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**GEOSTRATEGIC SHIFTS IN THE EASTERN
MEDITERRANEAN AND CERTAIN ECHOES OF
THE COLD WAR IN THE BLACK SEA AREA**

***Schimburile geostrategice în estul Mediteranei și anumite
ecouri ale Războiului Rece în zona Mării Negre***

Abstract: *The support of macro regional coalition of states and zones in South-Eastern Europe is a new direction in the regional policy of the EU. Its development model is under construction that searches to define the special progress matters in each countries and the entire region. It is an exceptional historical condition that the majority of political entities in the Black Sea area and its close neighborhood belong to the same common political union, to European Union.*

This analysis seeks to summarize certain important historical events in the bigger area of the Black Sea and not only member states of the EU, by involving geopolitical, spatial issues of development schemes taking into account the differences of the parts involved. Its socio-economic significance is that a common political strategy of South-Eastern European states should be constructed on consensus because the strength of mind of the Black Sea region involves historical fears and geopolitical concepts as well. However, in order to prevent a too broad of a delimitation, we will not divide our area from other European macro regional/transnational designs such as Central Europe or Southeast Europe. That is why it is imperative to reach standard internal characteristics. Beside the assessment of outside limitations, it is essential to consider the internal construction of the area as well. We must be conscious of which scenario is about broader or narrower Black Sea area and when it is considered necessary to consider unconnectedly its certain sub regions and analogous crisis catalysts.

Keywords: *Black Sea, Danube, UE, Romania, URSS*

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The Black Sea region is geopolitically still one of the most significant areas in the world, where fields of interests and influences from Asia, the Middle East and Europe overlap since hundreds of years. Severe political instability started in Ukraine in November 2013, today with no straightforward resolutions in sight. Russia searched to transform the Crimean peninsula into a de facto Russian territory through rapidly prearranged local elections (illegal referendum) on 16-th March 2014, whose outcomes favored joining Russia and imposed independence from Ukraine. It would seem that the post World War II boundaries of Europe are not as stable as most governments had estimated when the Cold War has finished by the turnaround of 1989/1990. It follows a short review of the complicated history of the Crimean peninsula in order to understand ongoing geopolitical shifts that are necessary prerequisites to perceive the intricate socio-economic backgrounds of South-Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region.

The area of the Crimea is 26,100 square kilometers but despite its smallness it can be considered a significant spot from the very beginning of its existence, which is also proven by the condition that empires and civilizations from ancient times of the surrounding were striving to conquer the island. Its vast woodlands have always assured top quality timber for craftsman and on its fertile soil almost any sort of cultivated plant has been grown. Its value has considerably increased geopolitically, because of its mineral resources such as iron ore that is still nowadays exploited, as well as rock salt and the currently increasingly important uranium. All of these geostrategic advantages are associated with well located harbours having good endowments until today as throughout the course of history shipmen's created suitable docks and transfer stations alongside the coast in order to support trade routes with nomadic peoples in the steppe. Eventually it should be stressed the circumstance that great powers, which conquered the Crimea were able to control the Black Sea because of the outstanding geopolitical location of the peninsula. The Black Sea harbours of Crimea are assuring quick access to the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkans and Middle East. Historically it was at the boundary between the classical world and the Pontic-Caspian steppe.

Among the first great civilizations that overtook the Crimea were the ancient Greeks in the 6th century BC. Back then, the Hellenic poleis have colonized the area known as Tauric Chersonese, however, its southern parts were already settled by the ancient Persians as well. Subsequently, the Romans and even the Byzantine Empire has earned a period of time the Tauric peninsula. In fact, it can be stated that the Crimean ports were also owned by the influential trading state of Genoa beginning with the 13th

century until the invasions of the Mongols and afterwards by the Ottoman Empire in the Middle Age. During the great migrations the core of the peninsula was subject to a changing cast of attacking steppe nomads, such as the Cimmerians, Scythians, Sarmatians, Goths, Alans, Bulgars, Huns, Khazars, Cumanians, Pechenegs and the Kipchaks. Although these peoples were also present between the X and XII centuries in the Crimea they had never kept the peninsula under permanent rule.

A major turning point in the history of the peninsula was the emergence of the Tatars in the XIII century, which conquered not only the Crimea for 150 years, but the entire neighbourhoods of the surrounding region. The thirty-year reign of the grand prince of Moscow, Dmitry Ivanovich Donskoy experienced the beginning of the end of Tatar control of parts of what currently means Russia. The Golden Horde was strongly destabilized from inside by civil wars and strong dynastic competition. Dmitry took advantage of this gap in the Mongol power apparatus to openly confront the Tatars. While he kept the exclusive rights of the Khan to collect taxes for all of Russia, Dmitry is also legendary for leading the first Russian military successes against the Tatars. Mamai, a Mongol general and pretender of the throne wanted to punish Dmitry for trying to strengthen his own supremacy, thus he gathered troops to attack the Russians in 1378. Nevertheless, the Mongols were defeated by the Dmitry's army in the Battle of Vozha River. Furthermore, Mamai as the recognised leader of the western part of the Golden Horde created a military alliance with other chiefs in order to re-attack the Russians. Dmitry defeated the Mongols on the Don River in the bloody battle on Kulikovo Pole and Dmitry was honoured with the surname Donskoy "of the Don" for his triumph. Shortly afterward his possessions were again subject to Mongol control when the Tatar leader Tokhtamysh comes into power in 1381. Tokhtamysh sacked Moscow in 1382 and re-established Mongol rule over the Russian lands. Meanwhile the huge Tatar region named the Golden Horde was falling apart in smaller Khanates, they were merging one after another into an emerging Russian Empire on its way for unity. Roughly until 1550 only one Tatar Khanate survived, notably in the Crimea. The Crimean Khanate became a vassal and associate state of the emerging Ottoman Empire in the 15th century. However, it also was an entity in its own rights for another 230 years claiming lands in what today means Russia's Caspian-Volga zone. Therefore, from the mid-1400s it functioned as the Crimean Khanate, a protectorate of the Ottomans, during which time it became a centre of a flourishing slave dealing. The name "Crimea" probably originates from the language of the Crimean Tatars, a Turkic tribe that developed during the Crimean Khanate, they named the peninsula among themselves "Qırım." As Catherine II of Russia annexed the Ottoman protectorate in 1783, the existence of the Khanate was finished and she tried to modify formally the name of the peninsula back to Taurica. The Crimea was dominated for the first time by the Russian Empire and was included into the Russian Taurida

Governorate in 1802. However, the name Crimea was still applied informally and finally reappeared officially again in 1917. One of the interesting events of the Russian period was the Crimean War between 1853 and 1856.

Following the defeat of the 1848-49 revolutions, the Russian Empire was at the peak of its power. Vienna was bound to Moscow as it was backed by the tsar in order to suppress the Hungarians by 1949. The Russian military aid has also prevented the creation of the German unity and Tsar Nicholas I the Cudgel (1825-1855) was also the King of Poland and Grand Duke of Finland. Afterward, around 1850 the Russians wanted to control the Black Sea straits (Bosporus Dardanelles) and to extend their own domination over the Orthodox people inhabited in Wallachia and Moldavia. Whereas those regions have been in the possession of a weakening Ottoman Empire as a result it was decided to start a war against Istanbul. Mensikov, the Russian ambassador handed over a list to Sultan Abdul Medzsid in which Moscow demanded certain “protector” rights over territories where the population was mainly Greek-Orthodox. After the expected refusal of the Sultan - in which Turkey was already enjoying the support of France and England - the Russian troops have invaded Moldavia and Wallachia. The war involved three years of bloody fighting between Russia and an alliance of the Ottoman Empire, France, Great Britain and Sardinia. War was conducted mainly on the territory of the peninsula but the battlefields were going in several directions including the Caucasus and the Black Sea area. The largest sea battle took place in November 1853 at Sinop, where the fleet of admiral Nahimov achieved a major victory as they sank almost all of the Turkish warships. After the Russian victory, the Western powers have decided to implement a serious intervention by invading the entire Crimean peninsula.¹

The allied forces (English, French and Piedmontese troops), took the city of Sevastopol, which was the largest military base of the Tsar’s Black Sea Fleet. From the end of 1853 the main battlefield of the war was clearly becoming the Crimea. The British, French and Turkish troops were occupying the fortified city of Sevastopol only after a long, nearly one-year siege, thus in September 1855. At the end of the war the Crimea was lying in ruins. While Russia has lost the war and Crimea was strongly damaged, it continues to be a part of Russia. The reign of Nicholas I can be characterized by main traits as geographical expansion, subjugation of opposition, economic stagnation, poor executive policies, a fraudulent administration, and numerous wars that culminated in the catastrophic defeat of Russia in the Crimean War of 1853-56. The Tsar has lost its estuaries on the Danube; besides, he had to give up the title of patron of the Turkish Christians, and could not keep military ships on the Black Sea

¹Source:<http://www.voanews.com/content/the-history-of-crimea---in-brief-/1860431.html>, accessed on 11.06.2015.

anymore. The Paris Peace Treaty concluded in 1856 clearly diminished the influence of Moscow in Europe.²

The peninsula had a very complicated 20th century. After the October Revolution has put an end on the period of the Russian Empire in 1917, Crimea temporarily found itself as sovereign state that didn't last long. During the civil war that broke out in the wake of the Russian Revolution (1917), Crimea was the location of cruel fighting between tsarist, Bolshevik and anarchist armed forces. It became a stronghold for the White Army but finally, the communists were victorious in 1921 and then Soviet Russia. From 1922 the USSR was divided into socialist republics. Following a succession of governments in a few short years, the peninsula finally became the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in 1921, part of the Soviet Union. It remained like this until 1945, when it became the Crimean Oblast, in official terms an administrative part of Russia. Please compare the five maps of National Geographic of the appendix that illustrate how Crimea continued to change hands from the 18th century to the present days.³

The experiences of Crimea in World War II, similarly to other components in the Eastern front, were extremely painful. It was invaded by the Nazi Army, and the harbour city of Sevastopol was nearly completely destroyed in the harsh combats. Once the Red Army regained Crimea in 1944, Josef Stalin forcibly deported the complete Crimean Tatar population to Siberia and other parts of the Soviet Union as punishment for their alleged collaboration with the German forces. According to certain sources about half a million of Tatars were deported, and in later years only about the half of them could have returned home. The Tatars, who were inhabitants of the peninsula for centuries, were not allowed to come back to Crimea until the end of Soviet Union. As the Crimean Tatars were deported from their homes, along with large numbers of Greeks and Armenians, the Crimea was mainly transformed into a Russian location. Finally, in the last stage of the war, the meeting between the leaders of the Allied powers was organized in Yalta, which entered in history as the Yalta Conference (from February 4 to 11 in 1945) where representatives of the victorious nations talked and agreed upon certain post-war scenarios in Central and Eastern Europe.

Later, on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the convocation of the Pereiaslav Rada in 1954, something unusual happened as the Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev transferred Crimea from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Accordingly, the Crimea became part of Ukraine. Today many people are wondering why exactly Khrushchev has

² <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2014/02/27/to-understand-crimea-take-a-look-back-at-its-complicated-history/>, accessed on 10.06.2015.

³ <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/content/dam/news/photos/000/773/77300.adapt.768.1.jpg>, accessed on 11.06.2015.

given away the Crimean Oblast to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. According to well-known assumptions the handover of the Crimea can be interpreted as a gift gesture of Khrushchev – the peninsula a strategically essential place also suitable for agriculture - was meant as a "reward" for Ukraine, whose people strongly suffered during World War II. Peasants of Crimea could have been compensated in this way with land in Ukraine. Khrushchev, though Russian himself grew up in Ukraine, was educated there and later has started political career in the Ukrainian Communist Party. Thus, it can be supposed that the communist leader identified himself with the people of that region.

It probably did not feel as a big deal in those days: after the transition the Crimea becomes a part of the independent Ukraine but back then in the Soviet period, the distinction between Ukraine and Russia was rather nominal. During the Soviet collapse in 1991 things were obviously getting slightly different. While people apparently expected from the new President Boris Yeltsin to insist that Crimea should be returned to Moscow, this never was claimed by him. 54% of Crimean voters preferred independence from Russia as Ukraine held a referendum on independence in December 1991. It was preponderance, but the lowest one found in Ukraine. After a short struggle with the freshly sovereign Ukrainian administration, Crimea decided to stay within Ukraine, but was getting significant self-government together with the recognition of its own constitution and legislature and its own regional leader. Thus, the Crimea received its autonomy from Kiev in 1992. Ukraine and Russia signed a mutual Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership in 1997 in which they agreed to divide up the former Soviet Black Sea Fleet. Ukraine officially allowed Russia to station its Fleet in Sevastopol, thus the port city remained the base for Russia's Black Sea Fleet.

Currently, the overall population of Crimea is about two million people. Official language was Ukrainian but many inhabitants speak Russian. Ethnic Russians constitute about 60% of the inhabitants, while Ukrainians represent 24%. Crimean Tatars, who began to return from exile to their homeland after the fall of the Soviet Union, make up 12% of the population of the peninsula in 2001. There are also significant communities of Armenians and Bulgarians in the Crimea.

The peninsula is not only important for Moscow because of its 1.2 million Russian speaking people, but also because according to the Ukrainian-Russian contract it should provide the naval military base (port) for its Black Sea fleet until 2042. The demonstrations of Euromaidan have repeatedly been described as a battle between the pro-Russian East and the pro-European West, a historical legacy of Russian domination in Ukraine. That could be rather a simplification, but it is a design that echoes in many people, both abroad and within Ukraine. Given the circumstances showed above it is to state that Crimea has a modern history intrinsically tied to imperial/modern Russia, thus is no wonder that the peninsula is evidently

an important place in current historical narratives and political scenarios. The Ukrainian domestic political crisis and riots were lasting since the end of 2013, therefore the leadership in Moscow saw the position of the Crimean Russian population threatened. Having the approval of the Russian Upper House President Putin ordered the armed forces to invade the Crimea on the first of March 2014. The belligerent action was immediately condemned by the majority of the European countries, the EU and the USA.

For Example, the 2007 Communication on the Black Sea Synergy agreed on tangible objectives and other responsibilities across a variety of trade and industry segments and thematic outlines. The Synergy was planned as a modern structure to make sure better consistency and offer guiding principles for participants. It was build up on a bottom-up project development approach meant to focus on real milestones in maritime interactions, fisheries, sea transport, environment, energy, education, civil society, cross border collaboration and scientific areas. A conference between EU and Black Sea Foreign Affairs Ministers in Kiev (Ukraine) in 2008 have ended in a joint declaration starting the Synergy cooperation that Brussels views as a central tool to enhance cooperation among the nations of the Black Sea. More exact local ties should stimulate democratic and economic development; help to maintain steadiness and encourage reforms; smooth the progress of realistic projects in fields of shared problems; disclose prospects and challenges by synchronized operation in a local context; support the nonviolent solving of conflicts in the area.

The Black Sea Environmental Partnership was started in March 2010. Additional instruments are now required on biodiversity protection furthermore, as included coastal region and river basin supervision. Further main concerns consist of deal with greenhouse gasses and advance ecological integration, monitoring, study and ecologic modernization. Brussels has also launched an innovative cross-border collaboration plan for regional units in the Black Sea zone, which also helps civil society networks. An evaluation on the first year of functioning of the Black Sea Synergy stressed the usefulness and future power of this new-fangled strategy for the regional policy of the EU. The Black Sea NGO Forum was started in 2008 and it comprises significant members, together with speakers of NGOs, specialists, benefactors and politicians from the Black Sea area. The current participants of this platform are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Turkey, Ukraine, Romania and Russia.⁴

The EU has indeed precisely formulated its objectives concerning the Black Sea area, which in current situation can not be carried out without the cooperation of other powerful agents as NATO, OSCE, member states

⁴ http://eeas.europa.eu/blacksea/index_en.htm, accessed on 17.06.2015.

and others in order to suitable back and harmonize complex local operations at international levels:

“Role of the EU and international actors

25. Underlines that the Black Sea region should have real priority for the EU; considers that the current Black Sea Synergy (BSS) format is outdated; calls again on the Commission and the EEAS to draw up, as soon as possible, a comprehensive EU Strategy for the Black Sea region; stresses that the provisions of the EU Maritime Security Strategy should also be applied in the case of the Black Sea; calls for a review of the European Security Strategy, and expects that the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy, taking in all relevant programmes covering the region, will bring about increased CSDP cooperation with Black Sea littoral partner states;

26. Stresses that, in spite of the fact that the BSS is practically on hold, effective cooperation with the states in the Black Sea Basin should continue; welcomes the ongoing CSDP missions – the EU Advisory Mission, the EU Monitoring Mission and the EU Border Assistance Mission – as important components of the EU’s contribution to resolve the protracted conflicts in the region; welcomes the efforts of the Member States to enhance the military capabilities of the Black Sea littoral states and thereby increase their potential to respond to crisis situations in the region; considers that EU needs a bold and result-oriented approach, especially in the areas of economics, defence and security, in order to strengthen the EU internally, update and improve existing instruments, and amplify the Union’s reaction capacity to developments in the neighbouring area that affect European security;

27. Stresses the critical importance of coordinating with NATO, in particular with the Black Sea littoral states that are members of the Alliance, and with the United States, as the Black Sea Basin is a key component of Euro-Atlantic security; stresses that modernising and enhancing the military capabilities of those Black Sea littoral states that are members of EU and NATO is of key importance to ensuring security and stability in the region; welcomes the commitment of NATO to support regional efforts of Black Sea littoral states aimed at ensuring security and stability; underlines the necessity of EU and NATO support for maintaining the Black Sea as an open economic area; calls on the OSCE to enlarge the scope of its efforts with regard to Black Sea security; calls on the EU to support a reinforced OSCE presence and new OSCE initiatives in the region aiming at easing the security situation;

28. Recalls that, particularly in light of the security situation in the Black Sea Basin, all EU Members states need to enjoy the same level of security in line with article 42 (7) TEU;

29. Welcomes the commitment by the NATO member states to collective security and, if necessary, to enact Article 5 of the Washington Treaty; welcomes the NATO Wales Summit decision on strategic

reassurance measures and the Readiness Action Plan, important elements for the security of the most-affected NATO member states; calls on NATO to continue to develop its cyber and missile defence capabilities, including in the Black Sea region, and to develop contingency plans for deterring and countering asymmetric and hybrid warfare;

30. Urges the Commission to support the Member States in their efforts to identify solutions for increasing their defence budget to the level of 2 %; welcomes the pledge made by members of NATO during the last NATO Summit in Newport to ensure that their defence spending reaches a minimum of 2 % GDP by 2024; expresses concern over announcements by some allies of their intent to make new cuts in defence spending; recalls, in this context, Article 3 of the Washington Treaty;

31. Recalls that although in 2008 Georgia's and Ukraine's applications to join the NATO Membership Action Plan were not accepted, at the Bucharest Summit NATO declared that Georgia and Ukraine will become members of the Alliance; notes that following the 2008 war in Georgia and the 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea, Russia has territorially crippled the two countries, making them ineligible for NATO membership; considers that, while not being able to defend them directly, NATO has a moral obligation to support Georgia's and Ukraine's ability to defend themselves;

32. Underlines that NATO should preserve its general naval and air superiority in the Black Sea Basin and maintain its capacity to monitor the area;

33. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the EU Members States and all the Black Sea countries.⁵

Definitely, as seen in the above, the history of the Crimea does not represent an ever lasting chain of conflict situations. While the Russian nationalists in Crimea have been in the focus of attention in the past years, certain analysts are coming to the conclusion that there are continuously splitting and rearranging groups as main politico-economic power is backed by some political elites with strong personal networks. Ellie Knott, who examines the situation in situ, has showed persuasively that the Crimean separatists and Russian nationalist are in actual fact slowed down by their own uncertainties and inner quarrels. Moreover, several ethnic Russians in Crimea have a more difficult meaning on their individual national identity than might first appear, which can not be overstepped by centralism.⁶

⁵ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A8-2015-0171+0+DOC+XML+Vo//EN#title2>, accessed on 17.06.2015.

⁶ <https://vostokcable.wordpress.com/2014/02/24/are-crimeans-really-russian-nationalists-and-separatists/>, accessed on 12.06.2015.

Additionally, Russia has often shown to be keen to get involved in the affairs of post-Soviet countries in order to regain old supremacy, most recently with Georgia over the breakaway state of South Ossetia and today is involved in controversial disputes and unconventional warfare with Kiev in order to gain even more precious time to manage to stabilize the Crimean situation as well.

The Russian position has now changed radically by the annexation of the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in the Black Sea as in this way the country becomes the maritime state with the longest coastal area on the Black Sea by regaining full sovereignty on the most important port in the Black Sea basin, the separate municipality of Sevastopol and over its naval base. Russia takes control of the two shores of the Kerch strait, recovers a part of the Ukrainian sea Plateau and the oil and gas reserves of Pallas in the strait zone of Kerch. Following this, the Azov Sea becomes a Russian inland sea. After the dissolution of the USSR and until the annexation of the Crimea, Russia had in fact remained, a sea shore area of about 400 km in length, predominantly rocky and unsuitable for navigation and of harbour activity development between the peninsula of Taman and the border with Georgia and a second maritime opening of 570 km in the Azov Sea. Through the annexation of Crimea, Russia has recovered almost 1,000 km of coastline of the Black Sea with ports in Sevastopol, Theodosia and Kerch. Before this, Moscow has extended its maritime interface after the war in Georgia by setting a military protectorate over Abkhazia, by recovering another 200 km of coastline of the Black Sea.

Because of the loss of Crimea, the Ukrainian Fleet of the Black Sea has been eliminated almost completely and the naval presence of Kiev has virtually disappeared in the Black Sea region. Without the previously owned 50 locations in the peninsula of the Ukrainian army, the military potential of Kiev has been drastically decreased. The Ukraine has lost 57 military vessels of its fleet and the overall power of its air force and anti-aircraft defence dropped by over 15%. According to Igor Delanoe, "Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 has overthrown the Black Sea maritime context. It is likely to give substantial impetus to Russian naval plans in the Black Sea and, by extension, to sustain Moscow's resumption of naval activity in the Mediterranean. Yet, whereas Russia's maritime power has been dramatically enhanced due to the takeover of Crimea, Moscow's naval power in the Black Sea and in the Mediterranean remains challenged by a set of qualitative factors. Beyond, the Ukrainian crisis has demonstrated the inability of the European Union to manage its Black Sea

environment as well as it has highlighted the United States waning influence and interests in the region.”⁷

Crimea is from now on in the axis of the Ponto Caucasian Russian military peripheral device and it can be considered the southern strategic fortress of the Russian Federation in Europe. It has to fulfil a double task: to counteract the increase of Western influence, as well as to reactivate the Russian authority in the Black Sea context. The annexation of the Crimea and Sevastopol fundamentally causes unrest in the strategic balances of the Black Sea space. Currently it allows Russia to solve with a military expenditure of practically nothing a series of deficiencies tied to security issues inherited in the strategic context of the Pontic area caused by the collapse of the USSR. The loss of sovereignty of Moscow over Crimea in 1991 was assessed by the Kremlin as one of the factors that favoured the decrease of Russian influence in the Black Sea region after 1991. According to Igor Delanoe, the inclusion of Romania and Bulgaria into the Euro-Atlantic community by 2000 as well as the penetration of the American influence in the Caucasus and up to the Caspian Sea caused simultaneously the decrease of Russian control as Moscow considers this zone within its field of privileged interests and sharply monitored foreign operations.

However, this process was reversed of its initial course, after the Russian-Georgian conflict by August 2008, which has ended the decreasing tendency of Russians to loose influence in the Black Sea area. Furthermore, the annexation of the Crimea has opened new prospects for the renewal of maritime power ambitions of Moscow and of the presence of Russian forces in the Black Sea and from there, in the Mediterranean spaces. The Russian strategic and military weight of the Black Sea basin will increase further considering the fact that Moscow has launched a program for rearmament of its troops in 2011, which also includes the renewal of military capabilities in the Pontic Basin. The modernization of the Black Sea fleet was started in 2000 and is accompanied by the intensive military fortification of the Crimean peninsula, which began in March 2014 by implementing sophisticated ground-based weapons systems and the hypothetical return to tactical nuclear arms in the Crimea. Alternatively, some of the most recent events are signalling a spectacular return of Russia in the Eastern Mediterranean, through Cyprus, Greece and Turkey. Nicosia has mainly secretly accepted the presence of Russian naval forces in its maritime area and ports. The past three years have shown a constant rise in Moscow's readiness to set up its navy into the Mediterranean. Since commencing his current term of presidency, the yet again head of state Vladimir Putin has pointed out the significance of a greater Russian presence in the Mediterranean, which he regards as a strategically essential area for its

⁷ “After the Crimean crisis: towards a greater Russian maritime power in the Black Sea.” Available from: http://www.researchgate.net/publication/265858387_After_the_Crimean_crisis_towards_a_greater_Russian_maritime_power_in_the_Black_Sea, accessed Jun 10, 2015.

country and federation. Besides, the declaration of the Kremlin to have a permanent naval deployment in the region, Russia strongly provokes its powerful competitors further with its demand for military bases around Cyprus. Previous news concerning Russian focus on Cyprus for military-strategic goals already appeared by July 2012, after a talk between Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and the then Cypriot counterpart Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis. She, on the other hand, firmly denied any opportunity of a durable Russian naval entrance in Cyprus by declaring: “There is no way that is going to happen.” Nevertheless, latest reports, diplomatic developments and the course of events are showing that Moscow has in fact requested the Cypriot administration for consent to create a naval base at the port of Limassol, as well as to utilize the Andreas Papandreas Air Base at Paphos. Considering the uncertain conditions in Syria rendering the potential of Russia’s naval base in Tartus as unsure, it was to be expected that Russia will search for other solutions to preserve its current position in those spheres.

Cyprus and Russia have close relations both politically and economically that involves the further development of complex security issues as well. Cypriot Defence Minister Fotis Fotiu declared: “Russia supports Cyprus and our close relationship will not only continue, but also deepen,” and that “Russia remains a long-standing supporter of our positions on the national issue,” referring to the firm Russian support at the UN for the Cypriot standpoint concerning the Turkish-occupied north of Cyprus. Additionally, Cyprus is today a preferred destination for Russian businessmen to deposit money and a favourite place for credit businesses. Moscow provided Nicosia with a \$3.3 billion loan in 2011 and subsequently the Cypriot government was getting the agreement of Moscow to extend the reimbursement schedule and the lowering of the interest rate.⁸

Nevertheless, Mr. Fotiu disclaimed any correlation between the economic ties of Moscow and Nicosia have together and a hypothetical Russian armed forces stationing in Cyprus, claiming that there is no exchange principle in this respect. However, even if this statement is true, the Cypriot administration obviously was not in the optimal condition to reject the official or unofficial diplomatic appeals of Moscow. According to the Russian ambassador of Cyprus, Moscow has not addressed the topic of a permanent military base in Cyprus, because such a demand would most probably agitate a number of actors inclusively the USA, the EU and Turkey, and might possibly stop Cyprus from adhering to the Partnership for Peace programme of the NATO. What was discussed as an alternative was an accord, which allows Russia to employ the Cypriot strongholds for military reasons without looking for prior authorization of Nicosia.

⁸ <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russia-loans-cyprus-33bln/444915.html>, accessed Jun 10, 2015.

As hitherto, the plan of a Russian military base within the EU has disappointed politicians in Brussels, particularly after Cyprus has been assumed officially the authorization of the use of its strategic points as a transit station for Russian arms deliveries to Assad's troops. Accordingly, Cyprus was getting into a catch 22 situation, as Washington stressed that they categorically disagree with this and would understand an affirmative answer from Nicosia for Moscow clearly negatively. Cyprus was trapped in the middle of a clash that probably will deteriorate on the long term its affairs with one of the big global players: but is it just a geostrategic game of the big ones? It is certain that the possible benefits of the renegotiated accord with Russia go beyond economic and monetary features for Nicosia. The occurrence of the Russian military might reinforce the security concept of Cyprus, especially as soon as it comes to conflicts with the strongly militarised Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Besides, the presence of Russian Navy could offer a stabilising feature in disagreements of Nicosia with Ankara over newly discovered natural gas and oil reserves within the economic sphere of Cyprus. Whilst several specialists appreciated the request for a stronghold in Cyprus to a broader Russian objective of projecting influence beyond the borders of the area of the former Soviet Union and, finally, gaining access to energy-rich waters of the Mediterranean Sea, analysts on Russia are usually unconvinced about such indirect assumptions.

According to Allen C. Lynch, professor of Russian political affairs at the Woodrow Wilson Department of Politics at the University of Virginia this action was evaluated as having mostly symbolic character for the Kremlin. Lynch states: "Russia's attempt to reestablish its presence in the Mediterranean is a matter of prestige and maintaining the plausibility that Russia remains a significant world power." A Russian commentator and analyst, Alexander Golz, thinks the same about the actual state of affairs: "The task of the Mediterranean fleet will be to show its presence."

In 1992 about 60 naval ships of the Soviet 5th Mediterranean unit were charged with the mission to keep away the 6th squadron of the USA in the Soviet era. However, the Russian Mediterranean troop was dispersed. The Russian Defense Ministry specified in *Pravda* that the newly created Mediterranean naval division will contain about 10 vessels, which will be borrowed from the Black, North and Baltic Sea task forces on a rotational basis. Moreover, Alexander Golz remarks that the Russian Navy has no new high-tech navy vessels at all, and points out that Russia only has a single flattop named Admiral Kuznetsov that is deployed with the Northern task force. Besides, Lynch considers that the real Russian means to project military control further beyond the borders of the former Soviet Union are rather narrow. "I would caution against applying a strategic neo-Cold War framework to this situation and ascribing overly ambitious geopolitical aims for Russia's military beyond the boundaries of the former Soviet Union," states Lynch, besides he comments as follows "the post-Soviet

territory is where the intensity of Russia's interests is highest, and where the superiority of Russian capabilities is most pronounced." In spite of all hints that the Greek Cypriots are trying to strengthen their current position between superpowers, Lynch considers that it is very logical to pursue a seesaw policy on diplomatic levels. "It is in Cyprus's interest to maximize its choices. Influence in politics and diplomacy, like influence in our personal and social lives, is generally the byproduct of how many choices we have compared to the choices others have and the choices that we perceive others have. That's perfectly logical and that's how a lot of the non-aligned countries acted during the Cold War, playing one off against the other." Therefore, the petite isle in the Mediterranean Sea can in this way opt for such agreements that will offer more for its partnership in order to settle his political gaps and economic problems in order to increase its geopolitical value. Cypriot Defence Minister, Fotiu stated the media that the administration will choose the correct resolution, "taking into account the country's national interest." The settlement of this affair has obviously also representative significances, but the EU and the USA might once again find caught themselves in a trap by reacting in opposition to Russia's economic power backgrounds intrinsically supported by military and secret service operations. As the current situation in Ukraine illustrates, Russia often seems to be a fine step forward compared to the more scattered international community in this multifaceted contest.

The attitude of Nicosia is comparable to that of Athens as it is interested to foster good relations with Moscow on the background of psychological warfare in which committed himself with Brussels in order to achieve better conditions for financial negotiations. Additionally, Turkey and other countries as well were interested in Russian gas transmission alternatives that would substitute the abandoned idea of the South Stream pipelines.

Was the annexation of Crimea illegal? A referendum was organized (16 March 2014) on the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the separate municipality of Sevastopol, in which 96.8% of the people opted to join the Russian Federation as its subjects, with an attendance of 83.1%. The outcomes of the referendum, during that major abuses happened, have no real significance today. They only give a pretext for the well prepared firm decision Russia had already made, to begin to separate Crimea from Ukraine. Moscow was announcing on 18 March the takeover of both the Republic and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation as two of its entities. This decision has not been recognized by Ukraine.

The annexation of Crimea is a propaganda achievement for domestic use for the Russian government, but in fact it is tied to large expenditures on the international political scene as Moscow has regained the image of an aggressive and unpredictable country, as well as economic estimates show that the total outlay of this takeover is quite above the total sum of \$80 billion. The secession of Crimea also provokes the new-fangled system of

the peninsula with severe troubles connected to the need to reestablish a balanced relationship with Ukraine, on which the area is strongly dependent, for instance the supplies of raw materials and provisions, the transport and tourism segment or the necessity to reconstruct the monetary configuration.

The Crimea has not only geopolitical and military meanings for Kiev, but there is the big shock on the domestic political landscape because the secessionist move is associated with the economic consequences originating from the loss of government-owned property situated on the peninsula, together with the energy and mining segments, as well as the waterway system of the harbor, which is important for Ukrainian trade partners. The loss of Crimea to Moscow affects the Ukrainian economy and simultaneously will contain partial macroeconomic effects: the rate of the peninsula in country's GDP was 3.6% in 2013, while it could gravely affect special subdivisions of the market. Economically could have far-reaching consequences that the Crimean state will take over all Ukrainian land found on the peninsula. The loss of restricted energy and mining resources will be mostly very costly on the long term, in particular the loss of the firm Chornomornaftohaz. This is one of three nationalized mining companies possessed by NAK Naftogaz Ukraina, and was one of the best growing gas suppliers in latest years. For example, it improved its output to 1.65 bcm that in the short-range may possibly completely meet the needs of the peninsula, which is expected to be between 1.7 and 2 bcm. However, the loss of the production of Chornomornaftohaz must not basically directly coin the gas supplies for Kiev and its overall energy equilibrium of course with the exception of gas use on the peninsula. Nevertheless, the extensive efforts made in most recent times to enlarge the gas business, together with the acquisition of two new drilling platforms will be a symbol of a big loss for the Ukrainian side.

It is also uncertain how the takeover of Crimea will influence the realization of the Ukrainian-Russian accord from 2010 known as Fleet for gas. That included the deal that in return for lengthening the rent of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Ukrainian Crimea, Kiev received a 30% reduction in the cost of gas imported from Moscow. Russia can abuse the new condition to coerce Kiev in unwanted directions, although in the past Russia did not completely used all potential alternatives for acting as such according to the existing contracts of the two sides. Besides, the loss of the peninsula is also linked with a decrease in size of the special economic region of the Ukraine on the Azov and Black Seas. It virtually reduces the chance of Ukraine executing projects to take out hydrocarbons from the Black Sea shelf that it had intended to make jointly with its Western partners. For instance, Ukraine had signed a contract with ENI and EdF at the end of 2013 in order to extract non-associated gas from the continental shelf in the Kerch Strait. Furthermore, the British Shell Corporation, which had been a co-member in the Ukrainian associate grouping, withdrew from

talks to sign an agreement to cut up production on a development to extract hydrocarbons from the Skifski shelf in the Black Sea. It is almost sure that there will be major adjustments in the rights of private businesses operating on the peninsula by now coined of the Kremlin. A quick development of Russian companies can be detected, but not just those connected with the current local administration. There is ambiguity about the future condition of the Crimean assets which presently belong to large Ukrainian business. Rinat Akhmetov, Dmytro Firtash and Andriy Klyuyev, among others, have branches on the peninsula. Although the Crimean authorities seem to be firm that they will not endeavor to capture of other private businesses, there are hints of potential nationalization attempts of all electrical energy production facilities because the lack of capacity in the case of regional energy. One of the private industrialists is Andriy Klyuyev, who has massively invested in solar energy. Several Ukrainian businessmen have had assets in Crimea, and they also have rent thousands of acres of seaside on the south coast.

The most important troubles are related to the repercussions of the separation of the budget and the monetary system of Crimea from Ukraine. For instance, two-thirds of the Crimean financial plan was based on operations from the central budget, about 80% in the case of Sevastopol in 2013. Such instabilities have gravely affected the banking segment of the peninsula, where local branches of banks are working whose principal agencies are in the Ukrainian capital. The new Crimean administration has introduced the Russian rouble as money, which will oblige financial institutions to adjust to the new setting as the first transitional phase is to end until 2016. Nevertheless, even prior to the engineered referendum, the authorities of the peninsula had implemented rigorous restrictions on the abandonment from deposit accounts kept in Ukrainian hryvnia. Furthermore, there will also be difficulties with editing original ownership and property papers, because Kiev has closed admission to the official key registries for Crimean homepages, and the autonomous government of the peninsula did not issues its own accounts. Very probably one can expect strong pressure that will be exercised on the Crimean Tatars, mainly to oblige them freely to give up the property they have already taken, whilst this is not linked with the legalization of possessing at any rate those lands on which residential constructions have previously been made. It is to be expected an opposition of the Crimean Tatar community to the new administration, which could be reinforced even stronger as currently, speeding up radicalization tendencies on all involved sides. Another predominantly essential subject for the inhabitants of the Crimea is the expectedly vague profit from tourism. The militarization of the Crimea could, mainly in the short term, turn the earnings from touristic businesses in the major fall down and principally affect durable the small and medium entrepreneurs on the southern coast of the peninsula. Above 65% of visitors of the Crimea were coming of Ukraine in the form of previously functioning

domestic tourism. However, because of recent security developments, Ukrainians will most likely not travel any longer in mass tourism to the peninsula in the near future.

Additionally, there is a broader dependence of Crimea on Ukraine as the peninsula relies on potable and other water reserves from Kiev. Moreover, it needs agricultural and other merchandise (over 70%), and electrical energy (much over 80%) from outside. Local infrastructure of natural gas is possibly merely imperative for sprawling industrial facilities, because Crimea extracts a large quantity of this supplies itself, and is capable to collect the large part of the necessities from its own subsoil, presently this amount is around 85%. When Kiev or both involved sides would close the land boundaries between Crimea and the rest of Ukraine, thus both main railway ways, two larger and two smaller road networks, the only access to deliver the peninsula could be the fragile connection of the Kerch ferryboat service. Seeing that this kind of infrastructure is totally insufficient for the provision of the entire peninsula for a longer period, this could create not only serious provisioning problems, but may also lead to the complete break up of the tourism sector as much longer rail travel would be a further discouragement for travelers of Russia or other parts of the world. The construction of a bridge over the Strait of Kerch can not be implemented in the near future as the area is under strict military control and involved parts are still so deeply conflicted that there is no chance for a compromise in such a multipart project. As a final point, even if Russia would construct the bridge alone, there is the risk that it could be anytime destroyed as strategic military target by any part involved in the current conflict-laden situation. The Ukrainian government does not want to fully suspend the delivery of needed primary products to the peninsula, especially for the reason that this step would also represent a real rejection of its existent ties to its properties of there. The official procedure related to ongoing delivery of materials will be possibly encapsulated in certain legal measures on the condition of the occupied properties worked out by the Ukrainian said given that Russia is ready to recognize the need for such a compromise. The other possibility is that Moscow could interpret such a choice as a full provocation and reason to foster current conflict situation and hybrid warfare. The recent separatist tracks of strategic military developments are showing the clear attempts to capture the hydroelectric power station in Nova Kakhovka in the Kherson area and it is not to ignore that the Kakhov Bay is a water source as well for the peninsula.

The repercussions of the secession of the peninsula are mostly affecting the Ukrainian inland political affairs. The illegal takeover of Crimea will preoccupy Ukrainian politicians and public debates in the near future. Sevastopol and Crimea are holding 13 single-member places in the Verkhovna Rada (parliament) in Kiev. The members of parliament nominated to these positions will keep seats except they themselves withdraw from. Their possible back down could deteriorate the pro-Russian

base in the Rada of Kiev. Democratic voting was only representatively manageable by Ukraine in the elections of 2014 far away of the districts of the peninsula. The loss of perhaps over 10 parliamentary seats has not influenced the minimum number of the Rada. The parliamentary elections of autumn of 2014 have shown the adoption and functioning of a simply proportional electoral law, thus the malfunction to not to could carry out ballot vote in the 13 electorates of Crimea was solved in this way. Moreover, as seen the refusal to not to take the regional representation scheme by elections is a logical move by the implementation of national lists. Indeed, the issue of the de facto loss of the Crimean peninsula has its roots and effects and this field of topics will overshadow other much important official problems in Kiev. The expenses and economic benefits related to the military occupation and further control are a very controversial complex of themes for Moscow. The takeover of the peninsula involves several hidden expenses for Russia and the fundamental impasse for Crimea is presently how to back the constantly growing gap of local budget deficit, which is artificially supervised now by Moscow, but according to estimates it is about \$1 billion. The official Russian financial injections are by now overstepping the sum of \$2.2 billion yearly in any case, but this amount does not corresponds the wishes of the people as during the quickly hold referendum campaign politicians promised that if the Crimea will belong to the Russian Federation, wages and pensions of the public segment will suddenly grow to the levels in Russia. Incomes in Moscow are on average almost three times bigger than in Crimea, but until now only the huge budgetary gap continues to grow and not the salaries and pensions of the people. In turn, at the end the citizens will have to pay by taxes and losses for both the war damages and the missing amounts for budget balance.

Additional costs are already arising by adjusting the apparatus of state and the financial system of the peninsula to Russian necessities and standards, particularly the switch period to the Russian rouble and the new monetary and legal structures. Besides, further financial resources are needed in order to effectively modernize the entire infrastructure of the Crimea. Russian economists calculate approximately that the total sum for Russian investments only in the transport and tourism segments could be at nearly \$6 billion. However, in order to maintain permanent contact with Moscow, it will be crucial to construct a bridge across the Kerch Strait. According to the calculations of Maksim Sokolov, the Russian transport minister the required sum for such a mega project would be at least \$1.4 billion. If the Kremlin wants to keep the peninsula, it also has to strongly invest on the construction of a solid connection through the Kerch Strait, as well as a new transmission line for gas as the project of the South Stream pipeline was abandoned. However, the whole project could be even redesigned to go across the peninsula or very near to it. This is way such energetic schemes are constantly re-estimated and energy is also used as bait to attract or punish strategic partners.

According to Alexander Pochinok (the late deputy finance minister), the takeover of Crimea could cost Moscow over \$82 billion. However, these are all only estimations and it is hard to gain transparency in the sums of real transactions as the operations are made on the territory of the Russian Federation. Other than the necessity for nonstop monetary expenses, the occupation of the Crimea still causes severe administrative and organizational problems. Probably Moscow is recognizing to intensively invest to develop the existent road and rail network and assure the protection of the external frontiers of the peninsula; as well as the delineation of new-fangled boundaries, together with maritime margins, and the redistribution of local sources of water to standardize access and ownership of the shelf. However, Kiev can not be just ignored by most of these complex projects if they should succeed on the long term. Thus, the management of these concerns will be further quite complicated. Kiev is not ready to recognize the annexation of the peninsula, and is not searching for negotiations in order to resolve these matters in this way. Thus, Moscow is risking a lot if starts such megaprojects alone or without the partial consent of the Ukrainian part.

In relation with the expenditures, nevertheless it should be noticed that the takeover of the Crimea could also generate Russia certain financial profits. Just take a look on the case of the expenditures of the Black Sea fleet. Previously Ukraine was transferring Russia \$97 million on a yearly basis to maintain the fleet of the peninsula but \$30 million of the sum remained in the accounts of Crimea. According to the current accord, as of 2017 this calculation should have increase to \$100 million. The annexation of Crimea not only abolishes the necessity to compensate such costs, but Moscow gets the chance to re-modernize the fleet that up to now had been mainly restricted by the Russian-Ukrainian contract that simply offered frameworks of repairing devices, which were already in use. The ambitious plan of Moscow is to take over and hold the Ukrainian vessels, which were in the Crimea, as well as the complete Ukrainian military infrastructure inclusively harbors. Russia plans to minimize the fees of the passageway of boats across the Kerch-Yenikal Canal, which now more possible by having power over the peninsula. Giving attention to declarations of the Russian Ministry of Transport, the Russian Federation has paid about \$15 million per annum to the Ukrainian budget for this purpose (passageway Kerch-Yenikal Canal). Russia and Crimea wants now to completely reorganize the complete infrastructure and administration of the peninsula inclusively the belongings of the Ukrainian state.

It is to see that the absorption of the Crimea is still viewed as a big domestic propaganda achievement by the Russian population and has been transformed into real political popularity for Vladimir Putin in between among both the simple people and the elites. The invasion act is an answer to the imperialistic politics and feeling of millions of people that still prospers in Russia. Besides, there is the legend, supported by communists

as even by elites after the turnaround of the existence of the so-named synchronized Russian world or *russskiy mir*. This was best exemplified by the result of assimilation of the Crimea. Sergei Naryshkin the board chairman of the State Duma declared that this was a cheerful moment in the history of Russia, which for the first time since the disintegration of the USSR was not losing its lands, but succeeded to increase its territory. Then again one could examine how long the recent optimism of the Russian society relying on the victorious capture of Crimea will continue to last. If concerning the large expenditures that Moscow must sustain in connection with the annexation process, it is to observe that the issue is still open end.

Financial resources for Crimea were originating mainly from the National Welfare Fund, which also finances the Russian Pension Fund. Thus, Russian pensioners will experience on their own budget the costs of the annexation of the Crimea and Ukrainian war. Moreover, this Pension Fund that was struggling with constant budgetary gaps till now searches simultaneously to pay off and increase the pensions of the inhabitants of Crimea. Direct and indirect costs tied to the annexation process will also reappear in regional financial plans. The finance minister Anton Siluanov declared on 18 March that the first compensation for Crimea will be transferred from the budget of the Krasnodar krai that is in the neighborhood of the peninsula.

Conversely, the Kremlin has reinforced for the moment its geopolitical position by the annexation of the Crimea even with the assumed risks of ongoing high expenses and debts. This decision also shows that Moscow is ready to actively participate in the execution of its interests on the international scene, and still wants to be fit to support the expenses of such complex military operations. Indeed, it gives the overall impression that this behavior will strengthen the image of the Western world about Russia as an impulsive and unsafe state, which does not directly mean their middle or long term recognition of local aspirations originating of the Kremlin. The political game over the Crimea is not yet over as the medium and long term economical maintenance of it will really show subsequently how costly this political decision was and who will in fact gain or suffer mostly on this artificially created conflict condition. Besides, it seems that the annexation of the Crimea will reinforce the fear of leaders of post-Soviet countries towards Russia. This could amplify their inclination to look for more secure prospects in the region in order to decrease their addiction to an impulsive Moscow. Thus, concerned countries will search to make stronger their collaboration with other international links. Nevertheless, the alternatives for the states of the region are quite restricted if they decided to stay in the shadow of Moscow. The only possibility is to recognize the importance and implementation of alternative ways different to that controlled by the Kremlin. The support of a range of identities and the real help of the cohesion among different entities is the first step in that direction, but concerns related to Russian expansionism will most possibly

unfavorably influence the Eurasian integration process, and not only.⁹ It follows a short review about Romanian foreign policy.

The main driving force behind the Romanian internal politics over the next years will be the confrontation between the left-wing coined government and right-wing oriented head of state. However, this internal fight will not affect previously settled foreign policy priorities of the country, which include the intensification of relations with the EU and NATO. Moreover, Bucharest searches to develop stronger political alliances with Chisinau, to reach more global economic openness and strengthen its own energy security. The summer of 2015 is a major political milestone in the covering of the pre-existent military strategic gaps in the region as the missile defence system of the USA will be installed in Romania. NATO reinforces control of the Black Sea and Washington trains Romania for an eventual conflict with Moscow.¹⁰

Thus, it is to see that the crisis situation in eastern Ukraine and the illegal annexation of the Crimea have huge impacts in South-Eastern Europe and the Black Sea area. The bilateral relations between Ukraine and Romania were impacted by a series of serious cases in the past few years as the sharing of the shelf sea (access to energy resources); the border section of the Danube; unsettled financial debts; problem solving methods related to Moldova and minority issues. The military-security activities carried out in Ukraine and the sky area of Baltic States are strengthening the Atlanticist commitment of Bucharest and its solidarity with Kiev, but it does not widen its economic and political capacity for action. Even the previous official political contacts between Ukraine and Romania were pending by now in order to avoid the deepening of conflicts. The reason behind this may be the recognition that NATO can not entirely cover the challenges generated by the crisis cycles occurred and artificially maintained in Ukraine. Therefore, according to the current security developments, governments of Bucharest and other capitals of the region are not feeling completely safe themselves and they have to raise their own defensive military expenses in order to meet eventual outside dangers. Warsaw has begun to buy modern weapons systems for example, anti-tank missiles, thus also Bucharest announced (December 2014) the increase of its military budget by 20%. However, such development is involving the increase in the governmental budgetary deficit. Therefore, in this regard Romania requested from the IMF and the EU to refrain to some extent the currently exercised budgetary rigor. Nevertheless, Romania has failed to reach any reductions with officials of the EU and IMF in loan matters in 2014 and the current external policy line is not conducive to achieve such agreements. Consequently, a serious risk is

⁹ <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2014-03-19/consequences-annexation-crimea> accessed Jun 15, 2015.

¹⁰ <http://www.globalresearch.ca/pentagon-prepares-romania-for-conflict-with-russia-nato-consolidates-control-of-black-sea/5441719>, accessed Jun 17, 2015.

the deterioration of the country in terms of creditworthiness. According to officials of Bucharest the Western World shows a mainly passive attitude towards the Ukrainian complex problems. Romanian officials think that this Western behaviour will not considerably change in the near future. Besides, Romanian foreign specialists are afraid that Bucharest has no real tools in its hands or a direct policy line how it could best influence the situation after the second half of 2015 as soon as the EU expectedly has to reduce the present sharp sanctions against Moscow. On the one side, Bucharest experiences the intensification of Russian activities in Transnistria, Moldova and Ukraine. Furthermore, it is to observe that Berlin and the EU searches to normalize its affairs with Moscow, on the other.

Tensions of the Romanian-Russian affairs can be perceived in the fact that Dimitrij Rogozin, the Russian vice prime minister, who wanted to visit the World War II commemorative ceremony in Tiraspol was officially not allowed to fly through Romanian airspace in May 2014. Thus, the airplane with the high Russian official had to perform an emergency landing in Chisinau. According to the evaluation of the Romanian leadership currently there are irresolvable differences of interests in the short run between Moscow and Bucharest especially concerning the case of Moldova and the Transnistrian issue that was coordinated by the Kremlin. The main direction of Moscow's policy in the past decade was the support of the creation of a neutral and federal Moldova, which should have also included the puppet state by the Dniester. However, the diplomatic line represented by Russia was counterbalanced by Romania and the Romanian friendly Moldavian opposition because according to the initial proposal, the Transnistrian side would have gained power of veto by significant joint decisions. According to Bucharest the federalization of Moldova would have offered an ideal framework for Moscow to gain even more direct control in the region and the possibility to strengthen its current geostrategic positions locally.

Russia is already involved strategically in the monitoring of the entire Dniester region and struggles to reinforce and legitimize its presence over there by the legalization of holding an efficient peacekeeping contingent that also supports its economic activities in the area. The implementation of such tools could offer Moscow to pave out further its indirect way to gain more and more political power by sophisticated control techniques in contrast to that what they have experienced in the crisis cycles of Eastern Ukraine. The choice between harder methods applied in Ukraine and softer ones in Transnistria are affected by a range of additional circumstances, of which some are predictable such as Western sanctions, but others are less foreseeable, such as the actions of the militia forces in Eastern Ukraine. Beside the use of certain principles of practical politics, historical experience shows that in the case of progressive worsening of the Russian economic situation, Moscow's attitude could ever more shift to

more predictable choices and models as implemented through the Transnistrian partners.

There are tendencies to integrate Chisinau in Western structures with the Association Agreement of the EU of 2014, but this reform process is quite slow, uncertain and is viewed very skeptically by Moscow as the separatist Transnistrian side has again had the opportunity to make certain decisions. Due to the association agreement, which includes the free trade treaty (DCFTA) the Transnistrian side can receive benefits within Moldova or even loose previously valid trade facilitations (Autonomous Trade Preferences) of EU-context. The latter option would mean for Tiraspol that prices of exported products will raise, especially that of steel and textiles. The loss of European markets could have grave consequences because it not only means the major failure of exported goods, but also leads to decline long-term in competitiveness on global levels. Despite of this offered opportunities, the leadership of Tiraspol has decided that they want to go the way to gain new Russian markets for their products at the end of 2014, thus they were completely neglecting the tracks to Western outlets in the Moldavian commercial framework. This turn of events could also lead to more economic devices that may limit the Euro-Atlantic integration Moldova. In the event that the new Moldovan government would take more definite steps towards NATO integration because of certain external pressure it is expected a reinterpretation of guidelines of Moscow in the region. This also means the possibility that Moscow officially recognizes the national sovereignty of Transnistria by abandoning the principle of a uniform Moldova. In fact, it is not to be excluded the scenario that Tiraspol would request to become part of the Russian Federation, and this would be a “welcomed choice” in Moscow. Conversely, the rapprochement of Chisinau to NATO would involve the set up of the Russian army around the Dniester region, which could result in the strengthening of military forces of the USA in Romania. The administration of Bucharest is also prepared for the implementation of such scenarios.

Although there have been made significant efforts to harmonize the entire Romanian foreign policy on the Moldova issue, this shift was not quite successful until now. Examples include the difficulties arousing around the linking of energy pipelines between the two countries and the administrative problems occurring by the donation Romanian citizenship for people of Moldova. Due to official corruption and the weak administrative capacity only around two hundred thousand Moldovans have received Romanian citizenship till now, but the main problem of the foreign policy coined by Bucharest remains the fact that developments in the regions being on the east side of the Prut remained still beyond its control. The Romanian society is mostly passive and mainly focuses on domestic affairs. Besides, the Romanian political elite fully supports the union with Moldova, because according to their view the entire Romanian nation could benefit of this kind of merger as it would gain a regional

middle power status from which position they would design more easily the crucial energy and infrastructure strategy in the region. Before the achievement of national and unionists goals Bucharest searches to achieve the Euro-Atlantic integration of Moldova. According to this line, on the one side, Romania would assume the political conflicts with Moscow and the strengthening of its Atlanticist attitude, on the other. This process is the central issue of the Romanian political thinking, which implies a number of other foreign and security concerns.

It is expected that Moldova will gradually reduce its economic relations with the separatist territory of Transnistria, which step in turn will strengthen ties between Tiraspol and Moscow. Chisinau is more and more tied to Euro-Atlantic structures in this scenario. Major Russian investments in steel industry, machine-building and energy in the Transnistrian area are indicating that Moscow really considers a viable pattern its political presence in Tiraspol. Among the current breakaway regions as Abkhazia, South Ossetia, eastern Ukraine and Transnistria, the latter has relatively the best economic opportunities. About 250.000 people of the region are already Russian citizens and by 2014 they took over the new Russian jurisdiction. According to specialists about 2000 Russian peacekeeping contingent has remained in the separatist territory, but it is expected that operations of Russian special units and secret service will be intensified in the area. One political reason of this could be that Moscow may take into account the destabilization of the Odessa region in the case of the aggravation of the crisis of the Donets Basin. This means that Russia has long-term plans in Transnistria and will not give up the region in the near future. The situation of Transnistria is also special, because after the civil war of 1991-92, they implemented a quite successful inter-ethnic peace that was only disturbed by some minor conflicts in between. Moreover, 35% of the population is ethnic Russian, but the two-third majority is Russian-native speaker – and this condition can be considered as a very good outcome in Moscow.¹¹

Consequently, current political and economical developments are not at all favourable for the international community and such agents as the EU, NATO, OSCE and others are trying to manage conflict situations related to Crimea, Ukraine and Transnistria as the Russian part is deeply involved by complex operations in this regions, which condition forces participant entities to constantly reconsider their present positions being attracted by various new and carefully prepared relations. According to these developments and the rising expenditures for military hardware, societies of the Black Sea region and of South-Eastern Europe have to face major economic and social challenges in the near future.

Despite various conflict situations, countries of the area are trying to conduct a balanced foreign policy, which is only manageable if very

¹¹ <http://www.mae.ro/en>, accessed Jun 19, 2015.

expensive short-run security tasks are successfully managed at national and international levels as societies are not at all prepared for worst case scenarios, which includes the involvement in hybrid or cyber war. It is to see that the military support and related operations to maintain and stabilize Russian positions in the Black Sea region also involves a security treat for the sovereignty of nations in the area, thus, it is necessary to forge a new kind of solidarity in order to achieve effective cohesion among participants with conflicting interests. The main challenge in the area is the practiced hybrid and cyber war and the move of security issues across national borders. Not only Moscow suffers already in economic terms because of huge war costs and other related consequences, but societies of the entire region will feel the repercussions of ongoing conflicts.

Due to suddenly changing factors for example in the Balkan region, European and non European governments have to constantly reconsider their foreign targets and partners. The main but hidden economic competition is happening between Russia and the EU in the Balkans. However, Sofia and Belgrade are maintaining excellent diplomatic relations to Moscow, but Gazprom wanted to involve even more countries by various energetic cooperation programs as South Stream pipeline or even offering attractive loans in order to efficiently invest the accumulated petro dollars. The geopolitical reorientations of single nations are generating international power gaps on strategic levels. That means a constant struggle among different competitors, because in order to successfully fill emerging economic and power-political gaps, different stronger actors have the possibility to calculate to achieve even better positions if participating by various conflict strategies. In this respect China, Germany and Turkey are powerful agents in combination with politics of the Pentagon. But it is to see that Moscow already recognised these possibilities as well, thus it tried to attract Ankara by certain economic, political and energetic alternatives on its side at the beginning of 2015. This kind of coalition also means that other countries in the region are to be left out, which generates new conflict situations. The breakdown of the initial energetic schemes of Moscow in Eastern Europe and the Balkans still keeps different actors in action in order to see, who where the new potential business and strategic partners as this kind of association could represent new shifts in traditional coalitions and modern geopolitical opportunities as well. The motion for a European Parliament resolution on the strategic military situation in the Black Sea Basin following the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia shows the complexity of the issue. Treated topics were: common security and defence policy; WEU, NATO; third-countries political situation, local and regional conflicts; peace preservation, humanitarian and rescue tasks, crisis management in the Black Sea region, Ukraine and the Russian Federation. It is to see how partner states can reduce the risks of ongoing conflicts and guide or coerce conflicted sides to further negotiations in the hope of a set of compromises.

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APPENDIX



Fig 1

“A vassal state of the Ottoman Empire since 1478, Crimea evolved into several political entities after the Russo-Turkish Treaty in 1774.”

Source©: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

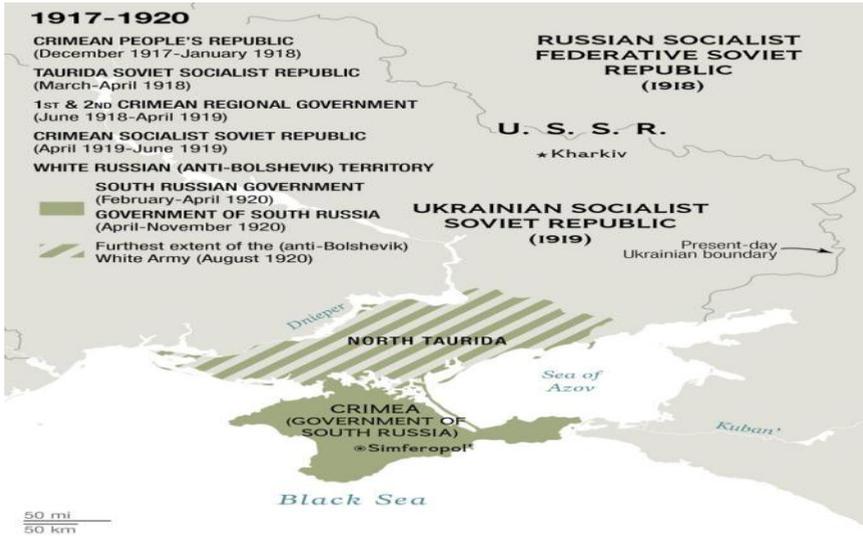


Fig. 2

“As a consequence of the Russian Revolution, Crimea changed hands and officially took on several new names over this three-year period.”

Source©: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC



Fig. 3

“After the reassertion of Soviet control in late 1920, Crimea became an autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, until the territory was annexed by Nazi Germany in 1941, returning to Russian control in 1945.”

Source©: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC



Fig. 4

“During the late Soviet era, Crimea was transferred to Ukraine, with its administrative status being upgraded on the eve of the dissolution of the U.S.S.R.” Source©: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

**Fig. 5**

“With the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, Crimea became part of an independent Ukraine. Crimea’s communist authorities proclaimed self-government in 1992, which ultimately led to the territory being granted expanded autonomous rights by Kiev.”

Source©: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/03/140305-maps-crimea-history-russia-ukraine/>