

POSSIBILITIES OF ROMANIA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE EUROPEAN ARMY

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Abstract: *Is there a European army or not? Do we need a EU army or not? A controversial subject, supported by some and criticized by others, the European army is a desired goal by France, which could thus strengthen its position in Europe and gain advantages from militarization.*

But what are Romania's interests, how open are the officials from Bucharest on the topic of the creation of the European army and what are the chances of our country participating in it?

The present paper represents a theoretical and analytical research on the possibility of Romania's participation in the European Army. Its purpose is to analyze the internal and external factors that can influence both the existence of such an organization and Romania's possibility of being included in it. Thus, the article brings to attention the factors that influence Romania's participation in the European Army and its implications.

Also, this paper takes into account the need for a quick intervention of an armed force in the context of the increasing risks to which EU states are exposed, the most recent example being the threat of Russia.

Keywords: *European army, EU army, security, European security and defense policy, threat, EU, NATO, Romania, armed conflict, war, Strategic Compass, US, France, Emmanuel Macron.*

Introduction

Romania officially joined NATO (North Atlantic Alliance) on March 29, 2004. As a NATO member, our country benefits from the North Atlantic Alliance's security guarantee and is also engaged in participating in various NATO missions and operations. "*Our entire participation in the Alliance's activity aims to ensure the security and defense of Romania and the region which we are a part of, as well as strengthening NATO as a collective defense alliance*"¹.

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¹ Press Comunicate-Participarea secretarului de stat Dan Neculăescu la reuniunea ministerială dedicată proiectului Busolei Strategice a UE, available at <http://www.mae.ro>, accessed on 13.10.2023.

On January 1, 2007, Romania also became a member state of the EU. As a member state, it has a number of rights and obligations related mainly to the environment, economy, free movement and more.

Romania, as a full member state of the European Union, benefits from all the advantages that this status offers. However, today the country is also in the position of a net exporter of labor for the more developed states of the European Union, but also of raw materials, with little added value, products that are processed in the west and then imported into Romania as products with high added value.

European Army – Context

The first ideas regarding a European army were circulated in the 1950s, when the French Prime Minister at the time, René Pleven, proposed the European Defense Community as a solution to "the request of the U.S. of the rearmament of Federal Germany in order to strengthen the defense of Western Europe against a possible Soviet attack. The Pleven Plan, which was the basis for the establishment of the European Defense Community, provided for the establishment of a single European army."²

After almost 60 years, in November 2018, the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, a fervent supporter of the creation of a European army, says that we must have a Europe that can defend itself, without relying on the support of the US³. In response, the President of the European Council says that "*an EU army is likely to be formed one day*"⁴.

Macron's proposal also received the support of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who pointed out that "*Jean-Claude Juncker (n.a. President of the European Commission) has already said that a common European army will show the world that there will never be war in Europe again.*"⁵.

On the other hand, Donald Trump, the US president at the time, categorized the French president's proposal as "*an insult to the United*

² European Defence Community, available at https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/institutions-and-bodies-profiles/eda_ro, accessed on 13.10.2023.

³ „France's Macron pushes for 'true European army.'”, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-46108633>, accessed on 13.10.2023.

⁴ „After Macron, EU executive echoes EU army call.”, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-army-idUSKCN1NB24Q>, accessed on 14.10.2023.

⁵ „Merkel joins Macron in calling for EU army to complement NATO.”, available at <https://www.politico.eu/article/angela-merkel-emmanuel-macron-eu-army-to-complement-nato/>, accessed on 15.10.2023.

States", given that the North Atlantic Alliance, an entity that has been successfully operating since 1949, being sponsored in a proportion of over 70% by the United States of America, and the Americans being the only ones who gave security guarantees to Europe (art. 5 of the Washington Treaty)⁶.

One of the most recent periodic reports on Romania's accession progress mentions the fact that Romania is confirming its upward trajectory towards alignment with the Common Foreign and Security Policy and was active in propagating regional security issues. Romania is seen as an active actor in the political dialogue established by the Association Agreement, thus recognizing the positive role played within the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)⁷.

What is the European Army?

European Army or EU Army are terms used to name a potential army of the European Union. The Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), which "*is the European Union's (EU) course of action in the fields of defense and crisis management and a main component of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFPS)*"⁸. The European peace tool is one of the latest CSDP instruments. Through this process, the EU will finance the common costs of CSDP missions and military operations, thus improving cohesion and the distribution of tasks between member states. By strengthening the capabilities of peace support operations, as well as the skills of third countries and partner organizations in military and defense matters, it will contribute to improving the effectiveness of the EU's external action.

At the moment, there is no European army, a united military force made up of EU member states. Thus, in case of military conflicts or threats, the defense rests exclusively with the member states. In the context of

⁶ Naumescu, Valentin „*Armata Europeană. Utopia tânărului Emmanuel sau interesele industriei de armament?*”, available at <https://www.contributors.ro/armata-europeana-utopia-tanarului-emmanuel-sau-interesele-industriei-de-armament/>, accessed on 15.10.2023.

⁷ Plângu, Ioan Mircea „*Poziția României la Conferința pentru angajarea capacităților militare.*” *Monitor Strategic* no .2, 43, 2000.

⁸ „*Common Security and Defence Policy.*”, available at https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/pages/glossary/common-security-and-defence-policy-csdp_ro, accessed on 16.10.2023.

increasing risks for European countries, the EU took into account measures to stimulate the cooperation of the member states in the field of defense.

One of the options put forward as a solution and optimal form of cooperation is the creation of a European army. This would facilitate a much more effective coordination of the armed forces and a quick and effective intervention should any of the EU member states be attacked or in imminent danger.

What does the European Army entail?

The frequent changes recorded in current geopolitics force us to ask some questions: what will be the role of Europe, what will be the direction it will go, is there a need to rethink its Common Security and Defense Policy to face the new challenges of the security environment? Is it necessary and possible to create an army of our own, or will it continue to rely on the umbrella provided by NATO and UN peacekeeping forces for crisis management?

According to an article cited by the Reuters news agency, the European Union aims to create a European army, a common military force of the EU states. This would total, at the level of 2025, a number of 5,000 soldiers, and the purpose of its formation is to intervene in a series of crises and without relying on the United States. According to the same sources, the European army should consist of land, sea and air forces that can be changed to and from any permanent force, depending on the crisis⁹.

The European Army is part of the Strategic Compass for strengthening EU security and defence. The project was "formally" approved by the EU Council, information published on the official website in the form of a press release, on March 21, 2022¹⁰.

European Army - what is happening in Europe?

Given that in recent years there have been conflicts in the vicinity of European states, the question of forming a European army to defend the

⁹ „UE vrea să creeze o armată modulară cu 5.000 de militari, până în 2025, cu care să intervină rapid în crize, fără să se bazeze pe SUA.”, available at <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/ue/ue-vrea-sa-creeze>, accessed on 17.10.2023.

¹⁰ „O Busolă strategică pentru consolidarea securității și apărării UE în următorul deceniu.”, available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/press/press-releases/2022/03/21/a-strategic-compass-for-a-stronger-eu-security-and-defence-in-the-next-decade>, accessed on 18.10.2023.

member states has arisen. Moreover, this idea is reiterated every time the risk to EU countries increases.

Another reason for creating a EU army relates to the need to create a fourth pole, Europe, and help it have a common voice that deserves to be heard. Moreover, the creation of an EU army would help the European Union not only to protect its member states, but also to have a say in relation to the three big poles: the USA, Russia and China.

Also, given that Russia is destabilizing the situation in the countries of South-Eastern Europe and beyond, the problem of creating a European army seems to be intensifying.

The construction of Romania's European and Euro-Atlantic status represents another important direction of action on which most of the political, organizational and financial efforts of public authorities and security institutions should be channeled.¹¹

Romania and the European Army

As a state located in an area of strategic importance for the two organizations (NATO and the EU), Romania must be an actor of particular importance in the process of defining and implementing NATO's stabilization, cooperation and security assistance policies and of the European Union, in tense areas such as Southeast and Eastern Europe, as well as in the South Caucasus, the Middle East and the Caspian Sea Region.

The fundamental purpose of the action of all these factors must be the democratic, just and equal security for all, and the channeling of efforts related to people's prosperity for the purpose of integration into the European Union. Romania's goals in the region are aimed at strengthening the European prospects of these countries, eliminating risks and threats related to terrorism, organized crime and illegal trafficking of people (mainly migrants) or goods, and building a sustainable stability, based on democracy, development, respect fundamental rights and freedoms of the person.

In order to achieve these objectives, Romania will actively support, respecting the rules of international law, the application of the decisions of the Security Council, the decisions and recommendations of the OSCE and

¹¹ Romanian National Security Strategy. 2020. „Împreună, pentru o Românie sigură și prosperă, într-o lume marcată de noi provocări.”, available at https://www-presidency.ro/files/userfiles/Documente/Strategia_Nationala_de_Aparare_a_Tarii_2020_-2024.pdf, accessed on 20.10.2023.

the Council of Europe and will contribute efficiently and effectively, developing its already existing connections with the countries in the area, to the achievement of political, economic and security measures and programs within NATO and the EU. In this field, the priority is to eliminate the obstacles in the way of resolving disagreements and tensions, which would allow the development of democratic institutions, provide security and open new perspectives for progress, by respecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of the person and accepting multiculturalism.

In such a modern register, the legitimate concerns of our country regarding the improvement of the legal status, living conditions and treatment enjoyed by the Romanian communities that are minorities in other countries will be addressed, according to international norms, with European standards and the commitments assumed through bilateral agreements.

Romanians wish for a European Army

According to a survey carried out by INSCOP, almost 73% of the Romanians who responded to this survey are of the opinion that the European Union should establish its own army in order to defend the interests of the member states¹². According to the same survey, more than 76% of respondents believe that Romania should not leave NATO, and almost 75% agree that the presence of American soldiers and the existence of American military bases in Romania would increase the degree of defense of the country in the event of an external aggression.

As far as the European Union is concerned, Romania will support the development of the common foreign and security policy and the European security and defense norms, including by increasing the contribution to military capabilities and those intended to combat terrorism and the management of civil emergencies in the European public space. To this end, Romania will increase its contribution to the promotion of democracy, peace, security and prosperity within the neighborhood policy and to crisis management operations in the region and to secure energy and commercial flows.

¹² „Neîncrederea publică: Vest vs. Est, ascensiunea curentului naționalist în era dezinformării și fenomenului știrilor false.”, available at <https://www.inscop.ro/ianuarie-2022-neincrederea-publica-vest-vs-est-ascensiunea-curentului-nationalist-in-era-de>, accessed on 25.10.2023.

Faced with the new challenges and threats to security, a united Europe can bring, both directly and indirectly, more stability, because the risks of a traditional military confrontation on the old continent have significantly decreased. The explanation of this evolution consists in two aspects: the current security interests and objectives of the European states do not generate conflict situations, but on the contrary, they favor cooperation and solidarity so that the international security environment is positively influenced by the processes of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, in fact by expanding the community of states that share and promote the values of democracy and market economy, in the context of deepening and developing regional collaboration.

Faced with threats and new challenges to security, the European Union can respond through three strategic objectives¹³:

- **ensuring stability and good governance** in the immediate vicinity. This will require expanding the security zone around Europe and ensuring that the states in this area (Eastern Europe, Western Balkans, Mediterranean states) are well governed and administered. This objective will also imply the continuation and development of Europe's involvement in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict;

- **creation of an international order based on effective multilateralism.** In a world characterized by globalization (global threats, global markets, global media), security and prosperity depend on the existence of an effective multilateral system. Therefore, one of the objectives of the European Union must be the development of a strong international society, characterized by the existence of effective international institutions, as well as an international order based on the observance of laws, first of all the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. The quality of the international society depends on the quality of the governments of which it is composed. The best defense for European security is given by the existence of a world made up of well-governed democratic states. That is why spreading good governance, fighting corruption and abuse of office and power, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights are the best ways to strengthen world order. In this sense, an important element of this new international order is considered to be transatlantic cooperation within NATO;

¹³ Mureșan, Liviu. „Riscuri și provocări în scenariile și strategiile ante și post Praga 2002.” *Colocviu strategic no .6*. Bucharest: Academy of Advanced Military Studies, Center for Strategic Security Studies.

- preparing a response to new threats. This response included the anti-terrorist package of measures and actions adopted after September 11, 2001, support for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and assistance to states with weak or unstable structures in the Balkans, Afghanistan, East Timor and Africa (Democratic Republic of Congo). Finding out the answers to the new threats must start from the fact that they often occur at great distances, are much more dynamic and complex. That is why the lines of defense will often have to be across borders. The dynamic nature will require efforts to be shifted to the prevention of crises and threats. The complex character will also require solutions as they will include export control, economic, political or even military pressures. The European Union has all the necessary means to adopt such complex solutions.

In order for the security and defense policy of the European Union to become more effective and efficient, it is necessary for the continental organization to become more active in pursuing its objectives by means of civil or military means, more coherent by uniting efforts and by ensuring unity of command in case of crisis, more capable by allocating more resources, avoiding duplication, better coordination of existing resources¹⁴.

In achieving its security and defense objectives, the European Union will not be able to ignore the need to maintain privileged relations with the USA. At the same time, however, the European Union will have to develop its collaboration with other important actors on the global stage. In this sense, strategic relations will be initiated and developed with Russia, Japan, China, Canada and India, without any of these relations having exclusivity. At the same time, the European Union will have to show the necessary openness for the development of active partnerships with any nation that shares its goals and values and is ready to act to defend them. Through this approach, the European Union can significantly contribute to the realization of a multilateral security system that allows the construction of a more prosperous, more impartial and safer world¹⁵.

¹⁴ Mureșan, Liviu, Adrian Pop, și Florin Bonciu „*The European Security and Defence Policy – A factor of influence of the actions of Romania in the field of security and defence*”, *research paper*,. Bucharest: Romanian European Institute, p. 9.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p.15.

First steps towards the European Army?

The European Union does not currently seem to be threatened by classic conflicts, consisting of large-scale military attacks, instead a series of other threats and challenges, such as hybrid war, are taking shape on the horizon, each of which is difficult to predict and relatively diffuse, which somehow makes such border/crisis situations much harder to counter.

In 2017, the newspapers mentioned that "*Germany managed this year, together with Romania and the Czech Republic, to take a radical step towards the creation of a European army, a project that frequently generates trouble between NATO allies (...) More precisely, Romania and the Czech Republic will, in the coming months, integrate a brigade each into the German army*"¹⁶. The same publication noted that "*European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has repeatedly floated the idea of a European army, which has often been ignored by EU leaders.*"

In an interview regarding a possible European army, Klaus Iohannis declared, in November 2019, that there are several relevant political actors in Europe who say that we must take care that Europe has its own, efficient, modern defense systems, which is correct, but in the view of the President of Romania, they should not be outside NATO, but should be complementary to NATO¹⁷.

The new geopolitical situation places Romania at the center of the processes of expansion and consolidation of European security, in general. On the other hand, the increase in mutual mistrust and the increasingly obvious rivalry between Americans and Europeans, who are on "different political courses", generate new challenges to the military issues of the European integration process and the military leadership of the candidate states.

Romania seems to support "a militarily strong Europe", of course under the conditions of non-duplication of NATO and the complementarity of the two organizations in the field of crisis management.

On the occasion of the participation of the Secretary of State for Strategic Affairs, Dan Neculăescu, at the joint meeting of the ministers of

¹⁶ „Germania construiește discret o armată europeană alături de România și Cehia.”, available at https://adevarul.ro/international/europa/germania-construiește-discret-armata-europeanaalaturi-romania-cehia-1_592303905ab6550c, accessed on 01.11.2023.

¹⁷ „Klaus Iohannis, despre înființarea unei armate europene: Nu trebuie să se afle în afara NATO, ci să fie complementară NATO. O armată europeană independentă nu este fezabilă”, available at <https://www.b1tv.ro/politica/klaus-iohannis-infiintare-armata-european>, accessed on 03.11.2023.

foreign affairs and defense from the member states, in the context of a first discussion on the EU Strategic Compass project, which took place in Brussels, on November 15, 2021, he emphasized "the need for adequate reflection in the EU Strategic Compass of security threats, but also of the potential for cooperation with partners in the Eastern Neighborhood, emphasizing the relevance of ensuring a balanced geographical approach", as it says in a press release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs¹⁸.

Also, in the same context, Neculăescu "*drew attention to the importance of strengthening complementarity and creating synergies between the EU and NATO, in the spirit of strengthening the transatlantic relationship. He firmly reiterated the primordial character of NATO as the foundation of European defense and pointed out the need to give a new impetus to EU-NATO cooperation, but also of the EU with its strategic partners, especially the USA.*"

During an interview given by Bogdan Aurescu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, for Digi24 on January 16, 2022, he talked about the role that the European Union could have "in resolving protracted conflicts in the Black Sea region" with the help of a capacity "of action in crisis situations", which he said was wrongly called the European army and that it was only "a complementary approach".

Aurescu mentioned, at the same time, that "we obviously support the increase of NATO's collective defense capacity, but it is clear that in this area (...) of collective defense, only the North Atlantic Alliance is the actor that can ensure the greatest efficiency. It would make no sense to spend the same money twice, once for NATO and once for the European Union". In addition, Aurescu compared the so-called European army with "a capacity to act in crisis situations, such as, for example, the evacuation from Afghanistan".

On March 14, 2022, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bogdan Aurescu, reiterated, during the consultations with the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Luigi Di Maio¹⁹, the fact

¹⁸ „Press Comunicate-Participarea secretarului de stat Dan Neculăescu la reuniunea ministerială dedicată proiectului Busolei Strategice a UE.”, available at <http://www.mae.ro>, accessed on 04.11.2023.

¹⁹ „Press Comunicate-Consultările ministrului afacerilor externe Bogdan Aurescu cu ministrul italian al afacerilor externe și cooperării internaționale Luigi Di Maio.”, available at <https://www.mae.ro/node/58093>, accessed on 05.11.2023.

that, regarding the Strategic Compass, "*Romania's position is that the founding document of the Strategic Compass needs to reflect the level of threat that Russia presents to the European security architecture. Also, to reflect the transatlantic solidarity and complementarity of action between the EU and NATO*".

In the context of the same developments, it is desired that Romania intensify its efforts regarding the connection to the security structures of the European Union, given that the organization promotes a common external, security and defense policy, which beyond the challenges inherent in such a process, advances towards the development and consolidation of transatlantic cohesion. This cooperation aims in particular to harmonize the contribution to strengthening international peace and security, to the fight against terrorism and proliferation, to the resolution of tense or crisis situations in Europe, the Near East and other areas of the world.

The same approach is taken by Daniela Gîțman, secretary of state, who participated on March 22, in Brussels, at the meeting of ministers and secretaries of state for European affairs from the EU member states. She also "*welcomed the adoption, during the Foreign Affairs Council meeting of March 21, 2022, of the Strategic Compass and appreciated that this instrument will allow the Union to have an adequate and adjusted security response*". At the same time, he mentioned that "*The Strategic Compass will contribute to strengthening the transatlantic partnership and EU-NATO complementarity*"²⁰.

Romania, as a full member state of the European Union, benefits from all the advantages that this status offers. However, today the country is also in the position of a net exporter of labor for the more developed states of the European Union, but also of raw materials with little added value, products that are processed in the West and then imported into Romania as products with high added value.

For a solid NATO-EU security relationship to emerge from the current crisis, the following three guidelines should be considered:

First of all, there is only one way in which Europe can gain influence over the US, namely by possessing truly relevant capabilities. That means the Europeans should focus on those capabilities, such as ground surveillance and airlift, that the US needs most when conducting multiple

²⁰ „Press Comunicate-Participarea secretarului de stat Daniela Gîțman la reuniunea Consiliului Afaceri Generale.”, available at <https://www.mae.ro/node/58197>, accessed on 10.11.2023.

simultaneous operations. To this end, NATO should have a new approach to force planning: the problem is no longer planning capabilities that more or less copy American capabilities, but on a smaller scale, but identifying American weaknesses and disadvantages and planning for capacities to reduce these weaknesses (development of niche capacities). Thus, the EU could possibly become an indispensable military partner for the US, with an operational NATO at the global level, thus stopping America's temptation to act alone.

Second, the European will to start a modernization program should be met with an increase in American availability to share technology with European partners.

Thirdly and most importantly, all these good intentions will be in vain, if Washington maintains its preference for ad hoc coalitions, and not for a NATO one, by the book. Of course, Europe, for its part, must improve its political credibility if it wants to become a global player. Paris should end the US military presence in Europe and US dominance of NATO, and Berlin should set its strategic priorities, defining its foreign policy objectives and accepting the military and security consequences.

Conclusions

Romania, as a member of NATO and the EU, has a number of rights and obligations towards both bodies. NATO is the alliance that ensures our country's security, while membership of the EU assigns it a series of rights and obligations related mainly to the environment, economy, free movement, etc.

A European army, as it was proposed by the president of France, Emmanuel Macron, and perceived, initially, as support for the member countries, in case of conflicts, as an alternative to NATO's help, is not foreshadowing any time soon. At this moment, NATO is the guarantor of our country's security and for Romania it is far too important not to endanger the relationship with the USA and NATO.

Regarding the possibility of the EU creating a European army, the head of NATO was of the opinion that: "*it will not only weaken NATO, but also divide Europe*"²¹.

²¹ „Şeful NATO critică eforturile UE de a crea o armată europeană: Nu numai că va slăbi NATO, ci va diviza și Europa.”, available at <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/-mapamond/seful-nato-critica-eforturile-ue-de-a-crea-o-armata-europeana-nu-numai-ca-va-slabi-nato-ci-va>, accessed on 11.11.2023.

In fact, PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation), which is the closest structure to a European army and which former communist countries, including Romania, have joined, also aims at security cooperation. However, from the beginning, the former countries of the communist bloc expressly requested that it be specified that the establishment of joint armed forces must not contradict the commitments that these countries have within the North Atlantic Alliance²², idea reiterated on every occasion by the officials from Bucharest.

However, a collaboration for crisis situations that would involve interventions, even armed, to ensure the security of the EU member states, could be possible, as long as the formations will not compete with NATO. These should be formations and actions that should be complementary to those of NATO and not created or directed against the Alliance.

Moreover, Romania, by joining NATO, assumed that "*our entire participation in the Alliance's activity aims to ensure the security and defense of Romania and the region of which we are a part*", but also "*the strengthening of NATO as a collective defense alliance*"²³.



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²² Pepine, Horațiu „CSAT și armata europeană.” *Made for minds*, available at <https://www.dw.com/ro/csat-%C8%99i-armata-european%C4%83/a-40993321>, accessed on 11.11.2023.

²³ „România și NATO.”, available at <https://www.mae.ro/node/46982>, accessed on 12.11.2023.

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