

THE DEFENSE COMPONENT OF ROMANIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY

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The end of the cold war brought about, among other things, important changes within the concept of "SECURITY". Thus, following the disappearance of the main threat - the Soviet threat -, the inclusion of the former communist areas within the international system, the transition within the new democracies and technological developments in general, a remarkable shift in emphasis has taken place within the concept of "SECURITY", in a relatively short period of time. First, it is evident that the old, "traditional" threats are no longer there: If they used to be preponderantly military in character, now they are much less so; if they used to be mainly external, now they tend to be mainly internal; and if they used to be visible enough, now they tend to be much less distinct in character. Second, and consequently, the instruments and methods for their counteraction are now different. If, in the past, deterrence based on strong defense was the main way to counter those threats, today a strong military defense is powerless in front of drug smuggling, illegal immigration, terrorism, money laundering, proliferation of mass destruction weapons and organized crime. Such new, "non-traditional" threats have to be countered by specialized national structures specifically created and trained for, which work in full cooperation with the international structures specifically created to deal with them. And third, as a consequence, the whole structure of national security system has to be re-designed, given the new roles and shares of its various components, resulting from the changes in the "threat spectrum" mentioned above. In a broader perspective, the end of the cold war, following the disintegration in the East, has created the conditions for the reunification of Europe, a continent divided on ideological and political-military grounds for the last fifty years. But, at the same time, the same disintegration in the East threatened to spread towards the West. As a consequence, after some hesitation generated, among other causes, by the wrong belief that all the negative developments could be "contained" in the area where they were born, the West decided, quite pragmatically and wisely to stabilize Central and Eastern Europe. That started to be achieved by projecting its own stability, security and prosperity eastward, mainly through the enlargement of NATO and the EU. In geopolitical terms, through the reunification of Germany and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, accompanied by the fragmentation of the political space between them, the center of gravity in Europe has shifted from Eastern to Central Europe, which now acts as the anchor of stability for the entire continent. Narrowed to the situation of a country like Romania, this meant the possibility to re-establish its traditional links to the West, coupled with, on the one hand, the substitution of a colossal neighbour, the Soviet Union, by less powerful ones - Ukraine and Moldova - and, on the other, a marked increase of insecurity generated by open conflict in her own vicinity (former Yugoslavia and former Soviet Union). To this, one should add the fact that, after the voluntary dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, Romania had to face such increased insecurity alone, a situation complicated even further by the inescapable reduction in her defense capability given internal transition.

Under such circumstances, where, on the one hand, the dominant trend was towards the reunification of Europe, and, on the other, the country had to depend, in the last resort, only on her own forces to defend herself, it was quite normal that Romania had no other chance but to try join the trend towards Europe's integration. Any other option, including neutrality, was thus excluded from the start, given its evident incapacity to satisfy the security requirements

of the country. Consequently, Romania support from the very beginning the enlargement of NATO and the EU and acted accordingly (see, for instance, the constant positive attitude towards and participation in the PfP, an initiative Romania first endorsed officially). It was thus inevitable that, under such circumstances, a restructuring of the defense component of our national security system had to be initiated. In this context, it should be noted that such a process was facilitated by the transformation of our defense establishment started in the first hours of the Romanian revolution, a transformation which, once initiated, is continuing even today. After the first corrections (depolitization and liberation from the control of former Securitate), the main motive force behind the process became the need for modernization of our armed forces. Consequently, the Romanian forces started to be profoundly reorganized according to the Western model even before NATO admission became a feasible option?! Besides, the funds for it came entirely from national resources! In general, there were three "yardsticks" for that modernization. The first was conceptual, namely how the future European security model would look like. An analysis was conducted and the result was that, most probably, the concept of "cooperative security" would be based on two pillars: one political, namely the concept of "preventive diplomacy", another military, multinational forces designed for low-to-medium intensity operations in mainly peace support activities. That way, "SECURITY" as such was to be assured by the efficient use of common resources of all the participants. The second "yardstick", already addressed in the present paper, is represented by the "spectrum of threats" the Romanian Armed Forces are to respond to. And the third "yardstick", probably the most important of all, is the level of resources available for modernization. In general, the Romanian Armed Forces are now confronted with the need to correct a number of imbalances accumulated during many years of communist neglect and postrevolutionary lack of enough resources. Thus, new balances have to be struck between the number of old and young cadres, superior and inferior officers, officers and NCOs, combat and support troops and, most important, generally between the level of personnel and the level of their armaments and military equipment. At present, the Romanian Armed Forces total a number of roughly 200.000, equal to that of, for instance, Japan, paying for their maintenance about 1/50 from the annual defense budget of Japan?! Therefore, a further reduction in the level of personnel, to reach a recommended figure of about 150.000, would be most appropriate, provided the money thus saved could be directed to better equipment. This, in turn would require a number of other improvements, among which one could mention: more qualified civilians to take up the jobs now performed by the military, a more attractive pay, to "snatch" them from the civilian sector, and of course, better equipment in general for the management of the defense establishment in its entirety.

To adjust a system previously almost similar to that of former Yugoslavia (with large reserves and lots of paramilitary formations designed to fight a "popular war") is not an easy task. Now, according to the law of national defense (adopted in 1994), the two pillars of the defense component of national security consist of the Armed Forces (the three Services, the units of the Ministry of Interior – Gendarmes, the units of intelligence services – mainly for anti-terrorist activities, and other units legally organized for armed defense) and the Protection Forces (civil defense, medical formations, and other legally organized formations to cover various needs arising in time of crisis or war). The Army consists of the Ministry of National Defense, which includes the General Staff, the three Services, and the territorial forces numbering about 100.000 men.

The reserves are an indispensable component of Romania's national defense. The active reserves consist of all men and women having completed their military service, up to the age of fifty. Periodically, depending on their category of age, they are called for refreshing courses and exercises (more frequent when they are younger). When the time comes (during mobilization), they are called to serve in the units they are assigned to in peace time. Those units are following a special program of preparation before being sent to the battlefield, a

program which is shorter or longer depending upon the function they are supposed to fulfill (for instance, shorter for logistics, longer for combat units). Legally, their activity is regulated through the laws for the preparation of the territory and population for defense. As one can easily see, the concept is tailored according to the conscription system now in use in Romania. But, following the termination of a long cycle - of mass armies - inaugurated during the Napoleonic Wars and given technological revolution and budgetary constraints compounded by the current "peace dividend" conscription is becoming more and more questionable. Accordingly, Romania introduced in parallel the military service on contract basis for a limited duration in time (3-5 years). Currently, about 10% of the total forces are functioning on that basis. In future, this share will increase, but probably - due to a combination of budgetary constraints and the need for a high rate of augmentation - conscription will not be eliminated completely.

The officers in reserve and retirement, as well as the veterans, are organized in a number of associations, which are very active in debating the problems of national defense, being, therefore, in close contact with the military authorities and the members of the Defense Committees from the Parliament. They are, thus, performing an important function of interaction with the rest of the society, helping the democratically transformed Armed Forces to further integrate into the democratic society Romania is currently building.

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