SECURITY THREATS TO EUROPEAN SOCIETIES. CASE STUDY: THE CONFLICTS ON THE ROMANIAN BORDER

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Abstract: The international security environment is in a state of continuous transition. Some changes are predictable and linear, whether they have their source in the objective development of the security environment or are the effect of strategies and programs. Others have unexpected qualities, of essential discontinuity, seismic and are accompanied by a significant dose of uncertainty in nature, magnitude and duration. The multiplication of new risks and threats intensifies the aspects of uncertainty and insecurity of the global environment, so that, in the vision of the next 10-15 years, the world order will look different, taking into account the fact that the new dynamics of international relations advantage the attempts of the Euro-Atlantic community which aims to build a new international balance, capable of ensuring the expansion and consolidation of freedom and democracy (CSSAS, 2004).
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1. Introduction: International security environment. Threats

To identify threats to the identity of a state, we must establish the values around which the community, in this case the nation, coalesces, including objective factors, such as the national language, territory and other identifying elements, specific to the state in question (Bogzeanu,2010). Barry Buzan identifies three major types of threats to societal security, namely:

• migration – when a people receives too high a percentage of foreigners, their identity can be affected by the change in their social composition (Daud, 2017);

• horizontal competition – the cultural and linguistic characteristics of a society can be affected by the influence of neighboring cultures, with clear effects on the identity of that people;

• vertical competition – sometimes, integrationist or secessionist projects make people stop identifying with people Z (e.g. Catalonia, Kosovo, etc.)

In addition to the three types of threats, three more threats to societal security are currently identified, namely:

• depopulation has an ambivalent character and for this reason it is mentioned separately. Depopulation has an ambivalent character, because it does not represent a threat to the identity of a society, but, first of all, to individuals, who are the bearers of the identity of a nation. It becomes a threat to societal security when it threatens to destroy society;

• discrimination;

• terrorism.

2. Risks and threats to Romania

The last decade of the 20th century was a turbulent period for the entire world, characterized by profound transformations at a global level, transformations that relate to both the redrawing of borders and changes in regime and ideology. The redrawing of borders meant an increase in the number of state actors at a global level, and the changes in regime and ideology generated new types of actors and surprising forms of their manifestation (CSSAS, 2004). Non-state actors (multinational and transnational corporations, NGOs, etc.) have gained increasing importance due to their role on the global stage (CSSAS, 2004), whose actions are sometimes difficult to predict. Other disturbing phenomena tend to undergo major mutations, gaining full status as an actor on the international stage, an actor whose face is increasingly difficult to identify, as is the case with terrorism. Risks and threats have acquired an internationalized aspect, "managing" to ignore, in their manifestations, state borders, which has resulted in a rapid blurring of the differences between internal and external security. The expansion of NATO and the EU to the east can also be included in this direction, these being processes that visibly influence the system of international relations, with the most important implications on the international security environment and on which we will focus in the following, for at least two reasons.

The first would be the fact that both processes bring about transformations of the geopolitical and geostrategic situation in the regions close to Romania (Central and South-Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans, the Black Sea and Caucasus regions) (Buzan, 2000:147).

The second reason is that the evolution of these processes is directly related to the achievement of Romania's security objectives, the state of our country's internal security environment depending to a large extent on them. Although there have been no immediate and concrete reactions, it is expected that, in the absence of adequate motivations from the main world actors, opposition reactions of a geostrategic and geopolitical nature will occur in the near future. The emergence of the idea of a "New Europe" (in which the Secretary of State for Defense Donald Rumsfeld included states such as Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, the Czech Republic, to give just a few examples, states with recent membership status in the North Atlantic Alliance) may suggest new ways of approaching Euro-Atlantic relations, but less a strengthening of them (Mostoflei, 2009).

In this context, we can appreciate that, in general, the risks to which Europe's stability and security are subject are residual risks, originating from the legacy left by the end of the Cold War – from states that belonged to the former USSR, or were in its sphere of influence (both in terms of existing tensions that can generate violent conflicts, but also of the high potential they have to become suppliers of weapons and combat equipment for certain non-state actors whose manifestation is increasingly felt on the international stage - terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda, for example, or other types of paramilitary groups). Such residual risks do nothing more than increase the chance of the emergence of transnational dangers, which could lead to the degradation of the state of stability, often precarious in some European regions, located on the periphery of the continent (Dinu et al., 2000).

3. Regional context

The situation on Romania's eastern border remains an extremely complex case, frequently addressed in current security analyses, which demonstrates that it remains one with pertinent influences on national security. One reason could be that it is sometimes quite unclear in which region this space should be placed, in a space of influence with strong European accents, or, rather, in one whose center of gravity remains the Russian Federation. The enlargement of the Euro-Atlantic space has been presented by Moscow, sometimes with virulence, as a continuation of Cold War practices in which Russia is the ultimate objective (Dolghin, 2004:35).

Despite all the mechanisms for establishing NATO-Russian Federation dialogue, this impression persists. Enough to give the various leaders (most of the independent states resulting from the collapse of the USSR are presidential republics with presidents holding extremely powerful positions) the opportunity to initiate certain "games" between Moscow and the West in order to maintain themselves in power, following a model once practiced by Romanian politics. Although it cannot be said that the West's policy is not pragmatic, the model is still incompatible with its democratic political values, which makes the political elite in the ex-Soviet republics more dependent on Moscow than they may assume.

Also, in the situation where the states in the area have a rather fragile democracy, with a degree of dependence on Russia still unclear, the main aspects of military, political and social security depend on the evolution of relations between Moscow and them. If we were to apply the security models developed by Barry Buzan, we can appreciate that there are three categories of risks and threats to regional security that we can identify in this area, with major implications for the main actors in the region, especially for Moldova, Romania and Ukraine:

Non-military risks and threats (Sarcinschi, 2005:5)
• Territorial problems whose resolution is delayed, thus succeeding in accentuating negative states and phenomena that can constitute dangers and even threats;
• Failure to comply with international commitments, which can lead to the disruption of the regional situation;
• Negative interstate developments, which can degenerate into destabilizing acts, thus leading to the triggering of political and military crises;
• Organized crime, trafficking in arms, drugs and people, corruption, social disorder, used by hostile forces to control and destabilize the region

Military risks and threats (Romanian Government, 2021)
• The presence in the region of approximately 2,000 soldiers and 40,000 tons of military equipment and ammunition belonging to the former 14th Army. Their international status still remains unclear and constitutes a destabilizing factor, even if the military forces consider themselves peacekeepers, which would imply a high degree of impartiality;
• Local armed confrontations, facilitated by the existence of Transnistrian separatist forces ready to resort to military means to prevent "reintegration" into the territory of Moldova.

Asymmetric and transnational risks (Romanian Intelligence Services)

• The possibility of conflicts, favored by the population structure, against the backdrop of the Transnistrian conflict, where separatist tendencies are manifested, to which are added tendencies for Gagauz autonomy. An extremely dangerous situation could result, having among its consequences the revival of various nationalist forces in the region, which, by involvement, could inflame the situation.

• Attempts to destabilize the region through terrorist actions, aiming to shake the confidence in the ability to manage the situation of both the actors in the area but especially of the international and regional security organizations (OSCE).

4. Conclusions: Romania's security as a NATO border state

Maintaining frozen conflicts in the Greater Black Sea Region and the possibility of new such conflicts in Romania's proximity have the potential to generate negative effects at regional level. At the same time, the existence and perpetuation of interethnic tensions and regional or local imbalances in Romania's proximity and interest areas may lead to the outbreak of conflicts (Presidential Administration of Romania). The wider Black Sea area (acronym ZEMN) represents an economic and political space, which includes, in addition to the Black Sea riparian states (Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia and Turkey), states in relatively close proximity to it - the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, being a space of convergence of distinct regions, in terms of their own characteristics.

The fragmentation tendencies in the Wider Black Sea Region (WSR) are increasing year by year, as the evolution towards integration and stability promoted by the EU and NATO seems to be seen as a danger by other actors in the region who wish to assert their distinct economic, political and military strategic interests, to recreate old spheres of influence and/or to impose new ones. The Black Sea constitutes a space of competition for power that continues to unfold even after it seemed that humanity had learned the difficult lesson of the Cold War (Băhnăreanu et al., 2022). Currently, Romania is not facing a direct, imminent and explicit terrorist threat. However, the geographical proximity to areas where the terrorist phenomenon is most prevalent and the transit of the national territory by refugee groups mainly from conflict zones may constitute factors favoring possible terrorist actions, with a high degree of unpredictability (Băhnăreanu et al., 2022).

Also, national contingents participating in missions outside the territory of Romania (Chirlesan, 2013) are exposed to risks and threats generated by the actions of extremist-terrorist organizations and groups. Radicalism originating in the Middle East and North Africa and its connections with organized crime activities on the European continent will increase with the return of "European fighters" to their countries of origin/residence. In close connection with the means and forms of manifestation of terrorism, cross-border crime induces the risk of arms and ammunition trafficking.

The new challenges with an impact on the security environment increasingly prefigure the tendency of state and non-state adversaries (information entities, interest or pressure groups, etc.) to exploit the limited capacity of communities, and society in general, to protect themselves against hostile interference (Presidential Administration of Romania).

Strengthening the military potential in Romania's vicinity, including on the eastern flank (Institutul European din România, 2023), respectively on the NATO border (the

militarization of Crimea and in general, of the Black Sea basin by the Russian Federation, the conduct of military exercises and the consolidation of capabilities through which offensive and defensive operations can be carried out by it), generates major challenges to national strategic interests aimed at securing the EU and NATO borders and, respectively, ensuring energy security and stability in the Black Sea Region (Institutul European din România, 2023).

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