” (Putin, 2022).

Relying on nuclear and energy deterrence and arguing the actions of the Russian armed forces as necessary to *save the Russian people*, now “*Tsar Putin*” and presumably the Kremlin authorities want to achieve a basic strategic objective, namely “*the formation of a new model of coexistence by the European states, in order to ensure a safe, sovereign and progressive development of the Russian Federation, its allies and partners*” (The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation). In other words, they are trying to shape a new world order, which involves Russian expansion at the level of an empire, including obtaining hegemony in the Black Sea area as a strategic objective.

Moreover, we cannot overlook the goal of the “*State Union of the Russian Federation-Republic of Belarus*”, formed in 1996, for the creation of a unique political, economic, military and cultural space, brought back to the fore countless times in the year 2022. Moreover, even the press secretary of the Kremlin, Dmitro Peskov, announced that the annexed territories of Ukraine will become part of Russia and the State Union. Thus, a new step was taken in the “*reformation of the new Soviet Empire*” and in the concept of aggression against the independent ex-Soviet states, which do not want to be close to this union.

It is possible that WBSA will be further unbalanced by the actions of the Russian Federation with the aim of reuniting the “*Soviet empire*”, given its spheres of influence in various regions of the littoral states and in the immediate vicinity of the Black Sea.

The assumptions of the annexation to the Union State of the territories occupied by the Russians and held captive by the actions of the Russian Federation in the form of frozen conflicts, such as the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, the Autonomous Republic of South Ossetia, the Moldavian Republic of Dniester and Găgăuzia, could generate even greater tensions, on the one hand interstate, and on the other hand intrastate, with effects on the regional to global security environment.

Therefore, estimates that in 2023 Vladimir Putin will give up the position of President of the Russian Federation and will become Secretary General of the State Union are circulated in the analysis environment, but the recent developments of the events, presented below, do not seem to be heading towards this outcome.

Thus, known as the world’s largest nuclear power, the Russian Federation, dissatisfied with the manner of meeting the objectives of the conventional armed forces in Ukraine, and with the failure of the hybrid tactics applied to achieve the quick and long-awaited victory, constantly resorts to deterrence methods that, in other situations, would have had the desired effect. In the last 17 months the international community was very often reminded of the possession of nuclear means and the impact of their use in battle. Moreover, disapproving of the support given to Ukraine, the Russian Federation suspended, in February 2023, the participation in the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (NEW START²).

Although there is a precedent for carrying out nuclear attacks, the use of nuclear weapons would, in my view, have represented the collapse of the Russian Federation,

² An agreement signed (Prague) by the United States and the Russian Federation limiting the strategic nuclear arsenals of the two sides, entered into force in 2011 and extended in 2021 for another five-year period.

which the Kremlin probably knows, and which has kept the nuclear option at the level of a threat. Sergei Karaganov, honorary chairman of the Russian Foreign and Defence Policy Council, argues that victory requires the Russian Federation to use nuclear deterrence by clearly expressing its willingness to use nuclear means to achieve its goal, and even by striking some “*targets from numerous countries to make them come to their senses*” (Baklitskiy, 2023).

Experts in this field have attacked Karaganov’s opinion and argued in various papers that it is not the optimal method to achieve a victory, while Vladimir Putin himself, at the plenary session of the International Economic Forum in St. Petersburg (14-17 June 2023) somewhat confirms this aspect by claiming that he sees no need to use nuclear weapons.

I believe that a real imbalance was created by the Russian Federation by applying the well-known Falin-Kvitsinsky method³, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict being also a confrontation between the largest producer of natural gas and its consumers, in response to Western sanctions against it, in the early phase of the conflict, by using energy resources to put pressure on the states in the region and beyond. Used as an opportunity to negotiate with European states, by creating a real gas crisis to discourage Europe, NATO and their partner states, in their efforts to support Ukraine in the defence operation. The method did not facilitate the achievement of the desired objective, but, on the contrary, highlighted the unity of the Western states in solving the energy and economic challenges generated by the coercive measures against the Russian Federation, managing to significantly decrease the amount of imported natural gas.

The fierce desire of the Russian Federation to achieve its goals in Ukraine and the strategic goal of the West that it does not know victory constantly generates crisis situations that affect the security of the WBSA states and not only. The imbalance generated by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, in a post-pandemic crisis period, has extended its tentacles to the global level, bringing challenges and instability to states, from the smallest to the largest.

³ After the end of the Cold War, the Russian Federation, in order to balance the impossibility of applying military intervention, developed the Falin-Kvitsinsky doctrine with the aim of maintaining the neutrality of the ex-Soviet states vis-à-vis NATO, through economic pressure.

CHALLENGES, UNCERTAINTY AND IMBALANCE – HIS WAY OR THE INCORRECT WAY

The most recent events show a setback in the achievement of the strategic goal of Vladimir Putin, who, 12 July 2021 stated: *“I am confident that the true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia”* (Putin, 2021).

The recent evolution of the security environment at the Line of Contact shows a Russian Federation weakened from a military point of view even by occasional attacks executed by the Ukrainian military, while, domestically, the imbalance caused by Yevgeny Prigozhin with the occupation of the headquarters of the Joint Strategic Command South in Rostov-on-Don generated more insecurity and instability in the Kremlin by triggering a crisis in political management, contradiction among the armed forces and shaking the pillars⁴ of the regime of the Russian president.

The imbalance and, I would say, the desperation of the Russian president in the face of the unforeseen course of the *“special operation”* and the European opposition, have directed his attention again in the direction of a vulnerable area, on which the Ukrainian state is heavily dependent, namely exports of cereals. The Russian Federation’s suspension⁵ of participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative, amid the failure to fulfil promises to restore the Russian state’s access to the SWIFT code and reduce sanctions, further exacerbated the impact on regional food security and beyond.

Moreover, the Kremlin’s determination to destroy the Ukrainian grain export infrastructure was materialized in systematic attacks on the ports of Odesa and Mykolaiv, as well as in the Iranian Shahed drone attack⁶ against the installations in the Ukrainian port of Reni, located in the immediate vicinity of the NATO eastern flank, and against Port Ismail⁷. These actions are likely part of Putin’s strategy to test the limits and patience of the West and NATO.

The Russian Federation also sought to win support among African leaders, arguing that the grain initiative prioritized *“well-fed European markets”*. These actions of Putin are not only to influence the ability of the Ukrainian state to resist his armed forces, but also to strengthen the position of the Russian Federation in Africa, by supplying grain to the states affected by the suspension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. Let us remember the day of 27 July, when he promised,

⁴ Propaganda and the security services are known to be the mainstays of Vladimir Putin’s regime.

⁵ 18 July 2023.

⁶ 24 July 2023.

⁷ The night of 31 July/1 August 2023.

during the Russian Federation-Africa Summit⁸, to replace Ukrainian grain intended for the states of Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Mali, Somalia, the Central African Republic and Eritrea, with 25,000-50,000 tons of grain in free mode.

However, despite Russian diplomatic efforts in Africa, there are clear signs that discontent and frustration on the continent is growing after the decision to suspend the grain transport agreement amid fears of a food supply crisis (Sauer, 2023).

Probably, the Russians want more than the containment of Ukraine, considering that the destruction of its maritime and river transport infrastructure, as a direct action, has indirect effects on the maritime and river transport infrastructures of Romania, a NATO member state, and the Republic of Moldova in the Black Sea area, which could act as a deterrent to Western support for Ukraine.

Of course, the idea that the Russians want to destroy the Ukrainian grain export infrastructure, vital to them, is the most publicized. However, the analysis environment also speaks of the weakening of Ukraine’s ability to supply itself with petroleum products in the coming cold season.

Certainly the objectives of these actions are multiple, but the question that arises is whether the Kremlin has a vision regarding the future of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, because the present only indicates uncertainty, incompetence and instability at the internal level, unrecognized by the Russian authorities, in the military operations it executes in Ukraine and in the hybrid actions in achieving the goals, which do not boil down to conquering Ukraine, but involve the complete destabilization of the WBSA and the West, which would give the Russian state the opportunity to re-occupy its place as a great world power.

I believe that the apparent certainty in the statements of Russian officials most likely hides a great deal of uncertainty, based on the new level of collective defence and deterrence achieved on the eastern flank of NATO, achieved with the accession of Finland as a member of the organization. Thus, Vladimir Putin’s fear of being defeated in Ukraine was probably induced, an aspect that, on the one hand, forced his hand to conscious risky and provocative actions in the proximity of the NATO border, and on the other hand, brought into his attention the Eastern vulnerabilities of the Euro-Atlantic defence. In this regard, he pays more attention to the Suwalki Corridor⁹, considered a key strategic point for the Russians, signalling

⁸ The Russian Federation hosted (27-28 July 2023, St. Petersburg) a two-day summit with the African continent, designed to portray Moscow as a great power, despite the Western sanctions and the unrest in the southern hemisphere heightened by the destabilizing war in Ukraine.

⁹ It refers to the strip of land of cca. 100 km, which follows the Polish-Lithuanian border, between the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad and the Republic of Belarus, seen as one of the most sensitive areas in Europe, separating the Baltic States from the rest of NATO countries.

a regrouping of the Wagner Group's military in the Republic of Belarus, in order to take over its control, if necessary. Thus, Russia acts through numerous provocations and intrigues to destabilize the border of NATO's eastern flank, without taking into account the fact that this aspect would represent a major aggression against some NATO member countries.

The support that Putin was counting on from China has also not been up to expectations, even if it "feels" that it has more to gain than to lose from being with the Russian Federation, its "junior" partner. However, Beijing maintains its attitude of not provoking the West very much, showing reluctance to enter into a conflict with a major nuclear power.

No one can say for sure what the outcome will be or how the situation will evolve in the WBSA and how much the situation will be affected at the global level. The only thing that is certain is that the fulfilment of the concept of the Kantian world, namely a world of peace, collaboration and cooperation, is impossible as long as the personality at the head of one of the world's great powers, namely the Russian Federation, does not accept compromise situations, and even tends towards the "my way or no way" principle.

CONCLUSIONS

Security environment in the WBSA will continue to remain fragile in the short and medium term, at certain moments its radicalization is even possible, depending on the actions of certain actors or the possible situations that could arise.

Thus, a defeat of the Russian Federation in the conflict with Ukraine could destabilize the administration in Moscow, which would encourage, on the one hand, certain republics in the composition of the Russian state to act to obtain independence and, on the other hand, Azerbaijan, supported by Turkey, to carry out decisive armed operations against Armenia, for the definitive, possibly even long-term settlement, of the secular dispute between the two states, and Georgia to try to regain control over the territories occupied by the Russian Federation.

In another note, maintaining the current status of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict will most likely lead to the "freezing" of the conflict, which will further generate substantial economic losses for Ukraine, the state being threatened with a permanent economic recession, which favours endemic corruption and strengthens the role of oligarchs in political life.

On the other hand, the maintenance, at least for the time being, of the conservative-Islamic regime in Turkey could generate new claims, if not territorial, at least to influence the Syrian and Iraqi societies, as well as the radical intensification

of the fight against organizations considered extremist-terrorists by the Ankara regime. At the same time, the possible loss of influence in the Black Sea, by the Russian Federation, would favour the Turkish Republic, which is increasingly less secular, to assume and consolidate a dominant role (somehow also mentioned in the Blue Homeland doctrine) in this maritime basin, and in conjunction with maintaining the current provisions of the Montreux Convention, could give the Turkish administration total long-term control in the Black Sea.

As far as Bulgaria is concerned, the lack of political stability, the maintenance of the parallel structures of the state in the grey area, as well as the continuation of the state of "balance" between East and West will determine the significant limitation of the role that the Bulgarian state could have in the WBSA.

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