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THE BLACK SEA SECURITY AGENDA
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I will lay out five challenges in the Black Sea area that make this region an important factor in trans-Atlantic relations and for the future of both the EU and NATO. And of course, as a member of both NATO and the EU, Romania plays a pivotal role in securing this region in terms of democratic, economic, regional, and integrative development.

1. Strategic Location

The Black Sea region connects the EU and NATO with the Middle East, the Caspian zone, and Central Asia – three areas that will be critical for U.S. and EU security interests over the coming decade. A multitude of security threats challenge the region, including international jihadist terrorism, weapons proliferation, international organized crime, and potential natural disasters such as epidemics, climatic changes, and environmental disasters. As a result, a coherent strategy for durable stability and sustainable security needs to be devised and implemented by the EU and U.S. working in tandem with the countries of the region, especially with those capitals that are members of either the EU or NATO or are seeking entry.

2. Strategic Competition

The Black Sea region has become a battleground between Atlanticism and Eurasianism, in essence between the West and Russia, as both sides seek to project and defend their influences and strategic interests. Russia has developed into a neo-imperialist power seeking to restore its spheres of dominance, to undermine the emergence of a Wider Europe that includes Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, and to prevent the development of an expanded and coherent trans-Atlantic community. Under the Vladimir Putin presidency, the Russian Federation has set itself an ambitious foreign policy target by developing as a “strategic pole” that will counter-balance U.S. influence. The key component of this strategy is to raise Russia’s global stature and to diminish America’s role by undermining the NATO alliance and neutralizing the EU along its peripheries. The political transition in Russia from a Putin presidency to a successor to be elected in March 2008 will further enhance the process of assertion and expansion.

3. Energy Security

Major energy supplies to Europe from the Caspian Basin will increasingly traverse the Caucasus and Black Sea regions and their transit needs to be secured from potential disruption, whether as a result of deliberate blockages by suppliers or transit countries or sabotage by sub-state actors and international terrorist networks. Supply transit needs to

be assured to all consumers and such guarantees are best served by diversifying suppliers and routes in case of blackmail or sabotage and bringing the entire region under a more secure NATO umbrella. However, Russia sees European energy diversification as a threat to its expansive state interests and as it would lessen or even reverse Moscow's growing political influence in using the energy lever. As a result, Russia has sought to monopolize diverse suppliers in Central Asia, to purchase vital energy infrastructure across Europe, and to undercut the potential of developing sources and supply routes that bypass Russian territory or Russia's control.

4. State Stability

There are several reasons why the former Soviet-occupied territories, including the Black Sea and trans-Caucasian region are important for the security of the European continent and the Atlantic Alliance. Regarding questions of state stability, weak states, divided states, and authoritarian states are a threat to their own security and to the security of their neighbors. Moldova, Georgia, and potentially Ukraine are politically polarized and divided states where the absence of territorial integrity and elite consensus corrupts state institutions, fosters organized crime, undermines economic development, discourages foreign investment, and prevents regional cooperation.

These states are also susceptible to Russian government manipulation, economic blackmail, and political pressure precisely because they remain weak and divided. Moscow prefers to have either authoritarian, divided, or weak states along its borders rather than pro-Western democracies or strategically neutral regimes. Ongoing Kremlin support for the Transnistrian separatists in Moldova and the Abkhaz and Ossetian secessionist movements in Georgia, demonstrates Moscow's strategy of promoting vulnerable and dependent neighbors.

As a consequence, a variety of military and sub-military threats challenge the region, including a spillover of armed conflict from the Moscow-sponsored separatist entities in Moldova and Georgia; Russian military involvement among neighbors in preventing state integration; and Russian military, nuclear, and anti-missile shield build-up to project its growing assertiveness. A potential escalation of armed conflict between Georgia and the two separatist regimes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia may also precipitate a wider conflict by drawing in neighboring powers and even the U.S. and the EU into the conflict.

5. Euro-Atlantic Aspirations

The post-Soviet countries of Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia face serious obstacles to their prospective Euro-Atlantic integration. Among the notable challenges and obstructions they will need to overcome are internal political divisions and potential public opposition, the resistance of the Russian administration to further NATO and EU

expansion eastward, separatist forces supported by Moscow and designed to keep these states off balance, and the hesitation of EU and Allied capitals in offering clear membership prospects.

Unfortunately, the EU has treated the “post-Soviet” countries differently from the western Balkan states, which have been offered the prospect of EU accession through stabilization and association agreements provided that they fulfill the required membership criteria. By contrast, the EU’s European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) has not offered the prospect of EU membership to the remaining East European states; instead, they were given ENP action plans that would steadily engage them in EU networks and programs. Without more effective incentives for Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, and potentially Azerbaijan and Armenia, with a prospect of eventual EU membership, the ENP is in danger of lacking sufficient momentum and incentive to promote structural reforms, generating substantial foreign investment, and reinforcing commitments to Western integration.

Meanwhile, NATO may be willing to enlarge eastward but two factors will need to be considered before decisions on including any of the remaining Black Sea littoral states are finalized. First, the commitment of the candidate states, their political elites and citizens, both to NATO standards and Alliance membership needs to be assured. And second, a commitment by the Alliance that such inclusion is in the strategic and national interests of all NATO and EU allies needs to be accepted. In this geo-strategic context, the Eastern Dimension of the new EU and NATO member states, including Romania, has involved various campaigns and initiatives to bring their neighbors into the ambit of both multi-national organizations. And the struggle continues.