THE EVOLUTION OF ROMANIA'S SECURITY THREATS IN REGARD TO MILITARY STRATEGIES: FROM 2007 TO 2023

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10.55535/RMT.2024.1.4

The evolution of the regional security environment determined the change of perspective in the elaboration of the military strategies regarding the threats faced by Romania. This retrospective analysis aims to highlight, on the one hand, the dynamics of the main threats to Romania as a result of the trends of the regional security environment, starting with the first military strategy after joining NATO until the present, and, on the other hand, to emphasise the imprint produced at the strategic level as a complementary document to the Romanian National Defence Strategy. Thus, the purpose of this research is to emphasise the amplification and complexity of threats over time as a result of the tightening of the security environment, a fact that highlights the current interdependence of threats and their transformation from autonomous elements into aspects that can no longer be analysed, in the present, in functional isolation.

Likewise, the retrospective analysis also emphasises Romania's role within the North Atlantic organisation, starting with the implementation of NATO strategic concepts within the national military strategies. If, at the beginning of 2007, Romania identified itself as a state concerned with aligning with NATO standards regarding the transformation processes of the Romanian Armed Forces, in 2016, Romania appeared as a credible state within the Alliance, and in the 2022 NATO Strategic Concept, Romania had a special strategic importance in the context of the war in Ukraine in the Black Sea region.

Keywords: Military Strategy; Romanian National Defence Strategy; NATO Strategic Concept; security threats; regional trends;

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this article is to highlight the transformation of the nature of security threats impacting Romania as a product of the security environment, as well as increasing Romania's role as an actor involved in the international and regional security architecture and a member state within the North Atlantic Alliance. The evolution of the transformation of Romania's capacities to assert itself as an actor of strategic importance for the consolidation of Euro-Atlantic security, especially for the Black Sea area, can be analysed through the lens of the analysis of strategic documents both at the national level and also those within the North Atlantic Alliance. On the other hand, strategic documents provide significant clues about the complexity of addressing security threats over time. From concepts that were once treated and managed autonomously in isolation, the dynamism and amplification of threats determined the imperative of their management and analysis interdependently.

The premise from which this paper starts is that the tightening of the security environment and the complexity of security threats are in a cause-and-effect relationship. Also, the effectiveness of military strategies in order to manage threats determined the growth of Romania's strategic profile in the Black Sea region. The objectives of the research aim to highlight the evolution of the threats faced by Romania in the regional context since joining the North Atlantic Alliance and, on the other hand, Romania's strategic approach as a response to security challenges.

The research methodology is based on the qualitative analysis of Romania's strategic documents from the moment of accession to the North Atlantic Alliance, respectively the military strategies and the national defence strategies, as well as the NATO Strategic Concepts, with the aim of evaluating the transformation stages of the security environment, the turning points that determined the changes in strategic perspective, as well as Romania's way of responding in relation to the nature of the threats.

The evolution of the transformation of Romania's capacities to assert itself as an actor of strategic importance for the consolidation of Euro-Atlantic security, especially for the Black Sea area, can be analyzed through the lens of the analysis of strategic documents both at the national level and also those within the North Atlantic Alliance.

Also, the relevance of the research remains in the need to evaluate the effectiveness of strategic documents in relation to the nature of security threats, as well as the management of elements of surprise in the security environment, in the context where the last turning points that marked the reconfiguration of the international security architecture, namely the pandemic COVID-19 and Russia's war against Ukraine, demonstrated the imperative to quickly and effectively adapt to unpredictable events or *"black swan"* scenarios. At the same time, the paper retrospectively analyzes the evolution of threats in relation to Romania's strategic approach with the aim of concluding on some aspects that should be taken into account in the elaboration of the following preparatory documents of the strategies in order to manage the elements of surprise, a fact that is useful for the academic research reporting the unpredictability of the unfolding of some scenarios on the international stage.

In order to deepen the quality of the analysis, it is important to clarify the conceptual framework of the theoretical tools that are to be used in this research. Thus, to define the concept of *"strategy"*, one can start with the etymology of the military art component, which establishes the preparatory aspects consisting of the planning and coordination of military operations (DEX, 2009). The distinction between *"military strategy"* and *"grand strategy"* should also be taken into account (Christianson, 2016). While the grand strategy draws the general directions for capitalising on national goals and interests in accordance with the political goals, the military strategy establishes the planning of the military instruments that reinforce the implementation of the political objectives provided in the grand strategy (Ib.).

Moreover, within the framework of the strategic documents, an individualised definition is offered by which the military strategy *"expresses the fundamental guidelines and options regarding the planning, establishment and use of the Romanian Armed Forces, in order to fulfil the objectives of the defence policy of the Romanian state, in a national and allied context"* (Romania's Military Strategy, 2016), while the national strategy represents *"an integrative and multidimensional approach, in which the defence dimension combines and balances each other with a series of other dimensions – public order;*

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intelligence, counter-intelligence and security activity; diplomacy; crisis management; education, health and demography" (National Defence Strategy, 2015).

On the other hand, the NATO Strategic Concepts represent the strategic approach of the Alliance in accordance with the fundamental security objectives and values and provide guidelines for quantifying the opportunities and overcoming the challenges of the security environment in order to adapt to the changes generated by international dynamics. Thus, NATO member states contribute to the achievement of the Alliance's objectives in accordance with the lines drawn by the Strategic Concepts (NATO, 2022).

Regarding the conceptual clarifications provided by the National Defence Strategy, the notion of threat means *"actions, facts or states of fact, capabilities, strategies, intentions, or plans that can affect the values, interests, and national security objectives and/or are likely to directly or indirectly endanger national security"* (National Defence Strategy, 2020). Thus, by security threats are meant the objectives of state or non-state actors contrary to the national interests of a state who seek to exploit their interests, jeopardising the state of stability and national security.

Before proceeding to the analysis of the strategic framework, it is important to also reflect on the consistency of the theoretical framework, considering the four schools of thought that have shaped contemporary military thinking and strategic approaches: *traditionalism, futurism, realism* and *institutionalism*. If the theory of *futurism*, largely shared by US military strategies, embraces the perspective of technological progress as an approach to military thinking (Gurzinger, Clark, 2015, p. 8-11), on the other hand, traditionalism mediates the fact that the principles and nature of war remain unchanged as a consequence of the pattern of different historical contexts and frictions between states (Clausewitz, 1976).

At the same time, *institutionalism* presents as relevant the structure of military institutions in order to shape a military strategy, especially from the perspective of the fact that the role of defence institutions is crucial in the implementation of military policies and strategies, in which sense it is imperative to study the institutional impact on the results of strategies and their implementation (Bodnieks, 2020).

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Realism, on the other hand, embraces the idea that armed conflicts and war present situational particularities, depending on the evolution of international events. It also mediates strategic depth and a long-term vision of resistance to the logistical and human exhaustion of war (Nolan, 2017). In this sense, the analysis regarding the strategic military and security framework will also provide a perspective on the military school of thought that can be applied most compatible with the particularities of Romania's strategic framework.

Starting from these conceptual clarifications, the main characteristics of the security environment and the turning points are to be analysed, which marked the change of the security architecture and, consequently, determined the need to adapt the strategic documents to the new requirements.
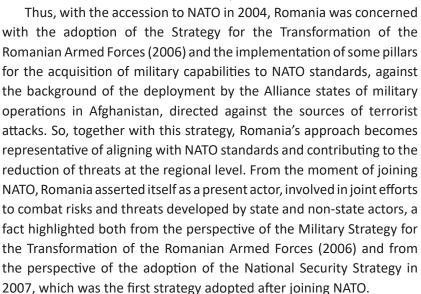
SECURITY ENVIRONMENT AND REGIONAL TRENDS: TURNING POINTS VS. TRANSITION PERIODS

The first national military strategy from the year 2000 came against the background of a regional context in which the possibility of a military confrontation was significantly diminished, and Romania did not assimilate any state as representing a threat to security. Internally, Romania was in a period of transition with the collapse of the communist regimes and was preparing to join the North Atlantic Alliance (Military Strategy of Romania, 2000).

NATO's Strategic Concept in 2000 was still operating along the lines of action established in 1999, although the security environment had changed significantly with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The 9/11 terrorist attacks against the USA represented a turning point for Euro-Atlantic security, which changed the perspective on the threats facing the international security environment. While the Strategic Concept of 1999 essentially envisaged the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the use of technology for the diversification of weapons of mass destruction as the main threats, but the risk of military confrontations was low, the turning point represented by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, decisively changed the strategic orientation for the member states, both on the development of the capabilities of the North Atlantic Alliance and on the defence principles. However, the next NATO Strategic Concept was only adopted in 2010,

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during a period of transition for the European security environment in which the main threats were already diversified.

Thus, with the accession to NATO in 2004, Romania was concerned with the adoption of the Strategy for the Transformation of the Romanian Armed Forces (2006) and the implementation of some pillars for the acquisition of military capabilities to NATO standards, against the background of the deployment by the Alliance states of military operations in Afghanistan, directed against the sources of terrorist attacks. So, together with this strategy, Romania's approach becomes representative of aligning with NATO standards and contributing to the reduction of threats at the regional level. From the moment of joining NATO, Romania asserted itself as a present actor, involved in joint efforts to combat risks and threats developed by state and non-state actors, a fact highlighted both from the perspective of the Military Strategy for the Transformation of the Romanian Armed Forces (2006) and from the perspective of the adoption of the National Security Strategy in 2007, which was the first strategy adopted after joining NATO.

The security environment at that time was envisioned as being characterized by rapid changes, some developing predictably and positively and others acting disruptively and unpredictably in discord with strategic directions. The main elements that characterised the security environment in the period 2006-2007 were constituted by trends: the acceleration of globalisation and regional integration processes, simultaneously with the existence of some forms of state fragmentation; the convergence of efforts to structure a new, stable, and predictable security architecture, accompanied by the accentuation of anarchic tendencies in some regions (National Security Strategy of Romania, 2007). Also, there were antagonistic tendencies represented by the efforts of the states to preserve a dynamic of stability in the international security architecture, in parallel with the intervention of non-state actors in the evolution of these relations.

The NATO strategic concept of 2010 came to draw the directions of action against the background of a coagulated context since the end of 2001. However, with the member states engaged in the fight against terrorism at the international level, the security environment was envisioned as already being characterised by elements much more complex, starting from the terrorist threat represented by non-state

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actors such as Al-Qaeda, instability at the borders of the Alliance, cyber attacks, and the expansion of emerging technologies in the production of sophisticated weapons (NATO Strategic Concept, 2010). Security challenges were already beginning to acquire a diversified character, either oscillating between the complexity of predictable threats and the novelty of the appearance of other types of threats presented by technological development or the appearance of other non-state actors.

A turning point for the European security environment was the beginning of the Russian aggression in the Baltic Sea region and the Black Sea region, which at that time predicted serious indications of increasing offensive tendencies in Europe. Thus, the aggression tendencies of the Kremlin against Estonia (2007) and Georgia (2008) were advanced in 2014 by Russia's first offensive against Ukraine and, respectively, the aggression against Crimea in 2014 (National Defence Strategy 2015-2019).

These events marked new threats to the European security order and the need to adopt new strategic documents, which would provide strategic directions, against the background of the dynamics and complexity of the security environment constituted by the unfolding of the military conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine and the expansion of other threats constituted by terrorism and migration generated by instability in the Middle East and North Africa.

At the time these strategies where adpted, respectively, the Military Strategy from 2016 and the National Defence Strategy for the period 2015-2019, Romania positioned itself as an integrated state within regional organisations (NATO, European Union), able to act in alignment with regional policies. Moreover, the strategic importance of Romania in the Eastern Flank of the Alliance began to acquire an increasingly high role in relation to the defensive capabilities against Moscow's growing aggression in the Baltic region and the Black Sea. On the other hand, the regional context challenges Romania to maintain its strategic balance against the background of the instability in the Western Balkans, characterised by extremist tendencies that are radical and affect the rights of ethnic communities. Russia's aggressive tendencies against Ukraine, Georgia, and the Republic of Moldova are also affecting the sector of regional energy.

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In 2016, the trends of the international security environment foreshadowed a continuous transformation, largely determined by the creation of interdependencies constituted by the reconfiguration of geostrategic games, the rapid development of information technology, ethnic-religious fragmentation and ideological radicalisation, and the need to adapt critical infrastructures in relation to the emergence of energy crises and cyber attacks. At the external level, Russia's actions to annex Crimea in disagreement with the norms of international law have brought NATO's mission of collective defence back to the fore, simultaneously with the need to manage developments in the Eastern neighbourhood, the Middle East, and North Africa as factors that generate the expansion of phenomena such as Islamic radicalisation, irregular migration, and economic instability (National Defence Strategy 2015-2019).

However, the adoption of the National Defence Strategy for the period 2020-2024 and the Military Strategy in 2021 marked the transition of the security environment from a global turning point – the COVID-19 pandemic – to another significant event of a military nature with serious consequences both regionally and internationally: Russia's war against Ukraine started on 24 February 2022. While the COVID pandemic highlighted the unpredictability of some major scenarios for the international community and the rapid need to adapt and manage a crisis that can affect the main security sectors in the state, the war led by Russia against Ukraine marked the start of the first military conflict in Europe after the Second World War, jeopardising the democratic values and international law promoted within international peacekeeping organisations.

The year 2023 marks a period of continuous challenges, mainly determined by the unpredictability of the end of the conflict in Ukraine and the ability of European states to adapt their reaction capacity and increase their resilience to complex phenomena generated by the emergence of pandemics, natural disasters, economic crises, and energy generated by conflict and instability.

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STRATEGIC VIEWS ON SECURITY THREATS

Threats viewed from the perspective of NATO Strategic Concepts

Starting with the acquisition of the status of a member state of the North Atlantic Alliance in 2004, Romania contributed to the consolidation of two NATO strategic concepts, respectively the NATO Strategic Concept 2010 and the NATO Strategic Concept 2022. The difference between the two concepts exists in the changing perspective on the nature of the security threats endangering the Euro-Atlantic space. In the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, the threats were mentioned generically, drawing the lines of direction of the Alliance in combating four major types of threats: the conventional military threat caused by the proliferation of ballistic missiles by a significant number of states; the proliferation of nuclear weapons in volatile regions outside borders of the Alliance; the diversification of terrorism as a threat using CBRN substances; and the risks created by the complexity of cyber attacks and the impact on critical infrastructure.

On the other hand, in the context of the recent security environment, the new NATO Strategic Concept 2022 explicitly identifies the threats generated by state actors and specifically provides for regions of strategic interest for strengthening the security of the borders of the North Atlantic Alliance. If the NATO Strategic Concept 2010 envisaged a low risk of a military confrontation on the borders of the Alliance, the new concept identifies the military threat generated by Russia as the most significant and direct threat, combining conventional military capabilities with the advancement of nuclear capabilities. Also, the regions affected by the risks generated by the aggressive behaviour of the Kremlin, both in hybrid and conventional forms, are represented by the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea.

At the same time, if Moscow's actions represent a significant military threat by all means, affecting complex regions on the borders of the Alliance, on the other hand, the threat presented by China is incidental in the economic, technological, and political fields, seeking to assert its hegemonic status at the global level. Also, the hybrid means constituted by the narrative, the cyber, and disinformation actions, combined with the intentions to create economic dependencies

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at the regional level and the fundamental alliance with the Russian Federation, constitute fundamental reasons for classifying China's actions as a threat to Euro-Atlantic security.

Last but not least, in relation to the threats generated by the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the behaviour of states with authoritarian regimes is foreseen, which is evidenced both by the systematic violation of human rights and the norms of international law and also by the intentions regarding the development of nuclear capabilities. The development of nuclear programs by Iran and North Korea, as well as the use of chemical weapons by states such as Syria, Russia, and North Korea, contribute significantly to the advancement of major risks posed by the use of weapons of mass destruction. Although the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons was also recorded as a threat in the NATO Strategic Concepts of 1999 and 2010, the novelty of this reference document comes against the background of the Alliance signalling both the direction for efforts to combat and prevent the member states and also the explicit identification of the main state actors, hostile to the interests of the Alliance.

On the other hand, although terrorism still constitutes a threat that generates instability coming from the regions of the Middle East and Africa, in this strategic document, the evolution over time of the complexity of the phenomenon is observed most meaningfully. While in the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, terrorism was configured as one of the main threats in the international security environment, but it was perceived in the traditional sense in the sense of the conventional means of preparation and action of terrorist means, in the current NATO strategic document, terrorism is broadly characterised, including multiple forms of action.

It is also identified as the most asymmetric form of threat to security, both from the perspective of the ways of operation and the actors involved, including non-state actors, states, or entities. Thus, it is observed that there is a change of perspective from the concentration of the direction of action predominantly in the region of Afghanistan and Iraq as a generating source of instability towards the inclusion of a wide range of actors that can directly or indirectly constitute a terrorist threat. Also, the diversification of the means of action, operation (using white weapons, non-conventional means of attack,

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but also CBRN substances or improvised explosives), and radicalisation (directed or coordinated radicalisation, self-radicalisation, including other subtypes outside of classic reductionism) regarding religious or political radicalisation determines the asymmetric character of the threat.

Therefore, the complexity of the North Atlantic Alliance's approach can be seen in the new NATO 2022 Strategic Concept. Although the NATO defence principles are preserved in the old reference document from 2010 (collective defence, crisis management, and security cooperation), the ways of action and coordination of the Alliance's efforts have become much more specific, in the sense of identifying the sources generating instability, whether they are about actors or regions. Equally, the traditional concepts regarding security threats have imposed a reorientation towards more nuanced approaches in accordance with their interdependence: hybrid actions, asymmetric threats, and diversification of conventional military means.

Security threats from the perspective of national defence strategies

As I mentioned before, the National Defence Strategy aims at expanded dimensions in relation to the Military Strategy, including essential sectors for national security such as foreign policy, public order, intelligence and counter-intelligence activity, the economic, health, environmental, and cultural fields, as well as management crises. What stands out is the inclusion of an expanded security concept, starting with the strategy for the period 2015-2019 in relation to the National Security Strategy of 2007. This multidimensional concept of security is modernised in the National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024, including new directions of action in the field of the environment, a more complex approach to the societal dimension, and the multiplication of objectives related to each line of direction.

By analysing the National Defence Strategies from the time of Romania's accession to NATO, respectively, from 2007 until the present National Defence Strategy from the period 2020-2024, it is observed:

1. *The multiplication of new security threats as a result of the dynamics of the security environment and the acquisition of complex valences of traditional threats.*

By analysing the National Defence Strategies from the time of Romania's accession to NATO, respectively, from 2007 until the present National Defence Strategy from the period 2020-2024, it is observed: the multiplication of new security threats; the introduction of new concepts or their modernisation; consolidation of Romania's profile within the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union.

2. *The introduction of new concepts or their modernisation in order to make strategic instruments more efficient.*
3. *The consolidation of Romania's profile within the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union.*

Regarding the perspective of security threats aimed at Romania, the double concept operated within the strategic documents, namely that of national defence and collective defence, is highlighted. However, in the National Security Strategy of 2007, threats and risks were treated in the same category and perceived primarily from the perspective of being a member state of the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union. Also, the threats were mainly generated by the trends of the international environment and, to a lesser extent, by the internal context, being listed exhaustively: *international terrorism structured in cross-border networks; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; regional conflicts; transnational organised crime; ineffective governance* (National Security Strategy of Romania, 2007).

With the introduction of the new *extended security concept* in the National Defence Strategy of the Country for the period 2015-2019, in which the defence dimension sought to create a strategic balance with other essential security dimensions such as public order, intelligence activity, counter-intelligence, education, health, critical infrastructure, economy, energy, and the environmental sector, Romania implemented strategic principles developed in the EU Security Strategy and aimed to increase the resilience of state institutions and civil society in relation to the unpredictability of the international security environment.

Also, cyberattacks and hostile information actions represented two new types of threats compared to those mentioned in the previous security strategy. In relation to the threat presented by cyber attacks, the main cause is determined by the integration of emerging technologies into the offensive tools of cyber entities, while, in the case of hostile information actions, Romania's strategic partnerships and policies promoted in accordance with EU and NATO membership brought attention to Romania predominantly compared to the previous period.

In relation to the National Strategy for the period 2015-2019, the evolution of the security environment determined the emergence of a new set of threats in the Strategy for the period 2020-2024, as a result

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of the unpredictability of the security environment and, on the other hand, of the interdependencies created in the international dynamics. If threats such as terrorism, illegal migration, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cyberattacks, and the continuation of potentially destabilising frozen conflicts in the Black Sea and Western Balkans region are found in both national defence strategies, the trends of evolution or development of these sources of instability are observed in this strategy. For example, in the case of terrorism, new ways of radicalisation and incipient manifestations of the inclusion of extremist ideologies are added, but without reaching a high level in the Romanian space.

However, considering the principle of collective defence, Romania's contribution is also translated through receptivity to the trends present in the Euro-Atlantic environment in order to transfer information and knowledge in the field in the context of the continuous diversification of the phenomenon, either through the emergence of new actors, new objectives of interest, or the acquisition of technological capabilities associated with traditional methods. Likewise, in the case of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, although it is perceived as a classic threat, unpredictability remains in relation to the intentions of international actors regarding the triggering of a new arms race with conventional or nuclear weapons.

On the other hand, the predictability of the intensification of a military aggression by Russia in the vicinity of Romania on the eastern flank has been foreshadowed since the beginning of 2020, following the militarisation of Crimea and the Black Sea basin and the conduct of military exercises by the Kremlin. In the case of the National Defence Strategy of the Country for the period 2020-2024, the economic threats present multiple valences in relation to the offensive behaviour of state entities with contrary interests, energy market distortions, economic sabotage, or economic blockages at the regional level. Also in the economic field, the turning point at the international level marked by the COVID pandemic determined the triggering of an economic crisis, a phenomenon that affects not only Romania but also other regional states in economic relations.

The novelty present in the current strategy relates to the conduct of hybrid actions against Romania or propaganda by actors with hostile

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interests with the aim of changing perceptions and influencing the behaviour of civil society through online means. Moreover, the diversification of technological means has determined the amplification of the phenomenon of computer crime, a phenomenon with reverberations in the cyber and economic fields.

The evolution of security threats from the perspective of military strategies

From a military point of view, interdependence and threats to Romania were foreshadowed from the period before joining NATO as an effect of regional trends that produced strategic imbalances in areas of strategic interest for Romania, the prolongation of economic and social difficulties with an effect on military potential, and dysfunctions of financial, energy, IT, and communications systems. Thus, ever since the drafting of the Military Strategy in 2000, actions with a destabilising effect in essential security sectors (economic, energy, and technological) alongside transnational risks such as organised crime, illegal migration, and drug and arms trafficking have also had consequences for the military field. Also, the asymmetric risks with reverberations and for the military field involved strategies or actions of hostile actors, using procedures different from the classic fight and attacking vulnerable points.

In this sense, Romania's Military Strategy adopted in 2000 develops the consequences of threats such as the expansion of terrorist networks and activities, the proliferation of nuclear technologies, materials, and armaments, and the informational war, in the sense that the main effect consisted of damaging the image of Romania – at that time, a state aspiring to membership in NATO – and propagating a distorted image regarding democratic values and the fulfilment of treaty commitments internationally by Romania. It should be mentioned that, at that time, from the point of view of strategic surprises and the unforeseeable, the strategy foresees the possibility of triggering natural disasters caused by floods, earthquakes, and droughts.

With the acquisition of the NATO member state, Romania adopted the Armed Forces Transformation Strategy in 2006, in which sense obtaining the credibility of the armed forces as an actor capable of contributing to the consolidation of European security and a preventive

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force was essential for the sedimentation of the integration process. For this purpose, the modernisation of the operational and technical capacities of the Romanian Armed Forces and the strengthening of the response capacity of the armed forces in times of crisis and war had to be complementary to the effective combating and prevention of threats.
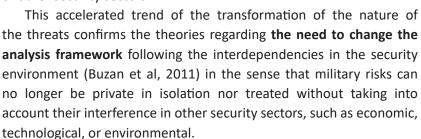
The following two military strategies adopted by Romania as complementary strategic documents to the National Defence Strategies highlight the interdependence of security threats as sources of instability, a fact that involved a comprehensive, unitary approach to the reference military strategic documents. To the extent that the security environment was characterised by the use of the means of hybrid warfare led by actors hostile to Romania's interests through the accumulation of conventional methods with actions of coercion, sabotage, disinformation, psychological operations, and propaganda, this fact required a complex approach in the reference documents on the military without being reduced to the classical reductionism of the types of military risks and threats generated by conflicts and the proliferation of armaments.

A first example in this sense is the Military Strategy of 2016, which, unlike the previous strategy, portrayed Romania as a state that strengthened its profile in the North Atlantic Alliance with fundamental contributions to the security of the Euro-Atlantic space, making the transition of the image of Romania to a newly integrated state in full process of modernisation and adaptation of the armed forces an active state within the North Atlantic Alliance.

Also, the 2016 Strategy emphasised the need to preserve Romania's interests and values, taking into account the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the development of military potential in the country's eastern neighbourhood. At the same time, the phenomenon of illegal migration maintained by actors such as Russia or other destabilizing actors in the Western Balkans area, the hybrid war from the perspective of the management of information operations that can affect Romania, cyber attacks directed against some targets in the military sector, and cross-border organised crime in the sense of interference with the objectives of the military and their endangerment through connections with other types of threats represent some edifying examples regarding

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the interconnectivity of the approach from the military field with that of other security sectors.

This accelerated trend of the transformation of the nature of the threats confirms the theories regarding **the need to change the analysis framework** following the interdependencies in the security environment (Buzan et al, 2011) in the sense that military risks can no longer be private in isolation nor treated without taking into account their interference in other security sectors, such as economic, technological, or environmental.

The current Military Strategy adopted in 2021 highlights the need for a multidimensional approach also in the case of surprise, strategic shock events, which are not caused by the involvement of the human factor, a fact demonstrated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on most of the state's security sectors, including the defence sector. Threats generated by economic, social, or health instability have the potential to produce dysfunctions through the prism of the need to decrease military budgets or re-plan essential endowment programs. Moreover, threats such as terrorism also have implications for the military field in the context in which non-state actors or radicalised individuals can facilitate the production of weapons of mass destruction in order to achieve objectives contrary to the international legal order.

An important aspect signalled by the current strategy is the change in perspective from the use of military forces understood in the traditional sense to the use of technological advantage to obtain military interests. Also, the cyber threats to the military infrastructure confirm the need to increase cyber resilience and strengthen cyber defence through offensive and defensive means in the context of the intensification of military tensions in the vicinity of Romania and also of increasing the strategic profile of our country.

Although the current strategy operates with the same concepts as the previous military strategy (Romania's Military Strategy, 2016), it is emphasised:

1. **increasing the profile of Romania as a state of strategic importance** in the region of the Black Sea and the Western Balkans prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, against the background of the accumulation of tensions, a fact confirmed and emphasized by the NATO Strategic Concept 2022.

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2. the complementarity of the response to threats that can affect the military field in close connection with threats that can affect economic, technological, and cyber security.

3. the multiplication of the types of threats that can have reverberations on the military field, although they are generated by the dysfunctions in other security sectors.

CONCLUSIONS

Both from the perspective of the National Defence Strategies and from the perspective of the Military Strategies from 2007–2021, Romania's credibility within the North Atlantic organisation has increased, either as a result of the consolidation of defence capabilities on the eastern flank of the Alliance area of strategic interest or from the perspective of promoting NATO's values and principles in the proximity of conflict zones that threaten stability at NATO's borders.
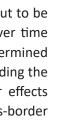
From this research, it has emerged that, both from the perspective of the National Defence Strategies and from the perspective of the Military Strategies from 2007-2021, Romania's credibility within the North Atlantic organisation has increased, either as a result of the consolidation of defence capabilities on the eastern flank of the Alliance area of strategic interest or from the perspective of promoting NATO's values and principles in the proximity of conflict zones that threaten stability at NATO's borders. Romania started from the status of a newly integrated NATO state in 2004, characterised by the need to adapt and transform the armed forces to NATO standards, to an active state within the Alliance by consolidating NATO's presence through operational objectives on the country's territory highlighted by the strategic directions starting in 2016, so that in 2022 the strategic importance of Romania in the Black Sea area as an actor involved in combating Russian aggression will be recognised at the level of the Alliance.

On the other hand, both from the perspective of national defence and common defence, the prevention of security threats by Romania has experienced a continuous improvement over time from the point of view of strategic instruments, through the development of directions of action and the introduction of an expanded security concept in accordance with the European principles of strategic planning, as well as their implementation at the institutional level. Thus, although the trend of security threats turned out to be upward over time, equally, the investment in early warning mechanisms and the minimisation of internal vulnerabilities increased the resilience of the state in relation to the evolution of threats.

The evolution of security threats to Romania can be seen as a product of the transformation of the security architecture at the international

level, with the source of the threats being perceived predominantly as a consequence of regional dynamics rather than as a source of instability at the internal level. Also, the factors that turned out to be the main indicators in terms of the complexity of threats over time are: the dynamism and evolution of technology, which determined the amplification of risks in almost every security sector, including the military; the economic interdependencies that imply major effects for the development of each security sector; and the cross-border character of the expansion of threats, a fact that affects states that are not part of the area of the source of instability.

At the same time, in relation to the evolution of security threats, characteristics such as:

- their multiplication as sources of instability for each security sector, having the character of novelty in the reference periods;
- their amplification and complexity in relation to the events of previous years;
- simultaneous damage to several security sectors by the same type of threat, regardless of the factor that triggered it;
- external interdependence as a product of the international security environment and internally related to the management of threats through prevention tools.

In relation to the dynamics of events on the international scene, the unfolding of unpredictable scenarios in terms of magnitude or consequences that can affect a large number of states or several security sectors at the same time (the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war in Ukraine), which are of strategic surprise.

Also, in relation to the dynamics of events on the international scene, the unfolding of unpredictable scenarios in terms of magnitude or consequences that can affect a large number of states or several security sectors at the same time (the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war in Ukraine), which are of strategic surprise. In this sense, increasing the ability to anticipate and improving the quality of prospective analysis (Bassford, 2023) regarding the evolution of the security environment becomes fundamental to diminishing the unpredictability of new security threats.

In conclusion, in relation to the particularities analysed regarding Romania's strategic framework, this article shares the idea that a holistic (Fox, 2023) vision must be applied, comprehensive, and balanced in relation to the schools of military thought that will shape Romania's future military strategies.

In this sense, relative to Romania's capabilities and the dynamics of the international environment, technological progress must be

embraced as a particularity of society's progress regarding the modelling of military strategies, but on the other hand, a futuristic reductionist approach would be inapplicable relative to Romania's needs and capabilities. At the same time, the traditionalism of the military school's thinking cannot be completely ignored, considering that it offers an important base of knowledge in terms of historical contexts and the pattern of states in relation to the individuality of strategic approaches, but equally, the realistic approach should not be neglected either, in the sense in which the recent war in Ukraine demonstrated the fatalism behind the situational in the military sense. It was also observed that although Romania largely embraces the institutional approach in relation to the theoretical tools applied in building military strategies, nevertheless, in order to prevent strategic surprises, borrowing specific aspects from the other three schools of thought is useful and relevant for modelling the strategic framework related to the dynamism of the current security environment.

Relative to Romania's capabilities and the dynamics of the international environment, technological progress must be embraced as a particularity of society's progress regarding the modelling of military strategies, but on the other hand, a futuristic reductionist approach would be inapplicable relative to Romania's needs and capabilities.

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