

A NEW STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: ROMANIA, OPPORTUNITY FOR INVESTMENTS

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to observe and analyse the causes of the lack of a new strategic objective for Romania, and, following that, to propose a new country objective. At first, the subject of analysis will be represented by Romania's current foreign policy objectives. Following that, the article outlines common aspects regarding the accession processes to NATO and EU, in an attempt to explain the role that Romania has played and to ascertain whether Romania is currently expecting a new strategic objective to appear as an external challenge. After that, following an analogy with the basic needs of a human being, it will be argued that Romania ensured its sense of security, by joining NATO, and its sense of belonging, by becoming an EU Member State. Having these two senses ensured, the next natural goal for Romania would be to ensure its sense of welfare. In order to do that, Romania should focus its efforts on economy and economic diplomacy. This new goal will not appear as an external challenge, because in the economic dimension even the NATO and EU partners are finding themselves caught in an open competition, and it will require conceptual efforts, vision, creativity and proactivity; it is also possible to require a new institutional design of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Keywords

Country objective, diplomacy, economy, future, vision

1. ROMANIA'S CURRENT FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES

Foreign policy refers to the programs and policies that determine Romania's relations with other states, nations and foreign entities. Foreign policy includes diplomatic relations and cooperation, issues related to security and different forms of economic policy.

According to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), there are five main objectives which Romanian Diplomacy should pursue. We will present the foreign policy objectives of the Romanian Government, with brief comments on each of them.

The first objective is defined as the focus of all actions on promoting and protecting the political, economic, social and cultural interests of Romania and all its citizens. This role of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs outlines the core mission of diplomacy and should be stated as a per se objective in any diplomatic strategy.

The second objective refers to using more effectively the benefits deriving from Romania's EU and NATO membership. This objective reflects the fact that at this moment Romania does not use the benefits of its membership completely. Whilst joining NATO and the EU was for a long period the main tasks for the Romanian Diplomacy, the use of membership benefits is closely related to internal aspects, such as reforms, political will and stability, and respect for the rule of law. In this view, the substance of this objective resides mostly into internal matters and, because of that, Romanian Diplomacy should not be considered accountable.

The third objective refers to consolidation, with more pragmatism, of the partnerships Romania has developed in recent years, first of all to its European and Euro-Atlantic partnerships. This objective is important because it outlines the distinction between the process of admission and the process of integration. The further integration into these structures will depend on both internal behaviours and Romanian Diplomacy.

Strengthening cooperation with neighbouring states represents the fourth objective of the foreign policy of the Romanian Government. The existence of this objective is imposed by two elements: the first one is represented by the territorial proximity; the second is a NATO requirement. It is very important that this objective is clearly stated because it has a substantial contribution to the maintenance of peace and stability in the region.

The fifth and the last main objective is the following: achieving the strategic targets of enhanced cooperation with countries on other continents that can attract Romania's economic interests. It is notable that the economic component of diplomacy is clearly outlined. For the future, this objective can be reformulated in a broader manner, by taking into consideration not only States as international economic actors, but also Multinational Corporations.

What is it to be retained from all of these observations?

First of all, it can be stated that Romanian Government is mainly focused on the maintenance and capitalization of the achievements of the Romanian Diplomacy.

Secondly, given the nature of our alliances and partnerships, the main objectives of our foreign policy are related to security and politics.

Thirdly, even though Romanian Diplomacy achieves its goals, internal actors and institutions play significant roles in the process of transforming the achievements of diplomacy into concrete benefits for the Romanian citizens.

Finally, the perspective over the economic component of diplomacy could be nuanced, for better coverage and pursuit of Romania's economic interests.

2. NATO AND EU ACCESSION PROCESSES: A PARADIGM OF COMPLIANCE

This section is not about presenting the steps taken by Romania in order to become a NATO Ally or an EU Member State. It is about setting a conceptual frame for both NATO and EU admission processes, a frame that will help us understand why all national forces coagulated their efforts in order to reach those two major objectives.

First of all, did Romania choose these paths because it imagined a future together with its current partners, or because of the lack of a convenient alternative? Were the EU and NATO "our way", or the only way? The answer to this question represents the motivational component for most of the internal actors involved in those admission processes.

Secondly, the initiative came from Romania, but the leadership came from its partners. In order to modernise the country, Romanian leaders wanted to include the country into "a liberal zone of law, fact which provoked changes that otherwise would not have occurred" (Beathe, 2006, 84).

Thirdly, the key notion in the admission processes was the concept of “criteria”. Whether we refer to the NATO Membership Action Plan or the Copenhagen Criteria, the criteria offered Romania a sense of measurable predictability. Romanian Authorities had the mental representation of the fact that if Romania complied with “A” and then with “B”, Romania was moving forward.

Fourthly, the most important aspect related to the criteria concept is represented by the fact that criteria were set and their compliance was monitored by foreign and external stakeholders, or arbiters. Romania had no significant conceptual role in the process of elaboration of such criteria and, because of that, Romania’s compliance with external criteria had little to do with common morals, values, principles or common sense of justice. This can explain why Romania still has a long way to go in order to integrate.

To sum up, it can be concluded that some of the key common elements in Romania’s admissions to NATO and EU are represented by: motivation, initiative, leadership, clear and stable sets of criteria, sense of predictability and impartial arbitration. Those are some of the most important elements which, combined, connected the energies of both Romanian Authorities and Romanian Diplomacy.

3. A LOOK AT THE BASICS: SENSE OF SECURITY AND SENSE OF BELONGING

In order to build the argument for strengthening the economic diplomacy, Romania will be compared with a human being. It is human nature that dictates the behaviours of individuals, groups and communities. There are three major dimensions which can be identified, related to the human nature: the sense of security, the sense of belonging and the sense of welfare.

First of all, any human being’s instinct is to survive. This is the sense of security, due to which its efforts combine for the assurance of an acceptable degree of security. Because of the fact that “politics out of security can only start with the principle of unqualified equality” (Edkins and Vaughan-Williams, 2009, 52), Romania considered that the best way to ensure its security and political equality among other states was to become a NATO member.

Second, once the individual has the sense of a relatively secured environment, its instinct is to search for a group or community: this is the sense of belonging. Romania oriented towards the European Union.

After achieving the goal of EU admission, Romanian authorities entered into a state of lamentation. One of the possible causes of this lament could be the past and wide spread expectation that once Romania was accepted into the family things will evolve by themselves. Seven years after Romania joined the European Union, Romanian institutions are still working to the consolidation of the relations with the European partners. This behaviour outlines the fact that the integration process is both complex and continuous and that Romania is still trying to find its sense of belonging – common values, principles and standards.

4. WHICH IS THE CAUSE OF THE CURRENT LACK OF A NEW NATIONAL OBJECTIVE?

In order to answer, two different approaches can be envisioned, both based on the following premise: the genesis of any future national objective must be based on a moral frame.

According to the first approach, the moral frame is already occupied by the processes of Romania's compliance with European values, morals, principles and standards. Romania still has to consolidate the sense of belonging. Because of the fact that the moral frame is already filled with that task, there is no room for another wide objective. In this perspective, even if Romania would define its next national objective, the start of its implementation process would be postponed indefinitely, until the EU integration process had ended.

The second approach consists in the thesis according to which the first approach represents, in fact, a pretext for the lack of action in the direction of elaborating another national objective. Adherence to European standards does not represent an impediment to setting and implementing another national objective. In this perspective, the lack of a national objective finds its cause in the fact that no action was taken in order to set it.

5. WHICH WAS THE MAIN IMPEDIMENT TO TAKE ACTION?

In order to find out why no action has been taken, we must clearly establish the fundamental difference between NATO and EU accession objectives and the economic objectives, with particular focus on the role of Romania.

The NATO and EU accession processes were defined as “sets of criteria, imposed by external actors and monitored by foreign arbiters”. Romania’s role in those processes can be defined in terms of compliance, with no significant conceptual contributions.

The economic objective is fundamentally different. It does not appear as a set of criteria, imposed by external actors and monitored by foreign arbiters, due to the fact that every actor is responsible for its economic growth or decline. Romania is waiting the economic objective to appear as an external challenge, instead of imagining its own vision, designing its own creative economic strategy and become proactive. In this case, the role that Romania should play is not defined in terms of compliance, but in terms of proactivity, vision and creativity.

In conclusion, Romania does not have a country objective because, firstly, no action has been taken in order to define it - and there is no justification for that; secondly, because of the fact that such an objective appears as a new concept which should be defined in terms of vision, creativity and proactivity, and not in terms of compliance.

6. THE NEXT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE FOR ROMANIA

The global economic world represents a universal community in which the relevant indicator of actor’s ranks is not their nature - public or private, but their economic status. Because the economic world is getting global with or without Romania’s contribution, the concept of “accession” is irrelevant, resulting in the fact that there are no criteria to comply with in order to be integrated in this world.

Today, Romania is experiencing the sense of security, following the accession to NATO, and a certain degree of sense of belonging, following the accession to the European Union.

Having its security and political belonging ensured, Romania's following efforts should naturally converge to the achievement of prosperity – the sense of welfare, as the future great national objective. In the global world, “the degree of interdependence is asymmetrical, and because of that, states experience different degrees of sensitivity to economic events” (Neumann and Weaver, 1997, 98). In order to achieve welfare, Romania must strengthen its economic diplomacy and adjust it with regard to the latest concepts and developments worldwide.

We can define the new economic diplomacy as “a set of activities (both regarding methods and processes for international decision making) related to cross border economic activities (export, import, investment, lending, aid, migration) pursued by state and non-state actors in the real world” (Van Bergeijk and Moons, 2009, 37). Economic diplomacy is also “an instrument for development of effective cooperation between the countries and regions at the global level” (Baranay, 2009, 9). In this view, the economic challenge appears to be different from the challenges of NATO and EU accessions, because of its universality: national borders become almost irrelevant and the nature of actors is not restricted to sovereign States.

Let it be clearly stated that the economic arena represents a distinct dimension, in which even NATO Allies or EU Member States are competing against each other; nation states compete “to attract foreign direct investment, push other countries to gain market access for their national companies and attempt to protect their domestic markets by covert or overt trade barriers” (Saner and Yiu, 2001, 2). In the economic arena, “reconciling international economics and international politics is a constant objective of economic diplomacy” (Bayne and Woolcock, 2007, 360). Success is mostly individual and it depends on how well oriented actors are.

A vision for a prosperous Romania could be the following: “Romania represents an attraction point for International Businesses and Multinational Corporations which are mostly preoccupied with intellectual work, and less oriented towards the consumption of natural resources; at the same time, the companies which need material resources in their field of activity are transforming those raw materials into finished products within Romania”.

Whether we refer to States or Multinational Corporations, economic actors can be separated into potential investors and potential places to invest. Due to the fact that, at this moment, Romania is not a great economic power, the

construction of Romania's plan should start from positioning as a potential place to invest.

In regard to the future role of diplomacy, it should mainly focus on transnational, non-state economic actors. In this vision, the Romanian economic diplomacy's mission would be to promote a set of criteria that Romania is offering in order to attract the investor's attention, and to attract the targeted capital. In other words, Romania should become a country that meets the investors' criteria, and the role of economic diplomacy will be to search the targeted investors and to convince them that Romania is the best place for them to place their investments.

In this light, the next national goal of Romania should be to become a likely place to invest. In order to succeed, Romania has to do two things: first, to identify the principles due to which investors guide in order to place their investments, and second, to transform itself into the exponent of those principles.

The construction of Romania's plan should start with the identification of all relevant internal actors that might have a role in defining national interest in economic terms. That will be followed by the elaboration of a collaborative, long term, strategic action plan. It will be vital to pursue an indirect and long term benefit, instead of a direct and immediate one and also to prioritize the investment sectors and domains. When this planning phase will be completed, the national interest of Romania can be defined in economic terms and its implementation could take place, at an institutional level.

A new institutional framework could also be created: a structure which will reunite personnel from all the institutions which have roles in the implementation of the economic objective, which would act in the benefit and under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This structure will monitor all relevant international institutions, actors, behaviours, stocks, financial markets etc. and will provide intelligence for Romanian diplomats who are enforcing the economic objective. Keeping Romanian diplomats up to date with the latest developments is essential in order to identify the key aspects of investor's behaviours.

In order to become the exponent of the principles by which investors are guided, Romania must suffer some profound reforms, related to legislative coherence and predictability, strong and independent institutions, fiscal facilities, reduced bureaucracy, a high degree of flexibility at the institutional

level and, most important, qualified human resources. Related to the economic model of Romania, some of investor's demands are regarding criteria as "openness, reputation for innovation and regulatory regimes" (Hocking, Melissen, Riordan and Sharp, 2012, 42).

The institutional design, the rules, procedures and activities regarding Romanian economic diplomacy should be focused on effectiveness, or on "its capacity to achieve its negotiation goals" (Woolcock, 2012, 7).

Finally, the key element which will connect the energies of the relevant actors is leadership. The leadership could be individual, institutional or both. The best way to achieve Romania's next country objective would be the one in which the President, the Prime Minister or both of them will become its promoters. Thus, the strategic objective of transforming Romania into a land of opportunity for investors could be enforced.

7. CONCLUSION

The next strategic objective for Romania should be defined in economic terms, due to the fact that Romania has ensured its security and sense of belonging. The welfare objective requires conceptual efforts, strategy, vision and creativity, and does not resemble with NATO and EU admission processes, which were defined in terms of compliance. The different nature of the economic objective could explain why Romania is expecting the next strategic objective to appear as an external challenge. All efforts should connect in order to transform Romania into a land of opportunity for investments. The enforcement of this objective requires a strong, long term leadership and also the hard work and commitment of Romanian Economic Diplomacy.

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