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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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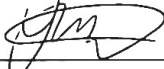
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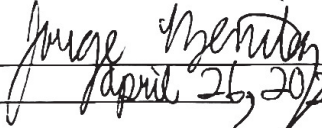
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## *Preface*

Romania is in a reality that it cannot change because it is connected to the Black Sea. This brings both opportunities and challenges. From a security standpoint, it is in a moment when it must respond, or not, to the challenges launched in the Black Sea area by Russia. The annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine have profoundly changed the security environment and show that Russia is determined to use its military to achieve national interests.

The interest in writing this paper was determined by how Romania decided to address the threats to its national security generated by Russia. Its actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine were launched six years ago, but Romania decided to respond in 2020 when it mentioned Russia in the National Defense Strategy as one of the threats to national security. I used the term mentioned because its wording does not show a clear stance towards a strategic vision and how such threats can be deterred.

The opportunity to be at the Command and Staff College brought in my attention new points of view for the security studies and the role of the power tools used by states in interstate relations. The fifteen years of experience in the land forces and naval infantry forces of my country and the Afghanistan missions helped me write this paper but the in-depth study of the information provided by the dedicated staff of Command and Staff College was the one that filled the gaps in my knowledge. I am deeply in gratitude to my mentor for writing this paper, Dr. Yuval Weber. Dr. Jorge Benitez's dedication during the classes inspired me to critically think and apply it during my writing and research process. Also, I would like to thank my classmates and LTC David Preston for their ongoing support to finish this project and in my experience at the Command and Staff College.

## Executive Summary

### **Title: “Snake Island – A Possible Conflict between NATO and Russia?” An Effective Romanian National Security Strategy to Deter Russia**

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**Thesis:** The Black Sea is a volatile security environment dominated by Russia’s anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) strategy. The external threat to Romania increased significantly following the annexation of Crimea and in light of Russia’s threat to Romanian security, Romania needs to reassess its national security strategy to develop internal and external security policies alongside the appropriate capabilities to deter Russia in concert with NATO allies.

**Discussion:** In the past two decades Russia has increased and modernized its military and non-military capabilities to transform the Black Sea region into a sophisticated A2/AD environment. In addition to the militarization of the northern areas of the Black Sea, Russia has also deployed information operations (IO), hybrid warfare, soft power, and cyber operations to reassert itself as the dominant regional power and to revise the regional order. Although the annexation of Crimea took place in 2014, Romania has responded very slowly, only committing itself to spending 2% of GDP on defense in 2017 and officially identifying Russia as a threat to national security in its National Defense Strategy in 2020. That document identifies a series of national objectives, threats, risks, and vulnerabilities and emphasizes the duality between internal and external security. However, it also raises questions about its effectiveness to generate the appropriate tools and policy to deter Russia. In turn, this thesis will address those shortcomings of Romania’s 2020 National Defense Strategy, namely, do the concepts used provide sufficient guidance to the national actors that have to put the Strategy into practice? Are the relations between strategic objectives and actors clearly identified? Is there a prioritization between internal and external threats? Although the strategic importance of the Black Sea is highly recognized by Romania and its allies, there is not a dedicated strategy to deter Russia in this region by regional actors.

**Conclusion:** To buttress its position as a reliable actor for peace and stability in the Black Sea region, Romania must continuously refine and reassess its National Defense Strategy to deter the Russian threat. It will also give Romania a louder voice in the international arena to build a consensus among NATO allies to transform the tailored forward presence into an enhanced forward presence and increase the Black Sea security.

## Introduction

Romania has long had a complicated geopolitical situation due to its position on the European continent. It was surrounded by empires (Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman) that forcibly occupied parts of the national territory or exercised their influence in the international system to the detriment of Romania. Romania only received international recognition for its independence in 1878 by uniting the regions of Muntenia (also known as Wallachia) and Moldavia and breaking political ties with the Ottoman Empire. It was only in 1918 that Transylvania came into union with the Kingdom of Romania from the Habsburg Empire's occupation, achieving the modern territorial boundaries of the country.

1940 brought another turning point: The secret Ribbentrop-Molotov pact separated Bessarabia from Romania to form the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. By the end of World War II, however, Romania ended up on the winning side of the Allied coalition but under the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union, which installed a communist regime that lasted until the overthrow of dictator Nicolae Ceausescu in the last days of 1989.

Romania's post-communist leaders focused their efforts on demonstrating to international partners and allies that the country's strategic orientation focused exclusively on integrating into the Euro-Atlantic space. According to Professor Marian Zulean, an expert on public policy, national security, and military sociology at Bucharest's University, "the development of national security strategies has emerged as an internal challenge, a requirement for the transition from a communist to a democratic society, and as an external challenge in preparing for NATO and EU membership."<sup>1</sup> The Romanian political leadership presented broadly integrated strategic visions to achieve national security interests under the influence of the Copenhagen School: "the concept of national security is analyzed in a broader context, in which national security strategies set new goals, to defend the physical and spiritual integrity of a country, to protect intangible

assets,”<sup>2</sup>along with the historical objective of defending the country’s border. In particular, all Romanian presidents after 2000 ensured that the national security strategies reflected the same concepts used by NATO or EU in their respective strategic security documents to interconnect national security in the European and Euro-Atlantic space. Along with these and the constant attachment to Western European and Euro-Atlantic values, Romania has built its way to the most robust international organizations of the moment: NATO and the EU.

Romania is now fully part of the Euro-Atlantic political and security establishment, but the country still maintains a predominantly defensive strategic culture. The consequence is that Romania is, in practice, still concentrated on defending its national territorial borders more than participating in the broader strategic aims of NATO. Romania's strategic culture follows the logic that “the risk of an interstate armed conflict remains low, yet there is an emerging risk of adapting hybrid offensive operations to technological developments.”<sup>3</sup> The characteristics of hybrid war are different from those of conventional war. In addition, with the current military and non-military capabilities used by Russia in the Black Sea space, these hybrid armed conflicts do not have a linear pattern anymore, leaving Romania potentially unprepared for the modern character of conflict emerging from Russia. For example, in “the wider Black Sea region,”<sup>4</sup> a concept that the national defense strategies are trying to promote, the armed incident between Russia and Ukraine in November 2018, when “Russian coastguard vessels, intercepted and later fired on three Ukrainian naval ships near the entrance to the Kerch Strait,”<sup>5</sup> creates a new category of aggressive actions carried out by Russia in the Black Sea space following the destabilization of Moldova and the occupation of Transnistria by the ethnic Russian separatist forces, the 2008 Georgia War, the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, and the illegal annexation of Crimea.

This thesis argues that Romania has an institutionalized process to develop national strategies but its historical background and rhetorical mindset from a different era limits its effectiveness. The strategic defensive culture should evolve toward a more active and decisive posture if the Romanian leadership wants to increase its deterrence capabilities vis-à-vis Russia. The process should be more connected with the immediate threats to its vital security interests and address the internal disagreements inside NATO and EU. The Black Sea is a volatile security environment dominated by Russia's anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) strategy, and the external threat to Romania increased significantly following the annexation of Crimea. Romania needs to reassess its national security strategy to develop internal and external security policies and the appropriate capabilities to deter Russia in concert with NATO allies.

## **Chapter I - THE CURENT SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN THE BLACK SEA**

### **Snake Island – Another Possible Military Scenario in the Black Sea**

*"We understand we have a truly unique history. And we draw strong support from that mentality, culture, and identity that are ours and ours alone. "*<sup>6</sup> – Vladimir Putin

Snake Island is a part of a long and complicated Black Sea history that generated different state relations between the historical Romanian Provinces and the Tsarist Empire, Romania and the USSR, and presently between Romania and Ukraine. Historically, the island belonged to Romania, but under Soviet influence, Romania ceded the island according to a secret protocol "signed in Moscow by Petru Groza and Vyacheslav Molotov in February 1948."<sup>7</sup> The protocol, never ratified by UN, formed part of the 1947 Peace Treaty signed by Romania and the Allied and Associated Powers that established the borders between Romania and USSR according to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Protocol from 1940. Immediately after taking possession of Snake Island, the Soviets built a military base to "monitor maritime Black Sea's space and the Balkan's airspace."<sup>8</sup> In 1967, Romania's communist regime began negotiations with the USSR regarding return of the island, which lasted until 1987. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine came into possession of the Island and inherited the territorial dispute with Romania, which then restarted negotiations that lasted until 2004. In 2004, Romania formally submitted the "Referral Application of the Hague's International Court of Justice."<sup>9</sup> The request's purpose was to establish the rights over continental plateau related to the Island and de Exclusive Economic Zone between Romania and Ukraine.

Snake Island does not appear very significant at first glance. It has only 17.000 square meters, no vegetation or water sources. There are currently "100 border guards"<sup>10</sup> living on the island with their families and technical staff. Starting with 2003, the National University of Odessa has had a permanent delegation with "students and scientists conducting ongoing



research regarding flora and fauna, as well as meteorology, geology, hydrobiology, and atmospheric chemistry.”<sup>11</sup> However, the Island's position, only 40 km from Romanian shores, has two larger points of significance: economic and strategic. From the economic point of view, it is related to

the continental maritime plateau, which, according to “the decision of the International Court of Justice No. 2009/9 from 3 February 2009”<sup>12</sup>, Romania has the right to “exploit 80 percent of the 100 billion cubic meters of gas and 15 million tons of crude oil in the disputed zone.”<sup>13</sup> However, “Russia already holds Crimea and the gas fields between there and Zmiinyi (Snake) Island.”<sup>14</sup>

The aggressive actions towards the Ukrainian vessels in the Black Sea and the Azov Sea could also be used against “the Romanian and Bulgarian offshore platforms in the Black Sea, given that following the illegal annexation of Crimea, Moscow unilaterally expanded its exclusive economic zone.”<sup>15</sup> The strategic standoff with Russia means that future economic activity in the area becomes highly unlikely in such an unstable security environment. From the strategic point of view, military analyst Cristian Negrea has suggested that “due to its position at the mouth of the Danube, the island has strategic value as an advanced military base for the state that controls the nearest shore.”<sup>16</sup> It has value for Ukraine as long it controls the Budzhak (Bugeac in Romanian) area and the Port of Odessa, and for Romania because it controls the mouths of the Danube and the maritime coast of the Black Sea to the south. Russia would be interested in seizing Snake Island simultaneously or immediately before occupying the Ukrainian coast, including Budzhak. The Washington, D.C.-based think tank Atlantic Council has also

noted in such a scenario, “the port of Odessa could be cut off; that would deny Ukraine almost all access to the sea”;<sup>17</sup> the Budzhak area would provide a direct connection to Transdniestria and access to the Danube Delta.

Russia would be expected to declare that Kyiv is a threat to Transdniestria to justify an offensive campaign in territory that it considers to be Russian. Besides supporting pro-Russian separatists in southern Moldova, Russia would then have access to the entire coastal area between Romania and Odessa. To strengthen its presence in the region, Russia then “may threaten both Romania and Ukraine with partition by backing the creation of a Budzhak Republic in southern Moldova to include Gagauzia in Moldova and parts of Odessa *oblast* in Ukraine.”<sup>18</sup> Romania would then be in direct contact with Russian-controlled territory.



**Figure 2: The Republic of Moldova, Moldovan Transdniestrian & Ukraine's Budzhak Region**



**Figure 3: Percentage of Russian language speakers in Ukraine**

Despite the fact that the Ukraine-Romania bilateral relationship has tremendous room for improvement, Romania should take the first step forward to improve the relationship. Ukraine's territorial integrity continues to be affected by the Russian military aggression in Donbas and the illegal annexation of Crimea. The beginning of a military cooperation between the two countries could send a message to Russia not to engage in future aggressive actions in the vicinity of Romania and Ukraine. A joint Romanian-Ukrainian effort to defend Snake Island, backed up by

NATO support, would have at least three effects: (1) Romania would send a clear message to Ukraine that it has no longer any territorial claim, (2) Romania's presence, as a NATO force, would hamper Russia's intention to carry out other aggressive actions in the area and (3) Romania's military actions, other than those in Afghanistan or the joint military exercises with US forces, would draw the Romanian population's attention to the Russian threat.

### **The Russian Threat**

*"The collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geo-political catastrophe of the century."*<sup>19</sup>  
*Vladimir Putin*

When Putin came into power, he began to build and consolidate a new type of authoritarian political system to revive Russia as a global and regional power as the Soviet Union once was to be a “challenger to the West’s dominance of international law and politics.”<sup>20</sup> The foreign policy goals are rooted in the old legacy of the Russian empire and “Putin’s narrative is shaped by, and shapes, a discourse about cultural and historical ties with Russian borderlands, as well as by the cultural and security vulnerabilities generated by the West’s treatment of Russia.”<sup>21</sup> The road toward democracy that began in 1991 took another path. Unfortunately, in its grand strategy, Russia's approach consists of an aggressive foreign policy that combines diplomatic actions with hybrid warfare, cyber actions, information operations, or laundering money.

After the incursion in 2008 in Georgia ended with “the de facto incorporation of two strategically important provinces (Abkhazia and South Ossetia),”<sup>22</sup> and “emboldened by the weak and noncommittal reaction of the international community,”<sup>23</sup> Russia put forward into motion the plan to stop NATO enlargement and regain its historic role as a regional power. The

mastermind behind the plan, Putin, created another zone of instability in 2014 when he annexed the Crimea Peninsula and provoked war in eastern Ukraine. Through concrete military actions, Russia created a buffer zone in the Black Sea region and a sophisticated A2/AD (anti-access/area denial) system.

The conflict in Ukraine in 2014 and the rupture in Russia's relationship with the West led to a rapid review of the essential documents in the field of Russia's security policies: “the Military Doctrine (2014), the National Security Strategy (2015), the Strategy on Scientific and Technological Development (2016), the Information Security Doctrine (2016), and the Concept of Foreign Policy (2016).”<sup>24</sup>

Russia's latest National Security Strategy provides a view of how Russia wants to achieve national interest related to national security and the threats to national security. According to Katri Pynnöniemi and her analysis on Russia's National Security Strategy from 2015, “in the paragraph that lists the long-term national security interests, strengthening of the country's defense is the first on the list, before any mention of economic development, raising living standards, and consolidation of Russia's status as a leading world power.”<sup>25</sup> In recent years, Russia invested time and resources to increase mobilization readiness, to modernize the Black Sea Fleet or other weapons systems. Such actions indicate a “systematic effort to improve Russia's military capability”<sup>26</sup> and its use as the primary means of pursuing national security interests.

The main threat defined in Russia's National Defense Strategy from 2015 is “the buildup of the military potential of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the endowment of it with global functions pursued in violation of the norms of international law, the galvanization of the bloc countries' military activity, the further expansion of the alliance, and the

location of its military infrastructure closer to Russian borders are creating a threat to national security.”<sup>27</sup> The document reasserts NATO and its allies as a threat to their national security and sustains the narrative of Western aggression toward Russia. Still, Russia, in its willingness to protect its national borders, disregarded the international laws when backed up the conflicts on Georgia, Eastern Ukraine, or seized half of the Ukrainian fleet during the actions in Crimea.

### **Romania’s Position**

*“Romania sees no immediate risks to national security related to Crimea crisis”<sup>28</sup> – President Traian Băsescu*

After transition away from communism in 1989, Romania went through a series of political, economic, military, and security transformations. It has opened its economy to the capitalist economic markets, changed foreign policy direction towards the West, and reshaped the national security system, especially for the restructuring, reorganization, and modernization of armed defense capabilities. Externally, the most important achievement in terms of strategic national projects has been NATO and EU accession. It is a good example in which the policies driven by national consensus have remained unchanged to achieve the two essential objectives. Internally, asynchronous policies have gradually degraded Romanian defense capabilities. Although a NATO member, the Romanian defense capabilities are not fully interoperable with allied members.

By joining NATO, Romania has strengthened its national security compared to the 1990s. But sharing the eastern border in the Black Sea and Western Balkans region, also “generates major challenges”<sup>29</sup> to its national security. Romania's policies usually focused on three directions: “the Central-European and, farther on, Western dimension (with a Danube basin

component), the Eastern dimension (including Black Sea regionalism), and the Balkan dimension.”<sup>30</sup>

Considering the three mentioned directions, Romania planned its national security system's architecture around the military defense component. The country made considerable efforts to prove its quality as a reliable partner. As a framework nation, it coordinates and leads the activities carried out by the three multinational commands established in Bucharest: “NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU),”<sup>31</sup> “Multi-National Division –South East (MND - SE),”<sup>32</sup> and “Multi-National Corps –South East (MNC - SE).”<sup>33</sup> The three commands are part of the NATO command-control architecture. The Aegis Ashore “missile defense system at the military base in Deveselu,”<sup>34</sup> strongly contested by the Russians, has been operational since 2016. The Mihail Kogălniceanu Airbase is used as a logistic node and support for the transit of US and NATO forces, and US Air Force uses the one at Câmpia Turzii for air surveillance missions with “MQ-9 Reaper drones.”<sup>35</sup> Another more consistent presence is the Polish armed forces company within the Multinational Brigade from Craiova. The US Army forces are a constant presence in Romania and according to former Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, “a new strategic decision was made by the US that will result in an increased military presence in NATO’s new front yard: The Black Sea.”<sup>36</sup> Up to this point, the US political decision indicates that the US Army's presence in the Black Sea area will be on a rotational basis. However, these actions pursued by Romania are not enough to deter Russian domination in the region and the aggressive policies pursued by Russia to change the Black Sea geopolitical environment.

## Chapter II - HOW ROMANIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY IS BUILT

### The Process Behind the National Defense Strategy

*“The national security policy cannot be the expression of a single person's will, although it is the result of a process that falls under the duties of the President of Romania”<sup>37</sup>*  
President Klaus Iohannis

The Romanian National Defense Strategy (NDS) “is a strategic-applicative instrument, which sets out guidelines, according to which national security system institutions will act in the upcoming period of time, 2020-2024.”<sup>38</sup> The following institutions in the document's elaboration and approval are the Presidential Administration, ministries within the Government with responsibilities in national security, and the Parliament.

Within the Supreme Council of National Defense, the National Defense Strategy establishes the priorities for national security. It is a process related to the Romanian Constitution. The country's president has among his main responsibilities foreign policy and defense policy; he is the commander of the armed forces and the head of the Supreme Council of National Defense. Despite Russia's sustained armed aggression in Crimea and Ukraine and hybrid war actions to gain dominance in the Black Sea, only in 2020 did Romania admit in its National Defense Strategy that “amid the strengthening of the offensive position and aggressiveness/assertiveness of the Russian Federation in recent years, and upgrading of the hybrid methods it uses is a major security concern at national level.”<sup>39</sup> The NDS is designed in the European-Atlantic context and aims to maintain a viable security system to deter external threats but the ambiguity of the language used shows Romania's unwillingness to take a clear stance towards Russia.

The primary role in the process of elaborating the NDS belongs to the Department of National Security, a “specialized structure within the Presidential Administration, destined to ensure the fulfillment by the President of Romania of the attributions conferred by the

Constitution in the fields of national defense and national security.”<sup>40</sup>The department is staffed with “dignitaries personnel, civilian advisers, experts, consultants, and specialized (military and non-military) personnel from ministries, and institutions with national security responsibilities.”<sup>41</sup>The Department provides decisional support and expertise to the President of Romania to elaborate the NDS, coordinates its implementation process, and evaluates results. It can also collaborate with international organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia, institutes, and experts from the country and abroad to develop the Strategy.

The next step is the debate within the Supreme Council of National Defense. According to the Constitution, the Council is an “autonomous administrative authority invested with the unitary organization and coordination of activities concerning the country's defense and national security.”<sup>42</sup>It is led by the President of Romania and is formed by the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Defense, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Economy, the Minister of Justice, the Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service, the Director of the Romanian Intelligence Service, the Chairman of the Joint Staff, the Presidential Adviser for National Security, and the Secretary of the National Supreme Council of National Defense (general rank).<sup>43</sup>The Council debates the Strategy and sends it to the Romanian Parliament for approval. Although it is a document in which the Presidential Administration sets out the directions for strengthening national security, Parliament maintains the final say.

## **Weaknesses and Vulnerabilities of the National Defense Strategy**

*“A nation is secure to the extent that it does not have to sacrifice its core values, if it wishes to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by victory in such a war”<sup>44</sup> - Walter Lippmann*

The main objectives of the Strategy are generating internal and external policies that lead to the achievement of national security objectives and implicitly of national interests; to inform partners and allies externally and the population internally about national interests, objectives, threats, risks and vulnerabilities to national security; and ways to follow to strengthen the overall security. The concept of security is built taking into consideration the domestic security environment and the external one. The NDS also expresses a trend used since 2005, namely, “three pillars of national security:”<sup>45</sup> the NATO membership, the EU membership, and the strategic partnership with the USA. Romania's current NDS addresses all elements of national power: political-diplomatic, military, informational, and economic to achieve the stated objectives. Although at first sight, the NDS seems relatively stable, it has several shortcomings.

*The first* is related to the principles underlying the Strategy. In Chapter II of the Strategy, point 2.1 states “Fundamental values and principles in defining national security interests and objectives,” but only names two principles: continuity and predictability.”<sup>46</sup> Both specifically explain how external actions should be supported but make no reference to the role of domestic formulation and implementation. A sound strategy should be built on more than two principles to counter threats related to national security in a dynamic geopolitical system.

*The second* shortcoming of the NDS is that it does not explicitly specify which pillars it is based on. Without making any explicit reference, the Strategy expresses a trend used in previous strategies; namely, three pillars can be inferred: the NATO membership, the EU membership, and the strategic partnership with the US. The dimensions of domestic and external security are

interconnected, but the three pillars presented only support the external dimension. Being described as a guarantee to national security the next question arises is whether the domestic dimension is necessary in the concept of national security?

*The third* shortcoming is the failure to establish the relationship between national interests, national objectives, actors involved, and necessary resources. According to Lucian Valeriu Scipanov, “the process of developing a national strategy can be based on the objective model: ends—ways—means”<sup>47</sup> and a strategic vision should dominate the narrative. The challenge of this is to set the proper objectives to achieve such a vision. Unfortunately, it is not easy to assess if the objectives are quantifiable or time-framed in the current strategy. Also, a trend from previous iterations can be observed: the purpose is suggested but not expressly specified, the ways of implementation are present, but no specific well-detailed tasks established, and the means of achievement, except for the military domain, are not identified. According to Malia DuMont, the lack of “measures of effectiveness”<sup>48</sup> impede the decision-makers to hold accountable the actors and agencies involved in achieving the Strategy's end state. The bottom line is that between the, ends-means-ways, there is no balance, and no measures of effectiveness are mentioned.

*The fourth* is that the language used is too ambiguous. The core message of the Strategy should have two types of audience: external and domestic. Externally, national and international experts have identified Russia as the main threat in the Black Sea region. This assessment results from the analysis of military and non-military actions carried out by Russia in Georgia, Ukraine, the Crimean Peninsula, or Moldova. Nevertheless, the Strategy stated that “amid the strengthening of the offensive position and aggressiveness / assertiveness of the Russian Federation in recent years and upgrading of the hybrid methods it uses is *a major security*

*concern* at national level.”<sup>49</sup> According to GEN (Ret) Virgil Bălăceanu, “Romania tends to hesitate to nominate the Russian Federation as a threat because, it is said, in this way, we would arouse Russia. The Russian Federation does not need such a thing to be aroused because it clearly follows its military and foreign policy path, regardless of whether we consider it a friend or an enemy.”<sup>50</sup> Domestically, the Strategy should also address the population. A document that is not concrete, concise, and easy to follow will not achieve its desired effects. For example, the terrorist threat is well understood because the fight against terrorism has taken place for twenty years and does not need any additional explanation. However, Russia's hybrid actions conducted in Ukraine and Crimea did not have a comprehensive public debate in Romania despite the fact these happened almost seven years ago. The character of such actions is hard to understand if the information is not transmitted in a proper format suited to the audience. Making aware the Romanian populace about the Russian threat is essential in achieving the Strategy's popular support.

*Fifth*, the NDS does not prioritize threats to national security, nor does it indicate which threats should be focused on by the authorities involved in ensuring national security. Threats to national security are seen as “those developments, those problems that can quickly generate national security crises, which in a few days or even hours endanger the territorial integrity, sovereignty, security of a large number of people.”<sup>51</sup> For example, Bessarabia was occupied in 1948 by the USSR in 48 hours, and the Russian Federation occupied the Crimean Peninsula in about 36 hours. The Strategy presents a wide range of threats, but there is no balance between “conventional and unconventional threats.”<sup>52</sup> Although Russia is the biggest threat to national security, the effort seems to be directed at asymmetric threats, such as terrorism. No terrorist

attacks have taken place in Romania, but it participates since 2002 in the military operations in Afghanistan.

*Sixth*, although they are not new, the current Strategy does not address concepts such as A2 / AD, nuclear proliferation, or space warfare. Numerous studies and reports present factual information about the A2 /AD concept and how Russia used it to dominate the Black Sea area, but Romania's NDS does not mention it. The US withdrew definitively from the INF Treaty in 2019 following Russia's non-compliance with the treaty's terms. A key treaty regulating the proliferation of ballistic weapons with nuclear capabilities can no longer prevent Russia from displaying its nuclear capabilities in the vicinity of NATO or EU borders. By militarizing the Crimean Peninsula and actions on space satellites, Russia is trying to dominate this component. At the moment, Romania's capabilities to counter such actions are non-existent.

*Seventh*, the dissensions within the EU and NATO are not taken into consideration by the Strategy as potential threats to the European security system. The British voted to exit from the European Union, but it is the consequence of EU's internal problems for which no satisfactory solutions have been found. In the case of NATO, security on the Alliance's eastern flank has a “tiered approach.”<sup>53</sup> In the Baltic region, NATO established an “Enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroups”<sup>54</sup> and established a “Tailored Forward Presence in the Black Sea region.”<sup>55</sup> Following the Wales summit in 2014, Alliance members agreed “to spend a minimum of 2% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP), to meeting their NATO Capability Targets and filling NATO's capability shortfalls.”<sup>56</sup> NATO's activity report for 2019 shows that apart from the USA, UK, Greece and Bulgaria, only the eastern states have dedicated this percentage. Poland states in its National Security Strategy from 2020: “Within the European Union, divergent approaches concerning its further development are emerging. There is also a noticeable

risk of undermining the coherence of the positions and actions of the member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union, as a result of increasing internal tensions and actions undertaken by external entities.”<sup>57</sup> Romania's NDS does not address to these dissensions, how it may affect the national security, or the two alliances' resistance.

*Eighth*, the NDS states that “the assessment on the Strategy's implementation degree is carried out annually or whenever the situation requires it and is based on the information collected during a monitoring process”<sup>58</sup> but does not indicate how to evaluate the presented objectives or impact criteria on national interests. The evaluation process should indeed be a balancing act between cost and benefits. If the evaluation is done too often, it is time, money, and human resources consuming and might disrupt security policies' implementation. If it is not done, especially when the environment is changing, the corrections might become inefficient. According to the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, “the best way to identify reliably when a review of national security policy is appropriate is to include ongoing monitoring in national security policy implementation.”<sup>59</sup> The Strategy does not mention who should conduct such a process and the difficulty lies in the relation between the state powers. The Strategy is a document related to the President's attributions but is approved by the Romanian Parliament. The responsibility for implementation lies with the executive branch (Government of Romania), but the control is the responsibility of Parliament. The question is, who should review, update or change the Strategy?

### **Chapter III – PROPOSED SOLUTIONS FOR AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY**

*“The basic principles of strategy are so simple that a child may understand them. But to determine their proper application to a given situation requires the hardest kind of work.”<sup>60</sup>Dwight D. Eisenhower*

Romania remains dedicated to the Euro-Atlantic values that underlie the two international bodies: NATO and the European Union. The two organizations' evolution shapes the Romanian National Defense System. In the current security environment, Romania must plan and organize its system in an allied context and build capabilities compatible with its allies. For integration into NATO and the EU, the two national projects achieved their goals in 2004 and 2007 because regardless of national political leadership, there was a national consensus. This moment requires the same national political leadership consensus to allow Romania to develop new security projects. The Black Sea has become an environment with the high volatility that may conduct to future conflicts. Russia will not stop its aggressive actions due to its way of achieving national interests.

The NDS is the primary tool to give birth to such projects. Unfortunately, the only documents deriving from the Strategy are the White Paper on Defense and the Military Strategy on Defense, both issued by the Ministry of National Defense and approved by the Supreme Council of National Defense. The armed defense is one of the most critical aspects of national security, but it is not the only dimension. Even though the Strategy has a long list of threats, such as cyber threats, it “does not address options for how Romania might respond to a significant cyber-attack.”<sup>61</sup> The document's primary purposes should focus on directing all actors' efforts in the national security system to achieve the desired effects.

For a start, it should clearly define the concept of security. The actors involved have different perceptions of understanding the concept, but a clear definition of it would reduce these differences. A very good example is provided in the Netherlands National Security Strategy which states that “national security is jeopardized if one or more critical interests of the Dutch state and/or society are threatened to such an extent that this results or could result in social disruption.”<sup>62</sup> To improve the efficiency of the National Defense Strategy, several recommendations could be implemented.

*Recommendation 1. Clarification of the concepts used in the field of national security.*

The experts in the national security field and civil society operate with conceptual confusions. The Romanian Constitution stipulates that the **National Defense Strategy's** approval must occur within six months from the new President's entry into office. However, the law of operation of the National Defense Council stipulates that it is responsible for issuing the **National Security Strategy**. Still, the concept of defense is part of the concept of national security. Therefore, national security is the big plan and national defense is a way to achieve objectives in support of national security interests. The document's drafting is subject to physical constraints (compliance with the deadlines imposed by Parliament) and conceptual (operation with two different concepts). The national defense strategy is a plan and a commitment, and the final authority in national security policy belongs to the executive branch. Since all implementation efforts belong to the Government, the President should be the final authority to approve the Strategy. In conclusion, it is necessary to harmonize the legislation in the field of national security and amend the Constitution to eliminate the divergences.

*Recommendation 2. Refine and rethink the list of national security interests, associate them with security pillars, and establish impact criteria.* The current Strategy presents fifteen

national security interests. A long list involves considerable effort and the division of resources into areas that are not so urgent. The Polish equivalent has only four interests, and six presented in the Russian, the Netherlands, or Lithuanian equivalents. A categorization of interests, according to their intensity or importance, can be beneficial. The use of terms such as “survival, vital, critical, major, serious, secondary, extremely important, important, less important, humanitarian, and peripheral”<sup>63</sup> can create a clearer picture of the directions to be followed and the effort to be invested. Once the most important national interests are identified, they should be grouped into security pillars. The pillars that address the external are not explicitly mentioned in the Strategy. Both areas should be addressed, domestic and external. After establishing the pillars, the objectives of high importance can also be established. To monitor the achievement of the objectives, and implicitly of the interests, a list of “impact criteria”<sup>64</sup> can be established. Such a list can generate decision points for concrete actions to limit or stop or limit the impact of the threats to national security.

*Recommendation 3. Narrowing down, refining, and prioritizing the list of threats, risks, and turning vulnerabilities into tasks.* The definition of threats and risks must be clear and understandable to all. According to Iulian Fota, “some countries prioritize their threat list and make it public.”<sup>65</sup> The focus should be on those threats that are most likely to directly affect national security and the risks with the most significant impact. It is clear that the military threat is Russia and should be at the top of the list. Romania's Strategy defines Russia only as a challenge. However, the militarization of Crimea, the ongoing efforts to modernize the Black Sea naval fleet, forcing the national airspace by Russian aircraft, or forcing “the clauses of the Montreux Convention (which prohibits submarines from passing through the Bosphorus Strait - the connector of the Black Sea with the Mediterranean Sea)”<sup>66</sup> should be used as arguments to

indicate Russia as a direct threat. Bringing into discussion threats such as terrorism is important but right now, they have no impact on national security. Since 2002, when Romania started to participate to US coalition missions or NATO missions against terrorism, no terrorist attack has occurred on the national territory. European strategies do not talk about their own vulnerabilities, as they take the form of tasks that lead to achieving the specified objectives. Vulnerabilities can be the subject of internal analyzes that can later materialize in tasks of a high degree of importance.

*Recommendation 4. The strategy must accelerate rebuilding the military capabilities and increase population's resilience.* Both concepts are connected with the armed defense dimension. At the moment, Romania has several ongoing military acquisition programs, programs under implementation, or research programs. These programs are dedicated to the land and air forces, but they are delayed, or the resource allocated for the research programs is insufficient. The naval component, the most critical in the Black Sea region, is not included in the acquisition program, although "Romanian officials are concerned about the security situation in the Black Sea."<sup>67</sup> According to the two National Supreme Council of National Defense (NSCND) decisions, from 2007 and 2016, the Multifunctional Corvette program for the naval forces is declared an essential program for Romania's security. Thirteen years past since the first NSCND decision was adopted and there is no contract signed for "the construction of four new corvettes."<sup>68</sup> Due to legal considerations, the project is blocked. The Strategy indicates the defense component's financing resource, but it should also indicate solutions for accelerating military capabilities suitable to respond in an armed type of conflict scenario in the Black Sea region.

Further, the debate on the concept of resilience should take into consideration the military component. Military leadership should advise the civilian leadership to include in the public

agenda the necessity for a broader involvement of the population in defending the national sovereignty and territorial integrity in case of an armed conflict. According to Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the “Parties...will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.”<sup>69</sup> This article could be invoked in the creation of the national legislation reintroducing the draft. The reintroduction of the draft in Romania would generate more human resources for the reserve component and increase the number of reservist units. The Baltic States, Poland, Austria, and Sweden use this method and have created a credible reserve component.

*Recommendation 5. Push for an Enhanced SmartPresence.* Russia succeeds in creating veritable A2/AD bubbles in the Baltic and the Black Sea region, which gives her the upper hand. To prevent this threat, NATO has adopted two different strategies: “enhanced forward presence in the Baltic”<sup>70</sup> region and “tailored forward presence in the Black Sea region.”<sup>71</sup> The main issue of this NATO Strategy is that it is an imbalanced one. It favors the Baltic region, where NATO has a “consistent robust, multinational, combat-ready forces”<sup>72</sup> and disadvantages the Black Sea region, where “only a Polish company is deployed with no other Allied troops.”<sup>73</sup> The Montreux Convention may limit Romania to convince the Allies for a more consistent naval presence, but it is not limited in the air and land options. In 2019, a window of opportunity was opened when the Secretary of Defense Mark Esper made public the intentions of relocating the US forces from Germany to the Black Sea region.

To be more successful in changing NATO's Strategy towards the eastern flank, Romania has to be more offensive and advocates for an enhanced “smart strategy for the Black Sea region.”<sup>74</sup> To start with, the NDS should be under revision and implement concepts like A2/AD. In the White Defense Paper issued by the Romanian Minister of Defense, a document that

conceptualizes the defense policies, the concept A2/AD is mentioned only twice. Having Poland National Security Strategy as an example, “building Anti-Access/Area Denial systems”<sup>75</sup> is a straightforward task for the Polish Armed Forces. Another argument to change NATO’s Strategy is that Romania should insist on an integrated Common Operational Picture (COP) of the entire eastern flank. Romania is the national framework for three multinational headquarters, and these should be integrated with the entire NATO’s command and control system. It will increase situational awareness of Russia’s actions, and it will also create the premises for more NATO Allies to prioritize capabilities, like the Global Hawk, for the Black Sea region. Directing the effort towards a fight in the A2/AD environment to discourage Russia is necessary not only for Romania, but for the entire eastern flank. A smart strategy’s narrative should focus on how to outsmart Russia’s capability and counter them before they are employed.

## Conclusion

*“Security is like oxygen—you tend not to notice it until you begin to lose it, but once that occurs there is nothing else that you will think about.”<sup>76</sup> - Dr. Joseph Nye*

The speed with which events unfold in the global environment shows that the 21<sup>st</sup> century is becoming more complex. It also presents “challenges and associated opportunities that are in a continuous condition of change or modification.”<sup>77</sup> Among these challenges, Romania has identified the need to institutionalize the process of creating national security strategies. The National Security Strategy must provide a clear vision of the national security interests pursued by the Romanian state.

Such interest must be as realistic as possible, with high chances of achievement, to be connected to the geopolitical reality, and have allocated resources. Since the founding of NATO, the issue of resources has been a constant concern among the Allies. After seven decades, the issue of resources within the Alliance is once again visible in the public eye. The 2014 Wales Summit ended with the Allies consent to dedicate 2% of their national GDP to increase the defense spending, but the 2019 annual report of the NATO Secretary-General shows that five years after the Wales Summit, only ten of the thirty member-states have dedicated 2% of their GDP. Romania must navigate this reality, think realistically, and spend smartly.

The reality of the Black Sea region is entirely different from the Baltic region. The lack of a dedicated Black Sea Strategy is the effect of the (1) different interests of the Black Sea states and (2) the lack of consensus NATO Allies on how to approach here the security situation. Romania can become the security pillar within the Black Sea area's security system and the EU's eastern flank if will act more offensively and assumes the leading role in the region. Up to this point, it was the most reliable and stable partner and involved in the Alliance commitments. Poland's success could be an example because it managed to impose itself as a critical ally in the

Baltic region. However, in order to succeed, practical actions need to be more consistent and faster.

Although Romania enjoys the status as an Alliance member, it must be more determined in building its defense capabilities to address the Russian threat. Membership should not be seen as a guarantee of national security; it should be seen as a responsibility for the common defense for which the North Atlantic Alliance was intended. To fulfill this responsibility, it needs credible defense capabilities. Romania should also reconsider its force structure. Before joining NATO in 2004, Romania assumed a force of about 70,000 service members, but the Romanian armed forces' evolution has not reached the Western NATO armed forces' level. With 2% of the GDP, a resized force would benefit more resources, would be better equipped and better trained. It would also divert resources in boosting and training the reserve component.

To boost its position as a reliable actor for peace and stability in the Black Sea region, Romania must continuously refine and reassess its National Security Strategy. These assessments should be presented to the Romanian population to increase the awareness of the Russian threat in the region. It will also give Romania a louder voice in the international arena to build a consensus among NATO allies to transform the tailored forward presence into an enhanced forward presence and increase the Black Sea security.

## **GLOSSARY**

A2/AD – anti access area denial

EU – European Union

GDP – Growth Domestic Product

INF Treaty – Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty

MNC – SE – Multi National Corps – South East

MND – SE – Multi National Division – South East

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NDS – National Defense Strategy

NSCND - National Supreme Council of National Defense

NFIU – NATO Force Integration Unit

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