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THE IMPACT OF EUROPEANISATION, AMERICANISATION, AND GAZPROMIZATION ON THE ARTICULATION OF ROMANIA'S FOREIGN POLICY DYNAMICS IN THE WIDER BLACK SEA AREA IN THE PERIOD 2005-2007

Eduard Rudolf Roth*

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to offer a complex overview of Romania's foreign policy dynamics towards the Wider Black Sea Area (WBSA) in the period 2005-2007, by uncovering and assessing the degree to which exogenously articulated preferences influenced the design and formulation of the indigenous foreign policy agenda for the region. In this context, the document would argue that Bucharest's behavioural dynamic towards WBSA was – throughout the whole the selected timeframe – a by-product of a multi-layered, overlapped pattern of influences (primarily of US and Russian and secondary of EU origin) that played a nodal role in the structural moulding of the regional topography, in terms of security or socio-political or economical outcomes. In particular, the manuscript will also set out to further understanding of how the anticipation to enhance Romania's status and allure with Washington (and partially with Brussels) led to imports of heterochthonous preferences, perspectives and interests into the indigenous foreign policy agenda and of how – due to the specificity of the NATO and EU integration processes, the two epicentres of power imposed an altercating socialization pattern to Bucharest, by providing cues to elicit a certain behaviour and by ascribing it roles and ways of conduct congruent with their interests, goals and political visions for the region.

Key words: foreign policy, Wider Black Sea Area, energetic security, Romania, Americanisation, Europeanisation, Gazpromization

Introduction

Despite of the country's formal involvement in the Black Sea cooperation structures as early as 1992, Romania's foreign policy dynamics kept the conceptual space of the Wider Black Sea Area (WBSA) at the periphery of Bucharest's diplomatic interests till mid 2000s. Following the materialisation of

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its 2004 NATO accession, Romania's interest in the deepening of sub-regional integration and in the development and promotion of interstate projects and strategies encompassing WBSA, reached an unprecedented magnitude, unsurpassed even after 2007, when Bucharest became a *de jure* EU member.

The climax of Romania's political involvement in the region was thus reached in the period 2005-2007, when – due to the catalytic role of the indigenous administration – Bucharest tried to play a key role in the development of a political model for institutional integration and foreign policy formulation for the WBSA, under the patronage and with the direct support of Washington (the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership, a structure aimed to engulf GUAM¹ regionalism into an non-CIS² political and economic cooperation framework).

Following the failure of its initiative, Bucharest's dynamics towards WBSA were circumscribed to a rather moderate behavioural pattern, tributary – although not necessarily in an exclusive form – to the fact that EU's strategic architecture and agenda for the region, relying mostly on low-level political designs focused on sectorial cooperation arguably drafted in order respond to the sensitivities of various regional stakeholders and to their competing policies³, left only a marginal regional role for EU members bordering the Black Sea, but also had a minimal potential in the development of important foreign policy deliverables in the WBSA.

1 The light Europeanisation of Romania's foreign policy and EU's lack of incentives in developing a strategy for the Black Sea region

As the EU integration continued to be the *backbone* of Romania's foreign policy architecture, Bucharest's diplomatic exercise from the period 2005-2007 revealed no prominent structural mutations in relation to the previous political cycle, continuing to oscillate between the already established minimalist *suivisme* of Brussels' foreign policy perspectives and the proactive *voluntarism* associated with its *NATO first* perspective in terms of European security

¹ GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development is a regional organisation of four post-Soviet states: Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova.

² Commonwealth of Independent States is a regional organisation comprising ex-Soviet republics, formed after the implosion of the USSR.

³ Black Sea Synergy (2008) and Eastern Partnership (2009)

infrastructure.

In this context, although the new governmental structure that took power after 2004 elections attributed various degrees of interest and importance to a large portfolio of national foreign policy objectives – which, among other aspects, included the strengthening of the privileged partnership with the US and the UK, the assignment of an important role for Bucharest in the Balkans and the wider Black Sea Region and the improvement of the relations with Ukraine, Russia and Moldova (see Romania's Governance Program for the period 2005–2008, 2005) – in reality, Romania's foreign policy agenda proved to be limited – with the exception of the EU membership process, to President **Traian Basescu's** “*Washington – London – Bucharest Axis*” project (Ivan, 2012). This situation arguably germinated into the revamping of the Black Sea initiatives and policies, and to Prime Minister **Popescu-Tariceanu's** (neo)liberal, arguably pro-European (and allegedly pro-Russian) foreign affairs perspectives (Tudoroiu, 2008).

In particular, the *overstretched prevalence* of the EU accession process in Romania's foreign policy from 2005-2007 *monopolised* Bucharest foreign policy resources to such extent that only marginal and thus modest institutional capacities were left for the design and formulation of alternative diplomatic projects, outside those engulfed in the mainstream foreign policy frameworks drafted in Brussels. In particular, the magnitude of the EU accession reached such a dimension that Romanian authorities developed what **Noutcheva** and **Bechev** defined as a veritable *culture of response* to Brussels' objections and penalisations (Noutcheva-Bechev 2008), with the indigenous administration rapidly stepping up reforms, presenting revised reform strategies and making pledges for additional measures.

The nature of the access negotiations and the strong normative impact of the EU allowed Brussels to export “*Europeanization pressures well beyond its own boundaries*” (Papadimitriou and Phinnemore, 2008, p. 11), whose leverage allowed Bucharest to move “*out of the post-communist limbo and ultimately qualify for EU membership*”, despite relatively poor domestic performance (Noutcheva and Bechev, 2008, p. 140).

According to **Denca**, the *Europeanisation* process, severely circumscribed to the adoption of the *Acquis Communautaire* and of the institutions and norms in the field of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), involved – due to the aspirant EU member state status – a tacit acceptance without the country's “*option to project [its] own preferences*” in order to reshape the institutional

models according to its interests. Furthermore, Romania had to adapt its systems of foreign policy-making and to align its national position in order to comply with “the EU common positions, common strategies, joint actions, and political declarations”, and last, but not least, to create or to refashion its political and administrative infrastructure in order to take part in political and technical committees and working parties of the Council of Ministers or to interact with the EU (Denca, 2009, p. 393-394).

By following the same logical line, **Popescu** adds that a crucial dimension of the foreign policy of *Europeanisation* in the period 2004-2007 was tributary the “involvement of the Romanian political elites in the process of European elite socialisation” (Popescu, 2010, p. 55) especially after 2005, when Romanian delegates and representatives were able to observe and gained first-hand experience from the assisting to all stages of the foreign-policy decision making process within CFSP.

In contrast, I will argue that although some degree of *Europeanisation* cannot be discounted, the fact that the dynamics of the process are circumscribed to a different behavioural pattern than in the case of the EU’s first pillar policies, being “less hierarchical in nature and rather voluntary” (Alecu de Flers - Müller, 2010, p. 18), leads to less convergent and arguably less visible effects.

For instance, although Romania – confined to its aspirant member status – was forced to *download* some EU perspectives and priorities – like CFSP or the Constitutional Treaty – it assigned a *variable magnitude* to their modelling force in the adaptation of its foreign policy and thus *limited* their materialisation, in most cases, according to its own portfolio of preferences and identity.

As a result, despite some internalisation of the EU norms and values and of a partial institutionalisation of the Western democratic infrastructure, the general projections of Bucharest’s foreign policy behaviour did not suffer extreme modifications. Moreover, neither the exposure to the EU institutional socialisation was able to generate a spectral shift in Romania’s foreign policy behaviour that could neutralise what Ivan defined as the state’s previous identity and portfolio of interests “marked by cultural and historical biases” in its relations with countries like Russia, Ukraine or Moldova (Ivan, 2012, p. 157). In case of Moldova, for instance, Romanian foreign policy dynamics – although suffering a certain decrease in terms of territoriality – continued to target Moldovan nationhood.

Moreover, although the apparent shift of policy making focus from Bucharest

to Brussels on a broad portfolio of issues allowed Romania to enjoy some improvement of its international prestige and an augmentation of its external action capacity in particular, Bucharest mainly aligned with the EU in cases where such orientation generated low or even no costs (like in the situation of remote, non-neighbouring states), or with those perspectives supported or even indirectly uploaded by Washington into the Brussels foreign policy infrastructure, in order to capitalise on the effects from the security (and economic) outcomes generated by the projection of the US preferences.

Wider Black Sea Area was, in this case, a perfect example of an alignment, which although not in a formal situation of conceptual divergence with Brussels perspectives, reflected the existence of a lack of Europeanisation in Bucharest's foreign policy.

However, this situation was tributary – among other things – to the fact that before the articulation of its broad, ambiguous and roughly holistic Black Sea Synergy initiative, WBSA was – prior to the 2007 accession of Romania and Bulgaria – of rather peripheral than strategic interest to Brussels. Moreover, despite of a relatively clear rhetoric highlighting the challenges and threats this pseudo-conceptual more or less politically and economically dysfunctional neighbourhood could have posed to EU security but also its relatively high potential as an energy hub linking Europe with the hydrocarbon rich Caspian region, EU's actions and initiatives engulfing WBSA were minimal. In practice, as **Akgul** sums up, none of Brussels' previous initiatives⁴ covering the region was designed per se for WBSA neighbourhood (Akgul, 2012), but affected it collaterally.

The absence of a clearly defined WBSA dimension in EU's institutional and political architecture⁵ increased Romania's foreign policy sensitivity towards

⁴ During the 1990s EU's concluded several Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA) with Russia, countries of Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia aimed to strengthen these countries democracies and accompany their transitions to a market economy through cooperation in a wide range of areas and through political dialogue. In 2004, Brussels launched its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), an all-encompassing foreign policy framework aimed to regulate the bilateral relations between EU and 16 of its closest neighbours.

⁵ In its 4 May 2006 speech, delivered during the "Common vision on common neighbourhood" conference from Vilnius Romanian President Traian Basescu's discourse highlighted for instance the absence of the EU's regional policy towards Black Sea, while highlighting the inefficiency of EU's soft power approach towards the region in comparison with NATO's strategy and role in constructing "democratic capacities for security and defense" (Presidential Administration of Romania - http://presidency.ro/pdf/date/7450_ro.pdf [accessed on 23 March 2015])

Washington's agenda for the region, which arguably led to the indigenous hybridising of a mostly imported transatlantic agenda for the Black Sea.

2 The WBSA dimension of Romania's foreign policy – an interplay of exogenously articulated influences (US, Russia, EU)

Although the *Americanisation* of Romanian foreign policy was arguably less pronounced than the EU's moulding influence, its dynamics and outputs played a nodal role in the redefinition of Bucharest's security matrix and of the state's capabilities of international expression and behaviour. In particular, unlike the *Europeanising* Brussels' tailored policies – involving broad, complex and sometimes even overlapping foreign policy objectives, perspectives and tools, and requiring the country to cope with a plethora of institutional deficiencies – the *Americanisation* was translated into Romania's foreign policy geometry, under the form of localized implementations or regional and sub-regional copies of Washington's mid 2000s *pragmatic, personalised and security-oriented* foreign policy *behavioural patterns*.

The main infrastructure for *Americanisation* was represented by the *Romanian - US Strategic Partnership* – and consisted of Romania's unilateral and convergent alignment with the US on many international files and in promoting or acting in order to add value to the American interests in Europe or in the regions of the world where Washington was, at that time, increasing its involvement and presence, like for instance Europe's Extended Neighbourhood (Greater Middle East, Wider Black Sea Area, etc.) and in Bucharest's assumed "NATO first" policy, despite some political *derailments* imposed by the EU integration process, which required Romania to give its formal support to the Constitutional Treaty's CFSP and ESDP-related provisions, whose institutional and strategic design were putting pressure on NATO and the US (Ungureanu, 2006).

The *Americanisation* of Romania's foreign policy increased its magnitude after president's **Basescu's** visit to the US, during 8-9 March 2005, when Romania's reaffirmed support for a potential US basing presence on its territory and Bucharest's decision to sign a bilateral cooperation agreement that will allow for the joint use of indigenous military facilities by US army troops (signed several months later) echoed positively in various *political circles* in Washington.

Romanian's most important *Americanised* foreign policy *deliverable*

consisted in the superior external action capacity conferred by its synergic relationship with the US, which was translated into a behavioural pattern aimed to project an indigenously adapted variation of Washington's regional preferences. This matrix of actions included ranged, for instance, from the country's endeavours to acquire a regulatory role in the Black Sea region (Papakostas, 2009) or to strengthen the political and security role of the Black Sea structures, by promoting the "*political umbrella*" model under the form of the Black Sea Forum (Manoli, 2012), up to its efforts to use the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) "*as a catalyst for a new regional identity*" (Celac, 2006, p. 147).

Furthermore, despite the existence of a certain convergence with Brussels' declaratory activism and the rhetorically assumed European interests in the Wider Black Sea region deriving from the region's vital role in EU energy security matrix (Ungureanu, 2006) –which arguably failed to leave the declaratory and strategic planning levels – most of Romania's Black Sea behaviour and energy policy ended up being *Americanised* foreign policy outputs.

Support to this claim is given by the very nature and the *depth* of Romania's involvement into the Black Sea cooperation structures, namely the fact that despite being a founding member of the BSEC since early 1990s (Ionescu, 2005), Bucharest's behaviour in the 1990s up to early 2000s reveals rather no interest in deepening the sub-regional integration, but only a limited interest to use it for the formulation and implementation of specific projects in fields of mutual interest (Micu, 2007).

Furthermore, Romania refrained from "*undertaking and participating in binding agreements*", as **Manoli** argues, in order to avoid "*complications*" (Manoli, 2012, p. 95) with its EU orientation, in the sense of delaying the accession (Christakoudis, 2000), as for a relatively long time, the two processes (EU and Black sea integration) were thought to be *opposite dynamics*, but also because, aware of its limited leverage, Romania might have thought that BSEC could have been used by Turkey or Russia to exert pressure upon itself, or even worse, to turn the organisation into a tool that would serve their own goals (Manoli, 2012).

As mentioned earlier, an important factor, which led to this situation, derived from the EU's own positioning towards the regional dynamics in the Black Sea region, namely the absence of any incentives for Brussels to develop a clear policy strategy in this sense. In particular from 1992 till 2003, EU's decisions in

this regard were, according to Tsantoulis, “sometimes of the lowest denominator, while in others EU was simply absent” while after 2004, “EU policies have been pursued in an ad hoc manner” on a “state-by-state basis” either circumstantial or in the *European Neighbourhood Policy* framework, but in general, in line with Russian sensitivities (Tsantoulis, 2010, p. 30-31).

3 Crude oil price and the colliding interests of the oil business circles with a high politics agenda: Bush-Cheney energy geopolitics, Nabucco hydrocarbon transport pipeline and Gazpromization

The factor that had the biggest contribution on the shaping of the *transformative dynamics* of the Black Sea was represented by the evolution of the crude oil price in the period 1998-2000 from US\$ 13.6 to US\$ 28.33 / barrel (World Bank Commodity Price Data)⁶. In this context, the exploitation of the vast Caspian resources become a paramount issue for the *oil business circles* from Russia, Europe and the US – especially those companies with a *hidden power politics dimension* which managed to exert important influence on the indigenous administrations. With the clashing interests and aspirations of these groups reaching a climax after 9/11, when OPEC started to apply production cuts in order to shore-up petroleum prices, Black Sea emerged as a potential energy asset and thus captured the interest of various potential stakeholders.

For instance, aware that each extra dollar in the price of oil equalled with an extra revenue of US\$ 1.4 billion for Moscow, thus not only helping Kremlin to rapidly achieve the country's financial solvency, but even to fuel some *restorationist* ambitions (Roth, 2010), the new Putin regime's acted in order to eliminate any foreign *interference* from Moscow's spheres of influence, while circumscribing Kremlin's policy to **Primakov's** doctrine of *alternative multipolarity* (Bitkova, 2014). Under these circumstances, in May 2002, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Armenia decided to upgrade the former 1992 *Tashkent Treaty* (the *Collective Security Treaty*) into an organisation, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), “a more robust form of military cooperation” (Ionescu, 2005, p. 22).

⁶ World Bank Commodity Price Data – Annual Data -http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1304428586133/pink_data_a.xlsx (accessed March 23, 2015)

On the other hand, for Bush Administration – whose May 2001 *National Energy Report* concluded that oil exports from the Caspian region could reach millions of barrels per day within several years (Nichol, 2009) – containing Russia's economic revival and preventing Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine from re-entering under Kremlin's economic and political mantle became a part of its policy in the region (Tsantoulis, 2010), arguably more or less engulfed in its strategy for combating global terrorism. Furthermore, the Administration's 2003 *National Security Strategy* stating that US energy security and global prosperity would be strengthened by expanding the numbers of hydrocarbon suppliers, including those in the Caspian region, highlights Washington's intentions of transforming the Black Sea into strategic energetic hub (*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, April 29, 2003).

Moscow's *Energy Security Strategy* policy published in 2003 whose provisions established a clear governmental dimension of the Russian energetic sector, creating the conceptual climate for the development of the “*neo-Brezhnevist Putin Doctrine of Gazpromization and Restoration*” (Roth, 2010, p. 72)⁷ certified the till then more or less justified “*assumptions*” and “*fears*” that Kremlin was embarked on a policy of controlling the energetic assets and systems of some key NATO members in order to use them as tools for achieving political objectives, but also to severely weaken the North Atlantic

⁷ Gazpromization denotes a complex doctrine and behavioural dynamics employed by Russian Administration during the presidential terms of Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev, having both indigenous and externalised dimensions. While indigenous Gazpromization involved an aggressive nationalisation of private Russian assets through state owned companies and the removal of foreign companies from the national extraction sector, externalised Gazpromization relies on a convoluted portfolio of manifestations, tributary to the place of the implementation (whether within or outside Russia's 'near abroad'). For instance, in the case of CIS states or young democracies, Gazpromization involved the exploitation of the target-state's energetic vulnerabilities or Moscow's direct control of the indigenous energy infrastructure in order to interfere with the local politics by favouring some elites with the aim of being conceded or granted various economic or political benefits. The political recalibration process often relied on a structural atopy within the indigenous political realm (a strong corruption network which could have been developed or adjusted and/or a strong ex-Soviet intelligence infrastructure which could have been easily activated or resuscitated).

In the case of EU states, Gazpromization mainly consisted in obtaining political concessions for Moscow's policies, perspectives and actions, through the exploitation of the focus on profit maximisation and market strengthening of the EU energy holdings with a hidden power politics dimension, which could exert an important influence at any level of the indigenous administration. In some cases, it also incorporated the acquisition by Russian entities of share packages at energy companies managing or owning energy infrastructure, deposits, port infrastructure or distribution networks.

Alliance.

In this context, the inclusion of the Wider Black Sea region in the US's and NATO's portfolio of strategic interests at the 2004 Istanbul Summit (Pascu, 2007) and the Alliance's full support for the further development of the existent formats of regional cooperation – as complementary means to strengthening the security and stability in the region – was in fact a green light for the new US allies to find and eventually develop some tools that could add value to American interest in the region and to subsequently leverage Kremlin's position in the European energy equation, while also exerting some pressure on its *near abroad* interests.

It political terms, it was the official marking of the fact that Washington's previous *Russia-first* approach in the Black Sea and the Caucasus had come to an end.

In particular, by revamping and diversifying the Black Sea cooperation infrastructures, Washington was trying on one hand to integrate the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan bloc into an energetic security equation completed by its new allies within NATO (Romania and Bulgaria) and on the other hand to include GUAM sub-regionalism into a different institutional architecture outside Community of Independent States (CIS) with the intention to push Iran and Russia respectively into some sort of a isolationist regional limbo.

Under the new auspices conferred by Washington's political umbrella, Romania's behaviour towards Black Sea cooperation suffered a radical change from reluctance to active engagement (Manoli, 2012), as BSEC started to appear as a possible *“additional means of speeding up its economic development”* (Micu, 2007, p, 102) and thus a significant asset in its endeavour to join EU, but also because the US-engineered projects for Trans-Caucasian and Trans-Caspian energy transportation corridors (aiming to reduce Russian influence on the EU energetic system) gained momentum and reshaped the almost inexistent and largely incoherent EU designs for the region, thus making Bucharest to *“see a role for itself in the future EU energy security infrastructure”* (Celac, 2006, p. 146). For **Ivan**, Romania's regional cooperation in the WBSA was never *“an objective per se, but only a means to increase Romania's attractiveness to the EU and the U.S”* (2012: 155). In order to achieve that, Romanian elites – profoundly embedded in the realist logic of the US unipolarity's geopolitical-determinism and hastening to adopt a *bandwagoning* alignment towards the West (Cioculescu, 2009), played the regional card in the logic of *expected consequences* and not in the logic of *appropriateness*.

Regardless the reasoning behind the state's behavioural dynamics, Romania's actions eventually germinated into an unconditional and extremely vocal support for the *Nabucco* project – a 3300 km pipeline aimed to transport up to an annual amount of 31 bcm Caspian (and initially Iranian) natural gas to the EU markets through Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary and Austria – by clouting its purely mercantile initial design into a geopolitical logic of energy security, to the extent that Romania became the only *Nabucco* participant country to never back-up the rival *South-Stream* project championed by Gazprom.

Gazprom's decision to set a price of US\$ 310/thousand of cubic meters for Romania in 2006, "*higher than in any other CEE country*" and despite the fact that the price was expected to stay below of a \$285 level – triggered important echoes in Bucharest, where the pro-American president accused Russia of artificially increasing the price for "*political reasons*", going as far as comparing Gazprom with the Soviet Red Army and thus fuelled Romanian presidential rhetoric in support for *Nabucco* as a reliable implementation of a *necessary* common EU Energy policy aimed at finding alternatives to Russian gas (Tudoroiu, 2008).

In particular, although the importance of *Nabucco* to Washington ranked high on the list – allegedly to the **Bush-Chenney** geopolitics, but also due to the very tradition of the US foreign policy architecture which places the control of the energy supplies in the core of its international dynamics – the pipeline, which should have been the flagship project of the fledging EU energy security policy, enjoyed relatively less "*encouragement from the large member states*" (Barysch, 2010, p. 3) due the fact that the EU, although aware of the energy security implications of its enlargement, was not very fond of challenging Russia's interest in the South Caucasus (Tsantoulis, 2010).

In this context, except for the UK who remained the strongest backer of *Nabucco*, most other powerful member-states' actions were circumscribed to a process of *Gazpromization* of their domestic politics (implemented with the help of the national and/or European energy holdings and local elites) and thus being constrained to offer political concession for Moscow. These concessions ranged from selective amnesia in regard to their *Europeanness* up to the prevalence of non-EU values and perspectives over community solidarity, preferences, norms and institutions.

The most visible cases were those of the Italian, Dutch, French and German establishments who embraced a "*sauve qui peut attitude in energy*" in order to

avoid any distortions in their relationship with Russia (Barysch, 2010) during Kremlin's successive energy conflicts with Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, or during Kremlin's coercive economic interventions in Poland, Latvia, Lithuania or Romania. The political silence of these Western states cannot be delinked from the rewarding agreements signed by Gazprom with ENI (Italy), Gasunie (Netherlands), BASF (Germany), E.ON Ruhrgas (Germany) and Gas de France (France) (Roth, 2010) or from the *Schroederized* recalibration of Germany's liberal market values in its relation to Gazprom (Roth, 2010)⁸.

Romania and UK's unconditional support for *Nabucco*, however, was not incoherent with the two actors' prior behavioural dynamics, as both London and Bucharest were among the few voices pledging for the articulation of a *common* EU policy towards Moscow, while antagonizing Kremlin's use of its energy resources as a coercive political weapon against various countries – Latvia 2003, Lithuania 2006 or Belarus 2004 and, later on also against Ukraine (during the extremely visible gas-conflicts between Kremlin and Kyiv).

Of note, energy dependency dimension of the two states can explain, to some extent, their matrix of interactions: while Romania shares a similar dependency level from Russian hydrocarbons with Italy, which is, however, expected to decrease in the near future (as explorations revealed important hydrocarbon reserves in its continental platform), UK is witnessing a dramatic decrease of its North Sea resource fields, thus having an increased potential to become a hydrocarbon importer from Norway or from Russia – situation anticipated by Kremlin, when it decided to sponsor the North Stream pipeline (Roth, 2010, p. 74, 78).

4 Romania's (failed) challenge to Russia's dominance in the Black Sea

The rise of GUAM – as a part of a gradual division of the CIS between the Russophiles (Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, etc.) and dissidents and neutrals

⁸ Schroederization is a variant of Gazpromization, implemented in Germany and with the potential to be implemented in other states, consisting in the coopting of a key political elite in an important position within a Russian state-owned energy entity (or in an equation of energetic profit), with the aim for the elite to exert its political influence in order to crystalize a network of interests that would serve Moscow's strategic interests in the development of a project, policy or specific foreign policy alignment.

(Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova) “seeking independence from Moscow” (Ionescu, 2005, p. 23) and united by “Russian backed separatism”, ranging from “frozen conflicts” that had “grown out of Russian covert operations to support secessionist movements” to contemporary Kremlin inspired separatism (Kuzio, 2008, p. 2) – and its upgrade into an organisation (Manoli, 2012) in the light of the coloured revolutions from Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan that swept Kremlin’s *near abroad*, arguably fuelled the perception that Russia’s “regional influence was [...] sharply and vastly fading” (Soare, 2010, p. 100-101) or that, at least, Kremlin had to use an important part of its foreign policy infrastructure in order to develop antidotes and to emulate solutions in order to contain and limit the spread of the process in other former-Soviet states (O Beachain and Polese, 2010).

Under these circumstances – by somehow positioning Romania as a *security provider* and as a *democracy enhancer* in the Eastern neighbourhood (Ivan, 2012), or as “a stability exporting factor” (Soare, 2010, p. 100) – president **Basescu** tried to find a *niche* in the East-West dialogue (Bitkova, 2014) by supporting the development of a *security dimension* of the existent BSEC cooperation (Celac, 2006), which – in practice – was just an articulated *diplomatic demarche* alluding to the *limitation* of Russia’s influence in the Black Sea, directed towards other international fora.

Meanwhile, Romanian mainstream discourse – both at academic and political level – delivered a similar message: “Black Sea Region is an indivisible part of Euro-Atlantic security” (Ungureanu, 2005, p. 15), EU and NATO’s decision to go global should come with a responsibility towards the Black Sea Region as a direct consequence of their posture and thus both Washington and Brussels were expected to “develop new necessary policies, especially from a security perspective” in the Wider Black Sea Region (Secares, 2005, p. 14) and thus to tackle the biggest security risks that confront the area: frozen conflicts and trans-border organised crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and the trafficking in drugs, humans and weapons (Ungureanu, 2005), or radicalised Islam, emerging chiefly in the Northern Caucasus.

By pointing out the risk of the spill-over of these threats (Ionescu, 2005) within a territory that after 2007 was to become the new Euro-Atlantic frontier (Secares, 2005) and by trying to capitalise on the powerful incentive for cooperation represented by the Caspian Basin hydrocarbon reserves (Ionescu, 2005) in exploiting EU’s energy dependence on the Black Sea resources, Bucharest acted in order to *upload* the Wider Black Sea region’s problems to

Brussels' foreign policy infrastructure and mechanisms (Papakostas, 2009), especially to ESDP (Ungureanu, 2006) where it tried to speculate the existent rift between some EU capitals and Washington, substantiated by the very *raison d'être* of the structure.

Subsequently, in contrast with his predecessors, president **Basescu** began to speak out strongly and repeatedly against Russia (Bitkova, 2014), singling out Kremlin's "*democratic deficit*" (Tudoroiu, 2008, p. 404) and its part as a source of political and security instability in the Black Sea region, through its alleged key-role in the creation and perpetuation of the frozen conflicts in Moldova (Transnistria), Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia), Armenia and Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) and in the perpetuation of the inter-ethnic tensions in Ukraine. Against this perspective, in June 2005, Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Moscow's Summit, which announced the 2006 joint ground force exercises at command and staff level in Belarus and Armenia, offered a proper conceptual tweaking to Bucharest's discourse as it "*illustrated Russian geopolitical tendencies*" (Ionescu, 2005, p. 23).

Beneath the internationalisation, however, Bucharest's rhetoric along the *frozen conflicts* issue was only apparently regional, as – in practice – it had a direct national dimension. In practice, although it often referred to the whole portfolio of inter-ethnic conflicts and tensions allegedly orchestrated by Russia within its political orbit – in order to capitalise more support from colliding Western interested entities – Romanian presidential discourse particularly targeted Transnistria, with the incumbent president in Bucharest aiming to involve its country in the discussions for the settlement of the conflict, to generally increase Romania's influence in Moldova and to tweak the dynamics of the Russian-sponsored separatism, by bringing Western powers to the negotiation table and turning the EU into an amplifier of its national interest.

These aspects, claims **Bitkova**, raised some concerns in Moscow (Bitkova, 2014), mainly due to the fact that if successful, Romania's involvement could have increased "*the leverage on Moscow for finding a multilaterally accepted and binding solution*" (Papakostas, 2009, p. 13-14).

Moreover, by employing the fate of the Romanians abroad concept – especially of those living in Moldova, Ukraine or Serbia – and partially derived from Bucharest's desire to acquire a *locus standi* for "*defending Chisinau's positions in the context of European integration*" (Papakostas, 2009, p. 14), **Basescu** offered Moldovan Communist President **Vladimir Voronin** the possibility of joining the EU together with Romania (Ivan, 2012), through

reunification, a suggestion that was immediately rejected by Chisinau.

In addition, a collateral by-product of Washington's role in Romanian foreign policy was arguably recorded in 2005 in the form of a structural mutation that affected the indigenous political spectrum: Democratic Party (whose informal leader was Romanian President **Traian Basescu**) decided to leave the European Socialists and to affiliate itself with the European People's Party family. The antagonist doctrinal change – negotiated by **Traian Basescu** with US' loyal ally within the EU, **Silvio Berlusconi**⁹ during a meeting of the two leaders that took place on 24 March 2005 at Chigi Palace in Rome – played a key role in Romania's foreign policy agenda.

For instance, a visible dimension of this ideological shift was represented by the adjustment of the Romanian political discourse to a supportive stance for **Berlusconi's** regional strategic schemes for Western-Balkans¹⁰. In return, Italy joined the strategic working group for the Black Sea Region together with the US, UK, Germany and Romania, a structure whose portfolio of objectives included the internationalisation of the Black Sea (formally controlled by Russia and Turkey, due to the effects of the 1938 Montreux Convention), the very topic approached by Romanian President days earlier in its discussions with US President **Bush**, with the US Secretary of State **Condoleezza Rice**, with the Secretary of Defense **Donald Rumsfeld** and other senior US officials. A collateral project was the revamping of the Constanta-Trieste Pan-European Oil Pipeline.

On another hand, yet of significant importance, the political transfer of the Romanian "*presidential party*" from the European Socialist to the European Popular camp seemed to improve Romania's chances in order to better articulate its foreign affairs perspective within the EU prior to the 2007

⁹ The rhetoric and behavioural dynamics of recurrent Berlusconi cabinets were circumscribed to a pro-US path, with Rome being one of Washington's most vocal allies during the transatlantic divergences of the 2000s and a partner with which US shared an increased affinity in terms of foreign policy (See for instance 'Esportare la democrazia anche cambiando leggi internazionali [Exporting the democracy even if changing the international laws]', Corriere de la Sera Newspaper, December 6, 2003: 6; Berlusconi respalda la política de Bush contra Irán y en Afganistán [Berlusconi backs Bush's policy against Afghanistan and Iran], Radiotelevision Espanola, June 12, 2008 <http://www.rtve.es/noticias/20080612/berlusconi-respalda-politica-bush-contra-iran-afganistan/86310.shtml> [accessed 23 March 2015]).

¹⁰ See for instance the official press release of the Romanian Presidential Administration, http://www.presidency.ro/index.php?_RID=det&tb=date_arhiva&id=6633&_PRID=arh [accessed 23 March 2015]

accession. This ideological shift, however, cannot be completely delinked from the fact that it could have offered Bucharest the possibility to allegedly exert some influence upon the Vice President and European Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security in the first Barosso Commission (2004-2008), **Franco Frattini** – a loyal and close political partner of **Silvio Berlusconi** who managed the portfolio causing the most trouble for Bucharest's EU bid and which could have triggered possible delays in the accession calendar. From a more technical point of view, the political move – officially aimed to secure the required political support in the European Parliament on the *avis conforme* vote for Romania's Accession Treaty, on 13 April – offered **Berlusconi** an extended political margin within EPP.

However, despite the declaratory activism and strategic planning in report to the strengthening of the Romania – US partnership (*Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Report on Romanian Foreign Policy 2005-2008*) and of Washington's reciprocal endorsement for Bucharest's regional policies, Bucharest rather overestimated America's practical involvement in the development of security and foreign policy deliverables in the region.

5 The impact of domestic constituents in the evolution of Romania's foreign policy in the period of 2005-2007

An important aspect in Romania's foreign policy dynamics derived from the fact that over the years 2005 and 2006, the political constellation in the Romanian executive “transformed into a *de facto* cohabitation” (Muller, 2007, p. 55) with an important political rift occurring between the President **Basescu** and the Prime Minister **Tariceanu**. In this context, the presidential rhetoric often singled out the idea that the government is too beholden to oligarchs and industrialists who serve Russian interests¹¹, by accepting a *Gazpromization* of Bucharest's political decisions either for personal either for group related economic or electoral benefits¹².

¹¹ On 6 April 2006 in a TV interview broadcasted on Antena 1 News Channel, President Basescu launched its first direct accusations against Prime Minister Tariceanu (see <http://www.9am.ro/stiri-revista-presei/Politica/30732/Basescu-Regret-ca-l-am-numit-pe-Tariceanu-premier.html> [accessed on 23 March 2015])

¹² According to Hotnews News Agency, citing US leaked diplomatic correspondence, the American Ambassador Nicolas Traubman highlighted that the influence of the Romanian oligarchs and their role as a tool for Russian interests was significantly increasing under Tariceanu's protection - (<http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-8445909-wikileaks-cum-vedea-ambasadorul-taubman->

In this context, among the first to be threatened by the Romania's institutional crisis, was the Washington variable - the epicentre of **Basescu's** foreign affairs rhetoric and arguably one of his important sources of electoral capital, mainly due to the important contribution to his political image offered by the perception of him having a personal friendship relation with US President, a perception cultivated by **George W. Bush** himself¹³.

Basescu, on the other hand, reciprocated with a constant support for **Bush's** foreign policy even when US faced growing opposition in Brussels and even when EU accused Bucharest of helping CIA operate illegal prisons for terrorism suspects in remote locations of Romania. Consequently he kept emphasizing the fact Romania's most strategic foreign policy vector is the Washington – London - Bucharest axis and that Bucharest will continue to offer full and unconditional support to the NATO missions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

However, on 29 June 2006, without any notification, the Prime Minister delivered an announcement on pulling out Romanian troops from Iraq¹⁴ despite the fact that earlier that month, the Foreign Affairs Minister – a member of his cabinet and also of his political party – declared in a common press conference with his Italian counterpart **Massimo D'Alema** that Romania's foreign policy intentions do not include retreating or diminishing the number of its troops in Iraq, although Bucharest does not consider a supplementation of the existent troops. Another factor that contributed to increase the surprise level was that two months earlier, Prime Minister himself stated that Romania does not consider the problem of pulling out its troops, but on the contrary is decided to continue its military participation in Iraq and Afghanistan as long as the consolidation of the democracy in these countries requires it.

Both UK and US ambassadors in Bucharest reacted rapidly to the situation and expressed their shock as no prior consultations between Bucharest and its NATO counterparts took place and asked for urgent explanations regarding

romania-timpul-suspendarii-lui-basescu-este-ingrijoratoare-marirea-influentei-oligarhilor-din-romania-rolul-lor-unealta-intereselor-rusesti.htm [cited March 23, 2015]

¹³ See for instance Traian Basescu and George W. Bush remarks following their discussions in 2005 and 2006, in US Government Printing Office - Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Administration of George W. Bush, 2005: 386 – 388 and in US Government Printing Office - Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Administration of George W. Bush, 2006: 1449-1452) respectively.

¹⁴ Tariceanu cere retragerea din Irak [Tariceanu demands the retreat from Iraq], Romania Libera Newspaper, June 30, 2006, <http://www.romanialibera.ro/actualitate/eveniment/tariceanu-cere-retragerea-din-irak--77222> [accessed March 23, 2015]

Romania's plans. On the other hand, President **Basescu** reacted violently to the Prime Minister's announcement claiming that it harms Romania's credibility in the international environment while the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced his resignation, in case the Prime Minister would not change his decision.

Allegations regarding Kremlin's involvement in the Governmental decision swept through Romanian media. However, the Supreme Council for National Defence (SCND) – the administrative body designated by the Romanian Constitution to organise and coordinate the activities regarding national defence and security – which convened next day, rejected Prime Minister's proposal that Romanian troops pull out of Iraq¹⁵, a decision saluted by the both Washington's and London's ambassadors in Bucharest.

The impact of the exogenous influences on Romania's foreign policy and security are reflected even by the strategic documents issued by Bucharest administration. For instance, an analysis of the text of Romania's 2006 *National Security Strategy* reveals a compilation of both *Americanised* and *Europeanised* security perspectives. On one hand, the document highlights the existence of a *security paradigm shift*, from the *reactive*, defensive-oriented security policy from the mid-1990s and early 2000s towards a rather *assertive* policy, based on "*pre-emption and prevention of the risks and threats*" (Miroiu - Soare, 2007, p. 168) – a statement highly coherent with the US dominant Neo-Realist perspective of the international relations, while on another, it claims that its *raison d'être* is to guarantee the "*security of the individual, his life and his family*" (*Romania's National Security Strategy*, 2006, p. 2), and thus a perspective that share the EU's liberal-constructivism vein.

However, with the *crux* of the new policy paper substantiating that international terrorism represents the greatest threat to Romanian security, together with the proliferation of the weapons of mass-destruction, regional conflicts, or transnational organised crime (Miroiu - Soare, 2007), the prevailing transformative dynamics of the Strategy seem so stem primarily from the interplay between Washington interests and security perceptions.

¹⁵ Basescu l-a zdrobit pe Tariceanu in CSAT [Basescu crushed Tariceanu in the Supreme Council of National Defence] Monitorul de Neamt Newspaper, July 1, 2006, <http://www.mont.ro/stiri/?editia=20060701&pagina=8&articol=5480> [accessed on 23 March 2015]

Conclusion

The major conclusion of this analytical rendition on Romania's foreign policy towards the Black Sea Area in the period 2005-2007 is that most of Bucharest's *foreign policy deliverables* and *paramount designs* – starting from Black Sea Regionalism and Caspian energy transport projects aimed to bypass Russia and culminating with Romania's endeavours to acquire a regulatory role in the region or to strengthen the political and security role of the Black Sea structures by promoting a *political umbrella* model under the form of the Black Sea Forum – were in fact *by-products* generated by the *Americanisation* (and to a peripheral extent by the *Europeanisation*) of the indigenous diplomacy and thus projections of Washington's (and Brussels') regional preferences and interests (into which Romania incorporated its own goals and aspirations in its anticipation to be rendered the position of the main promoter of these interests), rather than *indigenously articulated preferences*.

The main factors leading to this situation were on one hand the *monopolisation* of Romania's foreign policy resources by the European and Euro-Atlantic *integration processes* – which left only marginal and modest institutional capacities for the design and formulation of other diplomatic projects – and on another, the fact that Washington and Brussels imposed an *altercasting socialisation pattern* to Bucharest – by providing cues to elicit a *certain behaviour* and by *ascribing* it roles, identities and ways of conduct that were congruent with their interests, goals and perspectives – and which the latter accepted with the anticipation that it would be rendered the main implementer of an US/EU energy strategy towards the Caspian.

The cartelisation and collusion of EU energy market, personal or group benefits, aspects of national prosperity and subsequent electoral effects (most of them linked with the successful implementation of Russia's Gazpromization policy) led – in some key EU capitals (Paris, Berlin, Rome or Amsterdam) – to a decreased appetite to antagonise Moscow over its energy policies and over its interests in the Caspian or in Europe itself, and eventually to the failure in the development of any tangible foreign policy deliverables in the WBSA for Bucharest.

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