

ROMANIAN NAVAL DIPLOMACY, CONTINUOUS EVOLUTION IN THE SWIRL OF EXTERNAL DIPLOMACY

Ioan Gabriel Moise¹, Edith-Hilde Kaiter^{1*}

¹ “Mircea cel Bătrân” Naval Academy Constanța

* Corresponding author: green_flower19@yahoo.com

Abstract. From ancient times the dominion of the seas has been a condition for gaining power and influence, and the position of a state near a sea has been an advantage for both its development and the neighboring region.

Due to its geographical position, the Black Sea is a region of great importance for all actors claiming leading positions in the world hierarchy and the intensification of economic relations between the states of the region after the end of the Soviet monopoly and its connection to the world market generated auspices for a new cycle development and regional prosperity.

The relocation of the EU border to the Black Sea, along with the integration of Romania and Bulgaria, brings in many economic benefits, given its dependence on oil imports, but its expansion, like that of NATO, does not only mean benefits. The EU and NATO must also take on vulnerabilities in the area, such as underperforming economies, arms, drug and human trafficking, illegal immigration or frozen conflicts, and thus try to help stabilize the region.

In recent years, the military has not only played a destabilizing role, but has made a decisive contribution to ensuring the security of the Black Sea region. In this sense, the military naval forces of the riparian countries, including Romania, had a special role.

Through the wide range of missions in which the Romanian Naval Forces participate in the Danubian-Pontic space, both internally and externally, in cooperation with the states bordering the Black Sea and with the NATO member states, Romania contributes to the promotion of regional security and stability.

The naval diplomacy actions carried out in the last thirty years thus reveal not only the role and purpose of the Romanian Naval Forces within NATO in the actions of maintaining and consolidating good relations with the states bordering the Black

Sea, as well as maintaining security with allies in the distant maritime districts. They also point out that naval diplomacy has contributed to the expression of foreign policy in different areas and with means that have increased its effect, impact and efficiency.

Keywords: foreign diplomacy, naval diplomacy, naval policy, naval strategy, Romanian Naval Forces, doctrine, regional initiatives, maritime interests, maritime security, maritime security strategy.

1. Introduction

Since ancient times, the acquisition of power and influence has been achieved mainly by mastering the seas and oceans, and the proximity of a state with a surface of water has been an advantage for its development and the nearby region. Even if this theory was enunciated after the age of “great geographical discoveries”, it continues to be just as current and applicable to the geopolitical realities of the third millennium. Water represents life on this planet and covers more than two-thirds of the Earth’s surface.

From a statistical point of view, the Planetary Ocean, a source of biological, mineral, chemical, raw materials and energy, accounts for over 70% of the world’s surface, and more than 80% of international trade is on water. About 70% of the world’s population lives less than 100 miles from the world’s oceans and seas.

The oceans decisively influence the social development of all states and nations and have remained a huge field of economic, diplomatic and military action, open to the bold and powerful ones. Under the jurisdiction of international law, they provide the riparian states with a global navigation network of crucial importance for global, regional and national security.

Freight shipping is the core of the global economy, more than half of the value of world trade and 90% of global freight is shipped in containers.

The maritime trade network comprises over 30 ports in as many metropolises on the three major continents, Europe, Asia and North America, and through the network of canals and straits is directed 75% of world maritime trade on various types of transport vessels, sometimes they being involved in illegal activities.

Freedom of trade and navigation and the protection of the oceans are maritime, common and collective security priorities, which must be achieved with the support of regional and Euro-Atlantic security organizations but also with the legislative involvement of riparian states to harmonize their national and international legislation.

The beginning of the new millennium has not come, as we expected, with local, regional and international peace and security. On the contrary, it has added to the old challenges, risks and threats in defense and security and unconventional, asymmetric and hybrid actions, and all these have amplified the chaos of international relations.

As for the Black Sea, the waves of NATO and European Union expansion in the first decade of the third millennium have turned the region into a *limes* (Latin: fortress) of Western security and safety space.

Throughout history, the Black Sea has been a hub of opportunity and challenge, where global actors have exerted their influence and been interested in exploiting resources. The seas and oceans provide mineral resources and help trade between nations, and Romania depends on the Planetary Ocean for the development of the economy and the provision of energy resources.

In the Black Sea area there are a number of key positions, which particularize it and contribute decisively to the value and global importance of this area, as follows: the system of the Turkish Straits, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles; the Crimean Peninsula; The Danube with the mouths of the Danube and the Maritime Danube and last but not least, the Romanian continental plateau rich in resources. One can understand, therefore, why today, the geopolitical structure in this region is marked by two dynamics. The first is the replacement of the former Soviet influence with the American one, in this competition entering with significant chances the European Union with the two “engines” at full speed, France and Germany. The second is the energy axis, which connects oil and gas in Central Asia and the Caspian Sea region with the Balkans and the EU.

The massive eastward expansion of NATO and the European Union is a process of transformation that has meant not only integrating new members, but also increasing the potential and capabilities to combat the dangers and threats to continental and global security.

The configuration of the Black Sea region has changed significantly in recent years and will continue to evolve, in the sense of establishing a comprehensive framework that will proactively lead and pave the way for regional initiatives, the insistence on a European approach to relations shores of the Black Sea (Romania and Bulgaria) have become EU member states. Increased security in the Black Sea region is a vital element in the development of political and economic cooperation.

The security situation of our country is directly affected by the situation and developments in the Black Sea, as well as those in the Caucasus Basin, both of which are not at all favorable.

As we noted earlier, this beginning of the millennium, through changes in the geopolitical and geostrategic scene, is not a peaceful one for any country in the world. During this period, many states are reviewing their military doctrines, defense laws, and the content of military art concepts, but at the same time harmonizing their legislation with international principles and norms. Romania is, in turn, within these states and with the elaboration of new normative acts at the level of central and local administration, the contemporary military phenomenon is reanalyzed in the conditions of the transition from asymmetric to hybrid war, some terms of the strategy are reformulated, but new strategies are being initiated, in line with current risks and threats.

Our country must continue to support, with a proactive attitude in bilateral relations, NATO and EU visions of the Black Sea, using as an obvious resource the legislative and security framework coordinated by the North Atlantic structures and EU member states. Although it is a much smaller player than Russia and Turkey, with NATO and EU membership, Romania’s role in the Black Sea is growing due to the support of the two organizations.

Through the wide range of missions in which the Romanian Naval Forces participate in the Danubian-Pontic space, both internally and externally, in cooperation with the Black Sea riparian states and NATO member states, Romania contributes to promoting regional security and stability.

2. Romania’s place on the geopolitical map of the Black Sea

Throughout history, Romania has always been, along with other states, in various alliances, driven in particular by the need to benefit from the guarantee of territorial sovereignty. The alliances were different in terms of geopolitical perspectives, generated or generating a balance of regional power, alliances that presupposed Romania’s oscillations in its positioning towards the great powers.

Some of the alliances followed a natural course, such as those with France and England in the First World War, and as a result, Romania became a national unitary state, and others, such as

the Warsaw Pact, were imposed, Romania being considered a satellite state by USSR, which separates the communist bloc, military and political, from Western powers.¹

After the collapse of communism, Romania has always been at the crossroads of geopolitical axes of influence, such as the West, Eurasia, Central Asia and the Middle East and is beginning to be seen through the theory of the “pivotal state”.

Thus, immediately after the fall of communism, Romania seemed to have lost its compass and went through a period of crisis of its geostrategic and geopolitical identity. The factors that determined such an uncomfortable position were, in order: the situation on the periphery of the Western world, the non-acceptance in the family of Western democracies (EU and NATO) and the lack of security guarantees in that profoundly transformed international environment.² The main concern in those years was that Romania and other Eastern European countries could become a border state between the West and the Russian Federation, a “buffer zone” that would delimit Russian influence. Geopolitical concepts such as “buffer zone” or “stability flank” have been widely circulated regarding Romania’s geostrategic position in a geographical region identified as “Eastern Europe”, “South-Eastern Europe” or “ex-Soviet space.”

In the period after 1989, within the “Integrated Concept on Romania’s National Security”, from 1994, our country was marked in terms of geopolitical position due to belonging to the “buffer zone” between the West and the ex-Soviet space, of the existence of conflicts in its vicinity (Balkans, Moldova, the Midwest, etc.), as well as the absence of stable allies and security guarantees against the tendencies of the great powers to offensively promote interests in the region.

In this unstable geopolitical and geostrategic environment, the document mentions the role that Romania can play in ensuring regional stability and security, given its geographical location on the Danube and on the Black Sea coast.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, in the programmatic documents on national security, Romania moved from the “National Security Strategy” of 1999, which identified as risks and threats, separatist movements and ethnic irredentism, conflicts in Romania’s neighborhood or the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction³, to the “White Paper of the Government. Romanian Armed Forces 2005/2010”⁴ published in 2000, where the country’s position was defined by the convergence of four geopolitical areas: Central Europe – “future area of stability and prosperity”, Southeast Europe – “the main area of instability and insecurity”, Commonwealth of Independent States – “about to identify the way to reform” and the Black Sea – “area of opportunity, also a source of risk.”⁵

¹ George MAIOR, *Noul Aliat. Regândirea politicii de apărare a României la începutul secolului XXI*, ediția a II-a revăzută și adăugată, Editura RAO, 2013.

² Ioan Mircea PAȘCU, *Bătălia pentru NATO*, Ed. Proiect, București, 2007.

³ *** H.G. nr. 36/18.12.2001, Monitorul Oficial nr. 822/20.12.2001, *Strategia de securitate națională a României*, <http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis> [Governmental Decision No. 36/18.12.2001, The Official Gazette no. 822/20.12.2001, Romania’s National Security Strategy].

⁴ *** *Carta Albă a Guvernului, Forțele Armate Române 2005/2010*, Guvernul României, București, 1999 / The White Paper of the Government, Romanian Armed Forces 2005/2010, Government of Romania, <http://www.monitoruljuridic.ro/act/strategia-din-20-aprilie-2000-militara-a-romaniei-emitent-guvernul-publicat-n-monitorul-oficial-nr-191-din-4-mai-92108.html>.

⁵ *** *Carta Albă a Guvernului, Forțele Armate Române 2005/2010*, Guvernul României, București, 1999 The White Paper of the Government, Romanian Armed Forces 2005/2010, Government of Romania, <http://www.monitoruljuridic.ro/act/strategia-din-20-aprilie-2000-militara-a-romaniei-emitent-guvernul-publicat-n-monitorul-oficial-nr-191-din-4-mai-92108.html>.

We therefore appreciate that, in that volatile and difficult period, the only solution for the orientation of Romania's foreign and security policy was only towards integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, which at that time was a proof of pragmatism in promoting national interests.

Thus, at the beginning of the 21st century, Romania found itself in Western-inspired scenarios, such as the "Extended Black Sea Region" or the "Extended Middle East", which accelerated our country's accession to NATO.

The historic moment of Romania's accession to NATO was equivalent to legitimizing Romania's strategic status in the Euro-Atlantic world, both by obtaining guarantees of security and territorial sovereignty and by blurring a handicap of legitimacy and credibility that deprived us of a vital source of power of a strategic identity with strong geopolitical valences.

In this way, Romania assumes a regional strategic profile, as a "stability provider" in Southeast Europe, and in 2007, through the "National Security and Defense Strategy", our country established itself as objectives of interest the involvement in the prevention of regional conflicts, active participation in the promotion of security and democracy in Romania's neighborhood, as well as positioning as a dynamic vector in the Black Sea region, considered a "connector of strategic importance."⁶

At present, the National Defense Strategy of Romania for the period 2020–2024 "*Together, for a secure and prosperous Romania in a world marked by new challenges*" brings to the public's attention new concepts regarding the "regional stability pole" and "resilient state" significantly different from those presented in the previous strategy, compatible with the statement of the Romanian nation as a strong nation, involved in sustainable international partnerships, a nation that knows what it wants in Europe, in the world and for itself, based on continuity, adaptability, flexibility, resilience and predictability.⁷

3. Defining naval diplomacy

Public diplomacy has a special connection with the military instrument of a state and thus implicitly with defense diplomacy. Through the army, a state can engage in a range of non-aggressive and non-combat missions that can increase both the prestige of that state at the international level and its credibility in the field of security.

By forcibly participating in humanitarian aid missions, peacekeeping operations, states can win the sympathy of the international community, conclude a more effective and constructive security dialogue with other states, be more readily accepted in alliances, enter into several partnerships and interstate relationships can be built on mutual understanding and effective communication.

Naval diplomacy is a relatively new expression, which does nothing but present all the activities carried out by a state to promote its own interests in the maritime space and to influence the behavior of another state, in order to deter an armed attack or determine a priori established behavior.

⁶ ****Strategia de Securitate Națională a României – România europeană, România euroatlantică: pentru o viață mai bună într-o țară democratică, mai sigură și prosperă*, 2007, / *Romania's National Security Strategy – European Romania, Euro-Atlantic Romania: for a better life in a democratic, safer and more prosperous country*
<http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/SSNR/SSNR.pdf>;

⁷ ****Strategia națională de apărare a României pentru perioada 2020–2024, "Împreună, pentru o Românie sigură și prosperă într-o lume marcată de noi provocări"* / *Romania's national defense strategy for the period 2020–2024, "Together, for a secure and prosperous Romania in a world marked by new challenges"*
https://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/Documente/Strategia_Nationala_de_Aparare_a_Tarii_2020_2024.pdf

We can thus avouch that naval diplomacy is a continuation of the public diplomacy of the state, which is always in harmony with the level of the interests of that state on the seas and oceans of the world.

Even if power is exploited in naval diplomacy rather than the use of force, there are still situations that lead to acts of violence.

During peacetime, fleets can be used to obtain strategic materials, exerting political influence over suppliers, but in war situations, they can do the same through trade protection measures. Not infrequently, in the midst of a conflict, fleets are used as diplomatic tools in a much more direct way, being able to exert pressure on neutral countries or being used as an asset in negotiations to end the war. The relationship between politics and naval activities is extremely complex. Admiral Mahan considered: *“Diplomatic conditions affect military actions and military considerations affect diplomatic measures...They are inseparable parts of a whole, therefore those responsible for military measures must understand the diplomatic factors and vice versa.”*⁸

From the 18th to the 19th centuries, naval strategists appreciated the role of naval diplomacy in different ways, so Admiral Nelson (1758-1805) said that *“a fleet of British warships is the best negotiator in Europe,”*⁹ the British philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) considered that *“our diplomacy is nothing when there is no fleet to support it”* and last but not least, but even closer to our days, the famous British Sir Julian Stafford Corbett (1854-1922) stated that *“the primary function of a fleet is to support or sustain diplomatic efforts,”* or the well-known Russian Admiral, Sergey Gorskov (1910-1988), considered that it *“would be difficult to find an area of our planet in which US leaders have not used their preferred foreign policy tool - the Navy - against the progressive forces of people in different countries.”*¹⁰

Fleets can be used in many ways to influence events and to send messages.

Sending a strong force will change the opponent's options, convey the will to get involved and influence the desired result.

A weaker force, on the other hand, can be interposed between two conflicting parties, in order to calm a hot situation, signal the decision not to intervene and determine the conciliation of the opponents. Therefore, naval actions can have as wide a range of effects as any military instrument.

The main agents of naval diplomacy are mainly surface ships which have many and obvious advantages in this role over aviation and submarines.

Currently, naval diplomacy especially needs large surface ships, some political analysts estimating that there is a fairly high probability (about 95%) that the future function of naval forces will be that of presence (force display).

Naval diplomacy is defined as the use of naval power during peacetime in order to ensure the influence, domination and promotion of the international interests of governments.

4. The importance of naval forces in naval diplomacy missions

Analyzing the international legislation and regulations regarding the right to fly over the national airspace or crossing the national territory of the states, we found that the ground and air forces are constrained and limited by a number of factors in terms of their mobility. From this point of view, due to the legislation and in particular the international one, the naval forces are on another level.

⁸ Geoffrey TILL, *Maritime Strategy and Nuclear Age*, Sf. Martin Press, New York, 1984, p. 189.

⁹ Ibidem., p. 210.

¹⁰ Ibidem., p. 211.

International maritime law enshrines the principle of freedom of navigation at sea, as well as the principle of immunity of military ships. In all cases, any ship shall enjoy the jurisdiction of its own immunity, based on the principle of the sovereignty of the State, based on the unanimously accepted principle of equality of States in international relations.

With this privileged situation, a military ship can be anywhere on the seas and oceans, except the inland and territorial waters of the states. She can patrol, she can park, she can wait in international waters without anyone, state or supranational organization forbidding her, holding her accountable, or limiting her activity. It is an advantage that the troops of the other categories of forces of the army do not have, an advantage resulting from a series of characteristics specific to ships, as follows:

- **complexity** of carrying out a wide range of humanitarian, social, political or military missions, in isolation or organized in naval groups.
- **mobility** from the perspective of ease of movement on the water. Ships can sail to distant international maritime areas where they can increase their ability to use force according to the needs of the situation and can easily withdraw from the hostile environment in the high seas, “protected” by international law, with minimal losses and costs.
- **the ability to project the force** that allows the ship to embark troops and numerous military equipment to be transported very close to the “hot zone” where the military actions take place.
- **the autonomy** resulting from the ownership of ships to navigate and park continuously on water for a long time, depending on the storage capacity of fuel, food, drinking water and ammunition on board.
- **symbolism** seen as a message about the intention and will of the state to maintain its commitments.

All these conditions of immunity turn the naval forces into an effective tool to protect and defend, if necessary, the maritime and fluvial interests of a country. For example, military vessels may secure commercial and fishing vessels, patrol trade routes where piracy or smuggling is occurring, may be stationed near oil installations to prevent any terrorist activity and with the mandate of authorized international bodies, may apply the embargo from the sea over some countries.

During peacetime, naval forces are the most effective tool of diplomacy. They can be sent on stage with little political capital compared to other military forces. They do not need approvals or overflight access to travel anywhere in the Planetary Ocean and can be easily and quickly withdrawn when they have completed their mission without leaving any physical traces, as evidenced by the action of land troops. Their presence creates symbolic effects everywhere.

That is why states use their naval force to make goodwill visits, demonstrations of force, protection, intervention, in a word, to make political statements beyond their immediate borders. Let us remember that at the beginning of this century the expression “gunboat diplomacy” was born because the states sent their ships to represent their interests in the hot areas and their presence marked the intention of military action in the future.

Benefiting from the advantage of freedom of navigation at sea, naval forces can be the first units involved in a crisis and once they reach the area of operations, they can maintain balance for a longer period of time.

This ability of the naval forces to be the first in a hot zone and to be able to influence the leadership of a state or a group of states during peacetime and in all conditions of crisis, constitutes naval diplomacy, which essentially consists in the use of ships as a tool in support of foreign policy.

The great advantage of naval diplomacy is that it ensures a permanent presence without occupation of the territory, achieves coercion without a fight and, if necessary, can be withdrawn quickly and easily, without abandoning the territory.

The first to introduce and highlight the principle of battleship mobility is the British diplomat and naval strategist Sir James Eric Sydney Cable (1920-2001) in papers published between 1971 and 1994 under the title *“Diplomacy of Gunners”*, which he defines as *“use or threat of a limited naval force, as opposed to an act of war, for the purpose of securing an advantage or avoiding a loss, either in the settlement of an international dispute, or for intervention in the territory under the jurisdiction of another state.”*¹¹

Preventive and coercive naval diplomacy is applied when it is desired to influence events, especially in the early stages of crises and political objectives are still unclear. In this situation, the naval forces assigned to this type of mission, operating according to well-established rules, will ensure the maintenance of a balance in the area. In the language of peacekeeping operations, naval forces can make a significant contribution to the preventive deployment of forces to prevent the crisis.

Naval diplomacy¹² can therefore be achieved by:

- **Constraint** when it is necessary to send a strong message. In this case, the naval forces used by naval diplomacy must be able to develop offensive capabilities. The threat of offensive use of force is aimed at intimidating a potential aggressor or forcing him to comply with resolutions or decisions of international bodies.
- **The display of strength** (naval presence in the area of interest) can be achieved through the deployment of forces, visits to ports, exercises and routine operations in areas of interest. Presence is a national task as well as an alliance, and its contribution to stability is so valued by NATO that it has been adopted as a principle in the use of the Alliance’s naval forces.
- **Symbolic representation actions** by which ships can be used to send a message to a government without giving military support to an ally. The symbolic use of ships materializes through visits to ports and aims to create a favorable image of the country of affiliation of the visiting ships. These visits are of a political nature and are carried out in order to accumulate diplomatic capital.

5. Aspects from the naval diplomacy of the Romanian Naval Forces

The visits, both operative and courtesy, aim to create a favorable image of the country in question, both by the manner of conduct of the crew, by the seafaring aspect of the ship, and by cultivating and maintaining friendly relations with the local authorities. At the same time, the organizers of such visits also aim to increase the prestige and influence of the country in question.

In this sense it is to be noted that the Romanian Naval Forces have used, since its beginnings, the procedures of amicable visits to foreign ports, first with the gunboat FULGERUL, in 1875, which, having on board the officers of the fleet, made a reconnaissance at sea, on the occasion of

¹¹ *The Fundamentals of BRITISH MARITIME DOCTRINE*, BR 1806, London, HMSO, 1995, p. 56.

¹² Vam(r) Constantin IORDACHE, *Elemente de artă militară maritimă*, Editura CTEA, București, 2007, pp. 87-89.

which protocol visits with the Turkish authorities and the Turkish warships in Sulina and Tulcea were exchanged, then the tall ship MIRCEA in the ports of the riparian states at Black Sea and last but not least with the cruiser ELISABETA in the ports of the Black Sea, Mediterranean and Atlantic Ocean. The longest march carried out by naval ships was performed in 1890-1891, when the cruiser ELISABETA conducted an 8-month training march in the Mediterranean, North, and Atlantic Ocean. On the occasion of the visit of the Romanian squadron led by the cruiser ELISABETA, carried out in Istanbul, in 1890, Sultan Abdul Hamid II received in a benevolent audience the corps of officers he decorated, a fact interpreted by foreign diplomacy as a gesture of goodwill towards Romania. The Navy has supported Romania's state leadership in promoting its foreign relations with European and North African countries.

More than once, the ships have become ambassadors of the Romanian people, carrying the message of peace of Romania on the meridians of the globe. In 1892, the Romanian Navy, through the tall ship MIRCEA and the cruiser ELISABETA, represented Romania at the Colombian celebrations held in the Italian port of Genoa on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America. In 1895, the Romanian Navy participated in the opening of the Kiel Canal connecting the Baltic Sea with the North Sea, as well as in the official opening of the port of Varna.

Countless times, the commanders of military ships travelling abroad were also accredited with diplomatic missions, transmitting to the heads of state whose ports the Romanian ships entered, messages entrusted by the country's leadership.

According to the customs of the time, in its political and military relations developed in the first decades of the twentieth century, Romania participated in the exchange of visits between military ships with those of other states.

In the summer of 1901, the port of Constanta was visited by two Russian squadrons at the festivities held on that occasion the Grand Duke Alexandru Mihailovici being present on the Russian side, and on the Romanian side, the Crown Prince Ferdinand, the Prime Minister Dimitrie Sturza and the Minister of War Ion I.C. Brătianu.

In the following years, warships from Great Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria visited the port of Constanta. A vivid impression, with wide international echoes, was produced in 1905 by the presence in Romanian waters of the cruiser POTEMKIN, the most powerful ship of the Russian fleet in the Black Sea.

After an interruption of more than two decades, caused by the outbreak of the First World War, on August 1, 1924, a group of Romanian military ships resumed training marches during the summer, conducting friendly visits to ports in Bulgaria and Turkey.

In the following years, the visits of the tall ship MIRCEA and the destroyers MĂRĂȘTI and MĂRĂȘEȘTI in the Mediterranean Sea continued. Immediately after the completion of the construction and the arrival in the country, the new tall ship MIRCEA carried out an instructional march in 1939, which remained memorable both through its tricontinental itinerary and through its development in complex international conditions (beginning of the Second World War). The port of Constanta received numerous visits from foreign ships belonging to the fleets of Great Britain, USA, France, Italy, Greece, etc., visits that contributed to the building and strengthening of Romania's political alliances.

After the Second World War, the visits of the Romanian military ships were limited in the first stage to the allied ports from the Black Sea basin and Romania received response visits in the ports of Constanța and the Danube, then, after the relative opening followed after 1964, the tall ship MIRCEA was sent to the bicentennial of the United States of America, on which occasion it

also participated in a regatta of the main school ships, with sails, equipped with the fleets of that period.

After the events of 1989, the ships of the Romanian Naval Forces continued their diplomatic policy through visits and joint actions mainly in the ports and at the activities organized by the military fleets from the North Atlantic and European Union structures.

Significant are the participation of the tall ship (school ship) MIRCEA in the regattas organized over the Atlantic Ocean in 2004 and 2009 and in the maritime festivals in the North Sea, and the Baltic Sea in 2005 and 2008. Also, the school ship of the Naval Academy in Constanța also participated in a series of training marches and regattas in the Mediterranean Sea, including the Adriatic Sea, when it was the first Romanian military ship present in the port of Durres in Albania.

Extremely important was the participation of the tall ship (school ship) MIRCEA in the Black Sea Regatta in May 2014, held in the ports of Varna, Novorossiysk and Sochi, an activity that was a real naval diplomacy, known as the regional security context regarding the disputes between Russia and Ukraine.

This event, organized for the first time in the Black Sea, was a project of the Romanian sailing crew, and the success it had at the level of naval diplomacy, determined the organizers (Sail Training International) to return in the fall of 2016 with a new regatta, on the same itinerary.

During the last 10 years, the ships of the Romanian Naval Forces have combined, during the naval diplomacy actions, the display of the force with courtesy visits, together with the partners from the North Atlantic alliance, especially in the Black Sea, against the rapid evolutions of the naval environment security lately. The main actions of the naval diplomacy of the force display were carried out, according to the NATO deterrence strategy and against the background of the hostile actions of the Russian Federation in the Black Sea aquarium, within the annual editions of the multinational SEA SHIELD exercise,¹³ within the multinational anti-submarine combat exercises MAVI BALINA, the annual exercises SABER GUARDIAN etc.

The main dimension of naval diplomacy expressed in recent years has been the realization, together with allies, of a constant naval presence in the Black Sea aquarium, especially in response to the deteriorating security situation in the spring of 2014.

Numerous other naval diplomacy actions have been carried out in the field of maritime and river security, as part of NATO's policies to prevent illegal migration in the Mediterranean and to identify common procedures for preventing and combating asymmetric threats.

Numerous actions to strengthen bilateral trust with Turkey, Ukraine and Bulgaria, by means of naval diplomacy activities in the Black Sea basin, were carried out with logistics and through the Naval Military Forces. Following the deterioration of security in the western part of the Black Sea basin in the spring of 2014, the joint training activities of the Romanian military (by extension of NATO member states) and Ukraine have intensified and diversified, in order to engage a constant military presence to ensure peace, security and stability on the southern flank of the Alliance.

An extremely little-known dimension of the Romanian naval diplomacy lately is the significant support given by the specialized structures of the Romanian Navy to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the international process at the International Court of Justice on the delimitation of the continental shelf between Ukraine and Romania. Winning this international

¹³ Scenarios are being played out and complex integrated exercises are being carried out to strengthen security and collective defence on the Black Sea.

process is still seen today as one of the most important successes of Romanian diplomacy internationally.¹⁴

By means of all these actions, the Romanian naval diplomacy has exceeded the level of obligatory naval exercises or courtesy visits, reaching the area of impact and efficiency attributed to diplomacy in a broad sense; through these actions, the structures of the Navy, today the Naval Forces, have strengthened Romania's position as a reliable partner in NATO and the EU.

The naval diplomacy actions carried out in the last thirty years thus reveal not only the role and purpose of the Romanian Naval Forces within NATO in the actions of maintaining and consolidating the good relations with the states bordering the Black Sea, as well as maintaining security, together with allies within remote maritime districts. They also point out that naval diplomacy has contributed to the expression of foreign policy in areas and with means that have increased its effect, impact and efficiency.

All the above actions are part of the Romanian naval diplomacy, in this way Romania being "present" at all events in its area of "responsibility", further strengthening the allies' belief that it is a reliable partner at NATO's eastern border and EU.

Conclusions

Ensuring maritime security, an urgent need for maritime and coastal areas, contributes to achieving a favorable climate for the development of sustainable economic activities. However, in order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to develop international cooperation and promote the effective harmonization of security policies. The particularities of the security environment at regional level and the activities of the main actors involved in the management of the world's seas and oceans must be analyzed.

Romania, even if it benefits from a modest exit to the Black Sea compared to other riparian countries, has a major advantage: it controls one of the three strategic points that can offer domination in the Pontic basin: the mouth of the Danube, the most important European river, which crosses 10 countries and 4 capitals.

In this context, Romania plays a particularly important role. As a NATO and EU border state, Romania has an added responsibility to stop the identified risks and threats at its borders, while integrating itself into the organizations of which it is a member. The role of its armed forces is also consistent, and among them, the Naval Forces play an even more important role by participating in various cooperation initiatives, increasing mutual trust between ZEMN actors, but also by the responsibility to form the first line of defense in preventing and counteracting the risks and threats in this area.

Romania's geopolitical position at the Black Sea has substantial advantages, allowing in the case of a correct exploitation of all available resources to become a regional center of power and a state that has an important word to be said in the European Union. We appreciate that, due to the current geopolitical position, being located at the intersection of three major geopolitical axes – Central Europe, dominated by Germany, Eastern Europe, controlled by Russia and Southeast Europe, under the influence of Turkey – Romania cannot take initiatives in the area, but

¹⁴ The specialists of the Maritime Hydrographic Directorate also contributed to the achievement of this diplomatic success, by supporting a precisely documented plea from a cartographic point of view, during the process, by making available to the commission the current Romanian maps, on paper and in electronic format, necessary to prepare the negotiation rounds, as well as by searching and identifying, in the DHM archive, at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in order to prepare the Romanian side's argument, a set of maritime maps published over the years by the former USSR, Ukraine and Bulgaria. Rear Admiral (r) Ion Custură, PhD, thus appreciated the "outstanding achievement of the Romanian naval diplomacy" by winning the lawsuit filed against Ukraine.

can become a mediator between the three great powers, while being very careful not to become a currency.

The Naval Forces have undoubtedly shown that, in addition to traditional naval operations, they are best placed to provide flexible, continuous and sustained support during political and diplomatic action even during crisis management.

Capable of operating at long range, without constraints imposed by national borders or arms control limits, the Naval Forces are often the first to act in crisis areas. Their flexibility, resilience and ability to maintain their balance make them ideal participants in the first moments of the onset of crises.

A naval force can thus be an instrument of external security policy, visible from the outside, whose presence often exerts a much more convincing influence, compared to the size and costs of its components, the actions of naval diplomacy being always in the swirl of public diplomacy.

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