GAMES, EXERCISES AND SIMULATIONS

COOPERATION, PROBLEM SOLVING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING IN THE BLACK SEA REGION EXERCISE

Valentin STOIAN-IORDACHE[*]
Cristina IVAN[*]
Ruxandra BULUC[*]
Cătălina-Oana FRAȚILA[*]
Cristian CONDRUȚ[*]
Mădălina LUPU[*]

Introduction

The *Security in the Black Sea Region. Shared Challenges, sustainable future. Europe and its neighbourhood* program was created with the aim to foster academic and policy applied dialogue on topics relevant to the contemporary security challenges in the Black Sea Region.

The 2023 edition of the program took place under the aegis of the *European Security and Defence College* in May 2023 in Bucharest, and included participants from both EU member states and Eastern Partnership countries, who, together, discussed the present and future of the Black Sea Region.

The exercise[1] below aimed to familiarize students in the program with the security developments in the Black Sea Region over the previous

[*] PhD "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, email: stoian.valentin@animv.eu
[*] PhD "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, email: ivan.cristina@animv.eu
[*] PhD "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, email: buluc.ruxandra@animv.eu
[*] PhD "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, email: fratila.catalina@animv.eu
[*] PhD Candidate "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, email: condrut.cristian@animv.eu
[*] PhD "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, email: lupu.madalina@animv.eu
[1] The current exercise is an updated and expanded version of the previous work "Exercițiu de simulare pentru programul *Security in the Black Sea Region: Shared*

seven years and to place them in the role of policy makers. Thus, through a series of debates and group activities, they could evaluate the main trends in the region, conceive of potential game changers and adopt policy solutions at both the national and supra-national level with the aim of realizing a vision of a secure and developed region. At the end of the exercise, students presented their own vision of the future and argued for the best policy responses which they would implement in order to achieve that vision.

Overall Goal:
The exercise is designed as a framework in which public consultation, participatory management and leadership skills will be exercised by program attendants in order to understand the main challenges that the European Union and its members and partners face in the Black Sea Region. The final goal is to propose flexible policy solutions adapted to the problems at hand and which can transform the region into an area of stability and prosperity.

Participants will be encouraged to use the knowledge acquired during the program and their own skills as policy makers and strategists, to better formulate policy problems and to adopt relevant solutions that can be implemented by EU institutions, Member States and governments from countries belonging to the Eastern Partnership.

Setting & vision:
The setting is the real region of the Black Sea, which participants already know and understand through the multiple perspectives of their professions and national backgrounds. In this real-life context, what participants are encouraged to do is to exercise their knowledge of already extant EU and national policies in the region, as well as their imagination and expertise in order to create a vision of regional peace,

Challenges, Sustainable Future (2015) – Security Game Changers and Regional Competitiveness by 2030", by Cristina Ivan, Karin Megheşan, Mihaela Teodor, Valentin Stoian, registered in the "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy central library FD 772. The current version expands on the previous by adapting the scenario to contemporary security challenges, specific to 2023, and expanding the references to the possible actions of the European Union as a strategic actor, in line with the SBSR 2023 course development.

sustainability, resilience and stability, which can be reached through the synergic application of multiple policy instruments, implemented by different levels of government (supra-national, national, sub-national)
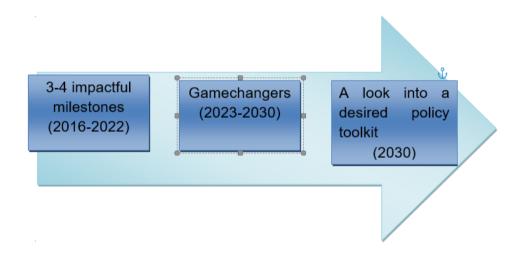
Objectives:

Given this overall vision, the tasks in the exercise will be to identify, through a process based on individual participation in group discussions, the sources of instability, decline and ineffectiveness in the Black Sea Region and, especially, the possible game-changers which might radically affect the strategic situation and require a different policy approach from the European Union institutions, the EU Member States and the countries of the Eastern Partnership. Game-changers will reflect not only possible events in the region, but also potential changes which could impact policy-making at the national and supra-national level.

Description:

The exercise is designed in **several stages. In the first three days, the exercise will focus on stages 1-3 below, while the fourth day will be dedicated to the fourth stage in the table. Each stage from 1-3 will consist of 7 steps to be followed according to the scenario** detailed below:

Stage 1	• diagnose the current state of the art in terms of regional security • make an X-ray of the hard, soft and smart power instruments that supra-national and national actors use within the Black Sea Region
Stage 2	• identify possible and/or likely game-changers
Stage 3	• identify potential strategic responses at both the supra-national and the national level that can leverage trends and game changers for an increased regional stability and sustainability
Stage 4	• build a vision that can inspire national and collective regional strategic decisions for the overall good by 2030 (to be presented in front of the group)

To provide consistency and structure to participants' collaborative analysis and decision making process, during each stage, facilitators will hand to each of the three groups an identical set of cards containing major indicators of most impactful events and trends that correspond to the relevant milestones that have shaped the current security environment over the past 7 years (in stage 1), game-changers likely or potentially occurring to change the current state of the art (in stage 2) and goals to describe a look into the desired future (in stage 3). Cards will be debated, selected and completed with participants' own vision recorded on distinct cards, named *jokers*.

Figure 1: The structure of the exercise (authors' idea)

Stage 1: Diagnose the current state of the art in the region

Participants will make an X-ray of the current state of the art and most impactful milestones over the past 7 years. Choices will be based on own knowledge and suggested indicators provided by the exercise facilitators (cards & jokers).

Sample card 1 (authors' idea)

Gas prices increase throughout Europe

Given the reduction of gas supply, energy prices increase consistently throughout Europe, sparking a drive to reduce consumption. However, actors begin to accuse each other of not reducing their consumption enough.

Stage 2: Identify game-changers likely to shape the hard and soft power methods used at regional level in the near future

Potential game-changers will be discussed in terms of relevance, magnitude and impact, with the aim to prioritize their importance and also the possible reaction on the part of policymakers.

Sample card 2 (authors' idea)

Russia deploys tactical nuclear weapons to Eastern Ukraine and launches several short-range missiles against Kiev and other major Ukrainian cities.

Russia goes nuclear

Stage 3: Build 'a policy toolkit' that can inspire strategic decisions for the regional good by 2030

Based on a careful analysis of hard/soft/smart power instruments, participants will identify potential strategic responses that can turn game changers into well addressed challenges and therefore increase regional stability and sustainability.

Sample card 3 (authors' idea)

Modus operandi *(to be gradually explained and monitored by exercise moderators)*

As mentioned, each stage in the exercise shall follow an action scenario divided in 7 distinct steps:

Step 1

Participants are divided in three teams (A, B and C/ X, Y and Z) that will progressively solve assigned tasks.

Figure 2: Modus operand **(authors' idea)**

Step 2

Each participant chooses a set of 3 most relevant cards and adds-up a joker (own vision). Then, he/she defends the choice in front of the team. The team debates and decides by vote on a set of 9 most important cards.

Step 3

The team chooses a spokesperson to defend a group vision. The spokesperson holds position at the table during the following steps of the exercise.

Step 4

In order to encourage interaction and provide participants with the opportunity to practice their communication, persuasion and leadership skills, as well as to contribute to a common vision, all team members, **with the exception of the spokesperson,** change tables according to the following algorithm:

Each team splits in half:
- A= A1+A2/X= X1+X2
- B= B1+B2/Y=Y1+Y2
- C= C1+C2/Z= Z1 + Z2

Then each half goes to form another team:
- A1+B2, B1+C2, C1+A2/X1+Y2, Y1+Z2, Z1+X2

Result: 3 new teams – listed on the chart set near each team table

Step 5

Newly formed teams filter ideas, **debate and choose by vote 5 out of the 9 initial cards presented by each table's spokesperson**. The team may also discuss and choose to add an additional joker.

Step 6

Then, team members switch tables again according to the following algorithm:
- B1+A2, A1+C2, B2+C1/ Y1+X2, X1+Z2, Y2+Z1

Result: 3 new teams – listed on the chart set near each team table

The elected spokesperson holds position to defend the team's choice in front of the newly formed team. **The team filters ideas again and chooses by vote 3 cards**. The team may also discuss and choose to add up a joker.

Step 7

Teams A, B and C/ X, Y and Z reunite to debate the three resulting sets of cards. Finally, the group ranks by vote the most relevant cards.

Once the first three stages of the exercise completed, in the fourth stage, the group (all three teams together, in plenary session) will have to elaborate and deliver in front of the audience a vision for a toolkit of policy instruments that can quickly and sustainably counter the negative trends already extant in the Black Sea Region.

Methods used:

During the exercise, there will be employed a series of analytical and project management methods, which include: *critical thinking,*

brainstorming, public consultation, debate, defending opinions, Delphi method, participative management etc.

Deliverables

Intermediate:
- oral briefs to be delivered in front of the team

Final:
- reunited groups draft a vision of the Black Sea Region in 2030, based on relevant events between now and then, which **can inspire strategic decisions for the regional good.**