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Introduction

Romania's National Security Strategy is the main document that corroborates its national defence strategy, as per Romanian law. The strategy provides a political depiction of the Romanian state's core characteristics in this field.

In order to substantiate, in a unitary and cohesive manner, the actions regulated by the government of the state institutions of the rule of law and constitutional power wielders held accountable for implementing, safeguarding, and asserting fundamental objectives of Romania, the strategy combines objectives, establishes clear definitions, and links policy actions for all entities responsible for maintaining the country's security.

The basic approach to security in Romania has evolved significantly over the last century, with the events in Georgia in 2008 and 2014 having hastened that growth. The key forces affecting Romanian strategic thinking have been the strengthening of transatlantic relations, the perception of the security environment in the wider Black Sea region being a threat to Romanian national security and the attempts to respond to new circumstances with accessible security tools. In this aspect, Russia's image has been austere and balanced. It has progressed from describing Russian policy in the Black Sea region of Romania as "a destabilising element" in 2010 to describing Russian behaviour patterns in the region as a "violation of international accords" in 2015.

Commitment to protect the neighbourhood for the benefit of Romanian stability has been one of the most popular discourses. Romanian governments are shifting to a defensive paradigm in their discourse, and their positions on security and defence priorities, as well as assessments of threats to Romania, are quite stable, whereas the need to counter Russia's efforts to change the security balance in Romania's immediate neighbourhood remains at the top of the security agenda.

The military procurement and security strategies of Romania are compatible with strategic documents and political pronouncements by the Romanian leadership. Bucharest's policies, which include military spending, are focused at improving the situation, strengthening ties with allies, particularly the United States, and assuring the security and realisation of Romanian interests in the area.

Modification in the Strategic Documents (2015-2019)

Strengthening strategic credibility has been one of the major responses suggested by the National Security Strategy. This is a new tendency in Romanian strategic thinking: attempting to transform the "Latin island in the middle of the Slavic sea" into the "Island of Stability" in the midst of an unstable and precarious environment. Romania is using these methods to gain more support from global powers while also seeking opportunities to utilise this support to advance its regional agenda.

It is worth noting that Romania is prepared to enhance defence spending in order to bolster strategic credibility. For example, the strategy calls for an increased defence spending of up to 2% of the GDP, which will boost defence capabilities while also satisfying the American administration's requests to NATO countries, which have been repeatedly articulated by the former President, Donald Trump. That makes sense, given that Romania's plan calls for deepening the strategic partnership with the United States.

In general, the strategy blends the historical legacy of Romanian strategic thought while also relying on close ties with regional global powers. The Westernisation tendency, on the other hand, had brought with it additional details. First and foremost, it reinforces Romania's commitment to NATO's Western block. Second, it implies that Romania's alliance have been to the west, not to the east, implying that the US and the EU have been its strategic allies, whereas Romania's positioning towards Russia had gradually been shifting from neutral (with the exception of circumstances where Russia meddles in Romania's direct neighbourhood, such as the Republic of Moldova) to defensive and supportive of Eastern neighbours, such as the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, which have been in a situation that required Romania's assistance. Third, the Black Sea becomes Romania's "backyard," and Bucharest attempts to show its desire to involve both the US and NATO in defending and stabilising this backyard in strategic documents, while Russia has been seen as the root cause of turmoil.

Transformation in the Security Discourses

Romanian high-ranking officials and politicians, regardless of political affiliation, frequently express the concepts expressed in Romanian security-related publications and the thoughts behind them. Internal competition between Romanian political parties can be fierce, but it never compromises national or interparty consensus on foreign policy issues. Commitment to support the neighbourhood for the sake of Romanian stability, promotion and capitalisation of Romania's role as a security contributor and reliable partner to both the US and NATO (commitment to EU strategies is also present but less vivid), whereas relations with Russia are shaped by two components: first, solidarity with European and transatlantic partners, and second, the assessment of Russian-caused risks.

For instance, regional security, the situation in Ukraine, and Russian forces stationed in the breakaway province of Transnistria were all on the agenda during the Romanian President Klaus Iohannis' first travel overseas in 2015 (to Moldova, which has not been surprising given the two nations' ties). President Klaus Iohannis expressed concerns about the security situation and reaffirmed Romania's commitment to Moldova's European integration.

Iohannis, Romania's President in 2016 emphasised the need to strengthen NATO as a guarantor of the security of Euro-Atlantic and to concentrate on collective defence, with significant investments in the political and strategic realms, in his address given during the "Between Reassurance and Reengagement? The Future of NATO" panel discussion at the 52nd Munich Security Conference in 2016. Another significant message from Iohannis was the importance of maintaining a strong transatlantic relationship, supported by increasing European contributions, in accordance with the Wales Defence Pledge. In line with Romania's strategic vision of the region, Iohannis also emphasised the strategic importance of the Black Sea. Romania, as a reliable and trustworthy partner within NATO, remains a foundation of democracy and stability in this area. In other words, Iohannis mirrored Romania's perspective on the crisis in its "backyard" while also actively promoting the nation as a stable island in an uncertain region, ready to aid its partners in restoring peace and stability.¹

¹"National Defense Strategy of Romania 2015-2019", (2022). Available at <http://old.presidency.ro/static/National%20Defense%20Strategy%202015%20-%202019.pdf>.

Despite the fact that Iohannis has often highlighted the importance of US support in Romania's security calculations, he does not rule out participation in EU-led efforts. In a press statement issued in July 2017, he stated that the EU's security and defence strategy has been a critical matter for Romania. The United States, on the other hand, is a guarantor of Romania's security, a solid ally, and a dependable partner, bound by a deep friendship, shared values, principles, interests and a strong commitment to the Euro-Atlantic family's unity and strength.

It is worth noting that the President of Romania was not particularly loud in his assessment of the Russian danger. This is logical, as Russia has long been wary of the creation of close connections between Bucharest and Washington, and it would be unreasonable to add to the stress by using antagonistic words.

The Prime Ministers' somewhat forthright words compensate for President Iohannis' absence of declarations on the direct threats posed by the Russian Federation. While Iohannis maintains his neutrality, the leaders of Romania's administrations are changing to a defensive posture, and their positions on security and defence priorities, as well as assessments of dangers to Romania, are very stable. Victor Ponta, Romania's Prime Minister from 2012 to 2015, was blunt in his opinions.

Afterwards, Ponta's successor Dacian Ciolos, Romania's Prime Minister from 2015 to 2017, suggested an active NATO presence in the Black Sea region and precisely stated that, while Romania seeks better relations with Russia, it will encourage sanctions against the country unless the Minsk agreements are executed. Despite the absence of European cohesion on this subject, Romania has been a constant backer of European sanctions against Russia. In addition, Ciolos' government promoted the concept of Romania as a major security contributor to regional security. Ciolos stressed that Romanians had become "security providers, not just security consumers" when he opened the American missile shield platform in Deveselu.

While addressing the highlights of the government's security priorities, Sorin Grindeanu, Romania's Prime Minister in 2017, emphasised that "an crucial pillar in the building of defence objectives have been found in the Government Initiative 2017-2020, which had been recognised as basic defence directions: involvement in collaborative allied defence within NATO and the EU, involvement in missions under the aegis of international organisations." Grindeanu's Cabinet has also made defence a priority in the 2017 state budget. According to the agreed pledge, the defence

budget allocates 2% of the GDP, as per the Programme for Government, this level of allocation has been expected to be maintained during 2018-2020.

Mihai Tudose, Romania's Prime Minister, also demonstrated the country's strategic course's long-term viability. "Romania will continue to be a US ally and friend," he said in July 2017, adding that "the Romanian Administration will operate to amplify bilateral cooperation in all regions of the strategic alliance among Romania and the United States. The bilateral relationship's defence and security elements remain a top focus, with Romania as a NATO member highlighting them. "Romania's commitment to stability in the region has demonstrated and reinforced by its commitment to defence spending, which accounts for 2% of GDP." Furthermore, the numerous missions in which Romania participates demonstrate its determination as a strategic partner in guaranteeing regional and global security.²

Tudose's government went considerably further than its predecessors in terms of ties with the Russian Federation. Romania denied the transit of a Russian airliner carrying Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin to the Republic of Moldova in July 2017. The Romanian government explained that because Rogozin has been subjected to European sanctions, Romania has the right to prohibit his air travel. While this has been technically correct, the true motivation was an affirmation of help both for Moldova (where Rogozin was declared persona non grata later that month) and Ukraine, as it was the Russian invasion in Ukraine that led to Rogozin's European sanctions. Although Romania was "officially" placed on Russia's targeting list (along with Poland) by Russian President Vladimir Putin in May 2016, when the US-built and crewed ballistic missile defence site became operational in the country, such a step undoubtedly resulted in further deterioration of Romanian-Russian relations.

To summarise, the analyses of Romanian political discourse, as well as the analyses of strategic documents, show that Romania, regardless of its leadership's political affiliation, has been committed to the Western block and NATO, relies on its strategic partnership with the US and contributes significantly to this relationship by promptly meeting American demands for increased military spending, shifting to proactive defensive rhetoric and politeness.³

² "National Defense Strategy of Romania 2015-2019", (2022). Available at <http://old.presidency.ro/static/National%20%20Defense%20Strategy%202015%20-%202019.pdf>.

³"National Defense Strategy of Romania 2015-2019", (2022). Available at <http://old.presidency.ro/static/National%20%20Defense%20Strategy%202015%20-%202019.pdf>.

Transmogrification of Security Policies

Romania has encouraged its NATO allies to strengthen the alliance's presence in the Black Sea, in addition to increasing the military budget. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated in February 2017 that the alliance had decided to supplement its increased regional posture in the air and on the ground by forming a multinational framework brigade in Romania. Eight partners have pledged brigade staff, while five others have pledged land and air assets for training and air patrolling. Two further maritime measures were also agreed upon: an expanded NATO naval deployment in the Black Sea for enhanced training, drills, and spatial awareness, and a maritime coordination function for NATO's Standing Naval Forces when acting with other Allied forces in the Black Sea.

Furthermore, in May 2017, Lockheed Martin, a US security and aerospace company, said that it had entered a deal with the Romanian Air Force to provide a training system for F-16 Falcon fighters in 2019. Lockheed Martin will provide the Scios Train simulator suite in 2019 as part of this contract, along with contractor logistical support services. Multiple pilots can train together on complex situations using the system, which can be networked. Romania received nine F-16 fighter jets from Portugal in 2016, as part of a deal to replace the country's Soviet-era Russian-made MiGs with NATO-compliant combat aircraft. Under an existing contract, Lockheed Martin also delivered Romania with two new radars last year.

Romania also took part in military training in what Bucharest considered to be a crucial zone. It was only in 2017 that it took part in NATO's global military exercise Sea Shield 2017 (warships from Romania, Bulgaria, Canada, Spain, Turkey, and the United States were also present). According to a press release from the Romanian Naval Forces, the drill involved 2800 military troops. Romania will contribute two mobile missile launchers, a special-operations detachment, two MiG 21 Lancer planes, and a medical evacuation helicopter in addition to warships; Saber Guardian 17 drills (approximately 25,000 service members from 22 allied and allies will get engaged, and the exercise emphasises on deterrence capacities of the participant, especially the capability to mass forces at any point anywhere in Europe) Spring Storm 17 has been a training

exercise (there were 450 Marines and 750 Romanian troops participate involving in the exercises to spur the defence of the Black Sea coastline and urban areas) Drills, etc. for Sea Breeze 2017.⁴

The aforementioned activities have demonstrated that not only Romanian politicians' rhetoric and strategic documents reflect a realistic view of the matter in the Black Sea region engendered by Russia, but also Bucharest's policies, which include military spending, have aimed at improving the situation, strengthening ties with allies, particularly the United States, and maintaining the safety and execution of Romanian interests in the region.

Conclusion

The Romanian approach to formulating security strategy blends Romanian strategic thinking's historical history with intimate ties to regional global powers. The trend toward westernisation has brought new details: it has resulted in a stronger Romanian commitment to the NATO and led to the US and the EU being perceived as strategic allies, whereas its position toward Russia has been gradually shifting from neutral to defensive and supportive of Romania's Eastern neighbours, such as the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, who are under conflict.

Such a strategy has been taken into account in the respective discursive: Romania, regardless of its leadership's political affiliation, has been expressing commitment to the West and NATO, and had been trying to shift to proactive defensive rhetoric and policies toward Russia, in an attempt to deter Russia's efforts to change the security balance in Romania's immediate neighbourhood..

The military procurement and defence policies of Romania have been consistent with the strategic documents and political pronouncements by the Romanian administration. Military spending in Romania hit 2% of its GDP in 2017 and has been steadily increasing ever since the illegal annexation of Crimea and the Russian activities in Donbas.

Romania's increased military spending has aimed at achieving the country's strategic objectives in the region, which includes improving the situation, strengthening ties with allies, particularly the

⁴ National Defense Strategy of Romania 2015-2019", (2022). Available at <http://old.presidency.ro/static/National%20%20Defense%20Strategy%202015%20-%202019.pdf>.

United States, as well as maintaining the safety and execution of Romanian interests in the Black Sea region.

Meeting the strategy's objectives require a collaborative effort between the political class and civil society along with the optimal use of the country's people, material, and financial resources, in the spirit of the values and principles on which it was founded. It is desired for the political class to adopt the stated goals and objectives by ensuring decision openness and the prudent use of public finances, and for the civil society to participate in the creation of a security culture and open debate on security matters.

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