

## REFLECTIONS ON ROMANIA'S ROLE CONCEPTION IN NATIONAL STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS 1990-2014: AN EVOLVING SECURITY UNDERSTANDING

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### Abstract

Romania's role conception is depicted in the series of national security and defence strategies formulated during its post-communist era. These strategic documents represent the vision of the country's Presidential Administration regarding foreign and security policy's main directions and, if adopted by Parliament, the national vision on foreign and security policy. The purpose of this study is to provide an analysis of Romania's role conception through the comparative case study of three of these national strategies, showing that while the stages of transition undergone by Romania in terms of foreign and security policy have had in some respects a manifold impact upon its security discourse and its strategic culture, some elements of strategic culture have remained constant despite important external shocks. Romania has maintained its role conception as a balancer in the region and its security rationale focused on Russia. The integration into the Euro-Atlantic community has led, on the other side, to an accentuated and constant Atlanticism as a main feature of Romanian security policy, as well as to a newly found assertiveness. However, this (re)discovered assertiveness has not led to consensus in terms of foreign and policy prioritisation, but to a current foreign policy based on the search for a new paradigm.

### Keywords

Euro-Atlantic integration; Role conception; Romanian foreign and security policy; Strategic culture; Transformation

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The external projection of a country and thus the role it conceptualises constitute a main feature of strategic culture (Holsti 1970; Aggestam 1999). National role conceptions reflect a country's level of ambition as much as its relationship with actors, both in its own region and on the international scene. Role conceptions are constructed discursively and thus may evolve and transform over time, according to the national interests a country formulates (Aggestam 1999; Krotz 2002). When major changes occur in a country's interests or in the international circumstances, the role conceptions of that country will be discursively adapted and will eventually evolve.

For Romania, the most apparent picture of its role conception is reflected in the series of national security and defence strategies issued during its post-communist era. Each of these strategic documents is echoing (in their draft form) the vision of the country's presidency regarding the foreign and security policy's main directions for the length of a mandate, i.e. for four or five years (Năstase 2005). Virtually all Romanian strategic documents reach beyond medium-term projections by formulating a consensual long-term vision of Romania's self-projected role (Degeratu 2006). Whether these strategies are truly accepted cross-party depends on the mandatory (but not matter-of-course) approval of the Parliament.

In reality, many strategies drafted by the Presidential Administration over the past 25 years have not achieved full legal status, being voted against by the legislative, but they have nevertheless been considered as highly reflective of Romanian foreign and security policy. According to the Romanian law for defence planning (473/2004), the national defence strategy (NDS)<sup>1</sup> is the fundamental document for national defence planning and has to be proposed by the president in the first six months of his mandate in order to be debated and approved by the Parliament. This strategy should encompass: the definition of the national security interests and objectives, the evaluation of the international security environment, the identification of potential risks, threats and vulnerabilities, the courses of action and the main ways to ensure the

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<sup>1</sup> Until 2005 called "national security strategy" and virtually identical in content and approach with a "defence" strategy.

national security of Romania within the Alliance (Law 473/2004). Consistently, the strategy applies to a medium-term horizon coverage of five years and includes a series of provisions for long-term national objectives and collective security and defence.

Regrettably, my comprehensive research indicated that Romanian national strategies on security and defence are not the topic of many academic studies. One reason for this limitation is the fact that their accessibility is very low: from a total of six security and defence strategies adopted by the Supreme Council of National Defence (SCND), only four are accessible online. In addition, of the three draft strategies developed by the Presidential Administration, none is available. The same is true for many sectorial strategies (the military strategy, the White Paper, the energy strategy, etc.), which are developed according to Romanian law based on the national security or defence strategy.

The purpose of this study is to provide a comparative analysis of some of Romania's issued (and available) strategic documents during the post-communist transition and to show how the national strategic culture in terms of discourse has evolved during this period. Due to space limitations, this study only includes three of the most relevant Romanian strategic documents (those of 1999, 2001, and 2010). The detailed comparative analysis I have conducted on these documents clearly indicates that the stages of historical and political transition undergone by Romania have had a manifold impact upon its security discourse and its strategic culture. In short, Romania had to undergo in the aftermath of the 1989 revolution the process from an isolationist foreign policy to one based on European values, from a doctrine of "the struggle of the entire people" to a collective one, and from an ambiguous orientation and fear of Romania's isolation in the "grey area" to becoming one of the staunchest European Atlanticists.

The analysis of the strategic documents discloses a series of modifications that have occurred in Romanian strategic thinking, as well as in its role conception. Through its successive political changes, Bucharest has dramatically deepened its relationship with the West and has integrated the

Western security narrative<sup>1</sup>, thus changing the coordinates of its security calculation and broadening its spectrum of threat perception and of foreign and security policy instruments (Gheciu 2005).

The integration into the Euro-Atlantic community also had a significant transformational effect upon the Romanian national identity concept, prominently revealed in the discourse on national identity. Furthermore, beyond integration, there are many factors suggesting that Romania's role conception evolved to a higher level of ambition and a newly found assertiveness at the regional level.

However, some core elements of strategic culture have remained constant, despite forceful external shocks, as the changes brought about by Romania's integration into NATO and the EU have had a significant impact upon Romanian security discourse, without essentially altering Bucharest's core security calculations. The Western rhetoric of asymmetric postmodern threat perception and the disregard for conventional risk discernment has not sunk deeply into Romania's security identity. While strategic documents have securitised terrorism as the most significant threat to national security, especially during the integration process, later documents reveal that Romania has maintained hard security calculations, a security-driven foreign policy and a territorial defence rationale (Micu 2013). These findings undoubtedly lead to a more complex examination, which necessarily implies the differentiation between strategic culture and the discourse pertaining to it.

The present study describes the way in which strategic culture, as reflected in three of the Romanian national strategies, has undergone transformation, i.e. it highlights the manner in which national interests have evolved in response to the internal and external environment. The analysis focuses upon the process of Euro-Atlantic integration that has generated a new definition of the role that the country holds on the international stage, leading to a reformulation of the Romania's national interests. In order to pursue these new interests, Romania's strategic culture itself had to undergo a deeply transformational process. My study elucidates this process of strategic culture metamorphosis and illustrates how the very search for a new paradigm

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive analysis on the impact of Euro-Atlantic integration as an external shock upon a national security identity and the democratisation process, see Flockhart (2001).

emerged as a product of strategic culture transformation and as the simultaneously defining element of contemporary strategic culture.

The core image of the country's role conception is based upon the specific Romanian identity construction and threat perception. It envisions Romania as a balancer in the region with the ambition of acting as a mediator, both of these images being historically conditioned. The regional focus is given by Romania's minor power status, while the balancing act is founded on its self-perception as having both the cultural premises and being the greatest power at sub-regional level. This role conception is also hinged on a security rationale focused on Russia that has essentially contributed to Romania's accentuated Atlanticism as a main feature of its security policy (Preda 2004). While during the early 1990s the country's foreign and security policy direction was ambiguous at most, leading to a reduction in its level of ambition, the successful integration into the Euro-Atlantic community has led to a newly found assertiveness in terms of both policy and discourse. However, this (re)discovered assertiveness was not sufficient for a consensus in terms of foreign and security policy prioritisation, and thus pushed Bucharest into a limbo in its search for a new paradigm.

## 2. ROMANIA IN TRANSITION

After the elections in 1996, a new president came to power. Emil Constantinescu's presidency of four years represented the context for a number of noteworthy changes in Romanian foreign and security policy that also significantly impacted contemporary national strategic culture. President Constantinescu's single mandate was marked by the disintegration of Yugoslavia and its accompanying wars, as well as the first wave of Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC) joining NATO, a wave Romania was not part of. These events determined the way in which the Constantinescu regime formulated and prioritised national interests and are mirrored in the National Security Strategy of Romania (NSS) of 1999.

Both the internal and the external projection of the state changed radically in comparison to the former presidential mandate of Ion Iliescu. The internal projection of the state took now Europe as a referent object: Romania became the student of Europe that strived to prove its worthiness and

struggled to be accepted in the Euro-Atlantic community (Gheciu 2005; Stoicescu 2008), if not in the first round, then at least in the second. In order to be able to do that, the Constantinescu regime adopted a discourse focused on the modernity project metaphor – the need for a structural reform of society and a future projection constructed on similarities with Romania’s Golden Age, the interwar period (Preda 2002, 2004). With the goal of identity reconstruction, Bucharest reframed the country as being part of South-Eastern Europe (annulling President Iliescu’s previous unsuccessful attempt to construct Romania as part of Central Europe<sup>1</sup>) and projected an external image as a frontier between the East and West. At the same time, Constantinescu opted for continuance concerning some elements introduced by the first Iliescu strategy (1994), such as the importance of the geostrategic position of the country and the need to affirm Romania’s identity on the European stage.

The Constantinescu period’s strategic thinking was epitomised by the “National Security Strategy of Romania (NSS) - Democratic Stability, Economic Development and Euro-Atlantic integration” (1999), adopted by SCND and presented by the president in front of the Parliament in 1999 (Constantinescu 1999), which acknowledged the document.

The purpose of the 1999 NSS was to uphold beyond doubt the desire to integrate Romania into the Euro-Atlantic community. As the title indicates, the document considers the integration as the ultimate priority of Romania's foreign policy and security policy. Moreover, the strategy introduces what will become for the next eight years the country’s absolute foreign and security policy paradigm – the integration into the Euro-Atlantic community.

With this end in view, the document has a modern approach, which attempts to create as much overlap as possible between the Euro-Atlantic community’s expectations about Romania and its national policy. The 1999 NSS is Romania's first strategic document with an Europeanised discourse; the strategy upholds – for the first time in Romanian post-communist history - European values and guarantees the fundamental rights and freedoms. This type of (Europeanised) discourse will become the norm for national strategies

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<sup>1</sup> In his first mandate (1992-1996), President Ion Iliescu’s strategy for Romania’s integration into the Euro-Atlantic community was rhetorically built upon constructing the country discursively as being part of Central Europe, and not Eastern or South-Eastern Europe. The strategy lacked any historical or empirical arguments and thus failed (Stoicescu 2008).

and currently represents the natural and internalised Romanian discourse used in such documents.

Even though the document establishes Euro-Atlantic integration as the utmost aim of Romanian foreign and security policy, not only through its telling title, but also by dedicating extensive lengths to this topic, it fails to name this goal as the number one national interest in terms of foreign policy. It is only in the next Iliescu strategy, in 2001, that integration into NATO and EU are considered as such, while the 1999 NSS subordinates this topic to national interests as solely an objective, an approach which suggests the novelty of the issue at the conceptual level and the still low degree of internalisation of the priority itself at the moment of the drafting. This shows that it was only at the end of 1990s that Romania finally left the grey zone in terms of strategic thinking and decided to unequivocally adhere to an exclusively Western path.

The general drafting elements of the 1999 strategy significantly differ from the previous document, the 1994 Integrated Concept. This time the NSS is drafted through a more inclusive process, while the ownership of the document is assigned to a group of specialists from “various segments of Romanian society” (NSS 1999, p. 3). The Constantinescu document guarantees the basic rights and freedoms, the minority rights, and also establishes for the first time a relationship with the diaspora. Another important shift generated by the 1999 document is that the internal social risk, evaluated as very high in the previous document, is reflected in a significantly reduced form in the 1999 strategy.

The concept of the 1999 NSS frames the external projection of Romania and its security understanding substantially different to the 1994 Concept. The Constantinescu strategy maintains the emphasis on the geostrategic position of Romania (in order to improve the country’s NATO candidacy), and the core need to promote its identity on the European level, but distances itself from the vision constructed during the Iliescu mandate, which depicted Romania as being in a historically disadvantaged position. Thereby, the new document is pitching a new type of rhetoric which lacks in previous nationalistic constructions and avoids considering risks such as the defamation of Romania's image by other states - a conceptual shadow of the former isolationist approach. In this regard, the 1999 NSS makes an important step in the direction it sets out - that of an undisputable Western path.

Nevertheless, the document remains constrained in its declared aim: while future strategies will conceive a national identity strongly connected to a declared goal of a more active role for Romania on the regional and European level, the Constantinescu strategy refrains from setting such standards and adopts a withheld and reactive foreign policy direction, in line with the previous Romanian strategic document.

Hence, the analysis shows that the discourse used in the NSS 1999 is unable to fully correspond with the contemporary strategic culture characteristic of CEEC. The 1999 document fails to introduce concepts that have become “musts” of contemporary Romanian rhetoric, such as “good governance”, as well as “responsibility” and “predictability” in relation to the adopted national role and to the Euro-Atlantic partners.

Nonetheless, the new strategy launches “modernisation” as a metaphor, conceptualised for the first time as a dimension that reveals two main significances: it refers to both meeting the assessment criteria for the Euro-Atlantic integration, and to the historical continuity of “modern Romania” from the interwar period. Assuming both meanings, the concept succeeds in featuring a new self-image of the country, thus assimilating the older ideal of the prosperous modern Romania into the new paradigm of the Euro-Atlantic integration. It is this new paradigm of the country’s identity that will be conceptually embraced and further developed by the strategic documents signed by President Traian Băsescu.

When considering the series of Romanian strategic documents since 1990, it becomes evident that the value of the NSS 1999 stems first and foremost from the fact that it initiated the unwavering and unequivocal orientation of Romanian foreign and security policy towards the West, after a period of lingering strategic ambiguity. One other significant strategic feature is that the document establishes the prioritisation of NATO in relation to the EU integration. Hence, Romania’s Western path will be earmarked for the years to come by a hardliner Atlanticism, a characteristic that will differentiate the country from most other Central and Eastern European states (with the exception of Poland and the Baltic states).

Romania’s NATO prioritisation is caused by two main factors: the specific external threat perception in relation to the existing regional instabilities, and the fact of considering Russia as a challenging – if not threatening – regional player. In this regard, the traditional problematic



relationship with Moscow is restored, in line with the pre-communist (and to a certain extent communist) period, and in contradiction to the position implied by the strategic ambiguity of the early 1990s. Romania's sound preference for NATO is motivated by the security guarantees the Alliance offers, considered vital by Romanian decision-makers and public opinion. The country's Atlanticist orientation, established by the NSS 1999, will be relentlessly maintained during President Ion Iliescu's last term, as well as during both of President Traian Băsescu's mandates, essentially contributing to the affirmation of today's Romania as one of the most convinced European Atlanticists.

In terms of regional policy, the 1999 NSS places its emphasis on neighbourhood instability as a major risk and consequentially stresses the need to stabilise South Eastern Europe. This accentuation of regional instability is to be understood in light of the political disintegration process that was taking place in former Yugoslavia. Romania's geographical proximity to the 1999 Kosovo war had significant consequences for Bucharest, causing great economic losses. In order to win the US and NATO over and to get a step closer to joining the Alliance, Romania invoked the national interest (to join the Alliance) and supported the US air strikes in Kosovo despite the previous long-lasting alliance with the Milosevic regime (Fati 1999). As a reward for these important political and economic efforts, Bucharest received unilateral security guarantees from Washington. This significant change in Romanian strategic thinking was sustained by the initiation in 1997 of a strategic partnership with the US and by the clear prioritisation of NATO integration, and it represented the first in a series of decisions that proved Romania's clear favouring of US policies in Europe. Time proved that the strategic decisions and change of course were successful steps, resulting in the entering of the NATO Membership Action Plan and thus a secure path to NATO accession.

The 1999 strategy's focus on the Balkan instabilities also led to the fact that Bucharest turned the focus away from the Wider Black Sea<sup>1</sup>. This will prove to be another critical aspect of the document, contributing to the strategy's relative inconsistency in terms of strategic culture, and to the

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<sup>1</sup> The Black Sea region was established as a region of priority for Romanian foreign policy in the 1994 Concept.

inability of the strategy to construct a comprehensive vision. On the plus side is, however, the fact that the document introduces the strategic interest of Bucharest in the Republic of Moldova, establishing a policy for the bilateral relationship and emphasising the importance Chişinău plays for Bucharest, thus devising what today has become a cross-party strategic topic of priority.

In terms of security and defence policy, the 1999 NSS constitutes a drawback. The strategy fails to grant particular attention to the policy area and is rather unreflective of national policies. Despite the fact that the Constantinescu regime initiated and supported the participation of Romania in a large number of international missions and directly contributed to the introduction of another vital element of Romanian strategic culture – its significant participation in all types of international missions – the 1999 NSS fails to reflect a particular concern for this instrument and falls short of establishing any commitment, threshold or interest in international missions. The consistent participation in all types of international missions until and beyond NATO integration has meanwhile become a constitutive part of the national security and defence policy with the aim of proving its commitment to the Euro-Atlantic community and of making provisions for armed forces out-of-area training.

Overall, the NSS 1999 was the first Romanian security strategy in terms of legislation, as it was passed by the Parliament. The strategy established Romania's unwavering and unquestioned path towards Euro-Atlantic integration and conceptualised a series of elements that today are constitutive of Romanian strategic thinking, but were then novelty. Despite a series of deficiencies in terms of overall vision and strategic outlook, the relevance of the NSS 1999 is given by the effects it produced. It offered the West proof of Romania's unequivocal foreign policy orientation as well as the landmarks it established for all strategic documents to follow.

### **3. ROMANIA IN NATO**

The elections of 2000 resulted in the re-instaurating of Ion Iliescu as President and a new NSS in 2001. Although the strategy was completed well beyond the legal term – in the context of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the invocation of NATO Article 5 by the USA – and was sent by the SCND to

Parliament (instead of being presented by the president), the document was approved by Parliament. Unlike the previous Iliescu strategy, the NSS 2001 “Guaranteeing Democracy and Fundamental Rights, Sustainable Economic and Social Development and NATO and EU integration” is a modern document, with an Europeanised discourse and an unambiguous security policy orientation.

Drafted in the aftermath of 9/11, the NSS 2001 was undoubtedly aimed at obtaining NATO membership. The strategy elevates the integration into the Euro-Atlantic community to the status of national interest, after the first round of NATO expansion in 1999, which demonstrated that Romania could not convince the West of the irrevocability of its transition process. Emphasising that the country’s path leads beyond any doubt to a stable democratic system, the NSS 2001 places NATO first among foreign and security priorities, followed secondly by the EU integration and thirdly by the development of the US bilateral cooperation in the framework of the strategic partnership. The trinity NATO-EU-US will remain beyond this Iliescu strategy Romania’s anthem in terms of foreign and security policy, though the prioritisation of the three will change according to the political colour of the president and the international political context.

Beyond the trinity of Romanian security policy, the 2001 strategy is dominated by the elevation of terrorism as the ultimate threat to security. Given the context of 9/11 it is drafted in, transnational terrorism is the topic most attention is dedicated to (even though until 2001 it was never mentioned in any Romanian strategic document). In response to this new threat, the document provides for Romania's participation in counter-terrorism missions as the principal method of combating the threat. The strategy constructs a connection between NATO and terrorism, so that national participation in counter-terrorism (and the implied manifestation of solidarity with the US) is to be read as a precondition for joining NATO (Maior 2009).

It is widely acknowledged among Romanian policy- and decision-makers that 9/11 was an opportunity for Romania to manifest unrestrictedly strong solidarity with the US and therefore to win (along with other CEEC) its fervently desired membership in the Alliance. In line with this approach of unconditional support for the US – considered as Romania’s security guarantor –, Bucharest agreed in the aftermath of 9/11 to host US military bases on its territory and supported without wincing the Iraq intervention

both politically and militarily, despite vehement protests all over European and European leaders' threats to endanger Romania's EU membership.

Most interestingly, the securitisation of terrorism through the discursive legitimisation of the phenomenon as a threat to national security is absent from the 2001 NSS and will only take place in the framework of the next NSS, while the 2001 strategy constructs terrorism as a transnational risk, not as a national one (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998; McDonald 2008; Weldes 1996). The novelty of the issue at the end of 2001 and the realisation that it did not constitute (at that time) a threat to Romanian security prevented the Iliescu Presidency to securitise the topic into a full threat.

When it comes to the ownership of the document, the 2001 NSS takes a step back from the 1999 strategy, but a step forward from the 1994 Concept. The drafting process is a more inclusive one, without however involving civil society, but the "national security system". The strategy is attributed to the state: the referent is the state, and civil society has only the reserved right to participate in the "implementation" of the strategy (not its design) (NSS 2001, p. 3ff). However, beyond the issues of ownership and referent, the document paradoxically has a liberal approach, emphasising the importance of prosperity, market economy and privatisation. These elements are closely connected in the 2001 NSS to a Europeanised narrative that presents in detail the benefits of EU integration and establishes a relationship with the Romanian diaspora. Clearly, the realisation that Euro-Atlantic integration much depends on discourse, explains the radical change in approach and rhetoric from the first to the second Iliescu strategy<sup>1</sup>.

Unfortunately, the internalisation degree of this discourse appears to be low, as indicated by the absence of concepts such as "modernisation" and "responsibility", as well as by the lack of measures proposed to reduce the level of corruption (present in other documents). The limits of the strategy also pertain to the fact that in line with the first Iliescu document, the NSS stresses Romania's disadvantaged position on the continent and the risk of the country's image denigration, which is a conceptual framework away from the Euro-Atlantic ambitions of the country. Also, the language used in NSS 2001

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive analysis on the impact of candidate states' rhetoric on the integration process see Schimmelfennig (2003).

remains ambiguous and maintains, in some cases, shades reminiscent of nationalism<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, the strategic vision reflected at the level of discourse remains superficial, and a series of features indicate that the strategic culture harboured by the 2001 NSS only partially contains the expected transformation.

Overall, the NSS 2001 marks a number of significant non-linear changes in strategic thinking. The only major national identity element maintained from the 1994 Concept and the 1999 NSS is the proclamation of a national identity affirmation, a recurrent theme in all Romanian post-communist strategic documents (Hitchins 2009; Iordachi and Trencsényi 2003; Petrescu 2008; Verdery 1991), which displays the overwhelming national concern with identity definition. But just like in the previous two documents, the instruments through which this acutely felt need to raise the national profile are proposed to be implemented remain obscure, so that the objective persists at the level of rhetoric, with no tangible consequences. Unlike in later documents, the call for a more active role of Romania on the international scene is not envisioned in the 2001 strategy, leaving it to the reader to guess how Bucharest might achieve the goal of identity affirmation. In this light it is unsurprising that the strategy lacks any referral to Romania's geostrategic position and a resulting regional strategy for the Black Sea region. The Black Sea is only listed by the 2001 NSS among other regions of equal (and thus reduced) importance, while the Republic of Moldova is discussed for the length of a single line in the foreign policy chapter.

Consequentially, the document's foreign policy objectives remain unclear and the role the country is to assume undefined. The strategy's risk assessment focuses on transnational terrorism (without internalising it) and on the most prominently identified risk, that stemming from the region. The latter is a euphemism for Russia, which remains throughout Romanian strategies' history until 2010 the great unnamed, but is embodied by the identified conventional and asymmetric major risks the region poses to Romania (Micu

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<sup>1</sup> Example of nationalist language: "This situation [of Romania facing a great number of vulnerabilities] occurred due to the cumulative pressure over time of multiple factors (...) that have influenced the security climate of the state and citizens, leading to the weakening of the moral, material, and that of spiritual values support, which underpin the civilisation of our identity national" (NSS 2001 - Introduction).

2015). Given the rationale that Romania is the largest and most powerful country in South Eastern Europe since the disintegration of Yugoslavia, any doubt regarding the origin of this risk is of rhetorical nature. In other words, while Russia remains unnamed, the document's stressing of regional risks well beyond the timeframe of the Yugoslav wars indicates a clear threat perception stemming from Moscow.

In the end, 2001 NSS achieved its purpose to demonstrate that Romania was ready and deserved to become a NATO member by embracing the terrorist threat perception, emphasising asymmetrical risks (and thus leaving the conventional Cold War thinking of the previous Iliescu strategy behind) and displaying an Europeanised discourse. The country's 2004 NATO integration will bring with itself an update in defence planning and modifications of the related laws (Ordinance 473/2004), renaming the NSS into "National Defence Strategy" (NDS) to avoid the negative association of the term "securitate". However, the NDS will be virtually identical in its content: it establishes the national goals for security and defence policy and has to be submitted by the president to Parliament within the first six months of the mandate.

#### **4. ROMANIA IN SEARCH OF A NEW PARADIGM**

In President Bănescu's second term a new document was drafted, the 2010 NDS, which establishes a clear continuity with the priorities and goals set by the NSS 2006. The 2010 NDS is the first strategic document prepared after Romania's EU accession and it is hence written from the perspective of a full member of the Euro-Atlantic community. Therefore, the document's framework is defined by this quality of a double membership, as much as by the economic crisis, started in 2008.

After being drafted in close cooperation with the civil society, the SCND sent the 2010 NDS to the Parliament, only to be rejected. The two specialised parliamentary committees required the modification of one of the paragraphs listed as vulnerability – media campaigns ordered with the aim of denigrating state institutions. However, a modified proposal for the NDS was never sent to Parliament, which gives the document a limited degree of legality. Both structurally and content-wise, the NDS 2010 is closer to a

security strategy (and therefore to the NSS 2006), than to a defence one (i.e. NDS 2008), given the fact that it includes a multidimensional conceptualisation of national security.

Undoubtedly the most comprehensive and inclusive strategic document of post-communist Romania, the NDS 2010 is considered the defining document of President Băseșcu's security policy vision for his second mandate by both the public opinion and the international community. The principal value of the document stems from its comprehensiveness in at least four areas. First, it performs the conceptual delimitation between the elements of continuity (from the previous strategic document) and the innovations. Secondly, the strategy clearly distinguishes between interests, values and objectives, as well as between risks, threats and vulnerabilities. Thirdly, it establishes lines of action and indicates with a (comparatively) high degree of accuracy the resources destined for policy implementation. Lastly, the 2010 NDS 2010 also represents the first attempt of a review in relation to the previous strategy.

Romanian policy-maker's quest for this document consists of defining a new paradigm of policy, a new grand strategy. My analysis indicates that the document does not succeed; however, in asserting a new paradigm, but rather launches the search for one. The metaphor used in the strategy to define this pursuit process is the concept of a "more active role" that Romania should play internationally. While the theme of identity affirmation is recurrent in Romanian strategic thinking, this time the NDS sets out to define guidelines and instruments for this established aim.

As a result of this proclaimed vision for a raised national profile in the framework of the Euro-Atlantic community, the security and defence policy adopted by the NDS is a much more forthright one in comparison to the previous strategies. The national policy is herein established in relation to Romania's NATO and EU membership, which involves inherent aspects: the guaranteed fundamental rights and freedoms and the minority rights, both the state and the individual as referents, and a highly Europeanised discourse.

In terms of strategic culture, the 2010 NDS takes a step forward in defining national identity as the fundament on which the strategy itself is built, considering the need for international identity affirmation as a main preoccupation of Romania's abroad strategy. Moreover, as a quintessential feature of Romanian national identity, the document dedicates consistent

attention to the diaspora. The narrative construction of the foreign and security policy directions is a comprehensive and more balanced one compared to the previous Bănescu document, suggesting a matured approach towards Romania's role conception.

It is safe to say that the strategy constitutes a true manifest for a more active role of Romania on the international scene, dedicating extensive attention to the instruments recommended for boosting national identity, through a daring and comprehensive foreign policy and a clear and bold defence policy. Interestingly, and with a very different dynamic, this politically more prominent role is defined as complementary to membership in the Euro-Atlantic community and to its (perceived) increased responsibility: Romania needs to become more assertive, but at the same time it has to prove responsibility and predictability.

Naturally, the shift towards a raised national profile dictates a radical change of Romania's definition in relation to the Euro-Atlantic community in relation to the first Bănescu strategy of 2006: while in all other strategic documents the narrative is built around an unequal relational dynamic - Romania is trying to conform to the Euro-Atlantic community's expectations - the 2010 NDS adopts the approach of an equal partner in relation to Romania's allies and partners. This newly found self-confidence refers however explicitly only to the relationship with NATO and the EU, while in the case of the wider international scene the document keeps the reader guessing.

The conceptualisation of an increased national profile at the discursive level is consequential to Romania's joining of the Euro-Atlantic community. From the student-teacher relationship, recurrent both at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and during the integration period prior to 2007, Romania's referential system evolves into a more equal footing with the EU, which leaves space for identity affirmation. This phenomenon is mirrored in the 2010 NDS, a document which embodies the striking display of the newly found membership status and a re-evaluation of Romania's main referent, the West (or in this case the Euro-Atlantic community).

In terms of rhetoric, the main discursive elements of the 2006 NSS are generally maintained and are defining for Bănescu's presidency - the concept of modernisation is hailed and further developed, those of transparency, progress, anti-anti-corruption, prosperity, and good governance are



emphasised as pillars of modern institution-building and of the future (ideal) Romanian society.

On the other side, the analysis of the foreign and security policy orientation shows a sensible difference to that of the previous years, from several points of view. First, the trinity changes balance as the strategic partnership with the US becomes priority number two for Romania, immediately after the security guarantee provided by NATO, while the EU becomes third priority. This prioritisation constitutes a significant change compared to the 2006 NSS, in which Romania was not yet an EU member and thus considered EU integration the utmost priority of national interest. The 2010 NDS makes the understatement clear: that Romania considers the US its security guarantor and NATO the framework for its article 5 guarantee, while the EU remains in terms of security and defence secondary. In line with this new trinity prioritisation, it is also President Bănescu's mostly significant decision of 2010 to host elements of the American Ballistic Missile Defence.

Secondly, Russia is named directly in the document, a fact that constitutes an outstanding premiere in Romanian strategy making. Over two pages length are devoted to the regional problems that Bucharest is accusing Moscow of: the unilateral suspension of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in 2007, the war in Georgia in 2008, the stopping of gas deliveries to Ukraine in 2009, the cyber attacks on Estonia in 2010 and the frozen conflicts. Even more memorable, for the first time, the illegal stationing of Russian troops in Transnistria is considered a threat to Romanian national security. Bucharest not only acknowledges Russia as a risk to regional stability, but also constructs it in the NDS as the destabilising factor and a risk to national security. The ample construction of Russia as "the other" in a Romanian strategic document (Kuus 2004; Neumann, 1999) is to be read in connection to at least three significant aspects: the country's newly found assertiveness as a full member of the Euro-Atlantic community, the recently developed policy on the Republic Moldova as Bucharest's first and foremost prioritised relationship in the region, as well as a growingly aggressive policy of Russia in the region.

The European path away from Moscow's claws is an understatement of President Bănescu's policy (Angelescu 2011) featured in the 2010 NDS. This discursive move towards a dramatically increased regional engagement (specifically in relationship to Chişinău) will be further developed and will find its peak in Bănescu's statement in 2014 (to the outrage of the political

opposition) that Romania's new national project is the re-unification with Chişinău. Whether this demonstrative statement is to be catalogued as the swan song in light of Băseşcu's ending second (and last) mandate and a surprisingly autochthonic outbreak after a decade of utmost Westernist policy, or if it will find long-term support on both sides of the Prut River as Bucharest's new paradigm remains unclear. Nevertheless, it constitutes a remarkable feature of Romanian strategic thinking integrated in the 2010 NDS.

The 2010 strategy's regional security policy features, along with a highly sharpened focus on Romania's immediate region, a premiere policy for Central Asia, which is conceptualised as an expansion of the (wider) Black Sea policy. Central Asia is constructed by the NDS as an unstable region with ground for supporting the "democratisation" of the countries. Obviously, the rich natural resources of Central Asia represent the incentive for Bucharest's pursued policy of regional energy market liberalisation.

The same assertiveness is present in the context of the NDS defence policy. The document establishes the level of ambition and the use of force and keeps all options on the table: Romania's participation is provided for in all types of international missions, including coalitions outside of the UN Charter umbrella. Moreover, in line with an accentuated regional (conventional) threat perception (i.e. Moscow), for the first time after a long policy of crisis management participation, territorial defence is prioritised to the same extent as the country's participation in foreign missions with allies. Most importantly, the NDS reserves in premiere the right to use military force alone or with allies as a last resort, an element that had been a taboo of national defence beforehand<sup>1</sup>. In previous documents, a clear provision for the use of force was absent and only specific types of missions were mentioned contextually. The reconsideration of regional conventional risks as majorly relevant and the conceptualisation of a conventional national defence policy make the 2010 NDS visibly break with previous Romanian strategic thinking. This break was widely seen as a pragmatic comeback to traditional security thinking, after the

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<sup>1</sup> The increased liberty with regard to participation in international missions was facilitated by Law 121/2011, which allows the president greater flexibility and gives him together with the prime minister the right to decide in favour of participation in missions under the auspices of international organisations without requiring the approval of Parliament.

interlude of asymmetric threat securitisation imposed by the prioritisation of NATO and EU integration.

Overall, the document is more bold and assertive, both in relation to the Euro-Atlantic community, which includes Romania now, and in relation to regional risks and general threat assessment. This approach should not, however, be interpreted as a departure from the common priorities of Euro-Atlantic area, but constitutes a way to initiate a self-redefining process, a search for a new paradigm of security policy. Several possible directions of this search are outlined in the document, such as a new national project, a greater involvement in the wider Black Sea region<sup>1</sup> and Central Asia, as well as a more profoundly self-aware national defence.

The Ukrainian crisis in 2014 and the sanctions imposed upon Russia have been perceived in Bucharest as a confirmation of the change in policy proposed by the 2010 NDS, away from asymmetrical global threat perception and back to regional instability and the need to balance power and defend itself against both Russia and internal fragmentation. The events have also accentuated Romania's frustration with the EU's disregard for the challenges the Eastern neighbourhood poses (and faces) and have further accentuated the trust in NATO instruments and the strategic partnership with the US. A new president, elected in 2014, was the one of the two favourite candidates that rather featured a common view on strategic matter with the old one. However, a new strategy will be issued only in 2015.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the documents, to the extent that they are public and accessible, reveals a series of remarkable changes in Romania's strategic discourse over 25 years. Romania's radical foreign and security policy reorientation from a grey area in the early 1990s to a most committed Western path led to a redefinition of national identity in terms of security

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<sup>1</sup> Romania has argued since before its Euro-Atlantic integration for a greater involvement of the EU and NATO in the Black Sea region and its significance as a key area for Euro-Atlantic security through a process of the region's "democratisation" (Homorozean 2010; Joja 2014; Maior 2009).

understanding and strategic thinking. Bucharest's role in the region and on the European level was discursively restructured from an isolationist, self-reliant and relatively unallied strategic thinking to an integrated security understanding, based on common values and collective acting.

Beyond the ample redefining process of Romania's role, the analysis of the national strategic documents reveals another phenomenon: that changes expected to be more stable over time, such as modifications regarding national interests, political orientation, and even national identity, may be of relatively short duration. Some of these changes take place only at the discursive level, generating superficial adjustments rather than deep transformations, and are aimed to "fit" the image or role conception of a country to external expectations.

The analysis of Romanian strategic documents indicates that contrary to the common conception of strategic culture as an inflexible feature of national identity, a series of elements introduced in one strategic document were not undertaken in following ones. These findings suggest that although in theory bipartisan, a strategy can be used in order to obtain a short-term objective and thus may reflect only slight or temporary adjustments of a national strategic culture. The strategic discourse requires the at times complex analysis of the distinction between narrative that becomes part of the culture, on the one hand, and speech that fails to securitise, on the other hand.

The rethinking of the domain called for a reformulation, inherently bringing up modifications in terms of discourse. A series of changes in rhetoric were of an outward nature and constituted an adaptation of national discourse according to its own historical course and the external events. The integration process Romania went through over the last ten years has created perceived expectations with regard to the foreign policy discourse. Aspiring countries had to chisel and even mould their understanding of security to that of the Euro-Atlantic community. Consequentially, Romania displayed a "modern" strategic thinking and language in order to speed up and accomplish the integration process.

Lastly, the long term quest for a new paradigm of Romanian foreign and security policy is reflecting the fragmentary and incomplete stage of strategic culture the country is now experiencing. Older strategic concerns and regional preoccupations have rebounded, while simultaneously new elements have come to light over time. Moreover, the aggravation of old threats such as

Russia and the emergence of new ones (such as terrorism) further continues to accentuate the process of paradigm search in Romanian policy-making and confirms yet again the changing character of strategic culture.

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