

ROMANIA AS A NATO MEMBER: A RELIABLE ALLY
TO THE US IN AFGHANISTAN

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
General Studies

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Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
2010-01

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 11-06-2010		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) AUG 2009 – JUN 2010	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Romania as a NATO Member: A Reliable Ally to the US in Afghanistan				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Catalin I. Ticulescu				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT This thesis is about contemporary Romania and its adherence to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The object of research and analysis is to determine the extent to which Romania, as a NATO member, constitutes a reliable military ally for the United States (US) in Afghanistan. The treatment includes an examination of the origins, nature, and parameters of Romania's post-Cold War commitment to Euro-Atlantic security arrangements, especially after the advent of the "long war" against terrorism. Special attention is devoted to the varying impact of structures, sentiments, threats, interests, and allegiances on processes and outcomes. After discussing the concept of "reliability" in alliance and bilateral perspective, the thesis examines the application of this concept in the evolving security relationship between Romania and the US within the larger NATO context. The thesis concludes that a number of factors underpin reliability, ranging from altruism through shared threat perceptions to a community of geo-political interests. In politico-military perspective, it is these factors that account for Romania's persistence as a reliable ally for the US in Afghanistan.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Afganistan, NATO, US and Romania partnership, Kosovo, ISAF, Iraq, PfP					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			(U)	79	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

ROMANIA AS A NATO MEMBER: A RELIABLE ALLY TO THE US IN AFGHANISTAN, by LTC Catalin I. Ticulescu, 79 pages.

This thesis is about contemporary Romania and its adherence to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The object of research and analysis is to determine the extent to which Romania, as a NATO member, constitutes a reliable military ally for the United States (US) in Afghanistan. The treatment includes an examination of the origins, nature, and parameters of Romania's post-Cold War commitment to Euro-Atlantic security arrangements, especially after the advent of the "long war" against terrorism. Special attention is devoted to the varying impact of structures, sentiments, threats, interests, and allegiances on processes and outcomes. After discussing the concept of "reliability" in alliance and bilateral perspective, the thesis examines the application of this concept in the evolving security relationship between Romania and the US within the larger NATO context. The thesis concludes that a number of factors underpin reliability, ranging from altruism through shared threat perceptions to a community of geo-political interests. In politico-military perspective, it is these factors that account for Romania's persistence as a reliable ally for the US in Afghanistan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is my pleasure to acknowledge various kinds of assistance in the completion of this thesis. First, I would like to recognize the members of my thesis committee, Professor Bruce W. Menning, Mr. William L. Knight, and LTC Randy G. Masten. They were with me when the going was difficult, and their assistance was crucial for successful mission accomplishment. As befits the theme of this work, interoperability and mutual trust figured prominently in the collective effort. And, second, I would like to recognize the role of my wife, who was a mainstay in providing inspiration and support throughout. Without her, nothing would have been possible.

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ACRONYMS

CEEC	Central and East European Countries
EU	European Union
FSRY	Former Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
KFOR	Kosovo Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSF	National Salvation Front
PARP	Partnership Planning and Review Process
PfP	Partnership for Peace
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
RCP	Romanian Communist Party
RCS	Regional Command South
RGNA	Romanian Grand National Assembly
RGNA	Romanian Grand National Assembly
SDP	Romanian Grand National Assembly
SFOR	Stabilization Force
US	The United States of America

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

This thesis is about contemporary Romania and its adherence to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The object of research is to determine the extent to which Romania, as a NATO member, constitutes a reliable military ally for the United States (US) in Afghanistan. Throughout the post-Cold War era, Romania has remained an important and consistent security partner for the US. Although Romania gained admission to NATO only in 2004, the country was an early contributor of troops to Operation Enduring Freedom. As of mid-2010, despite the changing nature of other nations' views and commitments in the interim, Romanians continue to serve faithfully with US and other allies in Afghanistan. Indeed, Romania thus far remains steadfastly devoted to "seeing the long war through" to its conclusion, even at the expense of considerable national sacrifice. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the origins, nature, and parameters of this commitment, with an eye to assessing Romania's reliability as a US military ally. The discussion extends to the implications of cooperation and mutual support for both countries and their national security arrangements. Along the way, the intent is to uncover elements of pivotal significance in supporting productive multilateral and bilateral relations. In the end, if we understand these and other relationships, then we better understand ourselves, for an old Romanian proverb asserts, "Tell me who is your friend and I will tell you who you are."

Significance

This research topic retains significance for several reasons. First, the subject under discussion constitutes an examination of motivation, or causation, during a complex period of shifting domestic political settlements and international security situations and arrangements. During the post-Cold War era, Romania confronted choices, and for various reasons, the country chose to pursue a course that brought its security policies into alignment with those of NATO and the US. Second, following from the first, this study emphasizes the impact of changing sentiments, threats, interests, and allegiances on processes and outcomes. Influences and forces interacted with one another over time within both smaller and larger security environments, and this interaction profoundly affected the way Romania perceived its military place in Europe and the world. Third, the focus is on Romania, a country whose journey from the Warsaw Pact to the NATO Alliance has enjoyed far less scholarly attention than some of its counterparts. Romania is neither a big country, nor even a major European power. Nonetheless, by default the country's location has assured it an important role in European affairs, whether as earlier bulwark against Ottoman expansion or more-recent resistor against Soviet-inspired communist ideology. Finally, this thesis is about the factors that underpin the reliability and predictability of alliance and coalition partners. How these factors are understood and how they apply to specific situations will in large measure determine the role that Romania continues to play in both European and world affairs.

Research Questions

The primary goal of this study is to answer the research question: Does Romania, as a NATO member, constitute a reliable military ally for the US in Afghanistan?

To address the primary research question, it is necessary to answer several secondary research questions: (1) What were the conditions under which Romania adhered to NATO? (2) To what extent do the security interests of Romania and NATO continue to coincide? (3) To what extent do the security interests of NATO and the US coincide in Afghanistan? (4) How can “reliability” be defined and understood? and (5) Can military reliability be distinguished from politico-military reliability?

Background

The revolution of 22 December 1989 marked the dawn of a new era for modern Romanian security policy. Romania turned its back on the old Communist system and began the difficult pilgrimage to a new democratic and market-oriented order. During the early 1990s, a different political leadership struck out in new directions, with the intent to affirm Romania’s place in a democratic Europe and to seek membership in NATO.¹ There followed the drafting of a new constitution and, along with it, a new military strategy. The latter document, replacing the pre-1989 version (national military doctrine), held that Romania had no stated enemies, that it enjoyed peaceful relations with its neighbors, and that the emergence of any major short or medium term military threat was unlikely. The Military Strategy of Romania further held that national security rested on four main pillars: a credible defensive capability, the restructuring and modernization of the armed forces, the development of enhanced operational partnerships, and the gradual integration of the country’s military capability into the larger European security system. All four factors supported the Romanian national effort to become a member of the European democratic “family.” Finally, the new strategy afforded the armed forces with

the necessary guidance for combat training and force development to meet the challenges of an altered international environment.²

Even with new foundations, political and military integration into NATO was a long and arduous process. To meet NATO requirements, Romania had to transform its national security policy and force structure. Changes in policy required changes in orientation and outlook, and these changes had to correspond with prevailing NATO views, which were themselves changing. Although Warsaw Pact doctrine constituted a poor starting point, by 2004 Romania had met all the litmus tests for NATO accession. At the same time, military structural change was even more difficult, in part because of the social and economic context. For example, the Romanian armed forces at the beginning of the 1990s numbered about 300,000 personnel. NATO requirements for modernization and compatibility would reduce that figure to 90,000, of which about 15,000 would be civilians.³ In addition, requirements for interoperability mandated substantial changes in military organization and equipment. In turn, these changes imposed significant social and economic burdens on Romanian society. Because the present discussion focuses on more purely military issues, these concerns figure only as general background.

In brief historical perspective, Romania met the political requirements for NATO accession in the decade following the collapse of the Warsaw Pact. Immediately after the revolution of 1989, Romania affirmed its desire to join NATO. In February 1993, while visiting NATO headquarters, President Ion Iliescu restated Romania's desire for integration into Euro-Atlantic structures.⁴ On 26 January 1994, Romania was the first signatory of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) document.⁵ Inaugurated in Brussels at the January 1994 summit of the North Atlantic Council, PfP's aim was to enhance stability

and security throughout Europe by means of a partnership between would-be allies and NATO. The idea was to alter the European security architecture in ways that expanded and intensified political and military cooperation throughout the region.⁶ Romania formally endorsed its own individual PfP program in 1995.⁷ In June 1996, there followed an appeal from the Romanian parliament to NATO members for support in making alliance membership a reality for Bucharest. Thus, there was national consensus for this momentous undertaking.⁸

Such consensus reflected the fact that democratic ideals assumed special significance for Romania during the accession process. Indeed, during a press conference in May 2001, the Romanian Chief of the General Staff, General Mihail Popescu, asserted:

Joining NATO or not, is rather a political issue. From the military point of view, we are trying to get ready for membership. NATO embodies the democratic values Romania aspires to. We wish to join in NATO but not for fear that will be attacked in a more or less foreseeable future. This is not what pushes us towards NATO, but the wish of more than 85 percent of our population that aspires to the democratic values NATO defends . . . this is in fact the political option of this country and the military will follow.⁹

General Popescu's assertion indicated that Romania understood one of its key roles as a potential NATO member state: to embody the democratic values to which the majority of Romanians aspired as citizens of a free European state. Beginning in 2000, to reinforce the country's sense of commitment, the Romanian armed forces embarked on operations in Bosnia, and later in Afghanistan and Iraq. By the time of full accession to NATO on 1 January 2004, Romanian troops were regularly fulfilling missions under either NATO/UN mandate or as part of a US-led coalition.

Despite the impressive string of successes, Romania's road to NATO membership was not without disappointments. In April 1997, the Romanian Parliament unanimously

appealed to the then-16 NATO nations, asking for support at the coming Madrid summit for Romanian accession.¹⁰ However, only the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland received invitations.¹¹ Between 1997 and 2002, Romania redoubled its accession-oriented efforts. In a demonstration of political will during March 1999, Romania dispatched troops for operations in the Former Yugoslavia.¹² Finally, at the NATO summit in Prague on 11 November 2002, Romania and six other nations received a formal invitation to commence discussions over membership. Secretary General Lord George Robertson hailed the event, asserting, “This has been a hugely significant decision, for NATO, for these seven countries that we have just invited to start accession talks, and for the Euro-Atlantic Community.”¹³

For Romania, the decision vindicated a decade’s preparation. On 21 November 2002, Bucharest’s official response was:

The decision in Prague is also the result of Romania's consistent attitude in the past 10 years in supporting the NATO objectives, of the Alliance's operations for stabilizing the situation in the Balkans. Romania has also been a trustworthy ally in facing non-conventional threats, in fighting international terrorism. The decision today recognizes the efforts mounted by the Romanian Army to perfect itself and modernize itself and represents Romania, in pride and with courage, in the missions carried out by the military together with the Allies.¹⁴

In Euro-Atlantic context, Romanian accession represented an important milestone in the post-Cold War evolution of the NATO alliance. Both to accommodate and to shape an altered European security architecture, NATO had to contend with a small series of challenges. The first was to reinvent itself as a political alliance instead of a military alliance. The second was to redefine “out of area” considerations in a way that might accommodate security concerns in locales as close as the Former Yugoslavia and as remote as Afghanistan. The third was to develop new organizational and policy initiatives

to accommodate a humbled and recalcitrant Russia. The fourth was to understand newly emerging threats in ways that might permit the alliance to bring its politico-military weight to bear. The fifth was to restructure NATO command and force structures to optimize the capacity for contending with new threats and new security realities. And, finally, the sixth was to orchestrate the calculated integration of new NATO members.¹⁵

During the early 1990s, only a few American political figures devoted serious thought to NATO expansion. Luckily for Romania and the other candidate countries, among the few were President Bill Clinton and his National Security Advisor, Anthony Lake. Lake encouraged the President to make statements in support of NATO enlargement and then used presidential assertions as the basis for US National Security Council (NSC) planning and scheduling.¹⁶ As James M. Goldgeier has noted, “the President, once convinced that this policy was the right thing to do, led the alliance on this mission into the territory of the former Warsaw Pact and sought to make NATO’s traditional adversary part of the process through his personal relationship with Russian president Boris Yeltsin.”¹⁷ In October 1993, the US proposed the PfP program to facilitate development of a future relationship between NATO and its former adversaries from the Warsaw Pact.¹⁸

With special regard to Romania, during the same month of October 1993, the US Deputy Secretary of Defense, William J. Perry, visited Bucharest to present the US proposal for the Partnership for Peace.¹⁹ As stated above, Romania was the first post communist country to ratify adherence to the PfP program.

At the time, acceptance of such initiatives was less than a foregone conclusion. The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1991 had left western opinion divided on the issue

of whether NATO should anticipate enlargement.²⁰ In large part, it was consistent US support for the concept that heavily affected the outcome. Jeremy D. Rosner, a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and former Special Assistant (1993-94) to the President for legislative affairs on the NSC staff, would write in July 1996:

Like many post-Cold War foreign policy initiatives, NATO enlargement has scrambled traditional partisan and ideological blocs. Supporters of enlargement include balance-of-power conservatives apprehensive about rising Russian nationalism and intent on further embedding Germany in Europe's security edifice, idealists who seek to bolster democratic and economic reform in Central and Eastern Europe, and natophiles who see enlargement as a way to preserve the alliance and its unique military structure. The anti-enlargement faction is equally diverse. It embraces isolationists opposed to further security commitments, internationalists who see enlargement as antagonistic to Russia and unnecessary for the region's political and economic development and security, and hawks who worry that the additional states will weaken the alliance's defenses, strain the current members' shrinking military resources, and risk leaks of sensitive information.²¹

These remarks seem to indicate that Romania's fate as a potential NATO member would have been quite different without consistent US support.

Meanwhile, alliance and security considerations would have a profound impact on the Romanian armed forces. Even while still a PfP country, Romania demonstrated the will and desire to participate in either NATO or coalition operations in various theaters. Following their country's accession to NATO, Romanian military personnel deployed to Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, and Afghanistan. All these efforts demonstrated important continuities in Romanian security and foreign policy. In fact, not all NATO members saw their obligations in the same light.

Romania's dual sense of obligation and opportunity imposed rigorous requirements to reform and revamp the nation's armed forces. From 1990 to 1999, the

reform process in the Romanian Armed Forces unfolded over three stages.²² The first stage (1990-1993) focused on rapid structural adjustments in the size of the armed forces, the creation of a new legislative framework to facilitate organizational change within a democratic context, and the launching of new programs for training and re-equipping. Acceptance of Romania into the PfP program initiated the second reform stage (1994-1996) that was geared for response to the PfP's first cycle of evaluation and investigation, officially termed Cycle I of the Partnership Planning and Review Process (PARP).²³ During this stage, Romania identified and nominated capabilities for taking part in NATO/PfP missions. As part of Cycle I PARP, Romania agreed to meet 19 interoperability objectives, allowing its armed forces to operate in conjunction with other NATO members. The Sintra Reunion and the Madrid summit inaugurated the third stage of reform (1997-1999).²⁴ This stage corresponded with Cycle II PARP, according to which Romania assumed 59 new objectives inherent in the interoperability process. As a result of these endeavors, from 1994 to 2001 Romania participated in 155 NATO/PfP training exercises. In addition, Romania hosted a number of field training exercises on its national territory.²⁵ These ranged from Exercise RESCUE 95 in 1995 to Exercise CARPATHIANS EXPRESS in 2000.

With these exercise and training experiences as a point of departure, the Romanian armed forces began participating in missions abroad for the first time since World War II. The isolationist stance of the old communist regime had left no legacy for such engagement. In contrast, post- Cold War Romania became an active player on the world scene. Even as military and political transformation proceeded apace, the Romanian armed forces participated in international missions that afforded still more

experience. Between 1996 and 2000, broadened participation on the world stage embraced a series of important operations from UNAVEM III – ONU in Angola (1996) to OSCE GEORGIA (2000).²⁶

Slowly but surely the Romanian armed forces accumulated valuable mission experience. The knowledge gained fed back through an assimilation loop that reacquainted Romanian military personnel with the importance of democratic values. Experience also afforded valuable preparation for coming challenges. Many of these challenges were unanticipated, and came largely as a function of tests confronted after 2001 in such theaters of operations as Iraq and Afghanistan.

Romania's role in these and other locales demonstrated that there were distinctions to be made, especially with regard to US security initiatives. Along with US personnel, Romanian armed forces were present in three major theaters of operations: the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Not all the NATO members shared this commitment. At its upper political reaches, NATO remained divided in its support for intervention in the Balkans and Iraq. After 2001, even the NATO role in Afghanistan became a subject of contention. Nonetheless, the Romanian Government and its armed forces took their cues from US policies and actions. As a NATO ally of the US, Romania willingly and predictably participated in US-led coalition operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is the object of this thesis to examine the nature and content of Romanian steadfastness in an effort to explain past conduct and to forecast future potential. To examine this problem is to embrace a study of situations, motivations, interests, rationales, and relationships. At the same time, as implied in the above background information, an examination of the problem also involves a study of the importance of

mutual understanding and reciprocity. No matter how reliability is defined, in one way or another it remains a function of mutual trust and confidence in pursuit of common objectives.

Thesis: Issues and Structures

The working hypothesis for this thesis is that an analysis of reliability for Romania as a US military ally must focus on several variables, ranging from a confluence of state interests at higher levels to tactical competence and military interoperability at lower levels. The analytical evolution from hypothesis to thesis unfolds over five chapters. Chapter 1 frames the problem and provides background for understanding the circumstances and considerations that led to Romania's accession into NATO. In addition, chapter 1 acquaints the reader with a Romanian perspective on the evolving regional and global security environment. Chapter 1 also introduces the term "reliable." Chapter 2 is devoted to an overview of literature and method. A consideration of sources leads to several eye-opening conclusions, including the fact that before 2000 very few Romanian political specialists could satisfactorily explain why their country had not been accepted into NATO as early as 1999. Nor was there any clear sense of how US and European political figures saw and understood Romanian political signals.

The heart of the entire study lies in chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 examines in depth the issues broached in chapter 1 and subjects them to more detailed clarification and explanation. For example, chapter 3 describes and analyzes Romanian political and military reactions to the challenges that the Balkans and Iraq posed to NATO and the US. Indeed, an examination of these issues clearly reveals how Romanian political and military actions supported US interests. In reality, it would not be an overstatement to

assert that Romanian and US interests coincided. The thesis contends that both the Balkans and Iraq formed a logical prelude for Romanian entry into Afghanistan as a reliable US ally. Chapter 4 shifts the focus directly to Afghanistan. Special attention is devoted to the Romanian political and military will to prosecute the war against terrorism side by side with the US, first under coalition terms, then under ISAF. Chapter 4 drives home the primary thesis contention. This chapter walks the reader through the maze of Romanian political and military decisions that led to the country's commitment as a NATO ally to Afghanistan. Chapter 5 outlines the primary conclusions deriving from the study. They are presented in broad overview with a special focus on Romania-US relations. Ultimately, the thesis rests on the final chapter's ability to convince the reader that Romania is--and continue to be--a reliable NATO ally for the US in Afghanistan.

Limitations/Delimitations

At the beginning of research, the intent was to limit application of the term "reliable" to the military aspect Romania's relationship with the US. This thesis generally adheres to this narrow focus, although conventional wisdom holds that political content overshadows nearly every dimension of a state's bilateral and alliance relations. For example, Romania's reliability as a US and NATO ally logically derives from various political arrangements/commitments adhered to by the Romanian President and/or Parliament. Then too, after the twists and turns of the last several decades, NATO in the end is primarily a political alliance, and secondarily a military alliance. Within the larger context of foreign and alliance relations, politicians arrive at decisions, followed by military execution. The same logic applies to bilateral Romanian-US relations. Political leaders agree on specifics, followed by execution in cooperation between the armed

forces of the two states. Ultimately, political will and political decision-making undergird the participation of the Romanian armed forces in NATO and various missions abroad, whether coalition or NATO. As in the case with other democratic nations, the armed forces of Romania constitute an extension of the nation's political will. For purposes of this thesis, the question remains, then, of squaring this larger reality with a limited focus. The answer lies in choice of emphasis and reliance on informed context. For this thesis, the term "reliable" refers to the both the military and political and military aspects, but with emphasis on the former. At the same time, due care will be exercised in a treatment of the political aspect as a significant element conditioning military participation and cooperation. It should also be understood that "reliable" will not be applied in any other sense, except incidentally, with regard to other considerations associated with military cooperation, including the social, economic, interagency, and cultural aspects. Finally, for the most part this thesis focuses on Romania's role as a US ally in Afghanistan.

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²M. Dascalu, "Romania's Road to NATO: A Necessary Process that has Implied Doctrinal, Structural, and Social Issues" (Research Paper, Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico, VA, 2003), <http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA506985> (accessed 10 October 2009).

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⁷NATO, "Romania and NATO."

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Dascalu, "Romania's Road to NATO: A Necessary Process that has Implied Doctrinal, Structural, and Social Issues."

¹⁰NATO, "Romania and NATO."

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Prague Summit, 21-22 November 2002, <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2002/0211-prague/index.htm> (accessed 14 November 2009).

¹⁴AMOS News, Romanian Media Agency, "Declaration of Romanian Government in consequence invited to join NATO," 21 November 2002, http://2002.informatia.ro/Declaration_of_Romanian_Government_in_consequence_invited_to_join_NATO-7356 (accessed 18 November 2009).

¹⁵For an early overview see Bruce George and John Borowski, "Continental Drift," *European Security*, 4, no.1 (Spring 1995): 2-7.

¹⁶James M. Goldgeier, "NATO Expansion: The Anatomy of a Decision," *The Washington Quarterly* (Winter 1998), <http://www.twq.com/98winter/goldgeier> (accessed 11 November 2009).

¹⁷In 1998 when we wrote his research, James M. Goldgeier was Assistant Professor of Political Science at the "George Washington" University.

¹⁸Goldgeier.

¹⁹NATO, "Romania and NATO."

²⁰"Warsaw Pact," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warsaw_Pact (accessed 12 November 2009).

²¹Jeremy D. Rosner, "NATO Enlargement's American Hurdle: The Perils of Misjudging Our Political Will," *The Council on Foreign Affairs*, <http://www.foreign>

affairs.com/articles/52237/jeremy-d-rosner/nato-enlargements-american-hurdle-the-perils-of-misjudging-our-p (accessed 18 November 2009).

²²General Mihail Popescu, PhD, Chief of Romanian General Staff, *Impact Strategic Magazine* no.3/4 (2003), 8-9, http://cssas.unap.ro/ro/pdf_publicatii/is8-9.pdf, (accessed 21 November 2009).

²³NATO Handbook, <http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001> (accessed 23 November 2009).

²⁴NATO Secretary General, Statement to the Press, Spring meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers, Sintra, Portugal, 29-30 May 1997, <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/1997/970529/home.htm> (accessed 15 December 2009); NATO Summit, Madrid, Spain, 8-9 July 1997, <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/1997/970708/home.htm> (accessed 25 November 2009).

²⁵Merisanu.

²⁶Popescu, 10.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Qualitative Method

This thesis is an exercise in qualitative analysis. Neither the topic nor pertinent data readily lend themselves to empirical methods. In this research instance, there is no single “go to” reference that explains the rationale for Romanian engagement with NATO or within US-led alliance and coalition operations. Consequently, the emphasis falls on framing the problem, gathering relevant materials, subjecting them to critical review, and developing an analysis based on verifiable facts and logical inferences. This process sets the lengthy stage for drawing larger conclusions from the subject under scrutiny.¹

A study of Romanian national security policy over the last two decades reveals a remarkable degree of consistency and continuity. Since the fall of the old single-party regime there has been--for lack of better terminology--a national thirst for incorporation into a larger European and even global order that might constructively address the internal and external challenges of a different era. Euro-Atlantic political and military structures, with their emphasis on democracy and collective security, came to constitute a kind of “holy grail” in the Romanian quest for a different (and better) future. However, despite persistence of vision and intent, the course of events and commitments did not evolve in straight-line fashion. It required more than a decade for Romania to gain admission to NATO, and still another decade for Romania to demonstrate itself a steadfast ally in alliance and coalition operations.

How to make sense of pattern and anomaly in this story? For research purposes the answer lay in fashioning primary and secondary questions to focus exploration and

inquiry. An initial survey of materials suggested a working hypothesis that would remain subject to testing and modification as the analysis unfolded. At the outset, the writer was wedded to an approach that relied heavily on his own military-oriented experience and perspective. Subsequently, research and analysis uncovered other significant dimensions of the problem, foremost among them the political element. Initially, the writer also assumed that the narrative might focus single-mindedly on Romania. Subsequently, the conviction arose that allied reliability and trust were complementary factors along the same path to shared security arrangements and commitments.

These and related considerations underscored the importance of context. Romania and its various internal political and military discourses comprised major parts of the whole. But, so also were the evolving security environment and the vicissitudes of NATO, US, and European Union politics and policies. Then too, there was the issue of altered threat, particularly after the events of 11 September 2001. Various pieces of the puzzle often interlocked, but at times they also remained disjointed and adrift. A major research objective was to describe and highlight complexities and differences in perspective and policy.

Another important objective was to arrive at a reasonable understanding of the term “reliable.” A common dictionary-based definition holds that reliable means “suitable, or fit to be relied on; trustworthy.” The writer accepted this definition as a point of departure, but soon found it necessary to develop a more nuanced understanding. What little exists on the theory of allied relationships lends some depth and sophistication to the term, but the writer soon concluded that “reliable” might better be examined within the specific context of Romanian-US relations during the post Cold War era.² Four aspects

within the larger story gradually stood out: (1) the importance to trusting relationships of evolution over time; (2) the necessity to consider cooperation and consultation at various levels from tactical to grand strategic; (3) the significance of a range of influences and sentiments from commonly-held altruism to a community of raw self-interest; and (4) the transformational impact of mutually-held institutions and habits. Without accounting for these aspects, it would be impossible either to understand reliability or to take the measure of Romania as a reliable US military ally in Afghanistan.

Materials

Throughout the process of arriving at this preliminary conclusion, an important common research denominator was the critical assembly and reading of materials. The research relies on published NATO documents as well as Romanian official documents. Some of the more important documents include the NATO 2002 Summit declarations and materials outlining the official Romanian Government position at key junctures. Important Romanian documents include those related to NATO accession, the response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, and various materials on Romanian commitments to coalition operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The purpose for perusing these and related materials is to establish the degree to which Romania, as a NATO member, constitutes a reliable ally for the US in Afghanistan. There is very little direct written or oral commentary on this question. Two main factors probably explain this lacuna. First, in US perspective, it makes little or no political sense either to criticize or to emphasize the responses of various NATO allies to US policies and decisions. Of necessity, the US must exercise caution in addressing such sensitive issues as allied decisions to participate in varying degrees in the war against

terrorism. With reference to Afghanistan, where NATO states must commit troops to a situation in which the outcome remains uncertain, political statements must be carefully crafted and weighed. It would appear unseemly for one democratic country to judge the politics of other democratic countries. Second, in Romanian perspective, many of the same considerations govern. Just as in the US case, it would appear unseemly for Romania to judge other nations' decisions with regard to troop commitments for Afghanistan. This is all the more so in view of Romania's status as a newcomer to the democratic club. At the same time, there is the realization that assertions about commitments play to both external and internal audiences. During a time of economic crisis and financial austerity, it would not be politic to emphasize the fiscal and military sacrifices inherent in Romania's support for the US in Afghanistan. These and related factors make it difficult to find official US statements lauding Romania while criticizing others. Meanwhile, there is an understandable tendency for Romania to hide its own allied light under a bushel.

The research for this thesis comes entirely from unclassified sources. Pertinent Romanian military documents are available on the internet in various sites for the Romanian Ministry of Defense. These sites and other readily available publications afford articles and testimonies from Romanian military and civilian officials and political commentators. Their views are often those of the moment, with the result that they provide a snap-shot like perspective at key junctures during the development of Romanian policy and posture.

Among the more valuable sources is the *Strategic Impact Magazine*, located at <http://impactstrategic.unap.ro>, a Romanian Ministry of Defense site. This on-line

publication proved very important as a source for the views of prominent figures, including successive chiefs of the General Staff, on Romanian military transformation, NATO enlargement, and the situation in Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq or Afghanistan. High-ranking officers explained what NATO integration meant for the Romanian Army, and with what implications and results. Romanian military sites were also important sources of accurate data about international missions in which the Romanian armed forces figured, as well as the number of troops committed.³

In addition to Romanian sources, research benefited from diverse internet-based materials on the US and NATO and on the evolution of their postures and policies. Various interpretive summaries were useful and sometimes even surprising. For example, a key source for understanding US attitudes on NATO expansion general, and on Romania in particular, was James M. Goldgeier's article, "NATO Expansion: The Anatomy of a Decision."⁴ In 1997, during the NATO summit in Prague, Romania's bid for accession failed. In Romania, the commonly-held perception was that the US simply opposed Romania's admission to NATO. This understanding was only partially true. Missing from the Romanian domestic picture was a clear understanding of the rationale behind US opposition. At the time, the US view was that democracy in Romania remained fragile.⁵ In retrospect, this was clearly the case. Between 1990 and 1996, four different Romanian prime ministers led four different governments.⁶ None produced a fundamental reform of Romanian society and its institutions. Therefore, the Clinton administration offered less than full support for Romanian accession to NATO.

To Romania's credit, this reverse failed to shake the country's longer-term resolve, despite many doubters. Nor was Lord Robertson, the NATO Secretary General,

discouraged. At the alliance conference of 4 February 1997, he asserted, “Despite the long and difficult transition, Romania remains firmly on course on its internal democratization.” He also expressed confidence by stating that Romania “also remains on course in its relationship with its neighbors and Europe more generally.”⁷ As these remarks testified, NATO publications and articles on the alliance comprised another important source of research materials on Romanian military activities, whether in association with NATO or under other auspices in the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Special Perspectives

Several secondary accounts were important sources of intellectual insight for understanding Romania’s accession into NATO. The first was Dr. Frank Schimmelfenning’s analysis of NATO enlargement in geo-political perspective.⁸ A scholar at the Technische University in Darmstadt, Germany, Schimmelfenning examined the course of enlargement between 1997 and 2000.⁹ He developed a process-oriented thesis to explain how the decision to expand NATO came about: habitual action, normative action, communicative action, rhetorical action, and strategic action. After identifying these five processes/behaviors, he distilled observable implications from the brief history of the enlargement process. For Schimmelfenning, observable implications referred to a second set of factors, including the Central and East European Countries’ (CEEC) enlargement preferences, the NATO members’ enlargement preferences, the quality of the decision-making process within NATO and of the negotiating process between NATO and the CEECs, the conditions that produced the enlargement outcome, and the post enlargement process.

Schimmelfenning's emphasis on process has important implications for understanding Romania's accession to NATO. Each of the five factors played a role in determining outcomes. For example, habitual action is important because it recognizes the way that institutions influence actors before they even begin to think about a situation and their preferences. Normative action, meanwhile, explains how actors perceive and value a situation and the obligations flowing from it. Communicative action emphasizes the impact of institutional and social influences during argumentative behavior, while rhetorical action focuses on the way that choice of instruments conditions behavioral outputs. Rhetorical action assumes that social ideas and institutions continue to affect outcomes during the interaction process. In contrast to these discrete processes, Schimmelfenning holds that strategic action is a constant that accounts for the importance of material factors and instrumental behavior across the entire spectrum.

On the basis of Schimmelfennig's analysis, it is possible to highlight important consequences of a process-oriented approach to NATO enlargement, as well as the implications for Romania. First, the logic of habitual action meant, *inter alia*, that the CEEC's desire to become NATO members was an automatic, taken-for-granted response to the post Cold War situation. With some variation to account for political complexities, this was certainly the case for Romania. It was also the case that organizational rules and routines provided categories and models on which possible NATO allies, including Romania, might orient their conduct. At the same time, expectations for normative change also held important implications. CEEC states, including Romania, identified their futures with the Euro-Atlantic international community and its values and norms. Indeed, the negotiating process between NATO and Romania was characterized by what

Schimmelfenning would call with reference to the entire CEEC a “grand design” for integration, with an emphasis on democratic institutions and common security perspectives.

Communicative and rhetorical actions were important parts of the larger process. At least initially, not all prospective NATO members necessarily shared the alliance’s rules, norms, expectations, and goals. There followed a negotiating process between NATO and various CEEC states as they exchanged arguments and developed a consensus. Once that consensus was reached, there followed a period of rhetorical action in which potential member states justified their decisions to join NATO, usually with reference to pursuit of self interests. With its own set of peculiarities, Romania followed this pattern on the path to accession.

Finally, there is the concept of strategic action, based on rationalist bargaining theory. In Schimmelfenning’s view, not all potential NATO members might share a consensus over corresponding strategic and security interests. He thus recognizes the necessity for latitude as NATO aspirants bargain over the conditions and terms of enlargement. In the end, the case would be decided by the superior bargaining power of some actors. In the instance of Romania, it might be cogently argued that the US was able to exercise superior bargaining power, thus “sealing the bargain” for accession.

Schimmelfennig’s study sheds important light on processes and outcomes, and his work was a formative influence during the development of this thesis. His argument helps explain the delicacy of Romania’s position during the pilgrimage from PfP to full NATO membership. His work also holds significance for a study of similar problems as NATO seeks further expansion to the East.

Another important source of insight for the research underlying this thesis was a treatise by Stefan Merisanu, “Romania and Partnership for Peace – Scope, Objectives and Structures.”¹⁰ This work is important because it focuses on the capacity of the Romanian armed forces to adapt to new requirements in a professional manner. During participation in PfP, the Romanian military learned important lessons that later smoothed the way for full NATO membership. Romanian participation in PfP activities occurred at both the individual and the team level, and in both exercises and real missions. Romanian staff officers undertook thorough preparation. They studied official documents and requirements, so that the correct decisions might be implemented within the teams. It has become a source of national pride that Romania was the sole aspiring NATO member to participate in the whole NATO/PfP spectrum of exercises (land, air, naval, logistics, and civil protection). From the beginning, Romanian commanders understood the importance of theoretical and practical training for officers and non-commissioned officers as a prerequisite for successful participation in NATO/PfP exercises. It was no accident that a large number of Romanian military personnel received training abroad in conjunction with various NATO/PfP exercises and missions. Meanwhile, PfP activities prepared the Romanian armed forces for participation in Peace Support Operations (PSO); subsequently, the experience gained in PSO became part of base-line training for troops that would take part in coalition/NATO-led operations. In other words, success fed success.

At the same time, quality rather than quantity became an important predictor of future success. Numbers loomed large as Romania participated in more than 1,100 PfP activities between 1997 and 1998. But, Romania applied quality-efficiency criteria

instead of quantity criteria for performance evaluation. For example, the activities scheduled for 1999-2000 were scaled back and prioritized. The result was improved quality of military management within the Romanian armed forces. There followed in 2001 a studied focus on air defense forces (ADF), air space management (ASM), command, control and communications (C3), logistics (LOG), infrastructure (MIF), English language instruction (LNG), and training and doctrine (TRD). The overall intent was that all activities must concentrate on accomplishing the Partnership Goal (PG) and the Romanian Membership Action Plan II goal. Participants were screened according to prior experience, emphasizing subunits and personnel with experience from Peace Support Operations (PSO) or with experience within NATO command structures. Romania selected 336 activities (28 hosted locally), covering all 23 areas of cooperation for 2001, with 191 activities (57 percent) identified as priority areas. By the end of 2001, 90 percent of the priority areas activities had been successfully addressed. Activities from other domains enjoyed an 85 percent completion rate.¹¹

A third and final research insight came from a renewed understanding of the importance geo-politics in the development of US-Romanian relations, with important implications for Afghanistan. During the course of research the writer discovered the degree to which there was a convergence of interests with reference to the South-Eastern region. Romania wants to promote its economical, political and military agenda in the Black Sea Area, and, by doing so, increase security and cooperation in the region. Romania plans to achieve its goals by taking into consideration major roles played by the other countries in the region, especially Turkey and Russia. At the same time, there must be recognition of important roles for Ukraine, Bulgaria, and Georgia. Meanwhile, the US

also has an interest in maintaining a legitimate presence in the Black Sea Area. By extension, the US focus on the region is explained in no small part by its energy security interest in the Caspian region. For its part, Russia wants to assume the role of the EU's most important gas and oil provider. Meanwhile, there are Turkish apprehensions over US policies in Iraq, which might possibly support Kurdish interests at the expense Turkey security.¹² In this context, Romania and Bulgaria have become key players in maintaining stability in the Black Sea Area. The US now promises to open military bases in Romania, while Romania in a kind of quid-pro-quo has fully supported US policies in both Iraq and Afghanistan.¹³ It is in the interests of both Romania and the US to seek mutual support and accommodation. Thus, Romania has become a more important player in the Black Sea Region, thanks to US presence and interests. Meanwhile, the US has enjoyed an important ally for its cause in Iraq and Afghanistan.

¹See, Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 3-17, 34-47, 139-153, 168-188.

²For an overview, see ABCA Coalition Operations Handbook (Washington, D.C., 2008), IX-XIII.

³For example, www.mapn.ro.

⁴Bogdan Chirieac said in "Tell Us The Truth" article in Romanian independent Adevarul (7/1), "Since it announced its clear-cut position against Romania, the United States has not managed to come up with even a single valid argument to justify why our country was excluded from the NATO competition. Instead, the Romanians will have to be content with President Clinton's four-hour visit to Bucharest on July 11. . . . Our disappointment is big because the Americans were most loved and awaited people in Romania this century. It is terribly painful when you're betrayed by those you love most. . . . Clinton should tell the truth, even if it were to sound like this: 'Romanians, America did not and does not want you. Look for your future elsewhere!' If a fixed date is not set and Romania is not named for (NATO) integration at Madrid, waving about the hoax of the second wave is an undeserved mockery for a nation which has paid in blood its breakaway from communism"; see Cornel Nistorescu, "Clinton Visit: Smart Move In

Political Chess,” *Evenimentul Zilei*, 1 July 1997, http://www.fas.org/man/nato/news/1997/97070701_rmr.htm (accessed 16 November 2009).

⁵In his front-page editorial article, “Clinton Visit: Smart Move In Political Chess,” director Cornel Nistorescu of mass-circulation Romanian news paper *Evenimentul Zilei* (7/1) cautioned against viewing Clinton's visit as “a kind of compensation for failing to accede in the first group and a kind of promise for the second (group). . . . Clinton's visit is the result of a serious assessment made by the White House and, therefore, a smart move in a game of political chess. . . . A visit by Bill Clinton to Romania is meant to be a gesture of support for the recent Romanian course and a kind of moral check for the current government. The American president's visit is also meant to be a positive signal sent to the Romanians at a time of disappointment and a gesture that would tone down a possible anti-American reaction fueled by nationalists. . . . From all these (elements), I would stress first of all the fear and a certain concern about the fragile situation in Romania. It would be a harmful illusion to feel, like some do, that the game was won once and for all and that, from now on, only the speed with which we advance towards true democracy and market economy matters.”

⁶Primi ministry in istorie, http://www.gov.ro/prim-ministri-in-istorie__c3611p1.html (accessed 1 December 2009).

⁷NATO Secretary General's Council Welcoming Remarks for Romanian President Constantinescu, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1997/s970204a.htm> (accessed 15 March 2010).

⁸Frank Schimmelfennig, “NATO's Enlargement to the East: An Analysis of Collective Decision-making,” EAPC-NATO Individual Fellowship Report 1998-2000, <http://www.ifs.tu-darmstadt.de/pg/regorgs/regorgh.htm> (accessed 15 March 2010).

⁹<http://www.ifs.tu-darmstadt.de/pg/regorgs/regorgh.ht> (accessed 15 March 2010).

¹⁰Merisanu.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ariel Cohen, Ph.D. and Conway Irwin, “U.S. Strategy in Black Sea Area,” The Heritage Foundation, 13 December 2006, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2006/12/US-Strategy-in-the-Black-Sea-Region> (accessed 15 December 2009).

¹³Missile Defence Advocacy Alliance, “Romania Defends Role in U.S. Missile Shield,” <http://missiledefense.wordpress.com/2010/04/05/romania-defends-role-in-u-s-missile-shield/> (accessed 18 December 2009).

CHAPTER 3

THE ROOTS OF CONVERGENCE

Pre-1989 Background

To understand the evolution of Romanian security policy over the 1990s and early 2000s, it is necessary to discuss immediate precedent. During the time of Romania's membership in the Soviet-dominated Warsaw Pact, Bucharest initially adhered to the broad outlines of Soviet military doctrine. For Moscow and its military, doctrine was something more than an enunciation of military "best practices" as distilled from combat experience and conditioned by outlook, organization, and hardware. Rather, in Soviet view military doctrine constituted an assertion of a state's security policy and posture. In addition, military doctrine always had two primary components, political and military-technical. In accordance with changing situations and circumstances, the former might undergo rapid evolution. Because of structural constraints, the military-technical component might change only slowly, in an evolutionary fashion. Within the Warsaw Pact, this understanding of military doctrine afforded constituent militaries a common lexicon, and--up to a point--a common perspective on the external security environment.

From 1968, after the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia, Romania increasingly exercised latitude in the way that it understood and applied the terms of Soviet-inspired military doctrine. For Nicolae Ceausescu, the Romanian Communist head of state at the time, an important lesson from Czechoslovakia was the understanding that no member of the Warsaw Pact might view its national integrity and sovereignty proof against Soviet invasion.¹ Ceausescu felt something had to be done to protect Romania

and its interests from possible Soviet depredations. Therefore, he launched a series of military and economic measures to secure Romanian sovereignty.

A new Romanian military doctrine gradually emerged, and it constituted a direct response to lessons learned from Czechoslovakian failure to resist Soviet incursion. The new doctrine was called “War of the Entire People.”² In 1972, the Romanian Grand National Assembly (RGNA) approved the doctrinal concept. It stated that Romania would declare war only to defend itself or a Warsaw Pact ally against external aggression. The new doctrine further stipulated that no foreign troops might enter the country without RGNA approval. A correlative declaration held that only the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) might issue orders to the Romanian armed forces. These provisions aimed at preventing the Soviet Union from disrupting national resistance to an invasion of Romania. They also precluded justification for a Soviet response to seemingly legitimate appeals for intervention or “fraternal assistance” from a compliant faction of the RCP.³

Post-1989: Evolving Internal Circumstances

During the period immediately following the events of December 1989, several important circumstances dominated transition to an uncertain future. The first was political dislocation. Romania had to transform its political system from a highly centralized model dominated by a single party to a more diffuse democratic model with multiple parties. In practical terms, such a transformation required rewriting the constitution to provide the foundations of legitimacy for a newborn democracy.

In practical terms, transformation also required an agent to orchestrate and oversee change. During the early 1990s, the only political entity capable of national-level

leadership was the National Salvation Front (NSF), which later evolved into the Social Democratic Party (SDP). With the collapse of the old regime and the RCP, the NSF assumed formal governmental control and initiated the first shaky steps to a new democratic order. Opposition to the NSF came from two reconstituted groupings, the old Romanian Peasant Party and the Liberal Party, both of which traced historical antecedents to the closing days of World War II.⁴ Although these two parties were fervently anti-Communist, the NSF gained greater popular support. Thus it was that the NSF drafted a new constitution, approved by a national referendum on 8 December 1991. This constitution established the principles for a democratic republic and ushered in a period of political stability.⁵

Meanwhile, the economic impact of the Romanian Revolution held unexpected challenges with long-term implications. Indeed, the transition from a centralized command-style economy to a market-oriented economy is far easier in theory than in practice. In November 1992, the NSF introduced fundamental economic reforms, including liberalization of controls, as recommended by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.⁶ The immediate result was high unemployment and increased inflation. Suddenly, Romanians realized some of the limitations inherent in a market-oriented democracy: it does not assure everyone a place of employment, nor does it assure a monthly salary from the state. Suddenly, many Romanians began asking themselves: “what is better, to have money but nothing to buy or to have everything but no money to buy it?” As was often the case after the collapse of the old socialist order in other Warsaw Pact countries, anything related to the old regime, whether good or bad, was denied or destroyed. For example, communist irrigation installations associated with

RCP-mandated Production Agricultural Farms were destroyed. As a result, Romanian irrigated fields declined from 3.2 million hectares in 1990 to 600,000 in 1996.⁷ To this day, Romanian agriculture has not recovered from this misguided abolition of the old irrigation system.

Social dislocation went hand-in-hand with economic dislocation. Again, as was the case in other former Warsaw Pact countries, the early 1990s constituted a period of gradual, but ambiguous transition, featuring a struggle between old communist ways and emerging democratic ways. Over nearly half a century, the old regime had come to wield a strong influence over Romanian life and culture. Despite the above-mentioned sentiment for negation, old influences still remained strong at the beginning of 1990s. Romanians had lived so long under the old system that it had affected their beliefs in persistent and unexpected ways. Worse, the pilgrimage to democracy did not occur in a vacuum. There was a nativist drive to rediscover and recover democratic values from the pre-1939 era, and there were external requirements for integration into European structures. In addition to purely political considerations, these latter requirements levied a heavy economic burden.⁸

Then, too, there was the military dimension of European integration. As noted in chapter 1, Romania had to redefine its military doctrine and structure in order to qualify for eventual membership in NATO. Doctrinal changes were difficult, but not insurmountable. At the beginning of the 1990s, Romania had no alliance affiliations, with the result that it had to fashion a bridge between what had been (the Warsaw Pact) and what might be (NATO). To its credit, Romania constructed this bridge, and it became part of the road to NATO. Structural transition was more complex because social and

economic concerns became important stumbling blocks. For example, a reduction in strength of the armed forces from 300,000 to 90,000 was accompanied by other requirements for interoperability and modernization. These requirements involved expenditures for systems and equipment, along with the assumption of added economic burden (even with external assistance).

Both before and after NATO acceptance, the social implications of military integration assumed greater significance. Perhaps the most immediate impact of reorganization, a reduction in military personnel, altered the image of the Romanian armed forces in civilian perspective. Suddenly military careers were seen as insecure. A direct consequence was that the motivation of young people to join the military decreased significantly. There was a concomitant decline in the prestige of the military. As military engagement with the new order produced missions and casualties abroad, the Romanian armed forces struggled to maintain the same kind of popular support they had enjoyed before the revolution of 1989.

Foreign military commitments were something new for most Romanians. Beginning in 1995, Romanian military detachments initiated their first deployments since World War II outside Romanian national boundaries. Under UN mandate between 1995 and 1999, Romania dispatched 4,530 military personnel to serve in Angola. The primary Romanian mission focused on peacekeeping in southwestern and northeastern areas of Angola, including humanitarian assistance and direct support for non-governmental organizations. It was a landmark experience.⁹ It was also an opportunity for the Romanian population to demonstrate that their country took its role seriously in supporting the overall global effort for stability in areas of persistent conflict.

Commitments to the UN were only part of the larger picture. Once NATO membership became a reality, the Romanian armed forces had to consider the strategic and tactical implications of assimilation into the alliance. Strategic considerations involved longer-term concerns about the availability of forces for service abroad under NATO and UN auspices. Such service required new laws, structures, equipment, and procedures. Tactical considerations involved shorter-term concerns over more immediate force requirements to discharge on-going NATO/EU/coalition missions in current theaters of military operations.¹⁰

Changing External Circumstances

The beginning of the 1990s marked the onset of an altered era in global affairs. With the fall of the Berlin wall, the US was now the sole surviving military and economic superpower.¹¹ The collapse of the Soviet Union meant the collapse of the old bi-polar order.¹² At the same time, globalization was proceeding apace, in no small part driven by advances in electronics and communications. The World Wide Web appeared in 1992, facilitating on a global scale exchanges of information, commerce, and communications.¹³ Although not readily apparent at the time, the same web would also facilitate attacks on the US and other countries.

Meanwhile, the nations of Eastern Europe confronted some of the same challenges as the more established democracies, but with important twists. The Warsaw Pact was gone, and former socialist countries experienced the euphoric taste of newly-acquired freedom. However, euphoria was short-lived, in part because the future remained uncertain, and in part because old and unresolved issues resurfaced. Hungary raised questions about former territorial claims in Transylvania.¹⁴ At the same time,

Ukrainian independence implied the possibility of old claims against territory in Bessarabia and Bukovina.¹⁵ Poland experienced its first democratic elections since the period immediately after World War II.¹⁶ Suddenly, the Balkans re-emerged as an important source of instability. In 1991, the former Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia (FSRY) teetered on the verge of disintegration, the beginning of a decade-long agony that would produce what in 2010 constitutes Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Serbia, and Kosovo.¹⁷

By the mid-1990s, Romania was surrounded by uncertainty. To the southeast, the former Yugoslavia was in an advanced state of disintegration, thanks to internal ethnic and cultural differences. To the northwest, Hungary appeared to encourage Hungarian minorities in Transylvania to take the Yugoslav path to devolution. To the east, Ukraine staked claims to a proposed oil field that lay in what had been traditionally considered Romanian territorial waters on the shores of the Black Sea. To the northeast, the Republic of Moldova, at one time Romanian Moldavia, fought against breakaway forces in Transnistria. Worse over the long term, Romanian diplomatic and economic relations with Russia left a great deal to be desired.¹⁸ These and related issues led Bucharest to conclude that the US, NATO, and the European Union were the only suitable allies for Romania.

NATO

The rapid disintegration of the Warsaw Pact surprised NATO as much as the rest of the world. Originally envisioned before 1949 as a political association, NATO rapidly assumed the nature of a hard military alliance. The primary potential foe was the Soviet Union.¹⁹ During the Cold War, NATO, with consistent US and Western European

participation, successfully maintained the European military balance. After the fall of Soviet Union, however, NATO struggled to find a new role and mission.

At the beginning of 1990s, many questions required answers from political leaders. Once there was no hostile power against which to balance, questions arose, like what is NATO and who is the enemy, what is the future of NATO, and how important is the organization for Europe? Possible answers to these and related questions split political leaders into different camps. However, armed with a combination of American vision and renewed European will, NATO forged an altered identity to contend with a less predictable future.

One of the more significant problems along the road to a redefined and revitalized identity was to restate NATO's mission and priorities. These two considerations, in turn, at least implicitly raised the issue of new members. Between 1991 and 2001 NATO accepted new members, but the process unfolded slowly, perhaps because of the absence of a truly unifying vision for the future of the organization. The terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 endowed NATO with a clear-cut sense of objective: the war against terrorism. NATO might now transform itself to wage a different kind of war, far removed in practice from potential confrontation with Soviet hordes across the northern European plain. Under terms of an altered security environment, NATO's collective understanding was that terrorism threatened not only the US, but everyone. Therefore, NATO began in earnest a genuine transformation of its military forces and doctrines, informed by an internal political dialogue and shaped by the necessity to contend with military and industrial transformation.²⁰

Romania and the Balkans

Geographically Romania is part of the Balkans. Before the seismic shocks of the early 1990s, Romania had enjoyed cordial relations with the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia (FSRY). Even before the creation of modern Yugoslavia, there was a history of good relations between Romania and Serbia, a major constituent part of FSRY.

Therefore, after the end of the Cold War, the disintegration of Yugoslavia confronted Romania with a difficult dilemma. On the one hand, there was the legacy of traditional friendship with both Yugoslavia and Serbia; on the other hand, there was a growing NATO/US involvement in FSRY and, subsequently, requests for support. At the outset of conflict in FSRY, Romania harbored pretensions to membership in NATO and later on, perhaps, in the European Union. Legacy lobbied for one approach to the FSRY problem, while promise for the future lobbied for another. What was the solution?

There was no easy answer to this question. Romanian officers who lived through this period remember intense discussions over the direction of their country's policy. In the end, Romania turned its back on legacy. There is a pointed statement on the web page of Romania's Permanent Delegation to NATO:

The involvement of the Alliance in the Balkans is part of the International Community's efforts aimed to ensure the stability and the security of the region. It has two dimensions: first of all, a political dimension, reflecting the Allies' support for the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of all the countries in the Balkans, as well as for the transformation of these countries from security consumers to security providers. The second dimension of NATO's involvement in the Balkans is an operational one, through the missions and operations carried out by the Alliance in this region.²¹

The shift to this tack was difficult for Romania. Initially, neutrality seemed more viable. However, UN Resolution 775 blocked Romania's trade with Serbia.²² There was also an on-going requirement for Romania to coordinate its decisions and actions with the

US, NATO, and Western European countries. The economic impact was significant, because cancellation of Danube River commerce partially severed Romanian trade with Europe. However, when confronted with a Hobson's choice, Romania elected to retain positive relations with NATO and the EU. Isolation from Europe was not a viable political or economic option, even at the expense of short-term sacrifice. With long-term European relations in play, the Romanian Parliament adopted a series of measures to support US/NATO forces in their effort to stabilize the region. These measures allowed US/UN/NATO forces to traverse Romanian territory on the way to deployments in former Yugoslavia. For example, on 9 December 1999, the Romanian Parliament adopted Decision no. 53, granting permission for KFOR-destined US military personnel and equipment to travel by train through Romania to Kosovo.²³

As the situation in former Yugoslavia evolved, Bucharest came to understand that it was wiser to participate in the stabilization process than to play the role of bystander. Therefore, the Romanian Parliament approved participation of the Romanian Army in the SFOR mission. On 23 June 1999, Decision no. 28 granted permission for the 26th Romanian Infantry Battalion to participate as part of SFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁴ Active Romanian military participation in former Yugoslavia thus began in 1999 and continues even in 2010, with Romanian personnel under NATO and EUFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina and under NATO/KFOR in Kosovo. For the first time in Romanian history, the events of 1999 marked Romanian determination to put troop commitments in support of US policies and military operations, albeit within larger alliance and coalition contexts.

The Problem of Iraq

Yugoslavia was an important milestone in the process that gradually transformed Romania from a security consumer to a security provider. The events of 11 September 2001 constituted a psychological watershed, but it was only in their aftermath that Romania deepened its security cooperation with the US by joining coalition forces in the war against Iraq. Romania was one among other 48 countries that understood the necessity for changing the dictatorial regime in Iraq.²⁵ Few would argue that politically-motivated self-interest was a stake, but there was also an element of altruism in Romania's decision to support the US. On 17 March 2003, the Romanian Prime Minister, Adrian Nastase, asserted, "Romania has interests and responsibilities in Iraq." He pointedly added, "We intend to bring our contribution to providing humanitarian assistance and to the reconstruction process in this country, including the reconstruction of the Iraqi society, economy, and democracy."²⁶

As had been the case with former Yugoslavia, the Romanian decision to intervene in Iraq was far from simple. Neither NATO as an alliance, nor many European countries supported the US-instigated war in Iraq. Romania was caught between US and mainline European camps. France, Germany, and Russia strongly opposed the war in Iraq.²⁷ In contrast, Romania would offer both political and military support to the US. The decision to support contradicted the main European players, and therefore exposed to some risk Romania's goal for membership in the European Union. Nevertheless, after a good deal of internal soul-searching, Romanian politicians garnered sufficient domestic strength to support the US in Iraq.

Consequently, in March 2003 Romania committed 730 troops to the US-led coalition for operations in Iraq. Both the Romanian President, Ion Iliescu, and Prime Minister Nastase publically supported the US effort to restore democracy in Iraq. Three years later, in September 2006, the Romanian President Traian Basescu stated:

Our policy toward the United States remains unchanged. We will continually consolidate our strategic partnership with the United States. Inside the European Union, we will behave like a very good European--a country which by tradition is European cannot militate against the good of Europe. We will support the necessity of a partnership between the European Union and the United States. Europe needs a special relationship with the United States, and the United States equally needs such a partnership with Europe.²⁸

Thus, Romania would have its cake and eat it too. That is, Bucharest would actively seek a strategic partnership with the US, while simultaneously pursuing constructive relations with the European Union and its constituent states. Although there was some risk of alienating European sentiment, history would suggest that rifts in modern US-European relations tend to heal quickly. Therefore, the risk might be acceptable.

Meanwhile, the Romanian armed forces maintained a presence in Iraq until end of July 2009. During six years' participation in the coalition cause, more than 8,400 Romanian soldiers deployed to Iraq.²⁹ For Romania, the fiscal cost of this commitment to the end of 2008 entailed the approximate equivalent of 111.5 million US dollars.³⁰ Although these numbers may not seem large on overall context, the troop presence represented an important Romanian sacrifice to the coalition cause. This presence also lent an important element of continuity to Romanian support for the US. To be explicit, steadfast political and military support sent a clear signal that Romania wanted a special relationship with the US.

Pursuit of the coalition cause in Afghanistan would extend and deepen the relationship. However, as will be seen, the relationship will bring both benefit and additional sacrifice.

¹Nicolae Ceaușescu (26 January 1918–25 December 1989) was a Romanian politician who was the Secretary General of the Romanian Communist Party from 1965 to 1989, President of the Council of State from 1967, and President of Romania from 1974 to 1989. His rule was marked in the first decade by an open policy towards Western Europe and the United States, which deviated from that of the other Warsaw Pact states during the Cold War. He continued a trend first established by his predecessor, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, who had tactfully coaxed the Soviet Union into withdrawing troops from Romania in 1958. Ceaușescu's second decade was characterized by an increasingly erratic personality cult, nationalism, and deterioration in foreign relations with the Western powers as well as the Soviet Union. Ceaușescu's government was overthrown in a December 1989 military coup, and he and his wife were executed following a televised two-hour session by a kangaroo court, http://en.wikipedia.org/wik/Nicolae_Ceaușescu, (accessed 26 November 2009).

² “Romania-military doctrine and strategy,” http://www.mongabay.com/history/romania/romania-military_doctrine_and_strategy.html (accessed 26 November 2009).

³Ibid.

⁴Britannica, “Collapse of communism,” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/508461/Romania/42882/Collapse-of-communism> (accessed 22 December 2009).

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷one hectare equals 2.471 acres, http://geografie.ubbcluj.ro/cgr/V4108/Pompei%20Cocean_en.pdf (accessed 22 December 2009).

⁸Thomas Carothers, *Romania: The Political Background*, <http://www.idea.int/publications/country/upload/Romania,%20The%20Political%20Background.pdf> (accessed 11 December 2009).

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¹⁷Yugoslavia, <http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yugoslavia> (accessed 2 December 2009).

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¹⁹“NATO: History of NATO: Information about NATO,” http://members.tripod.com/more_tra/1e_nato_txt.htm (accessed 8 January 2010).

²⁰Yves Boyer, *The Consequences of U.S. and NATO Transformation for the European Union: A European View*, 76-79, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=47082> (accessed 12 January 2010).

²¹Romania’s Permanent Delegation to NATO, <http://www.nato.mae.ro/index.php?lang=en&id=22425> (accessed 14 January 2010).

²²United Nations Security Council Resolution 757 (Implementing Trade Embargo on Yugoslavia), S.C. res. 757, 47 U.N. SCOR at 13, U.N. Doc S/RES/757 (1992), <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/peace/docs/scres757.html> (accessed 15 January 2010).

²³HOTĂRÂRE nr.53 din 9 Decembrie 1999 privind trecerea pe teritoriul României a unui tren militar ce transportă efective, tehnică și containere cu diverse materiale, aparținând contingentului armatei S.U.A. - KFOR din Kosovo (Republica Federală Iugoslavia), http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.http_act?ida=23121&frame=0 (accessed 18 January 2010).

²⁴HOTĂRÂRE nr.28 din 23 iunie 1999 privind aprobarea trecerii nemijlocite a Batalionului 26 Infanterie “Neagoe Basarab” la îndeplinirea acțiunilor în cadrul Rezervei Strategice SFOR în Bosnia-Herțegovina, http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.http_act?ida=21616&frame=0 (accesses 19 January 2010).

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²⁶“Attacking Iraq - international positions,” <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq-view.htm> (accessed 24 January 2010).

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²⁸Radio Free Europe /Radio Liberty, “Romania: President Traian Basescu speaks with RFE/RL,” 26 September 2006, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1071649.html> (accessed 19 January 2010).

²⁹Facts and figures on Romanian Army's participation in Iraq operations, Embassy of Romania, Copenhagen, <http://copenhaga.mae.ro/index.php?lang=en&id=31&s=88894> (accessed 21 January 2010).

³⁰Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

THE FLOWERING OF CONVERGENCE

Afghanistan in context of the war against terrorism

Romania's reliability as a NATO partner for the US in Afghanistan must be viewed in both military and political perspective. In fact, the commitment of Romanian troops to Afghanistan has been the result of a continuous strategic process that weighs and orchestrates ends, ways, and means. In the end, the political element inherent in national strategic decisions does much to explain Romanian steadfastness in support of the US cause in the Afghanistan theater of military operations.

To put this assertion in perspective, it is useful to review developments immediately after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Romanian political leaders reacted to these attacks on the US in much the same way as their European counterparts. On 19 September 2001, the Romanian Parliament unanimously accepted Decision no. 21.¹ This decision stated that Romania, as a strategic partner of the US and a PfP member, would participate as a *de facto* NATO member with other NATO countries in the war against international terrorism. Decision no. 21 authorized the use of all available means, including military force, in pursuit of national and alliance objectives. Several months later, on 21 December 2001, the Romanian Parliament approved Decision no. 38, on Romanian participation in the international reconstruction force in Afghanistan. Romania initially made provisions to dispatch 15 military physicians, a decontamination company, and a military police platoon to the theater of operations.² Subsequently, in a further refinement of Decision no. 38, on 15 April 2002, the Romanian Parliament adopted Decision no. 15.³ This legislation authorized the Romanian Minister of Defense to

deploy, starting 1 July 2002, a Romanian military contingent to Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. Thus, Bucharest would commit a full battalion, including 425 military personnel and the requisite equipment for mission accomplishment. At the same time, Decision no. 15/2002 appropriated the necessary funds for the Afghanistan commitment, while specifying a six-month rotation time for Romanian military personnel deployed to theater.

This initial commitment was to grow. In November 2003, the Romanian Military Mission to NATO and the EU received a request from Germany to participate to the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) Project. In addition, at the beginning of 2004, the NATO Secretary General requested all NATO members to increase their presence in Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).⁴ As a result, on 2 March 2004, the Romanian Parliament approved Decision no. 1, following a request from President Iliescu to increase the Romanian military presence in Afghanistan.⁵ Romania was now a NATO member, and the Parliament approved dispatch to ISAF of a military intelligence detachment with 30 personnel with specialties in human intelligence and counter intelligence. For participation in the PRT Project, the Romanian Minister of Defense additionally approved the dispatch of a small detachment specialized in logistics, engineering, and medicine. In recognition of these and other measures of support, President George W. Bush on 5 April 2004 sent a formal letter to the Romanian President, Ion Iliescu. The US President officially congratulated Romania for its efforts against terrorism and acknowledged appreciation for Romania's value as a NATO member.⁶ By the end of 2004, Romanian troops were serving not only in Operation Enduring Freedom under US command, but also in ISAF under NATO

command, and within the PRT Project under German auspices. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that the principal Romanian overseas effort still lay with Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Events at end of 2004 reaffirmed a deepening Romanian commitment both to democracy and strategic partnerships. National elections produced a new President, Traian Basescu, and a new Parliament, and there was little time lost in revisiting relationships with NATO and the US. On 8 March 2005, President Basescu visited Washington, at the invitation of President Bush. Bush hailed Basescu as a special ally and a special leader, and expressed US appreciation for Romania and its efforts as a security partner. It was Bush's observation that Romania shared US values.⁷ An important aspect of mutual discussions referred to the consolidation of the Romanian presence in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁸ President Basescu even officially expressed his intention for closer cooperation along the Bucharest-Washington-London axis, but to be sure, without losing sight of the European Union.⁹ Basescu's declared end state was to change the status of Romania from a security consumer into a security provider. Even before President Basescu's visit to Washington, Bruce Pitcairn Jackson, the President of the Project for Transition Democracies, had presciently noted that Romania, once on the path to democracy, would significantly assist in building new democracies in the Balkans.¹⁰

Meanwhile, Romanian operational deployments provided substance behind political assurances. Between 2002 and 2006, Romanian military detachments deployed to Kandahar as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. Initially, Romanian tasks were to secure the Kandahar base and its airfield. From the beginning, the Romanians were under US operational command. After several personnel rotations, the Romanian mission

changed from camp security to humanitarian assistance. By the end of 2005, the Romanian battalion in Kandahar was partially engaged in base security and partially engaged in humanitarian assistance for two Kandahar districts. It appears that local US military commanders understood the Romanians' lack of experience during their initial deployments. Therefore, the tasks assigned to Romanian troops during 2002 and 2003 were oriented on security. As the Romanians accumulated time in theater, they graduated to patrolling and to conducting humanitarian assistance and to engaging with local Afghan leaders. By the end of 2005, the Romanians were almost totally committed to providing security for Afghans in several Kandahar districts.

The year 2006 marked even greater departures for Romanian military activities in Afghanistan. Beginning in September 2006, ISAF/Regional Command South assumed responsibility for Operation Enduring Freedom.¹¹ This alteration in command responsibility was significant for Romanian troops because it involved substantial changes in mission and area of responsibility. The Romanians re-deployed from Kandahar to Qalat, Zabul Province. Now, as part of ISAF, the Romanians operated in conjunction with US troops in Zabul. Romanians and Americans shared the same area of responsibility and the same mission. It included military operations in support of the Afghan government and in cooperation with Afghan Security Forces. The goals were to facilitate governance, to deny Taliban influence in Zabul Province, and to assist the Afghans in reconstructing the province. Romanian troops were stationed in Forward Operating Bases (FOB) and exercised operational command over a US company. The initial Romanian deployment to Zabul numbered about 600 personnel, or nearly the

equivalent of a maneuver battalion. The total number of Romanian military personnel deployed in Afghanistan now reached 680, including those in Kabul and Kandahar.

To understand the importance of the deployment to Zabul, it is significant to understand the locale. Now under ISAF/Regional Command South (RC South), Zabul has previously been under US control. Because of its location, the province constituted one of Afghanistan's most dangerous regions. It shared 64 kilometers of border with Pakistan, and through it ran a major main supply line for drugs and terrorist/guerilla fighters. Not surprisingly, the province was the scene of fierce fire fighting between Coalition/NATO troops and the Taliban. The former included US, Canadian, British, and Dutch task forces, supported by troops from Romania, Denmark, Latvia and Australia.¹² At the beginning of 2006, no NATO countries were willing to assume the mission in Zabul from the Americans. To accept the mission in Zabul was a very dangerous step for the Romanian Army. However, assumption of the mission allowed the US to re-deploy its troops elsewhere, thus practicing economy of force.

Although military competence counted for much, it was an expression of Romanian political will that made possible the shift in mission from Kandahar to Zabul. There was a direct correlation between domestic decision-making and the changing nature of the Romanian military commitment in Afghanistan. In spite of divided sentiment, but pursuant to declarations made in Washington, President Basescu requested parliamentary approval for an increase in the number of troops for Afghanistan. As quoted by Rompres, the state news agency, Basescu held that, "We have over 680 troops in Afghanistan and we are preparing another battalion that was solicited by NATO."¹³

The Romanian Parliament heeded the President's appeal, with the result that during 2006 Romania remained committed to building security and stability in Afghanistan.

That same year, President Basescu was once again President Bush's guest in Washington. Analysts saw the invitation as recognition of the Romanian contribution to the war against terrorism. Once again, the Romanian President reasserted his decision to remain a US ally in support of the emerging democracies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Meanwhile, President Bush thanked the Romanian people for their strong support of the US in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁴

Steady State and More

During the following year, 2007, the Romanian military contribution to Afghanistan remained at steady state. The allocation to ISAF stood at 556 personnel and to Operation Enduring Freedom at 94.¹⁵ One of the reasons for no dramatic increase was the number of troops siphoned off by Operation Iraqi Freedom. At the time, Romania continued to maintain about 800 military personnel in Iraq. In force development perspective, the rotation of two battalions to two distinct theaters of operations required the Romanian armed forces to maintain two ready brigades at home. Under the six-month rotation system, one battalion deploys while the parent brigade holds one battalion in recovery mode and an additional battalion in training for follow-on deployment. For a small military force, the rotational system levies a considerable manpower burden.

The beginning of 2008 witnessed a refusal by Germany and France to commit additional troops to Afghanistan. In particular, there was strong sentiment against deployments in the more dangerous Afghan provinces, especially those located in

Regional Commands South and East. Romania lent it voice to US and Canadian diplomatic calls for more NATO troops in southern Afghanistan from European allies.¹⁶

Events later in 2008 vindicated Romanian political support for the US in Afghanistan. Originally, Portugal was to host the 2008 NATO summit. However, in December 2006, the US Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns held that Bucharest deserved the honor of organizing the 2008 NATO summit, in acknowledgment of Romanian commitments to Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁷ Consequently, Bucharest was the site of the summit, 2-4 April. The proceedings concluded with the usual comprehensive declaration by participating heads of states and governments.¹⁸ Point Six of the declaration re-stated the alliance commitment to Afghanistan. At the outset of the following year, allied troop commitments increased. For its part, Romania maintained force levels in Iraq and at the end of 2008 increased the number of troops in Afghanistan RC South (Zabul) to 780.¹⁹

There followed in 2009 an important shift in Romanian deployments. As was the case with other coalition allies, the Romanian mandate for a presence in Iraq expired at the end of July.²⁰ As of 1 August, there were no Romanian troops deployed to Iraq.²¹ However, the Romanian President and his Government decided, in accordance with a request from the US, to use approved funds for 2009 deployments to bolster the Romanian presence in Afghanistan. By the end of the year, the result was 1,089 Romanian troops under ISAF mandate in Afghanistan, with another 36 under Operation Enduring Freedom, for a total of 1,125 deployed personnel.

In April 2010, President Traian Basescu reiterated his country's troop commitment to Afghanistan and announced their number would increase to 1,800. The

additional 700 troops represented an increase of about 68 percent, for a total figure that would make Romania one of the major allied troop contributors to Afghanistan. The assertions and numbers seemed to make it clear that the Romanian political leadership understood that stability in Afghanistan might come in no small part through an enhanced military effort. The decision for additional troops had important political ramifications, since other contributors publicly stated their intention to withdraw from Afghanistan.

Allied Cooperation in Military Practice

Several levels removed from the politico–military spotlight, tactical considerations also exercised an important influence on evolving Romanian–US cooperation in Afghanistan. From the beginning of combined operations, Romanian troops and US forces functioned as a team. Initially as part of Operation Enduring Freedom, and subsequently as part of ISAF, Romanian military personnel fitted neatly into the US martial landscape. At the beginning of 2003, Romanian troops figured only in security for the Kandahar airfield. As experience accrued, Romanians sank their teeth into full spectrum operations. After September 2006, when Romanian soldiers deployed to southern Afghanistan, they discharged the same combat missions as their US counterparts. Romanian units conducted combat surveillance of sensitive points, participated in the search for Taliban insurgents, supported humanitarian operations, escorted materiel convoys, and secured the deployment of coalition forces.²²

An important impulse for the building of cooperation and trust between American and Romanian troops came from the fact that, from the inception of the Zabul mission, a US company has been permanently attached to the Romanian Task Force. US soldiers habitually operate under Romanian tactical command, while administrative support

comes from the major U.S. Army parent unit in the region.²³ Brigadier General Marquis Hainse, the Canadian who in October 2007 was NATO's second-in-command for Afghanistan's six southern provinces, stated in an interview for the Vancouver *Sun News*:

Some countries have decided to watch the parade in Afghanistan. Some countries have decided to be in the parade. Canada, Holland, Britain, the U.S. and Romania, to name a few, are in the parade.²⁴

On the ground, sound rapport dated to the beginning of the Romanian deployment to Afghanistan in 2003. Romanian officers and soldiers took courses in advanced-level English to overcome the language barrier. Most of the officers spoke serviceable English, and so did many of the troops. In the mess halls at the Kandahar base, “U.S. and Romanian soldiers jokingly greeted each other with the expression ‘Hello, Big Brother,’ while waiting in line for food.”²⁵ An American civilian with the catering firm for the Kandahar base had taught the Romanians this phrase.

Friendly ties naturally developed during the course of combined operations. In an article for the ISAF *Mirror Magazine* from May 2007, US Army Specialist Gilbert Lamont of Bravo Company, 1-4 Infantry, attached to the Romanian Task Force in Zabul, testified to the value of working with Romanians. Lamont said that it had been a pleasure to work alongside them, because “They’re nice guys, speak English fairly well and are really fun to talk to.” Fellow soldier Sergeant Gary Smith was impressed with the Romanians’ work ethic, commenting “They are very hard workers.” He and several Romanian soldiers had already spent nearly two years together performing the same functions in Iraq. In the same article, US Army Major Christopher Clay, deputy to the Romanian commander in Zabul during May 2007, had very positive words for the Romanians. He remarked, “It’s been rewarding to see how they’ve come in and been very

proactive.” In addition, Clay said, “You hear about the quality of their officers being very good, but their NCOs are also really take charge. . . .”²⁶

Operating together on a daily basis in quest of the same mission accomplishment in Zabul Province has left its mark. Michael Fumento, a reporter who in 2007 was embedded with US and Romanian troops in Zabul, wrote,

My escorts are from the Romanian 812th Infantry Battalion. It might have been easy to dislike them because I was exhausted from my flight the previous day and they made me get up at 0300 to grab that oh-so-uncomfortable seat. But of the 37 NATO countries providing 35,000 personnel in Afghanistan, Romania is one of only seven (besides the U.S.) that actually allow their men to fight. They deserve gratitude.²⁷

The Romanian commitment persists into 2010.

During a visit to Afghanistan at the beginning of March 2010, Romanian President Basescu told US General Stanley McChrystal of the intention to increase the number of Romanian soldiers in Afghanistan. During the same visit, Basescu addressed Romanian soldiers, asserting, “You have a mission to protect the civilized world against terrorism. You are carrying it out alongside your US and other NATO member states friends and comrades.”²⁸ Subsequently, during April 2010, at a meeting in Prague hosted by President Barack Obama, Basescu clearly stated that Romania would increase its troop commitment by September, from 1,073 to 1,800.²⁹ To fund added numbers and to purchase the requisite equipment, the Romanian Government has allocated the equivalent of an extra 15 million US dollars for the second quarter of 2010.³⁰

Numbers are sometimes deceptive and do not always convey a sense of true commitment. However, there is one set of numbers that rarely lies: the metric associated with what US President Abraham Lincoln once termed “the last full measure of devotion.” Since the beginning of the Romanian commitment to Afghanistan, 12 officers

and NCOs have been killed in action, with another 52 personnel wounded.³¹ These figures may constitute the acid test for a reliable ally.

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²Hotararea 38 din 21 decembrie 2001 (Hotararea 38/2001), Parlamentul Romaniei, [http://www.legestart.ro/Hotararea-38-2001-participarea-Romaniei-cadrul-forței-internationale-asistenta-Afganistan-precum-imputernicirea-Guvernului-stabilir-forțele-mijloacele-finantarea-conditi-\(NDg4MjY-\).htm](http://www.legestart.ro/Hotararea-38-2001-participarea-Romaniei-cadrul-forței-internationale-asistenta-Afganistan-precum-imputernicirea-Guvernului-stabilir-forțele-mijloacele-finantarea-conditi-(NDg4MjY-).htm) (accessed 29 January 2010).

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¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ministerul Afacerilor Externe, “Prezenta romaneasca in cadrul misiunii ISAF/Afganistan,” <http://www.mae.ro/index.php?unde=doc&id=38648&idlnk=&cat> (accessed 29 February 2010).

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²⁴“Romanians quietly in Afghanistan conflict,” *Vancouver Sun*, 12 October 2007, <http://www.canada.com/vancouver/news/story.html?id=4b2e160e-5e62-43a1-998c-0c6a04655929> (accessed 7 March 2010).

²⁵Ron Synovitz, “Afghanistan: Mission Prepares Romanian Soldiers For NATO,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 5 March 2004, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1051785.html> (accessed 7 March 2010).

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²⁸Embassy of Romania, Washington D.C., “President Basescu pays surprise visit to Afghanistan,” <http://washington.mae.ro/index.php?lang=en&id=31&s=103652> (accessed 27 March 2010).

²⁹“Romania asks USA for more military equipment in Afghanistan,” *Romanian Times*, 3 April 2010, http://www.romaniantimes.at/news/General_News/2010-03-04/7012/Romania_asks_USA_for_more_military_equipment_in_Afghanistan (accessed 1 May 2010).

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CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Larger Romanian–US Perspective

An assessment of Romania's reliability as a NATO ally for the US in Afghanistan must begin with the larger bilateral relationship. In broad context, the overall impression appears positive, but for reasons that transcend mere assertions of common altruism. Indeed there are palpable explanations for the convergence of interests and policies, and these explanations have overlapping military and political elements. The web of convergent interests radiates outward from a central emphasis on the common pursuit of stability. Above all, the US views itself as a force for global stability. Although Romania might have pretensions to play a wider role, stability--like politics--begins with things local. Therefore, it is extremely significant in the bilateral relationship that the US and Romania share a common vision for regional stability. President Basescu has underscored the significance of this vision for Romania. A re-statement of the Romanian National Security Strategy holds that since 2005, the regional Romanian role is "promoting an active policy at a bilateral level or in an international framework in order to ensure the security and stability in South-Eastern Europe, as well as in the South Caucasus and the whole area of the Danube and the Black Sea."¹ The US was among the first nations to understand this thrust in Romanian security policy. During President Basescu's visit to Washington in 2005, both he and President Bush found common relevance in the significance of the Black Sea Area² as "the next milestone in advancing freedom, democracy and regional stability."³ At the same time, Basescu stated very clearly that Romania was engaged in a strategic partnership with the US.⁴ Lest the point be missed,

he declared this relationship crucial to regional security and for promoting democracy in the region, since it constituted a bridge between Europe and the Caucasus. Notably for the time, the European Union had no clearly stated position on the Black Sea Area.

Perhaps just as important as President Basescu's assertions was subsequent US reinforcement of a common regional vision that emphasized security and democracy. In June 2006, Jack D. Crouch, Deputy National Security Advisor to President Bush, outlined the practical implications of US policy with regard to the Black Sea Area. Before more than 500 government and military leaders gathered in Bucharest at the Black Sea Forum for Dialog and Partnership, Crouch stated that Washington would work with its allies to strengthen political systems throughout the region.⁵ Affirmation for this commitment represented a clear appreciation of US reciprocal regard for the importance of bilateral US-Romanian relations.

US diplomacy bore fruit in May 2007, when the European Parliament adopted a communication of its Commission, "Black Sea Synergy—a New Regional Cooperation Initiative."⁶ This document asserts that Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania, as EU Member States in the Black Sea region, could and should lead the way in promoting enhanced cooperation within and without the region.⁷ In other words, the EU had reconsidered its policy towards the Black Sea Region. There was now recognition that Romania had become, among the other countries, an important regional player. This shift in EU emphasis might have occurred without a boost from the US, but Washington's energies likely sped up the process.

The Larger Military Dimension

Important within the same larger Romanian-American picture display a distinct military coloring. On 17 November 2005, President Basescu announced a possible decision to open US military bases in Romania. Romania offered the Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base for US use, with the object of better supporting the combined military effort in the war against terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁸ At the end of 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her Romanian counterpart signed an agreement to establish the first US military base in a former Warsaw pact country.⁹ Referring to the agreement, Secretary Rice said, “We have a great committed partner in Romania to make a more peaceful world. This is a symbol of burgeoning and brightening relations.”¹⁰

Asked why Romania? Ms. Rice explained:

We have stronger relations with Romania from a military point of view. We have good relations with Bulgaria, but President Bush and Basescu discussed about this arrangement. There is the geographical situation as well. Moreover, in all the activities we have had with Romania, this country has engaged itself to transform the army, to modernize it, to consolidate military capacity. This is recognition on our side of the fact that our relations are strong.¹¹

Ms. Rice’s statement in 2005 was testimony to the fact that on-going security cooperation between the two governments and their armed forces was now the norm. As indicated in chapters 3 and 4, above, a substantial part of that cooperation flowed not only from the common pursuit of regional stability--narrowly and broadly conceived--but also from the perception that terrorism represented a common threat. The case can be cogently argued that Romanian commitments to both Iraq and Afghanistan flowed from a sense of both idealism and hard-headed *realpolitik*. The blunt fact is that Romania needs the US, and the US needs Romania. Emotion aside, it was and remains in the interests of both the US and Romania to seek a deepening strategic partnership. In the end, the

reliability--like the loyalty--of a military ally is a two-way street. Without a large measure of reciprocity, cooperation becomes difficult, if not impossible. It is valid to conclude that assurances of reliability do not lie entirely with Romania.

At the same time, security cooperation never stands still. On 4 February 2010, President Basescu announced preparation for negotiations with the US to accept ground-based interceptors as part of an antiballistic missile defense system for Europe.¹² He attributed the proposal to Ellen O. Tauscher, Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, then in Romania.¹³ Current plans involve stationing 24 land-based interceptor missiles in Romania.¹⁴ Both the Romanian President and Parliament currently support the concept. The expectation is that a defense shield will become functional in 2015. Modern means and modern technologies such as anti-ballistic missile systems imply that no nation is an island, and this understanding lends even greater significance to the reliability of an ally.

Validation at the Highest Levels

On 27-28 April 2010, the NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), Admiral James G. Stavridis, visited Romania. He called on President Basescu at the Cotroceni Palace, and then conferred with Mr. Gabriel Oprea, Minister of Defense, and with Admiral Gheorghe Marin, the Chief of the Defense Staff.¹⁵ Admiral Stavridis said the main reason for his visit was to thank Romania, in the name of the President of the United States and the US Secretary of Defense. Stavridis noted that Romania was demonstrating itself a trustworthy ally. He said, "I would like to thank the President and the people of Romania for the invaluable contributions Romanian troops are making to NATO operations." Stavridis added that, "Training the Afghan Security

Forces is key to the success strategy and the additional Romanian troops are very welcome.”¹⁶ During meetings at the Romanian Ministry of Defense, Admiral Stavridis said with specific reference to Afghanistan that the US was proud of the way Romanian troops conducted operations. He expressed confidence that Romanian and American forces working together would accomplish the final goal--the readiness of Afghan security forces and country stabilization.¹⁷ Admiral Marin responded with the assurance of an increased Romanian presence in Afghanistan over the next several years. In accordance with earlier statements of President Basescu, Marin said that the Romanian military presence in Afghanistan would double in the foreseeable future, from one infantry battalion to two, along with an increase in staff officers who, in the future, would work within a US-Romanian Headquarters.¹⁸

At the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest, President Bush spoke on 2 April to the Romanian people during a joint conference with President Basescu. Bush began by thanking Romania for being a strong NATO ally, and by lauding Romanian contributions in Afghanistan.¹⁹ Later on in his comments, Bush returned to the same theme:

I want to thank you and the people of Romania for your contributions to Afghanistan. There are about 600 Romanian troops there. The Afghan people are grateful, as am I. I want to thank you for your contribution to the troops in Iraq. These are tough decisions, but I think they're necessary decisions to keep the peace. You and I have discussed our desire to work closely with those countries to encourage their success--for their sake and for the sake of peace.²⁰

President Basescu responded warmly, choosing to emphasize the kind of mutual confidence and trust that are key to any allied relationship:

Moreover, Mr. President [Bush], I would like to underline the confidence that the United States has had in the Romanian Army by placing under Romanian command important troops in Afghanistan. It was a token of confidence that you have given to us, and we are aware that it is very rare that the United States places its troops under the command of other countries.²¹

Thus president Basescu highlighted what is perhaps the sternest test of trust for an ally's reliability. For a number of reasons across a spectrum stretching from altruism to naked self-interest, Romania remains a reliable NATO ally to the US in Afghanistan.

¹The National Security Strategy of Romania, "Chapter VI. Romania-a dynamic vector of security and prosperity in the Black Sea Region," <http://english.mapn.ro/documents/nssr.pdf> (accessed 12 May 2010).

²According to the definition adopted by the European Commission the Black Sea region includes Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova in the West, Ukraine and Russia in the North, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the East and Turkey in the South. It is an area of growing strategic importance for the European Union as a zone of great economic potential, a market comprising 190 million inhabitants and also as a vital transit route. The completion of the fifth enlargement will take the European Union into the very heart of the region; www.fp6-nip.kiev.ua/211106/bsec1.doc (accessed 9 May 2010).

³Interview with Romanian President Traian Basescu, moderator: Craig Kennedy, president, German Marshall Fund of the United States, *Council on Foreign Relations*, "Washington The Black Sea Area: Advancing Freedom, Democracy, and Regional Stability," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 10 March 2005, http://www.cfr.org/publication/7933/black_sea_area.html?breadcrumb=/publication/publication_list%3Ftype%3Dtranscript%26page%3D42 (accessed 10 May 2010).

⁴Ibid.

⁵John Sitlides, "Forward East: Euro-Atlantic Security in the Black Sea Basin," 112-118, http://books.google.com/books?id=mVQdN7Ryu4YC&pg=PA112&lpg=PA112&dq=george+bush+about+black+sea+area&source=bl&ots=Nom2rTXzp&sig=wsTPQNdMICOUV6_OmGETn2A5MY&hl=en&ei=A0DoS_yzN4L4sgOQraHZCA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CBcQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=george%20bush%20about%20black%20sea%20area&f=false (accessed 4 May 2010).

⁶Commission of the European Communities, COM(2008) 391 final, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Report on the first year of implementation of the Black Sea Synergy, Brussels, 19 June 2008, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/blacksea/doc/com08_391_en.pdf (accessed 10 May 2010).

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¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance, “Romania Defends Role in U.S. Missile Shield,” 5 April 2010, <http://missiledefense.wordpress.com/2010/04/05/romania-defends-role-in-u-s-missile-shield/> (accessed 11 May 2010).

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¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷http://www.defense.ro/comunicat_COMUNICAT-DE-PRESĂ_391.html (accessed 18 May 2010).

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, The American Presidency Project [online], “The President's News Conference With President Traian Basescu of Romania in Neptun, Romania,” 2 April 2008, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=76890> (accessed 12 January 2010).

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²¹Wooley and Peters.

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