



THE BLACK SEA FREEWAY

Frederick Lauritzen

27th September 2024



The Russian fleet no longer has a role in the Black Sea. The new maritime freeway connects Constanta in Romania and Batumi in Georgia. It benefits the United States and China. The Road and Belt Initiative routes can now reach NATO and EU countries directly.

NATO is building its largest base outside the city of Constanta (Romania), making it the strategic centre of Europe for the USA. Directly east, across the sea, is the port of Batumi in Georgia. This city marks the beginning of the road which crosses into Armenia and Azerbaijan, reaching in the Caspian Sea. From there it continues to the Central Asian countries which are active members of the Road and Belt Initiative.

Batumi could be the destination of goods coming by land from Iran (and through the Persian port of Chabahar from India, especially Mumbai). If connected to the Chinese Road and Belt Initiative, it would also be the port for goods coming from China.

The Batumi and Constanta freeway is purely commercial.

It is an ancient and natural route. The easternmost inscription written in Latin is found in Azerbaijan (An. Ep. 1951, no. 263) and indicates the presence of a Lucius Iulius Maximus of the Roman Legion called XII Fulminata during the reign of Domitian (81-96). It proves the importance of the Batumi – Baku road from the point of view of Rome and Italy even in antiquity.



The Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinian, has also pointed out the importance of coordinated commercial route in the Caucasus on October 26th, 2023, in Tbilisi ('Crossroads of Peace')

China can only use this commercial artery effectively, if Georgia regains control of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Both regions are rather neglected by their current overlord, Russia, since the latter is embroiled in the war in Ukraine.

China will use the port of Batumi, after stabilizing the Caucasus. The US will endorse and support this since the goods will then reach the port of Constanta, now important for NATO and the EU.

The last time the Black Sea was under the control of one country, it was under the Byzantine Empire (284-1453). Just beyond the point where the Caucasus range meets the sea, the first inscription written in the Ossetian language used Byzantine Greek letters. Many mythological figures of traditional Ossetian epics have names which derive from Byzantine Greek saint names. The Black Sea gravitated round Constantinople (now Istanbul).

Constanta (*Κωνσταντία*) is the Byzantine name of the ancient port of Tomis. The Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (944-959) mentions it as part of the Varangian route which would bring the Vikings from the Baltic to Constantinople. Runic inscriptions from the 10th century have been found in the area near Constanta (Murfatlar caves).

The Roman poet Ovid (43bc-18AD), exiled in Tomis, was desperately far from where he wanted to be. For the Byzantines, Constanta was a crucial crossroads connecting north-south and east-west commercial routes. That was because the Black Sea was under supervision of the Byzantines alone. It was at peace and focused on commerce.

The great Orthodox saint and theologian, Maximus the Confessor (580-662), who shaped Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist and Anglican thought, was condemned in Constantinople (Istanbul) exiled in Crimea and died near Batumi. When he died in 662, all three places were part of the Byzantine Empire.

The Georgian port of Batumi (from ancient Greek *βαθύς* 'bathys' meaning 'deep' seaport) for the ancients was the remote land of Colchis, where the golden fleece sought by Jason came from.

It is now the beginning of the new Black Sea Freeway which connects Asia and Europe via the Romanian port of Constanta.