

SECURITY STRATEGIES AND POLICIES AFTER 2014

ROMANIA

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Résumé

The general approach to security in Romania went through a process of significant evolution in the last century although the events of 2008 in Georgia and 2014 have accelerated the process of such evolution. Strengthening Trans-Atlantic bonds, perceiving the security situation in the wider Black Sea region as a challenge to Romania's national security and the attempts to adjust to the new realities with the available security tools are the main factors shaping Romanian strategic thinking. The perception of Russia in this regard is sober and balanced. It has gradually changed from defining Russian policy in a sensitive manner for the Romania region of the Black Sea as "a destabilizing factor" in 2010 to defining Russian behaviour in the region as "violation of international agreements" in 2015.

There is a national and interparty consensus regarding these definitions. The trending discourses include commitment to support the neighbourhood for the sake of stability in Romania itself. Romanian governments in their discourse are shifting into defensive paradigm and their position on both security and defence priorities and assessment of threats to Romania is quite sustainable whereas the necessity to counteract Russia's efforts on changing the security balance in the direct neighbourhood of Romania remains in the top position of the security agenda.

Romanian military procurement and security policies correspond with the strategic documents adopted in recent years and political statements made by the Romanian leadership. Bucharest's policies including military spending are aimed at the improvement of situation, setting closer ties with its allies, in particular with the US, and ensuring the security and implementation of Romanian interests in the region.

1. The revision of strategic documents after 2014

The evolution of Romanian strategic thinking and approaches to ensuring security and defence is hardly possible without at least a brief mention of its historical background. The feeling of insecurity has been always implicitly present in strategic thinking in Romania and has been rooted in its historical past. Since the nineteenth century Romanian political elites were under the influence of the concept of a “Latin island in the middle of the Slavic sea” (Angelescu 2011, 126). That concept was resulting in a lack of cooperation and ties with neighbouring countries, emphasizing the differences with the neighbouring nations, etc. At the end of the twentieth century the feeling of insecurity reinvented itself through both active engagement in broader alliances and a commitment to strategic partnerships and collective defence concepts. Such an approach by Romania was deeply connected with its Westernization and resulted in the creation of a commission in February 1993 with the mandate to elaborate Romania’s European Integration Strategy (Angelescu 2011, 127), which became a significant step towards European and Euro-Atlantic integration of Romania completed by full-fledged membership of Romania in both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (in 2004) and the European Union (in 2007). Aside from NATO and EU membership Romania was also investing into strengthening transatlantic ties and cooperating with the U.S. Such an approach of having privileged relations with one of the great powers in the region has been often applied by Bucharest throughout its history since gaining independence in 1878 (Soare 2008, 56). The most explicit example in this regard was the Agreement between Romania and the United States of America on the deployment of the United States ballistic missile defence system in Romania signed in 2011 (US Department of State. 2011) accompanied by the “Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century between the United States of America and Romania”.

Simultaneously, Romania played significant attention to its closest neighbour in the East – the Republic of Moldova, with which Romania has historical and cultural ties and to the region of the Black Sea which was usually perceived by Romanian authorities as a “backyard” and where Bucharest was trying to become a mediator between the EU and NATO on the one hand and neighbouring countries on the other. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 was perceived by Romanian authorities as a serious threat to Romanian interests in the region and even caused Romania’s diplomatic offensive. Soon after the “August war” on August 20-21 that time President of Romania Traian Basescu undertook a “blitz-tour” to Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Turkey. During the trip

Basescu met with the leadership of these states and was accompanied by a clear message to Russia that Romania did not accept territorial revisions of Georgia and emphasized that the Helsinki Final Act should serve as a foundation stone for the peaceful resolution of the conflict between Russia and Georgia.

A further deterioration in relations between the West and Russia caused by illegal annexation of Crimea and Russia-led proxy war in Donbas, Ukraine, also found its reflection in Romanian strategic documents. In the 2010 National Defence Strategy (Centrul de coordonare a protectiei infrastructurilor critice 2010) Russian policy in the Black Sea was mentioned within the context of the Russian-Georgian war as a destabilizing factor. The main security challenges were still perceived as those coming from military conflicts outside the European continent, terrorism and weapons proliferation. The approach reflected in the National Defence Strategy 2015-2019 (President of Romania 2015) is relatively different. Russia is mentioned in the document four times. Firstly, Romanian Strategy clearly defines that the region is marked by deterioration in relations between NATO and Russia and such deterioration has direct impact on Romanian citizens' security. In this regard the document on the one hand reflects Romania's clear identification of itself as a NATO member country that shares the concerns of its allies. Secondly, the document mentions that Russian behaviour in the region on the one hand violates the international agreements which were also signed by Russia at the end of the twentieth century and on the other hand that it makes the issue of collective defence under the NATO umbrella relevant again. In this regard Romania demonstrates sustainability of its policy, since the Helsinki Act was also referred to by the previous President of Romania Basescu during his abovementioned tour. Simultaneously, reference to collective security reflects Romania's commitment to NATO. On the top of all that Romania traditionally emphasizes the importance of the Black Sea region in its foreign policy and defence strategy. Thirdly, the Strategy highlights that Russia by its attempts to consolidate its status as a power at the regional level undermines the European path of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Therefore it is fair to say that the document reflects the combination of approaches that Romania for years has found as the most relevant approach in the field of security – emphasizing the relevance of alliances and expectations to benefit from deep strategic relations with the global powers.

In its assessment of national security threats the Strategy goes beyond the traditional perception of military threats. Although the document does not show a major doctrinal change in Romania's approach to security, it seeks

to define a broader concept of national defence that might be perceived as the attempt to respond to the challenges of hybrid warfare. Another argument in favour of such hypothesis is the fact of highlighting energy threats, cyber threats, and hostile informational actions in the Strategy and putting the task to develop the capacities to respond to asymmetric and hybrid threats.

Among the main responses that the Strategy suggests is strengthening of strategic credibility. This is a new trend in Romanian strategic thinking – an attempt to convert the “Latin island in the middle of the Slavic sea” into the “Island of stability” within an unstable and vulnerable environment. By these means Romania seeks to find more support from global powers and is simultaneously looking for the opportunities to capitalize this support into promotion of its regional agenda.

It is noteworthy that for the sake of strengthening strategic credibility Romania is ready for an increase in defence spending. For example, the strategy foresees an increase in the respective spending up to 2% of GDP which will both increase defence capabilities and satisfy the demands of the American administration to NATO countries numerously voiced by President Trump. That is quite logical bearing in mind that according to the strategy Romania seeks to deepen the Strategic Partnership with the U.S.

Generalizing, the current Strategy both combines the historical tradition of Romanian strategic thinking and counts on close relations with the global powers in the region. The trend of Westernization has however brought new details. Firstly, it causes Romanian commitment to the Western block represented by NATO. Secondly, it hints that the Romania’s allies are located towards the west, not towards the east, meaning that the US and the EU are considered as the strategic allies whereas positioning towards Russia is gradually converting from neutral (with the exception of cases where Russia interferes into Romania’s direct neighbourhood e.g. the Republic of Moldova) to defensive and supportive to Eastern neighbours e.g. the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, which are in a situation of conflict with Russia. Thirdly, the Black Sea emerges as Romania’s “backyard” and Bucharest at the level of strategic documents tries to express its willingness to engage both the US and NATO into defending and stabilizing this backyard, while Russia is perceived as the cause of turbulence.

2. Changes in security discourses

The ideas reflected in Romanian security related documents and the ideas behind them are often voiced by Romanian high-ranking officials and politicians notwithstanding their political affiliation. Interestingly the internal competition between the political parties in Romania can be high but it undermines neither national nor interparty consensus on foreign policy priorities. The trending discourses include commitment to support the neighbourhood for the sake of stability in Romania itself, to promote and capitalize Romania's role as a security contributor and reliable partner to both the United States and NATO (commitment to EU strategies is also present but less vivid) whereas relations with Russia are shaped by two components – firstly, solidarity with European and transatlantic partners and secondly, the assessment of Russian-caused risks in the Romanian backyard.

For example, during the first visit abroad of the President of Romania Klaus Iohannis (to Moldova, which is not a surprise bearing in mind the ties between the two countries) in 2015 the main elements on the agenda were regional security, the situation in Ukraine and Russian troops stationed in the secessionist region of Transnistria. President Iohannis raised concerns regarding the security situation and ensured Romania's commitment to keep Moldova on its European path. (Schwartz 2015)

Later on in 2016, in his address given during the “Between Reassurance and Reengagement? The Future of NATO” panel discussion, at the 52nd Munich Security Conference, Iohannis emphasized the need to consolidate NATO as a guarantor of Euro-Atlantic security and to focus on collective defence, with major investments in the political and strategic realms. Another strong message from Iohannis was the necessity to keep in place the strong transatlantic link, complemented by an increased European contribution, in line with the Wales Defence Pledge. In accordance with the Romanian strategic vision of the situation in the region Iohannis also stressed the Black Sea's strategic importance. Besides, he emphasized: “Romania, as a predictable and trustworthy partner inside NATO, remains a pillar of democracy and stability in this region” (President of Romania 2016). In other words Iohannis both reflected Romania's vision regarding the situation in its “backyard” and attempted to promote the country as an island of stability in an unstable region ready to assist its allies in bringing security and stability to the region.

Although Iohannis often emphasized the dominance of American support in Romania's security calculations he doesn't exclude participation in EU led

initiatives. In July 2017 in his press statement he underlined that EU strategy on the security and defence dimension is a very important topic for Romania. (Agerpres 2017) However it is the United States who, for Romania are a guarantor of its security, a sound ally and a reliable partner, tied by a strong friendship, shared values, principles and interests, and a strong commitment to the unity and strength of the Euro-Atlantic family. (Embassy of Romania to the United States of America 2017)

It is worth mentioning that in terms of the assessment of the Russian threat the President of Romania was not that vocal. This is quite understandable since Russia always nervously reacted to the establishment of close ties between Bucharest and Washington and putting additional stress on that by unfriendly rhetoric would hardly be reasonable.

But the lack of declarations by President Iohannis on the direct threats caused by the Russian Federation is compensated by the somewhat explicit statements of the Prime Ministers. While Iohannis is still trying to be neutral the leaders of the Romanian governments are shifting into defensive paradigm and their position on both security and defence priorities and assessment of threats to Romania is quite sustainable. Victor Ponta, the Prime Minister of Romania in 2012-2015, was quite explicit in his assessments. In his interview with CNN in 2014 Ponta said: “We have lived for centuries next to a big aggressive neighbour like the Soviet Union and just as Russia is now, employing more or less the same methods as in the past... and we need to show Ukraine and Georgia that this is the way, that together we can be strong against the new Soviet Union” and emphasized “We must be independent; we cannot let Russia impose the borders”. (Antena3. 2014).

Later on, Ponta’s successor Dacian Ciolos, Prime Minister of Romania from 2015 to 2017 also suggested active NATO presence in the Black Sea region (Kozmei 2016) and clearly stated that although Romania seeks better relations with the Russian Federation it will support sanctions against Russia unless the Minsk agreements are fulfilled. (Weymouth 2016) And indeed Romania has been a consistent supporter of European sanctions towards Russia despite the lack of European solidarity on this issue. Besides, the government of Ciolos also promoted the idea of Romania as a significant security contributor towards regional security. When opening the American missile shield platform in Deveselu Ciolos emphasized that Romanians had become “security providers, not only security consumers”. (Agerpres. 2016)

Another Romanian head of government, Sorin Grindeanu, Prime Minister of

Romania in 2017, while presenting the highlights of the governmental security priorities, emphasized that “an important pillar in the construction of defence priorities is found in the Government Programme 2017-2020, which identifies as basic defence directions: participation in the collective allied defence within NATO and the EU, participation in missions and operations under the aegis of international organizations, national defence capacity building or strengthening strategic partnerships, especially with the United States.” (Government of Romania 2017) Grindeanu’s Cabinet also turned defence into a priority area of the state budget for 2017. The defence budget provides, according to the undertaken commitment, the allocation of 2 percent of GDP, and according to the Programme for Government, maintaining this level of allocation is envisaged for 2018-2020. (Government of Romania 2017)

Romanian Prime Minister Mihai Tudose also clearly proved the sustainability of Romania’s strategic course. In July 2017 he stressed “that Romania will remain a US ally and friend, and the Romanian Government will act to intensify bilateral cooperation in all areas of the strategic partnership between Romania and the US”. (Agerpres 2017) The defence and security dimensions, according to Tudose, are a priority in the bilateral relationship and are highlighted by Romania as a NATO member. “Romania’s devotion to regional stability is proved and strengthened again by committed defence investment, the earmarking of two percent of its GDP in defence spending. Moreover, the multitude of operations in which Romania is taking part proves our commitment to our strategic partner in ensuring regional and global security”, he stressed. (Nineoclock 2017)

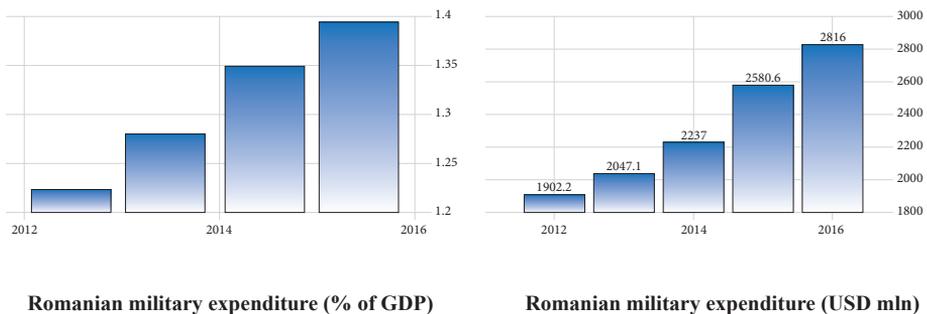
Regarding relations with the Russian Federation Tudose’s government went even further in comparison to its predecessors. In July 2017 Romania prohibited the transit of the Russian airplane with the Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin who was heading to the Republic of Moldova. The government of Romania explained that since Rogozin is under European sanctions Romania had a right to prohibit his air transit and although formally that is a correct explanation, the true motivation was also an expression of support for both Moldova (where Rogozin was later that month declared *persona non grata*) and to Ukraine since it was Russian intervention into Ukraine that caused Rogozin to be under the European sanctions. (Gerasyanchuk 2017) Definitely such a step consequently led to the further deterioration of Romanian-Russian relations although already back in May 2016, Romania was “officially” placed on Russia’s targeting list (along with Poland) by Russian President Vladimir Putin, when the US built and manned ballistic missile defence site became operational in the country. (Wetzel 2017)

Summarizing, the analyses of the political discourse in Romania together with the analyses of the strategic documents proves that Romania, notwithstanding the political affiliation of its leadership, is expressing commitment to the Western block and NATO, counts on its strategic partnership with the United States and contributes to this relationship by prompt fulfilment of American demands on an increase in military spending, shifts to proactive defensive rhetoric and policies towards Russia and tries to counteract Russia's efforts in changing the security balance in Romania's direct neighbourhood.

3. Transformation of security policies

Romanian military procurement and security policies correspond with the strategic documents adopted in recent years and political statements made by the Romanian leadership. Firstly, the declarations on the increase in military spending alongside the documents that stipulate such an increase have already been in place. Romania's military expenditures in 2017 reached the margin of 2% of GDP and have been constantly growing since the illegal annexation of Crimea and Russian intervention in Donbas (see the graphs below, according to the World Bank collection of development indicators, compiled from officially recognized sources) (Trading Economics 2016).

Graphs:



Romania's defence budget is also higher than that of several countries in Western Europe whose economies are more powerful, including Denmark, Finland, Portugal, and Austria. (Romania-insider 2016)

Apart from the increase in military spending Romania has also persuaded its NATO allies to increase the Alliance's presence in the Black Sea. According to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in February 2017 NATO has taken the decision to complement its strengthened regional posture in the air and on land – based on a multinational framework brigade in Romania. Eight allies have committed to provide brigade staff and five allies have committed land and air forces for training and air policing. It was also decided to take two additional maritime measures: an increased NATO naval presence in the Black Sea for enhanced training, exercises and situational awareness, and a maritime coordination function for NATO's Standing Naval Forces when operating with other Allied forces in the Black Sea region.

Besides, US security and aerospace company Lockheed Martin said in May 2017 that it had signed a contract with the Romanian Air Force to deliver a training system for F-16 Falcon Fighters in 2019. Under this contract, Lockheed Martin will deliver the Scios Train suite of simulators in 2019, also providing contractor logistics support services. The technology can be networked together to enable multiple pilots to train together on advanced scenarios. (Lockheed Martin. 2017) In 2016, Romania received nine F-16 fighter jets from Portugal as part of a programme that aims to replace the country's Soviet-era Russian-made MiGs with combat aircraft that comply with NATO standards. Also last year, Lockheed Martin provided Romania with two new radars under an existing contract. (Kershaw 2017)

Moreover, in July 2017 the State Department announced that it had approved a possible USD 3.9 billion sale to Romania for Patriot air and missile defence systems. The Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency notified Congress of the foreign military sale for seven Raytheon-made Patriot systems, including 28 launching stations, 56 guidance enhanced missiles and 168 Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missiles. (Mitchell 2017)

In addition, the United States intends to supply High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) to Romania for a total of USD 1.25 billion, the US Department of Defense announced in August 2017. Romania will use the HIMARS MLRS to modernize its Armed Forces, strengthen its national defence, and contain "regional threats", the US Defense Department indicated. It also clarified that the implementation of the agreement will require sending approximately 10 technical experts from both the US government and private American contractors to Romania for about one year to assist in the deployment of the acquired military equipment and training of personnel. (UA Wire 2017)

Romania is also an active participant in military drills, which is perceived by Bucharest as its region of strategic interest. Only in 2017 it participated in NATO's international military exercise Sea Shield 2017 (besides Romania, Bulgaria, Canada, Spain, Turkey and the US deployed warships. According to the press release of the Romanian Naval Forces, 2800 military personnel took part in the exercise. Romania will provide, besides warships, two mobile missile launchers, a special-operation detachment, two MiG 21 Lancer airplanes and a medical evacuation helicopter) (Bosphorus Naval News 2017); Saber Guardian 17 drills (approximately 25,000 service members from 22 allied and partner nations will take part, and the exercise highlights participant deterrence capabilities, specifically the ability to mass forces at any given time anywhere in Europe) (Kershner 2017); Spring Storm 17 exercises (there were 450 Marines and 750 Romanian troops participating in the exercises to simulate defence of the Black Sea coastline and urban areas) (Midia 2017); Sea Breeze 2017 drills (More than 30 ships will participate in the four-day free-play phase, operating and training together in the Black Sea) (U.S. Department of Defense 2017) etc.

The above-mentioned activities prove that not only the rhetoric of Romanian politicians and Romanian strategic documents reflect a sober vision of the situation in the Black Sea region caused by Russia but also Bucharest's policies including military spending are aimed at an improvement of the situation, setting closer ties with its allies, in particular with the US, and ensuring the security and implementation of Romanian interests in the region.

Conclusions

The current Romanian approach towards shaping security strategy combines the historical tradition of Romanian strategic thinking and counts on close relations with the global powers in the region. The trend towards westernization has brought new details: it causes Romanian commitment to NATO and causes the perception of the US and the EU as being its strategic allies whereas its positioning towards Russia is gradually converting from neutral (with the exception of cases where Russia interferes into Romania's direct neighbourhood e.g. the Republic of Moldova) to defensive and supportive to the Eastern neighbours, e.g. the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, who are in a situation of conflict with Russia.

Such an approach is reflected in the respective discourse: Romania, notwithstanding the political affiliation of its leadership, is expressing

commitment to the West and NATO and is shifting to proactive defensive rhetoric and policies towards Russia and trying to deter Russia's efforts in changing the security balance in the direct neighbourhood of Romania.

Romanian military procurement and security policies correspond with the strategic documents adopted in recent years and political statements made by the Romanian leadership. Romania's military expenditures in 2017 reached the margin of 2% of GDP and have been constantly growing since the illegal annexation of Crimea and Russian intervention in Donbas.

Romania's increased military spending is aimed at reaching its strategic goals in the region which are the improvement of the situation, setting closer ties with its allies, in particular with the US, and ensuring the security and implementation of Romanian interests in the Black Sea area.

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