



RESETTING NATO'S KEY PURPOSE OF COLLECTIVE DEFENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

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The current security environment, especially the regional one, has been deeply affected after 24 February 2022, when the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine, in flagrant violation of the international rules-based order.

In this regard, the invasion has mobilised concerted efforts to coordinate the support given to Ukraine, consistently materialised in humanitarian, economic and military aid at both national and NATO level. In addition, NATO initiated a new set of measures aimed at deterrence and defence, which included the deployment of response forces to strengthen the posture and presence in the eastern flank. Considering the geographical location of Ukraine, the Wider Black Sea Area has become increasingly relevant in the new security context, maritime security being mentioned, in the new NATO Strategic Concept, adopted in Madrid, in June 2022, as an element of particular importance.

A NATO Strategic Concept Tailored to the New Security Environment

NATO's new Strategic Concept reaffirms the central role of collective defence in Allied efforts, based on a multidimensional approach, and highlights three essential tasks: deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to the recognition of the strategic role of the Black Sea region for the security of the Alliance, emphasising the need to strengthen cooperation and support for the vulnerable partners in the Black Sea region and in the Western Balkans. Practically, by adopting the new strategic concept, in the eastern flank of the Alliance there is no longer a different approach to the northern part, where an enhanced forward presence – eFP was established, and to the southern part, where the tailored Forward Presence – tFP was established, but it is considered and assessed in a unitary, integrated and balanced manner, thus making the transition to forward defence.



To ensure an effective deterrence and defence process against the new threats and military actions from Russia, the Alliance established four new battle groups in Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. The Baltic States and Poland benefited from the establishment of similar structures as early as 2017 in response to Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. Moreover, in order to tailor and strengthen the collective deterrence and defence posture in the eastern flank, including in the Black Sea, in the long term, there were considered a substantial and robust ground presence, strengthened air missile defence systems, prepositioned military equipment and infrastructure improvement for the logistic support, aspects particularly important for Romania. During the discussions at the NATO Summit in Madrid, it was decided that the Allied battle groups, including the one in Romania, would scale up to brigade size, where and when required. The USA, in turn, decided to increase its military presence in Europe, in Romania included. Currently, both northern and southern eastern flanks have balanced structures that rely on the presence of US troops and battle groups, which ensures the coherence of the Allied posture along the entire flank.

Romania, a Key Actor in Strengthening NATO Deterrence and Defence Posture in the Eastern Flank

Against the backdrop of the illegal and unprovoked war launched by the Russian Federation in Ukraine, Romania has been at the forefront of NATO's efforts to secure the decisions and implement the necessary measures to strengthen the collective deterrence and defence posture in the Black Sea.

Starting in 2022, NATO enhanced Vigilance activity/eVA has been conducted, including in the Black Sea region, particularly in Romania, which has led to strengthening the Allied efforts and presence in support of regional security.

In the first semester of 2022, the French Armed Forces provided, in addition to assuming the role of framework nation for the NATO battle group deployed on the territory of Romania, a surface-to-air missile defence system SAMP/T – MAMBA, in support of the Alliance deterrence and defence efforts in Europe's eastern flank. In order to increase the efficiency of the adopted measures and to meet the needs of NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence System, it is connected and integrated into Romania's and NATO's defence systems.

In this context, 78 years after the Normandy landings, the 101st Airborne Division of the US Land Forces returned to Europe, more precisely to the Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base, as a result of the US commitment to enhancing the security of the Black Sea region and of NATO Allies. Moreover, at Mihail Kogălniceanu, detachments from various Allied states, such as Italy, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Canada, the United Kingdom, have contributed, on a rotational basis, alongside the Romanian pilots, to the NATO Air Policing mission.

Romania's objective, in this context, has been to identify options for the medium- and long-term adaptation of the defence and deterrence posture, in parallel with participating in the efforts to develop the defence capabilities of the most vulnerable to Russia's aggressive actions regional partners (Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Georgia).

The national efforts have focused on ensuring the operational level and implementing NATO multinational projects within the national territory, namely: NATO Force Integration Unit/NFIU, Multinational Brigade South-East/MN BDE SE, Headquarters Multinational Division South-East/HQ MND-SE, Headquarters Multinational Corps South-East/HQ MNC-SE.

The strengthening of the Allied deterrence and defence posture and the implementation of specific measures regarding eFP in NATO's north-eastern flank have also represented a priority for the Romanian Armed Forces, which have maintained their contribution regarding the deployment of an air defence detachment in Poland, within the US-led Battle Group (United States enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group/US eFP BG). The mission of this group is to ensure the enhanced Forward Presence, on a rotational basis, in the north-east of the Alliance, to deter any potential aggression, in accordance with the measures adopted during the NATO Summit in Warsaw, in 2016. Moreover, in April-July this year, a Romanian Air Force detachment equipped with F-16 aircraft was deployed in Lithuania, under NATO command, to ensure the integrity of the Baltic states airspace.

Another consequence of the conflict in Ukraine was that, on 24 February 2022, the North Atlantic Council issued the NATO Execution Directive/NED to authorise the activation of the five Graduated Response Plans/GRP of the Alliance. Consequently, the Commander of the Headquarters Multinational Division





South-East/HQ MND-SE ordered the training, with a view to being deployed, of a Romanian Deployable Communications and Information Module/DCIM to ensure the command support and the link with the Allied Battle Group/BG deployed in Bulgaria, under his operational control.

Ensuring the NATO standing naval presence in order to deter potential threats to the Alliance is a constant concern for the Romanian Armed Forces, which participate every year in the missions of the Standing NATO Maritime Group 2/SNMG 2 and the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 2/SNMCMG 2, with frigate-type ships (with a helicopter and a SOF team on board) and sea dredgers.

Moreover, Romania maintains its contribution to Operation Sea Guardian, with the T22 frigate. Because of the conflict in Ukraine and its consequences for the free passage of military ships through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, the missions have been successively cancelled.

In order to ensure maritime security in the Mediterranean Sea, the Aegean Sea, the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, the Romanian Armed Forces contribute to the missions of the NATO Standing Naval Forces with staff personnel in the embarked commands.

Cooperative Security: Romania's Contribution

Another dimension of Romania's contribution to the implementation of NATO initiatives is the participation in cooperative projects in the field of defence capabilities development carried out in Allied context. In this regard, it is worth noting the participation in the NATO Airborne Early Warning and Control Force/NAEW&C, an edifying example of a multinational cooperation programme for the jointly generation and funding of defence capabilities. NATO Security Investment Programme/NSIP represents another model of cooperative security in which Romania participates as a NATO member state. The national participation in the capability development programmes through a multinational approach within the NATO Smart Defence Initiative includes 22 projects, out of the 76 active ones at the Alliance level.

At the EU level, the European cooperation developed under the auspices of the Common Security and Defence Policy/CSDP has been

significantly improved, being amplified by Russia's invasion of Ukraine as well as by the major geopolitical changes. The main institutional effort with an impact on the CSDP was the fact that, on 21 March 2022, the Council of the European Union adopted the Strategic Compass, which affirms the commitment of the member states to the imperative of strengthening European defence, especially in the face of the systemic threat posed by the Russian Federation. The document expresses an explicit recognition of NATO's role in the European security architecture, the need for complementarity and the repositioning of the transatlantic relationship at the core of the European dialogue on defence issues.

Romania has supported the efforts of the European Defence Agency/EDA, which are aimed at promoting collaboration between EU member states in the field of military capabilities, including by connecting the national defence industry and the research and development units of the Ministry of National Defence to the programmes and projects that benefit from EU non-refundable grants. Thus, Romania participates in 21 out of the 60 ongoing PESCO projects. Regarding the participation in the projects for the jointly development and use of military capabilities carried out at the EDA level, Romania participates in 20 projects, of which six are dedicated to research and technology.

Conclusion

Romania is at the forefront of NATO and EU allies' efforts to maintain a security climate in the eastern flank of the Alliance. The sustained efforts made by the Romanian military authorities to implement the deterrence and defence measures decided at the level of the Alliance for the eastern flank, in general, and for the Black Sea region, in particular, position Romania as a stability pillar and a security provider in the region.

