

RELEVANT ACTORS AND EXISTING INTERDEPENDENCIES IN SECURITY ASSURANCE AT REGIONAL LEVEL BY ROMANIA

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The weak sense of security that is specific to the region that our country is part of, and also at the international level, renders the membership of an alliance and cooperation a necessity. The collaboration between NATO and the EU, the main actors and guarantors of security in recent years, in Europe, with other states and international organizations is essential to address threats and preserve our security. “Those ready to give up a fundamental right in order to achieve a temporary sense of security deserve neither the right, nor the security” (Popescu 2020), said Benjamin Franklin. Regardless of our opinion about what he said, we can all agree that freedom and security are two very hot topics given the current context.

This paper analyses the main themes of the relevant actors and of the existing interdependencies in ensuring security in the region and the influences that lead to destabilization in the region. The main purpose of this paper is to analyse both the internal and external factors that influence national and regional security strategy. Being given these facts, this paper underlines the risk factors that can influence and endanger peace and security, as well as the international bodies and the relations that place Romania on the regional security providers list.

Keywords: regional security; European security and defence policy; risk factors; security strategies; threat;

ROMANIA – 30 YEARS’ WORTH OF PROGRESS TOWARDS REGIONAL SECURITY

The past 30 years have represented Romania’s progress in regional security, given the significant changes in Eastern Europe, and in the context of the accession to NATO and the EU in 2004. Here are some of the important achievements and developments: participation in international peacekeeping missions, regional cooperation, modernization of the armed forces, cyber security, energy security, anti-terrorism efforts, as well as collaboration with strategic partners.

As a sovereign state, Romania is an essential actor in ensuring regional security. In this context, it needs to defend its interests and to involve in regional security efforts. *“In the past years, Romania strengthened its role as an ally and regional actor that takes part in ensuring security in the Euro-Atlantic region and at an international level”.* (National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024, p. 22)

Romania is one of the main actors that take part in maintaining regional security. Internal stability, cooperation with other states and organizations render our country as a stability pillar and an efficient partner when taking part in projects and concrete actions that are meant for maintaining regional and international security.

Since the moment that our country filed in a formal manner for joining NATO in 1993, Romania made a remarkable progress in cooperating with partners and allies to ensure its own security and to ensure regional and international security. All at the same time, Romania has succeeded in strengthening its role regarding its foreign policy and it became, all in all, a strong ally and a trusted partner for all the alliances and organizations that it is part of.

The fact that our country became a part of a series of international bodies that have the sole purpose of ensuring peace and security for the nations and in the regions that the member states are part of, partnered with the fact that it strengthened its own security (both internal and external) transformed it into a true pillar for stability and security in the Eastern European region. Nowadays the external policy of expansion, sometimes aggressive, sometimes even violent, promoted by countries like the Russian Federation have created insecurity, chaos, uncertainty, and so the membership of an alliance or of an international body that focuses on security becomes the path most likely to follow by all the states that wish for security and growth.

Analysing furthermore, the violent and unprovoked conflicts that happen nowadays prove the need for any country to have allies. The mere positioning that Romania has on the global map can lead to uncertainty and unrest in society, especially given the history that our country shares with the Russian Federation. A solid military strategy, good resource management and a modern training of the military can bring peace of mind among the people in our country. The guarantee that our country is ready and able to deal with crisis situations anytime is a key factor for mental stability that the society needs in order to properly function.

Romania has strengthened its relations with strategic partners, like the United States of America, contributing to a consolidated presence of these partners in the region. Such developments show that Romania has made significant progress in ensuring regional security in the past three decades, becoming an important actor in the region and in international alliances. However, regional security remains a priority, and Romania should continue to adapt to the new challenges and threats to maintain stability and peace in the region.

Like any other sovereign state, Romania has maintaining security among its objectives, without which any other objective, be it economic, social, environmental, cultural or military, cannot be achieved and maintained. In any situation in fact, security and political stability are very important pillars for a state as without them no other objective could be attained.

The national and regional security of Romania represents a constant subject of concern not only for the states in the region but also for the European and international bodies that focus on maintaining stability and peace. Given the fact that the Russian Federation manifests a growing tendency for expansion and shows a more aggressive behaviour, we can agree that insecurity and danger level in the region are on a rise and that we need to revise, adapt and evolve our partnerships and to strengthen our positions on the list of actors that have direct influence over the regional security and can provide stability.

Overall, the issue of regional security is complex and depends on a variety of context-specific factors. Its approach requires a deep understanding of regional dynamics, interests and interdependencies between the states involved. Addressing regional security issues often requires regional and international cooperation to address common threats and promote stability and peace. Romania represents a pillar of regional stability, as the issue of regional security is a major concern in the context of international relations and refers to the maintenance of stability

and security in a certain geographical area. This issue can be influenced by a number of factors and dynamics, and the specific context in which it plays out can vary by region. Here are some key aspects of the regional security issue and the related context.

The current context shows that the conflicts around our country are on an expansionist tendency, so Romania's stability and its participation in NATO and EU actions grant it the status of pillar of regional stability. As it is also stated in the official document published by the Presidential Administration of Romania, namely the *National Defence Strategy for the 2020-2024 period*, Romania is a "promoter and actor involved in sustainable international partnerships". In addition, "the security and economic developments generated by changes in the power balance abroad require concrete and concerted actions from the Romanian state, which will continue to implement and promote the concept of extended national security" (National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024, p. 8).

ROMANIA – MEMBER OF NATO, EU, OSCE, UN AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL BODIES

Romania – Member of the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization

More publicly known as NATO, the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization is an international body, a political and military alliance that has as purpose to protect the freedom and security of member states. NATO is fulfilling its purposes by engaging in diplomatic talks and military operations, when the first option fails.

According to an official document issued by the Presidential Administration, as part of the national defence strategy of Romania for the 2020-2024 period, the strengthening of the relations that our country has with NATO and the EU is a main objective. The same document also states that "Membership of the European Union and NATO, as well as the Strategic Partnership with the USA, is the foundation of Romania's foreign policy, as well as the path that the Romanian state has committed to follow consciously and irreversibly" (National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024, p. 8).

The fact that Romania is part of a series of treaties and international bodies not only means the existence of obligations, but also a lot of advantages that are not specific to some states in the Eastern-European region. The involvement that Romania has in NATO, the loyalty and commitment are perfectly presented using only two adjectives that describe our country's membership in such an organization: "consciously and irreversibly".

By any means, the officials that represent our country both in Bucharest and internationally state the same message regarding our countries relation with NATO: this relationship represents the core of our international foreign policy. This message has been conveyed for the past 18 years, more precisely since 29 March 2004 when our country formally became a NATO member state.

As a fully-fledged member, Romania takes part in a variety of missions and operations under allied command, but also benefits of the most complex security guarantees given by an international body as they are stated in the Article 5 of the Washington Treaty (North-Atlantic Treaty, Washington DC, 4 April 1949).

A strong example that proves the strong relation between Romania and NATO is what happened in 2014 when NATO created the *tailored Forward Presence* (tFP) on the eastern flank of the Alliance and on the Black Sea shore. Romania took part in all of this by investing forces and military bodies as a whole for the purpose of defending itself, the Black Sea region and the eastern flank of the Alliance. By converting the military bodies invested by Romania to allied structures, all the other armies that are part in NATO can contribute forces and resources (<https://www.mae.ro/node/46982>).

On the Black Sea shore was also created a structure for coordinating the maritime operations and missions under allied flag. Also for the purpose of intensifying the defence capabilities, the Air Military Policing forces were augmented by the allies, on a rotational basis. Also for defence purposes, on the national territory of Romania were created military bodies such as *Headquarters Multinational Division South East* (HQ MND SE) and *NATO Force Integrated Unit* (NFIU) that help coordinating the missions that take place under allied flag. (Ib.). Moreover, in 2020, the Allies created a new structure under the name of *Headquarters Multinational Corps South-East* (HQ MNC-SE) in Sibiu, with the purpose of strengthening the security architecture in the region (Ib.).

Considering the events happening in the neighbouring countries and the new tactics for conducting warfare, we can conclude that it is really important to implement a modern missile defence system. It has also been an important objective on the agenda discussed by the Allies during the last summits, and the conclusion that was reached was that the importance of these systems comes from the need of ensuring security for all the allies. Romania, because of the success that it had in implementing and developing the European component of the US aerial defence system, strengthened its position among the NATO allies.

Romania also took part in *Resolute Support Mission* (RSM) in Afghanistan, *NATO- Kosovo Mission* (KFOR) and other missions under allied flag such as the *Iraqi operations*, and it employed military means and personnel alongside the allies. Also, amongst other tendencies that Romania backed (and in which it was involved) we can mention: the efforts to enhance defence capabilities for the partners in the eastern and southern parts of the Alliance; the active participation in establishing and delivering the aid packages (resources and funds) meant for Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia; the fulfilment of its role as a coordinating nation in enhancing the NATO Fund for Ukrainian Cyber-defence; the active participation in global efforts for countering terrorist organizations and terrorism as a phenomenon. Also, between 2021 and 2022 Romania received the mission of being *Contact Point Embassy* (CPE) for NATO in Finland and Kuwait. (<https://www.mae.ro/node/46982>).

Romania – Member of the EU

On 1 January 2007, Romania became a full-fledged member of the European Union. Even though the main fields of action for the EU are economy, free trade and environment, a really hot topic discussed in the last years was the need for a new plan for ensuring security amongst de EU states.

In addition, on 21 March 2022, the European Council formally passed a paper, *“Strategic Compass”*, that has as a main focus *“strengthening the European policy for defence and security until 2030”* (A Strategic Compass to Strengthen the Security and Defence of the European Union by 2030).

Another EU project that aims to increase and encourage cooperation between member states on the security and defence topic is the EU cooperation on security and defence plan that was approved by the European Council in 2016. This document states four different measures that aim to increase security for the EU citizens. The four initiatives are: Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) and the *“consolidation of the set of defence instruments for rapid response of EU, including EU tactical battlegroups and civil capabilities”* (EU Cooperation on Security and Defence).

The strategic priorities that represent the main focus of the EU Global Strategy for Defence are: the defence of EU territory and its citizens; strengthening of allied capacities for defence; augmenting the capacity to react to crisis and external conflicts (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/policies/defence-security/>).

Through the European Defence Fund (EDF) for 2021-2027, *Coordinated Annual Review on Defence* (CARD) and *Permanent Structured Cooperation* (PESCO) the EU wishes to strengthen its defence capabilities, including the development of the adjacent industry and increasing the funds flow into this segment. As a result, there have been a lot of programs that were implemented with the implication of the member states. Romania takes part in 12 of these projects under PESCO management, even coordinating two of them. (<https://www.mae.ro/node/46982>).

On the civilian side of things, 2018 saw the implementation of a reform in the management sector, that was aimed as a response to international threats such as: illegal migration, terrorism, naval security, organized crime, cyber-attacks and so on. Also, in the same year, the “*Civil Pact for PSAC*” became a reality, and it came as a strategic guide for human resources management, the legal umbrella that foresaw the whole domain etc. In Romania all these initiatives were made a part of the National Strategy for Implementing the Civil Pact of PSAC that became reality in February 2021 (<https://www.mae.ro/node/46982>).

According to the European Council, CARD offers a better representation of the expenses in the defence sector, of the investments in every member state and on the research effort. Among the advantages that it has, we can mention: the ease to identify deficits; better cooperation in the defence field; better execution of plans and expenses on the defence spectrum (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/policies/defence-security/>).

Romania – Defended under NATO and EU

Although the two organizations are strongly built and managed, although they have a series of similarities (common members, common objectives) and their respective programmes intersect, these two organizations complement each other both in action and purpose. According to the *National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024*, a great objective of our country’s foreign policy is “*supporting NATO-EU cooperation, ensuring complementarity between the two organizations in terms of European defence and security; one particular aim will be to ensure the coherence of EU initiatives*” (National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024).

Also, the foreign policy that our country applies is heavily influenced by the European Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) that became mandatory through the Treaty on European Union (TEU) of 1993. This treaty states the formation of European Union that is invested with a certain set of powers

by the member states and has the purpose of reaching a common goal for all the members (Treaty on European Union, consolidated version). Regarding security for the whole Union, Article 3 of the treaty states that “*the Union wishes to promote peace, shared values, wealth and the shared interests of its members*”. In addition, Article 18 of the treaty states the existence of a shared policy for security among the member states, but it does not limit the possibilities to just the union’s institutions, maintaining the possibilities for collaboration within governments, on their own: “*Member states, if they decide so, can establish any form of cooperation between them that acts within the competence and objectives of the whole Union, they can call for the help of European institutions and can act according to treaties that they are part of and do not contradict the Union’s purpose and interests*”.

According to the European Council, the main areas within which EU and NATO cooperate are: military mobility, cybersecurity, hybrid threats management, counterterrorism, addressing gender issues and gender equality (or other areas that aim to aid women and their rights and treatment) and, last but not least, security (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/policies/defence-security/>). “*We welcome EU efforts to bolster European security and defence to better protect the Union and its citizens and to contribute to peace and stability in the neighbourhood and beyond. The Permanent Structured Cooperation and the European Defence Fund contribute to these objectives*”. (Joint declaration on EU-NATO cooperation, 10 July 2018, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/policies/defence-security/>). The main purpose of this statement is to call for an augmentation of defence and security cooperation on the transatlantic axis, as it was previously stated within the objectives of the declaration of 2016.

Romania has a lot to gain from the cooperation between EU and NATO, especially when it comes to its defence and security, both standalone and in regional and allied context.

OSCE – an Organization to Prevent Conflicts

The Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) has 57 member states, Romania being one of them, and has the main focus on preventing conflicts. OSCE is the biggest regional organization for security that has as a role in observing, warning and preventing crises and conflicts as well as implementing high-end political dialogue. The official website of OSCE states that “*The OSCE has a comprehensive approach to security that encompasses politico-military, economic*

and environmental, and human aspects. It therefore addresses a wide range of security-related concerns, including arms control, confidence- and security-building measures, human rights, national minorities, democratization, policing strategies, counter-terrorism and economic and environmental activities” (OSCE.org)

The Romanian White Paper on Defence 2021, the official Romanian Government publication that presents defence policies and objectives, states that the main pillar meant to ensure and enhance internal security are NATO membership, EU membership, strategic partnership with the USA and the continuous collaboration for development that our country has with neighbouring countries and *“countries that represent strategic interest for us”* (White Paper on Defence, 2021, p. 11).

In the same field of interest, the same official paper states the importance of continuing and enhancing the current missions that our country employs under OSCE coordination and also raises awareness about unsportsmanlike behaviour that certain countries show, especially the Russian Federation. About the Russian Federation, OSCE officially states that it repeatedly violated rules and regulations previously adopted on an international level through treaties and it also violated territorial integrity of Ukraine, enhancing the crisis and prolonging conflict in the region (Ib.).

Also, on the 2021 agenda that OSCE has we can find a key objective that interest almost every state at the moment: solving the Ukrainian conflict. Amongst other objectives that OSCE has we can mention: *“solving latent conflicts by establishing a trusting environment for intergovernmental dialogue and enhancing a more profound understanding on security issues that fall under OSCE authority, perfecting arms dealing procedures and countering terrorism”* (OSCE Role).

UN – Stabilization and Mitigation between States

Even though the UN does not have the military means and capacities to involve itself through military action in order to ensure security, the organization has a key role for preserving peace by being an *“observer”*, by facilitating dialogue and surveying the implementation of internationally accepted measures.

As a mediator, the United Nations enhanced its readiness and their people training in order to ensure a proficient effort. A key innovation in this regard was the establishment of the Mediation Support Unit (MSU) within the Policy and Mediation Division (PMD) of the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and, within the unit, the creation of the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers.

With the goal of supporting relevant actors to achieve a just and sustainable peace through the pacific settlement of disputes, the unit engages in and supports a wide range of operational activities and projects and works closely with a number of partners (Mediation Support Unit).

Romania became a full-fledged member of the UN in 1995, in spite of its efforts that started as early as 1946. Between 2004 and 2005, Romania was a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and it worked towards promoting the cooperation between the UN and other regional organizations with the main focus of maintaining peace and regional security. This initiative was both the first Romanian-coordinated initiative in the UN Security Council and the first initiative that meant to enhance coordination between the UN and other regional organizations. (<https://www.mae.ro/node/46982>).

After that time interval passed, Romania worked towards identifying, perfecting and applying a series of new initiatives meant for reforming the UN completely. At the same time, Romania has the possibility to take part in a series of military missions employing means and personnel aimed for maintaining peace and security worldwide. Through this, the Romanian military proved useful and efficient during international peacekeeping missions. All of these initiatives that Romania had within the UN made it a trustful and efficient country for helping others develop themselves. As a consequence, Romania became a part of a series of partnerships with UN-related institutions in 2017. (Ib.)

OTHER RELEVANT ACTORS FOR MAINTAINING REGIONAL SECURITY

The Western Balkans Countries

The Western Balkans countries essentially mean countries that once were part of former Yugoslavia (except for Slovenia and Croatia) including Albania. After Romania and Bulgaria became members of the EU, these countries represent the next candidates that will be integrated within the Union.

The Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that *“the European development of the states from the Western Balkans region is one of the major priorities of Romanian foreign policy. The fact that our country is a full-fledged member of EU and NATO, and the fact that these states are so close to us, almost neighbours, is a reason for the Bucharest administration to have a careful approach to these states”* (Western Balkans).

The summit that took place in Bucharest in 2008 was essentially an invitation for Croatia and Albania to apply for NATO membership.

Regional Cooperation Council

According to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Romania, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) was officially launched during a meeting in which a lot of foreign missions took part, in Sofia, where Bulgaria took the initiative and coordinated the formation of this organization. The year was 2008 and the meeting was called “*The South-East European Cooperation Process*” (SEECP). (<https://www.mae.ro/node/46982>).

The involvement that Romania has within RCC is included in the part that our country plays within SEECP and is linked to the country’s external affairs. Also, it has a lot to do with regional security and stability and is a part of a greater objective: helping the states from the western region of the Balkans to make progress toward becoming part of the EU and NATO (Romania and the Regional Cooperation Council).

RCC has the main purpose of creating a friendly environment in which underdeveloped states to try and catch up to their counterparts, and to maintain a European perspective for the Western Balkans region. In order for this organization to fulfil its purpose, it was developed a Strategy and a Working Programme (SWP), that also includes the SEE strategy for the year 2020 (<https://www.mae.ro/node/46982>).

Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS)

The Council of Baltic Sea States is a political organization between governments that has the main purpose of enhancing cooperation between states in the Baltic Sea region. The following states take part in this political structure: Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden and European Union. The Russian Federation was also a part of CBSS, but it was excluded in March 2022 as a result of the illegal invasion in Ukraine. The mission that CBSS has is building trust and ensuring better collaboration between the member states.

The cooperation that this organization brings in the international environment benefits Romania as well, mainly because it facilitates communication on official channels.

CONCLUSIONS

By means of the descriptive analysis, a detailed picture of the context is provided from the point of view of the regional security issue, as well as of the relations, which implies a significant commitment that Romania assumes, in the regional security policies. This descriptive analysis emphasizes the complexity and interdependence of the factors that influence the provision of security at the regional level by Romania. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing security policy and promoting stability in Eastern Europe.

Maintaining national and regional security represents a goal for the fulfilment of which we need to invest resources both nation and region-wide and to implement methods of cooperation between governments. Under the condition that threats are on a rise and are also getting closer, cooperation and partnerships for maintaining stability and security become a must, a number one priority.

Romania is in itself a pole for geostrategic influence both on a regional level and on a continental level. Being a member state in both UE and NATO and also being on the eastern flank, our country plays a key-role for maintaining security in the region.

As a full-fledged member in many international committees and bodies, Romania has a well-established role within all the alliances, maintaining partnerships for collective security on a regional and transatlantic level. The active involvement in strengthening both EU and NATO and other organizations as well, make our country a valuable ally, an active member, capable of maintaining security and of being a security provider at national, regional and international level.

The recent events in Ukraine prove that there is a need for a permanent set of measures and procedures to ensure security and stability and to act anytime if the need arises. Another priority is represented by a good cooperation with allied and neighbouring states. Regardless of the existence of a series of threats to our future such as the climate change, the high pollution rate etc., and regardless of the fact that these problems also require the attention, energy and resources of the Union in order to ensure a better future for its citizens, the ongoing war in Ukraine underlined the importance of a good training on the military side in order to be capable of maintaining social security because peace is not guaranteed even in this century.

Even if within the current context NATO appears to be the most important actor on the international stage for maintaining security in the region, we are sure that we cannot ignore the efforts of other organizations and states on this front.

It is increasingly more evident for everyone that without cooperation, implication, interoperability and loyalty we cannot reach our final goal, that of stability, security in the region and at the international level.

Given the progress in technology and the rapid growth of digitalization in the current century, it is of vital importance that every state has a strategy for countering cyber-attacks, on the same level of competence and efficiency as the military side. The majority of states started a high proficiency digitalization process and this fact led to a rise of the risk of a cyber-attack. Although Romania is not on the level of other countries, the process for rapid digitalization is ongoing, and the need for innovative solutions on how to efficiently counter cyber-attacks is on the rise as well.

The European Union started a series of initiatives regarding the digital sphere, both for introducing the new capabilities that come as a bonus to digitalization and for creating a modern defence against the most advanced of the technologies that aim to interfere and threaten the state's defence and the society's resilience. Furthermore, apart from protecting data, the new technologies were developed with the purpose of enabling the process of defence against the traditional ways of attack.

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