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NATO & the Black Sea

George Cristian Maior, Liviu Voinea, James Jay Carafano,
Daniel Kochis, Ovidiu-Adrian Tudorache

2020 in review
op-eds & debates

Perspectives

Scientific diaspora's potential
in enhancement of soft power



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contents

analysis

- NATO and the Black Sea / PP. 4 – 37**
George Maior / The Future of NATO and the Strategic Black Sea Area / p. 6
Liviu Voinea / A Bridge Over Three Seas. Cross-Border Projects and the Efficiency of Investments in Infrastructure / p. 14
James Jay Carafano, Daniel Kochis / Romania Leading NATO Build-Up on the Black Sea? / p. 16
Ovidiu-Adrian Tudorache / Securing a Pivotal Region for Euro-Atlantic Security: An Allied Comprehensive Strategy for the Black Sea Region / p. 18

perspectives

- Edward N. Luttwak / Aristotle in Beijing / p. 40**
Teodor Stan / Scientific diaspora's potential in collaborative enhancement of soft power / p. 42

campaign

- CULTURA and FEPRA INTERNATIONAL SA campaign for supporting circular economy in Romania / Interview with Ionuț Georgescu / p. 48**

2020 in review – op-eds / p. 50

2020 in review – debates / p. 76

Augustin Buzura Cultural Foundation

- Augustin Buzura Documents**
/ Dana Gagniuc-Buzura / p. 94

- Interview with Mike Phillips, recipient of the Excellence Award FCAB 2019**
/ Ramona Mitrică / p.96



Issue illustrated with views from the exhibition "The Meaning of Sculpture" at Kunsthalle Bega Timișoara. Artists: Nimbert Ambrus, Rudolf Bone, Norbert Costin, Teodor Graur, Roxana Ionescu, Adi Matei, Alex Mirutziu, Vlad Nancă, Mihai Olos, Alexandra Pirici, Bogdan Rața, Cristian Răduță, Mircea Spătaru, Patricia Teodorescu, Napoleon Tiron, Casandra Vidrighin. On cover: artwork by Bogdan Rața. Text and photos by courtesy of Georgeta Petrovici.

Sculpture can be impeccable sculpture suggested by nature. Yet, as an intellectual exercise, reality has never stimulated such a scenario. For a long time, sculpture functioned between a civic function and a sacred vocation. Marble, monument, power, politics. You could see the sculpture as an image: plan – structure – elevation. Sculpture had to stand up against the language, it had to cope with a metaphorical and image criticism. Each handicap had to be transformed into an advantage. Considered literary, limited and primitive, the sculpture aims to have a complex role in the figurative, modern and minimalist ideas and fantasies. The paradigm of sculpture – too much materiality, too much corporality, too much ambiguity – has provided and supported a lot of thoughts regarding the installation of some theories referring to sculpture... How can we define the long history of sculpture from

a contemporary viewpoint? The myths regarding marble collapses. The autonomy of forms and the commitment of matters are contaminated by the rules of installation. The two positions, the anti-monument and the anti-pedestal, become recurrent topics. Each material can be replaced with another material without changing the intention. Recently, there are more and more surprising works seen as sculptures: immense photos and video films documenting the ocean, the vegetation, the ice, the human body, the molecules, the silver plants, the clouds, the tunnels of light, and the performance posting up the technical grid, which is provided with theatrical sensibility... Is there a certain meaning? Is there a visual prejudice? The sculpture bears its truth.

Liviana Dan,
curator of the exhibition

"The Meaning of Sculpture", Kunsthalle Bega, Timișoara, 2020, exhibition view
(source: Facebook Kunsthalle Bega)



analysis

NATO and the Black Sea

In Europe, no partnership is more substantial or more important than the NATO-EU partnership. At its core, NATO-EU cooperation must strengthen the Alliance's role as primary guarantor of European territorial defense and first responder to military threats.

(George Cristian Maior)



"The Meaning of Sculpture", Kunsthalle Bega, Timișoara, 2020, exhibition view
(source: Facebook Kunsthalle Bega)

The Future of NATO and the Strategic Black Sea Area

GEORGE CRISTIAN MAIOR

2020 marked NATO's 71st anniversary. A distinguished age, making it the oldest functional military alliance in history¹. It is also, by any measure, the most successful in ensuring its members' collective defense. Moreover, its success has gone above and beyond its core mission. After the end of the Cold War, NATO helped stabilize and secure most of Central and Eastern Europe, ensuring the essential prerequisites for the development of democratic political systems and functioning market economies. The Alliance has, in turn, gained some of its most dedicated and active members, including Romania.

Of course, every anniversary comes with a necessary element of self-evaluation, stocktaking and planning for the future. What is sometimes striking about NATO milestones is that there always seems to be a small but dedicated group of pundits (sometimes genuinely impartial, quite a lot of times not) that question the value of the

Alliance's continued existence. Their arguments are by now so familiar one could quote them by heart: "The Cold War is over so the old military deterrent is no longer needed", "Conventional war is a thing of the past" and so on.

The truth is NATO is in many ways a victim of its own success. As a former intelligence chief I often struggled with the same type of dilemma: success in my field was defined, very often, by the fact that nothing happened. The attack was prevented, the enemy operatives were neutralized, the sensitive intelligence was well protected, the state adversary was discretely deterred and so on. Of course, as no one (fortunately) can witness the attack that didn't happen, you sometimes get the question: "If things are going so well and the country is so secure, why do we need you?"

The answer, of course, is obvious: "To ensure that the country is so secure and things are going so well that you can afford to pose that question". And this is NATO's "problem" as well. The Alliance has an (yet) unmatched military deterrent. Its capabilities make any and all potential adversaries think twice before attempting any overt military action against a NATO member state. NATO has succeeded in preventing war for a virtually unprecedented period in European history. If we want to see how things would have been without NATO, we don't have to go back very far in time.

We sometimes overlook the fact that NATO is one of the main reasons so-called “hybrid warfare” is such a big thing today. Because our adversaries could no longer afford to attack us the old-fashioned way. Again, you don’t have to look very far from NATO’s borders to see that, in the absence of strong collective defense, military aggression and forced territorial annexation are a very real possibility.

NATO’s current success does not mean, however, that the Alliance should lapse into “strategic inertia”. In fact, for a 71-years old organization it has been remarkably nimble and adaptive at times. Examining what went right until now must, by necessity, go hand in hand with analyzing what could go wrong in the future – the new risks and vulnerabilities that our Alliance will face.

In examining these challenges, it is essential that we start with a realist, clear-eyed assessment of the world we live in and the major international trends.

The first thing that we will undoubtedly observe is that geopolitics is not going anywhere. In fact, we might say it’s back with a vengeance. Sovereign states remain by far the international system’s most important actors. State competition is still the norm and the instruments of “hard power” are decisive. The reality is that many of the future threats to NATO will be the same as the current threats to NATO: malicious state actors seeking to undermine the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of NATO Allies.

We have seen quite clearly how a strategic competitor such as Russia is perfectly willing to use conventional military means against sovereign states, to illegally occupy and annex territory and to constantly test NATO’s defenses. Thus, the core mission of the Alliance—territorial defense and deterrence—remains now as important as it was 71 years ago.

However, this does not mean that our capabilities don’t need updating. History and technology have progressed quite a lot since NATO and Soviet forces eyed each other warily across the Fulda Gap. Capabilities in areas such as Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) have become steadily more

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important. Ensuring rapid and secure battlefield communications is no longer just an issue of controlling the airwaves. And these are just a couple of examples in a very long list.

Of course, size still matters. Stalin’s famous question “How many divisions?”² has lost none of its relevance. Deterrence remains fundamentally a numbers game and NATO must clearly show that it is willing and able to fulfill its core mission.

This is why, for instance, Romania has been one of the first NATO members to endorse and reach the 2% of GDP threshold for security and defense allocations. Not because the United States asked for this, but because it’s in our own national interest. In our dual quality as NATO and EU members we have advocated (and led by example) for increased investment in defense capabilities by all European Allies. As a country on the Eastern flank of the Alliance, we understand perfectly the need to be prepared, not just to defend ourselves, but to fulfill our collective defense obligations within NATO.

While maintaining strong conventional capabilities must remain a core priority, this is, in the 21st century, just part of the story. The strategic landscape has evolved and NATO must keep up with it. The domains in which the Alliance must act to ensure the security of its members have multiplied. We can no

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longer speak of real security without energy security, without cybersecurity, without having adequate resilience and protection against malign influence and subversion. Crippling a state's energy grid or paralyzing its IT networks can be just as impactful as a conventional military strike, at just a fraction of the cost for the aggressor (and with the added bonus of deniability in many cases). Undermining basic democratic processes, manipulating public opinion and eroding the citizens' trust in their own government can even make military action unnecessary. We have seen all of these tools deployed, even against NATO members and partner states, in the past decade.

In this context, we must rethink our definition of “collective defense” and develop adequate instruments to address a broader range of threats. As mentioned, hybrid activities are now a constant feature of the Euro-Atlantic security environment. The intensity, impact and sophistication of these activities are increasing as different actors in our proximity test and refine their own mix of instruments.

Fortunately, NATO is very much aware of this. In 2016, Alliance members reaffirmed the alliance's defensive mandate and recognized cyberspace as a domain of operations in which NATO must defend itself as effectively as it does in the air, on land and at sea. Cyber defense is now part of NATO's core task of

collective defense and the Alliance has clearly affirmed that international law applies in cyberspace. Actions like the NATO Cyber Defense Pledge (2016), the NATO Industry Cyber Partnership or decision to setup the Cyberspace Operations Centre (2018), are additional indicators that the Alliance is making this a priority.

Hybrid threats require hybrid responses. This means not just expanding NATO's “toolbox”, but strengthening its partnership with other actors: the private sector, civil society or media organizations. We need to increase the resilience of our societies against malign interference and influence, and this cannot be done by NATO alone. It requires a society-wide effort and an unprecedented degree of civilian-military cooperation.

It's not by accident that I highlighted energy and cyber in this context. Proper security in these areas means far more than carefully protecting state assets. Both the energy sector and (even more so) the cyber domain are staggeringly complex “ecosystems” involving large numbers of private actors and individual users, both foreign and domestic, tied in complex global networks, governed by layers of national and international regulations. Ensuring sector-wide resilience requires many actions that are outside NATO's purview. Simply expanding the Alliance's mandate to cover any and all issues is unlikely. But any rational analyst would immediately identify the need for partnerships that allow NATO to successfully fulfill its collective defense mission.

In Europe, no partnership is more substantial or more important than the NATO-EU partnership. At its core, NATO-EU cooperation must strengthen the Alliance's role as primary guarantor of European territorial defense and first responder to military threats. On the basis of complementarity and coordination, the EU can have a substantive involvement in areas such as capabilities development, addressing hybrid threats, combating terrorism, developing resilience, strengthening cybersecurity, countering disinformation and malign influence.

In short, while NATO brings the advantage of military capabilities, the EU can complete the spectrum with the needed civilian capabilities while, at the same

time, ensuring a strong economic base that can support the needed military expenditures. In the past five years, both organizations have accelerated efforts aimed at cooperation and complementarity, as reflected in the two NATO-EU Joint Declarations signed in 2016 and 2018.

Cooperation with NATO is essential in the context of the EU's own initiatives meant to strengthen its security and defense dimension, such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defence Fund (EDF). These initiatives can and should become pillars of a robust Transatlantic security partnership.

The temptation to interpret "European strategic autonomy" as "Europe unmoored from the United States" makes precisely zero sense, from every conceivable angle of a serious strategic analysis. European security is Transatlantic security—and the reverse is also true.

This brings us once again to geography. The range and complexity of modern security threats, as well as the emergence of new strategic competitors (and partners) mean that areas outside the Euro-Atlantic space must now be a permanent part of NATO's long term strategic vision. Challenges to Transatlantic security (rogue actors, terrorism, piracy, nuclear proliferation, to name just a few examples), often originate and "incubate" outside this space. NATO must be ready to use its full range of instruments, across the globe, in order to mitigate these threats. This does not mean, in any way, the dilution of the Alliance's core mission in Europe and North America. Nor does it necessarily mean NATO forces deployed everywhere problems arise. More realistically, it should mean developing stronger cooperation with partners outside the Euro-Atlantic area and an increase in activities such as training, capacity building or intelligence sharing.

There is one more essential dimension when considering NATO's increasingly multi-dimensional role. The unprecedented complexity of today's strategic landscape has brought about an important conceptual and legal issue: we no longer have a clear distinction between peace and conflict, in the broader

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sense of the term. Aggression is multi-faceted and rarely involves military means alone, and is not always geographically confined.

This reinforces the argument that NATO must adapt and upgrade both its capabilities and its rules of engagement. Allied solidarity and the indivisibility of NATO security need to apply not just in terms of territorial defense, but also with regard to cyberspace, to critical energy infrastructure and supplies or to the safeguarding of our democratic institutions.

This enhanced solidarity makes sense even from the most narrow or self-interested national perspective. The new threats mean that, in effect, all NATO states are "flank states". No one country can plausibly think of itself as safely behind the front lines. The new technological and geopolitical developments have served only to underline the need for collective security, in order to preserve not just our territory, resources or sovereignty, but also our values and way of life.

An excellent example for NATO's current challenges and future perspectives can be seen today in the geostrategic crucible that is the Black Sea area. The Black Sea has been strategically relevant since the Antiquity, but its importance was highlighted in the past decade, through the aforementioned return of geopolitical competition.

And no one actor has done more to highlight it than Russia. Moscow's patterns of revisionism and

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aggression were seen in Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008, in the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine since then.

Such actions may, perhaps, be shocking for the (dwindling) community of believers in the "end of history", but they fit neatly in Russia's historical patterns of activity towards this region.

For NATO and for Romania, the Black Sea Region's strategic significance relates to the fact that it represents the geographical frontier of the Alliance, the so-called "Eastern Flank". As a frontier space, this region includes NATO Allies (Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey are all riparian countries to the Black Sea), NATO partners (Ukraine and Georgia are engaged on an Euro-Atlantic path, even if Russia occupies parts of their territory), and Russia, a state which chose competition with the West over cooperation.

I previously mentioned the expanding definition of a "frontline state", and Romania is a good example of this. Geographically, it is located on NATO's Eastern Flank, in a key position for the Alliance's military defense. But it is also a "frontline state" when it comes to energy security, due to its high degree of independence, substantial reserves and potential to decisively contribute to the entire region's energy security. It is a "frontline state" when it comes to cybersecurity, due to its first-rate national capabilities and the support it lends to partners

such as Ukraine. It is a "frontline state" in the battle against disinformation and malign influence, due to its cultural resilience to Russian propaganda and our firm pro-Western and pro-US orientation. It is a "frontline state" in out of area operations as well, in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other places.

Romania's multi-dimensional "frontline" highlights the remarkable number of strategic fault lines and flashpoints that converge in the Black Sea area. Even a cursory analysis of this region must deal with a complex interplay of threats, risks and substantial opportunities.

As mentioned, Russia's conduct, especially in the past decade, was focused on preserving and expanding its influence in the region in the post-Soviet context. By Moscow's standards, that meant exercising overwhelming influence, if not outright control, over the foreign and security policies of its neighboring states. It also meant that the Kremlin saw closer cooperation between these states and the Euro-Atlantic community (mainly the EU and NATO) as the main threat to its ambitions.

As a consequence of Russia's actions, the Black Sea region became an unwilling "testing ground" for the full spectrum of contemporary challenges to security and stability. Economic pressure, the weaponisation of energy policy, propaganda, subversion and malign interference in political processes, cyberattacks and, eventually, outright military attacks and the occupation of other states' sovereign territory.

Russia has been showing us exactly what it can and is willing to do for a long time now. The invasion of Georgia in 2008 was not an outlier (as many in the international community hopefully convinced themselves at the time) but an integral element of Moscow's policy towards what it views as its "legitimate" sphere of influence. Episode II—the military aggression against Ukraine, followed by the illegal annexation of Crimea—was harder to ignore. Not just because of the geopolitical and military aspects—Russia gained control of an "unsinkable aircraft carrier" which it uses to project its power all the way into the Eastern Mediterranean—but because of the direct challenge to international law and to the post-Second World War order.

This challenge underscores one of NATO's most important roles, as a cornerstone of a rules-based international order. NATO is not just a provider of collective security for its own members; it also plays the role of "systemic deterrent". The fact that international norms are backed by the world's most powerful military force is a decisive factor in the calculations of every actor that may be tempted to cross over certain red lines. That some actors are now increasingly probing NATO's willingness to enforce those red lines is worrying. Credibility and commitment are key elements of any effective deterrent and the Alliance must show that it acknowledges and is ready to address any major challenge when it emerges, and not just when the tanks are literally crossing NATO borders.

As witnessed over the past years, Moscow has used the illegally-occupied Crimean peninsula as an epicenter for its power projection beyond this area, towards the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Deployment of Russian anti-access and area denial systems covering almost the whole of the Black Sea, coupled with large-scale military exercises are designed to maintain control of the region, purposefully limit the freedom of navigation and intimidate neighboring state into submission, or, at least, quiet acquiescence.

While it uses, for now, the conventional military approach only against non-NATO states, Russia nevertheless deploys a wide range of instruments against Alliance members as well. These are bundled up in what is generally called the "hybrid strategy", carefully tailored to be just below the traditional threshold of Article 5. Cyberattacks, energy used as political leverage, interference in democratic elections and the widespread use of propaganda are some of its better-known elements. We can also add to the list the dramatic escalation in the number and intensity of hostile intelligence operations conducted on the territory of Western states, ranging all the way to barely-denied assassinations. One more argument in favor of strengthening intelligence sharing and cooperation within NATO, as an essential part of the Alliance's strategic vision for the future.

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As a frontline state in geostrategic and geopolitical terms, Romania has constantly promoted the idea of a strong political engagement for NATO in the Black Sea region.

The shifts in the regional and global strategic landscape require adapting the West's strategic thinking and perspective on the region. It can no longer be considered a "frontier" (and it's clear that our adversaries don't see it that way), but a fulcrum for an increasing number of strategic projects and vectors. This shift is valid not just in the Black Sea area, but across the whole Eastern Flank of NATO, up to its northern point in the Baltic Sea region.

Romania has shown the strategic maturity that enables it to act as a key Western strategic pillar in this security new architecture. We were one of the first (and few) countries that accurately identified and warned about the new challenges and threats rising in the East. We have followed up that sober acknowledgement with a proactive approach to our own security and defense (including the aforementioned 2% of GDP allocation in support of a wide-ranging armed forces modernization program).

Romania has also assumed a leading role in bringing together Allies on the Eastern Flank. Together with Poland, the two nations led the "Bucharest Format" (the "B9" as it is frequently abbreviated) in providing a coherent vision of all the nations along the NATO's Eastern flank. This initiative also supports the

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continuous integration of the Black Sea area in the operational logic of the NATO Alliance, on similar lines to the Baltic Sea region. It is clear by now that Russia has a unitary approach to the whole flank, an approach that is, in turn, fully integrated in its overall strategic vision. NATO must do the same, and avoid piecemeal measures and a capabilities distribution imbalance that can adversely affect a comprehensive deterrence posture.

We have also been strong advocates of close NATO-EU cooperation and, through our membership in both organizations, actively worked to bring that about. A unified strategic vision for NATO is simply impossible without those civilian and economic components that only the partnership with the EU can bring. An example with clear operational implications is the military mobility project developed under the aegis of the PESCO, which aims to facilitate the rapid movement of military assets in Europe, via the incorporation of military standards in civilian infrastructure development plans and the streamlining of border transit regulations. Another good example is the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki, a project launched at the EU's initiative and included in the common set of proposals for the implementation of the 2016 Joint EU-

NATO Declaration. And, in a very recent development, Bucharest was just selected to host the new European Cybersecurity Competence Center, a hub for cybersecurity research projects across the EU, which will undoubtedly provide significant added value to the EU-NATO partnership as well.

On the issue of hybrid challenges, the cornerstone of our strategy in the wider Black Sea must be the building of societal resilience across the region. Not just in NATO states, but also in our partner states in the East and in connecting areas such as the Western Balkans. We must remember that many elements of hybrid warfare have a way of circumventing traditional geographical limitations. A key element in keeping a society well protected against subversion, disinformation and malign propaganda is, of course, trust. Over the years, NATO has built up a solid reputation with the public in Central and Eastern Europe, but in order for the organization to maintain it, there are at least two prerequisites:

One is keeping NATO as a model of success and reliability, show that the Alliance can deliver. This means a strong defense and deterrence posture and unquestionable capabilities. The solidarity enshrined in Article 5 is NATO's backbone. We must continuously demonstrate both the will and the ability to enforce it.

The other is emphasizing that the Alliance's door remains open for those states willing and capable to fulfill the necessary criteria. NATO has decisively contributed to the democratic transformation of many former Warsaw Pact countries. Membership in the Alliance is even now, for large sections of the public in these states, seen as an anchor of their countries' Western orientation. We must not overlook the fact that NATO has impressive "soft power" of its own, which can be used, in conjunction with its other capabilities, to protect and advance our common interests and values.

Energy security is another aspect which underscores the Black Sea region's strategic importance. Romania's substantial hydrocarbon reserves (many of them located on the sea's continental shelf) and balanced energy mix have given it a high degree of energy

independence and given it the capability to assume an active role in promoting source and transportation diversification projects. Energy is another area where NATO-EU cooperation is crucial in ensuring that security and resilience considerations are appropriately factored in economic development plans.

Ultimately, giving the Black Sea region its proper place in NATO's strategic paradigm is essential for fulfilling the Alliance's core mission and achieving its long-term goals of adaptation and development. As shown, the area provides probably the best example of a complex "strategic crossroads" that includes the full spectrum of current and future challenges to NATO, as well as ample opportunities to address them successfully.

The region's many contrasts also help illustrate the positive impact of the Alliance. In 2020 we also celebrate 31 years since the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe. It is a celebration because, despite enormous difficulties and quite a few setbacks, things moved in the right direction. And NATO played a key role in this transformation. The security, stability and sense of solidarity the Alliance provided were essential in transforming not just states, but societies. Seven decades after the signing of the Washington Treaty, I think this is something all of us can be proud of.

The current article is based on the keynote address delivered by the author at the NATO at Seventy: A Strategic Examination of the Past, Present, and Future of the Atlantic Alliance conference, hosted by Troy University (Montgomery, Alabama) in November 2019

Notes

1 I deliberately used the qualifier "functional", because the distinction of "Oldest military alliance in the world" goes to the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance concluded in 1373. But, as both the United Kingdom and Portugal are NATO members today, we can generously include the 647-years old alliance in NATO's distinguished historical heritage.

2 Reportedly asked (dismissively) about the Vatican's military capabilities at the time.

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George Cristian Maior is a diplomat, Ambassador of Romania to the USA. He was the director of Romanian Intelligence Service – SRI during 2006-2015.

A Bridge Over Three Seas

Cross-Border Projects and the Efficiency of Investments in Infrastructure

LIVIU VOINEA

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has recently published a report in which it estimates costs of the necessary infrastructure (in transport, energy and IT) in countries which belong to the Three Seas Initiative, among which also Romania, to \$1,2 trillion dollars. The focus on public investments will lead the way for economic recovery after the Covid-19 crisis, as the fiscal multiplier is four times larger during recession compared to normal times.

The Three Seas Initiative (3SI) was established in 2015 as a platform for 11 countries in Central and Eastern Europe to support cross-border cooperation in the region defined by the Baltic Sea, the Adriatic Sea and the Black Sea. Romania is a founding member of this initiative, it hosted the summit from 2018 and participated at creating and financing the Investment Fund of the 3SI, then located in Luxembourg. The fifth summit of 3SI has taken place in October at Tallinn. The purpose of the Three Seas Initiative is to develop the North-South axis of Europe by way of common projects of energy and transport infrastructure, as well as digital communication. By strengthening European integration, 3SI strengthens both the European Union and the transatlantic community.

IMF has recently published a report (IMF 2020a) regarding the deficient infrastructure in Central and Eastern Europe, focusing on 3SI countries. This report

was done by the European Department of IMF, on the request of several members of IMF's Executive Board, and was launched by Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of IMF, at an event organized by the Atlantic Council.

The research on this report has started before the arrival of the pandemic. However, its results are even more relevant in the new context. While all the countries in the region have introduced fiscal stimulus packages and have adopted monetary policies, both orthodox and non-conventional, in order to support affected economies, the next stimulus packages will unavoidably be limited. The fiscal space is facing inherent budgetary constraints, especially under the circumstances of rising public debt. There is also a limit of what the monetary policy can accomplish in an emerging economy. This limit is not zero rate of interest, like in advanced economies. Instead, defending the differential of the interest rate from the euro area ensures the stability of macroeconomic fundamentals in emerging European economies, including Romania. The implementation of an adequate monetary policy and maintaining financial stability may only buy time for realizing structural reforms. Under special circumstances, unconventional measures are necessary and have proven useful, yet on the mid- and long-term there is no substitute for healthy economic policies.

Therefore, we need to make a gradual transition towards support measures that are better targeted, straight towards viable companies and towards

vulnerable households. Furthermore, budgetary expenditures need to be reoriented to a larger degree towards the increase of public offer for infrastructure supply, stimulating also private investments, hence enabling more efficient reallocation of resources and promoting sustainable economic growth through structural transformations of the economy. This idea boosts the conclusions of the aforementioned IMF report. In the following, I will insist on three conclusions from this report.

First of all, the infrastructure deficit in 3SI countries is tremendous: \$1,2 trillion dollars need to be spent in the next ten years so that these countries make up for half of the gap from UE15 countries. It would mean that public investments would represent approximately 8% of the GDP in 3SI countries in each year from the coming decade; presently, they range between 3% and 6% from then GDP. This deficit is therefore unequally distributed across 3SI countries, yet it is clear that each country would benefit from the increase in infrastructure investments.

Secondly, the fiscal multiplier is very high, in other words the effect of fueling public investments is very high. In the most recent Fiscal Monitor of IMF (IMF 2020b) it is shown that investments in infrastructure have a fiscal multiplier four times larger during a recession than in normal times (IMF 2020b). This means that a dollar invested in infrastructure creates

four times more dollars when the economy is in need of stimulus, as opposed to periods of economic growth. For countries with a lower stock of capital (such as the 3SI countries), the IMF report shows that an annual growth with 1% of GDP of public investments in the next five years will contribute nearly double to creating GDP (it will add 9% to the GDP in the following five years). Moreover, the growth determined by investments will be sustainable, because the growth rate of the GDP will exceed the growth rate of public debt and hence the public debt-to-GDP ratio will decrease.

Thirdly, engaging private capital and promoting cross-border projects will increase the efficiency of investments in infrastructure. According to the report, the coordination of investments in the infrastructure between several countries could double the positive impact on regional trade, compared to the situation of individual investments.

The United States of America have contributed greatly to funding 3SI infrastructure projects, pursuing the increase in connectivity between countries in the region. The backing of the USA is essential for the success of this initiative and for attracting foreign capital, public and private, complementing the European structural funds, developing regional cooperation and building bridges across three seas.

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Romania Leading NATO Build-Up on the Black Sea?

Romania is rightly doing more for itself while also encouraging America to help bolster local defenses.

JAMES JAY CARAFANO, DANIEL KOCHIS

Recently, Romanian National Defense Minister Nicolae Ciucă visited Washington, DC for talks at the Pentagon. The top item on the minister's agenda: the stability of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) southern flank, particularly the Black Sea. Romania's near fixation on Black Sea security has become the itch begging for a transatlantic scratch.

This summer, Romania published a new security strategy that clearly focused on the importance of stability in the Black Sea region. The motivation seems pretty clear. Russia continues to build up its military capability in the region.

Putin has made this move with good reason. "The Black Sea, and specifically Russia's illegal occupation of Crimea, serves as a springboard to project military power in places like Georgia, Ukraine and even as far away as Syria," notes Heritage Foundation expert Luke Coffey. "The control of the Black Sea also means total control over the Sea of Azov (a small body of water surrounded by Russia and Ukraine connected to the Black Sea by the Kerch Strait)." Putin remains a strategic opportunist, always searching for any weakness in his opponents and any opportunity to expand Moscow's hard sphere of influence. The new Romanian strategy is not intended to confront or antagonize Russia. It seeks simply to disabuse Putin of any notion that there is a gap in NATO's southern flank that Moscow might easily exploit. There is little question that Romania's national security

strategy is focused on blocking Russian expansion. Clearly, Russia sees this. Right after the strategy came out, a spokesperson of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs attacked the strategy.

But Romania's concern extends beyond the Kremlin proper. It is also concerned that China could use its influence in Western Europe to undermine NATO cohesion and response to potential Russian aggression. That is implied in the strategy and explicit in a number of recent Romanian actions. Last year, the United States and Romania signed a 5G agreement to "seek to avoid the security risks that accompany Chinese investment in 5G telecommunications networks." In January, Prime Minister Ludovic Orban announced the termination of cooperation with Beijing on the expansion of the nuclear power plant in Cernavodă.

Romania struggles to focus NATO's attention on the Black Sea. The Black Sea is one of many issues where there is no consensus among the member states. Turkey, in particular, has been reluctant to support an expansion of NATO's naval presence in the Black Sea. Bucharest's response has been to turn to the United States and press for more American engagement. Their approach has been to encourage the Americans to do more, by demonstrating that Romania is willing to do more. Romania was one of nine NATO allies last year to spend the required minimum of 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) on defense (2.04%), and one of sixteen member nations to spend 20 percent of their defense budgets on "major new capabilities" (25.7%).

Romania is buying U.S. equipment, too. In 2017, Bucharest signed a \$3.9 billion contract to purchase seven Patriot missile defense systems. A year later, it announced would purchase three more, bring the total acquisition to ten systems acquired. The first shipment of Patriot missiles arrived in Romania last month. Romania has also purchased the U.S. HIMARS rocket launcher system. Bucharest also obtained twelve F-16s from Portugal in 2013, with delivery completed in 2017. In January, Portugal and Romania announced five additional F-16s would be winging their way east, with delivery completed in 2021. And Romania is reportedly interested in acquiring an additional thirty-six F-16s from allies.

In turn, the United States has significantly upgraded its presence in the region. Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base in Romania has become a major logistics and supply hub for U.S. equipment and personnel traveling to the Middle East region. The U.S. recently announced it also plans to reposition some air assets from Germany to Romania.

Romania also hosts an Aegis Ashore site in Deveselu, which became operational in May 2016.

In addition, the U.S. has also pushed for increased NATO presence. The alliance has agreed to develop a "tailored forward presence" in the southeast part of the alliance territory. The land component of this presence is a multinational framework brigade based in Craiova, Romania, under the control of Headquarters Multinational Division Southeast (HQ MND-SE) in Bucharest. The 5,000-strong brigade consists mainly of Romanian troops, supplemented by Bulgarian and Polish troops and headquarters staff from various other NATO states.

America and Romania jointly organize a biannual exercise named Saber Guardian, which is designed to improve the integration of multinational combat forces. In the 2019 iteration, almost 8,000 soldiers from six countries—Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and U.S.—participated in exercises in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania. These efforts are laudable, although arguably not enough to establish the level of conventional deterrence necessary to dissuade Russia from engaging in malicious behavior. Still, Romania's self-help model has effectively encouraged more U.S. engagement and shifted NATO's strategic focus. It's a model Romania can build on and one other NATO partners would do well to follow.

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Securing a Pivotal Region for Euro-Atlantic Security: An Allied Comprehensive Strategy for the Black Sea Region

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This paper aims to explain why the security of the Black Sea region is important for the whole Euro-Atlantic region and why NATO and the U.S. should prioritize Black Sea security in their strategies. The Black Sea region remains an area of significant geopolitical and geostrategic interest, though, given its complexity, the West's attention for it fluctuated. Mackinder's timeless phrase, "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland: Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island: Who rules the World-Island commands the World", reminds us

that for the West to successfully uphold its interests, it needs to control the whole Eastern frontier from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

Russia's complex and multifaceted approach and threats in the region are explored as well as why control of the Black Sea represents a means for Russia to project its power beyond this region in direct adversity to the U.S. and NATO's interests. China's interests in the Black Sea Region are also explored.

The paper argues that it is in the interest of the United States to focus more attention on the Black Sea region, to develop a policy to address great power competition in this area and to provide the necessary leadership to develop a comprehensive allied strategy for this region in order to help implement the policy. Various dimensions of the strategy are advanced.

The geopolitical and geostrategic significance of the Black Sea region

The Black Sea region has always been difficult to frame conceptually and geographically. It was generally understood to be a space found at the crossroads of Europe and Asia (or even the Middle East), a connecting region between the Balkans and the Caucasus or the frontier of Europe. It was even more difficult to frame it in terms of identity; however, in a limited sense, the Black Sea region includes the Black Sea itself, the riparian countries of Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, as well as the Republic of Moldova. A wider Black Sea region may include also Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Greece, and Serbia, such as seen in bringing together the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. For the current work, a more limited concept of the Black Sea region will be used, without losing sight of the region's connections to the Balkans and the Caucasus, as well as its larger integration in the NATO Eastern Frontier or even its connection to the larger area between the Adriatic, Baltic and Black Seas.

Reading through various works focusing on the Black Sea region, one may get the impression that this space's geopolitical and geostrategic time ended a while ago. Its "golden age" is marked by the historical confluence of empires, sometimes violent, not only between the most obvious ones like the Ottoman and the Russian empires, but also with the involvement of other external powers that have had an occasional interest in this area or attempted to balance power at the periphery. The Crimean War (1853-1856) or the Battle of Gallipoli (1915-1916) remain significant geopolitical events somewhere in the past, while the Second World War naval clashes in this area were limited due to Turkish neutrality for most of the war and the impossibility of the Axis to transfer ships to the Black Sea via the Straits.

Such events are reflective of the Black Sea's emergence in more recent history as "a turbulent meeting place of civilizations."¹, while one of its earlier names of Greek origin, *Pontus Euxinus* ("the hospitable sea"), has largely been forgotten. However, international approaches to solve the Black Sea question were attempted. One was materialized in 1936 with the conclusion of the *Montreux Convention*. The convention permitted Turkey to maintain control over the Bosphorus and Dardanelles strategic straits, while the convention basically established a delicate balance of power in the region, by keeping outside powers away from this region. The implementation of

the convention, which provided for the limitations of passage of naval warships of non-riparian countries², has rested with Turkey since then. After the Second World War, with a Soviet increased Black Sea military presence, the Soviet Union attempted to renegotiate the Montreux Convention and pushed Turkey to accept military bases on its territory; however, with U.S. support, which sent warships to the region, Turkey successfully maintained control of the Straits³. Furthermore, the Soviet period led to a "closure of the Black Sea as a zone of interaction"⁴.

After the end of the Cold War, and subsequent diminishing of tensions between East and West, the Black Sea region saw prospects of cooperation. Such prospects materialized in 1992 when the heads of states from the Black Sea extended region agreed on the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, a format which developed in 1999 into a fully-fledged international organization.

Next, NATO's Partnership for Peace program, started in 1994, was joined by all littoral countries of the Black Sea and beyond, while the prospect of security risks avoided the "classical and conventional approach of state rivalry"⁵. Other regional actions of significance included the Budapest memorandum of 1994 which provided for Ukraine's renouncing the nuclear weapons inherited from the Soviet Union, their transfer to Russia and the political security guarantees by the signatories, United States, Russia and United Kingdom towards Ukraine's territorial integrity. The Soviet Black Sea fleet was divided between Russia and Ukraine by the *Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation of 1997* with Russia holding 81.7% of the 525 fleet of combatant, auxiliary and support ships, in part also for settling energy-related debt, as well as over Sevastopol port's four main bays⁶. Furthermore, naval military cooperation among the Black Sea riparian countries enhanced in 2001, with the creation of the *Black Sea Naval Force* (Blackseafor), at Turkey's initiative.

Hope was given in the 1990s to this region; containment and force projection was "no longer so relevant", as "security risks and threats no longer stemmed from states but rather from asymmetric perpetrators such as terrorist groups and other emerging nonstate actors, sustained often through rogue or failed states"⁷. Such potential for various forms of cooperation led to the conclusion that "armed conflict among the states of the Black Sea zone is now virtually unthinkable"⁸, while peace and stability in this area would be endangered by

the weakness of states such as corruption, illegal trafficking of all sorts, but not by the power of states.⁹

Such approaches followed also a pattern of openness and cooperation in West-East relations, under Western leadership. The larger strategic framework of those relations included, as mentioned above, the NATO Partnership for Peace program, and its outreach to former Warsaw Pact member states, including former Soviet republics, as well as the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997 which set the stage for new cooperation with Russia. It follows, Euro-Atlantic integration with countries from the Black Sea region, specifically Romania and Bulgaria, was not made in the spirit of geopolitics but rather in having an "Europe whole, free and at peace" as well as in the new democracies contributing to NATO security burden. At the same time, NATO and Russia were to engage as equal partners under the already established NATO-Russia council¹⁰. In Bucharest, in November 2002, after the NATO Prague Summit invitation to seven states from Central and Eastern Europe to join NATO, the U.S. President Bush stated: "In the peaceful future we're building, Romania will strengthen our lives in another way—as a bridge to a new Russia. For centuries, Romania's geography was a source of danger. Now, you can help our Alliance to extend a hand of cooperation across the Black Sea."¹¹ In a sense, NATO's enlargement reflected the need to overcome the deep shadow left behind by the Iron Curtain. Consequently, Western attention to the Black Sea region slowly faded away, as pressing concerns required attention in other hotspots of the world such as the Greater Middle East. Still, the Black Sea Region was far from peaceful and further experts called from the West's continuous attention to this space.

In the introduction to a seminal project dedicated to "A New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region"¹², published in 2004, Asmus and Jackson argued for the need to include the Black Sea region among the priorities of the Euro-Atlantic agenda and exposed four factors to explain the lack of such a strategy: the location of the Black Sea region at the "crossroads of European, Eurasian and Middle Eastern security spaces" puts it at the frontier of such spaces but not in the middle, a rather complicated and less attractive space for academic research; attempts to cooperation with Russia and integration of Central and Eastern European countries to the Euro-Atlantic space took most of the political energy; the region itself pushed too little to get outside attention, and remained "a civilizational black hole in Western historical consciousness"¹³.

Such strategic ignorance proved disastrous when, unfortunately, the pathway to cooperation with Russia found a stonewall in the latter's emergence of a revisionist conduct in international affairs and, specifically, in its "near abroad" from the second part of the 2000s. Russia's policy of "near abroad" has practically maintained Russian long-term objectives regarding its sphere of influence over former Soviet republics, though for a significant period after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia *could not* rather than *would not* impose and exert its power in its neighborhood. In Russian foreign and security policy, the geopolitical and geostrategic significance of the Black Sea remained constant, a space which Russia needed to control for asserting influence and projecting force outwards. A recent opinion sums up this Russian constant approach to the region: "For Russia, the geostrategic factors of the Black Sea region have not changed since 1853, with NATO and the United States replacing individual European states as Russia's main geopolitical competitors: Crimea is the military source, Turkey is the pivot, and the Turkish Straits are the strategic throughput; and the end goal is access to and military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean as a counterbalance to U.S. and NATO expansion eastward and its presence in the Aegean and Central Mediterranean."¹⁴ Russian power projection towards Eastern and Central Mediterranean as an end goal reflects also the desire to assert control over what Churchill named the "soft underbelly"¹⁵ of Europe; this can be achieved only by having full control of the Black Sea region as a base of operations for supporting Russian operations in Syria and Libya. In this vein, the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 and the Russian illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its continuous support for the separatists of Ukraine's Donbas region reflect the need to maintain control over those states and prevent their Euro-Atlantic integration.

Relevance of the Black Sea region in light of geopolitical theories: Mackinder, Spykman, Brzezinski

Halford Mackinder's timeless phrase, "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland: Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island: Who rules the World-Island commands the World"¹⁶ points out to the importance of the frontier of Europe (East Europe in Mackinder's terms) for influence and power in the whole world. Mackinder saw both the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea as the frontier of

the European peninsula, while posing the question whether a sea-power would have achieved global control from controlling this frontier¹⁷. The question remains essential as Mackinder draws the map of the Heartland by including both the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea, as well as the whole Eastern Europe¹⁸, making this whole region strategically important to hold for global control. Mackinder argues that, over time, control of the Black Sea was strategically important for Roman Empire, Ottoman Empire as well as for German Eastern direction¹⁹. Furthermore, Mackinder points out that "regarded from the point of view of human mobility, and of the different modes of mobility, it is evident that since land-power can today close the Black Sea, the whole basin of that sea must be regarded as of the Heartland."²⁰ His solution for avoiding war was to keep the area from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea as a buffer zone.

Today Mackinder's solution is not only questionable but against the freedom and real independence of the states that may find themselves in the buffer zone; some of them still are seen like a buffer zone, specifically those outside the Euro-Atlantic integration. Mackinder's theory still shows the strategic importance of this space, even if the geopolitical configuration of Eastern Europe and the alignment from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea changed significantly over the past 30 years.

Nicholas Spykman changes Mackinder's dictum mentioned above in "who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world"²¹ as he favored more the capacity of the sea-power. However, his focus remains on the control of Eurasia. His theory demonstrates the importance of both Baltic Sea and Black Sea for the Heartland. In Spykman's words: "Because of the inadequacy of the Arctic Coast as an outlet to the ocean, the great Heartland can find access to the sea only by routes that cross the encircling mountain barrier and the border zone beyond. The only easy exits are through the Baltic and the Black Seas and by the overland routes through the North German plain between the Scandinavian massif and the Carpathians"²². Thus, Spykman focuses on the access that the Heartland needs in order to project power. To ensure such access to outer world, the Heartland needs a region that in Spykman's view basically overlaps on that of Mackinder, respectively from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. The other areas do not provide the adequate physical conditions to enable such access for the Heartland.

Recognition of the importance of the Eastern frontier of NATO, including up to the Baltic states and Ukraine, has been given in the more ample configuration of a geostrategy for Eurasia for the United States. Brzezinski argues that as the only global power at the time (in 1997), the United States' "chief geopolitical prize is Eurasia"²³. NATO's enlargement in the direction of the Baltic states and potentially Ukraine, a united Europe, cooperation with Russia while being mindful of Russia's desire to control its former republics, avoidance of a "grand coalition of China, Russia, and perhaps Iran" and a pragmatic approach to China were elements of U.S. preeminence in Eurasia²⁴.

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In brief, the Black Sea region includes all the elements that make its geostrategic profile highly significant: access to the Black Sea itself is done through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits governed by the Montreux Convention; Crimea plays the role of a significant "fortress", a base that allows both control over the Black Sea as well as power projection beyond; the region includes three NATO allies—Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey—, two NATO partners—Georgia and Ukraine—and Russia, which chose to perform the role of an adversary through its aggressive conduct; thus, the region basically opposes today Russia, on one side, and NATO on the other (with the U.S. the main actor outside the region that postures itself more prominently in this space). While Russia maintained a strong focus on fighting to exert control over this region, the West lost its attention after the NATO enlargement of 2004, and even more after the failure to integrate Georgia and Ukraine in NATO in 2008. Russian aggression against Georgia in 2008 and against Ukraine in 2014 brought back the need for a renewed Western focus on the Black Sea region, one that should not have moved away in the first place.

Mackinder and Spykman converge in underscoring the geostrategic importance of the Black Sea region by itself, as well as in conjunction with the entire alignment towards the Baltic Sea, for control and influence over or by the Heartland, either as a space of frontier or as a point of access. Brzezinski further recognizes the role of this frontier region plays for a U.S. geostrategy for Eurasia, needed to maintain long-term global preeminence. Therefore, both in terms of access and power projection, the Black Sea region remains an essential element in the geostrategic competition.

An Assessment of the Black Sea Region Security Environment

The Black Sea region encompasses a multidimensional security environment. The region includes three NATO allies—Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey—, two NATO partners—Ukraine and Georgia, and Russia as the geopolitical competitor of NATO. As such, the region is part of SACEUR's²⁵ area of responsibility. The United States remains engaged in this space both individually and as a NATO ally and the great power competition, recognized by the U.S. National Security Strategy in 2017, has resurged not only at global level but at regional level as well: "after being dismissed as a phenomenon of an earlier century, great power competition returned"²⁶.

Such a wake-up call for the West was triggered by Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 as well as by Russian supported separatist movements in Eastern Ukraine. In an attempt to prevent Ukraine's further integration with the West, in that case, the signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union which was to take place in November 2013, Russia asked initially for a delay of the signing, considering the EU-Ukraine agreement as a threat to its security interests²⁷, while imposing protectionist measures early on. Massive public protests demonstrated widespread support for the agreement and led to ousting of the Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich. Russia moved to annex Crimea after a sham-referendum was held under the control of the "little green men"²⁸. Subsequent support for separatist movements in Eastern Ukraine was directed by Moscow, with the Russian President stating that Russia will protect the rights of the Russians abroad²⁹, and reviving the more troublesome concept of Novorossiia³⁰ which would be another violation of the current international order. There was no word of the violation of the Budapest Memorandum signed in 1994, to which Russia is also part, of the UN Charter or of the Helsinki accords which recognized in 1975 the inviolability of the post-World War II frontiers in Europe.

Only to demonstrate the actuality of the problem, the Russian President revived in December 2019 the concept of *Prichernomorie* (essentially similar to Novorossiia) while questioning the Ukrainian identity as it is. In the Russian President's view, this Ukrainian identity equals the Russian one³¹. This remains no surprise; in 2008, at the NATO Bucharest Summit, Russian President allegedly said to the

U.S. President: "You don't understand, George, that Ukraine is not even a state. What is Ukraine? Part of its territories is Eastern Europe, but the greater part is a gift from us."³²

The 2014 events were not one of a kind. Six years before, in August 2008, Russian invasion of Georgia started from South Ossetia and, later on, from Abkhazia, demonstrating Russia's will and capacity to use force to attain political goals. As with Ukraine in 2014, in Georgia in 2008, the objective was similar: prevention of further integration with the West and maintain control and influence in the country, and project such control and influence across the region and beyond.

The 2008 and 2014 events demonstrated the interconnected use of traditional military forces, cyber-attacks, information warfare, in all-encompassing hybrid warfare. In hindsight, 2008 seems just a test-ground for 2014.

Russia's complex and multifaceted approach to controlling the Black Sea Region

The policy perspective. In 2008, D. Trenin underscored a new pragmatism in Russian foreign and security policy in its near abroad, one focusing on "zero-sum game", using instruments of power such as its army and navy, but also its oil and gas: "A review of Moscow's policy toward the wider Black Sea region suggests that Russia has entered a post-imperial phase in its historical evolution. Russian leaders have stopped mourning the loss of the former Soviet borderlands, and are learning to play on the new chessboard, with new pieces, and under new rules."³³

Russian foreign policy's southwestern axis was clear from 2008: keep Georgia and Ukraine out of West's sphere of influence, specifically out of NATO; maintain frozen conflicts around the Black Sea, specifically in the Caucasus and in the Republic of Moldova; use energy security as leverage not only in the region, but against Europe itself. 2014 actually upgraded Russian approach, adding the hybrid warfare piece with all its components, increased militarization of the illegally annexed Crimea and using it for power projection beyond the Black Sea. Russian southwestern axis has not stopped in the Black Sea: it continues towards Mediterranean Sea and towards the Southern Flank of NATO.

Following the illegal annexation of Crimea, Russia moved to secure its connection with the Peninsula by building a bridge over the Kerch Strait.³⁴

Russian hybrid warfare. Prof. Robert Shultz defines hybrid warfare as “a strategy that employs political warfare in conjunction with conventional operations, paramilitary operations, and cyber warfare”³⁵. It has its origin in the Cold War’s Soviet active measures—“secret political warfare and paramilitary operations (...) employed to influence the policies of other governments, undermine or build up leaders and groups in those states, destabilize opponents through support of opposition political and armed movements”³⁶. Hybrid warfare focuses on the economization of the use of force; it is persistent and makes use of predominantly covert operations; as seen in Donbas, it uses open combat operations if the situation requires; its main aim is to influence the targeted population, thus being population-centric warfare³⁷. Furthermore, such actions are performed in a way that aims to cover the identity of the perpetrator, provide him with deniability and ambiguity. Hybrid warfare, though at times may include combat operations, aims to remain below the threshold of military conflict in order to avoid triggering a more resolute counter response.

Russian doctrine of hybrid warfare is reflected in the perspective of the Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Federation Armed Forces Valery Gerasimov. He underscores the tendency in the 21st century of “blurring the lines between the states of war and peace”³⁸, while “the very ‘rules of war’ have changed”. Also, “the role of nonmilitary means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness”³⁹. Such effectiveness is obtained by the coordination of those nonmilitary means with military means in a proportion of 4 to 1, by exploiting the adversary’s vulnerabilities, engaging its population, and by designing a specific response or action to each individual case, thus rejecting the template-approach⁴⁰. Thus, the focus is not placed on military means, but rather on non-military means, while a whole-of-government approach is envisaged. The “Gerasimov doctrine”, however, responds to a higher authority: the Primakov doctrine, one that rejects the idea of a sole global power, advocates for Russia’s primacy in the post-Soviet space, lead the integration of that space, while weakening transatlantic institutions and U.S.-led international order⁴¹.

In this sense, Russian hybrid warfare has found its testing ground both in Georgia and Ukraine in fulfillment of Primakov’s doctrine. Russian hybrid toolbox has been extensive and included, among

others, according to Treverton et al.: propaganda, fake news, strategic leaks, funding organizations including political parties, organized protest movements, cyber tools (espionage, attack, manipulation), economic leverage, proxies and unacknowledged war, paramilitary organizations.⁴² Prof. Robert Shultz highlights Russian hybrid warfare objectives as capturing territory without resorting to military force, and undermining Western political narrative and transatlantic institutions using 3 main categories of tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs): non-kinetic political warfare or active measures (overt media tactics, disinformation and fake news, election operations in the Facebook Age; hybrid force multipliers); cyber espionage and electronic warfare (hacking in target’s information systems, attacks on critical infrastructure); kinetic operations (use of special forces combined with military operations; assassinations; infiltration and covert operations)⁴³.

No country escapes Russian hybrid warfare. For instance, the French National Rally Party received a 12.2 million USD loan from an obscure Russian bank to help its leader Marie Le Pen in her 2017 presidential bid. Though she failed to win elections in 2017, the loan brings an insight in the way Russia’s political aims can be served, with or without a connection to Kremlin. In 2016, Russia interfered in U.S. elections, with the U.S. intelligence community concluding that the respective active measures were approved by the Russian President⁴⁴. In 2018, the Director of National Intelligence, Dan Coats, stated that “we are seeing aggressive attempts to manipulate social media and to spread propaganda focused on hot-button issues that are intended to exacerbate socio-political divisions.”⁴⁵ More concerning was that such actions no longer followed the electoral cycle, but are aimed “to undermine America’s democracy on a daily basis”, while targeting a wide range of critical sectors.⁴⁶

Within the Black Sea region, Russian hybrid warfare has been applied depending on the targeted country and certainly commensurate with Russian objectives. Some of these hybrid tools have been tested in Georgia in 2008. Russian invasion of Georgia was notable through its use of cyber warfare as well as information warfare tactics. The cyber-attacks against Georgia, of distributed denial of service type, increased exponentially in intensity on August 7, 2008. Though difficult to attribute, the complexity and interconnection of the attacks demonstrate coordination; some of them appear to have originated within the Russian government. Apparently, Russian

armed forces attempted to integrate cyber-attacks with conventional warfare.⁴⁷ Information warfare was applied as well. With Georgia unable to get its message out, the main source of news became Russian journalists, who focused on alleged Georgian atrocities. Though, Russia could not convince the world of its narrative, it was more successful in gaining domestic approval of its actions⁴⁸. Today, Georgia continues to remain a testing ground for Russian hybrid warfare, with Russian troops on its territory and being exposed to Russian malign influence.⁴⁹

In 2014, a more complex hybrid toolbox was used against Ukraine. First, in Crimea, Russian special forces—"little green men", masked and without insignia—captured key strategic assets, including Simferopol port, Ukrainian military bases, airfields and airports. They also captured Crimea's Parliament, enabling the vote to hold the so-called referendum on the status of Crimea. Though their coordination and organization required a sophisticated command and control system, the Russian President initially called them local "self-defense groups"⁵⁰; later he admitted their status as Russian armed forces. Having Crimea under control, the sham-referendum on the status of Crimea, organized on March 16, 2014, passed with 97% of the votes supporting integration in the Russian Federation. Two days after, on March 18, 2014, the accession treaty to Russia was signed and on March 21, 2014 ratified by the Russian Duma. In about a month or less since "little green men" appeared in Crimea, the peninsula became part of the Russian Federation. The special operation has been accompanied by an information campaign designed to discredit the new government in Kiev, to showcase alleged dangers for ethnic Russians in Ukraine, to present the widespread support of the people in Crimea for joining Russia, and to support the deniability of the Russian involvement⁵¹. Putin's approval rating in Russia skyrocketed.

The conflict in Eastern Ukraine posed a different outcome. The hybrid toolbox was used again, targeting the Russian ethnics in Donbas. Protest movements and information campaigns were part of the hybrid approach. Ukraine moved to arrest the protest leaders, and, at that point, the protest movements turned to revolts and conflicts. Following the Crimean model, the protesters asked for a referendum to establish the Donetsk and Luhansk republics. In accordance with Putin's concept of Novorossiia, riots appeared further West, also in Odessa, though they were not successful in developing into a Donbas-like conflict.

Cyber-attacks against Ukraine have been a constant tool used since the 2014, including targeting critical energy infrastructure with a direct impact on the Ukrainian population in December 2015 (Advanced Persistent Threat Group Sandworm). In 2017, another significant attack targeted information and accounting systems: NotPetya, a state-sponsored Russian Cyberattack led to 10 billion USD in damages.⁵²

The media, and through it the access to foreign populations, remains a high target for Russia in all those countries. For instance, in Ukraine, Russia aims to get ownership over media outlets in order to control them, and through that to control the Ukrainian population: "Putin controls 50% of the news channels in Ukraine, so he can easily control 50% of the minds and hearts of Ukrainians", stated Ukrainian Prime minister Arseniy Yatseniuk⁵³. A separate way to ensure getting its message out is through its own media outlets abroad. In this sense, Russia Today (RT) chief editor Margarita Simonyan stated that RT is capable of "conducting information war against the whole Western world," using "the information weapon".⁵⁴ Such "weaponization of information" has been fully seen in the Ukrainian conflict after 2014, in the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008, but also as a persistent approach in disseminating biased information across time. In RT chief editor Margarita Simonyan's own words: "In a critical moment we'll already have grown our audience, which is used to come to us for the other side of the truth, and of course we'll make use of that."⁵⁵ Media disinformation and propaganda remains just one side of the story, as use of the trolls gives the whole disinformation operation a whole, upgraded, military-like approach targeting both domestic and foreign publics to promote Kremlin's political agenda. The Russian Internet Research Agency, dubbed the troll factory in Sankt Petersburg, has extensively used social media and freedom of expression in well-established democracies to pursue the respective political agenda; such tactics may have inspired also non-state trolls pursuing the same objectives by creating and spreading fake news.

When it comes to influencing the population, approaches are tailored to the target, as Gherasimov outlined in his approach. For instance, in Romania, the direct pro-Russian propaganda would have a difficult time to be successful, given the general pro-Western orientation of the country and positive views of NATO, the United States and the European Union. Russian propaganda would find it hard to make the Romanian population pro-Russian but may attempt to make it

question Euro-Atlantic values and democracy. A recent study⁵⁶ found out that there are certain nuances within the population, which was analyzed through their pro-U.S., neutrals, and pro-Russia⁵⁷ orientation. The neutrals, 48% of the population, though not susceptible to direct pro-Russia propaganda, “can be influenced more efficiently by undermining values central to the Western democratic model and elements connected to the European project”.⁵⁸

Russian economic capture and malign influence represent a powerful tool to undermine other countries Western orientation, to hamper their development as democracies, to weaken their societies, and specifically to influence or even direct their high-level decision-making process. Such influence targets the countries’ economies by exporting the Russian business network model in Central and East European countries based on their previous relations in the communist era. Warnings related to this approach have been highlighted as early as 2009 in an open letter of former Central and East European leaders to the U.S. administration who stated that Russia “uses overt and covert means of economic warfare, ranging from energy blockades and politically motivated investments to bribery and media manipulation in order to advance its interests and to challenge the transatlantic orientation of Central and Eastern Europe.”⁵⁹

According to CSIS’ *Kremlin Playbook. Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe*, Russia has developed an non-transparent network in the economies of Central and Eastern Europe, while using corruption for the expansion of the network itself, to “break the internal coherence of the enemy system”.⁶⁰ The two CSIS studies found out that if the Russian economic involvement in a country was higher than 12% of the GDP, then the respective country would be more susceptible to “political and economic capture”. In this sense, a compelling case is that of Bulgaria, where the Russian economic involvement averaged 22% of the GDP between 2005 and 2014, placing Bulgaria at “high-risk of Russian-influenced state capture”.⁶¹ The CSIS case study on Bulgaria is entitled suggestively “Bulgaria: What State Capture Looks Like”. It underscores direct connections between Bulgaria’s low democracy scores and Russia’s economic footprint, as well as its ambivalence between Western (“policy resistance” to Russian influence) and Russian orientation (“capitulation”). The case study concludes that Russian influence is deeply rooted in Bulgaria, which makes the country at “an advanced stage of state capture”⁶². A significant

example of Russian interference was the decision of the Bulgarian Prime Minister Boiko Borisov to withdraw from a Romanian proposal to form a joint Black Sea “flotilla” Romania-Bulgaria-Turkey, despite earlier positive statements of Bulgarian President and defense minister. Borisov argued that “Russia was particularly sensitive about Bulgaria’s potential participation in military formations that appeared directed against it”⁶³. The withdrawal decision came a few weeks before the NATO Warsaw Summit of 2016 where the proposed naval cooperation framework between the three NATO allies could have figured as a concrete contribution for naval defense in the Black Sea and part of the efforts to secure the NATO Eastern Flank in this region.

Russian energy leverage. Russian energy dependence can lead to likely Russian political interference in foreign decision-making or, more worrisome even, blunt political pressure, given energy leverage. Dependence on Russian energy creates some of Europe’s biggest problems, not only internally, but also contributes to souring some member states’ relations with the United States. Most prominently on the European scene figures the NorthStream II gas pipeline from near St. Petersburg to Germany which triggered U.S. sanctions and the wrath of the U.S. President against Germany. NorthStream II would be also another way to bypass Ukraine and leave it exposed to Russian pressure. Without being able to ensure transit of Russian gas to Western markets and in the absence of a viable alternative for non-Russian energy, Ukraine may find itself again in the situations like those from January 2006 and January 2009 when Gazprom reduced gas flow through Ukraine, conveniently during winter time, causing significant difficulties regionally⁶⁴ and putting pressure on the respective governments.

Another Russian action followed the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. Russia moved to grab from Ukraine “80% of oil and gas deposits in the Black Sea and a significant part of the port infrastructure”.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Russian moves to withdraw borders in the Black Sea in its own economic and energy interests, and hold them by force, as well as the pandemic crisis makes it difficult for foreign investors to consider long term investments in this area. However, the natural resources are still there and remain opportunities to be developed, Romanian expert Antonia Colibasanu mentioned⁶⁶. Dependence of Russian energy resources is varied throughout the region and destined to impact political choice of the riparian countries, with Ukraine most exposed to

it. Other countries aim to reduce their dependence, such as Bulgaria, which build an interconnector with Greece to import Azeri gas or U.S. LNG. An immediate consequence was Russian Gazprom offering a 40% cut in imports by Bulgaria in March 2020⁶⁷, a further Russian attempt to maintain a hold on the Bulgarian market.

Russian military presence in the Black Sea region can be divided in so-called "peacekeeping" forces, forces deployed and unrecognized, and proper deployments of various types of units as well as their training through exercises. So-called "peacekeeping" forces are still deployed in Transnistria, in Republic of Moldova (2,000 Russian troops), South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia (7,000 Russian troops)⁶⁸ despite the 1999 OSCE Istanbul commitments to withdraw and despite the absence of host nation consent. In Eastern Ukraine, Russia deployed 11,000 forces⁶⁹ and equipment, though either denied their belonging to Russian regular military forces or named them volunteers⁷⁰.

After the annexation of Crimea, Russia increased exponentially its militarization of the peninsula, which it uses as its own "aircraft carrier" in the Black Sea. Military deployments to the Crimean Peninsula involved all types of units. Russian ground forces number 28,000, sustained by 40 main battle tanks, 680 armored personnel carriers and 174 artillery systems⁷¹, which presents a significant threat in the land domain. Furthermore, there are 113 combat aircraft and, also, nuclear-capable strategic bombers⁷², allegedly to counter the U.S. Aegis Ashore Missile Defense System in Romania⁷³. In infrastructure upgrades have been made (including airfields) as well as in ensuring better surveillance through the deployment of the Monolit-B radar system⁷⁴. In 2017, Russian Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov stated that "Russia has installed a self-contained military formation in Crimea consisting of a naval base, an army corps, and an aviation and air defense division"⁷⁵. Furthermore, most concerning remains Russian deployment of S-300 and S-400 batteries, Bastion coastal defenses, Pantsir systems, long-range Kalibr cruise missile systems deployed on ships. These systems aim to ensure an anti-access and areal denial coverage that extends to the whole of the Black Sea. Furthermore, the Kalibr long-range missile systems as well as the recently tested in the Black Sea hypersonic missile system Kinzhal⁷⁶ aim to ensure missile dominance not just within the region but also against Europe as the range of those missiles may exceed 2,500 km (1,500 miles). The Russian Black

Sea fleet received significant additions and upgrades, with six new Kilo diesel submarines and three new frigates equipped with Kalibr-NK long range missiles⁷⁷. Capabilities to engage in electronic warfare have also been deployed and tested against U.S. vessels.⁷⁸

The development of the Russian Black Sea Fleet corresponds to a Russian concept of forward defense. Such forward defense includes three lines of defense for the "south strategic bastion": the first line of defense is in the Sea of Azov and Black Sea against Ukraine, respectively the Ukrainian "mosquito" fleet, the second line of defense also in the same space but against NATO, using more powerful combined capabilities and the third line of defense is in Eastern Mediterranean, with a Russian naval facility at Tartus, Syria, and a task force deployed there. These lines of defense make the Black Sea, in Russian view, a "bastion and a corridor"⁷⁹. The Caspian Sea flotilla plays also a significant role in the Russian southern strategy linked with the Black Sea fleet.

Russian military forces in this area are increasingly active and aggressive. The November 2015 Kerch Strait incident, where Russian ships rammed and arrested Ukrainian ships and sailors, is one of the most visible; however, there are many other incidents that fall below the public radar. Russian aircraft constantly breach international norms and agreements, endanger foreign aircraft in international space, for instance once coming within 1.5 meters (5 feet) from a U.S. EP-3 aircraft conducting operations over the Black Sea and triggering a U.S. Department of State response⁸⁰. Close and unsafe intercept of foreign naval ships in the Black Sea takes place in a similar manner. Such actions are specifically designed to hamper freedom of navigation operations or exercises conducted by NATO, U.S. or riparian countries in the area; they aim to communicate that Russia remains in control over the Black Sea despite the international status of this area.

Another type of Russian pressure using military means is its organization of military exercises. Snap exercises, involving up to and over 100.000 troops, not declared according to the Vienna Document, non-transparent and offensive oriented are regular. A massive Russian snap exercise involving 150.000 troops, 400 aircraft and 100 vessels was announced on July 17, 2020 to ensure "security in Russia's southwest". The sheer number of forces is impressive even if the exercise is against the terrorism threat⁸¹ and the exercises targets the Black and Caspian seas. Many such exercises involve more and more a nuclear component and test the Russian escalation-

de-escalation tactic. A more recent comprehensive exercise, Kavkaz 2020⁸², involving also China, has proved Russian strategic objective to control the Black Sea region and beyond and also an attempt to engage China.

Russian Black Sea Fleet constantly conducts exercises and trails U.S., NATO and partners' vessels during their exercises. Russia also closes areas in the Black Sea in advance of foreign navies exercises, even if those are conducted in the international space.⁸³

A brief conclusion is in order: Russian approach on controlling the Black Sea remains complex. It uses political pressure, malign influence, hybrid warfare, economic interference, energy dependence, and certainly military dominance not only for control but for power projection as well.

China's interest in the Black Sea Region

China's approach to Central and Eastern Europe is seen as part of its attempt to rule the "World Island", either alone or through engagement with Russia. Its Belt and Road Initiative represents a lure for smaller nations around the periphery of Europe, indicative of a good geopolitical knowledge of Mackinder.⁸⁴ For the stated reasons of bridging the infrastructure gap and develop a new Silk Road, China has developed over the past decade a format of multilateral cooperation with countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the so-called 17+1 format. The format relies heavily on bilateral relations and developments, and though its economic results remain to be properly seen in terms of investments and infrastructure developments, it can still be used as a political tool by China, as its interests see fit.⁸⁵ However, China's intentions remain consistent in the riparian countries of the Black Sea, targeting strategic infrastructure, such as ports, or strategic civilian nuclear energy cooperation. A notable example remains the attempted development of reactors 3 and 4 of the Romanian Cernavodă Nuclear Plant, a memorandum of understanding being signed in this regard in 2015. In 2019, however, Romania signed a memorandum of understanding with the United States to develop civil nuclear energy projects and in January 2020 the Romanian prime minister stated that the 2015 memorandum with China General Nuclear Power Corporation was no longer an option. Bulgaria may present a different situation as, in 2019, it invited the same company to bid for the development of its nuclear power plant. Later, in October 2020, Romania and the U.S. initialed an intergovernmental agreement for the development

of the two nuclear reactors, based on a 7 billion USD financing through the U.S. Exim Bank.⁸⁶ Romania also signed a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. on the development of its 5G network in August 2019.

China aims at investments in port developments in Bulgaria (Varna and Burgas), while it holds a cereal terminal in the port of Constanța in Romania, purchased in 2014 from the Dutch company that previously owned it. In Georgia, Chinese presence has sped up in past years, with the conclusion of a bilateral free trade agreement in force since January 1, 2018 and initiation of projects such as the Baku-Tbilissi-Kars railway line. However, development of the main port of Anaklia rests on Georgian and U.S. investments.

China's naval presence in the region has been sporadic though symbolic – two Chinese frigates did enter the Black Sea in 2015 for the celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the World War II victory, and joint exercises with the Russian Black Sea Fleet took place both in the Black Sea as well as in Eastern Mediterranean. Overall, China does not ignore this region, though it may not have found the optimum way to engage it, without stepping on Russian interests, and in fine-tuning its approach to foreign policy orientations of the individual countries. Romania's example due to its Strategic Partnership with the U.S. shows basically no-entry for China in strategic fields.

Allied efforts to address the security situation in the Black Sea

NATO refocuses on collective defense

With the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO found itself that it had to deal with a resurgent Russia, to refocus its efforts on collective defense from an expeditionary approach, and to develop mechanisms to identify and cope with hybrid warfare. NATO's initial response at the Wales Summit in 2014 put forward a Readiness Action Plan whose main focus was the assurance of allies, based on continuous rotation of forces, and adaptation of the military strategic posture. Main deliverables included a very high readiness "spearhead" force and appropriate command-and-control presence, in the form of NATO Force Integration Units (essentially planning taskforces), as well as recognition of the hybrid warfare challenge and the need to address it. The NATO declaratory policy on the Black Sea framed

it as “an important component of the Euro-Atlantic security”⁸⁷.

NATO Warsaw Summit in 2016 brought the much-needed deterrence (not just assurance) to NATO’s Eastern Flank. However, while declaring the strategic importance of the Black Sea region, alongside of other regions, the declaration provided that measures had to be adapted to each region. The NATO Eastern Flank, though facing the same threat from Russia, was treated significantly different in terms of deterrence measures, respectively unbalanced in its north-south dimension. Both a strategic communication and a deterrence gap, such differentiation provided the creation of a *tailored forward presence* for the allies in the Black Sea region, with Romania’s initiatives being accepted (establishment of a Headquarters Multinational Division Southeast and of a multinational brigade, designed for training not combat as the battle-groups that were part of the *enhanced forward presence* for the northern part of the Eastern Flank), as well as a promise that an allied air and maritime presence will be assessed. Cooperation with partners, Georgia and Ukraine, increased with the approval of a substantial package for Georgia, and a comprehensive assistance package for Ukraine.⁸⁸

The Bruxelles Summit of 2018 provided more developments for the allies and partners in the Black Sea region, though not sufficient to fully balance the NATO Eastern Flank. While the enhanced forward presence in the north of the flank boasted 4,500 allied combat-ready troops, the tailored forward presence in the Black Sea region was still developing (with most efforts pursued by Romania) just as a training force. Some progress was noted on the allied maritime and air presence, though insufficient. Significantly though, the Alliance noted the offer of Romania to develop a land command and control at corps level for NATO Force Structure. Also, the allied heads of states and governments met for the first time in a format that included Georgia and Ukraine to discuss Black Sea security. The commitment of the NATO Bucharest Summit of 2008 that Georgia and Ukraine will be part of the alliance was reconfirmed. Georgia was granted the enhanced operational partner status, and assistance for Ukraine was reconfirmed, including the support against hybrid warfare.⁸⁹ In April 2019, the NATO ministers of foreign affairs agreed on a package of measures for the Black Sea to improve NATO situational awareness in the region and strengthen support for Georgia and Ukraine.

In brief, NATO’s efforts after the annexation of Crimea by Russia aimed to refocus the alliance on collective

defense for its Eastern Flank. However, the focus was on NATO’s northern dimension of the Eastern flank, neglecting a similar approach in the Black Sea region, where Russian aggression took place, in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine in 2014. Such deterrence gap was coupled with a strategic communication deficiency in differentiating the approach related to the same Russian threat. Such differentiation is not in the number of forces deployed but rather in the concept of deterrence itself, expressed in lack of unitary approach of the forward presence—enhanced for the north and tailored for the south of the Eastern Flank—with different responsibilities for each. Though still relevant, NATO’s response in the Black Sea lacks the adequate deterrence needed by the level of regional threat.

The U.S. approach

The U.S. was first to respond to security developments triggered by Russia. It put forward the *European Reassurance Initiative* (ERI), initially resourced with 1 billion USD, with the objective to reassure European allies along five lines of effort: increased presence of the U.S. armed forces, enhanced prepositioning of equipment and material, improved military infrastructure, building partnership capacity (especially the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, valued at 250 million USD annually), as well as exercises and trainings. The ERI funding increased significantly: 3.4 billion USD for 2017, 4.8 billion USD for 2018, 6.5 billion USD for 2019, 5.9 billion USD for 2020 and 4.5 billion USD requested for 2021⁹⁰. A significant conceptual change came up in 2017, the ERI being renamed the *European Deterrence Initiative* (EDI), shifting the focus from reassurance to deterrence, given the degraded security environment on the NATO Eastern Flank. The EDI/ERI also provided major military infrastructure upgrades so that the bases be able to accommodate U.S. forces.

Financed by the ERI/EDI, the U.S. Operation Atlantic Resolve has provided since 2014 essential exercises, trainings and, above all, presence of the U.S. armed forces in allies and partners along the NATO’s Eastern Flank, with about 6,000 troops deployed at any one time. While the main focus of the U.S. armed forces presence has been Poland (with the rotational deployment of an armored brigade combat team), a sizable portion of those forces has been deployed in the Black Sea area. Within the Black Sea area, major U.S.-led multinational military exercises took place, such as the biennial Saber Guardian exercises (with around 10,000 U.S. troops, with participation

from over 20 allied and partner nations) as well as the annual naval Sea Breeze exercise series. Such exercises have also tested the military mobility of forces, as the speed of redeployment from Central Europe to its East, or even from the U.S. across the Atlantic, is essential for both deterrence and defense.

The U.S. armed forces presence is underpinned by host nation agreements (for instance, the Defense Cooperation Agreement with Romania, signed in 2005, allows the U.S. armed forces to have unimpeded access on the Romanian military bases in an exemplary joint cooperation fashion). The U.S. has also established the first operational Aegis Ashore Missile Defense system in Romania, inaugurated in 2016. The Aegis Ashore system ensures a robust presence and defense against ballistic missile threats originating outside the Euro-Atlantic area, respectively from the Middle East.

The U.S. has developed a broad cooperation with each of the allies and partners in the Black Sea region, under the framework of bilateral strategic partnerships. The U.S. assistance to Ukraine and Georgia has been critical for those countries defense capacity building, increase of inter-operability with U.S. and NATO forces. Significant support has been also provided through the U.S. Department of State as part of the Foreign Military Financing (FMF), through “such programs as the Countering Russian Influence Fund (CRIF), the Black Sea Maritime Domain Awareness Program, and the European Recapitalization Incentive Program (ERIP)—to build defensive military capabilities, enhance territorial national defense to include border and maritime security, increase cybersecurity defenses, improve NATO-interoperability, and reduce partners’ dependency on Russian-legacy equipment.”⁹¹

The U.S. forces constantly patrol the Black Sea from the air and in the sea where they are monitored closely (sometimes too closely as in the example above) by Russian forces. Such maritime deployments are in line with the Montreux Convention and reflect the security commitment of the U.S. in the region. Increasing the number and capacity of U.S. forces in Europe, for instance by adding two more Aegis ships in Rota, Spain, as recommended by the commander of the U.S. European Command, would make possible increased port calls and naval exercises in a multinational or allied framework⁹².

The U.S. has provided the most contributions and commitment to the security of the Black Sea region, either through its bilateral efforts in the region or

in the NATO framework (multinational exercises included). Absent such involvement and leadership, the regional situation would have been worse. However, the U.S. may improve its commitment through a dedicated and comprehensive policy towards the region that places this space among U.S. strategic priorities.

U.S. investments in military infrastructure may underscore, though, the direction of an implicit U.S. policy in this area. This year, the Department of Defense requested 130.5 million USD for the improvement of infrastructure at the Cămpia Turzii airbase in Romania, a major overhaul in line with the objective to create “a hub for U.S. Air Force operations in southeastern Europe, where the Pentagon is seeking added fighter plane rotations as part of a mission to deter Russian aggression.”⁹³ The U.S. Congress vision, expressed in the draft National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, follows this line and requires the Department of Defense to “increase [its] focus and resources to address the changing military balance in the Black Sea region”⁹⁴, a vision that aims to put the region itself in the center of the map, rather than individual countries from the region. Implicitly, this vision recognizes the need to address the discrepancy of sub-regional military balance of power and to adequately address it in line with the U.S. National Defense Strategy whose objective is to maintain “favorable regional balances of power in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, the Middle East, and the Western Hemisphere”⁹⁵.

Approaches of Romania and Turkey in the Black Sea region

Romania has been at the forefront of certain initiatives aimed to enhance regional security. Most notable are the Bucharest Format that includes nine allies on NATO Eastern Flank (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia), co-chaired by Romania and Poland, as well as the trilateral security dialogue Poland-Romania-Turkey. One of the key elements of those formats remains the importance of NATO’s forward presence from the Baltic to the Black Sea, without any distinction, as it aims to respond to the challenges and treats raised by Russia: “In the spirit of allied unity, solidarity and fair burden sharing, we underline the importance of NATO’s forward presence from the Baltic to the Black Sea”⁹⁶.

Romania’s National Defense Strategy assumes among its national security objectives the strengthening

of security in the Black Sea region, as the region represents a space of "maximum strategic interest". The security of the Black Sea region claims a comprehensive approach in the defense, military, economic, transportation, energy, environment, societal resilience spheres. The U.S. commitment to the security of this region, as well as the consolidation of NATO's deterrence posture on the Eastern Flank in a unitary manner, north to south, are essential elements.⁹⁷

Turkey is NATO's largest ally in the Black Sea region. However, Turkish policy was one of deliberately play down Black Sea security and apparently keep this region under a Turkish-Russian binomial regime. Thus, "a key component of Turkey's Black Sea strategy was excluding the West from regional initiatives. (...) While Turkey tried to keep Western allies out of the Black Sea, it accommodated Russia's security concerns."⁹⁸ However, Turkey's commitment to the security and stability of the Black Sea has been seen as essential by allies and partners from the region. Ambassador Maier has called for more Turkish engagement within NATO framework for the region and outlines the importance of partnerships of the allies and partners within the region for the security and stability of this space⁹⁹.

A comprehensive allied strategy for the Black Sea Region

Black Sea riparian countries of Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine, even if fully working together, cannot balance Russia in the Black Sea region by themselves. Unlike the Baltic Sea region, where NATO allies and partners Finland and Sweden cooperate strongly together, the Black Sea region remains complex and prone to volatility and insecurity due both to unaligned security policies towards the region. Apparently, the Russian strategy to divide has had effects in this regard. Furthermore, the Black Sea presents unique geostrategic characteristics that add further complexity. Naval deterrence by outside powers in this area is difficult as compared to the Baltic Sea due to the particularities of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits and their international codification in the Montreux Convention.

It follows that security of the Black Sea region is indissolubly linked with the presence of outside actors, what could be called internationalization of this region. The U.S., individually or within the NATO framework, NATO itself, and the European Union

need to be stronger engaged in this region, if a balance to Russia is desired and if Russian aggressive actions in the Black Sea or elsewhere, but originating from the Black Sea, are to be deterred.

Ambassador Maier states that "providing opportunities to the Black Sea region and making it enter into a cooperative paradigm with broad regional ownership, respect for international law, and states' right to freely choose their development path without external pressure and influence are ways to make people's lives better and to respond to their legitimate aspirations. Therefore, the more this frontier space is anchored in the West, in Euro-Atlantic core of civilization and identity, rule of law and democracy, the less it remains exposed to outward challenges."¹⁰⁰

The need for a policy

In an opinion on the region, Ambassador Kurt Volker argues that Russia shares legally just 10% of the littoral of the Black Sea, although it wants the world to believe that it has "a special role and a set of rights" there. In Ambassador Volker's view, the future of the other six countries belongs to them, if they "strengthen democratic institutions and fight corruption, boost growth, enhance energy security, and improve connectivity."¹⁰¹ Ambassador Volker makes the case for joint cooperation in those areas between the West and the Black Sea countries. This is actually the first step towards a better future for the region: the joint commitment of the West and of the countries in the region for the full integration of this region into the West, through U.S. policy, NATO strategy and European Union integration and enhanced partnership.

An expert opinion points out to an absence of U.S. policy designed specifically towards the Black Sea region¹⁰². Such a policy should outline the U.S. objectives towards the region and be prerequisite for an allied strategy for the Black Sea region. In Dr. Young's opinion, Russia will not engage in a more aggressive conduct in the Baltic region as such an act would be provocative to German interests. Additionally, I believe that Russia provoking Germany may lead to a more forceful German position within NATO, where, despite increasingly Russian aggressive conduct in the international security environment, Germany has continuously outlined the importance of the NATO-Russia Foundation Act of 1997.

A similar view on the need for a Black Sea policy has been supported through different voices, connecting

the importance of the security in this area with U.S. interests in Europe¹⁰³ or replacing U.S. policy for individual partners in the region¹⁰⁴. Such an approach completes the U.S. engagement for the whole Eastern Flank of NATO (or Eastern Frontier of the European Union), and still remains "critical to locking in peace and stability from the Baltics to the Black Sea"¹⁰⁵. With the return of great power competition, Mackinder's view on this part of the world and its role with regard to global affairs should be revisited.

Designing a comprehensive allied strategy

A U.S. policy towards the region would support the establishment of an allied strategy for the Black Sea region. Such a strategy could start with Romania's main strategic vision towards the region and its comprehensive approach.

In Ambassador George Maiorescu's approach such a strategic vision should envisage five principal guidelines. First, transformation of this frontier line in the Black Sea in a strategic pivot in the West's political thinking should take precedence and lead to strengthen deterrence, containment of challenges and threats with impact at global level. Along this line, Romania attained the "strategic maturity" to play a pivotal role, through its conduct as "a trusted NATO ally, [based] on its Strategic Partnership with the United States as well as being a regional engine for stabilization and cooperation."¹⁰⁶

Such strategic maturity is reinforced by Romania's political agreement on defense investment concluded in 2015 to provide 2% of the GDP for defense for at least the next decade, combined with modernization of the Romanian armed forces and development of major acquisition programs to ensure interoperability with allied forces. Such efforts are complemented by strategic investments in military infrastructure, 3 billion USD in the development of the Mihail Kogălniceanu Airbase near the Black Sea, and 400 million USD in the development of the Cămpia Turzii Airbase, key areas where the U.S. forces are also engaged. It follows that such strategic investments should represent a hub for U.S. and NATO outreach in the region and beyond.

A second line of effort should aim to bring allies and partners from the region¹⁰⁷, with the leadership of the United States and with NATO's participation, in a comprehensive format. This would serve to increase the profile of the region and to contribute to the coherence of efforts alongside the whole Eastern Flank of the Alliance.

Development of a dedicated format of security consultations within the region and inclusion of such format in an extended one within the whole NATO framework would better identify the challenges in the region, update threat assessments regularly in synchronization with all threat assessments for other regions, and also establish the capacities needed at regional level to balance Russia. Such a format would serve to switch from a relation in the region based mainly on a provider of security – consumer of security type paradigm to one where all those with vested interests in the region contribute to the regional security and beyond. This should be doubled by the allies and partners' in the region focusing on more investments in their own defense, and getting rid of Soviet-era equipment, potentially with the help of Western investments.

This relates to the third line of effort, respectively, "continuous integration of the Black Sea area similar to the Baltic Sea in the operational logic of the NATO Alliance"¹⁰⁸, in line with NATO's declaratory policy on the region. As pointed out in the 2018 NATO Bruxelles Summit declaration, par. 19, NATO has prepared "strategic assessments on the Baltic and Black Seas, the North Atlantic, and the Mediterranean". Such strategic assessments should be followed by comprehensive strategies on each region, including on the Black Sea.

Furthermore, the operational logic of NATO deterrence and defense efforts should aim both to ensure the capacity of allied forces to move quickly in the region, though all domains (land, air, and sea), in support of Article 5 scenarios, and also to be able to engage with NATO's partners to boost their defense capacity as well. To this end, NATO should focus on making the multinational corps headquarters south-east fully operational and the center of coordination for all types of operations (including crisis ones), trainings and exercises in a joint fashion, while also connecting partners like Georgia and Ukraine in those efforts as the case may be. Presence of allied troops underpinned by an enhanced U.S. military presence would be necessary.

Then, the maritime coordination function for the Black Sea should be moved from NATO Maritime Command into the region, while upgrading it to be able to adequately plan and coordinate larger naval operations in the Black Sea. Such operations, including freedom of navigation operations, should be done with an increased tempo and presence of allied naval assets. As entrance of allied naval assets in the Black Sea needs to comply to the Montreux

Convention, development of the navies of the riparian allies and partners and exploring solutions for better coverage of the Black Sea (such as with underwater drones) could be envisaged.

Furthermore, establishment of a Black Sea Air Policing Framework on the model of the Baltic Sea Air Policing and potentially connect the two would contribute to deterrence in the air domain. Air policing and other air operations should be done in a seamless fashion from the Baltic to the Black Sea in order to increase the strategic message of deterrence. Such efforts should be supported by adequate force generation from all allies.

Two other elements could support NATO's operational approach in this area: establish a NATO anti-access and area denial system to cover the whole of the Black Sea and develop a center for gathering data on the movement of Russian forces based on increase intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions in the area, including anti-submarine warfare.

A fourth line of effort should aim to increase societal resilience across allies and partners in the Black Sea region, through a whole-of-society approach to consolidate their societies¹⁰⁹ from foreign influence.

Additionally, while resilience efforts mainly rest at national level, a dedicated U.S. or NATO program could send a strong deterrence signal and also contribute to making the allies and partners more resistant to hybrid warfare. A significant investment could aim to finance the establishment of an integrated network of experts, with academic, think-tankers and practitioners from the region and from the West to consult regularly and provide strategic input from the region. Given the complexity of the Black Sea region, such a network can function under the auspices of a NATO Center of Excellence for Black Sea Security, with diverse participation from both allied and partner nations.

A separate direction would aim for better information sharing among allies and partners' agencies and institutions on the Russian hybrid actions that targets their societies. As a follow-up, specifically designed programs to counter hybrid warfare and to increase cyber defense could be put forward.

A particular program could address the need to promote democratic values and rule of law in the whole region and relate directly to citizens aspirations for a better life. This would aim to reinforce the trust of the people from the region in Western institutions and their value for citizens' prosperity, despite Russian attempts to weaken societies.

Another line of effort would aim to diminish the leverage of using energy dependence as a political tool¹¹⁰. Similarly, Western investments in the economy of the Black Sea region, both from U.S. and European Union, would make the countries more prosperous and more independent. Special programs, supporting U.S. and European companies' investment in the region may compensate other competitors' projects in the region. For instance, support to develop commerce along the Anaklia-Constanța route would better connect the Black Sea (including its Eastern part) with Europe. Development of the deep seaport in Anaklia (Georgia) would increase trade and have European countries more engaged in the region. More engagement would lead to increased awareness of security developments and increased stakes to protect such investments from European countries. Development of the port combined with the Danube access to Europe through Romania would better link Georgia with the rest of Europe and compensate competition from the nearby Russian port of Novorossiysk¹¹¹. The commercial potential of the port of Constanța can significantly increase through the link with Anaklia, but also through increased trade from Asia through the Suez Canal. Its competitive advantage as the European Union's biggest port at the Black Sea could be further increased by Romania joining the Schengen area.

Developments of smaller ports (such as those with Chinese investments in the Black Sea) or artificially increasing port capacities to hold transit cargo may hamper the strategic economic development of the Black Sea economy and its better coupling with Europe. The Port of Constanța would be a point of access for commerce with Europe from Asia and the Middle East. Access on the Danube and the port's increased cargo capacity represent such competitive advantages. The Covid-19 pandemics proved the importance of this access point, without being a competitor to the port of Rotterdam. Furthermore, businesses at the other ends of the European Union can be better served with faster access to consumers, while also strengthening the political ties between EU member states¹¹². With many U.S. businesses having a stake in the freer and faster flow of goods, such developments would certainly be to their advantage.

Furthermore, the "U.S. economic development model should be applied in all states on the containment line"¹¹³. To this end, the U.S. should consider the Black Sea region as a nucleus among other strategic spaces, such as the Baltic Sea, the Adriatic Sea, and the Caspian Sea. This remains particularly important

for U.S. interests as instability originating in Asia and the Middle East could spill over towards Europe. It remains the long-term U.S. strategic interest to secure stability in Europe and to ensure that Europe is not dominated by any other power, alongside the other strategic imperative of dominating the world oceans.¹¹⁴

Further investments in local infrastructure should aim to increase the capacity of transportation, especially the dual-use infrastructure. This would serve in increasing allied readiness and ensure that reinforcements can arrive in a timely fashion.

In the great power competition of today, against all combined forms of warfare that the West's adversaries use for their competitive advantage, the West needs to take back the initiative and become proactive rather than reactive. Within the frontier

space of Eastern Europe, the West leaves a gap in asserting its interests. This gap is the Black Sea region. Addressing this gap requires a renewed comprehensive effort at regional level with more integrated actions that respond to the region as a whole, beyond those that are being done at bilateral level. A robust Black Sea region security strategy, with more focus, initiative, and commitment, could make a difference in the West's reasserting itself and its values in the region and in the world.

This paper was written by me, Ovidiu-Adrian Tudorache, in my personal capacity. The opinions expressed here are my own and do not reflect official positions of any institution. This paper was originally written as the thesis requirement for the Global Master of Arts Program of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University.

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Zviad Adzinbaia, Georgian expert – —interview

"The Meaning of Sculpture", Kunsthalle Bega, Timișoara, 2020, exhibition view
(source: Facebook Kunsthalle Bega)



perspectives

In China itself, Shanghai Normal University, Shanghai University, Zhejiang University, Northeast Normal University, Tsinghua University, Peking University, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Capital Normal University, Nankai University, Sichuan University, and Wuhan University all offer Greek and Latin courses, both language and literature.

(Edward N. Luttwak)

Each European Union member state has its own international image to nurture and some have more resources than others.

(Teodor Stan)



"The Meaning of Sculpture", Kunsthalle Bega, Timișoara, 2020, exhibition view
(source: Facebook Kunsthalle Bega)

Aristotle in Beijing

EDWARD N. LUTTWAK

Everybody knows that schools and universities should be reformed for our new era by eliminating irrelevant traditional subjects—who needs Greek or Latin? Who needs to know the names of the ephemeral rulers of Moldavia? All the time available is needed to study algebra and more algebra (essential for Artificial Intelligence that works by stacking algorithms), statistical analysis, mathematical physics, English of course, Spanish maybe but no longer French, but also Mandarin characters as well as spoken Chinese.

But this brings us to a curious anomaly: in China itself, Shanghai Normal University, Shanghai University, Zhejiang University, Northeast Normal University, Tsinghua University, Peking University, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Capital Normal University, Nankai University, Sichuan University, and Wuhan University all offer Greek and Latin courses, both language and literature—and the only reason why only eleven Chinese universities offer classical studies is the shortage of qualified staff who can teach Greek and Latin in Chinese—in fact some of the above universities have to rely on foreign professors who teach Greek and Latin in German or English. But that shortage is being alleviated because a cadre of Chinese graduate students are preparing for teaching careers by studying in Greece, Germany and Italy.

They will find teaching positions very easily because of China's 137 Universities at least thirty

want to establish faculties of classical studies, to teach exactly the same subjects that were once taught in all respectable Western universities, and which are now being closed down one by one because: a) who needs Greek or Latin anyway? and b)—very important today in the US—Greek and Latin literature is poisoned by its association with imperialistic and racist “Western civilization” that conquered much of the world, enslaved many and subordinated all till very recently.

So why are the Chinese doing the opposite, by opening instead of closing faculties of classical studies? That was the question I put to Chinese in the field—people who first reached me when two of my books (“Grand strategy of the Roman empire” & “Grand Strategy of the Byzantine empire”) were published in Chinese.

Their answers started with “where to begin...?”: we certainly need Greek to teach Philosophy both to advanced students and to cadres (remember that Marxism is taught and Karl Marx himself studied little else...); we need Latin to teach Law (the recent correspondence in the China—Philippines Law of the Sea arbitration mostly consisted of Latin quotations), but above all that, who can live without the “Iliad”? Yes, we, Chinese, have a great literature, but there is a reason why the “Iliad” powered Western civilization: it is so powerful and so free that it makes fun of the Gods & the hero insults the King. And for Latin: who can live without Catullus & Horace? Our Chinese poetry is wonderful—our Li Bai was already read in Europe in the 18th century, but Catullus... is like drinking fine wine, every phrase is a jewel. But another of my correspondents a department head at a top (“Double First”) university had a different answer: “I do not know! and I don’t care!”: every day we receive requests from students to study Greek and Latin that we cannot satisfy, every other day another university tries to steal a junior professor. Anyway, look on line: four different translations of the “Iliad” are selling well, the “Odyssey” is not far behind, and every day more of Aristotle is published. Your question is not interesting. Much more interesting is why the West is uprooting itself.

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Scientific diaspora's potential in collaborative enhancement of soft power

TEODOR STAN

Scientific diasporas remain largely untapped reservoirs of "soft power" projection, poorly understood and rarely deployed caches in the art of public diplomacy attraction and persuasion.

This is possibly because state agencies involved in cultural diplomacy remain unaware or apprehensive about the role of cultural affinity in determining the civic allegiance of diaspora members as agents in the service of one state or the other. There is a long history of nations luring or stealing each other's scientists and their innovations. That binary mentality of equaling one's gain to one's loss is transferred into lasting lamentations about "brain drain" instead of looking at the win-win net gains through transnational mobility and pulling together

multi-national financial resources for research and innovation. Scholars and professionals who lead largely transnational lives tend to maximize collaborative use of resources and opportunities spurring the dissemination of expertise both ways to native and host countries. A different conceptual framework is needed to help us understand the potential positive role of scientific diasporas for both sending and receiving countries.

The concept of "soft power" provides that framework for understanding how scientific diasporas may be leveraged as vital human capital in grounding and enhancing strategic partnerships and the prestige of both sending and host nations. Harvard political scientist, Professor Joseph Nye coined the term "soft power" some three decades ago to describe a wide array of tools used in foreign policy to entice and at times imperceptibly incentivize the articulation of other nations' incentives, co-opting desired outcomes

without the use of coercion. He differentiated the United States' unrivaled economic and military "hard power" from the appeal of American values, democratic governance institutions and culture which he outlined as tools of "soft power" projection. He first outlined the "soft power" concept as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than through coercion," something that "could be cultivated through relations with allies, economic assistance, and cultural exchanges." The goal of statecraft, he seemed to argue was to nurture "a more favorable public opinion and credibility abroad."

While carrying a big stick matters and the militarily or economically dominant nations that possess "hard power" usually find themselves at the apex of "soft power" projection as well, they are not always able to translate that specter of coercion into desired cooperative outcomes. In practice, neither the occupation of territories by Soviet troops, nor the more recent exercises in mass media manipulation, or the "belt and road" economic diplomacy of China seem to have successfully translated hard power currency into instilling desired behavior based on trust or a positive, malleable public opinion in other nations. For all the talk about the lapse in US international leadership or the unraveling multipolarity on the international stage, the supposedly tattered American prestige has not yet sent scientists and skilled professionals spinning across the world. In any case, we are not seeing them clamoring to get to Moscow or Beijing as the new hubs of research and innovation. While "hard power" endowed states are often at the apex of projecting "soft power" such influence is accessible to smaller nations who fund cooperative means of leveraging their limited soft power resources often achieving through asymmetric results in the projection of their long-term goals. Getting others to see and prioritize one's interests as their own is in fact the art of wielding "shared values" and it is a readily available tool at the disposal of both large and small nations.

"Soft power", the projection of a nation's culture and values on the international stage has been studied in its correlation with that country's influence in creating a space conducive to the achievement of its foreign

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policy goals. At its best, the positive projected image leads not just to increased cultural tourism but to foreign direct investment, foreign student enrolments and a prestige that enables high level diplomats to articulate that country's perspective and interests within multilateral diplomatic engagements.

The "Soft Power 30" annual report developed by the University of Southern California Center on Public Diplomacy builds on Professor Nye's "soft power" concept and measures annually the global public diplomacy engagements and cultural relations projected by nations. This report compiles an extensive index of comparative measurements and ranks states on their performance. The report incorporates not just the actions of state sponsored agencies but the interventions of a variety of non-state agents with international impact in recalibrating a country's prestige. The structured rankings account for the mix of soft-power resources that individual states have at their disposal and distinguishing objective factors from subjective ones out of their

control. Accountable good governance and inclusive political values, digital exposure, international cultural dissemination, enterprise, foreign engagement and education are objective measurements. Factors such as a cuisine, technological advancement, dissemination of products and the perceived friendliness of people are of a more subjective nature.

Cultural rankings and their correlations to the country's international sway must consider that not every country conceives of its recipe for cultural diplomacy success in the same terms. Results based management applied to state sponsored institutions such as the British Council or the German Goethe Institute, may quantify their impact through participation surveys, students or tourists attracted while a less centralized, privately self-sustained federative network such as the Alliance Française, may not need to report its impact in terms of achieved state-articulated foreign policy objectives. France has one of the longest traditions in using culture and a "soft power." It is important to note that its success in establishing the Alliance Française as early as 1883 rests in rendering it into a financially self-sustained network of entities largely decoupled from the institutional or political interference of the French government.

Wielding "soft power" is at its best an art of synchronization developed through trust building exercises, a values-based community engendering process in which the agents of change are both government and private sector stakeholders. It is at its best a tango of following the lead and improvising on the tempo not simply a one directional propaganda march towards state driven goals. If it were simply a one-way march, it would hardly be perceived as anything less than propaganda, which often tends to legitimately backfire. Done right, it hopes to inculcate a cooperative environment within which partnership is perceived as mutually beneficial, accommodating the diverging perspectives of stakeholders involved.

Not all "soft power" mechanisms, institutions and projects are created to have the same scope and long-term impact. International exchange programs in particular have the unique potential of

cultivating relationships based on trust and mutual respect for the intellectual perspectives developed by participants, but it also stimulates inquisitive minds that help shape values and expectations. It is possibly because of this that cultural and academic exchange programs are notoriously difficult to implement in autocratic states, where a premium is placed on coercion and conformity not on inquisitive tendencies towards problem solving and innovation. One might argue that a branch of the diplomatic corps of a nation should conduct such programs as an extension of bilateral relations. There is a vulnerability with such an approach, one of perception, in which even scholarly research, may be seen as political in nature.

An anecdotal example is the rather futile, one-sided exercise of the United States in cajoling Russian cooperation in 2005 by endowing a US-Russia Foundation with some \$320 million to promote such exchange programs. That foundation had largely collapsed in a few years and a lesson has yet to be drawn from that. Washington had given the Kremlin exactly what it seemed to ask, special treatment and control over exchange programs, state control partnerships instead of the supposedly agenda ridden handouts. Such state-to-state gestures will predictably be susceptible to political circumstances and expediency in either country. Private sector exercises, whether implemented through social entrepreneurs that seek self-sustainability or through apolitical non-governmental or research driven entities have a better chance at eschewing political pressure and surviving the pressures of fleeting administrations. They stand a better chance at building networks of trust centered on professional expertise and mutual respect.

While the concept may be relatively new, the practice of effectively mobilizing foreign educated diaspora elites is hardly a novelty. The past is prologue, and Romania should have a deep understanding of the influence played a century ago by its Francophone intellectual elites in swaying even its Germanophile royal household to side with an alliance that had neither immediate economic sway nor boots on the ground. The influence of a country's intelligentsia however goes both ways and Romania's diaspora

elites had a major impact in building the prestige of the country, facilitating the formation of the current unitary state. Romania is nowadays a country with one of the most internationally mobile skilled labor force. Its state institutions should be interested in developing a strategy for engaging its scientific diasporas. It may well become its most rewarding return on investment.

In their research on "Soft power today: Measuring the effects" researchers at the Institute for International Cultural Relations at the University of Edinburgh highlighted the correlation between various forms of "soft power" investment and how these quantify into foreign direct investment. One of the strongest correlations built by the study was between political pluralism within the country, the environment of stability and inclusivity and how it fosters or limits foreign student enrolment and investments. The other correlation was that of good governance with its floury of measurements such as GDP impacting the attraction of foreign students. A country with poor infrastructure, unstable or unaccountable governance with difficult living conditions for foreign students, spotty internet connectivity or outdated academic centers, may not attract the same level of students, or foreign investment irrespective of the actual performance of a state-sponsored culture center. The international recognition of a country's academic centers with regards not just to the worth of their diplomas but with regards to the research collaborations and prospects of transnational career opportunities is vital in creating a positive image projected abroad.

Not all countries have the resources to modernize their academic centers and attract investment but those who nurture that prestige stand to gain substantially. International students alone contributed an estimated \$44 billion to the US economy in 2019 alone. The United States has for a long time been the top destination for international students attracting the best and brightest minds to premiere academic centers. Here, students and fellows may pursue research opportunities in a non-hierarchical environment that fosters open interactions between faculty and students and social environments of global reach with direct applicability for transnational careers.

Over a million foreign students continue to attend US academic institutions despite challenges related to the pandemic and increase in deferrals.

The Institute of International Education with the financial support of the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, recently released a report titled "Open Doors 2020," providing key findings on the state of International Educational Exchange Programs in the United States and the reach of these programs abroad. While mobility restrictions imposed by the pandemic have led to a steep decline and deferment of enrolment, the situation is likely temporary. In the seven hundred colleges and universities surveyed by the study, there is a large difference in the total decline of student enrolment down by 16% versus a 43% drop in international students. Over a million foreign students continue to attend US academic institutions despite challenges related to the pandemic and increase in deferrals. The US has hosted over one million foreign students in each of the past five years and despite diplomatic tensions between the two countries for the 16th consecutive year Chinese students continue to grow to currently 372,000, followed by Indian and South Korean students. The number of American students studying abroad also increased despite the pandemic with more than half choosing European countries and only 12% choosing an Asian country.

Europe continues to attract international students while it also seeks to become a leading force in collaborative international research exchanges. In recent years, the European Commission has stepped in as a major academic grants provider through the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions funding mechanism. It implemented the "Horizon 2020" financial exercise granting some 6.2 billion Euros. Flexing substantial financial muscle in building its networks of influence in the 2014-2020 financial exercise, it funded over 65,000 researchers, including 25,000 PhD candidates, out of which 31% were researchers attracted from outside Europe. Through its "Researchers in Motion" mechanism the pan-European initiative targets the shaping of a public academic presence on the international stage described as a "European Research Area" block, backed by national service centers in 42 European countries and in recent years attempted to reach out to European scientific diasporas in the United States. The upcoming multi-year financial exercise "Horizon Europe" promises to build on that success, and it is a venue for European academic centers, including those in Romania, to consolidate their research collaborations with American ones.

Each European Union member state has its own international image to nurture and some have more resources than others. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) founded in 1925 is of course as one of the largest state-funded yet self-governing such national organizations in the field of academic cooperation. While it does have offices abroad, including in the US, it uses its 522 million Euros budget to fund exclusively research conducted in Germany. Not all individual EU member states can allocate such generous endowments. Their best alternative is to pull resources through the European Commission mechanisms and foster researcher mobility joint coordination exercises with the scientific diasporas of other EU member states present in the United States. Medium size countries with limited resources stand to win the most out of a cooperative approach in instrumentalizing their scientific diasporas in "soft power" projection by incorporating former nationals or permanent residents leading transnational careers in their traditional concept of science diplomacy. Public

diplomacy exercises would not just seek to showcase research or innovation initiatives conducted within the native country but also the contributions of its diaspora to the host nation.

Austria provides a model for such a well regimented effort in asserting the impact of its scientific diaspora in enhancing its own prestige. Their Office of Science and Technology (OSTA) functions under the egis of the Austrian Embassy in Washington, DC mapping out and aiding both Fulbright and Marie Skłodowska-Curie scholarship recipients. The entity is supported by several Austrian Ministries who pull their funding jointly to support overlapping interests in engaging with their scientific diaspora. Through OSTA, they actively promote collaborations between leading professionals in Austria and those in the diaspora. They use this platform to enhance the impact and visibility of innovation communities committed to expanding transatlantic relations and investment. The pulled state and private funds are used in maintaining and expanding the Research and Innovation Network Austria (RINA), a platform which informs, assists and connects the country's researchers and innovators in North America. This is an engagement that both enhances their nationals' collaborations abroad and encourages the return of acquired expertise in research centers within Austria. The public-private sector partnership promotes the dissemination of career opportunities, mentoring connections and networking for scholars placed in various diaspora academic hubs.

A similarly state-sponsored platform is the Swedish Trans-Atlantic Researchers and Scholars (STARS) Network which explicitly promotes Sweden as a study destination, facilitating academic networking opportunities between 55 North American higher education institutions and 10 Swedish universities. Spain has implemented a similar approach for its scientific diaspora in the US, incorporating their ECUSA within a network of 18 such associations operating in various countries (RAICEX).

For some countries with financially self-sustaining diaspora organizations, the establishing of such platforms rests with the private sector. For example, the Greek scientific diaspora developed the "Hellenic

Bioscientific Association of the USA" which fundraises within the diaspora to support mentoring programs, sponsor science teaching exchange programs and the participation of diaspora members in professional conferences and events. The US models of scientific diaspora mobilization are not the only models for pulling together collaborative resources. In Canada, the Immigrant & International Women in Sciences (IWS) Network is a grassroots nonprofit established two years ago to support a gender inclusive academic environment. It boasts a roster of over 500 members from various countries and scientific backgrounds. That approach however, while being attuned to the needs of a particular group of immigrants, does not offer the opportunity to promote the prestige of any sending country except that of the host nation.

The Immigration Research Forum, an entity established in Washington, DC, has for the past two years worked towards mapping Romanian scientific diaspora networks, inviting leading diaspora scholars and professionals to attend annual conferences, and establishing interdisciplinary councils in various professional fields to enhance the public image, peer-support, mentorship on diaspora scholars and to create awareness about Romanian American contributions to American society. The IRF remains a self-sustained diaspora entity supported by the donations of Romanian American members. While it enjoys the encouragement of the Romanian embassy, it has yet to identify any sustained interest or expressed support from any Romanian ministry or Romanian universities or private sector research focused entities interested in establishing working relations with the country's scientific diaspora.

It would be important for Romania to articulate a coherent policy with regards to a structured engagement with its scientific diaspora, not merely in the envisioned return of scholars. Public-private partnerships that structure channels for the dissemination of diaspora expertise stand the best chance in ultimately developing research and innovation hubs within Romania. Such deliverables could in the long run enhance the reputation of the country as a worthy destination for international students and scholars alike.

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Teodor Stan is the president of the Immigration Research Forum, an independent, non-partisan, non-profit organization established in Washington, DC.

Re-imagining Sustainability

CULTURA and FEPPRA INTERNATIONAL SA campaign
for supporting circular economy in Romania

SIMPLE QUESTIONS FOR SOMEONE WHO KNOWS COMPLEX MATTERS OF RECYCLING

What is the narrative beneath recycling, on the scale of society and on an individual scale?



IONUȚ GEORGESCU,
GENERAL DIRECTOR
FEPA INTERNATIONAL SA:

« In certain systems, such as this one, waste management, there needs to be more transparency. »

We are in a field of increased complexity of life, and waste management, inevitably, enhances this complexity. Let's see: Do we have seven types of plastic? What should I do? Split plastic waste in seven types, in seven separate containers? And you are telling me that paper is being divided in two types, the printed one, that has ink, and the simple wrapper one, that doesn't? Should I also split paper into two separate containers? And how many containers do they all take up? My head hurts already! And it is only natural for any one to have a headache when one perceives the immense complexity towards which consumption is taking us. That aside the fact that, anyway, human life is very complex. And we have to sit half an hour to sort the waste we are producing? It is normal for us to perceive it as hard. From my point of view, the solution is based on two main directions:

technology development and education. I mean the necessity of developing the technology of waste management. And I am talking about the necessity of enhancing the degree of trust, namely increasing transparency. In certain systems, such as this one, of waste management, there needs to be more transparency. If we had the possibility, for example, to find out, with a single click in a smartphone app, from those who have picked up the trash, that the waste has reached recycling and then we'd see in the shops that a bottle there is a label which tells us it was obtaining through recycling or that it is a reused bottle, then our trust would increase. There would be a position emotion being created that would determine us to be content with our actions and our effort regarding waste, but also with our consumption from that point.

"The Meaning of Sculpture", Kunsthalle Bega, Timișoara, 2020, exhibition view
(source: Facebook Kunsthalle Bega)





"The Meaning of Sculpture", Kunsthalle Bega, Timișoara, 2020, exhibition view
(source: Facebook Kunsthalle Bega)

2020 in review

op-eds excerpts from articles

Things are becoming more and more complicated as crisis situations multiply and overlap. And the year 2020 is the year of the most unfortunate overlapping of crises from the existence of the current generation.

(Niculae Iancu)

2020 covers





January 2020

On the Grand Strategy

A Conversation Between

GEORGE CRISTIAN MAIOR and EDWARD LUTTWAK

George Maior: In "The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire", you are offering an excellent definition of grand strategy, perhaps the most suitable for our times: "All states have a grand strategy, whether they are aware of it or not. It is inevitable, because the grand strategy is nothing but the place where knowledge and persuasion, or in modern terms: intelligence and diplomacy, interact with military power to produce effects, in a world populated by other states, each with their own grand strategy". On the other hand, you subscribe to the perspective of Clausewitz, according to whom strategy has its own autonomy, irrespective of values. Considering the above definition, which includes elements which inherently feature a set of values, how can this paradox be reconciled? How does it influence the way in which we conceive grand strategy, presently and in the future?

Edward Luttwak: Actually, for me, strategy is governed by an internal logic—paradoxical logic in which everything turns into its opposite if it continues unchanged. It is a conception which does not depend on a specific set of values. However, we are using the same word, "strategy", to also name the policies pursued by particular states—Roman strategy, Byzantine strategy, Soviet strategy—, which may not be striped of values, on the contrary, they are a manifestation of their values.

George Maior: Do you consider that the position of Romania is just as important today for the West as former Dacia was, as a "strategic shield for the overall region"?

Edward Luttwak: Certainly yes, especially now, when Turkey no longer functions as an ally of the West. This might change if the current neo-Ottoman/Islamist leadership is being replaced by modernizing leaders with Western leanings. However, Russia won't change, and Romania is standing in the way of projecting Russian

power towards—and by way of—South-East Europe.

George Maior: If all states have grand strategies, you highlight in "The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire", that not all strategies have the same value. On the contrary, they diverge significantly from the point of view of cohesion and efficiency. How would you describe the grand strategy of Romania and its evolution throughout time and what suggestions do you have for its improvement?

Edward Luttwak: The power of each state is the product between its Mass (economic power, all other types of power) and its degree of Cohesion. By cultivating national unity, Cohesion may be enhanced, just as efficient policies may increase the human capital, the most important constituent element of the Mass.

George Maior: You were saying that the status of Rome's colonies or client states has dropped in time and even noted at one point that the "cultural and economic influence of Rome on the lives of its neighbors has itself created the cultural and political basis for common action against it. People who had nothing in common have ended up acquiring elements of a culture shared by all, but which belonged to no one." Are you perceiving any resemblance with what is going on today in the democratic world?

Edward Luttwak: There is a process of homogenization in the entire Euro-Atlantic area, from Romania to California (combining de-Christianization, de-sexualization, a negative perception of Homo Sapiens due to nature worship, universal equalization, etc.). Homogenization is being met with resistance in some places, by certain social groups led by quasi-heroic figures who are swimming against the tide promoted by media, Trump, Johnson, Salvini, etc. Perhaps, in fact, majorities from the whole space would be willing to resist, but not also the elites...

February 2020

Crisis

GEORGE CRISTIAN MAIOR

At the point where the gap between knowledge and reality will be reduced until reaching a certain equalization, then we will have created the conditions, initially of mitigation, then of control, and finally, of ending the medical crisis. What matters is the race for making a vaccine, and the race for identifying more powerful and more efficient treatment solutions. Both are the appanage of experts, and the duty of the political system is to ensure, at any cost, the resources and conditions in order to reach as soon as possible a result. But also to ensure the independence of the experts, who are anyway under the political and social pressure of results. Not to mention the pressure of time. Then, the political system also has the major responsibility to put into practice the solutions on a social scale. Yet, until making and implementing a vaccine or any other efficient medical solution, massively testing the population is the only – at this point – procedure to acquire real, field knowledge concerning the extent of the issue, and provides decision-makers clues on intelligent, targeted action.

Until then, precisely on the basis of knowledge acquired until now about the crisis and its amplification pace, the practices which proved a certain capacity of mitigating the spread of the virus, through the exceptional restrictions I have mentioned, must be continued in full force, with no exceptions. It is not a time for populism and political risk analysis. The times of political cost claims will arrive anyway, with all of their surprises. Inclusively – or especially – for those who, from the fringes,

criticize anything and, with an interest, pretend to be experts, visionaries, etc. Petty missionaries in the footnote of history, yearning to revolutionize the world.

The threat has an existential trait. And the main threat right now, simply put, is the medical one, on the life of the individual, in an immediate hierarchy of priorities. Concerning the economic crisis, it is naturally tied to the restrictions already imposed on individuals, communities, and nations, thus creating devastating physical jams in the real economy and in finance. Saving the population – as maximum priority – and returning to a normal pace of life will however, at some point, save also the economy, with all the loss and the dramatic falls that have been reached already. The realistic planning of models, which are handling economically the crisis, is inextricably linked with the healing of the population. We need to have people who physically return to work, in order to have economy. The rest is poetry.

Globalization has indeed shown now a very ugly face, yet realism shows that, without international cooperation, the crisis won't be fully overcome. For the simple fact that its persistence in a geographical space can easily affect other spaces, other nations, other societies, in a vicious cycle. Frightening. The same thing holds true for the economic crisis, and history is clear in this direction (see the stupidity of the crudely adopted protectionism which busted world economy in the 1930s). Now is not a time of incrimination and big blood feuds, because there are simply no geopolitics of the coronavirus.

March 2020

From Pandemic to Homeostasis

JEAN-JACQUES ASKENASY

What does a specific or optimum immunological response mean? An organism in good health condition, with a genetic basis without faults (mutations). A deficient immunological response means the emergence of a larger number of small proteins, with the role of signaling the need for defense, a flood of Interleukin 6 (IL-6) and tumor necrosis factor (TNF), titled Cytokine Release Syndrome (CRS), as well as the drop in leukocytes and lymphocytes (leukopenia and lymphocytopenia). Recent autopsies of Covid-19 victims reveal the presence in the alveoli of a yellow liquid, "hyaluronan" (HA – Hyaluronic Acid), whose accumulation is directly proportional with advancing towards a tragic ending.

In the future, the advances in the study of the immune defense system and its pathology will be part and parcel of the capacity to open a way towards defeating the viral agent Covid-19.

The notion of "harmony" is tied especially to a field about which its influence on the human brain is the least known, and that is music. It is supposed that musical harmony is a combination of musical notes, a composition that is balanced, coherent, proportional, symmetrical, with an ideal counterpoint. The common element of all these definitions is "balance", a balance which lends music "harmonic unity", as opposed to asymmetry, discordance, imbalance, and incoherence. Likewise in biology and medicine, life is harmonious or disharmonious, balanced or unbalanced. Walter

Bradford Cannon (1871-1945), chairman of the Department of Physiology at Harvard Medical School, has described the concept of "homeostasis" and the well-known "fight or flight response" (the decision of the brain, in face of an imminent danger, to engage in the battle or to run). The concept of "homeostasis", extensively described in the book he published in 1932, "Review of General Psychology", is fundamental for the understanding of the immunological process of the human organism. The harmony of the autonomous nervous system of the human brain applies to this day.

A second researcher who establish the indisputable value of harmony in biology and medicine was Claude Bernard (1813-1878). He discovered the importance of the "milieu intérieur", a synonym for "homeostasis". The constancy of the inner environment grants life the independence and the protection of the organism. The mechanism to maintain yourself is bestowed by the harmony of the inner environment of the body, despite changes in the external environment, idea named by Cannon "homeostasis". The constancy of the inner environment compared to the permanent changes in the exterior environment is proven by him through the study of the effects of different kinds of poison on organisms.

April 2020

Great Chasm of Good

The Surprising Resilience of the Romanians in Pandemic Times

REMUS IOAN ȘTEFUREAC

A key variable which shows how ready societies are to resist a prolonged tsunami, or to swiftly relaunch, is resilience. From this point of view, at least within the first month and a half since the debut of the pandemic, the population of Romania proved an unexpectedly large resilience across all age categories. Both the analysis of sociological studies, as well as of the social behavior we could all notice, suggest that the majority of Romanians have adapted fairly quickly to the new situations, appreciating and observing the restrictive measures decided by the authorities. The population understood the seriousness of the situation and so far respected the measures of limiting rights and freedoms, enabled once the state of urgency was declared. Surely, in times of great crisis, people's answers to sociological surveys, even the ones professionally applied, must be interpreted cautiously. The risk of cognitive dissonance is present at all times, and in such exceptional times, when pressure is directly applied over the freedom of movement and the capacity of ensuring income, it is all the more important to identify conforming answers and the differences between what people are saying that they're doing and what they are actually doing. That is precisely why the results of sociological research must be compared with proper observations of the social behavior. And, after nearly 50 days since the triggering of this crisis, we have the advantage of thus being able to make such evaluations, which show a fairly good

congruence between the early evaluations from opinion polls and the subsequent behavior of the population. In the nearly 7 weeks that have passed since the debut of the urgency state, Romanians have respected social distancing measures. Surely, there have also been exceptions, over-publicized, therefore very visible, but, most certainly, isolated and not representative for the behavior of the majority of the population. Of course, they shouldn't be downplayed, especially since, if let uncontrolled, the contagion risk of certain kinds of social behavior, which deviate from the rules that are strict and hard to be observed by the entire population, is as great as the contagion risk of the virus COVID-19.

The motives of such resilient behavior on the part of Romanians are multiple, varying from the civic values internalized by a part of society to the actual fear of being infected (over 50% believe that the personal risk of getting infected is great or moderate), or of the consequences of potential penalties imposed by authorities (especially the tremendous fines, but also institutionalized quarantine). Whatever the cause, the manifestation of the resilient behavior is a good news for us all. No matter the type of crisis we will face in the future, the population of Romania seems to have a sufficiently high level of maturity in order to be able to resist and respond in a coherent manner, under the influence of certain factors of coordination, represented by state authorities.

May 2020

Grand Strategy or The Anxieties of the Rationality of Hard Decisions for the Country

NICULAE IANCU

To have a strategy means to look beyond the present and rise above the details. It seems apparent that a strategic decision should mean something more than an ordinary decision. All the more so in the field of national security. The greatness of the objectives and the existential significance of the results expected from a national security strategy make the national security decision more important than any other. As a consequence, the strategists from the field of national security become more important than others. In fact, national security decision influence all the others. The economy, environment, health, education, and infrastructure of a country follow the path drawn by the national security policy. The development and prosperity of a country are being built on a solid national security policy. This mutuality lent substance over the past decades to the assertion that national security no longer means the mere lack of major threats against national values, but rather refers to prosperity. That level of prosperity towards which any society aspires and grants meaning to all the common efforts of a strong nation.

After the end of the Cold War, a myriad of new schools of thought in security studies have added new meanings to the traditional significance of national

security. The concept has expanded continuously, ending up engulfing nearly all forms and contexts of existence and manifestation of the individual, of society, and of the state, as stand-alone parts and as holism. However, as it may happen in any field, inflation also creates conceptual inconsistencies or practical anomalies. In the case of national security, paradigm collisions pass beyond the traditional framework of tensions between the classical and the modern, in order to enter the symbolic space of anxieties induced by security perceived as a possibility of an individual's emancipation into a world of Cartesian benchmarks of social and institutional-state rules. Otherwise, the Gestalt of national security is deeply impregnated by the multiple interpretations of the security of its constituents, and placing the pieces in the overall picture implies, oftentimes, resorting to the force of arguments and creating remaining tensions.

Despite such collisions, the two fundamental perspectives on national security are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they are mutually dependent. National security is stronger if the prosperity of the individual and of the nation are higher. And vice versa. It is a truth accepted both by realists and liberalists of all stripes.

May 2020

The Fog

GEORGE CRISTIAN MAIOR

There are special, extraordinary situations, in which, without derogating from certain rights and freedoms, one may not treat strategically and actionally such a phenomenon, which, for that matter, gravely affects one of the rights from which one cannot take any exception, any derogation: the right to life. And that also means a moral option, if not also legal, in the state, because one may put the legitimate question: if one does not make use of emergency situations, in however such clear emergencies, isn't the most important human right, the right to life, being threatened essentially, on a level of normal exercise in power?

Thus, I am sometimes puzzled to see how this necessary and, surely, temporary exception is sometimes interpreted, by many who have nothing to do with the notion of justice and the meaning of rights – from civilian super-activists to commentators, to political propagandists and analysts of all sorts –, as an unacceptable deviation from the idea of democracy and human rights and freedoms, certainly a step towards authoritarianism, towards totalitarianism, an unavoidable prelude to dictatorship, etc. Without someone suggesting us some practical and rational solution through which our, still, most important right, the right to life, to be somewhat preserved in such peculiar circumstances. On the other hand, I am sometimes amused to watch great jurists, some with experience in Romanian tribunals and stellar courts, who are explaining to us on TV, with solemnity, uneasy and sober, how authorities should handle protecting our dearest rights and freedoms in detail and in each and every second: from the constitutionality of wearing the mask to protecting religious freedom depending on using a spoon or a plurality of spoons, to the relationship between the

life to private freedom and thermal scanning, to the distance that may or may not be imposed in social interaction – should it be: one meter, two, three? – finally, to the minutes and hours when certain legal acts may come into effect so that the virus would not somehow act in a legal vacuum, etc. You ask yourself whether could there be a complex analysis of the constitutionality of the insidious invisible virus, because if it is unconstitutional, somehow illegal, then the issue will sort itself, and as such the victory of our liberty is nearly ensured. Grotius, Locke, or Sohn would be tremendously astonished to see how their entire philosophy of human rights is finally figured out in such an applied, thorough interpretation in the subtle juridical thought from the “Mioritic” space, and how the theology of liberty is here treasured to the core. Hobbes may however ask himself perhaps some little questions, noticing how his great Leviathan (the state), which should, according to his theory, somehow honor the social contract of protecting its citizens, is being transformed into some small lizard on the altar of the rights and freedoms to not wear a mask and be able to boastfully attend the haircut salon, in the attempt of somehow handling this exceptional situation.

On top of these larger or smaller ethical and judicial “dilemmas”, for the show to be complete, a deluge of conspiracy theories, focused on the evil Bill Gates, who is projected as coauthor of the virus (probably in the secret meetings of the world government) and originator of the hidden programs to introduce nanochips in the vaccine so as to control us all. An inglorious struggle of reason with the right to stupidity, which will always be legal, at least due to the right to free expression. Hence, a veil of fog is slowly covering the understanding of reality, of the crisis, but also of the moral order in crisis, thus enhancing its density.

June 2020

"Cosmic Gold Rush"

The Security and Geopolitical Impact of the New Space Race

SORIN DUCARU

The space field becomes more and more crowded, "jammed" even, and is characterized by developments with conflicting potential. Such accidental or conflicting events could have devastating effects which might severely limit the usage of space in the future. Indeed, our daily lives, our economic activity and security are practically unimaginable without spatial communication, without satellite systems of geolocating – GPS, without terrestrial monitoring from space and climate prediction, or without the safety of spatial capacities underlying the systems of nuclear deterrence, for example.

Therefore, there is a need for doubling efforts to maintain the sustainability and safety of the outer space. Firstly, an investment effort, which implies the need to increase the number of sensors (radars, telescopes) and the capacity for transmitting and processing relevant data in order to attain increasingly careful and precise monitoring of cosmic remnants and reducing the risk for new collisions. Secondly, efforts must be undertaken for coordination and collaboration both on a national scale, between relevant public and private institutions, and on an international scale. Therefore, on a national scale, in Romania, the coordination of space activities is taking place through the Romanian Space Agency (ROSA), with an active role in implementing European and international treaties. As for the SSA system, Romania has acceded to the program ESA SSA in November 2012. Beginning with 2018, Romania is a member state

within EUSST cooperation. On 25th of April 2019, ROSA signed with the USA a partnership agreement in SSA. Considering that daily dependence on space-provided services (monitoring, communication, navigation) is on the rise, taking into account the international geopolitic context, but also the multitude of players in the space field, what is taking shape is the necessity of greater focus on cosmic space, through an international collaboration that would ensure long-term peaceful usage. There is a need for a strategy of using the cosmic space similar to the one for airspace, where, on a global scale, there is coordination and collaboration (e.g. FAA, EASA, ICAO) for ensuring flight safety, by implementing air traffic management. In order to avoid escalating tendencies of geopolitical battling in the cosmic space and to maintain security in this space, with direct consequences also on a terrestrial scale, it is necessary to implement policies for discouraging non-peaceful usage of cosmic space. "Guidelines for the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space", a document approved in June 2019 by the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, represents an important step towards creating a space regime based on rules that are firmly acknowledged and enforced. In the same sense, in September 2019, the EU Special Representative for space has launched an initiative aimed at voluntary assumption of rules of conduct meant to ensure "Security, Stability & Sustainability in Outer Space" – 3SoS. Ahead the flurry of economical, geopolitical, and security implications caused by the "cosmic gold rush", there needs to be a much larger awareness of the opportunities-risks ratio.

June 2020

Covid-19 and the Europeans' Defense

Between Abandonment and Return

VALENTIN FILIP

Since even before the pandemic, the dawn of a turning point in the planet's geopolitics was looming. From the academic and research circles, from the analytical labs of think-tanks and consultancy centers, increasingly many voices have warned about the decline of the West and the rise of the Rest of the world. It is almost as if a dominant opinion trend has been formed regarding this transition of power from an unipolar world, or at least one in which the West, with the United States in its middle, held an overwhelming supremacy, towards a configuration with multiple centers or power blocs. Surely there have been and there still are notable disparities regarding when and how did this evolution occur, who are the players involved, and which are the decisive causal factors. These divergences of diagnosis and prognosis are also the reason for which the final picture, albeit scrutable, is still drawn in broad strokes, with unseen details, and the strategies for handling the challenges accompanying this period, and especially for attaining a desirable end of an era, suffer when it comes to clarity, if not even conception.

On top of this high complexity dynamic has arrived Covid-19, a disease caused by a virus still not completely known and thus hard to counter, disrupting even more the course of the world with its political, economic, and social implications. It is a shock which, like others before, pandemics included, influence developments and constrain behavior. In other words, it features both risks and opportunities, and where the different entities and communities, when it comes to wins or losses, will be situated is determined by their geostrategic reflection and

conduct. From another perspective, the relationship between the pandemic and the (dis)order of the international system has a double meaning. Not only does the former affects the latter, but also vice versa. Ironically, it could be said that precisely the power dynamics on a world scale have permitted or intensified the pandemic. It is not just about developments inherent to globalization (transit speed, liberalization of movement and trade, the expansion of the great urban clusters, etc.), but also about discord and distrust between the great powers, within an increasingly fierce and tense competition, the fragmentation of decision and action on a global scale, atrophy and the dismantle of international institutions and regimes, return to isolationism, and a sick form of nationalism. Each of these have inhibited an adequate and swift international response, based on integrated efforts in harmonious strategies.

In the whirlpool of complications caused or enhanced by the pandemic, the field of defense risks being irredeemably depreciated. Paradoxically, it appears to (re)turn to the bottom of government priorities, at least in Europe, precisely when disorder becomes the prevailing feature of the international system, when competition between smaller or larger powers takes on violent overtones which may spiral towards various forms of conflict, that is when geopolitical and geostrategic changes demand a sharper attention for the state of armed forces. This is not to say that other types and resources of power do not belong and have a purpose in the toolbox of (inter)national politics and governance. On the contrary, the latter is located at the confluence and is based on the sum of all forms of power.

July 2020

First Line of Defense for Emerging Economies

LIVIU VOINEA

The biggest issue emergent economies face when it comes to the crisis caused by the pandemic is the shortage of fiscal space for measures of economic stimulus, in parallel with narrowing leeway of the monetary policy. At first glance a cyclic problem, this remains however a structural vulnerability, as it has deep mechanisms, change-averse. When it comes to fiscal policy, the level of budgetary revenue is chronically reduced; even in periods of economic growth, budgetary revenue does not rise as GDP share, under the pretext of the necessity to stimulate the process of forming local capital, so as to catch up with developed economies. The justness of this argument, however, is overshadowed by the necessity of improving fiscal governance, in the sense of suppressing tax waivers and exemptions, and introducing a tax system which would reflect the reality of emerging economies, marked by inequalities (large income gaps) and informality (high proportion of underground economy). Without an increased level of budgetary revenue, many emergent economies are unarmed in front of a large-scale recession and, under the dependence of external financing, are forced to adopt procyclical measures, of austerity, precisely when developed economies adopt countercyclical measures, of sustaining the economy. Thus, the gap between them increases and convergence turns into divergence. On the level of monetary policies, independent central banks have more leeway for maneuvers (by reducing rates of interest, by

cash injection, even by acquiring assets), yet they are limited by structural features which influence intermediary banking and the mechanism of transmitting monetary policy—such as the margin between interest on loans and the interest on deposits, the market competition, the limited access to credit for numerous low-income households and for firms, likewise numerous, which operate all the time at a loss.

Institutional architecture, proper governance, public policy track record – all of these matter as well when it comes to using the available fiscal and monetary space, in the way in which are being formed and acted upon the expectations of the population, of firms and international markets, and eventually the capacity of emerging economies to face exogenous shocks.

Although the crisis caused by the pandemic is in progress, two conclusions may already be drawn. Emerging economies are the main losers of the pandemic, being all the more affected as, at the turn of the year, they were cumulating multiple sources of vulnerability. However, not all are affected equally. Structural reforms matter – because emergent economies which have prepared buffers in the good times, they proved that they are better equipped for facing this crisis than in the past; a cautious mix of macroeconomic policies, together with structural reforms to strengthen the resilience of this economies in face of external shocks, continues to be first line of defense against the volatility of the market.

July 2020

Quality Press, Fake News and the Need for References

REMUS IOAN ȘTEFUREAC

In the last few years in Romania, the public confidence in mass-media has followed a continuous descending curve. The phenomenon is not singular. It happens in Eastern Europe, it happens in the West of the continent, it happens on both sides of the Atlantic.

The burst of social media, doubled by the outflow of classical opinion formers, with moral and intellectual authority, has amplified this reality. In the era of click-bait titles and 250-word comfortably austere content, it is harder and harder for quality press to withstand. We read and hear more about fake news than about mere news. It would seem that "fake news" have become the rule, and "news" the exception. And, more than ever, the tendency to ideologize the information, in which the truth of one camp is a lie for the opposite camp, damages increasingly many ligaments which hold the social tissue and transform us, from a free, lively, democratic society, into a collection of dying tribes, each with their own values, politicians, news and, especially, walls that the others' ideas cannot pass. The pandemic of fake news has dire consequences over the trust nations have in systems of governance, in the ability of governors to do their job, in the capacity of professional groups to fulfill their missions, and even over the trust people have in their own kind. I am not the supporter of lamentations, nor of

pleas for resignation. On the contrary, I believe that there is a need for quality press, a need for solid content, for verified information, for serious analyses. Contrary to common perception, today there is more information being consumed than in the past. Even if we are in the era of short and judgmental articles, the multitude of devices and sources of transmission, as well as free access, have exponentially increased the number of citizens who seek and receive information. Implicitly, in this ecosystem that is so diverse, the share of quality information consumers is growing larger. What matters is for the suppliers to emerge once again. However, all of these need a way of accountability on behalf of journalist, contributors of any kind who publish information, no matter the format (written, video, audio). According to a Pew Research survey from last year, the most respected institution of measuring public opinion in the USA, journalists, were not perceived by the American public opinion as the main culprits for the spread of fake news; instead, the population, precisely the consumers of information, believe that the main responsibility for reducing the quantity of fabricated news and information rests with journalists and press institutions.

August 2020

In Search of Those Accountable for The COVID 19 Crisis

IULIA MOTOC

During the COVID-19 crisis, in the public action from democratic countries I could perceive the mistrust between departments, the terror of responsibilities, the dilution of decisions. I could perceive it when it comes to the management of tests, masks, limitations, the relationship between medical research and medical care, an exceptional summary of all faults, but also strong points of the democratic system. With all of its flaws, the democratic state cannot be hold accountable for this crisis.

In search of who is internationally responsible for the crisis, some researchers have claimed the potential accountability of China when it comes to COVID-19, by breaking international health regulations, especially by breaking the obligations of notification and information exchange. If China would have respected those obligations, then perhaps now there would have been less cases of COVID-19, researches say. However, all these researches hold one thing in common: they cannot identify a legal basis so that an international instance or court would eventually prosecute China for these infringements. Great scientists have indicated the mechanism of solving litigations from the article 56 of the W.H.O., yet this mechanism stipulates arbitrage only if China consents, which is, needless to say, very unlikely. In the specialized literature there has been indicated

an overlooked legal basis: Article 75 from the Constitution of the W.H.O. Article 75 states: "Any question or dispute referring to the interpretation or the enforcement of the present Constitution, which is not resolved by negotiation or by the General Assembly, is sent to the International Court of Justice...". However, if the Court interprets article 75 in the same manner it has interpreted article 22 from C.E.R.D (Ukraine against Russia), then a state would only have to satisfy the condition of negotiation in order to take China to the Court. The more difficult question is the following: how can a state frame its complaint regarding the behavior of China as one concerning the interpretation or enforcement of the W.H.O. Constitution? The W.H.O. Constitution does not seem to include underlying duties of international law regarding health. It is rather the case that the organization, as its name suggests too, is concerned foremost with establishing a constitutional frame, in charge of matters such as membership status and the institutional structure.

August 2020

Coronavirus, Conspiracies and the Anti-Western Propaganda

DAN SULTĂNESCU

Together with my colleagues I have made a great effort in these months in order to collect data (during the urgency state, as well as in the state of alert afterwards), using models tested in the West, in order to verify several behavioral patterns and relationships.

First of all, the level of concern – which followed a clear curve, similar with the number of infections (with a peak towards the end of March, and with a subsequent decline... then, recently, with a new increase). Therefore, nothing spectacular here. Concern always depended on the level of education (the most educated ones have always been more worried), but also on age (the elder were more concerned). When the state of urgency had been abandoned, concern became even political (the supporters of the government have remained more concerned, while the opponents of the government have assumed the political discourse of the leftists leaders and have become more relaxed).

Compared to other European states, the level of worry and concern fits into a reasonable dynamic – bigger concern than in the Northern countries or in Germany (which always had a calm mass, even in great moments of concerns), yet somewhat lesser than in the countries more damaged than Romania (such as Italy, Spain, or Great Britain).

The coronavirus effect on the Romanians' perception, however, has diversified after the peak moment at the end of March. Soon, narratives were no longer one-sided, and the diversification of explanations – on a global scale, not just in Romania – has led to the emergence of an openness towards unofficial approaches and explanations. Misinformation, rumors, conspiracy narratives have spread. Major geopolitical players have become part of spreading or even creating such narratives. We have ended sharing the concern that such a widespread of conspiracy beliefs may have a negative medical effect, at a time in which observing medical recommendations for limiting the spread of the virus was and is vital. Romania is a ground on which conspiracy beliefs may have a double effect – not only do they subvert the trust of the public towards the authorities in the country, complicating medical efforts of limiting the spread of the virus, yet also has an effect on subverting the credibility of the Western project to which Romania also belongs. The effect is already measured in a dramatic drop, over the past few months, of Romanians' trust in the E.U., N.A.T.O., the U.S.A., or in the democratic model. The effect of conspiracy messages does not necessarily lead to the increase of trust in Russia or China (despite of this happening in countries such as Italy, according to recent European barometers), yet may lead, at first instance, to the spread of the impression that Romania is on its own and is not sheltered by the Western family.

August 2020

The Crisis Has Not Started Yet

LIVIU VOINEA

The crisis that is soon to come is not being caused by the deregulation of the financial sector, as in the case of the crisis from 2008-2009. The crisis generated by the pandemic is the result of decades of ignoring climate changes, ecologically unsustainable growth, and interactions between humans and their environments. There were telling signs: natural disasters have multiplied, yet their impact had remained local or regional; global warming, plain to the naked eye, could not stop the rush for profits; yet the coronavirus set in front of us all a merciless mirror. Not just any economic growth is good when it remains seized by the few privileged, while the precariat—the employees who work and live in precarious conditions—lives humped by the concern for today and without knowing what tomorrow might bring. The stagnation in the population incomes has been compensated, for the last three decades, by the increase in debt. In order to keep up with the prices and the basic necessities, people have taken on debt beyond their abilities. As long as the mechanism kept moving, a debt rolled into another debt. However, the pandemic has shown that the dream of economic growth is not the same for everyone. We are not all equal in front of the disease, just like we have never been even in the good times; of course, no one says that we should be equal, yet we should an equality of chances. The pandemic demonstrates the equality of chances is pure fiction, even in the developed economies. Even worse, the pandemic will pass, yet inequalities are here not just to stay, but to grow even bigger.

Working from home is not for everyone, someone has to produce the food, and someone else has to deliver it. Home may be a mansion or a luxury apartment for the 1% of the world population, and squeezed

slums, insanitary blocks, or overlaid containers for the majority of the destitute and the needy. The disease spreads faster in such conditions. Access to health is not equal: some afford private clinics, others, very many, do not afford even a base insurance. Access to education is not equal: on-line education is a luxury for those who do not have access to electricity or Internet, nor money to buy tablets or computers. The generation that does not have today access to education and health will live tomorrow even worse than the current generation, and frustrations generated by flagrant inequalities will intensify. In the past, commercial banks, with help from the state in times of crisis, compensated the lack of income with the availability of the consumer credit. An expensive solution, meant not for development, but for survival. This time however the fragility of the financial system, banking and not only, is greater than before, and the interest for new loans is limited by the increasing risk associated with credits already granted, as well as the alternative of easy profit derived from financing increasing public debt.

In conventional crises, the intervention of governments and central banks for restoring the economy was sufficient. Time will show that in this crisis, which has not even started yet, there is a need for more than cyclic, punctual interventions. There is a need for depth, structural reforms in order to increase access to education and health, and the benefits of market economy for the great mass of the precariat. Indeed, this is a crisis like never seen before. In the absence of major changes when it comes to the struggle against the effects of climate changes and the balancing of the structure of income distribution, this crisis risks turning into a crisis like all of those that will arrive from now on. Larger, longer, and more severe than the ones before.

September 2020

Latin Again, Damn It!

IOAN-AUREL POP

Now, when some regard Latin as worthy of being thrown to the "trashcan of history", the reflections below cannot be devoid of interest. Knowledge of classical languages is extremely important, as a large part of our current linguistic heritage is derived from them, even when the language we speak does not have direct roots in any of these languages. For example, the scientific language of many disciplines originates, in most European languages, from Greek and Latin. Let's leave aside the fact that current Greek descends straight from ancient Greek, while current Romance languages are the daughters of Caesar's and Cicero's Latin. It does not mean at all that a Greek of the present day may understand, without specialized studies, the texts of Plato and Aristotle, or that an Italian reads Virgil in the original language. Same happens to a Bulgarian who would want to comprehend the Church Slavonic: they cannot, as they need training in order to reach the substance of those old texts. Languages changes alongside peoples. For each "dead" language in which preserved literary and scientific works have been written, efforts are needed in order to understand the messages transmitted by these works. Latin has transmitted to us, Romanians, not only the scientific language of many forms of systemic knowledge, but also the Romanian language itself. Moreso, many of us scatter in our contemporary

Romanian words and phrases taken directly from Latin. It happens especially in the academic and university world, in the fields of law, medicine and pharmacy, engineering, etc. Some Romanians casually practice the same thing, except by ear. There are many compatriots who think that we, if we are the "descendants of the Roman" and if we speak a neo-Latin language, know Latin by birth, effortless. (...) Errors derive especially from the desire to show off, from the phenomenon called hyper-urbanism, from small lapses of memory, yet most often they derive from illiteracy. We no longer have the patience, desire, and motivation to study hard, as we begin to think oftentimes that notable results may be achieved without work, without the accumulation of knowledge, and without practicing individual memory. (...)

The way one speaks and writes may seem to some irrelevant for human personality, yet it remains an unmatched calling card. In this sense, Romans too had a saying: *Errare humanum est*, meaning: "to err is human". And we enjoy very much this saying, as it excuses many of the bad deeds we commit, oftentimes willingly. However, we intentionally forget the follow-up of this dictum: *sed perseverare diabolicum* ("but to persist (in error) is diabolical"), which, once acknowledged, could rectify us once more towards the path of study, that is work, as *labor omnia vincit improbus* ("steady work conquers all").

September 2020

The Islam Inside Islam

CĂTĂLIN RAIU

One of the main themes of debates in the organizations and international forums dedicated to religious freedom is represented by the phenomenon Google Islam, born on one hand out of the easy access to low quality information on the Internet, on the other hand because of the lack of Muslim theological references authoritative on an international level. If a young Westerner with secular education wishes to inform himself regarding Christianity, he can easily find even on the Internet a decent literature, ordered and with traceable theological authority, not the same thing happens when it comes to the Islamic religion, where the Internet displays you mainly blogs, unordered sites where there can be easily inserted messages that are not endorsed by any particular theological authority and which may also contain extremist elements. Thus, Google Islam is defined as superficial knowledge of the Islamic religion by way of sites without consensus-based theological content and which also invite to extremist social, political, and civic discourses.

If in the 1990s or 2000s the sociology of religion was fascinated by the layout and dynamics of the New Religious Movements as organizations recently grafted onto different religious fields that were contextualized rather nationally, today there is a different paradigm. Global religious networks which exceed national barriers are more and more visible, such as the case of the Pentecostal, but also that of Islam. More than ever, Islam is denationalized: even Turkey ceased being a bridge between Europe and Asia, now rather taking on the role of a protector, religious one too, of the former Ottoman spaces.

Until two decades ago, religion was not part of diplomatic concerns, and much less it was seen as an useful mean of promoting democracy. The democratization of Muslim countries was awaited or foreseen together with an accelerated secularization, according to the pattern of Western liberalism. In 2007, the prime minister Tony Blair described Islamic extremism, in primitive and superficial terms, as a religion that has partly degenerated into ideology. Then emerged and was spread the concept of political Islam. For secular diplomats, the religious element was at most a marginal cultural factor, but not an object of study *per se*. On the other hand, in the political culture of the West, the methodological disregard towards the religious element was a natural attitude of respect towards any element which is specific to the intimate, private sphere of human consciousness. What changed in the strategic thinking of democratic countries was the leveling of these two opposite attitudes: on one hand, religion is no longer a museum piece, but a living social tissue that generates even public policies, yet, on the other hand, the diplomatic effort to know and debate religion does not automatically imply an intrusion of the religious intimacy, but a democratic effort of promoting religious freedom.

The consequence in the area of intern and foreign policy was the consolidation of the administrative and diplomatic capacity of the West to react to extremist drifts with the message, the principles and the standards of promoting religious freedom. Today, diplomacy needs to discover the Islam inside Islam, just like governments have to justify, beyond theatrical appearances or pro-/anti-clerical tastes, religious freedom under the guise of each religious manifestation.

September 2020

What Unites Us? What Divides Us? What Do We Have to Set Right?

REMUS PRICOPIE

History has taught us that a country, be it small or large, may fall when its citizens are no longer capable of being discerning for themselves. This is the essence of civilization, of progress, of development. For this reason there are standards that, so to say, we begin to sense right from the first day of our lives and continue to face them, trying to adapt to these social requirements, until a ripe old age. For example, vaccination, done for the first time at the maternity hospital, immediately upon birth, and continued in the first years of life, is not only an individual standard, but also society-wide, having impact on the broader health level of the population. Likewise, pension is a standard which, on one hand, has its roots in the fundamental human rights, and, on the other hand, pertains to the respect of the younger generations towards their parents and grandparents. Any infection of the two systems given as examples could lead to a major imbalance of society, but also of the individuals. A disease – tuberculosis, poliomyelitis, varicella, hepatitis B, etc. –, in the absence of a public prevention policy by way of vaccination, can not only bring to an end the life of a human, but also, in the same time, crush the force of a nation. Just like the alteration of a sustainable pension system, based on economic principles, through the introduction of tricks such as “special pensions”, from which the “elected” benefit, jeopardizes the safety of millions of citizens who cannot afford a decent living.

Social, economic, and political malformations, of the kinds featured above, in the two examples, may have hundreds or thousands of causes. They exist independently of us as individuals, since lust for

power, aggrandizement, pride, arrogance, hypocrisy, deceit, thievery, stupidity, etc. are parts of the DNA of each society – and we know these things at least since the times of Aristotle. Therefore, the issue is not suppressing these “harmful social genes”, but the control of their effects, by standards which are democratically established, so that the manifestation of these social-genetic anomalies may not affect – or affect as little as possible – the general course of a nation.

This is why we need standards and social stringency, this is why we need free press and critical thinking, this is why we need to criticize publicly even a friend or a person who we appreciate, yet who, in a certain moment, falls prey to “easy choices”, which are not always the correct choices. This is why we need to learn how to debate with anyone on any topic, but without forgetting what respect means and without burning the bridges of potential collaboration. This is why we need to abandon the comfort of our social, political, economic “bubble”, which deeply affects our level of objectivity and puts us into the situation of practicing “double measures”, that is pointing only towards the enemy (the other “bubble”), without applying the same standards inside our own group. This is why we need to be ready for ourselves to be, in turn, the subject of critical analyses by the ones around us and learn to admit that we have been mistaken, no matter how hard it can be, when we have done a mistake.

Without this kind of critical analysis, without asking ourselves each day: “What unites us?”, “What divides us?”, “What do we have to set right?”, we will not manage to learn the substance of today’s and tomorrow’s challenges and be able to give a coherent shape to the future.

October 2020

Tomorrow Starts Today

REMUS PRICOPIE

This is the lesson that we ignore so many times and, when we handle things this way, we will pay the price of incomplete judgment.

The doctors of tomorrow are today students in Romanian universities of medicine. Yet, unfortunately, today we also water the roots of their future professional dissatisfactions. The incapacity of authorities to rebuild the public health system, so as to bring it closer to the suffering of all those who are ill, urges many of those who will become young medics tomorrow to decide in favor of practicing their chosen profession in other Western countries. Their departure – and the departure of all other specialists from other fields, who mainly migrate towards West European countries – is a loss for the entire nation, almost impossible to heal, and an open wound in the parents' soul, whose children live far from home.

Today's economy – or, better said, the lack thereof – is sealed also today, due to the incapacity of several consecutive governments to lend a sense of development to a country whose potential of economic growth remains severely under-used. Others – in this case, the researchers from Harvard University – speak about us as being the 25th most complex economy of the world. Despite this, it is not clear for us if that is the way things are. And, as we do not even ask / listen to the ones who could shed light on this topic, it would seem we want to stay unclear. In the meantime, until it becomes clear to us where are we heading, we are selling everything on peanuts. What we aren't selling (including here also the woodlands) is being stolen, with the approval – or irresponsibility – of the "watchmen".

The clean air, which should fill the cities and localities where we live, is polluted today as well, and the lack of environmental education and sustainable policies make the future look... clogged. It does not disturb us that we are not using the European funds for cleaning/greening and that we have the biggest number of unauthorized landfills in the European Union. The fine will be paid tomorrow, when the people of the day will no longer be in governance.

Agriculture is also in a... drought. Drought of smart-headed policies, for which we do not receive money from Bruxelles. The ones who should be in charge of public policy proposals, in the interest of farmers and of the country (national agencies, research institutes, specialized universities, and so on), are doing politics – which would not be bad, if those "politics" were of good quality and within the frame of legality. It seems that electoral opportunism, laced with illegitimate benefits, is more fruitful than agricultural campaigns of old. Conclusion: tomorrow it is also going to be drought, and still apples will be bought by us from Poland.

Also, school is shaken, mainly, by the ones who have not really understood its purpose, yet are ruling us today at the expense of tomorrow. The issue with the school (of today) is simple: it is (poorly) shaped by people without much education, while the ones who know what should be done do not have a party membership card. Until we also find here a solution, we are changing the minister of education two times per year, in order to "wash" the image of the Government.

October 2020

Parliamentary Elections and the Development of Romania

REMUS IOAN ȘTEFUREAC

It is clear that center-right parties which belong to PPE (I am referring here to PNL, PMP and UDMR), respectively to the Renew Europe group (I am referring here to USR and PLUS), are gaining parliamentary majority. If these parties form or support from the Parliament the next Government, then Romania will have a convenient parliamentary majority of over 60-65%, capable of supporting not only complex administrative measures, but also the vital, long-awaited constitutional reform. I mean vital because, from a certain point, the development of Romania is no longer possible without structural changes regarding the way in which the country is organized from an administrative-territorial point of view, regarding the relationship between fundamental institutions and the type of republic in which we want to live, the relationship between rights and obligations, the political stability presently voided by the distinct duration of presidential and parliamentary mandates.

Key policies of Romania's development must be focused on: 1. Generous funding of education, in order to broadly cover all physical infrastructure deficiencies (small, unsanitary schools, with many children, or isolated schools lacking teachers, or with teachers who are merely "decorative"), extended after-school type educational programs spread across the whole country, better prepared teachers, tying to the digital revolution, etc.;

2. Massive modernization of transport and energy (electricity, gas, renewable sources) infrastructure; 3. Improvement of the health system when it comes to infrastructure (modern hospitals, better spread of modernized clinics amongst smaller towns and larger rural areas); 4. Revolutionary policies for protecting the environment, with harsh penalties for polluters and those who massively contribute to the deforestation of woodlands, but also by encouraging recycling in each village of the country; 5. Fiscal policies optimized for encouraging Romanian entrepreneurs in order to generate creativity, local capital and stable workplaces.

All these things are possible if, after the parliamentary elections, Romania will have a stable government, a solid parliamentary majority and consistency between the centers of executive power (Government – President), respectively between the parties which make up the majority, as well as the clear perspective that, in the following cycle which shall begin in 2024, we will have president-government-parliamentary majority of the same political color. And this last goal is possible as well. If we manage to change the Constitution by reverting to the 4-year mandate for the president, then in 2024 a rare window of opportunity will emerge, as parliamentary and presidential elections naturally overlap once more, helping us to return on the mid- and long- term to stable 4-year cycles of governance.

November 2020

Too Big Words for Too Small Characters

GEORGE CRISTIAN MAIOR

At one point, I was writing on how much the political parlance has declined through the tiresome usage of certain strong concepts, impressive words – such as nationalism, national interest, sovereignty and, of course, patriotism –, without them being at least explained, but merely spouted, on the level of an often rudimentary political and intellectual discourse. A discourse that hopes rather to compensate, with moral superiority, a chronic inability of critically understanding reality and, of course, an impotence for turning it into something better for the individual and for society (which should be the essence of politics, but also of civic action). But also a cynical method of stirring anyhow emotions that could produce a kind of free political capital; especially in periods of crisis, but not only, a strategy for sidelining responsibilities and outright rejecting arguments that are rooted in reason, knowledge, and some understanding of the course of history. I am “patriotic”, therefore I am good anyway and I do only good, I am “nationalist”, therefore I love my people and my ethnicity and I can say and do whatever I want, I am the exponent of national interest, therefore only my politics and my idea matter ... I am “sovereignist”, therefore only I may know what is truly of use in my home, in my backyard, in the country, even if my allied friends tell me that I may be wrong, or that maybe I should think it through a little... Everything is a matter of self-defining: patriotic, nationalist, etc., without the dignity of receiving these beautiful categorizations from someone else, perhaps with arguments.

First of all, defining yourself loudly as patriotic or nationalist or sole promoter of national interest, beyond the ridiculous appearance of the gesture, should naturally give birth to suspicions. Perhaps on a psychological and ethical level, if not also legally. In the attempt of taking on “patriotism” so as to conceal some earlier or more recent fault amongst “patriotic activities”, perhaps small conjectural betrayals, some “anti-national” oversight within the complexity of political decisions, some more or less significant deviation from the “national interest”. And then, if someone asked you if you are patriotic, if you feel committed to repeat obstinately the same thing, as sole political platform? And if you were not questioned, why do you feel obliged to repeatedly emphasize it?

To be patriotic means to love your country, its history, its culture and civilization, yet in a political sense (but not only, also intellectually), it implies facts and actions which better the country, bring safety and prosperity, assert its presence in the European and international society. And in order to improve it, the patriot is the first who is obliged to uncover its vulnerabilities, its weaknesses, its flaws, undauntedly speak about them and, of course, take lucid action in order to overcome them. Timothy Snyder, historian at Yale and well-versed in Central European culture, aptly noted this: “A patriot [...] wants the nation to live up to its ideals, which means asking us to be our best selves. A patriot must be concerned with the real world, which is the only place where his country can be loved and sustained. A patriot has universal values, standards by which he judges his nation, always wishing it well—and wishing that it would do better.”

November 2020

The Hostile Media Effect

TUDOR VLAD

The public disbelief in mass-media has been proven through numerous researches, there being even identified a “hostile media effect”. One of the earliest experiments that have brought this phenomenon to the researchers’ attention took place at Stanford University in the 1980’s. The same images of the (then) recent massacre of Palestinian refugees by Lebanese Christian militia, aided by the Israeli army, were projected to a group of pro-Palestine students and to a group of students with pro-Israel views. The analysis of surveys completed upon viewing indicated that both groups believed that the footage was not at all objective, but clearly biased towards the other side.

Experts from the Madison-Wisconsin University have continued this type of empirical research across several decades. In one of the experiments, they have created two groups of similar individuals (similar regarding demographics, including education) and were given the same text to read, presented as newspaper article to the first group and as the seminar paper of a student to the other group. Those who believed the text is a press product expressed serious doubts regarding the objectivity and the accuracy of given information, while those who had the conviction that it is the work of a student have declared that reading it satisfied them from the point of view of neutrality and informational value.

This reaction of disbelief on part of the public towards the press in the United States is not a

singular one. The hostile media phenomenon was also proven in Western Europe and South Korea, in the past two decades. Its existence has been explained especially with psychological arguments: there’s been talk of selective perception and the ways through which memory retains—in certain circumstances—particularly the negative elements. Its increased intensity in recent years and its expansion towards other countries with solid democracies make me wonder if perhaps the debate around the mechanisms which trigger that effect should refer rather to social and political facts.

The dramatic polarization of society—whether of the ideological, ethnic, economical, or religious type—leaves its mark also on mass-media. In the attempt of maintaining or boosting their audience, press institutions identify debate themes and approaches that respond to the expectations and visions, not at all neutral, of readers/spectators. To be objective, to be in the middle no longer seems an economically rewarding endeavor. When the public seeks you merely to find in your informative materials the confirmation of their own political or social convictions, your autonomy is limited. It is hard to tell if mass-media merely reflects the extreme partisanship originating from political discourse or is merely a factor that anticipates and stimulates it. What is certain is that it represents a large part of the process, and the consequences are not reassuring.

December 2020

The Year of Our Insecurity

NICULAE IANCU

Communities are divided down identity lines, whether they are national, professional or generational. Some become more important than others, creating entropic thrust and mood parameters expressed in terms of urgency. Under the pressure of social perceptions, systemic imbalances are being produced, disbelief sets in and uncertainties are enhanced. Restoring balance, meaning the retrieval of lost normality, implies legitimizing use of *force majeure* measures. The flaw of such a measure lies hidden in the premise of losing control of the urgency measures or their proportionality taking into account the presumed danger and, eventually, deepening the crisis instead of wiping it.

Things are becoming more and more complicated as crisis situations multiply and overlap. And the year 2020 is the year of the most unfortunate overlapping of crises from the existence of the current generation.

The pandemic crisis, emerged seemingly out of nowhere at the turn of the new year, swiped the whole globe from East to West and from North to South. The number of infections with the SARS-CoV-2 virus has presently exceeded 60 million cases, with bleak negative records in Europe and the United States of America. The first wave of the pandemic has thrown the international system into chaos. The states' reaction in face of the sanitary scourge has been more than

surprising. Governments have called for geographic and economical isolation. Physical and trade barriers have been drawn. Tariffs were imposed and exports were blocked right in the heart of Europe, where the space of political, economical, and social community seemed safe from harm. Competition for acquiring critical medical and sanitary equipments has skyrocketed, and former allies have turned overnight into transaction agents of mercantile interests enhanced by survival instincts. Against the background of lack of loyalty in exchanging information and of the flaws of the performed solutions, doubt has been instilled at the highest levels of decision. It sufficed for nationalism, protectionism and self-sufficiency to turn into defining principles of government behavior on an international scale, particularly there where international organizations have been ignored or, at best, kept on the fringe. In key moments, the red lines of dialogue and international cooperation have been crossed, as it happened with the World Health Organization, fallen into the disgrace of the Washington Administration. At the height of the "sanitary war", as president Macron worded it, Italy remained alone in the middle of the battle with the unseen enemy, despite its appeal for solidarity, also transmitted formally, via the Union Mechanism of Civil Protection of the E.U. And the unfortunate examples may continue with Spain, Belgium and other states that were hit hard by the pandemic.

After the first shock passed, things went slowly back to apparent normal.

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The expressed opinions belong to the author and do not reflect the official position of any institution.



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"The Meaning of Sculpture", Kunsthalle Bega, Timișoara, 2020, exhibition view
(source: Facebook Kunsthalle Bega)



2020 in review

debates excerpts from articles

A possible answer may derive from the ABC of the philosophy of living in common, as worded by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who noted, in 1762, that the absolute freedom of the individual is a source of social conflicts, that the individual needs to give up a part of their freedom for the sake of the social good, and that the one who rules should ensure collective safety, thus emerging the famous "contract social".

(Valentin Rupa)



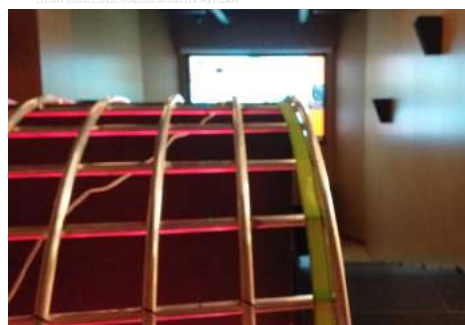
"The Meaning of Sculpture", Kunsthalle Bega, Timișoara, 2020, exhibition view
(source: Facebook Kunsthalle Bega)

2020 debates

4 | www.revistacultura.ro

teme în dezbatere

CULTURA | 5

Mărio (Museum de Artă Recentă),
11.1.2020, Galeria de Artă Contemporană (GAC) din Iași, Iași

Artistul în România: condiția, statutul și ecosistemul

Un grup de lucru afiliat proiectului „Cultura Alternativă” a realizat o propunere de politici publice care vizează rezolvarea unor dificultăți punctuale (juridice, sociale, administrative) sau de „jareșă” existente în domeniul artistic. Documentul cuprinde atât o cartă de căi și soluții cheie, la nivel legislativ și administrativ, care, aplicate, ar putea decongestiona multiple zone financiare responsabile de sustenabilitatea sectorului cultural estetic.

14 | www.revistacultura.ro

teme în dezbatere

CULTURA | 15

Mărio (Museum de Artă Recentă),
11.1.2020, Galeria de Artă Contemporană (GAC) din Iași, Iași

„Casă” sau „Acasă” Evoluții ale spațiului domestic

CARMEN CORBU

Jumătate din populația globului se află în izolare acasă. Pentru o mare parte a acestei populații, spațiul domestic a devenit și spațiu de lucru. Mai mult, gospodăriile care externalizaseră multe dintre funcțiile unei locuințe se află în situația de a le reinternaliza pe cele vechi, dar și de a asimila unele noi: birou, sală de petrecere, sală de cursuri, sală de sport, bucătărie, spațiu de îngrijire medicală.

12 | www.revistacultura.ro

teme în dezbatere

CULTURA | 13

Mărio (Museum de Artă Recentă),
11.1.2020, Galeria de Artă Contemporană (GAC) din Iași, Iași

Vârste și generații Între responsabilitate și conflict

NICU LIE

Generație e un termen-umbrelă introdus, relativ recent, de vârstă postmodernă a științelor sociale. Chiar dacă obiectivul, la început, nu a fost acela de a descrie conflictul, ci relațiile intergeneraționale, viziunea și teoriile generaționaliste au introdus ca element de studiu alteritatea grupelor de vârstă ca fiind opuse unei continuități omogene sub forma unui continuum social.

42 | www.revistacultura.ro

teme în dezbatere

CULTURA | 43

Mărio (Museum de Artă Recentă),
11.1.2020, Galeria de Artă Contemporană (GAC) din Iași, Iași

Dincolo de vâlul de neliniște

Pandemia
și standardul
de viață.
Politici de
protecție
socială

Raport elaborat
de un grup de cercetători
din cadrul ICCV

26 | www.revistacultura.ro

teme în dezbatere

CULTURA | 27

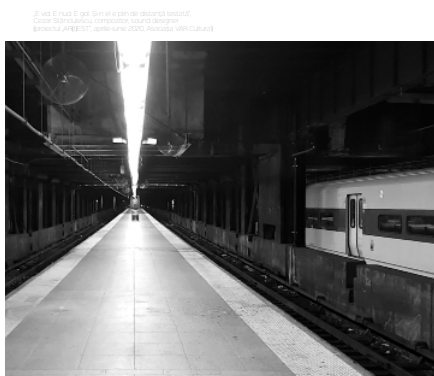
Mărio (Museum de Artă Recentă),
11.1.2020, Galeria de Artă Contemporană (GAC) din Iași, Iași

Sănătatea, între metafizică și contractualism Testul pandemiei

În trileterea medic-pacient-sistem de sănătate s-au acumulat disfuncții latente: unele sunt vechi de decenii, altele sunt produsul unor reforme superficiale și inconsistente. Fiecare pacient poate numi 20 de lucruri care nu-i plac în spitalele românești. Fiecare medic poate enumera zeci de nemulțumiri față de mediul în care lucrează.

[NICU LIE]

2 www.revistacultura.ro teme în dezbateră



„Pe unde e rău? E rău. Și nu e rău decât din cauza răului.”
Căminul bătrânului, compoziție de artă digitală
[Proiectul „JANES”], aprilie-iunie 2020, Arad, România (www.cultura.ro)

CULTURA 41

Despre spectacol în anul distanțării: îngrijorări, replieri, inovații

La nivel cultural macro, pandemia poate fi catalogată ca o perioadă de experiment global, pe parcursul căruia managerii, producătorii, artiștii și distribuitorii au fost obligați să găsească formule inedite, fără precedent în istoria sectorului cultural, ca formă și amplasare.

(Cornel Tănas Lungă)

38 www.revistacultura.ro teme în dezbateră

Ion Bărbulescu, macheta „Monumentului Măi Lăsat” (ianuarie 2017)



Cel aproximativ 600 de ani de sclavie a romilor sunt în pericol să fie uitați pentru că nu vorbim suficient de mult în spațiul public despre acea perioadă a istoriei noastre, iar în școli, mai deloc. Excepționalismul românesc, cu care ne-am obișnuit în istoria prezentă la nivelul învățământului obligatoriu, se pare că nu lasă loc așteptărilor mai puțin iludabile din trecutul nostru.

(Văla Răduț)

22 www.revistacultura.ro teme în dezbateră



„Căminul bătrânului”, compoziție de artă digitală (ianuarie 2021)

CULTURA 23

Individual versus colectiv Pandemia ca turnesol pentru conflicte

O situație precum această pandemie ne arată că nu doar individul este afectat de progresele științei, ci întreaga colectivitate poate deveni victimă. O urmare, de fapt, a lipsei de consens.

(Valentin Răduț)

18 www.revistacultura.ro teme în dezbateră

Aina Todor & Georgiana Văduva, making of Plastic. Memory, affect and map
[Proiectul Plastic, 2020]



Valorile vieții și comunitatea responsabilă
Disoluții culturale în România milenului 3

Totul pare blocat între practica juridică defectuoasă, pedepsele necalibrate, prea puținele inițiative guvernamentale și o complicitate de fundal a multor segmente societale.

(Cornel Tănas Lungă)

28 www.revistacultura.ro teme în dezbateră



„JANES” de Căminul Bătrânului (ianuarie 2021) [Proiectul „JANES”], aprilie-iunie 2020, Arad, România (www.cultura.ro)

CULTURA 29

Șansele culturii independente Relevanța, coerența și mecanismul finanțărilor

Concursul de alegere la ghilera cu doarele ca ghid aline de copii serar rămâne și în 2020 paradigma culturală înșușă de Ministerul Culturii, în timp ce întreaga societate face pași mari în digitalizare.

(Cornel Tănas Lungă)

30 www.revistacultura.ro teme în dezbateră

„Monumentul Măi Lăsat” (ianuarie 2017)



Soft power România Eternul și fascinantul „dosar în curs”

Din 2001 și până astăzi, în spațiul românesc se vorbește sistematic despre necesitatea unui brand de țară, însă toate încercările au eșuat lamentabil. Încurajarea proiectelor autohtone, a excelenței în cercetare și știință, a promovării produselor locale și a micilor ferme, exploatarea sustenabilă a turismului (ecoturismul) și a mediului fac mai degrabă parte din strategii izolate de absorbție a fondurilor europene, decât dintr-o strategie de dezvoltare și promovare.

(Cornel Tănas Lungă)

January 2020

The Artist in Romania: their condition, status, and ecosystem

The specificity of artistic creation and work and the extremely wide diversity of creative manifestations make it difficult for the state to establish a legal connection with the individual artist, creator, author.

Andreea Grecu, the initiator of the debate:

The legislating state's institutions may decide rights, incentives, and obligations for an individual only if the individual has a fundamental right (Constitution) or specifically belongs to a certain professional or social category.

Moreso, the typology of contractual relationships with an artist is different from all the other kinds of work performed on a social level. In this context, we find it necessary (1) to intermediate this state-artist relationship through specialized employers or professional associations and creative unions, thus proposing legislative regulations on a systemic level

towards the democratization of the access to rights and incentives that are legally established for artists, creators, authors, and (2) a certain rigor and precision in solving the deeper issues peculiar to each creative field. The problem pertains to: the lack of a definition of the artist, creator, author; the lack of a regulation that is generally applicable to the founding and the activity of creative unions, as creator organizations, as professional associations, as representative and public service organizations; the lack of awareness of the rights and obligations artists and cultural workers have; the scarcity of institutions or organizations specialized in consultancy on issues peculiar to the extended cultural sector.

The situation leads to an uneven legislative framework concerning a socio-professional recognition of the artist, creator, author, through their rights and incentives granted and guaranteed, inclusively through the creator organizations and collective management organisms.

Anca Constantin van der Zee, NGO activist:



„In Romania, across the past 30 years, many important steps have been taken in regulating and sustaining the activities and rights of artists, yet they were done sequentially, most often thanks to the initiatives of more active artistic guilds, who had access to the leverage necessary for such interventions, their actions being – most often – punctual and only managing to modify or complete previously formulated laws. In the absence of a general analysis, these punctual changes have led, naturally, to the onset of limitations or contradictions, but also creating social imbalances which, lately, have been turning more and more pressing.”

February 2020

House or Home? Developments of the Domestic Space

According to studies by Eurostat, Romania records the highest rate of living in overcrowded conditions. One of the fundamental aspects taken into consideration while assessing the quality of housing is the availability of sufficient space, and the overcrowding rate describes living in overpopulated houses, defined by the number of rooms a household contains, by the size of the household, as well as the ages and the family situation of their members.

Carmen Corbu, the initiator of the debate:

Half of the globe's population is isolated at home. For a large part of this population, domestic space has also turned into a workspace. Furthermore,

households which externalized many of the functions of a living space are now in the situation of internalizing again the old ones, but also assimilating new ones: office, meeting room, classroom, gym, kitchen, healthcare space.

A decent place at an accessible place and in a safe environment. It is a sentence with the value of prime necessity and is even considered a human right. Sure, there is also a legal normative to describe it. For instance, in Romania, a one-room apartment should have an usable area of 37 sqm. Does it have? On the real estate sites there are two-room apartments which barely qualify here, just as there are one-room apartments with up to half of its surface. We especially mean apartments that were build before 1989.

Arpad Zach, architect:



„The issue at hand here is: what do we relate to, make comparison with. Let's not forget that we are a rural civilization, that we have a rural culture. Not in a pejorative sense, just in the sense that it is different from the urban one. With the exception of Transylvania (Ardeal), Romanian cities have a prevailing rural component. Which we should not be ashamed of. Bucharest was a cluster of villages, hence why it was called Bucureștii (Bucharests). And, if you are paying attention, you can still see the hallmarks of this agglutination. Villages had certain purposes, the way in which households were placed had a function. It means that we have a different manner of living. And we should embrace it. Because there is no better or worse way.”

March 2020

Ages and Generations. Between Responsibility and Conflict

The lack of intergenerational communication causes social isolation, asymmetries in assuming rights and obligations, intergenerational injustice, even the massive loss of knowledge and social capital.

Nicu Ilie, the initiator of the debate:

Generation is an umbrella term, relatively recently introduced by the postmodern age of social sciences. Even if the initial objective was not that of describing conflict, but intergenerational relationships, generational vision and theories have introduced as a study element the alterity of age groups as

Roxana Bratu and Ada Cornea (INSCOP Research):

The elder are inclined to support the targeting of budgetary efforts more towards covering welfare expenses than towards investments. Since they have lived most of their adult life in the Communist period and have passed through the economic turbulences of the 90s, it is only natural for them to be more concerned with issues pertaining to the daily living and orienting public resources in this direction. At the opposite pole, the new generations, economically active, tend to

being opposed to a homogeneous continuity, in the guise of a social continuum. The mere definition of generations as collective characters (with a spiritual life, a “psyche” of their own) raises the twofold issue of communication/conflict, and, in return, the social dynamic – with fracture lines: aesthetic, ethic, ethological, and customary, but also economic – demanded an expansion of studies on generations. Broadly speaking, youngsters interact with other youngsters, adults with adults, the elder with the elder, each having their own circles, channels, and media instruments. However, intergenerational communication is strictly necessary to a society, so that it does not lose its coherence and that it may develop common projects.

have higher expectations regarding the improvement of infrastructure and of the quality of public services (as part of the aspirations influenced by the Western model), goals which are conditioned, among other things, by the increase in investments, both public and private. Therefore, we can observe that there are variations in the opinions regarding the way in which authorities should deal with the economic effects of the coronavirus epidemic. However, the observed variations do not suggest an insurmountable generational gap.

Aurelian Giugă, researcher



The demographic dynamic plays a key role in global geopolitics, regional and continental demographic variations influencing significantly the political and economic developments from our century. What is Romania doing in this context? The fertility rate has been dropping constantly (2,87 children/woman in 1970, 1,34 in 2000). Emigration is active, especially in the post-2000 period. In this way, the demographic picture is complete: regression all across the board. In the post-1989 period, Romania has been—and is expected to remain—a country with negative external migration. This absolutely disastrous demographic picture was not and is not able to concern the Romanian society. Without further ado: the failure of politics in 30 years of post-Communism resides in the current lack of vision, strategies, and efficient policies regarding the severe matter of the demographic development of our country. Romania seems to be a weak country, which is growing old and is slowly dying out.

April 2020

Beyond the Veil of Disquiet: The Pandemic and the Living Standard

Under the shock of the pandemic, structural issues are being felt (again) and will become more and more pressing.

Editorial Board, the initiator of the debate:

Romania is facing, at the same time, two crises: the first one, the medical crisis, pertaining to the evolution and the dynamic of the pandemic, of which

duration remains unpredictable. The second crisis is of an economic nature. Unlike the medical one, which produces immediate effects, the economic crisis has social implications which are beginning to be felt and will be visible on the mid- and long-term.

The Institute for Researching Quality of Life:

"On the basis of our experience regarding crises, we may state that: 1. the most difficult period for the living standard will follow after the medical crisis will pass or fade away; in April 2020, the population is still psychologically making comparisons with the income level from February-March, not with future hardships; 2. the socio-economical consequences of the pandemic on Romanians' quality of life will dominate at least the first half of the decade 2020-2030."

"The peculiarity of the current situation resides in the fact that, for the first time, we are experiencing a crisis which originates in health."

An inventory of workforce traits: "The economic model of Romania is based largely on cheap workforce, poorly qualified (low skill, low pay). In other words, there is a great mass of small wages and precarious workplaces. On the mid- and long-term, reducing the pace of Romania's depopulation is incompatible with the permanency of the occupational model of Romanian economy. In other words, without departing from the low skill-low pay model, Romania's economy will face an increasing, insoluble issue, of the lack of workforce, after the economy had been relaunched.

An analysis of their incomes and their distribution: „In Romania, the income of the population comes, to a large degree, from cash resources. For their part, these are mainly made up of wages and, secondarily, from social transfers, pensions for the most part. Other incomes sources are independent non-agricultural activities, agriculture, and property. As a consequence of transition, a prominent feature of Romanian society is the high, and time-persistent, level of income inequality. Romania is one of the most unequal state members of the EU. Constantly, our country occupies one of the premier positions—usually, alongside Bulgaria and Greece—at the key indicators pertaining to income inequalities: relative poverty, Gini coefficient, the S80/S20 ratio. This position of Romania is based both on our level of economic development and on the mechanisms of distributing and redistributing the newly-created value. Another peculiarity of income inequalities is that they are not at all, or almost, influenced by economic growth; in other words, inequalities have become structural. Among other things, this fact is mirrored by the relatively constant share of population under risk of poverty (between 22-25%)."

May 2020

Health. Between Metaphysics and Contractualism

In the Romanian medical system, the exceptionality of measures taken for the coronavirus epidemic, even if they worked perfectly, which was not the case, it could not erase the "structural" dysfunctions which affect it multilaterally.

Nicu Ilie, the initiator of the debate:

In the case of the new coronavirus, it was clear from the start that Romania is going to lose the battle in hospitals and that it can only win the one outside them. And, despite all the mobilization and all the professionalism of minister Tătaru and of the small team from the strategic group, despite all the dedication of certain teams of specialist doctors who have split themselves between the workplace and televisions in order to ensure the population is

being well informed, despite all the effort of health professionals, three months since the emergence of the pandemic, Romania did indeed lose the battle in the hospitals.

Amongst Central-East European countries, Romania and Moldova have recorded by the end of May the highest number of deaths per thousand inhabitants, considering that the number of cases per thousand inhabitants was in Romania very close to the region's average.

The problem of an outmoded medical system, depopulated, underfunded for decades compared to the assumed objectives, tainted by clientelism, politicization, and chronic violations of deontology, could not be solved overnight, no matter how serious the threat has proved and is proving to be.

Otilia Țăgănaș, family doctor



That this pandemic will change many things on the planet is clear to me. On a national level, it will challenge—both formally and in principle—the relationship of small medical units with the Public Health Departments. I am certain of that. Probably, the relationship will come, like in the other European countries, much closer to a contractual partnership than, like in its "pre-pandemic" form, the boss-to-subordinate relationship. Rather guidance than, exclusively, control and penalties. It will change, if not from the ground up, then at least on a subtle level, the organic aversion of the Romanian patient towards the Romanian medic. An aversion maintained, I believe, only by one-third by the attitude of the medic. And the other two-thirds by the political mistakes done for decades and the appetite of the press for sensational news. I believe that this pandemic will restore in the hierarchy of importance the time, attention, and the propensity of the medic towards the patient's spoken story, as a diagnostic mean far, far greater than a MRI, CT, or "all the analyses" that are being made impersonally, without context, illogically, and pointlessly.

June 2020

On the Theatre Spectacle in The Year of Distancing: Concerns, rebounds, innovations

The voices of industry are raising large concerns regarding the present and the future of the cultural sector.

Corina Taraș-Lungu, the initiator of the debate:

On a cultural macro level, the pandemic may be classified as a period of impending global experiment, during which managers, producers, artists, and distributors were constrained to think novel formulas,

unprecedented in the history of cultural sector as scale and shape.

In Romania, economic and financial measures have been felt as early as March, culminating with the cultural activity which has ceased. The independent sector has been the most seriously affected, those who earned from royalties or on the basis of collaborations could only, at best, receive compensations amounting to 75% of the national average gross salary.

Tudor Giurgiu, film director:



I think that it is important to rethink the purpose of certain state institutions and the way in which they could better serve the clients, namely directors, operators, content authors. I believe that the dysfunctions in cinematography are also being mirrored by the educational system, where there is also a crisis. Many dysfunctions derive from the fact that the system is in fact designed to keep certain institutions the way they are for years. A lot of reforms have been made not in order to help "the end of the tail", namely the public, the pupil, the client, but in order to maintain certain teacher positions and so on. The same happens in the cinema. There needs to be a reset and, from this point of view, I would like to see the guild more united, to struggle more, in the idea that it is us who have to invite decision makers to the process of change.

Vlad Drăgulescu, theater director:



At first, there was a very great state of uncertainty. Practically, it was not an actual festival, we called it "Shakespeare Festival Home Edition". We had everything ready for the normal edition and we had to close, cancel everything. Firstly, a theater group from Hong Kong called us to announce that they cannot come anymore. And then everything started to fall down, until the coronavirus reached Romania too and we had to postpone everything. "Home Sonnets" was the part we were most fond of! It was a promise of the artists towards the festival and of the festival towards the public. There were 50 artists from 28 countries who have recorded sonnets in 25 languages. And this was the novel feature, the part that had never been seen before in our festival, a gathering of forces from 28 countries.

July 2020

Being Roma in Romania. A Taboo Topic for the Public Agenda

In general, the Romanians associate unwanted behavior rather with the Romani/Gypsy community than with the lack of education. Ironically, this type of, more or less latent, racism is itself a consequence as well of the lack of education.

Valentin Rupa, the initiator of the debate:

Six hundred years. That is approximately how long the slavery of the Romani lasted on the territory known in historiography as the Romanian Lands.

Gelu Duminică, sociologist:



We aren't speaking publicly about this for a long time, and not just a few are the people who not even know this dark side of our history; they couldn't, as the topic is nearly inexistent in our schoolbooks. In the Carpatho-Danubian-Pontic space, there are many proofs of inhumanity which the collective memory did not store (or did so poorly). Romanian exceptionalism, to which we have grown accustomed in the history taught across obligatory education, does not seem to leave space to less commendable aspects from our past. That perhaps could also explain the discriminatory attitudes which are omnipresent even today.

In order to refer to something, you need to know about that thing. Namely, we are using words of which meaning we do not possess: we do not know too well what does "discrimination" mean, what does "racism" means, what is the difference between the two. Many concepts we do not understand because they were not transferred to us. There are two factors of education: family and school. How many discussions on racism and identity are people having in their families? Still, we mean middle class families, not the disadvantaged ones. In school, how many approaches of these topics are here? People have found about these topics from wherever they read, if they read, from discussions with friends... On the level of public policies, Romania has not treated the Romani differently. Here comes the question: "is the Romanian state racist?" It is racist, but it is also misogynist, it is also... Meaning it is not only racist, because there are many fields in which the Romanian state did not act, because of the limits our society has, because there was never any pressure from the people. For example, I see how large the pressure is from citizens regarding anti-corruption and does it seem to be that we have any great policies regarding anti-corruption in Romania? So there needs to be a long period of pressure for society to truly assume those values.

August 2020

Individual Versus Collective.

The Pandemic As Litmus Test for Conflicts

In the current situation, it would be logical to count on the civic spirit, yet it is also divided between protesters who deny the quarantine and wearing the mask, in the spirit of individual freedom, and supporters of the prevention measures agreed upon on a central level, in the spirit of overcoming the threat collectively.

Valentin Rupa, the initiator of the debate:

From China to the United States of America, from Norway to Chile, societies are facing this "unseen

enemy", denied by some, yet feared by others. The logical question in this situation would be: "how should «negationists» approach the fears of those who take the virus seriously?". And a possible answer may derive from the ABC of the philosophy of living in common, as worded by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who noted, in 1762, that the absolute freedom of the individual is a source of social conflicts, that the individual needs to give up a part of their freedom for the sake of the social good, and that the one who rules should ensure collective safety, thus emerging the famous "contract social". In the next century, John Stuart Mill sums up this "game of liberties" through the no less famous phrase: "my freedom ends where yours begins".

Georgeta Condur, doctor in Political Sciences:



From this Parliament, in its current formula, I didn't have high expectations anyway, as its track record and the repeated attempts of acting for protecting certain party leaders from justice are still very fresh in my memory. I was not expecting it to turn overnight into a model institution, overall. But the Parliament is a fundamental institution of democracy. We have to make do with what we have, and if it would be possible, let this be a lesson to us in the future, when will vote. The government has found itself between a rock and a hard place, with a hot potato in its hands: if they didn't take measures, they would have been accused for the number of fatalities; since they did, any weak spots in their decisions have been speculated and they have been accused of taking measures that are way too restrictive, as if there is any government in the world that would want to deliberately put its economy in a risk situation. In my opinion, all in all, their performance has been a decent one, compared also to what the other countries of the world have done.

Dan Dungaciu, director of the Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations:



The pandemic is, as sociologists say, a total social phenomenon, just like wars or earthquakes: they change all aspects of social life, not just the one where the phenomenon took place. A war changes economy, education, culture, politics, literature, practically everything you knew about life, a war can mess up everything. Likewise, an earthquake, if it has devastating effects, may throw a country into crisis, and so on. Well, the pandemic has the same effects.

Everything we've learned before the pandemic needs to be reframed.

Because if we are entering a new world order, we are talking again about a total geopolitical phenomenon, as it remaps everything. Now, the rules are the ones specific to a new world order.

September 2020

Life Values and the Responsible Community.

Cultural Dissolutions in Romania of the Third Millennium

Abuse represents an apple of discord in the Romanian territory. Everything seems stuck between the faulty legal practice, not calibrated penalties, way too few government initiatives, and a background complicity of many societal parts.

Corina Taraş-Lungu, the initiator of the debate:

Although it tends to align itself with developed countries from Europe, Romania remains a space in which the

main role in dismantling certain cases or societal approaches belongs almost exclusively to the press, or rather just a fraction of it. Or, in any case, civil society. The press is polarized regarding the coverage of these cases. On one hand, there is a tendency to present situations of violence and abuse in the guise of shock and entertainment, especially in traditional mass-media. On the other hand, the new media are a loudspeaker of these cases, making numerous journalist investigations, sponsoring studies and surveys, making interviews, and putting pressure on legal bodies to act.

Diana Oncioiu, journalist:



It seems unacceptable to me for a judge to decide whether an 11-year old girl consented having sexual contact with an adult. I don't know how one conceive that an 11-year old child would be able to consent to anything like that. The law says that a minor up to 14 years old may not be held criminally liable, as they do not have discernment. It is a contradiction. She does not have discernment to be criminally liable, yet she consents as a victim. Unfortunately, examples of court instances who decide whether a child consented or not are numerous, we are not talking about isolated cases, it is a legal practice. It is not enough to have necessary legislation. There is also the mentality we encounter even at professionals, whom we would expect to understand things better. Therefore, I have tried to talk to judges, but of course they all refused. What judges should understand is that a constraint may not simply be a physical, there is no need for marks to make it a constraint. It can be psychological, emotional, in the guise of blackmailing.

Oana Bîzgan, independent deputy in the Parliament of Romania



The first step is to accept that we have an issue and to make a plan, as Romanian already did in order to improve these things. But from said to done there is a long way ahead. And if we have today the level of crime that we have and which in the past years has been rising significantly, this happened with the complicity of us all. Somehow, quietly, these phenomena have become normal to us. Political instruments pertain to establishing real priorities through which all political players gather round a table and approach this topic with the necessary importance and priority. Then, the right people need to be placed in the right positions and to provide the necessary budget so that this change may occur. Last but not least, it is our individual responsibility, as citizens, where we have to practice taking a stand. Abiding these levels, things are going to change and believe me that they will change.

October 2020

The Chances of Independent Culture.

The Relevance, The Coherence, and The Mechanism of Financing

The marathon to the office counter with metal-fastener folders, full of xerox copies, remains also in 2020 the paradigm imposed by the Minister of Culture, while the rest of society makes big steps in digitalization.

Carmen Corbu, the initiator of the debate:

In their logical formula, things go this way: the financing entity has a list of objectives and a set of socially-anchored priorities that it pursues and puts on call, and for their realization and operation, various executing entities—the cultural operators—are candidate with their own schemes of specific objectives, methods of implementation, actions, expense budgets, and projected results. Everything must be specific,

measurable, approachable, relevant, etc., meaning "SMART". In fact, a cold look shows us that the mechanisms of the Ministry of Culture are unlikely to meet the above coordinates. With procedures and protocols adopted many years ago, the Ministry of Culture is frozen in time and practices, proving itself now to be one of the most retrograde local institutions. Implementing another philosophy and different procedures, the National Cultural Fund Administration or the Ministry of the Economy and Business have managed to remove the notion of the grant from the practice of begging at the gates of state institutions. That is retained however by the Ministry of Culture. As a national cultural paradigm of nostalgia for the past and for the ancient power relationships.

Adriana Moca, Cultural Project Manager:



In a country with the highest rate of persistent relative poverty in the European Union, one cannot privatize arts, culture, and education. For years we have been drawing attention towards the underfunding of the independent culture. We never participated in the calls of the Ministry of Culture, because I do not trust their methodology and nor their good faith. It isn't normal to have hundreds of associations, foundations which are making successful projects on their own initiative, with funds from their own pockets, and not create for them more means of funding. For peanuts, we most often are doing through these projects what should have been the State's job. No one sees that and it is discouraging and tiresome on the long run. Sometimes, you just feel like quitting!

Adriana Moca, Cultural Project Manager:



Vrancea, the area I work in, was and is deficient when it comes to independent civic and cultural initiatives, and unfortunately we do not really have the real support of authorities, perhaps also because we make things differently. We have started civic and cultural initiatives to somehow fill this void and bring a real, grassroots change, starting with children and the youth. We also initiated the project "c@rte în sate" (Books in the Villages), that we have been implementing for the last nearly four years, a project promoting books and reading and culture in the villages. It is not easy at all, but it is beautiful and we thrive on the joy we are receiving from the kids and teenagers with whom we work. Beyond this, one needs material resources in order to put ideas into practice. In disadvantaged, marginalized areas, we are pioneers.

November 2020

Soft Power Romania. The Eternal and Fascinating "Work in Progress"

From 2001 and until today, in Romania there has been systematic talk on the necessity of a country brand, yet all attempts have failed miserably. Encouraging autochthonous projects, excellence in research and sciences, promoting local products and the small farmers, sustainable exploitation of a tourism (ecotourism) and of the environment are rather part of isolated strategies of absorbing European funds than of a development and promotional strategy.

Corina Taraş-Lungu, the initiator of the debate:

Renown for its recent political scandals, for its impossibility to reduce the level of corruption, of poverty, for the seriously criticized interferences

with justice, for the acute ecological issues which are ignored, Romania is far from adhering to the moral, liberal, inclusive code of Western countries and shape a favorable country image, attractive both for its own citizens and for foreigners. Sure, the Romanian cultural landscape isn't monotonous, there are in our countries independent fields—artistic, scientific, literary, etc.—which not only survive, but also, circumstantially, elevate Romania to the level of countries which are competitive in these domains. But these gains are not, most of the time, the results of a societal effort of national identifying, acquiring intangible power on an international scale and, implicitly, global integration. As a "meta-flaw" of the trajectory of Romania, since the dawn of liberal democracy and until the year of the pandemic, reigns the education, the system with the biggest power of transforming a society and collective mindsets.

Daniel David, "Aaron T. Beck" Teacher of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy:



The problem is that the half-learned and the anachronistically anchored in old paradigms are the ones talking loudly, and too much, about patriotism, "românism", Romanians and national values. They are the ones who are often maximizing what's positive and denying or minimizing the negative, spurting with hatred and mud all of those who do not accept such excessive generalizations, thus causing great harm to the country and to Romanians, paradoxically, claiming love towards the country and towards Romanians. They do not understand that we are living in a world where truth cannot be distorted anymore by whoever hides it better or shouts the loudest. It is time to not let patriotism be solely the apanage of these people, but to be assumed in the most honest and advanced modern Romanian cultural environments. How do we do that? I have written a series of texts on this topic and I am not going to insist here. What is important for us to understand here is that we need to assume patriotism as a modern, motivational value. And an unifying value that must transcend time is the Romanian language! The rest is always being redefined, depending on how the "românism" is posited in a certain era; and that is good, because it gives us flexibility and stimulates evolution, by maintaining consistency with the Romanian language and motivation with the modern patriotism.

"The Meaning of Sculpture", Kunsthalle Bega, Timișoara, 2020, exhibition view
(source: Facebook Kunsthalle Bega)





20
DE ANI

**PROMOVĂM
SPIRITUL ROMÂNESC
PESTE HOTARE
DIN 1999**

Prima multinațională cu capital românesc.

Profesionalismul și perseverența noastră din ultimii 20 de ani au pus România pe harta feroviară globală și la conjuncția strategică a industriilor europene și internaționale. Suntem un pilon de dezvoltare a României și ne propunem să continuăm în aceeași direcție.



România

Austria

Serbia

Germania

Ungaria

Grecia

Bulgaria

Croația

The Projects of the Augustin Buzura Cultural Foundation

*Augustin Buzura (1938-2017) is a Romanian writer,
initiator of the Romanian Cultural Institute
project and founder of the publication Cultura*

AUGUSTIN BUZURA DOCUMENTS

The Picture of a Spectacular Romanian Event in the USA

Augustin Buzura possessed a permanently and nearly obsessive desire to promote Romanian culture around the world, to present the spirituality of the Romanian territory. From here, perhaps, also derives the motivation of an endeavor such as the one he conceived and managed to perform in 1999, in the USA.

Romanian traditional culture has been presented in all of its splendor at the SMITHSONIAN FOLKLIFE FESTIVAL, edition number XXXIII, event which took place between 23rd of June – 4th of July 1999, in Washington, D.C., under the title "Romania – Open Gates." The event was organized by the Smithsonian Institution and the Romanian Cultural Foundation, under the high patronage of the president of Romania, Emil Constantinescu, with the support of the Romanian Government, of the Embassy of the USA in Bucharest, and of the businessmen community. The success of such an endeavor was also ensured by the fact that it managed to coagulate a core of specialists from museums and prestigious specialized institutions from around the country, professors, researchers, ethnologists to present and explain for the public the specificity of Romanian traditions. Artists, craftsmen, folklore creators, actors, dancers, and singers from all regions of the countries have managed to show the public the spectacular trait of Romanian folk creation, through music, dances, crafts, culinary art, in a space that has been visited by over 1.000.000 people. A Maramureș-style wooden church built by Maramureș craftsmen, glass-painted icons, albums, photographs, and over 500 articles in prestigious American publications are merely a part of the results of this event.

AUGUSTIN BUZURA DOCUMENTS



Interview with a foreign friend

About the place Romanian creativity occupies in the imagination of the artistic world

RAMONA MITRICĂ

I want this interview to tell a story - a story about you Mike Phillips. How has your experience of Romania and Romanian arts affected and influenced your views as a critic and an author?
(Part 6)

Ramona Mitrică: Well let's see if I've got this straight. You've been telling me about your impressions of Romanian culture, in particular the way it emerges from our feeling for nature and from the history associated with our landscape. All of which is fine, but then you said that there is a problem about distinguishing the culture of one individual from another. How does culture mark you out as an individual?

Mike Phillips: It's a simple answer on this one. People emerge from a specific background, which they may or not share with others, but they become individuals because of what they do with everything they experience. I always knew that, but it was also something I understood differently around the time that I began thinking about how to use culture as a way of building character. So I'm going to read you an extract from a play I wrote then. This was really about migration, because, at the time, I was struggling to isolate and understand common strands between the various experiences of the migrants I knew. I wrote it for a Romanian actor Constantin Chiriac, and watching him perform it I realised that the words had begun to escape my control. All the events mentioned came from things I read in the newspapers, or had been mentioned to me by friends. I had been thinking about it as a long poem until the character on stage had begun to describe events and emotions which any number of migrants could have shared; all of them shaped by a unique cultural experience. I'll read it without the stage directions. Simpler that way. It was called "You think you know me but you don't".

(Mike Phillips reads) – You think
you know me but you don't –
I am not sure that I know myself – you
can call me a migrant worker
Or you can call me Victor –
My name is Constantine but Victor is easier –
It only has two syllables –
This is the kind of compromise I made
when I started moving between different
countries and different languages –
But you speak my language or I speak yours –
That's more important –
I speak – four, five, six – I don't know I forget –
Bon Soir Mesdames et monsieurs
Wilkommen –
Good evening ladies and gentlemen –
Four boys from the North
In a house in West London
Everyday we go to work
Before the sun rises
And come back in the darkness
Of night
On Sunday we go to the park
Where we find grass and trees
And a lake full of sweet little ducks
I know what you're thinking –
you're thinking that a man like me –
speaks with no understanding of the grammar –
no elegance, no lyrical fluency –
ah what an expression – lyrical fluency –
this does not apply to the language I hear –
I love you baby – kommen ze hir fraulein –
What vulgarity –

This is not lyrical fluency –
Lyrical fluency is the language of
Shakespeare and Goethe and Voltaire
But they are all dead –
And I don't need lyrical fluency –
This was the problem with my education –
Everything I learnt had to be correct –
Like mathematics – one two three – two and two are four
- that's correct
it's the same for languages - subject verb object
- correct?
- No – not OK –
- OK – what's that?
- Who can understand the construction of the syntax?
- Cliché, unformulated, careless, stupid, untranslatable
- But everyone knows what it means – OK?
Four boys from the North
We lived together in a small house in the West of London
Every day we went to work and came back
Let me show you something
First you must understand the condition of a migrant
One day in England they discovered a
man on a beach somewhere
He is dressed in a neat black suit, a white shirt and a tie
So well dressed, except for the fact that
he is wet, completely soaking wet,
Dripping with water, his hair, his shoes
If he is wearing underwear, which is a
small detail the public are not told,
But if he is wearing boxer shorts, they too are wet
This man has no memory
So complete is his loss that he cannot speak
Officials interrogate him but they can get no information
And they try every language at their command
French, German, Polish, Romanian – nothing
Italian, Portuguese, Spanish – nada
Serbo Croat, Georgian, Russian – nyet
This is a white man, indisputably European,
So they skip the languages of Asia and
Africa, but they try everything else,
And eventually
They decide that he is NOT faking it,
And they send him to hospital where he sits in a room
Crouched and fearful
A doctor speaks to him
And gives him a pencil and a piece of paper
He begins to draw and what does he draw?
He draws pianos – pianos and such pianos

Not only the representation of a piano
But also the inner workings of the piano, the strings,
The board inside, everything.
So they take him to a piano and he
sits down and begins to play
He plays without stopping for four hours
The most beautiful music in the world
Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Debussy
The man is transformed
In his room he crouches, terrified like an animal
The arms covering his head, wincing
as if frightened to be touched,
At the piano he is confident, unafraid,
master of the beauty that his hands
sprinkle like unending showers of flowering blossoms
Filling the air with soft caresses and sweet scents
After two hours the doctors and nurses surround him
Their work forgotten
One woman, a young radiographer,
comes closer and closer
transported by the beauty of the scene and
the fascination of his darting fingers
she too is beautiful, her breasts are heaving,
her big blue eyes are fixed, wide open,
she takes deep breaths
her feet straying gradually inch by
inch as if beyond her control
and when she stands so close that she can go no further
she reaches out and tenderly begins
to stroke his shoulders
Any other man – I know this – believe me
Any other man would have turned or
smiled or allowed his hands
At least one hand to touch this treasure
But the pianist pays her no attention
Instead he continues – lost in his own dreams
Hours later he stops abruptly
And he looks around and sees for the first time
The crowd surrounding him their faces
glowing with admiration, delight
And he shrinks – smaller and smaller
Then turns his back and covers his
face with his beautiful hands
I made up that part about the
beautiful young radiographer
It was really a security guard, seventy years old
Who wanted the pianist to stop
So he could clear the crowd out of the

room before he went home.
 I forgot
 The officials put the story in the
 newspapers, radio and TV
 But no one knew the pianist
 Hundreds of people from all the world sent
 messages and tried to claim him
 But the truth was that no one knew him
 And he...
 He had forgotten who he was –
Four boys from the North in a house in West London
Going to work and coming home every day
In a city beyond your imagination
 In the beginning I was not exactly –
 Innocent
 If a foreigner asked me who I was
 I knew the answer
 - Victor – Romanian
 But of course if a foreigner asked me this question
 I would have made no reply
 Unless it was absolutely necessary
 I have had this conversation too often
 Romania, Romania, the foreigner says
 I have heard of that country somewhere
 Yes, I tell this person
 We are the inheritors
 Of the oldest civilisation in Europe
 Romania, you've heard of the Roman Empire
 Our language is a refinement
 Of Latin wisdom and our rulers
 Carved their names in shining gold
 And our church breathed the sweet air of the spirit
 While our sculptors and poets and painters
 Nurtured in immortal mountains
 And sacred villages
 Kept alive the pure flame of art
 Despatching the fruits of our intellect
 To Paris and Rome and everywhere else
 That human beings vibrated
 With sympathy for love and beauty
 Listen to these names
 Tzara, and Brâncuși, and Eminescu
 And Georgiu
 Oh yes, the foreigner says
 I remember now
 Romania
 You are very cruel to children there.
 But I knew the answer

To this question of who I was
 - Victor – Romanian
 This was a long time ago
 When I became a student
 My dream was to return
 Here – with this suitcase
 Full of the magic
 Which a man might clutch from the air
 In the world outside
 But I was not exactly – simple
 Or innocent of danger
 On Sunday we went to the park
 Where we found grass and trees
 And a lake full of sweet little ducks
 And little birds who have paused
 Halfway in their flight
 From the distant shores of Africa
 And the geese,
 The geese are taking a vacation
 From their homes in Canada
 And these Rom of the skies
 Surveying the spinning globe below them
 Focus on this tiny patch of water
 In the middle of the most polluted spot
 You can find on the earth
 Because believe me this is no Danube Delta
 But this is what they find
 Along the edges of these lakes
In the centre of London
There are flowers, lilies, daffodils
And snowdrops
Gently swaying and dancing
In the soft breeze which ripples the surface of the water
 And among the flowers
 There are children, little toddlers
 Barely able to walk and old ladies
 And big soft girls from Zurich and Perpignan
 And Krakow pushing babies in perambulators
 And office workers dressed in smart suits
 And who knows what else?
 And all of these people are holding
 Little paper bags full of bread
 With which to feed the ducks
 Who advance out of the water
 Across the grass, some a little shy
 Awkward
 Others as bold as Cossacks
 With boots on their feet

Reaching up to snatch the food out
of the children's hands
With angry squawks
Așa – if you're a duck this is a land of plenty
And easy living.
But the truth is that animals don't understand
Our man-made boundaries
Their ignorance is complete and completely
(PAUSE) – ultimate
The birds fly through the blue skies
Drifting like clouds
With absolutely no thought
For the ownership of airspace
Like those impudent fishes
Invading our waters whenever they like
Not to mention the insects
Spiders, flies, bugs of every kind
They crawl past the checkpoints
And customs officials – they have no respect
Frogs – take the case of these INSOLENT batrachians
Monsieur Le Crapaud –
If you ever have the necessity
Of addressing a French frog in polite terms
This is how you do it –
Monsieur Le Crapaud –
These frogs are extremely territorial
Each species of frog has been hopping

Over the very same patch of ground
For the space of several millennia
In that pool over there
They are born
They hop out of it and across a patch of ground
To that pool over there
Croak Riddip Croak Riddip
Then they grow up they mate and they return
To the pool of their birth
And if by some foolish mistake you build your house
Right there in the middle of their migration
They crawl right through the pipes
They climb up out of your toilet
They emerge from the taps
They hop slowly across the floor of your house
And out of the door
Without even looking at you
What could be more territorial than this
But they never never never
Ask to see your passport.

I'll leave it here, because I think it makes a sufficient explanation about the way that culture shapes experience, and experience helps you to explore culture. I hope you can also see, in what I've read to you, the role that Romanian cultural expressions was playing in my struggles to try and grasp its universality.

Dr Mike Phillips OBE FRSL, FRSA

Mike Phillips was educated at the University of London (English), the University of Essex (politics), and at Goldsmiths College London (education). He worked for the BBC as a journalist and broadcaster between 1972 and 1983 before becoming a lecturer in media studies at the University of Westminster. After a spell as Resident writer at the South Bank Centre in London, he was appointed Cross Cultural Curator at the Tate Galleries in Britain, and then worked as Acting Director of Arts (Cultuurmakelaar) in Tilburg in the Netherlands. Later on, he lectured in Milan and worked as a freelance curator in London, Belgium, Venice, the Netherlands and Los Angeles, notably with the Belgian artist Koen Vanmechelen. He was awarded the Arts Foundation Fellowship in 1996 for crime fiction, and the OBE in 2006 for services to broadcasting. He served as a Trustee of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, but he is best known for his crime fiction, including four novels featuring black journalist Sam Dean: *Blood Rights* (1989), which was adapted for BBC television, *The Late Candidate* (1990), winner of the Crime Writers' Association Silver Dagger Award, *Point of Darkness* (1994) and *An Image to Die For* (1995). *The Dancing Face* (1998) is a thriller centred on a priceless Benin mask. *A Shadow of Myself* (2000) is about a black documentary filmmaker working in Prague and a man who claims to be his brother. *The Name You Once Gave Me* (2006) was written as part of a government sponsored literacy campaign.

Mike Phillips also co-wrote *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (1998) to accompany a BBC television series telling the story of the Caribbean migrant workers who settled in post-war Britain. *London Crossings: A Biography of Black Britain* (2001) is a series of interlinked essays and stories, a portrait of the city seen from locations as diverse as New York and Nairobi, London and Lodz, Washington and Warsaw. Recently he wrote a series of libretti for the compositions of musician Julian Joseph, culminating in a version of *Tristan and Isolde*, performed at the Royal Opera House.

Together with Romanian arts administrator and facilitator Ramona Mitrică, Phillips has worked over the last two decades to establish the cultural consultancy Profusion, which created the annual Romanian Film Festival in London. During that period he co-authored, with Stejărel Olaru, a history of the life and times of the notorious serial killer, entitled *Rimaru – Butcher of Bucharest*. In addition, as joint director, editor and translator, he worked on and helped to publish a series of Romanian works, including books by George Arion and Augustin Buzura. In 2019 he was awarded the Trofeul de Excelență of the Augustin Buzura Cultural Foundation by Academician Professor Dr Jean-Jacques Askenasy, at a ceremony in the Military Circle in Bucharest. Mike's book *The Dancing Face* will be re-published by Penguin in 2021.

Despre noi



Fundația Culturală Augustin Buzura

Fundația Culturală Augustin Buzura a fost înființată în 2017, la puțin timp după dispariția academicianului Augustin Buzura. Inițiatorii sunt membrii familiei, animați de dorința de a păstra vie memoria academicianului Augustin Buzura și pentru a continua idealul de conștiință și responsabilitate pentru care scriitorul s-a luptat o viață. Urmând valorile și principiile profesate de academicianul Augustin Buzura, fundația se va preocupa de sensibilizarea societății românești asupra importanței păstrării și dezvoltării patrimoniului cultural național, va promova excelența și va sprijini valorile.

Fundația Culturală Augustin Buzura se va ocupa prin toate mijloacele de care dispune de promovarea în țară și în străinătate a operei literare și publicistice a scriitorului Augustin Buzura, precum și a filmelor realizate după scenariile sale. Se va îngriji, de asemenea, de perpetuarea numelui său și a actelor sale fondatoare și generatoare de cultură civică și instituțională.

Având ca scop sprijinirea și promovarea culturii, artei și civilizației românești, FCAB își propune să fie un factor activ

în societatea civilă, prin sprijinirea procesului de integrare și de afirmare culturală europeană și mondială, prin oferirea de soluții practice în domeniul culturii, artei și educației.

Fundația Culturală Augustin Buzura militează pentru încurajarea și stimularea creației originale în toate domeniile culturii, de la cercetarea științifică până la creația artistică, precum și pentru sprijinirea și promovarea tinerelor talente și protejarea și perpetuarea celor consacrate.

Promovarea și sprijinirea activităților de studiu și cercetare privind istoria și civilizația românilor, menținerea prin mijloace specifice a legăturilor cu alte fundații culturale din țară și străinătate reprezintă obiective relevante ale Fundației Culturale Augustin Buzura.

Fundația va organiza și va participa, singură sau în parteneriat, la expoziții, spectacole, festivaluri, concerte și alte manifestări cultural-artistice, în țară sau în străinătate.

Președinte al Fundației Culturale Augustin Buzura este Anamaria Maior-Buzura, fiica scriitorului.

Buzura Foundation Washington D.C.



Buzura Foundation supports and promotes Romanian and universal culture, art and civilization, aims to be an active factor in civil society by supporting the process of integration and cultural affirmation, by offering practical solutions in the field of culture, art and education.

OUR VISION

To keep the memory of Augustin Buzura alive and create a movement around his work rooted into his principles, values and courage of telling the truth under any circumstances.

WHAT WE DO

We support and engage with established and emerging artists, scientists and educators whose works reflect and carry on the principles and values present in Buzura's literary and journalistic work.

OUR COMMUNITY

Our community is diverse, with a sense of belonging and deeply rooted into the present. It's inclusive and serves as a forum for honest discussion, respecting and welcoming diversity of opinion, hence keeping a sense of ownership of ideas.