

## ROMANIA'S POWER STRATEGY

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### **Abstract**

Although the concept of power is frequently debated in International Relations Theory there is less attention focused on the power exertion of small states as international actors. Consequently, this article focuses on how to approach different types of power resources in order to achieve strategic objectives in case of smaller entities. Therefore, the case of Romania is presented, regarding the development of a smart power strategy.

### **Keywords**

Conversion capacity, current international system, power, power resources, Romania, small states

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The current trends in the international system like multiple non-governmental actors, digital and physical networks characterized by new forms of interaction, diffusion of power, complex interdependences and new common global challenges have generated new approaches on power resources and ways in which they can be engaged. Moreover, the information revolution has reduced communication costs due to the expansion of Internet use. Therefore, the access of networking organizations and individuals to the international agenda has been widely opened. Consequently, the traditional barriers were diminished creating at the same time new opportunities also for small states.

Therefore, power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not limited to traditional approaches such as economic or military resource availability. It also encompasses ways in which measurable and less tangible resources like culture, traditions, internet, and narratives are used. These types of power resources are defined as *soft* or *smart* power by Professor Joseph Nye. The revolution in communications, globalization, and the global interdependencies brought to the forefront new instruments and methods to exert power. In other words, instruments such as strategic discourse, Internet tools, and public diplomacy can be used successfully to reach political and strategic objectives.

*Soft* power resources such as attraction and persuasion capacity represent an opportunity for smaller states to contribute to the international agenda and to increase their influence at regional and international level. The perception that small states do not have the capabilities to increase or enhance their position in the international system, this being determined by the system itself, it is no longer a real fact. While it is true that these small entities do not possess strong traditional power resources (from a *hard* power perspective) in economic or military terms, due to the availability of the *soft* power resources, limitations are being progressively reduced. Therefore, small states have the opportunity to contribute to the international agenda and achieve their goals.

Consequently, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the power of an international actor is not proportional to the size of its territory or military resources.

The case of Romania is approached in this context, more specifically the ways in which Romania can convert its available resources into results in order to increase its influence on a regional and international level.

## 2. TRADITIONAL POWER RESOURCES

In order to have an accurate image of Romania's capability to exert power, we will focus firstly on the measurable resources it possesses. Therewith, Romania is situated in Central - Eastern Europe, on the northern edge of the Balkan Peninsula, on the lower section of the Danube. It has a surface area of 238,391 square kilometers. On January 1, 2011, Romania's population numbered 21.413.815 persons (National Institute of Statistics 2012, 10).

Romania's borders have a total length of 3,149.9 km. Two thirds of the length are determined by the Danube, Prut, and Tisza rivers or follow the shoreline of the Black Sea while one-third (1,085.5 km) form Romania's overland border. Romanian territorial waters stretch 12 miles from Romania's Black Sea coastline.

Romania borders five states, the Black Sea representing its sixth border. To the NE and E, it borders the Republic of Moldova (681.3 km), Ukraine to the N and E (649.4 km), the Black Sea to the SE (193.5 km), Bulgaria to the S (631.3 km), Serbia to the SW (546.4 km), Hungary to the NW and W (448.0 km).

Romania is a member state of NATO (since 2004) and the European Union (since 2007).

### 2.1. Natural resources

Romania's exploitable mineral resources are varied: petroleum; natural gas; coal, especially bituminous coal suitable for coking, lignite; ferriferous and non-ferriferous ore; gold, silver, and bauxite deposits; large salt deposits as well as a series of non-metallic resources.

A distinct category of underground wealth is constituted by over 2000 natural mineral springs, suitable for consumption of medical treatment (National Institute of Statistics 2012, 5).

### 2.2. Energy resources

Romania holds a wide, yet quantitatively small, array of mineral and fossil primary energy resources: Oil, natural gas, coal, uranium ore as well as an important capitalizable potential for renewable resources.

According to the Romania's energy strategy 2007-2020, updated in 2011, Romania's energy production based on the exploitation of fossil primary energy resources (coal, hydrocarbons) or uranium is unlikely to increase in the following 2-3 decades. Therewith, increased demand for primary energy in Romania will be allayed through an increased use of renewable energy resources and through primary energy imports – gas, oil, coal, nuclear fuel. In the near future, Romania will remain dependent on primary energy imports. Its dependency level will be determined by the potential exploitation of new internal resources such as shale gas, the level of integration of renewable energy resources and the success of measures oriented to increase energy efficiency (Romania's Energy Strategy 2007-2020, 10-11).

Renewable energy resources in Romania hold an important potential even though the usable potential of these resources is lower than traditional energy resources, due to technological limitations, economic efficiency and environmental restrictions (Romania's Energy Strategy 2007-2020, 12).

### **2.3. National potential of renewable energy resources in Romania**

Available renewable energy resources include: solar, thermal, photovoltaic, wind and hydroelectric energies, biomass and biogas as well as geothermal energy.

According to assessments within the Romanian energy strategy, the technical hydroelectric potential of Romania is around 32,000 GWh/year. At the end of 2009, the yearly installed capacity of hydroelectric plants was of 56502 GWh/year, the energy output for an average hydrological year being evaluated at 17.340 GWh/year. As such, the efficiency of exploitation compared to the technical hydroelectric potential is rated at 54% (Romania's Energy Strategy 2007-2020, 12).

### **2.4. Economic resources**

According to the winter European Economic Forecast of the European Commission, the real GDP growth of Romania in 2013 has come out at 3.5% thanks to a strong export performance driven by a robust industrial output and an abundant harvest (European Commission, 92).

Growth is forecast to decelerate in 2014, to 2.3%, before slightly recovering to 2.5% in 2015. Annual average inflation is projected to decelerate to 2.4% in 2014 while unemployment is expected to decrease only in 2015. The growth contribution of net exports is forecast to fade out in 2014 and turn negative in 2015. This follows a strong trade balance adjustment of 4.1% of GDP in 2013, on account of both strong exports and subdued imports (European Commission, 92).

The budget deficit in Romania is estimated to have been reduced to 2.6% of GDP in 2013, from 3% in 2012. For 2015, benefiting from the expected acceleration in economic activity and based on the customary no-policy-change assumption, the deficit is projected to decrease further, to 1.8% of GDP. The structural budget balance is expected to mildly improve over the forecast horizon by about 0.5% of GDP. Government debt is forecast to peak at just above 39% of GDP in 2014 (European Commission forecast, 94).

In its annual Country specific recommendations, the European Commission underlines that in Romania's case, progress needs to be made on reducing local government arrears, enacting a law on the winding-up of insurance undertakings and continuing the reforms in the gas, electricity, rail and healthcare. Moreover, at 46 % of the EU average, Romania's GDP per capita is one of the most telling indicators of the country's developmental gap. Particular challenges include the need to increase labour market participation, improve overall competitiveness and reform the public administration. EU funds can provide an important source of public investment to support Romania in addressing these challenges<sup>1</sup>.

## 2.5. Military resources

Romania's military capabilities are composed of ground, naval and air forces. Romania is not a military power, its military capabilities being somewhat modest when compared to those of traditional military powers such as the US, Russia or even Great Britain.

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<sup>1</sup> COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Assessment of the 2013 national reform programme and convergence programme for Romania. Accompanying the document, *Recommendation for a Council Recommendation on Romania's 2013 national reform programme and delivering a Council Opinion on Romania's 2013 convergence programme for 2012-2016*.

Nevertheless, as a NATO member state, Romania benefits from the military support of NATO under the principle of collective defence (article 5 of the Washington Treaty – an attack on one or more member states shall be considered an attack on all member states).

Romania is present in international theatres of operations run by NATO, the EU and the UN. For example, Romanian troops were present in Iraq for 6 years (withdrawn in 2009) under NATO auspices.

**Table no. 1.** Number of troops participating in international missions

THEATER OF OPERATIONS	MISSION COMMAND:					TOTAL TROOPS
	NATO	EU		UN	COALITION MISSIONS	
		Monitoring missions	Operation ATALANTA			
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA		EUFOR: 37				37
KOSOVO	KFOR: 67					67
AFGHANISTAN	ISAF: 1021					1021
OTHERS		EUMM/EUSEC/EUTM/MALI 3/2/1/5	1	Military Monitors 38	Liaison officers 5	53
TOTAL	1088	48	1	38	5	1178

Source: Ministry for National Defence: 10 March 2014

### 3. ROMANIA'S POWER STRATEGY

As we may notice from the brief presentation above, Romania is not a global power given the amount of material resources it holds. Nevertheless, the quantity and exploitation potential are not neglectable, these constituting in the end power resources. On the other hand, Romania holds an important

geostrategic potential through its Black Sea shoreline, its navigable Danube and positioning as a contact point between Western and Eastern Europe (the Balkans and the EU). The latter of these can be categorized as traditional power resources but they can have a considerable weight if effectively put to use as part of a smart strategy together with other less tangible power resources.

Therefore, Romania's main challenge is its capacity to engage efficiently in the international arena to achieve its strategic objectives. In order to exert power to produce results, Romania must build a smart strategy of mixing its available traditional measurable power resources, such as the economic or military resources, together with persuasive and less tangible ones like traditions, culture, internet diplomacy, etc., that would allow it to act effectively in the 21<sup>st</sup> century international system. Accordingly, Romania needs to develop its conversion capability, meaning the transformation of power resources into results.

Romania's available *soft* power resources (that imply attraction and persuasion) are identified as follows:

1. Human resource: capitalization and development of the national human resources involved or skilled in specialty domains such as IT, healthcare, public administration, etc.
2. A 21<sup>st</sup> century diplomacy adapted to the new global challenges:
  - engaging in social media networks such as facebook, twitter, blogs, etc.
  - associative and group diplomacy: regional cooperation and partnering with other states in the region;
  - active diplomacy, engaging with international institutions, organizations, groups and summits that approach common interest subject or that can help achieving further objectives;
  - diaspora diplomacy through support for Romanian citizens abroad and involving them in programs to promote Romania abroad.
3. Strategic discourse: using strategic a narrative to legitimize undertaken and further actions and to influence the international system's actors perception.
4. Culture and traditions: promoting and using traditions and culture in order to exert attraction.

Consequently, in the current and future international context, from a result-oriented point of view, possessing quantitative traditional power resources (military, economic capabilities) is not enough to exert power. Therefore, using different types of power resources (measurable, less tangible, attractive), together or individually and evaluating each situation and context is necessary in order to achieve results.

At an early stage, the *smart power* strategy proposed by Professor Nye can represent a starting point in the creation of a smart power strategy for Romania. Therefore, setting achievable objectives, assessing available resources, evaluating the preferences, the resources of target entities, the probability to attain objectives and also choosing between power instruments, to which I would add the development of an influence tactic represent necessary steps in the creation of a *smart power* strategy.

The right approach towards resource engagement represents a necessary criterion for the success of a smart power strategy. Therefore, the simple assessment or awareness of the potential of available resources is not sufficient in order to exert influence. Analyzing contexts, strategic use of available resources in specific contexts, evaluating costs and coordinating goal oriented actions must be part of Romania's *smart power* strategy.

Regarding the setting of the objectives, Romania should define achievable ones such as increasing its regional influence. The opportunities to reach this goal stem from the multitude of advantages Romania could gain as a regional leader in Central and Eastern Europe, as a bridge between Eastern and Western Europe or between the EU and the Balkans.

This objective could be reached through the use of available *soft* resources such as the advantageous geographic position, associative diplomacy – an active involvement in regional organizations, initiative taking in regional development projects and support for EU policies in the region. Other important power resources in this situation are: using an adequate strategic discourse, engaging social media tools and persuasion through the promotion of regional culture and traditions as well as through the exchange of good practices.

All these resources must be part of a smart power strategy that envisages: different steps in reaching results, choosing the right types of available resources and ways in which they can be used depending on different contexts and regional developments.

In conclusion, Romania holds all the necessary power resources to increase its influence at regional level, to become a leader in the Eastern EU's region and contact point for states in Eastern Europe in their relation with the European Union. Reaching this objective would enhance Romania's influence not only in Eastern Europe but also in the European Union. Furthermore, this could be translated in economic development but also in credibility for negotiating with partners in the EU and outside the EU.

As previously emphasized, due to the revolution of the internet and the rise of new global challenges brought upon by globalization, the international agenda has become accessible to different types of actors, structures and groups, diminishing the relevance of the traditional instruments of power. The current international context, even if more complex and unpredictable, provides at the same time, opportunities and advantages for smaller entities. Therefore, Romania should take advantage of these opportunities in order to consolidate its position on a regional level and to increase its influence in the international system.

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