

БЕЗПЕКА НА СХІДНОМУ КОРДОНІ ЄС

Історико-політичні проблеми сучасного світу:
Збірник наукових статей. – Чернівці:
Чернівецький національний університет,
2018. – Т. 37-38. – С. 13-25

Modern Historical and Political Issues:
Journal in Historical & Political Sciences. – Chernivtsi:
Chernivtsi National University,
2018. – Volume. 37-38. – pp. 13-25

УДК: 339.9(4/5:262.5-192.2)

© Лівіу Міхаіл Янку¹

**Морські комерційні імперії та земельні територіальні імперії
в Чорноморському регіоні**

У статті розглянуто процеси становлення та розвитку основних форм міжнародної взаємодії у Чорноморському регіоні, які час від часу повторювалися протягом усієї історії. Опис таких моделей базується на двох основних категоріях: важливі регіональні гравці («позапонтійські комерційні імперії»; «північно-понтійські територіальні імперії»; «південно-понтійські територіальні імперії») та відносини між ними (конфронтація, співробітництво). Для охоплення історичних та геополітичних аспектів дослідження Чорноморського регіону необхідно застосувати методи попереднього аналізу геополітичного положення регіону, його основних геофізичних властивостей та гео економічних і геополітичних характеристик, а також основні стратегічні точки.

Саме такий аналіз проводиться у даній статті. Опис моделей міжнародної взаємодії у Чорноморському регіоні та їх характеристика у порівнянні з теперішньою ситуацією в межах регіону будуть розглянуті у подальшому дослідженні.

Ключові слова: Чорне море, геополітика, історія, імперія, земний, морський.

Maritime commercial empires and land territorial empires in the Black Sea region

The research I conduct is focused on establishing and describing the major patterns of international interaction in the Black Sea region which have repeatedly occurred throughout history, based on two main criteria: the major players acting in the region (extra-Pontic maritime commercial empires; northern Pontic land territorial empires; southern Pontic land territorial empires) and the relations developed between them (confrontation; cooperation). For achieving this goal of enhancing the historical and geopolitical knowledge of the Black Sea region, a preceding analysis of its geographical position and its key physical features (the 'board'), of its geoeconomic and geopolitical characteristics (the 'stake'), as well as of its key strategic points (the 'trump cards') is needed. This analysis is carried out in the present paper, while the description of the patterns and the comparison with the current situation and developments in the region shall be tackled in a subsequent paper.

Keywords: Black Sea, geopolitics, history, empires, land, maritime.

The 'Board': the geographical position and the key physical features of the Black Sea and its coasts.

The Black Sea is a unique landform, both through its *geographical position* on the great Eurasian continent and its derived *physical features*. The innumerable peculiarities which define it, as well as the diversity of its neighboring landforms, contribute to the existence of a specific place of the Black Sea among the other seas of the world and arouse a high interest for its research². The same situation occurs with regard to its neighboring regions, which render its unmistakable outline, compared in an-

¹ Кандидат історичних наук, Бухарестський університет, Румунія, E-mail: liviu.iancu@drd.unibuc.ro, liviu.iancu@eurocentrica.ro, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0203-3335>, <https://doi.org/10.31861/mhpi2018.37-38.14-25>.

² The research perspectives of the Black Sea are numerous: hydrographical and hydrological, climatological, geological etc. Cf. Rotaru 2010, pp. 131-132.

cient times with a Scythian bow³. The study of the physical geography of the Black Sea is not gratuitous as it sets the main condition for the understanding of the history of the human communities that lived on its shores and their geopolitical and geoeconomical interactions throughout the ages.

There are three main comments that might be made with regard to the *geographical position* of the Black Sea.

Firstly, the Black Sea is an instrumental landform that helps defining the European peninsula by separating it from the great land mass of the Eurasian continent. At the same time, the Black Sea contributes to the delimitation of another eccentric region of the Eurasian continent, the Extended Middle East, both from the main land mass, but especially from Europe. Consequently, the Black Sea should be envisaged as lying at the crossroads of three great geographical areas, contributing to their separation and to turning the Pontic shores into an area of significant geographical and human interactions⁴.

Secondly, given the physical features of its shores, it might be noticed that more than a border between West and East, the Black Sea acts like a demarcation line between a northern area uniformly characterized by low relief and a southern area physically fragmented into a large series of mountains, plateaus and small coastal or depressional plains⁵. This feature worked as one of the most powerful engines in the political, economic and military history of the region.

Thirdly, as it is situated far inside the Eurasian continent, the Black Sea is „the most isolated sea in the world”⁶: it is the most closed sea among the semi-closed seas of the world⁷, being indirectly connected to the Ocean, passing through the Mediterranean to which is connected through an extremely narrow communication system: the straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles and the small Sea of Marmara.

Geopolitically, this feature creates the temptation for the regional players to turn the Black Sea into ‘a lake’ under their exclusive control, while geographically the most important consequences are hydrographical.

Among the most conspicuous and fundamental *physical features* of the Black Sea are hydrographical characteristics as its low salinity (17.5‰), barely half of that of the Mediterranean, and its low tides, both of them mostly determined by its pronounced semi-closedness. Together with the geological fundament that divides the sea into two distinct basins, separated through a central north-south submarine ridge, it causes also the existence of circular streams at the surface, with significant consequences for the navigation routes⁸. The absence of vertical streams, wholly particular to the Black Sea, causes the lack of oxygen in the deeper sea layers and, consequently, 87% of the volume of water is void of aquatic life⁹.

The bottom of the sea is characterized not only by the aforementioned separation in two distinct basins, from west to east¹⁰, but also by significant differences in depth between the northern and the southern halves, which continue the altitudinal differences between the coastal regions: while the northern waters are shallow, the southern ones are deep, especially near the Anatolian coast, where the greatest depth of 2212 meters is registered.

The low salinity and the low temperature in winter, generated by the closedness of the sea between huge continental masses, at high latitude, determine the frequent freezing of the sea water at surface, near the shores¹¹. Furthermore, because there are no barriers in front of the northern arctic winds, storms frequently break out, especially in winter¹². Even more discouraging for navigation is the total

³ Brătianu 1999, p. 72. Among the ancient sources where this famous comparison appears are Strabo’s *Geography* (Str. 2.5.22), Pliny’s *Natural History* (Plin. Nat. Hist. 4.76) and Ammianus Marcellinus’ *Roman History* (Amm. 22.8.10).

⁴ I am theoretically indebted to H. Mackinder’s geographical conception, expressed in Mackinder 1904, pp. 431-432, 435, that divides the Eurasian continent in two great distinct areas: the great continental pivot and the crescent made of four excentric regions, open to the ocean, partly or fully peninsular (Europe, the Middle East, India and the Far East).

⁵ Brătianu 1999, pp. 71-72.

⁶ UN Environmental Programme 2012, p. 3. Cf. Jaoshvili 2002, p. 4: “a virtually locked water basin”.

⁷ Cf. Suárez de Vivero, Rodríguez Mateos 2007, pls. 8, 17. Cf. Brătianu 1999, p. 68.

⁸ Cf. Spinei 2009, p. 41.

⁹ Rotaru 2010, p. 131.

¹⁰ Rotaru 2010, p. 134.

¹¹ Spinei, p. 40.

¹² Spinei, p. 41.

lack of islands, with the exception of some rocky cliffs near the shores¹³, the most known examples being the improperly called Snake Island, near the mouths of the Danube, and Berezan, near the Dnieper-Bug Estuary.

Besides the sea itself, the rivers and the coasts are fundamental for having a fuller picture on the geographical environment that determined human activity in the region.

Given the semi-closedness of the Black Sea, the rivers that flow to it play a greater role than they usually do in other circumstances. The great amount of fresh water they bring to a sea whose connection to the salty Mediterranean is narrow and where the vaporization is meager contributes to the low salinity. Particularly near the mouths of the rivers, the amount of fresh water that flows into the sea creates excellent conditions for great biological diversity. At the same time, the extremely low tides allow the accumulation of silt brought by the same rivers onto the shores of the sea. This phenomenon gives birth to numerous new, permanently changing, low wetlands: deltas, lagoons, swamps. The accumulation of silt and sand represents a major obstacle to navigation, thus creating the need for permanent engineering work, which is however richly rewarded through the connections the rivers create between the sea and the inland. This is particularly true in the northern half of the Black Sea, where the coasts are low and the geological strata are easy to cross, prerequisites being thus met for the existence of mighty rivers – the Danube, the Dniester, the Bug, the Dnieper, the Don, the Kuban. As a consequence, notably for such a closed sea, it is more useful to conceptualize the environment as a whole rivers-estuaries-sea system rather than as only the sea¹⁴.

The ‘Stake’ and the ‘Rules’: the geoeconomic and the geopolitical characteristics of the Black Sea.

The geographical analysis undergone so far reveals a capricious sea that combines few advantages for navigators, such as the circular streams and the radial network of rivers, with serious shortcomings, such as the frequent storms and frosts or the permanent changing of the shorelines. It is easy to understand why the ancient Greeks, after calling it Okeanos for a short period of time, at the beginning of their exploration¹⁵, subsequently gave it the name of Pontos Axeinos (‘the inhospitable sea’). The fact that in the end they antithetically named it Pontos Euxeinos (‘the hospitable sea’)¹⁶ might become easily explainable after taking a look at the last element of the physical geography of the region – the coasts, probably the most important part of the ‘stake’ of the geopolitical ‘game’.

The main feature of these coasts is their great diversity, generating a great wealth of *local resources*. In the north, from the Danube Delta to the Volga, there is a single huge plain, interrupted only by the aforementioned rivers and their tributaries. It is divided by latitude in two different areas, a southern half near the sea, consisting of steppes and silvo-steppes, and a northern half covered by forests and swamps¹⁷. The south is suitable for agriculture, mostly for cereal monocultures and husbandry, while the north produces timber and furs. While this distinction is suitable also in Asia, east to the Ural Mountains, the lands there suffer from greater aridity: the steppes slowly turns into semi-deserts and deserts in Central Asia. The regional variation according to the proximity to the ocean is noticeable also when taking into account only the northern Pontic steppes: while the wetter Ukrainian plains are suitable to agriculture, beyond the Don, in the steppes of Kuban and Volga, husbandry is more proper.

The wealth of these areas is increased by the good opportunities they provide to beekeeping and to fishing both species that are useful to be salted, and delicacies as sturgeons, turbot and stingray. Despite fish production is not one of the key strengths of the region anymore¹⁸, it seems that in the past fishing at the mouths of the great rivers was one of the most lucrative activities in the Black Sea¹⁹.

The wealth of vegetal and animal products is balanced by a significant lack of mineral resources. The latter was compensated through intensive trade between the northern Pontic steppes and the neighboring mountainous areas, rich in metals and salt. The same needs created the same type of con-

¹³ Avram, Hind, Tsetskhladze 2004, p. 927.

¹⁴ Jaoshvili 2002, p. 49.

¹⁵ Due to the foggy mystery that surrounded it, see Vulpe 2012, pp. 99-100.

¹⁶ See a larger discussion on the names of the Black Sea and their political, economic and cultural implications throughout history in Brătianu 1999, pp. 68-71.

¹⁷ Mackinder 1904, pp. 423-425.

¹⁸ Suárez de Vivero, Rodríguez Mateos 2007, pl. 26.

¹⁹ Cf. Opaïț 2007, p. 106; Avram, Hind, Tsetskhladze 2004, p. 925.

nections: in the east, there was the economic link between the Caucasus and the Azov and Volga steppes, based on the exchange of minerals for agricultural products²⁰, while in the west, the minerals extracted in the Carpathians went for the agricultural products of the plains watered by the Danube, the Prut, the Dniester and the Bug²¹. Ironically, in the 19th-20th centuries, oil and gas were discovered in the greatest quantity in the Black Sea region exactly in the same extreme areas to the east and to the west, at the foothills of the Caucasus and the Carpathians²².

In the more mountainous and dry south, there are only a few fertile plains, especially in Thrace and western Anatolia²³. To the east, farther inland, the only valuable staple, highly priced in the past, was timber²⁴. The meager resources and the lack of suitable places for ports on the southern coast of the Black Sea determined a low density of significant human habitation compared to other Pontic regions, starting even after the Greek colonization in the 8th-6th centuries BC²⁵.

Besides the specific resources of every area, the Pontic region has represented from ancient times a significant source of cheap labor force. Thracian, Scythian, Paphlagonian and Caucasian slaves were well sold on the Greek markets attested at Sinope, Apollonia, Histria or Olbia²⁶. The custom went on in the Middle Ages, registering a high point in the 13th century BC, when the Mongols captured and sold Kipchaks for the Mamluk armies in Egypt²⁷. After the fall of the Golden Horde and the submission of the Crimean Khanate to the Ottomans, the most important revenue for the Crimean Tatars was derived from selling Christian slaves captured in Wallachia, Moldova, Poland and Russia to the Ottoman Empire, whose economy, administration, army and fleet were based on servile labor²⁸: statistics based on medieval documents show that between 1500 and 1644, only the individuals captured in Poland amounted to almost one million²⁹. Nowadays, a similar phenomenon is going on, albeit with new forms. Besides legal migration to the West, on the economic principle of the attraction that capital exerts over labor, there are also illicit and violent practices, more similar to the slavery in the past: human trafficking³⁰.

In conclusion, during its history, the Pontic region has represented a significant provider of raw materials, particularly agricultural, fishing and apicultural resources (corn, hides, furs, fish, honey, wax), but also minerals (gold, iron, copper) and hydrocarbons (oil, gas). In the same time, it has always acted as a continuous source of labor force, servile or not, for other wealthier regions.

The significance of the local resources that might be gained through the control of the region is shown by many examples in history. Thus, supplying Constantinople, a huge metropolis for the standards of the Middle Ages and the early modern age, would not have been possible without the extensive control exercised by the Byzantines and the Ottomans over the Pontic area³¹. When the supremacy over the Black Sea was lost, as it happened with Byzantium after 1204 and 1261, the city decayed significantly to the meager population of only 30000 inhabitants in 1453³². In the same vein, the swift

²⁰ The connexion is documented from the most distant past both archaeologically and through interpretation and corroboration of old myths, according to cultural anthropology. See Rostovtzeff 1922, pp. 18-19.

²¹ Spinei 2009., p. 45.

²² Brătianu 1941-1942, II, pp. 682-683.

²³ Friedman 2010a.

²⁴ Hannestad 2007, pp. 85-87.

²⁵ Cf. Avram, Hind, Tsetsckhladze 2004, p. 925.

²⁶ Avram, Hind, Tsetsckhladze 2004, p. 925; Avram 2007, pp. 239-252.

²⁷ The phenomenon is expressively described at large by Korobeinikov 2008, pp. 379-412.

²⁸ Davies 2007, pp. 23-27.

²⁹ Davies 2007, p. 25.

³⁰ Its extent is sometimes very large, e.g. the Moldovan prostitutes in Europe, see Friedman 2010b. The forms of the extraction of human resources from the region are sometimes unexpected. An illustrative example is represented by the international adoptions of children. A hot topic in Romania in the 1990s, it came in the limelight in Russia at the beginning of the 2010s as the Russian Federation retaliated to Magnitsky Law through banning the adoption of Russian children by US citizens. A rough estimate presented by Hill 2012 shows that in two decades, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, more than 60000 Russian children were adopted by US families.

³¹ Cf. Braudel 1985b, I, pp. 203-206.

³² Cf. Brătianu 1941-1942, II, pp. 29-32.

revival of Russia after the huge losses of the First World War and the Civil War was prompted by its free access to the Ukrainian wheat and Caucasian oil³³.

Not only local powers benefitted from the local resources. From the earliest times³⁴, extra-Pontic merchants came by sea and exchanged for the local resources finished goods of high added value due to the technical processes they incorporated: wine, oil, pottery, textiles, machines etc. The essence of the trade that developed between the Black Sea region and extra-Pontic areas reachable by sea is highlighted in a well known passage by the Greek historian Polybius (2nd century BC):

„For those commodities which are the first necessities of existence, cattle and slaves, are confessedly supplied by the districts round the Pontus in greater profusion, and of better quality, than by any others: and for luxuries, they supply us with honey, wax, and salt-fish in great abundance; while they take our superfluous stock of olive oil and every kind of wine. In the matter of corn there is a mutual interchange, they supplying or taking it as it happens to be convenient”³⁵.

The interest of the extra-Pontic merchants was engendered not only by the local resources, but also by the high convergence of long-distance commercial routes that meet here in the periods of political stability and security³⁶.

One of the most important routes is the already mentioned sea route that crosses the Straits and turns towards the West, through the Aegean and the Western Mediterranean, reaching the Atlantic in the end. The same route has also an Eastern variation, towards Egypt and the Levant³⁷.

On the other hand, the most renowned routes are those which connect Europe and the Middle East to the other two great regions of Mackinder's Inner Crescent, India and the Pacific Far East³⁸. The first variation of this route, sometimes called the 'silk road', goes from Crimea, crosses the north of the Caspian Sea and reaches China after passing through Bukhara and Samarkand, while the second connects the same Central Asiatic towns to the Black Sea through the southern road Trebizond - Trabzon. This same road might lead also south, to the Persian Gulf and even farther to the Indian Ocean and Southeastern Asia. On these three routes to the East, the finished goods and the silver³⁹ of the West were exchanged for luxuries as spices, silk, precious stones and carpets manufactured in Persia and Turkestan.

Some other long distance routes were part of connections on the North-South axis between Siberia, the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean. One of them is the road along the river Don, starting near its mouth on the Sea of Azov, the permanently disputed city called throughout history Tanais, Tana, Azov or Rostov, and leading to the forests in northern Europe, to the Ural Mountains and to Western Siberia. Even more renowned is the western route along the Dnieper, that connects the Baltic Sea with the western shores of the Black Sea and then with Constantinople and the Aegean, the so-called route 'from the Varangians to the Greeks', whose control prompted the rise of the Kievan Rus' state in the 9th-11th century. Similarly, the Moldovan route starting from the cities of Chilia (Kilia) and Cetatea Albă (Bilgorod/Akkerman), going along the Dniester or the Prut to the Polish Baltic ports and the commercial centers of Central Europe brought about the existence of the Principality of Moldova, while its closing after the conquest of the two cities by the Ottomans in 1484 and of their hinterland in 1538 prompted its demise.

³³ Brătianu 1941-1942, II, pp. 705-710.

³⁴ It seems that Myceneans entered the Black Sea starting from the Bronze Age, phenomenon reflected both in the myth of the Golden Fleece of Colchis and the morphological similarities between a few Pontic artefacts and discoveries on mainland Greece. Cf. Hiller 1991, pp. 207-216.

³⁵ Plb. 4.38, translation by Evelyn S. Shuckburgh.

³⁶ Particularly in the preindustrial area, long distance trade was one of the main enterprises where the great capitals were involved because of the high rate of its profits. Cf. Braudel 1985a, II, pp. 41-48. The role played by the long distance trade focused on the convergent Pontic commercial routes is demonstrated through eloquent statistics by Brătianu 1999, p. 317-341. Relatively detailed descriptions of some of the commercial routes that meet in the Pontic area might be compared in Brătianu 1999, pp. 72-74, 325, in Spinei 2009, pp. 52-54 and in Avramea 2002, pp. 56-90.

³⁷ More and more proofs attest its use in ancient times. See Archibald 2007, pp. 253-272 and Reger 2007, pp. 273-286. For more recent times, see the competition between Russia, Ukraine and Romania for the Egyptian and Jordanian wheat markets. Cf. Fati 2011 and Necula 2012.

³⁸ See note 6.

³⁹ Braudel 1985a, I, pp. 234-239.

Last, but not least, the Danube is one of the convergent routes to the Black Sea, gaining a great significance after the Treaties of Adrianople and Paris, in 1829 and 1856. The recognition of the economic importance of the Danubian corridor was made through the setting of the European Commission of the Danube in 1856 and all the subsequent changes that it suffered. The canals dug in the 20th century in order to directly connect the North Sea to the Black Sea and the current strategy of development designed by the European Union further enhanced its significance.

Therefore, the Black Sea region features as a region of convergence of numerous commercial routes of great significance, giving birth, in propitious historical periods, to a triangular trade between the West and the Mediterranean and their finished goods, the Pontic area, northern Europe, western Siberia and their natural resources, the East and its luxuries⁴⁰. More precisely, referring not only to the staples and products exchanged on the Pontic markets, but also to the provenance of the merchants that met there, the triangular description should be reduced to a bipolar one, constant throughout history in its main traits: the Mediterranean and the West provide finished goods (olive oil, wine, jewelry, cloth, manufactured products, industrial equipment etc.), while the Pontus and the East contribute with raw materials and luxuries (wheat, corn, fish, honey, wax, cattle, horses, slaves, furs, spices, silk, natural gas, oil etc.)⁴¹. Thus, the Black Sea is geoeconomically an area of manifest complementarity between distinct regions.

Besides the rule of complementarity, the Black Sea region is also subject to the historical law of the changing importance of the commercial routes, due to political and economic factors, exposed by F. Braudel⁴². As it has been seen particularly with regard to the routes along the great northern Pontic rivers, rough paths might become great corridors for certain periods of time, through investments in infrastructure and security, and then come back to their original state, suitable only for local trade, while other roads receive their former traffic. At the same time, polities compete to control them, in order to raise taxes and to secure strategic resources for themselves.

Therefore, even though some staples and products traded in the Black Sea markets might change, even though trade routes may appear or disappear, the geoeconomic significance of the region has rested in place throughout history due to the following three recurring features:

- the wealth in raw materials of the lands neighboring the Black Sea;
- the complementarity of the two poles that are commercially connected in the Black Sea region;
- the high density of the commercial routes convergent to the region, due to the intersection of the North-South and West-East economic axes.

When economics are not disrupted by politics, all the three features are concurring to turn the Black Sea into a genuine "swing bridge of international trade"⁴³, whereas the instatement of regional monopolies causes the reduction of the last two features to mere potentialities and the intensive use of the local wealth only, for the benefit of the imperial monopolistic center. These three recurring features, enhanced or diminished depending on the regional balance of power, synthetically define the geoeconomic 'stake' that sets the coordinates for confrontation and cooperation in the Black Sea region.

The swing bridge character of the Pontic region is evident not only with regard to trade. Following F. Braudel who advocated for the unifying virtues of the seas⁴⁴, it might be assessed that indeed the

⁴⁰ Jacoby 1989, p. 32.

⁴¹ Reviewing the products mentioned in modern commercial documents and comparing them with the items traded in more remote times, Gh. Brătianu made the same comment: "*Mutatis mutandis*, the essential and permanent traits of the economic conditions had not changed much". Brătianu 1941-1942, II, pp. 359-361.

⁴² Braudel 1985b, I, pp. 366-368, with regard to the roads through the Alps. See also the evolution of the routes used for bringing silk to Europe in the 13th-14th centuries, in Jacoby 1997, pp. 55-79, an interesting parallel to the current competition for the opening of energy corridors through the Caucasus, the northern Pontic area and Anatolia.

⁴³ This metaphor is the title of a chapter in Brătianu 1999, pp. 317-343. Its aptness is supported through telling examples. For instance, in the Genoese notarial archive of Lamberto di Sambuceto of Caffa, in only four months of 1289, there are registered contracts whose worth is calculated by Brătianu to one and a half million of 1924 French francs (roughly one million USD in 2018, using data from www.dollartimes.com and from Blancheton, Maveyraud 2009). Nonetheless, the same notarial records investigated by Brătianu 1999, pp. 326-327, teach us that only in Caffa were working at that very time at least 27 more Genoese notaries!

⁴⁴ Braudel 1985b, I, pp. 193-201. See also Brătianu 1999, pp. 67-68.

Black Sea region acted as a catalyst not only for trade, but also for *demographic, cultural and technological exchanges*.

The movements of populations are one of the most prominent features of the history of the region. The most famous are the nomadic migrations of the northern steppes, from East to West, either with dramatic developments and consequences, as in the case of Huns, Avars, Magyars or Mongols, or taking the shape of less spectacular infiltrations, as in the case of Sarmatians and Uzi. Less frequently and conspicuously, demographic flows were directed through the southern shores of the Black Sea, as happened with the Ottoman Turks or the Gypsies. Sometimes, migrations took place from West to East, as in the case of Cimmerians, Thracians, Celts and Goths, and the colonizing movements of the Greeks in ancient times or those of the Germans during the Tsarist Empire developed along the same direction⁴⁵. Even less noticeable, but still present throughout history, are the demographic flows from north to south, under the guise of slave trade, invoked earlier, while nowadays migration towards other parts of the world takes the shape of exporting labor force, brain drain, human trafficking and flows of refugees.

Likewise, technological advances frequently spread from East to West and backwards. The sedentary communities of Europe learned from the nomads how to ride horses using saddles and stirrups or even how to melt and cast iron, while the opposite direction is followed nowadays in the massive technological transfer from Western Europe to Russia.

Culturally, the diffusion of practices, religions and ideologies was also conspicuous, its diversity ranging from the impressive *dromos* tombs of the ancient times⁴⁶, to the Christian missionaries who brought their religion even to China in the Middle Ages and to communism that spread from Russia to all over the world (it is not by accident that the first great congress of Islamic communist parties took place in 1920 in Baku)⁴⁷.

Even unexpected items, as the bubonic plague that was brought to Crimea from Asia by the Tatars and was transported by Genoese ships from there to Europe, where it suppressed almost a third of the whole population in 1348-1349, should be taken into account as illustrative examples of the significance of the Black Sea as a gateway for exchanges.

Last, but not least, there is the geostrategic ‘stake’ that influences the behavior of the players. Two particular cases are relevant for assessing its significance.

Firstly, it should be noted that throughout history all the powers established on the northern shores of the Black Sea have faced the dilemma of insecurity, given the lack of easily defendable natural borders. Consequently, they are instinctively prompted to expand in order to reach more suitable frontiers, as the Carpathians and the Caucasus⁴⁸. More recently, when land power might be more easily integrated with the naval one, there is also a fundamental need to ensure an effective control of the Black Sea in order to avoid an attack from the south. The most logical answer to this vulnerability is occupying the Straits⁴⁹.

Secondly, the powers on the southern shores of the Black Sea willing to assure their own stability met the need to establish their domination on both sides of the Straits and to build concentric defense lines around them. This prompted the expansion of the powers having control over the Straits both in the Balkans and in Anatolia with such a high frequency that this movement turns to be a historical law⁵⁰, well grasped by great leaders such as Constantine the Great or Mehmed the Conqueror⁵¹, as well as NATO, which granted its membership to both Turkey and Greece in 1952, on geostrategic basis.

At the end of this short review of the main geoeconomic and geostrategic ‘stakes’ in the Black Sea region, it should be noted that each international player acting in this geopolitical space has defined for

⁴⁵ Brătianu 1941-1942, II, pp. 330-336.

⁴⁶ Tsetskhladze 1998.

⁴⁷ Cf. Gökyay 2006, pp. 20-23.

⁴⁸ The dilemma and part of its consequences were spectacularly described in the second part of George Kennan’s “Long Telegram” (Kennan 1946). A more didacticist view is offered for the current Russian Federation in Friedman 2012.

⁴⁹ This vulnerability and its consequences were made clear during the Crimean War (1853-1856), and later, in the 19th and 20th century, see Bobroff 2000, p. 78 and Gökyay 2006, pp. 59-60.

⁵⁰ Braudel 1985b, I, pp. 290-298.

⁵¹ For the strategic view of Mehmed II, based on the control over Rumeli and Anatolia, see Inalcik 1996, pp. 70-74.

itself different interests and has drawn different views for conceptually encompassing these interests. For example, while Russia has been contending for occupying the Straits in the last 300 years, due to mainly strategic reasons, the Danubian Principalities and, later, Romania, has been striving to keep the access open in and out the Black Sea, a fundamental prerequisite for having the ability to harness its own economic resources. At the same time, there have been many perspectives that highlighted the different interests and focus of the neighboring powers, sometimes expressed through metaphors that described the Black Sea as Byzantium's 'backdoor' or the Ottomans' 'chaste virgin'⁵² or the Straits as 'Turkey's heart and Romania's lungs'⁵³ etc.

For achieving as much as it is possible from the 'stake' of the game, the players are striving to get as many geographical 'trump cards' as they can.

The 'Trump Cards': the key strategic points for controlling the Black Sea.

By combining physical features and human attributes, geography grants special significance to key points which bring considerable economic and strategic advantages to any power that might control them. They comprise mandatory passage points as passes or straits, peninsulas and islands which dominate the seas, high landforms that dominate plains, mouths of rivers etc. There are three attributes that turns a geographical feature into a key strategic point: they might be defended with relatively low costs, they help harnessing large revenues, through taxation or exploitation of resources, they hinder the economic, military and diplomatic activities conducted by contenders and enemies. It is understandable they are limited in number and the competition for their control is fierce.

In the Black Sea region there are five key strategic points. Two of them are fundamental – the Straits and Crimea, while the others are of lesser importance – the mouths of the Danube, the mouth of the northern Pontic rivers (the Dniester, the Bug, the Dnieper, the Don), and the Caucasian passes, of which the most famous are the Caspian Gates.

The fundamental relevance of the Straits and Crimea has been already briefly described by Gh. Brătianu in his assessment of the Romanian interests in the region⁵⁴. Perhaps the best notice with regard to their significance is the fact that whenever someone controlled both the Straits and Crimea, it swiftly managed to impose its influence over all the Pontic region, as seen in innumerable examples, ranging from the Athenian thalassocracy and the Pontic Kingdom of Mithridates VI Eupator, to the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman empires. A short exposition of these key points' peculiarities will give a convincing explanation for the emergence of this historical law.

The Bosphorus and the Dardanelles are important because they are mandatory passage points on several strategic routes. They represent the intersecting point of the mostly maritime North-South axis with the mostly terrestrial West-East axis, with all its variations. The latter comprises in Europe the following main routes: Istanbul – Thessaloniki – Durrës or Avlona, the ancient *Via Egnatia*, that bridges Asia with the south of Western Europe, through Brindisi and Rome or Venice⁵⁵; Istanbul – Sofia – Belgrade, the so-called „imperial road” that leads to Vienna and Central Europe⁵⁶; the West Pontic coastal route, through Varna and Constanța to the mouths of Danube and subsequently to the Baltic⁵⁷. In Asia, there are also three main routes: the direct route through central Anatolia that reaches the Euphrates and the Persian Gulf; the older route followed by Xerxes and Alexander the Great, along the Aegean coast and the plain of the Sakarya river⁵⁸; the route along the Pontic coast of Anatolia, towards the Caucasus, very useful given the frequent insecurity in Central Anatolia⁵⁹.

While there are other parallel connections between West and East, the communication between North and South almost inescapably passes through the Straits, as the tectonics make them the only maritime gate in the great mountainous wall lying from the Alps to Himalaya. If the Straits were

⁵² The metaphor was used in 1700 by Alexandros Mavrocordatos the Exaporite, grand dragoman of the Porte, during entreaties with an emissary of tsar Peter I of Russia, Brătianu 1941-1942, II, p. 243.

⁵³ Declaration of Nicolae Titulescu regarding the navigation regime through the Straits of the Black Sea, Montreux, the 22th of June 1936, *apud* Bușe, Vianu, Zamfir, Bădescu 2010, p. 242.

⁵⁴ Brătianu 1941-1942, I, pp. 40-44.

⁵⁵ About *via Egnatia*, see Avramea 2002, pp. 68-72 and Vanderspoel 2010, pp. 265-267.

⁵⁶ Avramea 2002, pp. 65-66.

⁵⁷ Avramea 2002, p. 67.

⁵⁸ Hogarth 1913, pp. 325-326.

⁵⁹ Avramea 2002, p. 77.

closed, Russian and other neighboring countries' exports would be greatly affected⁶⁰ and even the effects on the global economy would be grim, as 5500 out of the 50000 ships annually passing through them are oil tanks which assure a daily traffic of almost 2.5 million barrels⁶¹.

Blocking the Straits is easy. Polybius noted that even in his remote time when there was no powerful artillery, the city of Byzantium "so completely commands the entrance to the Pontus by sea, that no merchant can sail in or out against its will"⁶². This is no surprise given the small width of the Bosphorus, of only 700m in the narrowest point encountered on its full length of 28.5 km. Likewise, the width of the Dardanelles, the twin strait 65 km long, ranges between 1.3 and 7.5 km⁶³, while even the Sea of Marmara comprises islands like Proconessus that are useful for controlling the traffic between the Mediterranean and Pontus.

Therefore, fortification works are able to turn the Straits into an impenetrable fortress to seaborne attacks⁶⁴, while a few strategic points on the European side help in repelling any land assaults. Even the amplest preparations have been frequently proved not to be enough to conquer the Straits, the latest historical instance being Britain's and France's failure at Gallipoli in 1915-1916. But the Straits are also redoubtable because they can be protected through raising concentric lines of defense farther away, in the Balkans and in Anatolia⁶⁵.

The last great advantage of the Straits is that they are placed in the middle of a fertile coastal plain that produces rich and easily transportable crops, thus greatly stimulating the existence of urban centers and the accumulation of capital⁶⁶.

At the opposite end of the Black Sea lies the other key for the total control of the Pontic region, the Crimean Peninsula. Given the total lack of islands, this peninsular spur dug right into the middle of the sea acts like a tremendous outpost from where all the other shores might be reached with lightning speed. The outpost feature of Crimea is enhanced by other peculiarities, too: the excellent landing facilities for big ships, which are not to be found anywhere else on the northern Pontic shores, the narrowness of the easy defendable Isthmus of Perekop, the eagle nests, like the Mangup, which might be fortified in the Yayla Mountains in order to harass the potential invaders, the commanding position over the Strait of Kerch.

The strategic advantages are doubled by economic ones. Besides the control that Crimea grants over the Dnieper and Don trade routes, it produces great crops and raises large herds of cattle and horses. The wealth amassed in the peninsula is a huge incentive and a great means to expand the exploitation system to the nearby Kuban valley, which might frequently be found throughout history in the same hands that own Crimea⁶⁷.

This peculiar advantages make Crimea to be "a world unto itself"⁶⁸, where the weaker peoples of the steppes, like the Scythians, the Goths and the Tatars, dislodged by more powerful warriors, frequently lived alongside merchants and colonists from abroad, like the Greeks, the Armenians and the Italians. On the other side, this mixed world, sometimes politically autonomous, sometimes independent, like under the rulers of the Bosphoran kingdom, has always attracted the interest of the external great powers entering the Black Sea. Athenians, Mithridates VI, Romans, Byzantines, Chazars, Kievan Rus' and Tatars imposed their domination throughout history either directly, or through unequal alliances. However, better known are the Ottoman and the Russian conquests. The Ottomans took Crimea only 22 years after they conquered Constantinople, receiving in 1475 the submission of the Tatar khan and forcefully occupying the Genoese possessions and turning them into a separate province. Likewise, the Muscovite expansion on the shores of the Black Sea was directed from the very beginning

⁶⁰ See statistics regarding the significance of the Russian exports through the Black Sea in Bobroff 2000, pp. 76-77 and Brătianu 1941-1942, II, pp. 357-359.

⁶¹ US Energy Information Administration 2017. For comparison, the 18.5 million barrels/day traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, the busiest in the world is 8 times larger.

⁶² Plb. 4.38.

⁶³ The physical measurements of the Straits might be found in Gogeanu 1966, p. 7.

⁶⁴ Friedman 2012.

⁶⁵ Friedman 2012.

⁶⁶ Friedman 2012.

⁶⁷ See the example of the Bosphoran kingdom and the Byzantine and Ottoman empires.

⁶⁸ Garnett 1997, p. 22, *apud* Sasse 2007, p. 4.

against Crimea, through the 1678 and 1689 campaigns of Prince Golitsyn against Perekop⁶⁹, while a century later, in 1783, the peninsula was finally subdued and visited even by the empress Catherine II herself. In 1853, the allied western armies chose Crimea as their landing area, deemed to be the most important Russian possession in the Black Sea region, while during the peace negotiations in 1856, the most heated discussion was that over the possibility of disabling the naval bases in Crimea and the Russian fleet in the Black Sea⁷⁰. The efforts of the Russian Federation to make permanent the presence of its fleet in the Ukrainian Crimea after 1991, followed by its annexation in 2014, are additionally revealing the huge importance of the peninsula for the Black Sea region.

Besides this first category of key points who are essential both economically and militarily and who are granting valuable advantages for controlling both the land and the sea, there is also a second category of lower significance.

To this second category belongs the Carpathians-Danube mouths system, as well as the Caucasus, two regions situated at distinct extremities of the Black Sea, but partly similar. They are important both economically and strategically, but their strategic relevance is limited to the ability to control the land only: there are no conspicuous advantages that they bring in a potential struggle for the domination of the sea, like those granted by the Straits and Crimea. History strengthens this notice, as there has not been even one power raised from these areas that managed to become hegemonic in the entire Black Sea region.

Nevertheless, the significance of the lower Danube and of the Caucasus derives from their status as passage points between the two distinct Pontic shores: the northern and the southern one⁷¹. The geographical demarcation is not absolute and a certain degree of physical and human continuity exists, for example, between the lands north of the Danube and those south of it, most conspicuously revealed by the name of Scythia Minor granted to Dobrudja in ancient times⁷². Therefore, these key points are not significant for any other geographical reason than the fact they represent the narrowest gates between the northern Pontic and the southern Pontic areas.

However, as N. Spykman noted a long time ago, there is no geographical border that can hold by itself, it is the human action that renders borders inexpugnable⁷³ and this is copiously shown by the constant preoccupation of the local powers to strengthen the already existing natural defensive lines.

Although Danube was sometimes preferred as the better strategic option for setting up defenses, the best demarcation in the West between the two main Pontic areas should follow the course of the river from the Delta to Galați, where it turns south. From Galați, the defense should follow the course of the Siret river to Nămolosa and then be built on land, on a line reaching Focșani and finally, the Curvature Carpathians. Although part of the defenses is on land, the main advantage of this option is that the length of the defense line is considerably shortened.

The first to harness this opportunity were the Romans, who set their legions on the Carpathians, in the province of Dacia, and on the Danube, in the province of Moesia Inferior, where they were supported in guarding the two river crossings by the Danubian fleet (*classis Flavia Moesica*)⁷⁴, while the segment between the two provinces was overseen by camps and *valli*. The Carpathian timber used in the Roman fortifications built in Dobrudja demonstrates the frequent and complex character of the connections between the region of the Curvature Carpathians and north-eastern Dobrudja in the Roman period⁷⁵. The Ottomans will do the same in the Middle Ages, strengthening Isaccea/Oblucița, Măcin and Brăila and trying to expand their domination to the Carpathians⁷⁶. The anti-Ottoman campaigns conducted south of the Danube by the Wallachian princes Vlad Dracula (1462) and Michael the

⁶⁹ Brătianu 1941-1942, II, pp. 122-126.

⁷⁰ Cf. Brătianu 1941-1942, II, pp. 444-456.

⁷¹ See Spinei 2009, p. 46. Cf. Rădulescu 1942, *apud* Bădescu, Dungaciu 1995, pp. 100-101.

⁷² On the mental mechanisms which act as fundamentals for geographical conceptual pairs as Scythia-Scythia Minor, see Vachkova 2008, p. 345.

⁷³ Spykman 1942, pp. 437-438; Spykman 1938, pp. 231-232.

⁷⁴ On the fords of Danube and other strategic matters, see Spinei 2009, pp. 30-33.

⁷⁵ I am indebted for this perspective to Liușnea 2000, Croitoru 2002 and to ideas and informations transmitted by conf. univ. dr. Ioan Carol Opreș during the special course „The Roman Dobrudja”, attended in 2012-2013 at the University of Bucharest.

⁷⁶ Brătianu 1941-1942, II, pp. 20-21.

Brave (1594-1595) highlight the risks of setting up defensive positions on the river, without controlling the Carpathian ridge.

From a northern point of view, it should be noted that the constant efforts conducted by Stephen the Great, the prince of Moldova, to gain the upper hand on the plain of the lower Siret river and on the northern branch of the Danube, by occupying the fortress of Chilia, building the stronghold of Crăciuna and frequently campaigning against the Wallachian princes, vassals to the sultan in Istanbul were repaid when he was able to repel two massive Ottoman invasions in 1475 and 1476.

The importance of controlling both the Carpathians and the lower Danube was sized early in the modern age and several political projects competed in this wise. Catherine II of Russia proposed several times the creation of a kingdom of Dacia, as a buffer between the contending empires in Eastern Europe, but she also envisaged that its rule should be granted to a Russian prince, thus asserting the great Russian interest for this strategic region⁷⁷. Similarly, France supported the birth of the Romanian state in 1856 and 1859, through strengthening Wallachia and Moldova and admitting their union, in order to create a buffer both against Russia and Austria. In 1917, the defensive line between the Curvature Carpathians and the Danube Delta, that started to be known as the Focșani-Nămoloasa-Galați line, was the only part of the Eastern Front that resisted the Central Powers' attack, while in 1944 it acted like a major advantage for Romania in negotiating the armistice with the Allies.

Finally, it should be noted that when this line cannot be held, the regional powers use the Danube itself as a second line of defense. The Romans did this after they retreated from Dacia in the 270s, while keeping bridgeheads north of the river, the Byzantines also tried to hold their influence in the Danube Delta, by the way of their fleet, even after the Bulgarian state was born⁷⁸.

A similar brief analysis might be done for the Caucasus and its passes, especially on the Caspian Gates/Dariali Gorge, one of the strategic points of constant concern for the regional powers in the east Pontic area: the emergence and the development of local polities in the Caucasus has also been connected throughout history to the strategic balance of power and to the economic benefits of the commercial routes which were passing by and through.

The third category of key points is represented by the mouths of the other great rivers that flow to the sea in the northern Pontic region – the Dniester, the Bug, the Dnieper, the Don – and their vicinities. It is not by chance that some of the most important cities of the Black Sea region are placed here: Moncastro/Cetatea Albă/Akkerman/Bilgorod, Ochakov/Vozia, Tana/Azov, in the Middle Ages, Odessa and Rostov, in modern times. Besides the great places they offer for anchorage, their fisheries and the surrounding agricultural fields, the main advantage granted by these key points is represented by the control that might be exerted from them upwards, on the rivers. The possession of land powers over the northern Pontic coasts is never to be considered secure without taking these strongholds, as it is shown by the great pains they are ready to suffer in order to occupy them, as did the Russians in the case of Ochakov (1737, 1788) or the Romanians in that of Odessa (1941).

References

1. Archibald, Z.H. (2007). Contacts between the Ptolemaic Kingdom and the Black Sea in the Early Hellenistic Age. In: *The Black Sea in Antiquity. Regional and Interregional Economic Exchanges*, V. Gabrielsen, J. Lund (eds.), Black Sea Studies 6, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, pp. 253-272.
2. Avram, A. (2007). Some Thoughts about the Black Sea and the Slave Trade before the Roman Domination (6th-1st Centuries BC). In: *The Black Sea in Antiquity. Regional and Interregional Economic Exchanges*, V. Gabrielsen, J. Lund (eds.), Black Sea Studies 6, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, pp. 239-252.
3. Avram, A., Hind, J. and Tsetskhladze, G. (2004). The Black Sea Area. In: *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis*, H.M. Hansen, T.H. Nielsen (eds.), Oxford; New York, Oxford University Press, pp. 924-973.
4. Avramea, A. (2002). Land and Sea Communications, Fourth-Fifteenth Centuries. In: *The Economic History of Byzantium. From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, vol. I, A. Laiou (ed.), Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, pp. 56-90.

⁷⁷ Brătianu 1941-1942, II, pp. 231-233.

⁷⁸ Spinei 2009, pp. 47, 55-56.

5. Bădescu, I. and Dungaciu, D. (1995). *Sociologia și geopolitica frontierei*, București, Floare Albastră.
6. Blancheton, B. and Maveyraud, S. (2009). French Exchange Rate Management in the mid 1920s, *Financial History Review*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 183-201.
7. Bobroff, R. (2000). Behind the Balkan Wars. Russian policy toward Bulgaria and the Turkish Straits, 1912-1913, *Russian Review*, vol. 59, no. 1, pp. 83-90.
8. Braudel, F. (1985a). *Civilizație materială, economie, capitalism. 2. Jocurile schimbului*, București, Meridiane.
9. Braudel, F. (1985b). *Mediterrana și lumea mediteraneană în epoca lui Filip al II-lea*, București, Meridiane.
10. Brătianu, Gh. (1941-1942). *Chestiunea Mării Negre*, I. Vernescu (ed.), București, Universitatea din București, Facultatea de Filosofie și Litere.
11. Brătianu, Gh. (1999). *Marea Neagră de la origini până la cucerirea otomană*, Iași, Polirom.
12. Croitoru, C. (2002). Aspecte politico-militare ale prezenței romane la Dunărea de Jos în secolul II p. Chr., *Erasmus*, vol. 13, 2002.
13. Bușe, C., Vianu, A., Zamfir, Z. and Bădescu, Gh. (2010). *Relații internaționale în acte și documente. 1. 1917-1939*, Iași, TipoMoldova.
14. Davies, B. (2007). *Warfare, State and Society on the Black Sea Steppe, 1500-1700*, New York, Routledge.
15. Fati, S. (2011). România sparge monopolul Rusiei la exportul de grâu în Egipt, *Radio Europa Liberă*, 05 Aug. 2011, Available at: <https://www.europalibera.org/content/article/24287956.html> (Accessed: 05 May 2018).
16. Friedman, G. (2010a). The Geopolitics of Turkey: Searching for More, *Stratfor*, 03 Aug. 2010, Available at: <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/geopolitics-turkey-searching-more> (Accessed: 03 May 2018).
17. Friedman, G. (2010b). Geopolitical Journey, Part 4: Moldova, *Stratfor*, 19 Nov. 2010, Available at: <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/geopolitical-journey-part-4-moldova> (Accessed: 03 May 2018).
18. Friedman, G. (2012). The Geopolitics of Russia: Permanent Struggle, *Stratfor*, 15 Apr. 2012, Available at: <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/geopolitics-russia-permanent-struggle> (Accessed: 03 May 2018).
19. Garnett, S.W. (1997). *Keystone in the Arch: Ukraine in the Emerging Security Environment of Central and Eastern Europe*, Washington, DC, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
20. Gogeanu, P. (1966). *Strămtorile Mării Negre de-a lungul istoriei*, București, Ed. Politică.
21. Gökyay, B. (2006). *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey, 1920-1941*, London; New York, Routledge.
22. Hannestad, L. (2007). Timber as a Trade Resource of the Black Sea. In: *The Black Sea in Antiquity. Regional and Interregional Economic Exchanges*, V. Gabrielsen, J. Lund (eds.), Black Sea Studies 6, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, pp. 85-99.
23. Hill, F. (2012). In Response to Sanctions, Russia Aims to Bar U.S. Adoptions of Russian Children, *PBS NewsHour*, 27 Dec. 2012, Available at: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/russia-aims-to-bar-u-s-adoptions-of-russian-children> (Accessed: 06 May 2018).
24. Hiller, S. (1991). The Mycenians and the Black Sea. In: *Thalassa: L'Égée préhistorique et la mer*, R. Laffineur, L. Basch (eds.), Liège, Université de Liège, pp. 207-216.
25. Hogarth, D.G. (1913). The Balkan Peninsula, *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 41, no. 4, pp. 324-336.
26. Inalcik, H. (1996). *Imperiul Otoman. Epoca clasică, 1300-1600*, București, Ed. Enciclopedică.
27. Jacoby, D. (1989). From Byzantium to Latin Romania: Continuity and Change, *Mediterranean Historical Review*, vol. 4, pp. 1-44.
28. Jacoby, D. (1997). Silk crosses the Mediterranean. In: *Le vie del Mediterraneo. Idee, uomini, oggetti (secoli XI-XVI)*, G. Aivaldi (ed.), Genoa, ECI, pp. 55-79.
29. Jaoshvili, S. (2002). *The rivers of the Black Sea*, The European Environment Agency, Technical Report no. 71.

30. Kennan, G. (1946). Telegram to George Marshall [“The Long Telegram”], 22 Feb. 1946, Harry S. Truman Administration File, Elsey Papers, Available at: https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/6-6.pdf (Accessed: 5 May 2018).
31. Korobeinikov, D. (2008). A broken mirror: the Kipçak world in the the thirteenth century. In: *The Other Europe in the Middle Ages*, F. Curta (ed.), Leiden; Boston, Brill, pp. 379-412.
32. Liuşnea, M.D. (2000). Considerații privind limes-ul roman în perioada Principatului, la Dunărea de Jos, *Carpica*, vol. 29, pp. 71-82.
33. Mackinder, H. (1904). The Geographical Pivot of History, *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 23, no. 4, pp. 421-437.
34. Necula, F. (2012). România va exporta 120.000 de tone de grâu în Egipt, *Ziare.com*, 27 Sep. 2012, Available at: <http://www.ziare.com/economie/agricultura/romania-va-exporta-120-000-de-tone-de-grau-in-egipt-vezi-cati-bani-va-primi-1192528> (Accessed: 5 May 2018).
35. Opaît, A. (2007). A Weighty Matter: Pontic Fish Amphorae. In: *The Black Sea in Antiquity. Regional and Interregional Economic Exchanges*, V. Gabrielsen, J. Lund (eds.), Black Sea Studies 6, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, pp. 101-121.
36. Rădulescu, N.A. (1942). Hotarul românesc dunărean, *Buletinul Societății Regale Române de Geografie*, no. 61, pp. 287-291.
37. Reger, G. (2007). Traders and Travelers in the Black and Aegean Seas. In: *The Black Sea in Antiquity. Regional and Interregional Economic Exchanges*, V. Gabrielsen, J. Lund (eds.), Black Sea Studies 6, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, pp. 273-286.
38. Rostovtzeff, M.I. (1922). *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
39. Rotaru, A. (2010). Geoenvironmental Issues Concerning the Black Sea Basin, *International Journal of Energy and Environment*, vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 131-138.
40. Sasse, G. (2007). *The Crimea Question: Identity, Transition and Conflict*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
41. Spinei, V. (2009). The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads North of the Danube Delta from the Tenth to the Mid-Thirteenth Century, Leiden; Boston, Brill.
42. Spykman, N.J. (1942). Frontiers, Security, and International Organization, *Geographical Review*, vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 436-447.
43. Spykman, N.J. (1938). Geography and Foreign Policy, II, *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 213-236.
44. Suárez de Vivero, J.L. and Rodriguez Mateos, J.C. (2007). *Atlas of the European Seas and Oceans*, Barcelona, Ediciones del Serbal.
45. Tsetschladze, G. (1998). Who Built the Thracian and Scythian Royal and Elite Tombs?, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 55-93.
46. US Energy Information Administration (2017). World Oil Transit Chokepoints, Available at: https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis_includes/special_topics/World_Oil_Transit_Chokepoints/wotc.pdf (Accessed: 03 May 2018).
47. UN Environment Programme (n.d.). Black Sea Region. Regional Profile, Available at: http://www.unep.org/regionalseas/programmes/nonunep/blacksea/instruments/r_profile_bs.pdf (Accessed: 20 Dec. 2012).
48. Vachkova, V. (2008). Danube Bulgaria and Khazaria as parts of the Byzantine *Oikoumene*. In: *The Other Europe in the Middle Ages*, F. Curta (ed.), Leiden; Boston, Brill, pp. 339-362.
49. Vanderspoel, J. (2010). Provincia Macedonia. In: *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, J. Roisman, I. Worthington (eds.), Oxford, Blackwell, pp. 251-275.
50. Vulpe, A. (2012). Fost-au cimrierii o populație nomadă? O discuție pe marginea unei cărți recent apărute. In: *Armele Atenei. In honorem Zoe Petre*, V. Nistor, D. Zaharia (eds.), București, Tritonic, 2012.