

EVOLUTION OF ROMANIAN-RUSSIAN POLITICAL-MILITARY RELATIONS POST-1989

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Abstract: *1989 momentum triggered the Romanian escape from Communism. Thus, the situation started to change in the Romanian-Russian relations when Russia got smaller and Romania took the chance to make a different political turn and entered a step-by-step way toward democracy and western values. Meanwhile, on the way to nowadays, a lot of changes were produced in their bilateral relations moving between cooperation to confrontation, many of them being mainly the result of two factors: Romanian shift to the Euro-Atlantic structures, policies and modus vivendi and Russia's aggressive foreign policy in its vicinity. As direct consequence, in the past two decades and a half from the collapse of the USSR, Romanian – Russian relations on the whole oscillated between tension and negative passivity on the grounds of former difficult historical legacy.*

In our paper we will present some key moments and their consequences on Romanian-Russian political-military relations.

Key words: *tensions, cooperation, Romania-Russia, political-military relations, passivity, aggression.*

Introduction

Romania and Russia have common historical religious roots in Orthodoxy and their ethno-cultural similarities, but between them there is a complicated common history of diplomacy and war, which by its nature created anxiety in the Romanian-Russian relationship due to the existence of unresolved issues: the problem of the Romanian treasure which was

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deposited in Moscow in 1916-1917 and not fully recovered, or the territorial dispute, consequence of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1939), when the territories of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina were transmitted to the USSR, as well as the effects still felt by the Romanian nation of the 45th years of Bolshevik Communism.

Under the historical conditions created, the 1989 moment that triggered the liberation from communism of the states of Eastern Europe found Romania positioned as a satellite of the USSR. After the collapse of the USSR, Russia became smaller and the situation began to change in bilateral relations, especially when Romania entered the post-communist era and advanced to democracy and Western values. As a direct consequence of the Euro-Atlantic road of the Romanian state and the sinuous evolution of Russian foreign policy in the post-communist period, in the last two decades, the Romanian-Russian diplomatic relations oscillated between negligence and negative passivity against the backdrop of difficult historical legacy.

1. The bilateral framework for political cooperation 1989-2014

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the disintegration of the Soviet Union was already signalled by the political changes in the former communist states, which later in 1991 led to the dissolution of the Soviet “empire”, the Romania’s position being quite sensitive in this context. Although there were those signs predicting the collapse of the “big bear”, it was also clear that Russia, the successor of the Soviet Union, would remain a great power within the international system in our immediate neighbourhood.

This state of affairs made it possible for Romanians to be captured by the Soviet aura between 1989 and 1991, with Romanian politics clearly being still subordinated to communist ideology. This statement is supported by the first Communiqué issued by the Council of the National Salvation Front (the new power in Bucharest after the abolition of the communist regime), who, on 22 December 1989, proclaimed the principles that would guide the post-communist Romanian politics. Among these, illustrative for the state of confusion in which the Romanian politicians of the time were, the objectives and priorities of the foreign policy of the new Romanian

democratic state were stated in the following manner: “*The entire foreign policy of the country should serve to promote good neighbourhood, integrating into the process of building a united Europe, a common home of all peoples of the continent. We will honour Romania’s international commitments and, above all, those related to the Warsaw Treaty*”¹. Apparently, the objectives of Romanian foreign policy were divergent, with the European Union and the Warsaw Treaty being two organizations that promoted opposing principles. From a geopolitical point of view, the mentioning in the same document of the United Europe and the Warsaw Treaty captures the exact situation in which Romania was caught at that time - in a “grey” area of security, in other words, at the junction between the East and the West and in geopolitical uncertainty.

In April 1991, Romania signed a Treaty of Good Neighbourhood, Cooperation and Friendship with the USSR; its Article 4 stipulated that “*Romania and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics will not participate in any alliance directed against the other*”², while the USSR collapsed only a few months later. However, the act was not ratified by the Romanian Parliament, but the intention to validate such an act was an inertial sign of the former long-standing Soviet influence over the Romanian politicians of the time surprised by the imminent collapse of the big Russian colossus and fearing the novelty brought by democracy. Of course, if the treaty had been ratified by the Romanian parliament, our state could not have been a member of NATO.

In the second part of 1991, more urgent aspects of practical nature influenced the evolution of the Romanian-Russian relations, namely the declaration of independence of the Republic of Moldova in August 1991 and the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Romania was the first country to officially recognize the independence of the Republic of Moldova and also supported the European ideals of the Balkan countries. However,

¹ *The Communique to the Country of the Council of the National Salvation Front*, published in the Official Gazette of Romania No. 1 of December 22, 1989, Part I (In Romanian: *Comunicatul către țară al Consiliului Frontului Salvării Naționale*, publicat în Monitorul Oficial al României nr.1 din 22 decembrie 1989, Partea I).

² Mioara Anton, *Documente Diplomatice Române, România și Tratatul de la Varșovia. Conferințele miniștrilor Afacerilor de Externe și ale adjuncților lor (1966-1991)*, Seria a III-a, Editura Alpha Mdn, București, 2009, pp. 1218-1221.

immediately after the dissolution of the USSR, the bilateral political and diplomatic relations were resumed in the new format, the diplomatic and consular representations of the USSR in Romania being considered diplomatic and consular bodies of the Russian Federation, and the diplomatic mission of our country in Moscow being considered Embassy of Romania in the Russian Federation.

Undoubtedly, the successor of the Soviet Union remained a great power within the international system, but it was not clear what the new Russia would be. Romania's position was rather uncertain in this context. In fact, the relations between Russia and Western entities (especially USA and NATO) seemed to relax in the 1990s, when the Russian state joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (1991) and the Partnership for Peace (1994) and participated in the Council NATO-Russia (2002), most of the geopolitical and military strategists considering that Russia had decided to rally to the Western structures.³ But recent history has shown that this orientation has proved to be just a myth, as the former Soviet republic has begun to rebuild its political intimidation techniques towards its smaller and weaker neighbours.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Romania acted in the inertial thinking of a former communist country, governed by geopolitical fear, thus trying to create good relations with its stronger neighbour by signing a basic political treaty with Russia. The signing of this settlement was delayed by Russia's refusal to mention in the diplomatic act that it agreed to condemn the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and to resolve the issue of the Romanian treasury. In addition, in 1992-1993, the relations between the two states became tense when they supported opposing parties in the conflict in Transnistria due to different national interests in relation to the respective issues. In fact, I consider that the moment of self-proclamation of the Republic of Transnistria in 1992, when Russia openly supported the separatist forces, was the first demonstration of the post-communist future hegemonic intentions of Kremlin.

³ Gheorghe Calopăreanu, *Regionalizarea securității în Europa Centrală*, Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare „Carol I”, București, 2011, pp. 24-44.

On 4 July 2003, in Moscow, the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation Relations between Romania and the Russian Federation was signed, with a joint declaration “*condemning the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, Romania’s participation in the Second World War alongside Hitler’s Germany*” and announcing “*the establishment of a joint commission ... to solve the study problems arising from the history of bilateral relations, including the Romanian treasury*”⁴. This major event has changed the trend of the Romanian-Russian bilateral relations, being considered as an opportunity “*to resume the political and diplomatic dialogue and to create favourable conditions for economic and cultural cooperation*”⁵. After signing the agreement, the economic and political contacts became more active.

The situation became clearer in the bilateral relations between Bucharest and Moscow, when Romania had the chance to make a political turn as a result of the Romanian diplomacy of the time by joining the NATO PfP Program in 1994 and also by signing a strategic partnership with USA in 1997. The accession to NATO in 2004 and other subsequent Romania-US bilateral co-operation strengthened the Romanian position outside Russian influences (*the Agreement on the Activities of American Forces on the Territory of Romania* entered into force on 21 July 2006, *the Agreement between Romania and the US on the US missile defence system in Romania* entered into force on 23 December 2011, *the Joint Statement on the Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century adopted between Romania and the United States* on 13 September 2011 in Washington, followed by 5 bilateral meetings which last took place on 26 seasons 2016, which mentioned the implementation of the joint declaration on partnership mentioned above). Thus, with the participation in the Euro-Atlantic military bloc, the Romanian national security was no longer threatened by a hostile

⁴ Law no. 24/2004 for the ratification of the Treaty on Friendly Relations and Cooperation between Romania and the Russian Federation, signed in Moscow on 4 July 2003, published in the Official Gazette no. 194 of 4 March 2004 (In Romanian: *Legea nr. 24/2004 pentru ratificarea Tratatului privind relațiile prietenești și de cooperare dintre România și Federația Rusă*, semnat la Moscova la 4 iulie 2003 publicată în Monitorul Oficial nr. 194 din 4 martie 2004).

⁵ Nadezda Feyt, „Russian-Romanian relations in the 21st century”, in *Political Science and International Relations*, Romanian Academy, Ed. XI, No. 2, Bucharest, 2014, p. 54.

state, as it came under the protection of Article 5 of the Treaty of Washington. Of course, joining the EU in 2007 has also been a guarantee for our Western ways and a means to escape the Russian influence. Thus, with Romania's participation in NATO and the EU, it was clear that our political, security and economic interests were related to the general interests of these organizations.

In 2005, the Romanian President had two visits (in February and May) to Moscow, and this should have had a positive impact on bilateral relations, but a speech in September delivered by President Basescu in the US in September⁶ triggered diplomatic tensions between Romania and the Russian Federation. Another hot topic was Russia's dissatisfaction with the location of American military bases on Romania's territory, which President Putin considered to be an obvious sign of the Romanian Euro-Atlantic inclination. Due to these diplomatic frictions, the interests of our countries in economic relations suffered in the years to come.

Vladimir Putin said in his speech at the 43rd Munich Conference on February 12, 2007 *"Today we are witnessing an exaggerated use of force - the military force - in international relations, a force that pushes the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts"*⁷. He was also dissatisfied with the fact that after the adoption of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) signed in 1999 *"only four states have ratified this document, including the Russian Federation"*⁸. Romania, at the time of the speech, was already a member of NATO, so it was among the countries that did not ratify CFE because the Alliance *"refuses to ratify the treaty as long as Russia refuses to withdraw its troops from the Moldovan and Georgian*

⁶ In September 2005, in the United States, President Traian Basescu delivered a speech at Stanford University, where he praised the Russian Federation as treating the Black Sea as a "Russian lake" because it does not want to internationalize the issues in the area. See: „Retrospectiva declarațiilor lui Traian Băseșcu despre Rusia”, in *Jurnalul*, 30 June 2011, available online at: <http://jurnalul.ro/stiri/politica/retrospectiva-declaratiilor-lui-traian-basescu-despre-rusia-583299.html>, accessed on 19.05.2018.

⁷ „Putin's Prepared Remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy”, transcript, *Washington Post*, February 12, 2007, available online at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR2007021200555.html>, accessed on 13.05.2018.

⁸ Idem.

*territories*⁹. After signing a federal decree on July 14¹⁰, in December of the same year, Russia suspended the application of the treaty. Thus, after joining NATO and Euro-Atlantic policy, the Romanian-Russian relations were marked by the general reciprocal approach between Brussels and the leaders of Moscow.

A moment of brief political confluence of the Romanian-Russian interests was the refusal of both states to recognize Kosovo's independence towards Serbia on February 17, 2007, which helped to improve the bilateral cooperation of the moment. Romania still supports its position on this issue, although there have been diplomatic pressure against it, initiated by other NATO and EU member countries.

Also, in April 2008, before the Russian military incursion into Georgia, the first and only moment to date when a Russian President visited Romania after the fall of communism was when Vladimir Putin attended the Russian-NATO Council organized on the occasion of the Bucharest Summit¹¹. The meeting between Vladimir Putin and Traian Basescu in 2008 positively influenced bilateral relations by intensifying contacts between the two countries. President Putin said at the bilateral meeting with his Romanian counterpart that *“since the visit in Moscow in 2005, relations have grown tremendously, especially in the economic sphere, and economic*

⁹ *CFE Treaty's Contribution to Euro-Atlantic Security*, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, March 29, 2006, available online at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_54709.htm, accessed on 12.05.2018.

¹⁰ The circumstances invoked by Putin for his decision were “failure of former Warsaw Pact states to adjust the treaty framework to account for their accession to NATO, the existence of too many NATO parties in the CFE Treaty, the negative impact of NATO's exclusive group mentality, the deployment of U.S. forces in Bulgaria and Romania, the failure of CFE Treaty parties to comply with their 1999 Istanbul political commitments, such as early ratification of the Adapted Agreement, and the absence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania from the CFE Treaty”. See details at: Duncan B. Hollis, „Russia Suspends CFE Treaty Participation”, in *Insights*. American Society of International Law, Volume 11, Issue 19, July 23, 2007, available online at: <https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/11/issue/19/russia-suspends-cfe-treaty-participation>, accessed on 05.05.2018.

¹¹ Post-communist Romanian presidential visits in Moscow were 4 (1991, 2003, February 2005 and March 2005). See: <http://www.mae.ro/bilateral-relations/4506#78>, accessed on 14.04.2018.

exchanges have reached nearly five billion dollars”¹². On the same occasion, T. Basescu was invited to visit Russia again. Even though this seemed a good sign for high-level bilateral cooperation, Russia’s next political-military move to Georgia again put Romania and Russia in opposition to the newly created issue.

Entering military forces in Georgia, Putin did exactly the opposite of what he had preached on various occasions, including the Munich Conference and the NATO Summit in Bucharest on preserving security and cooperation and respect for international law. In response, Western specialists considered that “*Putin’s interest in reviving a large Russia - an unity of peoples in Belarus, Ukraine and Russia - seems to have taken shape after the Georgian War of 2008*”¹³. In fact, Georgia’s invasion by Russia’s land, air and naval forces on 8 August 2008, and the proclamation of the independence of Georgian separatist provinces in South Ossetia and Abkhazia had drastic political, economic and security consequences for the countries in the vicinity of the Russian Federation, deteriorating the relations between the Moscow regime and Western democracies and leading to serious convictions abroad. Of course, Romania was in the same position with the West. Thus, global relations with Moscow worsened again.

Some of the sensitive issues that have damaged the Romanian-Russian relations were recorded in the *Military Doctrine of Russia in 2010* as the main foreign military dangers¹⁴, and Romania was the subject of some of them, namely the placement on Romanian territory of NATO military bases and discussions about hosting elements of the US missile shield as part of NATO facilities.

¹² „Putin catre Basescu: Relatiile romano-ruse s-au dezvoltat mult de la vizita dvs. la Moscova”, Bucharest Summit 2-4 November 2008, April 3, 2008, available online at: http://www.summitbucharest.ro/ro/doc_212.html, accessed on 14.04.2018.

¹³ Shaun Kenney, *Russian Identitarian Philosophy and its Influence upon Putin's Russian Federation*, University of Virginia, January 2, 2018, p. 71.

¹⁴ *The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation*, approved by Russian Federation presidential edict on 5 February 2010, Carnegie Endowment, available online at: https://carnegieendowment.org/files/2010russia_military_doctrine.pdf, accessed on 15.04.2018.

In 2013, bilateral talks were redirected to other levels of cooperation. Thus, two intergovernmental legal documents were signed - *the Agreement between the Government of Romania and the Government of the Russian Federation on the Establishment and Conditions of Operation of the Romanian Cultural Institute in Moscow and the Russian Centre for Science and Culture in Bucharest* and *the Cooperation Program in the fields of culture, media, youth, sport and tourism*, as well as a cooperation document at the level of the ministries of foreign affairs of Romania and the Russian Federation. In the same year, a *Memorandum of mutual trust between the Russian Security Council and the National Security Department of the Administration of the President of Romania* was signed. These initiatives seemed to show a real intent on both sides to relaunch their political relations. But unfortunately, some intentions, although seeming real, are not, because the 2014 Ukrainian crisis intervened and Russia again changed the rules of the game at the regional level.

2. Romanian-Russian post-Crimea relations

Following the unlawful Russian military intervention in Ukraine and the violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity in April 2014, the Alliance suspended all practical cooperation between NATO and Russia, including the NATO-Russia Council. However, the Alliance agreed to maintain open channels of communication in the NRC and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council from the ambassadors' level upwards, in order to allow the exchange of views, first of all, on this crisis¹⁵. Also the Romanian authorities condemned the annexation of Crimea and Russia's aggression in eastern Ukraine, with Romanians sharing fears among other East European countries that they could be the targets of the future Russian aggression.

In fact, this is also expressed in *the National Defence Strategy of Romania for the period 2015-2019* regarding Russian policy concerns: "Today, the region is marked by active conflicts and the deterioration of relations between NATO and Russian Federation ... Russia's actions in the Black Sea region, violating international law, doubting the international

¹⁵ *NATO-Russia Council*, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, updated June 16, 2017, available online at: https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics_50091.htm, accessed on 25.03.2018.

*order, maintaining frozen conflicts and annexing the Crimea, reappeared in the consciousness of NATO the fulfilment of its fundamental collective defence mission and the validity of the security architecture agreed with Russia at the end of the 20th century. ... The Russian Federation is trying to strengthen its regional superpower status and its actions affect the regional stability and the European path of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia*¹⁶.

This perception of fear could be a direct consequence of the fact that among the countries in the eastern flank, Romania is in the geographical proximity of the Crimean Peninsula, annexed by Putin, and of East Ukraine destabilized by Russia. Therefore, in response to Russia's aggression in Ukraine, "*Romania has supported a robust line within the EU towards Russia*"¹⁷, claiming sanctions because the emergence of current crises following the Russian intervention "*has only confirmed such a perception of it*"¹⁸. Not only do Romanian leaders and politicians have this perception, but this is also true about the Romanian public opinion on the whole. In fact, a survey by INSCOP showed in 2015 that 66.2% of Romanians said they had rather negative feelings about Russia.

The number of Romanians who declared positive feelings about Russia fell by 11.6 points since the takeover of Crimea by Russia¹⁹. Also, in the same poll, it was shown that "*64.4% of Romanians considered that the conflict situation in Ukraine was dangerous for Romania. The geographical proximity of this conflict, as well as a strong reflection in the Romanian and*

¹⁶ National Strategy for the Defense of the Country for the Period 2015-2019 - A Strong Romania in Europe and the World - Presidential Administration, Bucharest, 2015, pp. 5, 12-13 (In Romanian: *Strategia Națională de Apărare a Țării pentru perioada 2015 - 2019 - O Românie puternică în Europa și în lume* -, Administrația Prezidențială, București, 2015, pp. 5, 12-13).

¹⁷ Cristian Ghinea, *Romania. EU-28 Watch*, Issue No. 11, Romanian Center for European Policies, 2015, available online at: <http://eu-28watch.org/issues/issue-no-11/romania/>, accessed on 24.02.2018.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ *February 2015 - Evaluation of the Ukraine conflict. The Romanian attitude of other countries*, INSCOP Research, 2015, available online at: <http://www.inscop.ro/februarie-2015-atitudinea-romanilor-fata-de-alte-tari-evaluarea-conflictului-din-ucraina/>, accessed on 24.03.2018.

*international media of the harsh scenes of war, are a factor that strongly contributes to the level of concern of Romanians to this problem. Only 17.9% of respondents consider that this conflict is not dangerous for Romania, while 17.7% do not know or answer this question*²⁰. In the same context, *“the political decision ... on the increase of budgetary allocations for the army is welcomed by 69.7% of the population in the context of the concerns raised by the situation in Ukraine”*²¹. The main idea of the survey is that Romanians prefer Western countries more, probably due to at least two factual realities: Russia’s aggressive attitude towards the former communist countries that have crossed the European path and the Romanian collective mentality that has stored the idea that the Western countries provide prosperity to both their own citizens and to many Romanians who find themselves in the West with well paid jobs, which helps them to support their families in the country of origin.

However, a *Eurobarometer* survey conducted in 2016 showed that 53% of Romanians have positive opinions about Russia²². So we can think that Romanians fear that Russia could act the same way on their territory, but the population does not have a special problem with their neighbours as long as they prove to be peaceful. The negative perception of surveys could also be largely due to mass media news that negatively promotes all Russian actions.

In the same key, in May 2014, direct diplomatic tensions intervened in bilateral relations when Romania decided not to allow Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitri Rogozin’s plane to fly over the Romanian territory on his way to the Republic of Moldova and, as a result, Moscow sent a protest note to Bucharest. Romania acted on the basis of Article 1 (1) of Decision 2014/145/CFSP on restrictive measures against persons in connection with acts that undermine or threaten the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine.

Since March 2014, the EU, the US and other Western countries have imposed a series of sanctions on the Russian economy, the freezing of goods

²⁰ Idem.

²¹ Idem.

²² *Future of Europe, Special Eurobarometer 451*, European Commission, October 2016, p. 16.

belonging to certain persons, and the banning of certain commercial transactions. As shown in the EU news bulletin, the EU has imposed²³:

a) *Restrictive measures for Russia*: in March 2014 - travel bans and asset freezes against persons involved in actions against Ukraine's territorial integrity - and in July 2014 - economic sanctions regarding sectoral cooperation and exchanges with Russia and cooperation economic;

b) *Diplomatic measures*: suspending Russia's participation in the G7, suspending negotiations on Russia's accession to the OECD and the International Energy Agency and cancelling the EU-Russia bilateral reunion;

c) *Restrictive measures on economic exchanges with the Crimea and Sevastopol*.

As for the US sanctions against Russia, I do not mention them here because Romania is not the subject of their action or their effects.

On 10 March 2015, citing the de facto violation of the CFE Treaty by NATO, Russia formally announced that it had "completely" stopped its participation²⁴. However, the NATO-Russia Council meetings were resumed in 2016, and the first meeting in 2017 took place on 30 March.

Today, we can see an increased militarization of actors interacting in the international relations system, starting with the percentage of GDP allocated to defence expenditure, the deployment of military bases of major military powers around the world, a new arms race and the deployment of advanced anti-missile shields.

In the new aggressive geopolitical context, Romania gives increased priority to national defence, an action expressed in: increasing national military spending, modernizing military facilities and human resources training, investing in the defence industry, and cooperating more actively with NATO and its strategic US partner.

²³ *EU sanctions against Russia over Ukraine crisis*, European Union Newsroom, available online at: https://europa.eu/newsroom/highlights/special-coverage/eu-sanctions-against-russia-over-ukraine-crisis_en, accessed on 25.03.2018.

²⁴ „The Trump Effect? Germany Urges Europe for New 'Peace Treaty' With Russia”, *Sputnik News*, 26.11.2016, available online at: <https://sputniknews.com/world/-201611261047864471-europe-russia-peace-treaty/>, accessed on 13.05.2018.

However, the active engagement with the United States and NATO by hosting a critical element of NATO's anti-missile defence architecture - *Aegis Ashore* sited at Deveselu has made Russia call Romania a “clear threat” and an “outpost” of NATO²⁵. In this context, any security assurance must be taken into account by Romania, because it alone cannot face its bigger neighbour.

NATO responded promptly to Russia's threats by the voice of the Secretary-General in his speech at the 63rd annual session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Bucharest in September 2017, Jens Stoltenberg, saying the Alliance would increase its land, naval and air presence in Romania, and the brigade stationed there (Multinational Division South East of Craiova, author's note) is part of NATO's response to increasing Russia's presence in the Black Sea²⁶. These actions are foreseen to take place in the context of the *Tailored Forward Presence* initiative in the Black Sea, its land component being located in Romania, the air structure being constituted by the British *Typhoon* battleships, and the maritime component involves the use of Bulgarian and Romanian ports for visits of allied naval forces compounds²⁷. Also, among the national actions taken to improve Romania's defence capabilities, there are many other investments in the Romanian military bases, for example, a massive investment of 50 million euros is made at the “Mihail Kogalniceanu” military base near the port of Constanta, where several hundred US troops and military equipment are currently stationed and the number is set to increase. The US Army has also used this base to support its military operations in Iraq. Thus, Romania currently hosts several important NATO strategic assets: the missile shield, a multinational brigade and a NATO Integration Force Unit.

²⁵ „Russia calls Romania a 'clear threat' and NATO outpost for hosting US missile shield”, in *Independent* newspaper, February 9, 2017, available online at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russia-romania-clear-threat-nato-outpost-us-anti-missile-shield-putin-tensions-a7571031.html>, accessed on 23.02.2018.

²⁶ *Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Plenary session at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Bucharest*, 9 October 2017, available online at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_147635.htm, accessed on 12.02.2018.

²⁷ Ulla Schmidt (special rapporteur), *Special Report. Advancing stability in the Black Sea region*, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security, October 7, 2017, p. 5.

Also, in August 2017, Romania started another stage of endowing its armed forces for the period 2017-2026, launching multi-annual funds worth 9.8 billion euros²⁸. In 2017, the purchase of seven “Patriot” sol-air missile systems was approved by the Romanian Senate, and the first system was already paid to US suppliers. All systems will be delivered by 2019 and the first will become operational in 2020²⁹. In the same idea, the Romanian Defence Minister presented that in 2018, the Romanian Armed Forces endowment campaign continues with modern weapons and equipment. For example, the acquisition of 227 conveyors related to the PIRANHA 5 platform and 45 AH-1Z Viper attack helicopters³⁰. In the same idea, there are initiatives such as the manufacturing of the Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter in Romania, the replacement of Puma helicopters with newer ones, the purchase of HIMARS missiles or multifunctional corvettes.

²⁸ Cosmin Pam Matei, „Cum au marcat francezii în lupta pentru înzestrarea armatei române”, in *Cotidianul*, 25 August 2017, available online at: <https://www.cotidianul.ro/cum-au-marcate-francezii-in-lupta-pentru-inzestrarea-armatei-romane/>, accessed on 12.12.2017.

²⁹ Specifically, Romania will buy seven modernized Patriot units consisting of seven AN / MPQ-65 radar sets, seven AN / MSQ-132 control stations, 13 antenna groups, 28 M903 launch stations, 56 Patriot MIM-104E missiles, 168 Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) and seven EPP III power generators. According to the Defence Security Cooperation Agency in the US, Romania will also purchase communications equipment, test tools and equipment, support equipment, technical documentation, training equipment, spare parts, and service personnel training, technical and logistic support and related items. Thus, the total amount of the program amounts to \$ 3.9 billion. The main contractors are Raytheon Corporation in Andover, Massachusetts and Lockheed Martin in Dallas, Texas. See details at: Radu Eremia, Valentin Bolocan, „Cum funcționează sistemul de rachete Patriot, pentru care Camera Deputaților urmează să dea votul decisiv”, in *Adevărul* newspaper, 21 November 2017, available online at: http://adevarul.ro/news/eveniment/cum-functioneaza-sistemul-rachete-patriot-camera-deputatilor-urmeaza-dea-votul-decisiv-1_5a13168b5ab6550cb85b41ba/index.html, accessed on 04.01.2018.

³⁰ Valentin Bolocan, „În 2018, MApN are programe masive de înarmare pentru toate categoriile de forțe: blindate, rachete, corvete, camioane, arme de asalt și elicoptere”, in *Adevărul* newspaper, 10 January 2018, available online at: http://adevarul.ro/news/eveniment/In-2018-mapn-programe-masive-inarmare-categoriile-forțe-blindate-rachete-corfete-camioane-arme-asalt-elicoptere-1_5a55fda7df52022f755d70b4/index.html, accessed on 12.02.2018.

In March 2018, the restrictive measures on Russia's actions that undermine or threaten Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence were prolonged until 15 September 2018, and other EU measures applied in response to the same subject are economic sanctions in force until 31 July 2018 referring to specific sectors of the Russian economy and restrictive measures in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, limited to Crimea and Sevastopol, currently in force until June 23, 2018³¹. Of course, Romania - a member state of the EU - respects the sanctions imposed on Russia. However, the new actions taken on 26 March 2018 by most European countries to expel Russian diplomats from their countries did not improve their relations with Russia. Romania is among these states which announced the expulsion of a Russian diplomat.

After Vladimir Putin's victory in the 18th March elections, Russia is unlikely to move away from the increasingly authoritarian government model. However, the long-term president (the fourth mandate) faces a delicate act of balancing actions between increasing Russia's influence on the international arena, while avoiding a more prominent escalation of tensions with the West.

It is obvious that the ambition of the Russian President is to give Russia the importance of the USSR during the Cold War and for this it resorts to military, propaganda and economic means. This idea was supported by President Vladimir Putin's speech on the state of the nation on March 1, 2018, when he presented new "invaluable" Russian weapons, under development or testing, insisting that these weapons (lasers, submarines, new hypersonic weapons system) would give Russia the ability to launch "unstoppable" nuclear attacks on the US.

In 2018, the diplomatic relations between Russia and Romania met 140 years of existence. In the future, Romania and Russia need to have a more pragmatic relationship than they have had so far, based more on respect, trust and, above all, on successful collaborations. Neither of the

³¹ „EU prolongs sanctions over actions against Ukraine's territorial integrity until 15 September 2018”, Council of the EU Press Release, 12.03.2018, available online at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/03/12/eu-prolongs-sanctions-over-actions-against-ukraine-s-territorial-integrity-until-15-september-2018/pdf>, accessed on 24.03.2018.

countries is immune to errors, but in important times they need to know how to work efficiently.

Conclusions

The Russian-Romanian relations have deep historical roots.³² In the Romanian collective mentality, Russia is most often associated with the occupation of Bessarabia and the communist regime. Instead, Romanians should also look at positive elements such as the role played by Russia in gaining Romanian independence from the Ottoman regime or in modernizing the country in the nineteenth century.

The main neuralgic points identified in the Romanian-Russian relations are as follows:

- The elements of the US missile shield placed on the territory of Romania and our participation in the Western security community;
- Republic of Moldova where both Romanians and Russians have ethnic communities and historic interests;
- the ecumenical confession - dispute between the Moldavian Metropolitan Church attached to the Patriarchate of Moscow and the Metropolitan Church of Bessarabia attached to the Patriarchate of Bucharest³³;
- Historic Revisionism and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, including the “Great Moldova” geopolitical scenario;
- The issue of the Romanian treasury;
- The Black Sea - a space full of “frozen conflicts” and an area of geo-economic and geopolitical contradictions.

Russia has always had the advantage of its wide geopolitical dimensions (territory, rich resources, population, military power, cultural impact, the impact of ideology, etc.) compared to its neighbours, while Romania had no choice but to obey or avoid the Russian imperialist posture in its vicinity. Thus, Romania has conducted a prudent and even passive negative policy towards its strong neighbour, and whenever the Romanian

³² Gheorghe Calopăreanu, *Regionalizarea securității în Europa Centrală*, Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare „Carol I”, București, 2011, pp. 44-75.

³³ *Judgement of the Case of Metropolitan Church of Bessarabia and Others v. Moldova*, Application no. 45701/99, Strasbourg, December 13, 2001, p. 6.

political leaders tried to obtain some rights or advantages, it was very difficult to get something by diplomatic means. The frictions between Bucharest and Moscow have been inherited from past history, such as the intentions of recognizing the Republic of Moldova as a former territory of Romania, which the Russians considered as “a territorial action against them”³⁴.

The Revolutions of 1989-1991 against the Soviet order dramatically changed the political, economic, axiological and cultural map of the world. Thus, after the collapse of communism and the disappearance of the bipolar equation of international life, Romania was in a changed geopolitical space that allowed Western democratic participation in society. But things did not go easy for Romania. It had to fight extremely hard to win a proper place in the West and play an important role among the Black Sea countries, but instead lost his focus on building trust and relationships in his neighbourhood. In the process, the changes that have taken place in Romania’s internal political transition to adapt to the new democratic scenario have been characterized by searches of identity and crises. The same phenomenon happened in Romania’s foreign policy as well as in bilateral relations with Russia. Romania had to manage the relationship with Moscow rationally and not get away from it.

The first years after the collapse of the USSR could have been to the benefit of both states, but the start was lost in mutual relations, resulting only in stagnation and regression. Since the end of the Cold War, the relations between the two sides have been grounded on the principles of cooperation in some areas of common interest, but they have not had a uniform path from this point of view, because moments of disagreement and tension have not been exceptional because of their deep-rooted problems in the past. Moreover, after the USSR collapsed, new problems arose in the Romanian-Russian bilateral agenda, because their foreign policies had different directions and the shared elements became less numerous. In this context, they began to show different political interests: Romania came out of communism and Russia was seeking its new posture, both of which were

³⁴ *Conspect of Conversations with V. I. Potapov, Chief of Romanian Sector of CPSU CC Section*, Wilson Center, October 27, 1978, p. 5, available online at: <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114158>, accessed on 06.01.2018.

taking place in the new unipolar world that the US was leading. Meanwhile, things have changed, Russia has regained much of its power and, along with it, its old habits, and has begun to get involved in the fate of the former communist states (Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine), and beyond (Syria) using the less “orthodox” instruments it still had: diplomacy, propaganda, even the military instrument in its raw form, which triggered dissatisfaction and worries among the Western community and beyond.

At present, Romania has to build bilateral relations with Russia, given the following assumptions:

- Russia is a neighbouring country, with a centralized military decision, situated more closely geographically speaking than NATO that represents a coalition of the will of 29 member states;

- although Russia is not as strong as it used to be during the communist era, it proved to be able to use all its available means – military arm, financial instruments, security services, cultural connections, propaganda, political connections and cyber-capacities – upon what is regarded as a western invasion on its border areas and a threat to its interests in the world;

- nowadays, Russia regards Romania as a continuation of US power and NATO – its main declared enemy – interests;

- NATO military support depends on Romanian continuous allegiance to all the conditions of the Alliance, especially those related to the budget;

- In case Romania were found guilty of’ initiating illegal military action against Russia, NATO would have the right not to intervene;

- Diplomacy means soft power, therefore Romania should use it to its advantage.

The issue of Romanian-Russian relations, historically inherited, must be solved in such a way not to include winners or losers and place both parties in a win-win situation. We consider that cooperation starting from the common shared elements (common historic context, geography and religion) is a domain that so far has been neglected, misinterpreted or politically used in an unjust manner by both parties involved. Also, the economic potential and complementariness (even if asymmetric in proportions), the relative geographical proximity, the presence of both state in vicinity of the Black Sea and the maritime-riverine connections should be

reasons for the strong connections between the two states. Despite all these, maybe in the future, Romania and Russia will play a significant role in their mutual trade, benefitting both partners even in the context of unsolved bilateral issues, the extension of business contacts and increasing the activity of commercial partner activities having to become the main moving force for developing the relations between Romania and Russia.



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